UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Empire Converses With Conrad:
Case for a Liberating Imaginative Vision

by

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"His most frequent visitors were shadows..."

Joseph Conrad, Victory

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Empire Converses With Conrad: Case for a Liberating Imaginative Vision submitted by M. Ranganai Zinyemba in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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For Ta, Chaki and Ru, who all
wanted to come first - and did.

ABSTRACT

Over the last ten to fifteen years, Third World scholars and critics have shown an increasing interest in Joseph Conrad, particularly his colonial fiction. Many of these scholars and critics either come from, or have lived in Asia, Africa or South America, continents which were until recently colonies of European powers. Conrad's colonial fiction is set in some areas of these three continents.

There are many reasons that could be put forward to explain this emerging interest in Conrad.

The critical viewpoints that are emerging on Conrad's handling of the colonial theme are varied, and some of them dovetail into the canon of traditional critical viewpoints on Conrad's politics. Conrad is regarded as lacking a firm political or philosophical position on matters the Third World considers important; he has been labelled as a white liberal who cannot envisage a viable Third World ideology and is therefore limited in his approach to colonial issues, a conservative, and a racist who confirms European colonial prejudices against colonised peoples, colonised places, and matters affecting them. At the other end of the critical debate, Conrad is regarded as portraying an authentic picture of the colonial world, and lifting, thereby, the veil of ignorance readers back in Europe had on what transpired in the colonies.

In this thesis, I disagree with the critics who have labelled Conrad as a racist and as a white European liberal whose imaginative vision of the Third World colonial situations he writes about is limited. And while I agree with the critics who have found his Third World colonial situations authentic, I am not only or specifically concerned with the authenticity of Conrad's colonial world in this thesis, although this point is important for my argument. Rather, my contribution to the growing body of criticism on Conrad's colonial fiction lies first in examining in one extended study the various voices, most of them new in the area of Conrad criticism, that have spoken or made pronouncements on Conrad's colonial world over the past ten to fifteen or so years; and, second, in arguing and demonstrating that given the context of his time, Conrad's handling of the colonial

theme in its various aspects shows a concerned, searching, questioning and therefore liberating imagination which, in a number of complex ways, seeks to achieve the best possible imaginative vision and moral justice.

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I am grateful to Professors M.Dale Wilkie (my supervisor) and Fred Radford for their ideas, guidance - and patience (at the time it seemed that I, like Kurtz, might never return from the land that stands guard over the remains of Conrad's 'remarkable' man); to Professor Stephen Slemon for a stimulating course on 'Commonwealth Literature and the Re-writing of the Canon'; to Dr Anthony Chennels who first introduced me to Conrad; to the University of Zimbabwe for granting me leave to return to Alberta, and to visit Conrad's Malay Archipelago during the period I was writing the thesis; to Alice (and Ma) for 'holding the fort'; to Zvisineyi for always urging me to 'go back'; and to Patricia for typing the thesis.

CONTENTS

I

INTRODUCTION: CONRAD'S GROWING APPEAL TO THIRD WORLD CRITICS.

In their Introduction to The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (1989), Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observe that more than three-quarters of the world's current population has had its life "shaped by the experience of colonialism," and that this 'shaping' goes beyond the political and economic spheres, which are easy to determine, to include the "perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples" as well[1]. The various forms of the arts are the vehicles for expressing these perceptual frameworks. Writers and critics from the Third World, beginning from the fifties and sixties but largely in the seventies and eighties, have responded to writings about their continents by European writers in a number of ways. They have been spurred on to write "counter-texts" as Chinua Achebe of Nigeria has done in Things Fall Apart in response to Joyce Cary's depiction of an African community in Mister Johnson, and they have also made critical pronouncements on specific texts or writers or both, again as Achebe has done in labelling both Heart of Darkness and Conrad racist[2].

An examination of the state of Conrad criticism shows that over the last two decades, the volume of critical work published in the area of Conrad's colonial fiction has burgeoned, perhaps more than any other single area of Conrad criticism, and that the volume of criticai material produced by Third World critics in the area of Conrad's colonial fiction has grown more than in any previous period.

This increase in output from Third World critics coincides with the period when

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[1]Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back (London & New York: Routeledge, 1989) p.1

[2]Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," Massachusetts Review, 18 (1977), p.788

the majority of Third World countries attained their political independence, beginning with India in 1947 and thereafter Ghana in 1957. While it could be argued that the output increased because the rate of literacy in these countries increased dramatically after the attainment of political independence, that argument does not explain the particular interest in Conrad. This aspect needs to be explored further.

It has become a critical cliché that Conrad easily attracts labels on his work and on himself, and oftentimes superlatives from critics who feel unusually moved one way or the other. F.R. Leavis in 1948 included Conrad in his famous "Great Tradition" of what he believed were the greatest novelists in English[3]. In the first book published about Conrad, Richard Curle in 1914 remarked that Conrad's work, which was of the greatest quality and distinct from the works of his contemporary writers in England such as Kipling, "marked a new epoch."[4] Similarly, and nearer to our time, Robert Hamner in 1990 described Conrad's works set "in the outposts of Empire" as "the best" Conrad ever wrote, and said that these works are "the repository of his [Conrad's] right to remain a major figure in English literature."[5]

Third World scholars and critics find Conrad appealing for other reasons as well, some of which are particular to their world and historical experience. In his study of Heart of Darkness (1991), Robert Burden poses this most relevant question: "What then of the post-colonialist reader? After the Congo, Algeria, Rhodesia, Vietnam, and Nicaragua: how does this reader take Heart of Darkness?"[6] The scope of this question indeed goes beyond Heart of Darkness to include the whole of Conrad: Why has Conrad,

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[3]F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948)

[4]Richard Curle, Joseph Conrad (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, Ltd., 1914) p.1

[5]Robert Hamner (ed.) Joseph Conrad: Third World Perspectives (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1990), p.239

[6]Robert Burden, Heart of Darkness (MacMillan, 1991) p.78

more than his contemporaries such as Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, and Robert Louis Stevenson who also wrote about far away places and their peoples, generated so much interest over the years among critics, and more particularly among Third World scholars and critics in the last one and half decades?

Part of the answer to this question may lie in what Conrad himself said on what he hoped to achieve through his writings. "My task," he wrote in the "Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" in 1897, "which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel - it is, before all, to make you see. That - and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, *you shall find there according to your deserts:* encouragement, consolation, fear, charm - all you demand - and, perhaps, also that glimpse of the truth for which you have forgotten to ask"[7] (my italics). There is some truth in Conrad's statement in that each generation of Conrad critics has searched in Conrad's writings for answers to the generation's needs. The troubled decades of the twenties and the thirties, for instance, which had to cope with the bitter memories and experiences, in the case of the former, of the First World War, and in the case of the latter, the economic difficulties of the Great Depression, found Conrad's 'multiple vision' too 'elusive' for the kind of answers they believed they needed. Referring to Conrad's 'elusiveness' and its effect to this generation of Conrad's readers, Leo Gurko wrote in 1962: "To a postwar generation that required an unequivocal statement about the nature of life, even if it were a statement of despair, meaninglessness, or confusion, this elusiveness seemed unsatisfactory."[8] He further refers to E.M. Forster's "exasperated judgement" of Conrad in 1936 which Gurko believes summed up that generation's dissatisfaction with Conrad:

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[7]Joseph Conrad, "Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" in Walter F Wright (ed.) Joseph Conrad on Fiction (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964) p.162

[8]Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile (New York: MacMillan, 1962), p.2

> He is misty in the middle as well as at the edges . . . the secret casket of his genius contains a vapour rather than a jewel; and we need not try to write him down philosophically, because there is... nothing to write. No creed, in fact. Only opinions, and the right to throw them overboard when facts make them look absurd.[9]

The generations of the forties and beyond, to which Third World scholars would belong, began to find 'something' in Conrad, unlike their immediate predecessors. M.C. Bradbrook wrote in 1941: "Whatever else in Conrad has dated, his politics are contemporary."[10] If this marks the beginning of a change in the way Conrad was viewed by critics after the Second World War, Leo Gurko's comment in 1962 when he referred to Conrad as "One of us" shows that by the sixties this process of change was complete. "Conrad," Gurko declared, "is one of us. His [Conrad's] divided man, thrust into an ambiguous world, who writhes in emotional and spiritual anguish, who is torn apart in various emotional directions, unbelieving, disillusioned with doctrinal ideologies," appealed to a disillusioned world.[11]

This too was the world of the emerging Third World independent states and their scholars and critics who found Conrad so appealing for much the same reasons that Gurko cites from his European perspective. Their world was a divided world not only at the political level where some of them attained independence after protracted wars of liberation, only to be disillusioned, in a number of cases, by the new political dispensation, but divided also at a personal level. In his article entitled "Under African

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[9]E.M. Forster, Abinger Harvest (New York, 1936) p.138 Also quoted in Gurko, p.2

[10]M.C. Bradbrook, Joseph Conrad: Poland's English Genius (New York: MacMillan, 1941) p.8

[11]Leo Gurko, p.5

Eyes" which discusses in close detail how the Kenyan writer, Ngugi, was influenced in A Grain of Wheat by Conrad's Under Western Eyes, Ponnuthurai Sarvan from Zambia recalls the dates when a number of African countries became independent, such as Nigeria 1960, Uganda 1962, Kenya 1963 and makes a comment on the disillusionment the nationals of some of these and other countries in Africa have suffered, and on Conrad's relevance in circumstances such as these. "Conrad's opinion," Sarvan says, "that revolutions are often betrayed by success, and that power and materialism erode ideals and principles is, sad to say, well understood in the so-called developing world."[12]

V.S. Naipaul, the Trinidadian novelist and critic, makes an interesting comment on the impact Conrad's portrayal of the Harlequin's tender care for his book, "An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship" in Heart of Darkness had on him at a certain point in his life. Naipaul refers to how the book, "tattered and without covers," had been "lovingly stitched afresh with white cotton thread," and how the book was intended to show "an honest concern for the right way of going to work." Although Naipaul had read Heart of Darkness many times before, this point only made a strong impression on him at a particular point in his life when, he says, he felt it "answered something of the political panic I was beginning to feel. To be a colonial, " Naipaul says, "was to know a kind of security; it was to inhabit a fixed world."[13] In a number of ways, Naipaul's experience with Conrad's revelance is the experience of many former colonial subjects, mine, I might add, included. It is indeed , and quite ironically too, when the "security" of one's colonial world begins to "crumble" that the former colonial subject begins to find Conrad relevant to his or her life, to understand Conrad more meaningfully both at the public and personal levels.

In an article published in Conradiana in 1982, Peter Nazareth, the Ugandan writer and critic, described how he "discovered" Conrad. Not having taken much interest in

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[12]Ponnuthurai Sarvan, "Under African Eyes," in Robert Hamner, p.153

[13]V.S. Naipaul, "Conrad's Darkness," in Robert Hamner, p.194

Conrad during his undergraduate days in Colonial Uganda at Makerere University College, Nazareth discovered a new interest in Conrad when he left Uganda to study at the University of Leeds in England. "I had come to England," Nazareth says, "precisely at the point at which [my] fixed world was breaking up. Uganda had become independent less than a year earlier. Independence had shaken the ground under most Goans (and Asians) in Uganda. It was, not coincidentally, the time of the Civil Rights Movement political assassinations of radical Third World intellectuals like Malcom X and Pio Gama Pinto. At Leeds, I experienced a 'breakdown,' that is, a psychic dissolution of the fixed world I had known and taken for granted. At this point, Conrad (and Fanon) began to make sense, for I had to break apart my old perception of the world and to re-educate myself almost from scratch."[14]

It would, however, be wrong to surmise as does O. Mannoni, the French ethnographer who lived in Madagascar and wrote the highly acclaimed book Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization (1950), that colonized people feel threatened at the departure of the colonialist when their nations become independent because they have developed a "dependency complex."[15] It is quite natural that such a major change in a nation's direction should occasion some sense of anticipation, of apprehension even, of the unknown, particularly among the nation's intellectuals who are usually the sensitive points of their communities. It should also be noted that one of the major effects of colonialism in a colonized country is the imposition on a whole people of "a monolithic world-view."[16] This world-view is expansive in both application and impact in that under its usual umbrella-name, civilization, the colonizing nation can justify anything, be it religion, including standards of hygiene, and whatever else the colonizer believes the

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[14]Peter Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers," in Conradiana (XIV)3 1982, p.173

[15]O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1956) trans. Pamela Powesland, p.108

[16]Peter Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers," p.174

colonial subject 'needs.' Marlow's aunt in the Sepulchral City back in the Europe of Heart of Darkness urges Marlow to take up the White Man's Burden of 'weaning those ignorant millions in Africa from their horrid ways.' Third World intellectuals are only too aware that such a world-view, implanted among their people for many years by the colonizer, has taken firm roots, and that the process of re-education that has to be carried out is fraught with a lot of difficulties. This is the kind of re-education that Achebe has in mind in his essay, "The Novelist as Teacher" (1975):

> The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front... I for one would not wish to be excused. I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.[17]

Nostromo (1904) is in a sense a dramatization of how difficult it is to change the world-view imposed by colonialism and its extension, neo-colonialism, on a people.

In what way, or ways, then, does Conrad assume cultural and even political relevance for Third World intellectuals, particularly when their "fixed worlds" are threatened with breaking apart?

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan writer and critic, wrote in 1972, nine years after Kenya had attained its political independence and after a number of Kenyan intellectuals, he among them, had incurred the wrath of the new Government (Ngugi was later to be detained in custody without trial for three years), that Conrad appealed to him because

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[17]Chinua Achebe, "The novelist as Teacher" in Morning Yet on Creation Day (London: Heinmann, 1975) p.72

Conrad "questions things, requestions things like action, the morality of action, for instance."[18] This philosophical probing appears in the words of the teacher of languages in Under Western Eyes (1911), who says:

> The task is not in truth the writing in the narrative form a précis of a strange document, but the rendering - I perceive it now clearly - of the moral conditions ruling over a large portion of this earth's surface; conditions not easily understood, much less discovered in the limits of a story, till some key-word is found; a word that could stand at the back of all the words covering the pages, a word which, if not truth itself, may perchance hold truth enough *to help the moral discovery which should be the object of every tale.*[19] (my italics)

It is Conrad's agonizing to unearth the moral implications of action in a given situation that Ngugi finds appealing.

In his fiction set in overseas places, Conrad exploded popular myths in European minds about these places, their peoples, and the role and conduct of Europeans who went out to these places. The British reading public, which craved 'news from the fringes of the empire' so prevalent in the literature of the day, was disappointed in Conrad's rejection of the literary convention stressing the exotic nature of the fringes of the empire. Conrad was exploding myths enshrined in literary stereotypes of the colonial subject

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[18]Ngugi wa Thiong'o in African Writers Talking, ed. Dennis Duerden & Cosmo Pieterse (London: Heinemann, 1972), p.124. Also quoted by Nazareth in "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers," p.173

[19]Joseph Conrad, Under Western Eyes, (Penguin Modern Classics, 1957, reprint. 1980), p.62

dating as far back as the great voyages of discovery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The British reading public was accustomed to reading about what post-colonialist theorists like Homi Bhabha refer to as the "Other," who have become "fetishised,"[20] and who are in no way as easily recognisable as the ordinary European back in Europe. In Shakespeare's The Tempest (1611), Caliban, the "creature" colonized by Prospero on the remote island, is hardly recognisable as anything in particular more than just a "creature". In 1678 Mrs Aphra Behn wrote and published Oroonoko, which depicted an African slave hero, and in 1719, Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe also depicted as one of the main characters a colonial subject, Friday. Depicted as "noble savages" stripped of even their natural physical features, both Oroonoko and Friday are hardly recognizable as human characters belonging to a recognisable race. In colonial novels, the question of race is central, and a character who is denied racial identity is hardly more than an idea in the author's mind.

Nearer Conrad's time, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the colonies, hardly known except as the "Other," are mentioned in English fiction only as places where English characters go to make money or wealth, or where convicts are banished as a means of avoiding the gallows. Sir Thomas Bertram in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park has made his fortune in Antigua, but we are not told exactly how he has made it. Hetty Sorrel, the pretty but amoral girl who murders her illegitimate infant in George Eliot's Adam Beade, is banished to the colonies overseas to avoid hanging, as is the convict Abel Magwitch in Charles Dickens' Great Expectations. All these, and others in a similar vein, gave the English reading public the idea of the fringes of the empire as the "other" place, unknown, unknowable, until Conrad (and others at the turn of the century such as Stevenson and Kipling) published full-length stories and novels set in the overseas colonies themselves, showing that people lived in those places, real people, though they might be a shade darker than people in Europe. Conrad's portrayal of

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[20]Homi K.Bhabha, "The Other Question:Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," Screen, 24, 6 (Nov. - Dec.)

overseas places, of the roles played by Europe and Europeans in those places, of the effect of such roles on the local native people, of the various issues at play in the clash of cultures in a colonial setting, has made a strong impact on Third World scholars in a way that his contemporaries who also wrote about overseas places, such as Kipling and Stevenson, have not been able to do.

Conrad's personal history is a strong source of appeal to Third World scholars who are able to identify both with some of the circumstances of his personal experience and with his use of English, an adopted language to him, as a medium of writing fiction. Some Third World writers, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and V.S. Naipaul, have been greatly influenced in their own writing by Conrad's style.

Conrad experienced political injustice at the tender age of four. His father, Apollo Korzeniowski, an author and Polish political activist whose family's ancestral lands were confiscated by the Russian Government which was at the time exercising colonial control over Poland, was arrested and exiled to an isolated region of the Ukraine in 1861. The strain and stress of this experience, including the exposure to the savage winter temperatures as the Korzeniowski family marched to their banishment, had severe effects on the health of both Conrad's parents. Conrad's mother died barely four years after this experience, and three years later, his father, who after the death of his mother had been Conrad's sole companion, and whose dejection of spirit and deterioration in health must have been most painful for the young Conrad to watch, died also. Ian Watt graphically describes the funeral scene of Conrad's father indicating how the eleven-year old Conrad walked "alone behind the hearse at the head of the funeral procession."[21] Conrad was later to recall his father's doomed but heroic belief in and commitment to the emancipation of the Polish people, and the sad circumstances of his father's death before the unbending rule of colonialist Russia. "It stripped off me," he said, "some of my

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[21]Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979) p.3

simple trust in the government of the Universe."[22]

Many Third World scholars suffered in similar ways at the hands of colonial governments and are able to relate to Conrad's formative experiences.

Given such a background, Conrad could not easily or readily identify with the great excitement in Britain and Europe over European expansionism and overseas empires when he became a British citizen in 1886. The excitement was fanned by politicians, such as Joseph Chamberlain, and writers, such as Rudyard Kipling and others who wrote what Edmund Gosse called in 1899 "the literature of action."[23]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, England's supremacy on the high seas was being challenged by other European countries. The German Foreign Minister, Prince Von Biilow, captured the spirit of European nations' aspirations when he said: "We do not want to put anyone in the shade, but we demand a place for ourselves in the sun." Eager to retain the new markets and sources of raw materials they had discovered overseas, European countries developed monopolistic policies accompanied by a fierce and an aggressive nationalism. In order to keep the areas of their mercantile interest exclusively to themselves, European countries declared those areas colonies, dependencies, or protectorates. The partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884 into such dependencies, protectorates, or colonies, resulted in the map of Africa being re-drawn according to which European power owned which part (the flag colours Marlow studies on a map of Africa at the beginning of Heart of Darkness), and modern-day independent African states are defined by the boundaries that were drawn at that Conference.

In order to keep the colonial venture alive and acceptable, for at times it became necessary for armies and support for colonial wars to be raised, the proponents of the imperial ideal such as Kipling formulated an ideology of imperialism which was

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[22]Joseph Conrad, Notes on Life and Letters, p.168. Also quoted in Watt, p.4

[23]Edmund Gosse, "The Literature of Action," The North American Review CLXVIII no. DVI January 1899. pp.14-23

buttressed by doctrines of racial supremacy usually expressed in chilling and menacing social Darwinian concepts of the survival of the fittest and the Victorian idea of human progress and the inevitable march towards the perfectibility of mankind:

> History shows me one way, and one way only, in which a state of civilisation has been produced, namely the struggle of race with race, and the survival of the physically and mentally fitter race.
>
> This dependence of progress on the survival of the fitter race, terribly black as it may seem..., gives the struggle for existence its redeeming features; it is the fiery crucible out of which comes the finer metal. You may hope for a time when the sword shall be turned into the ploughshare... when the white man and the dark shall share the soil between them... But, believe me, when that day comes mankind will no longer progress; there will be nothing to check the fertility of inferior stock; the relentless law of heredity will not be controlled by natural selection. Man will stagnate...
>
> The path of progress is strewn with the wreck of nations; traces are everywhere to be seen of the hecatombs of inferior races, and of victims who found not the narrow way to the greater perfection. Yet these dead peoples are, in every truth, the stepping stones on which mankind has risen to the higher intellectual and deeper emotional life of to-day.[24]

At the time that Conrad became a British citizen, popular literature in Britain echoed these sentiments about Britain's destiny in the affairs of the world. Cheap, popular newspapers were launched to extol the virtues of empire, and their influence

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[24](Professor) Karl Pearson, National Life from the Standpoint of Science (second edition, London, 1905) pp. 21, 26-7, 64. Quoted in William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism (Second edition. New York: A.P. Knopf, 1900), p.88

affected the style of established newspapers such as The Times. The Daily Mail, the most popular of such newspapers, was first published in May 1896. At its launching, the following was announced as the newspaper's objective and policy:

> ...for the power, the supremacy and greatness of the British Empire... The Daily Mail is the embodiment and mouthpiece of the imperial idea. Those who launched this journal had one definite aim in view... to be the articulate voice of British progress and domination. We believe in England. We know that the advance of the Union Jack means protection of the weaker races, justice for the oppressed, liberty for the downtrodden. Our Empire has not exhausted itself.[25]

On a more literary level, Conrad would have read poetry and short stories by Kipling and his literary followers, known later by such epithets as "literary rough-riders," "the exponents of a literature of energy and of action," and "writers of blood-stained fiction."[26] Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden" (1899) articulated the imperial imperative, the white man's inescapable duty towards the darker races, in Old Testament-style rhythms of the Lord of Hosts:

> Take up the White Man's burden -
> Send forth the best ye breed -
> Go bind your souls to exile
> To serve your captives' need.

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[25]William L. Langer, p.84

[26]Langer, p.83

wait in heavy harness
On fluttered fold and wild -
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.

.....

Take up the White Man's burden -
The savage wars of peace -
Fill full the Mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought;
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hope to nought.

.....

Take up the White Man's burden -
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard -
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light: -
'Why brought ye us from bondage,
'Our loved Egyptian night?'

.....[27]

That Conrad had to seriously consider this spirit of excitement and jingoism over empire in his newly adopted country there can be no doubt: one could not escape it; it was so pervasive. Conrad's letters, particularly on the Anglo-Boer War for which Kipling was rallying support, confirm this. There is also the irony of Conrad's own personal circumstances in that by moving from Poland to England, he was moving from a colony to a colonial power. In addition, as Avrom Fleishman has pointed out, the Korzeniowskis were in a way 'colonialists' in that as members of the landed gentry, they were part of the community of Poles who made up only three percent of the population of the Ukraine, and yet this three percent of the population owned most of the land, and the majority, the Ukrainians, lived on the land at the pleasure of the few land-owners.[28] These factors must have had an impact on Conrad's perception of colonial and imperial ventures. It is necessary, for the purpose of this thesis, to establish what that perception was and how it, together with Conrad's expressed views on colonialism and imperialism, has affected the way he has been received by Third World critics.

A few years before his death, Conrad seems to have already become aware that scholars were beginning to comb through his public statements and his other written works to establish his political ideology. "My misfortune," he wrote to Edward Garnett on September 24, 1919, "is that I can't swallow any formula and thus am wearing the aspect of enemy to all mankind."[29]

Not many great writers have, as Conrad has done, attracted so many different and

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[27]Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," in Kipling: Poems Selected by James Cochrane (Penguin, 1977)

[28]Avrom Fleishman, Conrad's Politics (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967) p.4

[29]Joseph Conrad in Letters from Joseph Conrad (1895-1924) (Indianapolis: Bobbs - Merrill Co. Inc. 1928), p.265

sometimes conflicting viewpoints about their 'political thought.' Conrad's multiple vision and suggestive style have drawn praise for him, and condemnation, from various schools of thought. In his book The English Novel in the Twentieth Century: The Doom of Empire (1984), Martin Green observes that Conrad was "first a great hero and prize of the lovers of adventure among readers, and then the equally great hero of the opposite party."[30] We have already noted how Forster dismissed Conrad in 1936 as "misty," without a creed except opinions, which Conrad reserved the right to throw overboard when facts made them look absurd. John A McClure has argued that Conrad's apparent ambivalence or evasiveness on political or philosophical issues or positions accords well with his, Conrad's, struggle in his writings to "convey the complexity of experience, the elusiveness of truth." Conrad's handling of imperialism, argues McClure, is consistent with this aim. Conrad "offers descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of imperialism, but does so provisionally, without achieving either absolute consistency or certainty." Any effort to pin down Conrad on the subject of colonialism or imperialism therefore, argues McClure, "involves drawing some conclusions, taking some risks.... it is bound to be both speculative and somewhat controversial."[31]

Critics who have seen Conrad as a conservative have come to this viewpoint partly on account of Conrad's letter of December 19, 1885 to Spiridon Kliszczewski, a Pole who lived in England, following the 1885 general election in England in which the lower classes had voted for the first time:

> Where is the man to stop the rush of social-democratic ideas? The opportunity and the day have come and gone!...

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[30]Martin Green, The English Novel in the Twentieth Century: The Doom of Empire. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p.37

[31]John A McClure, Kipling and Conrad: The Colonial Fiction. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981) p.94

> The destiny of this nation and of all nations is to be accomplished in darkness amidst much weeping and gnashing of teeth, to pass through robbery, equality, anarchy and misery under the iron rule of a military despotism! Such is the lesson of common sense logic.
>
> Socialism must inevitably end in Caesarism.... Disestablishment, Land Reform, Universal Brotherhood are but milestones on the road to ruin...'All is vanity.'[32]

And yet we find the same Conrad, the apparent conservative, becoming good friends with some of Britain's leading socialists and agreeing with them on a number of issues, socialists such as Edward Garnett and the Scottish nationalist Cunninghame Graham, and scoffing at Kipling's ideas of empire and the supremacy of the British race, which ideas many saw as the ultimate formulation of the conservative doctrine of empire. "Mr. Kipling," wrote Conrad in August 1897, "has the wisdom of the passing generations, - and holds them in perfect sincerity. Some of his work is of impeccable form and because of that little thing, he will sojourn in Hell only a very short while. He squints with the rest of his excellent sort. It is a beautiful squint: it is an useful squint. And - after all, - perhaps he sees round the corner?... It is impossible to know anything, tho' it is possible to believe a thing or two."[33] If Conrad ever believed Kipling's "squint" served Kipling well at times, one of those times must have been the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. Kipling was at the forefront of the support campaign, urging the British public to volunteer to go to South Africa to fight the Boers. He himself went to South Africa, and from Cecil John Rhodes' seat of Government in Cape Town Kipling wrote

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[32]Gérard Jean - Aubry (ed.) Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters (London: Heinemann, 1927) I, 84-85, letter of December 19, 1885.

[33]Gérard Jean-Aubry, I, p.208. Letter of August 5, 1897

poems urging on the British troops, and took the long journey north to view Rhodesia, Cecil John Rhodes' newly acquired colony. As for women and children and the elderly who could not join the fighting ranks in South Africa, Kipling urged them to make generous donations for the war effort. Conrad condemned the Anglo-Boer War as a "stupid" war. In his view, the war was becoming inordinately protracted, thereby increasing the possibility that the Boers would get exterminated. He also believed it to be an unjust war designed to deny the Boers their liberty. Despite acknowledging the right of the Boers to liberty, Conrad was, however, disturbed by and opposed to the Boers' fierce and aggressive nationalism based on elements of racial superiority. Conrad therefore believed that only the British could provide the sense of order and justice that was needed in South Africa. The only "hope" Conrad saw in the situation once the War got underway is expressed in bitter irony:

> There is an appalling fatuity in this business. If I am to believe Kipling this is a war undertaken for the cause of democracy. Cést a crever de rire! However, now the fun has commenced, I trust British successes will be crushing from the very first, - on the same principle that if there's a murder being done in the next room and you can't stop it, you wish the head of the victim to be bashed in forthwith and the whole thing over for the sake of your feelings.[34]

Conrad, it seems, was judging aspects of the war not on some pre-conceived ideological or philosophical position, but on the basis of what he saw as the issues at play at the time, and as they related to the key players and the key elements, namely the British, the

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[34]Joseph Conrad in Gérard Jean-Aubry, "Letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham" dated 14 October 1899, LL., I, 284-5

Boers, and the way the war itself was being conducted. By keeping an open mind for further judgement as the situation continued to develop, Conrad was able in this and in other situations, to make honest assessments, evaluations based on the reality of the observed facts rather than on the dictates of an ideological or philosophical position. It is perhaps such a quality in Conrad that Fleishman found admirable. "The record of Conrad's political opinions," writes Fleishman in Conrad's Politics (1968), "is a record of growth. It shows no consistent application of first principles, nor systematic doctrine, nor even a sustained temperamental attitude. As in natural growth, there is an interplay of inner and outer forces which generates unlooked-for excrescences, *and there is an expanded comprehension - an ability to take in more of the world... the growth of an imagination*"[35] (my italics).

In their evaluation of Conrad's politics as shown in his responses to political situations of his day, in his statements, and in his fiction, the emerging Third World critics, like other critics before them, show varied and sometimes extreme and conflicting positions.

Lloyd Fernando, the Malaysian novelist, academic and critic, sees in Conrad's colonial fiction "the true colonial condition which deflects from familiar goals the occupied and the occupiers alike,"[36] a world, in other words, without heroes, but only the victimised on both sides of the conquered and the conquerors.

D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, an academic and critic from Sri Lanka, sees Conrad as belonging to the "distinguished minority of radical contemporary critics of imperialism." Goonetilleke has published a book entitled Developing Countries in British Fiction (1977), and in it, he gives a panoramic historical survey of colonialism and imperialism in English fiction from Mrs Aphra Behn to Graham Greene. Referring to Conrad's Malayan

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[35]Avrom Fleishman, p.23

[36]Lloyd Fernando, "Conrad's Eastern Expatriates: A New Version of His Outcasts, "in Robert Hamner, p.64

world, Goonetilleke has said: "His Malayan world is predominantly authentic in all its varied spheres... *He is able to rise above conventional Western prejudices*"[37] (my italics).

The South African novelist and critic Ezekiel Mphahlele, whose experience with the Apartheid South African Government is in some respects similar to Conrad's experiences in Poland, singles out Conrad, E.M. Forster and William Faulkner as three outstanding white novelists "who portray competently characters belonging to cultural groups outside their own."[38]

Perhaps the most extreme position taken to date on Conrad's politics by a Third World critic is that of Chinua Achebe of Nigeria. While the specific details of Achebe's paper, "An Image of Africa" (1975), will be discussed in the section on Heart of Darkness in this thesis, it should suffice for the current discussion to say that after Achebe points out that Conrad's depiction of Africans and Africa in Heart of Darkness serves only to reinforce European prejudices against Africa and Africans, he calls Conrad "a bloody racist," and refutes the claim that Heart of Darkness is a great work of art:

> The point of my observation should be quite clear by now, namely, that Conrad was a bloody racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticism of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely undetected.... The real question is the dehumanization of

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[37]D.R.C.A. Goonetilleke, Developing Countries in British Fiction, (London: MacMillan, 1977) p.2. Quoted in Hunt Hawkins, "Conrad and the Psychology of Colonialism," in Ross C. Murfin (ed.) Conrad Revisted: Essays for the Eighties (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1985) p.82

[38]Ezekiel Mphahlele, The African Image (London: Faber & Faber, 1962), p.101. Quoted in Hunt Hawkins, p.2

> Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot.[39]

A number of Third World critics, myself included, disagree with Achebe's reading of Conrad's attitude in Heart of Darkness.

Wilson Harris of Guyana accepts Achebe's argument about the prevalence of white racism against Africa, but he is convinced that Achebe's "judgement and dismissal of Heart of Darkness - and of Conrad's strange genius - is a profoundly mistaken one."[40] Harris bases his disagreement with Achebe on the grounds that Achebe failed to pay close attention to Conrad's style in Heart of Darkness.

Frances B. Singh of India indicates her own reading of Heart of Darkness which is different from Achebe's when she echoes the banal truth of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice's opening sentence in her 1978 article published in Conradiana: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that Heart of Darkness is one of the most powerful indictments of colonialism ever written."[41]

Peter Nazareth of Uganda believes that while there may be some racism in "Marlow" of Heart of Darkness, there is "an erosion of this [Marlow's] inherited racist framework through the direct experience of Africa, through reflection on that experience,

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[39]Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," p.788

[40]Wilson Harris, "The Frontier on Which Heart of Darkness Stands," in Robert Hamner, p.161

[41]Frances B. Singh, "The Colonialistic Bias of Heart of Darkness," re-printed from Conradiana, (10) 1978: 41-54 in Robert Kimbrough (ed. 3rd ed.) Heart of Darkness (New York: Norton, 1988) p.268

and through the telling of the story..." Nazareth goes further to pay tribute to Conrad, whom he sees as having broken the "censorship in the colonial world... Conrad actually takes us to the colonies," argues Nazareth, "to show us what happens there when the patriarch or his agents arrived and how his wealth at home came from brutal colonial action." Conrad, according to Nazareth, was therefore a "mental liberator... for those blinded at home... for those who were to come later."[42]

In his article on Nostromo entitled "The Limits of the Liberal Imagination," Jean Franco accuses Conrad of failing to resolve satisfactorily the political issues raised in Nostromo because he, Conrad, "could not envisage a viable Third World ideology."[43] While he acknowledges that Nostromo is "a penetrating study of European manipulation of the politics of a dependent country," Franco nevertheless believes that Conrad fails to "transcend the ideological limitations of a liberal critique," and, like Achebe in the case of Heart of Darkness, Franco takes issue with how native Latin Americans are portrayed in Nostromo.

In a similar vein, McClure acknowledges that Nostromo is "a brilliantly detailed political and psychological criticism of capitalism," but he argues that the effectiveness of Conrad's novel in this respect is diminished by Conrad's apparently racist portrayal of "colonized peoples as inherently incapable of self-rule," and by Conrad's dismissal of popular liberation movements.[44] Edward Said criticizes Conrad for what he sees as Conrad's ambivalence on political issues that affect his Latin American milieu in Nostromo, and for failing to realize that not all anti-imperialistic popular movements

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[42]Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers," pp.177-178

[43]Jean Franco, "The Limits of the Liberal Imagination: One Hundred Years of Solitude and Nostromo" in Robert Hamner, p.208

[44]McClure, pp. 166-167

fighting for independence are corrupt.[45]

And similar criticism of Conrad's portrayal of native colonized characters in his Asian fiction has been made by Lloyd Fernando and Todd G. Willy, who respectively accuse Conrad of portraying "shadowy... or exotic external characters"[46] and of writing texts with "racist implications."[47]

In this thesis, I propose to make a contribution to the on-going debate on Conrad's handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects in his major works set in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. I disagree with the critics who have labelled Conrad as racist and as a white European liberal whose imaginative vision of the Third World colonial situations he writes about is limited. And while I agree with the critics who have found his Third World colonial situations authentic, I go further to argue and demonstrate that in his colonial fiction, and in the context of his time, Conrad exhibits a concerned, searching, questioning and therefore liberating imaginative vision.

On the theoretical level in colonial discourse, colonialism has been viewed broadly in two ways. The first and earlier view, which found favour particularly during the years of the struggles for political independence, approached colonialism from the point of view of 'binary oppositions,' the opposed poles of white and black, self and other, good and evil, etc. This view was championed by liberation doctrine theorists such as Frantz Fanon in the 1950's in his classics The Wretched of the Earth and Black Skin, White Masks, and was enthusiastically taken up by the Liberation Movements for purposes of inspiring their members culturally and politically to define clearly both the enemy and the rationale for engaging the enemy in combat. It needs to be noted that both the theorists and the

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[45]Edward Said, "Through Gringo Eyes: With Conrad in Latin America," in Harper's Magazine. v. 276, April 1988, pp. 70-71

[46]Lloyd Fernando, "Conrad's Eastern Expatriates: A New Version of His Outcasts," in Hamner, pp. 59-78

[47]Todd G. Willy, "Almayer's Folly and the Imperatives of Conradian Atavism," in Conradiana, v.24. no.1 1992, p.4

Liberation Movements regarded this view as an absolutely essential tool to mobilize the masses into action against the colonial enemy.

The second and later approach, which is as varied as the different proponents who subscribe to it, views the colonial experience as more complex, more heterogenous, and more of a 'mixed blessing' than the 'binary opposition' theory would make it. Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, leading theorists in colonial discourse, are attracted to this approach. "I am critical of the binary opposition coloniser/colonised," says Spivak. "I try to examine the heterogeneity of 'colonial power' and to disclose the complicity of the two poles of that opposition as it constitutes the disciplinary enclave of the critique of imperialism."[48] Homi Bhabha also "rejects the notion of the colonial relationship as a symmetrical antagonism" in favour of the approach which views colonialism as having "the ambivalence of the colonial presence," without "the boundaries of colonial positionality - the division of self/other - and the question of colonial power - the differentiation of coloniser/colonised" in such clear-cut terms.[49]

While the two theorists have their reasons for being opposed to the 'binary opposition' theory, I believe they overstate their opposition to the "nostalgia for lost origins" (Spivak) and the "rhetoric of resistance in anti-imperialist writings of Liberation Movements" (Bhabha) because both views have served useful purposes in the struggles of colonized peoples against colonial oppression and in their long journey towards self-discovery and nationhood. The "nostalgia for lost origins," for instance, which Spivak speaks against, has been a useful life-line for self-realization at a certain stage of political and artistic consciousness among the Africans (in the Negritudinist Movement and its theory of a return to an idyllic African past), the West Indians (the Negritudinist

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[48]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in Angela McRobbie "Strategies of Vigilance: An Interview with G.C. Spivak," Block 10 (1985), I. Quoted Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse, "Oxford Literary Review (1-2) 1987, pp.28-29.

[49]Homi Bhabha, quoted in Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," p.28

Movement and Rastafarianism - the yearning to return to Africa and the land of the Lion of Judah, Emperor Haile Selasse's Ethiopia), and Afro-Americans (the return to Africa and the search for pre-slavery roots as in Alex Haley's Roots). And in his apparently low regard for anti-imperialist writings by Liberation Movements, Bhabha, like Spivak, misses the point that what he looks down upon was a necessary stage in the colonized people's development which, it could be argued, made possible the post-colonial era and conditions that have made the 'heterogenous theories' of colonial discourse worthy of study. Conrad would, I believe, look sympathetically at the 'heterogenous theories' as opposed to the 'binary oppositions' theory because his own approach to colonialism is complex.

Like Bhabha and Spivak, but for different reasons, I would also, now, subscribe to the 'heterogenous theories' of colonial discourse in my approach to colonialism. I would argue that these theories, which view in part the colonial experience as a mixed bag, multifaceted, heterogenous, improve on the earlier 'binary oppositions' theory in that relieved of the burden to mobilize the colonized masses into action against the colonial rulers, these approaches can afford to be more literary, more reflective, and more informed (by hindsight).

I said I would now agree with the later theory because I agree with Benita Parry's observation that "those who have been or are still engaged in colonial struggles against contemporary forms of imperialism could well read the theorizing of discourse analysts with considerable disbelief at the construction this puts on the situation they are fighting against and the contest in which they are engaged.... [as] these alternative narratives of colonialism obscure the 'murderous and decisive struggle between two protagonists (Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth).'"[50] A dozen or so years ago, when we were fighting for political independence in Rhodesia, I would have readily embraced the 'binary oppositions' theory as the relevant theory to my situation at the time, and would have perhaps dismissed wholesale the later theories as 'academic,' and inapplicable.

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[50]Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," p.43

Having lived in Southern Rhodesia, however, before and after the illegal regime of Ian Smith declared unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 to prevent black majority rule in the country, and thereafter lived in independent Zimbabwe over the last ten years, I have had time to 'reflect,' to be more informed (by hindsight), and can now admit that the new country Zimbabwe did gain something after all from the colonial era, particularly from the most hated and most repressive period of the era commencing 1965 and ending in 1979. In saying this, I do not, of course, wish to suggest that I would in any way minimize the crippling psychic effects, the indignity, the denial of opportunities, the racial discrimination, the injustice, and the general lack of freedom that the Africans in Rhodesia, I among them, suffered. It is, however, also true that when the dust of the celebrations for the new independence era settled down, and the bitterness and strained emotions engendered by the colonial experience were ameliorated through, among others, a government-pronounced programme of National Reconciliation, it was discovered, with a sense of gratitude which by and large went unacknowledged officially, that Zimbabwe had inherited from the hated colonial era of Ian Smith's rebel and illegal regime a strong economic infrastructure that thrived on local raw materials, local industrial base and expertise, local products - all necessitated by the fact that for the fifteen years of mandatory United Nations economic sanctions against the rebel colony, Rhodesia had been forced to look hard into its own resources to become self-reliant. The colonialists who shaped this economic infrastructure had believed in the future of the country ruled by a minority white regime. Draconian laws were passed to keep the growing militancy among the blacks under check and many Africans were hanged or were thrown into huge reservoirs of corrosive acid where they disintegrated and disappeared without a trace. And yet, the irony is that it is from that very era of brutal repression that the prosperity of the new independent nation of Zimbabwe was born. Indeed, the colonial experience has 'strange' and complex twists and turns to it.

It is my contention that the growing body of criticism on Conrad's colonial fiction is largely conceived on the 'binary oppositions' perspective of colonial discourse, and that

this approach does not accord well with Conrad's own complex and multifaceted approach to the portrayal of colonial experience in his fiction set in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The perspective of colonial discourse employed in this thesis is therefore 'heterogenous,' which, I believe, is consistent with Conrad's own approach and handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects. It acknowledges Conrad's complexity both as an independent thinker and as a man of his times. Cedric Watts is correct to refer to Conrad as "Janiform" - after Janus "the two-headed god [who] looks in opposite ways at the same time... presid[ing] over paradox."[51]

I would, however, disagree with Watts that Conrad is also "politically Janiform."[52] I would argue that if Conrad "looks in opposite ways at the same time," and is "Janiform" in techniques of representation, it is not because Conrad cannot make up his mind on issues at hand, but rather that as a narrative technique, and as indicated earlier in Fleishman's point about Conrad's ability to take in the totality of experience and thus grow in imaginative vision, Conrad is seeking the best possible mode of moral justice in the circumstances. In his essay on Conrad and Nietzsche, Edward Said points out this quality in both Conrad and the philosopher Nietzsche, namely that both, as products of the late nineteenth century, discovered the "inevitable antitheses everywhere to be found in human existence."[53] Conrad, the "worker in prose,"[54] was a conscious craftsman who was fully aware of the impact his modernist approach to experience made. "The only legitimate basis of creative work," Conrad wrote in 1901, "lies in the courageous recognition of all the irreconcilable antagonisms that make our life so

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[51]Cedric Watts, A Preface to Conrad, (London & New York: Longman, 1982), p.7

[52]Watts, p.59

[53]Edward W. Said, "Conrad and Nietzsche," in Norman Sherry, ed. Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration. Papers from the 1974 International Conference on Conrad (MacMillan, 1976) p.71

[54]Said, p.66

enigmatic, so burdensome, so fascinating, so dangerous - so full of hope."[55] In his complex handling of such antagonisms, Conrad walks, as it were, the tightrope, in that a casual or careless reading of his text would reveal binary oppositions which, however, on closer scrutiny of the narrative techniques, particularly the isolation of the authorial voice from the plurality of voices typical of a Conrad text, give way to a more complex imaginative vision. Watts defines Conrad's multi-faceted synthesis of opposites in the following observation:

> With the surface of his imagination he [Conrad] can reflect and in some measure endorse imperialistic enthusiasms, but the depths of his imagination question and subvert such enthusiasms. Similarly, at a superficial level his works reflect and in some measure endorse the prejudices (of white against black...) which were taken for granted by the majority of people of all classes in the Europe of his day; but the more fully his imagination is engaged, the more thoroughly those prejudices are challenged.[56]

The Chapters which follow in this thesis will demonstrate how Conrad 'walks the tightrope' in his handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects, and how a 'heterogenous approach' which transcends simple 'binary oppositions' shows that far from being conservative, limited, ambivalent and racist as claimed in the critical positions noted earlier in this Chapter, Conrad's approach to issues of race, colonial oppression and repression in his handling of the colonial milieu is essentially humane and philosophically profound.

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[55]Joseph Conrad, Letter to the New York Times, 2 August, 1901

[56]Watts, p.66

Following this introductory Chapter in which I have outlined the growing interest in Conrad's colonial fiction among Conrad's critics, particularly Third World scholars and critics, and in which I have also outlined the nature of the debate that has emerged regarding Conrad's handling of the colonial theme, I examine Conrad's fiction set in Asia, Africa and Latin America, in that order.

In the first part of the Asian Chapter, I examine two short stories, "The Lagoon" (1898) and "Karain: A Memory" (1898), which were written and published in the early part of Conrad's writing career. The two short stories make a useful 'gateway' into some of the main arguments of the thesis for a number of reasons. Set in the Malay Archipelago, a distant and far off setting (from Europe) which was considered by some critics of Conrad's day as 'decivilized,' the two stories illustrate in a number of ways the truth of Conrad's stated position on cross-cultural solidarity, which is that Conrad sympathised and identified with fellow human beings wherever they lived and whoever they might be. The two short stories also feature native Malay characters as the central figures while the white characters play supportive roles only - an important point to note because when Conrad later reverses these roles, in Heart of Darkness and Nostromo, for instance, to give central roles to white characters and supportive roles to native characters in the colonial setting, he is accused of being racist. The two short stories also depict how viable relationships between the white characters and the native characters in the colonial setting can be forged, i.e., only when both sides enter the relationship as equals and they, especially the whites, do not feel compelled to teach or rule, but regard the other side as having its own independent culture, social structures, and identity. And in using the two Malay characters Arsat and Karain as points of consciousness for the exploration of some of his major concerns as a writer, concerns he explored further in subsequent stories and novels, Conrad, whose voice as author is thus discernible through such cross-textual carry-over of themes from one Conrad story to another, underlines his own belief in the universality of human experience and nature which transcends racial and cultural boundaries.

Part Two of the Asian Chapter examines the antithesis of cross-cultural solidarity in Conrad's earliest two novels, Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, published in 1895 and 1896 respectively. The two novels are considered together because they are in a number of ways an exploration of the same drama: they share the same setting of Sambir of the Malay Archipelago; they feature as key players characters who are 'planted' in Sambir by Captain Lingard, a colonial father-figure and benefactor; the characters appear in both novels playing the same roles but with a space of twenty-five years difference in time (although An Outcast of the Islands was published after Almayer's Folly, its action and setting predates the action and setting in Conrad's first novel by twenty-five years). Conrad's condemnation of colonial ventures is shown through his characterization of Almayer and Willems, two Dutchmen whose main driving motive is amassing as much wealth as they can by whatever means. The fierce competition that develops between the whites on one hand and the native Malays and the Arabs on the other for commercial and political advantage results in strained cross-cultural relations which are an antithesis to the cross-cultural solidarity we witness in "The Lagoon" and "Karain." Although all the white characters are removed from the drama at the end, Conrad does not believe that this resolves the problems raised in the novel: the Arabs replace the whites as the new political and economic power, and the problems experienced in the past are likely to recur. The section also examines closely the charge that Conrad portrays Malay characters in a racist manner, and demonstrates that on the contrary, Conrad exposes and condemns the conventional racial prejudices of his day through a number of devices in his narrative method. Conrad's authorial voice, which is distinguishable from the voices of his characters and narrators, explodes the myths of the white colonialist's moral superiority in the colonies and of the native colonial peoples' savagery or idealised nobility. Conrad thus liberates the minds of Europeans from their ignorance of what was happening in the colonies.

In Part III, the final section of the Asian Chapter, I examine the betrayal of cross-cultural solidarity in Lord Jim (1900) and The Rescue (started in 1896 but completed in

1920). Both novels feature white colonialists who have established what Cedric Watts has called 'one-man empires' in taking charge and control of a specific region of the Malay Archipelago. The colonialists, who through extreme physical exertion of themselves and demonstrable commitment to their adopted countries seem to earn the high esteem that they are accorded by the native communities, subsequently lose their high positions as rulers when they have to choose between being loyal to the native peoples over whom they exercise control or to white interlopers who drift into their world - Conrad's favourite themes of divided loyalties and having to make a decision or choice at a supremely difficult moment. Both Jim and Lingard choose to support the white interlopers and in the process they betray the native people who had come to trust them unreservedly. The cross-cultural solidarity that had been established between the white rulers and their native subjects is shattered; Jim is killed, while Lingard is allowed to leave but is not expected to return. While it is possible to interpret this 'expulsion' of the white rulers from the colonial situation as a kind of herald for the era of the emancipation of colonized countries, the unpreparedness of the native institutions to institute an immediately viable alternative political system suggests that Conrad may have removed the whites simply because they were making the situation worse. In engaging in a debate which only gained currency fifty years later when colonial countries began to gain their independence from their European colonial masters, and by debunking the myth of the colonialist as a benevolent father figure in the colonies, Conrad showed an imaginative vision which was progressively way ahead of its time. Conrad's modernist texts also interrogate their own colonialist grounds, indicating a questioning and searching authorial imaginative vision which is more humane in its handling of the colonial theme and its various aspects, particularly the depiction of colonial native characters, than some of Conrad's critics have been able to realize.

Chapter III examines Conrad's two African stories Heart of Darkness (1899) and "An Outpost of Progress" (1897), which Conrad described as the only 'loot' he brought from Africa. Like Marlow in Heart of Darkness, Conrad went to the Congo in June 1890

ostensibly to take command of a Belgian steamer that was plying the River Congo from Matadi to Stanley Falls. He was outraged by what happened to him personally in the Congo and by the greed, exploitation and genocide perpetrated against the native Congolese by European (Belgian) colonialists in the Congo. His two African short stories re-create some of Conrad's experience in the Congo and condemn colonialism in very strong terms. Conrad exposes the lie at the heart of Europe's imperial mission in the nineteenth century, and suggests that as the Europeans are incapable of making a change for the better in Africa, it would be best if they left Africa to the Africans, who 'need no excuse for being there.'

The Chapter also responds in detail to the charge of racism that some critics, particularly Chinua Achebe, have levelled against both Heart of Darkness and Conrad. The response is made largely through a historicist analysis of Conrad's text, approaching it from the point of view of the heterogenous perspective in colonial discourse. It is my contention that critics like Achebe who believe that Heart of Darkness is a racist novel have failed to go beyond the binary oppositions theory in colonial discourse and are therefore not able to appreciate the complexity of Conrad's text and its profound criticism of colonialism. As a modernist text, Heart of Darkness 'interrogates its own colonialist grounds,' questioning, doubting, exposing stereotypical views and prejudices nineteenth-century Europe had of colonial peoples and places. What emerges in the end is an authorial imaginative vision which is humane and sensitive in its depiction of Africa and its people, and which, while speaking to nineteenth-century Europe through the colonial discourse of the time, craftily and methodically 'walks the tightrope' to undercut the premises on which European prejudices about Africa and Africans were being perpetuated.

Chapter IV examines Nostromo (1904), Conrad's novel about the Latin American Republic Costaguana. Although Costaguana is nominally an independent country, its economy is controlled and run by foreign multi-national commercial interests. In its neo-colonial status therefore, Costaguana shares with Conrad's Malay Archipelago and Congo

features of an exploited country where colonialists or imperialists come armed with lofty ideals of doing good and improving the lives of the locals, only to betray such ideals for personal interests, power and political control in the end. Like Jim, Lingard and Kurtz, Charles Gould betrays the ideals that initially guide his re-working of the San Tomé silver mine, dabbles in corruption, and betrays those persons who are close to him and who had come to depend on him. Nostromo, like Heart of Darkness, strongly condemns imperialism.

The Chapter also provides a comprehensive historicist and textually-based response to the charge of racism levelled against Conrad by some critics such as Jean Franco, John A. McClure, and Edward Said. Nostromo is a complex modernist text which, like Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness raises questions, and doubts about perceived contemporary attitudes towards Latin America and Latin Americans. Through a number of narrative devices, Conrad exposes these prejudices, using an authorial voice which is clearly distinguishable from the many voices in his text to explore some of the fundamental issues that have plagued the Latin American continent for years. His view of Latin American history is authentic, insightful, and in some ways, prophetic. Historical events have in a measure vindicated Conrad's view of Latin America explored in Nostromo nearly a century ago. In his treatment of history, and in his characterization of the "Southern" and "Northern" races in Nostromo. Conrad sets up frameworks which appear to accord with the prejudicial and stereotypical views of Nineteenth-Century Europe towards Latin America, but he proceeds to undermine those frameworks to transcend the limitations of racial prejudice and alignment with any one of the warring factions in order to draw the reader's attention to the fundamental issues his novel raises. Although material interests appear to succeed in the end, they succeed at a terrible cost, and only temporarily. Conrad perceives the change that has taken place as both inadequate and unsatisfactory, for it is based on the pursuit of material interests which, as Nostromo shows, dictates its own set of demands, sense of order and justice which are neither human nor humane. Conrad's pessimism is underlined by the fact that the only change

he sees as viable, which should be based on a moral principle, is espoused by characters whose influence cannot determine the direction events take in Costaguana. These characters are to be found on both sides of the colour-line, indicating once again Conrad's sense of cross-cultural solidarity.

In the Conclusion, I examine briefly Conrad's distinctiveness as a writer in England at the turn of the century by comparing him to Rudyard Kipling and Robert Louis Stevenson, two writers who, like Conrad, wrote colonial fiction and were, more than Conrad, closely associated with the popular catch-phrase 'news from the fringes of the empire.' Although the two writers were more popular than Conrad during their lifetime, Conrad has withstood better the test of time and in the end has made a stronger impact not only in England but also in the post-colonial Third World which they all wrote about. It is Conrad's broad, searching, questioning and liberating imaginative vision and how he employs it in his fiction, I argue, that has earned him over the years, unlike his two contemporaries, a central role in English literature and an enduring placing on the syllabi of schools, colleges and universities all over the world, including the Third World.

II

ASIA

II(i)

AFFIRMING CROSS-CULTURAL SOLIDARITY: "THE LAGOON" AND "KARAIN: A MEMORY"

At the beginning of his writing career, Conrad found it necessary to defend the fact that his stories were set in remote, outlandish and far-off places of the earth. One reviewer of Conrad's first novel Almayer's Folly (1895), for instance, expressed his "resentment against all the 'tiresome fiction supposed to be descriptive of outlandish places' and he concluded...[in relation to Almayer's Folly, that] 'Borneo [was] a fine field for the study of monkeys, not of men.'"[1] In response to another such negative criticism, Conrad wrote the following powerful statement stating clearly his own position on cross-cultural solidarity. Because the statement is central to the argument of both this chapter and the thesis as a whole, it is necessary that I quote it in full:

> I am informed that in criticizing that literature which preys on strange people and prowls in far-off countries, under the shade of palms, in the unsheltered glare of sunbeaten beaches, amongst honest cannibals and the more sophisticated pioneers of our virtues, a lady - distinguished in the world of letters - summed up her disapproval of it by saying that the tales it produced were "decivilized."
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> A woman's judgement: intuitive, clever, expressed

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[1] Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1979), p.42

with fecilitous charm - infallible. *A judgement that has nothing to do with justice.* The critic and the judge seems to think that in those distant lands all joy is a yell, and a war dance, all pathos is a howl and a ghastly grin of filed teeth, and that the solution of all problems is found in the barrel of a revolver or on the point of an assegai. And yet it is not so. But the erring magistrate may plead in excuse the misleading nature of the evidence.

The picture of life, there as here, is drawn with the same elaboration of detail, coloured with the same tints. Only in the cruel serenity of the sky, under the merciless brilliance of the sun, the dazzled eye misses the delicate detail, sees only strong outlines, while the colours, in the steady light, seem crude and without shadow. Nevertheless it is the same picture.

And there is a bond between us and that humanity so far away. I am speaking here of men and women - not of the charming and graceful phantoms that move about in our mud and smoke and are softly luminous with the radiance of all our virtues; that are possessed of all refinements, of all sensibilities, of all wisdom - but, being only phantoms, possess no heart.

The sympathies of those are (probably) with the immortals: with the angels above or the devils below. *I am content to sympathize with common mortals, no matter where they live;* in houses or in tents, in the streets under a fog, or in the forests behind the dark line of dismal mangroves that fringe the vast solitude of the sea. *For,*

> *their land - like ours - lies under the inscrutable eyes of the Most High. Their hearts - like ours - must endure the load of the gifts from Heaven: the curse of facts and the blessing of illusions* the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive consolation of our folly.[2] (my italics)

This is perhaps the strongest statement Conrad ever made about cross-cultural solidarity, about his sympathies with alien cultures, alien peoples, alien individuals outside the known and familiar European framework. The statement implies that such sympathy has been achieved through, as it were, a careful re-focusing of one's optics to enable one to discard, and go beyond the surface 'glare of the brilliant sun... the strong outlines' - beyond appearances - in order to get to the 'delicate detail' - an understanding of the reality of an alien environment, an alien culture, an alien people. Also implied in Conrad's statement is the fact that to get to that understanding one must be able, and be willing, to identify, isolate and transcend stereotypical views about what is alien, the sort of views that necessitated Conrad's statement.

Conrad is also giving the signal that in his writings set in overseas places, he would be placing his European readers' stereotypical views about such places to the test not only to expose their shortcomings, but also to show that people in those far-off places are as human as people in Europe, thereby liberating Europeans from ingrained prejudice and ignorance about colonial people and places. In addition, Conrad is giving the signal that he intends, in his colonial fiction, to deal with issues relating to those far-off places with a keen sense of justice (note how he dismisses the lady critic's comment about 'decivilized' tales as having nothing to do with justice). To do justice to issues raised in his colonial fiction, Conrad, as we have seen in Chapter I in his approach to the Anglo-

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[2]Joseph Conrad, "Author's Note, Almayer's Folly" in Almayer's Folly and Tales of Unrest (London and Toronto: Dent & Sons, 1923) pp. vii-viii. All further references to this edition will be given in the thesis and shown as (AF&TU, p.).

Boer War (1899-1902), approaches these issues with an open mind, without the blinkers of prejudice or stereotypical views, without the confinement prescribed by an ideological or philosophical belief. To achieve such justice, Conrad applies a concerned, searching, questioning, and liberating imagination in his handling of the colonial theme and its various aspects.

"The Lagoon," and "Karain: A Memory," two central short stories in the Conrad canon, are for a number of reasons a useful starting point in examining Conrad's writing career, and they form part of the first Volume of short stories written by Conrad, the Volume "Tales of Unrest" (1898). "The Lagoon" was published first, and in a letter to Miss Watson in March 1897, Conrad confided that of all his short stories to date, he liked "The Lagoon" best.[3]

Although the spectre of colonial wars of conquest looms in the background of both stories [Arsat refers to "the time of trouble and war "(TU in AF & TU, p.194) involving his people and white people; Karain refers to the wars that resulted in the Dutch occupation of his country (TU in AF & TU, p.28)], both stories emphasize the strong bond of friendship existing between the white characters and their Malay counterparts.

In "The Lagoon," Arsat and the unnamed white man are friends, and their friendship, we are told, goes a long way back. The narrator, who presents the story largely through the consciousness of both the main characters, shows us how each regards the friendship between them. The white man is "sorrowful" to find on his arrival at Arsat's hut that Arsat's wife is dying. "He had known Arsat," says the narrator, "years ago, in a far country in times of trouble and danger, when no friendship is to be despised. And since his Malay friend had come unexpectedly to dwell in the hut on the lagoon with a strange woman, he had slept many times there, in his journeys up and down the river (TU in AF & TU, p.191). Arsat, on his part, regards the white man as a dear friend, and as an equal. After the white man's arrival at his hut, and the two of them sit side by side

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[3]LLI, ed. G. Jean - Aubry, p. 202

for the whole night, Arsat first underlines his appreciation of his presence before he tells his story: "... for where can we lay down the heaviness of our trouble but in a friend's heart? "(TU in AF & TU, p.194). He also sees their relationship as a friendship of equals. "You know," he reminds the white man, "We were men of family, belonging to a ruling race, and more fit than any to carry on our right shoulder the emblem of power... We are of a people who take what they want - like you whites" (TU in AF & TU, pp. 194-196). And as if to put a stamp of approval on the beautifully drawn scene of the two men sitting side by side under a tropical sky through the troubled night, Nature seems to give her blessing: "A breath of warm air touched the two men's faces..." (TU in AF & TU, p. 199).

Karain's friendship with the three British gun-runners in the story that bears his name is portrayed in a similar manner. The three white men, Jackson, Hollis and the unidentified narrator, visit Karain for short intervals to sell guns to him over a period of two years. During that period, they grow to "like him, to trust him, almost to admire him," the narrator tells us (TU in AF & TU, p.18). Both Karain and the white men regard theirs as a friendship of equals. "There are those," the narrator, who is one of the three white men, says, "who say that a native will not speak to a white man. Error. No man will speak to his master; but to a wanderer and a friend, to him who does not come to teach or rule, to him who asks for nothing and accepts all things, words are spoken by the camp-fires, in the shared solitude of the sea, in riverside villages, in resting-places surrounded by forests - words are spoken that take no account of race or colour. One heart speaks - another one listens; and the earth, the sea, the sky, the passing wind and the stirring leaf, hear also the futile tale of the burden of life" (TU in AF & TU, p. 26). The narrator speaks these words on the fateful night that Karain, like Leggatt in "The Secret Sharer," swims to the white men's boat following the death of Karain's wise old sword-bearer. Karain speaks against these background words by the narrator, and we are thus assured in advance that the nature of the friendship between Karain and his white counterparts is such that Karain won't feel inhibited from laying bare his heart to his

friends, just as Leggatt in the "Secret Sharer," following a similar leap into the sea at night, and covered in the warm robes of his listener as Karain too is, lays his heart bare to the unnamed captain of the ship. As in the case of Arsat's story, Karain's story is told over the entire night. Also, on his part, Karain views his friendship with the three white men as a friendship of equals. When he visits them on board their boat at night, after his day's duties of State are done , he regards himself, we are told, as "a private gentleman coming to see other gentlemen whom he supposed as well born as himself" (TU in AF & TU, p.12).

In his portrayal of these two sets of friendship, Conrad seems to be at pains to demonstrate the truth of his statement in the "Author's Note" to Almayer's Folly quoted in full at the beginning of this chapter, particularly the point about the "bond between us and that humanity so far away." Such friendship, the narrator in "Karain: A Memory" tells us, has been made possible because the whites involved have not come as colonialists who claim a superior status or a higher sense of values; they have not come as "masters" who believe they must "teach or rule."

In Kipling's colonial writings, native characters who gain Kipling's approval are immediately transformed in colour in Kipling's mind to become "white." In "The Man Who Would Be King," for instance, Dravot, taken up by visions of building an empire, expresses his appreciation of the men of Kafiristan, whom he sees as the instrument to his goal, as follows:

> I won't make a Nation. I'll make an Empire! These men aren't niggers; they're English! Look at their eyes - look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes, or something like it, and they're grown to be English.[4]

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[4]Rudyard Kipling, The Man Who Would Be King and Other Stories, ed. Louis L Cornell (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.269

And in one of his famous poems, "Gunga Din," Kipling's narrator is moved to express his and his regiment's appreciation of an Indian soldier named Gunga Din, who ministers to every need of the white soldiers in the battlefield so dutifully that he pays the supreme sacrifice, his life, to save the lives of the British soldiers. To Kipling, Gunga Din, "for all 'is dirty 'ide," is "white, clear white, inside."[5]

It is a measure of Conrad's great appreciation of the dignity and integrity of other races and cultures that in his portrayal of Arsat and Karain, of whom he clearly and warmly approves, he lets them retain their identity as Malays. Indeed, Arsat and Karain, and not the white characters, occupy centre stage in these two stories. In "The Lagoon," the white man is not even given a name, an identity, and to those readers in 1897 who craved to read about the heroic exploits of white men in the tropics in their battles against the dark races and the dark environment, "The Lagoon" must have been a big disappointment: the white man in the story is no more than a chorus to Arsat's story; he hardly says anything more than a few words or a sentence in direct response to rhetorical questions asked by Arsat. In "Karain: A Memory," the white characters seem to bear names only for the purpose of narrative identification. The third white man, who cannot be mistaken for anyone else among the three of them after the other two have been given names, remains unnamed. As in "The Lagoon" therefore, the white characters in "Karain: A Memory" are essential only in their narrative roles.

It is important to stress the point about the two native characters' centrality in these two stories, and the marginalisation of the white characters (who merely complement the native characters), because when the situation is reversed in later Conrad and the native characters are the ones marginalised, in Heart of Darkness (1902) for instance, some Third World critics, Chinua Achebe chief among them, believe such a portrayal of native characters, among other reasons, is a key proof of Conrad's racist depiction of native peoples in colonial situations.

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[5]Rudyard Kipling, "Gunga Din," in Kipling: Poems Selected by James Cochrane (Penguin, 1977) p.166

Both Arsat and Karain are life-like characters with ordinary human strengths and foibles, and they carry the stamp of typical Conrad characters signifying the fact that although Conrad was in his later works to feature white characters as his main characters in the tropics, the two native characters of these stories would remain part of the Conradian gallery of characters and canon. Like white characters after them, both Arsat and Karain are vehicles of Conrad's central themes of impulsive betrayal and the subsequent quest for redemption, divided loyalties, and moral choices in excruciatingly difficult circumstances.

Arsat, who is presented to us with a strong presence as "young, powerful, with broad chest and muscular arms" (TU in AF & TU p. 190) when we first meet him, and whose heroic exploits, strengths and fearlessness in war are constantly referred to throughout the story, nevertheless carries a burden in his mind arising - in typically Conradian fashion - from his own actions, or as Marlow in Heart of Darkness would say, 'choice of nightmares,' in the past. Arsat impulsively abandoned his brother to his death at the hands of their ruler's men and chose to run away with the girl he loved, Diamelen, a servant of the ruler. The girl is now dying in Arsat's hut, and Arsat is plagued with an acute sense of guilt and remorse, for he can still, in his mind, hear the voice of his brother calling out his name at the moment of his death. The following morning, as the day breaks in a brilliance that mocks Arsat's situation, Diamelen dies, and Arsat is for a while immobilised by his sense of the harsh irony of his experiences: "Arsat had not moved. He stood lonely in the searching sunshine; and he looked beyond the great light of a cloudless day into the darkness of a world of illusions" (TU in AF & TU, p.204). We are made to understand, however, that when he finally makes a move, Arsat will return to his native land to make reparations and avenge his brother's death. "We are sons of the same mother - ," he tells the white man during the night, "and I left him in the midst of enemies; but I am going back now... In a little while I shall see clear enough to strike - to strike" (TU in AF & TU, pp. 203-204).

Critics hold conflicting views on Arsat's contemplated act of revenge. Drawing

evidence from Conrad's description of the landscape and the atmosphere when the sun rises on the morning of Diamelen's death, Thomas Moser sees Arsat's resolve to return as an act of redemption.[6]

On the contrary, Lawrence Graver, like some critics during Conrad's life - time, believes that the optimism Moser sees is "unconvincing," or that the story ends "bleakly; for even if Arsat does return, he will receive little consolation from this act. The price for betrayal has already been exacted."[7]

It would seem to me that Arsat here has as much chance of improving his situation, of redeeming himself, as Jim has at the moment he offers himself to be shot by Old Doramin in Lord Jim. Both Arsat and Jim, like Conrad's father Apollo and his fellow Polish patriots fighting for Polish liberation and emancipation, face heroic failure, failure over a cause they believe must be pursued, without a choice, and therefore 'into the destructive element they immerse themselves' as Jim discovers. In raising such central issues of his writing career through Arsat, a native Malay hero, as he would do in Jim and other white characters of his colonial fiction - weighty issues involving the making of difficult moral choices in excruciatingly difficult circumstances - Conrad is here affirming the substance of his statement on cross-cultural solidarity, the solidarity and sympathies of and among human beings "no matter where they live; in houses or in tents, in the streets under a fog, or in the forests behind the dark line of dismal mangroves..."

The same point can be made for Karain. A powerful ruler when we first meet him, a ruler who has the absolute loyalty of his people, a ruler who is almost larger than life, Karain, like Arsat and other Conrad heroes after him, nevertheless bears a tormented soul. We are constantly alerted to this fact by the narrator's language suggesting that

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[6]Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard, 1957) p.70

[7]Lawrence Graver, Conrad's Short Fiction (Los Angeles & Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) p.27

Karain is an actor on a stage, and that behind all the pomp and colour of sarongs and ceremonies, lies a tormented soul crying out to be redeemed. We learn soon enough that, like Arsat, Karain has betrayed a friend who was like a blood brother to him, at a crucial moment. Karain shoots and kills his friend, Pata Matara, instead of killing the Dutchman who had run away with Matara's sister. Karain and Matara had spend a number of years hunting for the couple, for Matara is compelled to restore the honour of his blemished family name. The girl was supposed to marry someone else before she took off with the Dutchman. Matara vows to kill the girl with his own hand. Karain, who is entrusted with the only gun the two friends have, would kill the Dutchman. In Karain's mind, however, the image of the girl becomes a presence which he finds comforting, protective, and irresistible during the years of their strange Odyssey as they move from place to place looking for the couple. Reality and illusion mingle in his mind, and at times he holds internal conversations with that image. At the crucial moment, the 'supreme moment' as Conrad would say, therefore, Karain impulsively shoots and kills his friend to protect that image, and the offending couple are saved. Reality and remorse afflict Karain almost immediately after the girl says she has never seen Karain before. Karain is now tormented by the ghost of his betrayed friend, Pata Matara, and the wise old man, his sword-bearer who alone could exorcise him and set him free, is dead. Karain remains closed up for several days after the death of the old man until he musters all his courage one night and swims to the three white men's boat to ask them to take him with them to their land of "unbelievers" where 'Matara' would not follow him, or alternatively, to give him a charm, a talisman, that is capable of warding off Matara's ghost. After agonizing on what to do for Karain (for, as Hollis puts it, "this Malay has been our friend" (TU in AF & TU p.47), Hollis finally takes advantage of Karain's admiration for Queen Victoria and makes a "talisman" for him consisting of a ribbon (from Hollis' own bundle of "the white man's amulets") and a Jubilee sixpence with the Queen's head on it. Karain, whose own mother had been a great ruler and whose admiration of Queen Victoria is probably associated with the memories of his own mother, is satisfied. He wears the charm;

Matara's ghost disappears from Karain's world; and the narrator gives us the following as our last picture of the "redeemed" Karain against the background of the rising sun:

> Karain seemed to wake up from a dream.... It was morning already... "He [Matara's ghost] has departed again - forever!" he cried.
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> He left us, and seemed straightaway to step into the glorious splendour of his stage, to wrap himself in the illusion of unavoidable success. For a moment he stood erect, one foot over the gangway, one hand on the hilt of his kriss, in a martial pose; and, relieved from his fear of outer darkness, he held his head high, he swept a serene look over his conquered foothold on the earth (TU in AF & TU, pp. 51-52).

Critics have made much of Conrad's comment in a letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham in 1898 in which Conrad expressed the fear that Graham might despise the story. "I am glad you like 'Karain,'" wrote Conrad. "I was afraid you would despise it. There's something magazine'ish about it. Eh? It was written for 'Blackwood's.'"[8] Lawrence Graver agrees there is something magazine'ish about "Karain: A Memory." After all, the story was serialized in Blackwood's Magazine only four months before the celebrations of Queen Victoria's sixtieth Jubilee in 1897, and Conrad, who was yet to capture a wide readership and to make money from his writings, might have pandered to the needs and allurements of the moment. "Conrad begins to tell a serious tale of murder and remorse," comments Graver, "but deliberately takes the edge off by using a slick, humorous ending to evade the full complexities of his theme.... The crafty Karain opens several

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[8]LLI, ed. G. Jean-Aubry, p.234

conversations with pious references to the grand and invincible White queen; and the Kiplingesque ending, though ironical, is good-hearted enough to please the average magazine reader."[9]

While Graver makes a convincing point about the "slick Kiplingesque ending" of "Karain: A Memory," it appears that the story makes important and serious points which are consistent with later Conrad, and the "slick ending" is ameliorated by Conrad's use of irony which is intended to put the entire spectrum of life, whether in Karain's distant land or in the narrator's London, under scrutiny.

We should note that the story is not taking place now as the unidentified narrator is telling it. It is "A Memory" (see title). In framework the narrative is a forerunner to some of Conrad's major works, particularly Heart of Darkness, where the technique of multiple consciousness in the telling of the tale is brought to near-perfection. Unlike a typical Kipling story which would capitalize on the action, on what is taking place, Conrad's story here is reported, thereby creating a distance in both time and narrative perspective to enable the reader to evaluate the moral implications of action that has taken place. What we are given as the present is the illusory nature of life in a typical London street on a typical day in London, and it is significant that the story ends on this picture. After the narrator meets Jackson in a crowded London street, and they discuss Karain's experience and wonder whether it was real, or just an illusion, no answer is provided. Instead, our attention is drawn to what is taking place on the street in London, and therein lies the answer: pale-faced youth strolling and overcome by weariness; girls talking vivaciously with shining eyes; the big wheels of hansoms turning slowly along the edge of side-walks; a fine old fellow strutting, red-faced, stroking a white moustache; a line of yellow boards with blue letters approaching slowly, tossing on high behind one another "like some queer wreckage adrift upon a river of hats" (TU in AF & TU, p.55). Jackson, like Marlow in the Sepulchral City at the end of Heart of Darkness, looks at all this

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[9] Graver, p.33

"contemptuous, amused" (TU in AF & TU, p.55), affirming the frivolity and illusion inherent in life in London as it is - indeed - in the characters' memory of Karain's experience in far-away Borneo.

In addition, there is the "saving lie" on which "Karain" and Heart of Darkness both end, the "saving lie" which, the narrators of both tales would have us believe, is necessary for the continued belief in the essence of life, in the very necessity to continue to live. Conrad was here probing into one of the complex fundamental literary and philosophical debates of the nineteenth century, the debate over truth and illusion, which characterized the sceptical pessimism of the age. Ian Watt links the debate to such literary figures of the nineteenth century as Ibsen and Henry James, but he believes that the philosophical arguments of Kant and Schopenhauer, and later Nietzsche, most influenced writers. He refers to Nietzsche's statements that "Truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are" and that "what really mattered [is] not whether an opinion [is] true or false, but rather 'how far an opinion is life-furthering.'"[10] Unlike the philosophers, however, Conrad holds a complex position. He would not have us endorse automatically the illusion by which Karain proposes to live and the lie with which Marlow hopes to simplify the telling of the complex experience he has had and witnessed in the Congo. While the narrators of both tales would appear satisfied with their stories' conclusions, Conrad would have us ask further questions about those conclusions. Jackson's question to the narrator when they meet in a London street years later whether Karain's experience was real, "whether it really happened to him" (TU in AF & TU, p.54), for instance, casts a sceptical light on what some philosophers were postulating. Watching Karain walk happily and confidently into the morning sunshine at the end, we cannot help but wonder what would happen to his new-found sense of confidence if he woke up one morning to discover his charm missing? Conrad's position is indeed complex: while he acknowledges the basic tenets of his age's debates, he, at the same

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[10]Ian Watt, pp. 246-247

time, questions and interrogates those tenets, showing the complexity of life even in as far a place as Borneo and in a character so far removed from European tradition and civilization.

In his article "Conrad's 'Karain' and Lord Jim," Bruce Johnson disagrees with Albert Guerard's conclusion that "Karain is in Conrad's eyes ultimately 'only a superstitious native'" by showing in close detail striking parallels between Jim and Karain, how both men seek "cross-cultural purgation,"[11] and how the details "bring Karain and the Englishmen together in the same illusion - haunted human predicament" (LJ, p.463) - an indication of Conrad's belief in the universality of human experience.

Robert F. Lee, who in his book Conrad's Colonialism interprets Karain's request for a talisman and his admiration of Queen Victoria as a symbolic statement of a colonial subject's need for protection by the white race, and Hollis' administering of the Jubilee sixpence charm to Karain as "a symbolic statement of the White Man's Burden assumed,"[12] misses not only the irony of Conrad's ending, but also, indeed, the point of the whole story, which is the illusory nature of life in London, in Borneo, anywhere - the "futile tale of the burden of life" which, according to the narrator of the story who echoes Conrad's statement on cross-cultural solidarity, is shared between one heart and another, through words "that take no account of race or colour" (TU in AF & TU, p.[illegible])

Thus "Karain," like "The Lagoon," explores issues which are [illegible]ntal to Conrad's concerns as a writer, and the story's hero, Karain, a native [illegible] shares with other Conradian heroes, irrespective of their race or colour, "the burden [illegible]ife" and its illusory nature.

The statement Conrad made in his "Author's Note" to Almayer's Folly about his

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[11]Bruce M. Johnson, "Conrad's 'Karain' and Lord Jim" in Thomas C Moser, ed. Lord Jim (New York: Norton, 1968), p.466.
y All further refere..es to Lord Jim will be made from the same edition and shown in the thesis as LJ. p.

[12]Robert F. Lee, Conrad's Colonialism (The Hague: Mouton 1969) p.18

sympathies with common mortals wherever they might be, according to McClure, must have been "shocking and offensive"[13] to Conrad's contemporaries, given the context of his time and how overseas colonial places were regarded by the general public in England and Europe. If indeed Conrad's statement shocked and offended his readers, proceeding to demonstrate as successfully as Conrad does in "The Lagoon" and in "Karain: A Memory" that there are indeed, in those far away places, people such as Arsat and Karain, whose stories are worth writing about, and whose stories can be written without "decivilizing" the fine traditional sensibilities of literature, must have been liberating not only to minds of his time in England and Europe, but also to the English novel itself whose boundaries were thus being expanded through Conrad's realistic, concerned, searching and liberating imagination. In "The Lagoon" and "Karain: A Memory," Conrad affirms that cross-cultural solidarity among human beings is possible, even in the far-away colonial world, under certain conditions.

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[13]McClure, p.100

II(ii)

ANTITHESIS OF CROSS-CULTURAL SOLIDARITY: ALMAYER'S FOLLY AND AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS

Unlike the wandering and freebooting white traders of "The Lagoon" and "Karain," the European characters featured in Conrad's first and second novels, Almayer's Folly (1895) and An Outcast of the Islands (1896) exercise, or are put into positions where they are expected to exercise, a large measure of influence, if not control, over the economics, local politics and lives of the natives of Sambir in the Malay Archipelago. The dynamics of managing such influence or control create an atmosphere which is very different from the near-idyllic, near-Arcadian atmosphere of "The Lagoon" and "Karain." In an effort to amass wealth in order to realise cherished personal hopes and dreams, the white characters engage in base manipulation of both the local situation and the local people's lives while, in turn, the native people devise cunning and crafty modes of conduct to outwit the whites. The competition which develops as a result is sometimes fierce, and the relationships among the various people, particularly across the colour-line, is characterised by the desire to dominate by all participants. We recall the warning of the white narrator of "Karain" which we discussed in the first part of this chapter, that a healthy and open inter-cultural relationship between whites and natives in a colonial situation is possible only if whites approach and regard the natives as worthy equals, not as inferior or backward people to whom they come as "masters... to teach or rule" (TU, in AF & TU, p.26). While "The Lagoon" and "Karain" affirm this principle, in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands Conrad explodes the myth of the white man's moral superiority in the tropics and condemns colonial ventures by showing how adversely the natives are affected, and how the white colonialists are dehumanized and subsequently destroyed. Conrad does not idealize either side. Avrom Fleishman has captured closely Conrad's attitude to both the native communities and the white men who come into them as follows:

> He has little sympathy for the indigenous forms of social life: native rulers are predatory and rapacious (like the leaders of "civilized" states, he also suggests), and tribal history is an almost uninterrupted record of war and enslaving or enslavement. The coming of the whites, however, only makes things worse: the primitive social order is reduced to anarchy.....
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> As for the moral effects of colonial rule on the Europeans, their participation in imperial ventures tends to decivilize, dehumanize, and destroy them because of their severance from the organic ties of their own social community.[1]

At the close of the period covered by both novels in the Sambir of the Malay Archipelago, Conrad puts an end to the drama between the races by separating them altogether. Almayer, although a Dutchman, dies disappointed that the British, expected to extend their political and mercantile influence to Sambir, have so far not done so, and the British flag which he and Captain Tom Lingard had hoisted at their trading station is removed by Willems and replaced by a Dutch flag. Almayer had believed that British influence in Sambir would raise his fortunes. The Arabs, who take centre stage after Willems betrays both Almayer and Lingard by showing Syed Abdulla Lingard's secret outlet to the sea, support the Dutch, the colonial power in the land. In turn, the Dutch concentrate on controlling coastal and large commercial centres, and leave remote inland areas such as Sambir to the local control of the rajahs who, in turn, pay tax to the colonial administration. After Almayer and Willems are both 'killed off' from the scene, and Lingard is reported to be dead in England where he had gone to raise capital for the

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[1]Avrom Fleishman, Conrad's Politics, p.82

exploration of his 'mountain of gold' in Sambir, there is no immediate white presence left in Conrad's Sambir. One would, on the face of it, be tempted to regard Conrad as a forerunner of the progressive thinking of the later half of the twentieth century culminating in the independence of Third World countries, for indeed, Sambir is left largely in the hands of the local native rulers. Conrad's vision is, however, more complex than that. While there is no white presence in the day-to-day running of both political and commercial affairs in Sambir, the scene has become dominated by a new 'foreign' commercial power - the Arabs - and their first political act is to station Abdulla's gun-boat in the gulf as a show of strength and support for Lakamba who ousts the old and benign Patalolo from power. As we shall see in the Chapter on Nostromo, Conrad ends the Costaguana saga in a similar manner. The American cruiser, "The Powhattan," is similarly stationed in the Golfo Placido while the process of the Occidental Province's secession from the rest of Costaguana is being effected, and this American representative is the first to salute the new Republic's new flag. As in Sambir, the political and commercial power of the new dispensation does not lie in the hands of the local people but in the hands of a foreign power. Action in the world of Conrad's novel therefore continues after we come to the last page of the novel, signifying Conrad's vision of history as a record of ongoing human actions. That action, as we see at the close of the Sambir and the Costaguana dramas, is cyclical, indicating that whatever change has been achieved is of little consequence as similar upheavals will recur in the new era or dispensation. And underlined in this dissatisfaction with the political changes at the end of the Sambir and Costaguana dramas is the fact that Conrad sees that there is need for further change. Zdzislaw Najder has also identified this quality in Conrad's vision, which he has described as "an acute consciousness of the need for fundamental social and political change, an awareness of widespread injustice and corruption, and a strong

disapproval of the status quo."[2] With such a yearning for fundamental and more lasting change, Conrad can hardly be regarded as a conservative.

Almayer and Willems, the protagonists of Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, represent what Cedric Watts has termed "one-man imperialism - ... the small, personal empires established by adventurous Europeans in far-off places" whose historical prototypes were Sir James Brooke in Sarawak and the 'real Lingard' in Borneo.[3] Watts's descriptive term suits Lingard in The Rescue and Jim in Lord Jim better than it does Almayer and Willems for like their historical prototypes, Lingard and Jim succeed in winning the confidence of the local native communities in the colonial setting and are accepted as rulers. Almayer and Willems do not have Lingard's or Jim's high-sounding motivations. They are simple white men who seize on what opportunities they see as coming their way to, as Goonetilleke has put it, "make their pile."[4] Almayer and Willems are put to work at the Lingard-Almayer trading station in Sambir by Capt. Tom Lingard, known as the "Rajah Laut" or the "King of the Sea." Lingard plays the role of colonial benefactor, a kind of colonial father figure, to both Almayer and Willems, and to the native woman who later becomes Almayer's wife. Lingard's life is traced backwards in what Conrad critics have termed The Lingard Trilogy[5] comprising of Almayer's Folly (1895), An Outcast of the Islands (1896) and The Rescue (started in 1896 and completed in 1920). In Almayer's Folly Lingard is an old man who controls events in Sambir largely from a distance; in An Outcast of the Islands he is middle-aged,

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[2]Zdzislaw Najder, "Conrad and Rousseau: Concepts of Man and Society" in Norman Sherry, ed. Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration: Papers from the 1974 International Conference on Conrad, p.87

[3]Cedric Watts, A Preface to Conrad (London & New York: Longman, 1982) p.65

[4]D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Developing Countries in British Fiction (MacMillan, 1977), p.53

[5]Heliéna Krenn, Conrad's Lingard Trilogy: Empire, Race, and Women in the Malay Novels (New York & London: Garland, 1990)

active and very much involved in the circumstances of Willems' life; and in The Rescue he is a young man whose reputation and power spread across the islands from The Shore of Refuge, his 'one-man empire' which he controls in a manner that has prompted a critic to suggest that The Rescue is a re-writing of Lord Jim[6]. The important point to make here is that by placing his protagonists in the remote settings of Sambir, Patusan and The Shore of Refuge, away from the communities that nurtured them, Conrad is, as it were, putting them under the reader's microscope for close examination. The reader is invited to examine their motivations against the background of the nineteenth century passion for colonial expansionism, and to assess their capability to undertake the tasks they set for themselves.

At the beginning of Almayer's Folly, we are told of events which took place twenty-five years earlier and have culminated in the wreck and decay we now see surrounding Almayer. Lingard, the active middle-aged "Rajah Laut" of An Outcast of the Islands days, establishes a trading post in Sambir. He sends to Sambir Kaspar Almayer to manage the post, a young man whose father was a minor official in the Dutch Administration in Java and who was himself a clerk at the port of Macassar in the Celebes. Almayer agrees to marry a native girl who has become Lingard's protegé after Lingard kills her father, a Sulu pirate, in one of Lingard's wars to establish control. Although he is revolted by the idea of marrying a native girl, Almayer agrees because Lingard promises him great wealth. Almayer begins to make plans in his mind on how to use the large sums of money he hopes to inherit through his wife. On top of the list is his burning passion to leave behind him the life of struggle that he has led in the Malay Archipelago, leave behind his native woman, and go to Amsterdam where he hopes to buy a huge mansion and live as a rich man with his beautiful half-caste daughter.

But all this happened twenty-five years ago. The present reality as the novel begins is that Almayer has still not achieved his dream, and it has in fact become quite

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[6]Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957), p.145

clear even to his dreaming mind now that he will never achieve it. Willems (of an Outcast of the Islands), whose history is similar to Almayer's in that he has married Joanna, the half-caste daughter of Lingard's banker, plays a large part in the disintegration of Almayer's dream. Willems is also sent to Sambir by Lingard after he is fired by Hudig of Hudig and Co. for stealing on the job. Once in Sambir, Willems betrays both Almayer and Lingard by revealing Lingard's secret access route to Sambir on the Pantai River in order to win the love of Aissa, a native Malayan girl in Sambir. Lingard's trade monopoly on the settlement is thus broken when Abdulla and the Arabs gain entry through the information divulged by Willems. Almayer therefore ends without any business. The big boarding house into which he invested all his money when the British Borneo Company was rumoured to be coming to Sambir to set up and conduct business stands unused and has begun to decay. The Arabs and other rival traders have dubbed the house "Almayer's Folly," the name which becomes the novel's title. The British Borneo Company never comes to Sambir, and Almayer has had to watch his dreams fade in that respect. Lingard dies in England without revealing his secret of the whereabouts of the mountain of gold, if there ever was one. The Arabs and local natives initially treat Almayer with some begrudging respect just in case he knows where Lingard's secret mountain of gold is located. When they are eventually convinced that Almayer has no such knowledge, they dismiss him as inconsequential. Almayer's only remaining means of realising his dream now lies with Dain Maroola, a Balinese Prince who lands at Sambir in search of gunpowder. Almayer takes Dain into his confidence and arranges that Dain should return with boats, men and equipment necessary to look for and excavate Lingard's mountain of gold. Dain only agrees to return because he has fallen in love with Almayer's daughter, Nina who has become Almayer's only reason for living:

> He absorbed himself in his dream of wealth and power away from this Coast where he had dwelt for so many years, forgetting the bitterness of toil and strife in the vision

> of a great and splendid reward. They would live in Europe, he and his daughter. They would be rich and respected. Nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth. Witnessing her triumphs he would grow young again, he would forget the twenty-five years of heart-breaking struggle on this Coast where he felt like a prisoner (AF in AF & TU, pp.3-4).

