



# **Representations of epistemological certainty and ontological ambiguity in selected earlier works by Joseph Conrad**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on how Joseph Conrad represents epistemological (un)certainty and ontological motifs in the Marlow texts ‘Youth, a Narrative’ (2007), *Heart of Darkness* (2007), *Lord Jim* (2007) and *Chance* (2008). Conflicting notions are advanced by critics as to why *Chance* seems to deviate from the other Marlow texts in terms of quality even though these texts were conceived at the same time. This dissertation hopes to explore why *Chance* appears different by investigating the following question: To what extent and how do *Chance*’s epistemological and ontological motifs differ from the other Marlow texts?

In answering this question, it is necessary to analyse how epistemology and ontology manifest in the given texts. Therefore, using a stylometric approach, I compare Conrad’s Marlow texts to each other and to the non-Marlow novels to demonstrate that *Chance*’s epistemic word use differs from that of the other texts. Focusing on three verb lemmas, *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND*, *THINK*, and the noun *TRUTH*, it becomes possible to concentrate on certain epistemological differences in the Marlow texts such as the level of (un)certainty.

Thereafter, qualitative interpretations of the Marlow texts illuminate the stylometric differences and explain why certain epistemic words recur as representations of (un)certainty in the Marlow texts. It would appear as though Conrad’s representation of Marlow in *Chance* is different to the other Marlow texts in terms of certain epistemological motifs. This seems surprising when one takes into account the fact that all the Marlow texts were conceived during the same period. This might point to what critics call ‘a decline in Conrad’s writing’ or at the very least a change in epistemological motifs in Conrad’s Marlow texts.

Furthermore, these epistemological concerns can be linked to certain ontological motifs that appear in the Marlow texts. These ontological motifs are then heuristically explored by comparing the Marlow texts in relation to how a *being* (character) experiences its world and why *Chance* seems different in this regard. By implementing Paul Ricœur’s theory of Mimesis (prefiguration, configuration and refiguration) heuristically, I show how each Marlow text conveys these concepts through certain metaphors. I especially emphasize Marlow as a *being-in-the-world* and how he gains knowledge and portrays it to other characters and listeners.

**Keywords:** epistemology, Joseph Conrad, knowledge, metaphor, mimesis, ontology, stylometry

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie verhandeling fokus op die wyses waarop Joseph Conrad epistemologiese (on)sekerheid en ontologiese temas voorstel in die Marlow-tekste. Die tekste wat relevant is, is ‘Youth, a Narrative’ (2007), *Heart of Darkness* (2007), *Lord Jim* (2007), en *Chance* (2008). Kritici verskil oor waarom *Chance* afwyk van die ander Marlow-tekste met verwysing na kwaliteit, aangesien al die tekste in dieselfde tydperk deur Conrad gekonsepsualiseer is. Die ondersoek in hierdie verhandeling hoop om die andersheid van *Chance* te ondersoek deur te vra tot watter mate die epistemologiese en ontologiese temas in *Chance* van die ander Marlow-tekste verskil.

In ’n poging om hierdie vraag te beantwoord, is dit nodig om te analiseer hoe epistemologie en ontologie gerealiseer word in die Marlow-tekste. ’n Stilometriese benadering word gevolg waarin ek Conrad se Marlow-tekste vergelyk met die nie-Marlow-romans om te wys dat die epistemologiese woordgebruik in *Chance* van die ander Marlow-tekste verskil. Die fokus in hierdie stilometriese ondersoek val op drie Engelse werkwoorde, naamlik *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND*, en *THINK*, asook die Engelse naamwoord *TRUTH*. Dit is moontlik om sekere epistemologiese verskille, veral die vlakke van (on)sekerheid, deur middel van hierdie vier woorde in die Marlow-tekste uit te wys.

’n Kwalitatiewe interpretasie van die stilometriese analise van die Marlow-tekste volg. In die interpretasie blyk dit waarom bepaalde epistemiese woorde herhaal word as voorstellings van (on)sekerheid in die Marlow-tekste. Dit wil voorkom of Conrad se voorstelling van Marlow in *Chance* wel verskil met verwysing na sommige epistemiese temas. Hierdie gevolgtrekking is verrassend, aangesien die Marlow-tekste gedurende dieselfde tydperiode gekonsepsualiseer is. Dit is moontlik ’n bevestiging van kritici se stelling oor ’n afname in die kwaliteit van Conrad se skryfwerk, of ten minste ’n verandering in die epistemologiese temas in Conrad se Marlow-tekste.

Uiteindelik skakel die genoemde epistemologiese oorwegings met bepaalde ontologiese temas. Die ontologiese motiewe word heuristies ondersoek deur die vergelyking van die Marlow-tekste met verwysing na hoe ’n *wese* (karakter) sy wêreld ervaar en waarom *Chance* in hierdie manier verskil van die ander Marlow-tekste. Ek wys in hierdie verhandeling op die manier waarop elke Marlow-tekst hierdie aspekte met behulp van sekere metafore oordra deur ’n heuristiese toepassing van Paul Ricœur se Mimesisteorie (prefigurasie, konfigurasie, en refigurasie). Ek

beklemtoon veral Marlow se *wese-in-die-wêreld* en hoe hy kennis opdoen en uitbeeld aan ander karakters en luisteraars.

**Sleuteltermes:** epistemologie, Joseph Conrad, kennis, metafoor, mimesis, ontologie, stilometrie

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Conrad's letters      CL, volume number: page number. For example: (CL IV:9)
- Chance*              C in text citations, i.e. (C:9)
- Heart of Darkness*      HoD in text citations, i.e. (HoD:9)
- Lord Jim*              LJ in text citations, i.e. (LJ:9)
- 'Youth, a Narrative'      *Youth* in reference to the short story and Y in text citations, for example:  
(Y:9)

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

### 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation examines how Joseph Conrad represents epistemological certainty and ontological ambiguity in the narratives of ‘Youth, a Narrative’ 1898 (2007), *Heart of darkness* 1898-9 (2007), *Lord Jim* 1900 (2007) and *Chance* 1912 (2008). The following questions are integral while discussing these texts: Why are *Chance*’s epistemological and ontological motifs different from the other Marlow texts and how do these motifs manifest in the texts?

In the texts, Conrad as author creates a frame narrator who conveys the setting and portrays how the main narrator, namely Marlow, recounts stories. Lothe (2008:167) argues that “the frame narrator functions first as a narratee, and then as first-person narrator relaying Marlow’s story to the reader”. It is important to note that, in this dissertation, there is a focus on Marlow’s narration and not on the frame narrator’s position within the texts, which makes it possible to analyze Marlow’s position as a narrator. In each of the Marlow texts, Marlow acts as the main narrator who narrates his own life in *Youth*, his journey to the Congo in *Heart of darkness*, his experiences in *Lord Jim*, and his meeting with Flora in *Chance*. By comparing the Marlow texts with each other, several similarities become apparent even though they were published at different times. Furthermore, *Chance* was published twelve years after the publication of *Lord Jim*. This situates *Chance* in another creative phase of Conrad’s writing career. This dramatically contributes to the fact that *Chance* is different from the other Marlow texts, even though Conrad uses Marlow as narrator.

A similarity that the texts share is that of their conception: according to Martin Ray (2008:xiii) in the introduction to *Chance*: “Conrad’s first conception of *Chance* appears to have been a 5,000-word short story called ‘Dynamite’, which he mentioned in a letter of 1898”. *Chance*’s genesis therefore coincides with the publication of ‘Youth, a Narrative’ (which will be referred to as *Youth* from this point on), *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*, which suggests that they ought to parallel each other in subject matter and motif. A few similarities in subject matter and motif include: Marlow as narrator, an emphasis on trying to understand another character and a level of ambiguity which relates to how a character experiences a situation. Although all the Marlow texts share these motifs, there are two fundamental differences in the way they are manifested in *Chance*, which was only published

in 1912. The first difference has to do with Marlow's knowledge and understanding, whereas the second difference relates to how he experiences the world as a *being*.

The former difference relates to certain epistemological issues such as Marlow's knowledge, what he understands of the world and the way he thinks about experiences; that is, the manner in which he gains understanding of the world and characters in it. Epistemic certainty is a concept that relates to the degree of certainty in something's existence and evidence to support it. According to Jason Stanley (2008:35), "knowledge requires epistemic certainty, and being epistemically certain of a proposition requires having independent evidence that logically entails that position". It is consequently possible to trace this epistemological motif, namely (un)certainty, in Conrad's texts. To use an example from the texts, in *Heart of darkness* and *Chance*, it is possible to compare what Marlow is certain or uncertain of. In *Heart of darkness*, Marlow does not gain certainty regarding Kurtz. An example of this uncertainty occurs when Marlow makes the claim that "He [Kurtz] was an impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines" (HoD:86). The word *impenetrable* clearly shows something of Marlow's inability to understand Kurtz and emphasises that there is something unknowable with respect to the character of the latter.

In contrast, *Chance*'s Marlow says that "I—we—have already the inner knowledge. We know the history of Flora de Barral" (C:196). This certainty with which Marlow speaks of 'having knowledge' suggests that there might be a change in the approach by means of which Conrad represents epistemological motifs in *Chance* when one compares this work to the other Marlow texts. Where Kurtz's character in *Heart of darkness* remains uncertain and 'impenetrable', *Chance*, it would seem, portrays a return to certainty of characters such as Flora through the certainty with which Marlow describes them. Therefore, the main concern of this epistemological approach seems to fall on epistemic words within the Marlow texts that interact with larger epistemological motifs, not only in Conrad's writing, but also within literary modernism.

Similarly, Paccaud-Huguet (2016:95) posits that in *Chance*, "the power of the written word to make you hear, feel and *see* has been sacrificed, the textual voice has vanished". It would seem as though this change in textual voice is one of the reasons why *Chance*'s epistemological motifs are unlike the other Marlow texts. She notices a textual aspect of

Conrad's writing related to how words in *Chance* no longer have an effect on the reader. Furthermore, she relates the power of language to perception and time:

The weird power of the written word can be 'positively' traumatic in the sense that it brings a disruption in the perceptions and representations of our time, and such a disruptive power will be enduring, thought-provoking as long as it cannot be resolved in meaning. Such is, it seems, what makes the living power and the extraordinary literary posterity of a text like 'Heart of Darkness'. A novel like *Chance*, despite its critical interest, has indeed little chance of producing the same kind of prolonged perlocutionary effect in the landscape of our modernity (Paccaud-Huguet, 2016:95-96).

Paccaud-Huguet shows that *Chance* tries to provide meaning, making the text less thought-provoking than its other Marlow counterparts. This kind of scholarship suggests that there may be changes within the Marlow texts in terms of meaning. As a result, what Paccaud-Huguet refers to is similar to what Thomas Moser refers to in *Achievement and decline* (1957), namely that there might be a decline in Joseph Conrad's writing. Moser seems to have been the first to have analyzed Conrad's reason for decline in a structural manner. Through a chronological reading, Moser (1957:3) examines the Conrad's uneven writing success in order to delineate his rise and fall from 1895-1923. In his attempt to get to the heart of Conrad's decline, Moser (1957:3) investigates Conrad's "early period in terms of key ideas and typical characters and of the complex structures and symbolic style which express these ideas". These complex structures are unavoidable when analyzing Conrad's texts, mainly because they can illuminate certain aspects of Conrad's writing style that often go amiss when the reader is flung into the constantly shifting nature of his novels.

According to Moser (1957:133), in Conrad's "early period, we discovered the significance for Conrad of test and betrayal. In the later period, these moral interests yield to an acceptance of chance as the force controlling human action". In effect, this acceptance of chance as the main reason why Conrad's characters suffer, especially in *Chance*, seems like a good premise for analysing the epistemological motifs in Conrad's novels, because chance is not the main reason why characters suffer in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. This could point to larger epistemological deviations of motif in Conrad's writing career.

The second difference occurs between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts, it relates to ontological issues, such as Marlow's position as a narrator of his own experiences. His narration of his change in behaviour and outlook in different narratives appears to depict a

change in his *being*. For example, Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, is portrayed as “loafing about” and irritating some of his acquaintances in their work (HoD:8) until he rekindles his passion for sailing and obtains a job on a steamboat to the Congo (10). He visits a doctor who wants to measure Marlow’s head and remarks that “the changes take place inside” (HoD:13). This visit to the doctor shows how his character is yet to undergo change inside his mind, thereby foreshadowing that something will alter Marlow irrevocably.

This change does indeed occur; the listeners become privy to it when they see Marlow after his trip into the Congo and the heart of darkness. Chronologically, Marlow is first depicted as an ordinary Englishman going on a journey to the Congo; only when he returns is he depicted as a meditating Buddha: Marlow as narrator is depicted as sitting “cross-legged” with an “ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, [he] resembled an idol” (HoD:4). Even though his outward appearance does not seem to alter in terms of his clothes, the manner in which he sits is inextricably linked to the end of the text where he is described as sitting “in the pose of a meditating Buddha” (HoD:96), undoubtedly showing that something did change within him during his trip into the Congo. This shift, from Englishman to Buddha, suggests a change within his character. Paradoxically, Marlow’s change in character in *Heart of Darkness*, is unperceivable because it occurs inside his mind which would mean that “human beings are impenetrable” because “what is inside them cannot be illuminated by a bright light or the slash of a machete—even by the person being investigated” (Hawthorn, 2015:40-41). The impenetrable nature of Marlow as a *being* and of the characters in his narratives suggests we should pay close attention to changes that occur in their behaviour and actions.

The alteration in Marlow’s behaviour suggests that something changes in his character. Something, I argue, within his *being* shifts. This change in *being*, however, does not seem to occur in *Chance*. There is no major transformation in Marlow’s character, no life changing event that alters his *being* in *Chance*. One can see this, for example, when Marlow is speaking with Flora: he is uninfluenced by Flora’s story and tries to keep their conversation “in the tone of comedy” (C:176), while being self-assured when he asserts that he understands her story (C:177). Flora observes that the truth will out, Marlow replies with a yes (C:328). Marlow’s detachment suggests that he remains uninfluenced by Flora’s narrative. Another example of Marlow’s unaffected behaviour as regards Flora’s narrative is depicted by his physical description as a narrator “lolling in the arm-chair” (C:330). This idle

attitude portrays his self-assuredness and detachment as narrator toward the knowledge he is conveying to his listener. It is a complete reversal when one compares his behaviour in *Chance* to the Marlow as Buddha figure in *Heart of Darkness*.

What *Youth*, *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance* have in common is the fact that all these texts revolve around Marlow as a narrator who attempts to understand the *being* of a character. Another aspect these texts share is that Marlow's knowledge about characters affects and changes him irrevocably. This evolution in his knowledge occurs through his investigation of several forms of evidence, such as narrators and personal knowledge, in order to understand characters. To understand concepts such as ontology and changes in *being*, I rely on Paul Ricœur's *The rule of metaphor* (1977) and *Time and narrative* (1984) in order to illustrate how Marlow's *being* is portrayed differently in *Chance*, even though all the Marlow texts were conceived during the same period.

The following section will provide a problem statement, as well as questions and objectives that can be inferred from the introduction. Thereafter, a clear contextualization will flow from it in order to focus on certain aspects that directly relate to the problem statement.

## **1.2 Problem statement, questions and objectives**

It is necessary to understand the differences in epistemology and ontology within *Chance* in order to formulate the following problem statement: There is an epistemological and ontological change in *Chance* when one compares it to the other Marlow texts, even though they were conceived around the same time. Following this, a central question can be articulated as follows: in what way is *Chance* epistemologically and ontologically different to the other Marlow texts, even though Conrad conceived them at approximately the same time? And, secondly, how do epistemological and ontological motifs manifest in the Marlow texts? In an attempt to answer both questions, I have three objectives: firstly, to give a broad contextualization of existing quantitative and qualitative criticism associated with Conrad studies in chapter two. These theories form a background and foundation for analyses in chapters three and four.

Additionally, my second objective is to examine the representation of epistemological notions in *Chance* compared to the other Marlow texts. This objective will be reached by incorporating and combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Chapter three includes a quantitative analysis of epistemic stance markers in the Marlow texts and qualitative

interpretations of some of these. This entails performing a stylometric analysis in order to explore certain epistemic lexical items which align with epistemological motifs within the Marlow texts.

My third objective is to portray how epistemological issues relate to the differences in ontological issues between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts. I analyze the Marlow texts in chapter four by heuristically using certain philosophical concepts proposed by Paul Ricœur, such as *being*, prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

### 1.3 Contextualization

It would appear as though *Chance*'s epistemological and ontological motifs do not seem to fit into the rest of the Marlow texts. However, where does this debate over *Chance* originate? In *Conradiana*, Laurence Davies (1991:7) argues that within Conrad's correspondence,

gender, notably rare in the earlier correspondence, become[s] much more frequent at the time of *Chance*. At about that time, too, Conrad's awareness of the reading public as an entity to be considered rather than simply despised becomes much stronger. These shifts from absence to presence or presence to absence indicate changes in Conrad's perception of the world: a coming to terms, a greater maturity, as some readers might say or, as others would have it, a loss of playfulness, a slackening off, a tiredness. These alterations concur with alterations in the mode of Conrad's novels. An examination of his letters contributes to the debate over when, how, and why his fiction deteriorated.

According to Conrad's letters<sup>1</sup>, Conrad promised J.B. Pinker that he would complete *Chance* (CL IV:15) and that part of the reason why he was taking so long concerned the ebbing of his own motivation and belief in the novel; this delay comes to its end when he writes to Edward Garnett about *Chance*: "I shall certainly make a dash to town before long to see you. But there is a novel in the way. The last 2000 words! Horrors!" (CL IV:530). It is no coincidence that Conrad writes 'Horrors!', since he is fully aware of its connection to the horror in *Heart of darkness*. Furthermore, Conrad was extremely insecure in his older age about his writing, feeling sceptical, as if he had become an old bore in his writing (CL IV:367). This feeling, and his wish to write something that would appeal to readers, made him despondent.

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<sup>1</sup> Karl, F.R., & Davies, L., eds. 1983-2007. *The collected letters of Joseph Conrad*. 9 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (CL)

In turn, Moser (1957:172) identifies various reasons for why *Chance* seems divergent, although the ones that stand out are related to Conrad's complexity: the use of "several narrators and seeming time shifts makes it superficially complex" but this only "irritate[s] the reader". Furthermore, according to Moser (1957:172), Conrad simplified his method, most probably deliberately, in order to gain a larger readership. As a result, he seemingly sacrifices complexity in order to articulate a newer and more understandable view of the world (Moser, 1957:172). From another critic's point of view, Peters (2014:140) argues that Conrad represents a different kind of scepticism through the earlier and later Marlow:

Marlow's scepticism in *Chance* is akin to cynicism and amounts to accepting the plight of humanity in a world governed by chance. The earlier Marlow, though, recognized the absurd nature of the universe, as well as the influence of chance on human activity, but instead of simply accepting this world he posited meaning in the struggle – hopeless though it may be.

I would say that Conrad represents a sacrifice of uncertainty in *Chance* in order to convey a more approachable text for his readers. This flies in the face of the trajectory of modern literature and his earlier Marlow texts when one thinks of the very uncertain peak literary modernism reaches in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), which is known for its extreme scepticism, and highly discontinuous narrative structure (Fludernik, 1986:17). Like *Ulysses*, a few modern novels are known for their cyclic nature, gaps in narrative progression through the use of ellipses, and epistemological or moral schizophrenia (Watts, 1984:15). Although one can perceive the beginnings of these elements in Conrad's early writing, Jones (2005:199) argues that:

The idea of a hiatus in the text commonly occurs throughout Conrad's fiction, frequently identified as a hallmark of his skepticism, sometimes characterized as a failure of language, and often signified typographically as a series of ellipses – dots or hyphens or simply chapter breaks. Such spaces may represent in the protagonist some form of physical or psychological crisis, a dislocation of consciousness or memory, an epistemological dilemma; or in the narrator, an uncertainty about literary subjectivity or authority. For example, Marlow's narrative in *Heart of Darkness* or in *Lord Jim* frequently trails off into a series of ellipses. Jim himself registers grammatically a gap in his memory, sometimes interpreted as self-deceiving amnesia, of his jump from the *Patna*.

Consequently, the hiatus portrays spaces and gaps in understanding, which becomes more important than the message conveyed. Jones proposes that these lacunae represent an epistemological dilemma within the protagonist, attributing it to self-deception. Alternatively,

Laurence Davies (1991:5) argues that omissions “signify the author’s anxieties and preoccupations; they signify the author’s indifference or, when subjects are too precious to discuss, the opposite of indifference”. This interpretation suggests that Conrad’s psyche is the origin of the manifestation of indifference in the texts. It appears as though Conrad himself is uncertain and indifferent of the message he is trying to convey, which directly relates to the modernist spirit of the time.

A central aspect underpinning my argument, where one starts to see certain changes in epistemology and ontology, occurs at the beginning of the modernist period. Notably, within this time period, changes can be observed within various research fields. In scholarly writing about literary modernism, for example, Childs argues in *Modernism* (2008:26) that prominent writers from approximately 1850-1920, such as Saussure, Freud, Nietzsche, Darwin, and Marx brought about major breaks with the former understanding of language, psychology, God, evolution, and hierarchies that existed in Victorian Britain and in the Western world. Literature portrays this break in the way modernist writers depict characters in novels. For example, in his book, *The transformation of the English novel* (1989), Daniel Schwarz (1989:10) argues the following:

While the Victorian novelist believed that he [sic] had a coherent self and that his characters could achieve coherence, the modernist is conscious of disunity in his own life and the world in which lives. The novelist becomes a divided self. He is both the creator and seeker, the prophet who would convert others and the agonizing doubter who would convince himself while engaging in introspective self-examination. Even while the writer stands detached, creating characters, we experience his or her urgent effort to create a self. Thus the reader must maintain a double vision. He must apprehend the narrative and the process of creating that narrative.

According to this extract, the Victorian novelist’s focus is completely different from that of a modernist author, since the Victorian believed that s/he had a coherent self, whereas the modernist was aware of the disunity in his/her life. For this reason, Victorian authors are regarded as “focused upon man [sic] in his social aspect” while modernist writers such as Conrad “isolate their characters from the social community by focussing on the perceiving psyche” (Schwarz, 1989:9). There is a clear change in the approach which writers from the two different periods employ to portray their characters: the Victorian author focussed on the social interactions between characters whereas the modernist author concentrated on the individual psyche of a character. For example, a Victorian author portrayed the subtle nuances of social interactions and centred his/her narration around domestic issues such as

marriage and love; however, the modernist writer was more uncertain and doubtful of his/her position as both “creator and seeker” (Schwarz, 1989:10). This is important to note, since these descriptions of modernist writers manifest in Conrad’s Marlow texts where he describes characters as uncertain and doubtful of their experiences.

Writers in the early modernist period were starting to become conscious of the various worldview changes mentioned by Childs (2008:26), which include worldview-changing writers such as Darwin and Nietzsche. Darwin’s *On the origin of species* (1859) directly opposed the church as well as Victorian sensibilities, because it altered the way people perceived themselves and how they came to *be*. Similarly, Nietzsche’s *The gay science* (1887) proclaims the death of God, which also transformed the worldview of people. These writers influenced the modernist era and its worldview, causing conflicting opinions in the minds of many. The modernist author was more concerned with how to represent this disunity in worldview in order to be congruent with and reflect the *zeitgeist*. These shifts in worldviews triggered a discarding of older conventions in literature, such as the Victorian’s focus on social issues, and involved an epistemological break, according to Regard (1997:134), that is evident in Joseph Conrad’s early work. Such a break, according to Collits (2005:55), is most evident when one compares *Youth* to *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*.

Simmons (2007:xiii) states in his introduction to *Lord Jim* that Joseph Conrad shows within his works the progress of the novel which marks a change “from the Victorian novel” of societal concerns to modernist experimentations with literary form that resulted in the works of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. As a result, according to Barry (2009:79), Conrad brought about major mutations in the novel through his focus on subjectivity and the process of *how we experience* what we see rather than just the object we see. In other words, the conscious experience of what we see becomes more important than the object itself, which is similar to Woolf’s notion of attempting to illuminate and depict consciousness itself through stream-of-consciousness writing (Stevenson, 1992:17). This centres on how the mind processes information and relates to epistemology. Epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge; how it is gained, what it is, what we can know, and how people know the things they do (Greco & Sosa, 1999:1). These aspects of epistemology are all related to an epistemological motif in Conrad, i.e. the process that Marlow undergoes as he does his best to understand characters. For example, he gains certainty as he experiences a situation and

describes it. His certainty is, for instance, reflected in the frequent use of words such as *know* and *understand*.

Within epistemologically related studies on Conrad, Marlow's struggle to interpret characters is attributed to the unique perspective this writer emphasizes in his novels, where characters do not inhabit the epicentres of a fundamentally free world of subjective relationships (Watt, 1979:269). Furthermore, Watt (1979:269) proposes that the perspective in Conrad's works is also more concentrated; he discusses how Marlow's scepticism compels him to explore available evidence, however fragmented or vague. These fragments of evidence may offer clues to comprehending what certain characters do and fundamentally are (Watt, 1979:269). Taking these fragments of narrative as evidence into account, one can note that they inform Marlow's understanding of Jim's existence. These stories create a multiplicity of information, each item different from the other, yet when taken together they create a holistic whole picture of Jim. Therefore, it is generally accepted that Conrad depicts how Marlow's reconstruction of a character relies heavily on the different fragments of narrative he receives – from minor characters, his own memories, identity as a seaman and personal interactions with the main character – to recreate the main character. However, several problems follow because of this fragmentary construction of a main character, leading into issues of how narrative, i.e. the conscious use of language and other features constructs the epistemological certainty of a character such as Marlow.

An early review on Conrad's writing, dates back to the nineteen forties, dealing with how Conrad fails to write a coherent novel (Lothe *et al*, 2008:3), while more recent studies include work such as *Conrad in the twenty-first century* (2008) and *The dawn watch* (2017) by Maya Yasanoff. Probably the first example of narrative theory that is used to examine Conrad's work is that of Van Ghent in her book, *The English novel: form and function* (1953). She observes that Conrad's technical devices represent an ethical scrupulosity regarding truth, and she anticipates the relationship between literary devices and ethics in narrative theory (Van Ghent, 1953:237). In line with this argumentation, Guerard recognises in *Conrad the novelist* (1958) that fear of knowledge and scepticism creates underlying tension in Conrad's works. However, Lothe *et al* (2008:4) argue that Guerard mainly focusses on Conrad's thematics without discussing Conrad's methods of narrative, which results in limitations in his study.

Janice Ho (2007:15-16) concentrates on modern literature and the historical time period and context of Conrad. Her study explores elements such as capitalism and modernity that could

explain why Conrad is ambivalent towards a world that had come to seem compressed and too tiny. This suggests that knowledge of globalisation and the burgeoning discoveries of new lands, as portrayed in *Heart of darkness*, influenced the ways in which a traveller's knowledge and interpretation of the world changed (Ho, 2007:16).

Furthermore, Ho (2007:16) proposes at the end of her argument that the focus of writing about travel in the twentieth century shifted from exterior to interior spaces, so that the unique experience of the traveller became the new emphasis in literature. Although this is indeed the case, she does not discuss this interior space at length, but, rather, concentrates on Conrad's writing form and how it is embedded in historical experience (Ho, 2007:5). Her argument highlights certain important sociohistorical issues, such as the influences of capitalism and modernity (Ho, 2007:16), but I suggest that taking a closer look at philosophical issues – such as the level of epistemological certainty in the various Conrad texts and the ontological elements that start to become manifest in them – could reveal this shift to interior spaces more accurately and demonstrate that *Chance* stands out in this regard.

An influential scholar in Conrad studies was J.H. Stape. His work in *The Cambridge companion to Joseph Conrad* (1996) identifies and examines several issues of identity and social constructions in Conrad's fictions. His consideration of *Lord Jim* investigates romantic elements and how they relate to a changing society (Stape, 1996:76-78). With regard to romantic ideals, Seeley (1992:497) argues that Conrad explores human aspirations not only to achieve an ideal, but to an admittedly impossible extent, he reflects on the unattainability of ideals and on the need for recognizing these delusions. However, Seeley does not take issues of ontology or epistemology into account, which is exactly the point where this study could contribute to Conrad studies.

Hanna Meretoja does integrate ontology and epistemology, but considers ethical dimensions of narrative instead of identity. While her study does not focus on Conrad in any way, she certainly provides illuminating arguments concerning such issues as: the intricate connections which exist between the ethical, epistemological, and ontological dimensions of the relationship between narratives and human experience of reality (Meretoja, 2014:89). Meretoja (2014:90) contends that theorists who focus on epistemological arguments propose that narratives impose a false linear order on the chaos of human experiences. In other words, a story constructs a false linear order of events even though the human experience of reality is not encountered in this way.

In a succinct overview, Meretoja (2014:95-101) compares various theorists within ontological, epistemological and ethical fields to show how they are related. She accurately postulates that epistemologists, such as Daniel Dennett, Hayden White and Louis Mink, overlook the fact that their arguments strongly depend on an ontological notion about the true nature of human reality: that narratives are important to comprehend reality (Meretoja, 2014:91). This contradicts their arguments that there is a more profound level at which human existence as immediately given, and human experience in general – as a portion of the fluctuating idea of reality – is characterised as non-narrative (2014:91). These contradicting notions of reality as profound and immediately given, and reality as non-narrative, relate to other studies in ontology.

