



The Imaginary and the Symbolic in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Abdelkader Ben Rhit

Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities of Manouba, Tunisia

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: 2019/06/21
Accepted: 2019/10/01
Available online: 2019/10/26
DOI:

KEYWORDS

Manichean allegory
(Post)colonial Discourse
Binary Structure
Colonizer/Colonized
Imperialism
Symbolic Texts
Colonialist Literature

ABSTRACT

This paper compares two texts Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and E. M Forster's *A Passage to India* through an application of Abdul Jan Mohamed's theoretical insights in "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory" to the two novels. In comparing these two texts, my aim is to investigate their implicit ideology regarding the African and Indian natives, the white presence in Africa and India respectively and their attitudes towards the colonial enterprise. The ultimate purpose of the paper is not only to demonstrate whether Conrad's and Forster's narratives serve the imperial ideology or rather undermine and criticize its practices but also to delineate the attitudes and relations between the colonizer and the colonized and the Manichean polarities between the self and the other as binary oppositions that sustain the colonial enterprise. Moreover, the paper aims at demonstrating that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Forster's *A Passage to India* are two narratives of dubiety where the authors' liberalism easily translates into an ideology of complicity. In other words, *Heart of Darkness*, which is previously read as an expression of Western ideals of civilization and progress, would now be read as embodiment of imperialist and racist rhetoric and representation. Similarly, Forster's *A Passage to India*, a narrative that has long been praised for its humanistic icon and its liberal ideas, would now be read as an incarnation of imperial and racial politics.

1. Introduction

The stereotypical and negative representation of Africans, Arabs and Muslims in British literature and media "is not a recent fabrication, but it has been deep-rooted in the West conceptualization ever since the first contacts with them." This representation has been operational "down to the Middle Ages, especially during the Crusade Wars and along the Arabs expansion in Europe until the very days of the Third Millennium." (Ridouani 1) The Western Writings of the 19th and 20th centuries have promoted almost the same stereotypes for Africans, Arabs and Muslims and paved the way for the 21st Century writers and Academics to continue their negative portrayal of the non-westerners. "Whether the contact took place in the foregone centuries or it happens recently, the West preserve a persisting conceptualization of the Africans, Arabs and Muslims as an alien Other or rather Enemy,

though both the means of communication and ascribing terminologies have known some changes. The sole difference between the past and the present lies chiefly in the means and not in the content.” (Ridouani 2) Although the terms ascribed to Africans, Arabs, and Muslims by the West “change in accordance with times, they converge in disparagement.” For instance, in the past Africans, Arabs and Muslims were depicted in the West as “primitive” “uncivilized”, “irrational”, “erotic”, “ignorant”, “slave traders” among other many derogatory terms. Recently, they are described as “terrorist”, “fundamentalist” and “blood-thirsty”. (Ridouani 2) Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness** and Forster’s *A Passage to India*† are two texts which have contributed in the dissemination of such stereotypes. The paper compares Conrad’s and Forster’s treatments of the African and Indian colonial other, their attitudes towards both the colonial encounter between the self/West/colonizer and the other/East/colonized‡, and the colonial enterprise. The authors’ respective attitudes about these issues are thoroughly discussed in order to locate the grounds for agreement and disagreement between them.

Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Forster’s *A Passage to India* are similar and dissimilar in many ways. The two texts explore a number of common thematic issues. Both deal with the British Empire since *Heart of Darkness* is set amidst the scramble for Africa in the last three decades of the 19th century while *A Passage to India* takes place during the British Raj in India following World War I when the British Empire was declining. Therefore, the two texts can be described as realistic because of the way they represent the historical conditions in their respective periods and the culture clashes between the British colonizers and the natives Africans and Indians they encounter. The two texts differ in terms of genre since *Heart of Darkness* is a novella whereas *A Passage to India* is a fully developed novel. They were produced in different periods of each novelist’s career. *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1902 and *A Passage to India* in 1924.

