The Integration of Text, Ideology, and History in the work of Joseph Conrad

The aim of the present thesis is to comment upon the fabric of ideas which reside behind the Conradian *text*, to focus on the manner in which the textual element is imbued with the historical and the ideological standpoints in order to grasp both the sense of reality and a critique of that reality, in short, the humanity at the turn of the 19th century. Sherry's concluding section of *Conrad's Eastern World* is titled, highly suggestive, 'Justice to the Visible Universe', in which Conrad is classed as an Aristotelian follower whose literary creed is defined by a certain *fidelity* to life as it is; moreover, through criticism of that reality, the writer also imprints upon his texts a possibility of existence as it should be lived (272). This is the exact objective of this research, to devote all its chapters to explaining the literary 'synaesthesia' between *text* and *idea*, and how the two elements work hand in glove to fabricate reality.

The chapter dedicated to *history* has been intended to reveal the way in which the force of history influenced Conrad's life, the choices he made in various stages of his life, and the resulting attitude towards the reality of his times. The scholars of Conrad express their unanimous agreement that the writer's Polishness is the most important attribute which he brought to fruition in his body of works. In Poland, Conrad experienced Russian exile, solitude, and became orphan at an early age; the native lands brought him nothing but cruelty, anguish, and hopelessness. Furthermore, we have commented upon various viewpoints pertaining to well-known Conradian biographers who have agreed that the conditions of Poland in the 19th century deeply affected young Conrad and compelled him to take to sea. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the fact that his desires, passion for freedom and adventure were augmented by his obsession that the native lands were chocking him, tearing him apart, both physically and psychologically. Conrad ventured to the west 'starving' for freedom, a desire he shares with Nathalia, a character in *Under Western Eyes*. She testifies to the condition of the oppressed individual who dreams of release from the burdens of tradition, in her case the autocratic kingship of Russia. The chapter continues with the writer's leap to the west—France, Britain, West Indies—to the east—the Malay Archipelago, India, Australia—and to the south—Africa, existential spaces which seem very similar in nature to the Polish space because torment, toil,

hardship, the sense of constant suffocation are still present. In France, the space of the loftiest illusions, Conrad becomes a mature person, the moment when he realizes that a seaman's life means constant self-sacrifice for the ship and its crew, work as a model of living under the form of daily ritual of devotion to and worship of seamanship. Romantic adventure is anathema, it is the breach of faith with the ship and its craft. The great majority of his novels portrays young sailors who dream of adventure while they serve on ships, self-confident, and who are confronted with old captains, individuals who are stuck to their routines of ensuring safe passage of the ship from the point of departure to destination. One of the best renditions of this situation is in 'Youth' in which young Marlow, reverberating with illusions of an enchanting east, has not yet acknowledged seamanship and everything seems disconcerting. On the other hand, the old captain is concerned only with rescuing his ship from sinking adrift and laments dearly its loss.

On leaving France in 1878, Conrad hoped of better times in the British space but it was there that he felt the barriers stemming from the clash of different cultures and languages, barriers which strengthened his sense of solitude, thus becoming a *déraciné* as Leaves notes. Yanko Goorall, of the short story 'Amy Foster', is the literary replica of Conrad's actual apprenticeship in England; both come from the oppressed east to English shores and are taken for eerie individuals by the natives, mainly due to their speech. Unlike Yanko who cannot adapt to the English lifestyle and dies, Conrad does find support in literary friends as Edward Garnett and the *Liverpool-clad* seamen as Marlow in 'Youth' informs us. Furthermore, Yanko who cannot put up with English, feels an innate need to speak in his native language, unlike Conrad who stresses in his biographical *A Personal Record* that had it not been for writing works of art in English, he would not have been a writer at all.

The British space, as Conrad's scholars agree, is the fertile ground for the writer's sensitive spirit, much like the Parisian space is for Stephen Dedalus. Both exiles, Dedalus and Conrad, find spiritual fulfillment in a journey to a different place, a place where individual freedom and liberalism are cherished. Conrad had the opportunity of enlisting in the British commercial Navy, the best and most widespread commercial navy in the world in the 19th century. The liberal Liverpool seamen were scattering the world for fresh markets in the east, and in voyages like those aboard the *Mavis* (1878) or *Palestine* (1881-3) Conrad experienced the eastern world, the space which helped him with the settings for his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*. In fact, in the first

chapter (pp. 31-2) I have extensively described the actual meeting of the writer with that eerie Dutchman, Olmeijer, in 1887, in order to extrapolate the crucial influences of the eastern settings and events upon Conrad, the would be writer. In short, we can say that both Conrad's meeting with Olmeijer and the voyages aboard Vidar, in which he got acquainted with the Malayan islands and the whereabouts, highly influenced him, and he began writing his novel in 1889.