Criticism is divided on how knowledge and meaning is generated and interpreted in Conrad. Armstrong posits in *The challenge of bewilderment: understanding and representation in James, Conrad, and Ford* (1987) that Conrad's narrative experimentation challenges our common-sense belief that we can know the nature of a stable reality and leads us into an ambiguous understanding of how we construct and create meaning (Armstrong, 1987:244). It would seem as though there is a link between how characters interpret the world and create meaning from these interpretations. For example, in the Marlow texts, Conrad portrays the main narrator Marlow who is unable to create meaning for his tales; the latter is not extremely clear in the meaning of his narratives.

Peters (2016:100), in contrast to Armstrong, proposes that Conrad begins from an impressionist epistemology in order to portray how humans, including Marlow, experience space and its connection to knowledge. He therefore concentrates on how Conrad represents the relationship between subject, object, and context (Peters, 2016:100) that appears to create meaning. By comparing Armstrong and Peter's interpretations it is clear that Armstrong's interpretation focusses on the narrative whilst Peters' main concern is more with the individual's epistemological framework. They complement each other, but for my study it would seem as though Peters' approach is more relevant since it is more epistemologically and ontologically inclined. In relation to Peters' argument for the way in which there is a connection between subject, object and context, Marlow in *Heart of darkness* describes himself in relation to Kurtz and the empty, weightless space that surrounds them:

There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was

alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air (HoD:82).

It appears as though earth is associated with solidity and what is known, whereas air is associated with instability and the unknown. From this example, it is clear that Marlow is using earth and air as a metaphor for knowledge and that Marlow is unable to appeal to Kurtz “in the name of anything high or low” (HoD:82) within this situation. The physical space within which Kurtz appears becomes a metaphor for the kind of knowledge he possesses. Since he metaphorically kicks the earth to pieces, he is completely cut off from what is known and subject to identification through language, which is why Marlow is unable to appeal to him. These aspects of weightlessness contribute to the reasons why Marlow uses this earth/air, high/low metaphor for Kurtz. This weightlessness conveys the otherness of the space that Kurtz inhabits, and signifies an encounter with the limits of Marlow’s knowledge. Yet, it also points to the distinction between the subject (Marlow), object (Kurtz) and context (the nothingness which surrounds them), as Peters suggests. This method of thinking about Conrad’s texts marks a change from matters of certainty about external reality to epistemological (un)certainly of ontology and matters of existence. This also demarcates a space for my dissertation and further research.

In the area of philosophy and Conrad studies, William Bonney’s informative text *Thorns & arabesques* follows the manner in which ontology is prevalent in Conrad’s works (1980:31). His study focuses on language and the discontinuous narrative perspectives that switch from first-person, to third-person and omniscient narrators (Bonney, 1980:152), and is mentioned in this dissertation to indicate how it contributes to the connection between language, larger narratological elements and epistemology.

It would appear as though a projection of Conrad’s mind is reflected in the novels. Bonney (1980:160-161) argues that “[T]hroughout much of the Conrad canon a similar perception of a metaphysically neutral world in which ethics and values are invalid projections of the human mind serves as the normative vision against which characters’ subjective fabrications of meaning and value in life must be measured and ultimately broken”. It seems as though Conrad projects two aspects in the Marlow texts: not only Marlow as the normative projection of ethics and values onto a character’s subjective creation of meaning, but also ultimately his realization that meaning and value are evaluated as broken. According to Phelan (2008:51-52), we might be able to understand a character “only if we can interpret the

enigma contained within the language of facts". This notion is ultimately true of any Marlow text except *Chance*; for this reason there is an emphasis on the epistemological motifs and metaphors for knowledge in this dissertation.

Another philosophically-inclined study on Conrad by Kim (2013:48) suggests that critics such as J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Harpham and Frederic Jameson reach an epistemological stalemate since Conrad's characters warrant innumerable interpretations: as many as there are readers and critics of the text. This would imply that there are many ways of creating meaning and interpreting what characters experience. Additionally, this multiplicity in meaning suggests that it is important to analyze individual characters and what they experience. In effect, the critics mentioned by Kim accord additional importance to specific subjects or to subjectivity, such as Jim and his narrator Marlow, or to how they are read in the text, instead of to how they are relationally involved and linked (Kim, 2013:48). Kim's study pursues an ontological explanation to understand Jim's actions (Kim, 2013:48). I concur with this method; however, Kim only investigates *Lord Jim*, which, in my opinion, is an inadequate basis for uncovering Conrad's need to portray Marlow's struggle to understand other characters. This difficulty is portrayed in the language he uses in relation to such characters.

Jeremy Hawthorn's work *Joseph Conrad: language and fictional self-consciousness* (1979) traces the ambiguity of Conrad's language use in his works. He argues throughout that Conrad is extremely conscious of the difference between speech and writing and that this distinction has an effect on consciousness (Hawthorn, 1979:6). In relation to the previous example of Kurtz and the weightless space he inhabits, Hawthorn (1979:6-7) attaches the following meaning: that the relation between a sign and what it refers to may seem divorced from actuality, but sometimes the sign and its reference mirror each other perfectly – this relation and uncertainty of the sign fascinates Conrad. For example, when Marlow perceives Kurtz in a weightless space one can interpret the scene in terms of a sign detached from its actual reality; hence Marlow is unable to read the scene because of this dissociation (Hawthorn, 1979:7).

Another example occurs in *Lord Jim* when Marlow comments on his own failure to describe a character fully to his listeners: "I've been telling you what we said – repeating the phrases we pronounced – but what's the good? They were common everyday words ... They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases

spoken in nightmares. Soul!” (LJ:83). The phrases of everyday life being repeated emphasize the ‘unreadable’ quality of the spaces Conrad represents which Marlow explores; this might indicate that there are no words that can fully describe the character’s *being* in order to render it as a reality.

Additionally, Hawthorn (1979:11) states that Conrad’s language use “also has much higher-level capacities, where the semiotic relationship is not between a word and a fact, but between *relations between words*, and *relations between things, individuals and events*”. In effect, language is relationally involved in Conrad’s works, as is argued of ontology by Kim. These relationships between words are central to understanding that language and epistemological motifs are inextricably linked in the Marlow texts. The foregrounding of language, developed by the formalist Jan Mukařovský, is an important characteristic that must be kept in mind. It portrays how language can be used in order to make language ‘strange’ and makes the reader extremely aware of how strange the literary world is that s/he is reading. However, in order to keep the focus on epistemological and ontological issues at hand, it is not discussed at length. For a full discussion on foregrounding, see Jiří Veltruský (1980:135) as he discusses foregrounding more succinctly. I now turn to how language is unable to portray truth.

In this regard, Wasserman (1974:327) rightly argues that “Conrad finds that words are often unable to cut through to the truthful heart of things, and that language itself may be nothing more than an outer form”. As a result, Conrad’s description of Marlow’s narrative exists only in the form of language, an outer form as Wasserman puts it. Marlow as narrator seems to “assert one thing” but later on “asserts another” (Raval, 1981:389-399), which depicts the changeability of language as a form and, accordingly, the changeability of characters. Thus, any meaning is unstable, never one thing and always deferred.

Clearly, the matter of ontology is an important feature of this dissertation because it seems as though there is an ontological difference in *Chance* in comparison to the other Marlow texts. Having given an overview of epistemology and touched on ontological elements, the present writer argues that it appears as though Marlow never gains absolute certainty about the driving force behind a character’s actions in the Marlow texts. His inquiry into a character’s motivations does not yield what he is searching for; he therefore remains uncertain of other characters. Knowledge does seem to be distorted within the Marlow texts, but what kind of

knowledge is being distorted? Marlow's inquiry into other characters is, it would appear, in actual fact an inquiry into matters related to ontology.

Marlow is attempting to understand the *being* of a character by inquiring about their existence. As 'reader' of characters and objects, Marlow moves towards delineating and interpreting various objects and subjects, yet every interpretation of a character leads to an unknowable space outside of his narrative capabilities. For example, for Stevenson (1992:21), the physical objects of Conrad's fictional worlds are less significant and less real than the invisible and what dwells within it. Marlow 'reads' characters as he reads the environment, which emphasizes that what dwells within is more important and unique for each character.

Marlow might understand what dwells within a character better than what resides within himself, but the listeners comprehend Marlow better than his narration – although it might be possible that the reader knows more of what Marlow is trying to convey through other narrators and listeners (Hawthorn, 1979:51) since the reader is in a position to know why Marlow is struggling to understand a character. Objective and subjective representations of experience become the focus in the Marlow texts. Reflecting the turn from objective to subjective experience and representations in modernist literature, Conrad seems to depict in his Marlow texts the improbability of entirely objective and factual understanding in the face of subjective experience – Conrad portrays the rejection of the unquestioning approval of a coherent and empirical methodology when determining certainty of knowledge (Peters, 1996:6). In effect, Conrad's Marlow texts embody a shift in emphasis to epistemology (Collits, 2005:55) and, it would seem, ontology.

In relation to studies in Conrad which concentrate on ontology, Levin (2016:64) homes in on the distinct ontological articulations in various novels and the way in which these refashion the plot, character and narrative voice. Conrad's experimental narrative methods are most often linked to his dedication to an intrinsically epistemological philosophical examination, according to Levin (2016:65), and are associated with the author's endeavour to map the ontological touchstones of narration and character. According to Levin (2016:67), "it is knowledge and its various coordinates to which the novel and its narrator repeatedly return". This return to knowledge by way of ontology is an important element in this dissertation because Levin (2016:67) argues that "... the question of self-knowledge is not without ontological implications", observing that this is noted fictionally by Marlow on page 51 in *Lord Jim* (2007). Furthermore, as Levin (2016:67) states, "one comes to know oneself by

looking to the other”. This indicates that a *being-in-the-world* can only know itself when interacting with another *being* within its world.

Therefore, “[i]f Conrad’s treatment of the relation between self and other is seen primarily as part of an epistemological inquiry, such an inquiry is still held within a world of ontological foundations” (Levin, 2016:67). The emphasis here is on how a *being* understands its world in relation to its ontological foundation; however, this foundation shifts as the *being* gains knowledge.

In relation to this, Levin (2016:69) argues that there are similarities between Conrad and Samuel Beckett: that language does not function to attain knowledge, but as *being* itself. However, language functions so as to gain certainty, which in turn creates a way into understanding ontology. Language therefore plays an important role in understanding epistemology and ontology, according to Levin (2016:76-77):

Language unfolds in Conrad’s tales as a performative passivity. It occurs at rest, at anchor, in the stillness or in-betweenness of a wary anticipation. It is that which is offered in lieu of action, in lieu of movement. In the staying of action there is an insistence on words, words circulating, unmoored, always belonging to another. A reimagining of plot beginnings in this event of language is the stylistic extension or symbolic representation of the seismic shift at the heart of the modernist subject and his [sic] relation to the world. To start a plot in this manner functions as a dramatization of the tension between experience and expression, between self and other; it is to suggest that the primary event of fiction is the subject’s encounter with language, an encounter that harbours the realisation that he is always already within language and as such can never independently author himself.

This extract demonstrates how language could either elucidate or obscure certain elements in the text and that it replaces action. Language becomes something that a *being* can use to relate to its world and interpret it. There is then a natural strain between what a *being* experiences and how s/he expresses it to another *being*. The world in a sense becomes textual and the *being* relates to everything in a textual manner since s/he is always within a text.

I shall now elaborate on this notion of *being*. At first glance, Marlow’s inquiry into a character is merely psychological; however, it is an inquiry into *being*. I use *being* here, in the same way as Paul Ricœur uses it in *Time and narrative* (1984). In this fashion every object and subject in the world is a *being*. Some *beings* such as humans are capable of questioning the *Being* of other *beings*, and in this way become a *being-in-the-world* (Ricœur, 1984:60-

61). This notion of *being* in Ricœur seems to stem from Heidegger's *Being and time* (1962) and will be used extensively in my dissertation in relation to ontology. Ricœur is also implemented because he wrote extensively on narrative structure and because he analyzes metaphor intensively.

It is important to understand how a *being* navigates his/her world since I observe a correlation between *being-in-the-world* and how a character (*being*) gains certainty about its world. For example, Marlow as a being-in-the-world experiences different situations and makes sense of it through his narration. He is in the position of a 'reader' since he is able to interpret the world and its various *beings*. His narrative is textual since he uses language to portray how he understands characters. Ricœur's theory suggests that the movement from epistemology to ontology is represented through language. The three verb lemmas I focus on, namely *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND*, *THINK*, and the noun *TRUTH*, seem to depict the process: gaining knowledge about the world and the characters within it. But what happens after this? What alters in Marlow's character as he acquires knowledge of other characters?

As an example, this process is most evident in *Heart of darkness* and his post journey wisdom as represented through his meditative position on the Nellie: "He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol" (HoD:4). The idol is ironic, since the lotus flower, which "signifies emergence into light from darkness", is missing (Hampson, 2007:117). This is in a sense a metaphor for the kind of knowledge he attains and is able to convey to his listeners: without meaning. However, it seems as though Marlow's *being* changes in the sense that he represents an enlightened *being* – "Buddha" – after his journey to the Congo (HoD, 96). This loss of meaning, yet change in *being*, appears to be manifested in the narrations of Marlow.

Marlow's depiction of characters explores the loss of meaning through the interchange of ontology and epistemology as he encounters other characters. The reason why no stable meaning is uncovered stems from epistemological certainty and ontological ambiguity. In terms of trying to discern a stable meaning, it appears as though metaphors and language in the Marlow texts are deployed to bridge the gap between what is known and unknown, thereby creating an unstable meaning. This points to and shows that it is important to analyze language and the manner in which certain words are able to convey different meanings.

Through close examination of language, literary scholars have arrived at some interesting results in their empirical work. In *Directions in empirical literary studies* (2008), a compilation of various articles, Margolin (2008:7) proposes that literature as a whole exists in two parts, namely: “literature as a set of given semiotic objects and codes (text types, genres, styles) and literature as the correlated set of historically occurring individual and collective situations, activities and practices bearing on these objects and codes”. She creates a divide in order to show that literature can be interpreted in terms of different approaches, firstly perceiving literature in its semiotic components and secondly regarding literature as an abstract idea. Studying linguistics, narratological models, semiotics and theories of these sorts is purely conceptual and intersubjective (Margolin, 2008:7). However, if one examines lexical items only, such a process can reduce and, in some cases, eliminate any empirical factor that yields an abstract poetics – comparatively, if one merely concentrates on interrelated activities in literature one falls into the trap of reducing the discipline to a historical overview (Margolin, 2008:8).

In order to bridge this gap, one should start at the textual level of analysis and then move to reconstruct the background and circumstances of the production of the text: how it is mediated and received (Margolin, 2008:11). One then proceeds to analyze the various relationships, between the structure within the semiotic object and the situations at work in the larger system (Margolin, 2008:11). For example, taking a closer look at the word *see* may yield different meanings in different contexts. Louw found in a study that the apparent frequent occurrence of ‘*see*’ usually means ‘understand’ rather than anything relating to one’s vision (Louw, 2008:244). Even though Louw’s study is unrelated to Conrad, it is prevalent to how Conrad’s Marlow texts also place a substantial emphasis on seeing (in the sense of understanding) rather than seeing with one’s eyes. Therefore, the lemma SEE appears to be a clear metaphor for understanding. Understanding is an important theme since it directly relates to epistemology and ontology, as Marlow forms his understanding of the world by experiencing it.

In turn, Hammond, in *Literature in the digital age* (2016), proposes embracing both quantitative and qualitative methods while continuing to remain conscious of both qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, which will allow for a more balanced analysis (2016:88). Digital analysis could tell us much about literature – it may assist us in perceiving concealed patterns (Hammond, 2016:129-130). I expect that my own digital analysis of Conrad’s Marlow texts

will yield data that support my qualitative analysis of epistemology and ontology. My method of analysis will be much like Hammond's analysis of *Pride and prejudice*, focusing on lexical content words rather than grammatical function words. He found that "know" and "think" occur frequently, and proposes that these words could indicate an epistemological theme: the boundaries of human understanding (Hammond, 2016:92).

I focus on epistemological motifs in Conrad, in order to show in what way *Chance*'s epistemological motifs differ to those in the other Marlow texts. Epistemological words that portray (un)certainty include adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs and modal auxiliaries. Key epistemic words (*know, understand, think and truth*) will be analyzed qualitatively and within the context of the novels. These words contribute to the epistemological motifs in the Marlow texts and present a close relationship with metaphors for understanding and knowing other ontological elements in the texts. In turn, Marlow's comprehension of characters is usually represented through metaphors. He uses a metaphor to describe Kurtz: "His was an impenetrable darkness" (HoD, 86). Kurtz's impenetrable character suggests that Marlow is not able to understand Kurtz in any way. The fashion in which Marlow narrates characters relies heavily on this mode of description, because it adds to our understanding of Kurtz, while simultaneously distorting it. Metaphors in everyday speech as represented in literature rely upon words and/or phrases, i.e. sources or vehicle terms to create semantic tension in their context and/or cotext (Kimmel, 2008:194). Solving this tension appears to be a phenomenal ability of the human brain, which calls for attributes from the vehicle's abstract domain to be related to a definite or indefinite target domain (Kimmel, 2008:194). In other words, metaphors distort our understanding of the thing itself and our description of it through language, which relates to how we experience something in the world; this is an issue of ontology since words cannot always describe what we experience.

Kimmel (2008:201) established that in *The turn of the screw* UP and DOWN are associated with morality. Similarly, knowledge-based metaphors emphasize Marlow's interpretative journey, while in the case of *Heart of darkness*, Marlow's journey acts as a metaphor for an inquiring into the *being* of things and characters. Marlow enters an interpretive circle: he moves from ignorance, to gaining knowledge, knowing, understanding (as close as one can come to fully understanding another character) and back to ignorance. Furthermore, DARK and LIGHT can be interpreted as metaphors for understanding since there is an emphasis on the manner in which Marlow moves between light and darkness and on how he tries to

understand the heart of darkness. The movement and stasis of Marlow's journey emphasize the metaphor for knowledge since these indicate how knowledge is acquired. By comparing the four novels using quantitative methods, it is possible to formulate more informed and clearer qualitative interpretations of metaphors and in what manner they seem to connect epistemology and ontology in the Marlow texts.

Metaphors have a long history that dates back to Aristotle; the intent of metaphors within that time was to move a reader beyond normal and straightforward linguistic and rhetorical rules and into something unusual – outside of language's normal rules (Punter, 2007:12). This notion of moving the reader beyond the normal rules of linguistics deepens the experience of the reader and suddenly enriches his/her *understanding* of the world (Punter, 2007:12). The deepening of experience and enriched understanding are motifs that occur in Conrad's Marlow texts through the use of metaphor. Various metaphors proliferate in the texts in order to convey epistemological motifs such as certainty or uncertainty. They blur the entry into truth, since it would appear that truth in Conrad's novels can only be understood within terms of something else. In *Metaphors we live by* (1980) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980:3) reported that metaphors are ingrained in daily life: in actions and thoughts, not just language. This can be regarded as a conceptual system which, they argue, is primarily metaphorical – these conceptions structure what we see, how we interact with the world and orient ourselves in relation to other people (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:3). Language is one path into these conceptual systems since it is similar to the systems we use to think and act (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:3).

Ricœur's notions of a *being-in-a-world* will strongly inform chapter four's discussion of ontology in order to depict how ontological motifs such as *being* are treated uncharacteristically in *Chance*, relative to the other Marlow texts. In effect, chapter four will integrate certain theoretical terms of Ricœur by way of analysis of the Marlow texts, thereby proving that *Chance*'s ontological motifs appear to be used in another fashion than in the rest of these texts. The ontological elements will be discussed separately in terms of each text; this will emphasize the most distinct ontological feature of it and highlight ways in which *Chance* is different to the other texts.

## 1.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter provided an introduction to the difference from the other Marlow texts which *Chance* exhibits as regards epistemology and ontology. Chapter two offers an overview of existing quantitative and qualitative critiques in Conradian studies, placing its emphasis on epistemology and its motifs, knowledge and understanding, which form the basis for analysis in chapter three. Furthermore, chapter two explores metaphors in order to make the connection between epistemology and ontology. Certain theories from Paul Ricœur are analyzed to solidify the connection between epistemology and ontology in the Marlow texts and to indicate how they will contribute to analyses in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter three examines the various lexical markers of epistemic stance in the Marlow texts. My qualitative analysis of epistemology starts with compiling a list of words relating to epistemic stance. This wordlist makes it possible to focus on epistemological motifs in chapter three and allows for the discarding of any words not related to epistemology. Isolating these words in Conrad's Marlow texts could elucidate the reason why many scholars find Conrad's Marlow texts ambiguous; except in this instance, I provide empirical evidence to support their claims. This furthermore indicates why *Chance* is distinct in its use of certain epistemological motifs in relation to the other Marlow texts.

In addition, chapter three analyzes the epistemological uncertainty Marlow experiences in trying to understand who a character fundamentally is, i.e. a character's *being*. Thus, this chapter creates a foundation from which to discuss the various interpretations advanced by other characters which inform Marlow's interpretative framework, and adds to understanding how certain ontological motifs surface because of this.

Moreover, chapter four compares some metaphors for knowledge in the Marlow texts in order to examine how they vary from novel to novel. Metaphors bridge the gap between what comprises epistemology and what constitutes ontology, which leads me to analyze the ontological aspects of the texts closely. I examine the ambiguous ontological space of Marlow's narrative in terms of theoretical aspects in chapter two and the empirical work performed in chapter three. This allows for a qualitative discussion of Conrad's representation of ontology in the Marlow texts, as well as of whether *Chance's* ontological motifs fit into the rest of the given texts. As noted, the ontological elements will be discussed separately in terms of each Marlow text, which will emphasise the most distinct ontological

feature of it. This method of analysis will demonstrate how *Chance* is ontologically different from the other such texts.

The last chapter offers a summary of all the findings and indicates what this dissertation has achieved by incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods in order to analyze how epistemology and ontology occur within the context of the Marlow texts. I now turn to the theoretical aspects, in chapter two.

## CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of existing theories related to epistemology, ontology and linguistic theories relevant to this study as a basis for explaining why *Chance* appears epistemologically and ontologically different to the other Marlow texts, even though their genesis occurred at about the same time. Furthermore, it is essential to explore existing criticisms of epistemology and ontology and their related theory in Conradian scholarship because they form the foundations for analyses of these texts in chapter three and four, which depict how ontology and epistemology manifest themselves in the given texts. Although epistemology and ontology are dealt with separately in this chapter, I suggest that there is a link between these concepts, effected through the literary technique of ‘delayed decoding’ and the ambiguous nature of Conrad’s presentation of metaphors in the Marlow texts. After this discussion, key components from these theories will then be used to analyze these in chapter three and four.

“Epistemology”, according to the OED (2019), is “the theory of knowledge and understanding, esp. with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion; (as a count noun) a particular theory of knowledge and understanding”. This theory of understanding seems dependent on the difference between belief and opinion, which is evident in Conrad’s Marlow texts. He inquires into the lives of characters in order to change his beliefs about them into some kind of understanding and knowledge. There is a sense that Marlow attains knowledge in stages as he listens to other narrators. This method of acquiring knowledge, according to Peter Ludlow (2005:11) can be viewed in the following manner:

[K]nowledge also comes in degrees, and whether a particular belief state also counts as a knowledge state will depend upon context. A true belief that has a degree of justification sufficient to count as knowledge in the context of a bar room chat may not have a degree of justification sufficient to count as knowledge in a court of law.

Similarly, this is what Marlow endeavours to achieve through his own retelling of his narratives: he tries to communicate something important – a change in his beliefs – yet he attempts to justify the view that knowledge in certain contexts can have long lasting implications. He endeavours to portray what it is like to gain understanding of some terrible

truth through the process of narrating stories. This act of telling a story is equivalent to the reading of a story through the eyes of the listeners, who recreate Marlow's narrative within their own perspective, which relates to more ontological issues and will be discussed in Chapter four.

In the case of epistemology in Conrad's narratives several of the following epistemological motifs, such as knowledge and understanding, are emphasized in Conrad's Marlow novels. For example, in *Heart of darkness*, Marlow recounts his trip into the Congo and remembers a cannibal who

...was instructed; and what he knew was this – that should the water in that transparent thing disappear, the evil spirit inside the boiler would get angry through the greatness of his thirst, and take a horrible vengeance. So he sweated and fired up and watched the glass fearfully (HoD:45).

Notice that certain words stand out in relation to how certain the cannibal is about this supposed evil spirit in the glass (the steam and water pressure gauge). He was *instructed* and *knew*. To him, what he has been instructed to believe and know is a lie, but he does not know how to gain certainty as regards what he believes through evidence. Objective truth seems to be the bridge between epistemology and ontology in this instance. This leads me to analyse the ontological implications in chapter four since there seems to be a connection between ontology and epistemology in Conrad's Marlow texts. In order to get to grips with the (un)certain and ontologically ambiguous texts it is necessary to understand the techniques of close and distant reading which form a part of analyses in chapter three and four. Distant reading can take a lot of time since you have to know what to search for in order to make use of it. Distant reading is typically done electronically by means of word frequency lists. Searching for such patterns by scanning on paper would take unfeasibly long. Furthermore, distant reading can portray certain patterns that go amiss during close reading, such as word-use and sentence construction.

Distant reading functions in huge corpora that contain large amounts of words (Hammond, 2016:116), but the study of all these words individually would not yield much useful information without qualitative analysis. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to make use of both close and distant reading in this dissertation in order to expound how epistemology and language are relationally involved in Conrad's novels. Drouin remarks that a common thread in literary studies which incorporate the digital humanities is the use of distant reading of

huge sets of data or analyzing certain linguistic features of a text (Drouin, 2014:110). This could yield a reading of a text that is able to offer virtually perfect statistical analyses of pattern usage, in order to reveal unnoticed elements in the text (Drouin, 2014:111). In turn, Hammond (2016:83) argues that these elements are, for example, a text's genre, ideology, authorship, theme and style. However, this does not acknowledge the discursive or historical context of the text (Drouin, 2014:111). This might be a drawback, but not if one incorporates both reading methods.

Through distant reading of the Marlow texts, crucial lexical components become apparent and influence larger themes, such as patterns within modernist literature, usually found in close readings. In other words, certain linguistic elements influence major themes in the texts such as epistemology and ontology. A distant reading approach would entail using software that is able to visualize large data sets of published information or huge amounts of corpora that can reveal patterns between them, otherwise unnoticed by scholars (Drouin, 2014:110). Similarly, I peruse words in Conrad's Marlow texts through software, in order to discover patterns that seem to go unobserved. One drawback of this approach, already mentioned, is the inability of the scholar to read what the algorithms quantify and their inability to place these patterns within a context (Drouin, 2014:111). However, since I use both distant and close reading, I will be able to place these patterns within the context of the texts in chapter three and four, thereby creating more nuanced interpretations of the given works.

To recapitulate: distant reading of the Marlow texts seems to identify crucial lexical components that influence larger themes, such as changes in epistemological motifs in *Chance*, usually found in close reading. In this sense close reading, according to Abrams and Harpham (2012:242) in *A glossary of literary terms*, is "the detailed analysis of the complex interrelationships and *ambiguities* (multiple meanings) of the verbal and figurative components within a work". It is most common when analyzing a text from a qualitative perspective, using subjectively chosen excerpts as evidence to support theories. This method of analysis forms a part of chapter four, where certain theories from Paul Ricœur are used as a framework in order to tease out certain patterns of ontological motifs in the Marlow texts. A number of similarities and differences will be explored to show how and why *Chance* stands out in relation to these motifs. Close reading could be problematic since subjectivity could overlook certain patterns in the text and convoluted interpretations; for this reason I have attempted to link my epistemological analysis to my ontological analysis.

## 2.2 Language and epistemology in Conrad's works

A combination of distant and close reading will be used to explain why *Chance* seems untypical in the Marlow texts as posited by Moser (1957), and later by Davies (1991), Paccaud-Huguet (2016), and others. Accordingly, my research into epistemology will quantifiably support their claim that *Chance* seems dissimilar from the earlier Marlow texts, except that I attribute this to the fact that Conrad uses certain epistemological words and motifs differently in *Chance* from the way he does in the other Marlow texts. Although Thomas Moser is not the only one to discover a change in Conrad's writing, he seems to be the first to have analyzed the reason for Conrad's altered writing course by analyzing the structure of the texts. Moser emphasizes Conrad's fatigue as a reason for his shift in focus, and although this seems true, how is it manifested in his novels? I argue that this takes place in his epistemological and ontological motifs. Peters contends that "*Chance* differs in language, method of tale-telling, and world view and bears little resemblance to the Marlow of Conrad's earlier work" (2014:131). The fact that *Chance* does not resemble the rest of Conrad's earlier works will be further explored in this study.

Paccaud-Huguet (2016:91-92) proposes that a shift in focus might be visible and that *Chance* is more inclined to be "language-focussed"; however, "the focus has shifted from the level of *énonciation* (an act) to that of *énoncé* (a product)". In relation to this act and product, *Chance* examines how language has the power to have an effect on certainties and interfere with those certainties, without being nostalgic because there is a loss of certitudes (Enderwitz, 2014:36). Paccaud-Huguet (2016:92) further comments on Enderwitz's statement that Marlow has "lost his enigmatic aura" and adds that,

[i]f words actually do things, if they acquire a transitory material quality as in the scene of the governess's abuse, they tend to be overinflated with meaning on the level of the novel's narrative discourse, an overinflation that stifles the material *life* of the signifier (Paccaud-Huguet, 2016:92-93).

