

The Secret Sharer written by Joseph Conrad, centers around a character of a sea captain. Its title and opening paragraphs forecast a story of mystery, isolation, duality, darkness and silence. The novel proves true these predictions revealing thematic and image patterns directly proportional to them. The opening of the novel further reveals dialectics in the novel. The clash between the private and the public world or man versus society, in other words is the primary dialectic. The journey theme or the rite of passage theme also reveal themselves. We see a young and inexperienced captain grow and explore himself and the world around him, and in the process becoming a functional member of a society. The novella may be only fifty pages long but its words speak volumes.

The first indication of a course that a novel may take is its title. The three little words contained in the title give rise to many interpretations. An image generated by the title could be that of a gossip. Since a gossip is someone who tells people's secrets, or in other words is a secret sharer if the word secret is taken for a noun, it is a possibility that this image might come to mind. Another image is that of a person who shares in secrecy, therefore becoming a secret sharer, if the word secret is taken for an adjective. This could be an image of a miser, who generally does not share his wealth, but does so only in secrecy. A secret sharer could also be an imaginary friend. It would be a person who is secretive, and you share your thoughts with them. A Biblical interpretation of the secret sharer could be that of the snake in the garden of Eden. Since the snake shares the ultimate secret of knowledge with Adam and Eve, it could be considered a secret sharer. The connotations of the two main words in the title show a contradiction. A secret has a mysterious somewhat evil connotation, while a sharer has a benevolent and good connotation. This gives rise to a possibility of a good and evil dialectic. The denotation of secret is something kept private, sharing is, however, a public act. This brings to light the dialectic of the public versus the private world.

The opening paragraphs bring to life the world of the work. The place where the characters move and have their being is a sail ship in this novel. The laws that define the character behavior are similar to the laws of a standard ship operation. There is a chain of command that must be respected. Also, there are rules and regulations to the liberties of the shipmates. This is evident in the greetings between the lower officers and the captain. Also, captain's commands must be respected, as they were when he sent the night watchmen away. The laws of the ship do not permit violations. There is a great need for order for a ship to function. Therefore one can assume since the setting is a ship, that the laws will not permit violations. Later on, we find out of Laggett's predicament. There is punishment for breaking a law. Likewise, captain will face punishment if found to be harboring a criminal. Therefore laws do not permit violations. As for deity, there is little influence of God in the novel, so one is not able to judge if the laws permit the belief in God. There are definite links between cause and effect. Captain's are obeyed. The effect of his first order is mistrust from the crew in his abilities. The world is both real and fictional. It is real in the fact there are no supernatural elements, but fictional in the fact that it came from the author's imagination. The world is highly structured due to the fact that it is a ship where there is a clear hierarchy and laws. Furthermore, the world is restricted to a place, but not time. Specific circumstances tie the world to the ship, but time plays no role in it.

The archetypal elements found in the opening paragraphs and throughout the book reveal the hidden meanings and intentions of the author. The "two small clumps of trees" which symbolize generative and degenerative processes, growth, proliferation, consistence and immortality, mark "the mouth of the river Meinam" which in turn symbolizes the rebirth, the flowing of time into eternity and the transitional phases of the life cycle, present the work in miniature. Also, the

mouth of a river is where the salt water meets the fresh water symbolizing the place where the consciousness and the unconsciousness meet. The two trees are an exponent of duality a recurrent theme in the novel. They also reflect the secret partnership to be formed between Leggatt and the captain. Furthermore, the green color of the trees symbolizes growth touching upon the theme of the rite of passage. The captain comes into the sea, an archetypal symbol of spiritual mystery and infinity, death and rebirth, timelessness and eternity, and the unconscious. This marks a beginning of a journey into the unknown for the captain. The sun shining overhead symbolized the law of nature, the creative energy, and the consciousness. The ship can therefore be seen as in a balance between unconsciousness and consciousness. The blue color of the sea symbolizes a positive side, truth and spiritual purity. The land that the captain left behind symbolizes the mother. Further more adding to the growth of the captain.

