A STUDY on JOSEPH CONRAD’S

*HEART of DARKNESS, LORD JIM* and *NOSTROMO*

in a NEW HISTORICIST PERSPECTIVE

Doktora Tezi

Mevlüde ZENGİN

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Tez Jürisi Üyeleri

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Tez Sınavı Tarihi……………………
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Mevlüde ZENGİN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment toward the Requirements for the
Degree of Ph. D.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to read Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1898), *Lord Jim: A Tale* (1900) and *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard* (1904) in a new historicist perspective. New Historicism is a theory applied to literature and that developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the American critic Stephen Greenblatt, and gained widespread influence in the 1990s. The theory suggests that literature must be studied and interpreted within the context of the history in order to evaluate how the text was influenced by the time in which it was produced. New Historicism is based on the premise that a literary text should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation of genius. New historicists aim simultaneously to understand the text through its historical context and to understand the cultural and intellectual history through literature. The theory had its roots in a reaction to New Criticism, which proposes a formal analysis of a literary work. In addition, new historicists draw from other forms of criticism, particularly the work of Michael Foucault. One of the significant peculiarities of New Historicism is its refusal to separate literary texts from non-literary texts. New historicists recognize all texts, whether they are literary or non-literary, as cultural artefacts. Therefore, in a new historicist reading of a literary text, it is essential to understand the culture and society that produced the text. New historicists have made a return to history in literary criticism, accepting history itself as a text and considering that the historian himself is trapped within his own historicity. New historicists’ approach to literature and history constitutes the key phrases in New Historicism: ‘historicity of text’ and ‘textuality of history’.

In this Ph. D. thesis, it is anticipated that the new historicist methods will enable us to read Joseph Conrad’s novels both in their biographical and historical contexts and alongside the historical and travel writings written in the period in which Conrad wrote these novels. It was a period that saw the expansion of imperialism, colonialism and pre-capitalism in the world arena. Through this kind of reading, it is aimed to pinpoint the relationships between Conrad’s novels and his life, between the novels and the period during which they were written, and between the novels and the non-literary texts written in the same period. The study will thus enable us to understand
Conrad’s approach to the pervasive ideas of the 19th century as well. Thus, we can determine to what extent Conrad’s texts are the products of the ideology of the time, i.e. imperialism and colonialism, and to what extent they are against the ideology.

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) grew up amid political unrest in Russian occupied Poland. After about twenty years, he began his career at sea as an apprentice in the French merchant marine. Then he joined the British Merchant Navy and settled in England in 1894. Though he was a man of letters before he wrote his first novel, his writing career began with the publication of his first novel, *Almayer’s Folly* in 1895. Conrad then gave up his job in the merchant marine. Throughout his writing career, he wrote seventeen novels, three plays, two memoirs, many letters and short stories.

Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim: A Tale* and *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard* are all marked by the autobiographical elements and by the history in which they were written. The texts’ relevance to the political and historical issues such as imperialism, colonialism and capitalism paved the way for our consideration of reading them in a new historicist perspective, a reading, which aims to construe the relationships between the texts and the author’s history and the world history. Firstly, the novels will be read in the biographical context to view to what extent Conrad reflected his own experiences as both a seaman and an intellectual, to what extent he made use of the impressions from real life and the impressions he gained through hearsay and reading, and thus to view the relationship between his life and his work. Secondly, the novels will be read in their historical contexts to observe to what extent Conrad reflected the prevailing ideas of the time and to see the relationship between history and his texts. The novels written in a period of imperialism and colonialism took their incidents and characters from the imperial world. Conrad himself was a member of the imperial culture and utilized his own experiences he gained as a seaman in the Congo and the Malay Archipelago when he wrote his *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. While writing *Nostromo* Conrad was aware of the policies of the world’s great powers, and his text, to some extent, was shaped by the pervasive ideologies of the time.

*Heart of Darkness* is partly based on Conrad’s four-month command of a Congo River steamboat. Conrad learned, during his journey, about atrocities made by the European explorers and traders in the Congo, and created, in the character of Kurtz,
the embodiment of European imperialism. Written several years after Conrad’s
gruelling sojourn in the Belgian Congo, the novel tells the story of Marlow, a seaman
who undertakes his own journey into the African jungle to find the European trader,
Kurtz.

*Lord Jim* is a novel whose characters and incidents were partly drawn from the
actual people and events. It involves the story of Jim, who is haunted by the memory
of a moment of lost nerve during a disastrous voyage, and submits to condemnation by
a Court of Inquiry. In the wake of his disgrace, Jim travels to Patusan, an exotic region
where he gains serenity and self-respect, and being the agent at this remote trading
post comes to be revered as ‘Tuan Jim’. However, a gang of thieves arrives on the
island and the memory of his earlier disgrace comes again to the fore because his
friend Doramin’s son is killed as a result of Jim’s wrong decision. Jim allows himself
to be shot by the grieving Doramin.

*Nostromo* is arguably Conrad’s greatest and most complex novel. Conrad shows,
in this novel, the social and political turmoil in South America and skilfully relates it
to the world’s history. *Nostromo* is also a novel of profound psychological insight and
of powerful political implications. It tells the story of a South American state whose
silver mine serves both literally and metaphorically as the source of the country’s
“value” and politics.

As all of these three novels deal with such political issues as imperialism,
colonialism and capitalism, the historical context in which they were written is of
great value for this new historicist study. Setting the texts in their historical contexts
requires a knowledge of how imperialism and colonialism were perceived in the time
during which the texts were written. Putting them in their historical and cultural
contexts, we expect to observe to what extent Conrad’s thinking on these issues was
influenced by a range of discourses surrounding the emergence of the new imperialism
in the 1890s. To construct the historical and cultural contexts for *Heart of Darkness*,
such travelogues and historical writings as Henry M. Stanley’s *Through the Dark
Continent* (1878), James Anthony Froude’s *English in the West Indies* (1888) and
Mary Kingley’s *Travels in West Africa* (1897) will be read alongside the novel. To set
*Lord Jim* in its historical and cultural contexts, *Brookiana* containing historical
documents about James Brooke, the white Rajah of Sarawak, *The Malay Archipelago*
(1894) written by Alfred Russell Wallace and *Perak and the Malays* (1878) by M. Frederick McNair have been chosen. Written in the English imperial culture, the texts will enable us to see how imperialism and colonialism were perceived in the 19th century, at least, by these travel narrators and historians. *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* belonging to the same epoch with these discourses will be read together with these texts in order to see the relation between these documents and the novels; furthermore, to observe how imperialism and colonialism were reflected in these texts and how Conrad treated the issues of colonialism and imperialism in his texts. The common points and the differences between these documents and Conrad’s texts will be explored to bring out the prevailing ideas in the English colonial discourses and Conrad’s reflection of these ideas in his texts. By so doing, we aim to indicate the containment and subversion of the ideology in Conrad’s texts. As this is a matter concerning form, a brief look at the narrative techniques in the novels will be included in the new historicist readings of these novels.

In the new historicist reading of *Nostromo*, the novel will be put in the biographical context to observe through what kind of impacts Conrad’s text was shaped. As the text includes a set of references to the real world and the suggestions from the imperial and capitalist deeds of the great powers in the world, the policies of these great powers will be mentioned to set the text in its historical context. Then it will be explored how Conrad reflected the policies of these nations in his text, and thus the relation between the text and history will be defined. Since, in *Nostromo*, the content and the form are interwoven, in order to indicate how the text demythologizes the pervasive ideologies of the time, the narrative technique in and the deconstructive strategies of the text will be explored in this new historicist reading of the novel.

The methods to be followed in this thesis can be best summarized with the key words and phrases constituted by New Historicism: historicity of text, textuality of history, intertextuality and contextuality. Knowing that Conrad is a writer whose works have been read and interpreted so disparately that it is tempting to talk of many different Conrads, we can expect that we can find another Conrad through this study.
I. NEW HISTORICISM

New Historicism is a recent critical approach based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. ‘New Historicism’ is a label to describe the studies carried out in the early 1980s by a handful of scholars, mostly in Renaissance studies. The scholars concerned with New Historicism gave this body of criticism a number of names including “critical historicism”, “historical materialist criticism” and “cultural poetics”. No matter how this mode of critical interpretation is labelled, it is evident that it draws attention to the close connection between cultural texts and history.

The critics and anthologists of New Historicism cite the year 1980 as the beginning of New Historicism because in 1980, Stephen Greenblatt, in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More To Shakespeare*, announced the chief characteristics of New Historicism though he preferred to call his project “cultural poetics”. Two years later, Greenblatt coined the phrase ‘New Historicism’ and thus inaugurated the currency of the label “New Historicism” in his “Introduction” to *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance*, a special issue of the journal *Genre*:

Many of the present essays give voice […] to what we may call the new historicism, set apart from both the dominant historical scholarship of the past and the formalist criticism that […] the New Historicism erodes the firm ground of both criticism and literature. It tends to ask questions about its own methodological assumptions and those of others […] the critical practice represented in this volume challenges the assumptions that guarantee a secure distinction between artistic production and other kinds of social production. (Greenblatt, 1982: 5-6)

New Historicism emerged in response to formalist criticism known as New Criticism and Russian Formalism, which focuses on the form of the literary text and separates literary criticism from the study of sources, biography, social and historical contexts, politics and other extrinsic matters, and which argues that there are specific formal characteristics making literature distinct from other kinds of writing. New Criticism tends to emphasize the text as an autotelic artifact,
something complete within itself, written for its own sake, unified in its form and not dependent on its relation to the author’s life or intent, history, or anything else. It is a formalist criticism since it focuses on a literary work’s formal and technical properties such as form, style and language and thus ignores the historical context of a literary work. Unlike formalist criticism, New Historicism focuses on the contexts of all kinds in which a work of art is produced. Instead of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primarily to “the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations”. (Abrams, 1999: 182-183) Therefore, New Historicism paves the way for interpretation of cultural texts and explores how historical forces such as social, economic, political, biographical, psychological, sexual and aesthetic phenomena interact with the cultural texts. (Cox and Reynolds, 1993: 3) In this sense, New Historicism does not distinguish literary texts from non-literary texts, which is the most essential way of its reaction to formalist criticism.

That New Historicism involves a parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts also encapsulates the main difference between New Historicism and its old counterpart, “old historicism”. Unlike previous historical criticism limiting itself to simply demonstrating how a work is reflective of its time, New Historicism evaluates how the work is influenced by and influential on the time in which it was produced. It also examines the social sphere in which the author moved, the psychological background of the author, the books and theories that may have influenced the author, and any other factors influential on the work of art. Thus, the practice of giving equal weighting to literary and non-literary material is the major difference between the new and the old historicism. As representative of the old historicism, Eustace Mandeville Wettenhall Tillyard’s *Elizabethan World Picture* is frequently cited. It is a book, against which New Historicism frequently defines itself. Tillyard’s book describes a set of conservative mental attitudes namely to society, to the deity and to the created universe which Tillyard saw as typifying Elizabethan outlook reflected in Shakespeare’s plays. It is very hard to think that the following assertions made by Tillyard could be written by a modern historicist critic. The following passages taken from the openings of the third and fourth chapters, and from the openings of the three sections of the fifth chapter of
The Elizabethan World Picture show how old historicism takes history as a unitary past:

The conception of the world order was for the Elizabethans a principal matter; the other set of ideas that ranked with it was the theological scheme of sin and salvation. (Tillyard, 1972: 26)

The Elizabethans pictured the universal order under three main forms: a chain, a series of corresponding planes, and a dance. (Tillyard, 1972: 33)

[…] for the Elizabethans the moving forces of history were Providence, fortune and human character. (Tillyard, 1972: 60)

Whether or not every educated Elizabethan had it well in his mind that the ether, according to Aristotle, had its native and eternal motion, which was circular, he took the motions and properties of the four elements very much for granted. (Tillyard, 1972: 68)

According to Tillyard, the feudal world was characterized by a sense of natural order and hierarchy and this age had a philosophy based on the ‘great chain of being’ in which every different being or form of life had its own essence and its own place in a divinely ordained hierarchy. This sense of order was then reflected in Renaissance literature. Tillyard, taking Shakespeare’s dramas as examples, argues that there are quite definite ideas about natural order. For example, the chaos of the comedies always resolves in the end with a return to hierarchy in which the sovereign powers again take control; the disruptive forces of youth are stabilized within marriages and nature returns to its normal course. On the other hand, tragedies are concerned with violations of natural order, and only when transgressions have been paid for, can the social order return to normal. Tillyard also argues that Shakespeare presents a cycle of history in which the transgressions and denials of natural justice by one ruler are eventually paid for in a series of tragedies. The cycle of history culminates in the divinely-ordained and natural rule of a just king. Tillyard therefore accepts that literature faithfully expresses something as a world-picture related to the period. Such an approach to literature and history seems by no means satisfactory to historicist critics because the old historicism “tends to be monological” and “is concerned with discovering a single
political vision, usually identical to that said to be held by the entire literate class or indeed the entire population”. (Greenblatt, 1982: 5)

While old historicism made a hierarchical separation between the literary text, which was the object of value, and the historical background, which was merely the setting, New Historicism is interested in history as represented and recorded in written documents, in history-as-text. It argues, “as historical events are irrecoverably lost, history can only be known by the texts which have come down to us”. (Barry, 1987: 174-175) The idea that historical events are comprehended in terms of discourses manifests itself in New Historicism as “textuality”, which was coined by Richard Rorty in 1982. He commented that in the 19th century, there were those who believed that nothing existed but ideas and he wrote, “In our century there are people who write as if there were nothing but texts”. (Rorty, 1982: 139) What Rorty refers to as textualism is Jacques Derrida’s famous declaration that – translated, alternatively, as either “there is nothing outside the text” or “there is no outer text”. (Hawthorn, 1996: 16) This post-structuralist idea of text is central to the new historicist perspective, which accepts that the past exists only in texts, and thus the past can only be known by the written texts. This is a challenge of New Historicism to established historiography. This challenge stemmed from the post-modern ideas of the historian, Hayden White. White, not accepting that the writing of history is to be distinguished from other writing by means of its factual subject matter, and defining the historical work as a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse, draws attention to the narratology of history. He argues that what a historian does is not to find history but to make it because a historian takes events that have happened and makes a story out of them. In *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, White’s emphasis is not on what distinguishes historical writing, but on what it shares with other narrative discourses:

Histories (and philosophies of history as well) combine a certain amount of ‘data’, theoretical concepts for ‘explaining’ these data, and a narrative structure for their presentation as an icon of sets of events presumed to have occurred in times past. In addition, I […] they contain a deep structural content which is generally poetic, and specifically linguistic, in nature, and which serves as the pre-critically accepted paradigm of what a distinctively ‘historical’ explanation should be. […] the historian performs an
essentially poetic act, in which he pre-figures the historical field and constitutes it as a domain upon which to bring [...] to explain ‘what was really happening’ in it. (White, 1973: ix-x)

White tends to see history as fundamentally a narrative, a narrated sequence always positioned within a genre of historical enquiry. The sequence of history itself elaborates relationships that belong to an “epistémé”*, not a mode of thought characterizing an age, as in the old historicism, but the discursive limits in culture on what can be thought at any particular moment, “so that history as a discipline necessarily traces ruptures rather than continuities, empty spaces of thought within and between epistémés”. (Davis, 1998: 464) Thus new historicists abandon any notion of history as direct mimesis, any belief in history as a mere imitation of events in the world. Instead, they recognize history itself as a text.

New historicists read texts and their contexts together because they see them as expressions of the same historical moment. The cultural materialists and new historicists, Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton in the “Introduction” to their collection of essays New Historicism and Renaissance Drama, describe this process:

Where [earlier] criticism had mystified Shakespeare as an incarnation of spoken English, it [New Historicism] found the plays embedded in other written texts, such as penal, medical and colonial documents. Read within this archival continuum, what they represented was not harmony but the violence of the puritan attack on carnival, the imposition of slavery, the rise of patriarchy, the hounding of deviance, and the crashing of prison gates during what Foucault called ‘the Age of confinement, at the down of carceral society.’ (Wilson and Dutton, 1992: 8)

epistémé is a concept which new historicists borrowed from Michel Foucault. Foucault used the term in The Order of Things to mean the historical a-priori that grounds knowledge and its discourses and thus represents the condition of their possibility within a particular epoch. According to Foucault, knowledge is defined and organized in various societies and at various times in different ways. Discourse is not just a way of speaking or writing, but the complete mental set and ideology that encloses the thinking of all members of a given society. See “Introduction” to The Order of Things, p. x.
The reading process described by Wilson and Dutton is a vivid encapsulation of the new historicist method, which separates it from the old historicism. Louis Adrian Montrose, an American new historicist, also makes a distinction between New Historicism and other critical methods that distinguish literature and history. He points out that New Historicism is new

in its refusal of traditional distinctions between literature and history, between text and context; new in resisting a traditional opposition of the privileged individual – whether an author or a work – to a work outside. (Montrose in Parker and Quint, 1986: 304)

New Historicism is based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than an isolated creation of genius. Therefore, the concept of culture has become prominent in new historicist criticism. New historicist critics conceive of a literary text as situated within the institutions, social practices and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and place, and with which “the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of that culture”. (Abrams, 1999: 183) For the new historicists, culture is not a highly valued and privileged social form such as religion, art and knowledge but culture is nothing other than the values, self-understandings and ways of thinking achieved by such practices as the writing of texts, the performing of ceremonies, the exacting the punishments and the formulation of prohibitions. Cultures do not sit ‘above’ the world in the way that ideologies are seen to be determined by, or expressive of, prior economic conditions. Nor are cultures ideal or psychological entities like a ‘world-view or ‘mind-set’. (Colebrook, 1997: 68)

The uses of culture in New Historicism differ from those methods, such as Marxism and sociology of literature, which relate a text to some concepts outside the text. In New Historicism, texts are considered aspects of culture rather than something that is related to culture. Cultures are not used to relate texts to their worlds because cultures are already texts, persons, practices and rituals. Therefore, a text is not an expression or reflection of its world; it plays an active part in producing and acting within that world. Thus, “texts constitute patterns of behaviour, the value of symbols and organize understanding”. (Colebrook, 1997:
68) J. Hillis Miller, though called a formalist critic, is among the critics who do not separate literature from its context. He states:

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

This approach to culture and cultural artifact, which has been one of the distinguishing traits of New Historicism, was borrowed from Clifford Geertz, an American cultural anthropologist. Geertz asserting that human beings are cultural artifacts brought anthropology closer to the practices of literary studies. In his essay, “The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man”, Geertz reflects the idea that man is a cultural product:

Our ideas, our values, our acts, even our emotions, are, like our nervous system itself, cultural products – products manufactured, indeed, out of tendencies, capacities, and dispositions with which we were born, but manufactured nonetheless. Chartres is made of stone and glass. But it is not just stone and glass; it is a cathedral, and not only a cathedral, but a particular cathedral built at a particular time by certain members of a particular society. To understand what it means, to perceive what it is, you need to know rather more than the generic properties of stone and glass and rather more than what is common to all cathedrals [...] It is no different with men: they, too, every last one of them, are cultural artifacts. (Geertz, 1973: 51)

Geertz argues that culture is a central ingredient in forming human beings, rather than being an addition to human life that is developed after a biological essence and that human beings are actually required to be cultural symbols and signs in order to function at all. Therefore, “by submitting himself to governance”, man creates himself. (Geertz, 1973: 48) Geertz also declares that “there is no such a thing as a human nature independent of culture [...] without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men”. (Geertz, 1973: 49) To understand human beings, therefore, we need to grasp them as
cultural artifacts, whose significance is to be found inscribed in the specificity of local circumstance and concrete detail. It is therefore evident that in Geertz’s work, new historicists found a way in which they examine how a particular period of culture fashions and manufactures itself. Greenblatt puts this idea in “Resonance and Wonder”: “Interest lies not in the abstract universal but in particular, contingent cases, the selves fashioned and acting according to the generative rules and conflicts of a given culture.” (Greenblatt in Ryan, 1996: 55)

The point which new historicist critics are interested in is how and why an individual or a people fashion themselves in a particular way. In this sense, what Greenblatt does in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* is to show how a particular culture, Renaissance culture fashioned itself in particular ways.

One important point to note here is that new historicists do not generalize specific examples of self-fashioning as the fashioning or imagination of an age or nation in a manner that is close to Geertz’s “thick description”. Geertz insists on paying attention to detail and difference in the study of cultural forms and symbols, respecting the diversity at work in cultural systems, and pushing through generalizing labels. He writes:

> We must […] descend into detail, past the misleading tags, past the metaphysical types, past the empty similarities to grasp firmly the essential character of not only the various cultures but [also] the various sorts of individuals within each culture, if we wish to encounter humanity face to face. In this area, the road to the general, to the revelatory simplicities of science, lies through a concern with the particular, the circumstantial, [and] the concrete. (Geertz, 1993: 53-54)

The interpretive practice described here is “thick description”, which is, in a sense, “an analysis of the conditions of cultural production”. (Ryan, 1996: 96) “Thick description” proposes focusing on the effect of the text in a network of practices rather than seeking the meaning of a text in the intention or mental content of either the author or the work. Geertz’s “thick description” has become a practice in New Historicism. If “thick description” is applied to literary criticism, the text could be seen as “an effective symbol: a social fact which makes action meaningful and is part of a culture’s way of performing its actions in an ordered and understandable way”. By means of the application of “thick description”, new
Historicists “focus on the effect of the text in a network of practices” and “descriptions of texts would be ‘thick’ if they referred to the social and cultural forms in which the text operated”. (Colebrook, 1997: 75) “Thick description” also distinguishes New Historicism from formalism by locating a text’s meaning neither in the text alone nor in some general pre-existing background. New historicist critics thus interpret texts as cultural events not as general historical phenomena. As Gallagher and Greenblatt argue, Geertz’s thick descriptions of cultural texts

strengthened the insistence that the things that draw us [new historicists] to literature are often found in the non-literary, that the concept of literariness is deeply unstable, that the boundaries between different types of narratives are subject to interrogation and revision. (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2000: 30)

Through Geertz, anthropology opened new avenues of investigation in the study of culture within and through the discipline of literary studies, one of which is New Historicism. Using the method of “thick description”, New Historicism analyzes the social and cultural processes by which “the lives and cultures of whole sections and classes of people were neglected and marginalized”. (Brannigan 1998, 35) It takes particular interest in representations of marginal and marginalized groups, and non-formative behaviors such as witchcraft, cross-dressing, peasant revolts and exorcisms as exemplary of the need for power to represent subversive alternatives, for the other to legitimize itself. According to Aram H. Veeser, new historicists evolved a method of describing culture in action. Taking their cue from Geertz’s method of “thick description”, they seize upon an event or anecdote and reread it in such a way as to reveal through the analysis of tiny particulars, the behavioral codes, logics, and motive forces controlling a whole society. (Veeser, 1989: xi)

New Historicism assumes that texts of all kinds are both products and functional components of social and political formations. “The written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power.” (Greenblatt, 1980: 7) As one of the first practitioners of New Historicism, Greenblatt sees literature as inseparable from other forms of representation and the modes of power function without regarding a distinction between literature and
social life. (Greenblatt, 1980: 3) New historicists tend to read literary texts as “material products of specific historical conditions”. It is this quality of New Historicism that distinguishes it from the previous critical approaches assuming that “texts had some universal significance and essential ahistorical truth to impart”. (Brannigan, 1998: 3)

New historicists see the role of literature as a political practice, rather than see literature as developing from within its own autonomous history. It is Stephen Orgel, a scholar of Shakespeare, who is the first to recognize the inseparability of a literary text and the history in which it was produced. Before New Historicism emerged, Orgel, writing primarily about the political and historical context of Renaissance literature, saw the role of literature as a political practice. In *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, which is accepted as an introduction to the dialectic of theatrical illusion and state authority, in other words, of play and power, in the culture of Elizabethan and Stuart England, Orgel sees Shakespeare as inseparable from the context in which he wrote. In the book Orgel shows that publicly performed works, such as masques, were not the reflections of ideology but parts of the construction of power in the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. In the masques written in that period, by acting out the role of a mythic character like Neptune, who was supposed to be capable of controlling natural forces, the king was able to produce certain power relations. He could present himself as a natural and divine ruler. (Orgel, 1975: 57) For Orgel, drama was, therefore, a directly social and discursive practice and it took part in its historical moment not as a mere reflection or expression but as a practical component in a field of discourses invested with power.

The new historicist point that literature is a mode of cultural production rather than a mere reflection of culture is not without a Marxist and cultural materialist base. Frederick Jameson, a prominent Marxist critic analyzes the cultural artifacts of contemporary culture ranging from architecture to pop art, from literature to television, in relation to the ideology of late capitalism not simply to interpret culture, but to situate it in relation to its historical base. His aim is to present “an analysis of the social forces that govern consciousness, and consequently, govern action”. (Davis and Schleifer, 1988: 460)
With his subtle analysis of the relationship between literature and ideology, the French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser provides a secure ground for the new historicist critics to explain the literary work in terms of the ideological structure of which it is a part. Terry Eagleton in his essay, “Literature and History” draws attention to Althusser’s ideas about the relationship between literature and ideology:

Althusser argues that art cannot be reduced to ideology: it has rather a particular relationship to it. Ideology signifies the imaginary ways in which men experience the real world, which is, of course, the kind of experience literature gives us too – what it feels like to live in particular conditions. However, art does more than just passively reflect that experience. It is held within ideology, but also manages to distance itself from it, to the point where it permits us to “feel” and “perceive” the ideology from which it springs […] Science gives us conceptual knowledge of a situation; art gives us the experience of that situation, which is equivalent to ideology. But by doing this it allows us to “see” the nature of that ideology. (Eagleton in Keesey, 1987: 434)

Althusser claims that literature as one of the institutions participates in making state power and ideology familiar and acceptable to the state’s subjects and reflects the values, customs, and norms of the dominant interests in its society. (Althusser, 1984: 1-6) Investigating how people within a state behave according to the rules of that state, even when it is not in their best interests to do so Althusser mentions two main mechanisms. The first is what he calls RSA or Repressive State Apparatuses, which can enforce behavior directly, such as the police, the criminal justice and prison system. Through these apparatuses, the State has the power to force its people physically to behave in the way it wants. The second mechanism is what Althusser calls ISAs, or Ideological State Apparatuses. These are institutions generating ideologies, in accordance with which, then, individuals and groups internalize and act. The ISAs include schools, religions, the family, legal systems, politics, arts, sports, etc. These organizations generate systems of ideas and values, which we as individuals believe or do not believe. What Althusser examines is how individuals come to internalize, to believe the ideologies that these ISAs create and thus misrecognize or misinterpret themselves as un-alienated subjects in capitalism. Althusser derives his idea of ideology as a structure from the Marxist idea that ideology is part of the superstructure and he links it to the idea of the unconscious, from Sigmund Freud and from Jacques Lacan. Thus, ideology for Althusser is a
structure working unconsciously. Like language ideology is a system, which we inhabit, which speaks us, but which gives us the illusion that we are in charge, that we freely choose to believe the things we believe, and that we find many reasons why we believe those things. Althusser’s premises that “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”, and that “Ideology has a material existence” (Althusser in Ryan, 1996: 17, 19) lead him to set down two conjoint theses: “1 there is no practice except by and in an ideology; 2 there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects.” (Althusser in Ryan, 1996: 21)

Althusser’s concept of ideology constitutes the concept of ideology in New Historicism. Ideology, for the new historicists, works in language, but more than this, it exists in a material form through institutions like the church, the school, the theatre, the university and so on. Therefore, “culture is a field of much ideological contest and contradiction and no cultural artefact or practice is outside this political sphere”. (Brannigan, 1998: 12) Furthermore, as Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dallimore claim, in their “Foreword” to Political Shakespeare, literary texts do not exist in a fixed moment of production; they are parts of a wider context of cultural and political institutions. Sinfield and Dallimore regard Shakespeare, in the context of his prevalence, as a cultural icon manufactured as a genius and a master figure through the media of education, industry and theatre:

A play by Shakespeare is related to the context of its production – to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production (the court, patronage, theatre, education, the church). Moreover, the relevant history is not just that of four hundred years ago, for culture is made continuously and Shakespeare’s text is reconstructed, reappraised, reassigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. What the plays signify depends on the cultural field in which they are situated. (Dallimore and Sinfield, 1985: viii)

Raymond Williams, the pioneer of Cultural Materialism, became a dominant figure in New Historicism in regards to his work examining literature as a part of culture. Literature, for Williams, does not passively reflect external reality, but rather represents the social and cultural values of certain sections of people. He also sees literature as only one form of the material expression of human experience and
as part of a system of culture, which is constantly shifting. In *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, Williams criticizes the humanist conception of literature, arguing that the critics engaged in the humanist concept of literature promote literature as the exclusive possession of a privileged élite of trained intellectuals and see literature’s primary function as to examine and reveal the intricacies of human nature. In Williams’ opinion, literature is not the only way of understanding human nature because experience is recorded in not only “the rich source of literature” but also history, building, painting, music, philosophy, theology, political and social theory, the physical and natural sciences, anthropology, and indeed the whole body of learning” and also “institutions, manners, customs, [and] family memories”. (Williams, 1961: 248) Williams also argues that literature is not autonomous: “we cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice, in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws.” (Williams, 1980: 43) His theoretical assumptions that language and its constituent modes of social and cultural expression are implicated in material practice and that language changes just as the material practices, objects and institutions to which it refers change are the concerns which new historicists borrowed from him. For Williams, we can conceive of these material changes only when concepts for the new forms already exist in language. In this way culture and society are mutually interactive, which reminds us of a typical Marxist insistence on the dialectical relationship between base and superstructure, economics and ideology, or society and culture. It should also be noted that Williams has been a central influence on the work of such cultural materialist critics as Sinfield, Dallimore and Catherine Belsey in regards to his descriptions of the cultural system and its constituent material elements and functions. With his materialist interpretations and analyses of literary texts, he has also made culture as much the object of literary study as literature, and thus founded new directions in literature and history in both cultural studies and New Historicism.

Since, in New Historicism, literature is considered an active part of a particular historical moment, it is not expected to be a medium for the expression of historical knowledge. From the standpoint of New Historicism, literature is “an agent in constructing a culture’s sense of reality”. (Howard 1986: 24) Literature is functional in shaping the concept of reality in culture rather than mimetic. Therefore, in a new historicist study the object is not the text and its context, not literature and its
history, but rather literature in history. New historicist critics do not regard literary
text as foreground and history as background. They “refuse to see literary texts
against an overriding background of history or to see history as a set of facts outside
the written texts”. (Brannigan, 1998: 3) Thus New Historicism does not distinguish
literature from other cultural phenomena such as anthropology, art, politics and
economics in the sense that literature is a cultural phenomenon produced in specific
historical conditions and that literary texts are the material products of these specific
historical conditions.

It is evident that the new historicist theory marks “a return to history” in literary
criticism. Yet, in New Historicism, history is not considered an objective knowledge
which can be made to explain a literary text. New Historicism rejects the idea of
history as a directly accessible, unitary past and as something linear and progressive.
Henceforth, to the new historicists, history is not a secure knowledge that a literary
critic can use to fix a text’s meaning and there is no place in New Historicism for
faith in “objectivity”, “permanence” and “the direct recreation of the past” but rather
a stress upon “the processes by which the past is constructed or invented”. (Cox and
Reynolds, 1993: 3) The refusal of history as objective and permanent in New
Historicism stems from its acceptance of historical materials as the products of
particular historical conditions like literary texts. New historicists tend to see all
texts - whether they are literary or non-literary – “as objects and events in the world,
as a part of human life, society, the historical realities of power and authority”. (Cox
and Reynolds, 1993: 3) For the new historicists, the past does not consist of a set of
objective facts which could be discovered. In Greenblatt’s opinion, literary criticism
has to renew itself by moving away from realist assumptions about the meaning of a
historical text towards the recognition that history and literature are discourses
which construct rather than reflect, invent rather than discover the past. (Greenblatt,
1988: ii) The past is subjective rather than objective, expressive in the same way
that a literary text is expressive because historians understand past as a narrative;
and accordingly they narrate the past, and thus the records of the past are expressive.
As all other modern critical approaches such as psychoanalysis, feminism, Marxism,
structuralism and post-structuralism, New Historicism defines the individual as an
effect of socio-historical, ideological, political and discursive forces, and therefore
subject to those forces. The new historicist assumption concerning the self is that
“the self is constructed in relation to society and is fashioned in the interaction between social norms and self-invention”. (Brannigan, 1998: 74,118) As the self is a social construct, there is no inalterable, eternal human nature or a true self impervious to history or ideology; and there is no text presenting unchangeable absolute essential truth.

New historicists’ approach to history results from their recognition of literary texts as the products of particular historical conditions. They see history as “an ongoing series of human constructions, each representing the past at particular present moments for particular present purposes”. (Cox and Reynolds, 1993: 3) The issues with which the new historicist critics are most concerned are the role of historical context in interpreting literary texts and the role of literary rhetoric in mediating history. (Brannigan in Wolfeys, 2001: 170) Montrose argues that the key concern of new historicist critics is the “the historicity of texts” and “the textuality of history.” He explains that to recognize the historicity of text is to specify the cultural and historical differences at work in both the literary text and the critical text, and that to recognize the textuality of history is to assume that nothing exists outside language, outside representations:

**By the historicity of text,** I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing – not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. **By the textuality of history,** I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived and material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question – traces whose survival we cannot assume to be contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called ‘histories’. (Montrose in Veeser, 1989: 20)

It is clear that Montrose’s historicizing the text and textualizing history became a mainstream in New Historicism, which can be attributed to its turn to history. Thus New Historicism recognizes that text is an event and history is text. That is, a literary text is conceived to be a part of the process of historical change and a constituent of that historical change; and “history is conceived not to be a set of
fixed, objective facts, but, like the literature with which it interacts, a text which itself needs to be interpreted”. (Abrams, 1999: 183)

In its historicism and in its political interpretations, New Historicism owes something to Marxism, which discusses literature and refuses to isolate it from the culture of which it is a part. Gallagher, in her essay, “Marxism and New Historicism” explains the evolution of the central concerns and characteristics of New Historicism stemming from the influences of Marxism. The questions she asks in this evolutionary process are:

Was it possible […] that certain forms of subjectivity that felt oppositional were really a means by which power relations were maintained? […] Was it theoretically possible even to differentiate the individual subject from a system of power relationship? (Gallagher in Ryan, 1996: 49)

New historicist answers to these questions would be: Certain forms of oppositional subjectivity help to sustain power relations and it is not possible to distinguish the individual subject from power relationships.

Marxist criticism has disrupted the hierarchy of history as superior to literature, closing the distance between the two. Instead of viewing history as the determining context for literature, Marxist critics such as Williams have conceived history as a field of discourse, in which literature makes its own impact as a political force and, in effect, participates in a historical dialectic. One of the central propositions of Marxist sense of history is that there are deep contradictions in the relationships of production and in the consequent social relationships. (Williams, 1977: 11-55) The economic “base” of a society, as manifested in the relations of production determines that society’s “superstructure”, that is, “its art and ideology, as a consequence of the underlying mode of production, such as feudalism and capitalism”. (Davis and Schleifer, 1998: 458) For Marxist thinkers, the actions, the beliefs and language of an individual are determined by a wide range of social, economic, historical and cultural factors; and likewise, they consider literary works as the products of a particular history. The seeds of that revolutionary understanding of history can be found in a famous passage in The German Ideology written in 1845 by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:
The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the spiritual intercourse of men, appear here as the direct efflux of men’s material behaviour [...] Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness. (Marx and Engels, 1945: 6)

Marx and Engels wrote, “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class”. (Marx and Engels, 1991: 50) According to this idea, economics is the determining factor in any society or culture, and the ruling mode of economic production. All ideas, beliefs, values and cultural forms belong to and shape the superstructure, which is determined by the interests of the economic base. Marx asserts that all cultural and ideological forms are embedded in material practices and institutions. For Marxist thinkers, “representation becomes as significant a field of struggle as the world of empirical economic circumstances”. (Davis and Schleifer, 1998: 460) The control of the means of representation ensures that the proletariats remain exploited and oppressed. Marx describes this position: “They cannot represent themselves. They must be represented”. (Marx and Engels, 1991: 164)

Marxist critics see history as the procession of stories favorable to the ruling class, and literary texts as historical texts taking place in this procession. On a simple level, Marxism fractures the idea that history is singular and universal by positing that all history is rife with class struggle, in which the interests of the dominant economic group are represented as the interests of the proletariat, those who sell their labor for wages are not represented, or are represented as those of a particular minority. New historicists are interested in the stories about women, the colonized, the insane, in short, the marginalized and the oppressed; and “they often look for ways in which populations are marginalized through a literary work”. (Brannigan, 1998: 23)

Marxist criticism is considered a progenitor of New Historicism in reference to the Marxist assumptions that the evolving history of humanity, of its social groupings and relations, of its institutions, and of its way of thinking are largely determined by the changing mode of its material production, and that historical changes in the fundamental mode of material production affect changes in the class structure of a society, establishing in each era dominant and subordinate classes
that “engage in a struggle for economic, political and social advantage; and
most importantly, that human consciousness is constituted by an ideology”.
(Abrams, 1999: 147-148) Through these Marxist interests and beliefs, new
historicists have recognized literary texts as having specific functions within a
network of power relations in society; literature can therefore serve to persuade
people of the justice of particular causes, or can police the dominant ideas of a
particular time by representing alternatives or deviations as threatening. For
example, in Shakespeare’s time the idea prevailed was that the ruling order was
sanctioned by a wide range of representations which formed a consensual discourse,
of which literary texts were a part. “These representations serve to ratify the existing
social order, by participating in a consensus which marginalizes or alienates any
form of dissent from the social order.” (Brannigan in Wolfreys, 2001: 172)

Marxist assumption that literary and non-literary texts are best analyzed as the
product of particular social practices enabled the new historicists to comprehend the
historical events textually. Greenblatt, in his “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance
Authority and Its Subversion”, followed a similar path to examine the construction
of a version of social authority and the way a textual economy works within that
construction. In the essay, his aim is to recover the power of ideas in cultural
artifacts in order to trace their functioning within the social world in which they
appeared. He traces the power and struggle attendant on the use of the idea of
‘atheism’ in seventeenth-century England in order to show the relationship between
political and cultural events. Contrary to the scholars positing the existence of
radical Renaissance intellectual traditions and scientific communities, Greenblatt
argues that the texts of authors who ostensibly seek to celebrate political authority
register some of Elizabethan society’s most subtly subversive insights about power.
To prove his point, he examines the practices of testing, recording, and explaining as
they appear in a political document, Thomas Harriot’s A Brief and True Report of
the New Found Land of Virginia, and he demonstrates that Harriot can provide a
skeptical representation of religion because this author is a vigilant defender of a
colonial administration that defines itself in opposition to native American voices it
projects as “Other”. (Greenblatt in Dallimore and Sinfield, 1985: 18-47) Greenblatt
traces, in Shakespeare’s play, Henry IV, the same tactics of testing and recording he
found in Harriot’s work to complete his task as a new historicist critic. The result is
that the texts are connected with the network of institutions, practices and beliefs that constitute a particular culture.

New Historicism’s emphasis on textuality, the problems of representation and deconstruction of the self and the individual seem to be the concerns taken from post-structuralist and deconstructionist criticism. The new historicists’ assumptions that there is no trans-historical or universal human essence and that human subjectivity is constructed by cultural codes positioning and limiting all of us in various and divided ways, that there is no objectivity as we experience the world in language, that all our representations of the world, our readings of texts and of the past are informed by our own historical position by the values and politics rooted in them, and that representation makes things happen and that, as forces acting in history, various forms of representation ought to be read in relation to both each other and non-discursive texts like events owe much to the deconstructionist and poststructuralist theories of Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. Greenblatt marks the effects of post-structuralism on New Historicism in his “Introduction” to *Learning to Curse*:

One of the principal achievements of post-structuralism has been to problematize the distinction between literary and non-literary texts, to challenge the stable difference between the fictive and the actual, to look at discourse not as a transparent glass through which we glimpse reality but as the creator of what Barthes called “reality effect”. (Greenblatt, 1990: 14)

According to the French psychoanalyst Lacan, the fixed stable self is a romantic fiction; like the text in Deconstruction, the self is a de-centered mass of traces left by our encounter with signs, visual symbols, language etc. Lacan, seeing the Christian-humanist idea of an autonomous individual self and soul that transcends the limit of language as a fallacy and illusion, accepts that the self is constituted by language, a language that is not one’s own, always another’s, always already in use. (Lacan in Lodge, 2000: 62-86) Lacan’s most celebrated dictum “the unconscious is structured like a language” seems to have been drawn upon by the new historicists, who concede that the individual self is constructed by cultural codes.

The concept of text in Deconstruction and Post-structuralism is an important support to the new historicist perspective. The new historicist effort to assimilate the
literary text to history has been guaranteed by the post-structuralist doctrine of
textuality, which states that the text is not aloof from the surrounding context, that
there is contiguity, an ebb and flow between text and whatever might once have
been seen as outside it. The term ‘text’, borrowed particularly from the work of the
French philosopher Derrida, implies that human reality is fundamentally discursive.
The concept of ‘text’ implies both a specific piece of writing and much more broadly, social reality itself. The new historicists’ conception of literature and
history as texts seems to have stemmed from the post-structuralist view that “all
experience has been deferred from original experience, and in this gap occur
language and history”. (Pinar in MacCarthy, 1993: 60) Derrida sees literature as a
language, a text consisting of an infinite chain of postponed connections between
the signified and signifier. For this reason, a text does not have a single fixed
meaning and recovering meaning from texts is impossible because interpretations of
a text never point to the real world but only to more language. “The purpose of
deconstructive criticism is to expose the indeterminacy of meaning in texts.”
(Griffith, 2006: 173) New historicist critics utilize Derrida’s deconstruction as a
method of interpretation in their analyses of literary and non-literary texts, seeing
literature, culture and history as texts having no single fixed meaning.

Dialogic Criticism inaugurated by Bakhtin contributed to New Historicism with
regard to its recognition of literary texts as discourses conducted by human
characters whose voices engage in a dynamic interchange of beliefs, attitudes,
sentiments, and other expressions of states of consciousness. Bakhtin argues that a
text is never ‘univocal’ (single-voiced) but it generates a riotous plurality of
meanings, and a text’s being not univocal is characterized by its ‘heteroglossia’
(different tongues) whereby the text provides us with a dialogue or carnival of many
different voices, some ironic, some humorous, some self-mocking or self-parodying.
Within this textual carnival there can be no place for the reasoned, authoritative,
single voice to silence all others and impose a fixed and reliable version of the
events depicted, for the text is by nature anarchic rather than authoritarian. (Bakhtin,
1984: 182-185; 1994: 79) Thus, for Bakhtin, a literary work is not a text whose
meanings are produced by the play of impersonal linguistic, economic or cultural
forces. Rather, it is a site for the dialogic interaction of multiple voices, or modes of
discourse, each of which is not merely a verbal but a social phenomenon; it is the
product of manifold determinants that are specific to a class, social group, and speech community. (Bakhtin, 1994) New Historicism’s consideration of texts of all kinds as the social and cultural artifacts having no fixed meanings owe much to Bakhtin, who describes discourse as “a medley of voices, social attitudes and values, and thus, as unresolved and open-ended”. (Bakhtin, 2006: 60)

Barthes’s famous declaration of “the death of the author” is a post-structuralist view explicitly disconnecting the text from any grounding in authorial intention. It means that “writing is the deconstruction of every voice, of every point of origin”. (Barthes in Lodge, 2000: 148) The theory of ‘text’ in New Historicism draws upon Barthes’s theory of ‘text’. In “The Death of the Author” Barthes writes:

A text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture [...] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (Barthes in Lodge, 2000: 148)

What Barthes denies is the validity of the function and role assigned to a uniquely individual and purposive author conceived as the ‘cogito’ or origin of all knowledge, as the initiator, purposive planner and the determiner of the form and meanings of a text. The author is no longer a centre possessing a unified, unique, and enduring personal identity. New Historicist criticism manifests a similar tendency to decenter the author as a self-coherent, purposive, and determinative human subject. In New Historicism, the human being is considered a disunified self who is the product of culture, and subjected to the uncontrollable workings of unconscious compulsions. Likewise, the author is recognized as “a construction by current forms of ideology” and thus “the texts are the discursive formations engendered by conceptual and power configurations in history”. (Abrams, 1999: 140) Post-structuralist announcement of the disappearance of the author became effective on new historicist critics such as Greenblatt, who says in Renaissance Self-Fashioning that he lost his confidence in “the role of human autonomy”
because “the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society”. Greenblatt continues:

Whenever I focused sharply upon a moment of apparently autonomous self-fashioning, I found not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artefact. If there remained traces of free choice, the choice was among possibilities whose range was strictly delineated by the social and ideological systems in force. (Greenblatt, 1980: 256)

In another essay, “From Work to Text”, Barthes employs the term ‘dissemination’ to name the deconstructive concept of textual meaning. Meaning is, for Barthes, sliding, abyssal and undecidable because the linguistic, rhetorical and intertextual properties of language undermine or deconstruct stable meaning. In one part of the essay, Barthes emphasizes the plurality of meaning of text:

The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible (and not merely an acceptable) plural. The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. (Barthes in Leitch, 2001: 1472)

The doctrine of the plurality of the meaning is that literary works mean any number of things to any number of readers. The plurality of text in Barthes’s theory paved the way for a new historicist method in which new historicists recognize a text as dissemination in the area in which all other texts exist, and by which they can interpret texts in relation to other texts and in relation to non-discursive texts.

Foucault is another philosopher whose ideas inform much of post-structuralist literary theory, and through whom New Historicism brings the tools of contemporary critical discourse to the understanding of history and historical texts. He played a critical role in the development of post-modern perspective that knowledge is constructed in concrete historical situations in the form of discourse; knowledge is not communicated by discourse but is discourse itself and it can only be encountered textually. Foucault, in “What Is an Author”, announces the disappearance of the author, which is similar to Barthes’s announcement of the “death of the author”. Foucault argues that
The author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; [...]. One can say that the author is an ideological product, since we represent him as the opposite of his historically real function. [...] The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning. (Foucault in Lodge, 2000: 186)

In the essay, Foucault also presents a historicizing approach, recommending the historical analysis of discourse:

Perhaps it is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each. The manner in which they are articulated according to their social relationships can be more readily understood, [...] in the activity of the author-function and in its modifications, than in the themes or concepts that discourses set in motion. (Foucault in Lodge, 2000: 185)

There can be no doubt that Foucault’s theory of discourse constitutes a major influence on New Historicism’s turn to history. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, he reflects his ideas about discourse. For him, “the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut; beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its integral configuration and its autonomous form” because it is “caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network”. (Foucault, 1972: 23) By ‘discourse’, Foucault means:

that which was produced (perhaps all that was produced) by the groups of signs [...] a group of acts of formulation, a series of sentences or propositions. [...] discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence. And if I succeed in showing, [...] that the law of such a series is precisely what I have so far called a discursive formation, [which] is the principle of dispersion and redistribution, not of formulations, not of sentences, not of propositions, but of statements (in the sense in which I have used this word) the term discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus I shall be able to speak of clinical discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse. (Foucault, 1972: 107-108)
Foucault’s interest in issues of power, epistemology, subjectivity, and ideology, and his willingness to analyze and discuss disparate disciplines such as medicine, criminal science, and philosophy, the history of sexuality, government, and literature have influenced not only the new historicist critics but also those dealing with political science, history, and anthropology. As a post-modern critical approach, New Historicism draws upon Foucauldian investigations of discourse and power in its intellectual impetus for a new way of looking at history and historicizing cultural texts. New Historicists have been inspired by Foucault’s questioning of the very principle of disciplinarity and specialization in their exploration of interdisciplinary connections between areas that had rarely been examined together. Foucault, picking up common terms and giving them new meanings, changed the way critics addressed such pervasive issues as ‘power’, ‘discourse’, ‘discipline’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘sexuality’, and ‘government’. In effect, through Foucault’s influence, New Historicism first gained popularity among Renaissance scholars such as Greenblatt and Montrose.

Foucault’s project was to examine the intricately structured power relations that obtain in a society at a given time, to show how that society constructs, defines, and thus controls its members. Foucault argues that society maintains control by making its constructed categories such as crime, madness, or sexuality appear to be natural, things given rather than made, and so beyond question or change. Yet such constructs change over time, leading us to suspect the naturalness of our own constructs. New Historicism accepts Foucault’s insistence that power operates through myriad capillary channels: these include not just direct coercion and governmental action but also daily routines and language. In other words, power does not reside somehow above, with lawyers, politicians, and the police, but rather follows a principle of circulation, whereby everyone participates in the maintenance of existing power structures. The New Historicist assumptions that “discourse organizes perception of the world by its categorical groupings and that symbols bind social agents emotionally to institutions and practices” (Leitch, 2001: 2250) owe much to Foucault’s ideas of power and power relations.

Following Foucault, New Historicism frequently addresses the idea that the ‘lowest common denominator’ (the lowest – the least useful, least advanced –
member of a class or set and which is common to things that relate to members of that class) for all human actions is power, so new historicists seek to find examples of power and its dispersedness in text. Power is a means through which the marginalized or “the Other” are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized seek to gain. This relates back to the idea that because literature is written by those who have the most power, there must be details in it that show the views of the common people.

New historicists seek to find sites of struggle to identify just who is the group or entity with the most power. Foucault’s discussion of the panopticon, a theoretical prison system developed by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1791, is particularly useful for New Historicism. Bentham stated that the perfect prison system would be a cylindrical shaped room that held prison cells on the outside walls. In the middle of this spherical room would be a large guard tower with a light that would shine in all the cells. The prisoners thus would never be certain whether they were being watched, so they would effectively police themselves, and be as actors on stage, giving the appearance of submission, although they were probably not being watched. (Bentham, 1995: 29-95) Foucault included the panopticon in his discussion of power to illustrate the idea of lateral surveillance, or self-policing that occurs in the text when those who are not in power are made to believe that they are being watched by those who are in power. His purpose was to show that power would often change the behavior of the subordinate class, and they would often fall into line whether there was a true need to do so or not.

New historicists inspired by Foucault tend to concern themselves with forces of Containment and the ways hegemonic forces consolidate the status quo. They look at moments of rupture to examine how forces of rebellion can be co-opted by power. Like Foucault, new historicists are concerned with relations of power within society; and they think of history in terms of power relations and they are fascinated by the ‘circulation’ of power within society. They also “traverse traditional disciplinary boundaries, collapsing distinctions between the literary and the non-literary”, between the foreground and the background and “they are deeply suspicious of any appeals to universal truths or natural behaviour”. (Keesey, 1987: 421)
In Montrose’s view, literature and history are fully-interdependent and no knowledge exists outside of the realms of narrative, writing or discourse. Montrose, in his essay, “‘Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture”, which appeared in the second issue of Representations, and whose subject is the construction of a powerful mythical identity for Elizabeth I through narratives and dramas which played out the “shaping fantasies” of Elizabethan culture, analyzed two different texts principally, a dream recounted in the autobiography of Simon Forman, and Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, but he also looked at travel tales of the Amazon to explain how the persona of Elizabeth I was invented and disseminated. It is evident in the essay that in New Historicism, literary texts and other texts are regarded as interdependent and that they are not only produced by social and political discourse but are also the makers of this discourse. Montrose points out in the essay that A Midsummer Night’s Dream played a vital role in shaping the cult of Elizabeth. At the beginning of the essay, he writes:

My intertextual study of Shakespeare’s Midsummer Night’s Dream and symbolic forms shaped by other Elizabethan lunatics, lovers and poets construes the play as calling attention to itself, not only as an end but also as a source of cultural production. Thus, in writing of “shaping fantasies”, I mean to suggest the dialectical character of cultural representations: the fantasies by which the text of A Midsummer Night’s Dream has been shaped are also those to which it also gives shape. I explore this dialectic within a specifically Elizabethan context of cultural production: the interplay between representations of gender and power in a stratified society in which authority is everywhere invested in men—everywhere, that is, except at the top. (Montrose in Representations, No: 2, Spring 1983: 61)

The larger purpose of new historicist inquiry is the reconstruction of the actual (as opposed to the represented) relations in which people lived during a particular time. Montrose in “Shaping Fantasies” interprets A Midsummer Night’s Dream as an ideological attempt to comprehend the power of Queen Elizabeth while simultaneously upholding the authority of males within Elizabethan culture. By citing a variety of contemporary writing, discursive practices of the age, Montrose demonstrates the Elizabethans’ ambivalence toward their queen: abiding respect mixed with a dark desire to master her sexually. In this context, A Midsummer
Night's Dream is reread as a fable of restoration of male governance. In the essay, Montrose also argues that mothers are excluded from the dramatis personae just as the danger of matriarchy was quietly suppressed by the celebration of Elizabeth’s virginity and that the very real possibility that power might actually be passed from mother to daughter was concealed from women of the age by such cultural productions as Shakespeare’s play, in which Elizabeth was a willing collaborator as much by her decision to remain unwed and barren as by her cultural presence within the play. In this sense, works of literature such as A Midsummer Night’s Dream are ‘representations’ of that culture from which they emerge. They are the emanations, the active agents of the culture’s circumambient ideology. New Historicism presumes that artistic fiction does not imitate human action; it mediates it. As mediation rather than as imitation of social practices, it can thus be said to shape rather than to reflect an age’s realization of human experience and potentiality.

New Historicism assumes that texts exist within particular historical contexts and that these contexts come to us through a variety of signifying practices subject to all the problematics associated with the interpretive process, (Cox and Reynolds, 1993: 3) and it blurs the lines between the literary and the historical, in other words, the fictional and the actual. Greenblatt argues that, through New Historicism, “the traditional paradigms for the uses of history and the interpretations of the texts have all eroded”. (Greenblatt, 1990: 15) Though New Historicism does not deny the relationship between literature and history, its way of exposing it is different from those of the previous critical approaches. The earlier forms of literary history creating a division between text and history relied upon general models in order to relate the text to history. Rather than seeing the text or culture as dependent upon or distinct from history, New Historicism focuses on the way in which social forces produce such boundaries between reality and text, or history and culture. Emphasizing the new historicist reaction to drawing a sharp line between text and history, Colebrook states that

New Historicism is neither a fully-fledged textualism (where the world exists only as a consequence of discursive construction); nor is it something like a Marxism which would see the history of economic forces as a primary or pretextual determinant. (Colebrook, 1997: 24)
In New Historicism, there is “no cultural domain as such which is either produced by, or productive of, history.” Rather, “the cultural, aesthetic domain is an area of contestation where various forces (aesthetic, political, historical, economic, etc.) circulate”. (Colebrook, 1997: 14) New Historicism concentrates on exploring the ways in which cultural boundaries are produced, instead of exploring any general theory, in order to relate the text to history. It challenges the canons about text on which the traditional critical approaches relied. These ideas are that “texts reflect social forms, that texts are symbolic resolutions to intolerable social conditions, that texts are valuable in so far as they reveal social conditions”. (Colebrook, 1997: 23)

Greenblatt, setting himself against both Marxism and post-structuralism, both of which rely upon general theories about the connection between art and history, draws attention to the ways in which New Historicism refuses any general theory of the link between literature and history. According to Greenblatt, Marxists are critical of capitalism because of the ways in which capitalism divides experience into various fields, which Marxists want to reunite by relating all events back to a historical ground; on the other hand, post-structuralists see capitalism as totalizing in its reduction of all experience to “a single language and a single network”. (Greenblatt, 1990: 149) For Greenblatt, neither the Marxist’s way nor the post-structuralists’ way is satisfactory because both of these theories define the relation between text and history as singular and monolithic. Greenblatt, seeing the cultural domain as a contradictory site, argues that the cultural field is a place where capitalism is both enforced and challenged, where history is both revealed and produced. Thus, he concludes that a text can have neither a unified ideology nor an entirely aesthetic function because in the cultural arena the political and the poetic are always in a dynamic circulation through which cultural boundaries are produced. (Greenblatt, 1990: 154) Consequently, the connection between text and history cannot be given in a pre-formulated theory; on the contrary, the interaction between them should be the object of new historicist criticism.

Focusing on the interaction between text and history, the new historicists investigate the ways in which texts produce boundaries. Therefore, in this theory, the relation between the text and its historical context becomes dynamic and it is
accepted that “not only is history itself only accessible as text, the text itself is also the result of certain non-discursive forces”. (Colebrook, 1997: 26) As a result of such a dynamic, unstable interaction between text and history or text and world, the text can no longer be a reflection of the pre-textual world. This principle can be regarded as New Historicism’s entailment of reading “literary and non-literary texts as constituents of historical discourses that are both inside and outside of texts”. Henceforth, its practitioners generally posit “no fixed hierarchy of cause and effect as they trace the connections among texts, discourses, power and the constitutions of subjectivity”. (Gallagher in Ryan, 1996: 45) In consequence, in New Historicism, the historical conditions in which a text is produced are regarded not as extraneous but as productive of the text’s meaning.

The consideration that historical context is productive of a text’s meaning constitutes another important key concept in New Historicism: contextuality. In the new historicist perspective, contextuality suggests that a text can have no useful meaning outside the context in which it appeared first. For new historicists, understanding a text requires understanding its context. Greenblatt became a key figure in the shift from literary to cultural poetics and from textual to contextual interpretation. This new historicist emphasis on context over text can be seen in his “Introduction” to The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance. Referring to New Historicism, Greenblatt writes:

> Recent criticism has been less concerned to establish the organic unity of literary works and more open to such works as fields of force, places of dissention and shifting interest, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses […] Renaissance literary works are no longer regarded either as a fixed set of texts that are set apart from all other forms of expression and that contain their own determinate meanings or as a stable set of reflections of historical facts that lie beyond them. The critical practice […] challenges the assumptions that guarantee a secure distinction between “literary foreground” and political background” or, more generally, between artistic production and other kinds of social production. (Greenblatt in Leitch, 2001: 2254)

By means of reading Renaissance literary works with their contexts, that is, contextualizing literary works, Greenblatt developed a new historicist method through which a literary text can be considered to interact with its context.
New historicist critics are engaged in uncovering the historical context in which literary texts first emerged and were received and in interpreting the significance of the past for the present, paying particular attention to the forms of power which operated in the past and how they are replicated in the present. Literary texts are the vehicles of power which act as useful objects of study in that they contain the same potential for power and subversion as exist in society generally. In this way, literary texts become an important focus for contemporary attempts to resist power. New Historicism can therefore be seen as using the past as “an impetus for political struggle in the present and making it clear that the discipline of literary studies is not removed from the sphere of politics”. (Brannigan, 1998: 6)

New historicists have made important claims to show how literary texts function when they are read alongside their historical contexts. By so doing, they establish a new way of awareness of how history and culture define each other. The new historicist realization that all human behavior, practices and knowledge are constructs and inventions, rather than natural or instinctual leads to the practice of reading texts as participants in the construction of human beliefs and ideologies. New historicists insist that there is no division between text and context or between literature and politics because “texts are understood as participating in the production of ideology and culture”; out of this belief new historicist critics treat literary texts “on an equal basis with texts and documents of all kinds, professing not to privilege ‘literature’ as a form of expression outside the realm of society or politics or history”. (Brannigan, 1998: 21) In order to interpret a literary text, what is required for the new historicist critic is to return to the term’s history and to read the other literary texts, historical, political and penal documents. “Questions are not directed to what lies beneath the text but to those other texts and events which surround the work.” (Colebrook, 1997: 207) Reading literary texts intertextually is a way of reading the past and of reading the power relations of the past societies and cultures. (Brannigan, 1998: 80) Thus a text’s other possible meanings can be reached rather than the meaning in the text which is supposed to be placed in the text by its author. The new ways intertextual analysis presents are stated by Graham Allen as such:

Intertextuality reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader’s own presuppositions, lacking in
clear and defined boundaries, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic ‘voices’ which exist within society. A term which continually refers to the impossibility of singularity, unity, and thus of unquestionable authority, intertextuality remains a potent tool within any reader’s theoretical vocabulary. By that same logic, however, it also remains a tool which cannot be employed by readers wishing to produce stability and order, or wishing to claim authority over the text or other critics. (Allen, 2000: 209)

Contextual and intertextual readings are obviously the ways of interpreting literary texts which New Historicism proposes. In the process of reading, what a new historicist analysis requires is stated by Colebrook as such:

New Historicism in many ways defines its practice against any theory of meaning in which the text would have its own single and determinate semantic content and moves towards the idea of the text as a practice: the critic focuses on the material effects and circumstances produced by the text and in which the text is produced. Against interpretation which would reveal a text’s hermeneutic depth, new historicism concentrates on a description of the discursive and material domains in which a text is situated. This anti-interpretive stance is a clear reaction against all those previous accounts of literary history which would see the text as possessing a meaning which could be related to, or explained by, a somewhat extraneous history. (Colebrook, 1997: 28)

The key assumptions in New Historicism written by Veeser in *The New Historicism* can be given as final words to define New Historicism, to state how New Historicism approaches literary texts, culture and history and to define their concerns with each other. They are as follows:

1. that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
2. that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes;
3. that literary and non-literary “texts” circulate inseparably;
4. that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature;
5. finally, [...] that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. (Veeser, 1989: xi)

The principles behind the New Historicist method can be summarized as follows:
1. Literature is historical, which means that a literary work is not primarily the record of the attempt of one’s mind to solve certain problems and the need to find something to say; it is a social and cultural construct shaped by more than one consciousness. The proper way to understand it, therefore, is through the culture and society that produced it.

2. Literature, then, is not a distinct category of human activity. It must be assimilated to history, which means a particular vision of history.

3. Like works of literature, man himself is a social construct, a composition of social and political forces. There is no such a thing as human nature that transcends history.

4. The historian and the critic are trapped in their own historicity. No one can rise above his own social formations, his own ideological upbringing, in order to understand the past on its terms. A modern reader can never experience a text as its contemporaries experienced it. So to accomplish a new historicist approach to literature, the text should be used as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology.

As a conclusion, New Historicism is a mode of critical interpretation which promises to be a valid and productive practice in both the interpretations of literary, historical and cultural texts and the understanding of the present by means of the other possible interpretations of the past. The newness of New Historicism lies not only in its different approaches to text, history and culture but also in its critical force. Its refusal to see a literary text as having a fixed meaning embedded in it and history as a single and coherent line of progress, its acceptance of the ceaseless interaction between text and history and of the impact of culture in which text is written and its emphasis on the relation of text with the other texts – which are supposed to be adjacent to that text – all contribute to New Historicism as a critical practice. The focal concepts in New Historicism, textuality of history, historicity of text, contextuality and intertextuality not only help to define the new historicist concerns and the objects of the new historicist analysis but also offer new ways of analysis and interpretation of both literary works and history and culture.
II. JOSEPH CONRAD'S LIFE as BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

This part of the thesis aims to construct a biographical context in which Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* will be put in the readings of these texts from the viewpoint of New Historicism in the related chapters of the thesis. The new historicist assumptions that there is always an interaction between a text and history and that in the interpretation of a literary text, author’s life is important to define the relationship between the text and the author’s biography have been the starting point for this chapter. To provide the thesis with an appropriate succinctness, this part will give Conrad’s life in a summary manner.

Joseph Conrad was born on December 3, 1857 near Berdichev, in the Russian-ruled province of Padolia. Christened Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski, he was the first and only child of Apollo and Evalina Nalecz Korzeniowski.