Of course, Vidar was not the only ship which left its imprint on Conrad's mind and page; the experience aboard Narcissus, from Bombay to Dunkirk in 1884, stood as the basis for the creation of *The Nigger of the* 'Narcissus', a Conradian novel of sea life more like a poem than a narrative, and of an admirable political and philosophical complexity. Likewise, Almayer was not the only real individual to influence the writer; Marlow, as scholars agree, is based on Conrad himself involved in undertaking various life situations, able to promote certain conceptions, to meditate in disconcerting but reflective speeches, and adopt a philosopher-like stance in order to enrich his four narratives devoted to him with deeper and multi-layered meanings. One of Marlow's voyages is in Congo, Africa, a passage of self-initiation into the sordid and gruesome world of imperialism and its worldwide affairs. Marlow's journey is based on Conrad's real journey to Congo in 1890 but the general meaning of the narrative is enhanced by personal imagination in the realization of, for example, Kurtz's character and conviction. As such, the chapter testifies to the importance of the historical element in the devising of the literary text.

The chapter dedicated to Conrad's most known political narratives,–'Heart of Darkness', *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Under Western Eyes*,–is accompanied by a critical explanation of the concept of *ideology*, as well as by an argument which highlights its importance to the overall meaning of the writer's work. *Ideology*, as Decker and Eagleton contend, is the cultural value of each and every human society which promotes various modes of conduct. The modes of conduct come under the form of rules, guides, and are mentally acquired by the individuals, either consciously or unconsciously. When a certain ideology is acquired, political and philosophical in our case, the individual creates social relationships according to its precepts. What happens when different ideologies face each other? Conflict appears between them, and the stronger ideology aims at subduing the weaker one and get hold of power. Therefore, in this chapter I have tried to get deeper into the complex conundrum of ideology suggesting that the

characters in these narratives may be understood as simple tools manipulated by all kinds of political or moral designs, and acting according to personal interests. Marlow of 'Heart of Darkness', for example, is driven to Congo by the need of money, material values and, more importantly, by a set of ideas fashioned by imperialistic blueprints. Before coming to Africa he had a pre-established conception of that continent, a place where a noble European cause is under way, namely the elevation of the primitives. But, contrary to the expectations devised by imperial ideals Marlow adheres to at the outset, the actual European, imperial enlightenment proves more primitive in demeanour than the primitives themselves. We need not look any further than Kurtz, the Luciferian character, whose fall alludes to the biblical upheaval in the heavens. The fact is that Marlow, like Kurtz, is also a victim of his own ideas, conceptions which are politically based. When, towards the end of the novella, he wakes up from the beatitude of illusions, he understands human perversity, greed, rapacity, and wickedness. Consequently, he acts as an ormolu frame for the reader, like a Delphian oracle sharing his enlightenment. In order to achieve this effect of epiphany, Conrad makes use of history, the Belgian enterprise in Congo in the latter half of the 19th century, and political ideology, the backbone of the imperial agenda worldwide. Corroborated with Marlow's moral and philosophical remarks throughout the novella, the reader may experience a new vision of life, and a certain didacticism since he is guided towards some moral paths which should, suggestively, be adopted once the epiphany has yielded its meaning.

Charles Gould in *Nostromo*, like Marlow, arrives in Costaguana with a European-based imperial mindset in that everything he is involved in is vindicated by profit. His only concern is to make the silver mine lucrative; still, he fails to admit that the mine itself is a political asset, a means by which the local government of Sulaco has managed to loot his father, legally. An entire society is developed out of the silver mine's output and the Monterist political faction attempts to pass it under the state's property by accusing its owner, Gould, of state treason because of the transformation of the enterprise into a foreign business. He also fails to realize that the mine has turned him into a link between the foreign business and Sulaco; he, like Sir John and Holroyd, strip the country off the silver and fool the natives with petty wages. Unknowingly, Charles Gould is an imperialist trying to achieve profit in a native land, a colony. Unlike Marlow, Gould does not experience any epiphany but keeps on dreaming of profit. Nostromo is the lower

imperialist, a ‘caretaker’ of the imperial enterprise. Respected and revered, he supervises the activity in the harbor, the shipments of silver from the mine to the ships, and defends the local government against the Monterist assaults. In the end Nostromo does admit that he has been a victim of his ideals, of the political climate of Sulaco; he identifies himself in the position of the Hegelian slave enacting the imperial agenda devised by the great master capitalists, Gould, Sir John, and Holroyd.

