

The Ideological Construction of Otherness in Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim

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Abstract:

J. Conrad's narrative aim is well expressed in his preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897). He states, "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" (1963: xiii). Thus, a literary text may produce meanings, "What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and 'feeling' (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes" (Louis Althusser, 1971:222). The 'ideology', to which Lord Jim alludes, is 'Othering', a term introduced by E. Said, which refers to the act of emphasizing the supposed inferiority of marginalized groups. The Patna as "a crowded planet" draws a demarcation line between superior and inferior. The Muslim pilgrims, in chapter three, are described awfully, they are 'mastiffs' with an eye on the top of their head and 'ugly mouths'. They are qualified as 'reptiles' and 'pink toads' mirroring a disgusting image of the ship. These 'brutes' "are as a burden to clear out as quickly as possible" (1994: 46). These images reinforce the Oriental discourse. While Jim and the rest of the Patna crew, like the ship's officers, are placed in a position of superiority, they are nevertheless economically dependent on the Muslim pilgrims, just as many European countries were at the time economically reliant on the natural resources of

their colonies. The juxtaposition of the economic reliance and the use of stereotypes suggest that Conrad is fully knowledgeable of his literary actions and wishes to be, perhaps, subversive. This paper questions how Conrad negotiates and resists the Othering process where Orientalism as 'a negative ideology' has provided him a cultural resource to meditate on the bewildering complexity of human difference, and express it narratively.

Key words: Otherness, oriental images, ideology, narrative strategy

البناء الأيديولوجي للآخرين في اللورد جيم لجوزيف كونراد

ملخص:

لقد تمّ التعبير عن الهدف السردى لجوائز جوزيف كونراد في مقدمته لـ (1897). *Narcissus of the The Nigger* يقول: "يجب عليك أن تجد هناك وفقا لرغبتك : التشجيع ، العزاء ، الخوف ، السحر - كل ما تطلبه ، وربما أيضا تلك النظرة للحقيقة التي نسيت أن تسألها" (1963: xiii). وبالتالي ، قد ينتج النص الأدبي معاني ، "ما الفن الذي يجعلنا نرى ، وبالتالي يمنحنا في شكل "رؤية" ، "إدراك" و "شعور" (وهو ليس شكل المعرفة) ، هو الإيديولوجية من التي ولدت فيها ، تستحم ، تنفصل عن نفسها كالفن ، والتي تلمح إليها " (لويس التوسر ، ١٩٧١ : ٢٢٢). إن "الإيديولوجية" ، التي يلمح إليها اللورد جيم ، هي "إعتزال الآخر" ، وهو المصطلح الذي قدمه إدوارد سعيد ، والذي يشير إلى تهيمش للفئات الأقليات كطريقة للتأكيد على "القوة المزعومة" لهؤلاء الذين يملكون القوة . سفينة باتنا "كوكب مزدحم" يرسم خط ترسيم الحدود بين الطاقم المتفوق والمتدني. الحجاج المسلمون ، في الفصل الثالث ، هم "الآخرون". يتم وصفهم بفضاعة ؛ هم "كلاب الدرواس" مع العين على رأسهم و "الأفواه القبيحة". وهم مؤهلون مثل "الزواحف" و "الضفادع الوردية" التي تعكس صورة مثيرة للاشمئزاز للسفينة. يُنظر إلى هذه "المتلاثلة" كما يعرفها مارلو على أنها عبء يجب إزالته بأسرع ما يمكن (1994: 46). تعزز هذه الصور الخطاب الشرقي ، الذي بدأه إدوارد سعيد في عمله الاستشراقي المؤثر (1979). في حين أن جيم وباقي طاقم باتنا ، مثل ضباط السفينة ، يتم وضعهم في موقع تفوق ، إلا أنهم مع ذلك يعتمدون اقتصاديًا على الحجاج المسلمين ، تمامًا كما كانت العديد من الدول الأوروبية في ذلك الوقت معتمدة اقتصاديًا على الموارد الطبيعية لمستعمراتها. يقترن التجاور بين الاعتماد الاقتصادي واستخدام القوالب النمطية بأن

كونراد على دراية كاملة بأعماله الأدبية ويود أن يكون ، ربما ، مشمئزاً. تتساءل هذه المقالة عن كيفية قيام كونراد بالتفاوض ومقاومة "عملية تهميش الآخر" حيث ان الاستشراق كـ "إيديولوجيا سالبة" مورداً ثقافياً للتأمل في للاختلاف البشري ، والتعبير عنه بشكل ادبي و نصي .

