

CHAPTER- I

Introduction

“It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.”

(Homi K. Bhabha: *The Location of Culture*)

The exact ideological location of Conrad as an important author writing of culture and empire is notoriously difficult to pinpoint. While undertaking to read Conrad's ideological position as revealed in his major works it is anticipated in this Ph. D. thesis that the vast array of current poststructuralist and postcolonial perspectives will facilitate us to read his novels in their biographical and cultural contexts. His novels are riddled with ideological ambivalence, and his private correspondences refract the political conditions of his time pretty clearly. But Conrad continually refuses to adhere to any particular coherent political stand. He addresses the issue of power politics of his age in his novels, broadly speaking, in three different ways:

- 1) In contributing to and critiquing the hegemonic discourse of empire through the tales of romance and adventures, set in the colonized territories of Africa and Asia (in novels like *Heart of darkness* and *Lord Jim*).
- 2) In involving the imperial hegemonic intent intimately to the newly emerging global capitalism, felt pretty directly during the last and first decades of respectively the 19th and the 20th centuries (in a novel like *Nostromo*).
- 3) In dealing with ideas like anarchy and revolution which pose up a kind of counter-discourse to the hegemony of European imperialism in the early decades of the 20th c (in novels like *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*).

An attempt would also be made to locate the precise aspect of the ideological transactions between select novels of Conrad and the imperial socio-cultural texts and travel narratives produced in the period. It was a period that saw the expansion of capitalism, imperialism and colonialism in the world arena. Through this kind of a reading, it is aimed to pinpoint the relationship between Conrad's novels and his life, between the cultural themes and the imperial period during which they were written, and between the novels and the non-literary texts written in the same period. The study will thus help us to understand Conrad's approach to the pervasive ideas of the 19th century as well. Thus, we can determine to what extent Conrad's texts are the products of the prevalent imperialistic attitude of the age and to what extent they are against the ideology.

Nineteenth-century European colonial power exerts its domination not only by means of material, military and technological superiority but also by means of the manipulation of the colonial subject's self-image and representation in discourse. The control of the colonial subject's representations constitutes an effective instrument of coercion. In reality, the ideological representation of the colonial subject as a deviant "other" was a key strategy of colonial discourse. The ideological representation of the colonized nation as a deviant "other" can also be mapped out in the records of Conrad's own experiences in Africa. Conrad describes Africa in his *The Congo Diary* with an unparalleled repugnance in his tone. In an entry, entitled 'Friday, 1st of August, 1890', in the *The Congo Diary* he comments on the end of his Congo expedition in the following words: "Mosquitos – frogs- beastly! Glad to see the end of this stupid tramp. Feel rather seedy" (Conrad, vol. 4, 2004: 136). *The Congo Diary* registers Conrad's disillusioned vision of Africa, the place that he always fantasized as a little boy to go to. Every aspect of real Africa seemed to repel him in a ghastly way. He notes his first hand reactions in direct terms in the *Diary* which, in due course, played a great role to create a stereotypical nation of dark, amorphous Africa in *Heart of Darkness*. In an entry of 'Friday, 4th July, 1890', Conrad writes, "In the evening three women, of whom one albino passed our camp; horrid chalky white with pink blotches; red eyes; red hair; features very negroid and ugly. Mosquitos. At night when the moon rose heard shouts and drumming in distant villages. Passed a bad night" (131).

Conrad uses synonyms to the pejorative adjectives like ‘ugly’ and ‘horrid’ for about several times to narrate his first hand experience of Africa in *The Congo Diary* which helps to fix “otherness” on Africa. The “otherness” of the Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, the Malays in *Lord Jim*, the South American anarchists (who resist imperialism in the region) in *Nostromo*, or in the failure of the anarchist or revolutionary political ideals in *The Secret Agent* or in *Under Western Eyes* are deftly made stereotypical through Conrad’s chosen impressionistic style. Indeed, in *Heart of Darkness* the narrative disruptions signal a failure in imperial modes of cognition. Its ‘knowledgeable’ terms of enlightenment lack the capacity to comprehend the ‘knowledgelessness’ of dark Africa. Hearing the strange music of drums in the forest, for instance, Marlow admits in *Heart of Darkness*,

Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell... We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspects of an unknown planet... The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us- who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings. (Conrad, 1994: 56)

To recognize the true nature of this “prehistory” in Marlow’s description of the colonial landscape and to appreciate Conrad, dealing with the theme of empire in its cultural as well as political, economic and historical contexts, it is important to focus on the milieu of the imperial knowledge production system of the age. Conrad, in one way or another engages in dialogues with texts like *The Expansion of England in the Nineteenth Century* (1883) by John Seeley, *The English in the West Indies* (1888) by James Anthony Froude, *The True Conception of Empire* (1897) by Joseph Chamberlain and *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) by John Atkinson Hobson among many such writings of the period. Our attempt to read Conrad in close relation to the context of imperialism and its culture may be defended by the poststructuralist view of history in the sense that texts are considered aspects of culture rather than something that is related to culture. Cultures are not used to relate texts to their worlds because cultures are already texts, persons, practices and rituals. Therefore, a text is not an expression or reflection of its world; it plays an active part in producing

and acting within that world. Thus, “texts constitute patterns of behaviour, the value of symbols and organize understanding” (Colebrook, 1997: 68). J. Hillis Miller, though called a formalist critic, is among those who do not separate literature from its context. He states:

Works of literature do not simply reflect or [they] are not simply caused by their contexts. They have a productive effect in history. This can and should [...] be studied. To put this [in] another way, the only thing that sometimes worries me about the turn to history now as an explanatory method is the implication that I can fully explain every text by its pre-existing historical context. But the publication of these works was itself a political or historical event that in some way or another changed history. I think that if you don't allow for this, then literature is not much worth bothering with. (1991: 152-153)

This approach to culture and cultural artefact was borrowed from Clifford Geertz, an American cultural anthropologist, who asserts that human beings are cultural products and should be so studied (Geertz, 1973: 51). Therefore, the historicity of Conrad's texts and ideology may best be appreciated through a reading of both literary and non-literary texts produced in the cultural currency of imperialism in the age of empire. Said understands imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire” (1994: 8). Discussing the facts about imperialism Said claims that in Europe itself at the end of the nineteenth century “scarcely a corner of life was untouched by the facts of empire; the economies were hungry for overseas markets, raw materials, cheap labour, and hugely profitable land, and defence and foreign policy establishments were more and more committed to the maintenance of vast tracts of distant territory and large numbers of subjugated people” (7). Said not only shows the economic aspects of imperialism but also focuses on the idea of the dominance of one culture over another. He pays attention to the privileged role of culture in the modern imperial

experience and takes note of the extraordinary global reach that the classical nineteenth and early twentieth century European imperialism has attained. Archibald Paton Thornton argues in his *Doctrines of Imperialism* that “imperialism is itself a comment, made by the controlled about their controllers, and made in the assurance of impunity” (1965: 27). In *Imperialism in the Twentieth Century*, he defines an imperial policy as “one that enables a metropolis to create and maintain an external system of effective control” (Thornton, 1977: 3). He also argues that this control may be exerted by political, economic, strategic, cultural, religious and ideological means or by a combination of some or all of these (5). Hobson, a university lecturer in 1900 and a participant in socialist, liberal and ethical causes, defines imperialism in *Imperialism: A Study* as the most powerful movement in the most effective politics of the Western world; and he sees it as a political and economic theory which first emerged in England during and immediately after the Boer War. Hobson discovers and discusses the general principles which underlie imperialist policy; and he illustrates that policy studying the progress of British imperialism especially in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the economic taproots of imperialism Hobson claims that imperialism is a policy which was created by a nation’s manufacturers, merchants and financiers who wanted to use their government to dispose profitably of their economic resources and thus to secure their particular use of some distant undeveloped countries. He shows the international consequences of capitalist under-consumption and over-savings as the causes of imperialism (Hobson, 1965: 71-93). He claims that,

]E]very improvement of methods of production, every concentration of ownership and control seems to accentuate the tendency. As one nation after another enters the machine economy and adopts advanced industrial methods, it becomes more difficult for its manufacturers, merchants, and financiers to dispose profitably of their economic resources, and they are tempted more and more to use their governments in order to secure for their particular use some distant undeveloped country by annexation and protection.

The process is inevitable [...] Everywhere appear excessive powers of production, excessive capital in search of investment. [...] It is this economic condition of affairs that forms the taproot of imperialism. (80)

Colonialism, which is almost always recognized as a consequence of imperialism, and which is sometimes thought to be preceding imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. Hobson sees colonialism as a natural overflow of nationality and argues that the test of colonialism is the power of colonists to transplant the civilization they represent to the new natural and social environment in which they find themselves. He emphasizes the idea that theoretically one of the aims of colonialism is “to represent true European civilization in a distant territory but practically there has always been a conflict between the colonial deeds and the imperial ideas” (6) because, as he observed, in most colonies, a civilization distinct from that of the “mother country” was marked out as a result of the presence of subject or “inferior” races and alien, climatic and other natural conditions (6-8). The political and economic structure of a colonial society was seen by Hobson to be wholly alien to that of the “mother country”. In Hobson’s opinion, the main reason for the disparity between a civilization marked out in a colony and the civilization of the mother nation is “a debasement of a genuine nationalism” (6-8). Thus, Hobson sees colonialism as a nation’s “attempts to overflow its natural banks and absorb the near or distant territory of reluctant and inassimilable peoples” (6).