Conrad’s mother, Evelina Bobrowski and his father, Apollo Korzeniowski first met in 1847 and fell in love immediately but there was a strong and protracted opposition to the marriage from Evelina’s parents, the Bobrowskis although the Korzeniowskis were an old and respected family of landed gentry. (Baines, 1960: 1) because Apollo had no profession, lived at his father’s home and occupied himself with nothing and owned nothing, in short, he had no qualifications for a good husband. Especially, Eva’s father opposed their marriage, not seeing Apollo as a suitable son-in-law. Therefore, it was not until 8 May 1856, five years after the death of Eva’s father that they were able to marry. The couple spent their first year at Luczyniec. Then, with the dowry the Bobrowskis paid the Korzeniowskis, they took the lease of Derebczynka Manor, near Berdichev in the Ukranie, in order to farm the estate, and it was here that Conrad was born. Apollo had no aptitude for practical affairs and the family was forced to leave Derebczynka after three years, having lost nearly all the money they invested in it. After the failure of this venture, Apollo seemed to have decided to devote himself to his real interests: politics and writings. He wrote two satirical comedies and some poems reflecting his patriotism and social radicalism and translated Victor Hugo from French.
“Apollo’s political activity aimed at the liberation of the Poles from foreign rule.” (Baines, 1960: 7) In 1861, Apollo Korzeniowski moved to Warsaw, recently the scene of two massive political demonstrations, which had been bloodily repressed. His wife remained with Conrad in the Ukranie on her grandmother’s estate. In October 1861, she and Conrad joined Apollo in Warsaw. Their home became a meeting place of adherents to the cause of Polish nationalism, and Apollo was involved in underground political activity, City Committee. In 1861, when little Conrad was not yet four years old, the house was raided by the Russian police and Apollo was arrested and imprisoned in the Citadel. For many years, Conrad “retained a memory of himself standing with his mother in a big prison yard where he caught sight of his father’s face peering at them from behind bars”. (Sherry, 1972: 10)

Conrad’s recollection of those troubled days are said to have been somewhat inexact, however, for there is evidence which suggests that Eva too may have been imprisoned; certain it is that she was co-accused with her husband in the trial and her letters to him from the country were used as evidence against him. They were sentenced to settlement in a distant province, and in 1862, escorted by two policemen, left for exile in Vologda in northern Russia, arriving in June. Both Conrad and Eva were seriously ill on the way. The family spent a miserable year there. In Vologda, in the colony of exiles composed of the three Korzeniowskis and twenty-one other people, mostly priests from Poland and Lithuania, little Conrad found himself in a completely adult community without a single playmate. The following summer, the family was allowed to move to Chernikhoiv and through the intervention of one of her relatives, Eva, due to her serious illness, was permitted to take a three months’ leave from exile and to a visit to Conrad’s uncle, Thaddeus Bobrowski on his estate in Nobofastov. Here little Conrad at last found a playmate, Thaddeus’s daughter Josefina. With her and other children from the neighbourhood, “Conrad enjoyed for the first time the pleasures of childhood play and the happy and stable atmosphere of home life”. Although it was apparent that Conrad’s mother was gravely ill of pulmonary tuberculosis, all attempts to take permission to extend her stay in Nobofastov were rebuffed, and “in 1863, Eva and Conrad were obliged to return to Apollo in Chernichov”. (Sherry, 1972: 11)
Conrad recalled the departure from Thaddeus’s house in the third part of *A Personal Record*:

I remember well the day of our departure back to exile. The elongated, bizarre, shabby travelling-carrige with four post-horses, standing before the long front of the house with its eight columns, four on each side of the broad flight of stairs. On the steps, groups of servants, a few relations, one or two friends from the nearest neighbourhood, a perfect silence, on all the faces an air of sober concentration; my grandmother all in black gazing stoically, my uncle giving his arm to my mother down to the carriage in which I had been placed already; at the top of my flight my little cousin in a short skirt of a tartan pattern with a deal of red in it; and like a small princess attended by the women of her own household. (Conrad 1923: 97)

In Chernikov Eva’s health declined rapidly. In 1865, when Conrad was seven, his mother died at the age of thirty-two. (Sherry, 1972: 11) For the next three years, Conrad was to live a strange and isolated life, full of his father’s grief and bitterness. During those years, Apollo divided his time between teaching Conrad and doing translations into Polish of Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. Like his father, young Conrad turned to books to help him through the long, lonely days. In *A Personal Record* Conrad wrote that he had been a great reader since the age of five and recalled having read as a child history, voyages, novels, in Polish and French; among them Fenimore Cooper, Captain Marryat, Charles Dickens and *Don Quixote* in abridged edition. (Meyer, 1967: 19) He also read the proofs of his father’s translations of *The Toilers of the Sea*, a book which is considered to have made “a profound impression on the future mariner and teller of sea stories”. (Meyer, 1967: 26-27) Conrad’s father, meanwhile, was becoming progressively ill with tuberculosis and was given permission to return from exile in 1867. After some travel, they settled at Lvov in 1868. Here Conrad was again tutored at home and he attended a preparatory school as an avid reader. It was at this time that the future novelist began to write, composing patriotic plays, which were performed by his young friends.

In 1869, Apollo and Conrad moved on to Cracow, where Apollo’s health rapidly declined. (Sherry, 1972: 12) As Jocelyn Baines writes, “Not only was Apollo himself dying but he had become absorbed in a cult of his dead wife”.
Thus on the anniversary of her death he would sit motionless before her portrait, saying nothing and eating nothing all day. (Meyers, 1967: 28) Years later, recollecting his father’s last months here, Conrad wrote:

I don’t know what would have become of me if I had not been a reading boy. My prep finished I would have had nothing to do but sit and watch the awful stillness of the sick room flow out through the closed door and coldly enfold my scared heart [...] I looked forward to what was coming with an incredulous terror. I turned my eyes from it sometimes with success, and yet all the time I had an awful sensation of the inevitable. I had also moments of revolt which stripped off me some of my simple trust in the government of the universe. (Conrad, 1923: 55)

On May 23, 1869 Conrad’s father died, and at his funeral, which took the form of a great patriotic tribute, the eleven-year-old Conrad walked at the head of the procession. (Sherry, 1972: 15) Conrad’s life now underwent a conspicuous change. He came under the influence of his uncle Thaddeus, who was in every way the opposite of Apollo, and who had always regarded his brother-in-law as a woolly-hearted sentimentalist. Thaddeus was in charge of Conrad’s education and financial affairs. Uncle Thaddeus’s influence continued to exert itself through his letters after Conrad left Poland and his philosophy, even phrases from his correspondence, appeared afterwards in Conrad’s novels. “Thaddeus was the type of benevolent guardian figure that Conrad dealt with in the character of Stein in Lord Jim and Captain Lingard in the Bornean novels.” (Sherry, 1972: 16)

Despite the change in the external appearance of his life, Conrad continued to suffer from various manifestations of ill health. He was subject to migraine and nervous fits, possibly epilepsy, which continued until the age of fourteen. His grandmother took him to Wartenberg in Bohemia to seek a cure for his headaches, and on several other occasions before leaving Poland for good, he travelled abroad upon doctors’ advice, thus establishing a pattern, which he was to follow in the years to come in seeking cures in the spas of Western Europe. (Meyer, 1967: 29)

In 1870, Conrad was sent to the gymnasium but he disliked the school-life. His dislike of the school-life may have resulted from his unorthodox upbringing and his finding the discipline of regular work irksome. (Baines, 1960: 27) In 1872, Conrad told his uncle that he wished to go to sea, a confession, which evoked a
reaction of shocked and bewildered incredulity. It was not until 1874 that Thaddeus agreed to send him off to the Merchant Marine. According to Sherry, behind the desire to leave Poland and to join the merchant navy, there was “the inspiration of Conrad’s reading of adventure and travel literature and his interest in geography”. Besides, Conrad must have been influenced by the fact that as the son of a political prisoner, he “risked conscription in the Russian Army for possibly as many as twenty-five years”. (Sherry, 1972: 17)

Conrad’s decision to leave Poland and become a sailor has provoked much controversy. Among them, there is a psychological approach. According to this theory, Conrad’s desertion of his country created in him a feeling of betrayal, and of guilt which he never overcame. It has been argued that Conrad knew, in his heart, that “he had abandoned the cause for which both his parents had sacrificed their lives. Therefore, the desire for atonement and self-justification dominated his life”. (Cox, 1977: 6) Conrad himself has given his explanation of how the desire to go to sea was formed in him and how he doggedly persisted in it until he had overcome all opposition and had his way. Looking back to this time more than thirty years later, Conrad concluded that his imagination had been captured by his reading about the sea, in fiction Hugo’s *Toilers of the Sea* and the tales of James Fenimore Cooper and Captain Marryat, and in other books such as Garney’s *Récits d’Aventures et Combats* or the accounts of famous voyages of exploration like McClintock’s *Voyage of the ‘Fox’ in the Arctic Seas*. Besides, there were books of travel which, though not connected with the sea, stimulated a general *Wanderlust* in him; among them were Mungo Park’s, James Bruce’s, and Livingstone’s travels of exploration on the African Continent. Of McClintock’s book, Conrad wrote in “Geography and Some Explorers”:

> The great spirit of the realities of the story sent me off on the romantic explorations of my inner self; to the discovery of the taste of poring over maps; and revealed to me the existence of a latent devotion to geography which inferred with my devotion (such as it was) to my other schoolwork. (Conrad 1924: 15)

In the same essay, Conrad repeats a story illustrating his wish of adventure. He says “looking at a map as a child” he had put his finger on a spot in the very middle of the then white heart of Africa and said that some day he “would go
there”. (Conrad, 1924: 11) A year earlier, in *A Personal Record*, he wrote: “When I grow up I shall go _there_” (Conrad, 1923: 13) referring to Africa.

Another reason that was advanced for Conrad’s desire to go to sea is regarded as his position as the son of a Polish patriot who had been imprisoned by the Russians for revolutionary activities. Baines makes a relationship between Conrad’s desire to go to sea and his leaving Poland and claims that he would have been unconscious of suffering under any disadvantage if he had been living in Austrian Poland. (Baines, 1960: 30-31) This idea is convincing enough when the conditions, in which he was brought up, are taken into consideration.

It has also been argued that parallels can be drawn between Conrad’s leaving Poland and the important moments of crisis in his novels. For example, Lord Jim’s jump over the side of the *Patna* can be seen as “an unconscious symbolic representation of Conrad’s action in leaving Poland”. Baines draws attention to Conrad’s use of the word ‘jump’ to describe his own case. He says:

> It seems likely that in Conrad’s eyes to have remained in Poland would have been tantamount to resigning himself to a climate where everyone and everything he had cherished had crumbled, and where he himself might well be the next perish. (Baines, 1960: 33)

A parallelism between Jim’s efforts to vindicate himself after his desertion of the *Patna* and Conrad’s own life can be drawn as well and it may be asserted that “Conrad never felt at home in any environment, and a sense of alienation is continually expressed in his fiction”. (Cox, 1977: 7)

In 1874, when his uncle finally granted his consent, Conrad left Poland for Marseilles, with introductions arranged and a reasonable amount of money- 2,000 francs a year in monthly instalments. Thus, Conrad began his career as a French seaman when he was a sixteen-year-old boy stepping alone into a new existence. (Sherry, 1972: 17) Two months after his arrival in Marseilles, he made his first voyage as a passenger to Martinique in the *Mont Blanc*, and on her next visit to the West Indies in 1875, he was listed as an apprentice. He returned to Marseilles in December in the same year and spent the following six months there.
In 1876, he sailed again to the West Indies, this time as a steward on the Saint-Antonia. Sherry agrees that it was a memorable voyage for Conrad for the first mate was a Corsican called Dominic Cervoni, who was to impress Conrad greatly at that time and to figure, later on, in The Mirror of the Sea and Nostromo. Sherry claims, “Cervoni was the type of heroic wanderer and adventurer, the embodiment of fidelity, resource and courage, that Conrad so admired”. (Sherry, 1972: 22) Meyer also says that Conrad used the theme of the drowning of a man weighted down by heavy metal in his Nostromo through the character, Decoud and in his novel, The End of the Tether through Captain Whalley.

In 1878, Conrad attempted suicide because he found himself in serious straits. Conrad, having engaged in smuggling for his own personal gain, lost every penny. Then he borrowed 800 francs from a friend and gambled away all this money; and left penniless and in debt, he returned to Marseilles where he tried to kill himself with a gun. Thaddeus Bobrowski, who told everyone that Conrad was wounded in a duel, concealed the true circumstance of Conrad’s bullet wound. (Meyer, 1967: 36-37) Thaddeus told Conrad that he should return to Poland. Despite his loneliness and the unhappy outcome of his initial venture away from home, Conrad refused to give up his profession; so it was agreed that he should join the English Merchant Marine, which did not require so many formalities as in France. Thus four years after leaving Poland, Conrad abandoned France, sailing for England in the British ship Mavis, bound first for Constantinople and then for Lowestoft, where she arrived on 18 June 1878. (Meyer, 1967: 52; Sherry 1972: 26) This voyage was the first step in Conrad’s career as a British mariner. This phase marked the beginning of Conrad’s familiarity with the English language and also the beginning of the next phase of a cycle which had just ended, a cycle which, in one form or another, was “destined to become the fixed pattern of his life: a positive thrust of aggressive energy suddenly interrupted by a condition of collapse, inertia, and defeat”. (Meyer, 1967: 53)

During the next eleven years, Conrad sailed on many British ships from the rank of ordinary seaman to the position of Master Mariner but it would be a mistake to think that Conrad devoted himself to a seaman’s life. On the contrary, “these were years of skipping from one ship to another, of quarrelling with a series
of captains, and of being constantly in financial difficulties”. (Meyer, 1967: 54) His leaving *Mavis* when she reached Lowestoft was due to his quarrel with the captain on the return journey from Constantinople. Then Conrad found another ship, the *Skimmer of the Seas*, upon having been rejected by his uncle Thaddeus, his usual source of help. Conrad made six voyages in this ship from Lowestoft to Newcastle in 1878. (Sherry, 1972: 27) On 12 October 1878, he joined the *Duke of Sutherland*, bound for Australia. Then in 1879, he joined the steamship *Europa* for a Mediterranean trip. Through his various stages of seamanship, Conrad obtained his second mate’s ticket in 1880; his first mate’s in 1884 and his master’s in 1886. (Sherry, 1972: 28, 29)

Nevertheless, these successes were accompanied by failures, discontents and restlessness, which aroused in him puzzlement, anger and anxiety at different times because he did not stay long with any ship, frequently because he quarrelled with the captain. This happened in the case of the *Mavis* in 1878; it happened with the *Europa* in 1879; with the *Loch Etive*, in which he sailed in 1880 and with the *Riversdale* in 1883.

It was after leaving the *Europa* that Conrad met two men whose friendship for him was to last many years. In January 1880, at the offices of a shipping agent, he was introduced to G.F.W. Hope, a company director. After they became good friends, Hope saw Conrad whenever he returned from a voyage and heard of his experiences and plans. At the same time, in January 1880, Conrad had lodgings where A.P. Krieger also lodged, and when Krieger married in 1881 and began to live at Stoke Newington, Conrad lodged with him between voyages until about 1886. As Sherry states, Krieger had a number of occupations, being at one time connected with the firm of shipping agents, Barr, Moering & Co. Both Hope and Krieger acted as Conrad’s sureties when he applied for naturalization. (Sherry, 1972: 32-33)

In 1881, Conrad found a berth as second mate on the fated barque *Palestine*, bound for Bangkok. The voyage with *Palestine* was a momentous one described later by Conrad in his story “Youth”. Sherry, quoting the report of the Court of Inquiry into the loss of the *Palestine*, writes on the loss of the *Palestine*. The report says that the ship was old and not up to sailing to the Far East. It took her sixteen
days to get from London to the Tyne because of a gale; on coming out of the Tyne, she rammed a steamer which caused further delay. In December, after heavy storms, she had to put back into Falmouth. Then followed a nine months’ delay; the cargo of coal was discharged and stored under cover; the *Palestine* was repaired in dock; there were numerous changes of crew. Finally, the ship cleared for Bangkok. But, when she was east of the Bangka Strait, her cargo of coal caught fire. It was not until the vessel became a mass of fire that the crew got into the boats, three in number; the boats remained by the vessel until the following morning. She was still above the water, but inside appeared a mass of fire. The amazing voyage ended with thirteen hours in open boats before the crew landed at Muntok on the island of Bangka, off the coast of Sumatra. (Sherry, 1972: 34) The Court then went on to exonerate the officers and crew from any blame in the affair. Conrad remained in Singapore for a month waiting for a chance to get back to England. Thus, he had had his first contact with the East. (Baines, 1960: 73) Sherry also draws attention to the same fact:

> this was Conrad’s first meeting with the East and its people, with the environment that was to inaugurate the change from seaman to novelist. The Inquiry into the loss of the *Palestine* was held in Singapore and attended by Conrad, and a reflection of it can most certainly be seen in the Inquiry into the loss of the *Patna* in his novel, *Lord Jim*. (Sherry, 1972: 35)

(This assumption will be examined thoroughly in the chapter related with the novel, *Lord Jim*.)

Conrad took a passage for Liverpool on a passenger steamer at the beginning of May. When he arrived back in England, his uncle pressed him to come and visit him in Cracow and again brought up the question of naturalization. (Baines 1960: 74)

As Conrad was still determined to remain at sea, he embarked as second mate on the *Riversdale* on 10 September 1883. Because of the quarrel with his captain, Conrad threw up his berth and left the ship at Madras on 17 April 1884. Thus on his certificate of discharge, against ‘Character for conduct’ was written ‘Decline’ while ‘Character for ability’ was written ‘Very good’. From Madras Conrad went to Bombay in search of another berth. While he was sitting with other officers of
the Mercantile Marine on the verandah of the Sailors’ Home in Bombay, which overlooks the port, he saw a lovely ship with all the graces of a yacht come sailing into the harbour. She was the *Narcissus*, of 1,300 tons, built by a sugar refiner nine years before. Her owner had originally intended her for some undertaking in connection with the Brazilian sugar trade. This had not come off, and subsequently he had decided to employ her in the Indian Ocean and the Far East. “She was commanded by Captain Archibald Duncan. A few days later Conrad signed on as her second mate.” (Baines, 1960: 75)

Conrad’s next voyage to the Far East was in the *Tilkhurst*, which was a sailing ship of 1,500 tons and which sailed from Hull on April 1885. Conrad was second mate on the *Tilkhurst*. The ship called at Penarth, near Cardiff, to collect a cargo of coal for Singapore. During the five-day stay at Penarth, Conrad carried out a commission entrusted to him by a Polish sailor named Komorowski, who had arrived at Cardiff some time before as a stowaway on a German ship to escape conscription in Russia. This was to repay a small sum of money that Komorowski had borrowed from another Pole named Kliszewskis, who had immigrated to England after the 1830 insurrection and set up as a watchmaker in Cardiff. Conrad’s visit to Kliszewskis led to a warm friendship, particularly with the son, Spiridion, a man of Conrad’s age. Conrad’s first extant letters in English were written to Spiridion Kliszewskis and they are Conrad’s earliest known pieces of writing in English. (Baines, 1960: 78) These letters of Conrad’s give us insight into his thoughts at that time. He saw England as ‘the only barrier to the pressure of infernal doctrines born in continental black-slums’. (Sherry 1972: 38)

On 17 June 1885, Conrad was discharged at Dundee and travelled to London with his commander, Captain Blake, and his wife. Conrad liked and admired Captain Blake. The friendship was mutual because Captain Blake told him: “if you happen to be in want of employment, remember that as long as I have a ship you have a ship, too.” But this turned out to have been the captain’s last voyage because he was an ailing man and Conrad was only to see him once again when he visited him at his home. (Baines, 1960: 82)

Meantime, Conrad was very restless and uncertain about the future, and he was searching for the possibility of staying in London and going into commerce,
probably with Barr, Moering & Co. However, the whaling came to nothing and by the time that he was in London Conrad had decided to sail at least once again, as master of a ship. In London, there were two immediate tasks for Conrad: one was naturalization and the other his examination for a master’s certificate. He successfully settled them in the same year. On 19 August 1886, he completed his naturalization, and on November 1886, he passed the examination for a master’s certificate. (Baines, 1960: 83)

In 1887, Conrad’s fourth and final, but longest and most fruitful visit to the Far East began when he signed as first mate on the *Highland Forest*. She was bound for Samarang in Java, and he joined her in Amsterdam. Conrad was chief mate for the first time. The captain was a laconic man, John McWhirr. It is apparent that he became the inspiration for the fictional McWhirr who took the *Nan-Shan* with her coolie passengers safely through the storms in “Typhoon”. (Sherry, 1972: 40) During the *Highland Forest*’s passage, Conrad’s back was injured by a flying spar and he was shipped to Singapore, where he entered hospital. The foundations of Conrad’s next career were being laid there. Conrad found his material for his later Eastern novels. “Singapore was to be the great Eastern port of *Lord Jim*, *The End of the Tether*, *The Rescue* and *The Shadow Line.*” (Sherry, 1972: 41)

When Conrad was discharged from hospital, he was taken on as mate of the steam-ship *Vidar*. She was a local ship trading among the islands of the South-East Asian archipelago. Conrad stayed with her four and a half months. As part of the journey, the *Vidar* travelled up the Berau River in Borneo, and here Conrad discovered another area that was to be a fruitful source for his later novels as Sherry points out:

The Bareu, with its small Malay settlement of Tandjong Redeb, forty miles up the river ‘one of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth’, appears in *Almayer’s Folly, An Outcast of the Islands* and *Lord Jim*. (Sherry, 1972: 45)

It was during his five or six voyages on the *Vidar* that Conrad absorbed some of his impressions, from which he was to create his first novels *Almayer’s Folly,*
and An Outcast of the Islands, as well as local colour for The Rescue, Lord Jim and a number of short stories. (Baines, 1960: 88)

On 4 January 1888, Conrad gave up his berth on the Vidar and he was given command of a small barque, the Otago, whose captain had died during the previous voyage and had been buried at sea. Conrad accepted the command. Conrad arrived in Bangkok. During his brief stay, he knew the city only as a sailor would but the whole area provided the material for The Shadow Line, Falk and The Secret Sharer. Conrad faced immediate difficulties with the charterers and in getting cargo. Besides, there was severe sickness among the crew. The crew suffered from tropical diseases including fever, dysentery and cholera. Thus Conrad had command of a cholera-infected vessel. The Otago first arrived at Singapore to take medical help for her crew and then at Sydney. Then the ship sailed next to Mauritius where Conrad spent three weeks. There Conrad became quite intimate with an old French family. The family had two pretty girls with one of whom Conrad fell in love. “On learning that she was already engaged, Conrad vowed never to return to Mauritius.” (Sherry, 1972: 50-52)

At the end of March 1889, Conrad abruptly resigned his command. Shortly afterwards he took a passage to England by steamship. When he arrived back in London, he was without a job. Besides, he had wanted to see his uncle, Thaddeus. He was sick and before he died, he wanted to see Conrad once again but there were still difficulties, for Conrad, in the way of visiting his uncle. Conrad’s release from the status of subject of the Russian Empire was announced by a Russian official gazette. Yet, there were formalities to be gone through before he could enter Russian territory without risk. Therefore, he took furnished rooms in London and set about looking for a command. (Baines, 1960: 101) This time, for Conrad, was a period of land-bound inactivity. Nevertheless, it had a great significance for him since it was at this time that he began to write his novel, Almayer’s Folly. During the next five years, the manuscript accompanied Conrad on his travels. At the novel’s inception in the summer of 1889, Conrad was still without a berth. (Baines, 1960: 103)

For the time being Conrad seems to have worked with Barr, Moering & Co., with whom he had a small sum invested. Through the good offices of the
company, Conrad was asked whether it would be possible for him to be employed in the Congo. (Baines, 1960: 105) Thus, Conrad seems to have been seized by “the most unexpected, the most incomprehensible: to go to the Congo and command a wretched little steamboat of a few tons, a sardine can with a stern wheel”. (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 153) It is difficult to know what had aroused Conrad’s interest in going to the Congo. Perhaps merely the necessity of earning a living, or Conrad’s restless spirit, which had already driven him across most of the world were responsible for his desire to go to the Congo. (Sherry, 1972: 54) But it is certain that tropical Africa attracted him very much and the Congo had an appeal for him. Conrad appears, from an early age, to have had an ambition to see Africa. Many years ago, when he was a little boy in Poland, he had announced that he would go to the heart of Africa:

> It was in 1868, when nine years old or thereabouts, that while looking at a map of Africa of the time and putting my finger on the blank space then representing the unsolved mystery of that continent, I said to myself, with absolute assurance and an amazing audacity which are no longer in my character now: “When I grow up I shall go _there_.” (Conrad, 1923: 13)

The assumptions made on the reason of Conrad’s beginning his career as an author are also remarkable. Baines argues that although Conrad was a successful captain in the British Merchant Navy for a man of his age, he had no particular occupation and had little money. Baines says, “He had plenty of time on his hands and was perhaps feeling restless and dissatisfied with the seeming emptiness of his existence, a state of mind which is often the prelude to creative activity.” (Baines, 1960: 101)

According to Conrad, his becoming an author was merely a chance. He says in *A Personal Record*:

> Till I began to write that novel I had written nothing but letters, and not very many of these. I never made a note of a fact, of an impression or of an anecdote in my life. The conception of a planned book was entirely outside my mental range when I set down to write; the ambition of being an author had never turned up amongst these gracious imagery existences one creates fondly for oneself at times in the stillness and immobility of a day-dream; yet it stands clear as the sun at noonday that from the
moment I had done blackening over the first manuscript page of *Almayer’s Folly* (it contained about two hundred words and this proportion of words to a page has remained with me through the fifteen years of my writing life), (Conrad, 1924: 64)

However, there were strong reasons why the idea of writing occurred to him. These reasons may lie behind his childhood. As it has been mentioned earlier, Conrad’s father had been a dedicated writer and Conrad, a sensitive and highly-strung boy, had lived alone with his father. Conrad had spent his most impressionable years in a predominantly literary atmosphere. He had helped his father with his work and, and the absence of companionships and usual activities had encouraged him to feed his imagination on avid reading and reverie. Life at sea gave Conrad “plenty of opportunity to indulge in pensiveness and to develop his capacity for story-telling which had first arisen and then survived in his letters”. (Baines, 1960: 102)

Conrad’s being a man of letters may be thought to have contributed to his literariness. It is evident that while Conrad was expressing himself as a Pole, as an Englishman, and as a sailor in his letters, perhaps unconsciously, he was improving both his artistic ability and his ability to express himself more effectively. Edward Said states that Conrad’s letters are of great importance in that they not only illustrate his state of mind and reflect the intensity and variety of his intellectual life but also involve dominant themes, patterns, and images recurring in his highly patterned fiction. (Said, 1966: i)

In November 1889, Conrad was interviewed in Belgium by Captain Thys, formerly one of the most able henchmen of Leopold II of Belgium. However, it was not until April of the following year that he obtained a post with the Société Anonyme Belge. Meanwhile, in February 1890, while he was travelling to Poland, he stopped in Belgium to make the acquaintance of a distant cousin. The wife of Conrad’s cousin, Marguerite Poradowska had influence with the Société Anonyme Belge and was a publishing author. (Sherry, 1972: 54) For Conrad it was the beginning of a warm and affectionate relationship with a woman. Eleven years his senior, she maintained an intimate and loving correspondence with Conrad during some of his loneliest years, and although she was no relative of his, Conrad addressed her as ‘Aunt’, endowing her with parental attributes. (Meyer, 1967: 51)
It is obvious that Conrad’s correspondence with Marguerite Poradowska, in the 1890s, was his sole contact with someone of a literary mind or someone cultured along his lines because, “for the next thirty years, Conrad was to write to Madame Poradowska in French”, and “for the period from 1890 to 1895, she was his most sustained correspondent until Conrad was diverted by Edward Garnett, John Galsworthy, and Cunninghame Graham”. (Karl, 1979: 272-273)

After Conrad stayed in Belgium for some time, he went to Poland, which he had left sixteen years earlier, to visit his uncle. His uncle was against the Congo plan, but on his return to England Conrad found that there was an opening for him as a steamer captain on the river due to the assassination of the young Captain Freisleben by natives. Conrad sailed in a ship, the Ville de Maceio, on May 10 1890. Nevertheless, he was sceptical of the journey because he had heard that 60 per cent of the company’s employees returned to Europe before completing six months’ service, because of fever and dysentery. “Conrad’s experience of the Congo was short-lived and humiliating, frustrating and distasteful, as well as disastrous in terms of his future health”. (Sherry, 1972: 58) On the other hand, this voyage to the Congo and its deplorable consequences can be considered to have played a big part in turning Captain Conrad into the novelist Joseph Conrad (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 175) because Conrad reflects many of his experiences during his journey to the Congo and in the Congo in his great novel *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow’s visit to the Company’s office, his medical inspection by the doctor, and many details of his journey to Matadi seem to be taken directly from facts. As has already been stated, for Conrad, the journey was an unmitigated disaster. He was disgusted by the ill-treatment of the natives, by the vile scramble for loot. A series of unsavoury details such as the horrid smell from a dead body lying by the track, arguments with carriers, the lack of water, the heat, the mosquitoes, the shouts and drumming, a skeleton tied to a post are all facts, which some scenes in *Heart of Darkness* are based on. (Cox, 1977: 9)

On his return to England, it was Conrad’s friend, Adolf Krieger, who, seeing him half-dead with fever, arranged for Conrad to enter the German Hospital at Dalston, London. Conrad was to suffer for the rest of his life from malarial gout. From the German Hospital, he went on to a hydropathic establishment in Champel,
near Geneva, where he completed the eight chapter of *Almayer’s Folly*, and returned almost a month later to London, temporarily in better health.

Once again, he worked for Barr, Moering & Co., taking over the running of a warehouse, but he was desperately unhappy and sinking into a deep pessimism, which lasted throughout most of the year. (Sherry, 1972: 62) Conrad’s Congo experience seems to be “the most devastating of his life” and Conrad “recognized this when he said later to his friend Edward Garnett: “Before the Congo, I was just a mere animal” and therefore “Conrad’s letters of this period are filled with unhappy reflections on his own and man’s destiny”. (Sherry, 1972: 63) “Before the Congo, I was just a mere animal” is righteously interpreted by Jean-Aubry as such:

> For his first fifteen years at sea he had lived almost without being aware of it, carried along by the ardour of his temperament in response to an almost unconscious desire for adventure without ever thinking about the reasons for his or other people’s actions. (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 175)

On 14 November, Conrad was offered a berth as first mate on the *Torrens*. On his second voyage on this ship among the passengers was John Galsworthy. The period from July 1893 to October 1894 was of great significance in his life. Conrad deliberately gave up his berth on the *Torrens* to spend a month with his uncle in Poland. It was to be their last meeting for Thaddeus had not much longer to live. Back in England, he continued to work on his novel, and to seek another post. He asked his aunt to use her influence to get him a job as a Suez Canal pilot. In December, he found a berth on a ship as first officer of the *Adowa*, which was to be his last berth on a ship. At Rouen, the ship waited for emigrants for Canada, but in January, her voyage was cancelled, and Conrad returned to London. He had been there only a month when news on his uncle’s death reached him from Poland. (Sherry, 1972: 63-68) This phase in Conrad’s life contains a strange coincidence because Conrad’s career as a seaman ended at the time of his uncle’s death and “but the lack of another job and the need to distract his thoughts from the loss of his closest adviser and friend appears to have turned him to his writing”. (Sherry, 1972: 68)
Conrad endured three months of extreme anxiety over his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, and he thought that the publishers would not accept to publish it. In September 1894, he demanded the return of his novel, and then, on 4 October 1894, the novel was accepted to be published by Fisher Unwin, who offered him 20 pounds for the copyright. It was Edward Garnett, one of the readers for Fisher Unwin, who advised the acceptance of Conrad’s novel. He was to be for a long time Conrad’s friend and adviser. It can be said that, on the publication of the novel in April 1895, Conrad’s days as a seaman were over. Although he still, for a time, looked for another berth, the acceptance of *Almayer’s Folly* formed a watershed in his life and brought about a change of role. (Sherry, 1972: 68-69) However it is believed that Conrad’s new occupation did not fundamentally alter his nature and outlook. He was still a man of continual restlessness. His approach to life was opposed to any idea of rest. As Sherry points out “his true existence was buried within his imagination where his novels were created out of his past”. (Sherry, 1972: 70) Conrad went on to write *An Outcast of the Islands*, which was published in 1896. On the publication of his first two novels, Conrad was given a sympathetic reception by the critics, several of whom recognized his originality and genius. One of them was H.G. Wells, who reviewed the second novel in the *Saturday Review*, and to whom Conrad wrote, being delighted to learn about his identity. (Sherry, 1972: 70)

Some time between 1893 and 1894, Conrad met Miss Jessie George, who was working as a typewriter in the city. Their friendship developed, and early in 1895, he proposed to her. They were married on 24 March 1896 at the St George Register Office, with Conrad’s oldest friends in England, Hope and Krieger, as witnesses. (Sherry, 1972: 71) After they married, externally, Conrad’s life changed to the extent that he had children wrote his novels and made his home at various houses in Southern England.

Jessie Conrad’s life with her husband was not an easy one, but due to her placid and self-contained temperament, she was in some ways an ideal wife for a man of Conrad’s genius and nature. The couple spent the first months of their married life on the rocky and barren Île-Grande, an island near Lannion, Brittany. In the early months of their marriage, Conrad had difficulties in writing, bouts of
crippling malarial gout and fever, fits of depression, financial difficulties. Yet, he began *The Rescue*, and *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* and wrote some short stories, “An Outpost of Progress”, “Idiots” and “Lagoon”. Jessie Conrad took on her duties as typist for him. “Then the Conrads lived at first near their friends the Hopes at Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, in a house, where Conrad finished *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. ” (Sherry, 1972: 73) In March 1897, the Conrads moved to an Elizabethan farmhouse, Ivy Walls, where he went on to write *Youth*, and began a short story called “Jim” which was to grow into the novel *Lord Jim*. It is known that, in those years, Conrad was under the constant pressure of having to live on what he could earn as a writer, and this pressure must have increased with the knowledge that Jessie was pregnant but in terms of congenial companionship, life was improving for Conrad. He met Stephen Crane; and Edward Garnett, John Galsworthy and Edward Sanderson visited him, and in 1898, the publication of “An Outpost of Progress”, which had been sent to William Blackwood, publisher of *Blackwood’s Magazine*, brought about a lifelong friendship with Cunningham Graham. “Both Conrad and Graham were adventurers and courageous journeyers and had wandered over great parts of the globe.” (Sherry, 1972: 75) Their friendship was so intimate that Conrad said to Arthur Symons once, “in a tone of almost tragic and passionate pathos”, as Symons noted, “Could you conceive for a moment that I could go on existing if Cunninghame Graham were to die?” (Conrad, 1925: 31)

In September 1898, Conrad met Ford Madox Ford. He suggested that the Conrads should rent from him Pent Farm, an old farmhouse at Stanford in south-west Kent, and as Conrad liked it, they moved in at the beginning of autumn. Pent Farm was their home from 1898 until 1907, a period when Conrad wrote some of his best works. Pent Farm was also at the very heart of English literary life of that period. Henry James lived at Rye. H.G. Wells lived at Sandgate and Rudyard Kipling at Rottingdean. (Sherry, 1972: 79-80) Meanwhile, in spite of Conrad’s ultimatum that there should be no children, two sons were born, Borys in 1898, and John in 1906 but Conrad always had a lack of interest in his own children. Through Jessie Conrad’s memories, it is known that Conrad was a little jealous of his sons and could not bear a child cry; and in one of his letters to Garnett, Conrad wrote that he hated babies. (Sherry, 1972: 82-83)
Early in 1899, Conrad was rewarded with 50 guineas for his “Karain”, one of the stories in his collection of short stories, *Tales of Unrest* by the *Academy*. Conrad’s years at Pent Farm were the most fruitful for him because *Lord Jim* (1900), the *Youth* volume (1902) containing “Youth”, *Heart of Darkness* and *The End of the Tether*, the *Typhoon* volume (1903), were all written at this time. Additionally, Conrad wrote *The Inheritors* in 1901 and *Romance* in 1903 with the collaboration of Ford Madox Ford.

Then Conrad directed his intense creative effort to write *Nostromo*. It can be considered that Conrad must have been initially inspired by Cunninghame Graham and his knowledge of South America because Conrad had several times met and talked with Graham, who had spent many years, as a traveller and a rancher, in Central and South Africa. “Conrad’s friendship with Graham may have been one of the main reasons for his interest in a relatively unfamiliar area.” (Watts, 1969: 37) One important point to note here is that Conrad did not write his novel out of deference to Graham’s extensive knowledge of South American affairs. This is clear from Conrad’s letters to Graham written during the process of his writing *Nostromo*. In some of his letters, referring to *Nostromo* Conrad says, “I hardly dare avow my audacity” (Letter 45); “When it’s done I’ll never dare look you in the face again” (Letter 47); and “I stipulate a profound and unbroken secrecy of your opinion as before everybody else. I feel a great humbug”. (Letter 52) (Watts, 1969: 38) Unfortunately, in spite of Conrad’s great effort, *Nostromo* did not receive the critical acclaim Conrad had hoped for when it was published in 1904. While Conrad was writing this novel, his health began to deteriorate, and then Jessie Conrad injured her knees in a fall and was to remain a semi-cripple for the rest of her life. Besides, Conrad’s financial condition became worse since his bankers, Watson & Co. failed. The worst of all, “Conrad suffered from influenza, bronchitis, insomnia and nerves, and could not tolerate the climate in Capri, where they went to rest after the operation which Jessie had had”. (Sherry, 1972: 88)

During the year 1905 to 1906, Conrad was involved in writing *The Mirror of the Sea* and *Chance, The Secret Agent* and several short stories including “An Anarchist” and “The Informer”. The Conrads lived in different places including Galsworthy’s London House, Montpellier and Geneva. On their return home in the
summer of 1907, Conrad decided to have no more trips abroad. Therefore, the Conrads lived in England for the next seven years but not in the same house. In September 1907, Conrad decided he could no longer live there and they moved three times between 1907 and 1910, firstly to Someries in Bedfordshire for over a year, secondly to Aldington in Kent, and thirdly to Capel House in Ashford in 1910. (Sherry, 1972: 89-90) In Capel House, which is an isolated farmhouse, Conrad’s friends went on visiting him. Among them were Warrington Dawson, G. Jean-Aubry, Norman Dougles, Hugh Walpole and Arthur Marwood. “Yet, Conrad’s restlessness at this time was so symptomatic that it resulted in a complete breakdown in Conrad.” (Sherry 1972: 93) It was this time when Conrad began writing *Under Western Eyes*. The novel’s first intended title was *Razumov*. It should also be noted that Conrad wrote this novel in three stages, the first of which covered the period from December 1907 to mid-March 1908, the second of which began on mid-March and ended on 14 October 1908, and the third of which lasted from 15 October 1908 to August 1909. (Carabine, 1996: 6-36)

In 1908, Conrad was fifty. It should be noted that as an author he had had great acclaim, but *Nostromo* and *The Secret Agent* had really been disappointments. For this reason, Conrad was oppressed by the fact that he was not a selling author. He was tormented by the need to make money and the need to retain his artistic integrity. Conrad seems to have been a difficult novelist whose “complex method of narration and use of broken time sequences militated against popularity”. (Sherry, 1972: 94) From a letter of Conrad’s to Graham, it is observable that Conrad developed a complete pessimism toward humankind’s condition, which was not conducive to popularity:

> There is – let us say – a machine. It evolved itself […] out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold! – it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to be embroider – but it goes on knitting […] You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart […] It knits us and it knits us out. It had knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions – and nothing matters. (Quoted in Sherry, 1972: 97)
In *A Personal Record*, Conrad reflects his view of the universe as such:

The aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular. The rest is our affair the human side of life is completely detached from the spectacular universe. (Conrad, 1924: 66)

In 1911 Conrad’s fortune was about to change. He was given a Civil List Pension of 100 pounds, and in the following year, an American lawyer offered to buy his manuscripts. Conrad was then working on a novel which he had started six years earlier and which he hoped to be his first best-seller. It was *Chance*, which was published in 1913 but the novel was neither Conrad’s best nor the most popular. After *Chance* was begun to be serialized in the *New York Herald*, it became the best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic. (Sherry, 1972: 99) In May 1912, Conrad began a short story, which ultimately grew into a novel. It was *Victory*, which was completed in 1914. After selling the serial rights of *Victory*, Conrad planned a trip to Poland. Then the whole family went to Cracow, where Conrad recalled many poignant memories of his childhood. It was the time when Conrad heard World War I had begun. In July 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and on 1 August, Germany declared war on Russia and then invaded France. The Conrads took refuge, in Cracow, with a relative, Teodor Kosch. In September 1914, being in the residence of Kosch’s family, Conrad drafted the manuscript of his political memorandum. In this memorandum, he gives a series of insights concerning England, Germany, Russia, Austria and Poland. He says:

Feeling convinced that all European problems can be settled only after a general armistice by a congress of all the states concerned, my intentions are:

Generally: To bring up and accustom the public in England to the thought that Poles are entitled to have their *nationality* legally recognized both by the defeated as by the victorious states.

And particularly: To support and develop goodwill towards Austria. (Najder, 1964: 303)

After the refuge with Kosch lasting for some time, the Conrads got home. Conrad produced little during the war. He wrote *The Shadow-Line* in 1915. As he had an income of 2,000 pounds, he did not write for money. Meanwhile his elder son,
Borys joined the army. Conrad also wanted to take some active part in the war. Therefore, in September 1916, he was involved in the Admiralty scheme to observe activities in various British ports. After this, he was interested in the dramatization of *Victory* and began to compose *The Arrow of Gold*, which was published in 1919. (Sherry, 1972: 104-105) In 1919, Conrad also succeeded in finishing *The Rescue*, which he had begun on his honeymoon twenty-three years earlier. In October, the Conrads moved to Oswalds, a Georgian house at Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, which was to be Conrad’s last home. Meanwhile Jessie was having more trouble with her knee and had three operations one after another. Conrad was still in financial difficulties though he earned 4,000 pounds by selling film rights for his books. (Sherry, 1972: 107) In 1920, he began what was to be his last work, *Suspense*. In December, he began composing a short story, which grew to be his last completed novel, *The Rover*. It was published in 1923. Conrad was now one of the most famous living authors in Britain and the United States. He made his only visit to America in 1923. He sailed to New York. There Conrad refused to lecture, but gave a talk at the house of a fashionable hostess, Mrs. Curtis James. On his return home, Conrad was greeted with the news of Borys’ secret marriage. (Sherry, 1972: 109-111)

The remaining months of Conrad’s life were taken up with sickness on his part and on Jessie’s. He was still working on *Suspense*. Meanwhile, he was offered a knighthood by Ramsay Mac-Donald, but Conrad declined the offer probably thinking that it was not appropriate for an artist to accept such honours. (Sherry, 1972: 112)

In July 1924, Conrad suffered a heart attack. On 3 August, he suffered another attack. Early next morning he was found dead in his room. On 7 August 1924, he was buried in Canterbury.
III. IMPERIALISM and COLONIALISM as HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This part of the thesis aims to indicate how imperialism and colonialism were perceived in the discourses written during the expansion of imperialism and thus to construct a base for the new historicist readings of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*. In this part, such historical writings as *The Expansion of England in the Nineteenth Century* (1883) by John Seeley, *The English in the West Indies* (1888) by James Anthony Froude, *The True Conception of Empire* (1897) by Joseph Chamberlain and *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) by John Atkinson Hobson have been chosen because they are a part of the English imperial and colonial discourse. As New Historicism proposes, in the interpretation of a literary text, to put the text in its historical context, and a synchronic reading of both literary and non-literary texts, in the readings of Conrad’s texts from the standpoint of New Historicism, these historians’ perceptions of imperialism and colonialism are of cardinal importance because both these discourses and Conrad’s texts belong to the same epoch. The new historicist assumption that history can only be known by the written texts has been the starting point for this chapter of the thesis.

It would be appropriate to begin with the definitions of imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism is a word and an idea today so controversial, so fraught with all sorts of questions, doubts, polemics and ideological premises as nearly to resist use altogether. Beginning from the emergence of the phenomenon of imperialism, many historians, theoreticians and intellectuals dealing with the imperial history have suggested numerous definitions for the term “imperialism”. Like most “isms” imperialism has proved difficult to pin down. In fact, there is no universally agreed definition. Yet, despite numerous suggestions, it has become an umbrella word to describe the relationship between a dominant and subservient society. The debate about imperialism involves definitions and attempts at delimitations of the very notion itself: was imperialism principally economic, what were its causes and how far did it extend?
In its general sense, imperialism means the policy of extending the rule or authority of one country over other countries and colonies. In *Longman Webster English College Dictionary*, imperialism is defined as

the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation, especially by territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas. (1984: 735)

Another definition of imperialism draws attention to the aim and the condition of British imperialism:

the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries either by direct acquisition of territory, or by indirect controls of economic or political life; the policy of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies; in British history, the policy of so uniting the separate parts of an empire with separate governments as to secure for certain purposes virtually a single state. (*New Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language*, 1971: 754-755)

Edward Said, the theorist of new historicism and cultural materialism, made a similar definition of imperialism in his *Culture and Imperialism*. According to Said, imperialism means “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.” (Said, 1993: 8) Discussing the facts about imperialism, Said claims that

in Europe itself at the end of the nineteenth century, scarcely a corner of life was untouched by the facts of empire; the economies were hungry for overseas markets, raw materials, cheap labour, and hugely profitable land, and defence and foreign policy establishments were more and more committed to the maintenance of vast tracts of distant territory and large numbers of subjugated people. (Said, 1993: 7)

Said not only shows the economic aspects of imperialism but also focuses on the idea of the dominance of one culture over another. He pays attention to the privileged role of culture in the modern imperial experience and takes notice of the fact that the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth and early twentieth century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over present.
Archibald Paton Thornton, the author of a number of books on British history, argues, in his *Doctrines of Imperialism*, that “imperialism is itself a comment, made by the controlled about their controllers, and made in the assurance of impunity”. (Thornton, 1965: 27) In *Imperialism in the Twentieth Century*, he defines an imperial policy as “one that enables a metropolis to create and maintain an external system of effective control”. (Thornton, 1977: 3) He also argues that this control may be exerted by political, economic, strategic, cultural, religious or ideological means or by a combination of some or all of these and that imperialism deals in dominance. (Thornton, 1977: 5)

Hobson, a university lecturer in the 1900s and a participant in socialist, liberal and ethical causes, defines imperialism, in *Imperialism: A Study*, as the most powerful movement in the most effective politics of the Western world; and he sees it as a political and economic theory which first emerged in England during and immediately after the Boer War. Hobson discovers and discusses the general principles which underlie imperialist policy; and studying the progress of British imperialism especially in the nineteenth century, he illustrates that policy. Focusing on the economic taproots of imperialism, Hobson claims the idea that imperialism is a policy which was created by a nation’s manufacturers, merchants and financiers who wanted to use their government to dispose profitably of their economic resources and thus to secure their particular use of some distant undeveloped countries. He shows the international consequences of capitalist under-consumption and over-savings as the causes of imperialism. (Hobson, 1902: 71-93) He claims that every improvement of methods of production, every concentration of ownership and control seems to accentuate the tendency. As one nation after another enters the machine economy and adopts advanced industrial methods, it becomes more difficult for its manufacturers, merchants, and financiers to dispose profitably of their economic resources, and they are tempted more and more to use their governments in order to secure for their particular use some distant undeveloped country by annexation and protection. The process is inevitable [...]. Everywhere appear excessive powers of production, excessive capital in search of investment. [...] It is this economic condition of affairs that forms the taproot of imperialism. (Hobson, 1902: 80)
In the book, Hobson emphasizes the economic causes of imperialism. For him, the main reason for the adoption of imperialism as a political policy and practice was a demand for foreign markets for manufacturers and for investments. Financial chiefs and their associates were responsible for imperialism. He points out that “they needed imperialism because they desired to use the public resources of their country to find profitable employment for their capital which otherwise would be superfluous”. (Hobson, 1902: 80-81) He also argues that these needs, which existed in European countries drove governments along the same path. Thus, imperialism emerged in many European countries as a result of the same need. Hobson states:

Overproduction in the sense of an excessive manufacturing plant, and surplus capital which could not find sound investments within the country, forced Great Britain, Germany, Holland, France to place larger and larger portions of their economic resources outside the area of their present political domain, and then stimulate a policy of political expansion so as to take in the new areas [...] If the consuming public in this country raised its standard of consumption to keep pace with every rise of productive powers, there could be no excess of goods or capital clamorous to use Imperialism in order to find markets. (Hobson, 1902: 80-81)

Colonialism, which is almost always recognized as a consequence of imperialism, and which is sometimes thought to be preceding imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. Webster’s defines colonialism as “the system in which a country maintains foreign colonies for their economic exploitation”. Hobson sees colonialism as a natural overflow of nationality and argues that the test of colonialism is the power of colonists to transplant the civilization they represent to the new natural and social environment in which they find themselves. He emphasizes the idea that theoretically, one of the aims of colonialism is “to represent true European civilization in a distant territory but practically there has always been a conflict between the colonial deeds and the imperial ideas” because, as he observed, in most colonies, a civilization distinct from that of the “mother country” was marked out as a result of the presence of subject or “inferior” races and alien, climatic and other natural conditions. The political and economic structure of a colonial society was seen, by Hobson, to be wholly alien to that of the “mother country”. In Hobson’s opinion, the main reason for the disparity between a civilization marked out in a colony and the civilization
of the mother nation is “a debasement of a genuine nationalism”. (Hobson, 1902: 6-8) Thus, Hobson sees colonialism as a nation’s “attempts to overflow its natural banks and absorb the near or distant territory of reluctant and inassimilable peoples”. (Hobson, 1902: 6)

Seeley, another 19th-century critic of imperialism marks the nature of imperialism and colonialism in *The Expansion of England in the Nineteenth Century* as such:

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

It is obvious that Seeley sees colonialism as a threat to a nation as colonies are naturally beyond its boundaries because of the geographical boundaries, the elements such as community of language, community of religion, possession of a national history, which make a people a nation could not be achieved in colonies; in effect, natives living in colonies could not be assimilated. (Seeley in Boehmer, 1961: 72-75)

It is known that the British Empire was not confined to the self-governing colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century. It included a much greater area, a much more numerous population in distant tropical territories, where the native population vastly outnumbered the white inhabitants. Chamberlain claims that in these territories, the sense of possession gave place to the sense of obligation. Then the British people as the colonizer felt that their rule over these territories could only be justified if the British rule added to the happiness and prosperity of the natives. Chamberlain himself approved of the idea of colonialism insofar as much it brings “security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before.” (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1961: 212) He believed that it was the work of civilization which was being carried out in the colonies and, it was their national mission. He also saw the colonies as scopes
“for the exercise of the faculties and qualities” which made of the British “a great governing race”. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1961: 212-213)

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

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

Thornton states that this power may be ideological, political, cultural, economic, or religious; but it is oppressive in all cases. He believes that the economic systems, however different their ideologies are, have had power over millions of people and that it has been a power which could be enforced. The world of the 19th century grew and prospered within a framework built by the great Powers insisting on their privileges, setting their margins and calculating their options. Especially in the later twentieth century, “money was reckoned as a power and modern imperialism was the product of this power”. (Thornton, 1977: 31)

‘Civilization’ is another concept that seems to have gone side by side with the concepts of imperialism and colonialism. Thornton remarks that in the world of the 19th century, intelligent people everywhere believed that they were the masters of an age of progress and the servants of a civilizing mission but this mission failed because

The agents of the Imperial Powers, wherever under the sun their enterprise took them, never spent any time thinking that what they were exploring, invading, manipulating, and ultimately
demolishing had any value whatever […] The biggest problem was timing: but, plainly, to take advantage of time, one must get started, must seize the day and make it one’s own. (Thornton, 1977: 32-33)

Rather than civilizing the primitive natives living in distant territories, the main aim of the Imperial Powers was “to develop the resources upon which the ignorant and the uncaring sat”. To this end, “they would sow the desert if they could”. Thornton also states that the Imperial Powers intended to put the globe into a single Eurocentric framework and to prove themselves they had to compete. Commenting on the imperialism in the 19th century, he says, “There was virtue in action. From imperial action wealth would result” and “Civilization was not then, and never had been, an abstraction”. (Thornton, 1977: 34)

In conclusion, it can be said that most historians such as Hobson and Thornton agree with the idea that imperialism is a political system by which a rich or powerful country gets political or trade advantages over poorer countries which are made colonies within the system. They also accept that imperialism should cover not solely the acquisition of colonies but also a variety of relationships between dominant and subservient states. Therefore, imperialism is regarded as an act of dominating another nation’s economic, political and even military structure without actually taking governmental control. These historians also share the idea that most empires are concerned with power, profit and prestige. As for colonialism, it is viewed, by such prominent historians as Hobson and Thornton, as the practice in which a powerful country rules a weaker one and establishes its own trade and culture. Colonialism is a policy in the imperialist system by which a nation rules weaker or dependent nations often with or for economic exploitation.

After having a general look at imperialism and colonialism, we can now present some information about British imperialism and colonialism and thus we can have insights into the approach to imperialism and colonialism in the historical discourses chosen and into the pervasiveness of these concepts in the history marked by imperialism and colonialism.

The phase of British new (also called high or forward) imperialism embraced the years 1870 to 1918. The beginning of the period of high empire is signalled by
two significant events. The first is the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which shortened the communication links between Britain, India and the Antipodes. The second is Benjamin Disraeli’s 1872 Crystal Palace Speech in which he laid the groundwork for his time as pro-imperial Prime Minister by admonishing Britons to recognize and live up to the imperial responsibilities.

During the process between 1872 and 1877, that is, within only a few years, expansionist and defensive campaigns were waged in England. They were also about to be waged in Afghanistan, Malaya, Egypt and southern and West Africa. As a result of these movements, Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1877. It was a powerfully symbolic act which was designed to consolidate further the British Raj and to prevent continuing rebellions. In 1885, at the Berlin Conference, the European carve-up of Africa was determined, and thus, the partition of Africa among the European countries was made. Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee came immediately after the partition as a sign of the triumphal celebration of empire. However, British imperialist self-congratulation was severely jolted by the setbacks of the South African War in 1899. Then, in 1901, Australian Federation inspired a vociferous republican movement in that country and the years following witnessed uprisings and resistance movements in some parts of British Empire such as Natal and Bengal. Throughout the years until the First World War, British Empire never ran completely smoothly. It was not until the First World War then serious questions were asked in Britain about the benefits and the propriety of ruling other people ‘for their own good’. (Boehmer, 1961: xv)

What distinguished the period of new imperialism was a more officially expansionist, assertive and self-conscious approach to empire than had been expressed before. Under the pressure of competition from other European nations, Britain began to extend her colonial responsibilities, taking over more territory, and formalizing spheres of influence, especially in South East Asia, Africa and the South Pacific. As British Empire was competitive and expansionist, the concepts of imperialism and colonialism were questioned and perceived differently by the politicians, historians, intellectuals, writers, colonizers of the time. As for the English Empire writing produced in the process of competition and expansion, it
can be said that a perception of the multiplicity and instability of meanings exist at the very heart of these writings. (Boehmer, 1961: xvi)

However, during the period between these years, there was a consensus regarding the validity of new imperialism. New imperialism became a legitimate concept in Britain as it did in all other European countries. Britain taking part in the increased pace of partition expanded her empire. This was a reflection of the important quantitative changes in the empire. There were also significant qualitative changes in the concept of empire. These changes were reflected by the emergence of new political and economic pressures and priorities, culminating in the gradual and wide acceptance of an imperial ideology. Although Britain was an existing imperial power in the period after 1870, she confronted “a more hostile and aggressive world, where rivals were unwilling to play the game by the old rules. And this challenged her supremacy”. (Elridge, 1984: 104) The domestic political condition of Britain in the phase of high empire is drawn by Eldridge as such:

With self-confidence already sapped, new strategies were forced upon political leaders by setbacks and increased electorates. Party leaders strove to find a unifying issue and the attempts to do so can be traced at least to Disraeli’s Crystal Palace speech. Not to be outdone, the Liberal Party was inundated by imperialism, even if Rosebery insisted that this brand be called “sane imperialism”. Parish pump and imperial pomp merged together. Gladstone’s second government was much damaged in public esteem by its overseas failures. Salisbury’s remark that Irish Home Rule awoke ‘the slumbering genius of English imperialism’ is a reminder of how internal dynamics could have wide ramifications. (Elridge, 1984: 104-105)

On account of the fact that any study of new imperialism must concern itself with the culture of the state, it would be appropriate here to explore how the imperial ideology shaped itself in Britain in the phase of new imperialism. Jingoism appeared in the 1870s and any British victory or setback might call it forth. The public schools and the universities, the music halls and the press became agencies of the new imperialism. The patriotic songs emanating from the music halls were far from being free of social control and manipulation and one publication, *Pall Mall Gazette*, almost solely led the campaign for Gordon’s
mission to the Sudan in 1884. Through jingoist effusions, the British thought of themselves as the owners of ‘an empire on which the sun never set’. The British Empire was seen, by its advocators, at its height with the images of continuity and worldwide spread.

The beginning of British imperial history is traced back to the publication of Sir John Seeley’s eloquent lectures on *The Expansion of England in the Eighteenth Century* in 1883. The lectures were in their own day something of a sensation. On publication, they became an immediate best-seller, selling 80,000 copies in their first two years in print. The volume remained continuously in print until 1956. They were lectures with a purpose and a message. *The Expansion of England* is a work which is believed to have contributed more than any other single utterance to the change of feeling respecting the relations between Great Britain and her colonies. The book is a colonialist primer justifying British imperialism. Throughout the lectures on which the book is based, Seeley argued that history, in particular the period 1688-1815 covering the rise of British colonial power, offered lessons for the present. His intention was to increase an awareness of empire and to create an imperial spirit in his students. He also wished to mould the ideas of his students by heightening their historical consciousness. (Elridge, 1984: 3-4) Seeley declared that

> the simple obvious fact of the extension of the English name into other countries of the globe [is], the foundation of Greater Britain. [...] We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind. While we were doing it, that is, in the eighteenth century, we did not allow it to affect our imaginations or in any degree to change our ways of thinking; nor have we even now ceased to think of ourselves as simply a race inhabiting an island off the northern coast of the Continent of Europe. We constantly betray in our modes of speech that we do not reckon our colonies as really belonging to us. (Seeley in Boehmer, 1961:73)

Seeley drew a picture of the colonial possessions of England in his own time. He remarked that:

> Excluding certain small possessions, which are chiefly of the nature of naval or military stations, it consists besides the United Kingdom of four great groups of territory, inhabited either
chiefly or to a large extent by Englishmen and subject to the Crown, and a fifth great territory also subject to the Crown and ruled by English officials, but inhabited by a completely foreign race. The first four are the Dominion of Canada, The West Indian Islands, among which I include some territories on the continent of central and Southern America, the mass of South African possessions of which Cape Colony is the most considerable, and fourthly the Australian group, to which, simply for convenience, I must here add New Zealand. The dependency is India. (Seeley in Boehmer, 1984: 74)

He evaluated the colonial condition of England, first looking at the quantity of the population living in English colonies. Giving some figures of the population in each colony, Seeley conceded, “The total makes a population roughly equal to that of all Europe excluding Russia”. (Seeley in Boehmer, 1984: 74) Seeley seemed to have suspicions about the future colonial power of England, considering the large number of the population belonging to different races. With a sense of nationalism, he could not see those people inhabiting in English colonies as a part of Great Britain. He claimed that

this enormous Indian population does not make part of Great Britain in the same sense as those ten millions of Englishmen who live outside of the British Islands. The latter are of our own blood, and are therefore united with us by the strongest tie. The former are of alien race and religion, and are bound to us only by the tie of conquest. It may be fairly questioned whether the possession of India does or ever can increase our power or our security, while there is no doubt that it vastly increases our dangers and responsibilities […] when we inquire then into the Great Britain of the future we ought to think much more of our colonial than of our Indian Empire. (Seeley in Boehmer, 1984: 75)

Seeley, then, looked at the colonial condition of England in respect of the territorial area it had in his own time. He had doubts again, about whether the population living in vast areas could belong to the English race. He thought that the larger the area was, the harder it would be to control the increasing population in those territories. He had a fear lest the English race could lose their specific qualities and become corrupt morally and intellectually by the increase of population in the colonies. He thought that
People cannot change their abodes, pass from [...] an ancient community to a new colony, from vast manufacturing cities to sugar plantations, or to lonely sheepwalks in countries where aboriginal savage tribes still wander, without changing their ideas and habits and ways of thinking, [...] We know already that the Canadian and the Victorian are not quite like the Englishman; do we suppose then that in the next century, if the colonial population has become as numerous as that of the mother country, assuming that the connexion has been maintained and has become closer, England itself will not be very much modified and transformed? (Seeley in Boehmer, 1984: 76)

Seeley’s image of the empire was one of a family of white colonies. Unlike Hobson, Seeley was sure that the carefully controlled autocracy of the Raj would not have a deleterious influence on British democracy. Seeley was in agreement with his fellow-historian Froude that Greater Britain would function best as an enlargement of the English state organized on federal lines. For Seeley, the key to imperial success was responsibility and organization: The vastness of the empire was no excuse for slipshod administration.

Froude, an English historian, wrote The English in the West Indies in 1888. The book is a travelogue interspersed with political and social commentary. Froude, in the book, presents his response to the topical issue of constitutional government for the colonies. As an English imperialist, he saw no benefit in colonial autonomy, “Dark Parliament” as he called it. He believed that it would bring only racial conflict and the dissolution of a once-glorious empire. In his own time, Froude received important reposts from J. J. Thomas, a West Indian black colonial writer. Froude was accused of having inaccuracies, prejudices and hard and fast views of the West Indian society as comprising ‘white-master’ against ‘black-slave’. Thomas wrote, in his Froudacity, that “No one can deserve to govern simply because he is white, and no one is bound to be subject simply because he is black.” Such counter statements appeared because Froude, in The English in the West Indies, had reflected the West Indians as an inferior race. He reported his first impressions of the black that he had when he had travelled in a vessel which was crossing the Atlantic and carrying slaves:

West-Indian civilization is old-fashioned, and has none of the pushing manners which belong to younger and perhaps more
thriving communities […] Evidently they belonged to a race far inferior to the Zulus and Caffres, whom I had known in South Africa. They were more coarsely formed in limb am feature. They would have been slaves in their own country if they had not been brought to ours, and at the worst had lost nothing by the change. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 112)

During his travels to the Antilles, Froude had the opportunity to observe the daily life of the natives on some of the islands. He gave information about their family and social lives in his Western perspective:

Morals in the technical sense they have none, but they cannot be said to sin, because they have no knowledge of a law. They are naked and not ashamed. They are married as they call it, but not parsoned. The woman prefers a looser tie that she may be able to leave a man if he treats her unkindly. Yet they are not licentious […] Many die in this way by eating unwholesome food, but also many live, and those who do live grow up exactly like their parents […] There is evil, but there is not the demoralising effect of evil. They sin, but they sin only as animals, without shame, because there is no sense of doing wrong. They eat the forbidden fruit, but it brings with it no knowledge of the difference between good and evil […] They are perfectly happy. In no part of the globe is there any peasantry whose every want is so completely satisfied as her Majesty’s black subjects in these West Indian islands. They have no aspirations to make them restless. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 113)

In the book, Froude not only expressed his ideas about the natives but also described the natural environment on the islands. The following quote shows how he admired the fertility of the soil in the Antilles:

negro families have each their cabin, their garden ground, their grazing for a cow. They live surrounded by most of the fruits which grew in Adam’s paradise- oranges plantains, bread-fruit, cocoa-nuts, though not apples. Their yams and cassava grow without effort, for the soil is easily worked and inexhaustibly fertile. The curse is taken off from nature, and like Adam again they are under the covenant of innocence. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 113)

Froude, throughout his travelogue, appreciated the British rule, seeing and showing the outcomes of it. To him, there were certain signs of civilization in the appearance of the towns:
we were at anchor off St Vincent, an island of volcanic mountains robed in forest from shore to crest. Till late in the last century it was the headquarters of the Caribs, who kept up a savage independence there, recruited by runaway slaves from Barbadoes or elsewhere. Brandy and Sir Ralph Abercrombie reduced them to obedience in 1796, and St Vincent throve tolerably down to the days of free trade. Even now when I saw it, Kingston, the principal town, looked pretty well to do, reminding me, strange to say, of towns in Norway, the houses stretching along the shore painted in the same tints of blue or yellow or pink, with the same red-tiled roofs. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 114)

Froude was attracted by both the natural beauty and the convenience of the environment on Grenada, one of the islands in the Antilles, when he visited it. Quoting the former representative of the French rule on the island, Pére Labat’s ideas about the island and about the likely British rule on the island, Froude probably felt contented as the island was under the British rule then. He expressed his contentment in these sentences:

Grenada was, like St Vincent, the home for centuries of maneating Caribs, French for a century and a half, and finally, after many desperate struggles for it, was ceded to England at the peace of Versailles. [...] There are lakes in the hills, and a volcanic crater not wholly quiescent; but the especial value of Grenada, which made us fight so hardly to win it, is the deep and landlocked harbour, the finest in all the Antilles.