According to this extract, Marlow's long explications of the effect of words make it appear as though he is more aware of trying to convey what he means with certainty. As a result, this gives the impression that certainty comes at a price: the effect and power of words. The price is Conrad's ability to make one *see*, i.e. to make one understand through Marlow's interpretations. Another aspect to *seeing* (understanding) is the change affecting the manner in which metaphors for knowledge occur in the text. Within the moment of Flora's change in

*being*, the metaphor for knowledge Conrad uses is over-explained and takes the same overinflated path as the words he uses.

### 2.2.1 Notable epistemic markers in the Marlow texts

Various critics such as Hawthorn trace the ambiguity of Conrad's language use in his works. Hawthorn argues that Conrad is extremely conscious of the difference between speech and writing and that this distinction has an effect on consciousness (1979:6). Wasserman (1974:327) also contends that "Conrad finds that words are often unable to cut through to the truthful heart of things, and that language itself may be nothing more than an outer form". Language plays a large role in formulating issues in the context of epistemology, and several critics delve into the issue of language patterns more succinctly by using quantitative and or qualitative methods in order to carry out their research.

Peters suggests that for characters such as Marlow in *Chance* the fictional world is volatile (2014:133). The only reason for this is the nature of chance and its ability to direct everything; however, this novel does not have the overarching impenetrability of the earlier Marlow worlds (2014:133). Instead, there is a partial incomprehensibility that is based on the volatility of chance, and which emphasizes the difficulty which the Marlow from *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* encounters in relating his experience of the world (Peters, 2014:133). This is a qualitative statement which is based on other critics Peters reviewed. Peters suggests that there is a linguistic difference between Conrad's representation of Marlow in *Heart of darkness* and in *Chance*:

In 'Heart of Darkness,' Marlow tries to rely on the adjectives 'implacable' and 'inscrutable' to convey much of his meaning, whereas in *Chance* the adjectives are more muted, the meaning being carried primarily via nouns and verbs. More important, though, in both statements, 'inscrutable' places exist in human experience; but the Marlow of *Chance* feels one can speculate about those dark spaces, while the Marlow of 'Heart of Darkness' believes that is impossible (Peters, 2014:133).

The words Peters list are epistemic words, i.e. words that suggest a level of certainty as he explains with the speculation of dark spaces and believing whether it is possible to discern what is in them. Peters does not quantitatively support his claims. By using frequency data, it might be possible to identify a pattern in Marlow's speculation about dark spaces and the *being* of another character. It would seem as though the pattern of epistemological motifs is distinct in *Chance*; this will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

Returning to the lexical items and their relation to epistemology and ontology, Michael Stubbs (2005:5) argues that a stylistic examination of *Heart of darkness* would benefit from a corpus linguistic analysis by exploring the placement and rate of recurrence of certain phrases and words. Stubbs (2005:6) merges a linguistic and literary approach – various stylistic features can be uncovered by linguists and software can help with their discovery, but they need to be explained by a literary scholar. Furthermore, Stubbs delves into the same ambiguity that surrounds *Heart of darkness* which Leavis and Watt mention in their literary approach to the text. However, he argues that literary critics such as these can only “identify a few content words, such as *fog* and *mist*, *vague* <5> and *indistinct* <4>” (Stubbs, 2005:10) that relate to the text’s ambiguity. These are but a few words that relate to ambiguity, therefore “ignor[ing] the many grammatical words denoting vagueness and uncertainty” within *Heart of darkness* (2005:10). When ordinary language corpora are used for linguistic description, two approaches are distinguished, namely corpus-driven and corpus-based approaches (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001:11). A corpus-driven approach derives theories from the corpus, whereas a corpus-based approach uses a corpus to test or supplement existing theories of language usage (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001:84). This distinction in approaches can also to a lesser extent be applied to studies where the works of a literary author constitutes the “corpus”. If there were assumptions about Conrad’s linguistic choices, and all theses about his style were derived from word frequency lists, the approach would have been data-driven. Such an approach is near impossible for an author who is as well studied as Conrad. Stubbs’s (2005) approach can be seen as corpus-based, because he looks for evidence of certain themes in the text that has already been mentioned by Conrad scholars. The current study will also follow this corpus-based approach.

Thus, I argue that what Stubbs suggests is occurring in *Heart of darkness* also takes place in the other Marlow texts. The grammatical words Stubbs refers to are the modal auxiliary verbs: can, may, must, might, could, should, etc. I therefore incorporate these words into my own wordlist. According to Stubbs (2005:8), key themes are expressed by repeating lexical contrasts, such as darkness and light, restriction and chaos, reality and appearances. Although these themes might be interpreted in various ways<sup>2</sup>, Stubbs (2005:9) “relate[s] them to linguistic features of the text” for example, “Marlow’s unreliable and distorted knowledge”. This is brought about through Conrad’s omission of important information and his word

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<sup>2</sup> For example, post-colonial perspectives might suggest that light is a metaphor for imperialism and feminist perspectives might warrant commentary on the fact that women could be under represented.

choices, such as Kurtz's proclamation of 'horror', with no explanation of what that horror is. Hazy imagery is found throughout the book and words<sup>3</sup> that relate to this kind of imagery average approximately more than one per page in *Heart of darkness* (Stubbs, 2005:9).

This frequency of words relating to uncertainty, as well as of hazy imagery, suggests that Conrad's other novels might contain the same words from this lexical field with a similar frequency in occurrence. If this is not the case, it would also point to some important changes occurring in his epistemology. For example, in *Heart of darkness* alone, Stubbs (2005:10) notes "over 200 occurrences of *something, somebody, sometimes, somewhere, somehow* and *some*, plus around 100 occurrences of *like* (as a preposition)". In turn, Stubbs (2005:12) considers that the "reason why counting individual words is certainly not sufficient is that the interesting content words are not (by definition) evenly distributed across the text, but are clustered at different places. For example, some words (e.g. *Buddha*) occur only in the opening and closing narrative frames ... and are thus used to mark text structure". This indicates that, even though certain words do not occur frequently, a scholarly knowledge of the texts will improve data driven analyses, since the scholar knows what words could be important. In this dissertation it is not entirely possible to compile a wordlist that contains all the ontological lexemes because of time constraints and the scope of this dissertation. So, I rely instead on a qualitative approach for the discussion of ontology in chapter four.

Criticism postulates that Conrad's novels are repetitive in nature, such as F.R. Leavis' theory of 'adjectival insistence' in *The great tradition* (1948), which contends that Conrad profusely uses certain adjectives in *Heart of darkness*. However, Stubbs has established that grievances about repetitiveness are completely unfounded and that this technique is normal for English fiction (Stubbs, 2005:15). He shows that the repetitive nature is groundless by comparing *Heart of darkness* to the type-token ratios of texts such as *Middlemarch*, *Oliver Twist* and *Death in the afternoon* (Stubbs, 2005:15). Conrad is repetitive because the grammatical patterns in *Heart of darkness* contain lengthy sequences of nouns and adjectives (Stubbs, 2005:15). However, Conrad is not being repetitive on purpose; he seems to be trying to find the right way to state the truth. He expands on an idea in order to see how far he can abstract it until the idea disintegrates. This demonstrates that when he comes close to truth in any situation, language takes on ambiguous forms such as metaphors for knowledge and epistemic stance words that denote uncertainty. Wolfreys (1998:160), who works from a

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<sup>3</sup> For the full list, see Stubbs (2005:9).

deconstructionist perspective, starts off by analyzing the title, *Heart of darkness*; what he realizes is that “[t]he degree of undecidability which the title articulates is symptomatic of the text as a whole”. Since the title evokes so much undecidability,

it communicates its failure to communicate except in the most indirect manner, so that it installs undecidability in the very act of communication, a quality reiterated throughout Marlow’s narrative – [which] can be described provisionally as a figure of negative anastomosis (Wolfreys, 1998:160-161).

The premise of the title, i.e. darkness, is communicated throughout the text. The title becomes a metaphor for the whole novel and the manner in which Marlow tries to understand his experiences. The indirect communication of the title is much like the (un)certainly portrayed in Marlow’s narration. The title connects the whole text and becomes a recurring motif which the reader attempts to connect to Marlow’s experiences in the Congo: it is a tool to use in finding the heart of darkness – but nothing can be found. Within *Heart of darkness* there is a longing to connect even though ‘connection’ to something can not be found: for example, narrators want to relate to audiences (Wolfreys, 1998:161). Marlow strives to connect and make connections about Kurtz by putting together the fragments of information he acquires (Wolfreys, 1998:161). The waterways that connect one place and another create an intercommunication between them, which becomes metaphorical for the textual movement of the novel (Wolfreys, 1998:161). This movement and connections also shows how the various narrators try to form a unity – a whole between the different fragments of narrative (Wolfreys, 1998:161). Wolfreys further asserts that:

despite the constant activity, despite the ceaseless work to understand, which we as readers are also engaged in, the problem remains that we all, characters, narrators, readers, language itself, endlessly find ourselves communicating incommunicability and undecidability, butting up against the limits of reading and the limits of writing (1998:161).

Although every person, fictional or real, attempts to communicate, they only communicate uncertainty. It would seem as though Marlow is constantly endeavouring to put *Being* into words but is incapable of doing so. Although this is evident in *Heart of darkness*, Wolfreys does not consider Conrad’s other texts. Which, in turn, seems to create a gap in Wolfreys argument since other Marlow texts such as *Chance* portrays an increase in certainty and being able to communicate incommunicability. This is where my dissertation could supply more information as I consider all of Conrad’s Marlow texts to test this theoretical stance.

Furthermore, Wolfreys (1998:162-163) expands on *Heart of darkness* by focussing on how the heart of darkness does not seem to exist in the text hence, there is not an absolute meaning or centre within it, so that no kind of reading can locate it. In addition, there is tension between binaries such as “reader and narrator, presence and absence, sound and silence, outside and inside” (Wolfreys, 1998:162-163). Wolfreys (1998:163) indicates that this tension occurs on “the level of narration, at the level of form, and, especially at the level of phonetic and scripted prefix, through a range of reiterated marks (none of which signify beyond themselves but only to each other, as signifiers of signifiers, traces of traces) and reiterated erasures and negations of possible, unequivocal meaning”. The symbolic nature that looms in conversations increases to a point where there is supposed to be one final image, symbol or proclamation, but this never comes. It is constantly deferred; even Kurtz’s words “the horror, the horror” (HoD:87-88) suggest that there is one more image or symbol that we as readers and Marlow never come to experience or see. However, the silence after such an epiphany suggests that there is some form of truth that is not being conveyed by Marlow’s voice; rather, it is his silence that imbues the moment with importance.

In order to demonstrate how this deferral of meaning and truth occurs, Wolfreys pays extremely close attention to prefixes such as “*in-*, *im-*, and *un-*” because they lexically indicate how words make the “search for the heart impossible, the location of meaning undecidable” and “a source or origin, unfathomable” (1998:163). It is evident that he focuses on the unfathomable and uncertain words and is not actively attempting to find instances of certainty in *Heart of darkness*.

A more comprehensive wordlist is compiled by Humphries (1994: 120-121) in which three categories can be discerned: *the dreamlike* (words such as ‘dream’, ‘unreal’ and ‘delusion’), *the enigmatic* (words such as ‘incomprehensible’ and ‘indefinable’) and *the supernatural* (words such as ‘demon’ and ‘magic’). These words are used, according to Humphries (1994:120-121), to “describe Marlow and Kurtz, the Manager, the Accountant, the Harlequin and the whites in general, as well as the dying natives and the cannibals, the Intended, and the women in Europe, the physical surroundings, and states of mind”. Humphries (1994:121) describes Marlow’s vocabulary as a “condensation of superstitions that live on”, except that they are more real than the people, Marlow does his best to situate himself in this new context and experiences in his own terms; this is portrayed in his language use, which comes across as highly uncertain.

A corpus stylistic approach by Lorenzo Mastropiero (2018:1) explores *Heart of darkness* and four Italian translations of the novel. He argues that “literary themes are related to the way the fictional world is linguistically constructed” and that this allows him to “study how textual patterns contribute to the text’s themes” (Mastropiero, 2018:2). A similar methodology will be followed in this dissertation to compare the four Marlow texts, using stylistic techniques to examine epistemological motifs. This kind of comparison is a feature of stylistics, as Halliday also contends throughout his article: ‘Linguistic function and literary style: An enquiry into the language of William Golding’s *The inheritors*’ (1971). Upon analyzing certain linguistic elements, an underlying epistemological structure becomes visible when one probes the Marlow texts.

### **2.2.2 Delayed decoding**

Ian Watt’s *Conrad in the nineteenth century* (1979) offers various thematic interpretations by closely reading Conrad’s novels, with themes ranging from psychology to narrative theory, as well as his addition of “delayed decoding” (Watt, 1979:270-271) which explains how knowledge evolves as more information becomes clearer to the interpreter. For example, someone looking at a square might only see it as a flat two-dimensional surface at first glance, but as s/he moves, more of the square becomes visible and s/he realizes it is in fact a three-dimensional square. In this way, more information changes the perspective of the person looking at the square.

According to Cedric Watts’ *The deceptive text: an introduction to covert plots* (1984), there are three stages in the progression of delayed decoding: the first stage is the “impinging sense-data, undeciphered (‘curious, irregular sounds of faint tapping on the deck’); second stage: the first, incomplete or inaccurate decoding (here, a Poltergeist or alien spirit at work – ‘mysterious devilry’); third stage: eventual full or accurate decoding – ‘Raindrops’” (Watts, 1984:44). This is a qualitative method of explaining how the character interprets sensory data in degrees of understanding – moving from “tapping on the deck” to “raindrops”. It demonstrates that there are levels of understanding the world, and that a character can gain certainty about his/her physical surroundings. The character becomes aware of experiences in various instances, seemingly unrelated, but they form a whole eventually.

Similarly, the narrative can be regarded as directly related to delayed decoding, since the reader gains access to the narrative in terms of moments and various experiences, such as

reading a paragraph while remembering what happened in the previous paragraph. Knowledge, therefore, is related to delayed decoding since knowledge is generated through the latter, as I understand Watts. Knowledge is also portrayed in the narrative structure since it is layered and could alter as new parts of the whole become apparent. Such knowledge builds up to a point where one can identify certain epistemological elements within the narrative.

Skilleås (1992:79) supports this notion when he argues that: “[d]elayed decoding’ is a feature of Marlow’s narrative which is crucial for our understanding of Marlow and the way he tells the story. This narrative impressionism accentuates the lack of forged links between his past experiences and the new ones, and hence between his language and the new reality”. For example, when Marlow nears the shore in *Heart of darkness*, he and the crew are attacked by cannibals but the manner in which Conrad describes this fact makes it seem as though ordinary sticks are falling on the boat: “Sticks, little sticks, were flying about – thick: they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house”; then Marlow realizes “Arrows, by Jove! We were being shot at!” (HoD:55). This process depicts that it takes time for Marlow to realize what the sticks are. This relates to Conrad’s...

attempts to ‘appeal to the senses’, which are close to the formalist notion of defamiliarization, Conrad repeatedly allies the processes of reading with the processes of perception – making the manner in which objects are apprehended central to his literary endeavour (Wake, 2007:101)

Only when Marlow gains more information does he realize what he is seeing: that is, the objects do not change, his *understanding* of them does. In other words, it takes Marlow longer to understand the subject that he is approaching. The time it takes him to grasp what he is seeing on the shore is comparatively short in relation to his effort to comprehend Kurtz.

But, something changes when Marlow tries to understand another character. Watt (1979:270-304) emphasizes Conrad’s representation of Marlow’s epistemological concerns in *Lord Jim* by showing how Marlow analyses the bits and pieces of narrative he receives from a character, which in turn, generates more knowledge about that character. Delayed decoding as a technique not only manifests itself in Conrad’s intensely eloquent passages, but also in the dislocated sequence of narratives and the narrative strategy of the whole novel (Watts, 1984:45). For example, *Heart of darkness* forces the reader to interpret Marlow’s narrative in

which he is trying to understand and interpret the meaning of his journey to the Congo (Watts, 1984:45). In effect, delayed decoding, and ostensibly improving knowledge, becomes a larger epistemological motif in Conrad's Marlow texts than expected. Marlow's attempt to understand Kurtz constitutes a larger delay in decoding during the course of events in the text and is ultimately denied in the end when Marlow does not cross the threshold that Kurtz traverses in death:

True, he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all wisdom, and all truth and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the Invisible (HoD:88).

In terms of understanding Kurtz, Marlow does not fully decode Kurtz as a *being*; for example, his decoding is denied because some things cannot be known by a character (*being*) such as Marlow. It seems as though decoding relies on Marlow's willingness to understand and readiness to cross the threshold as Kurtz does.

Another example of a different application of delayed decoding exists in *Lord Jim*, when Jim describes his jump from the ship. The time it takes to reach the bottom of the life boat goes by in mere seconds. This is not enough time to fathom, understand or process how much change he undergoes within those few seconds: "'I had jumped... ' He checked himself, averted his gaze .... 'It seems,' he added'" (LJ:86). The epistemic stance word 'seems' suggests the uncertainty of his experience since he is unable to understand what has happened to him. He experiences an epistemological change within a brief period, which is why he is unable to decode the reason why he jumps and does not want to face the truth of what he has done. This playing with understanding, time and distance is evident throughout Conrad's Marlow texts.

Comparatively speaking, it is as though Jim experiences Marlow's journey into the heart of darkness and experiences the same realization within the few seconds it takes to jump into the lifeboat. Marlow as narrator in *Lord Jim* does his best to understand the process and change that takes place within the period of Jim's jump, almost as if he is trying to understand his journey in *Heart of darkness*. The reader becomes aware of these delays through the epistemic stance words that manifest within or close to these moments of delay.

Another form of delayed decoding seems most prominent, according to Lucas (1992:118), in the way in which:

many of Conrad's works employ the mode of Internal Frame and Internal Embedded narration: the story opens with an internal narrator, who establishes the circumstances in which another narrator tells the story. We have an early move in this direction in 'Karain,' but Conrad fully adopts this mode in 'Youth' and *Heart of Darkness*, and uses it again frequently – in ... the novel *Chance*.

This creates distance between the narrative frameworks – between character, narrator, listener, frame narrator and reader. This framing effect makes it appear as though there is some hidden ultimate truth, but Conrad renders the fact that he is hiding something without being honest about what this is. The reader knows this, but the listeners cannot know because they do not have all the information:

Readers of *Chance* do not experience the same degree of relativity. Instead, while they receive different pieces of the puzzle from different narrators, these various perspectives are subservient to more pragmatic narrative concerns. In other words, Marlow does not imply that Flora's perspective influences what she tells him nor that Powell's perspective influences what he tells him. Rather, the various narrators primarily provide different pieces of information in order to justify how Marlow knows that he knows; they supply various parts of the story so that Marlow can complete the puzzle and present a fully fleshed account (Peters, 2014:138-139).

Clearly, Marlow is uninfluenced by other narrators in *Chance*, only existing to portray how he knows what he does. In effect, this creates a more complete story than *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. According to Anne Enderwitz (2014:48), Flora's final empowerment in *Chance* manifests itself in the way she discards the passivity and submissiveness that accompany being a victim. Paccaud-Huguet (2016:87) considers that this can be regarded as a symptom that "finds an outlet in the character development: it is diegetically resolved, whereas in the early Marlow narratives the affective intensities remain and insist, addressed as they are to an invisible partner which is no other than the reader". This resolved empowerment of Flora, and the certainty that accompanies it, is one reason why epistemological motifs portray more certainty as regards other characters in *Chance* than in the earlier Marlow texts. This is important to note, since, *Chance* was roughly contemporary with the rest of these texts.

Thus, what is lacking in *Chance* is *Lord Jim*'s uncertainty about characters, events, knowledge and the absence of transcendent knowledge and values (Peters, 2014:139). I

would argue that the concepts Peters lists correlate with certain epistemological and ontological motifs.

### 2.3 Conceptual metaphor

Conceptual metaphor directly relates to Marlow in the texts since he uses metaphors to describe certain states and actions of other characters. Lakoff and Johnson (2008:102) “emphasize the pre-linguistic experience” and how it is used to metaphorize language to attribute certain characteristics to phenomena in our world. Image schemata depict how certain meanings emerge through “embodiment, through our experience of certain actions, systemic processes, states within our bodies, often accompanied by a directional preposition (‘zoning out,’ ‘being laid back’)” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008:102). To put this differently, the experience of something, and how it is metaphorized in language, is a method of describing certain prelinguistic experiences. Representations of images portray how certain meanings can become prevalent through actions and our *being-in-the-world*.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:103) “metaphors, or analogies, are in this case not merely convenient economies for expressing our knowledge; rather they *are* our knowledge and understanding of the particular phenomenon in question”. Since metaphors constitute our knowledge, they can be called conceptual metaphors. These metaphors “consist of a target domain (that which is being discussed; equivalent to the tenor in traditional approaches) and a source domain (the ‘source’ of the metaphor, similar to the vehicle)” (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010:139). Furthermore, these “conceptual metaphors are cognitive structures that underpin our metaphorical use of language since cognitive metaphor theory makes clear the connection between language and thought” (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010:139). If metaphors *are* knowledge, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980:103) claim, then the metaphors in the texts could contain a small element of meaning and truth – metaphors portray distorted epistemological certainty, but they do not depict complete epistemological certainty. In terms of Conrad’s Marlow texts, this phenomenon becomes extremely important in the way that Marlow seems to uncover knowledge from the use of metaphors. For example, the many metaphors in the texts convey the different means for understanding the epistemological and ontological changes that characters undergo, which creates a sense of certainty and, albeit not complete, an understanding of them.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:116) are primarily concerned with the manner in which people can understand experiences through metaphors and how language can provide “data that can lead to general principles of understanding”. Conceptual metaphors are also prevalent in Conrad’s Marlow texts, e.g. ‘JOURNEY’ = ‘UNDERSTANDING’ and ‘VISIBLE’ = ‘KNOWN’/‘KNOWABLE’. The core of a metaphor is being able to understand and experience something in terms of something else (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:5); a technique for which Conrad is famous in his earlier novels. In *Chance* it appears as though Conrad is using metaphors in another fashion to see if this would yield truth more fully. However, this approach seems to superimpose meaning and certainty onto the text. In stark contrast to the certainty in *Chance*, while expounding *Heart of darkness*, Paccaud-Huguet (2016:93) argues that “the textual voice’s effect is potentially disruptive and traumatic in that it produces blank spots in understanding”. This notion of traumatic blank spots in understanding is also present in *Youth* and *Lord Jim*. One significant connotation of the word ‘spot’ in *Chance* stems from its several metaphorical meanings:

[t]he recurrence of the eminently ambiguous word ‘spot’ is itself not an accident since it designates a physical or moral stain, a point in space where time and thought come to rest. In other words, the affective dimension is located not in the story but in the narrative speech act which conveys the mystery beyond understanding. Such perlocutionary effects are nowhere to be found in *Chance* because of the primacy given to meaning and general statements; to the Imaginary, rather than the material dimension of the written word (Paccaud-Huguet, 2016: 95).

The dark core and ‘spot’ become perlocutionarily effective because they influence how the narrative is structured. Within *Chance*, there does not seem to be this uncertainty such as the mystery beyond understanding, which makes the novel’s affective force less than in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*.

Phelan (2008:57) also notices that in terms of *Lord Jim*, it is within this affective realm that there is a gap between the reader’s conclusions and Marlow’s since the reader perceives Marlow and Jim in an overarching system that Conrad creates. Jim’s life, or *being*, I contend, is not understandable to Marlow or to the reader of the text, yet it evokes emotion (Phelan, 2008:57). According to Phelan (2008:57): “[t]he affective power of the ending keeps us, like Marlow, fascinated by Jim, but also, I submit, even more tempted than Marlow to solve the riddle of Jim’s character”. Benson (1991:138) concurs, and claims that “for Conrad, a description, and by implication an explanation, of physical reality is fundamental to a faithful

account of human moral and spiritual experience". If a description of (external) physical reality is a faithful retelling of human experience, then the metaphors that proliferate in the texts are clearly descriptive of (internal) human experiences. These descriptions of external phenomena and internal experiences clearly comprise the connections between metaphors, language, epistemological motifs and ontology, as will be explored in the subsequent chapters.

While, to some extent, Marlow gains certainty about some characters, there seem to be many motifs which emphasise uncertainty in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*, although not in *Chance*. According to Moser, in Conrad's "early period, we discovered the significance for Conrad of test and betrayal. In the later period, these moral interests yield to an acceptance of chance as the force controlling human action" (1957:133). In effect, this acceptance of chance as the main factor controlling Conrad's characters is another reason why Conrad's novel *Chance* appears to display more certainty in its description of characters. Following this logic, one might enquire: why does Marlow never appear to completely understand a character in the earlier Marlow texts, yet he seems to understand Flora in *Chance*? In an attempt to answer this question and to identify the connection between epistemology and ontology I use Paul Ricœur's *The rule of metaphor* (1977) and *Time and narrative* (1984) heuristically.

A more philosophical outlook on metaphor is Paul Ricœur's view of metaphor in *Time and narrative*. He proposes that metaphor can be alive "as long as we can perceive, through the new semantic pertinence – and so to speak of its denseness – the resistance of the words in their ordinary use and therefore their incompatibility at the level of a literal interpretation of the sentence" (1984:ix). In other words, metaphor can only exist when one can see how the words are resistant to ordinary interpretation and therefore discordant when one tries to interpret them literally.

However, when a dislocation in the meaning of words occurs in a metaphor, this does not affect the whole metaphor (Ricœur, 1984:ix). Its function is to replace the literal interpretation of a sentence in order to maintain the relation between the new and odd characteristics of the metaphor (Ricœur, 1984:ix). This poses an epistemological problem because metaphor and narrative exist out of words that people use in order to explain their preunderstanding (Ricœur, 1984:x).

Furthermore, Ricœur's (1977:5) *The rule of metaphor* describes metaphor as a "rhetorical process" that has the power to "redescribe reality" by way of discourse. Ricœur (1977:6) places metaphor in the "copula of the verb to be" and not in the name, sentence or discourse. The metaphor for 'is' simultaneously signifies 'is not' and 'is like'; therefore metaphorical truth does open itself for our use but only tentatively (Ricœur, 1977:6). Words therefore carry the potential to affect their audience in numerous ways since meaning can be portrayed in ambiguous terms such as metaphors.

## 2.4 Ontology

### 2.4.1 Overview

In *Conrad and language* (2016) various critics analyse Conrad's language use: ranging from examining the nautical aspects, (10) terrorism (28), and idealism (44) to other features. An important aspect is discussed by Yael Levin in *Conrad and language*, namely Conrad's language and how it relates to subjectivity (2016:64). His study traces the appearance of an original modernist subject (character) and the way in which its ontological arrangements dictate that plot and event be reconsidered (2016:64). Ricœur's *Time and narrative* formulates this closer look at plot and how it influences ontological elements. Therefore, this study relies heuristically on ontological theories in order to describe how Marlow 'reads' characters in the Marlow texts. This process is important because it indicates that there might be a link between epistemology and ontology. Some theories in ontology study philosophical notions of what exists in the world and relate these to our own *being*. This presupposes that there are *beings* in the world as objects and subjects that can be understood by a *being*. To simplify, Marlow is a *being* who tries to understand other *beings*, for example he attempts to comprehend the *being* of objects such as a ball on a spear and characters as *beings* with a self. Ontology as a concept dates back several centuries, originating from Aristotle,

who in Book Four of his *Metaphysics* introduced the idea of a 'science of being *qua* being', or of being as such. Yet Aristotle did not use (a Greek counterpart of) the word 'ontology' to name such a science, although the term comes from *ón*, the present participle of *eînai*, the Greek verb for 'to be' (Berto and Plebani, 2015:1).

This definition focuses on how a *being* can interpret *being* as such, as well as on the science of *being*. My focus in this regard is placed on how an individual *being* (Marlow) experiences

the world, interprets it and how it changes his *being*. His own *being* is inquiring into the world but in so doing he is also inquiring into larger elements of ontology such as the *being* of other characters. To understand these concepts fully, I depend on Ricœur's theories of *being-in-the-world* and *Being* in order to situate the reader within this philosophical discussion. Ricœur relies on Heidegger's *Being and time* (1962) to formulate his own conception of a '*being-in-the-world*' (Ricœur, 1984:61).

According to Ricœur (1984:60-61), "*Dasein* is the 'place' where the being that we are is constituted through its capacity of posing the question of Being or the meaning of Being". *Dasein* becomes, to some extent, a place where the *being-in-the-world* can question what *Being* is, i.e. the questioning of existence. It would seem from this that when a *being* explores anything within its world it is inadvertently also busy inquiring into *Being*.

This dissertation uses '*being*' in relation to Paul Ricœur's notion of a *being-in-the-world* because this term encapsulates the way in which Marlow interacts with his fictional world. It is important to understand how this *being-in-the-world* (Marlow) 'reads' his world in order to grasp in what way there are differences in terms of this 'reading' in Conrad's Marlow texts. I perceive similarities between Marlow's narration of *Youth*, *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance* and the manner in which Paul Ricœur describes how a *being-in-the-world* interprets experiences through threefold mimesis.