In most of his novels Conrad portrays European men in colonial situations far removed from their usual social customs. Thus isolated, his characters are brought into conflict with the forces of good and evil within themselves and with the non-European social codes of their locale. The impact of isolation on a western individual, the codes of culture that European civilization designs for itself, the moral ambiguities of human existence coming in contact with the different non-European societies, generally illustrate the complicated nature of cultural as well as ideological realization on the part of Conrad’s characters about the issues of the Empire and its power relations. The typically European perception of Enlightenment links power with knowledge and spawns a scope of hegemonic discrimination of cultures in the Empire. The societies dominated by the Empire are often depicted as primitive and

lacking in any knowledge production system and therefore considered 'dark', as against the 'modern' and 'enlightened' society of the imperial nation. The very idea of the Empire, in fact, guarantees a dominant power position to the colonizing nations of Europe in the late 19th century and to its capitalist counterpart, America, in the early days of the 20th century. Conrad writes within the bounds of this matrix of power in the empire, a historical situation of which Hobsbawm speaks in the following words:

A world economy whose pace was set by its developed or developing capitalist core was extremely likely to turn into a world in which the 'advanced' dominated the 'backward'; in short into a world of empire. But, paradoxically, the era from 1875 to 1914 may be called the Age of Empire not only because it developed a new kind of imperialism, but also for a much more old-fashioned reason. It was probably the period of modern world history in which the number of rulers officially calling themselves, or regarded by Western diplomats as deserving the title of, 'emperors' was at its maximum. (2010: 56)

By the time of the first serialization of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in 1898, the larger parts of the globe were being occupied by the empires of sorts, and the cultural conception of any narrative, whatsoever, was deemed virtually impossible without some kind of consciousness of the prevalent imperial power relations. Hobsbawm further hints at the hegemony of empires over their occupied territories in the imperial system in the specific age and points out:

In a less trivial sense, our period is obviously the era of a new type of empire, the colonial. The economic and military supremacy of the capitalist countries had long been beyond serious challenge, but no systematic attempt to translate it into formal conquest, annexation and administration had been made between the end of

the eighteenth and the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Between 1880 and 1914 it was made, and most of the world outside Europe and the Americas was formally partitioned into territories under the formal rule or informal political domination of one or other of a handful of states: mainly Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, the USA and Japan. (57)

Seeley, another 19th century critic of imperialism, describes the nature of imperialism and colonialism in similar terms:

When a State advances beyond the limits of nationality its power becomes precarious and artificial. This is the condition of most empires, and it is the condition of our own. When a nation extends itself into other territories the chances are that it cannot destroy or completely drive out, even if it succeeds in conquering them. When this happens [...] the subject or rival nationalities cannot be properly assimilated, and remain as a permanent cause of weakness and danger. (1961: 73)

It is known that the British Empire was not confined to the self-governing colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century. It included a much greater area, a much more numerous population in distant tropical territories, where the native population vastly outnumbered the white inhabitants. Chamberlain claims that in these territories, the sense of possession gave place to the sense of obligation. The British people as the colonizer subsequently felt that their rule over these territories could only be justified if the British rule added to the happiness and prosperity of the natives. Chamberlain himself approved of the idea of colonialism insofar as it brings “security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before” (1961: 212). He believed that it was the work of civilization which was being carried out in the colonies and it was their national mission. He also saw

the colonies as scopes “for the exercise of the faculties and qualities” which made of the British “a great governing race” (212-213).

As has already been observed, in the discourses about imperialism and colonialism, the vocabulary of the 19th century imperial culture is stuffed with such words and phrases as ‘inferior’ or ‘subject races’, ‘subordinate peoples’, ‘dependency’, ‘expansion’, ‘authority’, ‘power’, ‘profit’, ‘civilization’ and ‘the mission to civilize the colonized’. Archibald Thornton’s comments on imperialism, which are related with concepts of ‘power’, ‘profit’, ‘expansion’ and ‘civilization’, are worth mentioning. For him, imperialism is a matter of power. He claims that within imperialism operate,

[T]he processes by which the power of a metropolis expands. Expansion is born of confidence. It carries its own dynamism. It explodes among the passive, apparently without harm to itself. It changes the polity, it changes the social structure; above all, it changes the mind and life-style of those among whom it comes. Expansion lives without rules and happens where it can. (Thornton, 1977: 29-30)

Thornton states that this power may be ideological, political, cultural, economic, or religious; but it is oppressive in all cases. He believes that the economic systems, however different their ideologies are, have had power over millions of people and that it has been a power which could be enforced. The world of the 19th century grew and prospered within a framework built by the great Powers insisting on their privileges, setting their margins and calculating their options. Especially in the later twentieth century, “money was reckoned as a power and modern imperialism was the product of this power” (31).

In fact, an awareness of the mechanism of empire and subsequently of imperialism became central to the knowledge of the European self. Conrad and many others critiqued the physical ways of dominance in an empire but always depended on the cultural categories fashioned by the same imperial system for their criticism. In most cases they did not question the episteme, but put the practice to question.

Hobsbawm describes these literary artists as “intermediaries” (2010: 80) writing between their experiences of the exotic culture and an awareness of the empire, and analyses the inherent culture of the empire as

[P]enetrated and dominated by these contradictions. It was an era of unparalleled peace in the western world, which engendered an era of equally unparalleled world wars. It was an era of, in spite of appearances, growing social stability within the zone of developed industrial economies, which provided the small bodies of men who, with almost contemptuous ease, could conquer and rule over vast empires, but which inevitably generated on its outskirts the combined forces of rebellion and revolution that were to engulf it. Since 1914 the world has been dominated by the fear, and sometimes by the reality, of global war and the fear (or hope) of revolution – both based on the historic situations which emerged directly out of the Age of Empire. (9-10)

Even the idea of revolution to revert the position of power, usually ascribed to imperialism and championed by gross capitalism, is a production of the empire. Conrad addresses this aspect of the revolutionary culture rather from a pessimistic viewpoint in novels like *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. The gloominess of the author’s tone in these two novels has to do with his realization of the incapacity of a conception of resistance, either in the form of anarchy or revolution, completely free from the idea of empire. Hobsbawm observes this power politics in the discourse of the empire and writes:

What is more, the cultural and intellectual life of the period show a curious awareness of this pattern of reversal, of the imminent death of one world and the need for another. But what gave the period its peculiar tone and savour was that the coming cataclysms were

expected, misunderstood and disbelieved. World war would come, but nobody, even the best of the prophets, really then understood the kind of war it would be. And when the world finally stood on the brink, the decision-makers rushed towards the abyss in utter disbelief. The great new socialist movements were revolutionary; but for most of them revolution was, in some sense, the logical and necessary outcome of bourgeois democracy, which gave the multiplying many the decision over the diminishing few. And for those among them who expected actual insurrection, it was a battle whose aim, in the first instance, could only be to institute bourgeois democracy as a necessary preliminary to something more advanced. Revolutionaries thus remained within the Age of Empire, even as they prepared to transcend it. (10-11)

The contradictory and often interdependent aspect of the empire ensures the mechanism of power that is central to its existence. An idea of resistance is an intrinsic part of power play as the binaries of the dominating and the dominated are sustained by it. Conrad in his attempt to illustrate the confrontation of cultures in his texts touches upon this scope of reading empire as power. Power, according to Foucault, should be understood as something felt not physically, but ideologically. He suggests that:

... (i) [T]hat power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network; (ii) that relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role; (iii) that these relations don't take the sole form of prohibition and punishment, but are of multiple forms; (iv) that their interconnections delineate general conditions of

domination, and this domination is organized into a more- or- less coherent and unitary strategic form; that dispersed, heteromorphous, localized procedures of power are adapted, re- enforced and transformed by these global strategies, all this being accompanied by numerous phenomena of inertia, displacement and resistance; hence one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with ‘dominators’ on one side and ‘dominated’ on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies; (v) that power relations do indeed ‘serve’, but not at all because they are ‘in the service of’ an economic interest taken as primary, rather because they are capable of being utilized in strategies; (vi) that there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies. (Foucault, 1980: 142)

Empire, in the age when Conrad had been writing, thus appropriates the role of an institution of power, which was not operating politically only, but culturally too. It was “being utilized in strategies”, and its “domination is organized into a more- or- less coherent and unitary strategic form”. The idea of empire, according to Hobsbawm, “was not only an economic and political but a cultural phenomenon. The conquest of the globe by its ‘developed’ minority transformed images, ideas and aspirations, both by force and institutions, by example and by social transformation”

(2010: 76). Culture, indeed, is the focus of the imperial discourse, knowledge and representation of which facilitates the empire to continue its hegemony over the colonized civilizations, ideologically described as savages. The historians of the empire, in general, accept that the cultural agenda of the expanding empire cover not solely the acquisition of colonies but also a variety of relationships between dominant and subservient states. Therefore, imperialism is regarded as an act of dominating another nation's economic, political and even military structure, in one word, the whole culture of the colony, without actually taking governmental control. On account of the fact that any study of imperialism must concern itself with the culture of the state, it would be appropriate here to explore how the imperial ideology, as specified by Hobsbawm, shaped itself in Britain in the phase of new imperialism in practice from 1875 to 1914. Jingoism appeared in the 1870s and any British victory or setback might call it forth. The public schools and the universities, the music halls and the press became agencies of the new imperialism. The patriotic songs emanating from the music halls were far from being free of social control and manipulation and one publication, *Pall Mall Gazette*, almost solely led the campaign for Gordon's mission to the Sudan in 1884. Through jingoist effusions, the British thought of themselves as the owners of 'an empire on which the sun never sets'. The British Empire was seen by its advocates at its height with the images of continuity and worldwide spread.