The pattern of mysteriousness seen in the opening paragraphs of the novel continues to appear throughout it. From the first sentence "a mysterious system of half submerged bamboo fence" the theme is established. Even from the title one can assume a theme of secrecy which directly implies mysteriousness. Furthermore the crew does not know their captain, and the captain does not know his crew. This fact adds to the mystery, especially after the mysterious and strange order not to have a night watch given by the captain. In addition, the names of the ship and the captain are withheld establishing a sense of mystery. The meeting of Leggatt adds yet another mystery. "Mysterious shades of night" progress to "mysterious communication" established between the narrator and Leggatt who "mysteriously" emerged from the sea. Also, the captain's action of hiding Leggatt brings more mystery to the crew. Likewise, Captain Archbold saw in the narrator, "a mysterious similitude to the young fellow he had distrusted and disliked from the first." The character of Leggatt is mysterious in itself. The reader is never fully understands the true nature of Leggatt's actions. Also, the past lives of all characters in the novel are never mentioned or considered.

Another theme clustered throughout the novel is isolation. Same as mystery, isolation is projected in the title and opening paragraphs. Isolation brings about a need for sharing. The first sentence "abandoned forever by some nomad tribe of fisherman now gone to the other end of the ocean; for there was no sign of human habitation as far as the eye could reach," foreshadows the appearance of isolation and seclusion. Further more, the narrator is a stranger to everyone on the ship. As the captain remarked, "my strangeness, which had made me sleepless, had promoted that unconventional arrangement, as if I had expected in those solitary hours of the night to get on terms with the ship of which I knew nothing, manned by men of whom I knew very little more." This isolation is broken by the entrance of yet another stranger, Leggatt. Much like the captain he was also a stranger on his ship. Also, he spent many days locked up in isolation on his former ship, and two nights after that swimming in isolation. Even with this arrival. The captain is still isolated from the crew. The feelings of isolation subside, however. "It's a great satisfaction to have got somebody to understand." Thus, Leggatt was created to break the feeling of isolation for both the captain and himself.

Starting in the opening paragraphs, the patterns of silence and calmness are projected in the novel. "I saw the strait line of the flat shore joined to the stable sea" instills in a reader a scene of calmness and order. "She floated at the starting point of a long journey, very still in an immense stillness ... there was not a sound in her - and around us nothing moved" further adds to the effect. Further on in the novel the captain "was met by the profound silence of the fore end of the ship." When the captain takes his stroll he notices "all was still down there." Everything in the novel from "solemnity of perfect solitude" in atmosphere of the opening paragraphs, to the "silent young man" character of the second mate, to the "stillness of air and water" and "silent play of summer lighting" in nature reflect the world of the novel which is the solemn and silent ship. The captain and Leggatt must abide by these laws of the world, and in order to maintain this artificial silence imposed upon them, they spoke in soft whispers audible only to each other.

The duality theme also exists throughout the novel. However, duality serves a purpose as a factor in the tension and dialectic build up. From the start everything appears in pairs. The title of the novel contains two significant words, who are of equal length, start with the same letter and are nouns. Furthermore, the novel is composed of two books. Also, the opening paragraphs introduce us to the two trees. There are two officers on the deck waiting to welcome the captain to the ship. An officer remarks that he saw a second ship with the setting sun. The captain and Leggatt are two strangers on a ship. Moreover, there is an uncanny resemblance between the two. Also, there are two captains in the novel. The end is marked by a comment "she's round" by the two seamen. Duality throughout the novel serves to show the partnership between Leggatt and the captain. This partnership is formed between opposing characters. As the captain remarked "the dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity ... it was very much like being mad, only it was worse because one was aware of it." The tension formed by this dialectic must be resolved. In order to resolve this problem, the narrator needs to grow up and individuate, to learn how to deal with the opposing force that are tearing him apart. The captain realizes that the partnership has served its purpose and has to end "everything was against us in our secret partnership." Thus when it is resolved both of them can seek "a new destiny."

The theme of darkness tied in with the shadow image clusters plays important role in the novel. As the novel opens the narrator is in a shadow of the sails of the ship. Also, "the side of the ship made an opaque belt of shadow on the darkling glassy shimmer of the sea." When Captain meets Leggatt, he is "glimmering white in the darkness." "A shadowy, dark head, like mine," is used to describe Leggatt. Darkness and shadows are always present when the two are together. The often talk during the night which is the epitome of darkness. Moreover, there is also an inner darkness which is associated with Leggatt's soul. He has killed a man, and that will forever leave a black spot on his soul. The captain knows of Leggatt's actions yet remains strangely detached. Shadows once again come to life at the end of the novel. "The shadow of the land ... the very blackness of it" describes the island's shadow on the ship. This instance is significant since the captain is with the crew.

If one looks at possible Jungian considerations it becomes evident that it ties in the dialectic of private versus public as well as the rite of passage and journey theme, as well as the hero initiation archetype. In the opening paragraphs one finds many references to the journey home. "She floated at the starting point of a long journey." Also there are some references to rebirth. The river is a symbol of rebirth, and if look on this way conception is two weeks ago when the captain got the post, and birth is coming onto a ship. Also, he is in a shadow when he comes on board alone, able to reflect on himself. However, when he comes in contact with the crew he becomes a stranger, and puts up a facade in front of them. This sets up the dialectic between the public and the private world for the captain. He is unable to combine the two. His youth is evident in his inexperienced decisions. The following has to occur to resolve the dialectic. The captain has to grow up and explore himself to be able to deal with the two worlds. This also marks the first stage of the hero initiation, the separation from the crew. Through a Jungian point of view, the captain puts on a mask for the world demonstrating a dominant persona. Through individuation he has to explore the shadow of his personality to balance the two. Next comes the growth phase. When Leggatt comes on board the captain makes an instant connection with his double. Due to his rash behavior we learn of one can say that Leggatt has a strong shadow to his personality. Moreover, the captain cannot see Leggatt's head at first adding to the fact that Leggatt is without reason. Through their conversations in the darkness of the night, the captain explores his soul. He transforms, grows, goes through individuation and moves along his journey, thus tying in the dialectic and the themes. "The dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity" reveals that growth did not come effortlessly to the narrator. The ending of the book brings an end to the dialectic, the journey, the rite of passage and

hero initiation. At the end of the novel the captain is in the shadow with his crew signifying he is able to control both his private and the public world. Also, he makes good decisions and saves himself and the crew, showing significant growth as a leader. With these actions he rejoins the crew as a fully functional member thus ending the hero initiation. Also, the island marks the endpoint of their physical journey as well. Thus, everything comes to an end.

The cosmic implications of the book are positive ones. The theme of positive growth and success are evident in the end of the novel. All of the dialectics are resolved in a good way. Also, all the thematic predictions are tied together and fulfilled. I believe I find an underlying Objective Correlative throughout the novel. All of us have been on the outside looking in sometimes. This is the situation of the captain at the start of his journey. At the end the captain succeeds in his quest, and the reader feels glad that the captain is able to fit in. The reader can relate to the captain's plight, and therefore shares in the joy together with him.

The Secret Sharer written by Joseph Conrad, is a short book that is very near perfection. In the opening paragraphs and the title there is not a word wasted. Each of those words serves to forecast the work in miniature. From the first couple of pages the reader is completely aware of the direction the story is going in. An attentive reader will also notice the themes of duality, darkness, mystery, isolation and silence. He will also notice the dialectics as well as many journey themes both physical and mental. If one pay careful attention the book will open a world as one never saw before.