In *The Secret Agent*, the political ideology affects Verloc, a mediocre secret agent who serves two masters, the Russian Embassy and the Scotland Yard Police. All he does in the novel subscribes to political machinations, and Vladimir is in care of the political plans. Verloc thinks it more important to sacrifice a member of the family in order to safeguard the autocratic agenda rather than vice versa. Above all, characters like Yundt, Michaelis, and Ossipon submit to their respective political convictions; the Professor takes political ideology to the level of a fine art, and spends his time engaged in perfecting his ominous detonators. Unlike the political ‘ideologues’ of the novella, Winnie displays no interest in political matters but it is the political climate and its undertakings which draw her in, as in the case of Stevie, the one who puts in practice the whole plan at Verloc’s mischievous machinations.

In *Under Western Eyes* Razumov develops into a combination of Gould and Marlow; on the one hand, he fails to acknowledge that education and the winning of the silver medal are the two factors which turn him into an interesting individual to be used by the authorities, whereas, on the other hand, he comes to understand the grim reality of his times and seeks refuge into solitude, into himself. His posture of a promising student is that which convinces Haldin to look for support in him. Nevertheless, guided by illusions of a promising career and political neutrality, Razumov betrays his comrade to the authorities; this error secures Razumov a totally unpredicted destiny, that of a secret agent of the Russian police. Although he is loyal to neither the revolutionaries nor the authorities, he is dragged into the immoral political affairs of a never ending battle for power. Both Haldin, the revolutionary archetype, and Mr de P—, the figure of order and authority, vindicate their quests with cynical religious convictions, namely that God is on the side of the revolutionaries out of the ideal of freedom, and on the side of the authorities out of the ideal of order.

In all the four narratives the condition of the individual is that of the *zoon politikon* who, aware or unawares, leads his existence engulfed in struggles for material interests; he follows the Hegelian scheme of masters who design the political game,—imperialism and autocracy in our case,—and slaves who enact it. There is no room for emotion and sensibility in Conrad's space, especially when politics and its agenda are on stage. As an extension, Jim, Lingard, and all the breed of the Conradian sailor characters lead their taciturn existence at sea, not bothered by the obvious fact that they too serve as simple pieces in the worldwide politico-economic machinery which turns them all into sea wanderers delivering goods from a colonial market to another.

Conrad's vision of time and humanity's existence is like Eliade's concept called the *Lunar Myth* principle according to which existence undergoes countless cycles of order and chaos (rise and fall). In other words, as Marlow suggests in his comparison of the Roman conquest of Britain and the Belgian conquest of Congo, the once primitive British natives in the eyes of the civilized Romans have reached the status of one of the most civilized countries in the world in the 19th century. However, as expressed in the section dedicated to *Nostromo*, a new superpower was being forged in the west, the United States, which attempted to replace the British Empire as the first dominant world power. Empires rise and fall, Conrad seems to allude, and with each rise to power, the rulers exploit the people of *different complexion*, everything for loot under the pretence of good deeds. Conrad understood world affairs as predominantly political in nature, and his intention of revealing them before his readers would not suffice; he needed to appeal to a set of moral codes and philosophical stances which could spur the readers into accepting and confiding in the new models of existence by following ideals or precepts rather than obeying socio-political norms. Conrad endeavoured to expose the way in which the political ideology worked upon the individual in order to compel the reader to be aware of other ideologies which could be adopted, and one of them is the moral path.