In the perspective of the statement made above, the beginning of British imperial writing may be traced back to the publication of Sir John Seeley's eloquent lectures on *The Expansion of England in the Eighteenth Century* in 1883. The lectures were in their own day something of a sensation. On publication, they became an immediate best-seller, selling 80,000 copies in their first two years in print. The volume remained continuously in print until 1956. They were lectures with a purpose and a message. *The Expansion of England* is a work which is believed to have contributed more than any other single utterance to the change of feeling respecting the relations between Great Britain and her colonies. The book is a colonialist primer justifying British imperialism. Throughout the lectures on which the book is based, Seeley argued that "history, in particular the period 1688-1815 covering the rise of British colonial power, offered lessons for the present" (quoted in Elridge, 1984: 3-4).

He evaluated the colonial condition of England, first looking at the quantity of the population living in English colonies. Giving some figures of the population in each colony, Seeley conceded, “The total makes a population roughly equal to that of all Europe excluding Russia” (1961: 74). Seeley declared that,

[T]he simple obvious fact of the extension of the English name into other countries of the globe [is], the foundation of Greater Britain. [...] We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind. While we were doing it, that is, in the eighteenth century, we did not allow it to affect our imaginations or in any degree to change our ways of thinking; nor have we even now ceased to think of ourselves as simply a race inhabiting an island off the northern coast of the Continent of Europe. We constantly betray in our modes of speech that we do not reckon our colonies as really belonging to us. (73)

Froude, an English historian, wrote *The English in the West Indies* in 1888. The book is a travelogue interspersed with political and social commentary. Froude, in the book, presents his response to the topical issue of constitutional government for the colonies. As an English imperialist, he saw no benefit in colonial autonomy, “Dark Parliament” as he called it. During his travels to the Antilles, Froude had the opportunity to observe the daily life of the natives on some of the islands. He gave information about their family and social lives in his Western perspective:

Morals in the technical sense they have none, but they cannot be said to sin, because they have no knowledge of a law. They are naked and not ashamed. They are married as they call it, but not parsoned. The woman prefers a looser tie that she may be able to leave a man if he treats her unkindly. Yet they are not licentious [...] Many die in this way by eating unwholesome food, but also many live, and those who do live grow

up exactly like their parents [...] There is evil, but there is not the demoralising effect of evil. They sin, but they sin only as animals, without shame, because there is no sense of doing wrong. They eat the forbidden fruit, but it brings with it no knowledge of the difference between good and evil [...] They are perfectly happy. In no part of the globe is there any peasantry whose every want is so completely satisfied as her Majesty's black subjects in these West Indian islands. They have no aspirations to make them restless. (Froude, 1961: 113)

Chamberlain, in *The True Conception of Empire*, divided England's imperial history into three phases. The first phase is the eighteenth century during which English became a great imperial power and the colonies were regarded, not only by English power but also by every European power that possessed them, as possessions valuable in proportion. The second phase came after the War of Independence in America. Chamberlain remarked that the war awakened England and gave way to the idea that the colonies could be held for England's profit alone. Chamberlain saw the 1890s as the third phase of England's imperial history. In that period, by the instinctive good sense and patriotism of her people, England reached the true conception of empire. He explained that conception as such:

We no longer talk of them (the self-governing colonies) as dependencies. The sense of possession has given place to the sentiment of kinship. We think and speak of themselves as part of ourselves, as part of the British Empire, united to us, although they may be dispersed throughout the world, by ties of kindred, of religion, of history, and of language, and joined to us by the seas that formerly seemed to divide us. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 212)

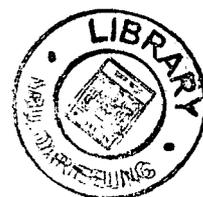
Hobson, in *Imperialism*, discovered and discussed the general principles which underlay imperialist policy and illustrated that policy studying the progress of British imperialism especially in the 19th century. In the book, the economic origins of imperialism have been traced with statistical measurements of imperialistic methods and results. He also investigated the theory and practice of imperialism regarded as a “mission of civilization”, imperialism’s effects upon “lower” and alien peoples and its view of things and the disorderly, irrational, selfish reality of events. Hobson, discussing the political significance of imperialism, saw imperialism as antithetical to democracy, peace and social reform. He claimed that those living in colonies and protectorates did not have any of the political rights of British citizens and they were not trained in the arts of free British institutions. The British Empire was accepted as an educator of free political institutions in the 19th century. Observing the imperial practice of his time, Hobson claimed that the British Empire did not perform its responsibilities towards the inhabitants of the colonies. He severely criticised the British Empire in following words:

Where British government is real, it does not carry freedom or self-government; where it does carry a certain amount of freedom and self-government, it is not real [...] We have taken upon ourselves in these little islands the responsibility of governing huge aggregations of lower races in all parts of the world by methods which are antithetic to the methods of government which we most value for ourselves.

The question just here is not whether we are governing these colonies and subject races well and wisely, better than they could govern themselves if left alone, or better than another imperial European nation could govern them, but whether we are giving them those arts of government which we regard as our most valuable possessions. (Hobson, 1965: 116-117)

The discussion made so far is intended to clarify that writings of the empire were offering the literary artists of the day enough scope both to critique and espouse the issues of imperial ideology. It has also been observed that, in the discourses chosen, the concept of European cultural and economic superiority was shadowed by self-contradiction and self-doubt though subversions in turn helped to maintain the interest of the empire by keeping within the practice of writing of and in the imperial culture. Even in the words of one as imperially ebullient as Chamberlain, there are examples of fracture, momentary admissions that Britain's greatness may, one day, collapse. Joseph Conrad, being a lifelong mariner in the service of the British Merchant navy and a loyal British citizen at once, becomes an apotheosis of this historical practice, addressing mutually opposite issues inherent in the culture of the empire. Culture, if understood in Edward Said's terms as "a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another", is a perfect playground of the imperial power politics that shapes and re- shapes it relentlessly (1994: xiii). Said informs:

All cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them. Yet not all cultures make representations of foreign cultures *and* in fact master or control them. This is the distinction, I believe, of modern Western cultures. It requires the study of Western knowledge or representations of the non- European world to be a study of both those representations and the political power they express. Late- nineteenth- century artists like Kipling and Conrad, or for that matter mid- century figures like Gerome and Flaubert, do not merely reproduce the outlying territories; they work them out, or animate them, using narrative technique and historical and exploratory attitudes and positive ideas of the sort provided by thinkers like Max Muller, Renan, Charles Temple, Darwin, Benjamin Kidd, Emerich de Vattel. All of these developed and



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accentuated the essentialist positions in European culture proclaiming that Europeans should rule, non-Europeans be ruled. And Europeans *did* rule. (100)

The dynamics of power existing between culture and empire in the age of the empire, according to Bhabha, “problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the ‘national’ is no longer naturalizable. What emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a *writing*, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable” (2009: 125). Conrad writes between this mimetic and mimic space and his novels are intertextually related to the other non-fictional writings of the empire. His fierce indictments of the colonizing enterprise are nuanced with his appropriation of the “other” cultures as degenerates in passive tracts of dark, primitive, uncivilized territories of the earth. The pre-supposed notion of degeneracy and backwardness on the part of the cultures in the Congo, in the Malay Archipelago or in the South Americas is a strategy of marginalisation. Bhabha defines the process as a method of cultural obliteration and says:

The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction. Despite the play of power within colonial discourse and the shifting positionalities of its subjects (for example, effects of class, gender, ideology, different social formations, varied systems of colonization and so on), I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a ‘subject nation’, appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity. Therefore, despite the ‘play’ in the colonial system which is crucial to its exercise of power, colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative whereby

the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs
are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality.
(101)

Thus theorized, it is seen that Conrad's texts are best located between the two extremes of culture and empire. The signs of civic ethics, enlightened morality and culture-specific knowledge of European civilization are continually doubled by the unsettling representations of the instinctive, spontaneous and non-specific qualities of the non-European civilizations in his novels. Thus, a critique of the hegemonic civil codes of utilitarian and capitalist Europe besides a certain consciousness of the symbolical immensity of the darkness of Africa, Asia and Latin America authenticate Conrad's acute awareness of the linkage between the representation of "the other" and the complex process of "otherisation" produced by the imperial episteme of power. The current study attempts to locate the hybrid ideological position of Conrad, writing in between the power relation of culture and the Empire in the novels of his major phase (1898-1911).