Ricœur's work in *Time and narrative* concentrates on Aristotle's notion of Mimesis, i.e. "Imitation; spec. the representation or imitation of the real world in... literature" (*OED*, 2019a). However, he adds to this component several distinctions. By using what he names Mimesis<sub>1</sub>, Mimesis<sub>2</sub> and Mimesis<sub>3</sub> he creates the idea of a Surplus of *Being*. According to Timo Helenius (2012:149): "While developing the idea of organization of events as a configuring activity, Ricœur distances himself from the Aristotelian understanding of mimesis, which is limited to the paradigm of tragedy. For Ricœur, configuration/*mimesis*<sub>2</sub> mediates between prefiguration/*mimesis*<sub>1</sub> (the presupposed structural, symbolic, and temporal character of the world of action) and refiguration/*mimesis*<sub>3</sub> (the appropriation of the text in the world of the reader)". Throughout this dissertation I, like Helenius, use prefiguration instead of *mimesis*<sub>1</sub>, configuration instead of *mimesis*<sub>2</sub>, and refiguration in the place of *mimesis*<sub>3</sub> to describe threefold mimesis or how a *being* with a self is in the world. Therefore, a broad discussion of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration is called for because there is a direct link between ontologically *being* in the world and interpreting it (epistemology).

## 2.4.2 Prefiguration

Ontologically speaking, Marlow is always already in the position of prefiguration and refiguration when he starts to narrate his story; in essence he is already within the plot. In other words, he has already gone to the Congo with prefigured life experience and knowledge, configured his experiences and is now narrating this configuration to listeners from a refigured position. Evidently, this process occurs in all the Marlow texts, except that I observe a clear distinction between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts in regard to prefiguration, configuration and refiguration; I elaborate on this in chapter four.

Prefiguration in *Time and narrative* relies on the conception that “the composition of the plot is grounded in a pre-understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character” (Ricoeur, 1984:54). If one relates this to the experience of an individual, then the *being-in-the-world* knows its own *being* through a pre-understanding of its experience of the world and how it functions. The knowledge (pre-understanding) with which the *being* experiences the world is significant, because it relates everything it experiences to what s/he already knows as part of his/her *being*. It navigates the world with the structures and symbolic resources accumulated over time and relates them to his/her immediate experience as a *being*.

Furthermore, there is a move from “the primacy of knowledge of objects and to uncover the structure of *being-in-the-world* that is more fundamental than any relation of a subject to an object” (Ricoeur, 1984:61). This indicates that while the certainty about objects is important, the manner in which a *being-in-the-world's* preunderstanding is structured is still more significant. In relation to Joseph Conrad's works, Marlow relies on prefiguration to recount his narratives. He knows what happens, the structure of the story and the characteristics of the world. Accordingly, he possesses knowledge about the temporal characteristics of the narrative.

Prefiguration is the knowledge that a *being-in-the-world* commands at any specific moment; it seems to be the point of departure from which one interprets the world. For example, Marlow's prefiguration is the knowledge he already possesses about the narrative he is relaying. He becomes more certain about the world which he recounts and, in this way, moves to configuration.

### 2.4.3 Configuration

Configuration is a concept that Ricœur (1984:67) explains in the following manner: “the configurational arrangement transforms the succession of events into one meaningful whole”. Configuration, according to Ricœur (1984:65), acts in the position of an intermediary, “between what precedes fiction and what follows it”. For example, Marlow (as a *being-in-the-world*) configures the world. He endeavours to understand the world and certain things, such as objects and characters, in it. However, by doing so he is unknowingly trying to understand *Being*. This *being* attempting to understand the world and *Being* also has a mediating function “which allows it to bring about ... a mediation of a larger amplitude between the preunderstanding and ... the postunderstanding of the order of action and its temporal features” (Ricœur, 1984:65). To express this differently, configuring is that which occurs between preunderstanding and postunderstanding; in other words, it is the direct experience of the *being-in-the-world*.

In terms of Marlow’s position in the texts, he describes his own ‘reading’ of a character by way of his involvement in the text and the way he experiences the various narratives of characters. According to Ricœur (1984:65), there is a “mediation between the individual events or incidents and a story taken as a whole. In this respect, we may say equivalently that it draws a meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents”. In effect, Conrad represents through Marlow the way in which Marlow might interpret the world. Marlow ‘reads’ characters in the world and interprets the events that take place.

This process of reading the world as a text represents Marlow’s experience of the world, both the preunderstanding thereof and postunderstanding of the world as he interprets it. In Ricœur’s (1984:66) words: “The configurational act consists of ‘grasping together’ the detailed actions or what I have called the story’s incidents. It draws from this manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole”. Every experience of the *being-in-the-world* draws from a manifold of events to create a temporal whole which also describes how a *being* understands his/her world.

In effect, according to Ricœur (1984:x), “[u]nderstanding... is grasping the operation that unifies into one whole and complete action the miscellany constituted by the circumstances, ends and means, initiatives and interactions, the reversals of fortune and all the unintended consequences issuing from human actions”. This, in terms of narrative, can be applied to a

*being-in-the-world* as s/he configures the world and describes how s/he may be able to unify various experiences into a temporal whole. It mediates by way of experience, to incorporate all the discordant elements of human experience into *being*.

Configuration mediates in another fashion as well: “the act of emplotment combines in variable proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other not” (Ricœur, 1984:66). For example, as Marlow interprets a narrative, he chronologically places the narrative in relation to what he already knows. But his narrative is also not linear since he is still configuring the world in order to create a temporal whole. Ricœur explains:

To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfilment in the ‘conclusion’ of the story. The conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premise. It gives the story an ‘end point,’ which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion (1984:66-67).

Configuring arranges and transforms the occurrence of events into a whole that is meaningful and followable (Ricœur, 1984:67). Therefore, configuration performs an “integrating and a mediating function” (Helenius, 2012:149). It integrates by way of showing how one experiences discordant events and mediates them by way of creating a concordant narrative after experiencing the events. Ricœur suggests that ‘concordance’ is not forced upon the discordant experiences of *being*; rather, it is ‘discordance’ that changes the concordance from within (Ricœur, 1984:73). This engenders a change of temporal experience which sustains a new kind of altered temporal experience (Ricœur, 1984:73).

For instance, Marlow represents this change in temporal experience which *Lord Jim* best portrays. Marlow appears to hold a concordant view of his *being* but, as he experiences other narratives of characters in a discordant manner, this alters his temporal experience of the world. In effect he is constantly configuring his concordant *being* as he experiences discordant situations. This forms a circle of interpretation, but Ricœur (1984:73) seems to advocate for a healthy circle (the ability to refigure experiences) since the dialectic of discordance and concordance constitutes an integral aspect of temporal experience.

Listeners in any Marlow text configure Marlow’s experiences from their own prefigured life experiences and knowledge. They are configuring new experiences, such as seeing and listening to his narrative, which changes their *being*. They try to refigure his narrative into a

new prefigured position from which they can interpret the world again. This process seems to impart form to Marlow's narrative and indicates how they are actively creating what Ricœur would call configuration. Thereby, the listeners create a narrative and meaningful whole from the succession of events in Marlow's narrative. Only when he is done retelling his narrative does the listener become able to refigure the whole narration into a new prefigured point from which to configure new experiences. In effect, this process creates a hermeneutical loop of interpretation and demonstrates how refiguration creates a new point of understanding. A hermeneutical loop of interpretation and reinterpretation, it would seem, portrays how interpretation can change a character's *being* and how a character's ontology might change.

#### **2.4.4 Refiguration**

Refiguration refers to the situation where “the world of the text” joins “the world of the hearer or reader”; the transition from configuration to refiguration occurs during “[t]he act of reading” (Ricœur, 1984:77). Refiguration describes how the *being-in-the-world* reconfigures his/her *being* after configuring the world. In effect the *being* also has a new preconfiguring point from which s/he configures the world. This hermeneutic circle represents how the *being-in-the-world* interprets the world and thereby also creates a shift within its own *being*. Since this seems to be possible through language, it produces an ontology of language since “we are in the world and are affected by situations, we try to orient ourselves in them by means of understanding; we also have something to say, an experience to bring to language and to share” (78). In this way, a *being-in-the-world* is able to mediate his/her world through language and bring his/her experiences into the world by speaking and, making someone understand their experiences of it.

According to Helenius (2012:150): “The language of human experience... presupposes the transference of meaning beyond itself”. In terms of Ricœur (1984:78), this means that the extralinguistic aspect of language that originates from the experience of “being in the world” is at the heart of “being *in* being in order to bear *on* being”. Thus, language says something about something, but it always says something about *being* (Helenius, 2012:150). “Being-in-the-world according to narrativity is a being-in-the-world already marked by the linguistic [*langagière*] practice leading back to preunderstanding” or prefiguration (Ricœur, 1984:81). It seems as though Ricœur suggests that a *being-in-the-world* is a textual *being* since it can

only move and experience the world in terms of language. Threefold mimesis describes this process through language; thereby language says something about *being*.

#### 2.4.5 Threefold mimesis

To situate threefold mimesis more practically, in chapter four I analyze the way in which Marlow is only able to relate this ontological change in *being* through language. It would appear as though metaphors comprise one of the main techniques used in Conrad's Marlow texts to portray a change in the *being-in-the-world*. In other words, metaphors have the ability to describe threefold mimesis: prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

If metaphor belongs to an heuristic of thought, could we not imagine that the process that disturbs and displaces a certain logical order, a certain conceptual hierarchy, a certain classification scheme, is the same as that from which all classification proceeds? Certainly, the only functioning of language we are aware of operates within an already constituted order; metaphor does not produce a new order except by creating rifts in an old order (Ricoeur, 1977:24)

The means by which metaphor functions seems to be very similar to the manner in which a *being* is in the world. The hermeneutic circle of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration operates in the same fashion as metaphors. Metaphors can only exist in language, 'an already constituted order' (prefiguration); the metaphor creates rifts in the old order (configuration) to create a new one (refiguration), thereby starting the whole process again.

This is an emphasis on the process of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration because it portrays the manner in which Marlow is a *being-in-the-world*. This ongoing process is present in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* but less so in *Chance*. The problem arises at the refiguration of Marlow in *Chance*. No major change seems to be brought about in his ontology: no change in his *being-in-the-world*.

For example, in *Youth*, Marlow is portrayed as a disgruntled seaman who drinks a great deal and has pessimistic views of youth. In *Heart of darkness*, Marlow is described as a meditative Buddha without a flower in his hand, while the Marlow in *Lord Jim* is still unable to understand Jim: "He is gone, inscrutable at heart" (LJ:318). Marlow's insistence on recounting Jim's narrative also alludes to the fact that Jim's story completely changes the way Jim is a *being-in-the-world*.

It is clear that Marlow refigures his own *being* after he configures it through immediate experiences. However, the manner in which Marlow refigures the experiences in *Chance* stands in stark contrast to the rest of the Marlow texts. Marlow is trying to inquire about the Fynes on a chance encounter. He even admits in the last pages of the novel that “for all my belief in Chance I am not exactly a pagan ....” (C:330). This suggests that even though chance is the driving force behind the actions of characters in the novel, it is not enough to refigure Marlow’s *being-in-the-world* and facilitate a new preunderstanding of the world. This is directly antithetical to the other novels, since they convey the utter refiguring of his *being* when he understands something new about his world.

The way in which Marlow uses metaphors to ‘redescribe’ reality and characters appears very similar to Ricœur’s approach to metaphorical truth: “that ‘seeing-as’, which sums up the power of metaphor, could be the revealer of a ‘being-as’ on the deepest ontological level” as he states in *Time and narrative* (Ricœur, 1984:xi). The metaphorical becomes the link between ‘seeing’ (epistemology) and ‘being’ (ontology). According to Peters (1996:65) in his thesis on *Joseph Conrad and the epistemology of impressionism*, there is a link in Conrad’s texts between what is perceived and the perceiver when any character obtains knowledge about human subjects. For example:

Marlow perceives Jim as he does any other object with extension and occupying space, but he also perceives Jim’s subjectivity through his own eyes and through those of other observers. Tamb’ Itam, Gentleman Brown, Stein, Jewel, Cornelius, Doramin, and others all narrate their perceptual experience of Jim. In addition, Jim narrates his own perception of himself. Marlow then uses these various sources of information in an attempt to gain a clear picture of Jim. Throughout the novel, Marlow also presents his own perceptions of Jim, which he then interprets in an attempt to obtain knowledge of Jim as a human subject (Peters, 1996:67-68).

During his perception of objects Marlow moves from an initially incomprehensible object to a comprehensible one, that is, for example, from a cane to a spear. In perceiving Jim, though, Marlow seems to proceed in the opposite direction. He begins with an apparently perfectly comprehensible object but ends with one that is not (Peters, 1996:68). An instance could be that the image of Jim in Marlow’s head is more concrete and real than Jim in real life.

Peters describes cultural experience as the mediation between what Marlow sees and experiences, which constantly shifts since Jim does not fit any cultural experience Marlow knows (Peters, 1996:69). However, after incorporating Ricœur’s threefold mimesis, it would

appear as though this process is more than just cultural mediation. Marlow's understanding alters his ontology. As a *being*, Marlow knows himself and tries to fit Jim into that congruent ontology, but since Jim does not fit, Marlow constantly tries to understand Jim through other sources, which inform his ontology. Upon obtaining each new piece of information, Marlow's *being* alters and he is able to understand and gain more certainty as regards his information or experiences than previously.

## **2.5 Concluding remarks**

To reiterate, this chapter investigated epistemology and its emphasis upon the importance of gaining knowledge. From this, it became possible to integrate quantitative aspects such as corpus linguistics in order to discern where moments of insight occur in the Marlow texts. It is essential to investigate theories within epistemology and ontology both qualitatively and quantitatively because this allows for a more objective study of Conrad's writing style that indicates there could be epistemological motif differences between them. It became clear that epistemological notions relate to metaphors which in turn, makes it possible to identify a link between ontology and epistemology. Subsequently, I gave an overview of the ontological aspects of this dissertation by considering ontological studies in Conradian studies and suggesting where this study might contribute to this field.

Next, I motivated my reason for using Paul Ricœur's theory of threefold mimesis and discussed this theory at length. Prefiguration, configuration and refiguration were then deliberated on to indicate how these could be used heuristically to analyse Conrad's Marlow texts in chapter four. Subsequently, there was a discussion of how this theoretical aspect contributes to the proving of a link between epistemology and ontology, and in which aspects there is an ontological contrast between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts. All these theoretical aspects are essential since they help answer why there is an epistemological and ontological variation in *Chance* in comparison to the other Marlow texts. Thus, a broad overview has thus far sufficed in explaining certain concepts and will now be implemented by means of analysis in the next chapters.

## CHAPTER 3 REPRESENTATIONS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL MOTIFS IN CONRAD'S MARLOW TEXTS

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I established that certainty as an epistemological notion is a central element in Conrad's Marlow texts. This chapter implements a corpus stylistic method as set out in the previous chapter and analyzes the lemmas and the lexical items that convey epistemological (un)certainty in the four Marlow texts as compared to the non-Marlow novels. This quantitative analysis aims to establish whether there is a difference in the epistemic markers amongst the Marlow texts and between each Marlow text and the non-Marlow novels. Based on these quantitative findings, the possibility that certain epistemic words are related to a gradual change in Conrad's style will be explored in the context of the conceptualization of the Marlow texts as well as the 'decline in Conrad's writing' in *Chance* posited by Moser in *Achievement and decline* (1957). I do not suggest that changes in epistemic markers are the reason for Conrad's decline, it does however seem to explain why *Chance* is different from the other Marlow texts.

Thereafter I analyse and compare four lemmas that convey epistemic (un)certainty which previous scholars have discussed in terms of the four Marlow texts: the verb lemmas *KNOW*, *THINK* and *UNDERSTAND*, the noun *TRUTH* and words that are morphologically related to them. The frequencies of these words will be compared statistically to determine whether there are significant differences between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts with regard to lexical marking of epistemic stance.

Furthermore, I add broader qualitative interpretations to tease out certain differences and similarities within Conrad's representation of these lemmas that convey (un)certainty. This qualitative analysis will elucidate the difference between the epistemological motifs in *Chance* and the non-Marlow texts.

### 3.2 Distant reading of epistemicity: Frequency comparisons

#### 3.2.1 Lexical markers of epistemic stance

The frequency list (Annexure A) of epistemic stance words in the four Marlow novels is based on my own close reading of the Marlow texts, Biber *et al's* reference grammar,

*Longman grammar of spoken and written English* (2002), and existing secondary literature. I also scrutinized the wordlists of the novels generated by Wordsmith 6.0 for words that convey epistemic meanings which may have been missed by the aforementioned three identification methods. Words that convey epistemic stance include verbs (*believe, know*), nouns (*belief, fact*), adjectives (*certain, impossible*), adverbs (*perhaps, possibly*), and modal auxiliary verbs (*could, might, may*). Their overall frequencies were used without reference to word classes. A list of over four hundred words with epistemic meanings was compiled and tagged. The frequencies for each of these words in each of the four Marlow texts are also contained in this list. For some of these words, the frequencies cannot be drawn from the automatically generated wordlist, since they potentially also convey meanings that are not related to epistemology. For these words, concordances had to be generated and concordance lines had to be classified manually to separate the epistemic markers from the other uses of the word. For example, the word *can* occurs with several meanings; however, some of these uses do not convey epistemic meaning, such as the noun *can* which denotes a type of container. As a modal auxiliary verb, the word *can* denotes either ‘ability’ or ‘possibility’ (Biber *et al*, 2002:184). The former conveys deontic meaning, that expresses ‘ability’, whereas only the latter conveys epistemic meaning.

Differences in frequency of epistemic words between two texts can be tested statistically to see if these differences are significant. A log-likelihood test compares two ratios (frequency of word out of total words in text) to one another. If the log-likelihood number is large, then there is a smaller chance that the two ratios (books) are similar to each other and the p-value will be extremely small (Corpora, 2019). This indicates that the two texts differ significantly from each other in terms of the frequency of a specific word. If the log-likelihood number is small (and the p-value above 0.01) any word frequency difference is insignificant, establishing that the two texts are similar regarding lexical frequency (UCREL, 2019).

It is also necessary to normalize the frequency of epistemic markers to a frequency per 10000 words for purposes of comparison. The following table reports the total frequencies of epistemic words from the Marlow texts:

**Table 3.1 Frequency of lexical epistemic stance markers in each text**

	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
<b>Total words in text</b>	13426	39370	131669	138262
<b>Lexical epistemic markers</b>	404	1643	5118	6248
<b>Normalised frequency of epistemic markers per 10000 words</b>	303	417	389	452

From the table above we may note that *Chance* contains proportionally more lexical epistemic markers than the other novels, with *Youth* having the least. This difference is statistically significant with a log-likelihood of 68.12 and a miniscule p-value of less than (<) 0.001 as expressed in the following table:

**Table 3.2 The log-likelihood tests of lexical items in the Marlow texts**

<b>Texts</b>	<b>Log-likelihood</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>Youth</i> compared to <i>Chance</i>	68,12	p<0,001
<i>Heart of Darkness</i> compared to <i>Chance</i>	8,02	0,00463
<i>Lord Jim</i> compared to <i>Chance</i>	61,52	p<0,001
<i>Heart of Darkness</i> compared to <i>Lord Jim</i>	5,96	p<0,014

The difference between the novels with proportionally the smallest difference between them (*Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*) is still statistically significant (with a log-likelihood of 5.96 and a p-value < 0.014).

One would expect more similarity among these lexical epistemic markers because the Marlow texts date from approximately the same time, but they all differ from each other according to the log-likelihood tests. In order to further investigate this difference, I narrow my focus to three verb lemmas (*KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND* and *THINK*), and the noun *TRUTH* and its derivations.

### 3.2.2 Verbs of cognition: *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND* and *THINK*

The verbs *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND* and *THINK* are cognitive mental verbs (Biber *et al*, 2002:108) which denotes epistemic (un)certainty in Conrad's texts. I will count all the forms of each verb lemma and omit their derivations. I report the verb usages which encode the cognitive mental processes separately from the nominalisations and other derivations of the word, which encode more static meanings. The frequencies of these words across all of Conrad's other novels (i.e. non-Marlow novels) are also reported as a basis of comparison obtained through existing wordlists.

**Table 3.3** The verb lemma *KNOW* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow novels

Epistemic lexical item	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>	Non-Marlow novels
Know	20	87	257	345	2171
Knows	0	7	26	19	249
Knowing	2	3	8	5	74
Knew	4	21	58	74	644
Knowned/ Know'd	0	0	0	0	2
Known	5	4	37	42	344
<b>Verb lemma total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>3484</b>
Normalised frequency per 10000 words of text	23	31	29	35	27
Lemma as percentage of lexical epistemic markers in text	8	7	8	8	n/a

Table 3.2 records the verb lemma frequencies in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow texts. The normalized frequency makes it possible to note that the frequency of these verbs in *Chance* is slightly higher, but that the differences amongst the Marlow texts are very slight and not significant.

A further possibility is to compare each of the Marlow texts to a reference corpus of all of Conrad's non-Marlow novels. Table 3.3 reports the results of an online log-likelihood test of these frequencies.

**Table 3.4**      **The log-likelihood test of the verb lemma *KNOW* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow novels**

<b>Texts</b>	<b>Log-likelihood</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>Youth</i>	1.09	0,295
<i>Heart of darkness</i>	2.36	0,124
<i>Lord Jim</i>	3	0,803
<i>Chance</i>	31.77	p<0,00001

This clearly indicates that *Chance* differs significantly from the non-Marlow novels with a p-value of <0,0001 with regard to *KNOW* verb lemmas that portray (un)certainty. *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* do not significantly differ from the non-Marlow texts. Another verb lemma that requires analysis is *UNDERSTAND*, since it falls under the same epistemological motif proposed in this dissertation. This analysis is important to determine whether there is a similar epistemological pattern in terms of the comparisons of the verb lemma *KNOW*:

**Table 3.5**      **The verb lemma *UNDERSTAND* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow novels**

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Non-Marlow novels</i>
Understand	6	21	61	99	593
Understands	0	0	3	1	13
Understanding	0	0	1	15	43
Understood	1	3	23	28	232
<b>Lemma total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>881</b>
Normalised frequency per 10000 words of novel	5	6	7	10	7
Lemma as percentage of lexical epistemic markers	2	1	2	2	n/a

The verb *UNDERSTAND* has a slightly higher normalised frequency in *Chance*, which is also the case for the normalised frequencies of the *KNOW* lemma. This does not appear to illustrate a significant deviation in the frequency of the epistemic verb lemmas in either Marlow text compared to each other, there is no significant change in the lemma as percentage. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the Marlow texts to the non-Marlow texts in relation to the epistemic verb lemma *UNDERSTAND*:

**Table 3.6      The log-likelihood test of the verb lemma *UNDERSTAND* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow novels**

<b>Texts</b>	<b>Log-likelihood</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>Youth</i>	0.32	0.572
<i>Heart of darkness</i>	0.06	0.804
<i>Lord Jim</i>	0.07	0.793
<i>Chance</i>	13.65	0.00022

Again, *Chance* differs significantly from the non-Marlow texts – with a log-likelihood of 13.65 and a p-value of 0.00022. *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* do not differ significantly from the non-Marlow texts. Effectively, this further substantiates the argument that *Chance* is different from the other Marlow texts in relation to lexical marking of epistemicity. I now turn to the verb *THINK*:

**Table 3.7** The verb lemma *THINK* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow novels

Epistemic words	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>	Non-Marlow novels
Think	15	38	134	202	1219
Thinking	3	6	28	47	312
Thinks	0	1	4	10	45
Thought	14	19	60	88	1296
<b>Lemma total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>2872</b>
Normalised frequency per 10000 words of novel	24	16	17	25	22
Lemma as percentage of lexical epistemic markers	8	4	4	6	n/a

*THINK* is relatively more frequent in *Youth* and *Chance* compared to *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. The log-likelihood test reflects the following:

**Table 3.8** The log-likelihood test of the verb lemma *THINK* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow texts

Texts	Log-likelihood	P-value
<i>Youth</i>	0.2	0.655
<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	4.18	0.04
<i>Lord Jim</i>	10.41	0.001
<i>Chance</i>	15.72	0.00007

*Chance* is the most significant with a log-likelihood of 15.72 and p-value<0.001. *Lord Jim*, when compared to the non-Marlow texts, yields a log-likelihood of 10.41 and a p-value of 0.001, which is statistically significant in relation to the epistemic verb lemma *THINK*.

Since the lemmas *KNOW* and *UNDERSTAND* were the only lemmas that possessed the most statistical significance, one can clearly distinguish between certainty and uncertainty. For example, Stubbs argues that within *Heart of darkness*, “[t]he verb lemma *KNOW* is frequent <122>, and fairly evenly distributed throughout the text. Many instances are negative, whether grammatically (*I don’t know, he did not know*) or by implication (*he wanted to know, if only he had known*). This is a novel about the fallibility and distortions of human

knowledge” (2005:12). Stubbs uses the example where knowledge is linked to negative grammatical instances early in the text but later to positive instances concerning the Intended’s conversation with Marlow, at the very end of *Heart of darkness* (2005:12). This might be due to the fact that Marlow tries to spare her from gaining traumatizing knowledge and to distort her knowledge of how Kurtz died. Knowledge is an important theme for Stubbs, as well as the manner in which it is distorted by ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ uses, but his qualitative interpretations do not seem to elaborate on this. Therefore, I compile the following table, from which I will elaborate qualitatively in my close reading of the texts:

**Table 3.9** ‘Certain’ and ‘Uncertain’ uses of the lemma *KNOW*

<i>KNOW</i>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Total</i>
‘Certain’	19	66	203	240	528
‘Uncertain’	12	56	185	245	498

In an attempt to visualize this ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ quality set out by Stubbs, this table depicts the frequency with which *KNOW* occurs in ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ moments. It would appear as though *KNOW* conveys more ‘certain’ uses in the Marlow texts, with a total of 528 instances.

**Table 3.10** ‘Certain and ‘Uncertain’ uses of the lemma *UNDERSTAND*

<i>UNDERSTAND</i>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Total</i>
‘Certain’	3	11	52	67	133
‘Uncertain’	4	13	35	61	113

This table records the raw data of ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ uses of *UNDERSTAND*. There does not seem to be a significant difference between the ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ aspects of this verb.

### 3.2.3 *TRUTH* and morphologically related words

In the previous chapter the significance of truth as an epistemological concept was introduced. Table 3.8 below depicts the frequency of the noun truth, and its derivations and inflections:

**Table 3.11** *TRUTH* in Conrad's Marlow texts and non-Marlow novels

Epistemic words	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>	Non-Marlow novels
True	0	14	50	51	373
Truer	0	0	1	1	1
Truest	0	0	0	0	3
Truly	0	1	4	5	29
Truth	0	14	58	31	277
Truthful	0	0	1	1	4
Truthfully	0	0	1	1	2
Truthfulness	0	1	2	0	3
Truths	0	0	1	0	2
Truth's	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Lemma total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>694</b>
Normalised frequency per 10000 words of novel	0	8	9	7	5
Lemma as percentage of lexical epistemic markers	0	2	2	1	n/a

Most notably, there are no *truth* words in 'Youth'. *Truth* words are most frequent in *Lord Jim*, though the differences in normalised frequencies among the novels are again only slight. The frequencies of *truth* words in each Marlow text were consequently compared to their frequencies in the non-Marlow novels.

**Table 3.12**      **The log-likelihood test of the noun lemma *TRUTH* in the Marlow texts compared to the non-Marlow novels**

<b>Texts</b>	<b>Log-likelihood</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<i>Youth</i>	n/a	n/a
<i>Heart of darkness</i>	39.68	P<0,0001
<i>Lord Jim</i>	25.27	P<0,0001
<i>Chance</i>	3.12	0,077

*Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* both differ strongly from the non-Marlow novels (with log-likelihoods of 39.68 and 25.27), while *Chance* does not diverge significantly from the non-Marlow texts with regard to *TRUTH* words. This plainly indicates that *TRUTH* is a thematic concern in *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*, but not in *Chance* and *Youth*.

### **3.2.4 Summary of the results**

Firstly, the total frequencies of all words that convey epistemic stance in each Marlow text were compared. From these normalised frequencies it is evident that *Chance* contains relatively more lexical markers of epistemic stance than the other Marlow texts.

The frequencies of the forms of three notable verbs of cognition (*KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND*, *THINK*) in the novels were compared. The normalized frequencies (per 10000 words) indicate that the occurrences of these verbs are proportionally similar in the Marlow texts. However, comparing each Marlow text to a reference corpus of all other Conrad novels demonstrates that only *Chance* differs significantly from the non-Marlow novels with regard to the verbs *KNOW* and *UNDERSTAND*, which occur relatively more frequently in this novel compared to the reference corpus. Regarding *TRUTH*, only *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* are significantly different from the non-Marlow novels.

Secondly, the ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ frequencies will be used as a starting point from which to move from a purely quantitative to a more qualitative analysis of certainty and uncertainty in Conrad’s Marlow texts. This approach should demonstrate why *Chance* seems distinct in its portrayal of the epistemological motif.

### 3.3 Close reading of epistemicity: Discussion and interpretation

If one chronologically analyzes the Marlow texts, *Youth* demonstrates that the lemma *KNOW* occurs 12 times in order to depict uncertainty: “I don’t know”, “did not know” and “I don’t believe they know” (Table 3.8). *Youth* is Conrad’s first Marlow text; within it one can observe Conrad’s allusions to epistemological notions such as uncertainty by using Marlow as the narrator. Although the noun ‘knowledge’ forms a part of epistemology, I omit it in order to focus on the process of knowing since it seems like Conrad emphasise ‘knowing’ throughout his texts. Thereby, certain epistemic word patterns become emphasised and open for qualitative interpretation.