Morality is the choice of life which disregards politics, ideology and material values. Therefore, Conrad, in his narratives, sets in contrast two archetypal classes of characters, the political man and the moralist. The two visions upon life are also given serious scrutiny, each with its own means and ends, results and influences upon the individual. Unlike the political man who is defined by group membership and identity, the moralist is mainly a solitary, silent individual, a man busy with thoughts, remorse, and pain. He is preoccupied with the preservation of such

qualities as integrity and goodness, the same traits Socrates and Plato dealt with. The Greek philosophers advocated conduct or ethics as the regulator of social life, and believed in the cultivation of goodness across the world. Jim is a good character, and so are Marlow and Lingard. Their intentions are meant to preserve goodness in their microcosm. Thus, in the subchapters dedicated to the Lingard trilogy and the Marlovian tetralogy, the Conradian 'hero' is viewed as a moralist, concerned with ethics, a proponent of friendship, a firm defender of the traditional values and a teaching figure. I cannot help but notice Lingard's benevolence to Willems in *An Outcast*; in fact, he serves as a father figure. Marlow, too, is a father figure who cannot vindicate his innate need of benevolence to poor Jim. The two patriarchal figures reflect morality in action, trying to show another mode of existence to their 'sons'. Still, the moral teachings work neither for Willems nor for Jim. Yet, we can say that, as far as the reader is concerned, Conrad's narratives preserve their instructing role: their intention is of being moral guides, and of portraying the possibility of what happens in the absence of morality. Ian Watt states that Conrad's main moral ideal is *commitment* or *solidarity* in work, and sympathy for each other. Conrad's moral teaching, hence, also includes compassion for the suffering individuals. Lingard and Marlow do sympathize with the sufferers previously mentioned; but Conrad achieves a moralistic effect upon the reader by providing characters like Jim and Willems with immoral destinies. Willems is a treacherous, petty sea chandler who dreams of wealth and fame; Jim does dream of fame but cannot discover the moral path because he cannot grasp the world with its complexities, a world in transition from the sail ship to the steamship as Watt accurately notes. In fact, Watt argues, it is this transition from one Heideggerean historical horizon to another which renders Lingard and Marlow's morality ineffective, barren. The implications, however, are more complex; Conrad criticizes through his characters, both moral and immoral, the new age of the steamship which denies tradition, religion and morality as futile, obsolete, and mercilessly replaced with the ideals of profitable commerce, group identity or scientific advancement with which world dominion may become feasible. The Belgian settlers in Africa identify themselves as imperialists, eager to strip off the native lands of ivory and any other commodities which may turn valuable; they are portrayed as rapacious, individualistic and obsessed with power. They all envy Kurtz for his influence among the natives; the General Manager devises plots for his downfall. Similar circumstances are found between Lingard, on the one hand, and the native Malays, in conjunction with Syed Abdulla, the wise Muslim, on the

other hand. Both the natives and Abdulla despise Lingard for his successful trade and influence in the area, and they plot his doom. The times have come for the political machinations for power, influence, and profit; Lingard and Marlow's era of reverence to tradition and dreams of innocent romantic adventures for the help of the suffering has vanished. Lingard's economic crash highlights the loss of the traditional codes of morality.

What is going to happen in an immoral world in which there's no sense of authority and existential models of life? The Conradian characters go through the Jaspersian 'limit situations' (Conrad's shadow lines) which stand for existential crises caused by confusion, despair, suffering and guilt. Lingard feels responsible for Willems's fate just as Marlow feels responsible for Jim's. Both feel guilty and suffer whenever their 'sons' fail in living their lives properly. Jim and Willems experience the 'limit situations' as soon as they understand the nature of illusions which has nothing to do with reality; death is the only barrier which prevents Jim from chasing wild geese whereas Willems meditates on suicide when Hudig, his master, discovers his evil doings and dismisses him from the office.

In the Lingard trilogy and the Marlovian tetralogy, let alone the writer's other narratives, the Heideggerian *Dasein* cannot be brought to fruition; it halts in *medias res*. Even Lingard's benevolent prospects of life for the future wife of Almayer in *Almayer's Folly* fail from the outset. In the end, Lingard comes to punish Willems for betraying him by revealing the secret, and himself by departing from anything reminding of civilization. Marlow's good deeds in respect to Jim do not help the latter find a purpose in life, and Jim's torments are ever increasing. The failed projects of existence are doomed because of the inadequate projection of the *Dasein*; when Lingard and Marlow decide what is better for their offsprings, they favour values suited for traditional times, not for the scientific era. Their own *Dasein* and the *Dasein* projected for the offsprings are not 'updated' to be on commensurate terms with the age of science and imperialism. As such, lack of meaning and purpose in living make way and the *Dasein* is close to its end for Willems and Jim. Lingard, in the manner of the later Jim, is believed to be roaming the uncharted islands for trade, alone in his ship, as Almayer's letters indicate, but nothing is certain. He may also have been living in Europe or may, as well, be dead. The fact is, I believe, that Lingard, like Jim, cannot cope with the requirements of the new historical *horizon* and,

bankrupt and betrayed by Willems, keeps on pursuing his illusions of restoring his fortune and godly fame.

