

Conrad's Impeachment of Imperialism – A Myth: A Postcolonial Analysis of His Selected Works

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Abstract: In most of his works, Conrad talks about the unrestrained, the unresponsive and the voracious attitude of the colonizers towards the colonized. His works talk about complicated race relationships and communication between mismatched and contrasting cultures. Conrad explores the mental syndromes produced due to the interaction between the colony and the Empire, the black and the white, and the colonizer and the colonized. However, Chinua Achebe deliberates upon the noticeable and the unnoticeable approach of Conrad towards the two races in *Heart of Darkness*. Encouraged by Achebe's interpretations, the aim of the present paper is to examine selected works of Conrad and to discover if the same complications are present and disguised in Conrad's other texts as well.

Keywords: Imperialism, Colonisation, Victims, Postcolonial, Periphery, Binary opposition, Biased, Racist

Aim of the paper:

In most of his works, Conrad gives versions of the disparaging effects of imperialist enterprise and the miseries of the people on the periphery. Conrad seems to be genuinely talking about the pronounced mythoi about the fallacious, the unrestrained, the unresponsive and the voracious attitude of the colonizers towards the colonized. In *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*, set in the remote surroundings of the Malay islands, Conrad observes the natives undergoing trauma due to the putrefying environment created by the minority of ruling foreigners. In these first two works, he also narrates the self-discovery of the two white men, Almayer and Willems, respectively. Conrad's *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, is an account about a nigger who journeys from Bombay to London with a white crew. On the sea the crew faces ethical trials due to a storm — internal and external. Conrad's *Lord Jim*, is a saga of a thoughtful youth, fantasizing heroism. Jim's relationship with the natives of Patusan, his agonising culpability and his anguish fill the narrative with human feebleness yet profound glory. *Victory* is set on the mysterious islands of the Malay Archipelago. It is an examination of wickedness, corruption, unfaithfulness and segregation of the white characters in the non-white lands. In *The Shadow-Line* Conrad relates the involvements of a young and untested sea captain, who has a non-white crew on his ship. It is a story about the narrator's brawl with his morality and sense of loneliness. *The Rescue*, is a story of protagonist's quandary while

involved in making a choice. Lingard is caught in the existentialist impasse of choosing between his love and his guarantee to the non-whites. *Chance* is a novel of the emotive isolation of Conrad's most complex heroine. The narrative describes the alteration and catastrophe of Flora de Barral. In almost all the novels of Conrad mentioned above one comes across the complicated race relationships and communication between mismatched and contrasting cultures.

Conrad explores the mental syndromes produced due to the interaction between the colony and the Empire, the black and the white, and the colonizer and the colonized in his highly symbolic and debated work, *Heart of Darkness*. Of all Conrad's works, *Heart of Darkness* is the most widely read and one of the most influential novels of the twentieth century. It is an imperial adventure tale where the narrator, Marlow, notices the degeneration and dishonesty produced by colonial imperialists and also the darkness in the deep and mysterious core of the jungle. The number of critics who read this text as one of the most potent denunciations of imperialism ever written, are many. However, Chinua Achebe deliberates upon the noticeable and the unnoticeable approach of Conrad towards the two races in *Heart of Darkness*. He forcefully proclaims, "Joseph Conrad was a thorough going racist" (Achebe 257). He feels uncomfortable with Conrad's stance towards the natives because according to Achebe, "for Conrad things being in their place is of utmost importance. . . . Tragedy begins when things leave their accustomed place, like Europe leaving its safe stronghold . . . to take a peep into the heart of darkness" (Achebe 254).

Achebe says that the image of Africa that Conrad shows is not Conrad's own impression; but is the one commercialised by the European archives, records and accounts. In *Heart of Darkness*, Africa is set "as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (Achebe 251-252). Achebe condemns Conrad of not loaning a voice to the natives. The conquered do not express their resentment and wretchedness. He continues, "It is clearly not part of Conrad's purpose to confer language on the 'rudimentary souls' of Africa" (Achebe 255). Encouraged by Achebe's interpretations, the aim of the present paper is to examine selected works like *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, *The Rescue*, *Victory* etc. and to discover if the same complications are present and disguised in Conrad's other texts as well.