Pére Labat, to whose countrymen it belonged at the time of his own visit there, says that “if Grenada belonged to the English, who knew how to turn to profit natural advantages, it would be a rich and powerful colony. In itself it was all that man could desire. To live there was to live in paradise.” [...] The change of hands from which he expected so much had actually come about. Grenada did belong to the English, and had belonged to us ever since Rodney’s peace. I was anxious to see how far Labat’s prophecy had been fulfilled. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 115-116)

Froude was content to see Grenada under the British rule. He pointed out “England had demanded and seized the responsibility of managing it”. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 115) When he saw the island, he recalled the fights of the English against the French to rescue it from the French dominion. The result was the Grenada he visited:
Here, where the cannon had roared, and ships and armies had fought, and the enterprising English had entered into occupancy, under which, as we are proud to fancy, the waste places of earth grow green, and industry and civilization follow as its inevitable fruit. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 117)

Because of the feeling of victory, Froude thought that the best type of administration for the people on the islands was the British rule. He seemed to have found solutions to the question about what sort of administration should be employed in the colonies. From Froude’s own writing, it has been clearly understood that there were debates about the administration in the colonies in those times. Froude offered a ruling system which was totally based on the British power on the islands, the power that Great Britain had; and he saw no use of a constitution in the colonies. He pointed out that

There are now two thousand white people there, and forty thousand coloured people, and the proportion alters annually to our disadvantage. The usual remedies have been tried. The constitution has been altered a dozen times. Just now, I believe the Crown is trying to do without one, having found the results of the elective principle not encouraging, but we shall perhaps revert to it before long; any way, the tables show that each year the trade of the island (St Vincent) decreases, and will continue to decrease while the expenditure increases and will increase. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 114)

While writing about the town of St George’s, Froude marked the same problem and yet could propose that the British rule, for those people, would be better than any other system of administration because, he thought, natives were an inefficient race to govern themselves. He wrote:

To set up a constitution in such a place was a ridiculous mockery, and would only be another name for swindling and jobbery. Black the island, and black it would remain […] The island belonged to England; we were responsible for what we made of it, and for the blacks’ own sakes we ought not to try experiments upon them. They knew their own inefficiencies, and would infinitely prefer a wise English ruler to any constitution which could be offered them. If left entirely to themselves, they would in a generation or two relapse into savages; there were but two alternatives before not Grenada only, but all the English West Indies- either an English administration pure and simple like the East India, or a falling eventually into a state […] where
Chamberlain, in *The True Conception of Empire*, divided England’s imperial history into three phases. The first phase is the eighteenth century during which English became a great imperial power and the colonies were regarded, not only by English power but also by every European power that possessed them, as possessions valuable in proportion. In the eighteenth century, in Chamberlain’s view, colonies were valued and maintained because it was thought that they would be a source of profit—of direct profit—to the mother country. Yet, the countries which possessed colonies were seen by Chamberlain as “an absentee landlord desiring to take from his tenants the utmost rents he could exact”. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 211) The second phase came after the War of Independence in America. Chamberlain remarked that the war awakened England and gave way to the idea that the colonies could be held for England’s profit alone. Reflecting the public opinion of the time, Chamberlain said that

because the colonies were no longer a source of revenue, it seems to have been believed and argued by many people that their separation from us was only a matter of time, and that that separation should be desired and encouraged lest haply they might prove an encumbrance and a source of weakness. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 211)

Chamberlain saw the 1890s as the third phase of England’s imperial history. In that period, by the instinctive good sense and patriotism of her people, England reached the true conception of empire. He explained that conception as such:

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

However, the British rule was not totally perfect, for Chamberlain. During the first conquests of the distant territories, there had been bloodshed, loss of life among the native population and among those who had been sent out to bring those
countries into some kind of disciplined order. He justified the loss of lives believing that it was because of the nature of the mission the British had to fulfil. For him, it was “the Europeans who redeemed districts as large as Europe from barbarism and the superstition in which they had been steeped for centuries”. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 211-212) Chamberlain also accepted the bloodshed in colonies even in the name of civilization. His justification for the deeds of colonialism can be seen in the following discourse of his:

You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force; but if you will fairly contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it, I think you may well rejoice in the result of such expeditions as those which have recently been conducted with such signal success- in Nyassaland, Ashanti, Benin and Nupe- expeditions which cost valuable lives, but as to which we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilization and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be eminently advanced. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 213)

The extract above proves to be an important historical discourse on imperialism and colonialism. Chamberlain, seeing the English as the most developed and civilized nation in the world, believed that it was the English who had a responsibility and mission of bringing civilization to those undeveloped parts of the world. Chamberlain, like Seeley and Hobson, approached the concept of imperialism with a sense of nationality. He encouraged the imperialist affairs of his time as the politicians of the time, such as Chamberlain, did. He remarked that

It is a gigantic task that we have undertaken when we have determined to wield the sceptre of empire. Great is the task, great is the responsibility, but great is the honour; and I am convinced that the conscience and the spirit of the country will rise to the height of its obligations, and that we shall have the strength to fulfil the mission which our history and our national character have imposed upon us […] our chief duty is to give effect to the sentiment of kinship which I have preferred and which I believe is deep in the heart of every Briton. (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 213-214)

It is obvious that Chamberlain was advocating the concept of imperialism in his own time. Owing to a firmer union between “all members of the great British
race”, that is, the people living in England and the people living in colonies both as the colonizer and the colonized, England had made great progress then. For him, England had a great ideal, a universal desire in the development of which time and patience were essential elements. He believed in the practical possibility of a federation of the British race and claimed that it would come not by pressure, but it would come as the realization of a universal desire. He anticipated that such a federation would occur even “as the expression of the dearest wish” of British colonial fellow-subjects themselves. That was the desirable outcome in the case of the British Empire in the future, for Chamberlain. He declared that:

If Greater Britain remains united, no empire in the world can ever surpass it in area, in population, in wealth or in the diversity of its resources. Let us, then have confidence in future. There are, in our present condition, no visible signs of decrepitude and decay. The mother country is still vigorous and fruitful, is still able to send forth troops of stalwart sons to people and to occupy the waste spaces of the earth; […] let it be our endeavour, let it be our task, to keep alight the torch of imperial patriotism, to hold fast the affection and the confidence of our kinsmen across the seas, so that in every vicissitude of fortune the British Empire may present an unbroken front to all her foes, and may carry on even to distant ages the glorious traditions of the British flag.

(Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 214)

Hobson, in *Imperialism*, discovered and discussed the general principles which underlay imperialist policy and illustrated that policy studying the progress of British imperialism especially in the nineteenth century. In the book, the economic origins of imperialism have been traced with statistical measurements of imperialistic methods and results. He also investigated the theory and practice of imperialism regarded as a “mission of civilization”, imperialism’s effects upon “lower” and alien peoples and its view of things and the disorderly, irrational, selfish reality of events. The book is an important work which includes Hobson’s insights and arguments about imperialism and its causes, the economic origins of imperialism, and the theory and the practice of imperialism. The book was written in 1902 when he sensed a disjunction between the formal principles of “laissez-faire” and the realities of economic competition. As the book is a culminating work of Hobson’s observations of the outcomes of the imperialistic practices which took place especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is
considered to be one of the crucial documents presenting the facts about imperialism in the nineteenth century. The work is also an important historical document containing Hobson’s own discourses about imperialism in the nineteenth century, when the immediate outcomes of imperialism could be experienced. Imperialism could be seen, by Hobson, as “a spreading excrescence, the outward sign of domestic order”. (Hobson, 1965: xiv) Hobson as a 19th-century critic of imperialism reached this severe articulation of the concept of imperialism, having a sense of disparity between the real and the ideal, between the formal and official, surface view of things and the disorderly, irrational, selfish reality of events.

Hobson saw the Boer War (1914-18) as the cause of the emergence of a new imperial concept in Britain. The self-interested financiers had held sway over the broader interests of the nation. The leading institutions of Britain had been infected by a malignant imperial sentiment. Hobson noted that ever since 1870 there had been a ‘conscious’ policy of imperialism, which had added 4,750,000 square miles of territory and 88 million people to the existing empire. Besides the innovatory role of finance capital, he considered the increased number of great powers which had involved themselves in the scramble for mainly tropical territories, as the cause of British High Empire. These developments represented such a break with the past that it justified labelling the period from 1870 to 1902 as that of the new imperialism. (Hobson, 1965: x-xv)

Hobson, discussing the political significance of imperialism, saw imperialism as antithetical to democracy, peace and social reform. He claimed that those living in colonies and protectorates did not have any of the political rights of British citizens and they were not trained in the arts of free British institutions. The British Empire was accepted as an educator of free political institutions in the nineteenth century. Observing the imperial practice of his time, Hobson claimed that the British Empire did not perform its responsibilities towards the inhabitants of the colonies. He severely criticized the British Empire:

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

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

Hobson was against the methods of governing the colonies in that those methods were incompatible with the general theory of the British Empire. He pointed out, “Any such ‘beneficent spirit’ presided over the policy applied to any class of colonies during the longer half of the nineteenth century was notoriously false.” To him, liberal thought that “England’s imperial mission was to spread the arts of free government” failed. “The principles and practices of representative government were boomed”, he thought. He added that though there were some people believing that they could “instruct the great populations of India”, the general conviction was that “in municipal and other government conducted under British control on British lines are failures”. (Hobson, 1965: 119) Hobson also argued that the problems of governing the colonies could only be solved by the use of natives for certain administrative work and the training in lower offices. He wrote:

Our practical success in preserving order, securing justice and developing the material resources of many of our colonies has been largely due to the fact that we have learnt to employ native agents wherever possible for detailed work of administration, and to adapt our government, where it can be safely done, to native conditions. (Hobson, 1965: 120)

Hobson, being against the English authority in the colonies, created an anti-imperial argument:

When British authority has been forcibly fastened upon large populations of alien race and colour, with habits of life and thought which do not blend with ours, it is found impossible to graft the tender plants of free representative government, and at the same time to preserve good order in external affairs. We are obliged in practice to make a choice between good order and justice administered autocratically in accordance with British standards, on the one hand, and delicate, costly, doubtful,
disorderly experiments in self-government on British lines upon the other, and we have practically everywhere decided to adopt the former alternative. (Hobson, 1965: 122)

Hobson, dealing with the political and economic conditions of the colonies, said that civilized governments might undertake the political and economic control of ‘lower’ races. He observed the general principles of guidance applied in colonies occupied by ‘lower’ or unprogressive peoples. He justified two kinds of interference on the part of civilized nations with ‘lower’ races. The first principle was to utilize natural resources which were left undeveloped; and the second was to compel the inhabitants to develop them. These were seen, by Hobson, as righteous insofar as much they would serve the good of humanity and contribute to global civilization. He expressed that

Such interference with the government of a lower race must be directed primarily to secure the safety and progress of the civilization of the world, and not the special interest of the interfering nation. Such interference must be attended by an improvement and elevation of the character of the people who are brought under this control. Lastly, the determination of the two preceding conditions must not be left to the arbitrary will or judgement of the interfering nation, but must proceed from some organized representation of civilized humanity. (Hobson, 1965: 232)

If this process of development could not be “so conducted as to yield a gain to world-civilization”, Hobson added, the races living in undeveloped countries might “trample down their parasitic and degenerate white masters”. (Hobson 1902: 229-230) He also claimed that if organized governments of civilized Powers refused the duty of mission of civilization,

They would let loose a horde of private adventurers, slavers, piratical traders, treasure hunters, concession mongers, who, animated by mere greed of gold or power, would set about the work of exploitation under no public control and with no regard to the future; playing havoc with the political, economic and moral institutions of the peoples, instilling civilized vices and civilized diseases, importing spirits and firearms as the trade of the readiest acceptance, fostering internecine strife for their own political and industrial purposes, and even setting up private despotism sustained by organized armed forces. (Hobson, 1965: 230)
As has already been seen, Hobson pointed out such dangers as private commercialism, despotism and exploitation which would be likely to emerge in the case of a lack of governmental sanction and control. He showed the case of Congo Free State to exemplify such dangers:

It is impossible for the most remote land to escape the intrusion of “civilized” nations, represented by precisely their most reckless and debased specimens, who gravitate thither in order to reap the rapid fruits of licence. The contact with white races cannot be avoided, and it is more perilous and more injurious in proportion as it lacks governmental sanction and control. The most gigantic modern experiment in private adventure slowly yielded it a full tale of horrors in the Congo Free State, while the handling over of large regions in Africa to the virtually unchecked government of Chartered Companies has exposed everywhere the dangers of a contact based on private commercialism. (Hobson, 1965: 231)

Hobson did not approve of any of the methods, which new imperialism employed. He declared that the economic basis of the industrial exploitation of the inferior races shifted with modern conditions of life and industry. In other words, the only difference between old and new imperialism was that in the process of old imperialism the status of slave had been legalized and during the period of new imperialism this legal status of slave gave place to that of wage-labourer. At the time of new imperialism, it was assumed that the most profitable use of the hired labour of inferior races was to employ them in developing the resources of their own lands under the control of the white man for the white man’s profit. According to Hobson, new imperialism approached lower races as the old one did; therefore, the essential end of imperialism did not change during the period of new imperialism. He defined the nature of new imperialism as such:

Now modern imperialism in its bearing on the “lower races” remains essentially of the same type: it employs other methods, other and humaner motives temper the dominance of economic greed, […] Wherever white men of “superior races” have found able-bodied savages or lower races in possession of lands containing rich mineral or agricultural resources, they have, whenever strong enough, compelled the lower race to work for their benefit, either organizing their labour on their own land, or inducing them to work for an unequal barter, or else conveying them as slaves or servants to another country where their labour-power could be more profitably utilized. The use of imperial
force to compel “lower races” to engage in trade is commonly a first stage of Imperialism […] 
Whenever superior races settle on lands where lower races can be profitably used for manual labour in agriculture, mining, and domestic work, the latter do not tend to die out, but to form a servile class […] As we entered these countries for trade, so we stay there for industrial exploitation, […] This is the root fact of Imperialism so far as it relates to the control of inferior races; when the latter are not killed out they are subjected by force to the ends of their white superiors. (Hobson, 1965: 248)

From these thoughts, we can infer that Hobson’s Imperialism is a forceful exhaustive work consisting of anti-imperialist discourses. Its main aim was to show that empire was not profitable and therefore not necessary for national progress and welfare. Quite contrary to what was commonly claimed during the period of high empire, “trade did not follow the flag.” Imperial activity did not in any way increase Britain’s income, instead benefited only the tiny elite of international financers. Therefore, imperialism was found antithetical to democracy, peace and social reform by Hobson.

Besides anti-imperialist discourses, there were optimistic beliefs that through technology, industry and civilization of the West, an imperial expansion in colonies could be possible. This was called as ‘steam-power optimism’. A bourgeois Christian reformer, Livingstone had such an optimistic outlook. He said that Africa was ready for the Gospel but commerce and Christianity had to advance together. The slave-trade, the curse of Africa would never be stopped by sermons or even by gunboats alone. In order to break the stranglehold of the slave-dealers over Central Africa, the Christian powers must introduce steam-powered transport by river and land. By doing so, they would develop the country, would enable Africans to produce crops for legitimate trade, would ensure social progress and would assist in the evangelization of Africa. Livingstone believed that philanthropy and profits were bound to go hand in hand. In the phase of English new imperialism, this mood was commonly coupled with an all-pervading sense of Western cultural superiority and national self-confidence.

This extraordinary feeling of cultural and national self-confidence was produced by scientific and technological progress in England. When considering the rapid expansion of every branch of Western industry under the stimulus of
power-driven machinery in England in the second half of the nineteenth century, it can be said that there was an ever-growing demand for tropical goods such as cotton, cocoa and edible oils. As a result of the feelings of superiority and self-confidence, technological and industrial developments in colonies, for example, the Indian railway, were seen as the symbols of English power. Such doctrines that the English were the greatest and the most powerful nation in the world and that England had the power to create a civilization in undeveloped parts of the world provided a strong ideological justification for imperial expansion in Africa, India and some other territories.

Through this study on the discourses about British new imperialism, it can be concluded that among the historians there was a common feeling of nationality. They all approached imperialism with the feeling of nationality. Yet they all questioned imperialism and colonialism. Though some historians advocated Britain’s imperialistic deeds, one of them, Hobson disapproved of them. In other words, on the one hand, there were the most convinced English imperialists, such as Froude, Seeley and Chamberlain, who approached imperialism and colonialism as something for the good of their own nation. It cannot be denied that they had a sense of nationalism but this feeling in their hearts was close to jingoism. Being very proud of their nation, they saw the English as the most responsible and righteous people in the world to civilize undeveloped parts of the world. It has also been observed that, in the discourses chosen, the concept of European cultural and economic superiority was shadowed by self-contradiction and self-doubt. Even in the words of one as imperially ebullient as Chamberlain, there are instants of fracture, momentary admissions that Britain’s greatness may, one day, collapse. On the other hand, there was an anti-imperialist historian: Hobson. It can be said that Hobson also approached British imperialism and colonialism through nationalist feelings. He had worries about the present condition and the future of his nation. Yet, he thought of the inhabitants of the colonies and saw colonialism as the exploitation of these people. He found English imperialism and colonialism incompatible with such concepts as democracy, peace, social reform, civilization and human rights, of which the English were considered the advocators and representatives.
IV. A NEW HISTORICIST READING of HEART of DARKNESS

“Cultural treasures owe their existence not only to the efforts of great minds and talents who have created them but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”

Walter Benjamin

As has already been pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis, new historicists treat literary texts as inseparable from the society and culture in which they are embedded. Following Geertz’s ideas about culture, new historicists recognize both literary texts and their authors as cultural artefacts. They share the view that a literary text cannot be separated from its author’s life because it is not the author himself but the culture and society - which shape the author – which shape the literary text. Therefore in a new historicist reading of a literary text, the author’s biography is of importance to indicate that the literary text is not solely a creation of the author but a cultural production like its author. This part of the thesis aims to read Heart of Darkness (1898) alongside, firstly, Conrad’s life to clarify the relation between his life and the text and thus to indicate that Conrad’s tragic vision in the novel stemmed from his bitter experiences in the Congo, and secondly, the imperialistic and colonial culture, in which the text was written, in order to pinpoint Conrad’s response to these issues. Knowing that past can be known by means of the written documents, some travel and adventure accounts dealing with the issues of imperialism and colonialism and written in the same period, i.e. during the expansion of imperialism, have been chosen for the synchronic reading, which aims to view the place of Conrad’s text in the English colonial discourses. Through such a reading, it is also aimed to observe the ways of representation of both the colonizing and the colonized in both Conrad’s text and the selected non-literary texts.

Heart of Darkness is a novel which parallels closely Conrad’s own life because some impressions from Conrad’s own life can be seen in it. In the novel Conrad reflects his own experiences which he gained before and during his Congo trip, through Marlow, the autobiographical hero of Heart of Darkness. As Marlow
was fascinated, in his boyhood, with the delightful mystery of the Congo and is fascinated again with the snake-like Congo when he sees a map of the Congo in a bookseller’s window in Fleet Street before he is appointed to a steamboat for his Congo experience (Conrad, 1994: 12), Conrad had been fascinated with not only the polar regions but also the torrid zone in the world. Such was the appeal of Africa that his first friends in the “world of mentality and imagination”, he claimed in one of his essays, were Africa and the African explorers:

And it was Africa, the continent out of which the Romans used to say some new thing was always coming, that got cleared of the dull imaginary wonders of the dark ages, which were replaced by exciting spaces of white paper. Regions unknown! My imagination could depict to itself these worthy, adventurous and devoted men, nibbling at the edges, attacking from north and south and east and west, conquering a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there, and sometimes swallowed up by the mystery their hearts were so persistently set on unveiling. (Conrad, 1924: 13)

Marlow, the narrator in *Heart of Darkness* tells that he was fascinated with Africa when he was a child. (Conrad, 1994: 11-12) Besides, Conrad’s situation and mood when he was waiting for the command as captain to the West Indies and New Orleans by the Antwerp ship-owners, Walford and Co. can be attributed to Marlow, who says at the beginning of the novel:

‘I have a lot of relations living on the Continent, because it’s cheap and not so nasty as it looks, they say.’

‘I am sorry to own I began to worry them. This was already a fresh departure for me. I was not used to get things that way, you know. I always went my own road and on my own legs where I had a mind to go. I wouldn’t have believed it of myself; but, then – you see – I felt somehow I must get there by hook or by crook. So I worried them. The men said “My dear fellow,” and did nothing. (Conrad, 1994: 12)

Although Conrad had obtained British citizenship, and had been released from being a Russian subject, he still needed a visa to go to Poland to see his uncle Thaddeus, whose health was uncertain. While he was waiting for the document that would permit him to go to Poland, he led a life of leisure which he had grown completely unaccustomed to. Meanwhile, Conrad had not given up the idea of going back to sea. The memory of the *Otago* was always in his heart. “Days and
months passed without bringing him the least hope of command.” (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 150) Conrad was, then, in exactly the same situation as Marlow is. Marlow describes his search for a job after coming back from the Orient:

‘I had then, as you remember, just returned to London after a lot of Indian Ocean, Pacific, China Seas –a regular dose of the East –six years or so, and I was loafing about, hindering you fellows in your work and invading your homes, just as though I had got a heavenly mission to civilize you. I was very fine for a time, but after a bit I did get tired of resting. Then I began to look for a ship –I should think the hardest work on earth. But the ships wouldn’t even look at me. (Conrad, 1994: 11)

Conrad’s and Marlow’s situations are similar to each other’s in the sense that Marlow is summoned by the company hurriedly and Conrad was suddenly appointed as captain and promised the command of one of the Upper Congo steamboats in 1889. Before Conrad came to Brussels to join the ship, he was in Lublin, where he spent forty-eight hours with his Zagorski cousins. He barely had time to go back to London to pack his belongings, bought a few articles and returned to Brussels to sign his contract. Conrad described his frantic situation and his effort to gather his equipment and say goodbye to his friends before leaving for Africa:

If you only knew the devilish haste I had to make! From London to Brussels, and back again to London! And then again I dashed full tilt to Brussels! If you had only seen all the tin boxes and revolvers, the high boots and the tender farewells; just another pair of trousers! –and if you knew all the bottles of medicine and all the affectionate wishes I took away with me, you would understand in what a typhoon, cyclone, hurricane, earthquake – no!-in what a universal cataclysm, in what a fantastic atmosphere of mixed shopping, business, and affecting scenes, I passed two whole weeks! (Quoted in Jean-Aubry, 1926: 41)

This experience of Conrad’s is reflected in *Heart of Darkness* through Marlow, who represents Conrad himself. Marlow says about the reasons for the company’s sudden hurry to engage him as a captain:

‘I got my appointment – of course; and I got it very quick. It appears the Company had received news that one of their captains had been killed in a scuffle with the natives […] It was only months and months afterwards, when I made the attempt to
recover what was left of the body, that I heard the original quarrel arose from a misunderstanding about some hens [...] through this glorious affair I got my appointment, before I had fairly begun to hope for it.

‘I flew around like mad to get ready, and before forty-eight hours I was crossing the Channel to show myself to my employers, and sign the contract. In a very few hours I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whitened sepulchre [...] I had no difficulty in finding the Company’s offices [...] A narrow and deserted street in deep shadow, high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones. (Conrad, 1994: 13-14)

And then Marlow gives his unforgettable account of his visit to the Company’s office. As Jean-Aubry remarks, the details and scenes recounted by Marlow such as the women dressed in black, knitting in the outer office like impassive Fates; the huge, many-coloured map of Central Africa; the interview with the managing director which lasted only a few seconds; the compassionate secretary; the visit to the doctor and his aunt are all extraordinarily vivid and all bearing the imprint of a biting irony and at the same time they are nothing but the memory of actuality. (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 160)

As it is known, Marguerite Poradowska was an important figure in Conrad’s life. In 1890, Conrad visited Mme. Poradowska and her husband Alexander in Brussels on his way to the Ukraine. Conrad arrived in Brussels just two days before Alexander died. It is known that Conrad and Marguerite were drawn together by this tragic event. Marguerite became Conrad’s closest correspondent, confidante and friend during the next five years. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow describes how he desperately sought the assistance of a female relative after he appealed in vain to his male friends for help in securing a berth:

The men said “My dear fellow,” and did nothing. Then –would you believe it? –I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work –to get a job. Heavens!

Well, you see the notion drove me. I had an aunt, a dear enthusiastic soul. She wrote: “It would be delightful. I am ready to do anything, anything for you. It is a glorious idea. I know the wife of a very high personage in the Administration, and also a man who has lots of influence with,” etc. She was determined to make no end of fuss to get me appointed skipper of a river steamboat. (Conrad, 1994: 12)
Marlow’s female relative’s help suggests Marguerite’s help for which Conrad was deeply grateful.

Conrad had the first chance to go to Africa when he was in Brussels after leaving the Ukraine. The event which required his immediate presence in the Congo was that the Danish captain of the *Otago* had been murdered by Africans during a trivial quarrel. Conrad was offered to replace the dead master of the *Otago*. In May 1891, Conrad left Brussels for Africa. He was eager for work in Africa but inexperienced. One important point to note here is that Conrad at first believed the high-minded propaganda about bringing the benevolent light of civilization to the dark continent and that only after he had reached the Congo and seen the brutal exploitation of the resources and the people did he discover the disappointing reality. (Meyers, 1991: 96; White 1993: 191) Conrad wrote in one of his last essays about the disparity between his idealized expectations and the disappointing reality of his first trip to Africa:

> A great melancholy descended on me. Yes, this was the very spot. But there was no shadowy friend to stand by my side in the night of the enormous wilderness, no great haunting memory, but only the unholy recollection of a prosaic newspaper “stunt” and the distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration. What an end to the idealized realities of a boy’s daydreams! (Conrad, 1924: 17)

*Heart of Darkness*, in most respects, appears to be a remarkably faithful transcription of the historical situation. Marlow observes several dead porters along the trail and say of the region, “The population had cleared out a long time ago”. (Conrad, 1994: 28) Conrad himself went on several of the expeditions as he recorded in his diary and saw three African corpses, including “a skeleton tied up to a post, and a youth with a gunshot wound in the head”. (Conrad in Najder, 1978: 13) Marlow remarks that he saw “the body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead”. (Conrad, 1994: 29) The company created by a Belgian financier Albert Thys, the *Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo*, was obliged to send recruiting expeditions farther and farther afield to find carriers. Finally, in order to cope with the shortage of labour needed for the railway, which was essential to King Leopold’s planned economic exploitation of the country,
Leopold’s officials resorted to three solutions: “importing workers from other African colonies, putting the Congolese ‘criminals’ on chain-gangs, and at last using forced or slave labour”. (Hawkins in *Conradiana* Vol.13 1981: 98) Conrad probably saw or heard about these colonial affairs and had Marlow say, just before he steps into the “grove of death”, “they were called criminals, and the outraged law […] had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea”. (Conrad, 1994: 22-23)

Beside his own experiences in the Congo, a British explorer called Casement whom “Conrad met on the Lower Congo had a profound impact on Conrad’s attitude towards the Congo and on his fictional portrayal of his grim experience in Africa”. (Meyers, 1991: 99) Casement has been described by Meyers as “a tall, extremely handsome man, with fine bearing, a muscle and bone thinness, wrinkled forehead, face deeply tanned from long tropical service” and “idealistic and unselfish” and as a man having “considerable charm, but was also high-strung and unstable, subject to periods of intense melancholy and self-pity”. (Meyers, 1991: 98-99) Conrad shared a room with Casement for two weeks and soon became very friendly with him. Writing in 1903 to his anti-imperialist friend, Cunninghame Graham, Conrad described Casement’s careless courage and his habit of travelling unarmed and unattended through the dangerous jungle:

There is a touch of the Conquistador in him too; for I’ve seen him start off into an unspeakable wilderness swinging a crookhandled stick for all weapons, with two bulldogs […] and a Loanda boy carrying a bundle for all company. A few months afterwards it so happened that I saw him come out again, a little leaner, a little browner, with his stick, dogs, and Loanda boy, and quietly serene as though he had been for a stroll in park […] He could tell you things! Things I’ve tried to forget; things I never did know. (Meyers, 1991: 99)

Conrad’s account of Casement’s serene stroll through the “unspeakable wilderness” may suggest that Casement may have been the model for “the elusive and inexplicable Russian in motley” in *Heart of Darkness*. (Meyers, 1991: 99) Casement reported in his *Congo Diary*, a long factual document, the atrocities committed upon what Casement himself called “the poor, the naked, the fugitive, the hunted, the tortured, the dying men and women of the Congo”. (Casement in
Singleton-Gates and Girodias 1959: 96) The facts written in Casement’s diary include such deeds of the white man as that Africans, bound with thongs that contracted in the rain and cut to the bone, had their swollen hands beaten with rifle butts until they fell off and that chained slaves were forced to drink the white man’s defecations and that, hands and feet were chopped off for their rings, were lined up behind each other and shot with one cartridge and that wounded prisoners were eaten by maggots till they died and were then thrown to starving pyre-dogs or devoured by cannibal tribes. Casement also gives an anecdote, in the diary, about a boy who described to Casement how he was wounded during a raid on his village:

He fell down, presumably insensible, but came to his senses while his hand was being hacked off at the wrist. I asked him how it was he could possibly lie silent and give no sign. He answered that he felt the cutting, but was afraid to move, knowing that he would be killed, if he showed any sign of life. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Girodias, 1959: 164)

Casement’s investigation stood as one of the great humanitarian achievements and helped to extinguish the cruel and exploitative colonialism in the Congo. “Through Casement’s revelations of the atrocities, the Congo Reform Association forced King Leopold II to surrender his personal ownership of the Congo.” (Meyers, 1991: 100) One significant point to note here is that from 1865 till 1908 the Congo was not a possession of the state of Belgium, but the private property of King Leopold II. Casement was an important figure taking an active role in the creation of the Congo Reform Association. “Through Casement’s triumph, the Congo became a colony of Belgium.” (Meyers, 1991: 96)

Casement’s Congo Diary substantiates the accuracy of the conditions described in Heart of Darkness. Conrad, like Casement, was one of the first men to question the Western notion of progress, to attack the hypocritical justification of colonialism and to reveal in documentary form the savage degradation of the white man in Africa. The conditions described in Conrad’s text such as the chained gangs, the grove of death, the payment in brass rods, the cannibalism and the human skulls on the fence posts are similar to the conditions described by Casement in his Congo Diary. Meyers points out that Casement himself confirmed that Conrad did not exaggerate or invent the horrors that provided the political and
humanitarian basis for his attack on colonialism. (Meyers, 1991: 101) Therefore Conrad’s text may be read in terms of the scenes depicting the white man’s atrocious acts upon the natives in Africa and may be studied to prove the idea that Conrad having been affected by the real situation of the natives, reflected their condition; and his text was nourished by his own experiences in the Congo. Besides, because Casement’s *Congo Diary* gives facts about the condition of the natives, it would be appropriate to compare the scenes in both Casement’s and Conrad’s texts to show how far Conrad reflected the real condition of the natives. In his text Casement reported that in Coqihatville, a native settlement half-way between Kinchassa and Stanley Falls, “two men were chained together and made to carry heavy loads of bricks and water, and were frequently beaten by the soldiers in charge of them”. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Girodias, 1959: 190) Marlow describes the chained slaves he saw when they were building a railway:

‘A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron color on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. (Conrad, 1994: 22)

Casement also reported that many Africans, including chiefs, died in their chains. In a grove of death similar to that in Conrad’s text, Casement found “seventeen sleeping sickness patients, male and female, lying about in the utmost dirt” and “Most of them were lying on the bare ground – several out in the pathway in front of the houses, and one, a woman, had fallen into the fire”. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Girodias, 1959: 100)

In the novel Marlow’s starving cannibalistic crew are paid in brass rods instead of money or even food. Marlow states that “the theory was they were to buy their provisions with that currency in river-side villages”. But the theory does not work and Marlow ironically says, “unless they swallowed the wire itself, or made loops of it to snare the fishes with, I don’t see what good their extravagant
salary could be to them”. (Conrad, 1994: 58-59) A similar scene can be found in Casement’s report:

In most parts of the Upper Congo the recognized currency consists of lengths varying according to the district. [...] Such as it is, clumsy and dirty, this is the principal form of currency known on the Upper Congo. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Grodias, 1959: 104)

Cannibalism is a common point both in *The Congo Diary* and *Heart of Darkness*. Casement authenticated incidents of mercenary soldiers who “took a woman and cut her throat, and divided her and ate her”. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Grodias, 1959: 152) Although Marlow did not witness any cannibalism in the Congo, he was horrified with the idea of eating human flesh:

Their headman, [...] stood near me. “Aha!” I said, just for the good fellowship’s sake. “Catch ‘im,” he snapped, with a bloodshot widening of his eyes and a flash of sharp teeth – “catch ‘im. Give ‘im to us.” “To you, eh?” I asked; “what would you do with them?” “Eat ‘im!” he said [...] I would no doubt have been properly horrified, had it not occurred to me that he and his chaps must be very hungry. (Conrad, 1994: 58)

The scene in which Marlow is horrified to see human skulls decorating Kurtz’s fence, is similar to the scene in which Casement was shocked seeing the skulls “lying about in the grass surrounding the post, which is built on the site of several large towns, human bones, skulls and in some cases complete skeletons”. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Grodias, 1959: 118) In Marlow’s case, although Kurtz was satisfied with the skulls only, the scene is terrifying enough for Marlow when he understands that the things on the posts are human skulls:

I had suddenly a nearer view, and its first result was to make me throw my head back as if before a blow. Then I went carefully from post to post with my glass, and I saw my mistake. These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing [...] They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way [...] I returned deliberately to the first I had seen –and there it was, black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids –a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line
of teeth, was smiling, too, smiling continuously at some endless and jocose dream of that eternal slumber. (Conrad, 1994: 82-83)

Casement reported on the fanatical and unscrupulous Europeans taking the ivory trade entirely from the hands of the natives of the Upper Congo. He wrote:

> The praiseworthy official would be he whose district yielded the best and biggest supply of the commodity; and, succeeding in this, the means whereby he brought about the enhanced value of that yield would not, it may be believed, be too closely scrutinized. (Casement in Singleton-Gates and Girodias, 1959: 110)

Europeans in Casement’s report are prototypes of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. Generally accepted, Kurtz suggests the unscrupulous European in Africa looting the ivory and exploiting the natives there. As already indicated, most of the facts reported by Casement in his text are reflected in one way or another in *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad questions the value of European civilization in his text as Casement did in his diary.

During his Congo experience, Conrad had an encounter with a man Camille Delcommune in Kinchassa. Delcommune was the Société Belge’s manager. Marlow’s encounter with the manager in *Heart of Darkness* parallels Conrad’s “contentious encounter” with Delcommune. (Meyers, 1991: 102) Marlow recounts in *Heart of Darkness*:

> 'My first interview with the manager was curious. He did not ask me to sit down after my twenty-mile walk that morning. He was commonplace in complexion, in feature, in manners, and in voice. He was of middle size and of ordinary build. His eyes, of the usual blue, were perhaps remarkably cold, and he certainly could make his glance fall on one as trenchant and heavy as an axe. (Conrad, 1994: 30)

During his very first encounter with Delcommune, Conrad was criticised by the impatient and irritated Delcommune for taking so long on his journey from Matadi and was informed that the *Florida*, which Conrad was supposed to command, had been damaged on the river and needed extensive repairs in Kinchassa. And then Delcommune, thinking that Conrad had to learn to navigate the swift and ever-changing river, assigned him to the *Roi des Belges*, whose
young Danish captain Ludwig Koch had been ill. During the voyage to Stanley Falls, in the ship there was a Belgian mechanic, the ailing Koch and four passengers including Delcommune. The crew of thirty Africans included a number of cannibals. (Meyers, 1991: 104) Likewise, the cannibals were a real threat during Marlow’s fictional journey. The purpose of the voyage of the *Roi des Belges* from Kinchassa to Stanley Falls was to relieve one of the company’s agents at the Falls. “The commercial agent’s health caused a great anxiety. He died due to his illness and was buried at Bolobo by the ship’s company.” (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 169-170) His name was Georges-Antoine Klein. Jean-Aubry argues that this dying agent was turned into the abominable hero of *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz, who actually had a similar name.* (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 170) It has also been argued by Meyers that though Klein was clearly a model for Kurtz, his life did not match the sensational aspects of Kurtz’s career and that Conrad was inspired by another real character, Arthur Hodister, who had been tortured as Kurtz had tortured others. A part of a report from *The Times*, dated December 8, 1892 says that “Hodister and his comrades were seized and put to death, and their heads were stuck on poles and their bodies eaten”. (Quoted in Meyers, 1991: 104)

Conrad’s attitude toward the colonial enterprise and the impressions of his bad experiences on him can be seen in one of his letters to Mme. Poradowska written two days after he came back from Stanley Falls. Conrad says in his letter dated September 26, 1890:

My days here are dreary. There is no doubt about it. I decidedly regret having come here: indeed, I regret it bitterly. Everything here repels me. Men and things, but especially the men. And I repel them, too. From the manager in Africa –who has taken the trouble of telling a lot of people that he can’t stand me, down to the lowest mechanic –they all have the gift of getting on my nerves […] The manager is a common ivory-dealer with sordid instincts who considers himself a trader when he is nothing but a kind of African shopkeeper. His name is Delcommune. He hates the English, and of course I am regarded here as an Englishman. (Karl and Laurence, 1983: 62-63)

* The word ‘klein’ in German means ‘little’ in English, and ‘kurtz’ in German means ‘short’ in English.
However, Conrad saw his Congo experience as the turning point of his intellectual development. In a letter to Edward Garnett, he wrote “before the Congo, I was a perfect animal. I see everything with such despondency—all in black”. (Sherry, 1972: 63) After the Congo experience, Conrad’s new insights into the nature of evil turned his innate pessimism into a tragic vision. It is therefore evident that the essence of the tragic vision in *Heart of Darkness* is Conrad’s own experiences in the Congo, which enabled Conrad to transform a tragic vision into literature.

At the end of this contextual study containing the relationship between *Heart of Darkness* and the autobiographical elements, we have seen that Conrad’s own experiences provided him with the material from which he created *Heart of Darkness*. Yet he relates his own experiences in the Congo as an officer in the British Merchant Marine to his unremitting concern with how to live in a rapidly changing world, a world dominated by imperialism and colonialism. Therefore, it can be said that *Heart of Darkness* is a text which at once takes in a range of settings and problems while remaining focused on individual experience of, and response to colonialism. Thus the novel can be regarded as a meditation on colonialism and imperialism in which evil and the thin line between civilization and barbarism are skilfully drawn through the white trader, Kurtz. Additionally, Conrad, in his text, used his own experiences not simply because he was only interested in how life treated him and how he reacted to this treatment but because he wished to allow his readers to use the same characters and incidents to bring a meaning to life as it exists in their own real world. So it can be said that the importance of Conrad’s experiences reflected in the novel can be recognized well if they are related with the themes of the novel. Though there are many themes that run through the novel, two major themes, restraint and man’s journey into self, can be considered the significant ones. It is restraint through which Marlow is saved, and, by the lack of which Kurtz is doomed. Another theme in the novel is that the real darkness is in man’s heart. Despite its autobiographical quality, the novel attracts the attention of today’s readers because the idea given in the novel is closely allied to the real world as we experience it. It is because of this quality of the novel that today we read *Heart of Darkness*. 
The following part of this chapter is an attempt to read *Heart of Darkness* in its social, cultural and political contexts. As it is known, new historicists treat literary texts as inseparable from other texts, and inseparable from the social and political contexts in which they are embedded. They regard all written texts as the products of social, cultural and political forces, not solely the creation of an individual author, and accept that texts reflect and engage with the prevailing values and ideologies of their own time. In New Historicism, all texts, all documents are recognized as the representations of the beliefs, values and forms of power circulating in a society at a given time in specific circumstances, and therefore all texts of a given time are in some ways interconnecting and interactive. In short, all material documentations are the representations which a society produces of itself.

Therefore, it can be said that one of the objects of a new historicist study is to show the way in which a culture represents itself. Furthermore, if written texts are embedded in their own historical contexts, then it is possible for a new historicist critic to reconstruct the ways in which any text interacted with and shaped the society, culture and politics of the past. One of the most common methods used by the new historicist critics to do this is to situate literary texts in relation to other texts of the same period, and to construct a kind of dialogue between wide ranges of texts. To perform such a reading in relation to *Heart of Darkness* would reveal that it was deeply embedded in the values and debates of its own time. Firstly, the text is to be linked to other kinds of texts written in the same epoch. As *Heart of Darkness* is concerned with such issues as imperialism and colonialism, other kinds of texts which will be read alongside the novel have been chosen among those concerning the same issues. As New Historicism suggests a reading of literary and non-literary texts synchronically, the discourses chosen are the historical documents and travel narratives written during the imperial expansion of England and justifying the colonial deeds of England.

Following Montrose’s new historicist method of “the historicity of text and the textuality of history”, the role of historical contexts in interpreting Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* can be explored to show that the novel was embedded in a specific social and cultural context, and that all our knowledge and understanding
of the past – in this case, our knowledge and understanding of imperialism and colonialism – could only exist through the surviving textual traces about imperialism and colonialism.

Following the Foucauldian model of discursive analysis, we can read a literary text with other non-literary texts to see how the literary text connects with other texts; in the case of *Heart of Darkness*, we can read the novel to see how it connects with non-literary texts and how the textuality of history forms a kind of discursive fabric and how these various texts interacted with each other to produce a discourse of colonialism. As it is known, Foucault brought to the discipline of literary studies an emphasis on the function and condition of texts within a network of power relations. Following Foucault, new historicists examine how literature plays a part in constructing a society’s sense of itself. They focus on how literary texts circulate with other texts in a particular period to construct and shape the power relations of that society. In this new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness*, we can explore the relationship between literature and colonialism – the dominant ideology of the time in which Conrad wrote his text. Through such an exploration we can also recognize the degree to which literature participated in forming the dominant ideological assumptions of that particular time.

*Heart of Darkness* might thus be seen to represent and reflect the ideologies of colonialism, a reading which could be reinforced by comparing the views expressed in Conrad’s text with such colonialist writings as Henry M. Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), J. A. Froude’s *English in the West Indies* (1888) and Mary Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* (1897). All of these texts were written and circulated during the colonial expansion of England and together they form a powerful set of colonial representations and stereotypes. It is an assumption of new historicist critics that the similarities between such an array of texts form a discourse, which inevitably shapes and determines the views, values and actions of the society and culture in which it is fostered.

One of the methods of performing a new historicist reading, preferred by Stephen Greenblatt, is to recount an anecdote which contains a microcosmic image of the power relations which is sought to elaborate in relation to the main text of discussion. Joel Fineman, in his essay “The History of Anecdote: Fiction and
Fiction”, argues that the anecdote has acquired a special role in new historicist reading because “it enables the critic to discover in minute pieces of the text the larger structure and operations of power” and to show “how power extends its operations from minute anecdotes to the more complex and intricate texts and material practices embedded in a particular society or culture”. (Fineman in Veeser, 1989: 49-76) The anecdote chosen usually belongs to the actual or historical documents such as travel narratives, texts of history, penal documents, confessional narratives, etc. They serve to base the critical interpretations of literary texts on.

In this new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness* the anecdotal method can also be traced. In other words, Conrad’s text can be read with the other texts written in the same period. Such a reading would be a kind of intertextual criticism through which we can see the ways in which *Heart of Darkness*, and texts of history and travel narratives, at certain moments and under specific conditions, intersect with each other to form a discourse of colonialism. Through such an intertextual reading, we can recognize that *Heart of Darkness*, though having a more complex form and structure than other texts, is in circulation with certain texts of history and travel narratives, and that their analyses construct a model of how discourses were performed in a particular period of time. Such a reading of *Heart of Darkness* would also reveal the connections between seemingly disparate texts. By means of this new historicist method we can recognize the presence of a discourse which shapes, as much as is shaped by, its own society; and we can also see that both *Heart of Darkness* and other non-literary texts chosen constitute the discourse of European representation of the African and even the idea of Africa. In this sense, Henry M. Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent*, Froude’s *English in the West Indies* and Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* can be read alongside *Heart of Darkness*, which is a part of a discourse representing the African in relation to European forms. Summarily, the remaining part of this chapter aims to read Conrad’s text through both Montrose and Greenblatt’s new historicist methods.

There are striking resemblances between Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent*. When, in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow
notes that the vast blank spaces on his boyhood maps of Africa had since been filled in with rivers and lakes (Conrad, 1994: 11), it is the work of Stanley and others to which Marlow is referring. (Brannigan, 1998: 142) Stanley’s narrative tells the story of his quest to discover the source of the River Congo, and to map central Africa more comprehensively. Stanley, in this sense, may be considered as Marlow’s precursor because, Stanley, like Marlow, who is drawn to the snake-like Congo River, was drawn to the same blank spaces which occupied the place of Central Africa on his maps. Stanley recalls a conversation with his companion in December 1876:

‘Now look at this, the latest chart which Europeans have drawn of this region. It is a blank, perfectly white [...] this enormous void is about to be filled up. Blank as it is, it has a singular fascination for me. Never has white paper possessed such a charm for me as this has, and I have already mentally peopled it, filled it with most wonderful pictures of towns, villages, rivers, countries, and tribes – all in the imagination – and I am burning to see whether I am correct or not’. (Stanley, Vol. II., 1988:152)

It is clear that for Stanley, as it is for Marlow, Africa is a blank space to be occupied and filled in, and even the present inhabitants and occupiers of that land are imagined, ‘mentally peopled’, in Europe. The African natives cannot be known in their own presence, as living beings with their own cultures and systems of representations. They must always have been the projection of the European imagination, always contained within the European system of representations. To Stanley, Africa is what must be occupied, simply because the European map of the world denotes Africa as an absence, as a blank space, as an anomalous void which awaits its place in the grand order of civilization.

Another similarity between Heart of Darkness and Through the Dark Continent is that Africa is represented as ‘the dark continent’ in both of them. Marlow calls Africa “one of the dark places of the earth”. (Conrad, 1994: 7) Stanley’s Africa is the heart of darkness, represented as “the dark continent”. (Stanley, Vol. I., 1988: 54)

There are indeed some surprising correspondences and startling resemblances between Froude’s and Kingsley’s travel narratives and Conrad’s text. Both Froude
and Kingsley explained to their English readers the cultural practices and social customs of the tribes whom they encountered on their journeys. Froude reported in *The English in the West Indies* that the West Indians were an inferior race and that their civilization was old-fashioned. He wrote:

> Evidently they belonged to a race far inferior to the Zulus and Caffres, whom I had known in South Africa. They were more coarsely formed in limb and feature. They would have been slaves in their own country if they had not been brought to ours, and at the worst had lost nothing by the change. (Froude in Boehmer, 1984: 112)

It is clear that Froude compared the Western civilization and the natives’ through his western perspective. Froude’s narrative contains the natives living in the West Indian islands, as the object of study and he himself as the subject observing and scrutinizing the natives. In other words, while the natives remain as the object, the European author displays his own mastery in the act of disclosing information, knowledge and interpretation about the social life of the natives living in the Antilles. Froude reinforces the absolute difference between the European “us” and the natives “them”. Froude’s text is thus based on the differences between “us” and “the Other”.

Froude also justifies the colonial enterprise of the British, claiming that the natives “would have been slaves in their own country if they had not been brought to ours [the British’s]”. He did not hesitate to call the natives “her Majesty’s black subjects”. In this sense, Froude’s text replicates the ideology of colonialism because in the text, he clearly shows that without the direction of the European white, the towns in the West Indies could not reach an advanced and more civilized position. It is evident that Froude was pleased to see St Vincent under the dominion of the British power as he wrote that the town “looked pretty well to do” and reminded him “of towns in Norway”, which is a European country. In this sense, the text deems it impossible for the Negro to become civilized without the European. Froude also saw the Europeans as more civilized than the natives, hence, deserving to instruct and direct the natives.

Mary Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa*, like Froude’s *English in the West Indies*, is a part of the European colonial discourse. The text contains Kingsley’s
account of her travel experiences in West Africa. She also explained to her English readers the cultural practices and social customs of the tribes she had encountered on her journeys. Kingsley wrote:

To my taste there is nothing so [as] fascinating as spending a night out in an African forest, or plantation; but I beg you to note I do not advise anyone to follow the practice. Nor indeed do I recommend African forest life to any one. Unless you are interested in it and fall under its charm, it is the most awful life in death imaginable. It is like being shut up in a library whose books you cannot read, all the while tormented, terrified and bored. And if you do fall under its spell, it takes all the colour out of other kinds of living. Still it is good for a man to have an experience of it, whether he likes it or not, for it teaches you how very dependent you have been, during your previous life, on the familiarity of those conditions you have been brought up among, and on your fellow citizens; moreover it takes the conceit out of you pretty thoroughly during the days you spend stupidly stumbling about among your new surroundings. (Kingsley, 1993: 33-34)

In this passage, Kingsley advises her readers against spending a night in an African forest because to a European the forest is inscrutable like “books you cannot read”. Yet, she finds the African forest charming because she is a European; in other words, as a European narrator, Kingsley falls under “the charm” of the African forest and finds it to her taste. As a careful observer of the African culture, she seems to be celebrating the joys of life in Africa because life, like everything else African, is different from what is European. In this sense, Kingsley’s narrative distinguishes between what is European and what is African. Thus it can be said that, as Brannigan points out, “the basis for European colonization of Africa lies in this absolute difference between the civilized European and the savage, inscrutable African.” (Brannigan, 1998: 134) Kingsley’s text can be recognized as a part of the European colonial discourse in that it is based on the difference between the white and the African. Kingsley reinforces the absolute difference between the European “us” and the African “them” when she advises readers who wish to follow in her footsteps of useful ethnological studies, and of the differences which ‘we’ can expect to find between “us” and “them”: 
They are not dreamers, or poets, and you will observe, and I hope observe closely – for to my mind this is the most important difference between their make of mind and our own – that they are notably deficient in all mechanical arts: they have never made, unless under white direction and instruction, a single fourteenth-rate piece of cloth, pottery, a tool or machine, house, road, bridge, picture or statue; that a written language of their own construction they none of them possess. (Kingsley, 1993: 165)

In this passage, the sensitivity to the practices and customs of the West African tribes is absent. “They” are the Africans, and “you” or “we” are the whites. Therefore, the text not only banishes the African from a position of knowledge or mastery over his/her own culture but excludes all non-white people from the possibility of even reading this narrative. The narrative also insists on the absolute and essential distinction between the mind of the white and that of the African, and thus it deems it impossible for the African to advance or become more civilized without the “direction and instruction” of the European white man. “The function of Kingsley’s narrative seems to know the natives so as to control them.” (Brannigan, 1998: 136) It is clear that Kingsley’s narrative, like Froude’s travelogue, replicates the ideology of colonialism.

New Historicism is primarily interested in examining and describing such systems of power as the European colonial discourse as it is found in texts like Froude’s *English in the West Indies* and Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa*. The native has been dominated, controlled and mastered in the act of representation in these texts, which constitute the discourse of European representations of the natives and the African. Besides, in both these travelogues and the novel the narrators are European and virtually alone. Both Kingsley and Marlow are journeying towards a dark centre in the heart of Africa, and then returning to the safety of home. In these three texts, the natives are inscrutable, and yet must be scrutinized and known. For Marlow, such places as South America, Africa and Australia are the places which must be scrutinized. He expresses his wish to know these places as such:

> When I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were
many blank spaces on the earth [...] I would put finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there [...] I have been in some of them, and well, [...] we won’t talk about that. But there was one yet – the biggest, the most blank, so to speak – that I had a hankering after. (Conrad, 1994: 11)

For Marlow, especially Africa and the Congo River are the most charming:

It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land [...] The snake had charmed me. (Conrad, 1994: 11-12)

In Froude’s, Kingsley’s and Conrad’s texts colonization is redeemed by an ideal of order, efficiency and civilization brought by the white ruler and stamped indelibly on the native. According to Marlow, Kurtz is a powerful symbol of that order, efficiency and civilization because he is at once the most effective instrument of European colonization and an enigma which cannot be understood in Europe. As Chief of the Inner Station, Kurtz ensures that the ivory trade for which he is responsible is more productive than in any other region. Marlow is told by the Company’s chief accountant that Kurtz “was a first-class agent”, “he is a very remarkable person” and that Kurtz “was at present in charge of a trading post, a very important one, in the true ivory-country, at the very bottom of there. Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together…” (Conrad, 1994: 27) But Kurtz’s methods are brutal. He stamps his authority through violence on the native population, but Marlow is told that the natives do not want Kurtz to leave. Kurtz corresponds with surprising consistency to Kingsley’s description of Mary Slessor in Old Calabar:

This very wonderful lady has been eighteen years in Calabar; for the last six or seven living entirely alone, as far as white folks go, in a clearing in the forest near to one of the principal villages of the Okyon district, and ruling as a veritable white chief over the entire Okyon district. Her great abilities, both physical and intellectual, have given her among the savage tribe a unique position, and won her, from white and black who know her, a profound esteem. Her knowledge of the native, his language, his ways of thought, his diseases, his difficulties, and all that is his, is extraordinary, and the amount of good she has done, no man
Kurtz also rules like “a veritable white chief”, and seems to have both suppressed the native population and earned their respectful submission. Kurtz’s disciples live under the spell of Kurtz, whom they consider to be the supreme being of colonial progress, their acknowledged master. (Darras, 1991:83) When Marlow asks whether “Kurtz got the tribe to follow him”, he is answered: “They adored him.” (Conrad, 1994: 80) Later on, when Marlow sees the skulls on the posts in front of the Inner Station, he is told by one of the admirers of Kurtz that he (the admirer) “had not dared to take these – say, symbols – down. He was not afraid of the natives; they would not stir till Mr Kurtz gave the word. His ascendancy was extraordinary”. (Conrad, 1994: 83) Kingsley does not tell us with what methods Mary Slessor has turned an area “practically unknown” to Europeans into an area over which she has a great deal of control. Likewise how Slessor has stamped out the local customs and wars is not revealed. Just as Kingsley thinks of Slessor as ‘wonderful’, Marlow comes to admire Kurtz, although his admiration is constructed from the fragments he learns about Kurtz on his journey up the Congo. Like Kingsley too, he never reveals much about Kurtz’s methods other than the mention of extermination (Conrad, 1994: 72) and his lack of restraint. (Conrad, 1994: 183) Thus it can be said that the shrunken heads of natives on poles at the Inner Station is the evidence of Kurtz’s stamp of authority, and are apt reminders that the liberal discourse of civilizing the native, instructing him in European ways, is inseparable from the violence used to achieve order, efficiency and civilization. (Brannigan, 1998: 138)

New historicist critics analyze a system of representation or ‘discursive formation’, as defined by Foucault, which is perfectly closed and circular. Heart of Darkness and historical writings – some extracts of which have been given in a
former part of the thesis – which belong to the same episteme, may also be read as parts of the system of European representation of the colonized. It can be observed that in all of these texts the subversive potential of the native view of colonialism is never possible because every time the native appears in that system of representation, it becomes a projection of the colonizing white man, and the native is always the fantasy or the nightmare of the colonizer; and therefore these texts always reflect how the colonizer is feeling and thinking. Froude and Kingsley in their travelogues Seeley and Stanley in their historical writings wrote about the natives and European colonialism and imperialism and reflected their ideas about “the Other” from their western perspective. In *Heart of Darkness*, too, the African is reflected from the view of Marlow, who is a European. Therefore, we can say that the native is represented always within the discourse of European colonialism. There is nothing outside of the European system of representation. The native and his/her views, life, pain or joy, are always represented by the European, in a European book and by a European voice. Our reading these travel narratives and historical writings today is the proof of the value of the European modes of representation. The value of the European mode of representation is evident in *Heart of Darkness* when Marlow encounters a book, *An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship*, in a deserted hut on his journey up the Congo:

I handled this amazing antiquity with the greatest possible tenderness, lest it should dissolve in my hands.[…] there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work, which made these humble pages, thought out so many years ago, luminous with other than a professional light. The simple old sailor, with his talk of chains and purchases, made me forget the jungle and the pilgrims in a delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real. (Conrad, 1994: 54)

It is clear that here Marlow associates the value of honesty, simplicity, originality and exactitude with the book of an English sailor and notices how the book makes him forget what must be the illusion or fiction of Africa and the African when he is absorbed in the unmistakable reality of the book. The book represents European discourse, and as such is the only reality. Africa remains a mere fictional projection of a European fantasy in which Europe is the only truth, the only reality.
It should also be noted that in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow’s journey into the heart of darkness is narrated at a docks ide in Gravesend; in other words, Marlow narrates his story about Africa and African natives through his western perspective to English audiences. Likewise, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* was written for English readers. It permits no other voice or point of observation than that of the colonizer. It is this quality of the novel that makes it an imperialist discourse. Concerning this matter Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism*:

*Heart of Darkness* works so effectively because its politics and aesthetics are, so to speak, imperialist, which in the closing years of the nineteenth century seemed to be at the same time an aesthetic, politics, and even epistemology inevitable and unavoidable. (Said, 1994: 26)

Froude, Kingsley, Stanley, Seeley, Hobson all wrote with English readers in mind. The events and characters in each of these discourses and *Heart of Darkness* are always the objects of European discourse of colonialism. Finally, it can be said that such a new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness* has enabled us to locate the text in the complex system of power relations and cultural representations which compose the discourse of colonialism and to see how the text is, in fact, participating and complicit in the European discourse of colonial control.

One important thing to note here is that there is a possible subversion of European colonial discourse in *Heart of Darkness*. As it is known, Conrad was writing at a time of expanding colonization, a period when imperial activities were more celebrated than questioned. Though written during the expansion of imperialism, *Heart of Darkness* contains subversion of imperialism and colonialism. Throughout the novel, we can find the implications of this subversion to show that Conrad did not see the events in the same way as the majority of the British, or indeed western Europeans as a whole. While such cultural artefacts as historical writings and travel narratives reflected and supported the ideological assumptions behind the idea of Empire and the glories of imperial adventure, *Heart of Darkness* involves a different perspective from these concepts that were taken for granted and that permeated the attitudes of historians and the writers of travel narratives because Conrad had personal experience of what Europeans were actually doing to Africa and of what the dark continent did to them. In order to
create this new perception, as Spittles points out, “Conrad needed a different form, a novel that required the reader to actively think about rather than just passively accept the text”. (Spittles, 1992: 63) Conrad himself detached his novel from the other cultural artefacts whose function is just to reflect reality. In his “Preface” to one of his earlier novels, *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”*, Conrad had declared a manifesto concerning the function of his novels:

> My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all to make you see. That – and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm – all you demand – and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask. (Conrad, 1957: x)

Conrad emphasized here that he was not referring merely to physical sight, or to the visualising of scenes in literature imaginatively but that he was using the word in the sense also of comprehending, of understanding, and of perceiving, by making “see” italics. In his opinion, the novel should render a new different challenging perception of the world. For this reason, in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad makes his anonymous narrator, who retails Marlow’s story, say that his story will not be of the conventional sort that other storytellers provide. The novel contains a new kind of content which requires a different form of expression:

> The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical […] and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (Conrad, 1994: 8)

This indicates that the form of the novel is part of the meaning and has to be understood as well as the events described. A new form is necessary because the novel is not a mere reflection of a tangible and known reality, but an exploration of different types of realities. This concept is maintained in the text by the shifting ideas of dream, nightmare and palpable reality, which are reinforced by images of light and dark. For instance, Marlow’s experiences in Africa are a “choice of nightmares” among “greedy phantoms” (Conrad, 1994: 98); and after he has
returned to Brussels, Marlow is still haunted by the memory of Kurtz: “a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night […] the heart of a conquering darkness.” (Conrad, 1994: 105)

Unlike a phantom, a shadow has a reality, but it is not palpable; and whereas shadows are normally formed by darkness within light, in the case of Kurtz and Africa the shadow is a darker pattern of darkness. The reader cannot simply bring a comprehension of life in late Victorian Britain to the novel, and interpret it as normal experiences might be interpreted. As Spittles points out in traditional novels the reader is usually required to understand events and motives only in terms of a known reality whereas Conrad detached his fiction from that framework, not seeing events in the same way as the majority of the British. (Spittles, 1992: 63)

In *Heart of Darkness*, this narrative function can be observed through the omniscient narrator, Marlow. Unlike the omniscient narrators of the conventional novels Marlow does not know everything. He has areas of ignorance, such as the exact fate of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition and the inner motivation of the cannibals. Therefore, it can be said that Conrad’s text does not present an unchangeable reality, but realities of which one will always be ignorant, which is an important aspect of the new perception projected in the text. Just like Marlow the reader will not know the full truth about imperial deeds in Africa.

This aspect of *Heart of Darkness* can be connected with a new historicist idea that what we can know about history is what we are told and what we perceive from the information, attitudes and ideas we are given. The common approach to imperialism and colonialism can be seen in the historical documents and travel narratives of the time. Like the majority of Britons, Froude, Kingsley, Seeley, Chamberlain and Hobson approached British imperialism with a sense of nationalism and tended to see their country as “the mother country”, and they all appreciated British imperialism and colonialism by reflecting and supporting the ideological assumptions behind the idea of Empire. The native lands, especially Africa, were at the centre of the British political consciousness. But Conrad had personal experience “of what Europeans were actually doing to Africa, and of what the dark continent did to them, which was much less publicised than the
glories of imperial adventure”. (Spittles, 1992: 64) Then Conrad’s text, though taking part in the same episteme, i.e. English colonial discourse, ran against it because Conrad’s task, as has already been pointed out, was to apply a different perspective to those concepts from that of the mentioned historians and journeyers.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad by expressing what is unexpressed in the English colonial discourse subverts English colonial discourse. In the novel, Kurtz is “a gifted creature” as Marlow says; and among his gifts “the one […] that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words” and “the man presented himself as a voice”. (Conrad, 1994: 67) His report to the International Society is filled with the profession of lofty ideals and an imperialistic, missionary earnestness. Marlow tells his audience about Kurtz’s “beautiful piece of writing” rich with “exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence”. But the report at the bottom of the last page, “evidently written much later”, ends with “an exposition of a method”: “Exterminate all the brutes!” (Conrad, 1994: 72) Kurtz’s report “is a chilling unmasking of the reality behind the white man’s language and it wraps up the combined elements of the sounds-of-civilization theme”. (Ambrosini, 1991: 105) Therefore, Kurtz’s report can be recognized as both a translation of the otherwise inaudible whisper of the wilderness into English and also the expression of the inexpressible voice of the wilderness.

Here Montrose’s approach to text should be recalled. He shows, in his new historicist work, how one text jars against another, producing the possibility, and explores the extents to which discourses of power are always shifting, insecure and rife with tensions. In this respect, it can be said that Conrad’s views of empire and his characterization of representatives of imperialism are different from those of the other writers who took part in the same episteme in that they appreciated British imperialism and Conrad was sceptical about its benefits. It is therefore evident that *Heart of Darkness* subverted the dominant ideology of the time, British imperialism and colonialism.

While colonialism and the civilizing mission of the European, in *Heart of Darkness*, are represented as a waste, almost nothing, colonialism was represented as a civilizing mission, the gift of white people to the savage natives and a
benevolent positive process in the travel and historical writings that are the constituent parts of the English colonial discourse. For example Chamberlain is among those who saw the English as deserving to civilize the natives and saw the natives as a savage race. To repeat his expression: “you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force.” (Chamberlain in Boehmer, 1984: 213) Since Conrad realized the hypocritical role played in this affair by his adopted and much beloved country, in his text almost all colonial deeds of the European “are against the idea of bringing sweetness and light to the dark continent”. (Baum in Conradiana 1975: 184) For example; when Marlow puts his foot on African soil for the first time and climbs the steep hill toward the Central Station, he finds things in a state of complete disarray; everything is desolate and completely run down. (Conrad, 1994: 21) When he reaches the Company’s station and observes the environment, he can see nothing but “three wooden barrack-like structures” (Conrad, 1994: 22) as the Company’s station and the objectless efforts of the natives, who are led by the whites, to build a railway. At the foot of the slope Marlow discovers boilers and other objects which were abandoned by the Belgians who had intended at one time to build a railroad. There are miniature railroad cars and drains as well. The boiler officiates on a square of grass, waiting to be operated. The railway-truck has been overturned; its four wheels are up in the air. The rails are rusted. Marlow is astounded by the wastefulness. He says:

I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders, and also for an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery, a stack of rusty rails. To the left a clump of trees made a shady spot, where dark things seemed to stir feebly. I blinked, the path was steep. A horn tooted to the right, and I saw the black people run. A heavy and dull detonation shook the ground, a puff of smoke came out of the cliff, and that was all. No change appeared on the face of the rock. They were building a railway. The cliff was not in the way or anything; but this objectless blasting was all the work going on. (Conrad, 1994: 22)
What Conrad shows in this passage is that “No light is being conferred on this imperial outpost. The discrepancy between pronounced ideals and the actual practices is everywhere apparent”. (White, 1993:183) Another example to this representation of colonialism can be found in the scene in which Marlow encounters the grove of death where only the brutality of colonial adventurism is present:

I avoided a vast artificial hole somebody had been digging on the slope, the purpose of which I found it impossible to divine. It wasn’t a quarry or a sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole. It might have been connected with the philanthropic desire of giving the criminals something to do. I don’t know. Then I nearly fell into a very narrow ravine, almost no more than a scar in the hillside. I discovered that a lot of imported drainage-pipes for the settlement had been tumbled in there. There wasn’t one that was not broken. It was a wanton smash-up. At last I got under the trees […] black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. (Conrad, 1994: 24)

Here Marlow suggests that these Africans have ceased to be human because they are reduced to “shapes”, “shadows”, “angles”, which cannot even be seen clearly. They hardly exist at all, seeming part of the jungle, of the earth itself. They signify “pain”, abandonment”, “despair”, “disease” and “starvation”. These are all the evils that the European colonialism has brought to Africa.

The scene in which we see Marlow, who needs and is unable to find some rivets to repair his boat although they are abundant at a station closer to shore is “just one more proof of the incoherence of the colonial system and the economic principles which govern it”. (Darras, 1986: 83) This incongruity is revealed in the following passage:

What I really wanted was rivets, by heaven! Rivets. To get on with the work – to stop the hole. Rivets I wanted. There were cases of them down at the coast – cases – piled up – burst – split! You kicked a loose rivet at every second step in that station yard on the hillside. Rivets had rolled into the grove of death. You could fill your pockets with rivets for the trouble of stooping –
down – and there wasn’t one rivet to be found where it was wanted. We had plates that would do, but nothing to fasten them with. (Conrad, 1994: 40)

Marlow also observes what European civilization is doing to the natives in Africa. This can be observed in the scene in which Marlow encounters the men – a group of slaves chained together and guarded by one of their own who has been promoted to the rank of foreman. Here Marlow comprehends “the dramatic aspect of the encounter”. (Darras, 1986: 88) The reality which is reflected here is that the educated European makes the natives beast-like creatures instead of educating them. The part of the novel in which the natives are seen as beasts of burden having to balance the “baskets full of earth” and the animal suggestion is reinforced by their apparently having “tails” is worth quoting twice:

A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them rhythmically clinking […] but these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. (Conrad, 1994: 22)

It is clear, in the passage, that the natives are reflected as maltreated animals too, thin enough to show every rib and joint, and also suffering from iron collars and a chain, signifying “the worst kind of Victor ian treatment of criminals”. (Spittles 1992: 84) Marlow’s expression that “all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them rhythmically clinking” can be interpreted as the ragtime rhythm of the natives who have been taken away from their culture had been destroyed by “the deaf and blind white colonists who are unaware of the discords which they have produced in the name of progress”. (Darras 1986: 89)

The representation of the brick-maker, who makes no bricks, is a subversion of European civilization in Heart of Darkness. He is “a telling representative of how “work” is being done in the Central Station” (Ambrosini, 1991: 97) though he
has done nothing for one year. The idea of hollowness of the Western civilization is revealed in the following passage as such:

He was a first-class agent, […] The business intrusted to this fellow was the making of bricks – so I had been informed; but there wasn’t a fragment of a brick anywhere in the station, and he had been there more than a year – waiting. It seems he could not make bricks without something, I don’t know what – straw maybe. Anyways, it could not be found there, and it was not likely to be sent from Europe, it did not appear to me what he was waiting for. (Conrad, 1994: 34-35)

In *Heart of Darkness* colonialism is subverted with reference to its representation as robbery, savagery and greed. Many instances to this subversion can be found in the novel because it reveals the violence and brutality following colonialism at every turn. For example, Marlow says that a nigger who was thought to have caused the fire in “a grass shed full of calico, cotton print, beads” was beaten violently:

The shed was already a heap of embers glowing fiercely. A nigger was being beaten near by. They said he had caused the fire in some way; be that as it may; he was screeching most horribly. I saw him, later, for several days, sitting in a bit of shade looking very sick and trying to recover himself: afterwards he arose and went out – and the wilderness without a sound took him into its bosom again. (Conrad, 1994: 34)

The European consideration of “the white man’s burden”, which existed as a popular philosophy or a general practice in all those areas of the world brought under Anglo-Saxon control in the past three hundred years, (Lee, 1969: 15) is subverted in the novel as well. Lee, in his *Conrad’s Imperialism*, writes that this major philosophy must revert to “idea” in Conrad’s work. (Lee, 1969: 22) Conrad’s treatment of “idea” in *Heart of Darkness* is of importance because being one of the deeper and more impressive concepts in imperialism and colonialism, the concept of “idea” is subverted, by means of Conrad’s representation of “idea” as savagery. Marlow says in the beginning: “What saves us is efficiency. – the devotion to efficiency.” (Conrad, 1994: 10) But Marlow, then, observes that the concept of “idea” is not carried out by the white man colonizing the African. In the following passage, through the reflection of the white man’s attitude toward that
nigger, it can be viewed how the civilizing mission of the European, which was called “the white man’s burden” during the colonial period, is subverted in the novel:

the beaten nigger groaned somewhere. “What a row the brute makes!” said the indefatigable man with the moustaches, appearing near us. “Serve him right. Transgression – punishment – bang! Pitiless, pitiless. That’s the only way. This will prevent all conflagrations for the future. (Conrad, 1994: 37)

It is known that in the beginning, Kurtz has a sense of “idea”. When he first arrives in Africa, he expresses the belief that “each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing”. (Conrad, 1994: 47) Europeans’ role in Africa justifies their presence in Africa but Marlow finds that the reality often belies the idea of improving the natives:

Once a white man in an unbuttoned uniform, camping on the path with an armed escort of lank Zanzibaris, very hospitable and festive – not to say drunk. Was looking after the upkeep of the road, he declared. Can’t say I saw any road or any upkeep, unless the body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead, upon which I absolutely stumbled three miles farther on, may be considered as a permanent improvement. (Conrad, 1994: 29)

The reflection of the colonizers in the novel also subverts the image of the humanizing function of colonialism:

But these chaps were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weaknesses of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. 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. (Conrad, 1994: 10)
Summarily, *Heart of Darkness* is a text in which the concept of “the white man’s burden” or “idea” is represented as savagery and thus subverted. The greed caused by the wish of having more and more ivory is also a way of the novel’s subverting the idea of colonialism. Several instances to this greed of the European may be found throughout the novel:

The word “ivory” rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I’ve never seen anything so unreal in my life. (Conrad, 1994: 33)

Sometimes we came upon a station close by the bank, clinging to the skirts of the unknown, and the white men rushing out of a tumbledown hovel, with great gestures of joy and surprise and welcome, seemed very strange – had the appearance of being held there captive by a spell. The word ivory would ring in the air for a while. (Conrad, 1994: 50)

The extent to which Kurtz’s greed for ivory had reached is told by the manager in the following passage including an anecdote:

He could be very terrible. You can’t judge Mr Kurtz as you would an ordinary man. No, no, no! Now – just to give you an idea – I don’t mind telling you, he wanted to shoot me, too, one day – but I don’t judge him.” “Shoot you!” I cried. “What for?” “Well, I had a small lot of ivory the chief of that village near my house gave me. You see I used to shoot game for them. Well, he wanted it, and wouldn’t hear reason. He declared he would shoot me unless I gave him the ivory and then cleared out of the country, because he could so, and had a fancy for it, and there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased. And it was true, too. I gave him the ivory. (Conrad, 1994: 80-81)

It is apparent that Marlow recognizes that the European enterprise supported by fools and fortune hunters is a criminal fiasco of the most scandalous kind. He never denies that Kurtz’s idealism has become moral barbarism and his admirable self-sufficiency has degenerated into an overwhelming pride as shown by Kurtz’s own expression, which Marlow transmits to his audience: “You should have heard him [Kurtz] say, “My ivory.” Oh yes, I heard him. “My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my – everything belonged to him.” (Conrad, 1994: 70) Kurtz is
the Company’s most successful agent and one reputed to have gone out to Africa with moral ideas of some sort. But on meeting Kurtz, Marlow confronts a man impersonating imperialism’s will to expand its domain over the earth and has become a member of ravenous colonialism. Marlow says: “I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him.” (Conrad, 1994: 85-86) Kurtz, who is an ideal colonizer because he keeps the trade flowing and seems to advocate instructing the natives, is a failure, and his representation as a savage greedy colonizer is a subversion of European colonialism in *Heart of Darkness*. His brutality can be seen in the part in which Marlow sees the sunken heads on poles at Kurtz’s station. Marlow says that “they would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house”. (Conrad, 1994: 82) Kurtz had probably turned their faces to the house to be seen by the natives so that the natives would recognize his power. Then the manager told Marlow that “Kurtz’s methods had ruined the district” and

there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him – some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. (Conrad, 1994: 83)

*Heart of Darkness* is a text which subverts colonialism through not only its representations of the colonized but even its representations of the colonizer. The fact that colonialism destroys not only the natives but also the colonizer can be best seen through the representation of Kurtz, who is represented as the “universal genius” adored by the primitive man; but then, he turns out to be a devil instead of a god. Kurtz is more savage than his adorers. Marlow is informed about what Kurtz’s arrival there: “he came to them with thunder and lightning”, (Conrad, 1994: 80) “two shot-guns, a heavy rifle, and a light revolver-carbine”. (Conrad, 1994: 86) At the Inner Station, this armful of guns is enough to make Kurtz a god. In this position Kurtz discovers “things about himself which he did not know […] till he took counsel with his great solitude”. (Conrad, 1994: 83) What he did not know was his capacity for the greed, lust, blood-thirst, and vainglory symbolized by his ivory, his mistress, the heads he puts on stakes, and the ceremonies at which
he presided. (Emmett in *Conradiana*, VII, 1975: 148-149) When the wilderness whispered these things to him, the whisper “echoed loudly within him because he was hallow at the core”. (Conrad, 1994: 83)

The story of the moral disintegration of Kurtz, “our white man in the tropics” (White, 1993: 174) to whose making “all Europe contributed” (Conrad, 1994: 71) was subversion enough. Kurtz is the character, through whom Conrad underscores the reality about colonialism because Kurtz’s aim to civilize and bring light to dark places is antithetical to his desire to “exterminate all the brutes!” (Conrad, 1994: 72) expressed in his seventeen-page report to the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. In the end, Kurtz fails, and his defeat by the wilderness is marked by his cry: “The horror! The horror!” (Conrad, 1994: 100) This is the last and in comprehensible whisper of a man who had once lofty ideals. This is also the failure of Kurtz to dominate the wilderness (Jones, 1985: 75) within him. In Kurtz we see that “the ideals and ennobling principles turn out to be dangerous illusions, and that his representativeness dismantles the myth of empire”. (White, 1993: 175) The day after Kurtz dies, Marlow sees that “the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole”. (Conrad, 1994: 100) Thus Marlow’s journey in *Heart of Darkness*, the aim of which was to pursue a moral and ontological inquiry into human history, turns out to be a journey at the end of which Marlow discovers the self-deluding endeavour of a human community. (Jones 1985: 66) Marlow’s journey shows the process of corruption and change, and moral degeneracy. Finally, it can be said that in *Heart of Darkness* violence pervades every aspect of the relationship between the colonizer and the native; then it subverts the image of colonialism pervasive in the 19th century.

*Heart of Darkness* also subverts the liberal image of the mother country by revealing violence. In the historical writings on English imperialism and colonialism, England is seen as the mother country and her colonies her children. All of these writings deem it a blessing for the natives that Britain had fostered them. Therefore, it can be said that in the Victorian England, the idea of colonial expansion was recognized as a natural process and, in a sense, colonies were invited to think of themselves as offshoots or extensions of Britain whereas *Heart
of Darkness plays with the image of England itself as a colony, making allusions to London being part of the darkness and to the Roman colonization of Britain.

We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever, but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, ‘followed the sea’ with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames [...] It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith – the adventurers and the settlers; kings’ ships and the ships of men on ’Change; captains, admirals, the dark ‘interlopers’ of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned ‘generals’ of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! [...] The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires. (Conrad, 1994: 7)

The novel also subverts “Europe’s customary imagery of purity, virtue, clarity, veracity and white and light in that Europe is represented with corruption, evil, confusion and lies”. (Parry, 1987: 22) Many instances indicating this subversion can be found throughout the novel. For example, the clean white city of Brussels which for Marlow resembles “a whited sepulchre” is the place from where a rapacious colonialism is organized. (Conrad, 1994: 14) The eyes of a venal agent in the Congo glitter like mica discs. (Conrad, 1994: 35) The object of European cupidity and veneration, and the means whereby the invaders are themselves held captive is the ivory. (Conrad, 1994: 33) The whiteness of a marble fireplace is cold and forbidding. (Conrad, 1994: 106) White fog is more blinding than the night (Conrad, 1994: 56) and sunlight can be made to lie. (Conrad, 1994: 104) Kurtz’s sketch of a blindfolded woman posed against a black background and carrying a torch that casts a sinister light on her face (Conrad, 1994: 36) can be thought as “a transformation of Europe’s traditional figure of justice into an image of that continent’s arrogant, unseeing and unjust invasion of Africa”. (Parry, 1987: 22) The pale and ethereal Intended's life by a delusion is also a subversion of Europe. The Intended with her fair hair, pale visage and pure brow, her mature capacity for fidelity, belief and suffering is the emblem of Europe’s religious traditions and the symbol of an imperialism saved by visionary desires. (Parry,
1987: 37) Marlow delivers to her the lie about her beloved and colonialism’s civilizing mission although he shares the fact about Kurtz with his listeners. Marlow tells the Intended the lie so as not to destroy her illusions about Kurtz:

“You knew him well,” she murmured, after a moment of mourning silence […]
“And you admired him,” she said. “It was impossible to know him and not to admire him. Was it?”
“He was a remarkable man,” I said, unsteadily. Then before the appealing fixity of her gaze, that seemed to watch for more words on my lips, I went on. “It was impossible not to – ”
“Love him,” she finished eagerly, silencing me into an appalled dumbness. “How true! how true! But when you think that no one knew him so well as I! I had all his noble confidence. I knew him best.”

“You were his friend,” she went on. “His friend,” she repeated, a little louder. “You must have been, if he had given you this, and sent you to me. I feel I can speak to you – […] “…Who was not his friend who had heard him speak once?” she was saying. “He drew men towards him by what was best in them.” She looked at me with intensity. “It is the gift of the great,” she went on, and the sound of her low voice seemed to have the accompaniment of all the other sounds, full of mystery, desolation, and sorrow […]
“But you have heard him! You know!” she cried.
“Yes, I know,” I said with something like despair in my heart, but bowing my had before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with unearthly glow in the darkness, in the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her – from which I could not even defend myself. (Conrad, 1994: 108-109)

In this scene we recognize that the European (Marlow) cannot tell about Europe (Kurtz) to Europe (the Intended). Marlow’s lie to Kurtz’s fiancée is, in a sense, “an admission that civilization must be protected from the truth about itself”. (Graver, 1969: 88) His lie also leaves the Intended in a delusion. By analogy, Europe is left with a lie that colonialism’s civilizing mission is carried out by great and good men of generous minds and noble hearts. As a result, the moral categories defining the western sensibility are all subverted in the novel.

On seeing all these subversions of imperialism and colonialism in Heart of Darkness, we can say that Conrad makes us understand how far the colonial quest has deviated from its original course. It has become a vulgar material venture and
not the spiritual process of enlightenment that it was made out to be by the Western powers. The colonial enterprise was supposed to be “one of the great adventures of European civilization both in imagery and in ideology”. (Darras 1986: 51) But Conrad’s treatment of it underlines the deformed image of both.

Generally speaking, *Heart of Darkness* is a narrative about what happens when a rational Westerner journeys into Africa. The result is the European encounter with the non-European. The text is perhaps one of the most effective expressions of the encounter between self and “the Other”. In other words, it portrays the encounter between Europe and its “others”, and more importantly, it depicts Europe’s discovery of “the Other” within itself. Thomas Brook also points out that, in Conrad’s text, “the natives and the impenetrable darkness of the Congo are projections of the European self”. (Brook in Murfin. 1989: 246) The interrogation of the truth about the encounter between the European and the African will contribute to this new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness*. To explore Conrad’s representation of the non-European in the text, we can turn to a passage in which Marlow describes the Africans:

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there — there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were — No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it — this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity — like yours — the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you — you so remote from the night of first ages — could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything — because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage — who can tell? — but truth — truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder — the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff — with his own inborn strength. Principles won’t do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags — rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row — is there? Very well;
I hear; I admit, but I have a voice, too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced. (Conrad, 1994: 51-52)

The passage starts with a paradox that the earth seemed unearthly. Thus Marlow sets up the expectation that the human beings inhabiting that unearthly earth will be inhuman. This is an expectation easy to arouse because it would confirm Marlow’s European listeners’ and Conrad’s European readers’ racial prejudices. But the narrative disrupts such commonplace prejudices because the horror of the story is said to be not the Africans’ being a deviant form of humanity but the monster’s being within the Europeans who consider themselves superior to the Africans. Thus it can be said that a number of ironic reversals are employed in the passage. For example, on the one hand, the African continent is represented as a shackled and conquered monster. On the other, the European conquerors are represented as the conquered; their ruthless and violent imperialism unleashing their latent savagery makes them more monstrous than those they profess to civilize. It may be recalled here that the European has a tradition of believing that to make the unknown known, the unknown should be controlled. But in the paragraph above, Marlow suggests that what allows the European to understand the African is loss of control. Released from the constraints of civilization, the European can feel a kinship with the African who can on the surface seem so different. Therefore, understanding of the African can occur only when the West is conquered by the people it feels it is conquering. Marlow here seems to be admitting that, as a European, he is conquered by “the Other” because he is courageous and privileged enough to encounter the fact that “the Other” exists all along within the European. The reason why Westerners do not immediately recognize the African, i.e. “the Other” within themselves, is the physical difference between the races. But for Marlow physical differences, such as skin and colour are a surface deception as he himself expresses.

What we have reached here is close to Bakhtin’s ideas about “the self” and “the Other”. To Bakhtin, the perception of the self is constituted by the perception of “the Other”. He explains this condition as such:

The most important acts, constitutive of self-consciousness, are determined by their relation to another consciousness (a ‘thou’). Cutting oneself off, isolating oneself, closing oneself off, those
are the basic reasons for the loss of self [...] To be means to communicate [...] To be means to be for the other, and through him, for oneself. Man has no internal sovereign territory; he is all and always on the boundary; looking within himself he looks in the eyes of the other or through the other; I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me (in mutual reflection and perception). Justification cannot be justification of oneself, confession cannot be confession of myself. I receive my name from the other. (Bakhtin, 1984: 311-312)

As it has been implied in the narrative, the European man is unable to comprehend the African. He is also unable to comprehend the African landscape. Marlow tells his listeners “Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings”. (Conrad, 1994: 48) The incomprehensibility of the landscape and the people inhabiting it occurs because to travel to Africa is to travel to prehistoric times. So the Congo is reflected as a world unrecognizable to the European through the distance of time. In the following passage Marlow casts Africa in the role of prehistoric Europe:

We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of these ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign – and no memories. (Conrad, 1994: 51)

The passage represents the pilgrims and Marlow as the first inhabitants of the prehistoric earth. It seems to be a fantasy of Europeans that they are the first men, alone at the beginning of the world. But Marlow and his travellers are shocked out
of this fantasy by the presence of natives near the river. The presence of the natives suggests a reversal of European fantasy because for a moment the natives are real and a shock for Marlow.

In the final part of this passage the Africans, i.e. “the Others” are represented as the distant or forgotten selves of Europe. The incomprehensibility of the natives can be explained as the result of historical distance and the passing of memory. This explanation contributes to the idea of the European as civilized, enlightened, at a more advanced state of intelligence and ability than the African because the passage posits that where “they” are now, “we” were there in the long-distant past. So *Heart of Darkness*, by creating a cultural distance, appropriates the African natives for what they tell a European reader about Africa.

As has already been claimed, the incomprehensibility of Africa and the African is a result of the failure of memory. Then it also signifies the failure of representation. There is an absence of signs and of representations as a result of the failure to remember. In other words, there are no signs by which the European can recognize his own past, that is, the primitive state of the European represented by the African. In order to reconnect European man to his past, i.e. his former self, Conrad’s text substitutes memory with a representation, which, in this case, is the representation of the African as prehistoric man. Then “the African is appropriated within the European system of representations in order to stand for the gap between the modern European and his prehistoric ancestors”. (Brannigan, 1998: 146) The result is that the African becomes a convenient explanation of how the European has reached his advanced state of civilization and so becomes an indispensable part of the European narrative of progress.

In conclusion, it can be argued that *Heart of Darkness* is a text in which power produces its own subversion only to contain it. Though the novel stumbles upon the natives in a form which interrupts the European fantasy of original man, it appropriates the natives as the justification for the fantasy of European civilization and progress. Through the analyses above it can be concluded that the late nineteenth-century experience of Europe encountering “the Other” in Africa was characterized by appropriation, and a substitution of the African with the “prehistoric man”.
Through this new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness*, it has been observed, with the help of the biographical context, that the text was nurtured by Conrad’s own life. This is a conclusion reached through taking, as a cue, the new historicist premise that writers and their works are not solely the products of their own but rather cultural artefacts. The investigation of Conrad’s references to his biographical facts and impressions in the text has enabled us to define the genesis of Conrad’s opinion on imperialism and colonialism. The second point reached is that *Heart of Darkness* is a part of the English colonial discourse written in the second half of the 19th century among many others including such works as travel narratives and historical writings. Through a synchronic reading of both the novel and other discourses concerning imperialism and colonialism, it has been investigated how far Conrad’s text shares the ideological assumptions of imperialism and colonialism. Through Greenblatt’s new historicist method, the anecdotal method, it has been observed that, when *Heart of Darkness* is read with the other non-literary texts, some striking similarities between them can be found. The conclusive idea gained at the end of such a reading is that Conrad’s text, to some extent, participated in forming the ideological assumptions of the time in which it was written. The third point marked in this chapter is that *Heart of Darkness* is different from the non-literary texts with reference to its representation of the European and the African. It has also been observed that Conrad’s text, through its way of reflection of “self” and “the Other”, detached itself from the selected non-literary texts, i.e. the travelogues and the historical writings belonging to the same episteme with the text. Through the use of Montrose’s new historicist method, “historicity of texts” and “textuality of history”, it has been observed that Conrad subverted the conventional assumption of imperialism and colonialism and demythologized the imperial subject as constructed by the travel and historical writings of the day.
Fredric Jameson starts *The Political Unconscious* with the words “Always historicize!” Taking this opening slogan of the book as a starting point, Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim* can be studied to ascertain the relationship between Conrad’s life and the novel, between the historical context of the novel and its content. By so doing, we aim to emphasize history as the focal point of this new historicist reading of *Lord Jim*, and thus to determine the categories which governed the novel as an artistic production. Such a study of *Lord Jim*, which would constitute the first part of the new historicist reading of the novel, would seem to be a kind of generic study. Nevertheless, it is considered that it would be suitable for a new historicist reading of such a novel as *Lord Jim* because it is one of the best examples of Conrad’s complex sources including autobiographical elements rooted in his Polish background and his life as a seaman. The novel also includes specific suggestions to actual people and events, and to the imperial world in which Conrad lived and the colonial setting, especially the Malay Archipelago, where Conrad sailed as a British merchant seaman.

This source study, which aims to define Conrad’s ‘point de départ’, in Jean-Aubry’s words, would be threefold. Investigating firstly the novel’s references to biographical elements, this reading will enable us to describe Conrad as having a past made up of certain significant events, and in the light of that past, to discover the coherent underlying psychoanalytic narrative. Secondly, the study aims to identify the novel’s references to history. In *Lord Jim*, specific references to actual people and events will be investigated to locate the novel as a historical phenomenon. This would also cast light on and clarify the novel as a document or a kind of material cultural artefact. Thirdly, to understand how a historical moment produced a particular literary work, the historical forces that shaped it initially will be attempted to be discovered. This third phase of the study is also considered to project the historical process itself as the instigator and actual shaper of the novel,
in other words, both the origin and composer of the text. As New Historicism assumes that a historical moment being enormously complex in its diverse representations produces the factors that shape a particular work of literature, it would be helpful, in this new historicist reading of *Lord Jim*, to historicize the text.

The second phase of this new historicist reading of *Lord Jim* is intended to be a study on the problem of representation because Conrad belonged to a European history which was moving out of its more buoyant, affirmative phase, with its belief in the free, self-determining individual, as it was represented in the historical documents and the travel accounts of the time, into a darker, more downbeat civilization altogether, which had no place in these travel accounts. Conrad wrote *Lord Jim* at a time when imperialism brought two different phases of history together. The imperialist culture produced both swashbuckling individualists like Jim, and a sordid narrative of greed, conflict and exploitation which seemed under no individual’s control. The world was beginning to be alien and inscrutable at the point of imperialism. Written in such a historical moment, *Lord Jim* presents a conflict between romance and idealism. The main character, Jim is represented, on one hand, as “one of us”, as a representative of imperial Britain, on the other, as a failure who abandons his duty as a seaman and who causes the destructions of his best friend and of himself and thus leads the Patusan village to leaderlessness and deprivation whereas imperialism was represented as a Romantic idealism having a vision of a transformed earth in the travel and adventure accounts of the time. Among these narratives there are *The Malay Archipelago* (1894) written by Alfred Russel Wallace and *A Visit to the Indian Archipelago in H.M. Ship “Maeander” With Portions of Journal of Sir James Brooke, K.C.B.* (1846) by Henry Keppell. In both these travel and adventure accounts and *Lord Jim* there is an encounter between the European white man and the Malay community. Yet there are contradictions in these documents and Conrad’s text. These travel and adventure accounts were bred with the liberal, humanistic values which had served the West so splendidly; for this reason it can be said that imperialism was represented in them with a cultural relativism. But in *Lord Jim* this self-assured historical phase and its self-esteemed individuals are being called into question. Thus the novel threatens to subvert the imperialist individual’s sense of supremacy
at exactly the point where it is most urgently needed. This is not just a matter of content but of form. Therefore, this second phase of the study would be a concern with the narrative technique in *Lord Jim*, in which a narrative into narrative, a report of a report is seen.

In a new historicist reading of a literary work, author’s biography is of great importance to determine the context in which the author wrote that work and to show that a literary text is an outcome of the relation between the author and his actual experiences. But before giving the autobiographical elements, which are evident in *Lord Jim*, the plot of the novel may be recalled. The novel contains the story of a young Englishman who disgraces himself as a sailor in the merchant navy but later compensates for his disgrace by becoming the effective benevolent ruler of a Malay community. The novel may be divided into two: The first part, from the beginning to chapter XIX, is generally called the *Patna* episode, and the second part, from chapter XIX onwards is called the Patusan episode. The story of the *Patna* section may be summarized as in the following: The young sailor, Jim, romantic and dreaming of heroic adventures, is suddenly confronted with the temptation of his life while serving as chief mate on board an old steamer, *Patna*. On her way across the Indian Ocean, the ship has touched some floating derelict, and when the engines are stopped, her condition seems so precarious that the disreputable gang serving as officers decide to clear out as quickly and noiselessly as possible, under the cover of a dark night, leaving the eight hundred Moslem pilgrims on board to their fate. Jim does not mean to accompany four other white men of the crew – the German skipper and three engineers – but, when one of the engineers dies of a heart attack brought on by fright, and in a moment of excitement, and urged by a voice in the darkness calling insistently: “Jump! Jump!”, Jim deserts the *Patna* in the firm belief that she is already sinking under his feet. They are picked up by a ship, and as to the abandoned vessel, it is sighted and towed to Aden by a French gunboat. A court of inquiry is held. Jim is the only officer to give evidence at the Official Inquiry because the skipper has fled and the two surviving engineers are in hospital. The officers of the ship, Jim included, have their certificates cancelled. The narrator, Marlow has his first sight of Jim when he attends the Official Inquiry into the desertion of the *Patna*. Marlow himself is a middle-aged merchant seaman, a seasoned, good-natured, mature man,
who is immediately attracted by Jim’s appearance. Jim seems to be a gentleman, upright, good-looking, “one of us” (a phrase Marlow often uses of Jim), a man who looks as though he should be loyal to the “solidarity of the craft” of the merchant seaman, and yet has clearly betrayed that solidarity. After Jim has been sentenced to the loss of his certificate of seamanship, which means the loss of his livelihood, since he is penniless and has no training other than that of an officer of the merchant marine, Marlow befriends him and tries to help him by finding him jobs. Nevertheless, Jim finds it impossible to live it down in spite of the sympathetic support of friends. Jim’s extreme sensitivity over the Patna scandal makes him a difficult person to help, since whenever the fact that he was mate of the Patna becomes known, he throws up his current employment and moves on. Wandering from port to port, and chased everywhere by the echoes of a past which he dares not face, he is finally sent to Patusan by a friend of Marlow’s, Stein. Stein is an enterprising Bavarian trader and also a famous collector of insects. Patusan is a Malay settlement in Borneo where there are no other white men apart from the rascally Cornelius, whom Jim is to replace as Stein’s agent, and where there is no risk of the Patna story becoming known.

The story of the Patusan section can be given as in the following: In that forlorn corner of the East, Jim’s arrival means the beginning of a New Era because Patusan is the place, where Jim transforms his hitherto somewhat passive and failed life into a romantic and heroic success, and where Jim soon exercises a great authority over the natives. With the help of Jewel, a half-caste girl with whom he falls in love, he subjugates Cornelius (Jewel’s step-father); and then with the aid of Doramin, a prominent trader, and his son Dain Waris, who becomes Jim’s closest friend, he defeats and controls both the nominal ruler of Patusan, the Rajah Allang, and a piratical Arab trader, Sherif Ali, who has hitherto been exploiting the place. Thus, Jim lives for some time in the illusion of having mastered his fate, of having forgotten his past. After two years, Marlow visits Jim in Patusan and sees the success he has made of his life and his happiness with Jewel. After another two years, Marlow learns that everything has gone wrong: Gentleman Brown, an English adventurer turned pirate, has arrived with his half-starved followers looking for plunder in Patusan. Jim’s illusions are shattered by the arrival of this white outcast. One of Brown’s men gratuitously kills a Patusan man. It would be
easy for Jim to disarm him and send him away, or, in case of resistance, to let him
die of starvation. But Jim does nothing. Despite Brown’s obvious viciousness, Jim
makes the fatal mistake of allowing him and his companions to go free. Overcome
by a curious weakness, a sort of identification of himself with this despicable
British, Jim remains passive. When they move down the river, Brown and his
followers are enabled, by the vindictive Cornelius, to make a cowardly attack on a
group of Jim’s Malays. Brown shoots some volleys into them. Dain Waris is
killed. In the end, Doramin, Dain’s father, shoots Jim in the mistaken belief that
Jim has betrayed his adopted people and is directly responsible for his son’s death;
and since Jim has already felt that his attitude is responsible for the tragedy, he
delivers himself up to the relatives of the victims, who kill him.

Conrad’s own life as a seaman, a life filled with adventure and excitement
provided him personally with the experiences he required for his fiction. Sherry
even argues “a Conrad who had not been to sea would not have been the same
writer at all”. (Sherry, 1966: 3) Conrad’s biographers also maintain that Lord Jim
is one of those books which remained nearest to his heart, and we can hardly
undervalue its autobiographical character. Conrad resembles Jim as an imaginative
boy, who, much against his guardian’s will went in search for adventures on the
high seas. Conrad, in a way, projected his own life in the following passage from
Lord Jim:

On the lower deck in the babel of two hundred voices he would
forget himself, and beforehand live in his mind the sea-life of
light literature. He saw himself saving people from sinking ships,
cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with
a line; or as a lonely castaway […] He confronted savages on the
tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a
small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men –
always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a
hero in a book. (Conrad, 1985: 11)

Jim’s first voyage to the East takes place in very much the same circumstances
as surrounded Conrad’s early voyages. Jim was “not yet four-and-twenty”,
Conrad’s age was respectively twenty-one and twenty-three when he made his first
two voyages to Australia. “Like Conrad, Jim is a sailor with his eye on
advancement in the hierarchy of command.” (Meyer, 1967: 61) Upon attaining the
position of chief mate, Jim, like his creator, “was disabled by a falling spar” (Conrad, 1985: 14) and “spent many days stretched on his back, dazed, battered, hopeless, and tormented as if at the bottom of an abyss of unrest” (Conrad, 1985: 15) and had to lie for weeks in an Eastern hospital. It is the same as Conrad’s accident on board the Highland Forest, of which Conrad was chief mate. (Conrad, 1946: 54; Jean-Aubry, Vol.I, 1927: 93) Having been hit in the back by a flying spar, Conrad suffered inexplicable periods of listlessness and sudden spurts of mysterious pain. His lameness, like Jim’s, persisted. When the ship arrived in Semarang on June 20, Conrad was ordered to remain quiet for three months and signed off the Highland Forest. He left Semarang aboard the steamship Celestial on July 2, reached Singapore four days later, “went straight into the great airy ward of the European hospital and surrendered himself to the sensual ease of the Orient”. (Meyers, 1991: 76) Jim is bewitched by the eternal serenity of the East, by the temptation of infinite repose when he is in a hospital in an “Eastern port”. He enjoys “the bewitching breath of the Eastern waters” because” there were perfumes in it, suggestions of infinite repose, the gift of endless dreams”. (Conrad, 1985: 15)

There are some other parallels between Jim and Conrad. Jim’s library, like that of Conrad, consists mainly in a green one-volume set of Shakespeare’s works. (Conrad, 1985: 181; Conrad, 1923: 72) Similar to Conrad, Jim is reckless, without fear, and sometimes “a regular devil for sailing a boat”. It is known that Conrad himself had some smuggling adventures and dangerous manoeuvres as a seaman. (Conrad, 1924: 18-21) Meyer makes a correspondence between Jim’s jump and Conrad’s act of quitting the steamship Vidar, on which Conrad sailed in 1887-88. (Meyer, 1967: 63) The natives of Patusan call Jim “Tuan Jim: as one might say – Lord Jim”. (Conrad, 1985: 10) This parallels the young Conrad’s being called “Pan Jozef” by the Polish peasants and servants. “Pan Jozef” is an expression meaning “Lord Joseph” in English. (Morf, 1930: 162) Jim uses only his Christian name and drops his surname. Morf notes that the same was true of Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski because Conrad was extremely shy when he mentioned his real name. He used his full name only in his Polish letters, in which he appears distinctly as a Pole, not as an Englishman. (Morf, 1930: 163)
Conrad’s creation of the German captain of the deserting crew in *Lord Jim* is an outcome of Conrad’s dislike of Germany. Shamelessness is attributed to the German commander, because he is the first to leave the ship which is loaded with pilgrims, and it is his evil counsel Jim yields to and jumps into a life boat, leaving his ship. Spittles claims that Conrad, through his personal, Polish dislike of Germany, might well have included villainous Germans in his fiction, (Spittles, 1992: 110) and Fleishman claims that Conrad’s hostility to Prussianism emerges in his fiction in repeated caricatures of Germanic selfishness and bullying. (Fleishman, 1967: 43) Finally, when Jim asks himself so anxiously whether public opinion will back him up, whether the sanction of his foreign friends would be absolute enough to absolve him in his own eyes, we again recognize in Jim Conrad himself. Morf states, “Jim’s authority over the natives stands really for Conrad’s success in the English-speaking world”. (Morf, 1930: 163)

*Lord Jim* also has roots in Conrad’s psychology. Therefore, to provide the accounts of the real-life sources of *Lord Jim*, we can trace the unconscious forces guiding Conrad in the choice of his subject and in the development of its theme because it is these unconscious elements, as Morf argues, which constitute so many forces guiding the author in the choice of his/her subject, in the invention of the plots, in the treatment of his/her characters, and in a hundred small details, thus leading him/her to treat those problems which s/he cannot solve in his/her conscious life. Whatever repressed conflicts, fears, wishes, hopes or joys there happen to be in the author’s soul will be exteriorized in his/her work. (Morf, 1930: 150) It may be asserted that *Lord Jim* is eminently autobiographical in that it was built up of unconscious elements, and the exteriorization of Conrad’s conflicts can be seen in the novel. It can be said that mentally or morally Jim is the projection of Conrad’s repressed feelings. “The circumstances leading up to Jim’s jump” can be thought to have modelled on “those leading to Conrad’s naturalization as a British subject”. (Morf, 1930: 161-162)

The general assumption about Jim’s jump from the *Patna* is that Jim’s desertion of the ship parallels Conrad’s desertion of his native land Poland. It can be claimed that Conrad himself saw a parallelism between his quitting Poland and Jim’s jump. In *A Personal Record* he wrote answering the accusations circled
around the fact of Conrad’s own abrupt departure from Poland and made against him at the time of writing: “I verily believe mine was the only case of a boy of my nationality and antecedents taking a, so to speak, standing jump out of his racial surroundings and associations.” (Conrad, 1985: 121) Thomas Moser makes an interesting remark that Conrad uses the same word, “jump” to describe his departure from his native land that he used to describe Jim’s desertion of his pilgrim ship *Patna*. (Moser, 1957: 20) Morf also notes a further parallel between Conrad’s and Jim’s case with reference to Jim’s jump and Conrad’s becoming a British subject. (Morf, 1930: 163-164) Besides, these two actions, one fictional and the other factual, can be regarded as the denials of duty and responsibility that result in the feeling of betrayal in both Jim and his creator, Conrad. There are some suggestions on why the motifs of guilt and betrayal are persistently evident in Conrad’s fiction. One of these suggestions is that Conrad, orphaned at an early age, would have somehow been betrayed by the loss of his parents. The second suggestion is that Conrad may have experienced pervasive guilt at having left Poland, having, so to speak, turned his back on the cause for which his father had given his life. (Ryf, 1970: 11) An eminent Polish woman of letters, Madame Marie Dombrowska, penetrated this parallelism, and thus, the secret source of *Lord Jim*, when she wrote, two years after Conrad’s death:

The feeling of responsibility is the rigorous principle that his heroes, and Conrad himself, obey […] The feeling of responsibility became the very atmosphere of his life; its breath pervaded his whole work. Even unconsciously Conrad puts the imprint of its sovereign force upon all his creations […] Something in his life posed a lasting contradiction to his instinct of fidelity and loyalty: he had abandoned his fatherland at the time of its greatest misfortunes. No doubt, Conrad’s ethical morality predisposed him to fidelity to rationally accepted causes rather than those bequeathed him by tradition […] Just like Lord Jim, Conrad could not bring to an end the dramatic episode of his youth. Nothing can end a conflict on such a plane. Poland seemed to Conrad a responsibility denied, a duty repudiated. (Quoted in Jean-Aubry, 1957: 240)

*Lord Jim* is a novel in which Conrad took his starting point, the theme of remorse from his own feelings. Jean-Aubry argues that “it is natural to see in his literary obsession with remorse a projection, an echo, of a personal worry, of an anxiety, a regret, or some secret failing”. (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 238) Conrad’s
dealing with the theme of betrayal and atonement in *Lord Jim* raises the question why Jim, as a young merchant navy officer, fails in his duty in contrast with his creator’s success. It is known that never throughout his maritime career, either as an ordinary seaman or as an officer, did Conrad fail in his duty. This is a fact which Jean-Aubry reached through the examination of all sea papers relating to Conrad. The answer to the question why Jim is a failure leaving his leaking ship may be thought to be associated with Conrad’s own fear of “being found unequal to his task” because he was “a foreigner among French and English crews”. (Jean-Aubry, 1957: 239) So, it is not wrong to say that the motifs of betrayal, desertion, failing one’s duty and the resulting guilt or shame employed in the novel as the central moral themes are all reflections of Conrad’s own feelings. Conrad had many difficulties in his spiritual life therefore, as Said argues, “the problems in his fiction can be associated with the problems in his spiritual life”. (Said, 1966: 5) In short, Conrad’s spiritual history was written by himself in his fiction. Generally, it is assumed that Conrad felt guilty of betrayal because he had left his home country and had been writing in a foreign language. This feeling of guilt is supposed to have been awakened by the accusations against Conrad at the time he was working on the novel. (Najder, 1997: 11-12) The second part of the novel may also be considered as the expression of Conrad’s fear that his desertion of his native land might ultimately prove a fault by which Conrad had forfeited his honour. “The final destruction of Jim consecrates the author’s triumph over the guilt complex. Tuan Jim’s defeat is Joseph Conrad’s victory.” (Morf, 1930: 165) Ryf also states that Conrad’s concentration on certain motifs, for example, isolation can be traced to “central events and traumas in his own life”. (Ryf, 1970: 10) From his biographical data, it can be seen that the theme of isolation, which is prominent in *Lord Jim*, had antecedents in his early life. It is evident that in *Lord Jim* Conrad wrote about the darker sides of his personality and exteriorized the deepest conflicts that arose from mostly his Polish heritage.

*Lord Jim* is a novel which was shaped by not only Conrad’s psychology but also his sea-life. Between the years 1883-88, Conrad sailed for a time in Eastern waters as a British merchant seaman, and when he began to write, it was to the East that he turned for inspiration. Although Conrad’s contact with the East was limited, (Conrad made three visits to the East and spent a few months in Eastern
lands) the East not only provided Conrad with the initial creative impetus but also remained a constant source for him. Having been occupied with commercial matters, interviewing charterers, getting together a cargo, taking in the full complement of crew and having been limited to sea-going society and mariners’ talk both on the sea and ashore, Conrad observed what a seaman could observe in port, and heard what a seaman could hear while staying on board ship or at a Sailors’ Home. For this reason, it should be kept in mind that “Conrad’s knowing the East as a seaman posits a special relationship between himself and the Eastern world which provided his source material” (Sherry, 1966: 6); and it would not be wrong to say that Lord Jim is a novel which derives largely from Conrad’s experiences as a merchant seaman in those Eastern seas. It should also be noted that Conrad went to Berau in 1887 in a trading ship and the people he met there were concerned with trade. Thus, it can be accounted for that trading concerns must have entered into Conrad’s work. Stein in Lord Jim, for example, is a successful trader.

Conrad’s own experiences in the Palestine and the Jeddah scandal form the sources of the first part of the novel. On 19 September 1881, when he was twenty-four years old, Conrad found a berth as second mate in the barque Palestine commanded by Captain Beard and bound for Bangkok. The Palestine was an old ship and on her voyage to Bangkok, she met with nothing but trouble. On 24 December 1881, the ship, getting into a gale, was forced to put back to Falmouth, where she had to take on several changes of crew. It was not until 17 September 1882 that the Palestine began what was to be her last voyage, carrying a cargo of coal. Her journey was both slow and disastrous, and she burnt at sea. After this incident a Court of Inquiry was held in Singapore to explore the facts about the incident. (Sherry, 1966: 16) Conrad probably recalled the Inquiry and his impressions of Singapore when he dealt with the Court of Inquiry into the desertion of the pilgrim ship Patna in Lord Jim.

Lord Jim, Conrad’s most famous novel of the East, is also based on a sea disaster involving a pilgrim ship that was abandoned at sea by her captain and officers. The Patna episode appropriates from the pages of the news of the Jeddah incident of 1880, which was widely discussed in the British press in terms of
issues of conduct and Western ideals. (Henricksen, 1992: 85) The case of the pilgrim ship *Jeddah* was one of the most notorious scandals in the East of the 1880’s. It was believed that Conrad must have read the reports of the *Jeddah* incident in the London newspapers in 1880 as the desertion of the *Jeddah* by her European master and officers was a scandal discussed in London as well as in Singapore. The event was fully reported in *The Times*, and Conrad, who was in London at the time, probably read about the scandal; and later he must have heard it discussed in nautical circles, especially when he was in Singapore in 1883. (Watt, 1979: 265) In his Author’s Note Conrad refers to the pilgrim ship episode. Here it is clear that the *Jeddah* case appealed to Conrad and became the inspiration for *Lord Jim*:

> my first thought was of a short story, concerned only with the pilgrim ship episode; nothing more. And that was a legitimate conception. After writing a few pages, however, I became for some reason discontented and I laid it aside for a time […] It was only then that I perceived that the pilgrim ship episode was a good starting-point for a free and wandering tale; that it was an event, too, which could conceivably colour the whole ‘sentiment of existence’ in a simple and sensitive character. (Conrad, 1921b: 31)

To reconstruct the parallels between the story of the *Patna* and the *Jeddah* case, the *Jeddah*’s story should be recalled: The *Jeddah* was employed in carrying almost a thousand Muslim pilgrims from Singapore to Jeddah, the seaport for Mecca. She left Singapore on 17 July 1880, on one of these trips, and after a stormy passage, during which her boilers gave trouble and she began to leak, she was abandoned off Cape Guardafui at 2 a.m. on 8 August 1880 by her captain and her European officers. They were later picked up by the steamship *Scindia* and taken to Aden where they reported their false story, that the *Jeddah* was lost with all her passengers. But the *Jeddah* appeared at Aden a day later with the pilgrims on board, and was towed in by the S.S. *Antenor*. This caused a great scandal both in London and Singapore, and the incident was the subject of an inquiry at Aden, an action for salvage at Singapore, a debate in the Singapore Legislative Assembly, and a question in the British House of Commons. (Sherry, 1966: 43; 1968: 309-310) On August 10, the *Globe*, London, reported the loss with these headlines: “DREADFUL DISASTER AT SEA. LOSS OF NEARLY 1000 LIVES.”
Sherry provided some other important documents concerning the *Jeddah* incident. Some of them are the cables reported in the *Singapore Daily Times*, August 12, 1880:

**Aden, 10 August 8:20 P.M.**

*Jeddah* foundered. Self, wife, Syed Omar, 18 others saved.

**Aden, 11th August 9:15 P.M.**

*Antenor* towed down here *Jeddah* full of water. All life saved, now in charge of Government. Telegraph further particulars tomorrow. Omar gone Jeddah last night. (Quoted in Sherry, 1968: 310)

Some of the documents are the news from the *London Times* of August 11 and August 12, 1880:

**TERRIBLE DISASTER AT SEA**

**ADEN, AUG.10.**

The steamer *Jeddah*, of Singapore, bound for Jeddah, with 953 pilgrims on board, foundered off Cape Guardafui on the 18th inst. All on board perished, excepting the captain, his wife, the chief officer, the chief engineer, the assistant engineer, and 16 natives. The survivors were picked up by the steamer Scindia and landed here.

**ADEN, AUG. 11, 7.50.P.M.**

The *Jeddah* which was abandoned at sea with 953 pilgrims on board, did not founder, as reported by the master. She has just arrived here, all safe, in tow of the steamer *Antenor*. (Quoted in Sherry, 1968: 310)

There were vivid accounts in the newspapers published in those days. The following are examples of editorial comment in the London newspapers, *Daily Chronicle*, *Globe*, and *Daily News*, concerning the *Jeddah* incident, all from the August 12, 1880 issues:

That she should thus have been abandoned and her living freight left to their fate is one of the most dastardly circumstances we have ever heard of in connection with the perils of the deep [...] It is to be feared that pilgrim ships are officered by unprincipled and cowardly men who disgrace the traditions of seamanship. We sincerely trust that no Englishman was amongst the boatload of cowards who left the *Jeddah* and her thousand passengers to shift for themselves. (*Daily Chronicle*)
Even if the *Jeddah* had afterwards foundered there would have remained an indelible stein of discredit upon the men who had thus run away at the moment of peril. But the fact that the ship was not in any extremity of peril is clearly proved by her eventual safety and the charge becomes thus one of over-timidity as well as simple *laches*. (Evening issue of the *Globe*)

The relief which is felt at the safety of the pilgrims will be modified by a feeling of indignation and horror at what seems the cowardly desertion of their post and trust by the master and seamen of the ship. (*Daily News*) (Quoted in Sherry 1968: 311-312)

Two important circumstances, inherent in the actual incident, were that the captain and the officers deserted the ship when the *Jeddah*’s sinking became an imminent danger, and that the ship did not sink. One of the complications in the *Jeddah* case was the inadequacy of the ship’s boats to take off the 900 pilgrims. Only a small number of those on board the *Jeddah* could hope to be saved. Such a situation demanded that the captain should go down with his ship. But in the *Jeddah* case this first code of the sea is dishonoured. The strains inherent in the position of the captain and the officers are projected in *Lord Jim* and it is this crucial involvement that bothers Jim later, and causes him to ask Marlow:

> What would you have done? You are sure of yourself – aren’t you? What would you do if you felt now – this minute – the house here move, just move a little under your chair? Leap! By heavens! You would take one spring from where you sit and land in that clump of bushes yonder. (Conrad, 1985: 85)

Consequently, the *Jeddah* and *Patna* stories run parallel in the fate of the ship after the desertion, and Conrad seems to be consciously using the *Jeddah* story and incorporating some of his experiences on the *Palestine* into the *Patna* story.

Another actual event, the suicide of the master of the clipper *Cutty Sark* in 1880 is another source for the pilgrim-ship episode of *Lord Jim*. Conrad may have heard or read the story of the *Cutty Sark* and the story of the *Jeddah* at the same time since the news of the suicide of Wallace, the master of the clipper “appeared in the same column in the *Singapore Straits Times* with the news of the *Jeddah*”. (Sherry, 1968: 343) The following passages, the former of which is taken from Basil Lubbock’s *The Log of the Cutty Sark*, and the latter of which is from *Lord
Jim show that the parallels between Wallace’s suicide and that of Brierly, one of the three judges at Jim’s trial, are strong:

Ever since the escape of the mate he [Wallace] had been unable to sleep […] Night and day he stood gazing out to see or walked with bowed head up and down the poop […] On the fourth day after leaving Anjer, the watch had just been called at 4 a.m., when the captain, who was standing at the break of the poop with the carpenter, turned to his faithful petty officer and asked if the second mate was on the deck.

‘Chips’ replied that he was just coming up. Whereupon Captain Wallace left the carpenter and walked aft: called the helmsman’s attention to the course; then deliberately stepped on to the taffrail and jumped overboard. (Quoted in Sherry, 1966: 263)

The details of Brierly’s death given Marlow by the old mate Jones are expressed by Marlow as such:

It appears that when he [the mate] came on the deck in the morning Brierly had been writing in the chart-room. ‘It was ten minutes to four,’ he said, ‘and the middle watch was not relieved yet, of course. He heard my voice on the bridge speaking to the second mate, and called me in. I was loath to go, and that’s the truth, Captain Marlow – I couldn’t stand poor Captain Brierly, I tell you with shame; we never know what a man is made of […] Says he, just like this: ‘Come in here, Mr Jones,’ in that swagger voice of this […] In I went. ‘Thirty-two miles more as she goes,’ says he, ‘and then we shall be clear and you may alter course twenty degrees to the southward.’ Then he calls out to me from the dark, ‘Shut that dog up in the chart-room, Mr Jones – will you? This was the last time I heard his voice. (Conrad, 1985: 50-51)

Both Wallace’s and Brierly’s deaths are similar in that the time is the same in both cases – four o’clock in the morning – as is the sense of deliberation on the part of both Wallace and Brierly, their interest in the course of the ship, and immediately afterwards, both step over the side without a word. Another connection between the two suicides can be made with reference to the reasons for both actions. The report of the Cutty Sark incident in the Singapore Daily Times, September 18, 1880, suggests reasons for Wallace’s suicide:

The captain appears to have assisted the chief officer to escape on board an American ship bound for Saigon and afterwards
whether from pangs of conscience or fear of future trouble he threw himself overboard and was drowned. (Quoted in Sherry, 1966: 263)

Brierly’s own ideas about the case of Jim make it clear that both Wallace’s and Brierly’s suicides are similar in respect of the reason for their deaths. Brierly tells Marlow:

“This infernal publicity is too shocking: there he sits while all these confounded natives, serangs, lascars, quartermasters, are giving evidence that’s enough to burn a man to ashes with shame. This is abominable. Why, Marlow, don’t you think, don’t you feel, that this is abominable; don’t you now – come – as a seaman? If he went away, all this would stop at once.” (Conrad, 1985: 56)

Here it can be suggested that Wallace committed a dishonourable act, and thus committed suicide from his pangs of conscience, and Brierly, through Jim’s dishonourable act of deserting his ship at the moment of danger, belonging to the same class with Jim, the seamanship having a fixed standard of conduct, cannot go on when he realizes he does not have the strength in him. In other words, “Jim leads Brierly to look beyond the surface” and leads him to analyze himself. (Roussel, 1971: 87) One important thing to note about this is that Conrad, in the creation of the incident of Brierly, may have reflected his own attitude towards seamanship as he himself was an honourable seaman, seeing the importance of fidelity to duty in seamanship and thinking that when a seaman, like Jim, abandoned his duty, the other men from the same class had to bear that betrayal. Brierly is represented as a man who cannot bear Jim’s betrayal. Finally, it can be said that Conrad, in the creation of the story of Brierly, brought together material from the real incident and his own attitude toward seamanship, to which he himself had belonged for twenty years.

The consensus on the primary source material for the second part of Lord Jim is that the whole Eastern world Conrad knew as a seaman in the East of the 1880s is the genesis of the second part of the novel. Conrad had brief voyages through the Malay Archipelago during the last half of 1887 and these voyages “gave Conrad the richest literary material from an unknown part of the world and provided the inspiration for Lord Jim”. (Meyers, 1991: 76-77) For example, the
setting for the second part of the novel has roots in the actual places Conrad knew in the East. An Eastern River suggests the Berau River, and Patusan, a native settlement and a European trading post is a reference to the actual trading post on the bank of the Berau River. Conrad called Patusan an area as “one of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth” (Conrad, 1985: 243) and “Berau was, and still is, this”. (Sherry, 1966: 119) Conrad’s fictional account of the area is “compatible with the sight of the actual settlement”. (Sherry, 1966: 120) Marlow describes the coast of Patusan thus:

[It] is straight and sombre, and faces a misty ocean […] Swampy plains open out at the mouth of rivers, with a view of jagged blue peaks beyond the vast forests. In the offing a chain of islands, dark, crumbling shapes, stand out in the everlasting sunlit haze like the remnants of a wall breached by the sea. (Conrad, 1985: 184)

It may be suggested that the real condition of Berau was utilized for the fictional account of the area. A report in the *Straits Times Overland Journal*, March 26, 1883, provides an account of conditions at Berau only a few years before Conrad visited Berau. Several details in the report seem to be echoed in Conrad’s text:

Gunong Thabor and Sambailung, formerly forming together the State of Berouw [Berau] are situated right and left on the Berouw river […] There is very little trade, though the soil is very rich and fruitful. Rattans, gutta percha, and coals are the principal products. The inhabitants are lazy and unenterprising. Labour is for women and slaves only. Slaves are met with in almost every house. On the lower river, there is even a large village wholly inhabited by slaves. The authorities allow this in spite of Art. 115 of the Government reg whereby slavery in Netherlands India has been abolished. (Quoted in Sherry 1966: 129-130)

The “large village wholly inhabited by slaves” is introduced in *Lord Jim*, the very first reference to it appears on page 184: “There is a village of fisher-folk at the mouth of the Batu Kring branch of the estuary.” Later in the novel, the village is described thus:

This bunch of miserable hovels was a fishing village that boasted of the white lord’s especial protection, and the two men crossing over were the old head-man and his son-in-law […] The Rajah’s
people would not leave them alone; there had been some trouble about a lot of turtles’ eggs his people had collected on the islets there. (Conrad, 1985: 250)

A day or two before Jim’s arrival “several heads of households in the […] fishing village […] had been driven over the cliffs by a party of the Rajah’s spearmen on suspicion of having been collecting edible birds’ nests for a Celebes trader”. (Conrad, 1985: 195) Jim tells Marlow: “The trouble is […] that for generations these beggars of fishermen in that village there had been considered as the Rajah’s personal slaves.” (Conrad, 1985: 251)

Many of the details about the characters in Lord Jim are based on the actual people. Jim’s character seems to be derived from at least four people. As has already been stated Conrad himself is a major source of Jim. However, the parallel between Jim and Conrad would mainly apply to the first part of the novel. The chief mate of the Jeddah, Augustine Padmore Williams is believed to be one of the sources of Jim’s character. Conrad might have based “some aspects of Jim on Williams”. (Watt, 1979: 266) Having discovered a good deal about Williams, Sherry writes that “it would seem more logical, given Conrad’s reliance on fact, to consider Jim’s counterpart, the first mate of the Jeddah, as the possible inspiration for Lord Jim”. (Sherry, 1966: 65-66) Like Jim, Williams was the son of a parson, he was often dressed in white and had blue eyes. William’s height, powerful build, and neat dress echo in Jim’s appearance. (Sherry, 1966: 78) Apart from this, Williams went to a training ship for officers of the mercantile marine as did Jim. He was indeed the last of the officers to leave the Jeddah and he figured prominently in the subsequent Inquiry; he is known to have returned to Singapore to face the matter. In 1884, Williams served, like Jim, as a ship-chandler’s water-clerk. (Sherry, 1966: 65-66) When Williams was taken on at Singapore as first mate of the Jeddah, he was very young, only twenty-three. (Sherry, 1966: 68) and this is close to the age of Lord Jim – “not yet four-and-twenty”. Just as Jim lived with his Jewel so Williams married in the East. (Sherry, 1966: 82) So William’s background was identical with that of Lord Jim. Williams came from a parsonage and was one of five sons. In Lord Jim Conrad writes:

Originally he [Jim] came from a parsonage […] Jim was one of five sons, and when after a course of light holiday literature his
vocation for the sea had declared itself, he was sent at once to a 'training –ship for officers of the mercantile marine'. (Conrad, 1985: 10-11)

As for the question how Conrad knew about Williams, we have different arguments about it. Henricksen argues that in 1883 Conrad and Williams were both in Singapore and they could have met there; (Henricksen, 1992: 85) Sherry argues that Conrad could have met or seen him when he was in Singapore in the autumn of 1885, or later, in 1887, while he was serving on the Vidar (Sherry, 1966: 80-81), and when Williams was working as a ship-chandler’s water-clerk in Singapore during Conrad’s periodic visits there. (Sherry, 1966: 85) Finally we can say that the close parallels between Williams and Lord Jim suggest that Conrad had spoken to Williams and heard his story from the man himself.

Some other hints for Jim’s character are believed to have come from Jim Lingard, William Lingard’s son, who, from the age of eighteen onwards, lived at the settlement on the Berau River. Watt states that Conrad probably met him there when he was about twenty-five, and was probably known as Tuan Jim. Jim Lingard lived with a Sea Dyak woman, and had a devoted servant called Lias. (Watt, 1979: 267) These two might have supplied the basis for Jewel and Tamb’ Itam in Lord Jim. The romantic love Jim has for Jewel had its origin in the love Jim Lingard had for his Sea Dyak, and also Lord Jim has a trusted servant Tamb’ Itam, whose function in the story is as body-guard. This can be seen in the following passage in the novel:

The very Tamb’ Itam, marching on our journeys upon the hills of his white lord, with his head thrown back, truculent and be-weaponed like a janissary, with kris, chopper, and lance (besides carrying Jim’s gun); even Tamb’ Itam allowed himself to put on the airs of uncompromising guardianship, like a surly devoted jailer ready to lay down his life for his captive [...] Tamb’ Itam was still on the prowl. Though he had […] a house in the compound, had ‘taken wife’, and had lately been blessed with a child, I believe that, during my stay at all events, he slept on the veranda every night. (Conrad, 1985: 214-215)

Lias always went with Jim Lingard when Lingard went up river into the dangerous interior, and Lias, like Tamb’ Itam, always slept on the veranda of Lingard. (Sherry, 1966: 136) So it can be said that Tamb’ Itam in Lord Jim may have had
his origin in Lias. Sherry also surmises that Jim Lingard’s Malay title provided Conrad with the title of his novel, and that Conrad must have been impressed by “the general inexplicableness of his being at Berau at all.” (Sherry, 1966: 80) Besides, like Lord Jim, Lingard was a person of some strength and influence in the area of Berau and Bulungan. (Sherry, 1966: 137)

The fourth main source for Lord Jim is Sir James Brooke (1803-1868), who was a British Empire builder and the first white ruler of Sarawak, Borneo. Brooke lived among Malayans during the first half of the nineteenth century and gained fame as a benevolent lawgiver. He is accounted to be a model for Lord Jim in that both ruled groups of people in the Malay Archipelago, being white rulers of the native states. (Sherry, 1966: 137; Watt, 1979: 267; Henricksen, 1992: 84) Remembering a boyhood ideal of his, Conrad, in a letter he wrote to reply to a communication from the wife of Brooke’s nephew and successor, says:

I am immensely gratified and touched by the letter you have been good enough to write me. The first Rajah Brooke has been one of my boyish admirations, a feeling I have kept to this day strengthened by the better understanding of the greatness of his character and the unstained rectitude of his purpose. The book which has found favour in your eyes has been inspired in great measure by the history of the first Rajah’s enterprise and even by the lecture of his journals as partly reproduced by Captain Mundy and others […] (Letter to Margaret Brooke, June 15, 1920, quoted in Payne, 1960: 247-248)

The letter is explicit enough about the relevance of Brooke to Conrad’s Lord Jim.

Now it would be appropriate to recall Brooke’s life story briefly. Brooke was born in Combe Grove, near Bath, to an English father and a Scottish mother. He was educated at Norwich School, England. He travelled to Burma with the army of the British East India Company in 1825, was wounded, and sent to England for recovery. He attempted to trade in the Far East, but was not successful. In 1835, he purchased a ship, the Royalist. After setting sail for Borneo in 1838, he arrived in Kuching in August of the same year to find the settlement facing a Dyak uprising against the Sultan of Brunei. Offering his aid to the Sultan, he and his crew helped bring about a peaceful settlement and he was granted the title of Rajah of Sarawak by the Sultan, because of the fact that he threatened the Sultan with
military force. Brooke began to establish and cement his rule over Sarawak; reforming the administration, codifying laws and fighting piracy, which proved to be an ongoing issue throughout his rule. Brooke, for whose character Conrad professed great admiration, professed the goals such as “adding knowledge, increasing trade and spreading Christianity”. (White, 1993: 25) To these ends, he quitted England in 1838 for Borneo and became the British government agent there. Brooke was such a historical figure as to lead to the emergence of the “Brooke myth”. Actually the “Brooke myth” was manipulated by Brooke himself, together with his admirers and hired biographers; and “Brooke had come to represent among Westerners the ideal imperialist”. (Henricksen, 1992: 85) The similarities between Brooke and Lord Jim and the subversion of the “Brooke myth” in *Lord Jim* will be studied in a later part of this chapter to show how social texts – in this case, the historical documents and travel accounts including Brooke’s imperialist deeds, and his own journals and letters – and *Lord Jim* as a cultural literary text interact with each other.

As a concluding remark for this part of the source study on the character of Jim, it can be said that Jim was modelled on both Conrad himself and on such historical figures as James Brooke, who lived among the Malays during the first half of the nineteenth century and gained fame as a benevolent lawgiver, and Augustine Padmore Williams, who was the chief mate of the *Jeddah* and Jim Lingard, who lived at the settlement on the Berau River and had trading interests in the area.

Some other people are accounted to be the inspiration for Conrad’s characters other than Jim. For example, Captain William Lingard, who had business connections with a company in Singapore and had many voyages to Berau and Bulungan, can be taken as a model for Stein. Both Lingard and Stein are old traders who have established trading-posts on an Eastern river, which are run by their agents. A man called Charles Olmeijer was Lingard’s protégé and Cornelius is Stein’s. Conrad can be thought to reflect, in his text, the true situation and facts of the trading post at Berau, to some extent, because of the fact that a second protégé was sent to Berau by Lingard and Jim is sent to Stein’s trading post as a second protégé. In the novel, it is observed that Jim arouses the antagonism of the
older man, Cornelius already at the post. Cornelius plots to bring about Jim’s downfall. When Conrad visited Berau, there were two men there, Olmijer and Jim Lingard. A cause for jealousy possibly existed because Olmeijer had been ten years at his trading outpost when Captain Lingard settled his son, Jim Lingard, at Berau. Olmeijer might have well seen Jim Lingard as a dangerous rival. Sherry argues that this may well be the origin of Jim/Cornelius antagonism in Lord Jim. (Sherry, 1966: 131-133) Captain William Lingard’s having trading interests in these places and his discovery of a channel for ships in the Berau River brought him renown and his title of ‘Rajah Laut’. Conrad probably met William Lingard at Berau. Regarding Lingard’s trading interests in the East, we can find the connection between Lingard and Stein a strong probability. In Lord Jim Conrad writes:

This Stein was a healthy and respected merchant. His “house” (because it was a house, Stein & Co…) had a large inter-island business, with a lot of trading posts established in the most out-of-the-way places for collecting the produce. (Conrad, 1985: 154)

Stein […] remained with an old trader he had come across in his journeys in the interior of Celebes – if Celebes may be said to have an interior. This old Scotsman, the only white man allowed to reside in the country at the time, was a privileged friend of the chief ruler of Wajo States […] I often heard Stein relate how that chap, who was slightly paralysed on one side, had introduced him to the native court a short time before another stroke carried him off […] ‘Look, queen, and you rajahs, this is my son […] I have traded with your fathers, and when I die he shall trade with you and your sons’ […] By means of this simple formality Stein inherited the Scotsman’s privileged position and all his stock-in-trade. (Conrad, 1985: 157)

It is commonly accepted that Alfred Wallace, who had made a collection of animals and insects in the Malay Archipelago, was also a model for Stein. (Saveson 1972: 17-18) Wallace was a naturalist whose account of the discovery of a certain butterfly is written into Stein’s story. Marlow tells us about Stein:

He was also a naturalist of some distinction, or perhaps I should say a learned collector. Entomology was his special study. His collection of Buprestidae and Longicorns – beetles all – horrible miniature monsters, looking malevolent in death and immobility, and his cabinet of butterflies, beautiful and hovering under the
glass cases of lifeless wings, had spread his fame far over the earth. (Conrad, 1985: 155)

This description fits Wallace in reference to the collections. Like Wallace, Stein catches a rare butterfly. Thus, we can say that Conrad made use of Wallace’s emotions on catching a rare butterfly, providing Stein with similar emotions. In a general sense, Wallace himself, his nature, background and activities as a naturalist, were used by Conrad in his creation of the character of Stein. Yet Wallace provides only one element in Stein’s character. One Dr Bernstein, a German naturalist, to whom Wallace makes one brief reference in his *Malay Archipelago*, and who stayed many months in the island with a large staff of hunters collecting insects for the Leyden Museum, (Wallace, 1894: 259) seems to be the source of the name and nationality of Conrad’s Stein.