By using Marlow as an older narrator of his own youthful experience on a ship sailing towards the East, Conrad depicts how knowledge changes his character. Marlow as the narrator, at the onset of the text, is pessimistic about life: “You fight, work, sweat, nearly kill yourself, sometimes do kill yourself, trying to accomplish something – and you can’t” (Y:140). This nihilistic point of view pertains to the older Marlow after he has travelled to the East, whereas the younger Marlow, as depicted by the older Marlow, is optimistic about his quest: “I was just twenty. How time passes! It was one of the happiest days of my life” (Y:140). What is evident in these two examples is the disparity between them and the fashion in which knowledge can affect the way one looks at previous experiences such as Marlow’s expedition to the East. Marlow’s journey can be interpreted as a metaphor for aging and acceptance of one’s lost youth and the manner in which gaining that kind of knowledge changes a person.

#### 3.3.1 Verbs of cognition: *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND* and *THINK*

The verb lemma *KNOW* occurs 66 times in contexts of ‘certainty’ compared to 56 times in contexts of ‘uncertainty’. Stubbs (2005:12) points out, as mentioned, that the negative (‘uncertain’) instances occur early in the text whereas the positive (‘certain’) instances concerning the Intended’s conversation with Marlow are placed at the very end of *Heart of darkness*. For example, Marlow is untruthful towards the Intended after Kurtz dies and he returns to London. This untruthfulness come across in affirmative uses of the lemma *KNOW*, in order to save her from a confrontation with some truth (HoD:96). Marlow essentially lies to the Intended about Kurtz’s last words and his hearing of “a light sigh, and then my heart stood still, stopped dead short by an exulting and terrible cry, by the cry of inconceivable

triumph and of unspeakable pain. ‘I knew it – I was sure!’ . . . She knew. She was sure” (HoD:96).

It seems to be knowledge that links Kurtz to Marlow and the Intended: “‘You knew him well,’ she murmured, after a moment of mourning silence. ‘Intimacy grows quick out there,’ I said. ‘I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another.’” (HoD:93). The first epistemic marker *knew* makes it seem as though Marlow is able to know Kurtz, but he subverts this view in employing the second epistemic word *knew* and its relation to possibility. Linguistically, *possible* opens the potential for uncertainty and indicates that Marlow is still unsure whether he really knew Kurtz. He appears uncertain of how possible it really is to know a person.

The process of gaining knowledge about Kurtz is, in a sense, a form of delayed decoding. Marlow gains information about Kurtz through several characters: the general manager, chief accountant and the Harlequin. They create the basis for the means by which his knowledge increases. The information that other characters give him about Kurtz informs a subjective kind of knowing, since this material is still circumstantial and biased. The characters’ stories of Kurtz remain unreliable since Marlow has not met him to prove them right or wrong. The Harlequin, for example, discusses Kurtz with Marlow before they reach Kurtz’s camp:

‘We talked of everything,’ he said, quite transported at the recollection. ‘I forgot there was such a thing as sleep. The night did not seem to last an hour. Everything! Everything! . . . Of love too.’ ‘Ah, he talked to you of love!’ I said, much amused. ‘It isn’t what you think,’ he cried, almost passionately. ‘It was in general. He made me see things – things.’ (HoD:69).

The words which the Harlequin uses to describe Kurtz make it appear as though Kurtz is some kind of Buddha or philosopher, who divulges knowledge to his listeners. Marlow is sceptical of this knowledge and is amused at the thought of discussing love. This scepticism alters, though, as Marlow’s knowledge is informed by various characters and is, in a sense, proved right when he meets Kurtz. The way in which the Harlequin describes Kurtz is similar to other characters’ descriptions of the latter as “a very remarkable person” (HoD:22). It would seem as though only from his own immediate experience of Kurtz would Marlow be able to know for certain whether the evidence he gains from other characters is reliable.

The Harlequin speaks of love, and Marlow similarly speaks of love with the Intended. Marlow essentially loved Kurtz, in a fashion (HoD:93). Only, the Intended turns the

conversation to prove she “knew him best” (HoD:93). Marlow repeats her claim, but with scepticism: “And perhaps she did. But with every word spoken the room was growing darker, and only her forehead, smooth and white, remained illumined by the unextinguishable light of belief and love” (HoD:93). One should pay attention to the link between her words and the growing darkness. This connection seems to emphasize the manner in which Marlow’s knowledge of the truth remains in the dark, while her belief (not knowledge of the truth) is the only light. The metaphor suggests that the horror of Kurtz’s death (truth) remains hidden and the lie is perpetuated.

One instance that relates to certainty is based on the Intended’s remark to Marlow: “I want you – you who have heard his last words – to know I have been worthy of him.... It is not pride.... Yes! I am proud to know I understood him better than anyone on earth – he told me so himself” (HoD:93-94). The Intended’s insistence on knowing how she understands Kurtz juxtaposes the knowledge she and Marlow possess. Even though Kurtz had told her that she knows him better than anyone else, the reader is aware that Kurtz has not been in contact with her for quite some time. Her knowledge is still based on him as he was, before and during his own expedition into the Congo.

The only place where certitude resides is with the Intended: she in her saving illusion is the only one who claims to have certainty about Kurtz’s actions, even if Marlow knows her view is distorted. For her, the illusion *is* truth; Marlow is mindful to what degree he is responsible for it. Contradictorily, Marlow’s account of Kurtz and the former’s kind of understanding is more accurate than the Intended’s knowledge of Kurtz. Marlow in fact does know him better than the Intended since their inner journeys are similar to one another. He is also the last man to see Kurtz and hear his final words which contain some form of truth and knowledge.

In turn, the epistemological motif namely, uncertainty, seems to appear more often in *Lord Jim* than in *Youth* or *Heart of darkness*. Instances of *not knowing* and *wanting to know* more are prominent within the novel: the word *don’t* occur 49 times in front of *know* (Collocates drawn from a concordance).

For example: “I don’t know of anybody that ever had a glimpse of him” (LJ:47) as well as a similar collocate, namely ‘never’, in the example: “they can never know the real, real truth” (LJ:233). This portrays Marlow’s constant reaffirmation of the unattainability of knowledge throughout the text. However, there seems to be a stronger sense of his longing to know a

character in *Lord Jim* than in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* or *Chance*. This is evident in the scene where Jim speaks to Marlow about his abandonment of the *Patna* while sitting in a hotel and drinking a bit of wine:

‘I couldn't clear out,’ Jim began. ‘The skipper did – that's all very well for him. I couldn't, and I wouldn't. They all got out of it in one way or another, but it wouldn't do for me.’ ‘I listened with concentrated attention, not daring to stir in my chair; I wanted to know – and to this day I don't know, I can only guess. He would be confident and depressed all in the same breath, as if some conviction of innate blamelessness had checked the truth writhing within him at every turn (LJ:62).

Marlow addresses his listeners when he says: “I wanted to know” and “I don't know, I can only guess”. These utterances signal that Marlow does not obtain certainty about what Jim is saying; yet the “I can only guess” creates the possibility that there is something more to know. Furthermore, this guessing at truth emphasises the possibility that truth does exist even if it remains illusory throughout the text.

In other words, the reader comes to experience the way interpretation occurs. Marlow does acquire knowledge from Jim, but he is still aware that there is a possibility of another interpretation for and meaning in Jim's actions and words. Certitude is deferred in this manner, which also portrays the nature of knowledge. One can know something and think one understands it, but other information on the subject may alter that knowledge and understanding.

Marlow constantly endeavours to establish a form of absolute truth regarding Jim's actions and narrative, but he repeatedly admits to being unable to accomplish it. Marlow's knowledge remains distorted by his own admission and, consequently, he never gains certainty about Jim as a character. He nevertheless tries to understand the driving force behind Jim's actions. He listens to Jim who insists that he is well aware of the fact that he had abandoned the *Patna*, but nevertheless wants Marlow's approval. He tries to convey this to the latter one night when he relates what had happened when he jumped from the ship. Jim can be certain that he jumps, but not why he jumps:

‘I leave it to you. You can understand. Can't you? You see it – don't you? No harm! Good God! What more could they have done? Oh yes, I know very well – I jumped. Certainly. I jumped! I told you I jumped; but I tell you they were too much for any man. It was their doing as plainly as if they had reached up with a boat-hook and

pulled me over. Can't you see it? You must see it. Come. Speak – straight out' (LJ:96).

Jim places the blame on other characters in the lifeboat; they are the reason for his jumping ship. He does not believe that he is the one responsible for the abandonment of the *Patna*. He is living a lie, just like the Intended in *Heart of darkness*. It is Marlow's position, as narrator of all the different narrations of Jim, that constructs the manner in which he could know some form of truth; and Jim's denial that makes truth such an ambiguous element in the example above. Jim constantly asks if Marlow can 'see it' and thinks the latter understands – but he never claims such understanding. Rather, he attempts to comprehend what drives Jim to abandon the *Patna* by listening to the various interpreters' narratives, which create a seemingly whole narrative. This method of interpreting narratives represents the process by which Marlow gains knowledge, namely delayed decoding as discussed in chapter two. This modernist technique on a narratological scale suggests that there are gaps in knowledge and that knowledge seems to be attained in a fragmentary manner. However, these fragments may create a whole that is believable and portrays some form of truth.

In turn, Marlow's narrative is more believable than Jim's since the latter is in denial as to why he jumped from the ship. Even if Marlow's narrative is more ambiguous than Jim's narration, one can sense that there is some truth missing from Jim's story. Marlow is able to arrive at a semblance of truth, but never the whole truth. He is able to identify certain elements of the truth of a character, but never everything that drives that character.

In *Chance*, *know* occurs 126 times (collocates drawn from concordances) in negated contexts ("don't know" and "didn't know"). However, the occurrence of *know* is no longer closely associated with Marlow's knowledge, but rather with that of other characters. Marlow blames characters, such as Flora, for their own inability to know the truth about themselves. For example, *know* in *Chance* is mostly associated with her inability and inexperience: "she did not know how to defend herself" (C:125). This instance emphasizes Flora's inability to know herself, not Marlow's inability to understand her as he does other characters in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Marlow is more critical of Flora than of Kurtz or Jim in the sense that he is highly pessimistic about her ability to 'see', i.e. understand herself. Marlow claims several features for Flora in relation to what she can and cannot know. This occurs in the novel before her father is released from prison, while Flora is assuming that Anthony had never given her time to think:

And that, in truth, she did not know! I am inclined to believe that she did not. As abundance of experience is not precisely her lot in life, a woman is seldom an expert in matters of sentiment. It is the man who can and generally does 'see himself' pretty well inside and out. Women's self-possession is an outward thing; inwardly they flutter, perhaps because they are, or they feel themselves to be, engaged (C:246).

Marlow believes that men are more capable of knowing themselves than women. This makes it clear that he does not think Flora is capable of understanding herself although he is capable of comprehending himself and other people. This is indicated in the extract through the words "I am inclined to believe she did not" which reveals that Marlow presumes to know what Flora does not, thereby pointing to Marlow as portraying more certainty as regards character and suggesting how he seems to know what drives Flora to act strangely.

Other such examples also relate more closely to other characters' inability to know in *Chance*: "I didn't even know that I was frightened" (C:92) and "Mrs. Fyne said she did not know" (C:129). These examples are very different from the instances in Conrad's previous novels that ascribe more uncertain moments to Marlow, which point up the notion that epistemological motifs might have altered by the time Conrad finished *Chance*. Therefore, the knowledge that Marlow gains about Flora needs to be examined. I argue that Marlow in *Chance* is more certain about Flora's character and what drives her to make certain decisions, which make her less mysterious than Marlow in *Youth*, Kurtz in *Heart of darkness* and Jim in *Lord Jim*. Marlow speaks to Powell and admits that he already knows several things about Flora de Barral:

I brought him to talk about that voyage, which, by the by, was not the first voyage of Flora de Barral. The man himself, as I told you, is simple, and his faculty of wonder not very great. He's one of those people who form no theories about facts. Straightforward people seldom do. Neither have they much penetration. But in this case it did not matter. I—we—have already the inner knowledge. We know the history of Flora de Barral. We know something of Captain Anthony. We have the secret of the situation (C:196).

This comprehension, "I—we—have already the inner knowledge. We know the history of Flora de Barral", is an event that never occurs in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* or *Lord Jim*. In this case, knowledge is undistorted, which is antithetical to the other Marlow texts; that is, Marlow's knowledge of Flora's character and actions is portrayed as complete and certain. There is no possibility of uncertainty since the linguistic choices portray absolute certainty. Even the last sentence in the example gives reason to believe that the epistemological motifs

in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* are not identical to *Chance*'s epistemic motifs, since Marlow claims to possess some secret knowledge into Flora's motivations.

Conrad's portrayal of knowledge is a great deal more certain about ontological issues such as the existence of a character in *Chance*. Linguistically, it would appear as though Conrad betrays himself since he is known for being ambivalent toward language's capability to convey absolute meaning and knowledge. This ambivalence is altogether missing in *Chance*. In this regard, Enderwitz (2014:36) remarks that *Chance* examines the influence of language to disturb and interfere, except that there is no mourning for the loss of certainties.

Knowledge and understanding appear to be linked in the Marlow texts; but what does Marlow understand and how is this portrayed in the texts? Marlow's understanding is self-generated in *Youth*, since he tells a story about himself and the sources for this narrative are his own mind: his memories and experiences, whether self-generated or gained from other narrators.

Within the text, the most notable use of *understand* occurs when Marlow questions his listener's ability to understand what he is saying throughout the text: "You understand", "You understand this?" (Drawn from concordances.) These interruptions in his narrative suggest a suspicious attitude in Marlow. He suspects that his listeners will not be able to comprehend his narrative. He seems, however, not quite uncertain about his ability to narrate or his ability to understand himself (as the main character in the narrative) since he claims to better understand his own perspective. Which might also portray that he could be deluding himself, thinking that he is certain, whereas he is not.

*Youth* portrays the process of gaining knowledge and subsequently understanding that process. In other words, Marlow depicts through his narrative the means by which he gains knowledge of the East, but at the same time he makes clear how he is understanding it several years later. The juxtaposition between a young and older Marlow emphasizes how knowledge evolves into understanding. His ability to look back on an experience and in a sense decode it creates the text's epistemological pattern. This is a precursor to the beginnings of larger epistemological themes within modernist literature, even though they are not as strongly emphasized as they are in *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* or *Chance*.

*Heart of darkness* contains similar instances to the way in which 'understanding' is used in *Youth*. Most representations of uncertainty are indicated throughout the text by syntactic

negation, e.g. ‘can’t understand’, ‘don’t understand’ and ‘not understand’. There are other cases where the reader is unable to know for certain whether Marlow gains understanding or not. These ambiguous instances occur in relation to whether Marlow comprehends Kurtz, and it would appear as though an occasion where this kind of ambiguous uncertainty is evident and occurs after Kurtz’s death before Marlow returns to London:

This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up – he had judged. ‘The horror!’ He was a remarkable man (HoD:87-88).

The word *better* does not connote or denote ‘complete’ or ‘full’. Marlow’s ability to “understand better” is not complete certainty. This type of ambiguous certainty remains a theme throughout the text and recurs in different ways but always remains incomplete. Within the extract above, Kurtz’s ability to see into the hearts of every person creates the illusion that only he knows the truth of every human being. In terms of this sort of understanding, Marlow questions whether his listeners comprehend events in the way Kurtz does. The narrator too does not entirely understand since he only ‘peeped over the edge’.

This suggests that Kurtz jumped over the edge, whereas Marlow only took a quick look. This metaphor of looking over the edge, and jumping, suggests that Kurtz gained knowledge by leaping over the brink. This is why he is able to say something about the nature of all human beings, whereas Marlow is unable to do so because he does not take the same action.

In turn, Marlow also questions his listener’s ability to understand in *Heart of Darkness*. “Do you understand?” is mainly used to convey this notion, which adds to the theme of uncertainty in the novel. The manner in which Marlow questions other characters’ ability to understand suggests that Marlow is still questioning his own knowledge and is always attempting to grasp his own story, i.e. he is still endeavouring to gain certainty about his experiences. Although he does not explicitly say what he and his listeners should comprehend, this creates the illusion that there is something within the narrative that can be known – something which could be completely understood. An instance where there is a semblance of certainty occurs when Kurtz is ill in the pilot house and the tribe shouts and roars outside:

‘Do you understand this?’ I asked. ‘He kept on looking out past me with fiery, longing eyes, with a mingled expression of wistfulness and hate. He made no answer, but I saw a smile, a smile of indefinable meaning, appear on his colourless lips that a moment after twitched convulsively. ‘Do I not?’ he said slowly, gasping, as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power (HoD:84).

Marlow is asking if Kurtz understands what is going on outside the pilot house: a seemingly straightforward question. However, Kurtz’s answer, “Do I not?” suggests that he does understand but, on another level, that Marlow is unable to do so. Kurtz’s question directly avoids answering Marlow’s seemingly straightforward question, which reinforces the uncertainty in the text. Even the ‘indefinable meaning’ in his smile suggests that Kurtz knows something Marlow does not.

Unlike *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* appears to experiment with other narrators. Marlow gains knowledge from other characters’ narratives about Kurtz. This is not certain and unquestionable, but it creates the sense of a Kurtz that could exist in the Congo. Marlow meets and listens to these characters as he nears him on the river, incrementally building an image of Kurtz in his mind.

As Marlow approaches him, the image and reality slowly begin to align with each other, and Marlow is better able to decode who Kurtz is because he is experiencing the latter first hand. All the knowledge that he gains from other characters alters into a form of understanding of what he is experiencing. Marlow’s own experience of Kurtz is ultimately what connects the pieces of his previous knowledge together and makes it possible for him to understand Kurtz better than most characters.

Marlow in *Lord Jim* obtains understanding of Jim in a similar manner to the Marlow in *Heart of darkness* who acquires a comprehension of Kurtz. He also hears various views from different characters as to why Jim would have jumped overboard. These various narrations – fragments – create, in the end, the appearance of a whole story and a complete grasp of Jim. These fragments assist Marlow to arrive at an understanding of, and a semblance of certainty as regards, Jim, even if it is incomplete and lacking. There are instances where characters claim to understand Jim; for example, Stein asserts:

‘I understand very well. He is romantic.’ ‘He had diagnosed the case for me, and at first I was quite startled to find how simple it was; and indeed our conference resembled so much a medical consultation – Stein, of learned aspect, sitting in an arm-chair before his desk; I, anxious, in another, facing him, but a little to one side –

that it seemed natural to ask – ‘What's good for it?’ He lifted up a long forefinger. ‘There is only one remedy! One thing alone can us from being ourselves cure!’ The finger came down on the desk with a smart rap. The case which he had made to look so simple before became if possible still simpler – and altogether hopeless. There was a pause. ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live.’ ‘He approved with his head, a little sadly as it seemed. ‘Ja! ja! In general, adapting the words of your great poet: That is the question. . . .’ He went on nodding sympathetically. . . . ‘How to be! Ach! How to be.’ (LJ:162-163).

Stein’s interpretation is an understanding of Jim’s broader placement within society, as a romantic hero. What Stein grasps is very abstract and quickly disintegrates into an even broader utterance, concurrent with the driving force behind Jim’s actions: “How to be!”. Understanding a character like Jim is therefore more complicated than placing him in a group such as a romantic one, regarding him as the ideal romantic hero who is unafraid of making decisions and a brave adventurer at heart. However, Jim no longer fits into this category, which is why I argue ‘how to be’ relates more to matters of ontology; I discuss these at length in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, within the extract above, there is a move from broad societal issues to the individual mind: from the ideal romantic hero and the rules he follows to that of the individual and how he experiences the world subjectively. The move demonstrates the preoccupation with the experience and subjective understanding of the character and the manner in which Jim is *being* in society and the world. This would explain why Marlow is constantly busy trying to explore behind the motivations of Jim’s decision to jump, even though certainty remains impossible.

The only instance where someone claims to be understanding anything about Jim’s situation is the moment when the frame narrator reads a letter from Marlow, addressed to no-one. After several attempts, Marlow gives up trying to write the letter, and the frame narrator expresses his interpretation by saying: “‘There's nothing more; he had seen a broad gulf that neither eye nor voice could span. I can understand this. He was overwhelmed by the inexplicable; he was overwhelmed by his own personality –’ the gift of that destiny which he had done his best to master” (LJ:260). The only issue the frame narrator can understand is Marlow’s inability to write. The frame narrator appreciates this because he is also struggling to understand and narrate the inexplicable nature of Marlow’s story.

This form of understanding and trying to understand appears in the way Marlow is able to talk abstractly about gaining it. For example, Marlow muses on how it occurs: “Nevertheless, there can be but few of us who had never known one of these rare moments of awakening when we see, hear, understand ever so much – everything – in a flash – before we fall back again into our agreeable somnolence” (LJ:110). The example indicates clearly that understanding is different from knowing. It happens in a flash and is transitory, since, according to Marlow, we live life in an unconscious state (somnolence). The word *awakening* also suggests that understanding is a highly aware state of mind, which suggests the antithesis of an unconscious state, whereas knowing implies something that one already knows, knowledge that can be recalled at any moment.

Within the next example, Marlow muses on being unable to go home. The lexical items ‘understand’ and ‘understood’ occur three times within the paragraph and relate to Marlow and Jim’s ability to know and understand:

I think it is the lonely, without a fireside or an affection they may call their own, those who return not to a dwelling but to the land itself, to meet its disembodied, eternal, and unchangeable spirit – it is those who understand best its severity, its saving power, the grace of its secular right to our fidelity, to our obedience. Yes! few of us understand, but we all feel it though, and I say all without exception, because those who do not feel do not count. Each blade of grass has its spot on earth whence it draws its life, its strength; and so is man rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life. I don’t know how much Jim understood; but I know he felt, he felt confusedly but powerfully, the demand of some such truth or some such illusion – I don’t care how you call it, there is so little difference, and the difference means so little (LJ:170).

Understanding the land itself is an important issue for Marlow, since he notices that few people comprehend it. Everyone feels the connection to Earth and his/her place in it, even though some might not understand this connection which Marlow suspects as regards Jim. Marlow does not have any certainty that Jim feels this connection – to some truth or illusion. The former’s attitude towards the difference between truth and illusion becomes important here because understanding is usually closely related to truth. However, Marlow subverts this notion since he perceives no difference between truth and illusion. This changes the reader’s perception of understanding, because now one does not know if he understands a truth or an illusion.

Marlow holds that Jim “felt the demand of some such truth or some such illusion” (LJ:170) and in effect places the emphasis on feeling, not on understanding or thinking. Thus, he suggests that people experience the demand of truth or illusion but seldom understand it. Thereby Marlow makes it apparent that experience (feeling) and understanding are not identical.

Within *Chance*, the role of understanding seems to shift. One important difference in the text is that there are seven instances where characters claim to understand something. The most striking example is a conversation between Flora and Marlow where Flora confesses subtly to Marlow that she had wanted to commit suicide, but not anymore, and wants to keep it a secret:

‘There's no deception in it really. I want you to believe that if I am here, like this, today, it is not from fear. It is not!’ ‘I quite understand,’ I said. But her firm yet self-conscious gaze became doubtful. ‘I do,’ I insisted. ‘I understand perfectly that it was not of death that you were afraid.’ She lowered her eyes slowly, and I went on: ‘As to life, that's another thing. And I don't know that one ought to blame you very much – though it seemed rather an excessive step. I wonder now if it isn't the ugliness rather than the pain of the struggle which . . .’ She shuddered visibly: ‘But I do blame myself,’ she exclaimed with feeling. ‘I am ashamed.’ And, dropping her head, she looked in a moment the very picture of remorse and shame. ‘Well, you will be going away from all its horrors,’ I said. ‘And surely you are not afraid of the sea. You are a sailor's granddaughter, I understand’ (C:177).

The way Marlow insists that he ‘understands’ deviates from the epistemological motif of understanding in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. The level of certainty that Marlow asserts in this example and throughout *Chance* is extremely high, unlike that in the other Marlow texts. The change occurs, as previously mentioned, when Marlow claims to have attained the inner knowledge of Flora (C:196). Marlow, in the example above, seems to understand Flora in a way he never comprehends Kurtz or Jim.

This representation of epistemological themes seems to be antithetical to the uncertainty that Conrad depicts in the other Marlow texts, which conventionally use ambiguous and hazy metaphors to convey Marlow's understanding of a character.

Evidently, there is an alteration from Marlow's attitude towards understanding a character, if *Chance* is placed in relation to the other Marlow texts. Marlow's own conceptualization of understanding another character seems to indicate a change in the pattern of epistemological

(un)certainty in *Chance*: “I think that to understand everything is not good for the intellect. A well-stocked intelligence weakens the impulse to action; an overstocked one leads gently to idiocy” (C:50). There is a focus on Marlow’s unerring inquiry into understanding another character, which is juxtaposed with the ambiguous and uncertain journeys portrayed in *Youth* and *Heart of darkness*, and the various narrators with whom Marlow converses in *Lord Jim* so as to understand Jim.

For example, the transformation of Marlow’s comprehension occurs in such a fashion that there is more of a focus on Flora’s inability to understand the world around her and her emotions than in the other Marlow texts. This may be observed in the degree to which Marlow presumes to interpret her state of mind. He assumes that “she could not have spoken with a certain voice in the face of his impetuosity, because she did not have time to understand either the state of her feelings, or the precise nature of what she was doing” (C:196). By this means, Marlow’s presumptuous outlook on her feelings portrays his scepticism towards Flora’s understanding. One should notice that he is narrating what she understands and that he comes across as unsure whether she has the ability to understand herself. Contrastingly, the other Marlow texts depict Marlow’s interpretation of characters, and he does not presume to grasp their capability to know their own states of mind and experiences.

In what ways does Marlow think about other characters? Does his certainty alter in relation to what he is thinking? It seems as though delayed decoding best answers these questions. There are three major methods by which Marlow interprets events: delayed decoding, symbolic deciphering and thematic apposition (Watt, 1979:270). The purpose of these devices is to place the reader in a position where s/he is immediately witnessing an event (Watt, 1979:270). The reader then notices the process “whereby the semantic gap between the sensations aroused in the individual by an object or event. And their actual cause or meaning, was slowly closed in his consciousness” (Watt, 1979:270). This process is, in effect, a stream of consciousness device.

Delayed decoding indicates the manner in which Marlow’s understanding shifts as he thinks about what he is experiencing. There are many cases where *think* occurs, but I consider only the aspects where the word affects Marlow’s certainty and its relation to epistemological motifs, such as understanding.

Conrad uses what Ian Watt called ‘delayed decoding’ (Watt, 1979:270-271) by writing down what Marlow is thinking, in *Youth*, about an experience. In other words, Marlow would first relate his experience as it takes place and afterwards explain what really occurred. For example, he describes how he:

immediately became aware of a queer sensation, of an absurd delusion—I seemed somehow to be in the air. I heard all round me like a pent-up breath released—as if a thousand giants simultaneously had said Phoo! —and felt a dull concussion which made my ribs ache suddenly. No doubt about it—I was in the air, and my body was describing a short parabola. But short as it was, I had the time to think several thoughts in, as far as I can remember, the following order: ‘This can't be the carpenter—What is it?—Some accident—Submarine volcano?—Coals, gas!—By Jove! we are being blown up—Everybody's dead—I am falling into the after-hatch—I see fire in it.’ (Y:154-155).

One may observe that within this experience, Marlow is able to define the process of several thoughts; this portrays how he gains certainty about what really happens to him. This representation of achieving certainty is similar to later modernist devices in literature such as stream of consciousness. However, in this case, there is a focus on *thinking* about an experience, rather than the immediate experience of a situation.

Within the example above, Marlow, by means of elimination, does his best to think about and discover what causes him to be in the air until he realises the truth, marked by the exclamation: ‘By Jove!’ This instance is similar to the moment of grasping everything in a flash, as mentioned previously. In other words, as Marlow experiences something, he unconsciously thinks about what is happening to him, interprets and reinterprets it instantly until he reaches certainty. This is portrayed by the technique of mentioning the various causes of why he is in the air: some accident, coals, gas... until he realizes that there was an explosion.

Other instances of *think* occur in moments which denote uncertainty, usually expressed by Marlow: “and youth, strength, genius, thoughts, achievements, simple hearts—all dies .... No matter” (Y:142). Thoughts in this passage are reduced to an entity that can die, suggesting the ever-changing nature of thoughts and how increasingly volatile thinking can be. In other words, Marlow may think about something, the thought might change (die) and be replaced by another one, much like the instance of delayed decoding as described in the earlier passage from *Youth*.

In *Heart of darkness*, Marlow seems even more unreliable than in *Youth*. The lexical items that relate to thinking and Marlow are more nuanced and explicitly emphasized to question Marlow's certainty, with examples ranging from 'I think the knowledge came to him' and 'I think it had whispered'. These examples place Marlow's ability to truthfully narrate his story under suspicion. They also indicate that Marlow is open to new ways of thinking about Kurtz and constantly trying to gain new understanding, which is similar to the process in *Youth* and the technique of delayed decoding.

*Heart of darkness* explicitly depicts how delayed decoding and thinking go hand in hand. Marlow uses his spyglass in order to see the house on the distant embankment on his way to Kurtz:

And then I made a brusque movement, and one of the remaining posts of that vanished fence leaped up in the field of my glass. You remember I told you I had been struck at the distance by certain attempts at ornamentation, rather remarkable in the ruinous aspect of the place. Now I had suddenly a nearer view, and its first result was to make me throw my head back as if before a blow. Then I went carefully from post to post with my glass, and I saw my mistake. These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing – food for thought and also for vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky; but at all events for such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole. They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house (HoD:71).

In the first few sentences one gains the impression that Marlow has a certain idea of what he sees on the embankment from afar – until he gains a nearer view, which completely changes his initial thoughts. He mentions that these knobs are symbolic and food for thought, which is an important description. It is as if he suggests that these symbols/heads must be consumed, i.e. interpreted and integrated into his mind, for him to make sense of them. What Marlow is suggesting is that seeing something – experiencing it – has to be thought through, as if he is consuming it like food. It becomes a part of him and alters the way he thinks.