Theoretical background:

Postcolonial theory seems most suitable for the analysis of Conrad's treatment of the interface between the two conflicting races and ethnic hybridity in the tricontinental societies because "neither the assertions of Marxism nor those of poststructuralism, however, can exhaustively account for the meanings and consequences of colonial encounter," though they form the "most compelling basis for postcolonial *politics*" (Gandhi ix). Also, because postcolonialism "stands for empowering the poor, the dispossessed, and the disadvantaged, for tolerance of difference and diversity, for the establishment of minorities' rights, women's rights, and cultural rights . . ." and the present dissertation too, aims to concentrate on the study of issues of race and gender in the works of Conrad (Young 113). Postcolonial theory stimulates the readers to question some fissures and gaps in Conrad's novels. It examines the location of the author and the site of the characters — white and the non-white — he writes about. Hall says, "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific.

What we say is always, ‘in context’, *positioned*”, and therefore, the analysis of the position of the author and his texts is of utmost importance (Hall 110).

Postcolonialism has appeared as one of the foremost discourses in the early twentieth century. Its interdisciplinary practise has ensued a massive quantity of committed academic writing. The postcolonial epoch is customarily, and somewhat mistakenly, supposed to have begun after the culmination of the colonial rule, but the colonized populations were retorting, counterattacking or struggling against the imperial dominance even during colonialism. Some readers segregate the times when the colonizers reigned over the non-white terrains and the non-white people; and the times when the dictating community left the subjugated lands. Or some are concerned with the study of the environment and culture of the dominated colonies after their independence. But in its inclusive meaning the term ‘postcolonial’, covers “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft 2). Moreover, the preoccupation and the obsession of the European powers towards the colonized areas remains the same from the first day of colonization till today, when these powers indirectly apply their control over the once colonized territories. Postcolonialism is, thus, concerned with “the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures” (Ashcroft 2).

In other words, postcolonialism does not refer to post-independence of the colonies, but it begins with the interaction of the Empire with the colonies. As soon as the colonizers step on the so-called dark lands, the germs of rejoinder and hostility are born. As a result, colonialism and postcolonialism begin instantaneously. Postcolonial literature is not the writing which came after the end of the Empire, but it embraces any piece of work which recounts the colonial relationship from the very beginning of the interface between the two races. Wolfreys claims that postcolonial literature: “has emerged from an interdisciplinary area of study which is concerned with the historical, political, philosophical, social, cultural and aesthetic structures of colonial domination and resistance; it refers to a way of reading, theorizing, interpreting and investigating colonial oppression and its legacy that is informed by an oppositional ethical agenda” (Wolfreys 463). Postcolonial literature dismisses the use of stereotypes for the Others. It depicts the way the First World people, writers, philosophers, critics and thinkers have developed a specific mode of perceiving and construing the lives, customs, and conventions of the natives. Natives are represented with damaging traits which justify the ascendancy of the whites. The Others are shown as immature, womanlike, uncultivated, unrestrained, untutored, cannibalistic, slaves of lust and incompetent of taking care of themselves. Postcolonial approach throws light on the cloaking of irresoluteness and evasion of malicious impression of the dominating powers over the colonised.

Conrad also seems to do the same in his works. He makes the Orient speak and disentangle the inconspicuousness of the non-white lands and its inhabitants. The dichotomous relationships between the East and the West are visible in the Conradian texts. Tewari finds that in the works of Conrad, “the colonised are certainly aghast with this invasion by the alien culture which they cannot comprehend and confront. Their living style is primitive but it meets with horrendous cruelty of the ‘civilised’ when the protagonist of the colonising mission proclaims the extermination of all the brutes for the success of the ‘civilising mission’” (Tewari 77). Conrad shows that the intention of the imperialists is to vanquish the nascent societies by laying importance on the variations between

the Orient and the Occident or by assuming and broadcasting the unusual and noteworthy characteristics which the Others do not possess.