الكلمات المفتاح :

الأخر ، الصور الشرقية ، الأيديولوجية السلبية ، استراتيجية السرد.

Introduction

The orientalist division of East and West can be seen in Joseph Conrad's first writings where Marlow's description expresses this 'exotic' pleasure. He writes in *Youth* (1902): "a puff of wind, a puff faint [...] strange odours of blossoms, of aromatic wood, comes out of the still night - the first sight of the East on my face. That I can never forget. It was impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight..." (Conrad "Y"37). The expressions 'a charm, a whispered promise, a mysterious delight' refer to the major component of the orientalist discourse, which was celebrated by Conrad's contemporaries, such as Paul Gauguin and Robert Louis Stevenson. Subsequently, in this passage, Conrad uses orientalist discourse to depict the East as an exotic land for Westerners, "a place of romance, exotic being, hunting, memories and landscapes, and remarkable experiences" (Said 01). Therefore, the Orient as a 'Space' is considered as a place for adventures, discoveries and entertainment for the Europeans, and the 'whispered promise' may also refer to commercial profit. Edward Said defines Orientalism as "an almost unconscious (and certainly untouchable) positivity that embodied an inaccurate yet unchallengeable body of ideas, beliefs, clichés, or learning about the East" (Said 205-6). The Orient is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive, and it has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior. Valerie Kennedy suggests that

Orientalism refers to “a collective and unconscious shared set of images and attitude” (2000: 23), and Peter Childs and Patrick Williams consider that the notion has strong affinities with certain concepts of ideology, particularly the ‘negative’ version of ideology as false consciousness. (101)

Conrad’s narratives coincided roughly with the expansion of Western colonialism and imperialism, all over the world. Thus, this Oriental discourse reflects a social “imaginary” or mode of “representation” imposed for strategic ends, which has resulted in “Othering”, a term introduced by Said. And which refers to the act of emphasizing the supposed inferiority of marginalized groups as a way of stressing the ‘alleged strength’ of those in positions of power. Does Lord Jim (1900) promote the “political doctrine” of othering or does it make us see its function as conscious /unconscious cultural ‘State Apparatus’ for ideology? For Althusser art make us “perceive, make us feel something which alludes to reality, and therefore gives to us in the form of ‘seeing’, ‘perceiving’ and ‘feeling’ the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes” (Althusser 204). We shall argue that Conrad’s use of Oriental pictures, in this narrative, has provided him with a cultural resource through which he ponders the bewildering complexity of human difference. This discourse, in which questions of nation, empire and race are intimately connected, constructs/deconstructs the ideology of imperialism in a complex and internally contradictory trajectory.

Lord Jim is described in various ways by commentators as an imperial adventure story. For Collits this “narrative provides the best opportunity for re-examining the question of Conrad’s relationship to British imperialism” (2005: 127). Yet, this complex literary work provides considerable textual interpretations. What this narrative illuminates about these different representations is the problematic continuity between nineteenth century and nowadays representations of race, nation, and culture. For Allan H. Simmons,

“The factual basis for *Lord Jim* involves recognition of the degree to which Conrad historicizes and politicizes the sea and British imperialism in the novel, and thus the degree to which the novel both reflects and critiques its age.” (Simmons 100) For Althusser, ideology constitutes our ‘lived’ relationship to historical reality, or our ‘world’ itself. Placing this novel in a larger context can provide an additional suggestion of doubts about the sustainability of imperialism, since *Lord Jim* was published at a moment of increasing international competition on the seas. It will be quite interesting to examine the concept of ideology as an imaginary relationship to real conditions of existence, discussing the role of popular beliefs, images and ideas that revolved all around Conrad at his time - some are still with us today - in representing this relationship.

The ‘White Man’: “The Subject” of Ideology

Althusser claims that ideology “interpellates individuals as subject” (Althusser 181). It functions by providing its subjects with a cultural vocabulary, an extended language that includes words, images, symbols, and cultural myth; and then, linking these semantic units together via associative patterns of reasoning that are analogous to such literary devices as metaphor, symbolism, and intertextual reference. Jim occupies an important place in the novel, he plays a significant role in Conrad’s cultural discourse where he serves as a vehicle through which the author mediates cultural, political, and racial anxieties of the age. The novel opens with a full description of Jim. He is healthy, robust, assertive and well dressed. He is a very popular water-deck in the Eastern ports. The omniscient narrator portrays him in the following words:

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 [...] He was spotlessly neat, appareled in immaculate white from shoes to hat and in the various Eastern ports where he got his living as ship-chandler's water-clerk he was very popular. \

(Conrad "LJ" 9)

Jim as a white man is significant since the colour is linked with ideology, a system with its own logic and rigour of representations endowed with a historical existence and a role within a given society (Althusser 231). Jim is truly a man in "white from shoes to hat": fair-haired, clad in white clothing, and often showing like radiant specks against dark backgrounds. Marlow's account of Jim's visit to the Rajah's palace in Patusan reinforces the statement of godlike power implicit in whiteness;

In the midst of these dark-faced men, his stalwart figure in white apparel, the gleaming clusters of his fair hair, seemed to catch all the sunshine that trickled through the cracks in the closed shutters of that dim hall, with its walls and a roof of thatch. He appeared like a creature not only of another kind but of another essence. Had they not seen him come up in a canoe they might have thought he had descended upon them from the cloud.

(Conrad "LJ" 229)

Jim is invested with a mythical investiture to show his importance as a 'saviour'. Marlow declares solemnly, "There he stood clean-limbed, clean-faced, firm of his feet, as promising a boy as the sun ever shone on" (36). Thus, Jim is presented as a genius, an exceptional and very talented person who gathers all qualities including the "ability in the abstract" (9).

The reader thus, is prepared to see this ability proved by Jim's extraordinary deeds in Patusan. This description may be justified by the ideology of the white supremacy of the period where the West has tended to approach other cultures from a superior intellectual and political vantage point, that is, from the perspective of a master-spectator able to construct a model of the other best suited to purposes of domination and domestication. It is thanks to this exceptional 'white man' that order and peace are brought to that area. Before Jim's coming, the region was in perpetual conflicts between two antagonist parties over trade. In this sense, Marlow states: "he had regulated so many things in Patusan" (168). He becomes very important to that region and its population. This means that this population is unable to establish order by itself. So, as an Eastern region, it is in need of Europe to order things there. This civilizing mission in overseas region is labelled as the 'White Man's Burden'; in other words, the white man has to provide the Eastern populations with progress, since these people are unable to achieve it by themselves. The notion of progress justifies the ideology of imperialism where Jim suits this imperialist trope. it is a "corporate institution" created in the West for dealing with the Orient "by making statements about it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it": in brief, a "Western style for dominating, re- structuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 1-2).

Moreover, Marlow shows the positive effect that Jim has on him and evokes the origins of this intelligent gentleman. Marlow says: "I knew his appearance; he came from the right place; he was one of us" (Conrad "LJ" 38). This quote shows that a certain categorization and classification among human beings has already been established. If Jim is introduced as someone that "came from the right place", it means that there is a wrong place. This discourse of differentiation and categorization adheres to the racial and oriental discourse of that time where the "right" place refers to the West as superior and the "wrong" place refers to the East as inferior. The tag phrase

“one of us” then, suggests a racial dynamics issue. Jim, as a radiant demigod, prepares to invoke the authority of the white man in Patusan. It suggests what the Europeans have in common: ‘grandeur’ and supremacy overseas. Jim’s as a white European man is able to be the ruler in that region. This feeling of credibility engendered by the skin-colour and the mythical dimension of the main character play upon a familiar imperialist trope and show both economic and racial versions of the colonial dynamics. This idea is reinforced when Marlow adds: “[Dain Warris] was still one of them; while Jim was one of us [...] He had not Jim’s racial prestige” (361). Accordingly, Whiteness as ‘a cultural object’ expresses the power and the supremacy of the white man over the natives and justifies imperialism. Is Lord Jim a ‘cautionary tale’ for imperialism? Does this narrative refer to “colonial myopia and cultural arrogance?” (Gene M. Moore 22) There is not no/yes answer because the narrative is not strictly ‘monological’, but it is the result of a combination of different discourses which clash with each other and are unable to create a unitary, coherent picture of colonialism and imperialism.

Indeed, the narrative reveals another discourse in relation to Jim. This character is also “outwardly so typical of that good, stupid kind we like to feel marching right and left of us in life” (Conrad “LJ” 39); in other words, Marlow seems to pity Jim. Later, Marlow gives a more complicated reason for his interest, and he concludes that Jim fascinates him because “he looked as genuine as a new sovereign, but there was some infernal alloy in his metal.” (40) So striking, Marlow is expressing a deep uncertainty about human complexity where the infernal alloy echoes the envious marplot of Eden. The tag phrase “one of us” enlarges its scope to man versus nature where Marlow expresses the vulnerability of man and human beings in general. In this sense, Jim’s vulnerability makes him, in some way, “one of all of us”, and looks for what this tells us about human nature as the narrator states: “Perhaps, unconsciously, I hoped I would find that something, some profound and

redeeming cause, some merciful explanation, some convincing shadow of an excuse.” (206) Lord Jim raises the philosophical issue of “how to be” and demonstrates how the racial-cultural difference cannot be contained within fabricated racial hierarchies, adopting superior/inferior and civilized/uncivilized dichotomies; instead, this narrative questions this system of representations.