The paper consists of an introduction, which explains the major focus of the paper, the primary texts it analyzes and the theoretical framework it uses, three sections namely the imaginary, the symbolic, and the failure to bridge the gap between the self and the other and finally a conclusion summing up the main findings of the paper. Section one focuses on the “imaginary” as theorized by Abdul Jan Mohamed and undertakes to show the straightforward debasing and dehumanizing of the natives in the selected texts. It discusses the narrative of othering, which is achieved by dichotomizing the self from the Other as Jan Mohammed’s theory of Manichean allegory§ elaborates. It demonstrates how in the “imaginary colonialist realm, the native functions as an image of the imperialist self in such a manner that it reveals the latter’s self-alienation.” (MA 84) Consequently, the “imaginary” colonialist text holds fast to an implacable opposition between the self and the other, insisting upon the superiority of the self and the inferiority of the native. In fact, the writer of the “imaginary” colonialist text,

* Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*. All subsequent references in the text are to 1994 edition and appear in the text parenthetically as *HD* followed by page number.

† Edward. Morgan. Forster, *A Passage to India*. All subsequent references in the text are to the Penguin Student Editions 2000 and appear in the text parenthetically as *PI* followed by page number.

‡ The terms ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ will be used interchangeably in the course of this paper with the terms ‘Colonized’ and ‘Colonizer’, respectively. ‘The West’ and ‘Colonizer’ are used to denote Britain and the British while ‘Colonized’ ‘East’, and ‘other’ are used to refer to Africa and India and the Africans and Indians depicted in the novels.

§ Abdul R. Mohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory”: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature,” in “Race” Writing and Difference, ed. Henry Louise Gates Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985). All subsequent references in the text are to this edition and appear in the text parenthetically as *MA* followed by page number.

to use Jan Mohamed's own words, "tends to fetishize a non-dialectical, fixed opposition between the self and the native" (MA 84), such binary oppositions** are heavily scattered through colonial fiction, which take their momentum from ethnocentric and racist attitudes of exclusion. In this respect, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Forster's *A Passage to India* are no exception.

Section two focuses on the "symbolic" as delineated by Jan Mohamed and which refers to the dialectic relationship, dialogue and social exchange between the self and the other, the readiness to consider the possibility of syncretism and the way such dialectic aims at resolving cultural opposition through syncretic solutions. Jan Mohamed posits that a "genuine and thorough comprehension of otherness is possible if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of his culture." (MA 84) Valid as such a point may seem, I would argue that in an East/West new relationship there is room for transcending one's subjectivity through a negation of ethnocentrism.

Jan Mohamed argues that "the symbolic writer's understanding of the other proceeds through self-understanding [. . .] and his success in comprehending or appreciating alterity will depend on his ability to bracket the values and bases of his culture." (MA 93) As such, the colonial encounter can be genuine, provided that one culture should not thrive at the expense of the other and cause it to perish. In a sense, this is to argue that despite the clashes and collisions, there are moments which show that there is a possibility of an interchange. This point will be illustrated with examples from the two novels.

Section three, however, focuses on the failure to bridge the gulf between the self and the other and the impossibility of syncretism within the power relation of colonial society. As Jan Mohamed has pointed out, "such literature is essentially specular: instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it uses him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image." (MA 84) As such, the colonial encounter cannot be a genuine cultural encounter in that all is geared to showing the supremacy of the Western culture and civilization and precluding that of the invaded by representing it as inappropriate.

The method I use to conduct this study is based on my interpretation of the two texts. I support my interpretation of the selected texts with the theoretical perspectives of Postcolonial theory. While performing a close reading, and subsequent close interpretation, of the primary texts, I base my analysis on direct quotations from *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India* to support my claims. The sections of this paper, which focus on the relationship between the British Colonizers and the African and Indian Colonized, are supported theoretically by the ideas of Postcolonial theorists Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Sara Suleri about the power-play between the East and the West. Moreover, the theoretical framework, which guides the analysis of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Forster's *A Passage to India* builds heavily on Abdul Jan Mohamed's the Manichean Allegory.