Thinking therefore forms part of knowing and understanding since Marlow thinks about what he is experiencing. Or, he thinks what it would be like for Kurtz and what he might have experienced. These interpretations by Marlow add to the way he gains knowledge by trying to interpret Kurtz. It seems easy for Marlow to interpret the objects around him, even if he does so through delayed decoding. Nevertheless, when it comes to another character such as

Kurtz he struggles to do so. Marlow endeavours to interpret Kurtz's knowledge and understanding of 'the horror':

I think the knowledge came to him at last – only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude – and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core.... (HoD:72).

It is evident that the word *think* creates a sense of ambiguity in the whole passage because what Marlow thinks is not necessarily true. However, he is able to make these claims since he knows Kurtz better than anyone else. Conrad represents this realization of Marlow to indicate that even the main narrator remains uncertain about Kurtz's character.

Marlow as the narrator attempts to grasp the epistemologically uncertain spaces that characters are placed in. *Lord Jim* portrays this space through Marlow's interpretation of Jim and how he inhabits such spaces. By using different methods such as examining Jim's actions, words and other characters' interpretations of him, Marlow reconstructs him. As Kim (2013:48) observes, it may be that "the narrator's indeterminacy and his personal preference in telling the story entail various possible meanings, yet they incline the readers toward skepticism in interpreting Jim's action as well as in ascertaining the narrative".

Similarly, Marlow is never able to discern an unchangeable reason for Jim's actions, so much so that "the psychological interest, what dwells within Jim, never seems fully exposed" (Stevenson, 1992:23). Because meaning in Conrad's works is highly subjective and never brought to light, this emphasizes the distinct uniqueness of each character. Delayed decoding draws attention to this by relating it to the varying thought-processes of characters. *Lord Jim* can be regarded as Conrad's largest experiment with delayed decoding, one which occurs in different ways. One obvious example illustrates how Jim narrates what happened after he jumps ship. He is hearing voices and tries to relate how *real* it seems to Marlow:

'Do you know what was my first thought when I heard? I was relieved. I was relieved to learn that those shouts – did I tell you I had heard shouts? No? Well, I did. Shouts for help . . . blown along with the drizzle. Imagination, I suppose. And yet I can hardly . . . How stupid. . . . The others did not. I asked them afterwards. They all said No. No? And I was hearing them even then! I might have known – but I didn't think – I only listened. Very faint screams – day after day. Then that little half-caste chap

here came up and spoke to me. ‘The *Patna* . . . French gunboat . . . towed successfully to Aden . . . Investigation . . . Marine Office . . . Sailors' Home . . . arrangements made for your board and lodging!’ I walked along with him, and I enjoyed the silence. So there had been no shouting. Imagination. I had to believe him. I could hear nothing any more. I wonder how long I could have stood it. It was getting worse, too . . . I mean – louder.’ ‘He fell into thought (LJ:104).

Jim becomes extremely aware of what he hears: people screaming – even though there are no people screaming. His imagination and the way he think make it appear as though he really is hearing people scream. However, he does not try to acquire certainty about what he is experiencing. Only when someone else explains that the *Patna* made it safely to shore does the screaming stop. This offers a clear example of delayed decoding. Jim does not possess all the possible information about the *Patna*; this gap influences the manner with which he experiences the world. But once he does have all of the information, his understanding and experience of the world changes, i.e. the screaming stops. In other words, he gains certainty over information, which alters his experience of the world.

However, Jim and Marlow do not ever seem to gain certainty about *why* he jumps. The words with which Jim thinks about his jump overboard are important, since he places heavy emphasis on his ability to think within that moment:

‘Well, yes! Perhaps I could not see then. But I had plenty of time and any amount of light in that boat. And I could think, too. Nobody would know, of course, but this did not make it any easier for me. You've got to believe that, too. I did not want all this talk. . . . No . . . Yes . . . I won't lie . . . I wanted it: it is the very thing I wanted there. Do you think you or anybody could have made me if I . . . I am – I am not afraid to tell. And I wasn't afraid to think either (LJ:102).

The word *see* here is intended to connote ‘understand’. In this case it is clearly a technique to emphasize that Jim had the time and light (he could see) yet was unable to understand what he experiences. He could think as well, which also attributes another kind of meaning to *see*. Furthermore, he states that being able to think makes it more difficult even though he is unafraid to think. What is strange about this scene is the fashion in which Jim is able to see (physically), has enough time and is able to think, yet struggles to gain certainty about the reason why he jumps afterwards. In other words, his memory of the event (jumping) is distorted, i.e. his knowledge has been distorted.

In turn, Marlow's narration of what Jim experiences adds another level to the story, since the former is now trying to understand what Jim experiences by relating it to other listeners. Although there is a sense that Marlow is incapable of narrating and explaining why Jim jumps from the ship it is because Jim is unable to relate why he does so. His inner motivations remain unknown and cause Marlow's inability to relate the narrative fully to his listeners.

*Chance* appears different from *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* in relation to the verb *think* and its variations. Marlow is portrayed as less inclined to try and obtain certainty with respect to Flora's behaviour, since he already claims certainty about her inner knowledge of her actions, as previously mentioned. This creates the sense that Marlow does have greater clarity as regards her character. Another reason why Marlow seems certain of her as a *being*, appears to be the way in which he relates how and *why* her life changes. The most important moment in the book, and the main reason why Flora's life alters, occurs when her governess screams at her (C:94).

Flora tells Mrs Fyne of this moment, who informs Marlow, who relates it to the frame narrator (C:91-95). One should notice that there is not one moment where Flora falters. This may be due to the fact that Mrs Fyne is retelling her story and makes adjustments to Flora's original narration. Marlow might be deceived by Mrs Fyne and the reader does not know whether Marlow is aware that he is being deceived. Be that as it may, it still influences the kind of certainty that Marlow gains from this retelling of her story. In effect, the manner in which Marlow learns of this moment is poles apart from the narrative techniques in the other Marlow texts.

This distance from the original story, which Flora narrates, seems to be clearer and more understandable to Marlow and an aspect that he deems a good feature in order to understand Flora: "Marlow stresses that his detachment from Flora is a necessary condition for understanding her" (Ray, 2008:xix). It is as if Marlow is able to gain more certainty with regard to Flora's character when he is not directly involved in her life. "Thereupon the somebody else ceased screaming and she lolled, exhausted, sightless, in a silent room, as if indifferent to everything and without a single thought in her head" (C:94). Unlike Jim who is able to think about what is happening to him, Flora seems unable to do so, according to Marlow. This might demonstrate a transformation of epistemological motif from the previous

Marlow texts where characters are highly inquisitive about their own mind and as a *being-in-the-world*.

Marlow portrays Flora as a character who does not try to understand what is happening to her, which makes the distortion of her knowledge minimal. In turn, this brings about a change in epistemological motif compared to the other Marlow texts in the sense that there is little distortion of what Marlow knows. He acquires a clearer picture of *why* she is acting the way she does, and what is behind her motivations, precisely because she is not questioning what is happening to her.

### 3.3.2 The noun *TRUTH*

Within my study of epistemological notions such as certainty, it is necessary to understand what Marlow is doing his best to gain certainty about. It appears as though this is the *truth* behind characters' actions and existence: the very reason why they act in different ways under certain circumstances. Therefore, how does Marlow represent this truth? Does he ever find truth? Let us turn to where these truths are presented.

There are, it would appear, strong correlations and disparities between *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance* when one analyses *truth* in the Marlow texts. *Truth* in *Heart of darkness* appears mostly in relation to anything Marlow struggles to interpret, ranging from external objects such as the forest and heads on spikes, to internal issues such as the *being* of Kurtz and Kurtz's shared history with the native tribe. Marlow, on the river and boat, thinks about the unknown tribe in the forest and how they embody some form of truth, a universal truth that man is capable of understanding:

Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you – you so remote from the night of first ages – could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything – because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage – who can tell? – but truth – truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder – the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff – with his own inborn strength (HoD:44).

One should notice how the sentence starts off as completely uncertain, for example “faintest trace” and “a dim suspicion of there being a meaning” (HoD:44) indicate the uncertainty Conrad portrays. Marlow views this wild tribe and notices a kinship to them, realizing that there could be a meaning to everything that is happening to him. In turn, he shifts from this uncertain starting point to the moment where it is possible for the human being to comprehend anything because his/her mind is capable of it. He or she is able to do so, since all time (past and future) is contained within the mind (HoD:44). Marlow seems to say that truth remains after one strips time from human experiences such as sorrow and fear. Such a timeless place seems to be one where absolute truth and certainty can exist, which is what the native tribe could achieve: experience without time. Marlow concludes that a fool is afraid of this realization, but a strong man knows – is certain of this truth and remains unperturbed.

Although a strong person is able to grasp this truth, it is impossible to convey to other people. It is “impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence – that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone....” (HoD:33). Marlow is sceptical of naming and conveying “that which makes its truth,” in other words meaning and essence. Although this is not possible for Marlow, there seems to be a notion that every person can experience it – alone. Navarette (1993:294) argues that “Marlow's narrative is shaped, as Kurtz's creations are, by his experience and his world view, and its various substructures reflect nothing more profoundly than the violence with which Marlow is stripped of his saving illusions concerning Kurtz's ‘gift of expression’”. Marlow experiences truth in a very raw form, since the narrative describes the process of gaining knowledge, yet never reveals an ultimate truth.

In terms of this view, the words in which Marlow speaks about truth and Kurtz's last stride (death) are fitting: “And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the Invisible” (HoD:88). Even though Marlow is uncertain of what wisdom actually is, as evident in his use of the word *perhaps*, it seems as though he is certain of a moment where a change occurs in wisdom and where truth exists. The stride over the threshold of the invisible is a metaphor for gaining understanding and finding truth.

These truthful moments are rare in the Marlow texts since truth is usually associated with hazy, obscure and unattainable metaphors. Frequently found in *Lord Jim*, these metaphors

and images add to the uncertainty of the novel in relation to *truth*. One would expect that the frequent use of *truth* would yield a more reliable text, but it does not. Marlow represents *truth* as ambiguous beyond a certain threshold (as in the examples from *Heart of darkness*). After Jim's jump from the *Patna*, Jim is portrayed as having one foot over the threshold and one foot still in front of it. Marlow comments on this liminal space that Jim inhabits:

It seemed to me I was being made to comprehend the Inconceivable – and I know of nothing to compare with the discomfort of such a sensation. I was made to look at the convention that lurks in all truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood. He appealed to all sides at once – to the side turned perpetually to the light of day, and to that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge. He swayed me. I own to it, I own up. The occasion was obscure, insignificant – what you will: a lost youngster, one in a million – but then he was one of us; an incident as completely devoid of importance as the flooding of an ant-heap, and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself. . . . (LJ:73)

Marlow is afraid that Jim has become something entirely other than what he is able to understand. He therefore questions his ability to understand him and discover some form of truth in his *being*. While he is looking at Jim, he perceives the duality of Jim's *being* and how he is simultaneously knowable and unknowable. Marlow metaphorizes this duality by the reference to the moon, illustrating how Jim represents both the known and the unknown. The ashy light on the edge, I argue, stems from moments of insight and truth that Marlow gains when he sees and understands something new about Jim.

Marlow notices how Jim is both one in a million and “one of us” (LJ:73). Jim's position is unique since he is an “individual in the forefront of his kind” (LJ:73) yet still a part of Marlow's broader society. This knowledge comes across as the obscure truth and could effect changes to “mankind's conception of itself” (LJ:73). This conception of humankind at that stage would appear Victorian as referred to in chapter one and two, whereas what Jim represents is a more modern position, as is clear from his ambiguous actions.

It is as if Marlow describes the driving force behind the modernist milieu, where Jim is unknowingly the first of this force's kind. Accompanying this is much frustration, since he is unable to make people understand and “know the real, real truth . . .” (LJ:233). Jim has

become aware that he will never be able to convey his *being* to other people, no matter how hard he tries. He seems extremely certain that they can never know the truth.

I now turn to *Chance* in order to show that, in this novel, truth is less obscure and more accessible. The way in which Conrad represents Marlow's method of arriving at the truth of a story is represented in *Chance* in stark contrast to *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. *Chance* seems to advocate that gaining certainty (truth) is a logical method: "the merest starting-point becomes a coign of vantage, and then by a series of logically deducted verisimilitudes one arrives at truth—or very near the truth—as near as any circumstantial evidence can do" (C:66). This method of achieving certainty is wholly unlike that which is represented in the other Marlow texts. In *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* gaining absolute certainty alters characters, mostly in terms of detrimental effects such as anxiety and isolation, yet Flora is changed for the better, unlike the characters in the other Marlow texts. After she finds out the truth about her father but is unable to kill herself, she acknowledges to Marlow that: "‘Truth will out, Mr. Marlow.’ ‘Yes,’ I said. She went on musingly. ‘Sorrow and happiness were mingled at first like darkness and light. For months I lived in a dusk of feelings. But it was quiet. It was warm . . .’" (C:328).

What truth, we cannot say for sure, but it is not as destructive as in the other Marlow texts because Flora is still alive which creates a sense of hope in the face of uncertainty. In any event, Flora's story ends happily even though she has gone through a traumatic life experience. It seems as though Marlow reaches an inner knowledge of Flora and her character lives on, knowing the truth. *Chance* therefore depicts the epistemological motif of certainty. Just as there are moments or glimpses of truth in the other texts, *Chance* represents it more fully. It would appear as though this final truth occurs near the end of the novel where Marlow is talking to Powell:

‘Listen, Powell,’ I said. ‘We got to know each other by chance?’ ‘Oh, quite!’ he admitted, adjusting his hat. ‘And the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself,’ I pursued. ‘Do you believe that?’ ‘Gospel truth,’ he declared innocently. ‘Well, don't forget it.’ ‘Oh, I! I don't expect now anything to present itself,’ he said, jumping ashore (C:329).

The fact that Marlow attributes the reason for their meeting to chance permeates the rest of the novel, providing an origin and reason for why life happens to characters. The origin, chance, also seems to be the reason why Flora acts strangely. This ‘gospel truth’ never occurs

in the other Marlow texts and there is no external reason why things happen to characters in them. What engenders their actions has more to do with their *being-in-the-world* than something which is as externally generated as mere chance is.

Evidently, there is a truth and Marlow acknowledges that it will out, which is unheard of in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*, thereby signalling a shift in epistemological motif within Conrad's Marlow texts.

### 3.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter set out to demonstrate how and where certainty or uncertainty manifest in the language of *Youth*, *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance*. There are indications that *Chance* seems unconnected, in terms of some epistemological motifs, to the other Marlow texts, but this is not made entirely clear through statistical and quantitative interpretation. There is, however, a statistical similarity between *Chance* and the non-Marlow texts which might indicate that *Chance* is dissimilar in its use of such motifs in relation to the other Marlow texts, even though their genesis took place at around the same time.

The conceptualization period and the fact that the empirical data shows that *Chance* is similar, in the use of the epistemic verb lemmas *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND* and *THINK*, to the other non-Marlow texts seem to show that there is an epistemic difference in the text. Whereas, qualitative critiques postulate that *Chance* contributes heavily to the 'decline of Conrad's writing'. If *Chance* really is a Marlow text, it should have also portrayed the same log-likelihood as the other three texts, in my view, but in fact it shows a similarity, in epistemic verb lemmas that denote (un)certainty, to the non-Marlow novels.

This epistemological motif differences in *Chance* are important to note because of the time it took Conrad to write and publish *Chance*. Although *Chance* took longer to write, it was still published within the modernist literature timeframe and conceived in approximately the same period as the other Marlow texts. However, *Chance* appears to stand outside of this modernist literature definition because of the epistemological motifs it conveys, such as certainty. If this is the case, then it is possible to observe the epistemological patterns occurring in the linguistic choices of Conrad's Marlow novels, which appears to indicate why *KNOW* is statistically significant in *Chance* (Table 3.3).

The epistemological pattern in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* reflects Marlow's uncertainty over characters; whereas, in *Chance*, the overall pattern of Marlow's uncertainty seems to evidence a complete change. He is represented as a *being* with certainty, and he seems certain of the knowledge he obtains from other characters.

Furthermore, Marlow seems uncertain in the language he uses when he describes characters in the Marlow texts, and remains sceptical of any kind of absolute truth within them, except in *Chance*. This occurs in the ambiguous descriptions of characters and Marlow's experiences which are emphasized through these lemmas, *KNOW*, *UNDERSTAND*, *THINK*, and the noun *TRUTH*. In turn, these draw attention to two main issues: firstly, Conrad's focus on epistemological motifs such as (un)certainty in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance*. Secondly, they indicate that there might be a difference in (un)certainty between the Marlow texts and the non-Marlow texts. These lemmas that persist in Conrad's Marlow texts indicate that there are certain epistemological motifs which altered between these texts themselves and could be studied in the future by comparing them to the non-Marlow texts. Due to the length limitations of a dissertation, it was impossible qualitatively to interpret all the epistemically uncertain lexical items; hence the given focus on three lemmas and one noun in the Marlow texts.

These epistemological motifs are also manifest in the vague metaphors in Conrad, which is why it is necessary to broaden the scope to matters of ontology. Since I have empirically demonstrated that *Chance* seems epistemologically different to the other Marlow texts, it becomes possible to show how it might differ from these texts in terms of ontology, thus disclosing that contextualized and qualitative analysis such as close reading are able to contribute to empirical data such as the positive and negative grammatical instances which convey epistemological motifs in the Marlow texts. I now turn to the ontological motifs in Conrad's Marlow texts and how they relate to the epistemological motifs discussed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 4 METAPHORS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL UNCERTAINTY AND ONTOLOGICAL AMBIGUITY

### 4.1 Introduction

As I have established in chapter three by means of an empirical method, epistemological motifs are portrayed linguistically in Conrad's Marlow texts. However, these are implemented differently in *Chance* compared to those in the other Marlow texts. It is now possible to take a broader view and examine how they relate to ontological issues such as *being* and *Being* (for a discussion of *being* see chapter 2) in the Marlow texts to investigate whether there appears to be an ontological motif change in the given texts. This chapter elucidates how and where *Chance* appears to be ontologically unlike the other Marlow texts by heuristically using Paul Ricœur's *Time and narrative* and certain elements in *The rule of metaphor* to study Marlow's *being-in-the-world*, as discussed in chapter two in relation to prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. Ricœur's notions about plot and events can be used to analyse Conrad's Marlow texts to determine why *Chance* stands out in comparison with the other Marlow texts. I heuristically use Ricœur's theory of Mimesis (prefiguration, configuration and refiguration) and compare this process in *Chance* to these other texts. The interaction between epistemology and ontology in the texts will consequently be explored.

I argue that there are two major ontological motifs that distinguish *Chance* when one compares it to the other Marlow texts. Firstly, there is no emphasis placed on the effect of acquiring understanding, which means that gaining knowledge doesn't have an effect on Marlow. For example, there is no metaphorical image that suggests a transformation in Marlow's *being* in *Chance* as there is in the way Marlow is represented as a Buddha in *Heart of darkness*. This is an important image because a "seeing-as' which sums up the power of metaphor, could be the revealer of a 'being-as' on the deepest ontological level" (Ricœur, 1984:xi). Thus, when read within the focus of Conrad's Marlow texts, every metaphor that relates to a character, even to Marlow himself, is a revealer of a 'being-as' in the world on an ontological level.

Therefore, his 'being-as' is also absent in *Chance*, which results in a shift in its use of the ontological motif. It is necessary to note that this chapter will focus on what kind of metaphors Marlow formulates in his narrative when he talks about characters because I regard them as inherently related to *beings* in *Being*.

Secondly, there is a disparity in Conrad's portrayal of Marlow's knowledge. One can note a fundamental difference in *Chance* when one heuristically uses Ricœur's notion of refiguration to interpret the text. If one analyses the pre- con- refiguration heuristically in *Chance*, it becomes apparent that: there is a higher amount of certainty by means of which Marlow conveys his prefiguration and refiguration, which also occurs linguistically in the texts, as suggested in chapter three.

## 4.2 Ontological analysis of *Youth*

Prefiguration in *Time and narrative* relies on the conception that "the composition of the plot is grounded in a preunderstanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character" (Ricœur, 1984:54). With respect to Marlow, he acts as the *being* who composes the plot, and he narrates from a prefigured point, thereby indicating that he has a preunderstanding of the narrative or world of action in Ricœur's terms.

Prefiguration in *Youth* expresses itself through the frame narrator since he conveys that there were four people listening to Marlow's narrative: "There was a director of companies, an accountant, a lawyer, Marlow, and myself" (Y:139). These listeners convey their different life experiences and what kind of prefigured positions they hold. Their unrelated backgrounds point to the many ways to interpret and configure Marlow's narrative. Marlow's prefiguration, in turn, is evident when he starts to narrate his story as follows:

'Yes, I have seen a little of the Eastern seas; but what I remember best is my first voyage there. You fellows know there are those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence. You fight, work, sweat, nearly kill yourself, sometimes do kill yourself, trying to accomplish something—and you can't. Not from any fault of yours (Y:139-140).

From this passage of Marlow's narration, it is possible to notice that he always already begins to narrate from a prefigured and refigured position. He has a preunderstanding of the narrative he wants to tell, as evident in his pronouncement that he remembers his first voyage the best. Furthermore, the image of Marlow as a pessimistic 42-year-old man emphasizes a change in his *being* since his 20-year-old self is described as optimistic about going to the East (Y:140). In other words, there is a negative aspect to his prefiguration of his narrative about his voyage Eastwards. Marlow suggests that voyages are 'ordered for the illustration of

life', which seems to convey through a metaphor that voyages illustrate something about life. His pessimism could also translate into a kind of uncertainty as to how he became so pessimistic.

Marlow configures his own journey to the East and mediates his experiences into a narrative which changes the way his listeners understand him. Marlow makes sense of his narrative by configuring it to his listeners, although it depends on the latter to configure his narrative into a whole and to make sense of it.

The distinct experiences of Marlow create the way in which Marlow's narrative is interpreted by the listeners. Several aspects stand out in terms of his narrative: Marlow is the locus of information and he alone knows the story he relates to the listeners. Because he constitutes such a locus, he is unlike Marlow in *Heart of darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance* since Marlow in *Youth* configures his narrative from one point of view, not from others such as the various narrators in *Lord Jim*. This is significant because it results in a more reliable narrator, unless Marlow's point of view is false.

Next, one can perceive that Marlow has refigured his experiences of the Eastern seas, an act which manifests itself when he explicates the notions of fighting, working and 'trying to accomplish something' yet not having the ability to accomplish anything at all (Y:139). This pessimism recurs throughout Marlow's narrative whenever he makes value judgements on his younger self. The juxtaposition of an optimistic younger Marlow and a pessimistic older one can be cited as an example that indicates the difference between his prefiguration and refiguration.

This juxtaposition points to how he has already refigured his narrative to make sense of it and is able to make certain value judgements on what has happened *before* starting his actual narrative. As mentioned, Marlow makes these pessimistic value judgements at the age of 42, meaning that he was just 20 years old when he first voyaged to the East (Y:140). Another instance where refiguration is most evident in the text occurs when he utters a metaphorical value judgement of youth:

Oh the glamour of youth! Oh the fire of it, more dazzling than the flames of the burning ship, throwing a magic light on the wide earth, leaping audaciously to the sky, presently to be quenched by time, more cruel, more pitiless, more bitter than the sea—and like the flames of the burning ship surrounded by an impenetrable night (Y:160).

Light is used as a metaphor for understanding experiences of a *being-in-the-world*. Metaphors become paths through which Marlow is able to understand experiences and other characters even though metaphors are inherently ambiguous and outside of the rules of language, as Punter suggests (Y:12). The metaphor also portrays the evolution from prefiguration and refiguration in Marlow's *being*.

Effectively, Marlow's refigured and pessimistic understanding of what he had experienced during his trip to the East is manifested through metaphors in the text. In this extract, youth is a refigured metaphorical fire that can be quenched by time, implying that Marlow's experience as a *being-in-the-world* was a youthful fire until time quenched it. Epstein (1996:13) argues that what:

'Youth' actually shows us is a brashly optimistic outlook becoming that of a prematurely ageing raconteur (only forty-two, after all), sardonic and maudlin by turns. The sailor has become the storyteller, aware of the closure of the past and uncertain of the value of his present activity that feeds upon it.

This refigured commentary on youth, to me, suggests a change in Marlow's *being*, since this is not how he first appears when he starts his journey on "one of the happiest days" of his life (Y:140). The refiguration of his experiences has altered his *being* from an optimistic and youthful one as a 20-year-old, to a pessimistic one 22 years later.

Another instance where Marlow appears to allude to something related to ontology and *being* occurs when he ponders what is inside other characters: "it was something in them, something inborn and subtle and everlasting" (Y:159). This refiguration of the sailors suggests that there is something in them that cannot be articulated. Marlow endeavours to articulate it, but seems able only to hint that there is some secret inside them: "There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct—a disclosure of something secret—of that hidden something" (Y:159). His inability to articulate this secret makes clear that he is unable to refigure certain elements from his experiences, for instance, the *being* of other characters.

This instance of refiguration is additionally emphasized through Marlow's sense of regret in gaining his knowledge about how time quenches the fire of youth. He muses that: "Only a moment; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour—of youth! . . . A flick of sunshine upon a strange shore, the time to remember, the time for a sigh, and—good-bye!—Night—Good-bye . . . !" (Y:170). This exclamation describes a moment when refiguration occurs in

Marlow's *being*. It is metaphorized through the instant when the fire of youth disappears into night.

One can notice a shift in his *being* when he states that "...for me all the East is contained in that vision of my youth. It is all in that moment when I opened my young eyes on it" (Y:170). Although he opens his eyes to the East, this action goes hand in hand with an ontological change in his *being* since he becomes completely pessimistic about his journey. His loss of youth displays a transformation in his *being*. This aspect of the text is dominant: the transition from one mode of *being* (a youth) to another mode of *being* (an adult). This aspect is not predominant in *Chance*, since no emphasis is placed on this transition between modes of *being* in Flora.

### 4.3 Ontology and *Heart of darkness*

To use an example of how a character's *being* might change, one could analyse the beginning of Marlow's narrative in *Heart of darkness*: the listeners await Marlow's yarn (HoD:3-5), which makes it clear that they are still in a prefigured position and are going to proceed through the entire process of configuration and refiguration. Marlow acts as a mediator in this regard, between the listener's configuration and refiguration, since he configures the story to the listener from a prefigured position:

'yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the furthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough too—and pitiful—not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light (HoD: 8).

Three distinctions within this paragraph illustrate areas where there are dissimilar points in the process of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. Firstly, prefiguration is implied in the text because Marlow has already travelled to the Congo and understood what happened to him; he has already completed the process of prefiguring, configuring and refiguring the whole journey. As within *Youth*, the prefiguration that is portrayed in the text is to be noted in the unrelated backgrounds of the listeners: the frame narrator, a lawyer, a director of companies, an accountant and Marlow (HoD:139). They all have prefigurations of their own and create meaning from the different lives that they have lived. Their prefigurations are

based on their preunderstanding of life until Marlow starts to narrate and configure his story to them.

Some noteworthy prefigured aspects in *Heart of darkness* are plain to see in the various metaphors of light and darkness. Marlow considers darkness as a starting point in his narrative: “‘And this also,’ said Marlow suddenly, ‘has been one of the dark places of the earth’” (HoD:5). This is furthermore connected to the last darkness in the narrative: “The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness” (HoD:96). This link indicates that Marlow compares the darkness of previous ages to the darkness that seems to lead into England.

Undeniably, this illustrates that Marlow’s preunderstanding of the narrative begins in darkness and ends in darkness. This could be a metaphor for what it is like to experience an epiphany (to gain understanding in a flash). In theoretical terms, the darkness at the beginning of Marlow’s narration and at its end creates a link between preunderstanding and post-understanding. The refiguration of his experiences remains uncertain and inconclusive since he is incapable of understanding, which is also emphasized through the frame narrator’s admission that they are listening to “one of Marlow’s inconclusive experiences” (HoD:8). Thus, the listeners know that Marlow’s prefigured position is based in uncertainty and remains inconclusive. In this way, Marlow’s uncertain prefiguration influences the way in which he configures his narrative.

Configuration seems to be portrayed through the different experiences that he alludes to, namely, ‘I went up that river’ and ‘I first met the poor chap’; these are all moments of experience which he configures and places into an entire narrative for the listeners. The various experiences range from the beginning of his journey, through the middle to its end. These configurational aspects of the text are represented by means of the snake imagery that Marlow uses to describe the river that leads into the Congo (HoD:9). This image makes it possible to trace the configuration of Marlow’s narrative since the narrative, like the metaphorical snake, begins in London and ends in the Congo, with a quick return to London.

The most significant aspect of the snake imagery is the manner in which it establishes a connection between Marlow’s prefiguration and refiguration. The first image illustrates that there is a big river 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” (HoD:9). The journey that Marlow undertakes follows this snake-like river into the Congo. Although there are no other references to it later in the text, it is clear that the framing narration occurs in London and the journey, in the Congo. Narratively though, Marlow starts his narration in London, and it seems as though the journey extends into the Congo and back into London. This is achieved by Marlow’s sudden return to England after his encounter with Kurtz:

there is a period of time which I remember mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire. I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other (HoD:88).

This period of time occurs at the end of Marlow’s journey and at the so-called end of the metaphorical snake, if one takes the previous snake image into account. Accordingly, this expresses that something has altered in Marlow’s attitude after this metaphorical end to his journey.