Conrad's evaluation of Imperialism:

Conrad's works like *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, *The Rescue*, *Victory* etc. contextualize the landscape, the language, the culture and the traditions of the non-whites. They decipher the imperial rule, its hegemonic insinuations, hybrid culture and the emotional impasse that the colonial authority creates among the colonized. They signify how the imperial power destroys the surroundings, culture and history of the natives' lands. These works list the opinion of the conquered and the disrupted against the domineering circumstances. Conrad shows how these situations of colonization result in scarcity and powerlessness. The representatives of the governing authority may have left the peripheral grounds physically, but the spiritual and psychosomatic marks of supremacy remain engraved on the lives of the aboriginal population. Conrad's works catalogue how the white culture finds its control by overpowering and annihilating the culture of the Others and thus, "marginality is the condition constructed by the posited relation to a privileged centre, an 'Othering' directed by the imperial authority" (Ashcroft 102). These works seem to be the voice of the hushed subjects of the colonial era. They talk about the incongruity between the colonized and the colonizer, and also about the discrepancy between the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizing nations, during and after the liberation of the formally colonized nations. They sometimes are "the celebration of the struggle towards independence in community, . . . the dominating influence of a foreign culture on the life of contemporary post-colonial societies, . . . the journey of the European interloper through unfamiliar landscape with a native guide, . . . the exile" (Ashcroft 26, 27, 28). Conrad's novels have "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre, it is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial" (Ashcroft 2). His narratives focus on the experiences of colonization and the tension arising out of an interface of the non-whites and the imperial powers.

Conrad's novels seem to invite the "readers to scrutinize the ethical foundations of the civilization of expansionist capitalism and engaging them in a critical view of imperialism's urge to conquer the earth" (Parry 8). He hints at the weird customs and values of the ominous, horrendous and ridiculous imperialist situation in the non-white lands. Conrad talks about the colonialist set-up that stresses upon admiration of the ruling authority. His writings decline lawfulness to the imperialist trade and enter the genre of protest against the dominion. Conrad presents the exacting reality of the colonial system and enterprise in almost all his works. At the very beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, for example, he says, "The conquest of the earth which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses, than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" and thus, proves himself to be a probing anti-imperialist (HOD 19-20). In this novel Conrad discloses the irrelevance of the refining and illuminating objectives of the whites through the unadulterated pictures of the man-of-war, the dying natives, the rotting ravines, and other rotting signs of the superior civilization. He brings out the covetousness and ferocity suppressed deep in the dark hearts of the white people, who dominate the non-white. Conrad opposes his own race and its superiority, in order to support the Others.

An inspection of *Lord Jim* also hints at Conrad's exposition of dreadful attitude of imperialism towards the non-whites. The pilgrims on *Patna* are seen as lifeless freight which has to be delivered to its port. But when a storm rises in the sea, the crew members, like the rats, are the first ones to leave the ship. Without a second thought about the non-whites, they leave the pilgrims at the mercy of their fortune. For the white crew, the pilgrims are like an inconsequential consignment, which could be abandoned in any crisis:

Eight hundred men and women with faith and hopes, with affections and memories, they had collected there, coming . . . after treading the jungle paths, descending the rivers . . . passing through suffering, meeting strange sights, beset by strange fears, upheld by one desire. . . . At the call of an idea they had left their forests, their clearings, the protection of their rulers, their prosperity, their poverty, the surroundings of their youth and the graves of their fathers. They came covered with dust, with sweat, with grime, with rags . . . the unconscious pilgrims of an exacting belief (*LJ* 53-54).

The journey seems to have been fashioned on the model of a colony ruled by imperial authority. Hundreds of pilgrims have no other choice but to show faith in the capability of a few white men. The *Patna* incident shows the inconsiderate, un pitying and callous attitude of the white officers. The pilgrims are likened to water which is expected to take the shape of the tight compartments in the ship. The author hints at the unhindered obedience and dependence of the pilgrims.

In *Almayer's Folly* also human beings have been reduced to the position of devices who add to the earnings and profits of the imperial companies. Conrad shows the exploitation and mishandling of the natives and misuse of their competences in the office of Hudig where "amongst piles of merchandise" the Chinese clerks work ceaselessly (*AF* 2). These "neat, cool and sad eyed (clerks) wrote rapidly and in silence . . . ending with a desperate yell" (*AF* 2-3). Other workers from China are continuously "counting and piling" the silver guilders "under the supervision of Mr. Vinck" (*AF* 3). Outside the private office of Mr. Hudig there stands a Malay, holding a small string with which he moves a *punkha* for Hudig. He, too like the Chinese clerks, works with the orderliness of an apparatus. When the guiltless people of the non-European civilization interact with deceitful and hostile European work culture, they are expected to convert into appropriately greased parts of a machine. The European economy endeavours to warrant a one way flow of profits. It flourishes on the economic exploitation, emotional displacing and cultural disruption of its employees.

Conrad describes the desolation of the Congolese and the Malaysians under the dominance and voracious interventionist policies of imperialism. He gives a realistic portrayal of the ruined and dehumanized Africa and the Malayan Archipelago. The natives are weighted under coercion, and mistreatment. In *Victory*, Conrad shows that Morrison is, "the dearly beloved friend of a quantity of God-forsaken villages up dark creeks and obscure bays, where he traded for 'produce'" (*V* 24). Morrison finds these settlements in dejected situations due to lack of food and other necessities. The people are hungry and clamouring for food. They delight at his arrival, as Morrison's visit brings them supplies that they need to stay alive. Morrison would explain to them that, "it was an advance, which they were in debt to him now" (*V* 24). Though Morrison here seems to truly be helpful towards the populace, yet "Morrison would beam and glitter at this excitement through his single eyeglass with an air of intense gratification" (*V* 24). He is happy that he was carrying on the drive of imperialism. Morrison has been successful in making the natives his debtors. Moreover, his discussion of his trade with Heyst gives the readers an understanding into the real logic of Morrison's generosity. When Heyst sees how Morrison helps the natives,

Morrison tells him, “I shall squeeze them yet some day – never you fear” (V 24). It shows white man’s selfish approach towards the non-whites. The white man always wants to rule over the non-white community. He abuses the basic needs of the natives for his own profits and elevation in position.

Like Morrison in *Victory*, in *The Shadow Line*, a dictating Arab owns a ship called *Vidar* and exercises colossal control over the natives. Conrad records that the Arab, “was having his hand severely kissed by a crowd of Malay pilgrims to whom he had done some favour, in the way of food and money. His almsgiving, I have heard, was most extensive, covering almost the whole Archipelago. For isn’t it said that ‘The charitable man is the friend of Allah?’” (TSL 44). The Malaysians have been reduced to the rank of scroungers, who are forced to respect the so-called benevolent masters. Rather than bringing light, awareness and contentment in the lives of the natives, imperial servants and agents make the life of the non-whites wretched. Conrad reflects upon the workings of colonialism and its reality and unveils the ghastly faces of the envois of the hegemony.

Moreover, the deterioration of the protagonists of almost all the novels of Conrad — for example, the corrosion of Kurtz, Jim, Heyst, Almayer and Willems, the central characters of *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Victory*, *Almayer’s Folly*, and *An Outcast of the Islands*, respectively — validates the breakdown of and the superciliousness of the allegedly advanced white culture and its advocated philosophies. Infused by their culture and its theory of progress, these protagonists become a target of their own impulsive, dogged and obstinate ravenousness for power and wealth. All protagonists of Conrad are directly related to the white supremacy; and directly or indirectly to theory of progress propounded by the white race. The thematic pattern of elucidation of the devious and unfair nature of the white exiles, is repeated in almost all the novels of Conrad. The white protagonists break into the non-white lands for their own advantage. They are involved in the forced utilisation of the land and its inhabitants directly or indirectly, and as a result, the natives have to tolerate distress and agony.

Conrad is cynical of the imperial ventures in his works. He ridicules the heroism of the white Europeans by portraying them as failures. In Conrad the whiteness of the material goods and the invaders symbolize the spiritual death of the white people. Almayer’s dreams of gold and treasure have come to nothing; Lingard’s hopes have failed, too. The Chief Accountant at the First Company Station, the Manager, and the Brick Maker at the Second Company Station, Kurtz at the Third Company Station in *Heart of Darkness*; Mr. Travers in *The Rescue*, Almayer in *Almayer’s Folly*, and Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* represent the spiritual void in their lives. Similarly, Marlow in *Lord Jim* becomes an important instrument of the colonial myth for he hails Jim’s triumph in bringing peace and prosperity to Patusan as an evidence of the white man’s energy, enterprise and skill. But, in fact, at the end he becomes yet another symbol of spiritual void.

In addition to the portrayal of the negative traits of the protagonists, Conrad gives space to the manipulative nature and insensitivity of the minor white characters as well. With the illustration of the uncooperative behaviour of the minor characters, Conrad leaves the readers in no doubt of his admiration and appreciation for the culture of the Others. His minor white characters display thorough untrustworthiness, indiscretion and a perfect non-attachment with anything except their own self. They are the personifications of pure egocentricity and are involved in generating lawlessness and pandemonium in the non-white lands. Conrad reduces these characters to their barest bones in order to show their contemptibility, adultery and cold-heartedness. In his simple

dramatization of their manipulative motives, Conrad shows the sheer animal instincts and anarchistic passion of the whites towards the non-whites.