After Dain returns and elopes with Nina Almayer is shattered. What hurts him most is the fact that Nina is marrying a native Malay, an affront to his racist mind:

> "I cannot," he muttered to himself. After a long pause he spoke again a little lower, but in an unsteady voice, "It would be too great a disgrace. I am a white man." He broke down completely there, and went on tearfully, "I am a white man, and of good family. Very good family," he repeated, weeping bitterly. "It would be a disgrace... all over the island, ... the only white man on the east coast. No, it cannot be... White men finding my daughter with this Malay. My daughter!" he cried aloud, with a ring of despair in his voice (AF, in AF & TU, p.184).

Thereafter Almayer takes to smoking opium and he dies soon after news reaches Sambir that Nina has given birth to a son, a prince, an heir apparent in Bali.

Almayer's counterpart, Willems of An Outcast of the Islands, fares no better. After Lingard finds a job for him with Hudig and Co. in Macassar, Willems entertains himself by playing god to his dark half-caste wife and her family, the Da Souzas', whom

at heart he despises and scorns:

> ... he would be able as heretofore to tyrannize good-humouredly over his half-caste wife, to notice with tender contempt his pale yellow child, to patronize loftily his dark-skinned brother-in-law, who loved pink neckties and wore patent-leather boots on his little feet, and was so humble before the white husband of the lucky sister. Those were the delights of his life... the awe-struck respect of Leonard Da Souza and of all the Da Souza family. That family's admiration was the great luxury of his life. It rounded and completed his existence in a perpetual assurance of unquestionable superiority. He loved to breathe the coarse incense they offered before the shrine of the successful white man; the man that had done them the honour to marry their daughter, sister, cousin; the rising man sure to climb very high; the confidential clerk of Hudig & Co. ...he was their providence; he kept them singing his praises... and he was greatly delighted... It is a fine thing to be a providence, and to be told so on every day of one's life. It gives one a feeling of enormously remote superiority, and Willems revelled in it... his greatest delight lay in the unexpressed but intimate conviction that, should he close his hand, all those admiring human beings would starve. His munificence had demoralized them. An easy task. Since he descended amongst them and married Joanna they had lost the little aptitude and strength for work they might have had to put forth under the stress of extreme necessity.

> They lived now by the grace of his will. This was power. Willems loved it.[7]

The rising clerk and little god is soon fired by Hudig for stealing on the job, but Lingard, the father figure, tries once again to rehabilitate him from his many passionate pleasures that include gambling, billiards and poker. He sends him to join Almayer at Sambir. But after his betrayal of Lingard, Willems is dismissed and refused further protection. Lingard condemns him to the wilderness of Sambir and tells Aissa that she can have his life. Willems soon finds himself caught up in a tricky *menage-à-trois* when his half-caste wife Joanna follows him to Sambir where he keeps Aissa as mistress. Conrad dramatizes the scene. Aissa is pointing a revolver at Willems:

> "Who is she?"
> "My wife," answered Willems, without looking up. "My wife according to our White law, which comes from God!"
> "Your law! Your God!" murmured Aissa, contemptuously. "Your law... or your lies? ...You lied to me with your lips, with your eyes. You crooked heart!" (Outcast, p.355)

In the scene that ensues, which is terribly melodramatic, Aissa fires the revolver and kills Willems, putting an end to a veritably worthless life.

It is clear from what we have seen of Kaspar Almayer and Peter Willems, Conrad's white men in charge of the Lingard & Co. Trading Station at Sambir, that they have no aptitude whatsoever for the tasks they are assigned to do. Willems seems to be an incorrigible criminal whom Lingard tries without success to rehabilitate. We are told

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[7]Joseph Conrad. An Outcast of the Islands (London & Toronto: Dent. 1923). pp.3-5. Further references to this text are made from the same edition and shown in the text as Outcast, p.

of his "[stepping] off the straight and narrow path" (Outcast, p.3) in the very first line of the novel, and he never steps back onto it. We sympathize with him, however, momentarily when he begins to restore bit by bit the money he had stolen from Hudig & Co. He is caught before he completes the process. In an effort to differentiate themselves from the native community in which they live, both Almayer and Willems have an exaggerated sense of their whiteness, which they hang onto as if that alone guarantees success. Despite this exaggerated sense of the worth of their racial identity, both men marry native women for money, and their mercenary spirit continues to manifest itself throughout the novels. Almayer, in addition, is weak; he lacks the positive will to do things, while on the other end of the scale, Willems is a slave of various self-indulgent passions over which he has no will or strength to exercise restraint. The tropical jungle, however, dictates a tempo of life which is way above Almayer and Willems' capabilities, and they are destroyed:

> In a moment the two little nutshells [boats - one of which is Almayer's] with their occupants floated quietly side by side, reflected by the black water in the dim light struggling through a high canopy of dense foliage; while above, away up in the broad day, flamed immense red blossoms sending down on their heads a shower of great dew-sparkling petals that descended rotating slowly in a continuous and perfumed stream; and over them, under them, in the sleeping water; all around them, in the sleeping water; all around them in a ring of luxuriant vegetation bathed in the warm air charged with strong and harsh perfumes, the intense work of tropical nature went on: plants shooting upward, entwined, interlaced in inextricable confusion, climbing madly and brutally over each other in the terrible

> silence of a desperate struggle towards the life-giving sunshine above - as if struck with sudden horror at the seething mass of corruption below, at the death and decay from which they sprang (AF, in AF & TU, p.71).

In these vital and almost tangible life-processes of tropical nature, Almayer and Willems, in their counterpart jungle of human affairs in the Archipelago, are certainly incapable of "struggling for the life-giving sunshine above"; they can only wallow in the thick of the "seething mass of corruption below" where "death and decay" are the order of things.

Conrad could not have made a more powerful condemnation of colonialism in the two novels than he makes in his portrayal of Almayer and Willems. Their motives are mercenary, and their moral conduct inept and despicable. Through their portrayal Conrad has exploded the romantic myth of the colonialist's moral superiority over the natives in the tropics, and has also condemned strongly in Lingard and Willems the practice of playing 'god' in the colonies, or playing 'father,' which relegates everyone else, particularly the colonized, to the stock image of the perpetual child, in addition to making the kinds of cross-cultural and inter-racial relationships we discovered in "Karain" and "The Lagoon" impossible.

Unlike Achebe who takes issue at the fact that native African characters are marginalized in Heart of Darkness[8], Third World critics from Asia generally seem to find justification in Conrad's assigning major attention to white characters in his Malayan novels. In this respect, Goonetilleke says Conrad's "kind of emphasis suggests that his perspective is European, but it is not distorted: the Europeans enjoyed an importance in the colonies enormously out of proportion to their numbers because they belonged to the 'ruling race' if not to the ruling nation."[9] While he also agrees and accepts that Malays

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[8]Achebe, "An Image of Africa"

[9]Goonetilleke, "Conrad's Malayan Novels: Problems of Authenticity," in Hamner,

are not Conrad's main focus in his Malayan novels, Lloyd Fernando nevertheless charges, though not as strongly as Achebe does, that Conrad conforms a little too much with "current clichés" of character conception in that his Malayan characters remain "shadowy, like Dain Waris in Lord Jim, or exotic external portrayals like Babalatchi and even Aissa in An Outcast of the Islands."[10] Interestingly, the direct charge of racism in Conrad's Malayan novels has not come from Third World critics but from Todd G. Willy of the University of California at Berkeley who, in his recent article in Conradiana (1992) writes:

> It is manifestly obvious that in Almayer's Folly, as well as in several of his earlier works, Conrad exhibits no embarrassment whatsoever in... defining the status of his Asian characters and the character of his novel's scene as savagery writ large - which of course explains in and of itself why in recent decades Conrad's critics have been quick to endorse, condemn, or, more imaginatively, to obscure, the text's clearly racist implications.[11]

Heliéna Krenn from Taiwan has traced some keywords which the narrators and characters of the Malay novels use, words such as "savage," "civilization," "civilized," "uncivilized," and applying her lexicographical findings has come to the conclusion that the use of these words is not intended to exhibit racial prejudice against Conrad's Asian characters. Referring to the use of the word "savage" in Almayer's Folly, Krenn

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p.42

[10]Fernando, "Conrad's Eastern Expatriates: A New Version of His Outcasts," in Hamner, p.63

[11]Todd G. Willy, "Almayer's Folly and the Imperatives of Conradian Atavism" in Conradiana v24 no.1 1992 p.4

observes:

> Conrad's frequent use of "savage" in these texts has made him suspect of sharing the racist thinking of his white characters. An examination of the meanings which he attaches to the word "savage" can exonerate him. It shows a great variety of connotations ranging from fierce, wild, untamed to unself-conscious, unspoilt, uninhibited. The fact that Almayer thinks of himself as being condemned to a "savage state of life" in Sambir is the best proof that to Conrad the word does not necessarily carry racial implications.[12]

And with reference to the use of the same word in An Outcast of the Islands Krenn observes that "in ten out of twenty-three cases the word refers to [Aissa] and half of these are Willems' choices of it in thinking about Aissa," and that "savage" expresses "both physical and mental states of Europeans as well as Malays." "'Savage' as used by Conrad," she says," has less to do with racial differences than with character; and more often than not, it is intended to reveal the speaker as much as the person to whom the word is applied. In light of his role as a weak, empty individual, "she says of Willems," Willems' frequent use of 'savage' and simultaneous emphasis on his own superiority as a civilized being are greatly ironic."[13]

Krenn's lexicon of Conrad's use of words that are on the face of it apparently disparaging to native characters in the Malay novels is certainly convincing. It is also consistent with Conrad's statement on inter-cultural, inter-racial solidarity in the "Author's

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[12]Krenn, p.19

[13]Krenn, p.64

Note" to Almayer's Folly. It would indeed be both inconsistent and strange for Conrad to make his statement on cross-cultural solidarity in the "Author's Note to Almayer's Folly" which we examined in the first part of this Chapter and then proceed to be 'racist' in the novel he is introducing.

The point Krenn is making in defense of Conrad can be extended to include another aspect of point-of-view, which is authorial voice (as distinct from narrative voice). Both Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands are narrated by omniscient narrators who enter the minds of both European and Malay characters freely. The narrators tell their stories in two ways: portraying a scene through the eyes or consciousness of a particular character, and through direct reporting from their own point of view. Let us examine the following two passages one reported through the consciousness of specific characters, and the other reported directly by the narrator:

From Almayer's Folly

> He wanted Almayer to marry his adopted daughter. "And don't you kick because you're white!" he shouted, suddenly, not giving the surprised young man the time to say a word. "None of that with me! Nobody will see the colour of your wife's skin. The dollars are too thick for that, I tell you!..."
>
> Startled by the unexpected proposal, Almayer hesitated, and remained silent for a minute. He was gifted with a strong and active imagination, and in that short space of time he saw, as in a flash of dazzling light, great piles of shining guilders, and realised all the possibilities of an opulent existence... As to the other side of the picture - the companionship for life of a Malay girl, that legacy of a boatful of pirates - there was only within him a confused

> consciousness of shame that he a white man - ... He had a vague idea of shutting her up somewhere, anywhere, out of his gorgeous future. Easy enough to dispose of a Malay woman, a slave, after all, to his Eastern mind, convent or no convent, ceremony or no ceremony.
>
> He lifted his head and confronted the anxious yet irate seaman.
>
> "I - of course - anything you wish, Captain Lingard" (AF in AF & TU, pp.10-11).

In the passage, although the sentiments expressed are reported by the narrator, it is clear to the reader that the sentiments are to be identified with specific characters. Lingard, for instance, is responsible for the view that a rich man can influence public opinion through the sheer fact that he is rich. Both he and Almayer assume a sense of racial superiority over the Malays, and although in his mind Almayer loathes the idea of marrying the Malay girl, he agrees to marry her in the hope that he will find a way of dispossessing her of her inherited wealth and disposing of her after that. The disparaging and racist remarks against the Malay woman in the passage are therefore entirely those of Almayer. In his article "The Conradian Voice, "Albert Guerard says "Conrad's authorial voice is... a grave interior one. For this reason we can detect and hear it, to some extent regardless of the narrative point of view and whether or not a fictional personage is speaking or writing"[14]. The reader feels invited by a certain inner compulsion to judge both Lingard and Almayer's attitudes in the passage. That compulsion has obviously been created by the authorial voice, by Conrad himself. By exposing the limitations of his two white characters in the passage, Conrad shows quite clearly that his own position is different from theirs. Like Conrad, therefore, we disapprove of both men's mercenary attitude and

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[14]Albert J. Guerard, "The Conradian Voice," in Norman Sherry, ed. Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration. Papers from the 1974 International Conference on Conrad, p.7

self-righteous sense of racial superiority. Conrad's irony which undercuts both men's assumptions when, later in the novel, the 'thick dollars' Lingard is talking about fail to materialize, and Almayer's situation becomes reversed so that it is the Malay woman, and not Almayer, who escapes the decay of their existence, further emphasizes Conrad's condemnation of Lingard and Almayer's mercenary and racist attitudes.

From An Outcast of the Islands

> To her he was something new, unknown and strange. He was bigger, stronger than any man she had seen before, and altogether different from all those she knew. He was of the victorious race. With a vivid remembrance of the great catastrophe of her life he appeared to her with all the fascination of a great and dangerous thing... He was indeed a man. She could not understand all he told her of his life, but the fragments she understood she made up for herself into a story of a man great amongst his own people, valorous and fortunate....
>
> She felt that he was ready. She felt it with the unerring intuition of a primitive woman confronted by a simple impulse (Outcast, p.75).

The sentiments in the first paragraph of the passage quoted above, like those in the passage quoted earlier from Almayer's Folly, belong to a specific character, and in this case to Aissa. As in the earlier passage too, Conrad's authorial voice invites the reader to judge the limitations of Aissa's thoughts and her illusions. She has clearly constructed a romantic image, as any lover would perhaps do, of Willems. Conrad, and the reader, know of course that she is wrong, and that Willems is not what she thinks he is. Far from being heroic, he is in fact pathetic.

The second sentence of the second paragraph of the passage is the narrator's direct description of Aissa: "She felt it with the unerring intuition of a primitive woman

confronted by a simple impulse." The question which immediately springs up in the reader's mind is why the narrator should attribute such a commonplace, universal lover's sentiment to what he prefers to call "a primitive woman." What is "primitive" about a woman sensing that a man is attracted to her? What is "primitive" about a woman making up an image of her lover in romantic terms which may be far removed from the truth of the lover's character or temperament? Conrad is urging the reader not to accept without close scrutiny the narrator's direct comments about what he observes. The reader also sees the limitations of the characters' views of each other, particularly across the colour-line. To attribute these racial epithets to Conrad, as Willy does, is therefore to miss the various levels of the complex narrative style Conrad uses to tell his story.

Goonetilleke would agree with this assessment. He avers that Conrad was able to "rise above conventional Western prejudices against Malayans," and he attributes this to the fact that Conrad read a lot about Malayans (Wallace's book The Malay Archipelago was Conrad's favourite bedside book) and that Conrad therefore knew more about Malayans than he did about Negroes and the Chinese.[15]

I would, however, take issue with both Goonetilleke and Fernando in their assumption that Conrad's major attention in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands is focused on the European characters. I believe that the local scenery and native characters are given as much weight in the novels as the white characters.

Firstly, there are the native political and trading characters who jostle claw and tooth for advantage and exploit it wherever it presents itself. The only flag flying at Sambir after Lingard establishes his trading post is the British flag, which the local ruler, Patalolo, who is a benign, and kind ruler, accepts. Flanked by his one-eyed adviser and later Prime Minister Babalatchi, Lakamba comes to Sambir as a trader and pretends that he is a prince exiled from his own land, when, in fact, both he and Babalatchi are desperate pirates from Brunei. Their initial efforts to dislodge Patalolo fail when Lingard

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[15]Goonetilleke, "Conrad's Malayan Novels: Problems of Authenticity," in Hamner, pp.50-51.

intervenes. They only succeed in wrestling power from Patalolo after Willems' betrayal which brings in Abdulla and the Arabs who immediately give Lakamba the support he needs to stage a coup against old Patalolo. The British flag is removed, and the Dutch flag is put in its place. It is politic for Lakamba and the Arabs to welcome the Dutch who have established their colonial administration in Batavia. Conrad restrains himself from getting carried away by elements of the romantic adventure tale which are as abundant in the story as they are in Stevenson's Treasure Island (1883): pirates, smuggling, guns, hidden treasure, maps of the supposed mountain of gold, etc. Babalatchi, who in Stevenson would have been marked out as a villain on account of his one eye, is presented by Conrad as a bustling, cunning, crafty political adviser who is far from being a "merely exotic portrayal" as Fernando claims. Babalatchi can read accurately the pulse of local politics in Sambir. When it still appears that Almayer, with Lingard's backing, may be in a powerful position, particularly as regards his supposed knowledge of the whereabouts of the mountain of gold, Babalatchi refuses to take up estranged Mrs Almayer's challenge to fight the whites as "men with arms by their side" would have done in her youth. "Where are they, the men of your youth?" asks Babalatchi. "Killed by the Dutch!" he says, "Aha! But I shall live to deceive them. A man knows when to fight and when to tell peaceful lies" (AF, in AF & TU, p.155). Babalatchi is not a fool; he won't challenge a powerful man, or an apparently powerful man, unless he is sure he will defeat the man. When the time comes, however, for a safe shift of allegiance, Babalatchi has no difficulty in persuading the Lakamba regime, of which he is Prime Minister, and the native people of Sambir, to ditch Almayer for Abdulla as chief local trader and businessman, just as he craftily manipulates Willems through Aissa for information on Lingard's secret access to sea on the Pantai:

> Now the up country canoes glided past the little rotten wharf of Lingard and Co., to paddle up the Pantai branch and cluster round the new jetty belonging to

> Abdulla. Not that they loved Abdulla, but they dared not trade with the man whose star had set. Had they done so they knew there was no mercy to be expected from Arab or Rajah; no rice to be got on credit in times of scarcity from either;
> And Almayer could not help them having at times hardly enough for himself (AF, in AF & TU, p.28).

Although Conrad does not approve of the political machinations, intrigues and opportunism of these native rulers and traders, as he disapproves similar machinations by Lingard, he nevertheless takes his time to depict a working political structure, similar although less brutal than the structure in Nostromo, a political structure against whose background the moral and social drama of his characters unfolds. Such a political structure can hardly be dismissed as "shadowy" or as "an exotic portrayal" as Fernando would claim. It is clear therefore that Conrad does pay attention to native life in the Archipelago, and that his depiction of native institutions is as realistic as his depiction of white colonial and commercial institutions.

Of the native characters, Dain and Nina occupy centre stage. A dashing young prince, strong, fearless and intelligent, Dain is on one level a foil to the hapless colonialists and on another level a rising and promising star for the future. Tactfully refusing to be dragged into Almayer's foolish pursuit of a dream of gold in a mysterious mountain, he goes along with the dream only to woo and carry away Almayer's daughter.

With the possible exception of Aimayer, Nina is designedly the most complex character in Conrad's Sambir setting of the Malay Archipelago. A child in An Outcast of the Islands and a grown young woman in Almayer's Folly, Nina is shaped early to become the embodiment of her father's dream of wealth and future glory in Europe. She is trained by the 'very proper Mrs Vinck' to become a young lady with European tastes and manners. Nina therefore embodies the two cultures at war with each other - the

Western culture of her father and of her trainer, and the Malay culture of her mother. Although in the final analysis Conrad fails to utilise these binaries in Nina's upbringing to create a really complex native and woman character, he uses her however as a vehicle for the transmission of some of his fundamental concerns as a writer, as he does Arsat and Karain:

> It seemed to Nina that there was no change and no difference, Whether they traded in brick godowns or on the muddy river bank; whether they reached after much or little; whether they made love under the shadows of the great trees or in the shadow of the Cathedral on the Singapore promenade; whether they plotted for their own ends under the protection of laws and according to the rules of Christian conduct, or whether they sought the gratification of their desires with the savage cunning and the unrestrained fierceness of natures as innocent of culture as their own immense and gloomy forests, Nina saw only the same manifestations of love and hate and of sordid greed chasing the uncertain dollar in all its multifarious and vanishing shapes (AF, in AF & TU, p.43).

Although, as Joceylyn Baines[16] has said, the language of the passage is too consciously created to be altogether convincing as Nina's, the voice could easily be Conrad's own voice articulating aspects of inter-cultural solidarity, the burdens of life that are similar whether one is on the streets of a European city or in the mangrove swamps of Borneo. To Nina, as it is to Conrad, man's greed is not qualified by racial or cultural

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[16]Joceylyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), p.150

considerations: it manifests itself in various modes and in various places, but it is still greed.

Conrad seems at first to reduce Nina to the role of a stock heroine of a romantic tale who meets her Prince and is whisked away to paradise. As he normally does, however, Conrad immediately subverts the stock role and gives Nina a voice, a voice similar to that given by the great realist Shakespeare to his heroine, Desdemona, on a similar occasion. In the verbal exchange she has with her father on the night of her elopement, Nina stands for human rights, particularly the rights of women, the rights of children, and the rights of persons discriminated against on grounds of colour:

> "Nina!" exclaimed Almayer, "Come to me at once. What is this sudden madness?
> What bewitched you?..."
> "No," she interrupted "... You ask why I want to go, and I ask you why I should stay."
>
> He staggered as if struck in the face, but with a quick, unhesitating grasp she caught him by the arm and steadied him.
>
> "Why you should stay!" he repeated slowly, in a dazed manner, and stopped short, astounded at the completeness of his misfortune.
>
> "You told me yesterday," she went on again," that I could not understand or see your love for me: it is so. How can I? No two human beings understand each other. They can understand but their own voices. You wanted me to dream your dreams, to see your own visions - the visions of life amongst the white faces of those who cast me out from their midst in angry contempt. But while you

> spoke I listened to the voice of my own self; then this man came, and all was still; there was only the murmur of his love. You call him savage! What do you call my mother, your wife? .... You were speaking of gold then, but our ears were filled with the song of our love, and we did not hear you... Then I began to live" (AF, in AF & TU, pp.178-179).

Nina is not on her own in revolting against oppression: Aissa also speaks out and eventually kills her deceptive and cheating lover, Willems; Mrs Almayer leaves Almayer in the decaying walls of "Almayer's Folly" which has become an opium-smoking den; and a rumour of a general uprising against the Europeans in the islands is spreading throughout the Archipelago towards the end of the Sambir drama.

Conrad's vision of the Malay Archipelago's future at the end of the period covered by the two novels is clear: by removing and 'killing off' all the white colonialists, Conrad is thereby not only condemning colonialism, but he is also suggesting that the locals should take charge of their own affairs fully and chart a new course of their future and their destiny. In support of this idea, Conrad "blesses" Dain Maroola and Nina with an heir apparent in Bali. Also, although Dain has been engaged in war against the Dutch in Bali for a long time, we are told towards the end of Almayer's Folly that there is talk of a general revolt by the natives against the Europeans not only in Bali, but throughout all the islands of the Malay Archipelago. Conrad seems to be suggesting that the political future of the Archipelago lies in the Malay Court, and not in the hands of a benevolent colonialist or the Administration of a colonial power. This is the view that Heliena Krenn would subscribe to when she says, "the underlying idea asserts itself that, given enough time, the temporarily stifled but unbroken spirit of the indigenous people will eventually

defeat the foreign powers that impose themselves."[17]

Conrad would, however, have us remember that the indigenous people are far from being a homogenous group, and that their political institutions are far from being ideal. Apart from the rumour of a general revolt at the end of Almayer's Folly, there is very little indication in both novels that the native people have a national network beyond their small settlements. Indeed, the coup which displaces Patalolo from the throne of Rajah of Sambir and places Lakamba, a stranger to Sambir, in his place does not augur well for the future of native administrations in the Archipelago. What is even more disturbing is that Lakamba, whose efforts to unseat Patalolo are repulsed earlier by the timely intervention of Lingard, only manages to remove Patalolo in the end with the assistance of Abdulla, another stranger to Sambir. I would therefore be a little more circumspect than Krenn in concluding that Conrad is suggesting and welcoming the emancipation of a colonial state here. While there is a clear indication that Conrad would wish to see a change in the *status quo*, there is also a similarly clear indication that the change which has taken place after the removal of the whites from the scene is inadequate and unsatisfactory: there will still be foreign domination of Sambir, and the same or similar problems that we have witnessed during the presence of the whites will recur. If there is any suggestion of cross-cultural solidarity in the Sambir setting of Conrad's two novels considered in this section of the Asian Chapter, it is to be found in the universal corruptibility of mankind, whatever their colour or race. Rather than offering a vision of a colonial state marching towards emancipation, Conrad raises questions about the viability of native institutions and motivations just as he does in the case of European institutions and motivations. By debunking the myth of the Europeans' moral superiority and conduct in the colonies, and the stereotypical views of native colonial people as either uncivilized savages whose only guide for conduct is unrestrained and blind passion, or noble savages, Conrad's searching and questioning imagination encouraged Europe to re-

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[17]Krenn, p.56

examine her attitudes towards the colonial experience, thereby liberating Europe from her ignorance of what was happening in the colonies.

II (iii)

CROSS-CULTURAL SOLIDARITY BETRAYED: LORD JIM AND THE RESCUE

In this final section of the Chapter on Conrad's Asian colonial fiction, we examine Lord Jim (1900) and The Rescue (1920), two novels which depict a combination of the antithetical elements we have examined separately in the first two sections of the Chapter, and which further show how this combination of these antithetical elements creates a conflict within the colonial situation: like "Karain" and "The Lagoon," the two novels deal with situations where the best possible cross-cultural relations between the white characters and the natives have been created; and like Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, both Lord Jim and The Rescue depict situations in which the white characters exercise control over some aspects of the lives of the natives. Lord Jim and The Rescue, however, go further than "Karain" and "The Lagoon" to show the destruction of the near-idyllic cross-cultural relations when the white colonial characters choose between white interlopers who drift into their peaceful kingdoms and the natives who have come to depend upon them; and they also go further than Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands to show a more extensive degree of control by the white colonial characters over the native people, and the consequences of exercising such power. Whereas Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands are dominated by weak white colonial traders at Sambir struggling to establish and keep their trade alive, but failing, Lord Jim and The Rescue feature strong white colonialists who at some stage in their interaction with the native peoples assume god-like statures, whose word becomes the law of the land, and upon whose power and protection the survival of the native people depends. In both novels, this happy state of affairs comes to an abrupt, violent and tragic end when the white rulers have to make a choice between protecting on one hand the native people, and on the other the white adventurers who drift onto their coasts. In both

novels, the white rulers choose to protect the white adventurers, at the expense of the lives of the native people, including the native people's heir apparent, and the violence which ensues brings to an inglorious end the reign and the power of the white rulers, thereby indicating Conrad's strong criticism of and opposition to colonialism. While the future of the native people and the world of the novel become bleak with the death of the heir apparent, and with the realisation, as McClure so aptly puts it, that "no imperial ruler, not even the most benevolent and protective, can both supersede and foster the natural leaders of the subject community,"[1] there is a sense of a 'new awakening,' a realisation on the part of the native population of how much their own exercise of will in matters that affect their lives has become 'crippled' by their dependency on the white ruler. The future, Conrad would have us believe, lies squarely on the natives themselves, without the interference of the white colonialists.

At the height of their power over the native peoples of Patusan and the Malay Archipelago's Shore of Refuge, Jim and Lingard respectively come to establish near-idyllic cross-cultural relations with their native subjects. Both would argue that they have 'earned' the high esteem with which their subjects regard them. Jim, as shown in those Chapters (22 to 35) which Guerard has criticised and dismissed as uncharacteristic of both Jim and the rest of the novel and therefore not worth re-reading,[2] has mobilised the Bugis settlers ruled over by Doramin, and at great personal risk to himself, has led them into a successful inter-tribal war against Sherif Ali. It is reported that Jim performed feats of bravery during that war, heroic exploits which the local people had never thought possible in a mere mortal; and, unlike Kurtz, who finds himself with similar powers in Africa, Jim re-directs his energies towards fruitful communal projects such as growing coffee as a cash crop in addition to the people's usual subsistence crops, once peace and political stability have been established. He becomes "Tuan" or "Lord" Jim, appointing headmen

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[1]McClure, p.129

[2]Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p.168

and sitting in judgement over the people to resolve their problems, civil and criminal alike. Marlow finds him, for instance, deliberating on a case involving some brass pots, and Jim remarks that the case is as important as any case that might involve people's lives (LJ, p.164). Jim therefore basks in the glory of the trust of the native people of Patusan. "Look at these houses," he points out to Marlow when Marlow visits him, "there is not one where I am not trusted. Jove! I told you I would hang on. Ask any man, woman, or child..." (LJ, p.151). And Marlow, who only recently had watched Jim squirm at the enquiry over the Patna scandal, is impressed by the new colonial ruler before him:

> He [Jim] looked with an owner's eye at the peace of the evening, at the river, at the houses, at the everlasting life of the forests, at the life of the old mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his own heart...
> (LJ, p.152).

Jim would claim he has 'earned' his position in Patusan as all-powerful ruler.

Lingard, too, would claim he has 'earned' the high regard in which he is held by the Wajo exiles, particularly the Prince Hassim and the Princess Immada. Unfettered by the typical English middle class sensibility we witness, in Marlow of Heart of Darkness, for instance, Lingard, the adventurer, does not hesitate for a second to 'mix it up a bit' with the native gangs in inter-tribal wars to enhance both his mercantile and political powers and influence. His friendship with Prince Hassim is sealed, the very first time they meet, over a dead body, following a shoot-out:

> Lingard and the young leader of the Wajo traders met in the splendid light of noonday, and amidst the attentive silence of their followers, on the very spot where the Malay seaman had lost his life. Lingard, striding up from one

> side, thrust out his open palm; Hassim responded at once to the frank gesture and they exchanged their first hand-clasp over the prostrate body, as if fate had already exacted the price of a death for the most ominous of her gifts - the gift of friendship that sometimes contains the whole good or evil of a life.[3]

From that moment on, Lingard and Hassim's lives become inter-twined in a number of ways, culminating in Lingard's feat of bravery when he storms onto the Wajo coastline to rescue Prince Hassim and his sister Princess Immada on the night of the old Rajah of Wajo's death and the war of succession, fanned by the Dutch colonialists, that erupts even while the old Rajah's body awaits burial. To both Hassim and Immada, Lingard becomes a "father," and on his part, Lingard vows to restore Hassim to his rightful place as the new Rajah of Wajo. This political project brings Lingard into touch with the various leaders of Wajo's exiled communities, and he is almost ready to pull the great project off when the Travers yacht touches his coastline, to distract him from the project forever. Like Jim, therefore, Lingard would claim that he has 'earned' his place among the natives of the Shore of Refuge in the Malay Archipelago, and established a harmonious cross-cultural relationship.

The fact that both Jim and Lingard would appear to have 'earned' the acceptance, the fame and the god-like statures they receive among their respective native communities would, on the face of it, suggest that Conrad approves of the role of the colonialist each exercises. Indeed, there are a number of other factors in the two novels that would appear to lead us to this conclusion.

Unlike Almayer and Willems, for instance, Jim and Lingard are not obviously corrupt and hopeless or essentially uni-dimensional. Indeed, both characters are most

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[3]Joseph Conrad, The Rescue (Penguin, 1978), pp.68-69. All further references to this text are to this edition, shown against R in the text.

sensitively drawn. There is credence in Gustav Morf's suggestion that Jim's "jump" is symbolic of Conrad's own circumstances relating to his leaving of Poland,[4] as portrayed particularly in the first part of the novel which critics over the years have found to be both personal and psychological. V.S. Pritchett also suggests that Conrad turned "the Polish exile's natural preoccupation with nationality, history, defeat and unavailing struggle, from his own country to these Eastern islands."[5] While accepting Pritchett's observation, Goonetilleke, in my opinion, unnecessarily reduces the scope of the observation by emphasizing that "the most important themes are always personal and not political."[6] because, in my view, they are as political as much as they are personal. Be that as it may, if the personal, particularly the political - personal dimension of Conrad's creation of Jim is accepted, and by extension of Tom Lingard whose story, as we have already noted, has been dubbed a re-writing of Lord Jim,[7] the sensitivity with which both Jim and Lingard are drawn becomes easier to explain. Both men work hard to overcome the shadow of their past, particularly in the case of Jim's past when he embraces Stein's offer for him to manage Stein's trading post in Patusan. Likewise, Conrad the Pole who left a Poland embroiled in bitter struggles for emancipation from Russian colonial oppression, always carried the shadow of his past after he assumed British citizenship in 1886, the shadow of having, like Jim, "jumped ship," abandoning his country to perdition. Both Jim and Lingard, like other Conrad characters who receive Conrad's approval, are used as vehicles to convey some of Conrad's fundamental beliefs as a writer, beliefs about reality (at the enquiry, for instance, the tribunal demands from Jim 'facts,' when,

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[4]Gustav Morf,"Lord Jim" in The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad. (New York: Haskell House. 1965) pp.149-66.

[5]V.S. Pritchett, The Living Novel (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock. 1947) p.145. Quoted in Hamner, p.56

[6]Goonetilleke, in Hamner, p.56

[7]Moser, p.145

in this instance, 'facts' are known to be the least useful indicators of the truth required), and illusion, truth, justice, and honour.

Conrad would also appear to be giving his approval to the roles played by both Jim and Lingard as colonial rulers: both express Conrad's position on cross-cultural solidarity, at least until the very last moment before they make the fatal choices that change their worlds forever, and also both are infinitely superior to the sinister agents of Dutch imperialism at whose sufferance the native Rajahs run their states. (In The Rescue, Hassim complains to Lingard about the taxes the Dutch exact from the natives on apparently no other grounds than that the Dutch are the conquerors, and in Lord Jim, Marlow meets the odious Dutch administrative officer who throws veiled threats against Jim's sailing vessels but is given a bribe). Indeed, it is largely through Conrad's handling of cross-cultural relations in the two novels that Goonetilleke and other Asian critics have been moved to declare Conrad's Asian world in his colonial fiction authentic. "His Malayan world," Goonetilleke says of Conrad, "is predominantly authentic in all its varied spheres. His degree of success and failure is explicable. He is able to rise above Western prejudices against Malayans..."[8]

Goonetilleke, however, proceeds to suggest that Conrad's portrayal of native characters in Lord Jim and The Rescue is tentative, timid, less sure than it is in the earlier novels Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, on account of criticism levelled at Conrad by such people as Sir Hugh Clifford who had lived in the Malay Archipelago for a long time and believed Conrad's portrayal of Malay characters betrayed how little his contact with them had been:

> Although Clifford was scarcely treating Conrad's work as *literature*, his "authoritative" criticism was bound to have effects on an author as hard on himself as Conrad

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[8]Goonetilleke, in Hamner, p.51

> was, still unestablished, and still rather isolated as a comparative newcomer to England. By the time he came to write Lord Jim, his confidence in his mastery of the Malayan experience seems to have been shaken. Consider Jim's comment on the ring given him by Stein: "The ring was a sort of credential - ('It's like something you read of in books,' he threw in appreciatively) and Doramin would do his best for him."... Jim makes an observation to Marlow on the relationship of Dain Waris, Doramin and his wife: "It's well worth seeing," Jim had assured me while we were crossing the river, on our way back. "They are like people in a book, aren't they?" he said triumphantly. These remarks are meant to establish the foreignness of Jim's and Marlow's reactions to an alien way of life. I think they also betray a doubt in Conrad about the convincingness not only of these particular items but also of all his Malayan material. He seems to be anticipating readers' objections to its authenticity. These remarks are put into the mouths of Jim and Marlow not only as appropriate to their characters but also to forestall possible objections.[9]

While there are many possible ways of responding to Goonetilleke's criticism of Conrad's portrayal of the Malayan experience here, such as the fact that Lord Jim, of all Conrad's works, perhaps with exception of "The Secret Sharer," emphasizes aspects of dream sensations, and the thin line between reality and illusion, or that the hesitation of

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[9]Goonetilleke, in Hamner, p.53

both Jim and Marlow is consistent with the general tenor of the book as a whole, perhaps the most satisfactory answer lies in post-colonial discourse of the modernist text. Eleven years after Goonetilleke (1976) made his comment, Benita Parry (1987), wrote: "Moral Confidence, and certainty (hymned by Rudyard Kipling as Law, Order, Duty and Restraint, Obedience, Discipline) are disrupted by the ambiguities, doubts, anxieties, and alienations of a stylistic modernism."[10] The colonial text affirms its colonial assumptions as facts from the point of view of the dominant culture, without showing any awareness that the suppressed culture of the colonised also has its side of the same story to tell, or without showing any awareness that there could be another way of telling the same story, or of affirming the same facts. Thus when Charlotte Bronte wrote in Jane Eyre about a colonial Creole woman from the ruling white colonial culture's point of view in 1848, it did not occur to her that there might have been other ways of presenting the Creole woman, that the assumptions and prejudices the West has in this respect, presented as facts, could be questioned, challenged. It took another text, Wide Sargasso Sea (1966), by a Creole woman, Jean Rhys, to question the assumptions, the certainties, the moral confidence of Bronte's Jane Eyre in its presentation of the Creole woman. Edward W. Said has commented that what makes Conrad interesting as a writer is that his "working reality, his practical and even theoretical competence as a writer was far in advance of what he was saying."[11] Although Conrad was writing Lord Jim in the nineteenth century, his vision and stylistic presentation were in this and in his other nineteenth century works essentially modernist. Robert Burden points out the "complexity and undecidability of Heart of Darkness as colonialist [or] modernist text," and, rightly in my view, he suggests that it is "modernist" because it establishes "an internal

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[10]Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," Oxford Literary Review, 9, nos 1-2 (1987), p.55. Also quoted in Robert Burden, Heart of Darkness (MacMillan, 1991), p.80

[11]Said, in Hamner, p.171

interrogation of its colonialist ground"; it is "an interrogative text."[12] Lord Jim is also clearly such a modernist text, which has within itself "an internal interrogation of its colonialist ground," and hence the constant probing, questioning, hesitation, which Goonetilleke has wrongly attributed to Conrad's "flagging confidence."

Goonetilleke also criticizes Conrad for reducing the canvas for the interplay of his Malayan characters in Lord Jim and The Rescue:

> His [Conrad's] doubt of his own powers lies behind other aspects of his art: the Malayans speak much less than in his first two novels and Dain Waris not at all; he makes Jewel speak an English closer to the Standard than, say, Babalatchi and justifies it, rather than attempting to give her a Malayan English.... the Malayans... in The Rescue... play a considerably less important part than in the early novels. These tendencies could be due either to a further flagging of his originally rather slight sense of Malay life, or to his awareness that he did not know enough to write well about the Malayans, or both.[13]

Goonetilleke seems to contradict himself in his rather long article in that at the beginning, he accepts that "Europeans are usually at the centre of [Conrad's] Malayan novels and that... the Malayans are not so important. [Conrad's] kind of emphasis suggests that his perspective is European, but it is not distorted: the Europeans enjoyed an importance in the colonies enormously out of proportion to their numbers because they belonged to the

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[12]Robert Burden, p.80

[13]Goonetilleke, in Hamner, pp.53-54

'ruling race' if not to the ruling nation..."[14] The second part of Goonetilleke's comment above was quoted in Section (ii) of this Chapter to show that contrary to Goonetilleke's suggestion, Conrad pays as much attention, if not more, to the Malay characters as he does to the European characters in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands. In both these earlier novels, Conrad portrays the dynamics of power and control in a colonial setting, and exposes the adverse social effects on the native characters and the adverse moral impact of such control on the European characters. In Lord Jim and The Rescue, the dynamics of power and control are not the primary focus because, as we have already established, the fact of Jim and Lingard's control is accepted by all concerned, and both Jim and Lingard would claim that they 'earned' that control, a fact which could not arise in the cases of Almayer and Willems. What seems to be at stake in Lord Jim and The Rescue is the moral question of the genuiness of motives, the protagonists' claim to absolute cross-cultural identification and solidarity. To pursue this concern Conrad's primary focus must surely be on the two characters in question, thereby rendering Goonetilleke's concern here somewhat unnecessary.

I would, however, argue further and say sufficient coverage is given to Malay characters to assist in the process of evaluating the central concern identified above.

In Lord Jim, for instance, the grounds for Jim's role among the Bugis settlers who came from Celebes under Doramin's rule are laid out before Jim's arrival in Patusan. There are interminable tribal wars for commercial advantage among the native groups, and the groups are characterised with painstaking sensitivity so that each stands out as distinct from all the others. Apart from the Bugis. of whom we learn a lot because they are the group who eventually give Jim refuge, there are the local Malays under the rule of Rajah Tunku Allang, and the Dyaks, under the leadership of the religious Sherif Ali. Rajah Tunku Allang's group, into whose stockade Jim inadvertently enters on his arrival in Patusan and where he is imprisoned and nearly starved to death, is, as shown in

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[14]Goonetilleke, in Hamner, pp.53-54

Kassim, the Rajah's diplomat, calculating, cruel and untrustworthy. Sherif Ali and his group harp on religion and will go to war at any time to defend their faith; and Doramin's Bugis have elaborate systems of societal organisation covering defence, commercial enterprises, and participatory democratic consultation.

In addition to this painstaking portrayal of native communities and their structures, Conrad singles out some native characters whose roles highlight aspects of the general theme or some aspect of Jim's character. Dain Waris, for instance, is presented almost as Jim's double. He is the first to trust and believe in Jim, and the two of them become very close friends. Although he too performs feats of bravery at Sherif Ali's stockade during the war, as Jim's secret sharer and shadow, he loses out to him in publicity and exposure. Indeed, when Brown arrives in Patusan during Jim's absence, Dain Waris advises that they should proceed to eliminate Brown and his gang forthwith. Although he is described as "that brave and intelligent youth ('who knew how to fight after the manner of men')," Dain Waris fails to convince his people. "He had not Jim's racial prestige and the reputation of invincible, supernatural power. He was not the visible, tangible incarnation of unfailing truth and of unfailing victory.... beloved, trusted, and admired as he was" (LJ, p.270). When Dain Waris is killed, Jim, his alter ego, is killed too. It is not useful therefore, as Goonetilleke does, to demean Dain Waris' role.

For all his trust in Jim, Doramin is essentially as self-centred and egoistic as Jim himself. Doramin is worried, for instance, when Marlow tells him that Jim would not be going back to the white world because deep down Doramin nurses the hope that one day his son Dain Waris should rule the Bugis, and although he regards Jim as indispensable, he fears usurpation. When Jim almost fails to persuade Doramin that Brown and his gang should be given free passage to leave Patusan and suggests that if the decision is to fight them then Dain Waris, and not Jim himself, should lead the Bugis, Doramin changes his mind in order to protect his son. Once Dain Waris has been killed, and Doramin's dynastic hopes are shattered, he does not hesitate to shoot Jim.

Jewel is as strong a native character and woman as Nina in Almayer's Folly and

Aissa in An Outcast of the Islands. If her English is almost standard, as Goonetilleke charges, it is perhaps because of her background under the fiery tutelage of Cornelius, and later of Jim. Her tender care, concern and passion for Jim is perhaps the most genuine emotion in the novel. Also, in this modernist text, which as we have seen interrogates itself on its own colonial ground, Jewel and Tamb' Itam, Jim's Malay servant and bodyguard, are given an opportunity to tell the tale in Stein's home in Bankok after Jim's death - the native woman, and the native male are given an opportunity to tell the story from the "other side," a rare opportunity in colonial fiction which can only be found in the modernist text, and in an author whose searching, questioning and liberating imagination seeks to establish the best possible justice in the depiction of the colonial story.

In The Rescue, Conrad also depicts an elaborate system of native communities, particularly those who are exiled from war-torn Wajo whose inter-tribal wars are fanned by the Dutch colonial authorities. Apart from the Prince Hassim, and the Princess Immada, who are both drawn along the lines of Shakespearean Romance royal youths such as Perdita, there are three distinct groupings under the leaderships of Tengga, Belarab and Sherif Daman. As in Lord Jim, each of these groups is carefully differentiated from all the others. Belarab, for instance, is a Muslim pacifist who, notwithstanding, is a strong leader and is currently in charge of the exiles' Settlement. Belarab survives the massacre perpetrated by the whites at the end, and ensures that all the whites, including Lingard, are expelled. Tengga is the most commercially-minded of the native leaders, and to this he adds a militancy which even Lingard finds difficult to assuage. Because he sees clearly the value of economic control, Tengga has been fighting the Dutch for a long time, and is therefore schooled in the art of protracted warfare. Sherif Daman, who takes Travers and his Spanish friend d Alcacer into custody, is associated with piracy on the high seas. These groups, each with a particular strength - militancy, protracted wars and commercial control (Tengga), war and commercial control on the high seas (Daman), and governance and peace (Belarab) - were, in the Wajo

political project, to amalgamate their varied strengths under the guidance of the Rajah Laut, Lingard, and restore Wajo to political legitimacy. The fact that Lingard lets down such a fine-tuned programme and abandons it, on account of his new-found romantic allegiance to Edith Travers, exposes him - the colonialist's - betrayal of cross-cultural solidarity and identification with the natives, and it becomes clear therefore that the apparent textual approval of both Jim and Lingard's colonialist roles is in fact illusory. Conrad undercuts the apparent approval to expose their befuddled motives.

Conrad portrays his strong abhorrence of the colonialist's sordid motives, machinations, and disregard for human life through the odious Gentleman Brown. Brown, whom critics, notably Gustav Morf[15] and Albert Guerard,[16] have rightly seen as Jim's "Secret Sharer," as Jim's "other self," gives the lie to the colonialist's high and lofty sentiments about the colonialist's motives and role in the colonies, and indeed also to the language the colonialist uses to 'clothe' these sentiments, when he confronts Jim in Patusan:

> You have been white once, for all your talk of this being your own people and you being one with them. Are you? And what the devil do you get for it; what is it you've found here that is so d-d precious?
>
> .....
>
> And what do you deserve... you that I find skulking here with your mouth full of your responsibility, of innocent lives, of your infernal duty... I came here for food.
> D'ye hear? - food to fill our bellies. And what did <u>you</u> come for? What did you ask for when you came here?

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[15]Morf, pp.149-166

[16]Guerard, <u>Conrad the Novelist</u>, pp.126-174

> I've lived - and so did you though you talk as if you were one of those people that should have wings so as to go about without touching the dirty earth. Well - it is dirty. I haven't got any wings. I am here because I was afraid once in my life. Want to know what of? Of a prison. That scares me, and you may know it - if it's any good to you. I won't ask you what scared you into this infernal hole, where you seem to have found pretty pickings (LJ, pp.232-233).

Each of these questions and statements brings Jim down a step from his nigh and lofty conception of his role in Patusan. The questions and statements hit directly where it hurts in Jim; they echo the basic mundane reality of his life and experience. He realizes that he and the desperado Brown are essentially similar in their roles, and that in Stein's world of butterflies and beetles, all colonialists, fine sentiments in some of them like himself notwithstanding, are in fact beetles. Once his thinking comes to be on par with Brown's thinking, Jim cannot in all conscience give the order for Brown, his alter ego, to be shot, just as Lingard, after he suffers the diminution from Rajah Laut to his normal class position once the Travers party arrive, finds he must choose to protect his racial group as opposed to upholding his vow to protect the native group.

While the point of Conrad's criticism of colonialism is clearly made in the Gentleman Brown - Jim episode, Conrad's modernist and self-interrogative texts do, in fact, also make us uncomfortable over what appears to be his approval of Jim and Lingard's colonialist roles right from the beginning. When Brown asks Jim why he came to Patusan in the first place, Jim finds that he cannot give an answer to that question. Brown's own reason for coming, he says, is quite ordinary and basic: food to fill his and his men's bellies. He implies that Jim must have made some "pretty pickings" too.

Conrad is suggesting here that whether the motives that drive the colonialist are mundane bread and butter issues, gain and profit, or refined psychological and spiritual sentiments, the colonialist goes out to the colonies essentially to serve his own needs. In the Victorian novel, the character who got banished to the colonies was normally a convict (e.g. Abel Magwitch of Great Expectations) facing the gallows, and the character who would choose to go to the colonies was normally someone who had failed to make it in the competitive economic and social climate of England (e.g. Pip of Great Expectations). During the heyday of imperial expansionism towards the end of the nineteenth century, the motives for going out to the colonies remained essentially the same, but veiled by altruistic and philanthropic sentiments. Hunt Hawkins says that whatever the motivation, the experience remains essentially unchanged:

> The colonialists, of course, have economic motives for going to Asia or Africa, but such motives are fully complementary with more intangible psychological ones. According to Mannoni, the typical colonialist, unable to succeed in European society, becomes the victim of an inferiority complex. He flees to the colonial situation where, through no real merit of his own, he is put in a position of dominance. The colonialist does not and cannot enter into community with the natives because they lack freedom and are unable to interact with him as equals; they remain objects upon which he projects his own schemes and fantasies.[17]

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[17]Hunt Hawkins, "Conrad and the Psychology of Colonialism," in Ross C. Murfin, ed. Conrad Revisited: Essays for the Eighties (Alabama: University of Alabama Press. 1985) pp.72-73

Both Jim and Lingard go to the colonies to reconstruct their world on new parameters after they have failed in the European world. Marlow finds that he has to explain to both Doramin and Jewel that Jim is not wanted in the European world because he is "not good enough" for that world (LJ, p.194).

Lingard has come to the Malay Archipelago to construct a world in which he hopes to transcend the limitations of his humble class origins as a poor fisherman's son and ex-trawler boy. "If I hadn't been an adventurer," he tells the aristocratic Mr. Travers of the yacht, "I would have had to starve or work at home for such people as you" (R, p.117).

While both Jim and Lingard blind themselves enough to end up believing that they are a blessing to Patusan and the Malay Archipelago respectively, their attention is drawn back to these basic factors of motivation by representatives of the very world they had hoped to escape forever. It is only then that the various hints in the texts, such as Jim's oft-repeated apartness even while he is in conference with the Patusan folk, hints of the self-interrogating modernist text, that make us uncomfortable about Conrad's apparent approval of the colonialist's role, cohere to indicate that the colonialist's moral yardstick remains essentially Eurocentric, despite his claim to the contrary. "I must stick to their belief in me," says Jim to Marlow, "to feel safe and to - to ... keep in touch with.. with those whom, perhaps, I shall never see any more..." (LJ, p.203).

Through his depiction of Jim and Lingard, therefore, Conrad explodes the myth of the benevolent colonial ruler, the benevolent colonial father figure, whose claim to care solely for the welfare of those he serves, the myth immortalised for a while in such writings as Kipling's "The White Man's Burden." Both Jim and Lingard betray the trust the native people had invested in them because they feel compelled to satisfy the personal and psychological needs that drove them to the colonies in the first place.

While the final picture Conrad paints may appear bleak, it is clear that as in the earlier novels of the Malay Archipelago, Conrad sees the hope for the future as lying, despite the shortcomings of their institutions, squarely on the indigenous peoples

themselves - even with their heirs apparent killed. The "new awakening," the new awareness of the dangers of dependency on the white ruler, which is clearly emphasized at the end of each novel, suggests a future or dawning era of self-reliance, of self-determination:

> Belarab turned away. His opinion had changed. He regarded Lingard ... [as] no longer a man of any importance. What Belarab really wanted now was to see all the white people clear out of the lagoon as soon as possible. Presently he ordered the gate to be thrown open and his armed men poured out to take possession of the settlement.
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> That night the white people left the stockade in a cortége of torch bearers... Belarab, standing in front of a group of headmen, pretended not to see the white people as they went by. With Lingard he shook hands, murmuring the usual formulas of friendship; and when he heard the great white man say, "You shall never see me again," he felt immensely relieved...(R, p.362).

Belarab, the surviving leader of the various Wajo groupings, immediately consolidates his position and begins to map out a future - a future without white men.

The final vision of Lord Jim also clearly emancipates the Malay Archipelago from the white man's interference. Doramin chooses to shoot Jim, even though that weakens his military position considerably, particularly when we consider that Dain Waris and his young compatriots have been massacred by Brown. McClure sees, rightly I think, in Doramin's act a profound message by Conrad for the liberation of Third World colonial countries, a vision which, in 1900, was way ahead of its time - half a century at least, before it became a reality. "The unwieldy old man," says the narrator, "lowering his big

forehead like an ox under a yoke, made an effort to rise, clutching at the flintlock pistols on his knees. From his throat came gurgling, choking, inhuman sounds, and his two attendants helped him from behind" (LJ, p.252). Commenting on this passage, McClure says:

> Doramin is roused from his dependency by the destruction of his dreams. When Jim appears before him, the old man struggles to stand, as if by doing so he will reestablish his authority, affirm his capacity to rule... Doramin's exertions have, for me, at least, an emblematic quality; his uprising, painful, enraged, and barely successful, may be seen as epitomizing Conrad's view of colonial rebellious in general.[18]

In his Asian colonial fiction examined in this chapter, therefore, we have seen Conrad positing the statement on cross-cultural solidarity, spelling out clearly his own sense of solidarity with human beings wherever they may be or whoever they may be, demonstrating the circumstances under which such cross-cultural solidarity may be realized and maintained in "Karain" and "The Lagoon," and questioning and exposing the motives of the colonialist, whose exercise of power and control shatters cross-cultural solidarity in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands, Lord Jim and The Rescue.

In his handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects in his Asian colonial fiction, Conrad transcends Western prejudices against the native Malay people, and through his searching, questioning and liberating imagination, resolves the issues raised in his fiction by clearly underlining his criticism of and opposition to colonialism, and by proposing a vision for the future in which the native people, despite the shortcomings of

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[18]McClure, pp.129-130

their institutions, determine their own destiny without the interference of the colonialist. In saying this, one must still be aware of Conrad's imaginative vision of history as cyclical, and the fact that in his view, unless fundamental political and social change was achieved, a change that would address itself to fundamental aspects of human nature rather than to human institutions,[19] whatever change was achieved would be illusory. While it is possible to read into the expulsion of the white colonialists from the colonial situation a heralding of the emancipation of colonial countries, one must admit that it is also possible to read into the expulsions an act of resignation on Conrad's part, for how else can we interpret the act of killing off Jim when it is clear that his death, after Dain Waris' death, will create an irreplaceable void in Patusan's self-defence capabilities? This is perhaps the view that Cedric Watts has in mind too when he says:

> Conrad's pessimistic sense that human nature is largely corruptible and fallible leads him to the humanitarian insight that since we 'civilized' men are not likely to be much better than the so-called 'inferior races,' if at all, we might as well leave them alone.[20]

Despite this qualification to the view that in his Asian colonial fiction Conrad heralds the emancipation of colonial countries, the fact that Conrad was engaged with this debate about fifty years before India (the first Third World country to gain her independence from Britain) became independent in 1947, shows Conrad's imaginative vision which, as

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[19]Joseph Conrad, Letter of 23 January 1898 to R.B. Cunninghame Graham in C.T. Watts, ed. Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.68. Conrad wrote to Graham: "You are misguided by the desire of the impossible - and I envy you. Alas! What you want to reform are not institutions - it is human nature. Your faith will never move that mountain. Not that I think mankind intrinsically bad. It is only silly and cowardly..."

[20]Watts, A Preface to Conrad, p.64

Said has put it, was progressively far ahead of its time.

III

AFRICA

"THE IMPERIAL LICENCE SHOULD BE REVOKED": HEART OF DARKNESS AND "AN OUTPOST OF PROGRESS"

To move from the world of Conrad's Asian colonial fiction to the world of his African colonial fiction is to move from brilliant sunshine days and cool moonlit nights to oppressively hot days and 'impenetrably' dark nights; from the colourful world of cross-cultural relations to the dark world of blatant, flagrant, deliberately orchestrated racial and ethnic chauvinism and oppression; from a world where human life is revered (the death of one individual, black or white, matters) to a world where very little value is placed on human life (the death of an individual, of many, of even the protagonist of the story makes little, if any, difference). Compare, for instance, the following scenes, from Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness which depict responses to the deaths of major characters in the respective novels, the deaths of Dain Waris (who is a major but not a central character) and Kurtz (who is a major and central character):

From Lord Jim

> The sky over Patusan was blood-red, immense, streaming like an open vein. An enormous sun nestled crimson amongst the tree-tops, and the forest below had a black and forbidding face ... On that evening the aspect of the heavens was angry and frightful... It was beginning to grow dark. Torches twinkled here and there. Those they met seemed awestruck, and stood aside hastily to let Jim pass. The

wailing of women came from above. The courtyard was full of armed Bugis with their followers and of Patusan people.... Dain Waris's mother crouched at the head of the body, and the grey dishevelled hair concealed her face. Jim came up slowly, looked at his dead friend, lifting the sheet, then dropped it without a word (LJ, pp.251-252).

From Heart of Darkness

One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, "I am lying here in the dark waiting for death." The light was within a foot of his eyes. I forced myself to murmur, "Oh, nonsense!" and stood over him as if transfixed.

Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. ....I blew the candle out and left the cabin. The pilgrims were dining in the mess-room, and I took my place opposite the manager, who lifted his eyes to give me a questioning glance, which I successfully ignored. He leaned back, serene, with that peculiar smile of his sealing the unexpressed depths of his meanness. A continuous shower of small flies streamed upon the lamp, upon the cloth, upon our hands and faces. Suddenly, the manager's boy put his insolent black head in the doorway, and said in a tone of scathing contempt _____

"Mistah Kurtz - he dead." All the pilgrims rushed to see. I remained, and went on with my dinner. I believe

> I was considered brutally callous. However, I did not eat much. There was a lamp in there - light, don't you know - and outside it was so beastly, beastly dark. I went no more near the remarkable man who had pronounced a judgement upon the adventures of his soul on earth. The voice was gone. What else had been there? But I am of course aware that next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole.[1]

Dain Waris is not a central character, and he is a native of Patusan. In the passage quoted above, his body is lying in state, and the whole of Patusan has turned out to pay their last respects to the deceased heir apparent. The women are wailing. The grief in every breast is almost tangible - the reader feels its poignancy. To this community, this tragedy is sure to change the tenor and face of things in Patusan. As if in sympathetic response, the skies have turned into the colour of blood, the blood that has been shed, and the empathetic sun has almost literally climbed down from its dizzy heights to "nestle" among the tree-tops. It has thrown off its usual tropical brightness, heat and harsh brilliance to take on the colour of the mourning skies, crimson, and thus "joins" in the mourning. Grief is expressed cosmically. There is no doubt that the life that has been lost was greatly valued. The reader feels that were he or she in Patusan, this is the kind of funeral he or she would attend, or, at least, be expected to attend.

On the contrary, and like Marlow, the reader is not likely to want to attend Kurtz's funeral. The world of Heart of Darkness, as painted in the passage quoted above, is the antithesis of the world of Conrad's Asian colonial fiction. It is a world of meanness, horror, darkness, death. Watching Kurtz "lying in the dark waiting for death," the reader

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[1]Joseph Conrad, Heart Darkness (Penguin Modern Classics, 1976) pp.99-100. Further references to this text are made from the same edition and shown as (HD, p.) in the thesis.

experiences a sinking feeling, "hopeless despair" which threatens to engulf everything and everyone. After Marlow blows out the candle, and Kurtz dies an ignominous and unheralded death in the dark cabin, alone, Nature seems to approve, for darkness intensifies to the point where Marlow, almost running out of appropriate adjectives to describe the thick darkness, borrows a word from the world of predators: "beastly" - outside, he says, it was "so beastly, beastly dark." And Kurtz, who together with, or perhaps even more than Marlow, is the protagonist of Heart of Darkness is, without ceremony, thrown into a "muddy hole" the very next day after his death in the night, thus ironically bringing to an end the life story of a man who had hoped, on his return from the jungles of Africa, to be met by kings at railway stations in Europe. (There are no fitting ceremonies for Conrad's deracinated white men in the tropics). Compared to the world of Conrad's Malay Archipelago, the world of Conrad's Congo is a place of untold meanness, where life has little meaning or value, a place of death.

The major cause of the differences in tenor between Conrad's Asian colonial fiction and his African colonial fiction lies in the colonial circumstances Conrad discovered on the two continents. These circumstances affected his perception of the continent as a backdrop for the setting of his work, his perception of the motivation and involvement of the Europeans who went out to the respective colonies, his perception of the native peoples, and the overall vision he projects in his work set in the respective colonies.

Conrad had sailed to the East (including Australia, the West Indies, the Far East, India) from 1874 to 1889, first in the French and later English Marine Services, a long period of fifteen years. On these early voyages he met individuals and situations whose stories, he would have us believe, inspired him to become a writer. He claimed, for instance, that if he had not met and got to know well the man Almayer (real name Olmeijer), in 1887 in Eastern Borneo, "it is almost certain," says Conrad, "there would

never have been a line of mine in print."[2] Their first meeting, Conrad relates in A Personal Record, produced impressions which tugged at Conrad's sympathies and later creative impulses. The Vidar, on which Conrad had signed as chief mate, was sailing from Singapore to Borneo and the Celebes. Olmeijer stepped on board at the steamship's regular stop to check if the riding pony he expected was on board. What fascinated Conrad was Olmeijer's attitude in the way he said, "I suppose you haven't got such a thing as a pony on board?" prompting Conrad to surmise that this was a man who had become used to buffets of fate, and yet he would not give up.[3] I would think Conrad saw in Olmeijer's attitude of dogged resignation something similar to the general spirit of the Polish struggle for emancipation. I have gone to some length to describe this incident here in order to underline the fact that Conrad's experiences in his Asian voyages were by and large normal, and in fact, stimulating, the kinds one would expect to meet anywhere in a normal world. In addition, while various European governments had set up colonial administrations in the Far East, and exercised varying measures of control over the native populations, the native political, social and economic structures were allowed to operate under the local governments of the Rajahs, who were expected to collect and pay tax to the colonial administration.

The same cannot be said of the Congo which Conrad visited for a total period of only six months from June to December 1890. In 1876, King Leopold II of Belgium had convened a Conference in Brussels of distinguished European explorers and travellers who had been to Africa or who might want to go to Africa. The stated objective of the Conference was, in Leopold's own words, "to open to civilization the only part of our globe where Christianity has not penetrated and to pierce the darkness which envelops the

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[2]Conrad, A Personal Record, p.87

[3]Conrad, A Personal Record, p.87

entire population."[4] With so grand an objective, Leopold II was able to attract such great explorers as David Livingstone, and Henry Morton Stanley who explored the Congo River and had the spectacular falls on the river named Stanley Falls after him - later used by Conrad as Kurtz's Inner Station. King Leopold II immediately established colonial administrative structures in the Congo, which reported directly to him, and he ran the entire country as personal business. When European powers convened at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to carve up Africa among themselves, with the strict injunction that each European colonial power was to effectively occupy the territories falling under its jurisdiction, the Congo was assigned to King Leopold II's Belgium.

When murmurings of atrocities perpetrated by the Belgians in the Congo began to filter back to Europe, Leopold II defended the operations of his adminstration and of the Belgian Commercial Company, of which he was also president, in glowing and philanthropic terms of a job well done. In his speech, "The Sacred Mission of Civilization," Leopold II said:

> Our refined society attaches to human life (and with reason) a value unknown to barbarous communities. When our directing will is implanted among them its aim is to triumph over all obstacles, and results which could not be attained by lengthy speeches may follow philanthropic influence. But if, in view of this desirable spread of civilisation, we count upon the means of action which confer upon us dominion and the sanction of right, it is not less true that our ultimate end is a work of peace. Wars do not necessarily mean the ruin of the regions in which they rage; our agents do not ignore this fact, so from the day

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[4]Maurice N. Hennessy. The Congo Free State: A Brief History, 1876 to 1908. (London: Pall Mall Press. 1961) 13-27. Quoted in Kimbrough, p.80

> when their effective superiority is affirmed, they feel profoundly reluctant to use force. The wretched negroes, however, who are still under the sole sway of their traditions, have that horrible belief that victory is only decisive when the enemy, fallen beneath their blows, is annihilated. The soldiers of the State, who are recruited necessarily from among the natives, do not immediately forsake those sanguinary habits that have been transmitted from generation to generation. The example of the White Officer and wholesome military discipline gradually inspire in them a horror of human trophies of which they previously had made their boast. It is in their leaders that they must see living evidence of these higher principles.... I am pleased to think that our agents..... have always present in their minds a strong sense of the career of honour in which they are engaged, and are animated with a pure feeling of patriotism; not sparing their own blood, they will the more spare the blood of the natives, who will see in them the all-powerful protectors of their lives and their property, benevolent teachers of whom they have so great a need.[5]

Leopold II's claims of the Belgians' exemplary conduct in the Congo were challenged by many travellers and missionaries who went to the Congo and personally witnessed the atrocities the Belgians were inflicting on the Congolese. John B. Murphy, an American missionary in the Congo, wrote about how the natives were forced to bring

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[5]King Leopold II, "The Sacred Mission of Civilization" in Guy Burrows. The Land of the Pigmies. Reproduced in Kimbrough, pp.125-130

in rubber, and the brutal atrocities that attended this form of forced labour:

> Each town and district is forced to bring in a certain quantity to the headquarters of the *Commissaire* every Sunday. It is collected by force; the soldiers drive the people into the bush. If they will not go, they are shot down, and their hands are cut off and taken as trophies to the *Commissaire*.... these hands, the hands of men, women and children [are] placed in rows before the *Commissaire* who counts them to see that the soldiers have not wasted cartridges.[6]

Many others, such as E.D. Morel and Roger Casement in the Congo, who became close acquaintances of Conrad, also wrote extensively about the hypocrisy behind the philanthropic work ostensibly designed to open up the Congo to civilization, to improve the material welfare of the Africans, and to stop slavery. "I saw," wrote Morel, "those hunted women clutching their children and flying panic stricken to the bush; the savage soldiery rushing hither and thither amid burning villages; the ghastly tally of severed hands."[7]

Both Morel and Casement became part of The Congo Reform Movement. As Morel put it, he was going to:

> do my best to expose and destroy what I then knew to be a legalised infamy. I knew that there lay concealed beneath

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[6]B. Inglis, Roger Casement (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. 1973) p.46. Quoted in Henryk Zins. Joseph Conrad and Africa (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau. 1982) p.61

[7]E.D. Morel, History of the Congo Reform Movement. ed. W.R. Louis and J. Stengers (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1968) pp. 160-161.

> the mask of a spurious philanthropy, and framed in all the misleading paraphernalia of civilised government, a perfect system of oppression, accompanied by unimaginable barbarities and responsible for the vast destruction of human life.[8]

That "vast destruction of human life," according to Polish historian Henryk Zins writing from Kenyatta University in Nairobi, K nya, was worse than what was generally imagined. It was "appalling," and according to an official Belgian report of 1919, "the population of the Belgian Congo had been reduced by half since the beginning of the European Occupation in the 1880's."[9]

And while Conrad was in the Congo in July 1890, George Washington Williams, a black American historian, wrote from the Congo an "Open Letter" to King Leopold II. Williams meticulously detailed under twelve general points the major flaws of Leopold's Administration in the Congo. He wrote about the "sleight-of-hand tricks" white men use in the Congo, such as shaking the hand of a black chief with a battery-charged hand to induce shock in the chief's hand to show how much power there is in a white man's hand in order to compel the chief to sign a treaty giving over jurisdiction of his lands and their natural resources to the white man; he charges that Leopold's government is "deficient in the moral, military and financial strength necessary to govern" such a vast land; he charges that Leopold's government is guilty of "violating its contracts made with its soldiers, mechanics, and workmen"; he charges that the laws printed and circulated in Europe purported to be "for the protection of the blacks" in the Congo are "a dead letter and a fraud"; he charges that the Belgians are "guilty of waging unjust and cruel wars against natives, with the hope of securing slaves and women, to minister to the behests

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[8]Ibid., pp.5-6.

[9]Zins, p.80.

of the officers"; he charges that the Belgian government makes many of its officers in the Congo ivory-traders, with "the promise of a liberal commission upon all they can buy or get for the State. State soldiers patrol many villages forbidding the natives to trade with any person but a State official, and when natives refuse to accept the price of the State, their goods are seized by the Government that promised them protection." Williams ends his Open Letter, which is dated July 18th, 1890 and date-marked Stanley Falls (Conrad's Inner Station in Heart of Darkness), Central Africa, as follows:

> Against the deceit, fraud, robberies, arson, murder, slave-raiding, and general policy of cruelty of your Majesty's Government to the Natives, stands their record of exampled patience, long suffering and forgiving spirit, which put the boasted civilization and professed religion of your Majesty's Government to the blush.....
>
> All the crimes perpetrated in the Congo have been done in *your* name, and *you* must answer at the bar of Public Sentiment for the misgovernment of a people, whose lives and fortunes were entrusted to you by the August Conference of Berlin, 1884-1885.[10]

This was the state of the Congo Conrad was sailing to at the same time as Williams was sending his "Open Letter" to King Leopold II, a place which was a far cry from the Far East where Conrad had spent fifteen years.

It was necessary for me to establish in detail both the perceived state of the Europeans's conduct in the Congo back in Europe, and the reality of the situation as

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[10]George Washington Williams, "An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo." Reproduced in Kimbrough, pp.103-113

reported by missionaries and travellers who went to the Congo because both viewpoints feature strongly in Heart of Darkness and "An Outpost of Progress," and because they also establish the necessary historical perspective from which the works should be perceived. When critics like Achebe criticize Conrad for not establishing equality between whites and blacks in Heart of Darkness, given this kind of background, it shows quite simply the hasty and possibly emotional nature of their criticism which fails to appreciate that Conrad's task to expose the hypocrisy, the fraud, the barbarity of the Europeans in the Congo was immense, and that given such a background, Conrad's treatment of the Africans in his handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects was, in fact, for his time, unusually humane.

It did not take long for Conrad to feel and to experience personally some of the cruelty chronicled by the missionaries, Casement, Morel and Williams after his arrival in the Congo. Just as Williams had charged (that the Belgian Government's Administration in the Congo was violating its contracts with people contracted to work for it) Conrad, who had been contracted to take command of the river steamer plying the Congo River to Stanley Falls, found himself without that command but required to do other jobs. "Conrad had been allowed to command a steamer for only ten days," writes historian Zins. "He was also employed in packing ivory and collecting wood which must have been degrading for a man of Conrad's qualifications."[11] Conrad's letters from the Congo are bitter, reflecting his deep disappointment with his Congo experience. The Manager of the Matadi Station, for instance, disliked the English immensely. Conrad was an obvious target. The manager became the prototype of the Manager at he Company Station in Heart of Darkness. Camille Delcommune, the manager at Matadi, humiliated Conrad quite deliberately by making him do menial tasks. "I can hope for neither promotion nor increase of salary while he (Delcommune) remains here," wrote Conrad to his aunt Marguerite Poradowska on 26 September 1890. "Moreover he has said that

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[11]Zins, p.95

he is but little bound here by promises made in Europe, so long as they are not in the contract... I can look forward to nothing, as I have no vessel to command."[12] Conrad's disappointment and bitterness therefore had a personal dimension to it, apart from his perception of the cruelty and barbarism in the Belgian treatment of the natives. It was an experience Conrad was never to forget, or to repeat. As Jonah Raskin has metaphorically expressed it, it was "a season in hell."[13] Conrad himself was to say later of this experience which shook him to the core: "Before the Congo I was only a simple animal."[14] The Congo experience 'humanized' him, opened his eyes to the evil lurking behind what are ostensibly man's best intentions.

It is out of this bitter experience that Heart of Darkness and "An Outpost of Progress" are born, out of the "distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience."[15] In 1917, Conrad had the following to say about the inspirational sources of Heart of Darkness and "An Outpost of Progress":

> It is well known that curious men go prying into all sorts of places (where they have no business) and come out of them with all kinds of spoil. This story [Heart of Darkness] and one other ["An Outpost of Progress"].... are the only spoil I brought out from the centre of Africa, where, really, I had no sort of business. More ambitious in its scope and longer in the telling, Heart of Darkness is quite as authentic in fundamentals as Youth. It is, obviously, written in another mood, I won't characterize the

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[12]Conrad in G. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad in the Congo, p.65

[13]Raskin, p.149

[14]Conrad in G. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad in the Congo, p.73

[15]Conrad, Last Essays, p.17

> mood precisely, but anybody can see that it is anything but the mood of wistful regret, of reminiscent tenderness...
>
> Heart of Darkness is experience... but it is experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the perfectly legitimate, I believe, purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers... That somber theme had to be given a sinister resonance, a tonality of its own, a continued vibration that, I hoped, would hang in the air and dwell on the ear after the last note had been struck.[16]

In the light of this statement, and as supported further by evidence from some of Conrad's non-fictional writings such as A Personal Record, The Congo Diary and "Geography and Some Explorers," it is somewhat surprising that most of the best known critical readings of Heart of Darkness have tended to be anything other than the realistic and historically imaginative approach Conrad is suggesting here. We recall famous readings of Heart of Darkness such as Albert Guerard's (1958) which viewed Conrad's novel as archetypal myth with far-reaching psycho-analytic implications on Marlow as the centre of interest, rather than Kurtz or the reality of the colonial experience that threatens to lodge Marlow in permanent psychic dislocation. According to Guerard, Heart of Darkness is Marlow's night "journey within himself."[17] In similar ways, Jerome Thale (1955) viewed Heart of Darkness as, largely, Marlow's journey - the Knight - errant's quest for the Grail where the epiphanic discovery at the end, is not light, but darkness;[18]

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[16]Conrad, "Preface to Youth and Other Stories" in On Fiction, pp.167-168

[17]Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p.1

[18]Jerome Thale, "Marlow's Quest," University of Toronto Quarterly (July, 1955), reprinted in L.F. Dean, Heart of Darkness: Backgrounds and Criticism (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1960).

and Paul Kirschner (1968) in a sources - study approach, sees similarities between Heart of Darkness and Dante's Inferno, where, by implication, Marlow's journey into the Congo, a "journey to the centre of the earth," is also "a descent into hell."[19] Many more examples of such readings of Heart of Darkness could be cited, and in their defence, one would have to admit that Conrad's text, with its very high level of suggestiveness, encourages all such readings. Take note, for instance, of the lack of specificity in the novel: Brussels is only referred to as the Sepulchral City; Belgium is never mentioned by name; the stations in the Congo are only referred to as Outer Station, the Central or Company Station, and Inner Station; and many characters, such as the manager, the accountant, the brickmaker, the fireman, the helmsman are only identified by their function. Viewed in this manner, therefore, Heart of Darkness could be interpreted in various ways.

But given the specific and well-documented circumstances of the Congo and of Conrad's story in the 1890's, one still cannot help but wonder, as does Raymond Williams, why for so long critics have tended to divest Heart of Darkness of its political, social and historical implications - an "endless reduction of deliberately created realities to analogues, symbolic circumstances, abstract situations... everything translated into what can be called... metaphysical."[20]

It is my contention that while Conrad was aware that the narrative style of Heart of Darkness, particularly its suggestiveness, would universalize the story, he nevertheless did not intend that the observed realities of the fraudulent emptiness behind Europe's 'missions of civilization' of the later half of the nineteenth century should not be exposed and shown up for what these missions really were: exploitative, greedy, criminal, murderous. This, perhaps, is the reading Conrad had in mind when he informed his

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[19]Paul Kirschner. Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist (Edinburgh, 1968)

[20]Raymond Williams. "Joseph Conrad" in The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence (London, 1984) VI. p.146 Quoted in Burden, p.19

publisher, William Blackwood, that Heart of Darkness was about "the criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa."[21] With the increasing interest in Conrad's works among Third World scholars and critics, and also with the growing interest in the "New Historicism," or the historicist analysis of texts which would regard Heart of Darkness as "undoubtedly [as] accurate a picture of colonized Africa as many other supposedly non-fictional accounts written during the same period,"[22] the interpretation of Heart of Darkness as a text addressing the colonial ventures of Europeans in the Congo at the end of the nineteenth century is gaining new currency.

The colonial world and its milieu which Conrad creates in Heart of Darkness and "An Outpost of Progress" is concretely recognisable and similar in its structure to Conrad's colonial world in the Malay Archipelago: the white traders who go beyond mercantile interests to exercise control and considerable influence on the local people; the native peoples who are pitted against the white 'man-gods' from beyond the seas; the trading station or the 'outpost of progress and civilization'; the river; the steamship; the Metropolitan government's long hand that stretches from across the seas to act as a permanent dark presence in the background of the colonial characters' activities; the conflict, brutality and death that characterize the dynamics of exercising power and control.

In Conrad's Congo, however, we are far from the harmonious world of cross-cultural relations and solidarity in "Karain" and "The Lagoon." Unlike the white traders of the two Asian stories who "want nothing" from the local people beyond what is fair and acceptable in mercantile exchange, the white characters of Heart of Darkness and "An

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[21]Conrad, in William Blackburn, ed. Joseph Conrad: Letters to W. Blackwood and David S. Meldrum (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958) p.37

[22]Ross C. Murfin, "The New Historicism and Heart of Darkness" in Ross. C. Murfin, ed. Heart of Darkness. A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) p.226.

Outpost of Progress" go to Africa not only to conduct trade, but, some of them at least, the new "gang of virtue," to teach, to civilize, and to control. Marlow, who does not himself believe in the civilizing mission, finds himself bombarded by the propaganda that is prevalent in the Sepulchral City, the Headquarters of the Congo enterprise in Europe, when he goes to make his final arrangements to go to Africa and to bid his aunt farewell:

> It appeared, however, I was also one of the Workers, with a capital - you know. Something like a emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways," till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit.
>
> "You forget, dear Charlie, that the labourer is worthy of his hire," she said (HD, p. 18).

Marlow was to find this clash of motives, or the clash in the rhetorical formulation of the Congo mission objectives, amply demonstrated in the Congo within the person of Kurtz, and in the hostility between Kurtz and the other whites out there.

The inept and hapless Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost of Progress," who are left in charge of a trading post in the Congo by their manager, only discover, to their delight and sense of self-glorification, how grand their "mission" is when they stumble upon an old newspaper from Europe which their predecessor had apparently discarded before he died of fever:

> They also found some old copies of a home paper. That

> print discussed what it was pleased to call "Our Colonial Expansion" in high flown language. It spoke much of the rights and duties of civilization, of the sacredness of the civilizing work, and extolled the merits of those who went about bringing light, and faith and commerce to the dark places of the earth. Carlier and Kayerts read, wondered, and began to think better of themselves. Carlier said one evening, waving his hand about, "In a hundred years, there will be perhaps a town here. Quays, and warehouses, and barracks, and - and - billiard-rooms. Civilization, my boy, and virtue - and all. And then, chaps will read that two good fellows, Kayerts and Carlier, were the first civilized men to live in this very spot!" Kayerts nodded, "Yes, it is a consolation to think of that" (Outpost, AF & TU, pp. 94-95).

In their enthusiasm over their new-found sense of the great work that they and many others scattered in the Congo were thought and believed to be doing, Kayerts and Carlier forgot that someone else, their dead predecessor who is buried on the grounds of the station, was there before them. All this happens before the night of their big fight over a lump of sugar when Kayerts shoots and kills Carlier before hanging himself on the wooden cross planted to mark the grave of their predecessor.

From the irony Conrad employs to portray the motivations of the whites who go to the Congo, we can see that he thinks not only that such motivation is empty rhetoric, but also that it is also a deliberate screen to cover up the reality of European conduct out there in the colonies. As we have seen in the discussion of Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands, Lord Jim and The Rescue, Conrad scrutinizes and questions the motivation of the white colonialists. Despite his high-flown rhetoric of bringing light to the Congo,

Kurtz is, after all, just another young European man who, like his predecessors Almayer and Lingard, hopes to make his fortune in the colonies to change his perceived status in Europe. "I had heard," says Marlow, "that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn't rich enough or something. And indeed I don't know whether he had not been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there" (HD, p.108). As for Kurtz's counterparts in "An Outpost of Progress," their motives for going out to the Congo are revealed after the manager's speech on the day they are dropped off at the station. The speech pointed out to them "the promising aspect of their station... an exceptional opportunity for them to distinguish themselves and to earn percentages on the trade." Kayerts, who, we are told, has come out precisely to raise a dowry for his only child and daughter, "was moved almost to tears by his director's kindness." His colleague, Carlier, an ex-non-commissioned officer of cavalry in an army guaranteed from harm by several European powers, and who had subsequently become unemployable in his country, is less impressed by his manager's speech.

In the light of this examination of the motivations of the white agents in the Congo, I would agree with Benita Parry's observation that "by revealing the disjunctions between high-sounding rhetoric and sordid ambitions and indicting the purposes and goals of a civilization dedicated to global hegemony, Conrad's writings [are] more destructive of imperialism's ideological premises than [are] the polemics of his contemporary opponents of empire."[23]

Parry might have gone further to say that Conrad's depiction of the disjunctions between the perceived role of the Europeans in the Congo and what they actually do once they are out there is even more challenging to imperialism's ideological premises. The list of acts of futility, of barbarism, that negate the perceived role of the Europeans in the

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[23]Benita Parry. Conrad and Imperialism (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.10. Also quoted in Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914 (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1988) p.256

Congo to civilize, to teach, to "wean those ignorant millions from their horrid ways," to further the cause of science and progress would be very long indeed if we were to construct it. It would, however, include the following glaring and shocking examples: the aimless shelling of the forest by the French Man-of-War which Marlow witnesses on his arrival on the African coast; the six-men chain gang; the grove of death where a large number of Africans are left to die; the pointless digging of holes; the broken-down machinery scattered all over the Company Station; the pointless blasting of a mountain-side; the aimlessness of Europeans in the Congo with nothing to do except engage in backbiting and dreaming of and sighing for ivory; Kurtz's raids on villages to impound ivory; Kurtz's setting up of himself as a man-god who is worshipped by the natives and his presiding over midnight dances that end with "unspeakable rites"; Kurtz's fence of human heads planted on posts surrounding his hut, etc. That in questioning the motives of the colonial agents and exposing their hypocrisy, and in exposing such horrors as listed above, Conrad is condemning colonialism in the Congo would be difficult to deny. Indeed, Conrad critics are generally agreed on this point. As Patrick Brantlinger has said, "that almost no other work of British fiction written before World War I is critical of imperialism... is a measure of Conrad's achievement."[24]

What Conrad critics, particularly his Third World critics, are not agreed upon is how Conrad criticizes colonialism in Heart of Darkness; whether, in so doing, he does not undercut his very objective and end up, as it were, throwing away the baby with the bathwater. Echoing and partially agreeing with Achebe's attack on Conrad and Heart of Darkness, Brantlinger puts the point of contention succinctly when he says: "As social criticism, [Heart of Darkness's] anti-imperialist message is undercut by its racism, by its reactionary political attitude, by its impressionism."[25] Brantlinger does not, however, go on to demonstrate or support the claim he makes. Chinua Achebe, however, does.

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[24]Brantlinger, p.274

[25]Brantlinger, p.274

In his paper "An Image of Africa,"[26] which he presented in the Chancellor Lecture series at the University of Massachusetts on 18 February 1975, Achebe charged that Conrad was, to quote his direct words, "a bloody racist," and because, in his opinion, Heart of Darkness celebrated the dehumanization of a section of the human race, namely the Africans, it could not and should not be regarded as a great work of art. Achebe repeated his attack in The Times Literary Supplement in 1980 where he said that in Heart of Darkness, the humanity of Africans was "totally undermined by the mindlessness of its context and the pretty explicit animal imagery surrounding it."[27] As the title of Achebe's Chancellor Lecture Series paper suggests, Achebe's charge is based on what he sees as the overall image of Africa that emerges out of Heart of Darkness. For a start, Africa is only presented as "the other world, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where a man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality." Africa does not therefore have a significance of its own which is separate from that accorded to it as the shadow of Europe. "Africa," says Achebe, is presented as "setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa is a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril."

Secondly, Achebe takes issue with how African characters are presented. He quotes a long passage in which Marlow describes an early encounter of the Europeans during his trip with the Africans where he is moved to imagine that the Europeans were "wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet," meeting with "a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling." The African is referred to as "the prehistoric man... cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us - who could tell?" (HD, p.51). Achebe then zeroes in on the following line from the long passage he quotes which he

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[26]Achebe, "An Image of Africa"

[27]Achebe, "Viewpoint," Times Literary Supplement, 1 February 1980, 113.

claims contains "the meaning of Heart of Darkness and the fascination it holds over the Western mind: 'What thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity - like yours... Ugly.'" Africans, Achebe charges further, are denied language, and that includes the few such as the African Queen, the fireman, and the helmsman who are briefly individualized. All the Africans do by way of language is "exchange short grunting phrases," and on the two occasions that they speak, they, on one occasion, speak to demand human flesh: "Catch 'im... Give 'im to us... Eat 'im!" and on the other occasion the Manager's boy announces with a tone of "scathing contempt": "Mr. Kurtz - he dead."

Achebe dismisses what he says is the usual defence given in support of Conrad which attributes what Achebe finds objectionable to Marlow. If Conrad meant to draw a wedge between himself and Marlow, declares Achebe, Conrad failed because "he neglects to hint however subtly or tentatively at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters. It would not have been beyond Conrad's power to make that provision if he had thought it necessary. Marlow," Achebe says, "seems to me to enjoy Conrad's complete confidence - a feeling reinforced by the close similarities between their careers."

Achebe also expresses surprise that in all the critical studies of Conrad carried out by Western scholars, including psychoanalytical studies such as Bernard C. Meyer's, not one of them focuses on what Achebe sees as Conrad's "antipathy to black people." Achebe believes that "Conrad had a problem with niggers. His inordinate love of that word itself," Achebe says, "should be of interest to psychoanalysts." He concludes that under the circumstances he can only surmise that Western psychoanalysts have not taken an interest in pursuing such a study because they regard the kind of racism displayed by Conrad as "absolutely normal."

Where some critics have viewed Heart of Darkness as an attack on colonialism therefore, Achebe sees only what would best be described as a traditional English liberal view of the kinds of atrocities that were being reported about the Congo in the press irrespective of where they might happen. Marlow's sense of shock at the grove of death

where Africans are dying in large numbers, for instance, is to Achebe consistent with "those advanced and humane views appropriate to the English liberal tradition which required all Englishmen of decency to be deeply shocked by the atrocities in Bulgaria or the Congo of King Leopold of the Belgians or wherever." Achebe therefore dismisses Marlow's graphic and sympathetic description of the dying Africans as nothing more than "bleeding - heart sentiments." Such liberalism, Achebe argues, is not to be taken seriously, because it was not peculiar to Conrad. It "touched all the best minds of the age in England, Europe, and America," manifesting itself in various forms in different people but almost always managing to "sidestep the ultimate question of equality between white people and black people." Although we might now sigh with relief, says Achebe, that whatever Conrad's problems were he is now "safely dead," such relief is illusory: Conrad's "heart of darkness" plagues us still in his book Heart of Darkness, which Achebe describes as "an offensive and totally deplorable book" which, "unfortunately... is today perhaps the most commonly prescribed novel in the twentieth century literature courses in our own Department here."

Achebe raises a number of fundamental issues in his diatribe against Heart of Darkness and Conrad. One question that immediately comes to mind, in view of the argument of the first chapter of this thesis, is how it comes about - if Heart of Darkness and Conrad are as bad as Achebe makes them - that there is such growing interest in Conrad's works among Third World scholars. The "Department" Achebe refers to above is the Department of English of the University of Massachusetts. In Africa, Achebe would have to do a lot of travelling up and down and across the continent to 'wean the ignorant millions from their horrid habit' of prescribing and teaching Heart of Darkness in African high schools and universities, including those in countries which are not historically Anglophone. Susan Blake, an American academic teaching at the University of Benin in Togo, a French-speaking African country, responds to Achebe's charge by first agreeing with him and then by raising the pedagogical question: should Heart of

Darkness be taught at all?[28] Although I agree with Blake that Heart of Darkness should of course be taught in schools and universities, I do not agree with the reasons she gives for answering yes to the question she raises. "It is not important," she argues, "to determine whether such works.... are racist or not, only to recognize that they have been considered so. The question of whether we teach them is important precisely because they are so highly regarded by the culture in general." She further argues that as students will come across such works in any case, it is wise that we teach such works to give a critical frame of reference, and that those like her who acknowledge that the book may be considered racist but decline to support racism in the name of art, would teach the book "out of self-defence." The critical framework she provides in her own teaching is to teach such a text in comparison with another text written from an opposing point of view, a practice similar to the idea of re-writing the canon discussed by Aschcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in The Empire Writes Back.[29] Blake teaches Heart of Darkness in conjunction with the Senegalese novelist, Sembene Ousmane's highly acclaimed novel God's Bits of Wood. My disagreement with Blake arises from the fact that I believe that it is important that we engage Achebe in argument to establish whether or not Heart of Darkness is a racist novel and whether or not Conrad is a racist in that novel as Achebe claims. It is important, particularly in teaching Literature, a discipline which is sensitive to human emotions and sensibilities and which examines a wide range of human potential and possibilities, that claims or charges such as Achebe's are put to scrutiny. The fact of the growing interest in Conrad among Third World scholars was discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, and it would be somewhat inconsistent with common logic for such an interest to continue to grow and gain the kind of momentum it has gained if indeed Conrad and Heart of Darkness were as racist as Achebe claims them to be.