The well-known *Heart of darkness* is Conrad’s most acclaimed account of the journey metaphor (Jones, 2005:101). Conrad achieved this metaphor “by creating a linguistic texture that privileged metaphors of movement and the human experience of embodiment, exploiting the metaphorical register to influence the narrative situation at the levels of the telling and the told throughout the tale” (Jones, 2005:101). The act of privileging metaphors in order to convey what it is like to be human harks back to Lakoff and Johnson’s concept that metaphors are knowledge.

If metaphors *are* knowledge, it would seem as though Conrad’s snake metaphor and journey comprise a technique through which he describes the process of gaining knowledge of oneself. In effect, Jones explores how Conrad extends “these qualities of the novella’s discourse by developing structural and temporal links between movement phrases in the text, enabling his audience to recognize the relation between Marlow’s literal and epistemological experience” (2005:101). If there is a link between the literal and epistemological experience of Marlow, then there ought to be a link between the metaphors for knowledge and his epistemological experience, and, I argue, the ontological change he experiences.

Another example of metaphor relates to Stubbs’ study of the words *heart*, *dark* and *darkness* which occur throughout the book, but increase in frequency at the very end when the story

becomes intensely dark (Stubbs, 2005:12). However, “the lemmas DREAM <15> and NIGHTMARE <6> are very differently distributed. DREAM occurs twice at the very beginning, then several times in a cluster, when Marlow is *trying to tell* his dream ... and then in a cluster towards the end ... in collocations with Kurtz. In terms of word distribution, Marlow’s dream turns into a nightmare” (Stubbs, 2005:12). The dream’s becoming a nightmare offers a metaphor for the kind of knowledge Marlow gains from his journey. Furthermore, these words express the change as happening to Marlow, not any other character. Therefore, I observe an alteration occurring in Marlow’s *being* as he is configuring his narrative to his listeners. The configurational act, then, acts as a means of portraying how Marlow pieces his experiences together to reconfigure them.

The metaphors that Marlow uses to describe Kurtz become ways in which he refigures his journey into the Congo. The listener, in turn, also becomes able to refigure his narrative into understanding. However, this refiguration remains uncertain and listeners are unable to articulate what kind of change Marlow underwent since they can only see the effect of the narrative on him.

Metaphors as knowledge are evident within *Heart of darkness* because they emphasize prelinguistic experiences (Jones, 2005:103). As readers of the texts, we might miss how Marlow metaphorizes the philosophical register of the narrative on the level of physical experience (Jones, 2005:103). An example of this kind of metaphor occurs after Kurtz’s death and before his return to London, as portrayed through Marlow’s musings on Kurtz’s death and his inability to refigure Kurtz’s *being*:

True, he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all wisdom, and all truth and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the Invisible (HoD:88).

Kurtz dies a physical death, certainly, but his death also represents a metaphorical death of old knowledge. Possibly, the last stride Kurtz takes over the edge offers a metaphor for gaining new knowledge and a new prefigured point that is unattainable for Marlow. It points to a prefigured position that Marlow cannot occupy (because he is not dead), so that he is unable to refigure Kurtz’s position. Kurtz, to some extent, is able to refigure his own *being*, but Marlow is able to withdraw his foot from gaining complete understanding. This is the

reason why the latter is not able to refigure Kurtz's *being* even though he comes close to complete understanding by observing Kurtz's own step into the unknown. Essentially, this metaphor enables Marlow to portray that "the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale" (HoD:6). To put it another way, the journey to this moment of crossing the threshold to a new prefigured position is more meaningful than the end goal (what lies beyond the threshold).

Marlow experiences isolation when he returns to England with his personal understanding of the journey into the Congo: "They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew" (HoD:88-89). That is, *Heart of darkness* seems to emphasize the detrimental effect of gaining understanding. Marlow understands that he will not ever be able to refigure Kurtz's narrative into something completely understandable to anyone. Likewise, this process portrays Marlow's knowledge, uncertainty of what can be known, what remains unknown and the ontological changes he experiences because of this. The text ends in an open-ended fashion in order to portray Marlow's inability to refigure the narrative.

Marlow emphasizes how the narrative has almost refigured his own understanding of the narrative and "the effect on me [him]" (HoD:8) when he states that the experiences "throw a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts" (HoD:8). The effect of some kind of illumination of his thoughts refers to how he has gone through the whole process of pre-, con- and refiguration in order to arrive at the point where the narrative alters his understanding of the entire journey to the Congo – bringing about a change in his ontology.

One should also take note of the emphasized metaphorical nature of how Marlow speaks about the manner in which experience seems to throw a light into his thoughts (HoD:8). He describes that the succession of experiences that lead to the point of refiguration constitute the localities where understanding occurs. Ricœur postulates that these successions of events can be regarded as plot since "plot already exercises, within its own textual field, an integrating and, in this sense, a mediating function, which allows it to bring about, beyond this field, a mediation of a larger amplitude between the preunderstanding and ... postunderstanding of the order of actions" (1984:65). As was remarked in chapter two, plot and configuration are interchangeable; therefore configuration acts in such a fashion as to link prefigured knowledge and refigured knowledge (postunderstanding).

Consequently, as intimated, the listeners configure Marlow's narrative into a whole and create meaning from the events which he narrates. According to Ricœur, configuration also has a sense of an ending in mind "from where the story can be seen as a whole"; he adds that it is in the "act of retelling rather than in that of telling that this structural function of closure can be discerned" (1984:67). This takes shape in Marlow's narrative in the way listeners create a whole picture from it, in the way in which he retells stories and engages in several different retellings. It is therefore possible to conceive that this entire process of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration is circular since the new point of refiguration (the listener's understanding of Marlow's experience) is also the new prefiguration point from which a listener can configure new experiences. Hence, his listeners configure his narrative with him and try to refigure it into something they can understand, except that listeners are not able to do this in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. The only narrative where there is a sense of being able to discern the story as a whole, and where there is closure, is achieved in *Chance*.

Csizmadia argues that "it is only in 'Heart of Darkness' – to limit the comparison to the Marlow texts – that there is a similar return to the frame at the end of the story, but there the effect is not to give a sense of comfort and closure. What we feel is much rather the bleak atmosphere of Marlow's tale spilling over into the frame and continuing to hang in the air" (2015:39). Csizmadia's analysis is correct in the sense that there is no closure at the end of *Heart of darkness*; nevertheless her claim that the tale hangs in the air seems incongruous. Rather, there is a sense that Marlow's tale is going to repeat itself endlessly because of the circular structure of the text and because Marlow seems to call for interpreting Kurtz in the future. Conversely, Peters (2016:101) maintains that "[i]n this epistemological event, one is unsure where Marlow's boundaries end and those of Africa begin, as the landscape projects itself onto Marlow and Marlow projects himself onto the landscape". This sort of projection creates a connection between Marlow's knowledge and a change in his *being*, which becomes a metaphor for the open-endedness of the text, because *being* is always becoming – there is no end to the narrative. This is the most dominant characteristic of *Heart of darkness*; it does not feature in *Chance*.

It would seem as though Conrad portrays a shift in Marlow's *being* in *Heart of darkness* by emphasizing the difference between preunderstanding and postunderstanding. This difference becomes evident in *Heart of darkness* when one examines the transformation of Marlow's

character and the way his attitude and behaviour have completely changed: he sits in the position of a Buddha who narrates something important to his listeners (HoD:7). In terms of this image, it adds emphasis to the narrative and creates a deeper sense of understanding which Conrad portrays metaphorically through Marlow's transformation from a naïve Englishman into a contemplative Buddha.

Taking this metaphorical image and the process of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration into account, *Chance* appears similar to *Heart of darkness* in several aspects: Marlow is also narrating experiences to a listener from an always already point of prefiguration and refiguration, i.e. he already has an understanding of the events that take place in the narrative which he relays. The listener in turn configures what she or he hears into a meaningful whole by interpreting Marlow's experiences into a meaningful narrative. Furthermore, both the listener and Marlow have their own prefigured knowledge of the world, which informs the manner in which they configure his narrative.

#### **4.4 Interpreting ontology in *Lord Jim***

Supposedly, *Lord Jim* revolves around Marlow's knowledge of Jim and his narration of that knowledge to his listeners (Benson, 1991:141). The focus on Marlow's knowledge would suggest that the prefigured aspects in *Lord Jim* mostly relate to Marlow's comprehension of Jim and how his understanding of him increases. Marlow expects that Jim's actions will influence the very fabric of the cosmos and influence the moral and spiritual possibilities therein (Benson, 1991:141). This expectation of Jim's ability to influence the cosmos has an impact on the uncertain prefigured aspects in *Lord Jim*.

Marlow's uncertainty of Jim leads him on a quest to understand the latter's *being*. To understand Jim, Marlow tries to get hold of evidence about Jim, which leads him into conversations with various interpreters, excluding Jim, "Jones (Captain Brierly's first mate), Brierly himself, the French lieutenant, Chester, Marlow's friend Denver, Egström, Stein, Cornelius, Jewel, Brown, and Tamb'itam" (Najder, 2008:31). These interpreters suggest a subjectivist view of reality that informs the way in which Marlow experiences the world. Benson argues that these conversations "become immersions in the depths of Conrad's cosmos" (Benson, 1991:142). The evidence that the various narrators convey to Marlow represents the prefigured aspects that Marlow had obtained before relating and configuring his narrative to his listeners. By so doing, he is configuring the evidence that ought to refigure

Jim's *being* into something understandable, i.e. a new prefigured point. However, the moment of refiguration never occurs in the text. Marlow, in turn, reflects that his preunderstanding of Jim is entirely his own fault:

My fault of course. One has no business really to get interested. It's a weakness of mine. His was of another kind. My weakness consists in not having a discriminating eye for the incidental – for the externals – no eye for the hod of the rag-picker or the fine linen of the next man. Next man – that's it. I have met so many men,' he pursued, with momentary sadness – 'met them too with a certain – certain – impact, let us say; like this fellow, for instance – and in each case all I could see was merely the human being (LJ:73)

What Marlow sees in every person is the human being. His prefiguration at the outset is that everyone he encounters is first and foremost a *being*, which would suggest that Jim is no more and no less. He is a *being* just like everyone else, yet he has an impact on Marlow in one way or another. Marlow, as it were, understands the following: that what everyone shares is the fact of being a human *being*. This moment, as preunderstanding, embodies Marlow's knowledge of Jim and what he shares with other *beings*. It also portrays Marlow's unreliability and uncertainty in the way he describes certain elements of other characters.

Configuration in *Lord Jim* occurs in two main moments when the reader is following Marlow's narration: he configures his uncertain refigured interpretation of Jim to his listeners. They are also busy configuring the various experiences of Marlow into a whole narrative. They listen to Marlow's narrative with their own prefigured experiences of life. Effectively, they 'emplot' Marlow's preunderstanding and post-understanding of the novel since they configure Marlow's narration. Accordingly, they place his narrative in a linear order in their mind in order to make sense of it by grasping the disparate events and bringing them together into a whole.

The listeners assemble Marlow's narration into a complete story that could make sense once it is finished. Essentially, they are placing Marlow's evidence about Jim, that he acquired through other narrators (Brown, Stein etc.), into a whole. The listeners engage in what Ricœur calls drawing "a meaningful story from a diversity of events and incidents" (65). This may be noticed when Marlow deliberates the Frenchman's following remark:

"Mon Dieu! how the time passes!" Nothing could have been more commonplace than this remark; but its utterance coincided for me with a moment of vision. It's extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half shut, with dull ears, with dormant

thoughts. Perhaps it's just as well; and it may be that it is this very dullness that makes life to the incalculable majority so supportable and so welcome. Nevertheless, there can be but few of us who had never known one of these rare moments of awakening when we see, hear, understand ever so much – everything – in a flash – before we fall back again into our agreeable somnolence. I raised my eyes when he spoke, and I saw him as though I had never seen him before. I saw his chin sunk on his breast, the clumsy folds of his coat, his clasped hands, his motionless pose, so curiously suggestive of his having been simply left there. Time had passed indeed: it had overtaken him and gone ahead (LJ:110).

Marlow formulates the following argument for his listeners: that configuration could consist of rare moments of enlightenment. The listeners configure (see, hear and understand) Marlow's narrative in a similar process of enlightenment. The word *see* is also important in this extract because it suggests immediate experience and how a *being* experiences certain situations. This word furthermore emphasizes that 'we' experience the world through the senses such as seeing and hearing, and in so doing, we obtain understanding of the world. The process that Marlow describes transpires in a flash – it is the moment of realizing something or understanding something important that alters the way he experiences the world.

This creates the impression that Marlow's knowledge refers to an ontological issue that manifests in his narrative. The ontological issue becomes evident as soon as the reader is unable to distinguish when Marlow is referring to the external world or the ontological experiences of another character. By way of illustration, Marlow portrays Jim as the last light in the middle of an immense darkness (LJ:257). Marlow's description indicates that the boundary between literal descriptions of Jim, such as his position in reality (light and dark) and the metaphorical descriptions of his *being*, is blurred. It is as if Marlow is describing the nature of Jim's *being*. This might be a reason why language conveys uncertainty since it reflects the internal experience of a character.

An exchange may be noted between Marlow's ability to gain knowledge of the external world and the manner in which that changes his *being*, which is an issue of ontology. For example, Marlow tells his listeners that Jim listened to him: "He heard me out with his head on one side, and I had another glimpse through a rent in the mist in which he moved and had his being" (Conrad, 99). It seems as though this 'being' stands in relation to ontology and seems rather to refer to the *being* of Jim.

The various conversations that Marlow conducts with other narrators convey various kinds of evidence of what Jim fundamentally *is*, in *Lord Jim*, and unearth the definitive relativeness of all knowledge (Peters, 2014:138). Accordingly, these conversations lead into uncertain domains, such as whether Jim *is*, i.e. exists (LJ:165). For instance: at first glance Jim looks like the stereotypical seaman (LJ:5), but this outer semblance does not coincide with his inner reality. This discrepancy leads Marlow to inquire into the semblance of things and Jim's *being*. It follows that there is a difference from the other Marlow texts in what is considered knowledge in *Lord Jim* because the surface knowledge of Jim conflicts with who he actually is:

What interests Marlow, and what constitutes knowledge of the incident, is precisely the opposite of what the inquiry believes to be knowledge. For Marlow, only through understanding its subjective context is it possible to come to a knowledge of the event. Using simply rational or empirical methodology to gain knowledge of human beings is ineffective and naive, because facts alone can never bring about knowledge of events involving human beings (Peters, 1996:7).

The subjectivity of knowledge in this incident makes clear that Marlow's inquiry into Jim is not just superficial like the court inquiry, and Marlow uses other ways in which he obtains evidence to support this subjective type of knowledge. He does not believe that facts can generate the kind of knowledge he is looking for.

Marlow, therefore, continually tries to situate Jim within an epistemological motif that conveys certainty and an ontological space that is unambiguous, but is unable to do so, so that he asks various interpreters, such as Stein, for advice. Stein offers a space within which Jim could fit: "‘He is romantic – romantic,’ he repeated. ‘And that is very bad – very bad.... Very good, too,’ he added. ‘But *is he?*’ I [Marlow] queried" (LJ:165). The space within which Jim fits is easily deduced by Stein, but Marlow seems to go a step further by questioning Jim's existence, with an emphasis on '*is he?*'. Stein offers two questions instead of answers:

“‘*Gewiss,*’ he said, and stood still holding up the candelabrum, but without looking at me. ‘Evident! What is it that by inward pain makes him know himself? What is it that for you and me makes him – exist?’” (LJ:165). One should note the epistemic marker '*know*' and its relation to his inward pain which might be pointing to an ontological change that causes pain. Then, stated differently, the second question can be transformed into the following: What is it that makes him exist for you and me? In this fashion, the emphasis falls on Marlow and Stein, and on how there is a relation between Jim's existence, perceiving, remembering and

refiguring him. In essence, this demonstrates the move from epistemological motifs to ontological matters such as Jim's existence. Then, rather ambiguously, Marlow answers Stein's question in a vision:

At that moment it was difficult to believe in Jim's existence – starting from a country parsonage, blurred by crowds of men as by clouds of dust, silenced by the clashing claims of life and death in a material world – but his imperishable reality came to me with a convincing, with an irresistible force! I saw it vividly, as though in our progress through the lofty silent rooms amongst fleeting gleams of light and the sudden revelation of human figures stealing with flickering flames within unfathomable and pellucid depths, we had approached nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive, obscure, half submerged, in the silent still waters of mystery. 'Perhaps he is,' I admitted with a silent laugh, whose unexpectedly loud reverberation made me lower my voice directly; 'but I am sure you are.' With his head dropping on his breast and the light held high he began to walk again. 'Well – I exist too,' he said (LJ:165-166).

By using the epistemic marker 'perhaps', Marlow suggests that no one can be certain of Jim's existence, because, even though he can remember Jim convincingly, he is still doubtful if he can refigure him completely. Marlow metaphorizes his own progress towards Truth to that of human beings' progress through the vast, dark and unknown spaces of the world – both mental and physical – half there and half not. He suggests that no one knows why they exist or why they are on earth and that the only source of understanding of why we exist is one of fleeting gleams of light – there and gone again. Admittedly, this also epitomizes how Marlow achieves understanding of Jim, even though Jim can approach absolute certainty – Marlow will never fully attain it because of the subject he is trying to understand (another *being*).

Marlow grapples with the *being* of Jim within a larger *Being* and does his best to interpret Jim, but what he is trying to interpret (*being*) remains out of reach forever. In striving to interpret Jim, Marlow portrays, through language, Jim's *being*, even though it is ambiguous and never accurate, which is the point.

On the other hand, the compulsion that Marlow experiences to retell Jim's tale "is rooted not only in character and situation but also, more deeply if more problematically, in the function of language in Conrad's cosmos" (Benson, 1991:144). This seems to indicate that one can perceive how Conrad uses language to function in a manner that perpetuates uncertainty. By means of Marlow's language use Conrad represents that nothing will reveal Jim's *being*

through language; therefore he remains half disclosed and not refigured into understanding. Writing about language, Benson (1991:141-142) speculates that:

Marlow's effort to see what Jim is proceeds by obscured literal seeing of him, typically in dark or misty, often palpable, atmosphere; by listening to what others, including Jim, say about his nature and actions, usually in darkness; and by telling his own story about him, also in darkness. In the account of these experiences distinctions between literal and metaphorical language, between language and experience, and between the material and immaterial, the physical and spiritual in particular, become highly problematical.

This inability to reconcile these binaries seems to be a manifestation of uncertainty in Conrad's texts. Benson relates the manifestation of it to Conrad's cosmos and the ontological ambiguity the irreconcilable binaries maintains by portraying Jim as being able to be a moral being and simultaneously an invisible shade (LJ:146). This proposes that Marlow sees within Jim his own darkness and the possibility of Marlow himself being both moral and an invisible shade. These irreconcilable binaries suggest something about Marlow's ability to refigure Jim's *being*: he is constantly attempting to use language to situate Jim's *being* in order to refigure him. The various metaphors that Marlow uses for Jim comprise a method of refiguring his *being* and emphasizing the uncertainty that language creates when one tries to describe *being*.

Furthermore, Marlow also sees the darkness after Jim's death – much like his blurred life in the beginning. Marlow's interpretive skills delineate *known* spaces such as the physical environment untouched by extreme ambiguities, thus disclosing that Jim still seems to inhabit an unknown space: "He appeared like a creature not only of another kind but of another essence" (LJ:175). The reader never finds this 'essence' and so "deferral ensure[s] that final meaning is suspended indefinitely" (Simmons, 2000:31). This essence is the moment of refiguration which would elucidate a new kind of understanding and prefigured point from which to understand the narrative.

Most noticeable in *Lord Jim* is the word-use that ascribes physical attributes to symbolic spaces. Attributes such as 'creature' suggest another transcendent meaning, strange yet truthful in its rendering of Jim's unknown space when Marlow endeavours to interpret him. This emphasizes the transformative power of *being*, since Jim is seeking "a mode of being" that "brings to light the fundamental inadequacies of all modes of (human) being" (Raval, 1981:391). Even though Marlow does not reach epistemological certainty and is unable to

reconfigure Jim's *being* into something understandable, retelling Jim's tale does influence how much he is able to understand Jim.

Furthermore, Marlow is willing to reconfigure his narrative more than once, and in so doing he interprets and reinterprets his experiences of Jim to say something of his *being*. However, the following extract indicates that Marlow has refigured Jim more than once: "And later on, many times, in distant parts of the world, Marlow showed himself willing to remember Jim, to remember him at length, in detail and audibly" (LJ:27). He is willing to retell Jim's story because he is refiguring Jim's *being* with every configuration. That is to say, Marlow is trying to reach a point where Jim's *being* is refigured and completely understandable in order to configure it to his listeners. After Marlow's narration to his listeners they disperse:

Men drifted off the verandah in pairs or alone without loss of time, without offering a remark, as if the last image of that incomplete story, had made discussion in vain and comment impossible. Each of them seemed to carry away his own impression, to carry it away with him like a secret; but there was only one man of all these listeners who was ever to hear the last word of the story (LJ:257).

This clearly shows that even the listeners are incapable of refiguring Marlow's narrative into something understandable. The only person who possibly comes to know the whole story is a man who receives a letter from Marlow (LJ:257-258). This letter contains the last moments of Jim, and would suggest that this man might be able to understand Jim and be able to refigure Marlow's narration; except that this does not happen since Marlow insists on Jim being inscrutable at heart (318) to the very end. Thus, Marlow's narration never reaches an absolute, certain, point from which to refigure Jim's *being*.

Still, Marlow is unable to portray absolute certainty because the prefigured aspects that he possesses to configure Jim's *being* never refigure into something substantially true about his *being*. Marlow is unable to accurately portray Jim's *being* through language (the letter) because every time Marlow refigures Jim's *being* (obtains understanding of Jim's *being*) it looks the same as all his previous prefigurations. In other words, the preunderstanding that Marlow has of Jim's *being* stems from previous refigurations of Jim, but his preunderstanding remains the same with every telling of Jim's story. This remains the case because he is always incapable of saying something true about Jim's *being* and refiguring it into a new prefiguration. For example, the end of Marlow's tale suggests exactly this notion:

There are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honour there are moments too when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades. 'Who knows? He is gone, inscrutable at heart' (LJ:318)

If Marlow is willing to recount Jim's tale over and over (LJ:27), the way in which he ends Jim's tale suggests the following: that his refiguration of Jim's *being* does not produce any new prefigured aspects, such as complete understanding. Accordingly, this does not form a certainty from which Marlow would be able to configure Jim's *being* in a succeeding tale. These two aspects are manifested in the passage above as follows: even though Marlow has reached the end of his narrative, Jim's existence is still immense and forceful, while on other days he seems to be an unreal shade. Therefore, Marlow remains incapable of refiguring Jim's *being*, which suggests that Marlow's refiguration in this tale will remain uncertain even if he could narrate the story in the future. The fact that only one person has a letter containing the whole narrative makes these ontological motifs even more distinct and the foremost ontological aspect in *Lord Jim*. I will now show why *Chance* is different in terms of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

#### **4.5 The ontological motifs in *Chance***

These examples of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration are all taken from Conrad's earlier written and published texts, *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*. His later text, *Chance*, published in 1912 stand out in terms of his previous Marlow texts even though it was envisaged at the same time as the earlier ones. A similarity exists between the texts as regards the various ways in which characters move between land and sea in *Chance*, and the texts' portrayal of contrasting epistemological and psychological voyages (Jones, 2008:100). Even though an epistemological motif, such as certainty, is present in *Chance* it comes across as extremely dissimilar to his earlier Marlow works.

At *Chance*'s "centre is the figure of Flora de Barral. Marlow's narrative tracks back from her appearance on the edge of the cliff to the events that brought her there: her father's financial success and failure; her traumatic rejection by her governess" and the "subsequent ontological insecurity that the various episodes of her life reinforce" (Hampson, 1996:146). These ontological insecurities appear to be the locus where changes occur in relation to the other Marlow texts.

In *Chance*, Marlow as previously suggested, stands out in the way he claims to have certainty of Flora. Marlow claims that he and his listener possess an inner knowledge of Flora and know her history: “I—we—have already the inner knowledge. We know the history of Flora de Barral” (C:196). It should be noted that there are no uncertain epistemic words to suggest that Marlow is uncertain of his prefigured understanding of Flora. Therefore, Marlow’s prefigured standing is certain because of this, which emphasizes a distinct change from the other Marlow texts, since he is uncertain each time he starts narrating his other narratives. According to Martin Ray, in the introduction to *Chance*:

the older Marlow returns a changed man. His role in *Chance* is much more passive than on his earlier appearances; he tells us little of his own life and he intervenes in the affairs of Flora much less than he did with *Lord Jim*. Marlow’s task here is rather to assemble the facts, to reach and convey reflective and philosophic understanding, of Flora, based on his imaginative interpretation of the often indirect knowledge which he receives about her (2008:xii).

This already signals certain prefigured aspects which go amiss in *Chance* since the reader knows little of Marlow’s life. Marlow intervenes less than he does with characters in other Marlow texts and bases his knowledge of Flora on imaginative and indirect information. This is not sufficient evidence for all the claims he makes about her life – he portrays certainty in his prefigured position that is based on secondary evidence.

The reason why Marlow eventually became interested in Flora in *Chance* originates from a “[c]uriosity about daily facts, about daily things” (C:34). This makes it evident that Marlow’s preunderstanding of Flora was not originally of her as a *being*, but of daily facts. This inquiry into the factuality of daily things is dissimilar to the view of facts in *Lord Jim*, where facts could not elucidate or explain anything (LJ:24). For this reason, the certainty of Marlow’s prefigured point from which he is able to narrate Flora’s story in *Chance* is in fact not the same as in the other Marlow texts. This certainty with which he conveys his prefigured position in relation to Flora becomes configured in his narrative of her *being*.

There is another distinction of prefiguration in *Chance* that relates to the knowledge which Marlow conveys, namely, the way he appears to the listener. In *Youth* the effect that understanding has on Marlow is portrayed through his pessimism (Y:139), while in *Heart of Darkness* it is conveyed through his behaviour as a “Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower” (HoD:7) and in *Lord Jim* it is depicted through the way in which

his voice seems to speak from the past (LJ:28). In *Chance* there is no similar image that conveys the detrimental prefigured knowledge that Marlow has obtained.

Fundamentally, in *Chance*, Marlow does not appear transformed after his experiences with Flora, which stands in clear contrast to the extremely personal transformations that Marlow underwent in the other Marlow texts. In practical terms, the anxiety of gaining knowledge and hesitancy to configure Flora is less than in the other Marlow texts. This demonstrates that there is little to no change in Marlow's *being*: he appears to happily reminisce with another character about their young and proud lives on board various ships (C:8), thereby suggesting that he is unaffected by Flora's narrative, and that no major refiguration takes place in terms of his *being*.

Marlow's configuration of Flora's narrative in *Chance* depicts a level of absolute certainty because of his prefigured certainty before narrating it. He seems to be certain of his narrative because he relates the story to the listener with a sense of knowing who and what she is (C:196) and without fear of or uncertainty about the truth. The words he uses of Flora illustrate that he knows her as a character and is able to think in the way she is thinking; to some degree, he is configuring her story for her as follows: "The difficulty here is to keep steadily in view the then conditions of her existence, a combination of dreariness and horror" (C: 167). The phrase "then conditions" indicates that the conditions of her existence have altered since 'then'. This change is, as we know after reading the text, a happy one because she has a future with Powell (C:329). Consequently, the dreariness and horror have changed since her horrific encounter with her governess and her failed suicide attempt (C:161). Marlow and Flora are in conversation about how she was going to kill herself and he is in a laughing mood when they discuss it:

'Oh, you did? To take that jump? You are a determined young person. Well, what happened that time?'

'An almost imperceptible alteration in her bearing; a slight droop of her head perhaps—a mere nothing—made her look more demure than ever.

'I had left the cottage,' she began a little hurriedly. 'I was walking along the road—you know, the road. I had made up my mind I was not coming back this time.'

'I won't deny that these words spoken from under the brim of her hat (oh yes, certainly, her head was down—she had put it down) gave me a thrill; for indeed I had never doubted her sincerity. It could never have been a make-believe despair.

‘Yes,’ I whispered. ‘You were going along the road.’

‘When ...’ Again she hesitated with an effect of innocent shyness worlds asunder from tragic issues; then glided on ... ‘When suddenly Captain Anthony came through the gate out of a field.’

‘I coughed down the beginning of a most improper fit of laughter, and felt ashamed of myself (C:161).

His configured narration of her darkest moment, when she is walking to the place where she intends to kill herself, seems out of place for Marlow, who is usually a serious character. He is not serious towards her as he is towards other characters in the earlier Marlow texts. This is uncharacteristic of him, which creates a sense of distrust because the listener can gather from this episode that even though Marlow is ashamed of his reaction. It still has an influence on the listener’s information concerning Flora’s character. Marlow’s configuration as mediation between prefiguration and refiguration is more removed from Flora as a *being*. His attitude toward her is belittling, as if he is not taking her ‘horror’ seriously, which is incompatible with his attitude toward the main characters in Conrad’s other Marlow texts.

Marlow’s refiguration of Flora is optimistic because he describes how she ends up happily, sharing her future with Powell. Even though the reader is unable to be sure whether she will be happy, the fact that there is a chance opens the possibility of certainty and makes it feasible to refigure her narrative. Her horrific ordeal seems to be behind her, as if it had never happened; this is also portrayed through Marlow’s attitude at the end of the narrative, which remains unchanged. He is unchanged as a *being* since he does not in any way expand on how she is unknowable and impenetrable at heart as he does about the main characters in *Heart of darkness* or *Lord Jim*.