Marlow is the only character in the tetralogy, save Stein, that comes to admit the disgrace which has been bestowed upon the world with the rise of the new age, with what Heidegger called *articulation*, shift; Marlow, initially, considers himself wise enough to tell about Jim's condition; it is only toward the end of the novel that he comes to understand that Jim's case disconcerts him and that the young man's situation encompasses a more complex existential standpoint beyond his abilities of comprehension. *Lord Jim*, as well as 'Heart of Darkness', end in an aura of meditation concerning the intricacies of the existential problem. Marlow is also the sole character whose existence is revealed to the reader from early youth in 'Youth', to maturity, 'Heart of Darkness' and *Lord Jim*, and to old age, *Chance*. Whereas in 'Youth' Marlow is teeming with illusions of a romantic and chivalric kind, and fails to access life as it truly is, in his maturity novels the English sailor experiences an epiphany which is life altering causing him to regard the European society with disgust, pity, and scorn ('Heart of Darkness') and bewildering meditation (*Lord Jim*). In other words, he comes to comprehend life not as a series of pre-conceived ideas (tradition) but as a constant experiencing of the world around, of pure living, which unfolds countless meanings when life is looked into. In *Chance*, old Marlow is more meditative, not so overbearing as in *Lord Jim*, engages a number of wise saws in his dialogues with the unnamed friend and Powell, and makes heavy use of irony. Kierkegaard depicts irony as serving both as a critique of society and as an enlightening device engaging the reader to look for the proper meaning behind a string of words. Differently stated, Marlow employs irony to render in a more translucent way the actual truth about the flaws of humanity and existence in society which is characterized by blind belief and subservience to a wide array of ideologies which are highlighted and mocked at by the old sailor himself; he makes fun of Mrs Fyne's feminist ideals, of Mr Fyne's traditional and somber demeanour, and criticizes sarcastically de Barral for his fraudulent means employed to build his fortune, namely by fooling the gullible citizens into depositing their money in his bank on promise of a great interest rate. Indirectly, through de Barral, Marlow denounces the world of finances which is a means by which the masters deceive the slaves with illusory promises of wealth. Nevertheless, Marlow is one of the few characters

who still *follows the sea*. Although times have changed he is a firm defender and follower of the codes of the seamen.

Toward the end of the chapter I have outlined the universe of the Conradian seamen, a universe with its own norms of conduct and system of beliefs. In his *Record* Conrad insists upon the importance the British seamen's universe played in his life; the British seem to have taught him to believe in a sense of duty, honour, discipline, and sacrifice for saving the crew. Moreover, it is obvious that the Conradian sailor, as Peters states, perceives life, as bound by "tradition, professional competence, shipmates, and the ship." In *Typhoon*, for example, MacWhirr's sole virtue is the keeping of the ship on track, whatever perils may come; he is always concerned with the safety of the ship and of his shipmates. The unnamed narrator in *The Shadow Line* feels guilty for the sickness of the crew, and spends many days in deep, anguishing meditation about the situation of the ship and the sailors aboard. 'The Secret Sharer' insists upon the sailors' friendship and trust which is above legal justice. In *The Nigger of the* 'Narcissus' we are faced with the consequences of the breach of faith, order, and discipline in the sailors' microcosm; Donkin stirs a sort of political upheaval whereas James Wait manages to stray away the crew from performing their daily 'ritual', duty. When the crew is deterred from its duty, the ship, the existential space, is prone to disaster, chaos.

On the other hand, *The Shadow Line* and *Typhoon*, for example, are manifestations of the power of a firm, loyal, disciplined and industrious crew in the face of nature's wrath. Fidelity to work, affection to the ship and its crew, and discipline are the key existential requirements of a genuine Conradian sailor. Even Marlow of 'Youth', a fresh seaman, keeps on pumping the water out of the sinking ship in order to prevent its submersion under water. Although the disaster is impending, the crew keep on to their respective duties till death, just like the motto of Judea suggests; *Do or Die*. Work in the service of the ship and its shipmates is, as Conrad writes in *Notes on Life and Letters*, the noblest existential conduct. Work is acknowledged by Camus as the sole weapon of Sisyphus against the punitive gods; although he is condemned to futile work, it is this absurd condition which reminds the gods of the reasons of Sisyphus's rebellion against their commandments. Like in the case of Sisyphus, Conrad's sailor is busy with his duty,—work even in the face of death,—an activity which, along with the crew's sympathy for each other they oppose to the absurdity of existence and the threat of nature.

The Conradian 'hero', be it a landed or an active seaman, is always engaged in constant strife with society, nature, and the self. The Sisyphean sense of absurdity protrudes just as the failure of illusions sets out, and the Heideggerian *Dasein* is threatened to a standstill and eventual shut down. Whatever happens to the sailors afterwards depends on their choices of either self-destruction or self-seclusion and meditation upon the unfortunate existence.

In the final chapter I have made an analysis on the writer's narrative techniques which he makes use of in order to create the sense of history and ideology in his work. Put differently, the focus of the chapter is to illustrate the literary means which Conrad appeals to so that a historical epoch may be rendered with its complex particularities, from individual to community. I have explored the writer's texts with Barthes's theory of the *text* in mind; Barthes understands a text as a fabric of different words which can express countless meanings when they are disposed in a certain structure. In other words, a combination of words can render different meanings not only from one person to another but also from one epoch to another; what matters the most is the way in which a particular text is built, how words and sentences are arranged in the structure of the text. Therefore, I have made recourse to various excerpts from various texts of the writer in order to identify the way in which Conrad creates his sense of time, space, and characters, existential coordinates which help to build a world.

The writer's world is based on the historical events at the turn of the 19th century, a period of time which witnessed the rise of global commerce pioneered by the imperial powers of Europe and The United States. Global commerce implied cultural clash and exchange of ideas; there were also different worldviews and an underlying sense of diversity which gradually diminished individual identity. Conrad's major novels in the first part of his literary career treat the conundrum of imperialism worldwide along with its influences both upon the colonizer and the colonized. Nina Almayer and her Malay mother experience crises of identity when they are presented with European teachings and manner of life; similarly, Willems and Almayer find meaning only in the imperialistic commercial enterprise for wealth, and when they fail, the eastern settings do not provide comfort but confusion and meaninglessness. Cultural deracination, Conrad suggests, is loss of identity, and plunge into crises of identity and meaning. These subjective crises are vividly expressed from the point of view of the suffering characters, the reader having access to their ideas and spiritual dispositions. The characters have nothing in

common either with society or with the environment; moreover, the settings seem oppressive. Nostromo is disgusted with Sulaco and its residents when he identifies as a petty slave conscripted in the service of the local government. Verloc is very eager to leave London and start a new life elsewhere but cannot satisfy his wish because Winnie would not listen. Razumov is one of the most tormented characters, prey to the direct influence of the social conditions. Even Conrad's seamen characters are constantly threatened by death at sea. Conrad's characters live in corrosive, life poisoning environments, disconcerted and experiencing profuse moments of mental and spiritual crises.

Individual subjectivity presents the oppressive settings mainly through impressions disclosed in free indirect speeches. Marlow's impressions of the African jungle serve as one of the best renditions of its kind. There are also scenes depicted by an unnamed narrator as Heyst's Malay island of Samburan at the beginning of *Victory* or Willems's bohemian lifestyle at *An Outcast*'s inception. Space, symbolically, alludes to an existential manifestation of the myth of the journey in the aftermath of which knowledge is gained. Guerard identifies the *night journey* myth in Conrad's narratives consisting of profound meditations into the human nature and the *day journey* myth with reference to more mundane existential problems which are often treated with light sarcasm or irony.