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[28]Susan L. Blake. "Racism and the Classics: Teaching Heart of Darkness (1982), in Hamner.

[29]Ashcroft, *et al.* pp.181-189.

In his article, Achebe does make a small concession that "influences of contemporary prejudice" might have had some impact on Conrad's "sensibility," but he quickly dismisses this as unimportant. In my opinion, Achebe fails to give due and necessary weight to the contemporary historical and literary climate of Conrad's time, and this fact is most evident in Achebe's charge that the English liberalism espoused at the time "almost always managed to sidestep the ultimate question of equality between white people and black people." From the brief historical analysis given in the first part of this Chapter accounting for the differences in tenor and outlook between Conrad's Asian world and his African world, it should be clear to any critic who has taken the trouble to study the way Africa was perceived at the time, especially in the wake of the landmarking Berlin Conference on the Partition of Africa in 1884-1885, that the question of the "equality between white people and black people" in Africa, at that time, was unthinkable. In his "Open Letter" to King Leopold II, for instance, the black American historian Williams, for whom the question of emancipation and equality of races must have been paramount given recent events involving the emancipation of slaves in America, did not throughout his long twelve-point document hint in the slightest manner at the question of equality between the Europeans and the Africans in the Congo, or at the injustice or illegitimacy of colonial occupation. His criticism, instead, was based on the fact that the Belgians were not administering the Congo well enough, and that they were violating the "legal" provisions of the Berlin Conference Agreement. Williams, Marlow's contemporary, could, in fact would, easily say, as Marlow does, that British imperialism was good because it was redeemed by "the idea" of real work the British did out there in the colonies (HD, p.10). These were the views of the age which Achebe has not considered closely enough.

The imperial propaganda of the later half of the nineteenth century was so pervasive and so influential that a missionary such as David Livingstone who, on account of his good work is still being honoured in some independent African states today (the city of Livingstone in Zambia is named after him; the new independent Zimbabwe

Government, which uprooted statues of Cecil John Rhodes and other colonialists at independence in 1980, retained Livingstone's larger-than-life statue that overlooks the spectacular Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River), was moved, in the context of his time, to say:

> It is on the Anglo-Saxon race that the hope of the world for liberty and progress rests... But in Africa the land is cheap, the soil good, and free labour is to be found on the spot... the inborn energy of English colonists would develop... resources... By linking the Africans to ourselves... it is hoped that their elevation will eventually be the result.[30]

There is a matter-of-fact assumption in the last sentence: the Africans are not at the same level of development as the English, and Livingstone's hope was that the English, in their dedication to work - a quality Marlow also praises in them - would in time help elevate the Africans.

The tone in which Livingstone's assumption is expressed is very mild compared to the generally held views about black people or "negroes," the term in common use then, such views emanating largely from the sentiments of Social Darwinism[31] so very much prevalent at the time. Marlow echoes these sentiments in the passage about "the prehistoric man" and the "prehistoric earth" quoted by Achebe, and it is surprising that Achebe fails to see this echo which, when viewed as it should be, as an echo to Social Darwinian sentiments, changes our perception of both Marlow and Conrad's (the implied author behind Marlow) characterisation of the Africans in that section completely. Wilson

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[30]David Livingstone. Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and Its Tributaries (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886) p.725. quoted in Zins, 103

[31]See Allan Hunter. Joseph Conrad and the Ethics of Darwinism (London: Cloom Helm. 1983) on this subject.

Harris, the West Indian novelist and critic, criticises Achebe for Achebe's failure to see "parody" in Conrad.[32] Harris would agree that this is one of such instances. In Social Darwinian sentiments, Negroes were believed to be racially determined to develop only to the level of a white child. Richard Burton, a proponent of such sentiments, wrote in 1887:

> ... the great gulf, moral and physical, separating the black from the white races of man, ... the physical development of the negro... that in the occipetal or lower breeds of mankind... it assigns a physical cause for the inferiority of the negro, whose physical and mental powers became stationary at an age when, in nobler races, the perspective and reflective principles begin to claim ascendancy.[33]

And far from imagining the equality between white people and black people in the Congo as Achebe expects at that time in history, the more extreme of the proponents of such sentiments of racial determinism were in fact predicting, and hoping, that the Africans would in due course be exterminated. The view is expressed in W. Winwood Reade's Savage Africa (1863):

> This vast continent will finally be divided almost equally between France and England... Africa shall be redeemed... in this amiable task they [Africans] may possibly become exterminated. We must learn to look upon this result with

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[32]Wilson Harris, in Hamner, p.164

[33]R.F. Burton. A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahomey (London: Tinsley Brothers. 1877) II, pp.118-119. quoted in Zins, p.104

> composure. It illustrates the beneficent law of Nature, that the weak must be devoured by the strong.[34]

As we can see, Kurtz's postscriptum in his Report, "Exterminate all the brutes!" was indeed a sentiment of its time, and not so much a question of nerves that had gone wrong as Marlow tried to explain (HD, p.72). The first part of the prediction or hope came true in 1884-1885 when Africa was indeed "divided" up among European Imperial powers at the Berlin Conference on the Partition of Africa. The second part almost became true too when, as we have already noted in this Chapter, more than half of the African population of the Congo was killed by the Belgians during the 1880's, 1890's and the decade before the First World War.

If Achebe is as concerned at what he sees as a fixation on Conrad's part on the question of "Negroes" as he suggests in his attack on Conrad, he perhaps should have paid some attention to the literature of the later half of the nineteenth century to see how preoccupied that literature was, as shown in the few examples quoted above, with that question. Most of that literature was written by people who did not, as Conrad did, go to Africa. The term "nigger" was in fact widely used before Conrad started writing. Kipling used it frequently in reference to Indians in India. The term was believed to refer to all non-white races.[35] Kipling went further to suggest racial connotations in the use of the word, such as his use of phrases like "dirty hide" for blackness in "Gunga Din" which we noted earlier. Olive Schreiner's novel The Story of An African Farm (1883), which draws for its setting part of my own country, Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia then) and South Africa, and which was written before Conrad's Heart of Darkness, also refers to Africans as "niggers" - a race which "must melt away in the heat of collision with a

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[34]W.W. Reade Savage Africa (London, 1863) II, p.451. quoted in Zins, p.106

[35]Zins, p.110

higher" race.[36] (Thank goodness, this did not happen in quite the way she expected - else, where would I be?)

I agree with Zins that in failing to take careful note of contemporary historical and literary sentiments, "Achebe has committed the sin of anachronism by demanding from Conrad our contemporary knowledge and experience."[37] I shall argue further in this Chapter to demonstrate that even if we viewed Conrad from our post-colonial perspective, we would still find that his view of Africa and Africans is far more humane than Achebe makes it, and that in his handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects, as it relates to the Congo of his day, Conrad shows a concerned, questioning, searching, enlightening and liberating imagination which transcended the limitations of the views and sentiments of his time. Conrad's unambiguous statement of sympathy with the black man of the Congo in his letter of 21 December 1903 to Roger Casement, which echoes his statement on cross-cultural solidarity in his "Author's Note to Almayer's Folly," lends further support to this view:

> It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe which seventy years ago put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds tolerates the Congo State today. It is as if the moral clock had been put back many hours. And yet nowadays if I were to overwork my horse so as to destroy its happiness of physical wellbeing I should be hailed before a magistrate. It seems to me that the black man - say, of Upoto - is deserving of as much humanitarian regard as any animal since he has nerves, feels pain, can be physically miserable... He shares with us the consciousness

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[36]Olive Schreiner. The Story of an African Farm. (London, 1883)

[37]Zins, p.122

of the Universe in which we live - no small burden.[38]

A historicist analysis such as the one given in this Chapter to this point is essential particularly because the debate of Conrad's handling of the colonial theme and colonial milieu in Heart of Darkness is also epistemological at the level of representation. There is therefore need to bring into the argument material extraneous to the text but relevant to the context of the creation of the text in question - hence the importance of examining the historical and literary sentiments of the later half of the nineteenth century. In terms of representation, it could be argued, for instance, from Achebe's perspective that by marginalizing Africans, and representing Africa as a backdrop for colonial looting and exploitation, Conrad is committing the same crime as the colonialist in the Congo who marginalized Africans and exploited and looted Africa, the only difference being that Conrad's crime is committed at the level of art. While the historicist analysis is useful in that it brings in ideas and circumstances that must have had some bearing on Conrad's frame of mind at the time he was writing Heart of Darkness, it cannot answer some of the issues raised in the debate, issues that are text-based, such as Achebe's assertion that Marlow enjoys Conrad's complete confidence and therefore that Marlow speaks for Conrad. An even more interesting question that arises in this debate is whether it is at all possible for an artist, such as Conrad, to set up a critique, such as Heart of Darkness, a critique of colonial exploitation, without the artist using the terms of reference of what he is criticizing - even if it is for the purpose of throwing away those terms of reference later? To put it more crudely, can a workman clear away mud from a surface where the mud should not have been in the first instance without closely following the contours of the very mud in order to clear it away effectively? While historicism cannot answer such questions, the created text can, or should.

In the discussion on Lord Jim in Chapter II, we noted Burden's regard for Heart

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[38]Quoted in F.M. Ford, Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance (London: Duckworth, 1924) p.122

of Darkness as a modernist text which, in its complexity, establishes "an internal interrogation of its colonialist ground."[39] Heart of Darkness, indeed, is a complex modernist text, and Achebe's failure to handle it as such, and his failure to go beyond the binary oppositions level of colonial discourse, account for some of the limitations in his reading and interpretation of that text, and of Conrad.

Perhaps the most encompassing self-interrogation of the text in Heart of Darkness is the use of the past as a framework within which the present should be viewed and evaluated. Marlow's very first words in the story sets up this framework: "And this also has been one of the dark places of the earth" (HD, p.7). "This" refers to Britain, and the word "dark" refers to Britain too. We soon realize that in Marlow's lexicon in the novel, "dark" refers to a country, any country, that is colonized by a power, any power, superior to it in military or physical force and which has a claim to a superior level of development and progress. Britain's "darkness" during the era of the Roman Empire is set up as a framework within which the Congo's "darkness" must be viewed and evaluated in the present era of European empire - building:

> I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago.....
> Light came out of this river since.... But the darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine - what d'ye call 'em? - trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north;... Imagine him here - the very end of the world.... - and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sand-banks, marshes, forests, savages, - precious little to eat fit for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian

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[39]Burden, p.80

> wine here, no going ashore. Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay - cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death - death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush. They must have been dying like flies here. Oh, yes - he did it. Did it very well, too, no doubt... They were men enough to face the darkness. And perhaps he was cheered by keeping his eye on a chance of promotion to the fleet at Ravenna by-and-by, if he had good friends in Rome and survived the awful climate. Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga - perhaps too much dice, you know - coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him, - all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination - you know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate (HD, pp.8-9).

From the above, which foreshadows the entire Congo experience in miniature, the framework which Marlow sets up with reference to Britain's "darkness" during the days of Imperial Rome stands as follows:

a. Britain, the land of "darkness," is undeveloped, threatening, sinister and dangerous to the Roman conqueror, the civilized man: "sand-banks, marshes, forests, wilderness, cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, death - death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush.... savagery, utter savagery .... all the mysterious life of the wilderness... the fascination of the abomination."

b. The locals, the native and conquered British, are "savages," and living among them, the civilized Roman has to live "in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable," and he has to carry his stores for there is "precious little to eat fit for a civilized man."

c. The Romans are motivated to go to the colony as a way towards gaining promotion, if employed by the State, or, as in the case of the young citizen who gambled his money away, to mend their fortunes.

Apart from foreshadowing the story of Heart of Darkness, this framework of the past sets up a lexicon of Marlow's terms for articulating back the Congo colonial situation, and his perception of a colonial background, whether it be the colonial situation of the Romans in Britain or of the Europeans in the Congo.

Achebe's criticism of Marlow's use of words like "savage," "savagery," "brute" and animal imagery to characterize Africans and Africa as setting, which has been supported by the Indian critic Frances Singh who says that Heart of Darkness carries a colonialistic bias in that the "darkness" in the title is "associated with Africans, their

customs, and their rites,"[40] fails to recognize the operative lexicon derived from the framework of the past Marlow sets up.

In addition, the interrogative strain in the use of apparently perjorative or reductive words and descriptions is felt throughout Heart of Darkness through a number of instances where reductive images normally associated with Africans and Africa in nineteenth century Europe are reversed to apply to the Europeans and Europe: the "white patch" on the map, Africa, before European expansionism which then reduced it to "a place of darkness" (HD, pp. 11-12); Brussels is a "Whited Sepulchre" (HD, p.14), reversing the usual association of blackness and death; when the African in charge of the chain-gang sees Marlow, a white man, at a distance, he salutes him, "White men being so much alike at a distance that he could not tell" (HD, p.23) - a reversal of the European stock perception of all black people as look-alikes; Marlow refers to himself at the Company Station as getting "savage" when the insensitive manager keeps him standing after his long overland journey on foot (HD, p. 32); the Europeans of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition are referred to as "less valuable animals" than their donkeys (HD, p.48); and the Manager's uncle who is in charge of the "less valuable animals" has "a short flipper of an arm" (HD, p.47). To claim, as Achebe and Singh do, that these apparently reductive terms are used on the Africans alone is clearly to misread the text. The terms of reference of these words and phrases, which are used liberally on both blacks and whites, cannot therefore be racial. Critics who disagree with Achebe's diatribe are therefore correct to refer to the self-interrogation the text is engaged in. Ellen Kitonga, a Kenyan critic, observes that although Conrad's portrayal of Africans in Heart of Darkness is "unflattering," his portrayal of the "civilizers" is "much less flattering."[41] Hunt Hawkins also observes that the harshest adjective Marlow applies to the Africans -

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[40]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.270

[41]Ellen Mae Kitonga, "Conrad's Image of African and colonizer in Heart of Darkness," Busara, 3:1 (1970), 34. quoted in Hunt Hawkins, "The Issue of Racism in Heart of Darkness," Conradiana (XIV) 1982. (3) p.166

"satanic" - is "significantly... not for something they do on their own, but for their participation in Kurtz's ceremonies."[42] Achebe's failure to pay closer attention to the language of Heart of Darkness leads him to take the use of words that are apparently reductive on grounds of race at face value. His failure to recognize the self-interrogative style of Conrad's text leads him to a mistaken reading of Heart of Darkness and of Conrad's attitude on the question of race.

Hunt Hawkins and P.J.M. Robertson are correct to point out that Achebe's off-handed dismissal of Conrad's praises to Africans is unfair, such as the descriptions depicting the Africans' energy, vitality, muscle, the stateliness of the African Queen, and the cannibals on Marlow's crew who although starving, have restraint enough not to eat human flesh - "fine fellows... men one could work with." "In a novel which is a relentless, sceptical inquiry into the basis of moral behaviour," writes Hawkins, "one which questions morality founded on principles or providence, the cannibals with their 'inborn strength' provide one of the few signs of hope."[43] Such descriptions, which should include Marlow's strong working relationship with the fireman and the helmsman, particularly the latter whose humanity and kinship (as a human being) Marlow acknowledges as he (the helmsman) is dying, are glimpses of light in an otherwise dark and sombre world, and in the debate which questions Conrad's attitude towards the Africans, such brief moments of human sympathy across the colour-line should be acknowledged:

> ... I am not prepared to affirm the fellow [Kurtz] was exactly worth the life we lost [the helmsman] in getting to him. I missed him even while his body was still lying in the pilot-house. Perhaps you will think it passing strange

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[42]Hawkins (1982), p.167

[43]Hawkins (1982), p.182

> this regret for a savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara. Well, don't you see, he had done something, he had steered; for months I had him at my back - a help - an instrument. It was a kind of partnership. He steered for me - I had to look after him, I worried about his deficiencies, and thus a subtle bond had been created, of which I only became aware when it was suddenly broken. And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory - like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment.
>
> Poor fool! If he had only left that shutter alone. He had no restraint - just like Kurtz - a tree swayed by the wind (HD, pp.72-73).

Even though Marlow shows in his language that he must make allowances for the prejudices of his listeners who were products of their time and who, as we have already noted in this Chapter, might have shared the prevailing prejudices against "Negroes," his sympathy, and sense of relationship, are quite clear. Apart from some few indications of his sympathy and identification (only in some respects) with Kurtz, Marlow's statement on his relationship with the native helmsman is the strongest and most intimate description of any relationship, let alone a description across the colour-line, in the Congo.

One full depiction of an African character in the Congo, which is not covered in the scope of Achebe's paper, but which is similar to Conrad's depiction of native characters in his Asian colonial fiction, is the portrayal of Makola in "An Outpost of Progress." Pitted against Kayerts and Carlier, the two new white men at the Station who are described as "two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals whose existence

is only rendered possible through the high organisation of civilized crowds" (Outpost, AF & TU, p.89), Makola, who insists that his name is Henry Price, is for all practical purposes the person in charge of the Station. "He spoke English and French with a warbling accent," we are told, "wrote a beautiful hand, understood bookkeeping..." (Outpost, AF & TU, p.86). He has a family at the Station, and we are allowed occasional glimpses of Mrs Makola, or her influence, from time to time. Makola survives the previous white manager of the Station, and he gives what becomes the official verdict of the white manager's cause of death: fever. When Kayerts has shot and killed his colleague, Carlier, Makola calmly tells Kayerts that the cause of death should be reported as fever, and for a while it seems that that story will stand, until Kayerts, on hearing the steamship's whistle, loses his nerve and hangs himself. It again falls on Makola's shoulders to give the official version of what happened at the Station.

The two white men are kept away from negotiations for ivory by Makola, who carries out all negotiations by himself, pays what he believes is reasonable, thereby reducing the two white men to mere spectators. Makola even takes the shocking decision to sell all the ten black workers at the Station in exchange for ivory without consulting Kayerts and Carlier, and although the two white men are outraged when they find out, they cannot do anything about it. When they try to intervene while Makola is negotiating with the slave-buyers, he drives them back to their hut and they have no option but to obey as they hardly understand what is happening:

> As they went across the yard to call Makola, they saw shadows moving in the night. One of them cried, "Don't shoot! It's me, Price." Then Makola appeared close to them. "Go back, go back please," he urged, "You spoil all."
>
> "There are strange men about," said Carlier.
>
> "Never mind; I know," said Makola. Then he whispered,

> "All right. Bring ivory. Say nothing! I know my business." The two white men reluctantly went back to the house, but did not sleep. They heard footsteps, whispers, some groans. It seemed as if a lot of men came in, dumped heavy things on the ground, squabbled a long time, then went away. They lay on their hard beds and thought: "This Makola is invaluable" (Outpost, AF & TU, p.102).

In the morning, the two white men are shocked to find that all the station workers are gone. "What do you know about it?" they ask Makola.

> "What do I know? I think only. Will you come and look at the ivory I've got there? It is a fine lot. You never saw such." He moved towards the store. Kayerts followed him mechanically, thinking about the incredible desertion of the men. On the ground before the door of the fetish [the storeroom] lay six splendid tasks.
>
> "What did you give for it?" asked Kayerts, after surveying the lot with satisfaction.
>
> "No regular trade," said Makola.
> "They bought the ivory and gave it to me. I told them to take what they most wanted in the station. It is a beautiful lot. No station can show such tasks. Those traders wanted carriers badly, and our men were no good here. No trade, no entry in books; all correct" (Outpost, AF & TU, p.103).

Kayerts bursts with anger and indignation. He shouts at Makola, telling him he is fired, until he is checked by Makola's calm and assured intervention:

> "You very red, Mr Kayerts. If you are so irritable in the sun, you will get fever and die - like the first Chief!" pronounces Makola impressively.
>
> They stood still, contemplating one another with intense eyes, as if they had been looking with effort across immense distances. Kayerts shivered... He turned sharply and went to the house. Makola retired into the bosom of his family; and the tusks, left lying before the store, looked very large and valuable in the sunshine (Outpost, AF & TU, p.103).

I have described this scene at length because I believe that one can argue that Conrad's two stories of the Congo, which, in his words are the "only loot" he took from Africa, set up an inter-textual interrogation and complementarity of each other. Whereas Heart of Darkness stresses the role of the Europeans in the Congo, and downplays the role of the Africans, "An Outpost of Progress" reverses that role by marginalizing the European characters and stressing the role of an African character. As in his Asian colonial fiction, Conrad therefore makes room for the native character, although on a limited basis, to play a role in the determination of events in the Congo colonial milieu. It is quite clear from the exchanges between Makola and Kayerts that Makola is the more intelligent of the two and the more powerful. He speaks in good English, knows exactly what to say and when to keep the two white men under his control. For instance, he simply ignores Kayerts' threats to dismiss him, and instead, reverses the direction of the threat by warning Kayerts that if he allows himself to get so worked up in the tropical sun, he will get fever and die. If Achebe's diatribe had been restricted to Heart of Darkness alone without including Conrad himself, it would not have been fair of me to insist that Achebe should have included in his comment on the way African characters in the Congo are treated by Conrad some acknowledgement of the distinctive

characterization of Makola, and of the complementarity of the two Conrad stories that share the Congo experience of the eighteen-nineties.

In dismissing the operative narrative style in Heart of Darkness which gives distinct status to the "I" narrator, to Marlow, and to Conrad as the implied author, Achebe says: "if Conrad's intention is to draw a *cordon sanitaire* between himself and the moral and psychological malaise of his narrator, his care seems... totally wasted because he neglects to hint however subtly or tentatively at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters... Marlow seems to enjoy Conrad's complete confidence - a feeling reinforced by the close similarities between their careers."[44] Frances Singh, who, as we have seen, agrees with Achebe's charge of a racist portrayal of the Africans, however accepts Fleishman's argument that Conrad creates a wedge between himself and Marlow when Conrad, through Kurtz, shows "the 'total bankruptcy of the work ethic'" which Marlow believes is "all-saving," and, she argues that Marlow, unlike Conrad, has, particularly with regard to the Intended, "an idealized conception of women."[45] According to Singh, therefore, Achebe is wrong to assume that Marlow speaks for Conrad. C.P. Sarvan, the Zambian critic, also goes to some length to demonstrate that "Marlow's portrait is drawn with quiet irony and, at times, a mocking humour which denotes 'distance' between creator and character."[46] As well I would query that the fictional narrator, the "I" figure, speaks for Conrad arguing that the "I" narrator is treated with some irony at the beginning of the story when he praises the "great" men of British history and their "great" ships which carried "the flame" of English civilization from "the sacred fire" of Britain. The irony is that the fictional narrator includes in the honours list pirates without appearing to be aware of that fact. Ross Murfin, using the formalist approach, argues that "a work of art is not undigested

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[44]Achebe, "An Image of Africa," p.787

[45]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.278

[46]C.P. Sarvan, in Kimbrough, pp.282-283

experience" and that Heart of Darkness, written almost a decade after Conrad's Congo journey, is certainly "digested experience," a point which should be a caution to the reader who is tempted to read Heart of Darkness as an autobiography and Marlow as Conrad. Murfin also refers to Conrad's Congo Diary to show some historical differences between Conrad's and Marlow's experiences in the Congo.[47] By refusing to accept the distancing effect of the narrative voices in Heart of Darkness between Conrad and his characters, particularly Marlow, Achebe is handling Conrad's complex story with unwarranted violence and over-simplification.

I would argue further than Singh, Sarvan and Murfin and say that "the alternative frame of reference" Achebe accuses Conrad of neglecting is in fact provided in the characterization of Kurtz and Marlow. There are not many former colonial subjects who will readily admit that in spite of the evils of colonialism, some good came out of the experience. It seems to me that one can only appreciate the "alternative frame of reference" in the characterization of Kurtz and Marlow if one is honest enough, and brave enough to (it is not fashionable in the post-colonial world to be so brave as to) admit that there was some good, after all, that former colonial subjects inherited from the colonial era. I have related earlier my own personal experience with colonialism in Rhodesia, and that it has taken me no less than ten years to accept that the new Zimbabwe nation's economy benefited most from the most troubled and most repressive era of Rhodesia's colonial history. I have also mentioned in the first Chapter of this thesis that I agree with Benita Parry's analysis that those people in the Third World who are still fighting against colonialism or some clearly defined form of imperialism may well find it difficult for them to go beyond the binary oppositions theory of colonial discourse. It would seem to me, however, that to appreciate fully Conrad's engagement with the colonial theme in Heart of Darkness, we must reject that theory and accept that colonialism is an heterogenous experience, a bag of 'mixed blessings.' As I mentioned earlier too, we need

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[47]Murfin (1989), pp.13-15

to accept that colonialism is an historical fact which we in the post-colonial era cannot deny or wish away. It was equally a fact of the same magnitude in the Congo when Conrad went out there in 1890. Heart of Darkness would not have been the great complex work of art it is if it had not begun by acknowledging the historical fact of colonialism in the Congo.

In his portrayal of the Roman occupation of Britain, for instance, Marlow acknowledges the historical fact of the experience, and only after he has done so does he make some assessment of the era within its historical context. The Romans, he says, were "men enough to face the darkness" (HD, p.9). In the typical self-interrogative style of Conrad's modernist text, however, Marlow qualifies his bold assertion immediately, to indicate the less attractive, indeed, the destructive elements of the colonial experience: "... the savagery, the utter savagery... - all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men .... the fascination of the abomination... the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate" (HD, p.9).

In the same vein, in his portrayal of modern European colonialism in the Congo, Marlow first acknowledges its historical factuality, and thereafter constructs an assessment which includes a comparison with Rome on imperialism. What redeems colonialism, says Marlow, is "the idea" - "efficiency - the devotion to efficiency" in carrying out work in the colonies (HD, p.10). Marlow therefore makes his judgement on colonial ventures, not on the basis of whether or not such ventures should be pursued, but on the basis of how well they are pursued. This is why he approves of British colonialism: "some real work is done there" (HD, p.14). Commenting on Marlow's "idea," Peter Nazareth says :"This is just a qualification: those with an unselfish belief in the idea are more admirable than those who are merely out to grab loot."[48] Implied in Nazareth's comment is his understanding that Marlow approaches colonialism in the nineteenth century as an

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[48]Nazareth, p.177

historical fact, and that Marlow's thinking therefore operates within the confines of that fact.

Viewed in this manner, the wide scope of critical engagement that the study of the roles of both Kurtz and Marlow has provided to Conrad critics over the years becomes easily explicable. Kurtz and Marlow are not presented, as Kayerts and Carlier are in "An Outpost of Progress," as characters who are obviously inept, incapable, or, in the context of Heart of Darkness, obviously bad. Indeed, in an extended form of his famous "delayed decoding" narrative technique,[49] Conrad would, it seems to me, have us initially approve of both Kurtz and Marlow until something happens to make us look back and re-assess our initial impressions. Among the Europeans in the Congo, Kurtz and Marlow stand apart because they espouse, initially at least, a sense of moral values and intelligence. As for the rest of the Europeans in the Congo, their main desire is "to tear treasure from the bowels of the land... with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe" (HD, p.44). Even those who appear to receive Marlow's approval, such as the accountant at the Company Station, are treated with irony. The accountant, in his starched and scented cuffs, is so grossly involved in his personal appearance and the accuracy of the entries he makes that Conrad would have us view him as a typical metaphorical cog in the colonial machine. A white colleague of his is dying in the accountant's hut - office - and all the smart fellow can say is, "the groans of this sick person distruct my attention. And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate" (HD, p.27).

Notwithstanding the fact that Kurtz is motivated to go to the Congo by economic considerations like all the other agents, he is, unlike the other agents, equipped, initially at least, with moral ideas to teach, and to civilize, ideas that were characteristic of some of the best minds of his age. The post-colonial critic may, in his more or better informed position, view Kurtz's moral ideas disparagingly today, but the historical fact is that it

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[49]Watt, pp.175-179

was Europeans like the original Kurtz who, equipped with such ideas, went to Africa to set up schools, churches, etc. and in many ways began to make a difference at the community level. "Each station," the original Kurtz said on his arrival in the Congo, "should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing" (HD, p.47). There is nothing in the text to suggest that we should doubt Kurtz's initial zeal for moral enlightenment in the Congo.

If Kurtz's story in the Congo were to be re-written, as is the case of the Creole woman in Wide Sargasso Sea in relation to the Creole woman in Jane Eyre, say by an African Congolese who was a member of Kurtz's chosen African tribe and who would have been present at the river-bank farewell party just before the steamship bearing Kurtz back to Europe took off, the story would show unquestioned preference for Kurtz to all other Europeans in the Congo. African history has many records of various versions of European Kurtzs in Africa, and the most revered and most successful of them do not have our present Kurtz's megalomania for power and personal aggrandisement. All the same, the Congolese would in re-writing Kurtz's story from the tribe's perspective place a lot of emphasis on Kurtz's attempt to understand his people, and, in fact, his partial success in becoming part of the tribe. Conrad's novel does not say how Kurtz communicated with the Africans but in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we may assume that he learned their language enough to engage effectively in the sublimity of native tribal religious rites, and to sustain the emotion of love. The nameless but elegantly drawn African Queen, Kurtz's African mistress, represents Africa, and her profound grief at Kurtz's departure testifies to the strength of the bond Kurtz had established with Africa. Unlike Jim, Kurtz did not need Stein's advice to "immerse" himself in the "destructive element" ("destructive" as seen from the European point of view); Kurtz immersed himself in Congolese life without a prompter.

If the people of the Congo were to level criticism against Kurtz in their re-writing of his story from their perspective, they would perhaps agree with Frances Singh that the problem with Kurtz is not that he went native, or as traditional Conrad criticism has

viewed it, reverted into savagery,[50] but that "he did not go native enough."[51] Because Marlow draws a veil over Kurtz's "unspeakable rites" in the Congo, the field is left wide open for speculation on these rites. Anthropological critics such as S.A. Reid argue that once Kurtz is accepted by the tribe as 'one of them,' he refuses to play by the rules that make the native group an organized human community. As the "Chitomé" or chief, for instance, it would not be proper that Kurtz be allowed to die a natural death, else the world, so the tribal belief has it, "would perish." "The man who was destined to be his successor, "says Reid, was to "strangle or club him to death." Reid speculates that the Russian harlequin had been suggested as Kurtz's successor, which, if true, would account for Kurtz's antipathy towards him.[52] Whatever the merits of Reid's analysis here, by turning himself into a god Kurtz fails to achieve a wholesome cross-cultural relationship with the Africans because of his greed: he wants the best of both worlds for himself. "Self," for Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, should be seen as larger than the individual person. Achebe's failure or refusal to acknowledge and recognize this point contributes to his violent handling of Heart of Darkness. "Of course," Achebe says, "there is a preposterous and perverse kind of arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind."[53] And yet the build-up towards Kurtz in both Marlow and the reader's minds as the steamer makes its harzadous journey towards Kurtz and the Inner Station is clearly intended to raise our conception and perception of Kurtz to much more than "one petty European mind." Kurtz is Europe, all Europe. "All Europe," we are told, "contributed to the making of Kurtz" (HD, p.71). His greed is larger than life, the greed of imperial Europe that would never have enough:

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[50]Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p.36

[51]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.277

[52]S.A. Reid "The 'Unspeakable Rites' in Heart of Darkness" in Mudrick, M. (ed.) Conrad: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1966), p.46

[53]Achebe, "An Image of Africa," p.788

> I saw him open his mouth wide - it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him (HD, p.86).

And contrary to what Frances Singh has suggested, that in Kurtz's tribalisation we see "a rejection of the materialism of the West in favour of a simpler and more honest way of life,"[54] it is precisely because of Kurtz's refusal or failure to reject the materialism of the West that Kurtz's greed, the greed of Europe, is portrayed in such sharp focus.

Like Lingard and Jim, Kurtz betrays the native people of the colonial setting in his attempt to satisfy the demands of his European world. According to Frances Singh, Kurtz "perverted the customs of the tribe, making them a means to a deplorable end - namely, keeping the ivory flowing and colonialism a profitable venture for his employers."[55] The "alternative frame of reference" Achebe accuses Conrad of not providing is partly provided in the characterization of Kurtz: the "original" Kurtz has in him great potential for healthy and fruitful cross-cultural relations with the Africans of the Congo, the kind that is also hinted at in the characterization of the Russian - if only his life were guided by some purpose more serious than the spirit of youthful glamour and adventurism. Once Kurtz betrays his potential, his alienation from both the European and African worlds escalates to the point where, as Marlow notices, nothing can influence this man-god: "I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had.. to invoke him... There was nothing either above or below him... He had kicked himself loose of the earth..." (HD, p.95). From that point on, Kurtz loses all restraint, and he commits the abominations and "unspeakable" horrors that shock Marlow almost out of his mind: raising tribal armies to raid villages for ivory; decorating the surrounding of his hut with trophies of human heads; getting himself worshipped as

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[54]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.277

[55]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.277.

a god to whom "unspeakable rites" and sacrifices are made and offered. In Gone Primitive (1990), Marianna Torgovnick rejects Leavis' objection that Marlow "makes a virtue out of not knowing" and proceeds to "talk about what [Conrad's novel] refuses to discuss except in the vaguest terms." In addition to some of the horrors listed above, Torgovnick writes:

> What, then has Kurtz done? He has.. corrupted the idea of work and carried it to the extreme of enslavement. He has taken the mechanics of imperialism and applied them so relentlessly that even the Belgian managers consider his methods "unsound." .... But Kurtz has done more, a "more" that remains less specified than his corruption of imperial policy... Kurtz has apparently mated with the magnificent black woman and thus violated the British code against miscegenation, a code backed by the policy of bringing wives and families with colonists and administrators wherever possible. The woman is decked with leggings and jewelry that testify to a high position among the Africans - the position, one assumes, of Kurtz's wife.[56]

Conrad's text, however, continues to interrogate itself even within these chambers of horrors, and to uphold the "alternative frame of reference" Achebe accuses Conrad of not providing. For instance, Torgovnick's inappropriate reference to the violation of the "British code of miscegenation" in a Belgian colony, and which in Kipling would invite

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[56]Marianna Torgovnick, Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1990) pp.146-147

nothing less that the ultimate punishment,[57] is really not an issue for which characters are punished in Conrad (remember the tender loving scenes between Jim and Jewel in Lord Jim) - a factor which contributes to the argument this thesis is making, namely that Conrad's questioning, enlightening and liberating imagination went beyond the prejudices and racial limitations of his day to show us a just view of resolving human dilemmas.

The "alternative frame of reference" in Kurtz's characterisation is perhaps provided most emphatically in what the Congolese re-writing of Kurtz's story would regard as a renunciation, towards the end, by Kurtz, of his abominable exploitation of the Congo and of his expression of regret over his lost potential for moral good, the moral good which he corrupts.

"I had immense plans," Kurtz tells Marlow. "I was on the threshold of great things." Marlow describes Kurtz's tone of voice when he says this as "a voice of longing, with a wistfulness... that made [Marlow's] blood run cold." Marlow quickly reminds him that he is a success: "Your success in Europe is assured in any case" (HD, p.94), but Kurtz is not comforted. We can only therefore assume that his "immense plans" could not have had anything to do with his exploits as a company agent or trader as in this respect he should be more that satisfied: Kurtz had gathered more ivory, and of the best quality too, than any other agent. Having discounted the material argument, we can safely assume that the "immense plans" are connected to the moral good of the original Kurtz - the "alternative frame of reference," the potential that he abused to demonic perversion.

It is in the same spirit of renunciation that Kurtz's postscriptum, "Exterminate all the brutes!" (HD, p.72), to his high-flown Report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, and his death-bed cry, "The horror! The horror!" (HD, p.100), should be viewed. The traditional critical view of Kurtz's Report, as explained

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[57]In "Without Benefit of Clergy," and "Beyond the Pale" characters who fall in love or marry across the colour line such as Holden and Ameera are severely punished by Kipling, including being killed off for it.

by Ian Watt, associates Kurtz's views expressed in the Report with Western theories of industrial supremacy and a claim to "the rightness of god."[58] We recall Kurtz's claim in the Report that "we whites... must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings - approach them with the might as of a deity" (HD, pp.71-72), and easily associate the postscriptum's militaristic call to action with the violence of Western supremacy that prefaces the Report. It is of course significant that although Marlow vividly remembers these militaristic sections of the Report and has only vague memories of the magnificence of the language of the actual Report (he has forgotten the substance of the Report), he tears off the postscriptum, in much the same way that he lies to the Intended, to preserve the image of the "original" Kurtz. From the point of view of the Congolese re-writing of the story, however, the postscriptum should and would be retained and preserved carefully as an integral part of Kurtz's Report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. Added as it was, "evidently much later, in an unsteady hand... it was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like of flash of lightning in a serene sky" (HD, p.72), this postscriptum, and the death-bed "horror" cry, mark the 'supreme' moments of truth in Kurtz's evaluation of his moral conduct in the Congo. Renouncing the liberal lies that he had been writing about the great civilizing mission of Europe in Africa, and the grand visions he had created of himself on his return to Europe where Kings would meet him at railway stations, Kurtz's postscriptum and "horror" cry are "a burst of honesty."[59] Conrad is therefore not only providing an "alternative frame of reference" here through his portrayal of the potential for moral good that has been betrayed and lost, but he is also attacking and undermining the very liberal views that Achebe accuses him of courting.[60]

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[59]Nazareth, p.175

[60]Achebe, "An Image of Africa," pp.787-788.

Conrad provides another "alternative frame of reference" through some aspects of his characterization of Marlow. We have already demonstrated in this Chapter that Achebe's claim that Marlow speaks for Conrad is unsustainable. Marlow is characterized as a typical middle-class Englishman who, as already argued in this Chapter, accepts the historical fact of colonialism as a typical Englishman of his age would, his only concern being that the Europeans should justify their colonial occupation by doing "some real work there," as the British do. It is therefore not surprising that Marlow should exhibit the prejudices and modes of thought of his day. One such mode of thought was the theory of Social Darwinism which, as demonstrated earlier in this Chapter, Marlow echoes when he fancies himself as walking on "the prehistoric earth" meeting with the "prehistoric man" in Africa. (HD, p.51).

We recall that unlike Kurtz, who had specific motives for going out to the Congo, Marlow is really essentially an adventurer. He has carried his childhood romantic vision of Africa with him to the Congo, and echoing some of the literature of his time, he would have got carried away in romantic visions were it not that constant reminders to him of the harsh reality of the Congo repeatedly jar on his romantic visions. There is therefore a constant self-interrogative process of the text in the way Marlow is characterized, indicating that there must be an implied author, who is of course Conrad, who repeatedly re-adjusts the lense Marlow puts before the reader to view the story.

If we must, as Achebe does, view the racial epithets in Heart of Darkness through our post-colonial eyes, we see that in Marlow's racial epithets in his reference to Africans, which is normal and characteristic of his age as demonstrated earlier in this Chapter, his use of such epithets in constantly interrogated. At the scene of the grove of death, for instance, Marlow's eyes meet the eyes of one of the many Africans who are dying there, and through his typical European perspective, he very easily, quickly and almost conspiratorially slides into one of the stock prejudices Europeans have of Africans: "The man seemed young - almost a boy - but you know with them it's hard to tell" (HD, p.25). Marlow does not associate his prejudice here with the reversal of the same

prejudice earlier in the same scene when the African in charge of the chain gang prudently hoists his rifle in salute to Marlow when he sees him at a distance from which he cannot tell who Marlow might be, "white men being so much alike at a distance" (HD, p.23). If Marlow does not make the association between these two interrogative instances in the novel, Conrad would have the reader make the association, keeping the reader constantly aware that there is another position, the implied author's position, beyond and in this instance antithetical to Marlow's commonplace European prejudices.

Other examples can be shown to illustrate this very important point. For instance, one of the common reductive words Marlow and the other Europeans in the Congo use to describe Africans is "savage." We recall the Roman framework using the same word for the British, and the lexicon Marlow constructs for the Rome-Britain colonial situation also becomes operative in the Europe-Africa colonial situation. But if we could perhaps go beyond that, and use our post-colonial perspective as Achebe and Singh have done, we notice that the context within which the word is used in the first two instances is as follows: Marlow has just arrived at the Company Station. He sees six black men chained together, toiling up the path balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads. "They passed me within six inches," he says, "without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages" (HD, p.23). Marlow has been questioning in his mind the information he has been given that the six Africans are "enemies," and while his mind is busy re-assessing this information in the light of what he has seen, he is disturbed by a loud report of the objectless blasting of the mountain. "Another report from the cliff," he says, "made me think suddenly of that ship of war I had seen firing into a continent. It was the same kind of ominous voice; but these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea" (HD, pp.22-23). Again, Marlow implies but does not quite make the obvious association: who really are the criminals? who are the "savages"? The answer would be obvious to Marlow if he were, in the context of his experience, to make the association: the Europeans in the Congo.

Immediately after he passes the chain gang, Marlow enters the hut-office of the chief accountant. For all practical purposes, the chief accountant imagines himself as working in some ordinary office in a modern European city. In his contrived appearance which prompts Marlow to think of him as "a hairdresser's dummy," the accountant takes breaks "to get a breath of fresh air" - his office is in the jungle - and he worries about making correct entries in his books, entries of the rotting machinery and broken pipes, assets Marlow sees as "a wanton smash-up." Then the Africans make some noise outside. The accountant is irate. "When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages - hate them to the death" (HD, p.27). And as mentioned earlier, he also complains that the groans of a sick and dying whiteman in his hut-office disturb and distract his attention. "And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate" (HD, p.27). In the first example of "savage" applied to the six Africans, Marlow uses that word because of their "complete deathlike indifference" (HD, p.23). The association Conrad would have us make here is to use the same adjectival phrase to describe the white chief accountant - "complete deathlike indifference," - as the phrase certainly applies more to him than it does to the six Africans. The six Africans are helpless passive embodiments of the qualities implied in that phrase whereas the accountant chooses to cultivate those qualities.

Other examples of this self-interrogative phenomenon of the text would include Marlow's use of the words "improved specimen" to describe the African fireman (HD, p.52), which is counterbalanced by his use of the same word, "specimen" to describe Kurtz (HD, p.69); similarly the sound of the African drums which to the Europeans sound "weird, appealing, suggestive and wild" (HD, pp.28-29), is counterbalanced by Marlow's suggestion that that sound may have for the Africans" as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country" (HD, pp.28-29).

The self-interrogative strain in Heart of Darkness is therefore unmistakable. Achebe's failure to pay close attention to Conrad's use of words blinds him from seeing this strain in the characterization of Marlow which constantly reminds us of another

position, the position of the implied author, Conrad himself. Contrary to Achebe's charge that he is a racist, Conrad not only repeatedly puts Marlow's European prejudices to close interrogation, but also he strongly challenges them. Conrad is therefore using the language of the discourse of colonialism of his day, but he proceeds to interrogate it, to undermine it, and - to recall two metaphors used earlier in this Chapter - to follow the contours of the mud in order to effectively clear it away, to throw away the bathwater without throwing away the baby too - both metaphors signifying Conrad's walking on a tightrope in his delicate use of the prejudices of his day to undermine those same prejudices.

The same is also true of Marlow's apparent ambivalence towards colonialism. Marlow, as we have already noted, approves of British colonialism because the British help the colonies develop. He condemns the colonial activities of the Belgians in the Congo because all they do is exploit the country. The implied authorial view of colonialism in Heart of Darkness is, however, not ambivalent: Conrad's condemnation of the brutal, greedy, and genocidal activities of the Belgians in the Congo, including the megalomaniacal and satanic activities of the later Kurtz, is clear; his dramatization of the loss of potential for moral good and healthy cross-cultural relations in his civilization of Kurtz is also clear; and Conrad's voice, which, as we have seen, repeatedly overrides Marlow's voice which exhibits typical nineteenth century European prejudices against Negroes or Africans through the self-interrogative strain that runs through Heart of Darkness, clearly shows that Conrad's own view of these prejudices and of colonialism in general is different from Marlow's ambivalent position: Conrad condemns colonialism.

Contrary to Frances Singh's view that Marlow's lie "stems from Conrad's own inability to face unflinchingly the nature of colonialism,"[61] Conrad re-adjusts the lens for the reader to ensure that Europe, and the world, are not permanently deceived, and that the heinous crimes of colonialism are not forever concealed. Marlow has told his

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[61]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.279

story to "insiders": the Lawyer, the Accountant, the Director of Companies, and the fictional "I" narrator who, from his own description, is 'one of them' (HD, p.5) - a group Peter Nazareth has described as "Manipulators of the whole colonial machine."[62] Although Marlow himself does not tell us the story, the fictional "I" narrator does, thereby ensuring that the truth is known. In the telling of the tale, Conrad therefore brings "unpleasant truths home... shattering the benign worldview projected at home."[63] Conrad, argues Peter Nazareth as noted earlier, "was therefore a mental liberator: not only for those blinded at home but also for those who were to come later, the colonized elite wearing the eyes of Europe."[64]

At least one "mind" is "liberated" in Conrad's text from among the audience that listens to Marlow - the fictional "I" narrator. At the beginning of the story, the narrator describes with unqualified pride the exploits of British empire-builders in long deliberate rhythms and high-flown, inflated and measured tones of approval:

> The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day, after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever, but in the august light of abiding memories.... the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of

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[62]Nazareth, p.176

[63]Nazareth, p.183

[64]Nazareth, p.178

> home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud... Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire (HD, pp.6-7).

At the end of the re-telling of Marlow's story, however, the narrator's inflated and measured rhythms and tones change to short, clipped, sombre words and phrases:

> Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha. Nobody moved for a time... I raised my head. 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 (HD, p.111).

The narrator has undergone some change after re-telling Marlow's story. Frances Singh recognises this too and says that unlike Marlow, the narrator "is a true critic of colonialism."[65] The narrator's words quoted above are also the last words of Heart of Darkness, and as they counter-balance the same narrator's opening remarks in the self-interrogative technique that we have established as characteristic of the implied author, Conrad himself, we may safely ascribe the critical view of colonialism to the implied author, Conrad.

In "An Outpost of Progress," the European colonialists, Kayerts and Carlier, are

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[65]Singh, in Kimbrough, p.278

killed off at the end as happens to Almayer and Willems in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands respectively, and Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, leaving Makola, the African assistant, in charge. Thus once again, as we have seen so consistently in his Asian colonial fiction, Conrad 'expels' the European colonialists to leave the native people alone. In Almayer's Folly, we are left in no doubt that the hope for the future lies in the Malay Court (although, as we have seen, this view is closely qualified), with the announcement at the end of the novel that a son, the heir apparent, has been born to Dain Maroola and Nina. Heart of Darkness does not visualize a future for the Congo as bright as that. But with the removal of all the Europeans from the most lucrative of all the Congo stations, which includes the removal also of the Russian harlequin who disappears into the bush for fear of being hanged by the manager, the natives in the heart of the Congo, without Kurtz, have no choice but to determine afresh their own future. Africa, the Congo, is in any case their place, and unlike the Europeans who are constantly trying to justify their presence there, the Africans belong, and have no need to have an excuse for being there (HD, p.20).

"The imperial license should be revoked," says McClure, "for Europeans are not equipped to operate in a civilized fashion beyond the protective custody of their own communities."[66] In his Asian colonial fiction, and indeed in his African colonial fiction, Conrad would agree with McClure, for in both sets of fiction, he exercises his questioning, enlightening, and liberating imagination to debunk colonial myths Europe had constructed both in ignorance and consciously as a way to justify colonialism. And in his handling of the colonial theme and its various aspects, including the issue of race which, as shown in this Chapter, assumes greater currency in Africa than it does in Conrad's Asian world, Conrad has shown that, contrary to some criticism levelled against him by such Third World critics as Achebe and Singh, he is not a racist, but, in the words of Peter Nazareth, a "mental liberator," who, in addition to liberating the minds of

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[66]McClure, p.143

Europeans in the nineteenth century, also liberates today the minds of modern-day "Third World elite wearing the eyes of Europe."[67] And in its complex self-interrogative style, as shown in this Chapter, Heart of Darkness sets up a racist framework which it methodically undermines and destroys. It is therefore, contrary to Achebe's claim, not a racist novel. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who is one of "Conrad's African descendants"[68] as a novelist, just falls short of calling Conrad "one of us" as Marlow does Jim. "The African writer and Joseph Conrad," Ngugi says, "share the same world and that is why Conrad's world is so familiar. Both have lived in a world dominated by imperialism."[69] To this I would add: and both have condemned colonialism and exposed its crimes to the world.

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[67]Nazareth, p.178

[68]Nazareth, Peter. "Conrad's Descendants," Conradiana Vol.22, no.2. 1990

[69]Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Writers in Politics (London: Heinemann, 1981) pp.76-77

IV. LATIN AMERICA

PLOUGHING THE SEA: IDEALS AND REALITY IN NOSTROMO

The study of Conrad's Asian and African colonial fiction in the earlier chapters of this thesis has revealed the drama of greed, exploitation, and betrayal of ideals, all set against a colonial background in which the native peoples figure little in determining their circumstances and their own future. Conrad's Costaguana, the fictional Latin American Republic in which the drama of Nostromo[1] (1904) is set, is different in many respects from both the Malay Archipelago and the Congo. As Albert Guerard has observed, "the plight of the reader is precisely that of Captain Mitchell's privileged listener who appears at the end to be 'stunned and as it were annihilated mentally by a sudden surfeit of sights, sounds, names, facts, and complicated information imperfectly apprehended...'"[2] Although most of the action takes place off-stage and is reported to us through a series of disjointed time-frames, a typical Conradian narrative technique which directs our attention more on the moral implications of the story than on action and adventure associated during Conrad's day with stories from or about the exotic fringes of empire, Costaguana is nevertheless portrayed as a bee-hive of activity, a world produced by a "[for instance] multiplication of protagonists."[3] Whereas in the Malay Archipelago our attention was primarily focused on individual protagonists Almayer, Willems, Lingard, and in the Congo on Kurtz and Marlow, in Costaguana we are faced with a gallery of major characters whose roles interface continuously against the equally ubiquitous background of nature featuring the mighty Cordilleras, the Azueras, the snow-white

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[1]Joseph Conrad, Nostromo (Penguin Books, 1980). All references to this text are made from the same edition and shown parenthetically in the thesis as N, p. .

[2]Guerard, p.175

[3]Jacques Berthoud, Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase (Cambridge: CUP, 1978) p.96

Higuerota, the deep and dark Golfo Placido, and the great "paradise of snakes," the San Tomé Gorge. Unlike the Asian and African settings Costaguana features masses of people whose presence we are constantly made aware of - the simple folk in the rural areas where the Goulds go to recruit labour for the San Tomé silver mine, the mobs who take off onto the streets to welcome whatever military leader has toppled the government in the apparently interminable series of revolutions carried out in the name of "democracy" and on behalf of "the people" or "the poor," and the various military men, politicians, engineers, railway workers, etc. Costaguana is politically an independent country. Its independence, however, like the independence of Third World countries generally whose economies remain inextricably dependent on the economies of their erstwhile colonial masters, is independence in name only, for, before long, not only the economy, but also the political control and direction of the country is determined by foreign investors and financiers, reducing the Latin American country to what Goonetilleke has termed "a part of an economic empire... an Economic Colony."[4] In this context of Costaguana's neo-colonial status, Nostromo shares with Conrad's Asian and African colonial fiction the themes that this thesis has been examining in earlier chapters. Conrad's critics, over the years, have generally agreed that like Heart of Darkness, Nostromo is "a strong condemnation of imperialism."[5] For all practical purposes, therefore, Conrad's Costaguana is as much a colony as Conrad's Malay Archipelago or the Congo. The unnamed narrator of Nostromo seems to consider it as such, perhaps subconsciously. Introducing Dr Monygham, for instance, the narrator says: "Had it not been for the immaculate cleanliness of his apparel he might have been taken for one of those shiftless Europeans that are a moral eyesore in the respectability of a foreign colony in almost every exotic part of the world" (N, p.49). Nostromo's world is therefore the

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[4]D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Developing Countries in British Fiction (London: MacMillan, 1977), pp.121-122

[5]Helen F. Rieselbach, Conrad's Rebels: The Psychology of Revolution in the Novels from Nostromo to Victory (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985, 1980), p.9

familiar world we have come to know in the context of this thesis as the world of colonialists and colonialist ideals (propped up by high-sounding sentiments and justification) which, however, when tested, reveal themselves to be no more than hollow shams used to mask greed, exploitation, personal ambitions for wealth and riches, or a personal crusade to overcome a blot in one's past or in one's moral character. In those circumstances, the colonialist betrays both the ideals on which his colonial enterprise is structured and the colonials whose confidence he has won.

In his rationalization and justification for running a commercial empire in Sulaco, Charles Gould, commonly known as "the King of Sulaco," shows, like the original Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, that he is driven by moral ideas, ideals and altruistic plans to serve Sulaco and produce social and economic benefits for the people. "The worth of the mine," he says, "- as a mine - is beyond doubt. It shall make us very wealthy. The mere working of it is a matter of technical knowledge, which I have - which ten thousand other men in the world have. But its safety, its continued existence as an enterprise, giving a return to men - to strangers, comparative strangers - who invest money in it, is left altogether in my hands" (N, p.71). After thus projecting himself as a willing and able instrument for the world of finance capital, Gould quickly broadens the scope of the anticipated benefits of the mine beyond himself and his investors to give the enterprise the moral justification that he believes it requires:

> What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Anyone can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an

> oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That's your ray of hope.... And who knows whether in that sense even the San Tomé mine may not become that little rift in the darkness which poor father despaired of ever seeing? (N, p.81)

Like Kurtz and Jim, however, Gould has a private motive in addition to this public motive for resuscitating the San Tomé mine venture. The mine, which had been forced upon his father by a vengeful and corrupt government which proceeded to meticulously and methodically haunt Mr Gould senior by five-year advance payments in royalties in addition to loans and cash advances both for the operations of government and for government officials' personal accounts, had been responsible for Mr Gould senior's early death. Before he died, Mr Gould had warned his son Charles never to return to Costaguana from Europe where he was studying, not to ever think of taking up the Gould Concession and revive the operations of the mine. The more Mr Gould senior dissuaded his young son from thinking of the San Tomé silver mine, however, the more the mine took an ever-increasing vividness in the young Gould's mind, to the point where it became an obsessive challenge after the death of his father. "It was imperative sometimes to know how to disobey the solemn wishes of the dead," the narrator says of Charles Gould's growing interest in the mine. "He resolved to make his disobedience as thorough (by way of atonement) as it well could be. The mine had been the cause of an absurd moral disaster; its working must be made a serious and moral success. He owed it to the dead man's memory" (N, p.66). As there is nothing inherently reprehensible about both the public and private motivations of Charles Gould when he embarks on the San Tomé silver mining venture, other than the idealism perhaps, we may assume that as in the case of the original Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, Conrad would have us approve of the "original" Charles Gould, at least initially. This view is strengthened by the fact that Charles Gould's young bride, Emilia, shares in her husband's public and private

aspirations and motivations. "Mrs Gould," we are told, "was too intelligently sympathetic not to share that feeling. It made life exciting..." (N. p.82).

But like his Congo, only even more intensely, Conrad's Costaguana is teeming with individuals who are impelled by various and disparate motivations and aspirations. Nostromo, whose experience with the silver of the San Tomé mine in many ways parallels that of Charles Gould, leaves his Genoese ship to settle in Sulaco "to better himself" (N, p.24). Nostromo is the most prominent of the Italian workers who, impelled by similar motivations to better themselves, come to Sulaco to work in the secondary industries of railway construction and steam navigation that grow parallel to the primary extractive industry of silver mining. The Railway Company, as represented by Sir John, pours into Costaguana millions of dollars hoping, as European nations had done in the nineteenth century 'scramble for Africa,' for absolute control of the country:

> He [Sir John] worked always on a great scale; there was a loan to the State, a project for systematic colonization of the Occidental Province, involved in one vast scheme with the construction of the National Central Railway. Good faith, order, honesty, peace, were badly wanted for this great development of material interests (N, p.107).

And in the discussion with Mrs Gould at the famous dinner aboard the Juno hosted for the President Dictator Don Vincente Ribiera and members of his Government before the ceremonies that would culminate in the turning of the first sod for the construction of the railway line, Sir John promises Sulaco those age-old symbols of colonial progress and achievement which had marked the success of British India for many years. "We can't give you your ecclesiastical court back," Sir John tells Mrs Gould, "but you shall have more steamers, a railway, a telegraph - cable - a future in the great world which is worth infinitely more than any amount of ecclesiastical past" (N, p.42).

Both Sir John and Charles Gould, the main movers of material and economic progress ventures in Sulaco, thus approach their projects with enthusiasm and a fair amount, especially in Gould's case, of idealism. Viewed purely as economic ventures, particularly dressed up in the 'fair robes of idealism,' and of altruism, these ventures are intended, at least initially, to be approved: the benefits to flow from them would, after all, be shared with the poor of Costaguana, and the security they demand would bring about order and justice to the State. Nostromo, who like Gould moves in the novel from a state of Blakean innocence to experience, whose moral values are determined largely by his association with the silver, is, in the initial stages of the Sulaco drama, representative of the idealism of both Gould and Sir John in his overwhelming wish to be well spoken of, and to create for himself a role that makes him indispensable.

All this is, however, the ideal. The reality, once the great wheel of 'economic imperialism' begins to turn, proves to be something else. Conrad's criticism of the economic imperialism in the Latin American Republic then becomes apparent.

To begin work on the mine, Gould needs capital and financial backing. He enlists the vast financial resources and backing of the House of Holroyd of California in the United States. Holroyd, the man presiding over these vast financial resources, takes the silver mining venture in Sulaco as an interesting "hobby." He attends to its business from his San Francisco office for a couple of hours a month, and finds the "hobby" interesting enough to occasion a rare holiday visiting Sulaco to see for himself how Gould is progressing. Conrad's criticism of economic imperialism is shown not only in the way he depicts Holroyd's casual regard for the economic undertaking on which millions of people's lives and the stability of a whole country depend, but also in the way Conrad characterizes Holroyd. Holroyd is characterized as a being of proportions that are larger than life, larger that Kurtz even (which means quite a lot). He is described with mocking irony as "the considerable personage, the millionaire endower of Churches" (N, p.74), the symbol, the product, the representative not only of all Europe as Kurtz is, but also of all imperial powers from Imperial Rome through Elizabethan and nineteenth century Europe,

to the New World, the United States - perpetually dreaming of conquering and running the affairs of the entire world as a matter of destiny (N, p.75). If the satiric characterisation of Holroyd as a great-limbed megalomaniac larger than life, not very perceptive, but callous and mechanical in his approach to Sulaco affairs, serves to indicate Conrad's criticism and condemnation of finance capital as a way of keeping a poor country in a perpetual state of neo-colonialism, Holroyd's regard for Charles Gould as a mere instrument to be used at his pleasure serves to further emphasize the inhumanity of economic imperialism and the pursuit of material interests:

> It interested the great man to attend personally to the San Tomé mine. It interested him so much that he allowed this hobby to give a direction to the first complete holiday he had taken for quite a startling number of years. He was not running a great enterprise there; no mere railway board or industrial corporation. He was running a man! A success would have pleased him very much on refreshingly novel grounds, but on the other side of the same feeling, it was incumbent upon him to cast it off utterly at the first sign of failure. A man may be thrown off... Even at the very last interview, half an hour or so before he rolled out of the patio... he had said...
>
> 'You go ahead in your own way, and I shall know how to help you as long as you hold your own. But you may rest assured that in a given case we shall know how to drop you in time' (N, p.79).

Conrad thus vividly characterizes the impersonal, faceless, mechanical do-or-die world of finance capital. It is significant that even in the distorted time-frame of

Nostromo, these financial arrangements must be understood as preceding everything else of the drama that takes place later in Sulaco, and as setting the mercenary tone which characterizes human affairs in the novel.

The second reality Charles Gould must confront is that he has to bribe greedy Costaguana politicians to leave his mine unmolested. An agent is appointed to lobby the politicians and to grease their palms in Sta Marta, the Costaguana Capital and seat of government, thus buying a 'kindly and friendly' attitude towards the San Tomé mine. Many of the politicians are on the "San Tomé mine... unofficial pay list, whose items and amounts, fixed in consultation by Charles Gould and Señor Avellanos, were known to a prominent businessman in the United States" (N, p.106). In addition, we are told, "The Gould Concession was a serious asset in the country's finance, and, what is more, in the private budgets of many officials as well. It was traditional. It was known. It was said. It was credible. Every Minister of the Interior drew a salary from the San Tomé mine. It was natural" (N, p.333).

At last tired of having to make constant political and financial adjustments each time there is a change of faces in government (four revolutions usher in four new governments in six years), Charles Gould and his finance capital sponsor the revolution that puts into power the Dictator President, Don Vincente Ribiera, "a man of culture and of unblemished character" (N, p.107). It is therefore not altogether coincidental that Ribiera's socio-political agenda just happens to be the same as that of the Blancos and of Charles Gould. He, Ribiera, is "invested with a mandate of reform by the best elements of the State... hope for better things, for the establishment of legality, of good faith and order in public life" (N, p.107).

Charles Gould thus comes to recognize and reluctantly succumb to the provisions of the truism that he who pays the piper calls the tune, marking the beginning of the erosion of his disinterested idealism and seeming incorruptibility. "The Gould Concession," we are told, "had to fight for life with such weapons as could be found at once in the mire of corruption that was so universal as to almost lose its significance...

Charles Gould was prepared to stoop for his weapons" (N, pp.81-83).

Like Lingard, Jim and Kurtz, Gould betrays not only the purity of the cause to which he had dedicated all his energy, his life, but also the people close to him. When Pedro Montero's forces from across the mountains and Sotillo's from the sea converge on Sulaco after the defeat and overthrow of Ribiera, Gould resolves to blow up the San Tomé mine rather than watch it being taken over by any of the local political or military forces - a move which would not be too different from that of a pirate who blows up a ship rather than give it up. It is indicative of the transformation Gould has undergone that he is now prepared to reverse a fundamental aspect of his initial altruistic ideal of working the silver mine for the good of the country and its people. Note the reversal contained in the following two excerpts:

<u>The original position:</u>

> The name of Gould has been always highly respected in Sulaco. My uncle Harry was no adventurer. In Costaguana we Goulds are no adventurers. He was of the country, and he loved it (N, p.165).

<u>The reversed position</u>:

> The mine had corrupted his judgement by making him sick of bribing and intriguing merely to have his work left alone from day to day... He had gone forth into the senseless fray as his poor uncle....
>
> After all, with his English parentage and English upbringing, he perceived that he was an adventurer in Costaguana, the descendant of adventurers enlisted in a

> foreign legion, of men who had sought fortune in a revolutionary war, who had planned revolutions, who had believed in revolutions. For all the uprightness of his character, he had something of an adventurer's easy morality which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action. He was prepared, if need, to blow up the whole San Tomé mountain sky high out of the territory of the Republic. This resolution expressed the tenacity of his character, the remorse of that subtle conjugal infidelity through which his wife was no longer the sole mistress of his thoughts, something of his father's imaginative weakness, and something, too, of the spirit of a buccaneer throwing a lighted match into the magazine rather than surrender the ship (N, p.303).

Although with the assistance of Holroyd's world of finance capital and the intriguing and resourcefulness of Dr Monygham, Nostromo and Decoud the silver mine is saved, and a new era of relative peace begins with the secession of the Occidental Province from the rest of Costaguana to become an independent Republic of its own, the "success" is achieved at a terrible cost, the cost of the "degradation of the idea," the lofty altruistic ideas of Gould's early days. Conrad condemns economic imperialism in the Latin American country both in the gradual corruption of those at the centre of the novel's action, and in the barrenness of the Gould marriage, a biological symbol of the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the mindless pursuit of wealth, and the economic exploitation of a country. We therefore note that Gould is drawn from the same mould as Conrad's other colonialists Lingard, Jim, and Kurtz, adventurers who, armed with lofty ideas and ideals of improving the lives of dependent peoples in colonial situations, set out to achieve these goals and ideals only to betray the very people they purport to serve and

the cause to which they claim to pledge their lives.

Although his condemnation of economic imperialism or commercial colonialism in the Latin American Republic is clear from his portrayal of Gould and Holroyd, Conrad has been accused, as he has been over Heart of Darkness, of racism in Nostromo. Critics who level this accusation against Conrad argue that Conrad's criticism and condemnation of economic imperialism in Nostromo is rendered ineffective or ambiguous by Conrad's attitude of apparent racism which condemns everything associated with the Latin Americans, at the same time supporting the cause of the Blancos, the landed gentry of European, particularly Spanish, origin in Sulaco.

Jean Franco compares the handling of the Latin American social, economic and political milieu in Nostromo to that of the novel of the Latin American Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, and while conceding that "the two novels are not... analogous projects," he nevertheless analyzes them to differentiate between a European writer's perspective and a Third World writer's perspective.[6] Although he agrees that "Nostromo is a penetrating study of European manipulation of the politics of a dependent country," Franco criticizes Conrad for failing to "transcend the ideological limitations of a liberal critique which, whatever its reservations about the materialism of the age, was not prepared to see the European domination of the underdeveloped world as anything other than inevitable," and of failing to "make Costaguana more than a comic opera setting in the eyes of the British readers." Franco further takes issue with Conrad's depiction of native characters. "In the depiction of character," he says, "Conrad loads the dice in favour of those natives who are most amenable to European manipulation, and hence he reproduces the very liberal ideology which helped promote dependency." And this dependency, Franco argues, is seen by Conrad as "inevitable" as the reader is given

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[6]Jean Franco, "The Limits of the Liberal Imagination: One Hundred Years of Solitude and Nostromo," in Hamner, pp.201-215.

"no opportunity to take the rebel side seriously."[7] In Franco's opinion therefore, Conrad did no more than "reproduce... the dependency relationships underpinning the whole capitalist structure," as by "reducing the natives to a chorus and by separating the Europeans into blind activists and helpless observers," Conrad showed that he "could not envisage a viable Third World ideology."[8]

While he agrees that Nostromo is a "brilliantly detailed political and psychological criticism of capitalism," John A McClure similarly argues that Nostromo's effectiveness in this regard is diminished by some "less attractive elements of Conrad's political vision." For instance, McClure argues, Conrad depicts "the colonized peoples as inherently incapable of self-rule," while his political sympathies lie with the Creole Oligarchs or the Blancos. "While foreign capitalists and indigenous liberals and socialists are condemned as barbarians," argues McClure, "the Blancos and the allies are portrayed as decent, peace-loving men whose only fault is indolence."[9] McClure therefore concludes that while Conrad's portrayal of Latin American history in Nostromo is anticapitalist, it is also "profoundly pessimistic, antidemocratic, and even racist,"[10] and that in conceiving in Nostromo the dualism of "a profound criticism of imperialism and vitriolic dismissal of popular movements," Conrad has "[denied] historical possibility... for it has proven impossible both to combat imperialism without appealing to the masses of people who live under its rule and to appeal to them in any other language than that of political equality and economic justice."[11]

Edward Said carries further this type of criticism against Conrad in his article

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[7]Jean Franco in Hamner, pp.204-205.

[8]Jean Franco in Hamner, p.208

[9]McClure, pp.166-167

[10]ibid

[11]ibid

appropriately entitled "Through Gringo Eyes" (1988). Echoing but also going further than both Franco and McClure, Said says that Conrad's novel "embodies much the same partenalistic arrogance of imperialism that it mocks in its characters Charles Gould, the British owner [of the silver mine] and Holroyd his American financier" in that it is the Westerners who decide "who is a good or bad native," and that when the natives rebel, "they simply confirm [the Westerners's] views of them as silly children, duped by their Western masters." Like McClure, Said stresses Conrad's ambivalence:

> If it is true that Conrad would have us see, in Nostromo, the San Tomé silver mine and its British and American owners - that is, have us see imperialism - as doomed by impossible ambition, it is also true that Conrad writes as a man in whom a Western view of the non-Western world is so deeply ingrained that it blinds him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations. All Conrad can see is a world dominated by the West, and - of equal importance - a world in which every opposition to the West only confirms its wicked power. What Conrad could not see is life lived outside this cruel tautology. He could not understand - or so we would have to conclude from reading him - that places like Latin America (and India and Africa for that matter) also contain people and cultures with histories and ways not controlled by gringo imperialists and liberal reformers of the world. Nor could he allow himself to believe that all anti-imperialist independence movements were not corrupt and in the pay of puppet masters.....
>
> Conrad was both an anti-imperialist and an imperialist - progressive when it came to rendering the self-

> confirming, self-deluding corruption of the West's colonial drive; reactionary in his inability to imagine that Costaguana could ever have had a meaningful existence of its own, which imperialists had violently disturbed.[12]

If Conrad's critics, as we have seen in Franco, McClure and Said, criticize Conrad for failing to provide in Nostromo a populist vision that would lend a sense of dignity to the leftist movements in Costaguana, or give a sense of 'historical possibility' for peace and stability in the beleaguered country, they cannot, however, accuse him of falsifying history and the insights into human endeavour Conrad drew from it. Franco is keenly aware of this, for he credits Conrad with historical insight and acknowledges Conrad's "accuracy [in] his reconstruction of nineteenth-century Latin American politics during the period of transition from the colonial era to the era of financial and industrial dependency."[13] Franco attributes Conrad's historical authenticity to his "insight and recourse to historical data."[14]

Unlike his experience of the Malay Archipelago and the Congo, where he had spent some time and observed events at first hand, Conrad's personal experience of mainland Latin America was very limited - a matter of a few hours mainly on the coast of Venezuela.[15] Conrad scholars and biographers have established that Conrad read a lot about Latin America and also learned about the region directly from such individuals as his friend R.B. Cunninghame Graham, who had vast personal experience of Latin America where he had once participated in a battle in Paraguay. Conrad used Edward

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[12]Edward Said, "Through Gringo Eyes: With Conrad in Latin America," Harper's Magazine vol. 276 April 1988, pp.70-71.

[13]Franco, in Hamner, p.203

[14]ibid

[15]Conrad, in G. Jean-Aubry, LL II, pp.321-2

B. Eastwick's Venezuela (1868), G.F. Masterman's Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay (1870), both travelogues on South America, and South American statesman S. Perez Triana's Down the Orinoco (1902) which carried an introduction by R.B. Cunninghame Graham, to sharpen his historical perspective of Latin America. Triana was Columbia's ambassador to England and Spain. Conrad used these publications faithfully and closely as source materials for his historical perspective of Latin America in writing Nostromo.[16]

From Eastwick's Venezuela, for instance, Conrad picked and used the following names: Higuerota, *mozo*, *Calle de la Costitucion*, Guzman Blanco (suggesting Guzman Bento), Ribera (suggesting Ribiera), Rincoin and Amarilla. Conrad bases his Colonel Sotillo on Eastwick's General Sotillo who is "similarly cruel and avaricious," and he also borrows from Eastwick's description of the historical Venezuelan army as follows:

Eastwick's description: lean old scarecrows

> and starveling boys not five feet high, the greater number half naked, with huge strips of raw beef twisted round their hats or hanging from their belts.

Conrad's description of Pedrito Montero's followers:

> Emaciated greybeards rode by the side of lean dark youths, marked by all the hardship of campaigning, with strips of raw beef round the crowns of their hats.[17]

Other examples could be cited, including Eastwick's recollection of an embarrassing incident at a banquet he attended in Venezuela where he had gone from London to "negotiate a loan sought by the Venezuelan government." The Venezualan President

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[16]Hay, pp.169-171

[17]Cedric Watts, Joseph Conrad: Nostromo (Penguin, 1990)p.30

toasted him with the tactless words: "I drink to the gentleman who has brought us thirty thousand pounds." Conrad's General Montero rises unexpectedly during the dinner on board the Juno to toast Sir John, who, like Eastwick, is bringing loan money to the government, and uses similar words: "I drink to the health of the man who brings us a million and a half of pounds."[18]

From Masterman's Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay, Conrad borrowed such names as Don Carlos Decoud, Mitchell, Gould, Barrios, Corbelàn, Captain Fidanza, *morenita* (young brunette), the term 'Gran bestia' which Decoud uses in his newspaper to describe General Montero; and the parrot which in Conrad's novel repeats the oft-said "Viva Costaguana!" is derived from the parrot in Masterman which cries "Viva Pedro Segundo!" Masterman was a surgeon and physician whose full title was "Chief Military Apothecary, General Hospital, Asuncion, Paraguay." Dr Monygham's experience in Nostromo is very similar to Masterman's experience. Masterman was working in Paraguay when Paraguay went to war with Brazil. Paraguay was then led by "the ruthless tyrant Francisco Solano Lopez." Masterman's experience, like that of Conrad's Dr Monygham in Nostromo, included two arrests and torture by ruthless priests who pressed him to confess to conspiracy against the dictator.[19]

Conrad gleaned from Ambassador Triana's book the sense of a deep-seated yearning for peace which was also so evident in both Eastwick and Masterman's writings. Triana, in a passion of hope for Latin America, expressed his views in a manner appropriate to his status as his country's representative; his words, however, conceal a lurking current of condemnation of the instability that characterizes Latin America:

> If the power of things ideal, of things that have in them the divine charm of undying force, overcomes time and

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[18]Watts, p.31

[19]Watts, p.32

> distance, why should not the ideal of righteousness, of liberty, and of justice prevail? And the vast continent of South America, why should it not be the predestined home of a happy and regenerate humanity? The trade-winds which come from the old world and across the ocean are purified by the Cordilleras. Even so, humanity in that pilgrimage that is bound to take place ere long, as the ancient world begins to overflow, may regenerate itself and establish liberty and justice in that new world. If these be dreams, awakening were bitter.[20]

The political perspectives Conrad uses in the writing of Nostromo are historically authentic. We are impressed, "not only by the extent and diligence of Conrad's astonishing ability to assimilate and coordinate thematically so many disparate items... the extent to which Nostromo's depiction of South American history, even in its more grotesque, ludicrous or tragicomic aspects, is authenticated by the documentary materials."[21] Nostromo is quite easily Conrad's most ambitious work.

While Conrad gleaned from these sources names of characters, objects and places, and the general political mood and atmosphere of nineteenth century Latin America, he, able craftsman that he was, used such materials to give both the sense of what Franco has termed "verisimilitude," and general direction to his handling of issues that he raises in his Latin American milieu.

One example where he uses just the mood of his source material but not the thematic orientation is his handling of the following dictum from Masterman. "The

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[20]S. Perez Triana, Down the Orinoco, with introduction by R.B. Cunninghame Graham (London: Heinemann, 1902), pp.114-115. Quoted in Hay, p.172

[21]Watts, p.34

history of South America, like that of Mexico, has hitherto been written in blood and tears, and I fear will continue to be so written until Anglo-Saxons or Teutons shall there outnumber the Indo-Spanish race."[22] We see a lot of blood and tears in Nostromo and no prospects of an immediate remedy to them, but we do not see a conscious effort to increase the numbers of Anglo-Saxons or Teutons in Costaguana as a solution to the problem. As a matter of fact, from Conrad's perspective this would not resolve the problems of Conrad's Latin American country; it would probably worsen the problem.

With our hindsight knowledge of the history of Latin America since Conrad's novel was published close to a century ago now, we may justifiably argue that Conrad had impressive insight, and perhaps foresight too, in the way he envisioned the political turmoils of Latin America. In an effort to be topical, and to show the authenticity of Conrad's perception of Latin American politics when he wrote his book Conrad's Politics published in 1967, Avrom Fleishman prefaces the "Nostromo" Chapter of the book with the following current (at the time) news item relating to a Latin American country:

Bogota, Colombia.

> Troops appear to be gaining the initiative in their long struggle against Colombian outlaw bands... The government has announced a social-economic rehabilitation plan for the area hardest hit by violence - in south western Colombia where the departments (States) of Tolima, Cardas, and Valle join [in the hinterland of Beunaventura].... The violence has its roots in a civil war between liberals and conservatives that killed 200,000

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[22]G.F. Masterman, Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay: A Narrative of Personal Experience Amongst the Paraguayans. (orig. pub. 1869; London, 1870). Quoted in Fleishman, p.168

> persons before a truce was declared between the two political parties in 1958... Broadly speaking, the violence can be divided into two parts: political and social. Colombia's Attorney General has said the political groups are infiltrated by Communists. The violence resulting from social causes is the most deep-rooted.
>
> - The Christian Science Monitor
> February 12, 1963.

If Fleishman were writing his book at the time this thesis is being written, he would, for the same reasons, perhaps refer to the recent coup attempt in Venezuela (November 27, 1992) which is incidentally, the only Latin American country Conrad ever saw:

> Caracas
>
> The Venezuelan government said it put down a coup attempt by rebel soldiers Friday in which up to 50 people were killed, hundreds wounded and the presidential palace bombed.
>
> Fernando Martinez Mottola, Communications Minister, said the government crushed the last pocket of rebel resistance by retaking the Libertador air base in Maracay, 100 km west of Caracas....
>
> Earlier, President Carlos Andres Perez, surviving the second coup attempt this year, told the country the coup leaders had regained control of all military installations except the Maracay base.

> The government imposed a curfew and suspended constitutional rights...
>
> The coup attempt started when rebels took over the country's main television station before dawn.
>
> The station broadcast a videotaped message from Lt.-Col. Hugo Chavez Frias, leader of the Feb. 4 uprising who is serving a prison term, announcing the new coup attempt and calling on Venezuelans to take to the streets in support of it.
>
> Venezuela, the third-largest producer in the OPEC oil cartel, has been beset by unrest because critics accuse the government of not distributing oil riches to the public. Perez, who took office in February 1989 for a five-year term, introduced austerity measures that triggered rioting in Caracas killing at least 300 people shortly after his inauguration.
>
> Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and US President George Bush sent letters of support to Perez.
>
> - The Edmonton Journal, Saturday, November 28, 1992 p.A5.

Each of these two newspaper articles could easily be substituted into an appropriate section of Nostromo right down to the quick show of support to the apparent victor, whoever it might have been, by political leaders in the North where, in Conrad's novel, Gould's silver was to flow without fail or else.... This quick show of support is as historical in its origins as the current round of political turmoil in Venezuela. Relating how the Costaguana-Sulaco War ended, the war which resulted in the secession of the

Occidental Province from Costaguana to become a Republic, with Sulaco as its capital. Captain Mitchell innocently and proudly refers to the quick show of support from the North:

> And in the superintendent's private room the privileged passenger by the *Ceres*, or *Juno*, or *Pallas*.... would hear a voice, familiar and surprising in its pompousness, tell him, as if from another world, how there was 'in this very harbour' an international naval demonstration, which put an end to the Costaguana-Sulaco War. How the United States cruiser, *Powhattan*, was the first to salute the Occidental flag... (N, p.400).

And during the Spanish-American War which resulted in the secession of Panama from Colombia, Conrad's prototype for the secession of the Occidental Province, the secession of Panama could only be effected after the arrival of US warships, ensuring thereby "Washington's control of the Panama Canal which was then under construction."[23]

Follow-up reports on the November 27, 1992 coup attempt in Venezuela sound more and more like extracts from the novel Conrad wrote nearly a century ago. A report published in The Edmonton Journal of November 29, 1992 captures the tragi-comic aspect of Latin American politics by showing a photograph of an apparently quite respectable man, on all-fours, bald-headed, necklace and pendant resembling some metal identification card hanging down his neck, and wearing a vigilant look focused intently on the other side of the street. Standing upright against a wall is a tall soldier in full military camouflage with cap turned backwards, apparently watching the photographer, and seemingly oblivious of the scared civilian's presence or of the dangers the civilian seems

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[23]Watts, p.24

to be so conscious of, and a sub-machine gun hanging awkwardly from the soldier's left arm pointing directly onto his foot. The caption reads: "With gunfire still ricocheting around the presidential palace Saturday, a Caracas resident prudently crawls by a Venezuelan soldier." Looking at the picture of this "prudent resident," one cannot help but recall Señor Hirsch in Nostromo, the hide merchant from Esmeralda who is caught up in the fighting in Sulaco when he comes to discuss business with Gould and nearly dies of fear and cowardice as he is propelled from one frightening escapade into another until the incensed Sotillo shoots him. As we find in Nostromo, the article that follows the picture described above shows that the populace will support any show of strength for change, and the age-old war cry - "for the poor" - has not changed from the time of Nostromo (1904):

> The involvement of city police in the rebellion appeared to confirm the wide scope of the uprising. A February coup attempt, in which dozens of army officers died, was limited to army rebels. Both attempts have had popular sympathy.
>
> Government officials and newspapers say about 100 people died Friday and Saturday as a result of the coup attempt. Forty-two of the deaths came when inmates rebelled at Caracas' Reten de Catia prison.
>
> The rebels said they were acting for the poor in the oil-producing country.

In Nostromo, Fuentes sends an emissary to Sotillo at the harbour in Sulaco soon after Pedrito Montero arrives in Sulaco in an effort to secure control of the harbour and the silver believed to be hidden there. His emissary, we are told, "was a Notary Public, whom the revolution had found languishing in the common jail on a charge of forging

documents" (N, p.363). Compare the Notary Public's experience to the experience of some candidates in the civic elections in Venezuela in the recent post-coup-attempt atmosphere:

> In addition to the governors, voters chose 282 mayors and 2, 116 municipal and regional council members to three-year terms.
>
> Several of the mayoral candidates waited out election day in jail, part of a post-coup government crackdown on opposition leaders. Perez's critics have accused him of waging a 'dirty war'
>
> - The Edmonton Journal, December 7, 1992.

Some aspects of the "dirty war" include a "mandatory voting law" and the loosening of election rules by the government on election day. And the violence that is so characteristic of similar situations in Nostromo has not been wanting either in the Venezuelan coup attempt:

> Twenty people imprisoned on charges of participating in a coup-attempt in Venezuela two weeks ago have accused their captors of physically mistreating them, the public attorney's office said.
>
> Meanwhile, a local human-rights group said it has testimony from family members that 18 civilian prisoners were tortured to force them to give information about their alleged roles in the military-led rebellion Nov.27-28.....
>
> Families said prisoners had electrical shocks applied

> to their bodies and had plastic bags with ammonia placed over their heads.
>
> Amnesty International, the London-based rights group, sent a letter to Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez expressing concern about 'an undetermined number of deaths of citizens caused by the apparent excessive use of firearms by security forces during the uprising.'
>
> - The Edmonton Journal, December 12, 1992.

On his part, Venezuelan President Perez has accused the rebels of "barbarity":

> What we saw on the 27th, compatriots, was barbarity. Barbarity in all its extremes.
>
> - The Edmonton Journal, November 30, 1992.

The historicist perspective given above demonstrates that Conrad's vision of the cyclical nature of political unrest and turmoil in Latin America from colonial through post-colonial and neo-colonial times to the present day is well-informed and insightful. One is at a loss therefore as to what McClure would have Conrad do when he accuses Conrad of 'denying historical possibilities' in his depiction of history in Nostromo - past, present and future. Could it be that McClure would have Conrad provide a more optimistic vision for the purposes of artistic possibilities which, given the circumstances, cannot be sustained historically? What credence would Said expect Conrad to give to the leftist movements in these circumstances, and what 'viable Third World ideology' would

Franco see as possible in these same circumstances? Any of these visions these critics clamour for would falsify the authenticity of Conrad's historical insight into Latin America's politics, which, as we have noticed, and as could be demonstrated further through other specific historical events such as those surrounding the revolution in Nicaragua in the late seventies and early eighties, is historically authentic.

Cedric Watts is correct to say "the suggestion... that Conrad is .... in deep complicity with 'imperialist ideology' seems curiously unfair to an author who raised questions, and voiced the contradictions, which it is allegedly the aim of imperialists to stifle and to conceal."[24] Like Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness, Nostromo is a modernist text which interrogates its colonialist or imperialistic grounds and assumptions. It raises within itself questions and exposes contradictions that arise from situations that it explores. The question of narrative voice, of who speaks for Conrad, of who or what constitutes the authorial voice, is therefore as crucial in Nostromo as it is in Heart of Darkness.

There are basically three major narrative voices in Nostromo: the voice of the unnamed and sometimes omniscient narrator who is always at hand to take over the narrative whenever no one else does, Captain Mitchell, and Decoud's letter to his sister in Paris. It is at first tempting to assume that the unnamed narrator is Conrad himself until the narrator identifies himself at the beginning of Chapter 8 of Part I as a real flesh-and-blood traveller or observer "whom business or curiosity took to Sulaco in these years" (N, p.89). It is not immediately obvious to the reader why the narrator ever reveals himself in this way; unlike Marlow in either Heart of Darkness or Lord Jim, the narrator plays no other role than telling in the story. The only possible reason for this removal of the narrator's cover, one assumes, is that Conrad wishes to create a wedge between the narrator as the teller of the tale and himself as the authorial voice. Whoever the unnamed narrator may be, we can assume that because of his privileged position and ubiquitousness

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[24]Watts, p.101

that gives him unlimited access everywhere in Sulaco (he must have been present at the famous dinner aboard the Juno, and of course, he must be a frequent and regular visitor, like Avellanos, to the Casa Gould), the unnamed narrator must be European, possibly English like the Goulds with whom he must have spent some considerable amount of time. The narrator's omniscience is, however, limited in that in the majority of cases, he interprets the inner thoughts of a character at a specific moment and in specific circumstances in a way which tallies with the action or movement of the story at that time. A good example of this is his interpretation of Sir John's thoughts at the dinner aboard the Juno:

> The chairman of the railway board had been enjoying her hospitality for several days, and he was really grateful for it. It was only since he had left Sta Marta that he had utterly lost touch with the feeling of European life on the background of his exotic surroundings. In the capital he had been the guest of the Legation, and had been kept busy negotiating with the members of Don Vincente's Government - cultured men, men to whom the conditions of civilized business were not unknown.
>
> What concerned him most at the time was the acquisition of land for the railway.... The Government was bound to carry out its part of the contract with the board of the new railway company, even if it had to use force for the purpose... and so he imagined to get the President-Dictator over there on a tour of ceremonies and speeches, culminating in a great function at the turning of the first sod by the harbour shore. After all he was their own creature - that Don Vincente... He had succeeded in

> arranging the trip with the help of a very clever advocate, who was known in Sta Marta as the agent of the Gould silver mine, the biggest thing in Sulaco, and even in the whole Republic. It was indeed a fabulously rich mine. Its so-called agent, evidently a man of culture and ability, seemed, without official position, to possess an extraordinary influence in the highest Government spheres. He was able to assure Sir John that the President-Dictator would make the journey. He regretted, however, in the course of the same conversation, that General Montero insisted upon going, too (N, pp.43-44).

In this passage, we are given an opinion of some of the Latin American politicians in Don Vincente Ribiera's Government: "cultured men, men to whom the conditions of civilized business were not unknown." Although the narrator may, or may not share this opinion of the government officials, the opinion is Sir John's and not anyone else's. After all, Sir John has discussed and conducted business with these men. He is therefore in a position to make an informed opinion of their capabilities. The same is true of the opinion expressed on the agent of the Gould silver mine who is stationed in Sta Marta, the capital of Costaguana, a local Latin American who, for diplomatic reasons perhaps, is referred to by name, Moraga, very rarely in the novel; his job, after all, is to efface his own and the silver mine's prominence while elevating the image of the politicians and doing all he can to keep the politicians satisfied so that they can leave the San Tomé silver mine in Sulaco unmolested. Sir John has also done business with the agent, and is in a position to make a judgement of his capabilities: he, the agent, is "evidently a man of culture and ability [who] seemed... to possess an extraordinary influence in the highest Government spheres." To claim, therefore, as Franco does, that "Conrad loads the dice in favour of those natives who are most amenable to European manipulation, and hence

he reproduces the very liberal ideology which helped promote dependency," or that Conrad displays a "paternalistic arrogance" as Said claims, charging that Conrad "seems to be saying, we Westerners will decide who is a good or bad native" is, from what we see in the passage, mistaken. What we are shown in the passage are Sir John's inner thoughts, unexpressed, and, we can therefore assume, honest. Sir John is a man of action. He wants to get preliminary things done so that work on his railway line can commence. He would certainly not be the type to court and pamper the local politicians and woo them by paternalism. In any event, Sir John does not live in Costaguana. He has come specifically to get things moving on the construction of the railway line, and, lest we forget as Franco and Said seem to have done, it is Sir John, and not Conrad, whose opinions we are discussing here.

Conrad's own authorial voice is distinguishable in the same passage. Sir John calculates in his mind that he will make use of whatever advantage he can bring his way. He is aware that Ribiera was 'sponsored' into power by the Blanco - Gould - Holroyd connection. Sir John reckons he can automatically count on Ribiera's Government to smoothe the way for the construction of the railway. "After all," Sir John muses, "he was their own creature - that Don Vincente." Because the imperialistic intentions are revealed so naively here, even though they are only Sir John's private thoughts, the reader feels immediately invited, not by Sir John or the narrator, who both seem to see nothing objectionable about it, but by some other agent, which can only be the author who, after all, attributes thoughts and ideas to his characters in such a way that the compulsion we feel is created in us. We feel invited to disapprove of Sir John's scheming, as, evidently, the author himself disapproves. Conrad's critics therefore need to pay closer attention to the roles of the unnamed narrator and interior monologue in the novel before they accuse Conrad of paternalism or exploitation of the native character. As we have seen above, Conrad, the authorial voice in the background of the action of the novel, may have a totally different view from that of his narrator, or as we shall see shortly, from those of his narrating characters such as Captain Mitchell and Martin Decoud.