The term "Manicheanism" is adopted from the "Manichean allegory of the third century A.D, according to which Satan was represented as co-eternal with God, an equivalent opposition to God. This implication, which relates that the two realms of spirit and matter are always and eternally separate and could never be linked, implies an extreme form of structure." (*Postcolonial Studies* 149) In the field of postcolonial studies, "Manicheanism is a

** The term 'binary opposition' refers to a set of two entities that are seemingly opposite to one another in nature. In general imperialism is based on this binary logic and Western thought tends to see the world in terms of binary oppositions that establish a relation of dominance. "A simple distinction between colonizer/colonized, centre/margin, civilized/primitive represents very efficiently the violent hierarchy on which imperialism is based and which it actively perpetuates." For further details on this concept refer to *Postcolonial studies: the key concepts* / Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin pp 26,27.

term for the binary structure of imperial ideology. Jan Mohammed uses the uncompromisingly dualistic aspect of the concept to describe the process by which imperial discourse polarizes the society, culture and very being of the colonizer and colonized into the Manichean categories of good and evil.” (*Postcolonial Studies* 149-50) Jan Mohamed posits the existence of two types of discourse in imaginative writing the “imaginary” and the “symbolic.” In fact, by dividing colonialist literature into “imaginary” and “symbolic” modes, he sought to study the change from the “objectification and aggression” (MA 84) of a representation predicated upon a fixed opposition and a superiority/inferiority binarism to forms of “syncretic solutions to the Manichean of the colonizer and the colonized.” (MA 85) The Manichean Allegory Jan Mohamed argues is the central trope of imperialism “that converts racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference.” (MA 80) This allegory characterizes the relationship between dominant and subordinate culture as one of ineradicable opposition.

Although the opposing entities of the allegory change “good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, rationality and sensuality, self and other, subject and object -they are always predicated upon the assumption of the superiority of white self and the inferiority of the native.” (MA 82) As a byproduct of the imperialist enterprise, colonialist literature inevitably re-inscribes the Manichean allegory either to confirm or to interrogate it in an effort to move beyond its limits.

Jan Mohamed subdivides the “symbolic category into two types. The first category goes for such novels as Forster’s *A Passage to India*, where he spots “the combination of the imaginary at the emotive level and the symbolic at the cognitive level.” The second type is embodied in the novels of Conrad and Nadine Gordimer, Jan Mohamed argues, “by examining the imaginary mechanism of colonialist mentality, [it] manages to free itself from the Manichean allegory.” (MA 85) Writers of symbolic texts tend to be more open to a modifying dialectic of self and other. The symbolic colonialist text’s preparedness to consider the possibility of syncretism is the most important factor distinguishing it from the imaginary text (MA 92) The symbolic text makes possible “a dialectic encounter between the self and the other in which the dominant culture is able to bracket its own values and thus radically to question its basis for cultural inference and interpretation. Such a dialectic or exchange would aim at resolving cultural oppositions through syncretic solutions.” (MA 85) Ultimately, according to Jan Mohamed, it is the ability to bracket the values and bases of imperialist culture that determines the success of the symbolic text to subvert or avoid the economy of Manichean allegory.

Postcolonial theories appropriated Foucault’s idea of discourse^{††} and rethought it in the colonial context within the framework of power/knowledge established also by Foucault. The trouble is that colonial “texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality that they appear to describe.” (*Orientalism* 94) Said’s account of Orientalist discourses views the ability to slide from detailed political knowledge of specific Eastern countries to generalized fantasies of the East as a key aspect of Orientalism, allowing for hegemonic control over a whole range of territories and peoples deemed Oriental.

^{††} Edward Said draws on Foucault’s understanding of discourse as depicted by him both in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault argues that knowledge is constructed according to discursive field which creates a representation of the object of knowledge. In *Orientalism*, Said demonstrates the way Western Scholars construct, their knowledge about the Orient. According to Foucault and Said discourse joins power and knowledge together. Therefore, those who have power have control of what is known and the way it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not. This way of knowing the Orient is a way of maintaining power over it as elaborated by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*.

Colonial discourse theory analyzes the discourse of colonialism. According to Homi Bhabha, colonial discourse is one manifestation of the Western “apparatus of power,” which is founded on intricately wrought design of misrepresentation, depersonalization and distortion. “The objective of colonial discourse,” