AN APPRAISAL ON THE REPRESENTATION OF THE 'OTHER' IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of the Other in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. *It provides a literary exploration into the continuing discourse of 'Otherness' vis-à-vis colonial representation and the negative stereotypes of non-European people and cultures. In this study the other referred to Africans and Non-Europeans. It analyses the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized had been a recurrent feature in fiction and non-fiction. The relationship was usually an unequal one based on the 'Self' and the 'Other', meaning the 'ruler' and the 'ruled', the 'civilized' and the 'uncivilized' and so on. However, this study uses post-colonial literary theory as its theoretical framework to examine the effects of colonialism in the world-renowned novel namely; Heart of Darkness. The reason that* Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness was chosen for this study was because the author attempted to look into the long strained relationship between the colonizer and the colonized from different perspectives.* Conrad's *Heart of Darkness was published in 1902. The period was the beginning of the disintegration of colonialism and the work suggests the beginning of a new attitude towards the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, European colonial expansion was at its height. By the 1930s, over 80 percent of the land on earth was either colonies or ex-colonies. The extent of colonialism was so vast that 'only parts of Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Tibet, China, Siam and Japan had never been under formal European government.'(Loomba, Colonialism/ Post-colonialism, p.xiii). In the early fifteenth century, European states began to embark on a series of global voyages that established a new chapter in world history. During this Age there was massive expansion in places such as America, Africa, and the Far East and this was motivated by religion, profit, and power and as a result the size and influence of European empires during this period expanded greatly. The effects of exploration were not only felt abroad but also within the geographic confines of Europe itself. The economic, political, and cultural effects of Europe's global exploration impacted the long term development of both European and the entire world. Furthermore, the principal political actors throughout the Age of Exploration

were Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, England, and France. It is imperative to state here that certain European states, like Portugal and The Netherlands, were primarily interested in building empires based on global trade and commerce. These states established worldwide trading posts and the necessary components for developing a successful economic infrastructure. Other European powers, Spain and England in particular, decided to conquer and colonize the new territories they discovered. This was particularly evident in North and South America, where these two powers built extensive political, religious, and social infrastructure. Therefore, the period of European global exploration sparked the beginning phases of European empire and colonialism, which develop and intensify over the course of several centuries. As European exploration evolved and flourished, it saw the increasing oppression of native populations and the enslavement of Africans. It is against this background that this study will focus on the historical context of European colonialism and imperialism.

1.2 THE OTHER:

The concept of the Other in racial relationships was created by human. The *Webster's Ninth New CollegiateDictionary* defines the Other as "... a different or additional one" (835). In *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, define the Other as "anyone who is separate from one's self" (169). For Homi Bhabha, the Other is "a subject of a difference, that is almost the same, but not quite" ("Of Mimicry and Man" 86). Therefore, the Other is a person other than oneself. The term is crucial to the understanding of identities, as people construct roles for themselves in relation to the one who is strange and different in their society as part of the process of stigmatisation or suppression.

The German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), was one of the first scholars to introduce the idea of the Other. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1931, 1977), Hegel sees the Other as "a component of self-consciousness" (III).This indicates that the Slave is the Other to the Master, the Self.The French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), declared in *Totality and Infinity* (1969), that the Other is not recognisable and cannot be made into an object of the Self. To Levinas, the Other "precisely reveals himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness" (150).

1.3COLONIALISM:

Colonialism is a practice of the powerful over the less powerful. It is defined as "political domination" "economic exploitation" and "civilizing mission." In this study, the ''other'' is associated with the unequal relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer poses as the 'civilized' with a mission to bring civilization to the 'uncivilized other'. The relationships between the colonizer and the colonized were based on political and economic factors rather than on a mutual understanding of each other as peoples of different cultures.

Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*(1993) describes the attitude of the colonizer towards the colonized in Western literature. In European writing on Africa, India, Far East, Australia and the Caribbean, one can always come across descriptions of 'the mysterious East', the stereotypes about 'the African, Indian, Chinese mind, the notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples'. 'They' were not like 'us' and 'for that reason deserved to be ruled'. (Said, p.xi) In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said looks at the novel as a cultural form which is immensely important in 'the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences.' (Said, p.xii) He points out the problems posed by culture in the relationship between the 'Other' and the 'Self'. He suggests that when people see culture as a sense of identity and associate it with the nation and state, they tend to feel that they have to appreciate and be loyal to their own culture.