There is a huge amount of diametrically opposite critical responses to the works of Joseph Conrad. The last several decades have seen a major shift in the author's reputation. His status as an archetypal modernist whose discursive narrative practices represent the turmoil of a literary culture at war with its past has been shaken by an assessment of the racial and gender assumptions underlying his tales. Conrad has narrated his tales of adventures in such an era of capitalist expansion, when to celebrate adventure is synonymous with celebrating the Empire and its colonial enterprises. Some critics have seen egregious excess of colonialism in his works while others are there to hold him as a liberal-humanist with capacities of "imagining the unimaginable" - civilizers as savages. The polemical polarities have increased the mass interest in Conrad's politics since the middle of the 20th century. Cedric Watts points out this feature of 'doubleness' in a Conrad text in his seminal book *A Preface to Conrad* (1982) and directs our attention to the very nature of the man writing between two zones of awareness – culture and the Empire. Watts says that Conrad,

[W]as a double man. 'Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning', he wrote to a Polish friend. 'Homo duplex': the double man. The phrase will serve as a theme for this book. Sometimes it seems to me that if any God presides over Conrad's best work, it is the god Janus. Janus is the two-headed god: he looks in opposite ways at the same time; he presides over paradox; and he is the patron of janiform texts. (7)

John W Griffith tries to sort out the problem of polarities in the Conrad polemics and brings to the surface the dialectics of the much famous psychic and ideological "janiformity" of the author in his influential research work *Joseph Conrad and the Anthropological Dilemma: Bewildered Traveller* (1995). Albert Guerard in his *Conrad the Novelist* (1958) enlists the ambivalence of his ideological position which renders a ready key to the multifaceted forms of cultural, political and moral implications of a Conrad novel. Guerard dramatically enlists the paradoxes in the author in the following manner:

A decided fear of the corrosive and the faith-destroying intellect – doubled by [i.e. coupled with] a profound and ironic skepticism;

A declared belief that ethical matters are simple – doubled by an extraordinary sense of ethical complexities;

A declared distrust of generous idealism – doubled by a strong idealism ...;

A declared commitment to authoritarian sea-tradition – doubled by a pronounced individualism ...;

A declared and extreme political conservatism, at once aristocratic and pragmatist – doubled by great sympathy for the poor and the disinherited of the earth ...;

A declared fidelity to law as above the individual –
doubled by a strong sense of fidelity to the individual;

Briefly: a deep commitment to order in society and in
the self – doubled by incorrigible sympathy for the
outlaw, whether existing in society or the self. (44)

Abdul R. JanMohamed, in his essay “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature”, argues that colonialist literature is divisible into two broad categories: the “imaginary” and the “symbolic” and further states,

The second type of ‘symbolic’ fiction, represented by the novels of Joseph Conrad and Nadine Gordimer, realizes that syncretism is impossible within the power relations of colonial society because such a context traps the writer in the libidinal economy of the ‘imaginary’. Hence, becoming reflexive about its context, by confining itself to a rigorous examination of the ‘imaginary’ mechanism of colonialist mentality, this type of fiction manages to free itself from the Manichean allegory. (1986: 85)

There are critics, likewise, who regard Conrad as a ‘secret sharer’ (a term, used by Conrad himself) of imperial ideologies. Chinua Achebe, in his famous essay entitled “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness”, claimed that Conrad was a thoroughgoing “racist” (1977: 794). The nub of Achebe’s criticism of Conrad is Conrad’s representation of Africa and Africans:

A Conrad student informed me in Scotland that Africa is merely a setting for the disintegration of the mind of Mr. Kurtz.

Which is partly the point. Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of

all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. (782-94)

Although Chinua Achebe has gone quite far yet the severity of his critique is unable to satisfy the critical gaze of Edward Said. Said asserts that Achebe “does not go far enough in emphasizing what in Conrad’s early fiction becomes more pronounced and explicit in the late works, like *Nostramo* and *Victory*... Conrad treats [the local Indians and the ruling-class Spaniards in *Nostramo*] with something of the same pitying contempt and exoticism he reserves for African Blacks and South East Asian peasants” (1994: 165-166). Said becomes even more drastic in deprecating Conrad’s racism when he says of his and Flaubert’s work that it is, “despite its ‘realism’, ideological and repressive: “it effectively silences the Other, it reconstitutes difference as identity, it rules over and represents domains figured by occupying powers, not by inactive inhabitants” (166). Said attacks Conrad indeed not as an individual but as one of a huge number of biased and colonial writers of fiction and nonfiction. He depicts him as a liberal humanist, trying to purge the notions of atrocious imperialism and adds:

Conrad’s tragic limitation is that even though he could see clearly that on one level imperialism was essentially pure dominance and land-grabbing, he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that ‘natives’ could lead lives free from European domination. As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them. (3)

To many, it appears that Conrad does not merit the place awarded him in the canon of the English and world novel. Mukhtar Chaudhary, for instance, has this to say: “Joseph Conrad’s position as a great writer is questionable. The reason is that racial details found in his work, and often ignored or shrugged off by [many] commentators, make him look like a partisan spirit instead of an objective observer of human situation...The human hierarchy in Conrad is, in descending order in value and worth, the British, the Continental European, and the rest” (2003: 41). Chaudhary rather deprecates the practice of those who hold Conrad as a great artist:

They will see that Conrad does not treat ‘race’ and ‘colonialism’ as local colours or as a detail in his setting, but as part of the universal meaning that great literature is supposed to communicate. He is so conscious of this detail of human experience that he is unable to transcend it even when he is aiming at presenting a moral or ethical issue having universal relevance across geographical or racial lines. (42)

Naturally, it is *Heart of Darkness* that has attracted the most comments and analyses in this connection. This amazing novella has attracted both condemnation and admiration in equal proportion to its great popularity in all languages and parts of the world. Both friends and foes of Conrad find this little work worthy enough to invite their attention the most. About this novella, many scholars adopt rather the same viewpoints as Achebe’s finding Conrad guilty of placing the Africans at a lower level morally and humanly than the Europeans. James M. Johnson, for instance, deplors Conrad’s painting of Africa as inherently evil. In his words: “His version of evil – the form taken by Kurtz’s Satanic behaviour – is ‘going native.’ In short, evil is African in Conrad’s story; if it is also European, that’s because some number of white men in the heart of darkness behaves like Africans” (Johnson, 1997: 370- 371). He failed miserably, according to Johnson, because “Conrad’s use of Africa in *Heart of Darkness* reinforces the dominant racial paradigm enunciated by Spencer in *Principles of Sociology* – and by Victorian anthropology generally” (112). But why is the world unlikely to be imagined without the white man taking it upon himself to look after it, to order it as he wills? Said muses upon the possibility of an independent

national culture free of the colonial hegemony of the empire and observes: "Conrad does not give us the sense that he could imagine a fully realized alternative to imperialism: the natives he wrote about in Africa, Asia or America were incapable of independence, and because he seemed to imagine that European tutelage was a given, he could not foresee what would take place when it came to an end. But come to an end it would" (1994: 28). Patrick Brantlinger suggests that Conrad does not try to exonerate himself and further observes, "Conrad must have recognized his own complicity and seen himself as at least potentially a Kurtz-like figure. In the novella, the African wilderness serves as a mirror, in whose 'darkness' Conrad/Marlow sees a death-pale self-image" (1985: 377). Brantlinger does not let Conrad get away with it by his just portraying a morally corrupt West. The difficulty with this ingenious inversion, through which 'ideals' become 'idols,' is that Conrad portrays the moral bankruptcy of imperialism by showing European motives and actions to be no better than African fetishism and savagery. He paints Kurtz and Africa with the same tar brush, "while Conrad/Marlow treat the attribution of 'evil' to the European invaders as a paradox, its attribution to Africans he treats as a given" (371-372).

The general trend of most condemners is that Conrad failed to go beyond the racially superior attitude of the Victorians, that his fiction reinforces the dominant racial paradigm which was enunciated by the current anthropology and sociology and which was never challenged by Conrad. Nor is the verdict better about Conrad's other fiction than *Heart of Darkness*, as evident in Said's remarks and as Robert Ducharme has it: "I think it can be demonstrated that his novel *Lord Jim* contains what may fairly be called a defence of traditional Western cultural values and practices" (1993: 4). Sarah Cole observes in her essay, "Conradian Alienation And Imperial Intimacy": "As the language and the logic of imperialism have increasingly been subjected to critical investigation, Conrad's texts have come to mark an important moment in a literary tradition defined not by its heroic break with bourgeois conventionality, but by its adherence to a Western, male world hegemony" (1998: 251).