The Daily Chronicle of 12 August 1880, commenting on the real event of the Jeddah affair of 1880, from which the story of the Patna was inspired, reinforces Conrad’s ironical discourse. The text reads: “We sincerely trust that no Englishman was amongst the boat load of cowards who left the Jeddah and thousand passengers to shift for themselves.” (Norman Sherry 66) In Conrad’s work, the person that committed an outrage is an English young sailor, the son of a parson whose church “had stood there for centuries” and “had belonged to the family for generations” (Conrad “LJ” 10-11). Accordingly, Conrad questions this English ‘purity’ and supremacy. Is Jim standing as a black spot in the English “whiteness”? The author even challenges the tacit gentlemanly agreement, the code of “decency” “I thought to myself – well, if this sort can go wrong like that...” (36).

The Colonial System: An Ideological “State Apparatus”

The ‘White’ supremacy and civilization is introduced through the British Navy, the representative ‘object’ of British power overseas, since Britain was one of the leading industrial nations in the world of the shipping technology. The Patna, as a ship, allows Conrad to refer indirectly to the British Navy, one of the most powerful “State Apparatus” at work for imperialism overseas. One of Conrad’s earlier letters, written shortly after the publication of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* in 1897, provides an alternative view of the various “worlds” he associated with the ship’s situation stating that he “[...] wanted to connect the small world of the ship with that larger world carrying perplexities, fears, affections, rebellions, in a loneliness greater than

that of the ship at sea.” (Conrad “JCL” 421) For him the connection of those two worlds indicates that the ship possesses some relationship with the larger social environment in which it evolves. Althusser describes ideology as the way in which people understand their world. From the opening chapters, Conrad invokes colonialism by locating Jim and the Patna in the “Arabian Sea” (Conrad “LJ” 19), one of the parts of the world that has been claimed by European powers.

Jim engages as chief mate on the Patna, a decaying steamer ferrying a boatload of Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and commanded by a crazy German skipper. The ‘bad state’ of the Patna refers to the ‘decay’ of the fleets of those times — “un-sea worthiness of ships” (using Brian Spittle terminology) which let them vulnerable to all manner of accidents. He states that elements of risk were among the inefficiency of land-based operators and the greed of some owners. He notes that in Conrad’s formative sea-going years, the period in which many of sea stories are set, safety regulations governing ships were inadequate and even such laws as those in force were poorly supervised and implemented. Spittle refers also to the profit of the insurance companies (Spittle 9-10). This financial interest based on insurance and the Patna, as a ship: “eaten up with rust worse than a condemned water tank” (Conrad “LJ” 53) serve to criticise the British Navy, and makes Jim to expect the ship to sink after the collision rips a hole in it and justifies his act to Marlow by declaring: “have you watched a ship floating head down, checked in sinking by a sheet of old iron too rotten to stand being shored up?” (11) In a way, Jim could not stay in a damaged ship, but his mistake as a seaman is abandoning a still-floating ship, and not waking any of the pilgrims. The Patna expresses Conrad’s irony towards the pseudo-supremacy of the British Navy and the colonial system.

Let’s see how the Patna is used by the author as an imaginative space for the reflection on the ideology of the “Other”. The Patna as “a crowded planet” draws a demarcation line between superior and inferior among the

passengers in the boat. The Muslim pilgrims are ‘Othered’ in chapter three. Jim, recalling the Patna incident, describes the pilgrims awfully; they are “mastiffs” with an eye on the top of their head and ugly mouths. He portrays them as “reptiles” and “pink toads” reflecting a repulsive image of the ship. These “brutes”, as he calls them, are seen as a burden to clear out as quickly as possible. (Conrad “LJ” 46) These pilgrims are described as prone bodies, “[...] a chin upturned, two closed eyelids, a dark hand with silver ring, a meagre limb draped in a torn covering, a head bent back, a naked foot, a throat bared and stretched as if offering itself to the knife” (20). The description reveals that they are packed in the ship like animals. This image reinforces the Oriental discourse by introducing them through their body-parts as if they did not deserve the status of human beings. The place is described through Jim’s listing of objects as “the Arab’s belongings” (20), which denotes disorder and dirt; and among the “mass of sleepers” there is “a woman covered from head to foot, like a corpse” (Ibid). Both the place and the Arabs adhere to the negative representation of the Oriental and show how they are reduced to nasty creatures. However, the irony lies in the Muslim pilgrims’ economic importance. While Jim and the rest of the Patna crew, as the ship’s officers, are placed in a position of superiority, they are nevertheless economically dependent on these pilgrims, just as many European countries were at that time economically reliant on the natural resources of their colonies. The juxtaposition of the economic reliance and the use of stereotypes suggest that Conrad is fully knowledgeable of his literary actions and means to be subversive. The Patna as a social and cultural construction serves Conrad to construct a critique on the British Navy as an important tool for colonialism.

The description of the Patnasans - the natives - is not so stereotyped as the description of the Patna Muslim pilgrims. Doramin, the chief of the Bug, is presented as the most remarkable man of his race. He is a respected old man, having important moral qualities. Physically, he is imposing and

monumental. He has a huge head with a round face. Being introduced through a physical description, this native is individuated contrary to the pilgrims who are introduced through body pieces and reduced to inanimate objects. Among the natives, there are protagonists, and therefore individualized when the Muslim pilgrims are not. Does this racial distinction in the description of the natives allude to social stratification of these regions? Or does this Oriental discourse suggest the good influence of the Westerners on the natives?

Dain Waris, Jim's mate, is a young native, who is portrayed rather positively. He too, like his father, appears as a distinguished youth of his race. He is a man of bravery who fights like a white man, but he is not entirely successful because he lacks Jim's charisma as a leader. This description is ambivalent since Dain Warris is neither the stereotyped Oriental Other nor a Westerner. Neither Doramin nor Dain Warris can be grouped in Marlow's tag 'one of us' though they share the European's friendship and the white man 'civilised behaviour'; yet, they lack Jim's "racial prestige". They can only be considered as "civilized natives" because they learned how to resemble the Europeans. This notion is well developed in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1967). The key element in this concept is that, in the oppressed black mind, there is the tendency to equate European culture and whiteness with humanity. Thus, "the negro will become whiter - become more human - as he masters the white man's language" (Fanon 18). The problem Fanon addresses is the constitution of a self-identity where the native as "different" is validated by Western thought and culture. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (17-18) Colonialism and oppression work as a distorting operation in the colonized self to the degree that the latter forgets his/ her own self in an attempt to become another self, a white person, to be considered as human

not as “Other”. Dain Warris is one of “them”, not good enough to be Marlow’s “one of us”. The difference in relation to the “Other” is made on the basis of man’s race or origin. So, even if the Patusans have the same qualities as the Europeans they are considered as “Others” because they do not belong to the white race.

However, the portrayal of European characters, Cornelius and Gentleman Brown, makes us think that Conrad is questioning the racial ideology. Marlow’s description of them differs from the description of Jim and Stein. Cornelius is depicted as a man clothed strangely; “his feet shod in dirty white shoes.” Marlow describes him as:

Cornelius was creeping across in full view with an inexpressible effect of stealthiness, of dark and secret slinking. He reminded one of everything that is unsavory. His slow laborious walk resembled the creeping of a repulsive beetle

(Conrad “LJ” 29)

The above description shows him as repulsive and bad, and he is compared to a “vermin”, the one that can harm. The “dirty white shoes” symbolises his bad personality and a soiling of the pure white race.

The second character, Brown, is presented as a “ruffian” of “arrogant temper of misdeeds and a vehement scorn for mankind at large and his victims in particular” (Conrad “LJ” 265). Conrad portrays them as inferior people since they are acting in a threatening way towards others; and more importantly, they spread disorder. As white men, they behave in complete contradiction to the “civilized” white man, the bringer of order and progress. We could have thought that these characters mediate Conrad’s ironical racial discourse if he were not so ambivalent in the description of Cornelius. In Chapter 21, we are told that Cornelius is “Malacca Portuguese.” Malacca was a Portuguese colony in Malaysia, which implies the possibility that he might

be half-white, half-Malaysian. In any case, he is definitely not English because of his “yellow fist.” Obviously, his non-English, non-white heritage is mentioned in the same breath as his “unsavory” personality traits, expressing the racially charged atmosphere of that time. Does Conrad suggest a parallel between Cornelius’s ethnic difference and his general bad behavior? Is Conrad making a connection between Cornelius’s ethnicity and Cornelius’s behavior, or is he merely reflecting the way people might have thought at that time?