1.4STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study sets out to fill the gaps left by earlier writers in connection with the problems of identity formation and the complexities of colonial discoursein Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Also, the study examines in detail the problematic relationship between coloniser and the colonised in a colonial context especially based on the approach of the ''Self'' and the ''Other'' to show that these were the creation of the imperial powers.

1.5OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine how the ''Other'' is represented in *Heart of Darkness*using Post-Colonial Literary theory.Other specific objectives are:

1) To examine the different ideas of the Other in *Heart of Darkness.*
2) To investigate the authorial ideologies of Joseph Conrad and relate them to the representation of the Other in the selected text.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research analyzes the representation of the other in the novel under study. The main concern of the study is to examine the conflicting views of Conrad in his representation of the Other in *Heart of Darkness*. This study will also be crucial for researchers who are interested in novels about Africa, colonialism and imperialism among other things especially *Heart of Darkness***.**Because the text evokes interests in writings about relationship between coloniser and the colonised

However the focus of this research is also to uncover how Conrad's approach and portrayal of "Otherness" differs from other works with the same concern, especially in terms of setting, ideology as depicted by the text under study.

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1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is a textual analysis and therefore it will be devoid of the conventional use of research tools like questionnaire, interviews, and sampling techniques. However primary and secondary materials will be consulted significantly. Works cited will be duly recognized and acknowledged.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 REVIEW OF CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP ON JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS:*

Heart of Darkness, though a short novella, has inspired over a century of scholarly criticisms. In the year of its publication in 1899 *Heart of Darkness* was generally praised by reviewers and critics, but largely fell into obscurity for the next several decades. In 1930s and 1940s Conrad enjoyed a sort of revival when M.C Brad Brook and F.R Leavis in *The Great Tradition* (1979) proclaimed *Heart of Darkness* to be one of the great works of the literary canon, and Conrad novella has maintained this position. In fact in the 1980s an American literary critic Lionel Trilling regarded *Heart of Darkness* as the 'quintessentially modern text' (Tradell 9). Frederick R. Karl in *Joseph Conrad: The Three Lives (1979)* has called *Heart of Darkness* the work in which "the nineteenth century becomes the twentieth." The novella's artistic cohesion of image and theme, its intricately vivid evocation of colonial oppression, and its detailed portrait of psychological duplicity and decay have inspired critics to call *Heart of Darkness* the best novella in the English language. But a new type of critical perspective on the novella arose, one which denounced the racism and imperialism that Conrad's work seemed to espouse. Post-colonial critics among others have disparaged the text's treatment of Africans and women (and, of course, African women). It is no secret that Conrad's novella, an accepted addition to the Western literary canon, harbours many racists and imperialist overtones.

In early criticism of Conrad's work, there is a tendency to categorize him as a writer of sea-tales, and, following his death in 1924, there was a period of uncertainty regarding his literary reputation. However, by the 1940s his status had become assured. In *The Great Tradition* (1948), F. R. Leavis describes Conrad as 'among the very greatest novelists', and describes *Heart of Darkness* as an instance of the 'art of vivid essential record'. Although commenting on Conrad's 'supererogatory insistence on [the] "inconceivable mystery" of Marlow's experiences, Leavis, amongst others, established the story as a canonical text.

During the late 1950s, a thread of criticism developed that regarded the narrative of *Heart of Darkness* as a psychological quest. The purpose of Marlow's journey into the African jungle is to locate Kurtz, a successful imperial trader who has 'gone native'. Beyond central control, Kurtz raids the country for ivory, and indulges in 'primitive' and 'savage' practices. Thomas Moser, in *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (1957), adopts a Freudian approach: for Marlow, the

journey towards the renegade Kurtz is like traveling [...] into the subconscious'; the jungle imagery stands for 'the truth, the darkness, the evil, the death which lies within us, which we must recognize in order to be truly alive.' In his influential book, *Conrad the Novelist* (1958), Albert J. Guerard applies the psychoanalytical approach to the author's experiences: the story represents 'Conrad's longest journey into self, and Marlow's narrative confronts 'an entity within'. Guerard is explicit about his analytical base: Marlow travels towards his double - the 'Freudian or Jungian shadow', figured by the 'evil' Kurtz. Guerard highlights a 'collision' between 'the adventurous Conrad and Conrad the moralist'.Guerard also comments on the relevance of *Heart of Darkness* to his own times:

Conrad was reacting to the humanitarian pretenses of [the] looters

  precisely as the novelist today reacts to the moralism of cold-war
  propaganda. Then it was ivory that poured from the heart of darkness;
  now it is uranium. Conrad recognized [that] deception is most sinister

During the 1960s the critical trend shifts towards the political approach hinted at by Guerard. Eloise Knapp Hay, in *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* (1963), notes Guerard's identification of the conflict expressed in *Heart of Darkness* - between 'adventure' and 'morality'. However, she takes the view that Marlow's journey is significant in relation to 'a more serious collision', between 'Conrad the British subject and Conrad the moralist', and that this idea is particularly relevant in respect of imperialist looting. Marlow and Kurtz are representatives of imperialism as an idea. They are, after all, employed by a Belgian company which profits from the 'civilizing' principles espoused by the International Conference of 1884-85. The canonical status accorded to *Heart of Darkness* by Western critics ensured a benign response to its anti-imperialist theme into the 1970s. Cedric Watts, in *Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (1977), for example, suggests that it 'serves the cause of truth dialectically, byoffering a skeptical questioning [of] European imperialism.' Chinua Achebe's provocativeessay, '*An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad'sHeart of Darkness*' (1977), is a criticalturning point. Its post-colonial perspective is vigorously challenging. Achebe attacks Conradfor displaying the psychological need 'to set Africa up as a place of negations at once remoteand vaguely familiar'. He objects to Conrad's foregrounding of binary oppositions in whichAfrica represents 'the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization', an 'Other' in whichthe West is tested.Achebe suggests that notions of a bond with this 'Other' are 'well-nigh intolerable.' For him, *Heartof Darkness* is shot through with imperialist ideology and serves the 'dehumanization [of] Africans'; famously, Achebe asserts that 'Conrad was a bloody racist.'

Christopher GoGwilt, in *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conradand the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (1995), notes that in nineteenth-century Orientalist discourses which attempted West-East divisions of Europe, Slaves were categorized as Eastern, a 'confusion of Russian and Polish culture'. Poland's history was one of dependency on Russia and partitioning by adjacent powers, and Conrad was thus sensitive to the relationship of 'The West' to subaltern

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cultures. He was 'infected' by stereotypically racist perspectives, whilst also having experience of being 'othered' by such attitudes.

In this study, my interest is in the relationship between such unequal ideas of identity. Dialogic readings may reveal gender issues not immediately visible in apparently masculine texts such as Conrad's. Nina Pelikan Straus's influential essay, '*The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing in Conrad'sHeart of Darkness*' (1987), brings the text into the field of feminist criticism. Earlier critics read Conrad's female characters, Kurtz's fiancee, his 'Intended' for example, as symbols. Marlow returns from Africa and visits her to tell her about Kurtz's fate. He is compelled to lie about the real horror of the imperial project, and this was regarded by critics as a means of protecting the pure world of 'home' for which the woman stands.

Straus draws on the cultural theory of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In her essay, '*Imperialism and Sexual Difference' (1986)*, Spivak deconstructs the 'trope of the male of the white race as a norm'. Marlow's lie determines the Intended as 'Other' to his social group; she is a sign rather than a subject; in Spivak's terms, he performs an 'emptying out because a sign means something other than itself whereas a person is self-proximate.' Johanna M. Smith, in her essay ''*Too Beautiful Altogether": Patriarchal Ideology inHeart of Darkness*' (1989) extends Straus's focus on individual gender issues into the wider political arena considered by Spivak. Smith suggests that a feminist approach 'can interrogate its complex interrelation [of] patriarchal and imperialist ideologies.'She observes that the way in which Marlow narrates female characters (his aunt, for instance, who secures his appointment as a steamboat captain, and the African woman who is Kurtz's mistress) is a 'manful effort to shore up the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres.' Through a dialogic reading of these spheres, 'a gap opens between the imperialism visible to Marlow and the patriarchal attitude [...] unseen by him because it seems natural.'

Bette London, in *The Appropriated Voice* (1990), continues the kind of approach adopted by Parry regarding narrative as a 'struggle [between] competing voices', and discusses issues in *Heart of Darkness* in respect of masculine voices functioning in an exclusionary way. More recently, Carola M. Kaplan, in '*Beyond Gender'* (2005), has suggested that female characters in the story, especially the African woman, are more complex and have a wider significance than merely to represent the effects of exclusionary cultural forces.The idea of approaching *Heart of Darkness* through a range of inter-relational dialogues within cultural systems feeds through to postcolonial criticism of the 1990s. At the forefront of this movement is Edward Said's major study, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Said asserts that '[culture and the aesthetic forms it contains derive from historical experience'. He describes an interactive *process*: cultural experiences, he claims, are 'oddly hybrid'; they 'assume more "foreign" elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude.' These contradictions challenge 'the politics of identity as given' and show 'how all representations are constructs]'.