It would not serve much purpose to single out each incident of the type that might have prompted the kind of criticism we have noted from some of Conrad's critics such as Francis, McClure and Said, but one incident stands out as particularly useful to examine - the incident in which Colonel Sotillo interrogates Señor Hirsch, the Jewish hide merchant from Esmeralda. Conrad has been criticized for anti-Semitic sentiments, and in his defense, Jeffrey Meyers has argued that "for historical, familial, and personal reasons, [Conrad was] - essentially sympathetic to the Jews."[25] Nevertheless, the portrayal of Hirsch has been called anti-Semitic. "The characterization of Hirsch," says Cedric Watts, "does seem to be tainted by anti-Semitism... the uneasy feeling that Conrad's humanity has not sufficiently resisted the easy option of a prejudicial stereotype."[26] The scene Watts draws his reading from is the following:

> All at once, in the midst of the laugh, he became motionless and silent as if turned into stone. He, too, had a prisoner. A prisoner who must, must know the real truth. He would have to be made to speak. And Sotillo, who all that time had not quite forgotten Hirsch, felt an inexplicable reluctance at the notion of proceeding to extremities.
>
> He felt a reluctance - part of that unfathomable dread that crept on all sides upon him. He remembered reluctantly, too, the dilated eyes of the hide merchant, his contortions, his loud sobs and protestations. The fact was that though Sotillo did never for a moment believe his story - he could not believe such nonsense - yet those accents of despairing truth impressed him disagreeably. They made

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[25]Jeffrey Meyers, "Conrad and the Jews," in Conradiana, vol.24, no.1, 1992, pp.33-40

[26]Watts, p.87

him feel sick. And he suspected also that the man might have gone mad with fear. A lunatic is a hopeless subject. Bah! A pretence. Nothing but a pretence. He would know how to deal with that.

He was working himself up to the right pitch of ferocity... Sotillo looked at him in silence. 'Will you depart from your obstinacy, you rogue?' he asked. Already a rope, whose end was fastened to Señor Hirsch's wrists, had been thrown over a beam, and three soldiers held the other end, waiting. He made no answer. *His heavy lower lip hung stupidly.* Sotillo made a sign. Hirsch was jerked up off his feet, and a yell of despair and agony burst in the room, filled the passage of the great buildings, rent the air outside, caused every soldier of the camp along the shore to look up at the windows, started some of the officers in the hall babbling excitedly, with shining eyes; *others, setting their lips, looked gloomily at the floor.*

Sotillo, followed by the soldiers, had left the room.... Hirsch went on screaming all alone behind the half-closed jalousies... *He screamed with uplifted eyebrows and a wide - open mouth - incredibly wide, black, enormous, full of teeth - comical....* Sotillo, irritable, moody, walked restlessly about... Several times he had entered the torture-chamber... to ask with forced calmness, 'Will you speak the truth now? No? I can wait....

Speak, thou Jewish child of the devil! The silver! The silver, I say! Where is it? Where have you foreign rogues hidden it? (N, pp.367-369. My italics).

As in the previous passage on Sir John at dinner on board the Juno, the narrator here is interpreting Colonel Sotillo's thoughts. Sotillo finds himself in a most tense situation. He has in his custody what he believes to be *the key* to his recovering of the silver that was removed from the harbour just before his arrival in Sulaco, namely Señor Hirsch, who must have told him that the silver was sunk in the lighter when Sotillo's ship collided with the lighter in the dark gulf the previous night, and that he, Señor Hirsch, had somehow held on to something on Sotillo's ship - otherwise he would be dead as, so he must have believed, Nostromo and Decoud. Sotillo has a difficulty. He is determined to have the silver. His rapacious mind won't accept any suggestion that it is lost. The sentence, "A prisoner who must, must know the real truth," indicates the internal drama that is taking place in Sotillo's mind. These are his very thoughts, and the narrator has transcribed them in such a manner that the impatience Sotillo is suffering is captured. Sotillo also knows he has very little time to secure the silver for himself. Pedrito Montero has already arrived in Sulaco, and Sotillo knows that his own claim to the silver will have to give way to Pedrito's - General Montero, the new Head of State's brother. To buy time, Sotillo has already begun to wave the flag of peace by sending messages to Pedrito addressing him as "Your Excellency." The italicised derogatory sentences, "His heavy lower lip hung stupidly" and "Speak thou Jewish child of the devil!" issue from Sotillo's overwrought mind, and they tell us more about Sotillo than they do about anything else in the novel. To attribute the sentiments expressed in them to Conrad is a clear misreading of Nostromo.

Watts singles out the italicised sentence, "He screamed... comical" and argues that since there is no one else in the torture chamber the sentiments are clearly Conrad's. A closer look at the passage, however, shows that although Hirsch may believe that he is alone in the chamber, the door is in fact only "half-closed." Sotillo is too impatient to go away at this stage when he believes that anytime now Hirsch may tell him what he wants to know. Leaving the room and closing the door half-way are only a change or variation of the torture strategy on Sotillo's part. Sotillo is "walking restlessly about,"

watching through the half closed door for any sign that the "stubborn" Hirsch is relenting, breaking, and ready to talk. We are told that he had in fact "entered the chamber" several times. The mean and apparently anti-Semitic description of Hirsch is therefore a further interpretation of Sotillo's thoughts. If anything, therefore, Sotillo's racist appellations reflect on him and his greed, and not on the narrator or on Conrad the author. Conrad's own silent but compulsive voice invites us to observe the tragi-comic effects of a mind greedily and immovably set upon looting a treasure, working itself into a mad frenzy until it becomes irrational and dangerous.

The self-interrogative strain of the text can also be seen in this passage. Among Sotillo's soldiers who watch or listen to Hirsch's agonized screams when he is jerked up by the wrists are some who, in the italicised sentence, "setting their lips, looked gloomily at the floor." We feel invited to interpret this response. These soldiers certainly feel disapproval, and the author's compulsive voice, which invites us to pronounce 'censure' on Sotillo's r[illegible]ss torturing of Hirsch, is clearly distinguishable here too. The soldier who runs his [illegible] through Sotillo's body a few hours later when the soldiers at the harbour learn that Barrios has defeated Pedrito Montero may be from this group. In addition, the novel also pronounces censure upon Sotillo's anti-Semitic sentiments when Hirsch, in one impulsive act of desperation, raises his head and spits "violently" into Sotillo's face (N, p.370).

At the second level of narrative voice, Captain Mitchell, who relates large sections of Parts I and III of the story, is a pompous but likeable old sailor who, like similar Conradian characters such as Singleton and MacWhirr, is hardly aware of the significance of events that take place around him, although on a practical level he gets things done. In his romanticized commentary of historical and political events that in his opinion always "marked an epoch," Captain Mitchell hardly notices that these events are cyclical in nature, a kind of grim merry-go-round, and that what has been changing are the key figures or players only. Thinking of the recurrent revolutions in the country, for instance, Captain Mitchell can only conceive of them in the practical sense typical of a Conradian

sailor - in terms of how disruptive they are to the orderly working of his Company:

> Captain Mitchell prided himself on his profound knowledge of men and things in the country - *cosas de costaguana*. Amongst those he counted as most unfavourable to the orderly working of his Company the frequent changes of government brought about by revolutions of the military type (N, p.22).

This circumlocutory nature of the description signals that Captain Mitchell describes Costaguana's political turmoil only from his narrow view-point of its effect on the OSN Company.

It is also Captain Mitchell who dubs Nostromo "incorruptible," and yet the story proves him wrong when Nostromo becomes corruptible and then corrupt. The ironic treatment of Captain Mitchell is sustained right to the end of the novel. He describes the sad events that led to Sulaco and the Province's secession with pride as "historical events" (N, p.389). He boasts that he now "hold[s] seventeen of the thousand-dollar shares in the Consolidated San Tomé mines.... enough to keep me in comfort to the end of my days at home when I retire.... Don Carlos, great friend of mine... Seventeen shares - quite a little fortune to leave behind one, too..." (N, p.391) without understanding the political significance of how he has come to have his fortune or that his plan to remove and spend it in England reflects, on the larger level of economic imperialism by foreign interests on the Latin American country, the cause of so much unrest in the country. This is a crucial point which those critics who accuse Conrad of being so 'Western-minded' that he fails to see issues from a Third World perspective need to note closely.

I have gone to some length to show how Captain Mitchell is characterized in order to demonstrate that he does not speak for Conrad in the novel. This is important because most of the satiric humour against Latin American politicians and military leaders, and

the mobs in the streets, is presented through Captain Mitchell, either directly through his own narration or indirectly when his thoughts are interpreted by the narrator. A typical incident which demonstrates these elements is Captain Mitchell's presentation of how he and Nostromo assisted the deposed President Dictator Ribiera and some prominent Sulaco officials of the deposed government to escape from the enraged mob:

> And he could speak with knowledge; for on a memorable occasion he had been called upon to save the life of a dictator, together with the lives of a few Sulaco officials... belonging to an overturned government. Poor Señor Ribiera (such was the dictator's name) had come pelting eighty miles over mountain tracks after he lost the battle of Socorro, in the hope of out-distancing the fatal news - which, of course, he could not manage to do on a lame mule. *The animal, moreover, expired under him at the end of the Alameda where the military band plays sometimes in the evenings between the revolutions.* 'Sir,' Captain Mitchell would pursue with portentous gravity, '*the ill-timed end of that mule attracted attention to the unfortunate rider.* His features were recognized by several deserters from the Dictatorial army amongst the rascally mob already engaged in smashing the windows of the Intendencia.' ... Ultimately, Captain Mitchell succeeded in taking everybody off in his own gig to one of the Company's steamers...
>
> He had to lower these gentlemen at the end of a rope out of a hole at the back, while the mob which, pouring out of the town, had spread itself all along the shore, howled and foamed at the foot of the building in

> front... Captain Mitchell exhibited willingly the long cicatrice of a cut over his left ear and temple, made by a razor-blade fastened to a stick - a weapon, he explained, very much in favour with the worst kind of nigger out here.'...
>
> 'These gentlemen,' he would say, staring with great solemnity, 'had to run like rabbits, sir. I ran like a rabbit myself. Certain forms of death are - er - distasteful to a - a - er - respectable man. They would have pounded me to death, too. A crazy mob, sir, does not discriminate' (N, pp.23-24. My italics).

The gap between authorial voice and character in the way this passage is narrated from Captain Mitchell's perspective is wide. Any suggestion that Conrad's presentation of Latin American politicians is like a "comic opera" is therefore clearly inappropriate. Instead, the reader again feels invited by the authorial voice to re-adjust the viewing lens. For instance, the reader has to interpret more appropriately the italicised sentence which suggests that revolutions here are as frequent as the playing of a military band - every evening - and re-interpret the suggestion that 'the ill-timed end' of the mule seemed to have been part of a great scheme of things - as if the poor animal willed its own death at a most unfortunate moment. Captain Mitchell's description of the incident is riddled with humour, of which he is unaware. He seems to be more concerned about the indignity he endured to save Ribiera and his officials, and he intends to uphold an English man's dignity even in the manner of his death. Captain Mitchell, unwittingly, portrays the attitude of Conrad's readers towards Latin America at the turn of the century. Conrad is treading the tight-rope. He uses conventional attitudes in vogue during his day in order to undermine those attitudes. As shown in the following excerpt from a critic who published his article in The Manchester Guardian, a paper Franco admits was sympathetic

to Latin America, nobody in England at the time would perhaps take events in South America as seriously and as worthy of the notice that Conrad gives them in Nostromo:

> Most of us have from time to time read idly of some crisis or revolution in a South American republic and perhaps dismissed idly the 'farcical' episodes in the life of a community which seems to change its government with the weather. It is to one of these episodes in the separation of the 'Occidental Republic' from 'Costaguana' that Mr Conrad has addressed himself. It need hardly be said that he does not lack the humorous perception of the events that he records, and in a corner of the world that is hardly worthy of our perfunctory and impatient regard that he finds a richness and variety of life that cannot be matched in our careful civilization.[27]

Conrad indeed goes beyond farce in his depiction of the drama of greed, rapaciousness, and avarice in Latin American politics. He uses the prevailing attitude of his age's regard for South America only as a vehicle to draw the attention of his readers to the heinous crimes of imperialism and neo-colonialism.

In addition to depicting events through the consciousness of a character, and through Captain Mitchell, the narrator also omnisciently describes individual characters to indicate their motivations, hopes, fears, and he raises fundamental questions in an effort to fathom why South America should be so riddled with such seemingly endless problems.

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[27]Unsigned Review published on 2 November 1904 in The Manchester Guardian, and reprinted in Norman Sherry (ed.) Conrad: The Critical Heritage (London & Boston, 1973). Quoted in Hamner, p.202

The five Latin American rebel leaders, General Montero, his brother Pedrito, the two deputy chairmen of the Provincial Assembly in Sulaco, Gamacho and Fuentes, and the army Colonel at Esmeralda, Sotillo, are all portrayed by the narrator through omniscient description as essentially military men. The army, it seems, provides the best and easiest way for such characters to better themselves. They all come from humble backgrounds, and their aim is to make fortunes for themselves as quickly as possible. Gamacho's experience, for instance, seems to represent to Dr Monygham 'the way of the country':

> Gamacho, the Deputy from Javira, has been nothing else but a *tramposo* of the commonest sort, a petty pedlar of the Campo, till he managed to get enough goods on credit from Anzani to open a little store in the wilds, and got himself elected by the drunken *mozos* that hang about the *estancias* and the poorest sort of *rancheros* who were in his debt (N, p.268).

With such poor backgrounds, and with the one driving force of getting rich quickly, these military men quickly change allegiance once they sense a possibility of political change. Within a single day, depending on how the changes develop, they may adjust their political positions as many times as necessary for them to end up on the right side - i.e. the side that wins. Personal security and the promise of a lucrative position to make money, and not moral conviction, guide their decision-making processes. The narrator describes Pedrito Montero's political aspirations, for instance, as follows:

> Pedrito Montero saw in the elevation of his brother the road wide open to his wildest imaginings. This was what made the Monterist *pronunciamiento* so unpreventable.

> The general himself probably could have been bought off, pacified with flatteries, dispatched on a diplomatic mission to Europe. It was his brother who had egged him on from first to last. He wanted to become the most brilliant statesman of South America. He did not desire supreme power. He would have been afraid of its labour and risk, in fact. Before all, Pedrito Montero, taught by his European experience, meant to acquire a serious fortune for himself. With this object in view he obtained from his brother, on the very morrow of the successful battle, the permission to push on over the mountains and take possession of Sulaco. Sulaco was the land of prosperity, the chosen land of material progress, the only province in the Republic of interest to European capitalists. Pedrito Montero, following the example of the Duc de Morny, meant to have his share of this prosperity. This is what he meant literally. Now his brother was master of the country, whether as president, dictator, or even as Emperor - why not as an Emperor? - he meant to demand a share in every enterprise - in railways, in mines, in sugar estates, in cotton mills, in land companies, in each and every undertaking - as the price of his protection (N, p.321).

Having satisfied himself that these Latin American political leaders are driven by base material motives which are totally devoid of any moral consideration or conviction, the narrator - whom we have identified as a flesh - and - blood figure who is not Conrad - obviously despising these leaders, gives reductive personal descriptions of some of them:

> They [the Montero brothers] were very much alike in appearance, both bald, with bunches of crisp hair above their ears, arguing the presence of some Negro blood. Only Pedro was smaller than the general, more delicate altogether, with an ape-like faculty for imitating all the outward signs of refinement and distinction, and with parrot-like talent for languages. Both brothers had received some elementary instruction by the munificence of a great European traveller, to whom their father had been body-servant during his journeys in the interior of the country. In General Montero's case it enabled him to rise from the ranks. Pedrito, the younger, incorrigibly lazy and slovenly, had drifted aimlessly from one coast town to another, hanging about counting-houses, attaching himself to strangers as a sort of *valet de place*, picking up an easy and disreputable living (N, p.320).

As we have noted several times in this thesis, particularly in the discussion on Heart of Darkness, Conrad treads the tightrope in his handling of the issue of race. He sets up what would appear at the first and casual glance to be a racist framework, thus leading the casual reader to say Conrad is pandering to the popular views of his time and to the expectations of his readership then. It is therefore tempting to immediately close the pages of a Conrad text after that casual glance reveals an apparently racist framework and pronounce the novel racist, as Achebe does, or pronounce it limited in its liberal critique, as Franco does, or pronounce that it undercuts its own criticism of colonialism or imperialism in the way it presents it - what we discussed earlier as throwing away the baby with the bathwater - as Brantlinger does. In reading Conrad, however, one needs to go beyond what is revealed by that first flash, beyond the simple binary oppositions,

as in Conrad every word counts, and he was always looking for the most appropriate word, the most befitting way of representation - *le mot juste*.[28]

The apparently racist framework in the unnamed narrator's portrayal of leading Latin American figures in Nostromo is fleshed out first by the same narrator, and, second, by Martin Decoud, who represents the third narrative voice of the novel in the letter he writes to this sister in Paris. The apparently racist framework we have noted is balanced out at the end, equally weighted between the Latin Americans and their European counterparts, thereby eventually cancelling the matter of race as an issue in the novel. Our attention is guided away from matters of race, which are used only initially as a gateway into the issues the novel raises, such as, could it be correct, as Simon Bolivar the great Latin America revolutionary avered, that Latin America is "ungovernable," and that those who have fought for its liberation, as Bolivar himself did, have "ploughed the sea?" (N, p.161).

As in Heart of Darkness, where we are told of the colonial experience of imperial Rome in "savage" Britain in the opening pages of Conrad's novel as foreshadowing the colonial experience of imperial modern Europe in "savage" Africa, in Nostromo we are given in the opening pages a local folkloric tale of what greed and the single-minded pursuit of a treasure did to the *gringos* (foreign sailors) and the local Indian who was their guide when they dared go up the enchanted mountain in search of the forbidden treasure. Deeply involved in the venture together, the foreign adventurers and the local man meet a bitter end. They were never seen again, and it is believed in the legendary tale that

> the two *gringos*, spectral and alive, are believed to be dwelling to this day amongst the rocks, under the fatal spell of their success. Their souls cannot tear themselves away

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[28]Conrad, A Personal Record, Xiv.

> from their bodies mounting guard over the discovered treasure. They are now rich and hungry and thirsty... (N, p.18).

This local legendary tale involving both foreign and local adventurers in the pursuit of treasure sums up the essence of the story of Conrad's novel, where foreign and local inputs, together, contribute to the chaos we witness in the Latin American country. Yes, material interests succeed at the end, but at a great cost. Charles Gould and Nostromo are in this analogy easily the two *gringos* who cannot tear their souls away from the silver of the San Tomé mine; their success is fatal in more than the temporal sense. As noted earlier, the barren and childless marriage of the Goulds, with insistent emphasis being made on Charles's being the last of the Costaguana Goulds, symbolizes the emptiness of this success.

Society, particularly that section of it which is leftist in its ideological leaning, is quick to pronounce 'discrimination' if a remark is made against those who have traditionally come to be known as the subalterns - the native characters in a colonial situation, and women generally in society. It is of course quite understandable that this is and perhaps should be so if the legitimate battles against racism and sexism stand any chance of succeeding. It is also true, however, that society is not as quick to pronounce 'discrimination' if a similarly culpable remark is made against those who have traditionally come to be known as the powerful - the colonialists in a colonial situation (usually whites), and males generally in society. This perhaps explains why it has not occurred to the critics who have accused Conrad of racism and of unfavourably portraying leading Latin Americans in Nostromo to consider how those traditionally considered as the powerful, in this instance the European imperialists, are portrayed. It would appear to me that Conrad's handling of the issue of race in Nostromo demands careful consideration of these questions. The narrator, in fact, invites us to make this comparative study when he characterizes the "Southern" and "Northern" races as binary

oppositions. "There is always something childish in the rapacity of the passionate, clear-minded Southern races," he says, "wanting in the misty idealism of the Northerners, who at the smallest encouragement dream of nothing less than the conquest of the earth" (N, p.278). The narrator's irony here is hardly complimentary to either race.

A member of the "Northern race" who immediately comes to mind because of the crucial role he plays in Costaguana, who influences events to the same degree, if not more, than the Monteros although he operates by remote control from his offices in San Francisco, is the American financier of the San Tomé silver mine, and multi-million dollar endower of churches, Holroyd. In direct commentary without using the consciousness of another character in the novel (as he does in his description of the Montero brothers) the narrator describes Holroyd's personal and racial characteristics, as follows:

> He was a big-limbed, deliberate man, whose quiet burliness lent to an ample silk-faced frock a superfine dignity. His hair was iron grey, his eyebrows were still black, and his massive profile was the profile of a Caesar's head on an old Roman coin. But his parentage was German and Scotch and English, with remote strains of Danish and French blood, giving him the temperament of a Puritan and an insatiable imagination of conquest (N, p.75).

If the narrator's reference to "Negro blood" in the veins of the Montero brothers is offensive, the same narrator's reference here to "strains" of so many nationalities' blood in the veins of Holroyd, a reference which suggests imperfect or impure canine breeds, must be equally offensive, and the critics who accuse Conrad of portraying the leading Latin American leaders in a racist manner must, if they insist on the accusation, say the same thing in the portrayal of Holroyd. In his portrayal of Charles Gould, too, the

narrator insists on Gould's "Englishness" - down to the way Gould rides a horse - so much so that at the end the reader is forced to re-assess Gould's claim that since he was born in Costaguana he is totally committed to it, a point which is intended to alert the reader to the fact that Gould represents foreign economic interests.

Holroyd's "insatiable imagination of conquest," which the narrator tells us is a characteristic of the "Northern races," and which is consistent with the bulldog canine imagery in his characterization, is revealed in his interview with Charles Gould. In a chilling and deterministic prognosis of America's imperialist intentions, Holroyd, like Pedrito Montero in his own political and material aspirations which we noted earlier, is almost insane:

> The Costaguana Government shall play its hand for all it's worth - and don't you forget it, Mr. Gould. Now, what is Costaguana? It is the bottomless pit of ten-per-cent loans and other fool investments. European capital had been flung into it with both hands for years. Not ours, though. We in this country know just about enough to keep indoors when it rains. We can sit and watch. Of course, some day we shall step in. We are bound to. But there's no hurry. Time itself has got to wait on the greatest country in the whole of God's Universe. We shall be giving the word for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion, from Cape Horn clear over to Smith's Sound, and beyond, too, if anything worth taking hold of turns up at the North Pole. And then we shall have the leisure to take in hand the outlying islands and continents of the earth. We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not. The world can't help it - and neither can we, I

guess (N, p.75).

The narrator is quick to comment and to evaluate Holroyd:

> By this he meant to express his faith in destiny in words suitable to his intelligence, which was unskilled in the presentation of general ideas. His intelligence was nourished on facts; and Charles Gould, whose imagination had been permanently affected by the one great fact of a silver mine, had no objection to this theory of the world's future. If it had seemed distasteful for a moment it was because the sudden statement of such vast eventualities dwarfed almost to nothingness the actual matter in hand (N, pp.75-76).

According to the narrator, Holroyd, like the Montero brothers, is not very perceptive. And, again like the Monteros, he and Charles Gould are slaves of material passions and ideas which blind them to the existence of other issues. Such mania, like the mania of the Monteros, ends in futility, "[dwarfing] to nothingness the actual matter at hand." If the Monteros are dangerous in that they initiate and lead revolutions on no better grounds than personal gratification, and revolutions lead to the death of innocent people and to instability in the country, Holroyd is equally dangerous in his manipulation of people and economic power for personal gratification and at the expense of a whole country. Holroyd is callously mechanical in his involvement in Sulaco, and he lets Gould know that should he, Gould, fail to keep the silver flowing north to San Francisco, for whatever reason, he, Holroyd, will immediately remove the financial backing:

> We will go with you as long as the thing runs straight. But

> We will go with you as long as the thing runs straight. But we won't be drawn into any large trouble. This is the experiment which I am willing to make. There is some risk, and we will make it; but if you can't keep your end, we will stand our loss, of course, and then - we'll let the thing go... But you may rest assured that in a given case we shall know how to drop you in time (N, pp.76-79).

There can be no long-term economic strategy in a situation like this. Holroyd's use of the economic power of finance capital is as callous and as whimsical as the Monteros' use of guns and mobs to direct events towards their own personal end or gratification.

Further illustrations in the characterization of members of the "Northern races" could be made to demonstrate the self-interrogative strain of Conrad's novel's handling of the issue of race. Examples would include Captain Mitchell who, in his deeply ingrained sense of an Englishman's dignity, behaves sometimes in a manner as ridiculous and pompous as Colonel Sotillo; Giorgio Viola, the old Garibaldino who spent years fighting against the oppression of the masses and the autocratic rule of Kings and Emperors and yet, ironically, loathes "the people" who are celebrating the deposing of a Latin American Dictator, in the same manner that each of Pedrito Montero, Sotillo, Gamacho and Fuentes loathes the other Latin American leaders heartily although publicly they show support for each other; Gould and Nostromo who become so obsessed with the silver of the San Tomé mine as to have their moral perspectives corrupted in ways similar to Sotillo's raving for the silver reportedly lost in the harbour; and the armchair politicians Don Juste Lopez and Don Jose Avellanos whose futile pontification is in essence not different from Pedrito Montero's laziness and ineffectiveness.

The narrator does not draw our attention to this balancing of the 'racial account' in Nostromo, but the authorial voice of Conrad does: the momentum set in the novel to this end gives us no choice but to draw the balance. Similarly faced with a mixed set of

figures to establish the function, in the mode of an equation. Once the 'racial account' is balanced, the mathematical function established in the mode of the similar treatment of the races as we have noted, the significance of the issue of race ceases to be useful or important. Conrad has again walked the tightrope by setting up a seemingly racist framework in order to undermine racism. The issue of race becomes a gateway into the major issues of the novel. One such issue is that the situation in Costaguana has become what it is because of the roles played by characters of all races in the situation, whether these characters are Latin American political or military leaders, or European captains of industry or American presidents of finance capital. Conrad thus affirms the commonality of corruption in the human nature he explores in both the "Southern races" and the "Northern races" in Nostromo. He uses the prejudices of his day against Latin America and Latin Americans in order to undermine those prejudices, to expose their limitations, and by showing his readers in Europe that 'that humanity out there' is not different from them as embodied in Charles Gould, Holroyd and other Western characters, to liberate the minds of his readers from petty prejudices and racial stereotyping.

Martin Decoud, whose letter to his sister constitutes the third narrative voice in Nostromo, is used to a certain extent to confirm the views espoused by the authorial voice, by Conrad, but as in the cases of the other narrative voices in the novel, Decoud does not necessarily always speak for Conrad, despite the fact that some critics have tried to show by the similarity of some of their biographies that Decoud and Conrad constitute the same voice in Nostromo.[29] Unlike Conrad who, his biographers inform us, perhaps attempted suicide in Marseilles during his stay there after he left Poland, Decoud does commit suicide, and the supreme irony of his characterization is that he cannot bear the solitude and loneliness of the Great Isabel, a situation his indifferent and intellectually detached nature and inclinations should have found ideal. In characterizing Decoud with irony, Conrad here is consciously creating separate identities between himself as author

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[29]Norman Sherry (ed.), The Critical Heritage, p.173.

and Decoud as character and part-narrator. As perhaps the most intellectually astute character in the novel, however, Decoud is used to raise questions and at times to shed useful light on some issues raised in the novel more than any other character. The kind of questions Decoud raises warn and alert the reader from taking certain assumptions in events or incidents of the story for granted, thereby maintaining the self-interrogative strain in the novel which is meant to assist the reader to arrive at the most comprehensive view of events and issues in the story.

One such question is the nature of history in Costaguana. We have already in this chapter noted Captain Mitchell's uncomprehending grasp of it. While the action of the novel is largely focused on the abortive Montero Revolution, with flashbacks into the past reign of terror by Guzman Bento, Decoud's appreciation of Costaguana's history goes beyond both the present and the immediate past. He recalls how the European colonialists first came to conquer Latin America and how, in fact, they, and not the Latin Americans, set the reckless tone of the history of the region which has endured into the present:

> .... imagine our forefathers in morions and corselets drawn up outside this gate, and a band of adventurers just landed from their ships in the harbour there. Thieves, of course. Speculators, too. Their expeditions, each one, were the speculations of grave and reverend persons in England. That is history, as that absurd sailor Mitchell is always saying... there used to be in the old days the sound of trumpets outside that gate. War trumpets!.... In those days this town was full of wealth. Those men came to take it. Now the whole land is like a treasure-house, and all these people are breaking into it, whilst we are cutting each other's throats..... It has always been the same... (N,

pp.151-152).

Echoing the same sentiment, and directly accusing the "Northern races" of setting off the spiral of political corruption and turmoil in the Third World, Jamaica Kincaid uses her experience of her native Antigua to write as follows:

> Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank accounts? Have you ever wondered why it is that all we seem to have learned from you is how to corrupt our societies and how to be tyrants?... You murdered people. You imprisoned people. You robbed people... The people like me, finally, after years and years of agitation, made deeply moving and eloquent speeches against the wrongness of your domination over us, and then finally... you leave, and from afar you watch us as we do to ourselves the very things you used to do to us.[30]

Decoud wonders whether "a curse of futility" is not ingrained in Costaguana's "national character" (N, p.149). He does not exclude the Costaguanerons of European extraction from this "curse of futility." "Our national character" (N, p.149), he calls it, linking up the present era of the Monteros through the immediate past eras of Ribiera and Guzman Bento to the era of the colonialists who came from Europe and conquered the local Indian tribes. Decoud therefore views Latin American history as cyclical. "After

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[30]Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place (Plume Penguin Books, 1988) pp.34-36

one Montero there would be another," he says, "the lawlessness of a populace of all colours and races, barbarism, irremedial tyranny" (N, p.161). Decoud's reading of Latin American history is vindicated long after he himself has been made a victim of it: as the novel draws towards the end, and notwithstanding the apparent success of the Occidental Province's revolutionary secession from the rest of Costaguana, a new war cry is being sounded in the name of "wealth for the people" (N, p.418). We are made to believe that Fr. Corbelan is preparing for a Holy War against Holroyd's "Protestant invasion of Sulaco" with missionaries funded by the Holroyd Missionary Fund (N, p.416); that there is "trouble with the workers" at the mine (N, p.454); that through the appearance of a Marxist on the scene, and the report of meetings of the workers addressed by Marxists, the next round of revolutions is likely to be a class struggle and the workers, fighting against finance capital, are not likely to fight on the side of Gould and his mine as they did previously; and the suggestion - which is gaining currency at a fast rate - that the Occidental State is planning to invade and annex to itself what is left of Costaguana.

If the questions raised through Decoud's analyses, sentiments, scepticism, and his apparent vindication by the history of Costaguana are not adequate to convince critics like Franco that Conrad's treatment of the political crises in Nostromo transcends the narrow limitations of aligning with one section of the contending forces, in this case the Blancos, perhaps a brief examination of the futility of the role of the Blancos in the drama might assist.

It is quite significant that the first of the Blancos we meet (the party has among its membership some leading Latin American leaders although its traditional base comprises of the Creole Oligarchs) is the Dictator-President Ribiera - already in flight following his defeat by the Montero forces at the last battle of Socorro. As we have already noted, the President Dictator cuts out a miserably ridiculous and undignified figure as he arrives in Sulaco riding on a lame mule which dies from under him in the midst of the raging mob, and as he and other officials of the ruling party are 'lowered by rope through a hole at the back' by Captain Mitchell and Nostromo to prevent the mob

from tearing them apart. Conrad can hardly be suspected of being sympathetic to the Blanco party when the party's most leading member is treated with such reductive humour.

The futility of the Blancos' role in the politics of Costaguana is most clearly revealed as Pedrito Montero is arriving in Sulaco to claim it as part of the Montero Revolution, and as Colonel Sotillo is at the same time arriving at the Sulaco Harbour from Esmeralda. The two Deputies of the Provincial Assembly, Gamacho and Fuentes, who are Blancos, 'defect' and quickly raise a make-shift army from the street mobs and ride out of Sulaco to welcome Pedrito Montero. They return into Sulaco marching arm in arm with the surprised Pedrito, for Pedrito had expected some resistance from Sulaco. The rest of the Sulaco Blancos form what Decoud sarcastically refers to as "a sort of Junta of Notables," and in response to the impending crisis, they sit in conference and spend all their time talking without doing anything concrete or arriving at any useful idea. Decoud's description of this meeting of the "Junta of [Blanco] Notables" brings out the hopelessness and futility of their role:

> In the great *sala* upstairs a sort of Junta of Notables was sitting, the remnant of the vanished Provincial Assembly. Don Juste Lopez [the President of the Provincial Assembly] had half his beard singed off at the muzzle of a trabuco loaded with slugs, of which every one missed him, providentially. And as he turned his head from side to side it was exactly as if there had been two men inside his frock-coat, one notably whiskered and solemn, the other untidy and scared... They all answered together, 'on the preservation of life and property.' 'Till the new officials arrive,' Don Juste explained to me, with the solemn side of his face offered to my view. It was as if a stream of water

had been poured upon my glowing idea of a new State. There was a hissing sound in my ears, and the room grew dim, as if suddenly filled with vapour.

I walked up to the table blindly, as though I had been drunk. 'You are deliberating upon surrender,' I said. They all sat still, with their noses over the sheet of paper each had before him, God only knows why. Only Don José hid his face in his hands, muttering, Never, never! But as I looked at him, it seemed to me that I could have blown him away with my breath, he looked so frail, so weak, so worn out. Whatever happens, he will not survive. The deception is too great for a man of his age; and hasn't he seen the sheets of Fifty Years of Misrule, which we have begun printing on the presses of the Porvenir, littering the Plaza, floating in the gutters, fired out as wads for trabucos loaded with handfuls of type, blown in the wind, trampled in the mud? I have seen pages floating upon the very waters of the harbour...

'Do you know,' I cried, 'what surrender means....?' Meanwhile Don Juste had begun a pondered oration whose solemn effect was spoiled by the ridiculous disaster to his beard. I did not wait to make it out. He seemed to argue that Montero's (he called him The General) intentions were probably not evil, though, he went on, 'that distinguished man' (only a week ago we used to call him a *gran bestia*) 'was perhaps mistaken as to the true means.' As you may imagine, I didn't stay to hear the rest (N, pp.199-201).

To suggest, as McClure does, that Conrad identifies with the position of the Creoles or the Blancos,[31] or as Franco does, that "mature realisation" in the political chaos of Nostromo is "reserved to the Europeans" while the natives are "[reduced] to a chorus," is to miss the irony and ridicule with which the Blancos are characterized. Gould's sarcastic remark that the Blancos should await their fate in their houses is appropriate for it is clear that they only get together in meetings to share their fear. The irony here too is that this Provincial 'think-tank,' which finds Decoud's proposal for secession too daring and too dangerous to consider even briefly, is seen after the secession championing the cause of parliamentary democracy and the Occidental Province's (now State) sovereignty. Like the leading Latin American military and political leaders therefore, the Blancos are as trees swayed by the wind - political opportunists whose major political consideration is expediency, personal safety, and not moral conviction. The political and economic 'survival' and 'success' of the Occidental Province (now State) at the end of the novel results not from the thinking, planning or action of the Blancos, but as a freak accident of sorts: the idea of secession is conceived by an intellectual sceptic, Martin Decoud, whose only reason for being involved is love for Antonia, and who commits suicide before the idea is implemented; it is implemented through a series of slim and chance opportunities that Dr Monygham, a man carrying the heavy weight of the burden of betraying friends under torture during Guzman Bento's reign of terror, finds and manipulates largely for the sake of saving Mrs Gould, for whom he has strong admiration and love - with the assistance of Nostromo, a man carrying an equally heavy burden of corruption after he steals the silver he had been entrusted to carry away to safety.

There is a heavy sense of pessimism therefore at the end of Nostromo. The subject of political revolutions was close to Conrad's personal experience as a Pole growing up under the shadow of imperial Russia, Austria and Prussia, which carved

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[31]McClure, pp.162-163

Poland into sections similar to the partitions Africa suffered in the nineteenth century. He had experienced through the sufferings of his parents, particularly his father, what dedication to the cause of fighting for national emancipation, particularly the almost inevitable element of sacrifice can mean. Conrad was to recall his father's funeral march years later, a march which was joined by crowds in the streets, workers and university students, as "a manifestation of the national spirit seizing a worthy occasion."[32]

While Conrad was thus keenly aware of the stubbornness of the Polish national temperament, which manifested itself through a number of uprisings which were invariably ruthlessly crushed, he had also been a personal and private witness, of his father, to how destructive to a man's spirit such dedication can be, and what harm can be brought upon those who, like Conrad and his mother, must depend on and live with the activist. Conrad was therefore painfully aware of the double-edged nature of political revolutions, and his depiction of them in Nostromo is testimony to this feeling. It is not surprising that we find such disparate statements on revolutions in the same text as these:

> The political atmosphere of the Republic was generally stormy in these days. The fugitive patriots of the defeated party had the knack of turning up again on the coast with half a steamer's load of small arms and ammunition. Such resourcefulness Captain Mitchell considered perfectly wonderful in view of their utter destitution at the time of flight (n, pp.22-23).

and:

> Mrs Gould watched his abstraction with dread. It was a

[32]Conrad, "Author's Note," A Personal Record

> domestic and frightful phenomenon that darkened and chilled the house for her like a thunder-cloud passing over the sun. Charles Gould's fits of abstraction depicted the energetic concentration of a will haunted by a fixed idea. A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if that idea is an idea of justice; for may he not bring the heaven down pitilessly upon a loved head? (N, p.315)

It is therefore not an accurate reading to say that in Nostromo Conrad sympathizes with the Blancos while he satirizes the political immaturity of Latin Americans as some of Conrad's critics have suggested - a reading of Conrad's text which implies racist connotations in the novel's conception. As we have noted in this chapter, Conrad 'courts' or 'flirts with' the stereotypes of his age and uses them to make his point by undermining the same stereotypes, which include stereotypes of race, and he is sceptical and pessimistic about passionate sentiments for political reform irrespective of who makes them.

The only ray of hope which Conrad envisions in Nostromo is embodied in characters, from both sides of the colour line, who have had their 'fingers severely burnt' in the political chaos of neo-colonial Costaguana, characters who, after they realize the futility of the pursuit of material interests, material progress or political power, dedicate themselves to the performance of small acts of kindness, dispensing 'the small graces of life' which benefit others rather than themselves: Dr Monygham, 'General' Hernandez, Don Pepe, and, of course, Mrs Gould who, we are told towards the end of the novel, "resembled a good fairy, weary with a long career of well-doing, touched by the withering suspicion of the uselessness of her labours, the powerlessness of her magic" (N, p.427). This moral alternative is not based on what Jonah Raskin sees as the advent of a new era

of Marxist egalitarianism,[33] but on "moral integrity"[34] and "moral principle":

> There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle (N, p.419).

Anything else, as we have already noted, would be like 'ploughing the sea.'

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[33]Jonah Raskin, p.178. "The Marxists of Sulaco," says Raskin, "wait impatiently for the day when blood will flow through the streets like wine."

[34]Peter Nazareth, An African View of Literature (Evanston, Illinois: NorthWestern University Press, 1974) p.126

V CONCLUSION

The literary scene in England at the time that Conrad began to write was most varied, colourful, bordering on a number of extremities. It was, according to Rose Alan Manuel, an era when "newness seems to have been the keynote ..., [when] interest in the fringes of the Empire created a search for the new and the exotic..., [when] the spirit of science reflect [ed] itself in the doctrines of French realists who sought new ways to express new knowledge of man..., [when] the disillusioned aesthetes [sought], in new and exotic ways, to forget a universe revealed to be indifferent..., [when], as H.G. Wells commented, the Victorian novel just did not answer the tastes of a new generation in a new world..., [when], in search for the new, one finds Henley the imperialist and activist, George Moore the disciple of the French, Oscar Wilde the 'very aesthetic young man,' and the Garnetts, those apostles of Russian fiction..., [and an era of] intense search for a means to express a time of bewildering change."[1] Conrad was associated with many strands of this "newness" which characterized the 'fabulous eighteen nineties.' As a writer whose early works were set in the exotic tropical islands of the Far East, Conrad was hailed as "the Kipling of the Malay Archipelago,"[2] and because of the particular care he took to find the most appropriate word, '*le mot juste*,' and the most appropriate way of expressing an idea or telling a story, Conrad was associated with the great French novelists Maupassant and Flaubert who were indefatigable experimenters with style.[3] When critics noticed that though Conrad's works were set in the remote exotic places and continents they were different from the typical exotic and adventure tale which was in

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[1]Rose Alan Manuel, Joseph Conrad and the Eighteen Nineties (Unpublished dissertation presented to the Columbia University or the Ph.D degree in 1965, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms), p.5.

[2]The newspaper critic, The Spectator, (October, 1895).

[3]Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1959) pp.221-222.

vogue at the time, they ascribed the realism that set his works apart to his 'Slavic temperament' and associated him with the great Russian realists, particularly Turgenev and Dostoevski.[4] Conrad himself was at pains to dissociate himself from these and many other labels. "I have been called a writer of the sea, of the tropics, a descriptive writer, a romantic writer, and also a realist," he complained, "but as a matter of fact all my concern has been with the ideal value of things, events and people. That and nothing else."[5]

Although Conrad's explanation - "the ideal value of things" - does not on the face of it seem to tell us much about what he really achieved as opposed to what critics, through the various labels they used on him, believed he set out to achieve, we must note carefully the sense of the limitless range in time, geography and subject that Conrad himself rightly associated with his work. He extended the frontiers of the English novel not only in bringing onto its white pages dark and yellow-skinned heroes and heroines as worthy subjects for study in English literature, but also by taking the English novel out of the confines of Jane Austen's and George Eliot's English provincial settings, out of the confines of Dickens's London, and out of the confines of Hardy's Wessex, to name only a few examples. This aspect of Conrad's work, compounded by his realism that was alien to the exotic and adventure tale of his day, set Conrad apart from his contemporaries. It made him less popular during his day than his contemporaries who provided the gullible readership with the full fare of 'news from the fringes of the empire' and the exotic and adventure tale, but it also gave him a currency that we today notice as relevant to generations after the Second World War, including the post-colonial generation and world which is now actively responding to what Conrad wrote about it close to one hundred years ago.

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[4]Jocelyn Baines, pp.192, 360-361.

[5]Joseph Conrad to Sidney Colvin, quoted in Norman Page, A Conrad Companion (London: MacMillan, 1986) p.xii

Conrad's uniqueness as a writer in England at the turn of the century can best be illustrated by briefly comparing and contrasting him with Kipling and Stevenson, two contemporary writers with whom he was closely associated or compared and contrasted in the minds of contemporary readers. Both Kipling and Stevenson had established themselves as highly popular writers of the 'news from the fringes of the empire' by the time Conrad published his first novel. Critics therefore immediately measured his achievement against Kipling and Stevenson. Commenting on Conrad's style after the publication of Heart of Darkness, for instance, John Masefield (1903) said:

> Mr. Conrad's stories, excellent though they are, leave always a feeling of disappointment, almost of regret. His is a rare temperament, an exotic, a poetic temperament, and its artistic expression, though tense, nervous, trembling with beauty, is always a little elusive, a little alien, of the quality of fine gum from Persia, or of a precious silk from Ghilan.
>
> ... He has set down page after page of stately and brilliant prose, which is fine writing, good literature, and so forth, but most unconvincing narrative. His narrative is not vigorous, direct, effective, fresh like that of Mr Kipling. It is not clear and fresh like that of Stevenson, nor simple, delicate and beautiful like that of Mr Yeats. It reminds one rather of a cobweb abounding in gold threads.[6]

Masefield's reaction to Conrad is hardly surprising. As we have noted on a number of occasions in this thesis, Conrad was a modernist writer whose depiction of human experience reflected the complex nature of life and man's role in it. Edward Said

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[6]John Masefield in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": Backgrounds and Criticisms, Ed. Leonard F. Dean. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 1960. p.148.

is right in saying that both in hi.. ...ice of subject matter and how he treats it Conrad was well ahead of his time[7], and we are not surprised in the least that it was not until after the Second World War that Conrad's true merits as a writer began to be appreciated.