Charles Allen, Wallace’s assistant, can also be thought to be the origin for Conrad’s Stein because he was similar to Stein in three ways: He was an assistant to a famous naturalist; he remained out in the East while the famous naturalist returned home, and he prospered in the East. (Sherry, 1968: 350-352) Describing how Stein became both an amateur naturalist and a trader of note, Conrad writes in *Lord Jim*:

> It was there he came upon a Dutch traveller – a rather famous man, I believe, but I don’t remember his name. It was that naturalist who, engaging him as a sort of assistant, took him to the East. They travelled in the Archipelago together and separately, collecting insects and birds, for four years or more. Then the naturalist went home, and Stein, having no home to go to, remained […] in the interior of Celebes. (Conrad, 1985: 156-157)

To conclude, it can be said that in composing the character of Stein, Conrad did not draw solely upon one person but drew upon such other people as Captain William Lingard, Alfred Russell Wallace, Dr Bernstein and Charles Allen.

As a brief note, it should also be said that Brooke’s native friend Budrudeen is the model for Jim’s friend Dain Waris. (Saveson, 1972: 41) Dain Waris is also Jim’s “war comrade”, as Stein might have called him. (Conrad, 1985: 198) The natives say that he fights like a European. Marlow says that he has a European
mind: “You meet them sometimes like that, and are surprised to discover unexpectedly a familiar train of thought, an obscured vision, a tenacity of purpose, a touch of altruism.” (Conrad, 1985: 198-199) The following passages from the letters and journals of Brooke resemble Marlow’s description: Budrudeen, “fights like a European” (Keppel, 1847: 181); he is “a very clever figure for a native, and far more clever than many better educated and more experienced Europeans” (Templar, 1853: 269), he “combines decisions and abilities quite astonishing in a native prince, and a directness of purpose seldom found in an Asiatic”. (Templar, 1853: 292) Therefore, **Lord Jim** has roots in not only the actual people, incidents and places but also travel books and historical accounts of adventurers who had become rulers of native states. It is known that Conrad created his character, Lord Jim partly with reference to James Brooke. Therefore, it can be said that the journals, letters and memoirs of Brooke and the historical documents about his affair in the East, in short **Brookiana**, as Baines calls the collection, (Baines, 1960: 254) found its way to **Lord Jim**. But Conrad also had recourse to other books than **Brookiana**. Alfred Russel Wallace’s *Malay Archipelago* seems to be one of Conrad’s favourite books, and Conrad seems to be mainly indebted to it. Richard Curle, referring to Wallace’s *Malay Archipelago*, remarks that it was Conrad’s favourite bedside book. Conrad read this

[…] over and over again […] Wallace’s *Malay Archipelago* was his favourite bedside companion. He had an intense admiration for those pioneers of explorers – “profoundly inspired men” as he has called them – who have left us a record of their work; and of Wallace, above all, he never ceased to speak in terms of enthusiasm. Even in conversation he would amplify some remark by observing, “Wallace says so-and-so,” and *The Malay Archipelago* had been his intimate friend for many years. (Curle, 1928: 120-121)

Wallace’s book provided Conrad with a great range of source material including not only characters but also incidents, attitudes and backgrounds. The details of Lord Jim’s imprisonment by Rajah Allang can be considered to owe to Wallace. Wallace describes, during his visit to Lombok and Bali, how he and his companion Ross were received at the village of Coupang:

[…] we reached our destination […] and entered the outer court of a house belonging to one of the chiefs […] Here we were
requested to seat ourselves under an open shed with a raised floor of bamboo, a place used to receive visitors and hold audiences. Turning our horses to graze on the luxuriant grass of the courtyard, we waited [...] As we had not yet breakfasted, we begged he [the Malay interpreter] would get us something to eat, which he promised to do as soon as possible. [...] a small tray was brought containing two saucers of rice, four small fried fish, and a few vegetables [...] At length, about four o’clock the Pumbuckle (chief) made his appearance [...] he seemed to be somewhat disturbed, and asked if we had brought a letter from the Anak Agong (Son of Heaven), [...] This we had not done, thinking it quite unnecessary; and he then abruptly told us that he must go and speak to his Rajah, [...] Then the Rajah asked what we wanted [...] questions were asked about my guns, and what powder I had, and whether I used shots or bullets; also what the birds were for; and how I preserved them; and what was done with them in England. Each of my answers and explanations was followed by a low and serious conversation, which we could not understand, but the purport of which we could guess. They were evidently quite puzzled, and did not believe a word we had told them. They then inquired if we were really English, and not Dutch; and although we strongly asserted our nationality, they did not seem to believe us. (Wallace, 2000: 127-128)

The conference was interrupted by a meal and then the questioning continued, says Wallace, and he goes on thus:

At length, about one in the morning, the whole party rose to depart [...] We now begged the interpreter [...] to show us a place to sleep in, at which he seemed very much surprised, saying he thought we were very well accommodated where we were [...] all we could get after another hour’s talk was a native mat and pillow, and a few old curtains to hang round three sides of the open shed and protect us a little from the cold breeze. (Wallace, 2000: 128-129)

Wallace reports in his book that on the following morning, they were again neglected and eventually he decided to leave. The interpreter then appeared and begged them to stay until the Pumbuckle returned from another conference about them with the Rajah, but Wallace refused and his party rode off. (Wallace, 2000: 130-133) In *Lord Jim*, Jim’s account of his imprisonment on his first arrival at Patusan indicates the similarities between Wallace and Jim’s imprisonment:

‘This is where I was prisoner for three days,’ [...] we were making our way slowly through a kind of awestruck riot of dependants across Tunku Allang’s courtyard. ‘Filthy place, isn’t
it? And I couldn’t get anything to eat either, unless I made a row about it, and then it was only a small plate of rice and fried fish.’ (Conrad, 1985: 189)

The unexpectedness of his coming was the only thing

that saved him from being at once dispatched with krisses […] They had him, but it was like getting hold of an apparition […] What did it mean? What to do with it? Was it too late to conciliate him? Hadn’t he better be killed without more delay? But what would happen then? […] Several times the council was broken up […] the deliberations upon Jim’s fate went on night and day […] Now and again ‘some fussy ass’ deputed from the council-room would come out running to him, and […] administer amazing interrogatories: ‘Were the Dutch coming to take the country? Would the white man like to go back down the river? What was the object of coming to such a miserable country?’ (Conrad, 1985: 191-192)

The similarities between Wallace’s and Jim’s imprisonments are too obvious to escape notice. Both Wallace and Jim have been confined in a courtyard and forced to wait about for a long time while the Rajah holds conferences about them. In each case, these conferences suffer interruptions. Both men are asked questions about their purpose in coming there and reference is made in each instance to the Dutch. In both situations, there is a difficulty in getting food, the food provided is similar, and the accommodation is limited to a shed in the courtyard. The reference to “the effluvia of filth and rotten matter” comes from a later passage in which Wallace describes an attap house: “Close to my house was an inclosed mudhold where three buffaloes were shut up every night, and the effluvia from which freely entered through the open bamboo floor.” (Wallace, 2000: 170) And lastly both Wallace and Jim put an end to the situation by suddenly deciding to leave.

Major Frederick McNair’s Perak and the Malays is another source material, which supplied Conrad with a number of details for Lord Jim. Conrad “took the names of Doramin, Tamb’ Itam and Tunku Allang from this book”. (Baines, 1960: 254) It can be observed that the names appear in McNair’s account of a Malay boat which was attacked by pirates in 1873, on the Jugra River, Selangor, Malaya. The sole survivor of the attack stated
there were three Chinese passengers [...] and six Malays belonging to the boat, named Hadjee Doraman, who was the nacodah (skipper), Ah Kim, Tamb’ Itam, Meman, Mambi, and myself [...] We left Bandar Langat about six o’clock A.M.; we arrived here (the stockade at the mouth) about one o’clock, [...] We anchored about three o’clock [...] They [pirates] talked to Doraman. About six o’clock Doraman told us to bring the rice. When he was about to begin eating, shots were fired from both boats. Doraman fell to the shots [...] Three of our people jumped into the water and were stabbed, and all the others in my boat were also stabbed and killed. I jumped into the water, hung on the rudder, and after dark floated away to the shore. (McNair, 1878: 283-284)

The pirates who slaughtered Doraman and his crew were at last captured and tried at the place where the piracy had taken place. McNair was one of the British Commissioners who watched the proceedings of the court. The sitting of the court took place at a stockade, and seven of the eight pirates were executed by the Sultan’s kris. (McNair, 1878: 283) Before the trial and the eventual execution, a British Admiral had an interview with the Sultan who

was surrounded by his chiefs and people [...] The Admiral, in referring to the barbarity of the Jugra piracy, advised and urged upon the Sultan to caution his people against being guilty of such acts in future, pointing out how it was impossible that they could be left unpunished [...] The Sultan listened very attentively, and then turning quickly round to his people, he exclaimed: [...] ‘Hear now, my people! Don’t let us have any more of this little game! (McNair, 1878: 289)

The similarity between the Sultan’s speech and that of the Rajah becomes evident through the following account from Lord Jim:

Some poor villagers had been waylaid and robbed while on their way to Doramin’s house with a few pieces of gum or beeswax which they wished to exchange for rice. ‘It was Doramin who was a thief,’ burst out the Rajah. A shaking fury seemed to enter that old, frail body [...] Jim began to speak. Resolutely, coolly, and for some time he enlarged upon the text that no man should be prevented from getting his food and his children’s food honestly. The other sat like a tailor at his board [...] fixing Jim through the grey hair that fell over his very eyes. When Jim had done there was a great stillness. [...] till the old Rajah sighed faintly, and looking up, with a toss of his head, said quickly,
‘You hear, my people! No more of these little games.’ This decree was received in profound silence. (Conrad, 1985: 190)

It is clear that the incidents are similar and Conrad seems to have taken over the Sultan’s speech nearly verbatim.

Conrad uses another incident from McNair; yet he blends this incident with information from other sources. The incident taken from McNair was his account of the murder of the Resident of Perak, J.W.W. Birch on November 2, 1878. Birch had fallen out of favour with the Sultan of Perak, and was attacked and murdered by the Malays while he was in his bathing-house:

 […] the infuriated Malays, armed with spears and krises, made a rush in a body down to the river-bank, where Mr Birch was ashore at the bathing-house, an orderly being on guard with a revolver. He let his leader, however, be taken completely by surprise […] he was savagely attacked, some of the Malays driving their keen limbings through the rattan mat that formed a screen, while others went to the end of the bath, and, as the wounded Resident struggled up out of the water, one man cut at him with a sword, when he sank. (McNair, 1878: 369-370)

A reflection of this incident occurs in *Lord Jim* when Cornelius suggests to Jim that he is in danger of being assassinated, one of the possible methods being “to be stabbed in the bath-house”. (Conrad, 1985: 219) McNair’s description of the campaign against the Malay rebels following the murder of Birch seems to have given Conrad “suggestions first for Jim’s flight from Rajah Allang and secondly for his attack on Sherif Ali’s stockade”. (Sherry, 1966: 151) McNair describes how a certain Captain Channer led a surprise attack on a Malay stockade:

This jungle fort was composed of logs surrounded by a palisade, and sharp spiked bamboos were everywhere about the ground.

This was an important moment; for if the Malays had caught sight of the attacking force the alarm would have been given at once; but by using precautions, and watching the enemy, Captain Channer was able to learn the easiest way into the stockade. Then, supported by two Ghookhas, he leaped over the palisade, where he could hear the Malays talking inside – no look-out being kept, as the enemy was cooking; and then dashing forward, followed by his two men, he boldly attacked the twenty or thirty who constituted the garrison, shot down one man with his
revolver, while the two Ghoorkhas each shot down theirs [...] the enemy, believing themselves to be surrounded, took the flight. (McNair, 1878: 400-401)

This recalls Conrad’s account of the attack on Sherif Ali. Jim organizes the Bugis for his attack on Sherif Ali’s stockade in order to drive him out, because he has been terrorizing the local population. Jim has the Bugis mount “two rusty iron 7-pounders” (Conrad, 1985: 324) on one of the two twin hills overlooking the stockade which is built on the other twin hill. Then with Doramin’s son, Dain Waris, and the other Bugis Jim lay in the wet grass waiting for the appearance of the sun, which was the agreed signal [...] With the first slant of sunrays [...] the summit of one hill wreathed itself, with heavy reports, in white clouds of smoke, and the other burst into an amazing noise of yells, war-cries, shouts of anger, of surprise, of dismay. Jim and Dain Waris were the first to lay their hands on the stakes [...] [Jim] put his shoulder to it [...] and went in head over heels [...] The third man in, it seems, had been Tamb’ Itam, Jim’s own servant [...] The rout [...] had been complete. (Conrad, 1985: 202-205)

Summarily, in the case of both Channer and Jim there is a surprise attack. Besides, Channer, followed by two Ghurkhas, is the first through the stockade, and this parallels Jim, who is followed into the stockade by Dain Waris and Tamb’ Itam.

Another resemblance between the record of McNair and Lord Jim occurs in the descriptions of the stockades. McNair describes the stockade, which had been taken by the British during the expedition as such: “It was a strong place, with deep ditch, earth-work, wattled fence, and pointed bamboos, while it was armed with a large iron gun and a small pivot.” (McNair, 1878: 380) In Lord Jim it is told that Jim built a fort, for himself, that he called “The Fort Patusan”, and it is described in a similar manner: “a deep ditch, an earth wall topped by a palisade, and at the angles guns mounted on platforms.”(Conrad, 1985: 256)

Conrad is known to have made use of Captain Sir Edward Belcher’s account of the voyage of H.M.S. Samarang. The account of his voyage can be found in his Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Samarang during the years 1843-46. (1848)
In the book, Belcher gives a record of his search up the Berau River for the missing European seamen. Conrad seems to have borrowed from Belcher to complete the Sherif Ali incident. In *Lord Jim*, there are two native powers at Patusan: The Bugis led by Doramin, and the Rajah Allang, who “pretended to be the only trader in his country”, and whose “idea of trading was indistinguishable from the commonest forms of robbery.” (Conrad, 1985: 195) He is a cruel man and “struck at them [the Celebes men] through his subjects.” (Conrad, 1985: 195)

When Jim arrived at Patusan

The situation was complicated by a wandering stranger, an Arab half-breed [Sherif Ali], who […] had established himself in the fortified camp on the summit of one of the twin hills. He hung over the town of Patusan like a hawk over a poultry-yard, but he devastated the open country. Whole villages, deserted, rotted on their blackened posts over the banks of clear streams […] The two parties in Patusan were not sure which one this partisan most desired to plunder. The Rajah intrigued with him feebly. (Conrad, 1985: 196)

Later Jim shows the ruins of Sherif Ali’s stockade to Marlow. He says:

On the other hill, two hundred yards across a sombre precipice, I saw a line of high blackened stakes, showing here and there ruinously – the remnants of Sherif Ali’s impregnable camp. (Conrad, 1985: 199)

Belcher refers to a ruined stockade on a hill on the left side of the river Berau just before Gunung Tabur. He writes:

About 9 A.M., on the 30th of December, we noticed what at first appeared to be a Malay battery, or stockade, constructed upon the summit of a hill which completely commanded the whole reach of the river below this place […] we soon discovered that the place was not only without inhabitants, but that the town […] had been lately burned […] and the plantain and other fruit trees lately cut down, exhibited indubitable symptoms of recent war. (Belcher, 1848: 212-213)

The stockade described by Belcher is similar to that of Sherif Ali. Yet, we can say that Conrad may have referred to some other travel or adventure books for the ruinous stockade described in *Lord Jim* since such stockades were not rare in the East in those times.
Finally, it can be said that travel and adventure books provided Conrad, for his novel *Lord Jim*, with information about the East and the incidents there, which could not have been obtained either from observation and hearsay during the period when he was at Berau and Bulungan. Conrad was able to take not only Malay names, but suggestions for Malay characters and their histories and backgrounds, as well as obtaining information about the attitudes they would be likely to have towards each other and each race, and especially towards the white man. So far, what has been demonstrated can be summarized as such: Conrad drew upon “his seaman’s experiences for intellectual capital – for curious facts, human types, and innumerable impressions of individuals and places”; besides, “his Polish background supplied him with a deep emotional and moral power”. (Megroz, 1964: 85)

As Conrad did in his *Heart of Darkness*, in *Lord Jim*, he used incidents from the real life to illustrate the environment in which the characters he created could perform and react. By means of this source study, we have observed that the novel is partly based on true events. Conrad combined references from real life with the theme of betrayal through his character Jim, who is haunted by the guilt of cowardice and forced to face his own past tragically. Conrad, once again, presents us the tension between individual self-interest and the demands of the prevailing social organization. Perhaps one difference between the uses of the allusions from the real world in *Heart of Darkness* and in *Lord Jim* is that Conrad used many more materials provided by his own experience – his sojourn in Africa up the Congo River – in *Heart of Darkness* than he used in *Lord Jim*. We have observed that he made more use of the other’s experiences than his own in *Lord Jim*. It can be argued that Conrad, through time, became so sensitive a writer toward the others’ experiences that he could draw upon them very skilfully in his novel. Thus, we can conclude that his fiction is a reflection of his intellectual development.

The general conclusion we can draw from this source study of *Lord Jim* is that the dominant thematic veins of the novel agree with either Conrad’s own life – as both a Pole and an English seaman – or the incidents that took place in history, and the historical figures. Yet, this study does not aim to establish a point-by-point indebtedness or influence. The emphasis is on the relevance between history and
the novel. The connections between the novel and Conrad’s experiences both as a man having a Polish background and as a seaman, between the novel and the actual people and incidents, which Conrad either saw or heard about, between the novel and the places he visited, and between the novel and the travel and adventure accounts, all show that Conrad, while writing *Lord Jim*, made use of all these materials. The study has also enabled us to reach the new historicist premises that texts, whether literary or non-literary, are all products in a cultural network, and that in one way or another they affect each other as they are the productions of the same culture, and that both writers and their works are inseparable from the culture in which they produced them.

Now it would be appropriate to put Conrad’s text in its historical and cultural context to explore its place in the imperial culture and thus to accomplish this new historicist reading of the text, which aims to investigate how far Conrad reflected the imperial culture in which he produced his text and how he subverted that culture in his text. To this end, we can investigate how Conrad presents his characters and his main themes in the novel; in other words, the ‘value’ of his presentation will be the main concern of the following part of this chapter. To start with, we can take a brief look at Conrad’s views about fiction and history. He wrote in his *Notes on Life and Letters*:

Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than this; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting – on a second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth. But let that pass. A historian may be an artist too, and a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder, of human experience. (Conrad, 1921a: 17)

It is clear that in these lines Conrad suggests that the novel presents us a more truthful reality than history does. To investigate how *Lord Jim* presents this truer reality, the novel may be read from the standpoint of New Historicism. To this end, the characters, actions and the themes in the novel will be studied in the light of history, the history in which Conrad wrote it.
To begin with Jim, the eponymous character, he is described as “one of us” by Marlow, the narrator-participant in the novel. Marlow uses the phrase “one of us” a minimum of nine times in the novel. (Conrad, 1985: 38, 64, 75, 85, 101, 241, 249, 272, 313) The phrase deserves a special examination because it indicates “Jim is a member of a group, the seamen, and that he is a gentleman”. (Goonetilleke, 1990: 23) Its broader inclusion takes in such concepts as merchant-adventurers and the British and the ethical qualities generally associated with seamanship and being British. Moreover, the phrase is used in relation to “the man of “idea”, the colonial man”. (Lee, 1969: 35) The characteristics of “us” can be rather well established by reference to the situations in which the phrase appears. For example, the nationality of “us” is established in a passage following a long tirade by the rascally captain of the Patna against the English, in which he works himself up to “shpit” in a gesture against his English “verflucte certificate” which has been taken away from him for ignoble conduct as a sea captain. Marlow, in contrast, shifts his view from the “patriotic Flensburg” to Jim. He says: “I watched the youngster there. I liked his appearance; I knew his appearance; he came from the right place; he was one of us.” (Conrad, 1985: 38) We know that Jim comes from England. In the following passage, Marlow presents Jim with the qualities of the British:

He stood there for all the parentage of his kind, for men and women by no means clever or amusing, but whose very existence is based upon honest faith, and upon the instinct of courage. I don’t mean the military courage, or civil courage, or any special kind of courage. I mean just that inborn ability to look temptations straight in the face – a readiness unintellectual enough, goodness knows, but without pose – a power of resistance, don’t you see, ungracious if you like, but priceless – an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors, before the might of nature, and the seductive corruption of men – backed by a faith invulnerable to the strength of facts, to the contagion of example, to the solicitation of ideas. (Conrad, 1985: 38)

The phrase “one of us” has been discussed by most of Conrad’s critics. For example, Tony Tanner relates “one of us” with the image of “a western seaman”. (Tanner, 1964: 13) For Moser, the group behind “us” is the solid folk of England, and Conrad suggests, toward the end of the novel, that “the ranks Jim belongs to,
or should belong to” are essentially the whole community of Western man. (Moser, 1957: 20) Parry argues that Marlow is drawn to Jim’s familiar and congenial features, and thus comes to value those qualities in Jim seen in his outward image as the very model of colonial manhood and that Jim seems to have all the requirements of colonial manhood. (Parry, 1987: 80) The idea that the “us” are honest and dedicated is given in Jim’s “frank aspect, […] artless smile, […] youthful seriousness”. (Conrad, 1985: 64) Marlow goes on: “He was of the right sort; he was one of us.” (Conrad, 1985: 64) The “us” are highly aware of honour, and proud in the best sense, as Jim indicates when he is dying: “the white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance.” (Conrad, 1985: 312) Marlow says that Jim “fell forward, dead […] to go away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct […] he was one of us.” (Conrad, 1985: 312-313) Thus, we can say that the concept of “us” is defined as a clique of dedicated, honourable, humanistic, courageous British merchant adventurers who bear the burden. At the beginning of the novel, through the anonymous narrator’s presentation of Jim, we can see that Jim’s qualities are associated with the codes of such social classes as seamanship and the clergy:

He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull. His voice was deep, loud, and his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it. It seemed a necessity, […] He was spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat, (Conrad, 1985: 9)

Jim is drawn here as one belonging to a certain class. Immediately after given his physical appearance, we are given the information that “in the various Eastern ports where he got his living as chip-chandler’s water-clerk he was very popular”. (Conrad, 1985: 9) Jim is also presented as one deserving to belong to seamanship for he comes from a parsonage. Conrad writes: “Many commanders of fine merchant-ships come from those abodes of piety and peace.” (Conrad, 1985: 10) Here the narrator speaks about the clergy as the officially appointed custodians of morality whose function is to manipulate piety and faith as a means of social control, and he looks on Jim’s personality and situation “from the standpoint of one who consents to the impositions of regulations that will ensure the uniformity,
cohesion and equilibrium of existing social arrangements”. (Parry, 1987: 78) Jim seems to be a qualified member of the society to accomplish many achievements in his sea life. Outwardly, Jim seems the ideal representative of certain virtues that Marlow most admires:

An unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors, before the might of nature, and the seductive corruption of man – backed by a faith invulnerable to the strength of facts, to the contagion of example, to the solicitation of ideas. (Conrad, 1985: 38)

Jim draws himself as a hero in his imagination. His inner existence was largely compounded of dreams. In his training days

He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shell-fish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing man – always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book. (Conrad, 1985: 11)

Owing to his injury, Jim had to leave his ship at an Eastern port, but after his release from hospital, he took the temporary job of chief mate of the Patna. He is presented as one who feels “something like gratitude for this high peace of ease and sky”. (Conrad, 1985: 21) Jim’s imagination again seems to be enmeshed with a dream:

At such times his thoughts would be full of valorous deeds: he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements [...] they passed before him with a heroic tread; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself. There was nothing he could not face. He was so pleased with the idea that he smiled. (Conrad, 1985: 21-22)

So far, we have seen that Jim looks like a reliable British sailor and a confident member of English society. Then he should exemplify honesty, loyalty and instinctive courage. But Jim is also drawn as a character between whose ideals and acts there is an incongruity because he has a weak point: it is his powerful
imagination which causes him to exaggerate things. For this reason Jim can be described, as Tanner states, as a man whose will is valiant but whose behaviour is craven, who is bravely active in his intentions and disastrously passive in his deeds, whose ideal aspirations are courageous and whose real conduct in a crisis is ignoble. He is a man who pursues a glamorous dream at the same time as he flees from an ugly fact. In him, the best and the basest of human motives are ominously interwoven. In imagination he is a hero; in actuality he is a coward. (Tanner, 1964: 11)

Jim is a character through whose characterization Conrad subverts the idea that the British are a race that is dedicated, honourable, humanistic and courageous. This subversion is provided with the obvious separation between the Jim as an individual person and the Jim as an embodiment of the British “idea”. Jim’s actions do not accord with fidelity, which is the code of the British Merchant Marine, or, as Marlow puts it in the novel, “the service of the Red Rag”, “the craft of the sea.” (Conrad, 1985: 39) Several instances for the incongruity between his self-ideal and his actions are apparent in the first part of the novel. For example, during his training days, two men are thrown in the water by a collision of rough water. Jim stands irresolute, paralyzed by what seems to be fear, and only moves when it is too late. His imagination is horrified by the brutal violence of the gale, and “he stood still – as if confounded.” (Conrad, 1985: 11) The other boys see less than Jim, but as a result, can act decisively. (Conrad, 1985: 12) Thus in a moment of indecision, he missed being in the rescue boat. But Jim still felt that “he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and seas”. (Conrad, 1985: 13)

Another failure of Jim lies in a soft spot in his attraction to the less demanding service in Eastern waters and ports. (Henricksen, 1992: 99) As the omniscient narrator tells us, due to the bad weather, Jim “was secretly glad he had not to go on deck” (Conrad, 1985: 14), and was filled “with a despairing desire to escape at any cost,” when he was disabled by a falling spar” (Conrad, 1985: 15); and therefore was lying in his cabin. But when the good weather returned, “he thought no more about it”. (Conrad, 1985: 15)
The incongruity between Jim’s self and his actions is given immediately after he dreams of himself. The accident in the Patna, which was to alter the whole course of his career, happens just after he had such dreams. The Patna incident is an important failure through which Jim turns out to be an anti-hero or a “vulnerable hero”. (Moser, 1957: 16) If we recall the Patna incident, we can see how Jim acts during the accident. When the Patna accident happens, Jim rushes to investigate. What he sees is that the vessel has evidently been badly holed and the forepeak is half-full of water. He feels the iron bulkhead bulge under his hand and as he looks at it, a large flake of rust falls off. And now, with the swiftness of tropical weather-changes, an opaque cloud, presaging a storm “had eaten up already one-third of the sky” and the seven lifeboats on board would not hold more than a third of the passengers. It is true that Jim does not give way to panic, he raises no alarm but he sets to work to cut the lifeboats clear of the ship while the other officers, in a frenzy of terror, are desperately trying to launch one of the boats in order to escape before the Patna sinks, which might happen at any moment. Jim, at first, does not help them. But when the boat is at last launched and the surviving officers are safely in it and the ship begins to plunge in the rising sea and Jim hears, standing alone on the bridge, the captain utter a shout of warning, he jumps into the boat without thinking. Though Jim, at the very second, notices what he has done, it is too late to go back. Jim once again fails as a result of his lack of courage. Jim, as Marlow already knows, has shown his vulnerability in the Patna accident. He betrays his seaman’s trust, jumping impulsively from the stricken ship. Marlow’s interpretation of Jim’s desertion of the steamship Patna and eight hundred pilgrims, which can be found in his response to Jim’s hearing, would help us evaluate Jim’s action: “Nothing more awful than to watch a man who has been found out, not in a crime but in a more than criminal weakness.” (Conrad, 1985: 38) Jim’s weakness is more than criminal because he has broken the fundamental, elevated trust of the sea.

Conrad also subverts the conventional, mythical hero of the 19th century travel and adventure accounts through the characterization of Lord Jim. In the Patusan section of the novel, Jim is again, at first, presented as a man of courage and invariable success. At Patusan, Jim, having a great energy and a sense of fairness, seems to be a good leader. He gains the Malayan people’s faith. The untutored
Bugis regarded him almost as a god, “for never once had he failed them, never once had the mysterious white man ceased to exercise his beneficent powers on their behalf”. (Curle, 1957: 41) We know that Patusan people “had trusted him […] Him alone! His bare word” (Conrad, 1985: 203) and we also know Tamb Itam’s “devotion to his ‘white lord’ ”. (Conrad, 1985: 205) Marlow’s last sight of Jim, just before Marlow’s ship leaves Patusan, seems to support the idea that the Patusan people have accepted Jim as a benevolent lawgiver:

Two half-naked fishermen […] pouring the plaint of their trifling, miserable, oppressed lives into the airs of the white lord, and no doubt he was listening to it, making it his own […] Their dark-skinned bodies vanished on the dark background long before I had lost sight of their protector. He was white from head to foot, and remained persistently visible with the strong-hold of the night at his back, the sea at his feet, the opportunity by his side – still veiled. (Conrad, 1985: 253)

We also know that at Patusan, Jim, as a man of great courage, overcomes dangers to reach Doramin, calmly risks being poisoned as Marlow witnessed, beards four murderers, killing one and disarming the others, defeats his enemy, Sherif Ali, and, with an “untroubled bearing”, speaks to the desperado, Gentleman Brown. Jim seems to be accomplishing his dreams as a leader of the people there till he encounters the horrible Brown. Jim’s failure is the result of his inability to act decisively. He allows Brown and his followers to leave the country unharmed on condition that they take no life. But Brown breaks the pact and kills Dain Waris and his men. Jim, feeling responsible for this, does not try to escape with Jewel, but allows himself to be killed.

In the context of Lord Jim, Jim’s death cannot be seen as a heroic act although he finally faces his death with the courage he lacked on the Patna. His death is a failure because Jim, in his colonial exile, by his submission to death, leaves the Patusan people without a leader, and Jewel without a lover. He once again betrays people who trusted him just as he betrayed the pilgrims on the Patna, who “surrendered to the wisdom of white men and to their courage”. (Conrad, 1985: 19) In the Patusan section of the novel, we once again see that Jim’s appearance and acts are totally in contrast: On one hand, we see Jim, who is “clean-limbed, clean-faced, firm on his feet, as promising a boy as the sun ever shone on”
(Conrad, 1985: 36), as Marlow says; on the other, we see his acts: “the destruction of his best friend, the destruction of himself, the abandonment of the Patusan village to leaderlessness and depredation.” (Ghent, 1953: 230)

If we put Jim in the historical context in which the British traditions of duty, obedience, faithfulness and unostentatious courage were of great importance, Jim’s desertion of his ship and the helpless pilgrims it carries seems deplorable. Jim is “one of us”, an Englishman, son of a country clergyman, a “gentleman” brought up in the British traditions. He looks so trustworthy, so perfect an example of the unassuming nobility of the tradition, from which he has sprung. Nevertheless, he has committed a shockingly dishonourable act. So there is a discrepancy between what Jim looks like and what he is. Creating such a discrepancy in his character Conrad subverts “the seaman’s code of fidelity, obedience, and obscure courage on which the British Empire was built”. (Miller in Bloom, 1987: 103) Conrad, through presenting Jim as a failure whose ability to act decisively is paralyzed during the time of danger, questions the power installed behind this standard and within it. He shows us that, if there is no sovereign power enthroned in the fixed standard of conduct, the standard is without validity. Then it is an arbitrary code of behaviour, as Marlow says, “this precious notion of a convention, only one of the rules of the game, nothing more”. (Conrad, 1985: 66) Miller comments on this matter as such:

Nothing matters, and anything is possible, as in that condition of spiritual anarchy which takes over on the ship’s boat after Jim and the other officers have deserted the Patna and left her to sink with eight hundred men, women, and children. (Miller in Bloom, 1987: 104)

Through the second part of the novel, Conrad subverts the concept of hero created by the British imperialism and reflected in the colonial discourses of the time. One example to this type of hero is Sir James Brooke, the first white Rajah of Sarawak. The subversion of the concept of the colonial hero is provided by the contrast between Jim, who is “white from head to foot” (Conrad, 1985: 253), and who stands before Doramin, “stiffened and with bared head in the light of torches”. (Conrad, 1985: 312) James Brooke was drawn as a benevolent lawgiver
in the travel and adventure accounts written in the 19th century. Some of Brooke’s achievements were recorded by Keppel as such:

After ten years, we find Sir James Brooke the most powerful Rajah in the Eastern Archipelago. The city of Sarawak can no longer be seen at one view; [...] The population exceeds forty-five thousand. A fort, formidable from its commanding position, a Protestant church and a Mahomedan mosque are the principle objects which first attract the eye. As you advance up the river, after passing the suburbs containing the villa residences of the Europeans, you see the Court House, from which even-handed justice is dispensed without the interference of lawyers [...] Shops containing goods open to the inspection of the passer-by – a thing unknown in any other native state of the Archipelago – are here to be seen. [In] the missionary church of St. Thomas [...] divine service is performed [...] thanks to the exertions of the most indefatigable and zealous churchman, the Rev. Francis McDougall [...] The strict morality of his conduct, added to the above claims on their respect and gratitude has impressed the natives with a veneration for him little inferior to that which they feel for the Rajah himself. Attached to the church is a school, to the management of which Mrs. McDougall devotes her valuable time: it numbers already twenty-five Dyak and Chinese children. (Keppell, Vol. II, 2002: 2-3)

Brooke was explaining, in his journal, his wish to perform a public service:

I go to awake the spirit of slumbering philanthropy with regard to these islands [...] fortune and life I give freely, and if I fail in the attempt, I shall not have lived wholly in vain.” (Quoted in Keppell, Vol. I, 1846: 4)

Brooke’s expression sounds like a note of the disinterestedness of a hero. Likewise, Conrad draws Jim as a benevolent lawgiver. Jim is presented as a white ruler having the ethical qualities such as assumption of responsibility, courage and trust. “He is the symbol of British superiority in the East.” (Lee, 1969: 90) But at the end of the novel, Conrad makes him a failure. Jim thus becomes a subversion of the hero in the English colonial discourses, who was recognized as the embodiment of many accomplishments in the exotic places far from the civilized parts of the world.

The cause of the discrepancy between Jim’s conduct and his wholesome appearance is as significant as the contrast itself. Jim’s imagination is shown as the
cause of his downfall throughout the novel. As Tanner points out Jim is so imaginative that, “when a sudden call to real action shatters his reveries, he is paralyzed, unable to make the transition from the world of fancy to the world of fact”. (Tanner, 1964: 19) His imagination was the cause of his desertion of the *Patna*, for it made unbearable the threat of the storm and the scurrying of the captain and the engineers; because of his vivid consciousness of what might happen Jim could not endure the flaked, rotting bulkhead that hardly separated him from death. When he deserted the ship, he was fleeing from his own thought. Again, imagination is seen as the cause of Jim’s death in the Patusan section. He was unable to see Brown simply as a ruthless criminal, and, more important, “his imaginative conception of previous dishonour had become so intense that only death would satisfy it”. (Guetti, 1970: 30) In the novel, we see that Marlow, at dinner with Jim, realizes that the desertion was caused by Jim’s incredibly active imagination, his vivid awareness of what might happen. (Conrad, 1985: 76-77) Stein, a respectable old acquaintance of Marlow’s diagnoses: “I understand very well. He is romantic.” (Conrad, 1985: 162) Stein implies that Jim is labouring under a distorted illusion very far from reality and immediately following his diagnosis, he states: “A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns.” (Conrad, 1985: 163) To return to Moser’s “invulnerable hero”, he describes such kind of hero as “the man with the plague spot; the man who, confronted with isolation with a crisis, necessarily fails”. (Moser, 1957: 16) The vulnerable hero is also a failure and a betrayer. By analogy, Jim’s plague spot is his imagination and when he encounters the crisis on the *Patna*, he leaves the eight hundred pilgrims to their fate; so he is a failure. He is also a betrayer because his conduct does not accord with the codes of seamanship. At the moment of crisis, Jim is cursed by an excess of imagination. When the *Patna* strikes an underwater derelict, he looks ahead although he knows well what to do as a seaman. He imagines the rusty bulkhead giving way, the pilgrims in panic, as he reports to Marlow. (Conrad, 1985: 68) Because of his imagination rendering him powerless he deserts the ship. Jim goes to Patusan to realize his romantic ideals. But his imagination once again fails him. So we can say that Jim is a failure at Patusan in that he couldn’t succeed in achieving full-self knowledge because he is still “an outcast from himself […] unable to recognize his own identity” (Ghent, 1953: 58)
and he continues to exist in the “mist of self-deception”. (Guerard, 1958: 140) Jim’s failures can be taken as outcomes of not only his imagination but also his romanticism caused by his excessive imagination. He can be described as “a rather adolescent dreamer and ‘romantic’ with a strong ego-ideal, who prefers solitary reveries of heroism to the shock and bustle of active life”, and as one having “a strong visual imagination and vividly foresees the worst”. (Guerard, 1958: 140) He can also be taken as a romantic egoist, dreamer who “idealizes his self-deception, and distorts reality in his obsession with the fixed idea of his own greatness”. (Moser, 1957: 30-33) Jim is also “unfit for reality” because he has “exchanged his real self with an ideal self” and he jumps from the Patna because of his “prolonged habit of self-deception” (Berthoud, 1978: 72-73) caused by his self-indulgent dreams.

Now it would be appropriate to make a further analysis to understand the reason why Jim is so sensitive and imaginative a character that in all cases of crises he fails. His being an imaginative character has already been pointed out by the help of the scenes in which Jim seems to be paralyzed. His sensitivity can be seen at these moments of crises as well. It is his sensitivity again which makes Jim flee from port to port after the Patna incident. At the beginning of the novel, Conrad’s framing narrator tells us:

His incognito, which had as many holes as a sieve, was not meant to hide a personality but a fact. When the fact broke through the incognito he would leave suddenly the seaport where he happened to be at the time and go to another – generally farther east. (Conrad, 1985: 10)

Our concern here is the recognition of the reason of Jim’s imaginativeness. To approach this matter in a new historicist perspective, an exploration of how Jim’s self has been constructed is needed. An exploration of the impacts on the construction of Jim’s self will reveal that Jim’s self was shaped by the adventure narratives. In the opening depiction of Jim, we are told that his self-concept is derived from “sea life of light literature”. (Conrad, 1985: 11) As Henricksen puts forward, here the anonymous narrator “explicitly thematizes the shaping influence of societal discourses as they come to the individual already aesthetically encoded in entertaining narratives”. (Henricksen, 1992: 87) Jim’s internalization of
adventure narratives in his fictional world is the reason for his self-delusion. It is evident that in his inner world Jim creates a hero and believes that he himself is a hero, and he sees himself “as a hero in a book”. (Conrad, 1985: 11) Leading a fictional life and constructing his identity in a literary context, Jim views himself as a protagonist in an imaginary story. Throughout the novel, Jim is reflected as having been influenced by ideals absorbed from the literature of heroic adventure, and even his decision to become a seaman was occasioned by the adventure stories and his image of himself as a seaman is nurtured on them. (Erdinast-Vulcan, 1991: 37; Saveson 1972: 34)

The travel and adventure accounts of the 19th century are known to have emerged with the effects of imperialism. In other words, imperialism created its own culture, which was embellished with colonial discourses, and the travels and adventure accounts of the merchant-adventurers and the white rajahs. In these colonial discourses, these adventures were aestheticized; and finally imperialism created such characters as Jim, who is so romantic and imaginative that he cannot see his real self, and therefore, is in a self-delusion.

Conrad’s creating such a vulnerable hero is, of course, not aimless. His aim is to criticize “the romantic imperialist of adventure literature’s collusion with imperialism”. (Henricksen, 1992: 87) Conrad’s critique of imperialism is achieved, in Lord Jim, through a series of subversions of the standard accepted values of imperialism. A further study may show us how Conrad, through his novel, subverts the colonial discourses containing the adventures of the colonists.

As it has been demonstrated in an earlier part of this chapter, among the colonial discourses the Brookiana had a special role in Conrad’s creating his character, Lord Jim. It is known that for many years Brooke was recognized as the symbol of the White Rajah for the British public. “Brooke’s fantastic success was a contemporary folk myth that Conrad interpreted and refined in his art.” (Fleishman, 1967: 99) To recall a short history of Brooke, we can give the account of Brooke’s deeds:

James Brooke was a sea-man trader who arrived in Sarawak in 1839 with little more than the proverbial shirt on his back. After interludes in which he aided a Celebes chief in a local war and
tried to stir up the Sultan of Boni to revolt against the Dutch, he returned to help Sarawak’s ruler, Hassim, suppress his enemies. […] Brooke forced him to step down, and had his conquest ratified by the Sultan of Brunei. With these origins […] Brooke began a dynasty […] Brooke was an enthusiastic colonizer […] Once he overcame the opposition of the Dutch authorities and native rulers, he energetically pursued the twin goals of colonial development and private gain. He cleaned up the pirate nests in order to make the seas safe for trade; he abolished slavery in order to create a labor force beyond the control of native slaveholders; he relieved the Dyaks from their traditional exploitation and periodic slaughter by the Malays in order to have them on his side […] he stipulated free trade […] Despite his conquering sword, Brooke was able to become a successful colonist. (Fleishman, 1967: 100-101)

Lord Jim is drawn as a benevolent colonist in the second part of the novel. The idea of benevolent colonization vividly described in Brooke’s writings is also represented in the character, Lord Jim. Jim becomes a significant and positive political force within his new community. He commits himself to spending his life among the Malay natives and allies himself with them. Marlow reports that Jim “seemed to love the land and the people”. (Conrad, 1985: 189) The working of the Brooke regime was glowingly celebrated throughout the 19th century. (Fleishman, 1967: 102) But Conrad, unlike both Brooke and the writers and hired biographers of Brooke, who created the “Brooke myth”, celebrating Brooke’s deeds in the Eastern Archipelago, represents the myth from a different perspective. It has been pointed out that Conrad made use of the writings of and about Rajah Brooke. But Conrad’s interest in Brooke, as marked by Fleishman, “is not simply a matter of colourful details of his career, on which was modelled Jim’s jump into a ditch during his escape from the natives”. (Fleishman, 1967: 101) It is true that the glory reflected in the writings about Brooke is partially reflected in Jim’s accomplishments at Patusan; but Conrad, while making Jim partially successful in becoming a colonist, makes his character fail to realize completely his “idea”. Jim’s career of benevolent lawgiver and arbitrator at Patusan is presented as a political failure. Conrad does this by making Jim’s egoism, which gives the impetus to his idealism, come ultimately to determine his failure. Marlow, while saying that Jim loved the land and the people there, adds the qualification that he loved them: “with a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness.” (Conrad, 1985: 189) We also know that Jim goes to Patusan to realize his dreams,
which he could not realize in the Western society. Conrad’s creation of a character like Jim, in whose personality benevolence and egoism skilfully coincided, gives us the idea that Conrad was aware of the dangers of personal imperialism. Idealism and disinterestedness like Brooke’s were considered the essence of the colonist and devotion to his impulse is the mark of Brooke himself. Nevertheless, “when these selfless virtues are associated with egoistic sentimentality, they make the colonist a danger to those whose betterment he seeks” (Fleishman, 1967: 105) as in the case of Jim. There seems to be something fatal in the very virtues that mark the virtues of the best colonists. Through Jim, Conrad shows us the possibility of ordering a society almost completely along the lines of an individual’s imagination, and the danger when an individual’s imagination is at work. The result is, in Jim’s case, the destruction of himself and the people who trusted him. Then, for Conrad, there is no such successful adventurer. What Jim, as a colonist, has left behind himself is nothing more than such rumours as: “Some white men had gotten in there and turned things upside down.” (Conrad, 1985: 290) Through Jim’s failures, Conrad criticizes imperialism. Conrad’s portrayal of imperialism in the novel can be associated with Conrad’s portrayal of Jim. Jim is known to be a failure in Western society, who could not maintain the codes of seamanship, as presented in the Patna episode of the novel. But ironically he is sent to Patusan, a part of the Eastern world, to discover a new self. At Patusan, Jim faces the truth that none of his triumphs can ever wipe the slate clean. (Watt in Billy, 1987: 86) Jim says: “There is always the bully thing at the back of my head.” (Conrad, 1985: 306) He also confesses: “The world outside is enough to give a fright […] because I have not forgotten why I came here. Not yet!” (Conrad, 1985: 230) Then we can ask whether individuals like Jim failing in their native community can be heroes in the colonial settings. The answer becomes evident in the last act of Jim. Then Conrad suggests, in a way, that some native communities were better off without European influence.

Conrad’s emphasis on Jim’s failures rather than his successes supports the idea that Conrad viewed the hero of the imperialist writings of the 19th century from a different perspective, and that Jim is a subversion of the hero created by these writings. Therefore, it can be said that Conrad wrote, in Lord Jim, about Jim’s failure and death rather than his period of success; and thus reversed the hero
reflected in the English colonial discourse. It is therefore evident that Conrad, subverting the hero in these discourses, presents the possibility of the Western man’s failure, and thus presents a more truthful reality in the novel than presented in history.

Consequently, it can be said that Conrad’s interpretation of the Brooke myth is ironic and tragic unlike the interpretation of it in the travel and adventure accounts written in the 19th-century England. Thus, it can be said that Conrad looked at the imperialist deeds of the merchant-adventurer from a different perspective; a perspective which enabled Conrad to show the other side of imperialism and thus to criticize it, and that such a criticism of imperialism had no place in the colonial discourses of the time. Therefore, it can be said that Conrad’s vision of the deeds of the adventurers represented as heroism in the 19th-century English discourses is different from the tradition of these discourses. For Conrad the Eastern world with the people who dwell in it is simply the wrong ground for Western civilization.

Written at the time of the colonial expansion of England, and taking the East as the setting, at least in its second part, *Lord Jim* can be regarded as a constituent of the English colonial discourse. But the novel with its way of defining “self” separates itself from the other discourses. The general tendency of these discourses to define the “self” is subverted in *Lord Jim*.

The English imperialist discourses, as Pennycook puts forward, are the cultural products mapping out the relationship between “self” and “other”. These discourses include a series of dichotomous pairs such as primitive and civilized, savage and enlightened, educated and uneducated, dividing colonizers from the colonized. In these discourses, “the Other” has become a requirement to define the self. So it is hard to separate the constructs of self and “the Other” in these discourses. “Juxtaposing every primitive savage there must be a civilized gentleman, for every despotic regime there must be a model of democratic government.” (Pennycook, 1998: 47) Metcalf puts the matter as such:

as Europeans constructed a sense of self for themselves apart from the old order of old Christendom, they had of necessity to create a notion of an ‘other’ beyond the seas. To describe oneself as ‘enlightened’ meant that someone else had to be shown as
‘savage’ or ‘vicious’. To describe oneself as ‘modern’, or as ‘progressive’ meant that those who were not included in that definition had to be described as ‘primitive’ or ‘backward’. Such alterity, what one might call the creation of doubleness, was an integral part of the Enlightenment project. (Metcalf, 1995: 6)

To see how *Lord Jim* subverts the definition of the self in the English imperialist discourses, it is necessary to read the novel alongside these discourses. To this end, we can apply to the travel narratives and historical accounts about Sir James Brooke. Therefore the concern here will be to compare and contrast the presentation of the self in both Conrad’s text and these discourses.

In the travel and historical accounts containing Brooke’s career in the East, Eastern people were represented as “the Other” of the European. While Eastern people were reflected as dependent, uncivilized people needing the rule and the reign of the Westerner, Brooke was represented as a white ruler whom they needed to achieve civilization and who would give these Eastern people the rule and reign which they lacked. Brooke’s achievements were always described together with the failures of the Eastern people in the way of civilization. For example, a picture of the Eastern village, Sarawak before the reign of Brooke was drawn as such:

Before leaving the coast, I may as well give a short account of the then state of things at Sarawak […] or “Kuching”, as it was then called, was a village. By internal war, the bonds of society had been loosened; the Dyaks driven into the jungle. Government was at an end; rapine and crime of all kinds were of daily occurrence; - trade was literally extinct. (Keppell, Vol. II, 2002: 2)

Keppell, qualifying the British existence in these uncivilized parts of the world, also wrote:

the *Royalist* [kept] guard at the mouth of the Linga, to prevent any of the pirates getting up to the habitations of the Dyaks in that neighbourhood, during the absence of their warriors in attendance on the Rajah. (Keppel, Vol. II, 2002: 2)

Brooke himself wrote that he was accepted almost as a god by the Eastern people. In a letter written in 1845, Brooke defined him as the one who could give these Eastern people what they had not achieved by themselves:
When I seat myself on the mat, one by one they come forward, and tie little bells on my arm; a young cocoa-nut is brought, into which I am requested to spit. The white fowl is presented. I rise and wave it, and say ‘May good luck attend the Dyaks; may their crops be plentiful; may their fruits ripen in due season; may male children be born; may rice be stored in their houses; may wild hogs be killed in the jungle; may they have Sijok Dingin or cold weather.’ The people, both men and women, ‘take my hand, and stroke their own faces’. After this, they wash my hands and my feet, and afterwards with the water sprinkle their houses and gardens. Then the gold dust, with the white cloth which accompanies it, both of which have been presented by me, is placed in the field. (Quoted in Runciman, 1960: 258)

In *Lord Jim* it is seen that defining the self becomes a major problem for Marlow, the principal narrator and also an interpreter of Jim’s actions. Conrad also puts the reader into a scrutiny of Jim’s self. Though ambivalent, Jim’s self is recognized through his other self. In the novel Jim’s “Other” cannot be found in the Eastern people, but in Jim’s own self in the first instance, and in another Westerner, Gentleman Brown in the second instance. While “the Other” became a device to define the ‘self’ in English colonial discourse, in the novel the ‘self’ is defined through the materials taken from the Western world. To exemplify the first instance, it can be said that Jim encounters himself at the moment of his jump from the *Patna*. Ghent takes this event as “a paradigm of the encounters of the conscious personality with the stranger within, the stranger who is the very self of the self”. (Ghent, 1953: 229) Though, before the *Patna* incident, as the anonymous narrator tells us, Jim sees the other seamen as “the Other” and despises the bowman of the cutter when he rescues the drowning men during a gale (Conrad, 1985: 13), he finds his “Other” not in those seamen but in himself when the *Patna* accident happens. During the *Patna* accident, Jim is paralyzed again as he was during the other gales. Jim’s self is defined by what he is not. It is obvious that the encounter of Jim’s conscious will with his act is not completely comprehended by Jim though he struggles to find an excuse for his deplorable act. During the Official Inquiry, and later, during his speech with Marlow, he seems to try to find an excuse for his act; he is in an incomprehensibility of the true nature of his act and he seems to be a stranger to himself. Jim’s attitude toward his jump from the *Patna* proves that he does not know himself. He seems not to have witnessed the jump though it is he who performs it. He tells Marlow: “I had jumped […] It
It is this denial of the very self of the self that makes Jim struggle to be what he is not. Surrendering himself to an impossible ideal of the self, Jim goes to Patusan. He thinks that he can realize himself at Patusan. He needs “the Other” to define himself. The dichotomy of “self” and “Other” occurs in Conrad’s text as it occurred in the other texts written in the period of imperialism. But this time it is not used as a way of defining the “self”. In other words, although the European encounter with the natives occurs in the Patusan episode, in contrast with the other discourses, in Conrad’s text the European does not go there to civilize them but to rehabilitate himself. But Jim cannot realize his dreams there because he faces once more his unacknowledged identity with Brown’s arrival at Patusan. It can be maintained that Jim identified himself with Brown, which has led to the ruin of both Jim and the Malayan people. The reason for Jim’s identification himself with Brown deserves particular attention because it is this identification that leads Jim to the failure. Jim can be seen as the one who “simply cannot resist the evil because the evil is within himself”. (Morf, 1930: 157-158) Ghent argues that “the appearance of Brown is, in effect, the externalization of the complex of Jim’s guilt and his excuses for his guilt, for he judges Brown as he judged himself”, and that Jim’s letting Brown escape is really a “compact with his own unacknowledged guilt”. (Ghent, 1953: 235) Jim’s error at Patusan can be taken as an outcome of an “immobilizing bond brought about by his unconscious identification with Brown”. (Guerard, 1958: 150) Watt claims that Jim’s consciousness of his own failure may well have strengthened his wish to spare Brown’s life,” and Jim identified himself with Brown “to the extent that he thought that, like himself, Brown ought to be given another chance”. (Watt in Bloom, 1987: 61) Jim, seeing himself in Brown, who has reminded Jim of his past, lets Brown and his men go. Identifying himself with Brown, Jim tells Jewel: “Men act badly sometimes without being much worse than others”. (Conrad, 1985: 297) Consequently, Jim sees his “other” in Brown;
the “other” in Jim’s self is the self which misses being forgiven by the community he once belonged to.

In *Lord Jim* the authorial vision of the English historical discourses and travel narratives written in the 19th century is also subverted. Conrad does this in the text by employing the points of view of the various narrators, and through transitions blurred between narrator, narrative information, and character. In the novel, narration and interpretation blend because most of the narrators and interpreters including Marlow, the principal narrator; and Jim, Chester, the French lieutenant and Jewel whose narratives are transmitted to Marlow’s listeners and thus to the reader by Marlow himself are all the participants in the action of the novel. Ghent draws attention to Conrad’s use of “reflector within reflector, point of view within point of view, cross-chronological juxtapositions of events and impressions”. (Ghent, 1953: 237) This narrative technique of Conrad’s can be considered to have emerged as a result of his loss of faith in the mimetic powers of language. As Said argues, for Conrad, “writing cannot represent the visible, but it can desire and, in a manner of speaking, can move towards the visible, without actually achieving the unambiguous directness of the visible”. (Said in Billy, 1987: 38) With the employment of different points of view, Conrad suggests, in a sense, “the truth about man is too immense and too delicate” (Ghent, 1953: 237) to be reached and shown through just one perspective. Then it can be said that through his narrative technique, Conrad questions the colonial text’s reliance upon language and authorial vision.

The omniscient narrator of the first four chapters in *Lord Jim* gives the conditions of Jim’s upbringing, his heroic dreams, two incidents in Jim’s training days, the *Patna* voyage up to the moment when the submerged wreck strikes and the courtroom scene in which Jim is seen in the dock. The first four chapters of the novel are told in a fairly straightforward way, and “the main interest of the omniscient observer is to tell the reader many facts about Jim’s earlier life”. (Watt, 1979: 271) Though this narrator seems to give facts about Jim, actually he does not reveal the hidden reality behind Jim’s appearance. We may think here Conrad, believing that the truth about man cannot be maintained through one perspective, employs another narrator, Marlow in the novel. Marlow attends the Inquiry as a
spectator, curious to learn what defence can be put up by any ship’s officer who has broken such a moral tradition as the one which forbids an officer to leave a sinking ship unless all of the passengers have first been safely removed. Marlow takes over the story when Jim is placed before us and the processes of judgement begin. As Jim’s case is not an absolute but a relative one, “Marlow has to exist.” (Ghent, 1953: 237) Marlow both observes and interprets Jim’s case. Through Marlow’s narrative the reader can see Jim from a subjective point of view. Conrad thus presents Jim from different angles. But Marlow’s narrative is an ambiguous one because there is a contradiction at the heart of his narrative. At one point Marlow seems to assert one thing, soon he asserts another. As Tanner points out, it is the apparent discrepancy between appearance and fact in Jim that arouses Marlow’s interest. “This is a major theme of the novel and it determines the line of Marlow’s inquiries – is Jim gold or ‘nothing more rare than brass’ ”. (Tanner, 1964: 23) The contradiction is an outcome of Marlow’s seeing Jim as “one of us” and this suggests that Marlow desires to find an excuse for Jim’s desertion of the sinking ship. If Jim, who looks like “one of us” has betrayed those standards which bind the community together, then what is the implication for the man who believes in those standards? For this reason, “the deep inward truth of Jim, for Marlow, is the only truth worth knowing”. (Tanner, 1964: 24) It is therefore evident that Marlow has a moral response to Jim’s unfaithfulness. He explains his initial interest in Jim as such: “I wanted to see him overwhelmed, confounded, pierced through and through, squirming like an impaled beetle.” This is a moral response stemming from his feeling that Jim “stood there for all the parentage of his kind”. (Conrad, 1985: 38) The cause of the ambiguity in Marlow’s narrative has also been described by Guetti defining Marlow’s case in relation to Jim’s case:

Just as Jim’s destruction is the result of imagination and sensitivity, Marlow’s inability to give Jim and his story a single and final meaning is the result of these same qualities. Jim’s death for honor fails because it may be seen as overly romantic and foolhardy; Marlow’s search for a final meaning is thwarted by his own particular “exquisite sensibility”. Although Jim and Gentleman Brown are clearly very different kinds of men, Marlow’s inability to give Jim’s suffering quest a final meaning is based upon the same faculty which confuses Jim about Brown: the complexity of the response of the imaginative man to his experience. (Guetti, 1970: 32)
Marlow is also led to another scrutiny with Jim’s case. He questions the validity of the code of conduct and develops a sceptical feeling that the code of conduct has no absolute authority over human life. While narrating Jim’s story to his listeners Marlow also doubts his narrative ability because he doubts his capacity for seeing innocently. Thus his narrative, though about Jim, turns into one about himself, “about his potential transgressions” and “about the impossibility of pure allegiance to one’s values, the impossibility of fulfilling the dream which Jim himself never abandons”. (Raval in Bloom, 1987: 80-81) Marlow, in a sense, is caught in his own contradiction and his effort to decipher Jim is left unarticulated. Marlow’s uncertainty can be observed even in his concluding words of the story of Jim’s life:

And that’s the end. He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success! […] we can see him an obscure conqueror of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct. Is he satisfied – quite, now, I wonder? We ought to know. He is one of us – and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy? Was I so very wrong after all? Now he is no more, there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honor there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray among the passions of this earth, ready to surrender faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades.

Who knows? He is gone, inscrutable at heart, and the poor girl is leading a sort of soundless, inert life in Stein’s house. Stein has aged greatly of late. He feels it himself, and says often that he is “preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave …” while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies. (Conrad, 1985: 313)

These last words of Marlow signal neither, for Marlow, a conclusive response to Jim nor, for the reader, the possibility of deciphering Jim’s life and of *Lord Jim*.

In Chapter XII of the novel, Marlow shifts the perspective by recalling his meeting with the French lieutenant, who was on board the ship that saved the *Patna* and towed her to harbour. This man actually boarded the *Patna* and stayed there for thirty hours. He has done so without hesitation and as the most obvious
exercise of duty. What he did was of course extremely dangerous but he belittles the behaviour by saying “One does what one can”. (Conrad, 1985: 109) He describes the situation on the Patna after she had been deserted. Through the French lieutenant’s viewpoint, we gain another perspective on the accident. We know that Jim stood still for twenty-seven minutes on that night, and he defended himself claiming that he was not frightened by the accident. On the ship, which Jim has deserted, the lieutenant shows a great courage. Although he seems aware both of the danger (it can be inferred from the anecdote the lieutenant tells of; he tells Marlow that two years ago, incidentally, a ship immeasurably better equipped than the Patna suddenly sank while it was being towed to harbour, and the two men aboard both drowned) and the accompanying possibility of fear, “his ability to resist the fear is greater than Jim’s”. (Lothe in Carabine, 1992: 121) The lieutenant unloads the pilgrims safely from the Patna. He also comments on Jim’s action, which gives a different perspective to both Marlow and to the reader. He agrees that Jim “might have had the best dispositions”, and insists that a sense of honor is a real and not a borrowed emotion. He goes on: “And what life may be worth when […] when the honour is gone […] I can offer no opinion […] because I know nothing of it.” (Conrad, 1985: 115)

After Marlow gives the reader the information that Jim’s and the other officers’ certificates were cancelled, he meets one of the important marginal figures who contributes to our assessment of Jim. This man is Chester, “a cynical, unscrupulous pirate; a man of dubious exploits, immorally undertaken, energetically pursued to a conclusion”. (Tanner, 1964: 37) Chester is a man who is indifferent to the ethics of the matter. As he is a man with no morals, he scorns all symbols of honor and takes the lowest view of life. He asks Marlow to mediate between himself and Jim so that he can offer Jim a dubious job on a guano island, controlling forty coolies and making them work. Marlow refuses this offer in horror. This is because he could not see, in Jim, the courage, energy and amorality which Chester has. Marlow says about Chester: “The chap had a wonderful eye for things. He saw it in a jiffy.” (Conrad, 1985: 127) Chester, in a sense, comments on Jim’s imaginativeness: “You must see things exactly as they are – if you don’t, you may just as well give in at once. You will never do anything in this world.” (Conrad, 1985: 125) Through Chester, we see what Jim does not have.
Marlow’s interview with Stein appears in Chapter XX. We know that Stein, though not knowing Jim, diagnoses Jim as a romantic. Marlow’s and Stein’s putting Jim at Patusan is given by Marlow in Chapter XXI. Marlow’s narrative, which begins in Chapter V, goes on throughout these chapters. He tells of his visit to Patusan two years later, beginning from Chapter XXIV and till XXVII. Jim recounts his adventures in brief comments and allusions. Marlow remarks, “Jim the leader was a captive in every sense. The land, the people, the friendship, the love were like the jealous guardians of his body”. (Conrad, 1985: 199) Marlow seems disturbed that “in the midst of success Jim has sacrificed rather than redeemed his inner life through his position at Patusan”. (Jones, 1985: 82) And Marlow knows that privately Jim is still troubled. In chapters from XXVIII till XXX Jewel is introduced; and the love story begins. In Chapter XXXI we learn from Marlow that Jewel worries that Marlow will take Jim back with him. In Chapter XXXIV Marlow’s listeners become impatient and Marlow apologizes. Marlow’s failure to find a way out for Jim ends in his shadowy, dark romantic images. He leaves Jim at Patusan in the enveloping darkness. Thus, Marlow’s oral narrative ends. The remaining part of the action in the novel is rendered through the privileged reader, who receives a packet of letters written by Marlow two years later. Through the letters, we learn of Jim’s fate, and the Brown affair; and the novel ends with Marlow’s elegy to Jim.

It is significant that the privileged reader is introduced by the third-person narrator, who thus makes a re-appearance at this point. So the function of the re-appearance of the third-person narrator lies in his introduction of the privileged reader. Another function of this narrator is explained by Lothe as such:

Part of his function here is to modify Marlow’s first-person account […] this is done only implicitly, by reminding the reader that the novel contains a narrative instance supervening, and more knowledgeable than, its principal first-person narrator […] His function […] is essentially an editorial one […] outlining the contents of the packet. (Lothe, 1997: 122)

However, it can be said that the omniscience of the third-person narrator is less pointed now than it was in the first four chapters of the novel.
The employment of the privileged reader can be regarded as a necessity in the narrative structure of the novel because through him Conrad puts the reader into the activity of interpretation. Thus, a connection exists between narrative and reading. The privileged reader is presented as one who is in the capacity of reader. The omniscient narrator introduces the privileged reader as such:

Each of them [Marlow’s listeners] seemed to carry away his own impression, to carry it away with him like a secret; but there was only a man of all these listeners who was ever to hear the last word of the story. It came to him at home, more than two years later, and it came contained in a thick packet addressed in Marlow’s upright and angular handwriting.

The privileged man opened the packet, looked in, then laying it down, went to the window. His rooms were in the highest flat of a lofty building, and his glance could travel afar beyond the clear panes of glass, as though he were looking out of the lantern of a lighthouse. (Conrad, 1985: 253-254)

As a conclusion, it can be said that Lord Jim with different points of view of various narrators, who appear in the action of the novel, makes the reader become engaged in an interpretative process. What Conrad does through his narrative technique in his text is firstly the employment of the characters in the novel as narrators in it, and thus making a connection between narrator and character; secondly, he makes the reader a character, though not a literary one; and thirdly, he puts the reader into a particular time and a particular place, and thus he makes his readers historically situated.

By means of the shift in the nature of the narrative of the text, employing different views and perspectives, which supplement and enrich each other in an intriguing manner, Conrad subverts the established conventions of narration, the mimetic representation of the historical and travel accounts written in the 19th-century England. As it is known, these texts adopted the authorial vision to reflect the imperialist creed of the colonial man, and put the narrator in the text, and the reader outside it. It should also be noted that despite an abundance of perspectives in the novel, at the end of the novel Jim remains enigmatic. There is no one single truth about him; instead, there is uncertainty, ambivalence about his character. Conrad implies that there is no single truth to be reached, rather many subjective truths.
VI. A NEW HISTORICIST READING of NOSTROMO

We are all marooned upon the islands of our dreams.

John Cowper Powysy

Since its publication in 1904, Nostromo has taken its place among Conrad’s masterpieces as a panoramic novel of revolution and a profound meditation on history and the effects of “material interests” on human destiny. As New Historicism proposes a synchronic reading of text and context, in this new historicist reading of Nostromo, the attempt will be to put the novel in both the biographical context and its historical and political contexts. Taking as a cue the new historicist premise that both authors and cultural texts are the products of the historical and cultural contexts in which the authors lived and their texts were produced, this part firstly aims to show that there has been an interaction between Nostromo and culture in which it was produced. Through the construction of a biographical context in which Conrad’s text is intended to be put, it is anticipated to show that Conrad made use of other peoples’ experiences rather than his own experiences, and to show to what extent Conrad utilized his own experiences and of the actual events and places and the things of which he heard or read, in the writing of the novel, and how he used them in the context of the novel. This part also aims to show how Conrad combined, in his text, the particular histories of the particular characters with the history of the world. Conrad took his subject matters and characters – there are many stories in Nostromo: The Goulds’, Nostromo’s, Decoud’s, Giorgio Viola’s and The Avellanos’ – from his own time, and dealt with the political and socio-economic issues of the time in the novel. He also had his novel have an artistic integrity by approaching history in a modernist sense and by means of his modernist narrative technique. Therefore, toward the end of this chapter, Conrad’s narrative technique employed in the novel will be pinpointed. Through the construction of the historical and political context, it is aimed to show how Conrad reflected the political ideas pervasive in the second half of the 19th century and subverted them in Nostromo by employing both symbolism and an ironic tone in the novel. To this end, first it will be given how such nations as the USA, Britain, Germany, Russia and Spain reflected their policies in the world
arena in the second half of the 19th century, and then it will be explored how Conrad perceived their ideologies and reflected them in his text; in other words, how he responded to them. In this part of this chapter, it will also be explored how Conrad gave his characters symbolic dimensions and to what extent they could fulfill their social and political roles; the effects of “material interests” on each character will be the concern in this part as well.

Before reading *Nostromo* in its biographical context, it would be appropriate to recall the story in the novel briefly: *Nostromo* is set in the coastal province of Sulaco, the wealthiest region of the South American republic of Costaguana. The setting of *Nostromo* is a fictional colonial state whose economy hinges on the nearby San Tomé silver mine, which the Englishman Charles Gould has inherited. Along with the mine, the instability of a civil war between Ribiera’s legal government and Montero’s Populist Party begins. To save the silver from the rebels Gould entrusts it to the journalist Martin Decoud and the Italian Nostromo, Capataz de Cargadores, a local hero. But Nostromo smuggles it out into the gulf. When they are forced to run around on nearby islands, the Isabes, they hide the silver and Nostromo returns to Sulaco. Left alone, Decoud drowns himself. Though Dr. Monygham persuades him to summon loyal forces to save Sulaco, Nostromo has been shocked into awareness that he is exploited by his employers. He allows people to believe that the silver has been lost and makes secret visits to retrieve it from the Isabes, where the lighthouse keeper is now Georgio Viola, the father of his betrothed Linda. Nostromo finds himself in love with Linda’s sister, Giselle. Georgio mistakes him for an intruder and shoots him, and thus the secret of the silver is lost forever. Though this surface story gives us what happens in the plot of the novel, it is far away from showing the depths of the characters and the integrity of the action in the novel.

Conrad in his “Author’s Note” to *Nostromo*, which was written in 1917, thirteen years after the novel was published, recalled the circumstances under which *Nostromo* was begun:

after finishing the last story of the “Typhoon” volume it seemed somehow that there was nothing more in the world to write about.
This so strangely negative but disturbing mood lasted some little time; and then, as with many of my longer stories, the first hint for “Nostromo” came to me in the shape of a vagrant anecdote completely destitute of valuable details.

As a matter of fact in 1875 or ’6, when very young, in the West Indies or rather in the Gulf of Mexico, for my contacts with land were short, few, and fleeting, I heard the story of some man who was supposed to have stolen single-handed a whole lighter-full of silver, somewhere on the Tierre Firme seaboard during the troubles of a revolution.

On the face of it this was something of a feat. I heard no details, and having no particular interest in crime qua crime I was not likely to keep that one in my mind. And I forgot it till twenty-six or seven years afterwards I came upon the very thing in a shabby volume picked up outside a second-hand book-shop. It was the life of an American seaman written by himself with the assistance of a journalist. In the course of his wanderings that American sailor worked for some months on board a schooner, the master and owner of which was the thief of whom I had heard in my very young days. I have no doubt of that peculiar kind in the same part of the world and both connected with a South American revolution. (Conrad, 1963: xv-xvi)

Although Conrad gives no other details, some critics such as John Halverson and Ian Watt argue that Conrad undoubtedly refers to a book whose title page reads: 

On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor (1897) written by Frederick Benton Williams. The book was recognized as Conrad’s original source for Nostromo by Halverson and Watt in their article, “The Original Nostromo: Conrad’s Source” and written in 1959. (Halverson and Watt, 1959: 45) On Many Seas is both an autobiography of Williams as a sailor who rose from ship’s boy to captain and an entertaining account of William’s youthful adventures as a seaman from 1864 to 1878. It is also a tale of the stolen lighter of silver. (Williams, 1897) On seeing that Nostromo includes some stories other than the stolen light of silver, we can concede that Conrad obtained certain important material, for his novel, from a number of books written about the South American continent. It can be suggested that Conrad might have read some other books about the South American continent, except for On Many Seas, and these books might have provided Conrad mainly with hints for characters, names, incidents and topography. Therefore, it can be said that there is not a single important source of Nostromo, and that a number of books are significant as sources because “they provide the suggestions for important movements within the historical, socio-
economic world of the novel”. (Sherry, 1971: 148) The previous studies of the sources of *Nostromo* have also showed that the novel was derived from George Frederick Masterman’s *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* (1869), which is an account of Masterman’s own torture in Paraguay. Ivo Vidan in his article “One Source of Conrad’s *Nostromo*” recognizes the torture of Dr. Monygham in *Nostromo* as parallel to Masterman’s. (Vidan, 1956: 287) Frederick R. Karl also states that Conrad drew the names of many of his chief characters from Masterman’s book, for example; Decoud, Mitchell, Gould, Fidanza (*Nostromo*), Corbelan, Barrios and Monygham. Except for these source materials, Karl focuses on the importance of another book as a source material for *Nostromo*. It is Edward B. Eastwick’s, *Venezuela: or Sketches of Life in a South American Republic; with the History of the Loan of 1864* (1868), of which Conrad may have heard from Cunninghame Graham. It may be considered that Conrad borrowed names such as Sotillo, Ribera, Antonia (Antonia Ribera in Eastwick’s book), Guzman Bento (Guzman Blanco in Eastwick’s book) from *Venezuela*. Karl argues that Conrad found descriptions in *Venezuela*, which he applied to “the topography of Sulaco, including the gulf, cape, customs house and lighthouse”. (Karl, 1979: 542) *Venezuela* provided Conrad with not only certain names but also a conception of Antonio Avellanos, though she was modeled on Conrad’s first love. Conrad’s Antonia has much in common with Antonia Ribera in *Venezuela* in respect to her appearance and mannerism. *Venezuela* is a book in which Eastwick both gives an account of his travels in Venezuela and records the incidents concerned with the negotiations with Government ministers. *Venezuela*, one of whose chapters is devoted to the history of the loan and another to Venezuelan economic history in terms of foreign loans, gives an analysis of the failure of Republican economics. This book will be referred to, in a later part, as a source for another character in *Nostromo*, Sir John, who is the representative of “material interests” from abroad.

The actual historical events, true of the South American republics may be suggested to have been the model for the historical events, movements and ideas of the imaginary Occidental Republic in *Nostromo*. The first parallel between the history of the South American republics and the Occidental Province is that in both the Italian element is strong. Conrad himself pointed out in the “Author’s Note”: “the thing is perfectly credible: Italians were swarming into the Occidental
Province at the time, as anybody who will read further can see.” (Conrad, 1963: xix) The Italian element was provided in the novel by the employment of Giorgio Viola the Garibaldino, whom, as Conrad writes in the “Author’s Note, he drew as “the idealist of the old, humanitarian revolutions”. (Conrad, 1963: xxi) Conrad, to draw his character Viola, might have made use of R. B. Cunninghame Graham’s experiences in South America or read *Thirteen Stories*, a collection of Graham’s stories published in 1900. There are close parallels between Viola and Enrico Clerici, a character in “Cruz Alta”, a story in Graham’s collection. It is a tale in which Graham describes his experiences in post-revolutionary Uruguay and Paraguay, and tells how he had renewed his friendship with an Italian immigrant, Enrico Clerici, who kept a store overlooking the little port of Ytapua in Paraguay. In *Nostromo* Viola is presented as “Old Giorgio Viola, a Genoese with a shaggy white leonine head – often called simply ‘the Garibaldino’ (as Mohammedans are called after their prophet)”. (Conrad, 1998: 22) He has a “little hotel […] standing alone halfway between the harbour and the town.” (Conrad, 1998: 21) He had been “one of Garibaldi’s immortal thousand in the conquest of Sicily.” (Conrad, 1998: 26) Graham’s story contains the following account:

Two days passed in Ytapua resting our horses, and I renewed my friendship with Enrico Clerici, an Italian, who had served with Garibaldi, and who, three years ago, I had met in the same place given him a silver ring which he reported galvanized, and was accustomed to lend as a great favour for a specific against rheumatism. He kept a *pulperia*, and being a born fighter, his delight was, when a row occurred […] to clear the place by flinging empty bottles in his hand, whether as weapon of offence or for the purposes of drink; withal well educated and no doubt by this time long dead, slain by his favorite weapon. (Quoted in Sherry, 1971: 150-151)

The parallels between Viola and Clerici can be summed up as such: Both are Italian and have served with Garibaldi, both became innkeepers in South America.

Giuseppe Garibaldi, an actual historical figure can be suggested as another model for Viola. Conrad, in the creation of his character Viola, might have utilized this revolutionary and patriotic figure. Garibaldi was an Italian patriot and soldier of the Risorgimento, who lived between the years 1807 and 1882. He was a famous Italian republican who conducted various political and military campaigns
in Italy and South America, advocating, among other aims, the unification in Italy under Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Sardinia. The military campaigns led by Garibaldi brought about the formation of a unified Italy and had military expeditions in South America and Europe. Conrad’s Viola is a revolutionary striving not for personal gain but for justice, as the historical figure Garibaldi was.

In *Nostromo* Conrad enlarges upon “the idea of the picture of Garibaldi, describing it in detail and making it a focus in the Casa Viola”. (Sherry, 1971: 151) In the novel liberty and Garibaldi are represented as Viola’s divinities. (Conrad, 1998: 22) The scene in which Viola and his family – his wife and two daughters – await the attack of the rioters on his isolated inn is an evidence of Viola’s attachment to Garibaldi:

> A discharge of firearms near by made her throw her head back and close her eyes. Old Giorgio set his teeth hard under his white moustache, and his eyes began to roll fiercely. Several bullets struck the end of the wall together; pieces of plaster could be heard falling outside; a voice screamed ‘Here they come!’ and after a moment of uneasy silence there was a rush of running feet along the front.

> Then the tension of old Giorgio’s attitude relaxed and a smile of contemptuous relief came upon his lips of an old fighter with a leonine-face. These were not a people striving for justice, but thieves. Even to defend his life against them was a sort of degradation for a man who had been one of Garibaldi’s immortal thousand in the conquest of Sicily. He had an immense scorn for his outbreak of scoundrels and lepers, who did not know the meaning of the word ‘liberty’.

> He grounded his old gun, and, turning his head, glanced at the coloured lithograph of Garibaldi in a black frame on the white wall; […] His eyes, accustomed to the luminous twilight, made out the high colouring of the face, the red of the shirt, the outlines of the square shoulders, the black patch of the Bersaglieri hat with cock’s feathers, curling over the crown. An immortal hero! This was your liberty; it gave you not only life, but immortality as well. For that one man his fanaticism had suffered no diminution. (Conrad, 1998: 25-26)

Conrad also took Garibaldi as a model while constructing Viola’s past, which is given in a series of flashbacks and references to past events. The following passage is an account of Viola’s history:

> When quite a youth he had deserted from a ship trading to La Plata, to enlist in the navy of Montevideo, then under the
command of Garibaldi. Afterwards, in the Italian legion of the Republic struggling against the encroaching tyranny of Rosas, he had taken part, on great plains, on the banks of immense rivers, in the fiercest fighting perhaps the world had ever known. He had lived amongst men who had declaimed about liberty, suffered for liberty, died for liberty, with a desperate exaltation, and with their eyes turned towards an oppressed Italy. His own enthusiasm had been fed on scenes of carnage, on the examples of lofty devotion, on the din of armed struggle, on the inflamed language of proclamations. He had never parted from the chief of his choice – the fiery apostle of independence – keeping by his side in America and in Italy till after the fatal day of Aspromonte. (Conrad, 1998: 33)

Here Conrad reinforces the Garibaldi theme by linking Viola’s life to his hero’s. From the passages above, we can infer that the character of Viola, through his loyalty to Garibaldi is similar to the actual Italian patriot and soldier Garibaldi. Conrad also based Viola’s character upon Garibaldi as an old man. Old Viola’s character is drawn by Conrad in the following account:

The spirit of self-forgetfulness, the simple devotion to a vast humanitarian idea which inspired the thought and stress of that revolutionary time, had left its mark upon Giorgio in a sort of austere contempt for all personal advantage. This man, whom the lowest class in Sulaco suspected of having a buried hoard in his kitchen, had all his life despised money. The leaders of his youth had lived poor, had died poor. It had been a habit of his mind to disregard tomorrow. It was endangered partly by an existence of excitement, adventure, and wild warfare. But mostly it was a matter of principle. It did not resemble the carelessness of a condottiere, it was a puritanism of conduct, born of stern enthusiasm like the puritanism of religion. (Conrad, 1998: 35)

Conrad seems to have taken not only the patriotism and spirit of revolution of Giuseppe Garibaldi but also his appearance in his old age in order to draw his fictional character Viola. Conrad reflects the appearance of Garibaldi in his old age in the physical description of Viola. Viola has a “shaggy white leonine head” (Conrad, 1998: 22) and is “the old fighter with a leonine face”. (Conrad, 1998: 35) Conrad describes Viola in a part of Nostromo as such:

each afternoon “the Garibaldino could be seen […] with his big bush of white hair, his arms folded, his legs crossed, leaning back his leonine head against the lintel, and looking up the wooded
slops of the foothills at the snowy dome of Higuerota.” (Conrad, 1998: 30)

Anyone who looks at any photograph of Garibaldi’s that portrays him in his old age could find the similarity between the appearances of both Garibaldi and Viola. Garibaldi was described – in both his biographies and the historical writings – as an old lion because of both his physical attributes and his courage. Like Viola Garibaldi was renowned for refusing financial rewards. After he had achieved great fame during the Montevideo siege and immediately after his victory at the Salto San Antonio, the French Admiral Lainé called on him only to discover that “the Garibaldis’ house was in darkness, there being not a penny to buy a candle”. (Sherry, 1971: 158) As a result, Georgio Viola derives from Garibaldi himself in respect to his appearance and character, and his patriotic and revolutionary feelings.

A significant parallel between a terrible experience of Garibaldi’s and an incident in Nostromo, taking part in the scene in which Hirsch, the Jewish dealer in hides, is put into the power of his torturer, General Sotillo can be found. Garibaldi’s autobiography reveals the fact that he was put into prison by Governor Don Leonardo Milan and that “Garibaldi was exposed to torture to confess by means of the estrapado, and at this, he spit in Milan’s face”. (Sherry, 1971: 158) Conrad seems to have taken these two incidents – the attempt at forcing a confession by means of the estrapado and the final heroic spitting in the face of the enemy – from Garibaldi’s own life. In Nostromo the torture scene is viewed after the following incidents: When Decoud and Nostromo are taking the lighter of silver out into the gulf, Hirsch is discovered by them. Then, in the dark, Hirsch is swept by accident on to Sotillo’s vessel during a collision between the lighter and Sotillo’s transport. Sotillo, driven by greed, does not believe Hirsch’s story that the transport has collided with the lighter of silver and sunk it, and believes Dr. Monygham’s false story that the silver has been buried somewhere along the shore for Gould’s own private purposes. Sotillo convinced that Hirsch knows where the silver is hidden, decides to torture him into telling the truth he wishes to hear. Hirsch is brought into the presence of Sotillo. Chapter IX of the Third Part of the novel involves an account of torture:
Sotillo looked at him in silence. ‘Will you depart from your obstinacy, you rouge?’ he asked. Already a rope, whose one end was fastened to Senor Hirsch’s wrists, had been thrown over a beam, and three soldiers held the other end, waiting. He made no answer. His heavy lower lip hung stupidly. Sotillo made a sign. Hirsch was jerked up off his feet, and a yell of despair and agony burst out in the room [...]

Sotillo followed by the soldiers, had left the room. The sentry on the lending presented arms. Hirsch went on screaming all alone behind the half-closed jalousies [...] He screamed with uplifted eyebrows and a wide-open-mouth – incredibly wide, black, enormous, full of teeth – comical [...] ‘Speak, thou Jewish child of the devil! The silver! The silver, I say! Where is it? Where have you foreign rouges hidden it? Confess or – ’

A slight quiver passed up the taut rope from the racked limbs, but the body of Senor Hirsch, enterprising business man from Esmeralda, hung under the heavy beam perpendicular and silent, facing the colonel awfully [...]

‘Speak – thief – scoundrel – picaro – or – ’

Sotillo had seized the riding-whip, and stood with his arm lifted up. [...] And as Sotillo, staying his raised hand, waited for him to speak, with the sudden flash of a grin and a straining forward of the wrenched shoulders, he spat violently into his face. (Conrad, 1998: 393-395)

As for Nostromo, his central dilemma, the responsibility for and corrupting influence of the silver came from the tale of the sailor, of whom Conrad heard in his youth, and read in 1890 or ’91 as he states in the “Author’s Note” to *Nostromo*. Conrad writes that he “received the inspiration for him [Nostromo] [...] from a Mediterranean sailor”. (Conrad, 1963: xx) But Conrad does not reflect Nostromo merely as a thief. He had Nostromo have some other peculiarities such as his nationality, his being a man of character, his courage and trustworthiness. It is evident that Conrad utilized his own experiences to draw Nostromo. A certain Dominic Cervoni, whom Conrad had known at Marseilles between 1874 and 1878 when Cervoni was the padrone of the Tremolino may be the source of Nostromo. Apart from this, Cervoni was first mate of the Saint Antonia, the vessel in which Conrad sailed to the West Indies and then on to the South American continent. “Cervoni’s being a man of character; fearlessness and caustic manner are the traits, which Conrad passed to Nostromo.” (Sherry, 1971: 163) Conrad also writes in his “Author’s Note” to *Nostromo*: “Many of Nostromo’s speeches I have heard first in
Dominic’s voice.” (Conrad, 1963: xx) The parallels between Cervoni and Nostromo are drawn by Sherry as such:

just as Dominic ‘belonged to the Brotherhood of the Coast, a kind of Mafia; Nostromo is leader of the Cargadores, and later of the labour movement and is a ‘fearful and reared leader. Dominic was a smuggler […] Nostromo is also chosen for difficult tasks, and is particularly involved in smuggling the silver out of Costaguana […] Dominic has a physical assurance which attracted that splendid lady and Carlist intriguer, Dona Rita […] and Nostromo is attractive to women also – both the Viola girls are in love with him. Cervoni’s character of bravery on land and sea and his qualities of leadership can be seen in the character of Nostromo. (Sherry, 1971: 164-165)

In the novel the quality of leadership in Nostromo can be viewed especially in the scene in which Nostromo becomes a fearful and feared leader when he is at sea with the lighter of silver and when he becomes superior to the educated Decoud and threatens to put a bullet into Hirsch’s head and a knife into Decoud’s heart if they make a sound during the movement of Sotillo’s transport across their bows. Nostromo shouts at Hirsch: “Don’t move a limb. If I hear as much as a loud breath from you, I shall come over there and put a bullet through your head.” (Conrad, 1998: 243) Likewise, he threatens Decoud: “Don Martin […] if I didn’t know your worship to be a man of courage, capable of standing stock still whatever happens, I would drive my knife into your heart”. (Conrad, 1998: 248)

Conrad took an actual person as a model for his character Martin Decoud as he did for his characters Viola and Nostromo. Vidan points out that “a certain Carlos Decoud is mentioned near the beginning [of Masterman’s book, Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay] in an account of an unhappy incident” and that it bears “a remote similarity to Decoud’s situation in Nostromo”. (Vidan, 1956: 289) It can also be considered that Conrad reflected one of his experiences in Decoud. If we consider the relationship between Decoud and Antonia Avellanos, and the fact that Conrad implies that Antonia was modeled on his first love, whom he loved when he was young and in Marseilles, we can say that Conrad, while creating his character Decoud, took himself as a model for Decoud. Referring to his relationship with his first love, Conrad states that he was “very much like poor Decoud”. (Conrad, 1963: xxii) Conrad probably reflected, in Decoud, something
of his own nature. As Conrad did, Decoud beholds the universe “as a succession of incomprehensible images (Conrad, 1998: 436) and Decoud’s final statement of man’s position in the universe and his dealing with the helpless human condition are similar to those of Conrad. Decoud says: “In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part.” (Conrad, 1998: 435-436) The supposition that Conrad has drawn a parallel between himself and Decoud can also be confirmed by a short glance at Conrad’s youth, his relations to Poland, and his patriotic sentiments. Don Martin Decoud, “the dilettante in life”, (Conrad, 1998: 181), “the adopted child of Western Europe,” (Conrad, 1998: 143) has been living in Paris for several years. There he had been “an idle boulevardier, in touch with some smart journalists, made free of a few newspaper offices, and welcomed in the pleasure haunts of pressmen”. (Conrad, 1998: 139-140) All this is closely modeled on Conrad’s own life in Marseilles, and “this manner of existence has the effect on Decoud’s character that it had had on Conrad’s”. (Morf, 1930: 129) Conrad says in Nostromo: “This life induced in him a Frenchified – but most unFrench – cosmopolitanism, in reality a mere barren indifferentism posing as intellectual superiority.” (Conrad, 1998: 152) Decoud, then, is presented as a young man who does not see himself as he is: “He imagined himself French to the tips of his fingers. But far from being that he was in danger of remaining a sort of nondescript dilettante all his life.” (Conrad, 1998: 153) It can be argued that as in Conrad’s case, a more active life and a complete change of scene saves Decoud. He helps to sell arms to the silver mine in San Tomé and, moved by a curious impulse, decides to accompany the precious consignment to Sulaco himself. The cause of this unexpected zeal is the longing to see Antonia again, whom he “used to know when she wore her hair in two plaits down her back”. (Conrad, 1998: 142) When Decoud comes back to his native country, to which he had grown a stranger, his cosmopolitan superiority and superficiality gives way to patriotic feelings. He is “moved in spite of himself by that note of passion and sorrow unknown on the more refined stage of European politics”. (Conrad, 1998: 143) In Morf’s opinion, “passion and sorrow” are the very words characterizing Conrad’s Polish risings of 1831 and 1863. (Morf, 1930: 133) Decoud stays in Sulaco and insists on action. He is called to lead the people, to organize resistance, to lay the foundations of the new Occidental Republic. A few other details in the description
of Decoud’s suicide, the details showing “his loneliness and despair are recognized as Conrad’s reminiscences throwing fresh light on the character of Conrad himself and on his romanticism”. (Morf, 1930: 138) We can also say as a brief note that the sources for both Decoud and the newspaper, for which Decoud works, were taken from the real life. As Sherry states “the title derives from Porvenir, which was published in Cartagena, and which Conrad might have seen during his visits there in 1876”. (Sherry, 1971: 166)

As has already been mentioned, Eastwick’s Venezuela is recognized as a source for Nostromo. It provided the suggestion for Sir John and his visit and business, and also for “a pattern of events within the novel connected with the theme of ‘material interests’ generally”. (Sherry, 1971: 171-172) Sir John is the great financier, “the head of the chairman of the railway board (from London)” (Conrad, 1998: 38), and he is an important figure in Nostromo because Conrad relates him with the theme of “material interests”. Eastwick reports, in the book, that he went to Venezuela in 1864 as financial commissioner for the General Credit Company, which had floated an immense loan for Venezuela in order to see whether Venezuela could keep up the payments and whether the customs duties could be collected by the Credit Company. He also writes that he “tried to impress upon every one in authority that any infraction of the conditions of the contract would strike a fatal blow at the national credit” (Eastwick, 1868: 124), and that he “dwelt on the importance of a scrupulous adherence to the conditions, and of the government’s maintaining its character for good faith”. (Eastwick, 1868: 203) Like Eastwick, Sir John is concerned about the safety of the loan. He says: “The Government was bound to carry out its part of the contract with the board of the new railway company.” (Conrad, 1998: 40) Conrad seems to have taken, from Eastwick’s book, some other details as well. Eastwick, in Venezuela, reports that he was invited to breakfast with several ministers of Venezuela and that the breakfast was given by the acting President, General Trias, who had demanded a share of the loan that Guzman Blanco had negotiated. Eastwick naturally joined the breakfast as the man, who came to make inquiries regarding the safety of the loan. The following is an account of the incident reported by Eastwick. The italicized parts are the statements that Conrad used directly:
The Sunday following, the scene was repeated, but on this occasion it was the acting president who gave the breakfast. At last the meal reached its termination, and the president, filling his glass, looked round the table, and then at me, and said […] ‘I drink to the gentleman who has brought us thirty thousand pounds.’ I was somewhat disconcerted by the wording of the toast, and thinking that it spoke for itself, judged it unnecessary to rise to respond. […] the old general said, ‘I drink now to the English Government, which has always been the protector of Venezuela, and has set the best example for free states to follow.’ This, of course, compelled me to reply, and I expressed the pleasure I had had in visiting that beautiful country, in which Nature had been so lavish of her gifts, and whose inhabitants, by their gallant struggle for liberty, had shown themselves worthy of such a fair inheritance. England, I said, was the friend of all free nations, and would no doubt support the Venezuelans in maintaining their independence, as warmly as she had aided them in acquiring it. These, and many other things, I was obliged to say in English, no having sufficient Spanish at command for an oration. A friend, however, translated what I had said into pure Castilian and his version seemed to give great satisfaction. (Eastwick, 1868: 195)

This account can be recognized as a source for the banquet on board the Juno in Nostromo. In the following scene from Nostromo, it is seen that the Minister, General Trias is paralleled by the corrupt General Montero. In each incident the aim is to flatter and reassure the visiting financier, who is disconcerted by the tacit insinuation by the minister that the loan is regarded as a gift through his crude toast to the financier and the money he brings. The italicized parts show Conrad’s direct use of statement:

‘General Montero is going to speak’, he [Sir John] whispered, and almost immediately added, in comic alarm, ‘Heavens! He’s going to propose my own health, I believe.’

General Montero had risen with a jingle of steel scabbard and a ripple of glitter on his gold-embroidered breast; a heavy sword-hilt appeared at his side above the edge of the table […] He floundered, lowering, through a few vague sentences; then suddenly raising his big head and his voice together, burst out harshly:

‘The honour of the country is in the hands of the army. I assure you I shall be faithful to it.’ He hesitated […] and the figure of the lately negotiated loan came into his mind. He lifted his glass. ‘I drink to the health of the man who brings us a million and a half of pounds.’ […] Sir John did not move.
‘I don’t think I am called upon to rise,’ he murmured to Mrs. Gould. ‘That sort of thing speaks for itself.’ (Conrad, 1998: 111-112)

Another account in *Venezuela*, in which Eastwick describes the entry of the Venezuelan army into the Gran Plaza at Valencia in early September in 1864, can be considered to be the model of a scene in *Nostromo*, which illustrates Pedro Montero’s arrival in Sulaco with his victorious and ragged army. The similar expressions in both accounts are given here in italics:

It was a bright hot forenoon in the first week of September … at Valencia, the unusual sound of martial music reached my ear. Starting up, hurried to Gran Plaza, and was in time to see the Venezuelan army enter […] Some of the officers, indeed, were tall and well-made; but the men were the strangest figures – lean old scarecrows and starveling boys not five feet high, the greater number half naked, with huge strips of raw beef twisted round their hats or hanging from their belts. Their skins seemed to have been baked black with exposure to the sun. (Eastwick, 1868: 195)

Behind the rabble could be seen the lances of the cavalry, the ‘army’ of Pedro Montero. He advanced between Senores Fuentes and Gamacho at the head of his Ilaneros, […] They rode four abreast, mounted on confiscated Campo horses, clad in the heterogeneous stock of roadside stores they had looted hurriedly in their rapid ride through the northern part of the province; for Pedro Montero had been in a great hurry to occupy Sulaco […] Emaciated greybeards rode by the side of lean dark youths, marked by all the hardships of campaigning, with strips of raw beef twined round the crowns of their hats, and huge iron spurs fastened to their naked heels. (Conrad, 1998: 339)

An actual person, General Sotillo can be considered as the model for Sotillo in *Nostromo*. General Sotillo was an important figure in Venezuelan politics at the time of Eastwick’s visit to Venezuela. Eastwick wrote in his book that he dined with him in a *posada*, and that General Sotillo told him that he “had been enquiring for his share of the loan, and would probably raise disturbances unless a considerable portion were set aside for him”. (Eastwick, 1868: 230) Eastwick also comments: “The other great revolutionary leaders have been sanguinary, too, and even those associated with Falcon, as Sotillo, are no exception to the rule.” (Eastwick, 1868: 198) Conrad’s Sotillo has also been drawn as a sanguinary and greedy character. We are told that Sotillo is of
no convictions of any sort upon anything except as to the irresistible power of his personal advantages [...] The only guiding motive of his life was to get money for the satisfaction of his expensive tastes, which he indulged recklessly, having no self-control. He imagined himself a master of intrigue, but his corruption was as simple as an animal instinct. (Conrad, 1998: 253)

Sotillo’s determination to find the silver from the mine results in the terrible torturing of the cowardly Hirsch, which is one of the most ruthlessly cruel scenes in *Nostromo*. Thus we can say that Conrad took certain characteristics of the original Sotillo, attributed them to his fictional character, Sotillo, and he allowed these traits to function within the tale of the silver.

We can turn to Masterman’s *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* to find out the parallels between the torture Dr. Monygham suffered under the rule of Guzman Bento and the torture to which Masterman was put during his imprisonment in Paraguay. Baines writes that “Conrad based his account of Dr. Monygham’s torture and confession on that of Masterman himself”. (Baines, 1960: 295) Vidan gives us the close parallels between these two tortures and writes that Masterman’s portrait of Padre Roman is the source for the infamous Padre Beron in *Nostromo*, to whom Monygham made his confession. (Vidan, 1956: 290-291) We can exemplify these parallels from Masterman’s book and *Nostromo*. Masterman referring to Padre Roman writes:

> He was, as an army chaplain, dressed in lieutenant’s uniform, and wore a sword; all that pointed out his clerical character being a small red cross on his left breast, and the little stubbly tonsure on his crown. (Masterman, 1869: 287)

We are told of Padre Beron in the following account in *Nostromo*:

> That priest was a big round-shouldered man, with an unclean-looking, overgrown tonsure on the top of his flat head, of a dingy, yellow complexion, softly fat, with greasy stains all down the front of his lieutenant’s uniform, and a small cross embroidered in white cotton on his left breast. (Conrad, 1998: 328)

In the following accounts, the first from *Seven Eventful Years* and the second from *Nostromo*, it can be seen that there are parallels between the process of the
torture Masterman underwent in which he was forced to confess and that of Dr. Monygham:

Then turning to the priest [Falcon] told him to take me out and put me in the rack the priest meanwhile, in a monotonous voice, as if he were repeating a formula he had often gone through, urged me to confess. (Masterman, 1869: 257)

Dr. Monygham could by no manner of means forget the zeal of Father Beron, or his face, or the pitiless, monotonous voice in which he pronounced the words, ‘Will you confess now?’ (Conrad, 1998: 328)

Masterman writes that he was unable to stand more torture and confessed what was required of him, fully expecting that he would afterwards be executed. He says:

When I recovered, I was lying on the grass utterly exhausted, and felt that I could bear no more; that it would be far preferable to make a pretended confession, and be shot, than suffer such cruel torture. So, as they were about to again apply the uruguayana, as it is called by them, I said, ‘I’m guilty; I will confess’: and they immediately unbound me. The priest said, ‘Why were you such an obstinate fool?...’ There was no help for it, but God knows with what agony and shame I repeated that wretched tissue of fables and misrepresentations. I felt that I ought rather to have suffered any martyrdom than purchase life on such terms, and until I was put to the question I hoped and believed I should have done so; it was that, however, and not death, I feared. (Masterman, 1869: 258-259)

Monygham, though having a stronger belief than Masterman did that he would be executed, thinks this is a consolation:

When making his extorted confessions to the Military Board, Dr. Monygham was not seeking to avoid death. He longed for it. Sitting half-naked for hours on the wet earth of his prison, and so motionless that the spiders, his companions, attached their webs to his matted hair, he consoled the misery of his soul with acute reasonings that he had confessed to crimes enough for a sentence of death – that they had gone too far with him to let him live to tell the tale. (Conrad, 1998: 330)

Another parallel between the conditions of these two people, one actual and the other fictional is that neither of them was executed. Masterman was released three
months later (Masterman, 1869: 305), and Monygham, after suffering further by being left “for months to decay slowly in the darkness of his grave-like prison”. (Conrad, 1998: 330) It should also be noted that the phrase “a grave-like prison” has been used by both Masterman in his book and Conrad in his novel. Masterman uses the phrase while he is giving an account of his first imprisonment which lasted for eleven months. (Masterman, 1869: 170) But Conrad uses the same expression to refer to the prison in which Dr. Monygham was put after the confession. What Conrad does here is to return to an earlier period of Masterman’s imprisonment.

Monygham’s experience of torture is not solely based on that of Masterman’s but that of a certain Dr. Carreras, whom Masterman met and who told him of his bad experience. Masterman reports, in his book, what Carreras told him about his terrible experience: “That terrible Father Maiz […] tortured me in the uruguyana on three successive days, and then smashed my fingers with a mallet!” (Masterman, 1869: 277-278) Masterman adds: “He […] held out his maimed hands as testimony.” (Masterman, 1869: 278) Likewise, Dr. Monygham has been permanently crippled by the torture he suffered. We are informed that Dr. Monygham hobbled because many years ago “both his ankles had been seriously damaged in the course of a certain investigation conducted in the castle of Sta. Marta by a commission composed of military men”. (Conrad, 1998: 327)

Don José Avellanos’s sufferings appear to have been based by Conrad upon those of Dr. Carreras and that Conrad’s information about that man comes from Masterman’s book. In Nostromo it is said that Don José Avellanos was imprisoned by Guzman Bento and suffered a great deal for many years. A close parallel may be found between the following accounts, one from Conrad’s text and the other from Masterman’s:

For years he [Guzman Bento] had carried about at the tail of the Army of Pasification; all over the country, a captive band of such atrocious criminals, who considered themselves most unfortunate at not having been summarily executed. It was a diminishing company of nearly naked skeletons, loaded with irons, covered with dirt, with vermin, with raw wounds, all men of position, of education, of wealth, who had learnt to fight amongst themselves
for scraps of rotten beef thrown to them by soldiers, or to beg a negro cook for a drink of muddy water in pitiful accents. Don José Avellanos, clanking his chains amongst the others, seemed not only to exist in order to prove how much hunger, pain, degradation, and cruel torture a human body can stand without parting with the last spark of life. (Conrad, 1998: 127)

some prisoners of war […] were not fettered, but were in the last stage of misery, almost, some quite naked, covered with wounds, and the majority too feeble to walk […] a stalwart negro, assisted by several prisoners, prepared the food for all the guardians around, and little enough it was; a small allowance of boiled meat and broth in the morning, and at night a handful of parched maize and the bones and scraps left by the soldiers. I saw poor Dr. Carreras, once the most influential man in Uruguay, an ex-prime minister, eagerly gnawing the gristle from a few well-picked bones contemptuously thrown him by a passer-by. Can I give a more vivid picture of our miserable condition? […] Horn-spoons were coveted treasures, I found; and when a prisoner died who had had one, there used to be a furious contention amongst the survivors for its possession, often leading to a severe trashing administered indiscriminately to all within reach. As I had only just been sent there, nothing was given to me until late, when the negro cook came by with a piece of roast meat he was eating, and gave me a part of it. (Masterman, 1869: 268-270)

When we ask the question which materials Conrad made use of in the creation of the setting in *Nostromo*, we encounter the fact that his friendship with Graham was one of the main reasons for his interest in a relatively unfamiliar area. (Watts, 1969: 37) *Nostromo*’s setting is South America, which Conrad had only glimpsed. Conrad confessed, referring to his visit to South America, in a letter to Graham that he “just had a glimpse 25 years ago – a short glance. That is not enough *pour bâtit un roman dessus*”. (Letter 47, Watts, 1969: 37) This statement is partly confirmed by his letter to Richard Curle in which Conrad says that his longest stay there was of two and a half or three days. This part of the letter can be found in Curle’s “Introduction” to the 1955 edition of *Nostromo*:

As to No.[stromo]. If I ever mentioned 12 hours it must relate to as I went up the hill and had a distant view of Caracas, I must have been 2 ½ to 3 days. It’s such a long time ago! And there were a few other places on that dreary coast of Venla [Venezuela]. (Curle, “Introduction” in *Nostromo*, 1963: vi)

Therefore Conrad’s personal experience of South America cannot be thought as a significant source for *Nostromo* as his first-hand experience had a considerable
effect on his major works prior to *Nostromo*, for instance, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. The idea that Conrad had made use of his own personal experience in these two novels has been tried to be confirmed in the previous chapters of this thesis by showing that Conrad dealt with, in these novels, locations familiar to him – in regions like the Congo and the East Indies, of which Conrad had had a considerable first-hand experience. Conrad’s choice, in *Nostromo*, of a region which was relatively unknown to him leads us to think that Conrad made use of Graham’s experiences to create the setting of the novel. It is known that Graham was a friend of Conrad’s during the five years preceding the writing of the novel. Cedric T. Watts comments on this matter as such:

Conrad had several times met and talked with Graham, whose many years as a traveler and rancher in Central or South America must inevitably have been one of the topics of conversation […] less than five years before he began to write *Nostromo*, Conrad had apparently heard a first-hand account of a South American revolution, and the basis for ‘a moral sketch on Paraguayan manners’, from a friend whose arguments were already forcing Conrad into a fresh assessment of his political position. (Watts, 1969: 37-38)

Watts also argues that Conrad, in *Nostromo*, not only drew upon the facts about South America told him by Graham but also utilized Graham’s criticism of imperialistic adventures found in his articles which were published in the *Saturday Review*. During Conrad’s friendship with Graham, the US began to emerge as a rival to the older imperialist powers and Graham was concerned to express in his articles the opinion that the United States’ policies toward Spanish-American territories were as hypocritical as Britain’s policies in Africa. At this period, Conrad, as Watts states, was a reader of the *Saturday Review*, which contained not only Graham’s warnings of the dangers and complexities of European and North American affairs but also skeptical editorial comments on the United States’ expansionist ambitions. (Watts, 1969: 39) It is argued that Conrad shared much of Graham’s antipathy to the policies of the US and thus he had a critical eye on the South American affairs. Particular current events in Central and Southern America are also considered the genesis of *Nostromo*. This matter is now being put aside to be held in a later part of this chapter, i.e. when *Nostromo* will be put into its historical context. The significant idea that must be emphasized now is that Conrad
developed an awareness of the current events occurring in these areas of the world through Graham’s writings. Therefore, we can say that Graham, by means of both his ideas he shared with Conrad and his writings, became effective on the ideas reflected in *Nostromo*. 

To turn to the setting of *Nostromo*, it is Costaguana, which is an imaginary South American republic. In his “Author’s Note” to *Nostromo* Conrad wrote that Costaguana was all of South America. (Conrad, 1998: xviii) It has been argued that Conrad took particular aspects of the continent as sources for Costaguana and Sulaco. “The name of the imaginary state, Costaguana is derived from Costa Rica and Guano.” (Morf, 1930: 14) Sherry also argues that many of the names Conrad uses in the novel come from the long western coastline of South America. For example, Zapiga, which is shown as “a settlement of thieves and matreros” in *Nostromo*, is a place “in Chile in the region of Tarapaca, east of the coastal town of Pisagua”, and Cayta, the principal port of Costaguana and “an important postal link” in *Nostromo*, is derived from the coastal port of Payta in the Northern part of Peru. Esmeralda, where Sotillo commands the garrison, is in Ecuador. Sta Marta, which is seen as the capital of Costaguana in the novel, is an actual Colombian port. (Sherry, 1971: 190-191) Baines also comments on the topography in *Nostromo*. He writes, “Puerto Cabello […] is situated in the Gafó Triste, which became the Gafó Placido”, and “the reefs of Punta Brava became the cape of Punta Mala” in the novel. (Baines, 1960: 296) Sherry shows Sulaco, a town in Honduras, as the original name of Sulaco in the novel. But we can also propose that Valencia in Eastwick’s book may be the origin of Sulaco in *Nostromo* because both of these places have the quality of unchangeableness. Eastwick comments about Valencia: “I could not help asking myself how it was that in three centuries it had made so little progress in wealth, population and importance.” (Eastwick, 1868: 167) In *Nostromo* we are told that Sulaco is “an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world”. (Conrad, 1998: 11) Besides, the silver mine San Tomé appears to be based upon a copper mine which appears in Eastwick’s book. In *Nostromo*, we learn that:

An English company obtained the right to work it, and found so rich a vein that neither the exactions of successive governments, nor the periodical raids of recruiting officers upon the population
of paid miners they had created, could discourage their perseverance. But in the end, during the long turmoil of pronunciamientos that followed the death of the famous Guzman Bento, the native miners, incited to revolt by the emissaries sent out from the capital, had risen upon their English chiefs and murdered them to a man. (Conrad, 1998: 53)

And Eastwick writes:

If I went to San Felipe, I could easily go on to the copper-mines of Aroa, which I was desirous of visiting. These mines were worked for a time under the superintendence of Englishmen with good results; but unfortunately one fine day the native miners took it into their heads that they had a grievance against the foreigners, so they fell on them suddenly, split their skulls with hatchets, and decamped with their property. For this cruel and cowardly deed some of the guilty parties were afterwards executed, but the mines were for a time abandoned. (Eastwick, 1868: 144)

The plan of Sulaco appears to be based upon that of Valencia as described by Eastwick, and “certainly it shares with Valencia a Gran Plaza with similarly designated buildings surrounding it, and a Calle de la Constitucion”. (Sherry, 1966: 194) Baines also writes that “for some of the topography of the town of Sulaco Conrad draws on Eastwick’s description of the inland town of Valencia”. (Baines, 1960: 296) “The Sala of the Provincial Assembly (in the Municipal Buildings of Sulaco)” (Conrad, 1998: 126) situated in Gran Plaza is also considered to be derived from Eastwick, who writes: “The south side of the Gran Plaza is entirely taken up by public offices and the Government house of Carabobo, of which state Valencia is the capital.” (Eastwick, 1868: 155) The Casa Gould, which is presented as an old Spanish house in *Nostromo* is similar to the houses in Caracas, one of which W. E. Curtis, in his *Venezuela; a Land Where it’s always Summer* (1896), describes. Conrad describes the Casa Gould as a house of great beauty, filled with flowers and elegantly furnished and ordered. Through the following account from Curtis’s book, we can find that houses in Caracas have wide arched gateways, patios with bronze fountains and tessellated corridors, palms and roses, orange-trees and oleanders. Curtis writes:

a patio or courtyard […] in which are growing and blossoming in their natural luxuriance plants […] The atmosphere is laden with the odour of flowers […] Around […] is a corridor fifteen feet
wide, upon which the windows of all the apartment open […]. The corridor is paved with blue and white marble tiles, upon which Persian rugs are spread […]. The front room, which looks upon the street, is about twenty or thirty feet inside and is used for a drawing-room. The floor is tiled and covered with a large rug. In the centre is a handsome table […]. In one corner is a grand piano, scattered around are easy chairs, Turkish divans […] and other articles of furniture and decoration. (Curtis, 1896: 56)

The following accounts in which Conrad describes the Casa Gould with its impressive aspects show that Conrad might have used Curtis’s *Venezuela* to create a particular place in the setting of *Nostromo*:

The ceiling of the largest drawing-room of the Casa Gould extended its white level far above his head. The loftiness dwarfed the mixture of heavy, straight-baked Spanish chairs […] and European furniture […] There were knick-knacks on little tables, mirrors let into the wall […] square spaces of carpet […] smaller rugs scattered all over the floor of red tiles; three windows from ceiling down to the ground, opening on a balcony (Conrad, 1998: 52).

The long open gallery was in shadow, with its screen of plants in vases along the balustrade, holding out motionless blossoms, and all the glass doors of the reception-rooms thrown open. (Conrad, 1998: 160)

the dimly-lit corridor had a restful mysteriousness of a forest glade, suggested by the stems and the leaves of the plants along the balustrade of the open side. In the streaks of light falling through the open doors of the reception rooms, the blossoms, white and red and pale lilac, came out vivid with the brilliance of flowers in a stream of sunshine; (Conrad, 1998: 189)

Conrad’s psychology may be taken as the genesis of his pessimistic worldview pervasive in the novel. His pessimism emerges in such themes of the novel as history is futile and cyclical, individuals are impenetrable and solitary, and human values are relativistic and irrational. We can attach Conrad’s pessimism to his historical condition in the general history, and recognize Conrad’s personal standing “as an aristocratic Polish exile deeply committed to English conservatism, intensified for him the crisis of English bourgeois ideology”. (Eagleton in Keesey, 1987: 431) Considering that individual psychology is a social product, we can recognize Conrad’s psychology as a
product of the Western imperialism and capitalism, the aspects of which were observed by Conrad throughout his life. Eagleton marks that the pessimism in Conrad’s worldview is “rather a unique transformation into art of an ideological pessimism rife in his period”, and Conrad allied himself to the ideology of the Western bourgeois class. Eagleton adds:

There were good reasons for that ideological crisis, in the history of imperialist capitalism throughout this period. Conrad did not, of course, merely anonymously reflect that history in his fiction; every writer is individually placed in society, responding to a general history from his own standpoint, making sense of it in his own concrete terms […] To write well […] means having at one’s disposal an ideological perspective which can penetrate to the realities of men’s experience in a certain situation. This is certainly what the Placido Gulf scene does; and it can do it, […] because his [Conrad’s] historical situation allows him access to such insights. (Eagleton in Keesey, 1987: 431)

We can give the Golfo Placido scene as an example to show how Conrad transformed the crisis of the bourgeois class into his novel. In this scene, Decoud and Nostromo, having been charged with the duty of saving the silver, are seen trying to keep the silver out of sight and are isolated in utter darkness on the slowly sinking lighter. Though the radical pessimism of Conrad reveals itself throughout the scene, it is preferred here to give some parts of the scene to give a quotation having no excessive length:

The Capataz, extending his hand, put out the candle suddenly. It was to Decoud as if his companion had destroyed, by a single touch, the world of affairs, of loves, of revolution, where his complacent superiority analyzed fearlessly all motives and all passions, including his own.

He gasped a little. Decoud was affected by the novelty of his position. Intellectually self-confident, he suffered from being deprived of the only weapon he could use with effect. No intelligence could penetrate the darkness of the Placid Gulf […]

“We seem to be crossing her bows,” said the Capataz in a cautious tone. “But this is a blind game with death. Moving on is of no use. We mustn’t be seen or heard.”

His whisper was hoarse with excitement. Of all his face there was nothing visible but a gleam of white eyeballs. His fingers gripped Decoud’s shoulder. “That is the only way to save this treasure from this steamer full of soldiers. Any other would have carried lights. But you observe there is not a gleam to show us where she is.”
Decoud stood as if paralysed […]

“The darkness is our friend,” the Capataz murmured into his ear. “I am going to lower the sail, and trust our escape to this black gulf […]

A deathlike stillness surrounded the lighter. It was difficult to believe that there was near a steamer full of men with many pairs of eyes peering from her bridge for some hint of land in the night. (Conrad, 1998: 244-248)

As a result of this source study for Nostromo, it can be said that Conrad made use of many of the details taken from a number of various sources and he brought them together in his text to create a convincing mine with a convincing situation and history. Among the books he read are William’s On Many Seas, Masterman’s Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay, Eastwick’s Venezuela, Curtis’s Venezuela, and Graham’s short story “Cruz Alta” and articles containing Graham’s comments on and criticism of the implications of American and European commercial and political intervention in Spanish-American affairs. Conrad also made use of Graham’s personal experiences in South America as a source material for his Nostromo. It is evident that Conrad put himself through an intensive reading process in preparation for writing his book. It should also be noted that, during the writing of Nostromo, Conrad was aware of the specific current historical events, the information about which he had gained by means of reading. It is thought that Graham may have recommended to Conrad some of the South-American source books Conrad is known to have used during the writing of Nostromo; besides, Conrad was a reader of Blackwood’s Magazine, and of Saturday Review, in both of which skeptical editorial comments on the USA’s expansionist ambitions could be found. Through the biographical context in which Nostromo has been put, we have observed that Conrad utilized almost nothing from his own life except for the creation of his characters, Decoud and Antonia, and reflected the other people’s experiences in his text. Though Conrad used the others’ experiences, his treatment toward them shows us that Conrad, in the course of writing his three novels, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and Nostromo, so developed himself as a writer as to be sensitive toward the issues related to the others. This shows us that Conrad, as a conscious writer developed himself through time during which he wrote these three novels. In other words, Conrad was an author who never repeated the same ideas in these novels though they all seem to be dealing with political subjects. As
a last word here, we can say that these texts are never against his intellectual development; the more he developed his worldview, the more he developed the ideas he gave in his novels. We can say that Lord Jim is more complex than the preceding one, Heart of Darkness, and Nostromo is the most complex of all. His three novels transcend one another with respect to the suggestions from the real world and Conrad’s own life, his treatment of these experiences in the novels, his putting them into the contexts of the novels. He put his own experiences in the Congo in a context in which he criticized the European colonialism in Heart of Darkness, he put both his experiences and the other peoples’ experiences in a context in which he criticized mostly the British seamanship in Lord Jim, he put the others’ experiences in a context and criticized the policies of the great powers in Nostromo. Therefore, we can say that Conrad is a writer who developed himself and gained a global view during the six-year period in which he produced these three novels. For this reason, the Conrad, who wrote Heart of Darkness, is not the same Conrad, who wrote Lord Jim, and the Conrad, who wrote Lord Jim, is not the same Conrad, who wrote Nostromo.

Now our concern will be to set Nostromo in its historical context. It is known that Conrad began writing Nostromo in February or January 1903 and finished it September 1904. It is therefore evident that the novel was written at a time when the new imperialism appeared in the world stage. Through this new historicist reading of the novel, it is aimed to show how Conrad represents the pervasive ideologies of the late Victorian period, how his text resists and subverts these ideologies, and how he criticized the dominant political ideas by means of these subversions. Nostromo can be read in the light of Conrad’s representations of empire, imperialism, colonialism, political ideologies that are once again relevant today’s world. It is a novel in which an analysis of imperialism can be found. As Arnold Kettle states, with Nostromo

we are in the 20th century. It is not merely a matter of the date of publication. The novel is a whole historical vista that has changed. The world of Nostromo is the world of modern imperialism, of war and violence and concentration camps, of displaced persons and mass neurosis, all on a scale and of a kind radically different from previous human experience. (Kettle, 1969: 59)
Nostromo’s main themes of man’s degeneration via “material interests”, are all connected with the history of imperialism in Latin America. Therefore, it is possible to read the text “as a record of the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist – and, prospectively, to post-capitalist – society”. (Fleishman, 1967: 171)

To do so, it is necessary to look at the stages of society by their component classes, and at the same time to consider the main characters in the novel as representatives of those classes. In Nostromo the imaginary South American Republic of Costaguana becomes “a melting pot, a paradigm […] a commentary on the entire Western world” (Jones, 1985: 122) with European capitalists, indigenous Spanish landowners, hidalgos, native Indians, imported European laborers, conquerors, colonists, aristocrats and revolutionists. It is therefore evident that in Nostromo Costaguana is depicted as an international community. The Goulds are a mixture of European Costaguananans and European immigrants; Georgio Viola is a Genoese; Nostromo is an Italian; Teresa Viola is an Italian, too; Decoud imagines himself as a Parisian, and he is also “the adopted child of Western Europe”. (Conrad, 1998: 143) The Avellanos family are one of the representatives of the older, original colonists, the “Spanish-American” community although, in fact, Antonia Avellanos has a cosmopolitan background, “born in Europe and educated partly in England”. (Conrad, 1998: 129) Holroyd is from San Francisco and Sir John is from England. The politicians and power-seekers, Guzman Bento, General Montero, Sotillo and Don Vincente Ribiere have Hispanic names. Conrad with such an abundance of characters drawn with their national personalities, explores, in a global perspective, the connections and similarities which the imperial nations shared.

In order to historicise Nostromo, the historical context in which the novel was written should be recalled. We can draw a panorama of the new phase of imperialism. As Spittles points out in his Text and Context, the British Empire expanded to cover the greatest area of the globe and the largest number of people, of any imperial range known in human history. British expansion created more jealousy and Britain’s unpopularity among other Europeans powers. (Spittles, 1992: 89) This meant that Britain’s imperial power was being threatened by either the original European powers such as Spain, Portugal and Holland or newer forces such as the US and Germany. Toward the end of the century newly emergent
nations joined the struggle for power, territory, raw materials and markets. Germany, for example, sought a place among the colonial scramble, the USA began to challenge Western European countries, Russia and Japan expanded their influence in the east. From the early 1890s to the outbreak of the World War I, a new global dynamic began to emerge, which was in many ways typified by the 1898 Spanish-the USA war. Having had a long-established rule in Cuba, Spain met with increasing resistance there in the last two decades of the 19th century. This opposition attracted the support of the USA. In February 1898, a visiting USA battleship was blown up in the harbor of the Cuban capital, Havana, with the loss of 260 American lives. At this, the USA government blamed Spain, and took the opportunity to proclaim the island independent despite the objections of Spain. There were Spanish troops garrisoned on Cuba but the ensuing war consisted mainly of a series of naval battles around the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, and subsequently in the Far East, where Spain had colonized the Philippine Islands. The six-month war ended with the capitulation of the Spanish forces in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. Spain suffered a humiliating defeat concluded with a peace treaty in which Spain conceded independence to Cuba, lost possession of Puerto Rico to the USA and sold the Philippines also to the USA. It meant that “Spain was dwindling as an imperial power and the USA had entered the international power struggle. Britain’s initial response to the war was in favor of the USA” (Spittles, 1992: 90-91) because Spain was a long rival of Britain. However, there were some commentators who saw the USA as a potential danger on the world stage. In 1898, Blackwood’s Magazine, in which Heart of Darkness was serially published, analyzed the situation in an article. It is a great probability that Conrad read the article, which then C. T. Watts summarised in Joseph Conrad’s Letters to R. B. Cunningham Graham. The article was summarized with a succinctness that cannot be improved:

the political commentator made a dispassionate and partly ironic survey […] his main points being:
(a) The Americans had glorified the war; yet it was a rather tawdry series of minor engagements.
(b) At the outset, most English papers had urged Spain to sacrifice one or two colonies ‘as a cheap means of peace’. But ‘now we have lately heard a great deal of the possibility, the not-unlikelihood, of a great European coalition to redistribute the colonial possessions of Great Britain […] At what point would
the beautifully accurate reasoning addressed to Spain be our own guide to giving in?

(c) The Americans had originally claimed that they were helping the rebels to attain independence, but now they claim that the rebels were mere cut-throats: so that in Cuba and Manila

‘there is considerable likelihood that [...] the Americans will have to deal not with a population grateful to its liberators, but with a malcontent people well practiced in rebellion who think themselves tricked into a change of masters.’

(d) Therefore the war which had revealed the United States as a new imperialist power might well result in increased sympathy for Spain from other countries. (Watts, 1969: 97)

Conrad showed his response in a letter to Graham, referring to both Spain and the USA as ‘thieves’, which shows that Conrad did not approve of colonialism. (Karl, 1986: 81) Spittles also says that Conrad was suspicious of the USA’s world ambitions, being aware that the globe was becoming a unified political stage rather than a collection of separate arenas. Conrad also realized that imperialism was developing a more subtle aspect than the old form of simple military conquest. As Conrad suspected it would be, after the Spanish-American war had led to Cuban independence, the USA, which had “become increasingly powerful economically since the end of the American Civil War in 1865, became a power on the economy of Spain” (Spittles, 1992: 91-93) Thus, the USA realized one of its long-projected aims. As Alstyne points out in The Rising American Empire, in the 1850s the USA had a desire for Cuba for its foreign trade. The possession of Cuba would make New Orleans the leading port of the world; and as a future slave state, the island was looked upon as a bulwark of strength for the South. Similar interests in the upper Mississippi valley regarded Cuba with great favor. Thus, the Illinois Central Railroad anticipated bringing Cuban sugar to the Chicago market and carrying wheat and pork south for export to the West Indies. Chicago, New Orleans, Havana and New York had been expected to be tied together in a web of banking, trading and transportation interests. (Alstyne, 1960: 153) It should also be noted that the USA, referred as the greatest country in the world, developed a rising national feeling, a growing sense of power. This was initially viewed as an attempt to lead a coalition of the new world. But it was then turned into ‘Pan-Americanism’ by many ‘Pan-American conferences held between the years 1899-1901. Thus, the USA began to be recognized as a rival for world power. There was a growing British distrust of the USA. Yet Britain was cooperating with the USA
in some respects. This paradox is considered to have stemmed primarily from the fact that the Boer War had exposed Britain’s isolation in Europe and she needed American friendship and from the attitudes of other European nations. But it is clear that the cooperation was beneficial for both the USA and Britain, and it created an international capitalism in the world. (Spittles, 1992: 92-93)

During the period in which *Nostromo* was written, the economic strength of the USA was translated into a “crypto-colonial expansion through the twin-forces of naval power and financial investment”. (Spittles, 1992: 99) When *Nostromo* is put into its historical context, it can be seen that the novel was produced at a time when imperialism was transforming into a new shape, in which money was recognized as power, through which the dominating country’s control of the dominated country’s government was ensured. Thus, the novel cannot be viewed as just a simple allegory of anti-Americanism. Conrad does not just reflect the politics in the world arena during the period when he wrote *Nostromo*. Rather, he works through an analysis of political realities and explores understandings of processes. Our concern here is to show how Conrad represents the world powers and their policies in *Nostromo*.

In the text, Americans are involved in a form of imperialism. At the beginning of the novel, Americans are in Costaguana because of the silver. The two “wandering sailors” who become folk legends haunting the Azuera Mountains because “Their souls cannot tear themselves away from their bodies mounting guard over the discovered treasure” are “Americanos, perhaps.” (Conrad, 1998: 12) The USA is also represented by the San Franciscan financier, Holroyd, who is represented as a respectable figure of commerce and finance. He is such a character that he expresses his sense of nationalism in a similar way in which Pan-Americans expressed their jingoism. Holroyd refers to the USA “the greatest country in the whole of God’s universe”. (Conrad, 1998: 74) It is clear that Conrad was aware of the complexities of international capitalism. Imperialism is represented in the novel not as a simple case of pillage, but as a cooperation of the USA and Britain. Sir John is English, and the railway is British-owned; Charles Gould is the owner of the San-Tomé silver mine and has an English background.
and wife. San-Tomé is reopened by the finance given by an American, Holroyd to an Englishman, Charles Gould.

It is known that by the turn of the century industry was expanding enormously. Railways were the great symbol of scientific, technological and industrial progress in Europe in the 19th century. When Conrad makes, in *Nostromo*, the railway a central feature of the development of Costaguana, it is not by a causal, coincidental choice. The 1890s were the years in which “the British Empire comprised more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the world”, and “Englishmen were building railways throughout the empire at its outposts in India and Africa”. (Leitch, Vol. II, 1986: 926) A similar sentiment is reflected in *Nostromo* when the railway is described as a “progressive and patriotic undertaking”, the very words in which: “Vincente Ribiera, the Dictator of Costagun, had described the National Central Railway in his greatest speech at the turning of the first sod.” (Conrad, 1998: 37) The scene is a satire on the portentousness of politicians and merchant bankers on such occasions. That is, “Capitalism is presented in the novel as dressing up its own interests so that they appear to be for the common good.” (Spittles, 1992: 98) For example, it is said that Sir John

worked always on a great scale; there was a loan to the State, and a project for systematic colonization of the Occidental Province, involved in one vast scheme with the construction of the National Central Railway. Good faith, order, honesty, peace were badly wanted for this great development of material interests. (Conrad, 1998: 109)

In this scene, the political stability is shown as a requirement of the protection of the investment of foreign capital. Conrad uses the phrase “one vast scheme” in an ironic tone. The scheme consists of the act of bringing together the moral virtues such as “good faith, order, honesty” and “peace” and the pursuit of “material interests”. Thus Conrad criticizes the practice of political economy. The criticism is emphasized a few pages later in a scene in which The Goulds see the local people enjoying a native festival:

Over little heaps of glowing charcoal Indian women, squatting on mats, cooked food in black earthen pots, and boiled the water for the maté gourds, which they offered in soft, caressing voices to
the country people. A racecourse had been staked out for the vaquerors; and away to the left, from where the crowd was massed thickly about a huge temporary erection, like a circus tent of wood with a conical grass roof, came the resonant twanging of harp strings, the sharp ping of guitars, with the grave drumming throb of an Indian gombo pulsating steadily through the shrill choruses of the dancers. (Conrad, 1998: 114)

This scene illustrates how the ordinary folk of the country are happy enjoying immaterial interests such as music, song and dance. After this scene comes Charles Gould’s remark to his wife: “All this piece of land belongs now to the Railway Company. There will be no more popular feasts held here.” (Conrad, 1998: 114) It is evident that Conrad subverts the practice of political economy, a practice which was pervasive especially at the end of the 19th century, by representing the “material interests” as something which lies behind the practice, and to which the immaterial interests must be sacrificed. The collective pleasure and sense of life of the common people must be sacrificed to the benefits of the Railway Company capitalists rather than the mass of the people of Costaguana. What progress meant for Conrad and how he represents it in Nostromo will be examined in a more detailed way in a later part of this chapter.

In 1890, the USA built its first battleship and throughout the decade expanded its naval capacity, which ensured the country’s political order. As a result of “its power in the political arena, the USA was perceived as the agent of Fate and God”. (Spittles, 1992: 99) The following extract taken from a speech of Senator Albert Beveridge’s illustrates the general mood of the country, the sense of inevitability:

Fate has written our policy […] the trade of the world must and can be ours […] We will cover the ocean with our merchant marine. We will build a navy to the measure of our greatness. Great colonies, governing themselves, flying our flag, and trading with us, will grow about our ports of trade […] American law, American order, American civilization and the American flag will plant themselves on shores hitherto bloody and benighted by those agents of God henceforth made beautiful and bright. (Quoted in Spittles, 1992: 99)

In Nostromo Holroyd reflects a similar feeling when he talks to Charles Gould: We shall be giving the word for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion, from Cape Horn clear over to Smith’s Sound, and beyond, too, if anything worth taking hold
of turns up at the North Pole. And then we shall [...] take in hand the outlying islands and continents of the earth. We shall run the world’s business whether the world likes it or not. The world can’t help it – and neither can we, I guess. (Conrad, 1998: 74)

Toward the end of the 19th century, the USA navy was the strong arm of its foreign policy, enabling a number of interventions in central and South American politics as unstable friendly governments needed support, or hostile ones were opposed by rebels inside a nation’s boundaries. (Spittles, 1992: 100) Captain Mitchell proudly tells visitors that the United States were “the first great power to recognize the Occidental Republic”. (Conrad, 1998: 425) And then he gives an important detail refracting the fact that the USA navy is the most powerful of all: “there was ‘in this very harbour’ an international naval demonstration, which put an end to the Costaguna-Sulaco War”, and he adds “the United States cruiser, Powhattan, was the first to salute the Occidental flag”. (Conrad, 1998: 426) It should be noted that Captain Mitchell does not understand that the political relationship rests on the financial links between the San Tomé silver mine and the bankers of San Francisco, especially Holroyd. As Spittles writes the connection between capital and politics is ensured, in the novel, by Gould’s ownership of the silver mine. (Spittles, 1992: 103) Gould begins the adventure as an idealist who believes that the material interests will bring “a better justice” (Conrad, 1998: 80) to Costaguana. San Tomé mine is financed with a credit opened by “the Third Southern Bank (located next door but one to the Holroyd Building)” and “the Ribierist Party in Costaguana took a practical shape under the eye of the administrator of the San Tom” mine”. (Conrad, 1998: 132) The colonialism reflected in Nostromo can therefore be regarded as a more civilized form of colonialism than that occurred in Africa. Conrad, in his text, reflecting this sort of imperialism in an ironic tone, subverts capitalism, which took part in the politics of economy of both Britain and the USA toward the end of 19th century. This type of imperialism is reflected as exploitative as the colonialism in Africa, a subverted reflection of which is found in Heart of Darkness.

The subversion of imperialism, colonialism and capitalism in Nostromo can be linked with Conrad’s understanding of history reflected in the novel because the novel insists at length that it is not the consciousness of human beings that is primary in determining the events but other non-human forces: “material interests”.
To illustrate this idea in the text, Conrad makes the silver of San Tomé mine the symbol of “material interests” and an important factor affecting the lives of all the characters. Conrad’s comment on the deliberateness of the silver as symbol is well known in a letter dated 7 March 1923 to Ernst Bendzt, a Swedish professor who had written a study of Conrad’s work:

I will take the liberty to point out that Nostromo has never been intended for the hero of the tale of the Seaboard. The silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale. That this was my deliberate purpose there can be no doubt. I struck the first note of my intention in the unusual form which I gave to the title of the First Part, by calling it “The Silver of the Mine,” and by telling the story of the enchanted treasure of Azuera, which strictly speaking, has nothing to do with the rest of the novel. The word “silver” occurs almost at the very beginning of the story proper, and I took care to introduce it in the very last paragraph, which would perhaps have been better without the phrase which contains the key-word.
(Quoted in Jean-Aubry, Vol. II, 1927: 296)

A significant concern in *Nostromo* is with self-deception, which is showed by the disparity between the ideal and the action, that is, the earlier dreams and intentions of the characters and the end results in the case of each character. The novel is full of characters who think that they are the masters of history but who are, in fact, its slaves and puppets. Conrad puts all his characters into a process of history in which no character realizes his ideals, and in which no progress is gained.

Now our concern will be to show how the major characters see themselves and each other at the beginning of the novel and how all of their assessments turn out to be incorrect by the passage of time. To begin with the Goulds, Charles Gould, who has inherited the San Tomé mine, sees himself as the bringer of order and law to a lawless land and of prosperity to a land of grinding poverty. The perspective from which Charles Gould sees himself and his mine is illustrated in the following passage in *Nostromo*:

What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Anyone can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That’s how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because
the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That’s your ray of hope. (Conrad, 1998: 80)

We can also say that before the opening of the San Tomé mine, Mrs. Gould has a great confidence in her husband. We are told that:

He had struck her imagination from the first by his unsentimentalism, by that very quietude of mind which she had erected in her thought for a sign of perfect competency in the business of living. (Conrad, 1998: 51)

We have also Gould’s own idea of himself through which we see more or less how he sees himself. He compares himself to Holroyd, the American capitalist:

In comparison to the correctness of his aim, definite in space and absolutely attainable within a limited time, the other man appeared for an instant as a dreamy idealist of no importance. (Conrad, 1998: 75)

And he tells his wife:

‘Any one can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. Only let the material interests once get a firm footing, and they are bound to impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist. That’s how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. A better justice will come afterwards. That’s your ray of hope.’ (Conrad, 1998: 80)

Moreover, Gould is sure that he is no mere profiteer. He tells his wife that: “Uncle Harry was no adventurer. In Costaguana we Goulds are no adventurers.” (Conrad, 1998: 64) Thus, it is clear that Charles Gould, according to himself and his wife, at the beginning of the novel, are not sentimentalists or adventurers. Charles Gould sees himself as one who pins his hopes on material interests rather than abstract ideals. However, Conrad controverts their assessments later on in the novel. (Hawthorn, 1990: 206) Decoud tells Mrs. Gould his conviction that her husband is an idealist and sentimentalist:

A puzzled look came upon Mrs Gould’s face, and Decoud, approaching, explained confidentially –
‘Don’t you see, he’s such an idealist.’
Mrs. Gould flushed pink, and her eyes grew darker at the same time […]

He must have known what he was talking about. The effect he expected was produced. Mrs Gould, ready to take fire, gave it up suddenly with a low little sound that resembled a moan. (Conrad, 1998: 193)

Then Decoud tells her that he believes that her husband can be drawn into his plan, “like all idealists, when he once sees a sentimental basis for his action”. (Conrad, 1998: 195) In his letter to his sister, Decoud repeats these charges, referring to Gould’s idealism and sentimentality. Gould’s earlier claim that neither he nor his family was adventurers is controverted via the revelation of consciousness of Gould himself:

After all, with his English parentage and English upbringing, he perceived that he was an adventurer in Costaguana, the descendant of adventurers enlisted in a foreign legion, of men who had sought fortune in a revolutionary war, who had planned revolutions, who had believed in revolutions. For all the uprightness of his character, he had something of an adventurer’s easy morality which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action. (Conrad, 1998: 323)

Thus, it can be said that Charles Gould, convinced that the development of San Tomé mine has been for the best moral reasons, is later forced to admit that he is an adventurer. What Conrad does through the failure of the noble ideals of Gould is to subvert the ideas attached to imperialism and colonialism. Gould, who holds the concession to the mine, is represented in the text, before his failure, as “the most powerful political force in the country, a man who can make or break governments”. (Jones, 1985: 124) At the end of the novel, Gould is presented as one trapped by the material benefits which he expected to come through the silver of the mine. He is, then, a mere adventurer like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, who has been in the Congo for just looting. In Heart of Darkness, we have seen that the ideal turns out to be an illusion through Kurtz’s greed and egoism. Gould is doomed to his isolation like Kurtz, “not like Kurtz by avarice, vanity and violence, by refusing his mission as light-bringer, by repudiating the idea, but by accepting his mission as light-bringer and bearer of the idea”. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 212) He accepts his mission, but ironically enough he becomes a victim of the impersonal logic of “material interests” and in the end, he becomes the slave of his silver because he has lost love to the
enormous abstraction of his historical role. Conrad also suggests that the mine becomes “a demanding mistress” in Charles’s life. As Johnson remarks, Emilia Gould will bear no children, and Charles is incessantly described as riding off to spend the night at the mine. (Johnson, 1971: 107) Gould idealizes the mine “as a spiritual principle, turning it into an idol or fetish; but this simply rationalizes greed, rivalry, and the lust for power”. (Eagleton, 2005: 248) By means of the character of Gould, Conrad shows us effectively that

Ideals are no more than masks for material interests, objectivity is a convenient fiction, the human subject has no abiding core of truth, and so-called civilized notions are in the service of power and desire. (Eagleton, 2005: 248)

In *Nostromo* Conrad once again shows the paradox of action and idea. In Gould, idealism becomes illusion through his obsession with the “material interests”. In the case of Gould, as in the cases of the other failures in *Nostromo*, and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, and Jim in *Lord Jim*, there is

the clash between spirit and body [...] a rift between the ideal and the real – between the dreams one has in the moment before acting, and the inevitable let-down of putting them into material form. We cannot be free without acting, yet we end up imprisoned in our own actions like a convict in his cell. Charles Gould of *Nostromo* will discover that – in this kind of acquisitive society at least – there is something about freedom which turns inexorably into imprisonment. (Eagleton, 2005: 241)

Charles Gould is an important character in the novel with reference to Conrad’s reflection of the bitter reality about imperialism through him. Hawthorn suggests that it was a substantial insight of Conrad’s to perceive how important to imperialism the masking of the acquisitive spirit by fine words was. (Hawthorn, 1990: 212) Conrad draws, in the character of Gould, the colonial adventurer, who fails to perceive the real face of imperialism. Gould is an imperialist adventurer who conceals unpleasant facts from himself by means of pretty fictions. As, in *Lord Jim*, Jim’s idea of life was shaped by “the light holiday literature”, which reflects an imaginary life far from the realities of real life, Gould’s perception of life is shaped by pretty fictions. In *Nostromo* Decoud tells Mrs. Gould that her husband
cannot act or exist without idealizing every simple feeling, desire, or achievement. He could not believe his own motives if he did not make them first a part of some fairy tale. The earth is not quite enough for him, I fear. (Conrad, 1998: 193)

He repeats the point after a short time, referring to Mr. Gould: “Life for me is not a moral romance derived from the tradition of a pretty fairy tale. No, Mrs. Gould; I am practical. I am not afraid of my motives.” (Conrad, 1998: 196) Yet Gould thinks himself a realist, far away from believing in fairy tales as can be imagined. He is so wrapped up in his own visions and so egocentrically concerned with his fairy tales that he never succeeds in making any real contact with his wife. His failure in communicating with his wife is revealed in the following parts of the novel: “Charles Gould did not open his heart to her in any set speeches. He simply went on acting and thinking in her sight”, (Conrad, 1998: 60) “now he was actually not looking at her at all; and his expression was tense and irrational, as is natural in a man who elects to stare at nothing past a young girl’s head”. (Conrad, 1998: 62) Emilia Gould understands that her husband is the quintessence of material success. “Poor boy!” thinks Emilia in a moving and tragic moment, “He was perfect, perfect; but she would never have him to herself. Never;”. (Conrad, 1998: 455) In the following account, we see Gould thinking that there is nothing to say because he has attached himself to the development and protection of “material interests”. For him there is no longer any need for human intercourse:

“One could close one’s eyes to the glare”, said Mrs Gould. “But, my dear Charley, it is impossible for me to close my eyes to our position; to this awful …”

She raised her eyes and looked at her husband’s face, from which all sign of sympathy or any other feeling had disappeared. “Why don’t you tell me something?” she almost wailed.

“I thought you had understood me perfectly from the first,” Charles Gould said, slowly. “I thought we had said all there was to say a long time ago. There is nothing to say now. There were things to be done. We have done them; we have gone on doing them. There is no going back now. I don’t suppose that, even from the first, there was really any possible way back. And what’s more, we can’t even afford to stand still.”

“Ah if one only knew how far you mean to go,” said his wife, inwardly trembling, but in an almost playful tone.

“Any distance, any length, of course,” was the answer, in a matter-of-fact tone, which caused Mrs Gould to make another attempt to repress a shudder. (Conrad, 1998: 187)
It is because the development of “material interests” is inhuman that Gould no longer has anything to say to his wife. It is also clear from these passages that Gould’s passion for his wife has been transferred to the mine. Though Mr. Gould does not realize that he is a man who actually lives in fairy tales, Mrs. Gould grows to realize that she has been a character in her husband’s fairy stories. We are told that

Small and dainty, as if radiating a light of her own in the deep shade of the interlaced boughs, she resembled a good fairy, weary with a long career of well-doing, touched by the withering suspicion of the uselessness of her labours, the powerlessness of her magic. (Conrad, 1998: 454)

Through the character, Gould, “Conrad shows us that the Europeans in Sulaco are living an unreal life in a world whose real contours they cannot see” because “Gould is cut off from an insight into what he is actually doing by the magic of the fairy tales to which he is mentally in thrall” (Hawthorn, 1990: 214) just as Lord Jim fails to make proper contact with the real world because of his youthful infatuation with light holiday literature. Conrad also shows us how imperialism creates individuals like Gould, who is unable to understand his wife, but ironically becomes a servant of imperialism.

Mrs. Gould is as good an example as her husband is to confirm the idea that one cannot determine how the events will shape oneself. Mrs. Gould is such a person that changes into the opposite of her youthful self. Her initial idealism and sentimentality are pointed out early on in the novel. We are told with reference to her first visitors from abroad in Sulaco that

Perhaps had they known how much she was inspired by an idealistic view of success they would have been amazed at the state of her mind as the Spanish-American ladies had been amazed at the tireless activity of her body. She would – in her own words – have been for them “something of a monster.” (Conrad, 1998: 66)

The following passage also reveals that, at the beginning, Emilia Gould is drawn as an idealistic character. During the meeting at the O.S.N. Company Mrs. Gould, as
the only woman there because Sulacan women are not “advanced enough to take part in the public life to that extent”, tells the Sulacan men:

“We can’t give you your ecclesiastical court back again; but you shall have more steamers, a railway, a telegraph-cable – a future in the great world which is worth infinitely more than any amount of ecclesiastical past. You shall be brought in touch with something greater than two viceroyalties. But I had no notion that a place on a sea-coast could remain so isolated from the world. If it had been a thousand miles inland now – most remarkable! Has anything ever happened here for a hundred years before today?” (Conrad, 1998: 38-39)

A little later in the novel, we are informed that even the most legitimate touch of materialism was wanting in Mrs Gould’s character. The dead man of whom she thought with tenderness (because he was Charley’s father) and with some impatience (because he had been weak), must be put completely in the wrong. Nothing else would do to keep their prosperity without a stain on its only real, on its immaterial side! (Conrad, 1998: 72)

It should be emphasized here that Emilia Gould’s rejection of the materialist ambitions of her husband’s father is self-deceiving, and “she fails to realize the extent to which the whole Gould project is still enslaved to ‘material interests’”. (Hawthorn, 1990: 211) Mrs. Gould changes in a direction contrary to the change she experiences in her husband, in other words, she is not sentimental any longer. She is not the sentimentalist and idealist woman, to whom Mr. Gould proposed. By this time she has begun to recognize “the contribution her sentimentality has made to her husband’s enslavement to the mine”. (Hawthorn, 1990: 221) The following account shows us that Mrs. Gould realizes what has happened to them:

With a prophetic vision, she saw herself surviving alone the degradation of her young ideal of life, of love, of work – all alone in the Treasure House of the World. The profound, blind, suffering expression of a painful dream settled on her face with its closed eyes. In the indistinct voice of an unlucky sleeper, lying passive in the grip of a merciless nightmare, she stammered out aimlessly the words – ‘Material interests.’ (Conrad, 1998: 456)

Emilia Gould perceives the truth as if she were in a dream. But she is still “lying passive”; her idealism has unfitted her for her active struggle against “material
interests”. At the end of the novel, she is told by Dr. Monygham that the “material interests” will not bring about human betterment, they only cause the tragedy of human beings, and that human betterment will come only from active struggle in pursuit of a moral principle. Dr. Monygham tells Mrs. Gould:

‘There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back.’ (Conrad, 1998: 447)

Emilia is the victim of her husband’s mission. As Warren marks, “over against the abstractions, she sets up the human community, the sense of human solidarity in understanding and warmth and kindness outside the historical process”. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 212, 223) It is to her that the dying Nostromo wants to make his confession. It is she who compels the devotion of the bitter Dr. Monygham. The other characters, except for her husband taken up by his silver and his mission, gather around her. Emilia Gould, trapped in her “merciless nightmare” (Conrad, 1998: 456) in “The Treasure House of the World”, leans over the dying Capataz and hears him say “But there is something accursed in wealth”, and then begins to tell her where the treasure is hidden. But Emilia bursts out: “Let it be lost forever.” (Conrad, 1998: 488) This is her moment of vision, her repudiation of the logic of “material interests”.

As for the old Garibaldino, Giorgio Viola, like Emilia Gould, he believes in the human bond, in a brotherhood of liberty, and has risked his life in the hope of bringing the day of liberty nearer to men. But like the idealism of Charles Gould, his idealism is tainted with abstraction. Yet his idealism is not totally destroyed; “some warmth remains in his nobility of purpose and his Roman rigor”. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 213) Viola’s idealism could not be realized because he is not the author of his life as the Goulds are not. In his case, the ideas that man cannot be the author of his life, and that there is always a disparity between idea and action, are once again emphasized. Another form of the idealism of Viola can be seen in his leaning toward Nostromo. We find a symbolic desire in his taking Nostromo as a
son. Nostromo is the man whom old Viola would draw into his orbit by uniting him with his elder daughter, Linda, who carries something of the Garibaldino’s passion and fidelity. But Nostromo, who has lived by his vanity, turns to the other daughter Giselle, the “bad” daughter, and dies as a consequence. In the end neither Viola nor Linda realizes their dreams. On the other side, Nostromo fails though he has a natural grandeur. Through Nostromo’s end, Conrad shows that natural grandeur unredeemed by principle or ‘idea’ is not enough.

Throughout *Nostromo*, the pervasive idea revealed is that it is the power of nature that resists the schemes of men. This is dramatized in the failures of many of the characters in the novel, in their struggles to exploit the silver of the mine. Mr. Gould, Nostromo, Holroyd, Sir John, the Montero brothers and Sotillo can be accounted for their struggles to exploit the silver. The mine, as the narrator says, becomes the cornerstone of the social structure in Sulaco: “the San Tomé mine was to become an institution, a rallying point for everything in the province that needed order and stability to live.” (Conrad, 1998: 110)

To begin with Nostromo, the foreman of the cargadores, he is presented as “the lordly capataz” (Conrad, 1998: 144), and an “invaluable fellow”. (Conrad, 1998: 18) With his broad chest dazzling with silver buttons, he receives, and gains sustenance from the adulation of the crowds. Warren defines Nostromo as

> the natural man, the son of the people with the pride of the people, contemptuous of the “hombres finos,” with their soft hands inexpert on tiller or rifle, half magnificent unconscious animal and half the confused, conscious tempted man, who is virtuous merely by vanity, for until the combination of opportunity and rancor strikes him he wants nothing but “reputation,” that full awareness of his identity ideally projected in the minds and on the tongues of men. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 213)

Nostromo’s living by his reputation is suggested in his response to Charles Gould, who wants to reward him for his heroism. Nostromo says: “My name is known from one end of Sulaco to the other […] What more can you do for me?” (Conrad, 1998: 428) In a conversation concerning Nostromo, Decoud says, “The heroes of the world have been feared and admired.” (Conrad, 1998: 210) As Guetti points out, Nostromo is a hero, and each character fears or admires him in a different way; Nostromo’s
given name, Giovanni Battista, is also “the name of his patron saint, and for Signora Theresa Viola, […] he is a saint.” (Guetti, 1970: 36) Her fearful, plaintive remonstrance of him has the quality of prayer. Theresa prays: “Oh! Gian’ Battista, why art thou not here? Oh! Why art thou not here?” (Conrad, 1998: 23) There is something magical about Nostromo. For Giorgio Viola, Nostromo is simply and comprehensively “the incorruptible”. Captain Joe Mitchell is proud of Nostromo’s bravery. He says, “He carried all our lives in his pocket. Devotion, courage, fidelity, intelligence were not enough” and “he was perfectly fearless and incorruptible. But a man was wanted that would know how to succeed. He was that man, sir”. (Conrad, 1998: 423) In the novel, Nostromo’s ability to succeed in any venture is seen “as more than the results of human virtues; it is mysterious, incomprehensible, more than human”. (Guetti, 1970: 36) Nostromo is presented as the master of the fortunes of Sulaco in Captain Mitchell’s oral history of the revolution. This idea, as Guetti marks, has a good deal of factual basis:

in depriving Colonel Sotillo of the silver, Nostromo also deprives him of his ability to act; when he could have constituted an ominous threat to Sulaco, Sotillo is harmlessly and distractedly dragging the bottom of the Placid Gulf for the treasure. Nostromo’s ride to General Barrios at Cayta is, of course, the actual turning point of the revolution. (Guetti, 1970: 36)

It should also be noted that Nostromo is drawn in the novel – before he stole the silver – as a mythical hero. Through the viewpoints of the other characters, we continually encounter “glimpses of this fabled and magnificent man. Here and there appear accounts of his shining black whiskers, his great revolver, and his bloodcurdling laugh”. (Guetti, 1970: 37) He is often seen very mysteriously in the glimmering light of a flame: “The flame showed a bronzed, black-whiskered face, a pair of eyes gazing straight.” (Conrad, 1998: 44) This mystery is heightened by Conrad’s tantalizing presentation of Nostromo. For the greater part of the first half of the book, the reader is never sure where Nostromo is or what he is doing; he appears and disappears, a dark, spectral figure on a ghostly silver horse: “the short flick of yellowish flame in the dusk was powerless against the muffled-up mysteriousness of the dark figure with an invisible face concealed by a great sombrero.” (Conrad, 1998: 169) Nostromo also exists as “a public persona”. It is therefore evident that “he has no value in himself, only in the way he is regarded by
Nostromo exists, as he himself remarks, to be spoken well of. So Nostromo resembles “a commodity like the silver, which similarly has value only because it is thought well of. A commodity like silver accrues its worth only in what people make of it”. (Eagleton, 2005: 250) Conrad presenting Nostromo like a commodity as the silver is, implies the idea that

nature and history are meaningless in themselves, and people or objects take on value only because of the energies which men and women subjectively invest in them. The silver of the mine is itself just inert material stuff; but in generating this whole enthralling drama, it becomes in Conrad’s own words the hero of the novel. As men and women are turned into objects for others’ power or profit, so objects like the mine begin to assume an oppressive life of their own. (Eagleton, 2005: 250)

Nostromo is the natural hero, as has already been pointed out. The passage about Nostromo at the end of Chapter VII of Part III can be taken as the key passage to show Nostromo’s naturalness. The passage gives the moment when Nostromo, having swum from the Isabels after the burying of the silver, goes to sleep in a “lair” of grass and then wakes:

He stood knee deep amongst the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world. Handsome, robust, and supple, he threw back his head, flung his arms open, and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast. Then, in the suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing from under a thoughtful brow, appeared the man. (Conrad, 1998: 363)

The description of Nostromo in the account above constitutes a striking statement of his well-known strength and a new awareness of his basic simplicity and innocence. Yet Nostromo then takes a large step toward moral degeneration and self-annihilation. In opposition to Nostromo’s fabled greatness, which is accounted for nearly till the beginning of the second half of the novel, Nostromo is presented to us as a failure in the second half. “Behind his generosity, and, in fact, behind his every
heroic quality, lies an incredible vanity, an overwhelming desire to be well spoken of, a passion for prestige and reputation.” (Guetti, 1970: 38) The crucial moment of Nostromo’s shift from a hero to a failure occurs when Nostromo’s preoccupation with silver begins:

As soon as Nostromo departs from the harbour of Sulaco with the silver, his deeds abruptly cease to be heroic […] Isolated in the deserted fort in which he has slept after leaving Decoud on the Great Isabel, Nostromo is overwhelmed with a sense of betrayal and guilt; he feels he has been abandoned by every friend and admirer, and he is mystically conscious of Signora Viola’s death and his failure to comply with her wish that he summon a priest. (Guetti, 1970: 39)

The shift in Nostromo from being a public hero to a failure is strengthened by his awakening from the dream-ideal. In the following part of the novel, we can see that Nostromo perceives his life before he has stolen the silver as an illusion:

The Capataz of the Sulaco Cargadores had lived in splendour and publicity up to the very moment, as it were, when he took charge of the lighter containing the treasure of the silver ingots. The last act he had performed in Sulaco was in complete harmony with his vanity, and as such perfectly genuine. He had given his last dollar to an old woman moaning with the grief and fatigue of a dismal search under the arch of the ancient gate. Performed in obscurity and without witnesses, it had still the characteristics of splendour and publicity; and was in strict keeping with his reputation. But this awakening in solitude, […] amongst the ruins of the fort, had no such characteristics. His first confused feeling was exactly this—that it was not in keeping. It was more like the ends of things. The necessity of living concealed somehow, […] which assailed him on his return to consciousness, made everything that had gone before for years appear vain and foolish, like a flattering dream come suddenly to an end. (Conrad, 1998: 364-365)

Nostromo’s failure can also be commented on from the standpoint of Nostromo’s psychology. Just before his meeting with the doctor, Nostromo suffered the first setback in his long career of brilliant feats of courage. He was unable to carry the Gould silver safely beyond the Isabels on the Gulfo Placido. The weight of failure is increased by the fact that the capataz, who has been for many hours facing terrible solitude on the company lighter, now possesses a secret which further cuts him off from nearly all his fellows. He cannot make his presence, or his story, known to the
public, for it would be dangerous to risk the possible exposure of the secret of the silver. He must wait in continued solitude until he can find some important and properly appreciative figure that is connected with his daring adventure, before which he can recount his tale of bravery and frustration. “Perhaps for the first time Nostromo suffers a loss of identity.” (Marten, *Con radiana* Vol. 8, 1976: 28-29) His sense of the loss of identity can be seen in the following expressions in the novel: “since it was no longer possible for him to parade the streets of the town and be hailed with respect in the usual haunts of his leisure, this sailor felt himself destitute indeed.” (Conrad, 1998: 366) With the sense of loneliness, abandonment, and failure, he beholds the world without fate and courage. He is left with no intellectual existence or moral strain to carry on his individuality. He sees himself as an empty shell, “ready to feel the burden of sacrilegious guilt descend upon his shoulders”. (Conrad, 1998: 370) Under such sentiments, Nostromo does decide to steal the silver. He thinks that “he had been betrayed”, (Conrad, 1998: 368) and he makes up his mind that the treasure should not be betrayed. Before Nostromo meets Dr. Mongyham at the deserted customhouse, he is far away from being “the magnificent capataz of cargadores”. He is flitting along the shore like “a pursued shadow, between the somber palm-groves and the sheet of water lying as still as death on his right hand”. (Conrad, 1998: 370) When he meets the doctor, we see how far the decline of mental and physical stability has gone:

“Who are you?”
Already Nostromo had seemed to recognize Dr. Monygham. He had no doubt now. He hesitated the space of a second. The idea of bolting without a word presented itself to his mind. No use! An inexplicable repugnance to pronounce the name by which he was known kept him silent a little longer. At last he said, in a low voice –
“*A cargador.*” (Conrad, 1998: 374)

We may even say that Nostromo commits a kind of suicide because “he has destroyed the self by which he had lived”. (Warren, 1960: 213) When, after the theft of the silver, he returns to the port but does not resume his work, he asks Captain Mitchell, “How can I look my Cargadores in the face after losing a lighter?” And Mitchell replies: “It was no mistake … It was a fatality. A thing that could not be helped. ‘*Si, sí!*’ ” (Conrad, 1998: 428) Nostromo replies and turns away. It is evident in this scene that everything “seems fated to Nostromo, fated because he had had
nothing to depend on to prevent his succumbing and therefore cannot see how things could have been otherwise”. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 213) It can also be marked that the whole passage bears a kind of double meaning. Both Nostromo’s smile wrenching Captain Mitchell’s heart and the captain’s response as he averts his head reveal that Nostromo has lost what he had lived by.

As the novel moves toward its close, we see Nostromo living in an ever-increasing tangle of deceptions, all of which have their roots in the first lie about the silver. As time passes, Nostromo begins to realize that “he does not own the silver; it owns him”. (Rfy, 1970: 26) He is tainted and corrupted by his act; his vision of self suffers. As Rfy reminds us, he is ashamed of the greedy animal that makes furtive nocturnal expeditions to carry away an ingot or two. Occasionally he stares at his fingers, “as if surprised they had left no stain on his skin.” (Conrad, 1998: 457) The net of his own complicated intrigues tightens round him. Startled to learn that a lighthouse is planned for the island, and fearful that it will lead to the discovery of his cache, he uses his influence to place his aged friend Giorgio as the keeper of the lighthouse. Georgio’s arranging a betrothal to his elder daughter, Linda, gives Nostromo a pretext for regular visits to the island. Secretly, however, he is courting the younger daughter, Giselle. All these actions of Nostromo reveal the fact that he is driven, by the silver, into a moral degeneration. Nostromo at last has reached a level of moral corruption from which there is no hope of return:

A transgression, a crime, entering a man’s existence, eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever. Nostromo had lost his peace; the genuineness of all his qualities was destroyed. He felt it himself, and often cursed the silver of San Tomé. His courage, his magnificence, his leisure, his work […] everything was a sham. (Conrad, 1998: 457)

Later we are told that Nostromo has lost his freedom and he is simply a degenerate “slave of the unlawful treasure” (Conrad, 1998: 475), “of the San Tomé treasure” (Conrad, 1998: 483). After losing his sense of identity, Nostromo tries to restore his personality. But “his struggle of restoration of his personality causes him on the way toward complete corruption”. Mrs. Gould’s strong idealism has “the ironic effect of denying the foreman his last chance of escaping from the web of deceit”. (Marten, *Conradiana*, Vol. 8, 1976: 32-33) Nostromo’s final hope of regaining peace of mind
comes when, dying from a bullet wound caused by Giorgio Viola, he turns in his need to Emilia. What Emilia Gould finds there is a man struggling to relieve himself of a crushing burden of guilt. The painful confession comes slowly: Nostromo explains to Mrs. Gould that Giselle loves him despite the fact that he is a thief. Nostromo, though admitting that he is guilty, fails once again before “the first lady of Sulaco”. His first attempt to relieve himself is viewed in the scene in which he revealed his theft to Giselle. But his first attempt was equally a failure for him:

“A treasure of silver!” she stammered out [...] “How did you get it, Giovanni?”

He wrestled with the spell of captivity. It was as if striking a heroic blow that he burst out:

“Like a thief!” [...] “I love you! I love you!”

These words gave him an unwonted sense of freedom; they cast a spell stronger than the accursed spell of the treasure; they changed his weary subjection to that dead thing into an exulting conviction of his power [...] “Where is it? Where? Tell me that Giovanni.”

He opened his mouth and remained silent – thunderstruck. “Not that! Not that!” he gasped out, appalled at the spell of secrecy that had kept him dumb before so many people, falling upon his lips with unimpaired force. Not even to her. Not even to her. It was too dangerous [...] The spectre of the unlawful treasure arose, standing by her side like a figure of silver, pitiless and secret with a finger upon its pale lips. (Conrad, 1998: 471-473)

To turn to the deathbed scene, Nostromo seems to find enough courage to proceed to a full statement of the emotions that drove him toward crime, and to a revelation of the location of the treasure. In this scene, Nostromo tells Mrs. Gould:

“You are all alike, you fine people. The silver has killed me. It has held me. It holds me yet. Nobody knows where it is. But you are the wife of Don Carlos, who put it into my hands and said, ‘Save it on your life.’ And when I returned, and you all thought it was lost, what do I hear? It was nothing of importance. Let it go. Up, Nostromo, the faithful, and ride away to save us, for dear life!” [...] “Senora, shall I tell you where the treasure is? To you alone ... Shining! Incorruptable!”

A pained, involuntary reluctance lingered in his tone, in his eyes, plain to the woman with the genius of sympathetic intuition. She averted her glance from the miserable subjection of the dying man, appalled, wishing to hear no more of the silver.

The irony of this scene is immense. While Emilia is acting in accordance with her noble ideal of compassionate behavior, the dying man, Nostromo finds it difficult to relinquish the treasure. “Nostromo does not gain even a brief period of peace. All that remains for him is the agony of physical and mental torment”. (Marten, Conradiana, Vol. 8, 1976: 34-35)

Conrad, in his dramatization of Nostromo as a failure, through a series of antiheroic actions, shows the severe limits of idealistic action. The decline of Nostromo suggests that a man is subject to forces from without and that the noble idealistic desires are overcome by man’s personal aspirations. Through Nostromo’s decline dissolving his masterful aspect, Conrad also changes “the emphasis from Nostromo to the overwhelming elements with which Nostromo must struggle”. (Guetti, 1970: 40) Eagleton also comments on the decline of Nostromo and on Conrad’s achievements in his dramatization of Nostromo:

Nostromo, then, exists as a fiction, like the novel he inhabits. Just as the novel itself exists only through language, so its protagonist lives only through his good name. His public altruism is thus in the service of private egoism. Like Kurtz, he is hollow to the core; like the silver, he comes to life only in the fantasies of others. He is entranced by a myth of himself, a self idealizer and self-fetishist. His name can mean ‘our man’, suggesting that like Decoud he is the hired lackey of the ruling class of Sulaco. Decoud’s job is to lend his political masters some intellectual muscle, while Nostromo’s is to keep the common people in order. One who has no identity of his own, however, being the mere instrument of others, has no personal self to pledge to them. It is not surprising, then, that Nostromo should finally come to ‘betray’ his overlords. Everybody’s man is nobody’s man. (Eagleton, 2005: 250)

In brief, in the case of Nostromo we see how the ‘incorruptible’ man is corrupted by “the material interests”.

In Nostromo the preoccupation with the silver seems the source of the isolation of each character from the others. The other major figures in Sulaco intending to gain the control of the mine become enslaved to it, as Charles Gould and Nostromo do. The American tycoon Holroyd invests in the mine as both a hobby and a
mission, as he tries to establish a base for his Protestant religious crusades. The Englishman Sir John hopes for the backing of the Gould interests for the construction of the National Railway. In addition, the silver of the mine tantalizes the assortment of ambitious political rogues in Sulaco, especially the Montero brothers and Colonel Sotillo. Even the most apolitical characters, says Jones, become directly concerned with the mine. For instance, Monygham and Decoud are drawn into counterrevolutionary intrigues. “All these characters’ political plots become private obsessions, which, in turn, become impersonal and dehumanizing, leaving only the inanimate silver ‘uncorrupted’ and unchanged”. (Jones, 1985: 124)

The corrupting effect of the silver on the characters in *Nostromo* makes Sulaco seem as a society consisting largely of lunatics as the narrator comments: “A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane.” (Conrad, 1998: 335) Jones summarizes the severe corrupting effect of the silver of the mine on the characters in *Nostromo* in the following passage:

This of course is not only the raving madness of Sotillo dredging the harbor for days looking for a sunk en treasure that is not there. It is also the calculating madness of Montero brothers in their Napoleonic dreams, the sad, senile romanticism of Giorgio Viola, the decent self-sacrificing nationalism of Avellanos, the slavish devotion of Monygham to Mrs. Gould, the suicidal despair of Decoud on the Golfo Placido, and the narcissist self-betrayal of Nostromo when he exchanges his integrity for a cache of hidden silver. Ironically, the one man who might be thought to control the very mine that seems to possess everyone else has erected “a wall of silver-bricks” between himself and his wife. (Jones, 1985: 125)

Dr. Monygham can be defined as “an older and more twisted Lord Jim, the man who had failed the test”. But Mongyham is tested by not abandoning his post and breaking the code of the sea, but by betraying friends under the torture of a South American dictator. His personal story, like the story of Jim, is viewed as “an attempt to restore himself to the human community and to himself, though he, unlike Jim, survives the attempt”. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 212)

As for Decoud, the skeptic, he is one of the isolated men, not isolated by a crime like Kurtz or Lord Jim, or by the conception of his role or mission like Gould or Viola. His isolation is intellectual. As Warren defines him, he is “a connoisseur of sensation” (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 213), as Conrad defines him in the novel, he
is “a boulevardier”, “a dilettante of experience”, who “recognized no other virtue than intelligence, and had erected passions into duties.” (Conrad, 1998: 436) In Decoud we observe

how his passion for Antonia casts him in the role of the father of a revolution and the herald of Progress, and later in the role of heroic adventurer when he finds himself on the dark Gulf in the lighter with Nostromo and the load of silver. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 214)

In *Nostromo*, Decoud, like the other characters, is drawn as a failure, the cause of which is Decoud’s own lack of illusion. Being a man of intellect, he has no faith in the idea of faith. He had thought himself outside of the human commitments, outside the influence of the “idea”, as the worshipper of reason, which told him that the only reality is sensation. “In so far as his skepticism is natural, he recognizes the skepticism of Nostromo, the natural man” (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 219) who, Decoud says, “like me, has come casually here to be drawn into the events for which his skepticism as well as mine seems to entertain a sort of passive contempt”. (Conrad, 1998: 220) But Decoud’s worship of nature and reason are not enough. As soon as he finds himself outside the human orbit, alone with the sea and sky, he cannot live. The following passage shows that Decoud cannot bear to be alone:

The brilliant “Son Decoud,” the spoiled darling of the family, the lover of Antonia and journalist of Sulaco, was not fit to grapple with himself single-handed. Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and skepticism have no place. It takes possession of the mind, and drives forth the thought into the exile of utter unbelief […] In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part. Decoud lost all belief in the reality of his action past and to come. On the fifth day an immense melancholy descended upon him palpably. (Conrad, 1998: 435-436)

And now, as a true romantic, Decoud absorbs himself in his melancholy. He derives from the painful analysis of his own state of mind a sort of sensuous pleasure, as certain people experience when ruminating over imaginary wrongs. He sees his mistake as if through a magnifying glass. He had believed in action, in effort, in a future for his country, in his own exalted mission. He had not seen the monstrosity
of his audacity in the bustle of life, in the midst of persons who inspired him, who told him to go on. But now he was alone with himself as he was “a victim of the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity” (Conrad, 1998: 438), and the sense of the “utter uselessness of all effort” was brought home to him:

[...] as if to escape from this solitude, he absorbed himself in his melancholy. The vague consciousness of a misdirected life given up to impulses whose memory left a bitter taste in his mouth was the first moral sentiment of his manhood. But at the same time he felt no remorse. What should he regret? He had recognized no other virtue than intelligence, and had erected passions into duties. Both his intelligence and his passion were swallowed up easily in this great unbroken solitude of waiting without faith. [...] His sadness was the sadness of a skeptical mind. He beheld the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images. (Conrad, 1998: 436)

Three days afterwards he commits suicide. At the moment of his spiritual and physical death, Decoud experiences the “first moral sentiment of his manhood” and the vague awareness of “a misdirected life”. (Conrad, 1998: 436) “His act of shooting himself and letting his body fall into the sea is merely the literal repetition of an already accomplished fate.” (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 220) Decoud “weighted by the bars of San Tomé silver disappeared without a trace, swallowed up in the immense indifference of things”. (Conrad, 1998: 438-439) Conrad, through his portrayal of Decoud, shows that “ideals may be in the service of love though this may be just a more devious form of egoism”. (Eagleton, 2005: 249) Decoud’s failure functions as an important element through which Conrad illustrates his views about the futility of “ideas”. Eagleton showing parallels between Decoud and his creator, comments on this matter:

Decoud is actually more of an altruistic patriot than either he or the novel will allow; but he is painted as a faithless sceptic full of abstract ideas, Parisian flippancy and dilettantish irony. This is partly because his world view is actually uncomfortably close to his author’s, and thus needs to be kept at arm’s length. He is one of Conrad’s secret sharers. Like Conrad, Decoud views the politics of his country as a futile farce. Like Conrad, too, he sees patriotism and other ideals as cloaks for material exploitation. Yet he also rejects all belief as odiously narrow, which allows the conservative side of Conrad to write him off [...] Yet ideals are
necessary as they are death-dealing, which is what, from the novel’s viewpoint, Decoud’s cynicism fails to appreciate. He does indeed have one illusory ideal: his love for Antonia; but he is aware of his own illusion, which is the next best thing to having none at all. To know one is deluded is the nearest one can come to clear-sightedness. Marooned with nothing but his own sensations in the Placido gulf, he dies, so to speak, from a taste of his own medicine. Intellectuals like Decoud are more mind than action; and since for Conrad it is action that gives us the illusion of an independent identity, Decoud finally dissolves away. (Eagleton, 2005: 248-249)

In Nostromo the characters’ preoccupation with silver seems the source of not only the isolation of each character from the others but also of the political disorder. It is true that in the novel, there exists a portrayal of the Occidental Republic, but it is also observed that there is an analysis of the general political process. In his “Author’s Note” to Nostromo, Conrad makes a reference to some “few historical allusions” in the novel, and says that they are “closely related to actuality – either throwing a light on the nature of current events or affecting directly the fortunes of the people” (Conrad, 1963: xviii-xix) of whom he speaks. It is therefore evident that Nostromo is a text in which the author demands not only comprehension of a specific chain of events but understanding of the contemporary political process. So it is not wrong to say that Nostromo is a text in which Conrad relates history and narration.

Now the concern here will be to show how Conrad achieves a coexistence of narration and history in his text. To this end we can put the novel in its historical context and thus we can observe that the events and the characters in it are the epitomes of the general historical process. The actions in the novel are the subverted reflections of the great political and historical movements of the 19th century, and current events in the broadest sense. In Nostromo the characters epitomizing political ideas can be taken as the subverted forms of political ideas. The text contains the real historical and political allusions only to subvert them. The subversion is achieved mostly by the failures of the characters in action. Nobody achieves his goal, and in the history of Costaguana no progress is gained. The opening of the San Tomé mine, opposed to Captain Mitchell’s remark that “This marks an epoch”, (Conrad, 1998: 66) is observed as a regression rather than a progression. Nostromo beginning with the epigraph that says “So foul a sky clears
not without a storm” ends, in one sense, with leaving the sky again foul. Thus, it can be said that in *Nostromo*, Conrad gives his responses to the pervasive ideologies of the 19th century, such as imperialism and capitalism through unmasking them.

To see in what ways Conrad unmasks these political ideas in his text, we should turn to the actions and the characters in it. Avrom Fleishman has drawn certain parallels between Costaguana and Colombia. Like Costaguana, Colombia emerged from its war of independence under Bolivar as an unmanageable confederation which included the provinces that were soon to become Venezuela and Ecuador. (Fleishman, 1967: 168-169) Through the history of the Gould family, writes Spatt, one is reminded of Simon Bolivar’s wars for independence; through the history of Viola, one is intimately linked to Garibaldi’s struggle to unite Italy. Spatt adds that Decoud’s purchase of guns is made possible by the conflicts among the Europeans Great Powers, and finally, the successful secession of Sulaco ironically mirrors the American Civil War. (Spatt, *Conradiana* Vol.6, 1974: 38) In the novel, the “material interests” are reflected as the basis of the Costaguanan conflict. As Hawthorn remarks Conrad shows us that it is human misperception of the elements that determines the path of historical development. (Hawthorn, 1996. 184)

Therefore, Sulaco represented as “the Treasure House of the World” becomes the goal of every ambitious politician. Throughout the novel “material interests” are repetitively indicated as a fundamental cause of regression in Sulaco. The silver mine is the most important single factor in determining what happens there.

The connection between the text and the world of reality is achieved through Conrad’s making almost each character owe “his being or his aspirations to Europe or America”. Thus the men who dominate the action are, “not Costaguanans, but Englishmen, Italians, Americans. (Spatt, *Conradiana* Vol. 6, 1974: 39) Conrad’s first means of inserting the action into the time-scale history can be considered to be Giorgio Viola’s story. Through Viola’s history given via flashbacks in the novel, we learn that Viola is a veteran of the war between Uruguay and Argentina in the 1840s; and he was a loyal follower of Garibaldi for some fourteen years after. His support of Uruguay, led at the time by a man named Ribera, is seen as a fight for liberty against Argentina’s dictator, Rosas, and the two brothers who led his invasion forces. As has been mentioned in a previous part of this chapter, Viola’s support of
Garibaldi extends the struggle to include Garibaldi’s war for Italian independence. Garibaldi’s name was “a rallying-cry for liberals” during more than twenty years, ending only after his final defeat at the hands of the French at Mentana in 1867”.

(Spatt, Conradiana Vol. 6, 1974: 39) Viola thus epitomizes the forces of nationalism and democracy so powerful throughout the 19th century.

When we look at the history of the Goulds presented in the text and the actual history of Columbia, we can find a close parallel between these two histories. In Conrad’s text we are told that Don Enrique Gould, uncle to Charles, is lauded as a champion of federalism executed by the dictator Guzman Bento during the latter’s rise to power. Extrapolation through Gould’s life from 1886 would set the time of Bento’s accession to power in approximately 1852. Spatt, referring to the parallel, writes that:

Colombia experienced a civil war in the early 1850’s, when the provinces rebelled against the strong central government; by 1853, the forces of federalism had triumphed. Many years of relative stability followed, only to end in a civil war of the bloodiest kind. Finally, in 1886, Rafael Nunuez succeeded in reuniting his country under a new central government; so successful was he that Colombia was able to withstand the secession of Panama in 1903 (while Conrad was writing Nostromo), even though the United States favored the Panamanian cause. (Spatt, Conradiana Vol. 6, 1974: 40)

It is true that Conrad’s fictional state Costaguana experiences the cycle of civil war, deceptive stability, renewed turmoil, and secession. Yet Conrad does not only mirror these events through the history of Costaguana but inverts the history of Colombia for the purpose of expressing his cynical view of the political process. To confirm this idea Conrad’s reflection of federalism in the fictional world of Nostromo can be defined: At first, “federalism is defeated […] succeeding only when Colombian federalism failed”; as the novel closes, quite a few years later, “the seceded province is about to annex its former ruler, creating a new centralized state”. (Spatt, Conradiana Vol. 6, 1974: 40)

Now we can turn to the characters in Nostromo to observe how Conrad reflected them as political figures in his text, and how, through his characters, he connected the history of Costaguana with the history of the world. It is obvious that the
personal stories are related not only in the contact of one person with another in the plot and as carriers of variations of the theme of illusion, but also in reference to the social and historical theme. That is, each character is also a carrier of an attitude toward, a point of view about, society; and each is an actor in a crucial historical moment. This historical moment is presumably intended to embody the main issues of Conrad’s time: capitalism, imperialism, revolution and social justice. Many of the personal illusions bear quite directly on these topics: Viola’s libertarianism, with its dignity and leonine self-sufficiency and, even, contempt for the mob; Charles Gould’s obsession in his mission; Avellanos’s liberalism and Antonia’s patriotic piety; Holroyd’s concern with a “pure form of Christianity”, which serves as a mask and justification for his imperialistic thirst for power; even the posturing and strutting “Caesarism” of Pedrito Montero, whose imagination had been inflamed by reading third-rate historical novels. (Warren in Stallman, 1960: 221)

In *Nostromo* Costaguana is presented as a savage and fierce, and an irrational milieu in which the progress which the Europeans try to introduce in the form of material interests is destroyed. The silver of the mine, the symbol of material interests, affects the lives of all characters in the book. *Nostromo* traces the violent history of Sulaco and the lives of the people who are involved in Costaguana’s revolutionary politics. Most important in the novel’s huge cast of characters are Charles Gould, an Englishman with a European education who was born in Sulaco, Decoud, another Costaguanan returned after life abroad, and Nostromo, the Italian “capataz” of the longshoremen. Among these characters Charles Gould is perhaps should be the first to mention in order to confirm the idea that the political ideas are overcome by the “material interests”. We know that at the beginning of the novel Mr. Gould, who has a European background, who is educated in England, and who studies mining in Germany, sees himself, and is seen by the others including his wife, as the bringer of modern technology to Sulaco: a silver mine, a railroad and electric lighting. But ironically, at the conclusion of *Nostromo*, we learn that some ten or more years after the revolutionary victory of technological interests, the electric lights of modernity illuminate only the domain of the rich: the mine, the docks, the Calle de la Constitucion. It is clear that “the political and economic significance of Sulaco lies in the San Tomé silver mine, which Gould inherits from his father”. (Wollaeger, 1990: 126) In the Sixth Chapter of Part I of the novel, we
are given the history of San Tomé mine. One of a series of Costaguanan governments ("the fourth in six years") forced the elder Gould to take up the mine as a perpetual concession and to pay heavy duties on it. Ruined by what amounted to officially sanctioned extortion, he advised his son never to take up the Gould concession. But after his father’s death, Gould becomes stubbornly idealistic in his belief that the wealth of the mine will necessarily improve Sulaco’s standard of living in both economic and moral terms. Charles Gould’s failures, about which so much have been written in a preceding part of this chapter, in which characters are taken as idealistic individuals, and their failures are mentioned, are also his failures in his realization of his political aims. After the decision to pursue separatism, Gould comes to the conclusion that “the words one knows so well have a nightmarish meaning in this country. Liberty, democracy, patriotism, government – all of them have a flavour of folly and murder”. (Conrad, 1998: 360) Charles Gould’s materialistic ambitions fail because the security of mine depends upon political stability in the country; and history has proved repeatedly that permanent stability is impossible to achieve; the vain Nostromo is extraordinarily changed with his possession of the silver; and Decoud, more than any other character, represents the inability of European civilization to survive in a savage and ferocious country. The central tragedy of the novel lies in the incompatibility of “material interests” and ideas or moral principles represented by Mrs. Gould, Viola, José Avellanos and Dr. Monygham. Conrad, in the character of Gould, reflects the European “idea” in a subverted form in his text because the Gould family is presented as a failure in it. The Gould family, including the former generation, that is, Charles’s father and Uncle Harry could not bring any progress to Sulaco. Conrad gives us the final picture of the Goulds through Emilia Gould:

She had a clear vision of the grey hairs on his temples. He was perfect – perfect. What more she could have expected? It was a colossal and lasting success; and love was only a short moment of forgetfulness, a short intoxication, whose delight one remembered with a sense of sadness, as if it had been a deep grief lived through. There was something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea […] She saw the San Tomé mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Costaguana Goulds; mastering the spirit of the son as it had mastered the lamentable weakness of the father. A terrible success for the last of the Goulds. The last! (Conrad, 1998: 455-456)
Without political stability Charles cannot succeed where his father has failed. Conrad making Mr. and Mrs. Gould remain childless implies the idea that Sulaco’s progress in the hands of the Europeans would be impossible. As Ryan states, in the Goulds (Mr. and Mrs. Gould), Conrad “exposes the self-deluding hollowness of the liberal rhetoric of progress and philanthropy legitimizing private enterprise” because through these characters we observe “the soul-destroying contradiction between the cosmetic ideology and the dehumanizing reality of exploitation and corruption it conceals”. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 50)

In the novel, Nostromo, who bears a name meaning “our man”, is not only a romantic individual but also a character to whom Conrad gave a symbolic identity. In his “Author’s Note” Conrad explains the meaning of this symbol:

Nostromo does not aspire to be a leader in a personal game. He does not want to raise himself above the mass. He is content to feel himself a power – within the people […] He is a man with the weight of countless generations behind him and no parentage to boast of […] Like the people.

In his firm grip on the earth he inherits, in his improvidence and generosity, in his lavishness with his gifts, in his manly vanity, in the obscure sense of his greatness and in his faithful devotion with something despairing as well as desperate in its impulses, he is a Man of the People, their very own unenvious force, disdaining to lead but ruling from within. Years afterwards […] listening in unmoved silence to anarchist speeches at the meeting, the enigmatical patron of the new revolutionary agitation, and trusted, the wealthy comrade Fidanza with the knowledge of his moral ruin locked up in his breast, […] remains essentially a man of the People. […]

Antonia the Aristocrat and Nostromo the Man of the People are the artisans of the New Era, the true creators of the New State. (Conrad, 1963: xx-xxi)

Owing to the fact that Conrad drew Nostromo as a symbol, Nostromo’s career may be considered in the historical pattern of the novel. Nostromo can be defined as the symbol of a class – the proletariat, and thus his career represents this class’s enlistment and exploitation in the industrialization of the country, its entry into the separatist revolution (fighting for class interests not directly its own), its growth of self-consciousness and discovery of an independent political role, its temptation by the
materialistic drives of capitalism, and its purgation by traditional idealists in its own camp. (Fleishman, 1967: 163-164)

Nostromo’s career also represents “the exploitation of the proletariat in behalf of the various political forces that contend for the country without reference to the interests of its masses”. (Fleishman, 1967: 172) We know that Nostromo ultimately tries to emancipate himself and materially supports the proletarian revolution, but he does so through crime – the concealment of and slow theft from the silver hoard. Eagleton argues that what the novel sees as Nostromo’s betrayal – his stealing of the silver – is also the dawning on him of class-consciousness. Eagleton writes, referring to Nostromo:

He comes to realize that he and his colleagues are being exploited by the capitalist class for their own selfish motives, and is moved to rebellion. He thus becomes ‘our man’ in a different sense, affirming political solidarity with his fellow workers. For Nostromo, this is far from an act of treachery, since so far he has had no identity of his own to be true to. On the contrary, it is he who feels that he has been sold out by his disloyal paymasters. This justified resentment, however, conveniently allows the novel to rationalize his new-found political identity as sheer pique and vanity, vices which can then be added to his acquisitiveness. Nostromo is still a slave to the mine, but now a private rather than a public one. He has merely moved from one kind of vacancy: his servile dependence on the silver. His new socialist identity and sense of comradeship with others must be discredited as yet mere delusions. (Eagleton, 2005: 251)

By means of Nostromo’s corruption by silver, Conrad shows us the moral danger of taking on values of the propertied classes that yawns before revolutionary movements. It is equally important that “Nostromo’s career is a record of growing class consciousness. Egoism turns him against his former employer; the mine”. (Fleishman, 1967: 172-173) We are told in the novel that the mine “appeared to him hateful and immense, lording it by its vast wealth over the valor, over the labors of the town, the sea, and the Campo”. (Conrad, 1998: 440) Finally, to assert his theft, Nostromo recognizes himself as “a republican like old Giorgio, and a revolutionist at heart (but in another manner)”. (Conrad, 1998: 459) He also explains to himself: “The rich lived on wealth stolen from the people, but he had taken from the rich nothing – nothing that was not lost to them already by their folly and their betrayal.” (Conrad, 1998: 472) On his deathbed, he claims, “the rich must be fought with their
own weapon”. (Conrad, 1998: 490) Thus it is evident that Nostromo asserts his self by identifying himself with the people. He is actually an egoist. But just when his egoistic desire for reputation is satisfied in the fullest measure, he is isolated by his guilty conscience and by his hidden crime. “He then tries to take on another identity along with the old – that of Captain Fidanza, seaman-merchant and respectable patron of the radical party.” (Fleishman 1967: 174)

The examination of the symbolic identity of Nostromo has shown us that he is a dramatic representative of the “people”. He is, however, an individual, a stern foreman, a “would-be popular hero”. (Fleishman, 1967: 173) For this reason, when Nostromo is taken either as an individual or a political figure, i.e. a representative of the proletariat we encounter the fact that his individual aspirations are at work to make him a failure. Though he identifies himself with the community, when he is given a political duty (to save the silver and thus to protect the community from the depredations of a ruthless military regime) by Mr. Gould and the others who trust him, his greatest egoism appears because he thinks that he is exploited by the advocates of the new capitalist regime. His altruism turns into egoism when he is already absorbed in his own plans to become rich. In other words, “his social integration is eroded by personal preoccupations”. (Fleishman, 1967: 175)

Now we can look at the scene, which is at the same time the melodramatic conclusion of the novel. In this scene, we observe that Nostromo, drawing silver in order to grow “rich very slowly” (Conrad, 1998: 457), is shot by his revolutionary mentor, Giorgio Viola, who takes him for the young worker, Ramirez, the unwelcome suitor for his younger daughter, Giselle. The scene can be taken as a reflection of class struggle as tragedy. To view the scene from the standpoint of New Historicism, we can explore the symbolic level of it. It can be said that Viola, the old-guard Garibaldino, rejects Ramirez because he is a native of Sulaco and therefore lacking in traditional class-consciousness. The idealist Viola fails to recognize Nostromo “because of his both literal and symbolic poor vision. The faded radical is out of touch with the new proletariat and is himself ridden by class prejudices”. (Fleishman, 1967: 175) The deathbed scene when viewed from the new historicist perspective, gives some suggestions as well. Through the scene the idea suggested is that, in judging his own crime, Nostromo frees himself from
“captivity”, strikes a “heroic blow”, and fulfills himself as a tragic hero. He points the way toward an ideal social hero who achieves full integration with his nation or his class. But he himself does not fulfill that ideal. “He remains a tragic figure torn apart by the contradictions involved in his effort to transcend his historical situation and his own ego”. (Fleishman, 1967: 176)

What we have reached through the examination of the major characters in *Nostromo*, both as individuals and historical figures, is that none of them could realize their ideals, become the author of their own lies and make the history of Costaguana as a result of their personal aspirations and their egoisms coming before their social and public roles. *Nostromo*, which presents us a large panorama of the history of the imaginary country, Costaguana, with its liberals, revolutionists, capitalists, also presents us a history which seems repetitive, devoid of rational progression, without real progress toward a better form of society. One of the important themes of the novel – the world is not really designed for human consciousness and certainly not for freedom – lies partly in the presentations of the characters as failures. Through the presentations of the characters as the victims of their manly desires, and as corrupted by the silver, that is, “the material interests”, the idea Conrad reveals is that man is not the agent of his destiny. Conrad, thus presents to us a pessimistic view that real progress can never be achieved because human beings cannot stand against their egoism, and that only if man does not become a slave of “the material interests”, – which seems impossible in a world of materialism in which money means the greatest power – the real progress for the humanity will be achieved. This idea is well summarized in Dr. Monygham’s speech toward the end of the novel when Emilia Gould demands: “Will there never be any peace?"

There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, and without the continuity and force that can be found only in a moral principle. Mrs. Gould, the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back. (Conrad, 1998: 447)
Considering Baine’s remark that the main figures in *Nostromo* “exist for what they represent rather than for what they are” (Baines, 1960: 299), we can relate their individual failures to the failures of the classes they represent. Gould’s corruption is, in fact, “the corruption of the capitalist system” and the death of the “imaginative materialist Decoud is a variation on the novel’s theme, the menace of death in materialism” (Hay, 1963: 200). Monygham, who becomes the governing intelligence as well as the most forceful political actor in the last third of the novel, proposes, in a sense, the marriage of politics and morality. Monygham, “a realist in politics, a personalist in human relationships”, as Hay righteously defines him, proposes an ideal relationship between politics and morality, which Conrad saw as the unattainable goal of human history. (Hay, 1963: 207-208) As for Nostromo, who represents the people, refusing the doctor’s help when he is on his deathbed, refuses, also, “the help of the Marxist”. His similar refusal of the help of the priest leaves him alone. “Both his spiritual and physical war is a matter of interest to him alone.” (Hay, 1963: 163-164) Thus, it can be said that *Nostromo* dramatizes “the failure of various grand narratives” as Henricksen argues. Conrad, while presenting the history of Costaguana in the narrative of *Nostromo*, undermines the grand narratives. (Henricksen, 1992: 113)

Now the concern here will be in what ways Conrad undermines the political ideas of the 19th-century world in his narrative. To do this it is essential to examine the narrative structure of the novel because in *Nostromo*, the form and the meaning are interwoven, as in the other works, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. As we have seen, in the previous chapter, *Lord Jim* presents major difficulties to the reader with its complex plot. *Nostromo* is even more complex. The opening chapter, which moves backward and forward in time, describes the town of Sulaco on the coast in the Republic of Costaguana, and the Golfo Placido, on which it is situated. We are then introduced to Captain Mitchell, the superintendent of the Oceanic Navigation Company, and given some of his recollections about a riot in which Nostromo, the head of the Company’s lightermen, saved the life of the dictator, Senor Ribiera. In the third chapter, we meet the hotel-keeper, old Giorgio Viola, and we are told that he has been an ardent follower of Garibaldi. In this chapter, we also hear about the history of the San Tomé silver mine, the coming of the railway to Sulaco, and the
savage tortures and killings under a previous dictator, Guzman Bento. It is obvious that *Nostromo*’s narrative is chronologically incoherent because

We move so quickly from one incident to the next that we cannot fit the happenings into a chronological pattern. The circuitous narration is confusing, and even after many readings we remain uncertain about the exact sequence of events. The first part of the novel frustrates the normal objectives of the reader to an astonishing degree, not allowing him to identify himself with one character or to locate himself firmly in time or place. (Cox, 1977: 23)

Lothe makes a similar comment on the continually changing perspective in *Nostromo*, relating it with the reading difficulties and the function of the narrative method of *Nostromo*:

One of the peculiarities of *Nostromo* is that first impressions are altered, even radically, as rereading helps one toward a fuller understanding of the work. As regards this Conrad text, too, it would seem the rereading is not only advantageous, but necessary […] the narrative, instead of progressing forward in time in the conventional manner, spirals backward, providing a wealth of information about past events […] On a first and even a second reading, this backward narrative movement is confusing indeed. (Lothe, 1991: 175-179)

With the changing perspectives in *Nostromo*, we are sometimes given Captain Mitchell’s reminiscences; toward the end of the novel, we hear the confused account of the riot and of present-day Sulaco, which he retails to distinguished strangers. It is obvious that the most crucial military engagements of the revolution are narrated by Captain Mitchell, who conducts guided tours for rich visitors to the new republic near the end of the novel. At one stage, the narrative is meditated to us through a long letter of Decoud to his sister living in Europe. Indeed, some of the important events in *Nostromo* are narrated indirectly in this long letter. Some of these happenings, such as the military revolt at Esmeralda, are barely summarized in this letter from information received in a telegraphist’s dispatch. Most of the story, however, is told by an anonymous narrator. The omniscient narrator gives an account of Nostromo’s climactic ride to Cayta to recall the forces of General Barrios. The anonymous narrator often precedes his words with “The story goes …”, or “It is said that …” in order to give the impression that these parts of the
story, “come from hearsay, and may not be true in every detail”. (Cox, 1977: 22) By means of such expressions, Conrad, in a sense, defies the reality of the events narrated in his text. It is clear that Conrad did this deliberately in order to prevent his readers from a total identification with the characters. Thus in a series of stylistic effects, the readers are deprived of the full vision of the history they would expect the story to provide.

Although there is so much to say about the narrative technique of *Nostromo*, we will limit our survey of the novel’s narrative method, and deal with it only to determine how history is presented in it and, to some extent, how the characters are presented in the narrative. The aim of this examination is to show how *Nostromo* built on a series of impressions, at once presents a great canvas of recollections and colorful scenes creating a vast panoramic picture of Costaguana and its people, and deconstructs its plot. *Nostromo*, at its core, studies the making of history. Throughout the novel we view that its background is the history of a South American republic, Costaguana, which passes through a revolution establishing a liberal parliamentarian regime, a counter-revolution led by totally unprincipled adventurers and a third revolution re-establishing the liberals. Along with the history of Costaguana, we see how the diverse ambitions of a group of patriots, liberals, opportunists, citizens and soldiers coalesce to structure a national historical moment. In effect, beginning from its title “*Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*”, the novel defies its plot. Its main character is not Nostromo, after whom the novel is called, nor a tale of sea. After reading the novel, we understand that the real hero is actually the silver of the mine because it is the only thing that remains “incorruptible” in contrast with the “incorruptible” Nostromo who is corrupted by the silver of San Tomé. We can also assert that there is a contradictory tension between the title of the novel and the actual absence of Nostromo from the centre of the historical action. This is a crucial deconstructive strategy of the text. The recurrent myth is that of history being made by the colorful Garibaldian, “Man of the People” – “a myth calculated to conceal the ruling economic and class interests actually constructing history”. (Ryan, 1987: 49) As Mitchell begins the account of Sulaco by mentioning Nostromo, Conrad begins his novel with the name of Nostromo. Mitchell says: “A monument to the Separation could not do better than begin with the name of Nostromo.” (Conrad, 1998: 422) In opposition to Mitchell’s narrative, Conrad does
not place Nostromo in the center of his narrative because, having observed that
history is in fact made by “the material interests” and “at the discretion of the
Goulds, the Sir Johns and the Holroyds, Conrad can no longer write as if it were
made by the Nostromos”. (Ryan, 1987: 49)

Nostromo, with its multiple points of view, its disrupted chronology and
delayed information defies its clear, concrete, so-called objective background. To
exemplify its solid background, we can read some passages in the very first part of
the novel:

In the time of Spanish rule, and for many years afterwards, the
town of Sulaco – the luxuriant beauty of the orange gardens bears
witness to its antiquity – had never been commercially anything
more important than a coasting port with fairly large local trade
in ox-hides and indigo. The clumsy deep-sea galleons of the
conquerors that, needing a brisk gale to move at all, would lie
becalm, where your modern ship built on clipper lines forges
ahead by the mere flapping of her sails, had been barred out of
Sulaco by the prevailing calms of its vast gulf […]

On one side of this broad curve in the straight seaboard of the
Republic of Costaguana, the last spur of the coast range forms an
insignificant cape whose name is Punta Mala […]

On the other side, what seems to be an isolated patch of blue
mist floats lightly on the glare of the horizon. This is the
peninsula of Azuera, a wild chaos of sharp rocks and stony levels
cut about by vertical ravines. (Conrad, 1998: 11)

The shores on the gulf are steep-to all round; there uninhabited
islets basking in the sunshine just outside the cloud veil, and
opposite the entrance to the harbour of Sulaco, bear the name of
“the Isabels”.

There is the Great Isabel; the Little Isabel, which is round; and
Hermosa, which is the smallest. (Conrad, 1998: 14)

Conrad himself explained, in a letter written in 1923 to Richard Curle, how he was
trying to compose fluid narratives, “depending on grouping (sequence) which shifts,
and on the changing lights giving varied effects of perspective”. (Jean-Aubry, Vol.II,
1927: 317) We can argue that one of the aims of Conrad in shifting the perspective is
to create irony and to prevent the reader from settling for any one point of view. Cox
gives some examples for the changing perspective in the novel:

In the description of the meeting between Sir John and the chief
engineer, we begin with a conventional attitude to natural beauty
and then proceed to the faith of these practical men of affairs that they can conquer all natural obstacles in the service of material interests. This confidence is already cast in an ironic light because we have been told of the subsequent riots in Sulaco; it also seems misplaced in the setting of the mountains [...] This is straightforward enough, but what are we to make of the comparison of Higuerota to a frozen bubble? The perspective suddenly shifts once again, and we see that under the moon, in the immensity of space, all the forms of Nature are insubstantial, as transient as a bubble. Then immediately our perspective is drawn back to the particular scene, to the pack-mule stamping and blowing, one detail among the hundreds that give a rich actuality to Conrad’s creation of Costaguana. (Cox, 1981: 153-154)

The descriptive method is continued to give each individual’s personal characteristics and history. By means of this method, we learn about the histories of the Gould family, of Mr. and Mrs. Gould’s love and marriage, of Giorgio Viola, of José Avellanos, of Dr. Monygham, of Decoud. But, as Kettle points out, Conrad’s method is

to over-simplify somewhat individual character in the sense of giving each individual very sharply defined personal characteristics, frequently reiterated, so that each stands out clearly, not only in contrast to the others, but against the clear, concrete, surface-objective background of the whole. Thus the girl Antonia is invariably associated with a fan, Nostromo with silver and the epithet “illustrious”, Dr. Monygham with a lame leg, a twisted body and scarred cheeks, the Garibaldino with his ‘mane’ [...] What at first appears a somewhat irritating insistence is seen after a time to be a conscious and essential method. In fact, of course, the characters are not simple at all: by the end of the book their depths and complexities are well established; it is their presentation which is simplified. (Kettle, 1969: 66)

But it should also be noted that in Nostromo the full depths and significances of the characters are gradually revealed. To have a full understanding of actions and the characters in the novel, the reader should catch the ironies, which, actually, cannot be detected at the first reading, and which can only be disclosed on a second reading. For example, when Mitchell informs his visitor that “this Nostromo, sir, a man absolutely above reproach, became the terror of all the thieves in the town” (Conrad, 1998: 19), this is naturally first read, as Lothe argues, as a piece of factual information about a character obviously admired by Mithchell. The ironic
implications are only appreciated when we learn that Nostromo’s own theft brings terror upon himself. As it can be observed, Mitchell’s casual conversation conceals ironic prefigurations of the novel’s ending. (Lothe, 1991: 178) Likewise, Monygham is revealed in all complexity and significance. Thus we see Monygham as the cynical but austere moralist though he is conventionally presented to the reader with his scarred face and twisted body. Eagleton, concerning the structure of *Nostromo*, writes:

The novel has all the scope, rich social texture and psychological subtlety of a great realist work, yet with a resounding postrealist vacancy at its heart. It is as though that realist form has been remorselessly emptied of its positive content. (Eagleton, 2005: 239)

It can also be noted that “positive actions, colorful people, warm feelings are constantly framed in a vision which seems to negate their existence”. (Cox, 1981: 154) It is this dimension of the novel, which Leavis, in *The Great Tradition*, accounts for:

for all the rich variety of the interest and the tightness of the pattern, the reverberation of *Nostromo* has something hollow about it; with the colour and life there is a suggestion of certain emptiness. (Leavis, 1948: 248)

If we take the representation of the silver in the novel, we can see that it is first meant to lay the basis for peace and prosperity, but then it becomes the object that tears the country apart. Eagleton pinpoints this characteristic of the novel in the following passage:

The silver, which was intended as a principle of unity, becomes a focus and force of division. Order is simply controlled disorder. Capitalism is an irrational system, as pointless as the cosmos itself, since it provides the material resources for human well-being only to undermine it. Material interests are seen as essential means for human flourishing, as Charles Gould recognizes; but for him and his colleagues they rapidly become an end in themselves, one to which human flourishing is brutally sacrificed. Gould is prepared to blow up his own mine rather than yield it to his political enemies, and is thus a kind of bandit or terrorist himself. The outlaw is the mirror-image of the businessman. In a neat reversal of the reflection, the bandit Hernandez is hired as a soldier. (Eagleton, 2005: 247-248)
Likewise, the history of Costaguana is presented like “a vast, panoramic painting with many small sketches that seem to blur rather than highlighting the picture”. (Jones, 1985: 122) As a result, the state’s history is opaque, and that the novel seems to defy plot, as the story is told piecemeal in what would ordinarily be called flashbacks and digressions, as the character studies refuse to settle upon any central figure, as the perspectives constantly multiply and rearrange the shades and color of a fabric that seems infinitely variable and never complete. (Jones, 1985: 122)

Besides, the historical vision of the novel is not articulated in strictly social and political terms. Indeed, politics and the history of public events seem to fade into the splendid and overwhelming natural geography of the country: the ghostly Golfo Placido, whose indomitable calms and shiftless winds have defied for generations the sails of foreign shipping; the immense mountain, Higuerota, whose shadow delays the light of dawn from falling on the campo; the three Isabel Islands that the birds mysteriously avoid; and the “incorruptible” silver of the San Tomè Mountain. The atmosphere that pervades the novel is “beautifully poetic but it engulfs the events of politics and history within a timeless world where the most enduring truths are left unsaid.” (Jones, 1985: 123)

On a second or third reading of the novel, it is observed that nothing is aimless in it, that is, every strategy of Conrad’s in the structure of the text is understood better than it was at the first reading. It can only be construed through a rereading of the novel that *Nostromo*’s structure is based on the contradictions. This raises the problem of the text’s conflicting impulses. As Kettle points out, on one hand *Nostromo* powerfully and clearly pursues its uncompromising “moral discovery” of corruption and dehumanization in a society surrounded by the imperial and capitalistic policies, in effect, based on the “material interest”. Yet, at the same time, there is “a certain mistiness which, [is] buried deep in the language and symbolism of the book”, and “there are moments in the novel when a sense of the real cruel futility of lives and deaths [is] thrown away”. (Kettle, 1969: 71) He also suggests that there is a sense, in the novel, “that something in the very nature of things, something beyond human control (yet never defined), is responsible for the tragedy
It can thus be said that Nostromo seems to be an essentially straightforward realist novel providing a solid representation and criticism of a social reality. Yet, there is a contradictory tension, which should be recognized; as Ryan suggests, we should recognize “how the whole novel is produced and informed by a radical contradictory dynamic pulsing at the core”.

Throughout the novel, we see that there is a strong clinging to the facts of the visible universe, but on the other hand, there is a dissolution of this visible universe. This quality of the novel is stated by Ryan as such:

There is a strong confident Conrad who sees his art as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect [...] But then too there is the artistically paralyzed, agonizing Conrad before whom that visible universe dissolves into a meaningless void, its truth utterly beyond hope of communication [...] For in Nostromo Conrad must once again both clearly see and yet be blind to ‘the visible universe’, ever disclosing yet veiling the actual composition and movement of reality in a truly duplex tension whereby the novel is at once propelled and paralyzed [...] Thus [...] in order to penetrate the ideological façade concealing the full historical and human truth, Nostromo deploys a range of strategies designed to deconstruct the bourgeois version of history. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 44-48)

Thus, the novel subverts all expectations of the kind of realist novel. In effect, Nostromo seems, at first sight, with its title and especially its first chapter, a realist novel. Then the novel subverts its realism with the deconstructive strategies in itself. One of the crucial strategies of deconstruction appears in the language of the novel when Conrad defines his characters to give us their public versions. The characters are defined with the recurrent adjectives. In other words, Conrad gives them recurrent epithets. For example, Mr. Gould is often presented to us as “El Rey de Sulaco”, Mrs. Gould as “the First Lady of Sulaco”. Nostromo’s epithet is “Man of the People”, Giorgio Viola’s is “the old Garibaldino”, and lastly Decoud is always presented as “the brilliant Costaguenero of the boulevards”. However, Conrad peels back the public versions of the Goulds to reveal a man spiritually congealed and utterly alienated from his wife, and a woman, the universally revered “Dona Emilia”, disillusioned, lonely and guilt-ridden. Thus it is clear that Conrad
demythologizes his characters by means of tunneling beneath their facades. The pressure to demythologize exerts itself on the other figures as well. For example, Decoud, in fact, “ends as the mere alienated ghost of himself, literally sinking in despair beneath the weight of the all-powerful silver, which is the real protagonist of this inhuman history”. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 50) With Nostromo we see once again how Conrad demythologizes his character. As has previously been mentioned, Nostromo is presented on the margins in the whole of Part I and most of Part II: in his fleeting appearance at the endangered Casa Viola or as John’s escort, as “a most useful fellow” at the edge of the firelight; as the “phantom-like horseman” to solve the Company’s labor problems, or passing mysteriously beneath Antonia and Decoud on Gould’s balcony. Actually, this demythologizing is flagrantly indulged for a moment in that exotic scene with Morenita in Part I of the novel. As Guetti points out, in this scene, in opposition to Nostromo’s fabled greatness, Conrad presents Nostromo as “devoid of embellishing awareness, often evidences a brusqueness that is close to cruelty”. (Guetti, 1970: 37) The scene is as in the following:

“Querido,” she murmured, caressingly, “why do you pretend not to see me when I pass?”
“Because I don’t love thee anymore,” said Nostromo, deliberately, after a moment of reflective silence.
The hand on the mare’s neck trembled suddenly. She dropped her head before all the eyes in the wide circle formed around the generous, the terrible, the inconstant capataz de cargadores, and his Morenita. (Conrad, 1998: 118)

It is evident that Nostromo always “seems about to endorse the novel’s title and snatch up the reins of the narrative” but he remains “doomed to its verges by Conrad’s uncompromising recognition of his real objective status as a blind tool of the ruling classes”. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 49-50) When Nostromo is seen in the Placido Gulf scene, what is discovered is that his legendary act of saving the silver is in fact of no vital consequence and that he himself is thoroughly dispensable. Likewise, “his momentous ride to Cayta cannot be represented as a climactic feat of unalloyed heroism” (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 50) because his daring courage served but to save “the lives and fortunes of the Blancos, the taskmasters of the people; to save the San Tomé mine;” (Conrad, 1998: 431), as Conrad brings Nostromo himself to see. It can also be said that Nostromo’s heroism is “polluted by its complicity in
securing the continuance of an oppressive social order, whose historical course is actually dictated by the propertied minority”. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 50) We can conclude that Nostromo remains a putative hero because in reality, as Conrad articulates in “Author’s Note”, that the real hero of the novel is silver. It is therefore evident that Nostromo is a novel which always refuses to acknowledge its own protagonist, whose putative hero can never become its hero.

As it has been pointed out earlier in the study of Conrad’s deconstructive methods, Nostromo is a novel which refuses to deliver an orthodox chronologically coherent narrative, and thus, violates the conventional narrative expectations; therefore, the history of Sulaco is not presented to us chronologically. Conrad does this by deconstructing the narrative of his narrator, Captain Mitchell. Mitchell is introduced to us at the opening in the second chapter of Part I. We are told:

“Our excellent Senor Mitchell” for the business and official world of Sulaco; “Fussy Joe” for the commanders of the Company’s ships, Captain Joseph Mitchell prided himself on his profound knowledge of men and things in the country (Conrad, 1998: 17)

Through these first words about Mitchell, his “memorable occasion” is “broached and stranded right” by Conrad. Nevertheless, his narration is deflated by “the deconstructive prolepses”, as Ryan calls them. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 48-49) The similar deconstructive prolepses are included most in Part III of the novel. For example in Chapter IX of this part, the action builds toward a momentous climax by arousing a curiosity in the reader about whether Nostromo will make the impossible ride to Cayta and save Sulaco. Nevertheless, the next chapter “brusquely deflates that expectation, along with its sense of an immanent historical ending, by refusing to relate Nostromo’s ‘famous ride to Cayta’”. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 49) Indeed, in the tenth chapter, Mitchell’s own recognition of Nostromo’s ride as “an historical event” (Conrad, 1998: 415) is deflated by his own remark: “The history of that ride, sir, would make a most exciting book”. (Conrad, 1998: 423) Indeed, “precisely the kind of book Conrad’s integrity cannot permit Nostromo to be.” (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 49) The deconstruction of Mitchell’s narrative is actually the deconstruction of the linear history and the historical accounts that give the action in a chronological order. We are told that Mitchell
proud of his experience, penetrated by the sense of historical importance of men, events, and buildings, [...] talked pompously in jerky periods, with slight sweeps of his short thick arm, letting nothing “escape the attention” of his privileged captive. (Conrad, 1998: 416)

One of the important themes in *Nostromo* is, as has been defined in an earlier part of this chapter, that history is not progressive but cyclical because it is shaped by the “material interests” not by moral ideas. Conrad’s deconstructive trajectory is again at work in the narrative so that such a sense of history – history is not progressive – could be evoked in the reader. The deconstructive trajectory of the narrative, as Ryan writes,

embodies a genuinely historicizing dynamic, illuminating the real formation and motion of society in history – history being grasped as a humanly produced, changing and changeable process whose rationale, laws and consequences are not only fully intelligible but susceptible of definite moral evaluation.

But this historicizing impulse is simultaneously cancelled by the pervasive ontologizing pressure exerted within and across the deconstructed sectors of the text by *Nostromo’s* basic descriptive style. What is opened up on one plane as intelligibly developing history made by men is written out on another intersecting plane as opaque, unchanging condition devoid of meaning and beyond evaluation. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 51)

If we relate this reduced and deflated history with the representations of the characters as passive constructs in the novel, we can see that “there is no real exchange either of language or experience”, as Ryan puts forward. He writes:

The characters in *Nostromo* are presented either as given and fixed thus or, insofar as they exhibit exchange, as subsequently *having become* thus: they are presented, in other words, as *results* [...] The result is a series of static pictures [...] The so-called action is only a thread on which the still lives are disposed in a superficial, ineffective fortuitous sequence of isolated static pictures. (Ryan in Bloom, 1987: 52-53)

Conrad describes his characters in almost lifeless reification to create the sense of paralysis. For instance, Georgio Viola’s face has “the immobility of a carving” (Conrad, 1998: 32), and in the end he remains “unstirring, like a statue of an old man”. (Conrad, 1998: 482) The Sulaco ladies “looked like white plaster casts with
beautiful living eyes.” (Conrad, 1998: 50) Mrs. Gould’s face is “powdered white like a plaster cast” (Conrad, 1998: 82), and the people she meets are “suffering and mute, waiting for the future in a pathetic immobility of patience”. (Conrad, 1998: 83) Mrs. Gould is also depicted in withdrawn poses, and in the last chapter of the novel, she is left frozen in “her still and sad immobility”. (Conrad, 1998: 455) Likewise, Nostromo appears waiting “silent on a motionless horse” or transfixed in “silence and immobility”. (Conrad, 1998: 368) Don José “appeared almost inanimate, sitting rigidly by the side of Mrs. Gould”, (Conrad, 1998: 137) and his face is “as if modeled in yellow wax”. (Conrad, 1998: 137) Father Corbelan “remained quite motionless […] with that something vengeful in his immobility”. (Conrad, 1998: 178) Pedrito Montero “became motionless and silent as if turned into stone”. (Conrad, 1998: 391-392) Moreover, the characters’ state of passivity is reflected in the quality of the external world. We are told that “outside the house there was a great silence” (Conrad, 1998: 218) and everything was “steeped in a clear stillness as in an imponderable liquid”. (Conrad, 1998: 42) With the representation of the passivity of both the characters and the surrounding, Nostromo never gives the sensation of progress.

Consequently, in putting Nostromo into its historical context we have explored the relationship between the text and the history in which it was written. As a result of this exploration what we have reached can be summarized as such: When we situate Nostromo in the history, in which it was written, we have seen that Conrad was acutely conscious of the collapse of the ideologies pervasive in the 19th-century world when he was writing Nostromo. Through Nostromo Conrad explores the incommensurability between ideological identifications and the activities they legitimate. Conrad’s text is, in a sense, his response to the indifference and immorality of the modern world. In Conrad’s opinion, the political ideologies such as imperialism and liberalism, and the economic politics such as capitalism are all cloaked by noble ideals. Behind them lies the very fact of man’s egoism, greed, wish of power to dominate the others. For this reason, true altruism and morality can never be achieved. This is the tragic condition of man. What is more tragic than this is that man is conscious of it. Therefore, we can say that Conrad reflects, in Nostromo, the characters’ moments of consciousness as the most tragic scenes. The moment of recognition is, in one sense, more tragic than the plights of the
characters. In order to confirm this claim, we have observed the moments of the recognition of the characters’ failures in the novel. In the world of Costaguana, which is full of intrigues, egoisms and personal desires, the silver, which was intended as a principle of unity becomes a power of division, order is simply controlled disorder, Capitalism is an irrational system, and the world is pointless. “Material interests” that were essentially seen as a means for human welfare rapidly turn out to be an end in themselves. As for the characters reflected as representatives of certain political ideas and classes in the text, they are represented as failures. Charles Gould, a mine-owner who had noble ideals at the outset, becomes a kind of bandit or terrorist who is prepared to blow up his own mine rather than yield it to his political enemies. Decoud, who was an intellectual, is left without any faith, and thus he dies of solitude. Nostromo “our man” yields to his personal desires to be rich, and thus becomes a slave of the silver. As for the state, Costaguana, whose political life is simply a sordid, repetitive round of greed, corruption, lawlessness and squalid power struggles, is presented as a country that will keep on existing with its political chaos. The natives are presented as the political primitives, which can be best seen in Montero’s revolutionary struggles against US imperialism, which are equally presented as politics motivated by nothing more than greed, power and ambition. It is therefore obvious that Nostromo is a text which suggests, once again, after Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim – though Nostromo is different from these two novels with its preoccupation with the political subjects – that human self and action are futile, progress is a chimera, imperialism is another kind of barbarism, and that in such a soulless world the ideal and the material are incapable of resolution. It can also be said that both Nostromo and its author are social constructs that cannot be considered to be far away from the specific historical time in which the novel was produced and the author lived. Conrad wrote Nostromo at a time in the world’s history when imperialism and capitalism were the pervasive ideologies of the Great Powers in the world. For this reason, it is not accidental that Conrad had a pessimistic worldview and that he reflected it in his novel. Nostromo is a novel in which the radical pessimism in Conrad’s vision of the world’s policies can be found and in which Conrad made use of the world’s policies only to subvert them by means of the reflections of the political figures as failures, the novel’s involvement with the ideas that history is proved to be cyclical and that establishing a permanent and valid moral order has proved largely illusory. Therefore, Nostromo can be
construed as a novel which never gives the sense of progress. It is in this regression that the Goulds are disillusioned, and Decoud and Nostromo die. By the help of the deconstructive trajectory employed in the novel, the narrative gives the reader the sense of a regression. Thus, we can say that the novel reveals clearly not only why the Sulacan people suffer but also that they will suffer under the “imperium in imperio”. Conrad reveals in the history of the Sulacan people the history of man. It is a history that is made by “the material interest”, and thus doomed to regression. In the novel, Conrad, while revealing the action and characters through the descriptive method, also represses them through a deconstructive strategy. Therefore, the whole novel suffers from this contradiction between revelation and repression. The surface of the text, which is maintained by the descriptive style, is always undermined by the deconstructive elements in the novel, in other words, what is disclosed is refuted. The text always moves between disclosure and reification. Therefore, the reader cannot collaborate in the exploration of the unfolding action in the novel, just passively observes a dead, fixed and frozen world. *Nostromo* is a novel whose structure and meaning are closely related with each other, in the best sense, interwoven. For this reason, to perceive the whole meaning of the novel, it is crucial to read it by taking into consideration its structure. Then we could observe that *Nostromo*’s narrative creates different areas of value, but offers no final reconciliation. Variations in the technique of the novel cause the reader to have difficulties in reading and understanding the novel. Both Conrad, in his writing process, and the reader, in his reading process, seem to be pushing a bus, which they drive.
CONCLUSION

This study involving new historicist readings of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* can be considered a kind of parallel reading of these novels with the history in which they were written and with the historical and travel accounts written in the period during which Conrad wrote these texts. This contextual and intertextual reading is a method to interpret the literary texts, which is proposed by the literary approach, New Historicism.

New Historicism is a theory applied to literature and that arose in the 1980s with the work of Stephen Greenblatt, and developed with the works of such critics as Louis Montrose, Catherine Belsey in the 1990s. It emerged in response to New Criticism, which is a theory focusing on the form of a literary text, not on the biographical, historical and cultural contexts to interpret the text. New Historicism separates itself from New Criticism with respect to its premise that a literary work cannot be separated from its author’s history, the world history and the culture giving shape to the text; therefore, to interpret a work of literature, it is essential to understand the circumstances by which the text was shaped. New Historicism focuses on the idea that all cultural texts – whether they are literary or non-literary – are the products of historical and cultural circumstances in which the texts are produced. As texts are the products of several contexts, they do not have a universal significance and fixed meanings in themselves; rather, their meanings change through time and different contexts. New historicists’ concern with the contexts of all kinds in which a work of art is produced constitutes the main difference between New Criticism and New Historicism. New Historicism also separates itself from the old historicism with respect to its focus on the textuality of history. According to the new historicists, history is not a unitary past, a background to be reflected in a work of art; rather it is a text because we learn history through written texts. So we can say that the newness of New Historicism comes from its acceptance of ‘the historicity of text’ and ‘the textuality of history’. The theory owes much to Montrose for these key phrases.

In a new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness*, the new historicist premise that a literary text, like all other cultural texts, was shaped by the history and culture in which it was written has become the starting point for this study. Considering that
both Conrad’s own life and the imperialistic culture shaped the novel, it has been explored to what extent *Heart of Darkness* was affected by Conrad’s impressions from his own life, experiences he gained during his journey to Africa up the Congo River and in the Congo. To this end, the novel has been put in the biographical context and thus it has been observed that *Heart of Darkness* is a novel in which we can find many references from Conrad’s life, ranging from his childhood desire to go to Africa and the Congo River to his experiences in the Belgian Congo where he went as a seaman. Apart from this, it has been viewed that Conrad reflected, in his novel, his experiences through his narrator Marlow and thus the parallelism between Marlow and Conrad has been constructed by means of their first perceptions of civilization and their later observations of the deeds of imperialism. Marlow, in the novel, believes in the benevolent light of civilization and Conrad, in his real life, believed that civilization had been brought to the dark continent by Europe; Marlow discovers the disappointing reality that, instead of civilization, barbarism has occurred in Africa and Conrad himself saw the disparity between his idealized expectations and the disappointing reality about colonialism. The barbarity of colonialism Conrad observed in the Congo is represented in the text through the European Kurtz and his barbaric deeds, through the scene of the grove of death and the scenes in which Marlow observes that the representatives of the European civilization have brought nothing to the Congo in the name of progress. It has also been suggested that Conrad’s own experiences in the Congo are the essence of the tragic vision in *Heart of Darkness*.

Through an intertextual study involving a parallel reading of *Heart of Darkness* and Roger Casement’s *Congo Diary*, it has been observed that Conrad was affected by a colonial discourse, *The Congo Diary*, a factual document depicting the white man’s commitments and atrocities upon the natives in Africa. The relationship between *Heart of Darkness* and *The Congo Diary* has been constructed by the scenes in both texts; and the conclusions we have drawn through such a reading are that the Europeans in *The Congo Diary* are the prototypes of Kurtz and that Conrad’s treatment of imperialism in his text, for the most part, was affected by *The Congo Diary*.

In the new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness*, the historical context constructed in the third chapter of this thesis has been made use of to observe the
disparity between the novel and the historical documents written in the same epoch. At the end of this study, it has been observed that James Anthony Froude, John Seeley, Joseph Chamberlain and John Atkinson Hobson approached, in their imperialistic discourses, British imperialism with a sense of nationalism and appreciated British imperialism and colonialism by reflecting and supporting the ideological assumptions behind the idea of empire; but Conrad, though his novels took part in the same episteme with these discourses, i.e. the English colonial discourse, ran against it through his novel, *Heart of Darkness*. It has been indicated that the novel subverted the dominant ideology of the time, that is, British imperialism and colonialism and the European consideration of ‘the white man’s burden’ through its representation of imperialism and colonialism as robbery, savagery and greed.

As New historicism proposes a parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts to interpret a literary text, certain non-literary texts dealing with the British imperialism and colonialism and written during the expansion of imperialism have been chosen for this parallel reading. The common point between these texts and the novel is that they contain the encounter between the European and the African and constitute the English imperial discourses. The aim of this parallel reading of the novel and these texts is to explore how *Heart of Darkness* connects with these historical and travel writings and detaches itself from these documents. The chosen texts are Henry M. Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), James A. Froude’s *English in the West Indies* (1888) and Mary Kingsley’s *Travels in West Africa* (1897). In this parallel reading the central concern has become the representation of the African by the European and the encounter between the native and the white man. At the end of this study, we have observed that the representation of the African in these non-literary texts and Conrad’s representation of the African in *Heart of Darkness* are similar to each other in that these authors and Conrad reflected Africa as ‘the dark continent’ and the African as an inferior race that was to be scrutinized, instructed and directed by the Europeans; they all drew a line between the natives and the Europeans and thus created “the Other” to present “we”. Thus we have indicated several containments of ideology in Conrad’s text and concluded that his text is participating in the ideology by which it was shaped.
Beside the similarities between these texts and Conrad’s text, the differences between them have also been pinpointed, indicating the subversions contained in the text. *Heart of Darkness* is a text which contains a subversion of European colonial discourse because Conrad treated imperialism in a different way from those of the writers of the other texts. While these non-literary texts support the idea of empire, *Heart of Darkness* presents the barbarity behind the idea of empire. Colonialism represented as a civilizing mission, the gift of the white people to the natives and a benevolent positive progress in the historical writings and travelogues is represented as barbarism and savagery in *Heart of Darkness*. All European ideas such as purity, virtue, clarity, veracity, white and light are represented, in the novel, as corruption, evil, confusion and lies. Conrad does this mainly by means of his character, Kurtz because at the end of the novel, Kurtz himself finds ‘the horror’ in himself. As a conclusion, we can draw the ideas that *Heart of Darkness* is a text, which, to some extent, participated in forming the ideology of the time in which it was written with reference to the similarities between the novel and the non-literary texts, and that it is a text which resists this ideology with reference to the differences between the novel and these texts and thus detaches itself from these texts.

In the new historicist reading of *Heart of Darkness*, the narrative technique employed in the novel has also been explored to indicate how Conrad subverted the ideology of the time. It has been viewed that the form of the novel is part of the meaning and has to be taken into consideration as well as the events described. The conclusion which have been drawn are firstly that *Heart of Darkness* is a text which requires the reader to actively think about what is said rather than just passively accept it, and secondly that it is a novel which is not a mere reflection of a tangible and known reality, but an exploration of different types of realities, and thirdly that, by means of the narrative technique in his text, Conrad detached it from other cultural artifacts whose function is just to reflect “reality”.

In the new historicist reading of *Lord Jim*, firstly the novel has been put in the biographical context to determine to what extent Conrad made use of his experiences as a seaman, references from the real life and impressions he gained through reading in order to create the characters and incidents in the novel. What we have observed here is that, in the creation of his character, Jim, Conrad utilized his own experiences.
He projected his repressed feelings in Jim’s character. We have observed that Jim’s jump from the Patna parallels Conrad’s desertion of his native land, Poland. The main theme, betrayal has been observed to have come from Conrad’s sense of guilt stemming from his quitting Poland. It has also been observed that the motifs of desertion, failing one’s duty and shame are the central moral themes in Conrad’s text and they are the reflections of Conrad’s own feelings. Besides, the theme of isolation had antecedents in Conrad’s Polish background. Conrad also drew some materials from actual events such as the accident in the barque Palestine and the Jeddah scandal that occurred in the 1880s for the Patna accident in the novel. Through the source study included in the parallel reading of Lord Jim and the history in which the novel was written, we have observed that Conrad used many materials for the source of the characters and the incidents which take place in the novel and that the thematic veins of the novel agree with either Conrad’s own life – both as a Polish and an English seaman – or the incidents that took place in history, and the historical figures. Furthermore, we can infer that in Heart of Darkness, Conrad used his personal experiences more often than he did in Lord Jim. In the creation of the other characters in Lord Jim, Conrad made use of the actual people; and in the creation of the setting of the novel, he made use of the names and the characteristics of the real places which he visited in the Malay Archipelago. At the end of this study, we have concluded that while Heart of Darkness is a novel which is based on Conrad’s own experiences, Lord Jim is a novel which is partly based on his own experiences and partly based on the actual events, people and the imperial world, the information about which he gained through reading and hearsay.

In this part of the thesis, it has also been marked that in the creation of the main character, Jim, Conrad made use of Sir James Brooke, the white Rajah of Sarawak. The source study has enabled us to see that Conrad not only reflected the history as it was but he used the historical figures for his own need to reflect English imperialism from a different perspective. For example, Brooke was represented as a benevolent white ruler in the historical and travel writings of the time, Conrad, in the character of Jim, subverts the idea of benevolence involved in imperialism and thus subverts the “Brookiana myth” created in the imperialist discourses. Lord Jim has been read alongside Brookiana, Alfred Wallace’s Malay Archipelago (1894) and M. Frederick McNair’s Perak and the Malays (1878) to determine the relationship between these
texts and the novel, and the idea reached is that Conrad used them as source material for his novel. Through this study we have also pointed out that Conrad put himself in a reading process before creating his novel and that Conrad not only penetrated his own experiences but the other people’s experiences highly skilfully in Lord Jim; and this suggests the idea that Conrad, through time – the period before and during the writing of Lord Jim – became so sensitive a writer that he could approach other people’s experiences with the same sensitivity as he reflected his own experiences in Heart of Darkness. Thus we can say that Lord Jim is a novel which is a reflection of Conrad’s developing character.

Through the parallel reading of Lord Jim and the travel and adventure accounts written in the same epoch as the novel was written, it has been viewed that Conrad reflected the imperialistic deeds that prevailed in the 19th century only to subvert them. In the novel Jim’s failure is of great importance in that Conrad subverts the image of the ‘western seaman’ and the codes of the British Merchant Marine, the ideas of fidelity, duty, responsibility, honesty and courage attached to the British. Conrad subverts the concept of the hero created by the British imperialism and recognized as the embodiment of many accomplishments in the exotic places far from the civilized parts of the world. Conrad, being aware of the dangers of personal imperialism, makes Jim fail in realizing his idea, and presents Jim’s career of benevolent lawgiver and arbitrator at Patusan as a failure. Thus we have observed that Conrad treated colonialism in a viewpoint different from that of the other colonial discourses. As a conscious individual and writer, Conrad saw the dangers of personal imperialism, which came out as a result of man’s egoism. Read along with the non-literary texts, the travel and adventure accounts written in the 19th-century England and dealing with the white man’s career in the Far East, Lord Jim presents the imperialist deeds of the merchant-adventurer from a different perspective, which shows that the eastern world is simply a wrong ground for western civilization.

Lord Jim has also been read along with the Brookiana to observe in what ways Conrad subverted the way of defining the self in the English imperialist discourses. As a result of this study, it has been construed that the ‘Other’ became a device to define the ‘self’ in the travel and historical accounts containing Brooke’s career in the East and that the ‘self’ is defined through the materials taken from the western world in
**Lord Jim.** The ‘other’ of the European ‘self’ is found in a European, Jim and Jim himself finds his ‘other’ in another European, Gentleman Brown.

**Lord Jim** is also a text which subverts the authorial vision of the English historical discourses and travel narratives written in the 19th century. To support this idea, the narrative technique employed in the novel has been dealt with briefly, and it has been marked that Conrad employed both Marlow, the principal narrator and such characters in the novel as Jim, Chester, the French lieutenant and Jewel as narrators. Thus Conrad makes the reader become engaged in an interpretative process, which makes the novel a text with no single fixed meaning. Ambivalence achieved by the narrative technique of the novel enable us to see various subjective truths. This quality of the novel has enabled us to observe that **Lord Jim**, though written during the expansion of imperialism, differs itself from the non-literary texts written in the same period. For this reason, we can say that **Lord Jim** is a text which at once was affected by the imperialist discourses and subverted the ideas involved in the concept of imperialism.

In dealing with the new historicist reading of **Nostromo**, the novel has been put in the biographical context as **Heart of Darkness** and **Lord Jim** have been put in the preceding parts. At the end of the study of the relationship between the text and the author’s life, what we have observed is that Conrad, in the novel, made less use of his experiences than he did in **Heart of Darkness** and **Lord Jim**. In **Nostromo** he made use of other peoples’ experiences reflected in **On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor** (1897), **Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay** (1869) and **Venezuela: or Sketches of Life** (1868) written by F. Benton Williams, G. Frederick Masterman and Edward B. Eastwick respectively. Conrad was also engaged with the experiences and ideas of R. B. Cunninghame Graham as well during the writing of **Nostromo**. He also made use of the experiences of a historical figure, Giuseppe Garibaldi, who was an Italian republican and patriot. Conrad created his characters in **Nostromo** by taking actual persons as models. In the creation of the setting, Costaguana and Sulaco, Conrad made use of Graham’s experiences in South America. Besides, some resemblances between the houses in Caracas described by W. Eleroy Curtis in his **Venezuela; a Land where it’s always Summer** (1896) and the Casa Gould in **Nostromo** have been marked. In this part of the thesis it has been suggested that
Conrad, though he spent just two and a half days in Venezuela, through an intensive reading process before and during the writing of *Nostromo*, so developed himself as a writer that he could reflect what he read in a highly skilful way in the novel. Thus we can infer that *Nostromo* is a novel which reflects its writer’s developing character.

Conrad’s pessimistic world view pervasive in *Nostromo* – a sense of history as futile and cyclical, of individuals as impenetrable and solitary, of human values as relativistic and irrational – has been observed to have been the result of both his individual psychology and the ideological pessimism in the period. Conrad uniquely transformed that ideological pessimism into *Nostromo*. At the end of the study in which *Nostromo* has been set in the biographical context, we have concluded that Conrad, being aware of the specific current historical events, must have put himself through an intensive reading process to create his novel. The general conclusion drawn at the end of the examinations of the three novels in the biographical context is that Conrad developed himself as a writer throughout the process of writing these novels to the extent that he could be sensitive enough to the other people’s experiences and make conclusions from them as if they were his own experiences, and so aware of the history of the world that he could foresee the atrocities behind the ideologies of the great powers in the world. The development Conrad achieved through time can also be observed by the fact that he dealt with English imperialism and colonialism and reflected the commitments of the white man upon the natives in *Heart of Darkness*; he demythologized, in *Lord Jim*, the idea of seamanship, courage, fidelity etc. attributed to the Englishman; but he developed his perspective in *Nostromo*, dealing with the world’s history and atrocities behind the pervasive ideologies of the time. Briefly we can say that Conrad developed a global vision in *Nostromo*. The development of Conrad as a writer could be observed when these three novels are contrasted with each other with respect to the impressions taken from Conrad’s own life, the allusions taken from the real world and Conrad’s treatment of these impressions and allusions and putting them into the contexts of the novels. Through the study of putting these novels in the biographical context, we have observed that the more Conrad developed his world view, the more he developed his ideas in his novels. Therefore, we can say that, though *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* deal with the political issues, Conrad never repeated the same ideas in them and Conrad was never the same writer as he was writing these novels. In other words, these novels
of Conrad are the reflections of his developing character. Owing to this assumption, we can say that **Lord Jim** is a novel which transcends the preceding novel, *Heart of Darkness* and **Nostromo** is a novel which transcends the preceding one, *Lord Jim*.

In setting *Nostromo* in the historical context, we have observed that Conrad created characters representing the political views of the time. The characters in the novel are the epitomes of the general historical process – Mr. Gould is the representative of English idealism, Holroyd is a representative of America, Viola is a republican and Nostromo is the representative of the proletariat. Of course, Conrad did not employ these symbolic figures in his novel just for the sake of symbolism; rather, he gives the sense of vanity of all these ideas, making his characters failures. All the characters in the novel are disillusioned by the idea that there is always a discrepancy between the idea and the action, which comes out by man’s obsession with ‘the material interests’. Through the failures of the characters, Conrad subverts each ideology represented by them. Through the disillusionment of Mr. Gould, who fails to perceive the real face of imperialism, Conrad subverts the idea of colonial adventurer and the British imperialism; through Sir John’s, the American capitalist-imperialism, through Viola’s, liberty and patriotism and through Nostromo’s the ideological action. To pinpoint how Conrad demythologized the political ideas of the 19th-century world in the narrative, we have examined the narrative structure of the novel and we have observed that Conrad employed continually changing perspective in the novel. By means of the deconstructive strategies employed in the novel, Conrad reduced and deflated the narrated history, and thus he gave the reader a sense of regression. Therefore, we can say that **Nostromo** is a novel which at once reveals the action and the characters and represses them. At the end of the novel, we are left with the idea of a history which seems repetitive and devoid of rational progress, and with the idea that whoever has an engagement with the silver – whoever pursues ‘the material interests’ – is disillusioned, and in effect, it is not the ‘idea’ but the ‘material interests’ that precede the ideology.

Throughout the new historicist readings of these novels of Conrad, we have attempted to indicate that there is always a close relation between *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo* and the history of the author, between these literary texts and non-literary texts written in the same period, between the texts and the history in
which they were written. In the new historicist readings of Conrad’s texts, we have attempted to indicate these relationships and thus we have observed firstly that Conrad developed himself as a writer during the six-year period when he wrote these novels and his novels are not against his developing character, that is, the development of his world view can be observed by means of the complexities of his novels; and secondly, that the novels, on the one hand, participated in the ideologies of the time and on the other, resisted the ideology by means of numerous subversions of the orthodox ideas that prevailed in the 19th century. To pinpoint the interaction between these novels and the discourses preceded by Conrad’s texts may be a field of investigation for another new historicist reading of these novels of Conrad.
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The aim of this Ph.D. thesis is to read Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1898), *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Nostromo* (1904) in a new historicist perspective. The study can be considered a kind of synchronic reading of these novels and Conrad’s biography, and thus to construe the relationship between these texts and Conrad’s life, of the novels and the history in which they were written and of the novels as literary texts and the historical and travel writings as non-literary texts written in the period during which Conrad wrote these novels, and thus to determine the novels’ places in the imperial culture reflected in the English colonial discourses. With respect to these relations, in this study the new historicist assumptions, textuality, intertextuality, historicity and contextuality, which are the key words in New Historicism, have been attempted to be put forth.

The first part of this study gives the theory of New Historicism and explains the new historicist premises upon which the theory is based. The emergence of New Historicism as an approach to literature and its development are explained as well. The part also includes the differences between New Criticism and the old historicism against which New Historicism came out, some examples to some applications of new historicist methods of interpretation of the literary texts are given mainly with some of the studies of Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose. New historicists’ approaches to history, culture and text are all involved in this part. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the theory and thus to construct a basis for the thesis.

As it has been put forward in this first part of the thesis, New Historicism is a literary approach which arose mainly with the work of Stephen Greenblatt in the 1980s and developed mainly with the works of Louis Montrose and Catherine Belsey in the 1990s. It was Greenblatt, who gave this body of criticism the title “New Historicism” in 1982. The theory emerged in response to New Criticism focusing on the form of a literary text rather than the biographical, historical and cultural contexts in the interpretation of that literary text. In contrast with New Criticism, New Historicism focuses on the contexts of all kinds in which a literary text was produced. The newness of New Historicism owes much to its acceptance that a literary text, like
all other cultural artifacts, cannot be separated from the history and culture in which it was produced, and its denial that a literary text has a universal significance and fixed meaning in itself. The new historicist concern with the contexts of all kinds paved the way for the new historicist premises known as “the historicity of text” and “the textuality of history”, for which New Historicism owes much to Montrose and which are the key phrases in New Historicism. The theory also differs itself from the old historicism in that it does not distinguish the literary text from the history in which it was written and does not recognize history as a unitary past, a background.

The first part also deals with the post-structuralist and deconstructionist impacts on New Historicism. It has been marked that especially Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault became influential on the theory. Owing to their ideas on text and history, New Historicism became interested in history as represented and recorded in written documents, in history-as-text. Derrida’s famous declaration that “there is nothing outside the text” is central to the new historicist assumption that the past only exists in texts, and therefore, it can only be known by the written texts. Hayden White is another figure who became influential on this new historicist perspective, drawing attention to the narratology of history. Foucault brought the concept of episteme to New Historicism. According to Foucault, knowledge is defined and organized in various societies and at various times in different ways; therefore, a discourse is a product of a particular time. This Foucauldian idea paved the way for the new historicist premise that a literary work is a product of the time and place in which it was produced. Hillis Miller is another significant critic who contributed to the new historicist theory with respect to his accepting literature as a constituent of culture and an active part in producing and acting within that culture. Clifford Geertz’s interpretative practice known as “thick description” opened, for the new historicists, new ways of interpretation of literary texts; they attempted to analyze the conditions of cultural production, they sought a text’s meaning neither in the text alone nor in some general pre-existing background. They interpreted texts as cultural events. Marxism and cultural materialism have been effective on the new historicists’ recognizing the literary texts as cultural artifacts. Such Marxist and cultural materialist theorists as Fredrick Jameson, Louis Althusser, Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams provided a secure base for the new historicist premise that there is always a continuous interaction between literature and culture and between literature and ideology. For the new
historicists, ideology works in language and exists in a material form through such institutions as the church, the school, the theatre, the university and so on. Therefore, no cultural artifact is outside the ideology and the political sphere in which that cultural artifact was produced.

The second chapter of this thesis gives a biography of Joseph Conrad. As throughout the new historicist readings of Conrad’s texts, Conrad’s biography would be used as a context, it has been considered that this part would construct a base for the study.

The third part deals with such issues as imperialism and colonialism. The part begins with the definitions of imperialism and colonialism and goes on with the explanations of the doctrines of imperialism. Then the British imperialism and colonialism have been studied through historical writings of such historians as John Atkinson Hobson, James Anthony Froude and John Seeley, and of Joseph Chamberlain. In the following parts of the thesis, as the novels are intended to be set in their historical contexts and as the novels deal with the issues of imperialism and colonialism and were written during the expansion of imperialism, it has been considered that this part would also constitute another basis for the study: a historical context in which the novels would be put.

From the fourth chapter onward, the thesis contains the new historicist readings of *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* respectively. In the fourth part, which is an attempt to read *Heart of Darkness* in a new historicist perspective, a parallel reading of the novel and Conrad’s biography are included. The part also includes a parallel reading of the novel and the historical documents and travel writings which constitute the English colonial discourses together. The aim of this part has been to define, in both these texts and the novel, the encounter of the white man and the native in the tropics, and thus Conrad’s response to history and the historical writings.

In putting *Heart of Darkness* in the biographical context, the aim has been to explore to what extent the novel was affected by Conrad’s own experiences that he gained during his sojourn in Africa up the Congo River and in the Congo. As a result of this contextual study, it has been observed that *Heart of Darkness* is a novel in which many impressions from Conrad’s life ranging from his childhood desire to go to
Africa and the Congo River to his experiences in the Belgian Congo where he went as a seaman can be found. In the novel, Conrad, through his narrator Marlow, reflected his own disillusionment with imperialism and colonialism. Both Conrad and Marlow believed in the benevolent light of civilization before their journeys up the Congo, but after the journey both saw that, instead of civilization, barbarism occurred in Africa. Therefore, Marlow, like Conrad himself, is disillusioned by the disparity between the ideal and the action. In the novel, this incongruity is presented through the European trader, Kurtz, who, in the end, dies recognizing the horror in himself. At the end of this study, it has been pointed out that Conrad developed a tragic vision during and after his journey in Africa and as a conscious writer he transmitted his tragic vision to the novel; in other words, the essence of the tragic vision in *Heart of Darkness* is Conrad’s own bitter experience in the Congo.

As Conrad, before and during the writing of *Heart of Darkness*, was affected by the imperialist and colonial discourse, *The Congo Diary* written by Roger Casement depicting Casement’s own experiences in the Congo and the white man’s commitments upon the natives in Africa, a parallel reading of the novel and this factual document has been attempted in the new historicist reading of Conrad’s text. Indicating many similarities between these texts written in the same epoch, we have concluded that Conrad’s character, Kurtz was modeled on the Europeans whose atrocities upon the Africans were reflected in Casement’s diary. It has also been suggested that Conrad’s treatment of imperialism was affected by this factual document.

*Heart of Darkness* has also been put in its historical context and thus Conrad’s text has been read with the history in which it was written. In this synchronic reading, the new historicist approach to history has been taken into consideration; thinking that the only way of knowing history is to read the written texts, the historical documents about British imperialism and colonialism written by Froude, Seeley, Chamberlain and Hobson have been chosen. The common point between these texts and the novel is that they all belong to the same episteme and were written during the colonial expansion of England. Through such a reading, what we have observed is that *Heart of Darkness* differs itself from these texts with respect to Conrad’s treatment of the concept of imperialism. In these historical documents, British imperialism and
colonialism is reflected in such a way that they support the ideological assumptions behind the idea of empire whereas Conrad, in the novel, subverts the ideology pervasive in the 19th century, reflecting it as nothing more than robbery, savagery and greed. Besides, “the white man’s burden”, a concept which meant the Europeans’ civilizing mission and became pervasive via these documents during the colonial expansion of England is subverted by Conrad in his text. Thus it has been concluded that Heart of Darkness is a text which contains such issues as imperialism and colonialism only to subvert them thus runs against the English colonial discourse.

To put Heart of Darkness in the cultural context in which it was written, H. M. Stanley’s Through the Dark Continent (1878), J. A. Froude’s English in the West Indies (1888) and Mary Kingsley’s Travels in West Africa (1897) have been chosen. The aim of this study has been to read Heart of Darkness alongside these travel accounts to determine to what extent the novel connects with these texts and detaches itself from them. Through this reading, it has been indicated that both the novel and these travel accounts participated in the ideology in that they all reflect the encounter between the native and the white man. Conrad, like the writers of these texts reflected Africa as ‘the dark continent’ and the natives as a race which was to be scrutinized by the Europeans. Furthermore, all of them drew a line between the natives and the Europeans and thus created “the Other” to present “we”. Therefore we have said that Conrad’s text shaped by the culture in which it was produced has a containment of the pervasive ideology of the time. In contrast with the similarities between the novel and the texts, some differences between them have also been found. As a result of the study of the differences between them, we have observed that Conrad detached his novel from these English colonial discourses by means of the subversions of imperialism and the relevant issues such as the civilizing mission, the gift of the white people to the natives and the benevolent positive progress. Unlike these non-literary texts, Conrad’s text reflects these concepts as barbarism, savagery, corruption and evil. The question of how Conrad detached his text from these non-literary texts has also been dealt with in the new historicist reading of the novel; and it has been found out that Heart of Darkness is a text which is not a mere reflection of a tangible and known reality, but rather a text requiring the reader’s active thinking of what is said; and thus it has been concluded that the form is part of the meaning in the novel. Owing to this quality of the novel we have said that the novel subverts the authorial vision of these
non-literary texts, and finally we have concluded that *Heart of Darkness* is itself a subversion of the English colonial discourse.

In the fifth part dealing with a new historicist reading of *Lord Jim*, the ways followed have been almost the same with those of the preceding part. That is, firstly the novel has been set in its biographical context to observe the relationship between the author’s history and the novel. Secondly, the novel has been put in the historical context and read alongside the historical and travel accounts to observe to what extent Conrad reflected the pervasive ideas of the 19th century and subverted them his text. Various subversions of the imperialistic ideas have been found out through this study. Apart from this, it has been another concern in this chapter how Conrad subverted the orthodox ideas that were prevailed in 19th-century England through the imperialistic discourses.

Through the contextual study in which *Lord Jim* has been put in the biographical context, we have observed that Conrad made use of not only his experiences as a seaman but the allusions from the real life he gained through reading and hearsay. He also projected his repressed feelings, especially in Jim’s character, caused by his desertion of his native land Poland. The essence of the central motifs in the novel such as betrayal, shame, guilt, desertion of and failure in duty have been observed to have come from Conrad’s own life as a Pole and as a seaman. By means of this source study, it has also been viewed that Conrad put himself, before and during the writing of *Lord Jim*, into a reading process. Among the documents he read in this process, there are *The Malay Archipelago* (1894) written by Alfred Russel Wallace, *Perak and the Malays* (1878) by Major Frederick McNair and *Brookiana*, a collection of the white Rajah of Sarawak, James Brooke’s imperialistic deeds in the Malay Archipelago. For this reason, it is not wrong to say that Conrad used these documents as the source material for his novel. When compared to Conrad’s source materials for his novel *Heart of Darkness*, his source materials for his *Lord Jim* have been recognized as the constituents of other people’s experiences. In other words, though *Heart of Darkness* was based on, for the most part, Conrad’s own experiences, *Lord Jim* was based on chiefly the other people’s experiences. At the end of the source study, it has been concluded that Conrad approached the other people’s experiences with such sensitivity that he could penetrate them skillfully in the novel. This has
given us the idea that Conrad developed himself as a writer through time; and as a concluding remark we have said that *Lord Jim* is a novel which is a reflection of Conrad’s intellectual development.

When the mentioned non-literary texts and Conrad’s text were read synchronically, it has been found out that *Lord Jim* is a text which subverts ‘the Brookiana myth’, and thus subverts the concept of the benevolent white ruler created in these imperialist discourses of the time. The image of ‘the western man’, the codes of the British Merchant Marine, the concepts of fidelity, duty, responsibility, honesty and courage attributed to the British, and the concept of the hero created by the British imperialism have been the central concerns in the parallel reading of the novel and the travel and adventure accounts. It has been investigated how these concepts were reflected in both Conrad’s text and these documents. The conclusion we have reached is that *Lord Jim* is a novel including subversions of all these concepts and ideas prevailing in the 19th century through these discourses. Conrad subverts all of these ideas by means of presenting his character Jim as a failure. The reason for Conrad’s reflecting his main character in the novel as a failure has been shown as Conrad’s awareness of the dangers of personal imperialism, which were recognized by Conrad as an outcome of man’s egoism. In this part of the thesis, it has also been inferred that Conrad reflected the imperialistic deeds of the white benevolent lawgiver and the merchant adventurer in a different perspective from that of the travel and adventure accounts, alongside which the novel has been read, and thus Conrad shows us that the eastern world is a wrong ground for the westerner and western civilization.

When *Lord Jim* has been read along with the *Brookiana*, it has been observed that Conrad subverted the definition of the self of these texts because, while in these imperialist discourses “the Other” became a means to define “the self”, Conrad took the materials from the western world itself to define “the self”. Thus it has been concluded that in Conrad’s text, “the Other” of the European “self” is found in Jim, a European, as Jim himself finds his “other” in another European, Gentleman Brown.

In dealing with the subversions included in *Lord Jim*, it has been viewed that the novel, with its employment of various narrators, also subverts the authorial vision of the English imperialist discourses. In the novel Conrad presents various subjective truths, which creates ambivalence and complexity. The conclusion reached, by means
of the examination of the narrative technique employed in the novel, is that *Lord Jim* is a text which detached itself from the non-literary texts written in the period during which it was written.

In the last part of this thesis, *Nostromo* has been studied from the viewpoint of new historicism. In order to determine to what extent Conrad made use of the impressions from the real world, the novel has been put into the biographical context. Then the novel has been read alongside the history of the 19th-century world to pinpoint Conrad’s approach to the ideologies of the great powers in the world. To this end, the part also includes a short glance at the history especially in the second half of the 19th century, to remind the competition among England, USA, Spain, Portuguese, Holland and Germany recognized as the great powers in the world to benefit from the less powerful countries than themselves for the sake of their material interests and their ideologies. The part also deals with the narrative structure of the novel to mark how Conrad demythologized, in his text, the pervasive ideologies of the great powers of the world.

By means of the contextual study in which *Nostromo* has been put in the biographical context, we have observed that in the novel Conrad made use of his personal experiences less often than he did in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. While creating the characters, incidents and places in *Nostromo*, Conrad made use of the colonial experiences of Frederick Benton Williams, George Frederick Masterman and Edward B. Eastwick, and also made use of R. B. C. Graham’s experiences he gained in South America and his ideas about the world policies. To support this idea, a parallel reading of the novel and the travel and adventure accounts written by these writers has been carried out. Among the documents Conrad read before and during the writing of *Nostromo*, there are such travel and adventure accounts as *On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor* (1897) written by Williams, *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* (1869) by Masterman and *Venezuela* (1868) by Eastwick, William Eleroy Curtis’s *Venezuela; a Land where it’s always Summer* (1896) and Graham’s writings on his experiences in South America. In this part of the thesis, it has also been marked that Conrad made use of the experiences of a historical figure, an Italian republican and patriot, Guiseppe Garibaldi. Conrad’s making use of many allusions from the other people’s experiences in the novel has helped us to have such an
assumption that Conrad, putting himself in an intensive reading process to create his novel, developed himself as a writer to the extent that he became sensitive enough toward the world history to foresee the atrocities behind the ideologies of the great powers in the 19th-century world. What we have observed through the reading of his three novels in the biographical context is that though Conrad dealt with the European imperialism and colonialism in his *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, he dealt with the several ideologies observed in the world arena in *Nostromo* through developing a global vision. Therefore we have suggested that Conrad’s novels studied in this thesis are the reflections of his intellectual development.

The aim of putting *Nostromo* in the historical context has been to explore the relation between the novel and the history in which it was written. What we have found through this reading has been that Conrad reflects the pervasive ideologies of the time through his characters in the novel, thus his characters are all epitomes of the general historical process. One significant point to note here is that Conrad reflects such ideologies as English idealism, American superiority, republicanism and proletarianism only to subvert them in the novel. In other words, Conrad’s characters in this novel (except for Mrs. Gould and Dr. Monygham, because, though disillusioned, they are not the representatives of any political insight) are, on one side, the epitomes of particular ideologies but on the other, seeing that all of these ideologies are in vain, they are disillusioned by them. Conrad subverts, in his narrative, the concepts of colonial adventurer and the British imperialism by means of the disillusionment of Mr. Gould, who fails to perceive the real face of imperialism, the American capitalist-imperialism through the disenchanted Sir John, liberty and patriotism through the disappointed Viola and the ideological action through the disillusioned Nostromo. Thus it has been pointed out that Conrad’s way of subverting these ideologies is by making his characters disillusioned failures. Indicating that there is always an incongruity between the idea and the action which is the outcome of man’s obsession with the ‘material interests’, Conrad demythologized the political ideas pervasive in the 19th-century world.

When we come to ask the question how Conrad, in his text, demythologized the ideologies seen in the world arena in the 19th century, we have encountered the fact that, in *Nostromo*, the form and the content are interwoven, and therefore the narrative
structure of the novel should be explored so that we could better construe the theme of the novel. After the examination of the narrative structure, we have observed that Conrad, on one hand, employing a descriptive method, reflected the history of Sulaco, and on the other, employing a continually changing perspective and not reflecting the action in the novel in a chronological order, deflated and deconstructed this history; and thus we have suggested that the novel deconstructs its plot. It is this quality of the novel that gives the reader a sense of regression rather than progression. After reading the novel, the reader is left with a history which is repetitive and devoid of rational progress. At the end of this study, we have concluded that *Nostromo* is a text which at once reveals and represses the action and the characters, and thus gives a sense of history which is futile because it is not the ideology but the ‘material interest’ which shapes the history.

At the end of this thesis we have concluded that Polish by birth, British by naturalization, both a seaman and a writer, Conrad is a writer whose novels are marked by both the culture and history in which he lived. He made use of many experiences from his own life and allusions from the real world in the creation of his novels. He took the actual people as models for his characters. He put himself in an intensive reading process before and during the writing of his novels. So we have concluded that there is a close relationship between Conrad’s narratives and his history, between the novels and the non-literary texts and between the novels and the history in which they were written. But it is clear that Conrad did not aim at just reflecting the things as they were, rather he made use of the impressions and the allusions from the real world by means of relating them with the themes in the novels so that they could serve his own needs in writing these novels. Throughout the new historicist readings of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*, these relationships have been explored. Through reading his novels in the biographical context, we have concluded that Conrad developed himself, as a conscious writer, during the period in which he wrote these three novels, that his novels are the reflections of his developing character, and so they are never against his character. By means of the parallel reading of his novels and non-literary texts, historical and cultural texts and travelogues and adventure accounts which belong to the same episteme, we have observed that he sometimes participated in the ideology of the time but he did not reflect the cultural and historical phenomena, in the case of these three
novels, imperialism and colonialism and the ideologies pervasive in the 19th century, in the same way as the writers of these texts. Instead he developed a different perspective from that of these texts. Therefore we can say that Conrad put the issues of imperialism and colonialism in his novels only to subvert them and he detached his novels from the non-literary texts by means of the subversions of imperialism and colonialism. Thus we have concluded that on one hand, the novels, to some extent, participated in the ideology of the time and on the other, they resisted the ideology by means of various subversions of the orthodox ideas prevailed in the 19th century. Through the parallel reading of the novels and the history in which they were written, we have observed that Conrad, employing numerous subversions of the orthodox ideas prevailing in the 19th century and being a conscious writer to foresee the dangers of these ideas, formed, in his novels, *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* a powerful response to the pervasive ideologies of the 19th century world.
ÖZET

Bu doktora tezinin amacı Joseph Conrad’ın *Heart of Darkness (Karanlığın Yüreği)* (1898), *Lord Jim* (1901) ve *Nostromo* (1904) adlı romanlarını Yeni Tarihselcilik (New Historicism) bağlamında incelemektir. Bu çalışma, adı geçen romanlarla tarihsel bağlam arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek üzere romanların öncelikle Conrad’ın yaşamı ile daha sonra ise romanların emperyalizm döneminin söylemleri içindeki yerini belirlemek üzere, yazılan tarihsel dönem ve aynı dönemde yazılan yazısal olmayan metinlerle paralel olarak okunması dayanmaktadır. Bu anlamda, bu çalışmada Yeni Tarihselcilikte önemli kavramlar olarak ortaya çıkan metinselliğin (textuality), metinler arası etkileşim (intertextuality), tarihsellik (historicity) ve bağlamlama (contextualization) ön planda tutulmuştur.


Yeni Tarihselcililiğin her türden bağlamla ilgilenmesi, “metnin tarihselliği” (the historicity of text) ve “tarihin metinselliği” (the textuality of history) olarak bilinen yeni tarihselci varsayımları ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bunlar Yeni Tarihselcilinin Montrose’a borçlu olduğu iki önemli kavramdır. Yeni Tarihselcilik ayrıca yazısal metni içinde yazılıdiği tarihten ayrı tutmaması ve tarihe bütünsel bir geçmiş ve arka plan olarak bakmamıştırda eski tarihselcilikten ayrılr.

süregelen bir ilişki olduğu yolundaki yeni tarihselci düşünüşü sağlam bir temel üzerine oturmuşlardır. Yeni tarihselciler için ideoloji dille birlikte oluşur ve kilise, okul, tiyatro, üniversite vb. kurumlar aracılığıyla maddesel bir şekil alır. Bundan dolayı hiçbir kültürel oluşum, içinde üretilmiş olduğu ideoloji ve politik durum dışında değerlendirilmez.

Tezin ikinci bölümünde Joseph Conrad’ın yaşam öyküsü verilmektedir. Romanların Yeni Tarihselciliğin bağlamında incelenmesinde Conrad’ın yaşam öyküsü bağlam (context) olarak kullanılarak bu bölümün tez için bir temel olacağı düşünülmüştür.


*Heart of Darkness* adlı romanı biyografik bağlam içine koymaktaki amaç, romanın Conrad’ın Afrika’da Kongo Nehri’ne doğru yaptığı yolculuk sırasında ve Kongo’da edindiği yaşantılardan ne dereceye kadar etkilediğini araştırmaktır. Bu bağlamusal çalışma sonucunda, romanın Conrad’ın çocukluğunda duyduğu Afrika


Bu bölümde Heart of Darkness aynı zamanda tarihsel bağlam içerisinde konmuş ve böylece romanla, romanın yazıldığı tarih birlikte okunmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu paralel okumada, Yeni Tarihselciğin tarihe yaklaşımı göz önünde bulundurulmuştur; tarihi bilebilmenin tek yolumu yazılı metinler olduğunu düşünerek, İngiliz emperyalizmi ve sömürgecilği üzerine Froude, Seeley, Chamberlain ve Hobson tarafından yazılmış olan tarihsel belgeler seçilmiştir. Bu belgelerle roman arasındaki ortak nokta bunların tümünün aynı bilgi sistemine ait olmaları ve İngilizler’in sömürgeci yayılımı sırasında yazılmış olmalarıdır. Bu tür bir okuma ile varılan sonuç, Conrad’ın emperyalizme olan tavr açısından Heart of Darkness romanının bu metinlerden farklı olduğunu. Bu

olarak düşünmesini gerektiren bir roman olduğu ve bundan dolayı romanda biçimin anlamanın bir parçası olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Romanın bu özelliğinden dolayı, romanın adı geçen yazarın olmayan metinlerin yazarın bakışını (authorial vision) tersine çevirdiği ifade edilmiş ve sonuç olarak Heart of Darkness romanının İngiliz sömürgecilik söylemlerinin yıkımı olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.


*Lord Jim, Brookiana* ile birlikte okunduğunda Conrad’ın bu metinlerdeki “kendi” (self) kavramını tanımını yıkıma ugrattığı görülmüştür; çünkü bu emperyalist söylemlerde “öteki” “kendi”ni tanımlamada bir araç olurken, Conrad “kendi” kavramını tanımlarken materyallerini Batı dünyasından almıştır. Böylece, Conrad’ın metninde, Jim’in kendi “diğer”ini başka bir Avrupa, Gentleman Brown’da bulması
gibi, Avrupalı “kendi”nin “diğer”inin yine bir Avrupalı olan Jim’de bulunduğunu sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Lord Jim** incelenirken, romanın farklı anlatıcılar içermesiyle, İngiliz emperyalist söylemlerin yazarşal bakış açısıyla da yıkmaya ugrattığı görülmuştur. Conrad, romanında farklı öznel gerçekler sunmuştur, böylece roman belirsizlik içermekte ve tek ve kesin bir anlam ortaya koomamaktadır. Romanda kullanılan anlatım teknigiinin incelenmesi ile varılan sonuç, **Lord Jim**’in yazıldığı dönemde yazılan yazarşal olmayan metinlerden kendini ayırt tutan bir metin olduğudur.


**Nostromo**’nun biyografik bağlam içine oturtulduğu bağlamsal çalışma yoluya Conrad’ın bu romanda kendi deneyimlerinden, **Heart of Darkness** ve **Lord Jim**’dekiinden daha az yararlandığı görülmuştur. **Nostromo**’daki karakterleri, olayları ve yerleri yaratırken Conrad, Frederick Benton Williams, George Frederick Masterman ve Edward B. Eastwick’in sömürgecilik deneyimlerinden ve R. B. Cunningham Graham’in Güney Amerika deneyimlerinden ve dünya politikaları hakkında düşüncecilerinden yararlanmıştır. Bu düşünceyi desteklemek amacıyla roman ile adı geçen kişilerin yazmış olduğu yolculuk ve macera öyküleri paralel olarak okunmaya çalışılmıştır. Conrad’ın **Nostromo**’yu yazmadan önce ve yazma aşamasında okuduğu metinler arasında Williams tarafından yazılan On Many Seas: The Life and Exploits of a Yankee Sailor (1897), Masterman tarafından yazılan Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay (1869), Eastwick’in yazmış olduğu Venezuela (1868) ve William Eleroy Curtis’in Venezuela; a Land where it's always Summer

sürekli meşgul olmasından kaynaklanan bir uyuşmazlık olduğunu göstererek, 19. yüzyıl dünyasında yaygın olan ideolojileri yıkmıştır.