2.2 POST-COLONIAL LITERARY THEORY:

The term 'Theory' is the systematic postulation and rules of procedure based on an organised body of knowledge formulated to study a particular phenomenon. Also, in literature, theory is "a way of emancipating literary works from the stronghold of a 'civilised sensibility', and throwing them open to a kind of analysis in which, in principle at least, anyone could participate" (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* viii).

According to Valentine Cunningham, theory "has opened, or reopened, our eyes to textual irresolution, stickiness, awkwardness, it has certainly opened many eyes to meaning in text previously quite unregistered or only dimly perceived" (*Reading After Theory* 41). Commenting on the two distinctive functions of literary theory, Roger Webster posits that:

> … literary theory should do two things. It ought to provide us with a range of criteria for identifying literature in the first place and an awareness of these criteria should inform our critical practice… it should also make us aware of the methods and procedures which we employ in the practice of literary criticism, so that we are not interrogating the text but also the ways in which we read and interpret the text (*Studying Literary Theory* 8).

Post-colonial literary theory deals with literature written in countries that were once colonies of France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Britain. According to Ali Behdad, the term "post-colonial" refers to "cultural practices that address the issues surrounding the colonial encounter between the West and its others" ("Une Practique Sauvage" 73). The idea of post-colonial literary theory "emerges from the inability of European theory to deal with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing" (Ashcroft et al, *The EmpireWrites Back* 11). As a literary theory, it covers a wide range of texts that criticise the idea of colonialism.

The theory studies the use of power by colonising nations over the colonised people's values and their definition of the Self during colonialism (see, Ngugi, *Writers in Politics* 12). This is because colonialism reveals the relations of domination and submission which turn the indigenous people into instruments of production for the colonising nations (see, Cesaire, "From *Discourse on Colonialism*" 177).

Thus, "Post-colonial literary theory" is the body of work which emerged around the 1970s to understand the representation of colonialism and colonization in literature. Postcolonialism often also involves the discussion of experiences of various kinds, such as those of slavery, migration, suppression and resistance, difference, race gender, place, and the responses to the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics (see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995: 1-12)

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Joseph Conrad is significant exponents of the post-colonial approach to literature and this considerably influenced and shaped their ideologies. Similarly, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with the experiences in post-colonial concepts of Africa's past, present and future. These texts structure their actions in such a way that they outline the various questions of post-colonial literary theory regarding racism, ethnicity, hybridity, hegemony, mimicry and voice.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 CONCLUSION

This study has been concerned with the representation of the Other in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This is especially relevant because the concept of the Other plays a significant role in dealing with issues such a colonialism, imperialism, racism, stereotyping, hybridity etc as depicted in the text under study. The text demonstrates very vivid binaries of the colonizer and the colonized, and the self and the other. This text shows how the colonist powers exploited the natives of various geographical areas of the world in order to satisfy their lust for money, authority, and power. The focus of analysis in the text, however, is the pitiable predicament of the colonized. The process of othering is at the very core of the novel and dominates all the other post-colonial concepts in the text.

        The study also examines the portrayal of the Other in the novel base on colonial domination of Africans. Furthermore, this study has shown, to some extent, the inaccuracy concerning the others' historical and cultural practices of the indigenous Africans. We see, by juxtaposing the colonizers' thoughts that text such as *Heart of Darkness*is highly inaccurate, even fabricated, because the author is seeing the 'Other' through the Europeans' eyes. Like the texts that had distorted the Africans by European pens. Also, the presence of the Other helps the Africans and black to know how the world is divided. Therefore, the implication of this in post-colonial literary theory is that*Heart of Darkness* uncovers the difference between the 'Self' and the 'Other' through the Europeans' eyes.

3.2 RECOMMENDATION:

This study would greatly help research on post-colonial literary theory and African literature, by showing how the text provides ways for the Other and the Europeans to disclose their vibrant nature in cross-cultural issues. Also, our analyses of the Otherin *Heart of Darkness* revealthat the setting in the novel represents the cultural boundaries created by the colonizers in Africa. Thus; *Heart of Darkness* open the reader's mind to understand about the two different perceptions of the Other in African literature and these different views in this study augment the debate on the definition of the Other in post-colonial literary theory.

Finally, the study found that *Heart of Darkness* like any imperial discourse privileged the Europe and the European ideologies while the Africans and their culture were presented as lesser and inferior stereotypes.

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