Malow never asks the equivalent of the question he poses in *Lord Jim*: “‘But *is he?*’ I [Marlow] queried” (LJ:165) about Flora in *Chance*. There is an ontological gap when Marlow inquires into Flora’s character: he does not seem to want to understand her *being* as such, but he does want to understand her. He places the irregular pieces of her story together, but it remains on a superficial level. This superficiality can be observed in the manner in which he interrupts Flora: ‘I quite understand,’ I said. But her firm yet self-conscious gaze became doubtful. ‘I do,’ I insisted. ‘I understand perfectly that it was not of death that you were afraid.’” (C:177). Marlow’s insistence on knowing and understanding illustrates that he has refigured her story even before she configures it to him. He appears to be making a leap from

configuration to refiguration, thereby indicating that there is an ontological gap in Marlow's narration; this is exactly where *Chance* is distinguishable from the other Marlow texts. Marlow's interest here is not in Flora's *being*; it is a pure epistemological inquiry into the facts of her story.

By Flora's own admission, she has changed for the better since she has learned of her father's money laundering, while surviving her governess screaming at her and her failed suicide attempt: "I am not even mad now. Yes, I have been happy. But I remember also the time when I was unhappy beyond endurance, beyond desperation. Yes. You remember that. And later on, too" (C:329). She admits that she has been both happy and unhappy; yet, there is a sense of optimism and change in her when she declares the following, in relation to Powell: "'Oh, I am brave enough,' she said with a sigh" (C:329). The next day Marlow sees Flora with Powell and she bids them: "'*bon voyage*' in a most friendly but tremulous tone" (C:330). Her happy ending makes it clear that she and Marlow has refigured her *being* into complete understanding and close to absolute certainty. This epistemological motif, certainty, is used very differently from the other Marlow texts that end in death, despair and the unknown, perhaps because Conrad wanted to broaden his reader-base.

Marlow's narration refigures his listener's understanding of Flora in a positive fashion, which is unlike the refiguration in *Lord Jim* (LJ:257), where listeners are unable to make sense of or to make comments on Marlow's narrative. In *Chance*, Marlow's uninterested stance toward the *being* of Flora is further portrayed in his off handed way of ending his narrative: "I am not afraid of going to church with a friend. Hang it all, for all my belief in Chance I am not exactly a pagan ...." (C:330). This ending is important to note, because Marlow admits to a modicum of certainty when he states that he is not afraid of going to church. His attitude towards chance points to an alteration in his belief system: that there might be a form of truth that can be attained. This shows that Marlow does believe in a level of certainty, and not entirely in uncertainty as suggested through his use of 'pagan' in the sentence. This is an epistemological and ontological shift in Conrad's Marlow texts, since none of the other texts admit to something so religious and certain.

The fashion in which Marlow ends Flora's tale therefore indicates that his refiguration of Flora's *being* does produce new prefigured aspects, such as complete understanding of the tale and a sense of knowing that Flora has a chance at happiness. This chance at 'something more' is completely different from the portrayal of other characters in Conrad's Marlow

texts. These prefigured aspects become an understanding of something about Flora's *being* and it does not seem necessary for Marlow to recount this narrative. His greater amount of certainty, that is portrayed in his prefiguration, manifests in the refiguration of his narration. This results in a bravery in the face of uncertainty, since Marlow is not afraid of the knowledge he gains from inquiring into Flora's *being*.

Accordingly, even though there is a link missing in the configurational aspect of Marlow's narration, i.e. he vanishes from a narrative position, he is still able to refigure Flora's narrative into new understanding. One should also notice that the frame narrator does not portray Marlow as willing to narrate Flora's story again, consequently making this response different to Marlow's willingness to recount Jim's story in different places and in full detail (LJ:27).

Therefore, there are ontological dissimilarities in the prefiguration, configuration and refiguration in *Chance* when one compares it to the other Marlow texts. Effectively, this could indicate an ontological shift in *Chance*.

#### **4.6 Concluding remarks**

Through a heuristic examination of Conrad's texts and the use of Paul Ricœur's theories of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration it became possible to determine that *Chance* is indeed ontologically distinguishable from the other Marlow texts. Through Marlow's narrative Conrad represents the following: that saying something true about another *being* can only occur in a metaphorical manner. Only through language and narrative can one come near to a semblance of something true about a *being-in-the-world*. Marlow informs us of this in *Heart of darkness* when he says that "to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that, sometimes, are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (HoD:6). The meaning therefore can be found on the outside of the narrative, which suggests that one can only create a meaning for the narrative after the hindsight of its ending. In practice, only when Marlow has refigured the whole narrative, will he and the reader be able to create an understanding of it.

The ontological motifs that are prevalent, and the way in which *Chance* is different, may be noted in the text's change in refiguration. *Chance* indicates that refiguration is possible, whereas the other Marlow texts deny this possibility. This distinction manifests itself in

several ways, especially the manner in which Marlow is portrayed in *Chance* compared to the other Marlow texts. The fashion in which Conrad represents how Marlow gains knowledge and how it manifests in his changed behaviour portrays a change in *being*, except in *Chance* where no major change is evident. The fact that his behaviour does not radically alter in *Chance* suggests that the knowledge he gained does not transform his *being*. He has refigured Flora's narrative and is able to live with the knowledge he gained from it in a better way. The deepening of experience and enriched understanding does not occur in *Chance*. In essence, the certainty with which Marlow is configuring his narrative to the listener forms a part of the reason why I observe an ontological motif change in *Chance* in terms of the other Marlow texts.

By my comparison of *Chance* to the earlier Marlow texts, the unattractiveness of truth becomes evident when Conrad portrays Marlow's ambivalence towards truth in *Heart of darkness*: he tells a lie to Kurtz's Intended and maintains her in a saving illusion (HoD:96). This kind of ambivalence towards truth, and Marlow's fear of truth and gaining understanding, are absent from the novel, *Chance*. Marlow is unafraid of refiguring his understanding of his experiences in *Chance* and gaining knowledge about matters of ontology. He exhibits a willingness to understand Flora and his experiences in this regard through his lack of fear in configuring his narrative to the listener. This chapter set out to portray the ontological motifs in the Marlow texts and I now wish to conclude by summarising what this dissertation set out at the beginning.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Epistemology

I set out to analyse how Joseph Conrad represents epistemological motifs and ontological ambiguity in the narratives of *Youth* (1898), *Heart of darkness* (1898-9), *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Chance* (1912). I discovered that using quantitative methods revealed that the epistemological changes in Conrad's Marlow texts are miniscule and statistically, it seems, unnoticeable. However, I have established that certain qualitative interpretations illuminate a number of changes in the epistemic word-use in *Chance* in comparison to the other Marlow texts. This is relevant since, as noted, *Chance* was conceived at about the same period as the other Marlow texts, which might indicate a shift in the way Conrad uses epistemological motifs.

The first lemma, *KNOW*, makes clear that there are certain differences in Marlow's willingness to say that he knows a character. There are fewer examples where Marlow says he knows a character in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and in *Lord Jim* than in *Chance*. Marlow is more inclined to say that he knows the main character, Flora, in *Chance*. This indicates that there are examples of a change in certain epistemological motifs in Conrad's Marlow texts, but they seem statistically unnoticeable. Qualitatively speaking, this alteration, albeit small, in the Marlow texts indicates that certainty plays a large part in Marlow's understanding of a character. *Chance* depicts Marlow as a character with certainty about other characters such as Flora. He relies more on other characters as sources for his knowledge, which is relatively similar to the other Marlow texts, except that these other works portray him as more engaged with the main characters. This indicates a shift in how he knows and gains information about characters.

Marlow constantly questions his own knowledge in *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*, but this kind of questioning decreases in *Chance*. Knowledge in *Chance* relates more to other characters' ability to know than Marlow's ability in this regard. For example, there is an indication that Marlow does not think Flora is capable of knowing herself (C:246). This stands in contrast to Flora's male counterparts in *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*, who appear to know who they are. This motif change in the Marlow texts is important because *Chance* falls within the modernist literature timeframe, yet it is different to what is considered typically modernist, such as Conrad's *Heart of darkness* which portrays more uncertainty.

*UNDERSTAND*, the lemma I analyzed next, is employed similarly to *KNOW*, since Marlow uses it ambiguously when he describes characters. There is no clear indication that he completely understands any character; in addition, he questions the listener's ability to understand his narrative. There are instances where other characters claim comprehension of certain situations, such as Stein who claims an understanding of Jim, but they are never related to Marlow's understanding of characters. These examples are less clear in *Chance*, since Marlow asserts that he understands Flora (C:177), an attitude which is dissimilar to the other Marlow texts. This emphasizes my view of the difference in the epistemological motifs in the Marlow texts in relation to *Chance*. Moreover, this alteration is evident in Marlow's attitude towards understanding, since he perceives it as harmful to the intellect (C:50) in *Chance*.

Furthermore, the lemma *THINK* draws attention to what characters think about and how their thinking is portrayed through language. Marlow is able to think several thoughts in one experience (*Youth*, 155) which formulates, through language, a way of gaining certainty about an experience. In turn, *THINK* best describes uncertainty since it is still in the process of happening and not a fact. The most prominent instance in this regard is Marlow's description of a character's thought process: for example, thinking about a sensation does not mean it is actually happening. Marlow shows that Flora is unable to think when something traumatic happens to her (C:94) whereas characters in the other Marlow texts appear to retain their ability to think rationally (LJ:102). This variance further leads me to observe an alteration in the epistemological motifs in *Chance*.

The noun I analyzed, *TRUTH*, portrays what characters are trying to gain through knowing, understanding and thinking. They, including Marlow, are trying to arrive at the truth of everything that happens to them. Marlow is depicted as avoiding any claim of truth in the Marlow texts and describing it as something that is out of reach. There are instances where Marlow seems to know where truth resides: for example, in *Heart of darkness*, truth is "over the threshold of the Invisible" (HoD:88). This suggests that truth can be found in anything unknown that becomes known; in Kurtz's case, he gains truth by dying.

In contrast, *Chance* portrays a clear and logical method of gaining truth through a "series of logically deducted verisimilitudes" (C:66). This, and various characters who claim truth and a sense of absolute "Gospel truth" (C:329), further emphasize why I postulate that there is a distinction between the epistemological motifs in *Chance* and those in the other Marlow

texts. Even though the statistical element yields little to no difference in the epistemic uses of these lemmas between the Marlow texts, there does seem to be a statistical deviation when one compares *Chance* to the non-Marlow novels. The qualitative interpretations convey distinct and important differences between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts. I have shown in chapter three how epistemic lemmas that denote (un)certainty are linguistically portrayed in the texts and that there are certain differences in the way in which they are used.

Qualitatively, chapter three suggests that there are differences in epistemological motif between *Chance* and the other Marlow texts, which is why I utilize a more qualitative approach in chapter four to analyse the Marlow texts in terms of ontology. Chapter four focusses on the ontological element in my dissertation and employs Paul Ricœur's threefold mimesis heuristically to analyze these texts. This use of Ricœur's theory conveys the interchange between epistemology and ontology in the Marlow texts. It is also necessary to recall that chapter four elucidates how *Chance* is ontologically different to the other Marlow texts.

## 5.2 Ontology

An increase in the epistemological motif, namely certainty, in *Chance* seems to become apparent. This increase is apparent after Marlow's interpretation of Flora in the seventh chapter of *Chance*. The prefigured point from which Marlow conveys his narrative in *Chance* is as follows in the second part of the novel: "I—we—have already the inner knowledge. We know the history of Flora de Barral" (C:196). As I have shown in chapter three, this claim of possessing the 'inner knowledge' indicates that Marlow interprets Flora's narrative without any uncertainty. Effectively, Marlow configures his narrative from an absolute, certain, position.

Marlow's insistence on '*knowing*' expresses a higher level of certainty from which he has refigured his experiences. Consequently, he is speaking from a refigured position: prefiguration with certainty. This makes it apparent that the understanding he has gained from his experiences (refiguration) has little to no effect on his prefigured knowledge as a *being-in-the-world*. Marlow is not anxious about configuring Flora's *being*, which is unlike Marlow in terms of the other Marlow texts. This, in turn, forms a basis of absolute certainty from which he configures his narrative in *Chance*. Contrastingly, Marlow in the other Marlow

texts appears to be more concerned with trying to understand a character, questioning their existence and querying why they seem fundamentally changed after a traumatic experience.

The way in which Marlow and the listener refigure the narrative lacks a sense of ‘fear of understanding’ because they have prefigured and refigured the story with certainty. In other words, Marlow’s fear of uncertainty is missing; for this reason, *Chance* is antithetical to the usual way in which Conrad portrays the unattractiveness of truth and the undesirability of knowledge through this narrator (Freedman, 2010:5).

Firstly, it is necessary to understand how the interaction between epistemology and ontology is manifested in the language that characters, mostly Marlow, use. I have attempted to show that it manifests itself through the various metaphors for Marlow as a *being* and his own use of metaphors in regard to other characters. I analyzed the most important pre-, con- and refigured aspects in *Youth* and *Heart of darkness*, although they are not my main focus. I paid close attention to *Lord Jim* and *Chance* in order to point up the major differences between pre-, con- and refiguration, heuristically speaking. By giving examples from *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* in relation to prefiguration, configuration and refiguration, I established fundamental differences between them and *Chance*.

Using prefiguration, configuration and refiguration heuristically, I demonstrate that the Marlow texts portray how interpretation leads to a change in the *being* of a character. For example, Marlow in *Youth* conveys how certain experiences, such as his trip to the East, have altered him from being an optimist to a pessimist. This change in his mode of *being*, a reversal nonetheless, portrays an interchange between epistemology and ontology, since the way in which Marlow gains knowledge and certainty of other characters directly affects his *being*.

Prefiguration within *Youth*, *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim* appears to remain the same in the sense that, respectively, characters have knowledge and pre-understand certain things about their world. However, they do not make presumptuous claims that they irrevocably understand other characters. This aspect, though, does occur in *Chance*. Marlow claims pre-understanding of Flora (C:196) which influences the prefiguration of listeners and readers and juxtaposes it to the other Marlow texts. If readers have only read *Chance*, these epistemological and ontological motif changes will go unnoticed. Subsequently, the readers’

preunderstanding and postunderstanding will influence the way in which s/he reads the Marlow texts.

In turn, configuration in the earlier Marlow texts links what Marlow knows and understands to the metaphors he uses to explain how he acquires that understanding. *Heart of darkness* markedly employs several metaphors of knowledge to describe how Marlow obtains knowledge, either through snake metaphors or light and darkness. The effect of Marlow's journey into the Congo is intense and changes him completely, so that he is much more aware of the anxiety and detrimental effect of gaining knowledge – which in essence alters his *being* – whereas these configurational elements do not occur in *Chance*. The journey metaphor is lacking in it and is not prominent as in the other Marlow texts, which indicates an ontological dissimilarity.

Furthermore, the features in *Chance* that denote refiguration are distinct in comparison to the earlier Marlow texts. The first and most dominant aspect appears to be manifest in Marlow's ability and willingness to interpret Flora without the anxiety of gaining new knowledge. Interpretatively, Marlow is able to refigure his narrative of her in such a manner that it reaffirms his certainty of her and his own *being*. This certainty with which he is able to interpret her narrative causes no major change in his *being* – in the manner with which it is altered in the other Marlow texts. Marlow's loss of anxiety is distinct in *Chance*, which thereby has an influence on how his *being* is portrayed.

### **5.3 Literary implications of this dissertation and areas for further exploration**

This study indicates that there might be a link between Conrad's use of epistemology and ontology in his Marlow texts and that *Chance* stands out in its use of epistemological and ontological motifs. The combination of empirical evidence and qualitative interpretations made it possible to attest that certain critics are correct in some respects, in their views that *Chance* seems to deviate from Conrad's other Marlow texts even though their genesis stems from approximately the same period. This dissertation identifies certain epistemological and ontological motif changes that add to their interpretations. My empirical method made it possible to substantiate these claims in a more objective manner, not by subjectively choosing purple passages for analysis.

One potential future study would be to compare the quantitative aspects to other Conrad texts, to determine whether there are broader epistemological differences in Conrad's entire

oeuvre. It would be fascinating to analyse the entire epistemic lemmas of the non-Marlow texts in comparison to the Marlow texts, to investigate whether there is a 'decline in Conrad's writing' and if it can be attributed to an 'epistemological decline' across all his texts.

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## ANNEXURE A: EPISTEMIC WORDLIST OF THE MARLOW TEXTS

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
About	4	9	23	17
According [to]	1	1	4	5
Actual	0	0	2	4
Actually	1	3	8	20
Almost	3	13	42	68
Apparent	0	0	2	2
Apparently	1	6	16	15
Appear	0	4	8	9
Appearance	1	5	19	22
Appeared	4	16	33	30
Appearing	0	1	1	0
Appears	1	5	12	4
Arguably	0	0	0	0
Assume	0	0	0	4
Assumed	0	1	4	4
Assumes	0	0	0	0
Assuming	0	0	2	0
Assumption	0	0	2	3
Aware	4	8	21	28
Belief	0	8	16	6
Believe	7	22	83	78
Believed	0	4	20	17
Believes	0	0	1	1
Beyond	2	8	11	14
Blur	0	0	1	0
Blurred	0	2	5	1
Blurring	0	0	0	0
Blurry	0	0	0	0
Blurs	0	0	0	0
Can	7	43	104	103
Certain	0	9	29	83
Certainly	2	8	10	40
Certainty	0	0	0	1
Comparatively	1	1	0	6
Conclude	0	0	1	6
Conclusion	0	1	3	9
Conscious	1	1	4	15
Consciously	1	0	3	3
Convince	0	0	0	2
Convinced	1	2	5	9
Convincing	0	0	2	0
Could	31	110	385	391
Curiosity	1	4	7	24
Curious	0	9	14	7
Curiously	0	2	4	5
Dawn	0	0	8	5
Dawned	1	1	3	3
Dawning	0	0	0	0

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Dawns	0	1	0	0
Deceitful	1	1	3	0
Deceive	0	0	0	0
Deceived	0	0	3	2
Deceives	0	0	0	0
Deception	0	0	4	3
Deceptions	1	0	0	1
Decide	0	0	2	0
Decided	1	1	5	5
Decidedly	0	0	0	2
Decides	0	0	0	0
Definitely	0	0	2	2
Delusion	1	1	1	2
Dishonest	1	0	0	0
Dishonestly	0	0	0	0
Dishonour	0	1	1	1
Distinct	0	3	19	5
Distinctly	1	1	9	15
Doubt	3	13	51	43
Doubted	0	0	2	9
Doubtfully	0	0	1	5
Doubting	0	0	1	1
Dream	2	11	24	6
Enigma	1	2	1	0
Evident	0	3	7	2
Evidently	1	6	12	7
Exactly	1	13	13	32
Expect	1	5	23	20
Expectant	0	1	1	5
Expectation	0	2	2	3
Expected	7	8	17	40
Expecting	0	1	7	8
Expects	0	0	0	0
Fact	2	11	32	74
Facts	0	3	15	13
Factually	0	0	0	0
Fathom	2	0	3	1
Fathomable	0	0	0	0
Fathomed	0	0	0	1
Fathoming	0	0	0	1
Fear	0	8	62	20
Fearful	0	1	2	1
Fearfully	0	1	1	1
Feel	2	7	26	29
Feeling	5	9	31	57
Feelings	0	2	10	30
Feels	0	0	4	5
Felt	6	22	72	119
Figure	0	0	1	0
Forget	2	7	17	30
Forgot	1	7	6	8

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Forgotten	2	3	16	9
Frankly	0	0	5	6
General	0	6	7	23
Generally	1	3	8	22
Glimpse	1	4	13	7
Glimpsed	0	1	1	1
Glimpses	0	0	5	1
Ground	0	6	41	22
Grounds	0	1	6	4
Guess	0	2	6	19
Guessed	0	0	1	4
Guesses	0	0	0	0
Guessing	1	1	0	2
Hid	0	0	0	6
Hidden	2	6	9	7
Hide	0	3	3	3
Hides	0	0	0	0
Hiding	0	0	3	1
Honest	0	1	4	18
Honestly	0	0	3	3
Hypothesis	0	0	1	0
Idea	1	20	35	38
Ideas	0	6	5	10
Ignorance	2	1	7	5
Imaginary	0	0	2	1
Imagination	1	2	16	21
Imaginations	0	0	1	21
Imaginative	0	0	7	4
Imagine	4	13	23	44
Imagined	0	4	6	17
Imagines	0	0	0	2
Imagining	0	0	0	1
Imaginings	0	0	1	1
Immense	3	12	30	10
Immensely	2	1	5	3
Immensity	1	5	10	4
Immutability	0	1	0	0
Immutable	0	0	0	1
Impalpable	1	2	4	1
Impalpably	0	0	0	0
Impenetrable	1	6	5	3
Impenetrably	0	0	0	2
Imperceptible	1	1	2	2
Imperceptibly	1	0	2	0
Implacable	0	1	1	3
Implacably	0	0	0	1
Impossibility	0	1	1	0
Impossible	0	11	29	25
Impossibly	0	0	0	0
Impression	0	4	10	18
Impressions	0	0	3	5

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Improbable	0	1	0	0
Improbably	0	0	0	0
Incomprehensible	1	4	8	5
Incomprehensibly	0	0	1	0
Inconceivable	0	6	8	4
Inconceivably	0	1	0	0
Inconclusive	0	1	0	0
Inconclusively	0	0	0	0
Incontestable	0	0	0	0
Incontestably	0	0	0	0
Incontrovertible	0	0	0	2
Incontrovertibly	0	0	0	0
Indefinable	0	2	2	0
Indefinably	0	0	0	0
Indefinite	0	0	6	1
Indicate	0	0	0	0
Indicated	1	0	1	1
Indicates	0	0	0	0
Indicating	0	0	0	0
Indifference	0	1	7	5
Indifferent	0	1	7	5
Indifferently	0	0	0	0
Indistinct	0	4	5	8
Indistinctly	0	1	0	0
Inexplicable	0	2	8	7
Inexplicably	0	0	0	1
Inexpressible	0	0	2	0
Inextricable	0	1	0	0
Inextricably	0	0	0	0
Inscrutable	0	4	6	4
Inscrutably	0	0	0	0
Insensible	0	1	1	3
Insensibly	0	0	0	0
Interminable	1	2	1	3
Interminably	0	0	1	0
Insight	0	1	0	8
Invisible	3	2	16	8
Invisibly	0	0	0	0
Knew	4	21	58	74
Know	20	87	257	345
Know'd	0	0	0	0
Knoved	0	0	0	0
Knowing	2	3	8	5
Knowingly	0	0	5	0
Knowledgable	0	0	0	0
Knowledge	1	9	22	16
Known	5	4	37	42
Knows	0	7	26	19
Largely	0	0	0	1
Likely	0	1	12	39
Look	1	6	9	14

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Looked	9	23	18	58
Looking	0	1	7	1
Looks	0	1	7	8
Mainly	0	0	3	5
May	4	14	56	85
Maybe	0	4	6	4
Might	5	12	70	98
Mind	7	19	81	116
Minds	0	1	11	5
Must	1	33	88	179
Mystery	0	12	18	12
Mysterious	5	8	27	34
Mysteriously	0	1	5	7
Near	2	27	25	49
Nearly	6	13	24	22
News	0	4	17	10
Notion	0	5	19	27
Notions	0	2	3	6
Observation	0	1	0	5
Observe	0	0	2	9
Observed	1	1	8	30
Observer	0	0	1	1
Observes	0	0	0	0
Observing	0	0	1	7
Opinion	0	4	27	14
Opinions	0	0	1	3
Perhaps	1	29	86	131
Perspective	0	0	1	3
Perspectives	0	0	0	0
Possibility	0	1	2	2
Possible	2	5	23	57
Possibly	0	3	6	16
Probable	0	0	2	3
Probably	1	5	17	24
Prove	0	1	3	1
Proved	0	1	2	3
Proves	0	0	0	0
Puzzle	0	0	0	2
Puzzled	0	1	1	3
Puzzled	0	0	6	4
Puzzles	0	0	0	0
Puzzling	0	1	0	2
Queer	5	3	4	15
Queerly	0	0	1	2
Quite	3	12	33	88
Really	2	17	27	84
Remember	13	15	61	41
Remembered	0	4	23	28
Remembering	0	1	0	10
Remembers	0	0	1	2
Report	2	6	8	3

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Reported	0	1	0	0
Reportedly	0	0	0	0
Reporting	0	0	0	2
Reports	0	0	2	1
Rough	0	0	5	8
Roughly	0	2	1	2
Saw	0	1	7	6
Secret	2	3	26	31
Secretly	0	1	2	3
Secrets	0	4	2	0
See	4	34	59	36
Seeing	0	1	1	1
Seem	1	8	22	38
Seemed	17	69	218	161
Seeming	0	0	0	0
Seemingly	0	0	1	1
Seems	2	2	37	38
Seen	0	1	0	0
Show	2	9	27	11
Showed	2	4	21	10
Showing	1	4	5	13
Shown	0	0	5	3
Shows	0	1	0	1
Should	5	16	44	50
Sign	0	7	25	24
Signed	0	0	1	2
Signing	0	0	0	0
Signs	0	4	5	12
Silence	4	26	57	62
Silenced	0	1	1	5
Silences	0	0	2	0
Silent	4	8	45	47
Silently	0	1	11	6
Struck	2	6	19	23
Suggest	0	0	1	6
Suggested	0	2	4	11
Suggesting	0	0	0	2
Suggestion	0	1	3	12
Suggestions	0	0	1	4
Suggestive	0	1	3	1
Suggests	0	0	0	0
Suppose	2	11	59	66
Supposed	0	5	9	13
Supposedly	0	0	0	0
Sure	2	11	48	22
Surprise	0	6	11	25
Surprised	1	6	11	34
Surprisedly	0	0	0	0
Surprises	0	0	0	3
Surprising	2	1	0	9
Surprisingly	0	0	0	2

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Suspect	0	4	11	10
Suspected	0	1	5	14
Suspectedly	0	0	0	0
Suspecting	0	0	0	0
Suspects	0	0	0	0
Tend	0	0	0	0
Tended	0	1	1	1
Tending	0	0	0	0
Tends	0	0	0	0
Think	15	38	134	202
Thinker	0	0	1	0
Thinkers	0	0	0	0
Thinkin	0	0	0	0
Thinking	3	6	28	47
Thinking's	0	0	0	1
Thinks	0	1	4	10
Thought	14	23	68	121
Thoughtful	0	1	4	4
Thoughtfully	0	0	2	8
Thoughtfulness	0	0	2	1
Thoughtless	0	0	0	0
Thoughtlessly	0	1	0	0
Thoughts	2	8	25	34
True	0	14	50	51
Truer	0	0	1	1
Truest	0	0	0	0
Truly	0	1	4	5
Truth	0	14	58	31
Truthful	0	0	1	1
Truthfully	0	0	1	1
Truthfulness	0	1	2	0
Truthts	0	0	1	0
Truth's	0	0	1	0
Typical	0	2	1	1
Typically	0	0	0	0
Unapproachable	0	1	1	1
Unapproachably	0	0	0	0
Uncanny	0	1	1	0
Uncertain	0	0	4	5
Uncertainly	0	0	0	0
Uncertainty	0	0	0	0
Uncomprehend	0	0	0	0
Uncomprehending	0	0	3	2
Uncomprehending -ly	0	0	0	0
Unconcern	1	0	1	0
Unconcerned	0	2	1	3
Unconnected	0	1	0	1
Unconscious	1	2	8	13
Unconsciously	0	0	3	1
Undeniable	0	0	3	2

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Undeniably	0	0	0	0
Understand	6	21	61	99
Understandable	0	1	0	1
Understandably	0	0	0	0
Understanding	0	0	2	15
Understandingly	0	0	0	0
Understands	0	0	3	1
Understood	1	3	23	28
Undoubtedly	0	0	0	3
Undoubtful	0	0	0	0
Undoubtfully	0	0	0	0
Unexpected	3	4	7	27
Unexpectedly	2	2	8	15
Unexpressed	0	1	3	1
Unextinguishable	0	2	0	0
Unextinguishably	0	0	0	0
Unfamiliar	0	1	2	0
Unfathomable	0	1	3	5
Unfathomably	0	0	0	0
Unfold	0	1	0	0
Unfolded	0	0	2	1
Unfolding	0	0	1	0
Unfolds	0	0	2	0
Unfortunate	0	1	5	7
Unfortunately	0	0	2	2
Unknowable	0	0	1	0
Unknowing	0	0	0	0
Unknowingly	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	4	15	9
Unlikely	0	0	0	3
Unreal	0	2	0	0
Unruffle	0	0	0	0
Unruffled	0	1	1	0
Untrue	0	0	0	1
Vague	0	5	8	14
Vaguely	1	1	7	9
Vanish	0	1	3	7
Vanished	6	10	11	18
Vanishes	0	0	1	1
View	0	1	36	36
Viewed	0	0	1	1
Viewing	0	0	0	0
Views	0	0	1	8
Wisdom	3	4	10	9
Wonder	3	9	29	63
Wondered	0	2	7	21
Wonders	0	0	1	2
Would	40	133	535	449
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>1639</b>	<b>5107</b>	<b>6215</b>
	13426	39370	131669	138262

<b>Epistemic words</b>	<i>Youth</i>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>	<i>Lord Jim</i>	<i>Chance</i>
Normalised frequency of epistemic markers per 10000 words	301	416	388	450