Even though literary critics on the whole have not adopted Chinua Achebe's bracing denunciation of Conrad as a 'bloody racist,' they nevertheless have revalued Conrad's work in the context of a discursive economy that functions in both overt and subtle ways to justify imperialism and racial hierarchy. Localization of Conrad in the

meta-text of imperialism is seen by Benita Parry in her *Conrad and Imperialism* (1983) as a process of reciprocal discourse formation. The currents and cross-currents of Conrad criticism down the ages are sufficient to show that his texts are woven out of the complex awareness of imperialism as a phenomenal shaping power of human psyche in modern, enlightened Europe. Scholars, sceptic to Conrad's ideological status between the cultures he is writing of and the imperial 'gaze' that he is writing from, can be Western or from the Third World, and so can his defenders be. Many can see him as even-minded, fair, and having a sympathetic attitude to all races and nations. It is revealing to see how differently one can read the same *Heart of Darkness* from the perspective of the indignant scholars mentioned so far by quoting from a Sri Lankan Scholar, D. C. A. Goonetilleke who thinks that Conrad has "a sense of racial equality and a balanced critical sense" (1991: 16). He adds somewhere else:

Writing in the heyday of Empire, the age of Joseph Chamberlain and Cecil Rhodes, Conrad subverts majority imperialist sentiments and opinion from the beginning, revealing an aspect of his modernity. Suggestions of darkness in Britain's past and present history are confirmed by Marlow's opening words, 'And this has also been one of the dark places of the earth.' (69)

He further says about *Almayer's Folly*: "Racial superiority is refused. Conrad's criticism of Lingard's sense of white racial superiority is implied in the excess of Lingard's consciousness of his adopted daughter's colour and in his defensiveness" (16). If anything, it seems to Goonetilleke, that it is the non-whites who are favoured by Conrad: "The naturalness and reality of the Africans differ strikingly from the alienness and frightening absurdity of the [French] man-of-war" (72).

That Conrad attains balance is substantiated by Brian Spittles: "Conrad constantly stressed both the difference of foreign cultures – seeing them in their own right, with their own values, not simply as amusing, or barbaric, variations from

European definitions of civilization – and a possible fundamental unity of human experience” (1992: 17).

In most cases scholars who condemn Conrad's stance concerning imperialism do so concerning race- representations; and in the same way those who defend his attitude to the empire, also defend his attitude to the “other”. Therefore, when Benita Parry champions Conrad's attack on imperialism, it is almost certain that the attack necessarily be understood in terms of the author's attitude to races, “by revealing the disjunction between high-sounding rhetoric and sordid ambitions and indicating the purposes and goals of a civilisation 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” (quoted in Brantlinger, 1985: 365). Along the same line of thought, Ian Watt says that *Heart of Darkness* is “an early expression of what was to become a worldwide revulsion from the horrors of Leopold's exploitation of the Congo” (1981: 130). To his admirers, Conrad appears to merit applause on his exposure of the cultural creed of the Empire in its colonialist intervention on at least two scores. He first shows that the colonial mission is not that of bringing light to the benighted savages but one of the procedures of darkening through perverting the West's image of itself as bearer of light and civilization. On the other hand he finds the cause of the unspeakable horror in the natural wilderness of the non- European countries. It is of course not only the opposition of the colonised and the coloniser but rather the opposition between modernity and primitivism, between immorality and morality, between culture and nature that is being critiqued in the textual discourses of Conrad. But to Goonetilleke, Conrad appears to be able to see an individual from the colonies as more than an inferior “other”. “I agree with Kettle,” he says, “when he states that ‘Dain Waris in *Lord Jim*, Hassim in *The Rescue*, are presented with the greatest simplicity and dignity; indeed they are among Conrad's few characters (apart from women) who can be said to be idealized” (1991: 52-53).

There are of course all sorts of conclusions here, but when all is said it remains a fact that there were very few British fiction writers before World War I as critical of imperialism as Conrad was. Conrad was surely among the very few who did criticize and expose the ironies embedded within the idea of the Empire. But he

does that only after essentializing the same idea in terms of imperialism's "other" in the cultures of the tropical countries and in the cultures of the anarchists and revolutionaries who challenge to capsize the capitalist social structure. No wonder then that one finds as many champions of Conrad on that score as condemners. Many of both the camps are listed by Tom Henthorne. He calls the Western attitude to other nations as 'rotten' (2000: 204). He especially quotes McClure, who finds that "Conrad rejects the superiority of Western society" (quoted in Henthorne, 2000: 204). McClure, as is quoted in Henthorne's article, interprets the ending of *Lord Jim* as an indictment on imperialism's destructiveness (204). To both McClure and Eloise Knapp, Conrad is anti-racist and anti-imperialist, but to Henthorne, Third-World nations deserve more: "Natives are not only capable of independence, but their revolution is inevitable" (204). He challenges Achebe's great misreading of Conrad, because the overturn is definitely coming in those regions. Henthorne foresees an alternative regime to emerge when imperialism will come to its end. According to him *Heart of Darkness* suggests that such consciousness will emerge and that "the people of Africa will eventually strike back" (205). Henthorne goes so far as to find "revolution in virtually all of [Conrad's] colonial fiction" (205). He goes farther than most when he states that in *Lord Jim*, as in all of his early colonial fictions, Conrad develops alternative perspectives of imperialism through non-European characters in order to expose the inherent contradictions of the imperialist system and the inevitability of its end. Such a focus was unusual in the 1890s as the remark of one contemporary reviewer, quoted by Henthorne, suggests unequivocally that "Conrad, beyond all others, has identified himself with the standpoint of the natives, has interpreted their aspirations, illumined their motives, and translated into glowing words the strange glamour of their landscape" (206). To Henthorne, the white man cuts a figure most unfavourable to the West: "As in much of [his] colonial fiction, Conrad uses white protagonists to challenge European assumptions of racial superiority" (207). A very different reading we have here of Jim's and Kurtz's characters. We have a complete subversion of the myth of the white man as a supernatural power. "Ultimately," Henthorne says, "Conrad debunks this myth as he did in *Heart of Darkness*. As Eloise Hay suggests, Kurtz is perceived by the Africans not as a god, but as a man backed by "overwhelming force" (207).

The white imperialist will argue of course that he is there to civilize, but that becomes absolutely ludicrous because, for instance, “the fact that Kurtz professes the desire of ‘humanizing, improving, instructing’ his subjects even as he corrupts them makes the attack upon European imperialism all the same devastating.” (207) The image of the white is not much better in Conrad’s other colonial fiction. In *Lord Jim*, for instance, “[the] cowardliness of Jim and the other white officers is all the more damaging to the colonial system because it stands in sharp contrast to the actions of the Malay helmsmen who ‘remained holding the wheel’ during the crisis” (208). The existence of “the other” in Conrad is even more forcefully enunciated by Brian Spittles:

For Conrad the Far East, South America, Central Africa were not peripheral areas; they too were the core of human experience. Events and experiences there were not of merely secondary interest as measured against the centrality of European culture... Conrad constantly stressed both the difference of foreign cultures – seeing them in their own right, with their own values, not simply as amusing, or barbaric, variations from European definitions of civilization – and a possible fundamental unity of human experience. (1992: 17)

To such researchers as Spittles and Henthorne, Conrad’s claim, suggested at the beginning of this paper, that he was ‘content to sympathize with common mortals, no matter where they live’ would sound quite justified. Conrad’s own summing up of imperialism in Africa, based on personal experience, was that it was, as he declared in his *Last Essays*, ‘the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience’ (1968: 17).

Joseph Conrad was a narrator of the experiences of the empire in all its facets- its missionary intentions, its wrong-headedness and in its inherent ironies. In fact, Conrad reflects the discourse of imperialism in mutually opposite ways. The non-fictional writings of the author suggest that he was quite aware of the differences

in cultures of the ruler and the ruled. The accounts of his journeys to Africa and Asia reveal him as a man of liberal humanist values. Conrad appears to be extremely loyal to the ideologies of British Empire in those regions, but he can never withstand the brutalities of the rulers in a colony. O. P. Grewal in his article “The Conservative Attitudes of Henry James and Joseph Conrad” discusses the conservatism of Conrad in the following vein:

The liberalism Conrad inherited from Poland was also idealistic in many respects. His intense dislike for the crass materialism of the nineteenth-century plutocrats derives from this idealistic liberalism. But since liberalism in Poland had developed as a part of nationalism, the Polish liberals thought of fulfillment of the self not as an isolated endeavour of some exceptional individual but closely identified it with the fate of a whole nation... As a consequence Conrad became more firmly aware of the social nature of man than James could ever hope to be. For him, as for Burke, to use Raymond Williams’s words, ‘the embodiment and the guarantee of the proper humanity of man is the historical community’... His schooling in the British Merchant Service further strengthened his conception of society as a joint communal venture which promoted the individuality of each member and brought his humanity to perfection through a common discipline and shared hardships. (1998: 97-98)

These essential features of the conservative ethics induce Conrad to uphold the importance of “a common discipline and shared hardships” as redeeming values in the characters of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, Jim in *Lord Jim*, Charles Gould in *Nostromo* or Razumov in *Under Western Eyes*. Each of these novels narrate incidents counterproductive to the principal discourse of imperialism, and yet, in each of them these characters are made to save the heroic values of the Western civilization, of Capitalism, and, indeed, of the Empire consistently. The present study thus departs

from the existing practices of pinpointing Conrad either as an apologist or as a critic of the imperial discourse. It focuses on the ambivalent attitude of the author and tries to establish the fact that Conrad gave expressions both to the strengths and weaknesses of the discourse of imperial power.