For Conrad, art should mirror life, and any work that aspires, "however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line."[8] To be successful, the artist "descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, [and] if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal." Conrad makes a clear distinction between the artist on one hand, and the thinker and the scientist on the other. "Impressed by the aspect of the world," he says, " the thinker plunges into ideas, the scientist into facts... they speak authoritatively to our common sense, to our intelligence, to our desire of peace or our desire of unrest; not seldom to our prejudices, sometimes to our fears, often to our egoism - but always to our credulity." The artist's task, according to Conrad, is different. His is, as we have noticed, "the lonely region of stress and strife," and

> ...his appeal is made to our less obvious capabilities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities - like the vulnerable body within a steel armour. His appeal is less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring - and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures forever. The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being

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[7]Edward Said, "Conrad: The Presentation of Narrative," in Robert Hamner, p.171.

[8]Conrad, "Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'," in Walter F. Wright (ed) Joseph Conrad on Fiction, pp.160-162.

> which is not dependent on wisdom... He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation - to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity.... such an appeal, to be effective, must be an impression conveyed through the senses... All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions.. And it is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour, and that the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words.[9]

From our vantage point in history, we can appreciate Conrad's engagement with the "ideal value of things, events and people" - their timelessness, the universality of human experience, the cross-cultural solidarity that links together all humanity - more than the reader of Conrad's day could. As implied in Masefield's preference of Kipling

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[9]ibid

and Stevenson to Conrad, the reader of the eighteen-nineties expected in a writer's work a sense of immediacy and applicability, a message that was "clear" and "direct." And this is what both Kipling and Stevenson provided to the reader.

Kipling had a strong aversion to the aestheticism of the eighteen-nineties to which, as we have noted, Conrad responded positively. Kipling's vision of the novel was strongly Victorian:

> Yet I dreamt for many years of building a veritable three-decker out of chosen and long-stored timber - teak, green-heart, and ten-year-old oak knees - each curve melting deliciously into the next that the sea might nowhere meet resistance or weakness; the whole suggesting motion even when, her great sails for the moment furled, she lay in some needed haven - a vessel ballasted on ingots of pure research and knowledge, roomy, painted, carved, gilt and wreathed the length of her, from her blazing stern-galleries outlined by bronzy palm-trunks, to her rampant figure-head - an East Indiaman worthy to lie alongside The Cloister and the Hearth.[10]

We can surmise from this welter of construction terms that Kipling's ambition was to write a typical three-decker Victorian novel, with the only difference that the setting and milieu would be India, not England. The novel would, to an English reader, be exotic, obviously, on account of its exotic setting, but it would be true to facts, and its created world would be familiar since it would be based on "research and knowledge," and its subject and style on "chosen and long-stored timber." For Kipling, the best style for

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[10]Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself (London: MacMillan, 1937), p.228

fiction was explicit statement:

> Most of the arts admit the truth that it is not expedient to tell everyone everything. Fiction recognizes no such bar. There is no human emotion or mood which it is forbidden to assault - there is no canon of reserve or pity that need be respected - in fiction. Why should there be? The man, after all, is not telling the truth. He is only writing fiction. While he writes it his world will extract from it just so much truth or pleasure as it requires for the moment.[11]

It is clear that Conrad and Kipling were diametrically opposed in their conception of art and its role. By using the language of the tradesman in describing his role as a writer, and by choosing explicit statement as the writer's best mode of expression, Kipling underlines the fact that for him, art is a tool in the artist's hand for the attainment of some immediate defined goal or objective. He takes the presence of truth for granted in his conception of art, and all the writer needs to do is carry out his research, acquire the requisite knowledge, and then pick and choose those aspects of the truth he wishes to use, for, after all, the writer is 'not telling the truth.' "Fiction," says Kipling, is "Truth's elder sister."[12]

While the presence of truth is thus taken for granted in Kipling, in Conrad value concepts such as truth and justice are not absolute, nor is their availability taken for granted or assured. In Conrad, as in life, these concepts are as complex and elusive as they are desirable; they can only be understood, and indeed discovered, in terms of

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[11]Kipling, Art of Fiction, p.3

[12]Kipling, Art of Fiction, p.2

degree, and the artist's objective is to establish "the highest" degree[13] by examining closely every aspect of the concept in a specific given situation. For Conrad therefore, a narrative method of explicit statement which simply tells it as it is, as we find in Kipling, is inadequate to establish the "highest" degree of truth or justice.

Consistent with his conception of art and its role, Kipling wrote poems, short stories and novels to impart clearly defined messages of immediate applicability to his readers. He wrote and preached about The White Man's Burden, encouraging young white men to go out and serve the British Empire in the colonies. He wrote poems to raise money for the British soldiers fighting in the Boer War of 1899 in South Africa, and wrote more poems to keep the soldiers' morale up when he went out and personally visited them in their camps in South Africa. Kipling kindled and fanned racial chauvinism and superiority in the minds of fellow Englishmen to instil in them a sense of "mission" and "obligation" to serve the Empire. In an essay entitled, "Mr Rudyard Kipling: The Banjo-Bard of Empire," W.T. Stead says Kipling is "the man who most of all ... impressed the popular mind, [who] fired the popular imagination and interpreted the popular consciousness."[14] Kipling admired the man of action, and he devoted his art to serving the immediate political concerns of his day:

> When you've shouted 'Rule Britannia',
> When you've sung 'God Save the Queen',
> When you've finished killing Kruger
> with your mouth
>
> Will you kindly drop a shilling in

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[13]Conrad, "Preface to The Nigger of Narcissus,' in Walter F. Wright, ed. p.160

[14]W.T. Stead, "Mr Rudyard Kipling: The Banjo-Bard Empire" Review of Reviews, April 15, 1899, pp. 317-327.

my little tambourine
For a gentleman in khaki
ordered South?[15]

Kipling's style of explicit statement is best illustrated in the way he begins his short story, "Beyond the Pale":

> A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black. Then, whatever trouble falls is in the ordinary course of things - neither sudden, alien nor unexpected.
>
> This is the story of a man who wilfully stepped beyond the safe limits of decent everyday society and paid for it heavily.
>
> He knew too much in the first instance; and he saw too much in the second. He took too deep an interest in native life; b. he will never do so again.[16]

If we were to apply Conrad's idea of art which we analyzed earlier in this chapter, this would hardly pass as art or imaginative literature. Kipling intrudes into the world of his characters, and long before he introduces them to us, he pushes the moral of the story somewhat rudely into our face so that within those first few lines he defines the trespasser's sin, tries and sentences him, rushes him through reformatory, making sure he

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[15]Kipling, "The Absent-Minded Beggar," in Kipling: Poems Selected by Cochrane, (Penguin, 1977. rpt. 1987) p.210

[16]Kipling, "Beyond the Pale" in Plain Tales from the Hills (New York: Lamb, 1899) p.231.

will emerge repentant. Only then does Kipling introduce his characters. It is then that we discover that the cardinal sin Christopher Trejago, the white man in question, has committed is to fall in love and sleep with a native girl. For his failure to observe the strict racial demarcations of Kipling's colonial world, Trejago is stabbed in the groin, and, we are told, he "limped slightly from the wound the rest of his days" - an indication that he has perhaps become impotent for life. The native girl, Bisesa, has her hands "cut off at the wrists,"[17] for these are the very hands that dared embrace a white man. Kipling returns to this theme repeatedly in his stories, and on each occasion, those who commit the Kipling cardinal sin are severely punished. In "Without Benefit of Clergy," for instance, Ameera, the Indian girl who marries a white man and has a child by him, is killed off together with her child while Holden, the white husband, is let off to some extent because he is required to be on duty to relieve a fellow officer whose wife, a white wife, is sick. Holden is, however, stripped of all that he owns by Ameera's mother even while her daughter's lifeless body lies in the house awaiting burial. And in "The Man Who Would Be King," Dravot and Carnehan, who seem to have Kipling's approval initially when they build their empire in Kafiristan, are punished by losing everything they have worked so hard for when Dravot marries a native girl. Even in Kim (1902), in which Kipling long after he had left India to live in England appears to bridge the racial gap of East and West, Kim ends up playing the role of the Sahib, taking up the White Man's Burden in the Great Game of the Indian Civil Service, spying on the very Indians in whose midst he grew up, and thereby betraying and abusing the education the Lama gave him.

Because of Kipling's belief in explicit statement, his works, which in some instances deal with the same colonial issues that Conrad wrote about (there are several striking parallels between "Beyond the Pale" and Heart of Darkness, and between "The Man Who Would Be King" and "An Outpost of Progress") lack the depth, the complexity,

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[17]Kipling, "Beyond the Pale," p.241

and the capacity to engage meaningfully and effectively with the issues they raise. They are circumscribed, governed, controlled by Kipling's irrational and deep-seated racial prejudices, and, as a result, they have no life of their own which might lead them out of the pre-determined Kipling mould. Not even the dullest reader can miss the moral of the works which is thrust forward as we have seen in the case of "Beyond the Pale," sometimes as a prelude to the story itself. When the world discovered how dangerous and inglorious modern warfare was at the end of the First World War, Kipling's popularity declined sharply, and with further passage of time, his works began to suffer the oblivion that the racial chauvinism and imperialistic jingoism that he had champoined suffered. E.K. Brown captures this aspect of Kipling and his works in a review article entitled, "Kipling and the Modern Reader":

> Mr Hilton Brown has turned from his own fiction and poetry to write a charming and unpretentious plea that more people, especially in England, read Kipling. He knows as well as anyone why, except among Anglo-Indian and other imperialists, and among boys of all ages, Kipling has lacked readers. The obstacles are Kipling's stupidity and temperament. The temperament is disagreeable - brutal, cocky, and fussy. The stupidity is monumental; he was wrong about reformers and about intellectuals; about the Pope and the Jews; about Ireland and India; about Europe and America; about the present and the future. His eyes were unexcelled when he let them play freely on colors and shapes; but his stupidity would put blinkers on them.[18]

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[18]E.K. Brown, "Kipling and the Modern Reader," Yale Review vol.35 (1946), 740-742.

And in a passage which is largely apologetic, and which, in my opinion, unfairly links Dickens with Kipling, Norman Page addresses the issue of Kipling's "repellant" politics as follows:

> As with Dickens, the reader of Kipling finds himself compelled to come to terms with, or at least to confront, certain elements that have been fiercely attacked. Both writers have been charged with vulgarity, false rhetoric and overstatement, and inadequacy in the presentation of women - though some of these charges tell us much about cultural changes as about the authors in question. In addition, Kipling has been found irritably knowing... in his early work... His political attitudes have been found repellant... H.E. Bates, writing in 1941, compared him to Hitler.[19]

Throughout his life, Kipling had not wanted to believe that the 'sun might one day set on the British Empire.' Historical developments, however, made it so glaringly obvious - even to him - that 'the sun would certainly set on Her Majesty's Empire' one day. This was a realization which Kipling could hardly bear. According to Rebecca West, Kipling sank into "black exasperation in later years," but being a man of action and a fighter, he bounced back onto the changing scene and worked himself "into rage" before he finally "[shut] his eyes against his times."[20]

Conrad had long noticed Kipling's tendency to put on blinkers when he was confronted with unsavoury reality. He wrote in a letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham in

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[19]Norman Page, A Kipling Companion (London: MacMillan, 1984) p.xiii

[20]Rebecca West, "Rudyard Kipling" in V.S. Pritchett, ed. Turnstile One: A Literary Miscellany From The New Statesman and Nation (London: Turnstile Press, 1948) p.9.

1897 that Kipling "squints with the rest of his excellent sort," and that perhaps Kipling found the squint "useful."[21] Conrad's irony against Kipling's 'all-knowing' attitude is clear, the attitude we see behind Kipling's all-knowing narrators, behind Kipling's self-assured style of explicit statement, and also behind the rigid and absolute moral and racial codes so abundantly prevalent in his work. Kipling thus denies his characters an inner life, and we cannot therefore expect his characters to develop or discover themselves morally or otherwise. The best we can expect of them, if they are bad and still alive, is to repent. Kipling stresses the life of the outer person, the life of action and incident.

Kipling must have realized with something of an unpleasant shock how different Conrad's handling of the colonial theme and its various aspects was. He must have realised that Conrad had done what he himself had not or could not have done on account of his ideological circumscriptions, that Conrad had allowed his characters to experience - unhindered by narrow codes of behaviour, racial chauvinism and political dogmatism - inner lives and full responses to the vagaries of life in the colonial situation. Kipling expressed wonder at the "countless types of people in Conrad obsessed by one idea or emotion... [at the] intensity [of] the specific feeling of fear and terror... in Conrad."[22] But Kipling refused, or could simply not realize, that such a pitch of emotion was only a natural and unhindered response to a situation that taxed human endurance to extremity, the kind that would be common in the colonial setting where European colonialists were isolated and cut off from the societies that nurtured them, without, as Marlow in Heart of Darkness would say, the butcher (to shield one from having to shed blood of an animal for meat, which might just make it easier for one to shed the blood of a fellow human being afterwards) and the policeman (to protect one from his enemies and from himself), or the kind voice of a neighbour to warn one of public opinion, scandal or the gallows.

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[21]Conrad, in C.T. Watts, ed. Letter of 5 August 1897 in Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, p.45

[22]Kipling, in Edmund Gosse, "The Literature of Action," in The North American Review. CLXVII. no. DVI. January, 1899. p.14

Instead, Kipling ascribed this quality of Conrad's art to peculanities in Conrad's Polish background. "That man," Kipling said, "must have suffered horrible nightmares himself."[23] In yet another apologia for Kipling, Edmund Gosse paraphrases Kipling's attitude towards Conrad as follows:

> Kipling believed that in addition to his enormous talent and unequalled technique, the exoticism of Conrad's soul was probably what attracted English readers. There is in the average Englishman a complex of emotions suppressed by a puritan culture, and Conrad set free these emotions. His characters, masterfully drawn and understandable to the English reader, have an emotional temperature higher by a few degrees than is normal for the English. In their intensity, Conrad's characters usually move 'to the pitch of emotion,' but since the gradual progression takes place virtually before the reader's eyes, even he succumbs to what is, for him, an unusual increase in emotion and 'getting red in the face,' experiences sensations unknown until now.[24]

Kipling seems to shrug his shoulders as if to say, 'There is no way I could be expected to develop my characters to this extent; I am only an Englishman.'

Examining Conrad against his then popular and, in the minds of many of his day, great contemporary writer, Rudyard Kipling, assists us therefore to define more closely Conrad's distinctiveness and genius as a writer who wrote not only for his generation, but

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[23]Kipling, in Edmund Gosse, "The Literature of Action," p.14

[24]Edmund Gosse, "The Literature of Action," pp.13-14

also for all generations to come; and as a writer who wrote not only for Europe but also for the whole world, including the post-colonial world which has found and is finding in Conrad's handling of their world close to a century ago liberating truths and gateways to handling its own current and contemporary problems.

We arrive at a similar appreciation of Conrad by examining him against the other then popular, and again in the minds of many readers of his day, great contemporary writer of Conrad's time, Robert Louis Stevenson.

Unlike Kipling, Stevenson had an immense interest in prose styles. He became a close friend of Henry James, and the two writers discussed the art of writing on many occasions, agreeing that before a novel could be considered ready for publishing the writer must painstakingly work toward its perfection: "re-writing, re-drafting, beginning again, altering in proof, a snail's rate of progress."[25] In this respect, Stevenson's approach was similar to Conrad's. He differed from Conrad in that he made a clear distinction between art and life and believed that the world of art is a created world which should be governed solely by the laws or parameters the writer or artist chose to set up. While Conrad would argue that art should mirror life, Stevenson would argue that art should be manipulated to reflect the artist's wishes and does not have to mirror life. "The novel," Stevenson said, "which is a work of art, exists, not by its resemblances to life, which are forced and material, as a shoe must still consist of leather, but by its immeasurable difference from life, which is designed and significant, and is both the method and the meaning of the work."[26] Stevenson's view here reflects the tension between romance and realism that characterizes his work. If he had to make a choice between romance and realism, Stevenson would choose romance. "Life," he said, "is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt, and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat,

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[25]Robert Kiely, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1964) p.149

[26]Robert Louis Stevenson, in Kiely, p.25

finite, self-contained, rational, flowing and emasculate."[27] According to Stevenson, therefore, while life presents us with no easy solutions, art should be different: it should provide us "neat," "rational," and "logical" solutions; it should "emasculate" life's rough edges and transform them into some "flowing" texture that we find easy to handle; and life's insoluble mysteries, ambiguities, and ironies should be transformed into a form man can explain and handle easily.

Stevenson is clearly 'escapist.' Ironically, his conception of art 'mirrors' his own life. He found Scotland almost unbearably oppressive, both physically and spiritually. Plagued by persistent ill-health, " a childhood and youth of hushed sickrooms, monotonous routine, raw, damp Edinburgh streets, somber Sabbaths, and endless hours in the kirk,"[28] Stevenson sought to escape all these 'monstrosities' of his life. He tried the Alps, California, and finally settled in Samoa in the South Sea islands. For Stevenson therefore, writing was escape, an opportunity for him to be in full charge for a change, to create a world of his inner wishes, a world without the 'monstrosities' that plagued his own real world. "We want incident, interest, action," Stevenson said in 1880, "to the devil with your philosophy."[29] As the artist finds himself in daily contact with reality and life, how was Stevenson to ensure that art remained separate from life? "Man's one method," he said, "whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality."[30]

Stevenson's conception of art is reflected in his work in two ways. A sense of celebration which is idealistic and to some extent naive appears in his fiction of the 1880's following his settlement in the South Sea islands. When his ill-health was not altogether cured by his new environment, colonial abuses on the islands became too

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[27]Stevenson, quoted in Kiely, p.28.

[28]Kiely, p.149.

[29]Stevenson, in Kiely, p.40.

[30]Kiely, p.17

glaring for him to ignore, and the initial excitement of finding himself in the South Sea islands began to wane, Stevenson engaged the spectre of evil in his works but he still found ways of shying away from confronting the contradictions, and choosing, instead, to oversimplify the issues raised. To the end of his writing career, Stevenson remained the puppet master of his created world of art.

Note, for instance, the excitement in Stevenson's narrator's voice in The Ebb-Tide and how different it is from Marlow's apprehension and foreboding which we noted in the discussion of Heart of Darkness. Just as Marlow is approaching the coast of Africa for the first time, Stevenson's narrator is also approaching the coast of the South Sea islands for the first time:

> We were both under the glamour of the Islands - and that life, so strange, so picturesque, so animated, took us by storm. Kings and beachcombers, pearl-fishers and princesses, slavers, and schooner-captains, castaways and runaways - what a world it was! And all this in a fairy land of palms and glassy bays, and little lost settlements nestling at the foot of the forest and mountain, with kings to make brotherhood with us, and a dubious white man or two, in ear-rings and pyjamas, no less insistent to extend to us the courtesies of the beach.[31]

This same spirit of youthful excitement is clearly escapist in The Wrecker where Loudon Dodd regrets that he has not cleared Europe of all writers and artists to bring them to the South Sea islands where they might stop their "prating" under the spell of the islands's beauty:

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[31]Stevenson, The Ebb-Tide, p.202

> I would I could have carried along with me to Midway Island all the writers and prating artists of my time... The scene.. the rugged speech and faces of my fellow-toilers, the glare of the day on deck, the sinking twilight in the bilge, the shrill of myriads of the ocean-fowl; above all, the sense of our immitigable isolation from the current epoch - keeping another time; some eras old; the new day heralded by no daily paper, only by the rising sun; and the State, the churches, the peopled empires, war, and rumours of war, and the voices of the arts, all gone silent as in the days ere they were yet invented. Such were the conditions of my new experience in life, of which (if I had been able) I would have had all my confréres and contemporaries to partake, forgetting, for that while, the orthodoxies of the moment.[32]

Stevenson is essentially a writer of romance who, as we have noticed, 'half-shuts his eyes from the dazzle of life's realities.' His created world is, like Kipling's, the simple world of binary oppositions, of the good and the bad. Predictably, the good prosper and triumph over the bad, and the bad are punished by death or banishment. Treasure Island (1883), which made Stevenson famous, fits their mold. The good characters, who are only seven in number, outwit and defeat the bad characters, who are nineteen. The good characters are drawn from respectable social circles, are given real names (not nicknames), and they invariably hold some responsible position in society. Examples are Dr. Livesey, who is both a medical doctor and a lawyer, and Squire Trelawney, a country squire who is a member of the landed gentry. The good characters

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[32]Stevenson, The Wrecker, pp.232-233

have God and King on their side, the side of Right. "God defends the right,"[33] the narrator tells us. Captain Smollett, that good man who senses that there is going to be mutiny long before it comes, swears by his "Sovereign's colours" (TI, p.137). And young teen-age Jim Hawkins, the narrator of the story, in combating and of course defeating a bad man who is probably twice his age, shouts as he triumphs: "God Save the King!" (TI, p.164). The evil or bad characters, on the other hand, are identified by suggestive nicknames, and they bear characteristics which are the opposite of the good characters. Billy Bones is a "brown old seaman" bearing the mark of his evil and rough life: he has "the saber cut" (TI, p.3), a "cut on one cheek" (TI, p.11), and a tattooed body (TI, p.15). Black Dog is a "pale, tallowy creature, wanting two fingers of the left hand" (TI, p.10). Long John Silver, the chief of the bad characters, is without a whole leg. These evil characters are associated with mutiny, murder, plotting, hypocrisy, piracy, greed, and lack of patriotism. Where the good characters fly the Union Jack, for instance, the villains fly a "black flag" (TI, p.127); and where the good characters evoke the name of their Sovereign, the villains evoke the name of Captain Flint, who is described as "the blood-thirstiest buccaneer that [ever] sailed" the seas (TI, p.39).

This juvenile romantic oversimplification is also shown in Stevenson's resolution of the issues raised in his fiction. In "The Beach of Falesa," for instance, Case, who is clearly a forbear of Conrad's Kurtz, engages in fierce and ruthless trade competition with his white counterparts on the island, poisoning and murdering them whenever he gets the opportunity. He has cowed the natives by declaring himself the "Tiapolo," the big chief devil with his shrine in the heart of the dark and impenetrable bush where he has set up contraptions generating "devlish" noises. When Stevenson's hero Wiltshire (note the slight parallel with Conrad's Marlow in Heart of Darkness) arrives on the island and finds Case feared and worshipped, he, Stevenson's agent, "emasculates" the whole evil set-up

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[33]Robert Louis Stevenson, Treasure Island (Oxford; New York: OUP, The World's Classics)

by blowing up the contraptions, reducing everything to a mere game of mechanical and juvenile trickery. He exposes Case, and re-assures the natives:

> I laughed out. 'Not much!' says I. 'Tell him the place [the feared bush] is a blooming toy-shop! Tell him, in England we give these things to the kid to play with' (BF, p.282).

In his later years, however, Stevenson's excitement over the South Sea islands became diminished. Not only had his illness persisted, but he had also seen too much of human suffering, greed and evil on the colonial islands for him to continue to pretend they made an Eden. Leprosy, smallpox and influenza had swept through the islands, killing many of the inhabitants. Stevenson had also seen the shrine where cannibals feasted on their victims.[34] Significantly, natives had always been treated as noble savages in Stevenson's fiction. Stevenson's mood in The Ebb-Tide (1895) is therefore generally sombre, and his characters assume more life-like roles. Attwater is perhaps the most fully developed colonial character in Stevenson. An educated Oxford graduate, Attwater anticipates Conrad's Kurtz in a number of ways. He talks of "my pearls," "my island" (E - T, p.290) just as Kurtz would talk of "my ivory," "my Intended," etc. Attwater is the self-proclaimed governor of the "New Island," and like Shakespeare's Prospero and Conrad's Kurtz, he has absolute control over what happens in the area under his jurisdiction. He flies the Union Jack on the remote island depopulated by disease. Somewhat like Kurtz and Marlow, Attwater comes to the island driven by "youth, curiosity, romance, the love of the sea, and (it will surprise you to hear), an interest in missions. That has a good deal declined, which will surprise you less" (E - T, p.298).

In his desire to make art "logical," Stevenson foregoes the potential for a profound

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[34]Kiely, p.187.

exploration of the contradictions of colonial life by turning Attwater into a demi-god and keeping him larger than life to the very end of the story. We recall Kurtz's similar status in the Congo, and the wealth of human experience and human drama Conrad derives from humanizing Kurtz once Marlow meets him in the Congo. Stevenson, however, assigns to Attwater the role of re-populating the island. Like the Jehovah of the Old Testament, Attwater commands, and he is to be obeyed. He marries off the two native survivors against the girl's wishes so that they can 'multiply.' He presses Herrick and Davis, two white stragglers, into his service. One of them should end up mating with the surviving fat white woman so that they too can 'multiply.' Attwater watches all this from his lofty position of demi-god and is satisfied like the God of the Book of Genesis watching his creation and declaring that it was good. Thus, as in his earlier fiction, Stevenson evades the realities of life by creating a puppet world run by a puppet master. "The man never lost the vision of his childhood," Lettice Cooper says of Stevenson. "Everything was fresh, new, strange, curious, crammed with possibilities... Being often lonely, ill, and unhappy as a child, he had to go under or clutch at fantasy and optimism."[35] Despite his recognition of their inadequacy, Stevenson never let go clutching at fantasy and wishful optimism.

In 1914, Richard Curle deplored the fact that Stevenson had come to be regarded as the writer against whom other writers, such as Conrad, were being judged:

> ... it is Stevenson, rather than the contributions to The Yellow Book or The National Observer, who has poisoned our English critical intelligence for a decade. He is neither unhealthy or exaggerated and he does not lay himself open to ridicule or hatred. Our error has been in taking him too seriously... In innumerable minds he is now the model of

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[35]Lettice Cooper, Robert Louis Stevenson (London: Home & Van Thal Ltd., 1947) p.105.

> what an artist should be. And by this standard the great masters are judged and found wanting. Stevenson sailed delightfully over the surface, little guessing of the tragic depths waiting to be plumbed by men like Conrad.[36]

John Masefield's 1903 comment quoted at the beginning of this Chapter is a good example of what Curle is deploring. Conrad's conception of art, and his concerns as a writer, were demonstrably different from those of his most popular contemporaries, Kipling and Stevenson. In his pursuit of the "ideal value of things, events and people," Conrad's concern was not the 'historically immediate,' as were the concerns of his two contemporaries. He was more interested in exploring the vicissitudes of human nature and human experience, and therefore the inner life of his characters, unlike his two populist contemporaries who were more interested in depicting events, incidents, action, and therefore the outer life of their characters as determined by what was popular or fashionable. Those Third World critics such as Achebe and Franco who believe that Conrad was, as it were, playing to the gallery - feeding his contemporary readers with the comfortable myths and prejudices of their day - need to re-examine Conrad in the context of his time, especially against his two contemporaries Kipling and Stevenson, to see what difference there is between Conrad and those writers who were writing largely for the moment.

Conrad has emerged over the years as the greater writer not only because of his innovative narrative methods that were to inspire many a writer to come after him, and not only because of the universality of his concerns, but also because of his modern mind and modern political attitude, the same which, ironically, have been questioned by Achebe and other critics. As we have already noted in this thesis, Conrad was not interested in political ideologies, philosophies or dogmas, but, as in the case of the Boer War of 1899,

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[36]Richard Curle, Joseph Conrad (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd, 1914), p.11.

he was interested in arriving at the highest possible justice in any given situation. He could therefore sympathize with the legitimate claims the Boers made in South Africa, while at the same time he could not tolerate their racism and racial chauvinism. An ideological stance, such as that adopted by Kipling over the same War, would have blinded Conrad from making such fine distinctions in such a heated historical moment. In addition, as we have noticed throughout this thesis, Conrad believed in the universal solidarity of mankind, and many of his colonial works demonstrate this belief. He saw as art's fundamental task to "single minded [ly] attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe... to speak to [our] latent feeling of fellowship with all creation - to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity."[37] And it is precisely because the Europeans who exercise control in the colonies fail to live up to the principles of such universal human solidarity that Conrad would have them removed from the colonies, that he questions the very concept and practice of colonialism, and condemns it.

Conrad's condemnation of colonialism, and his questioning of the beliefs, values and myths of his day become clearer set against the views of his two popular contemporary writers, Kipling and Stevenson. Both writers were so concerned about the immediate present that once the immediacy of the situations they were writing about passed, their works began to lose their immediacy and relevance too. As E.K. Brown has noted, Kipling was wrong historically. He never imagined that the British Empire might one day come to an end. He preached the White Man's Burden and his fiction provides not the slightest questioning of the White Man's right to rule over the natives in the colonies. When the political sentiments Kipling championed lost their original appeal following the horrors of the First World War, and it became clear that the British Empire

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[37]Conrad. "Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'" in W.F. Wright, ed. p.161.

would come to an end one day, Kipling, as we have noted, "raged" before sinking into sullen silence.

Stevenson, on the other hand, would shut his eyes from the colonial realities of Samoa where he lived. When he could no longer ignore the colonial abuses around him, he published, separately from his neat world of fiction, Footnote to History, in which he "directed public attention to the frequent injustice, scandal, and shame of imperial glory."[38] Despite this, however, and unlike Conrad, Stevenson did not condemn colonialism. His stories assume that the whites should rule in the colonies, and in the rare instances where he removes a white ruler from power he simply replaces him with another and better white man as a matter of course.

History has vindicated Conrad over his then more popular contemporaries. "When Joseph Conrad.. turned from life as a seaman in 1895 to assume writing as a profession, "says Robert Hamner, "he virtually opened a new literary world. It would be an oversimplification to call him a colonial novelist in the line of his contemporaries Rudyard Kipling... and H. Rider Haggard..., because his stories reach beyond their settings in time and place to themes still current in the post-colonial present."[39] That Conradian literary world, this thesis has attempted to argue, has over the last two decades become immensely enriched by the emerging, strong interest and critical output from the post-colonial Third World which Conrad wrote about a century ago, a fast-growing interest that has found Conrad's questioning, complex and liberating imaginative vision in the handling of the colonial theme in its various aspects revealing, inspiring and preferable to the binary oppositions approach of Conrad's contemporaries such as Kipling and Stevenson.

Conrad's place in both the English and Western canonical literary histories was

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[38]R.L. Stevenson, "Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa" in The Works of R.L. Stevenson, Vol. XVI (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., MCMVII) pp.9-201.

[39]Hamner, p.1.

assured by the seminal studies of his work by M.C. Bradbrook (1941),[40] F.R. Leavis (1948),[41] Thomas Moser (1957),[42] and Albert Guerard (1958),[43] and his immense contribution to the novel has been widely acclaimed over the years. Cedric Watts rightly places Conrad in the English literary canon when he says that Conrad

> was 'ahead of his times,' in ideas and techniques.... In his critical awareness of nineteenth century preoccupations, he anticipated - often critically - many twentieth century preoccupations. He was an intermediary between Romantic and Victorian traditions and innovations of Modernism.... Romantic in his interest in questing individualism and in his keen responsiveness to the beauty of the natural world in its more useless and dramatic manifestations... Victorian in his sense of the burdens of thought in an age when science offers bleak vistas... in his responsiveness to the magnitude of the imperial adventure, and in the related sense of the importance of an ethic of work and duty among its varied participants. Yet his sense of individualism can modulate the Modernist's intuition of solipsism; and Modernistic, too, is his sense of the utter absurdity of man in a non-moral universe, his profound scepticism about the value of modern industrial society and its acquisitive imperialisms, and his sense of men as myopic participants in a destructive

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[40]M.C. Bradbrook, Joseph Conrad: Poland's English Genius (Cambridge, 1941).

[41]F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948).

[42]Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge, Mass., 1957)

[43]Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass., 1959)

> machine... Even the Modernist's sense of the duplicity, deceptiveness, and inadequacy of language is voiced repeatedly in Conrad ('the old, old words, worn thin, defaced'); and in his kaleidoscopic techniques, his mastery of delayed decoding, he clearly and boldly anticipated the experimentation which was to burgeon in poetry and the novel almost a generation after Heart of Darkness.[44]

It is partly from such "experimentation... a generation [and more] after Heart of Darkness," that masterpieces such as T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and "The Hollow Men," Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea, Graham Greene's The Heart of the Matter and Brighton Rock, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby were born. Other examples from the Western literary canon could be cited, including - an example which also serves to indicate Conrad's continuing influence on Modern Western literary and artistic culture - Francis Ford Coppola's recent classic film on the Vietnam War, Apocalypse Now (1979). The great value placed upon Conrad in the canon of Western literary history was aptly articulated by Hemingway after Conrad's death in 1924 in a humorous but informative comparison between Conrad and T.S. Eliot (who, like Kipling but for different reasons, was more popular than Conrad during their lifetime):

> If I knew that by grinding Mr Eliot into a fine dry powder and sprinkling that powder over Mr Conrad's grave Mr Conrad would shortly appear, looking very annoyed at the forced return and commence writing, I would leave for London early tomorrow morning with a sausage-grinder.[45]

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[44]Cedric Watts, A Preface to Conrad, pp.171-172

[45]Ernest Hemingway, Transatlantic Review, II, 341-2. Also quoted in Cedric Watts,

It is a measure of Conrad's greatness and richness as a writer that, although he is so firmly established in the Western literary canon, he has been found by Third World scholars to be equally relevant to their world. The title of Peter Nazareth's 1982 article on Conrad published in Conradiana, "Out of Darkness: Conrad *and Other* Third World Writers"[46] (my italics), tells us much about how Nazareth regards Conrad. Nazareth uses the co-ordinate conjunction "and" in the title deliberately to claim Conrad as a 'Third World writer' like Nazareth himself, Achebe, Naipaul, Ngugi and others mentioned in his article. Nazareth is of course aware that Conrad is not, literally speaking, a Third World writer. He uses the term to draw attention to the close affinity he and other Third World writers and critics feel towards Conrad's art, and to the currency and relevance of Conrad's imaginative vision and narrative techniques to their world.

The introductory chapter to this thesis describes and explains the emergence and growth of interest in Conrad in the Third World over the last two decades. It explains that Third World scholars and critics find Conrad's imaginative vision and personal history appealing and identifiable with their own. What the chapter does not stress is Conrad's influence on Third World writers, a dimension that I believe needs some examination to emphasize Conrad's enduring strength and currency in both Western and other world literatures.

"Conrad is an inspiration to the African writer who ventures to express himself through a foreign linguistic medium," says Ponnuthurai Sarvan, "for was not English Conrad's third language?"[47] Sarvan's observation suggests inspiration at a basic and mundane level, something similar to "if Conrad could write in English his third language so well, so can I" - which is fair enough, but I believe Conrad's influence on Third World

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A Preface to Conrad, p.173

[46]Peter Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers," Conradiana vol.XIV, no.3, 1982, 172-187

[47]Ponnuthurai Sarvan, "Under African Eyes " in Hamner, p.153

writers is more profound than that. In a 1985 critique of Conrad's Typhoon for High School students writing the Cambridge School Certificate Literature in English Paper, I said:

> The second aspect of the [writer's] task involves how the substance of art is conveyed to the reader. Conrad lived in an age of experimentation. The word new was a catchword in the England of the 1890's. Society and its institutions were in a state of flux. The new discoveries in various branches of science affected man's conception of God, the truth, and himself. The publication of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species in 1857 marked the height of an age that had become sceptical and was losing faith....
>
> There was therefore a new spirit of questioning, doubting, in the air. Man no longer took for granted that he had descended from Adam. If he could no longer be sure of where he had come from, man became even less certain of where he was going.
>
> Leading writers, among whom was Conrad, challenged the role and assumptions of the novel. They became aware of the fact that for the writer to mirror the reality of his time. he could no longer take for granted or assume that he could speak on behalf of his society which no longer had a wide pool of shared values.
>
> If the writer desired to achieve truth - an elusive but highly desired goal - he had to employ writing techniques that took into account society's new state of flux. The most affected writing techniques were the narrative voice, the

> chronology of events in a story, and the writer's conception of his audience and how he proposed to appeal to them.
>
> Conrad believed that a man's state of mind was not determined by isolated single events but by the sum impression of all such events. To capture such a state of mind in a novel, the character should be introduced 'with a strong impression,' and then his state of mind analyzed and shown by moving back and forth over the events that have shaped the man.[48]

The societies from which and about which Third World writers write are for various reasons in a similar state of flux which, in most instances, assumes varying degrees of life-threatening instability. Like Conrad, therefore, these writers find that they cannot speak on behalf of their societies with any authority as these societies no longer have a wide pool of shared values. 'Reality,' and 'truth,' are as elusive in Third World experience as they were in Conrad's, and as Conrad discovered, Third World Writers find that narrative techniques which present experience in traditional linear fashion as the Victorian novel does, and which purport to present experience from an all-knowing perspective are inadequate and inappropriate to mirror the reality and truth of their experience.

Ngugi's novel, A Grain of Wheat (1967), whose similarity to Conrad's novels Nostromo, Lord Jim, and (particularly) Under Western Eyes many critics have commented upon,[49] begins as follows:

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[48]R.M. Zinyemba, Joseph Conrad: Typhoon (Harare: The College Press, 1985) p.9.

[49]See Sarvan's "Under African Eyes," in Hamner, pp.153-160; Nazareth's "Conrad's Descendants," and Watts's A Preface to Conrad, p.174

> Mugo felt nervous. He was lying on his back and looking at the roof. Sooty locks hung from the fern and grass thatch and all pointed to his heart. A clear drop of water was delicately suspended above him. The drop fattened and grew dirtier as it absorbed grains of soot. Then it started drawing towards him. He tried to shut his eyes. They would not close. He tried to move his head: it was firmly chained to the bed-frame. The drop grew larger and larger as it drew closer and closer to his eyes. He wanted to cover his eyes with his palms; but his hands, his feet, everything refused to obey his will.[50]

Mugo is introduced with 'a strong impression' reminiscent of Conrad's introduction of his characters. Thereafter, the narrative moves back and forth through disjointed time-frames to explore Mugo's state of mind and how it has come to be what it is. Mugo's dream, in which all options are 'inexorably' closed from him, mirrors his troubled mind. Like Conrad's Arsat, or Karain, or Jim, or Razumov, Mugo is tortured by guilt: he has betrayed his countryman who confided in him. And like Razumov's experience when Victor Haldin confides in him after Haldin has assassinated Mr de P-, the chairman of a repressive Russian Commission, Mugo's peace of mind and quiet life are shattered from the moment Kihika, a revolutionary Mau Mau freedom fighter, comes to confide in him. Mugo, like Razumov, turns in Kihika to the authorities, and Kihika is hanged by the colonial administration in Kenya. Like Razumov who is regarded as a hero among the Russian exiles in Switzerland on account of his supposed association with Haldin - when in fact he is a spy of the Russian government - Mugo is acclaimed as a hero, on account of his supposed association with Kihika - when he too is the very man who betrayed the

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[50]James Ngugi (now Ngugi wa Thiong'o), A Grain of Wheat (London: Heinemann, 1967) p.3

people's hero. Like Razumov, Mugo confesses his guilt at what Conrad would term a 'supreme moment,' when Mugo is expected to cap his heroism by addressing the crowds celebrating Uhuru (independence). Notwithstanding the danger they stand to suffer personally after their confessions, both Conrad's Razumov and Ngugi's Mugo experience an inner freedom and peace after their confessions.

Although his novel is set only four days from Uhuru, Ngugi emphasises, as Conrad would have, the moral implications of the event on his characters, and not the event itself. As the Dutch colonial administration operates remotely in Conrad's Malay Archipelago, and the Belgian colonial establishment exists primarily in the Sepulchral city away from the individual agents who exploit the Congo, the historical heroes of the Mau Mau Revolution in Kenya such as Jomo Kenyatta hardly feature in Ngugi's story. We witness instead a small group of ordinary men and women each taking stock of his or her role in the liberation struggle, re-assessing the moral implications of his or her actions, and nursing his or her wounded psyche and marred relationships. As in Conrad's Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness, and Nostromo, the story in Ngugi's novel is told by many narrators, each bringing into the story the truth of his or her sensations and impressions. In the end we have a kaleidoscopic view of several characters' impressions, and truth in the novel is as varied as the number of characters who tell their story.

While Cedric Watts's somewhat paternalistic comment on Conrad's influence on Ngugi, namely, "it is appropriate that the author of Heart of Darkness should now be helping black writers in the emergent nations of Africa,"[51] helps to emphasize the point I am making about Conrad's enduring imaginative vision and narrative techniques being re-worked in emerging non-Western literary traditions, it fails to appreciate the strength of Ngugi's own imaginative vision and the particularity of his African milieu. Where Conrad uses the love theme to have Natalia Haldin move Razumov towards confession, for instance, Ngugi evokes the legendary and great Gikuyu story of creation in which

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[51]Cedric Watts, A Preface to Conrad, p.174

Mumbi the great mother of creation simultaneously assumes other roles of Modern Kenya as the sister of Kihika the hero, Gikonyo's wife who becomes the fallen woman, and the angel of mercy and confidante who helps Mugo confess to achieve his inner freedom and peace. And as Sarvan has observed, Ngugi's vision is markedly different from Conrad's in Under Western Eyes:

> A Grain of Wheat accepts that imperialism, ruling over people by force and fear, can be removed through force and fear.... Therefore, there is not Conrad's sense of futility.[52]

While Sarvan is partly correct in his delineation of the difference between Conrad's vision in Under Western Eyes and Ngugi's in A Grain of Wheat, he misses the qualification Ngugi makes to his optimism at the end of the novel. The optimism is directed not so much on Kenya's public affairs as on the individual lives of the inhabitants of a small community outside the major centre Nairobi. Indeed, there is a suggestion of disillusionment already with the new Uhuru political leaders when an MP appropriates for himself land which the community are trying to acquire for communal and cooperative farming. Despite this small qualification, however, Ngugi's vision remains basically affirmative of the new political dispensation. It is largely optimistic, whereas Conrad's is largely pessimistic (in Under Western Eyes). The point to make here is that Conrad enduring imaginative vision and innovative narrative techniques have made him a most powerful influence on an author writing in a literary tradition and a socio-political milieu that are different from his own.

Other examples of Conrad's influence on Third World writers could be cited. At the University of Iowa, Peter Nazareth has introduced a graduate course in which he

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[52]Sarvan, "Under African Eyes," in Hamner, p.156

teaches a number of Conrad texts and texts by Conrad's "descendants."[53] He describes how difficult it was to reduce the texts on the "descendants" list to a number that would be manageable in a semester:

> I began to plan the course, to select Conrad texts I considered essential, and to select novels that related to texts by Conrad. The second list began to grow so large that I felt such a course would take years to teach. I began to shorten the list.[54]

And by using various criteria, Nazareth narrowed down his reading list to the following texts[55]:

CONRAD

"The Secret Sharer"
Heart of Darkness
Lord Jim
Nostromo
The Secret Agent
Under Western Eyes

DESCENDANTS

Tayeb Salih, Season of Migration to the North (Sudan)
Ngugi wa Thiong'o, A Grain of Wheat (Kenya)

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[53]Peter Nazareth, "Conrad's Descendants," Conradiana vol.22, no.2, 1990, pp.101-109

[54]Nazareth, "Conrad's Descendants," p.103

[55]ibid

Wilson Harris, Palace of the Peacock (Guyana)
Peter Nazareth, The General is Up (Uganda)
James Konrad, Target Amin (Uganda)
Lloyd Fernando, Scorpion Orchid (Malaysia)
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (America)
Ishmael Reed, Flight to Canada (America)

As the course progressed, Nazareth's students made many suggestions of further texts which they believed should have been included on the reading list. One woman student from India was particularly insistent that Ayi Kwei Armah of Ghana's third novel, Why Are We So Blest? "with its multiple texts presenting the exploitation of Africa by the West, "should have been on the list. So successful was Nazareth's graduate course that Conradiana agreed to publish three essays by graduate students on the course (in addition to Nazareth's own article about the course). Nazareth was moved to conclude his article on the course on a triumphant note reminiscent of the aggressively positive and optimistic slogans of a successful liberation movement: "Conrad lives."[56]

Indeed, as this thesis has attempted to show, Conrad "lives" in the classrooms of schools and lecture halls of universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as he does in the educational institutions of the West. Because of his peculiar cosmopolitan background, his enquiring, questioning, humane and liberating imaginative vision, and his innovative, sound, and enduring narrative techniques, Conrad has had, and continues to have, an impact on Third World writers, critics and scholars which no other major Western writer has had; Conrad deserves the universal critical attention that has been and that continues to be accorded to him.

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[56]Nazareth, "Conrad's Descendants," p.108

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