Whereas space is presented as ominous and corrosive by the subjective reasoning or by an unnamed narrator, time is rendered through textual devices such as rapid shifts in the temporal progression of the action which is, mainly, accompanied by philosophical and moral remarks related to the human affairs or certain characters, or omissions of certain events in order to evince them as ineffective, puerile. In the subchapter dedicated to time I have delved considerably into the chronological development of *Nostromo*, *Lord Jim*, and *Chance*, mainly because of the complexity raised by the respective novels. In *Nostromo*, the reader is virtually bombarded with scenes and events which shift the temporal course quite often, and this peculiarity makes the narrative hard to grasp in its entirety. The chronological shifts, to borrow from Genette's terminology, take the form of anachronies, omissions, flash forwards or narrative pauses which allow for a deeper meditative stance. As such, Conrad's chronology in the narratives is predominantly shifting, and Robert Hampson's valuable essay, 'Joseph Conrad', gives credit to the fact that it is through these chronological shifts that the writer invites his

readers to consider the symbolic meaning of the whole work and to acknowledge the cyclical feature of time; the action is just a trivial occurrence which also takes place in the past and in the future but under different circumstances. The temporal coordinates serve to entail a repetitive scene with similar means and ends in which human avarice, illusions, and wickedness are reenacted in countless skirmishes for wealth, power, and the submission of the weak or of those whose complexion is *slightly different*.

The first two subchapters take into account how the subjective consciousness or the unnamed narrator refers to the sense of space and time or the existential coordinates, whereas the third subchapter inquires into the means employed for constructing the characters themselves. Trotter and Watt reach the conclusion that Conrad's characters speak indirectly by making appeal to coded messages which are charged with hidden meaning, and can be decyphered by co-operation with the reading process in the aftermath of which a new vision upon life is contoured. The characters can also speak through their actions in the narratives and, corroborated with the cryptic language, they follow the communicative pattern characteristic of the modernist model of communication. Everything is suggested and it is the reader who receives character impressions, and who should decode the underlying meaning of the narrative. Let us think of 'An Outpost of Progress', for example, a ridiculously short story whose actions project a profuse scrutiny into the human psyche, into how the individual behaves in an oppressive African jungle, without a snippet of civilization, and whose mental state stoops as low as to the point of insanity which gives birth to futile reasons for murder and suicide.

There are two major groups of narrators, the focalizers and the unnamed narrators. Both categories provide the reader with meaning and information about events, characters in the narrative or come up with the explanations of the confusing stances. The focalizers permit the reader to peer into the character's thoughts and feelings. They are also responsible for the waves of impressions regarding the self and the world around that bombard the reader. Almayer, for example, manages to make the reader feel as if he were in the Malayan settings. Razumov causes the trained reader to experience deep anguish, sorrow, and hopelessness which wither the soul. These focalizers are also responsible for vivid portrayals of slices of life with their respective beauty and feelings which appeal to the reader's emotions. On the other hand, the unnamed narrators, though interested in feelings and thoughts, do not provide such a detailed information

as the focalizers; they are busy with the establishment of the settings (*Victory*'s island) and character development (Lingard's aura of a demi-god ruling the Malay space). They are also designed to draw the main narrative level which, as in the case of the Marlovian tetralogy, allow for the introduction of frame stories charged with deeper meaning. As such, we have more chronological threads to disentangle, and they develop independently but depend on each other for the overall meaning of the entire narrative and *Nostromo* is the monolithic example of the kind, more complex even than *Lord Jim*. In *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast* the unnamed narrator, like the later Marlow, poses for a moralist who shares his judgments in respect to the dishonest Willems right at the beginning and the vivid representation of Almayer's fall into madness at the end. *The Nigger*'s narrator is a combination of the two types of narrators above mentioned in that half of the novel is depicted by a seemingly unnamed narrator whose intelligence could not be accounted for otherwise, whereas in the second part he refers to himself in the first person. All the Conradian narrators, be it focalizers or not, radiate with symbolic meaning which can be grasped by the reader after sincere commitment to the reading process, and sharing in with the textual life perspectives and ruminations. They lead a historically based existence, Conrad's own time, whose thoughts are engaged with the imperial agenda, morality, life suppressing conditions, confusion, despair, and an eschatological feeling of the ultimate disaster, curse and hopelessness; the proper way is either death or isolation in meditation away from the community. Consequently, the textually based Conradian characters and settings illuminate the reader with an anthropological vision into the times concerning the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. In this integrating perspective of the elements of history, ideology, and text we can certainly call Joseph Conrad an anthropologist preoccupied with a rigorous representation of his age, an age which he both identified with and criticized as a fine, detached observer.