Edward Said states in *Culture and Imperialism* that “we live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and representations- their production, circulation, history, and interpretation are the very elements of culture” (1994: 56). Indeed, the “trafficking” and manipulation of the colonial subject's discursive representations and images in discourse are at the center of his/her ideological figuration as a deviant “other”. The colonial subject thus becomes permanently circumscribed to a fixed signifying position. Homi Bhabha considers fixity “as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, which is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (1994: 66). The stereotype can then be conceptualized as the crystallization of the notions of fixity that informs colonial discourse. The power, underlying the stereotypical representations of a subject nation/individual can be analyzed in terms of this colonialist discourse. It is therefore within this framework that the present study tries to explore the cultural representation of power relations in a Conrad novel from a postcolonial angle. To illustrate such representational constructs, the present thesis aims at a discursive study of such texts of Conrad as the *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Nostramo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* - novels that reveal the author's hybrid ideological position in narrating cultural discourses anthropologically and politically.

It is a truism to repeat that colonial discourse is fundamentally based on a binary formulation of the dominated and the dominant grounded on dichotomies such as self/other, coloniser/colonised and East/West. Said claims that the terms of the dichotomy Occident/Orient, as well as the images and representations they involve are imperial constructs that have a history and a tradition (2003: 5). The critic further argues that the most important trait of the relationship between Occident and Orient or West and East is that it was and still is one of “power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (5). In colonial discourse the West becomes the

“enlightened self” that defines the “benighted other” represented by the non-Western world. The West thus is the norm and the East is made to stand for deviance. Consequently the positive term of the dichotomy draws its authority and power by means of debasing, degrading and excluding the negative term. The hierarchy of the empire in its colonies is therefore culturally sanctioned even in the texts of an apparently disillusioned writer like Conrad. Conrad sees through the fiasco of imperial progress in the colonies but maintains the rhetoric of ethical difference in the tales that ultimately justifies inequality and dominance in the non-European cultural spheres. Ranajit Guha elaborates the issue as such:

[P]olitically that difference is spelled out as one between rulers and the ruled; ethnically, between a white and blacks; materially, between a prosperous Western power and its poor subjects; culturally, between a higher and lower levels of civilization, between the superior religion of Christianity and indigenous belief systems made up of superstition and barbarism-all adding up to an irreconcilable difference between colonizer and colonized. (1997: 3)

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Foucault observes that the very birth of the classical age in Europe witnesses the birth of different power exercising techniques and apparatuses to subjugate (dominate) the scopes and wills of individuals having counter-impulses. As for Conrad, this great technology of power functions in organization with the idea of monarchical capitalism of which imperialism is but a close exercise. Foucault elaborates the power orientation of capitalism of the 19th century in the following words: “This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes” (1998:140-141). The appointment of Marlow to control Kurtz, the incessant inner urge of Jim to rehabilitate himself to the heroic standards of the society, the crisis of territorial authority of Almayer or the concentrated effort of Charles Gould to establish capital generating industries in the remote Sulaco are all

but expressions of paradigmatic power relations in the novels of Conrad. The remarkable fidelity, as Conrad himself claims them to have to their respective ideals may be termed after Foucault as methods of ‘reinforcements’.

Conrad’s adoption of British citizenship and his choice of English as the fittest medium for his expression were deliberate and strategic. A clear awareness of the imperial superiority and imperial power politics underlie the fact of Conrad’s tremendous British affinity. This affinity gives a significant hint to locate useful paradigm of power in the novels of Conrad. Conrad has always been euphoric about the imperial glory of the British Merchant Navy, of which he himself was an officer. He pays his tribute to the institution in his essay “Confidence”, published in the *Golden Daily Mail* in 1919, in the following words- “I may permit myself to speak of it in these terms because as a matter of fact it was on that very symbol that I had founded my life and (as I have said elsewhere in a moment of outspoken gratitude) had known for many years no other roof above my head” (Conrad, vol. 3, 2004: 161). This affinity to power is further reflected in Conrad’s various utilizations of canonical imperialist documents in his novels. His works establish a dialogue, to use Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism, with the colonial and imperial documentary works, existing in contemporary England.

Conrad is heavily indebted to H.M.Stanley’s *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa* (1874), Alfred Russel Wallace’s *The Malay Archipelago* (1894) and Arthur Maudsley’s *Reports From The Ports of Mexico and Chille* (1907) for ascertaining authentic colonial atmospheres in *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*. His novels can therefore be described as dialogic and intertextual as meaning is partly built by the dialogue established with other literary works. The documentary works, mentioned above, are monologic, for they offer a single totalizing perspective that centralises meaning and exerts a violent homogenisation. The dialogue between his texts and the canonical colonial documentations mentioned above clarifies the cause of Conrad’s psychosocial ambiguity. The liberal humanist ideology of the author encounters a face- off in his representation of the colonized culture as his textual resources are mostly drawn from the writings of the empire. Conrad’s liberal-humanist anguish stems out of his heavy reliance on the literature of imperialism. His novels describe the experience of

colonialism in the non-European regions from the perspective of imperial power. At the same time he also records the European anxieties for the failure of that power in isolation.

Conrad's narrator Marlow implies in *Heart of Darkness* that the only thing that redeems English imperialism and colonial policy is the discourse of improvement. Conrad evidently privileges the voice of imperial power incarnated in Marlow. From the very beginning, Marlow establishes a sort of cultural difference between the English and the African worlds. The "civilized" English audience on the deck of the *Nellie* functions as the counterpart of the silenced "savage" Africans depicted as forces of nature that form parts of a nightmarish landscape of the African jungle. The Western world is thus erected as the measure of the colonial world that is represented as deviant, primitive and incomprehensible. This measure makes Jim's ideals of European heroism sustain strongly even at the expense of his death in *Lord Jim*. Almayer finds bliss in his singular defiance against the rule of the Malaysian Babalatchi in *Almayer's Folly*. The South Americans in *Nostramo* are portrayed as cunning anarchists. The idiom of power assumes a strong materialist paradigm of Capitalistic progress in this novel. The ironic localization of the capitalistic power against the milieu of South American dictatorship becomes more telling in this context. Martin Price observes in his essay "The Limits of Irony: *Lord Jim* and *Nostramo*":

In *Nostramo* Conrad's irony becomes more inclusive, enfolding the political history of a nation as well as the motives of individuals. The central irony is that of 'material interests'. They alone seem to possess the power to bring order to Costaguana. They require stability for their profitable operation, and they bring peace through their great financial power, through bribery or an improved standard of living. The danger of 'material interests', in turn, lies in their use of the power they acquire, making men instruments of an institution and sacrificing them when they fail to be useful. (1986: 195)

The anarchists in *The Secret Agent* and the revolutionaries in *Under Western Eyes* are portrayed as pursuers of wrong ideals as they resist and challenge the reigning discourse of imperialism. The voices of Verloc (*The Secret Agent*) and Razumov (*Under Western Eyes*) are completely silenced by the violent imposition of an alien situation and their individualities are utterly suppressed by the ideological construction of their identities. Conrad is able to construct exotic “other”-s in the lady of the jungle accompanying Kurtz in the African wilderness, Babalatchi, Verloc and Razumov on account of the bond existing between power and knowledge during the golden age of the British Empire. The mechanism of power functioning in the process of a textual replication of the colonial culture is explained well by Said in *Orientalism*. Having discussed at length the relation between imperialism and orientalism, Said argues that “the political and cultural circumstances in which Western Orientalism has flourished draw attention to the debased position of the Orient or Oriental as an object of study” (2003: 96). Thus, the representations of the non- European cultures as objects of study in Conrad’s texts help in upholding the strength of the Western culture to a large extent. The symbolic and abstract nature in Africa, the Malay Archipelago and the South Americas is therefore raw or primitive data that wait to be transformed into finished and concrete knowledge for one Marlow, Jim or Charles Gould in Conrad’s texts.

How earnest Conrad’s effort was to do justice to various nations and groups will never be finally determined. Many do accept that he tried his best to be balanced and fair, and at times, as some have asserted, may be biased in favour of the non-white. To Achebe and like-minded scholars, Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist. And as will be seen in the following paragraphs, his novels and tales provide ample evidence to both. In large part, it depends how one wishes to read him. In sheer number, the whites in Conrad’s work who are a disgrace to their race and nations are more perhaps than non-western whites who are so. A cursory contrast of the English Donkin and the black Wait in *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’* would show who of the two is the more impressive, superior and capable. We have the Negro as “calm, cool, towering, superb ... naturally scornful, unaffectedly condescending” (Conrad, 1968: 18), while the white English Donkin is less respected by everyone; he is cowardly, cheeky and abject and it is of no use for him to brag, ‘I am an Englishman’ (12). It is

observed by critics like Jocelyn Baines that *Lord Jim* and Conrad's other imperial fiction came just before a major shift in perspective was about to take place. In *Lord Jim*, as Christopher GoGwilt tells us, one comes across "...an uncertainty of cultural contexts which began to eclipse the self-assured English claim to lordship (of one kind or another) overseas. In that uncertainty we might also recognize a growing awareness of cultural differences which began to unsettle the nineteenth century's consolidation of European imperial and colonial assumptions" (1995: 47).

It is often noticed that Conrad was just ahead of his time in perceiving that imperialism was something of the past practice of atrocious dominance and that it was no more than greedy scramble for the wealth of the world. It is just as GoGwilt says about the Patna inquiry in *Lord Jim*: "The whole of the Patna inquiry might be read as the progressive revelation of the underlying material interests of an international capitalist imperialist" (51). It might be supposed that the inflated ego of the white man would have collapsed under its own weight had it not been aided by the impression he often created on the minds of the native. Thomas Pakenham tells us as much in *The Scramble for Africa* (1993) about Arthur Hodister, one main model of *Heart of Darkness*'s Kurtz: "For the last ten years Arthur Hodister's charismatic reputation had spread from the heart of darkness to the heart of Brussels....To the simple Africans, his white skin and neat black beard gave him the air of a god" (434). This classic case of internalization of the colonial values on the part of the colonized is exemplified best in the character of Dain Waris in *Lord Jim*. The system of internalization of borrowed values is observed by Goonetilleke in Conrad's presentation of the native and he highlights: "There are coloured people who believe in white superiority because of their psychological backwardness and subordinate position" (1991: 10).

The cultural hegemony is often maintained in this given process in a narrative replete with the issues of the empire. For a concrete example, Goonetilleke refers to Dain Waris in *Lord Jim*. He is "content to accept unquestioningly Jim's foreign overlordship as if it were the natural order of things; the other members of his community hold Jim in even greater awe" (49-50) Even the admiring Goonetilleke can say that although "Marlow trenchantly criticizes 'the conquest of the earth,' [he] still ... finds justification for British imperialism .. its 'efficiency and its idea'" (66).

Similarly, in *Nostromo*'s state of Costaguana, it is evidently by adopting European ideas that Decoud is seen to have the width of outlook and detachment which permit him to identify a practical means of ensuring the survival of Sulaco and the Blancos (i.e. the whites) – separating Sulaco from the helpless rest of Costaguana. In *Nostromo*, in fact, it is of course the white man, Mr. Gould, who draws the future for Sulaco, himself being the ultimate leader. The English are idealized by the Italian Viola, by Decoud, and by others; it is the English (Captain Mitchell) who are ranked as the first champion of the idea of progress among the other Europeans.

The anthropological understanding of different groups of people in the colonies in and around the 1870s, when Conrad migrated to the west, was mostly an artefact of the persisting culture of the empire. One extension of Darwin's evolutionary theory in vogue at the time ranked nations from the lowest to the highest, England being at the top of civic and cultural scale. But it was not to last long. As James J. Johnson asserts:

The ascendancy of evolutionary ideas in the field of anthropology was very pronounced in the 1860s and 1870s but was relatively short-lived. By the end of the century, as James Clifford points out, 'evolutionist confidence began to falter, and a new ethnographic conception of culture became possible. The word began to be used in the plural, suggesting a world of separate, distinctive, and equally meaningful ways of life' (Clifford, 92-3). (1997: 120)

When Conrad was being acquainted with the English scene, racialist propositions such as the innate superiority of the English over all races were often put forward – for instance, as Goonetilleke asserts, “by Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain – to justify imperialism” (1991: 10). English writers of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as Sarah Cole tells us, produced a tremendous array of literature (including fiction, poetry, exploratory narratives, polemics, and official documents) that “helped to rationalize Britain's global domination” (1998: 253). In the middle of the nineteenth century, adds James M. Johnson, “Non-Europeans traditionally occupied

an inferior position in the European view of the world” (1997: 115). It was a strict European centrality that the nearer one is to it the higher. Johnson goes on to say:

For McLennan, Darwin, and Wallace, distance from the European present becomes virtually synonymous with distance from the European centre. This conflation of time and space is also evident in Spencer’s anthropological writings...Like his colleagues, Spencer achieves an understanding of the human past by turning away, momentarily, from the European centre. Peoples such as the Bushmen, the Tasmanians, the Fuegians are denied a legitimate position within their own historical narratives so that the evolutionary master-narrative, with its final focus on contemporary Europe, can be completed. (117-118)

One may see this centrality put to practice in Leopold II’s inhuman dealing with the natives of the Congo. As Tony C. Brown points out: “In *fin de siècle* Europe, accounts of grotesque atrocities occurring in Leopold II’s Congo Free State were appearing in an ever increasing quantity. A notable effect of this was the recurrence of an image of the Congo as an abject zone of horrors” (2000: 16). To read the end of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* (1871) before or after reading *Heart of Darkness*, one will not fail to see the obvious connection. In one of Darwin’s last paragraphs he says:

There can hardly be a doubt that we are descendants from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind – such were our ancestors.. He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creatures flows in his veins. (quoted in Johnson, 1997: 114)

To many, Conrad just accepted mindlessly the dominant philosophy. Thus, Johnson quotes: "V.Y. Mudimbe points out that due to the force of dominant ideologies, many schools of anthropology "repress otherness in the name of sameness, reduce the different to the already known, and thus fundamentally escape the task of making sense of other worlds" (72- 73). Johnson goes on to say: "Conrad's version of the anthropological encounter (the contact, or confrontation, between different cultures) participates in precisely the narrow and reflexive gaze isolated by Mudimbe" (112). Indeed, Conrad did not do much to fathom the reality about Africa; he mostly accepted the negative image of Africa, the dark continent of the European imagination. And that goes for his other exotic novels and tales. For the sympathizers, Conrad was presenting, for instance in Kurtz, the white at his worst. Critics like Sarah Cole gives onus on Conrad's imperialist complicity against his modernism. As she states: "[H]e is either condemned for ascribing to popular notions of racial supremacy and difference, or, alternatively, his guilt is partially mitigated by his formal commitment to ambiguity, fragmentation, linguistic indeterminacy, and other strategies typically understood as modern" (1998: 252). If the above provision is accepted, then one can agree with Lionel Trilling as he observes: "No one, to my knowledge, has ever confronted in an explicit way [Conrad's] strange and terrible message of ambivalence toward the life of civilization" (quoted in Brantlinger, 1985: 378). Spittles tries best to define the source of the difficulty of locating Conrad politically in a fixed position: "It is a feature of Conrad's fiction... that linguistic and structural ironies often make it difficult for the reader to know exactly what the author's attitudes are towards the themes... Conrad was never either a consistently straightforward conservative or a convinced progressive. He judged cases individually, on their merit" (1992: 14).

Joseph Conrad's life as that of a Pole, writing in English and living as a British citizen may be looked upon as a definite source to his psychosocial ambivalence, struggling to accommodate within an ideological space between culture and empire. It is undeniable that Conrad writes for a mass of English readers, and the English imperial ideology of the age was characterised with both high nationalism and a subtle sceptic outlook on its 'civilizing missions' carried out in the colonies. Conrad's location as an author is unmistakably between these two contrary positions

which stemmed out of his insecurity of finding himself almost all his life between two different national characters and national ideologies – his background of living under Russian subordination in Poland and his citizenship in a dominating imperial power in Great Britain. Althusser claims that literature, as one of the institutions, participates in making state power and ideology familiar and acceptable to the state's subjects and reflects the values, customs, and norms of the dominant interests in its society (1984: 1-6). Althusser's premises that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence", and that "Ideology has a material existence" (quoted in Ryan, 1996: 17, 19) lead him to set down two conjoint theses: "1 there is no practice except by and in an ideology; 2 there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects" (21). Following this idea of interdependence between ideology and the individual's "real conditions of existence", we may cast a look upon the biographical context of Joseph Conrad. His life, indeed, does go some way to help understand some of the mysteries of Conrad's famous inconclusiveness as writer betraying multivalent experiences of the empire.

Joseph Conrad had a chequered life and he directly drew materials for his writings from his life loaded with experiences. He was born on December 3, 1857 near Berdichev, in the Russian-ruled province of Padolia. Christened Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski, he was the first and only child of Apollo and Evelina Nalecz Korzeniowski. His parents were Polish revolutionaries and passed a considerable portion of their lives in Russian prison. Conrad lost his mother at an early age and on May 23, 1869 his father died. At his funeral, which took the form of a great patriotic tribute, the eleven-year-old Conrad walked at the head of the procession (Sherry, 1972: 15). Conrad's life now underwent a conspicuous change. He came under the influence of his uncle Thaddeus, who was in every way the opposite of Apollo and who had always regarded his brother-in-law as a sentimentalist. Thaddeus was in charge of Conrad's education and financial affairs. Uncle Thaddeus's influence continued to exert itself through his letters after Conrad left Poland and his philosophy, even phrases from his correspondence, appeared afterwards in Conrad's novels. "Thaddeus was the type of benevolent guardian figure that Conrad dealt with in the character of Stein in *Lord Jim* and Captain Lingard in the Bornean novels" (16). In 1872 Conrad told his uncle that he wished to go to sea, a

confession, which evoked a reaction of shocked and bewildered incredulity. It was not until 1874 that Thaddeus agreed to send him off to the Merchant Marine. According to Sherry, behind the desire to leave Poland and to join the merchant navy, there was “the inspiration of Conrad’s reading of adventure and travel literature and his interest in geography” (17). Besides, Conrad must have been influenced by the fact that as the son of a political prisoner, he “risked conscription in the Russian Army for possibly as many as twenty-five years” (17). Conrad’s decision to leave Poland and become a sailor has provoked much controversy. Among them there is a psychological approach. According to this theory Conrad’s desertion of his country created in him a feeling of betrayal and of guilt which he never overcame. C.B. Cox explains this psychological burden of Conrad and argues: “[H]e had abandoned the cause for which both his parents had sacrificed their lives. Therefore, the desire for atonement and self-justification dominated his life” (1977: 6). In an essay, Conrad repeats a story illustrating his wish of adventure. He says “looking at a map as a child” he had put his finger on a spot in the very middle of the then white heart of Africa and said that some day he “would go there” (Conrad, 1924: 11). Another reason that was advanced for Conrad’s desire to go to sea is regarded as his position as the son of a Polish patriot who had been imprisoned by the Russians for revolutionary activities. Baines finds a relationship between Conrad’s desire to go to sea and his leaving Poland and claims that he would have been unconscious of suffering under any disadvantage if he had been living in Austrian Poland (1960: 30-31). It has also been argued that parallels can be drawn between Conrad’s leaving Poland and the important moments of crisis in his novels. For example, Jim’s jump over the side of the *Patna* can be seen as an unconscious symbolic representation of Conrad’s action in leaving Poland. Baines draws attention to Conrad’s use of the word ‘jump’ to describe his own case. He says: “It seems likely that in Conrad’s eyes to have remained in Poland would have been tantamount to resigning himself to a climate where everyone and everything he had cherished had crumbled, and where he himself might well be the next perish” (33). A parallelism between Jim’s efforts to vindicate himself after his desertion of the *Patna* and Conrad’s own life can be drawn as well and it may be asserted that “Conrad never felt at home in any environment, and a sense of alienation is continually expressed in his fiction” (Cox, 1977: 7).

Almost all the important characters of Conrad's novels are modelled upon several real life persons that he came across in his long career at sea. In 1874, when his uncle finally granted his consent, Conrad left Poland for Marseilles and on her visit to the West Indies in 1875 he was listed as an apprentice. In 1876, he sailed again to the West Indies as a steward on the *Saint-Antonia*. Sherry agrees that it was a memorable voyage for Conrad for the first mate was a Corsican called Dominic Cervoni who was to impress Conrad greatly at that time and to figure, later on, in *Nostramo*. Sherry writes, "Cervoni was the type of heroic wanderer and adventurer, the embodiment of fidelity, resource and courage, that Conrad so admired" (1972: 22). In 1878, four years after leaving Poland, Conrad abandoned France, sailing for England in the British ship *Mavis*, bound first for Constantinople and then for Lowestoft, where she arrived on 18 June 1878 (26). During the next eleven years Conrad sailed on many British ships and in 1890 he made his terrible trip to Congo at the heart of Africa.

Conrad's Congo experience seems to be "the most devastating of his life" and Conrad recognized this when he said later to his friend Edward Garnett: "Before the Congo, I was just a mere animal" (quoted in Sherry, 1972: 63). "Before the Congo, I was just a mere animal" is rightly interpreted by Jean-Aubry as such: "For his first fifteen years at sea he had lived almost without being aware of it, carried along by the ardour of his temperament in response to an almost unconscious desire for adventure without ever thinking about the reasons for his or other people's actions" (1957: 175). He married Miss Jessie George in 1896, settled in England and pursued his career as a modernist writer of exceptional merit but moderate financial fortune till the 3rd of August, 1924 when he died of heart attack in his own house. A feeling of cultural exile remained always living in Conrad and that feeling gave birth to his famous ideological inconclusiveness as is evident in his texts. The biographical contexts to examine the ambivalent ideology of a complex author like Joseph Conrad pays well when it provides necessary key to his psychosocial dilemma. Looking for the rift in Conrad's psyche, Catherine Rising says:

The gap between Raskolnikov and Razumov [in *Under Western Eyes*] roughly parallels that between Dostoevsky, son of a Russian military doctor – a

member of the hereditary nobility of Moscow – and Conrad, the orphan son of an exiled Polish revolutionary. As such, Conrad was a pariah entitled to no future in his native Russia beyond twenty-five years' compulsory military service... [Dostoevsky] presents a milder face of Russian society than that seen by Conrad, who like his creature Razumov felt himself, and was, an alien... For the traumatized and displaced Conrad, a Pole turned English novelist – as for the displaced teacher of languages who narrates *Under Western Eyes* – words are, and stubbornly remain, 'the great foes of reality'. (2001: 25)

The point here is that in our attempt to account for Conrad's scepticism and elusiveness it is quite natural to understand him as Catherine Rising has done in the light of some of his characters like the teacher of languages in *Under Western Eyes*. While living in England, or, for that matter in any part of the world other than Poland, Conrad lived in exile. One can draw on a generalization about exile in modern thought put forth by Nico Israel:

Exile informs most of the significant strands of modern social and philosophical thought ... a misty halo of exile seems to surround the spectral figure of Conrad himself. The author, the familiar biographical yarn goes, lived "three lives," each of them, in a different sense, exilic: born in the Russian-occupied Ukraine to a family of aristocratic Polish political refugees, he travelled the world as a mariner before becoming a naturalized British citizen, eventually, one of his adopted country's most famous novelists. Lonely and misunderstood as a child, as an adolescent, and as an adult, on land and on sea, Conrad apparently suffered from a peculiarly acute form of national and psychological deracination. Given his impressive exilic pedigree and

employment experience, it is not especially astonishing that Conrad's novelistic portrayals of such figures as Marlow, Jim, Decoud, Razumov, Verloc, and Heyst tend, in many critical accounts, to become with Conrad's own biographical narrative, producing a composite persona regarded as the exilic ne plus ultra of Anglo-American modernism. (1997: 1-3)

Conrad's early experiences and memories were never abandoned. Quite late in his career he wrote *Under Western Eyes*, and in the "Author's Note" to this work there is an urgent exhortation to West to work against the tyrannical power which had colonized his own country. He attacked in that Note both the Russian tyranny and the resistance trying to bring it down; they were a "senseless desperation provoked by senseless tyranny" (1968: viii). A little further down he adds: "The ferocity and imbecility of an autocratic rule rejecting all legality and in fact basing itself upon complete anarchism provokes the no less imbecile and atrocious answer of a purely Utopian revolutionism encompassing destruction by the first means to hand" (x).

Beth Sharon Ash observes that Conrad's crucial ambivalence, his "betweenness", is "an artifact of his inability, in a variety of ways, to properly mourn lost objects" (1999: 16). She further locates the origin of this psychosocial dilemma in Conrad's life and says that his works, "like his life, attempts to hold on to a sense of continuity, but often at the expense of the unfolding of discursive truthfulness" (16). In consequence, Conrad finds himself at ease in the aesthetic space of "irresolution" and "denial" that is necessitated by a cultural desire of remaining within the mid-point of irreconcilable opposites. To conclude, it may be said that Conrad's texts are featured with an awareness that resists but continues to live within the margins of imperialism. An innate textual hybridity, operating on two levels at once, immediately situates Conrad between the two extremes of the empire and culture. Conrad began to publish his novels at a time when imperialism was becoming increasingly popular with the British public. Conrad's market was also very limited geographically as he could not expect readership in his homeland. Since the middle of the 1890s Conrad's dependence on the fortune of his books increased and he committed himself to the profession of writing. In consequence, he evolved a style of

narrative that could reach a larger range of reader which played on the two levels of culture and empire. His novels stand as exotic tales of empire that legitimizes imperialism and subverts it at the same time. His hybridity consists in the fact that he, "...neither believes in the cultural superiority of the colonialist nations, nor rejects them outright... [his] viewpoint disturbs imperialist assumptions to the precise degree that it reinforces them" (Eagleton, 1976: 135). The in-between space in Conrad's psychological approach to his socio-cultural subjects is thus a product of his acute sense of personal exile, not only geographically but linguistically too. This exilic by-product combines with an ideological dilemma in him. Beth Sharon Ash describes the cultural location of the author in the following terms:

Conrad's idiomatic negative refusal of choice, his viewing of the world in terms of irremediably opposed alternatives that can not be embraced or given up, colo[u]rs his relation to culture as chronically ambivalent and melancholic. It also suggests an internal world where conflict, the tension between mutually informing experiences of otherness and sameness within the self, becomes contradiction, the tension between disconnected aspects of self where mutual exchange and transformation become not only difficult but dangerous to the survival of needed psychosocial provisions. (1999: 15-16)

In view of the above study, we can with conviction place Conrad ideologically between culture and empire. Conrad may be found not as an atrocious "colonialist", but at best as a "colonial" writer par excellence (Boehmer, 2006: 2-3). Colonialism and a critique of colonialism may be found featuring in his fictions contrapuntally given the discursive regime under which he was working.