Therefore, a postcolonial reading of Conrad points out that he shows how the doctrines of white man's burden, egalitarianism, and theories of enlightenment and progress transmute into despotism, subjugation, nastiness, dictatorship and authoritarianism. Conrad's protagonists, like Almayer, Willems, Kurtz, Lingard, Heyst, and Jim etc. are the products of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century imperial Europe. The failure of the success myths, advocated by the whites, shows the limitations of the white supremacy. Hence, metaphorically, the ultimate disintegration of Conrad's white protagonists stands as a commanding indication of the failure of white man's burden. The self-centred, rapacious, wicked agents of the superior white race, in the wake of evolution of the disadvantaged never bring the natives away from their apparent primitivism. They cannot wean the supposed unenlightened inhabitants out of the, so-called, darkness. The agents and the traders of the avowed superior race consequently, fail to accomplish their divine duties and in their failure the readers detect the downfall of whole system, its theories and myths.

Demystifying Conrad's critique of imperialism:

Achebe's enquiry of Conrad's compassion for Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* has been influential in having a re-look at Conrad's agenda of assessing the colonialist philosophy which contaminates and is contaminating at the same time. We have noticed his white characters agonise in non-white settings and how his readers seek clemency for them. Presenting them as Promethean figures and adventurers they are made to courageously face the ferocity and savagery pervading in the non-white lands. The dialectical thought process where Conrad empathises with the downgraded and is also prejudiced towards the fair ones brings him under the close inspection of the postcolonial readers and critics. The readers see Conrad as a racist when he reduces the non-white lands to a mere site for disintegrating of dexterous white men's minds. His works keep revolving around the deracination and the collapse of the white men and do not show the problems of the natives in Conrad's novels like *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, *Lord Jim*, *The Victory*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Shadow Line*, *The Rescue*, and *Chance*.

Surely there is a well-founded anti-racist stance and depiction of aberration and oddity of the imperial rule in Conrad's texts, but what needs to be discovered is whether the author could distance and untie himself from the overriding imperial, cultural, and racial ideologies. Sometimes his protagonists help in laying bare affectations of the imperial rule. They hint at the disconnectedness between colonialism's decorous speechmaking and its soiled performance. However, these white agents and traders are also seen rejoicing over the desire to discern positive qualities in a venture to which their society is dedicated. They seem to mask their disillusionment and their dissatisfaction against controlling hegemony by assigning ethical drive to imperialism and its doctrines. There is need to question if the dual character and the uncertainty in Conrad's writings touch the elemental concern of his works. He is critical of the unfair nature of the colonial rule, and yet seems to be empathetic towards the agents of the superior white world. His novels are a saga of the wretched life of the white characters

which makes the readers forget the agony of the blacks. From *Almayer's Folly* to *Nostromo*, almost all the works of Conrad are based on the margins of the Empire. His novels exemplify that imperialism legitimises and spreads itself on the geopolitical, social and psychic foundations. The Europeans' aspiration to inhabit the vacant lands and the lands inhabited by the lower races has been uncovered. Conrad's works include explanation of the bizarre, humid, enigmatic lands, where the white agents and traders of the superior race go at the threat of their life. Such settings and themes of the interface between the two races invite the application of postcolonial point of view for the analysis of Conrad's works. One instantly notices that among other things he is seemingly more involved in portraying the deplorable circumstances of the whites than that of the non-whites. His stories are more of a study of the problems faced by Willems, Kurtz, Jim, Heyst, Lingard and Almayer than the non-whites.

The white traders and agents may be seen as exploiters, but the works of Conrad sing about their anguish also. He shows how his white characters yearn for freedom because of the troubles in their lives in a colony. Such particulars and accounts of the travail of the whites drive the readers to be more anxious about white men's life in the environment that is forced upon them and the quandary that they encounter in the non-white lands and. The same point of view may be seen in the words of Jocelyn Baines, who says that Conrad's imagination was "captured by the test of character to which the East, or primitive life, subjected the Westener" (Baines 115). Conrad shows that these white protagonists are autocrats but beleaguered too.

The white traders never feel at home in the non-white lands. Their gloominess arises from their being quarantined in the non-white lands. They are lonely and cut off from their family and friends. They have to survive in the unfamiliar and intimidating environment. Conrad is very mindful of the moral segregation and delicate consciousness of the white race. His portrayals show the corroding effect of estrangement. Unaided, the white protagonists face the primeval, unfathomable, ferocious, treacherous, aggressive and malevolent wilderness that increases their sense of seclusion. The incalculability of exotic environment brings out the inconsequentiality and powerlessness of the intruders.

The suffering protagonists yearn for freedom. On the very first page of Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, the narrator talks about the wretched predicament of Almayer, who has spent "twenty-five years of [his] heart-breaking struggle on this coast", and has yet not been able to achieve his dreams (AF 1). The rest of the novel may be read as the saga of Almayer's harrowing agony, justifying his target to reach a state of freedom. As we read the other novels we find that Almayer's case is not an isolated one. Like Almayer, the other protagonists like Willems, Kurtz, Heyst, Schomberg, Lingard, and Jim, too feel sequestered, since they are put to an enormously callous test by destiny. Amongst the race of "slaves and cut throats," Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* wants to get away to a "safe and dumb solitude" (AOI 129). In his expedition for escape he is carried by the "flood of hate, disgust, and contempt of a white man for that blood which is not his blood, for that race which is not his race; for the brown skins; for the hearts false like sea, blacker than night" (AOI 129).

In *Lord Jim*, the rebellion of natives — due to Dain's death — leads to the verdict that it is impossible for Jim to live in Patusan. Marlow's description of the white protagonist makes him worthy of "forgiveness and understanding" of the readers (Ross 58). His narration shows Jim to be "a pawn of the fate in the tradition of many tragic heroes" (Ross 59). The whites hence, become aware of the vulnerability of their moral uprightness

when they come in contact with the supposed wickedness of the unaccustomed eco-system. After a few years in the non-white lands their sole persistence is to hunt for any crevice through which they could seep back into their own world. Conrad's characterisation of Jim forces the readers to identify themselves with him. The white protagonist is raised to the height of a tragic hero because of some tragic flaws which validate his activities and pain. Jim is captivated by the literature of adventure and always visualises himself as an impervious contender of literature books saving people from great perils on the sea. But what Jim actually faces intensifies the irony. He always doubts his actions and feels if he had taken the other route, his valour would have been unsurmountable. Jim spends his life lost in the unrealistic world of principled accomplishments. Accordingly, Jim is a romantic, who suffers not due to a fault of character because of a tragic flaw. By the end of the novel, the readers forget the death of Dain Waris and remember Jim for his heroic boldness and action.

The empathy of the readers with Jim is strong because, like Jim, every man is caught in existential choices. Every man is caught in muddle and finds it problematical to select which way to plod. Jim emerges as a tragic hero, since *Lord Jim* talks about the horrendous side of his life — his depression, his desolation, his melancholy and the supercilious contrivance of supernatural against him.

Conrad tries that the readers feel a sense compassion for the whites and forget the natives in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* also. This novella is devoted to a black character, who has been attributed with so many negative traits that the hatred of the white crew for him seems justified. In his Preface to the novel, Conrad comments on Wait's role and says, "he is merely the centre of the ship's collective psychology" (TNN xlv). It seems that Conrad has not been able to rise above the binaries. He is incapable of redesigning the images and extricate himself out of the mesh of the omnipresent myths. He may appear to condemn unkindness, callousness and ravenousness of the whites, but reproach for the eastern runs parallel to the denunciation of the western.

The white colonisers do not enjoy pleasant marital relationships also. Non-white women stand as an example of the unfaithfulness, and they generally retaliate against their white lords. In accordance with conventional standards, the narratives of Conrad are masculine but the readers are made to feel pity for the white men when they undergo the distress in their relationship with the non-white women. Conrad's women do not speak or express much however, when these non-white and half-caste women present their views, they are seen as boisterous, rough, and unsophisticated. Almayer and Willems are incompetent in surpassing the feeling of racial vanity in their approach, as far as the relationship with their wives is concerned. If their temperament dampens the development of a harmonious marital relationship, their wives play shrewd games against them. The life after marriage becomes a torment for Almayer because he becomes "uneasy, a little disgusted, and greatly inclined to run away" (AF 23). He always desires that God be merciful to him and that his wife may die. But Almayer is neither able to shut "her up somewhere" nor does he find it "easy enough to dispose" her off (AF 20). Similarly, when Willems comes back home and tells his wife that he has lost everything. In contradiction to the expectations of Willems, Joanna does not cry or lament. Neither is she shocked nor does she complain. Joanna revolts and throws him out of the house. Conrad thus, shows that because of the conduct of these women, the white men are suffering in wretched circumstances.