Patusan is another space that highlights Conrad’s ideological discourse. The place is introduced as an abandoned territory, difficult to reach, and ruled by a young man with congenital deformities. This implies that the place needs help from ‘the civilised/normal’ sphere. Indeed, different points of view about Patusan is reported by the principal narrator, Marlow. First, an omniscient narrator presents the region as a “Virgin forest” and “the Malay jungle village”, this means that the region is ‘vacant’, has not yet been explored and is still in its primitive state. Then, Marlow reports that this region or the “an unfamiliar heaven” is known for its irregularities and aberrations. However, it is introduced by Stein as a place of a “greater profit, too” (Conrad “LJ” 167). This place offers a site to Western imperial fantasy, which is completed with an English gentleman-adventurer winning the trust of the natives, and instituting a system of government. For Simmons, “the Patusan sequence self-consciously replicates the stereotypical and formulaic representation of exotic space in colonial fiction where the European succeeds to achieve greatness as genuine as any man ever achieved.” (Simmons 244)

One of these representations is the imaginary construction of Patusan as a space of otherness. On his departure, Marlow declares: “I had turned away from the picture and was going back to the world where events move, men change, light flickers, life flows in a clear stream, no matter whether over mud or over stones” (Conrad “LJ” 248). The exotic description of this area is

reinforced by Marlow's phrases: a "forest country" with "sombre coats" and "crumbling shapes". It is noticeable, then, that it is associated with darkness and mystery. These fixed images are so vague and imprecise for Marlow that they create confusion; so, they are for the reader and create misperception in his mind. Marlow says: "this was, indeed, one of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth" (243). So, Marlow's description makes the reader see the island as an exotic, strange, mysterious and immense place. Besides, the region is shown as if it were haunted by some spirits, which reinforces its mystery. It follows from this description that Patusan, as seen by Marlow, is a land of mystery full of magic powers. We can then speak about a land of Marlow's imagination, 'an imaginative geography'; "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences", and it is Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said 4).

Jim becomes the spiritual leader of the area, the one that instituted justice in a degenerate place. So, his arrival there is a salvation to the area and its natives. Jim as a symbolic hero, possessing supernatural powers, comes to save the region. The latter as 'a remote land' will allow him to recover from the Patna's incident. This relationship mediates Conrad's reference to colonialism. Jim's relationship to Patusan alludes to the relationship of the European powers to their colonies, a dependent relation and a self- other dialectic. Such, I would argue, is the larger narrative perspective of Lord Jim, which exposes the limitations and self-contradiction of Marlow's views to open up a complex dialogue on issues of history, culture, and race.

"Art provides us with a critical view of the ideologies that perpetuate the exploitative relation on which societies are based" (Ferreter 96). Lord Jim, as an artistic work, is a privileged place for discovering the ironies at work in imperialist discourse. The point is not merely to recognize that this narrative generates contradictory ideologies - that the text philosophically debunks the idea of a national and a racial belonging ultimately only to valorise these same

concepts. It is, rather, that race, nation, and the problematic of belonging in general is dealt with in an ambivalent and sometimes contradictory way that troubles the reader. The novel adequately accounts for the disturbing dilemma of difference as encoded in the thematic, and also in the narrative form. In *Lord Jim*, there is no fixed opposition between the white and the native, and no clear statement between the binary opposition “superior”/ “inferior”, and “civilized”/ “uncivilized. In this novel, the space is not only referential but also textual which provides images and ideas, a possible experience for the ‘reception’ of these ideas but also the questioning of them. Conrad criticizes the idea of Europe’s hermeneutic power by destroying the racial certainties on which the imperial hermeneutic ideology depends. He has demonstrated a keen awareness of the perception of the racial Other and has eloquently challenged the habitual thought that circulated in his time. The complexity of Jim’s character, the ambivalent description of the natives may be seen as a displacement of Conrad’s personal grievances that makes the narrative as an interpretive space for “Other” (s). This narrative challenges the dominant culture’s official stories because as Toni Morrison, an American critic and writer, has stated it, “the best art is political and the writer ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time” (qtd. In Denard 64).

Notes

The following abbreviations refer to the Works of **Joseph Conrad**

CL JC: The Collected Letters Of Joseph Conrad, V III

Y: Youth

LJ: Lord Jim

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