Conrad's works describe the inevitable deaths of not only the natives but the whites, also. These white agents are hysterically distraught by the alien world. East has been attributed with undeniable negative natural possessions.

The colonized are unfathomable and unassailable but also lack history and culture. Similarly, the landscapes lack the warmth of Mother Nature. In *Lord Jim* Patusan the “remote district of a native-ruled state” is seen “as a grave for some sin, transgression, or misfortune” (*LJ* 205, 204). The whole atmosphere is sinister. Nature is depicted as gloomy, uncanny and demonic. *Almayer's Folly* is loaded with phrases, like the “close and stifling heat”, “the oppressive calm”, “the sickly perfume”, “the poisonous shores”, and “the seething mass of corruption” describing the tyrannical setting of Sambir for the whites (*AF* 2, 12, 10, 2, 49). The lustre of the sun and the moon are cold and pale. They seem to rise from and set in a grave. The implausible mystery alive in the non-white lands makes the whites its preys. *An Outcast of the Islands* presents Pantai's “selfish discourse,” to be “regardless of joy or sorrow, of suffering and of strife, of failures and triumphs [of the whites] that lived on its banks” (*AOI* 177, 178). The whites have to oppose an ominous reality of shadows in a realm that is not theirs. Nature seems to own a power that robs the whites of their peace and sturdiness. None of the white protagonists of Conrad can endure the battering of the dark powers of nature. For Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* the Congo river is, “streams of death in life, whose banks were rotting into mud, whose waters, thickened into slime, invaded the contorted mangroves that seemed to writhe at us in the extremity of an impotent despair” (*HOD* 29). Once the white people come here they are controlled by the wilderness, which they had been intending to subdue. They surrender to the insufferable climate and the landscape and get buried in the disease-producing countryside.

Conclusion:

In the present paper after scrutinising the complications that the whites have to experience, it becomes easy to conclude that Conrad tries to reverse of roles the natives and the whites. Conrad demonstrates that the lives of the white agents, traders and adventurers seem to have been overawed by the wilderness of the non-white lands. An inspection of the compassionate approach of Conrad towards the whites shows that Conrad has been deeply influenced by the social values and the political views of the place of his habitation; or I would say that Conrad has become an unconscious prey of the old-fashioned standards, prevalent myths and philosophies and the, so-called, supremacy of the white race. According to Parry, Conrad's letter scorning “‘the criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa’ be taken as the felt statement of the one who despised the method but approved the mission, for when repeated in the fictions the very notion of ‘civilizing work’ is derided as colonialist cant” (Parry 12). Achebe, consequently, seems correct to call Conrad ‘a bloody racist’ on the basis of Conrad's portrayal of the non-whites.

Accordingly, the agony, the torment, and the misery of the whites are streaked with a greater degree of thoughtfulness in comparison to that of the natives. It appears as if Conrad is not bold enough to say-it-in-the-face of the white recipients that the grief of the whites is his own creation. Conrad wishes that the natives should be allowed self-sufficiency and dominion from the interference and intrusion of the whites; but it seems that he could not escape the essence of his times. And therefore, Conrad's outlook towards the non-white lands and its populations is in association with the viewpoint of the superior European white race. Consciously, Conrad may be an anti-imperialist and an anti-racist, but unconsciously, he has been prejudiced by the racist, sexist and imperialist thoughts current in his day.

It is also vital to recognise that Conrad represents the prevalent irrationality and viciousness at the heart of colonialism and for doing so he had to face problems. The Polish writer, who migrated to England and was accepted as a citizen, would not have received any support from his host land if he had stood against the customs, ideologies and morals. Also, the philosophies, values, beliefs and the culture of the place to which one writer belongs, consciously or unconsciously, make their way first to the mind of the author and then leave an impact upon his works. There is no indispensable individual self of Conrad; perhaps it is rare to have one. His postcolonial identity is made up of racial and socio-political paradigms of his times.

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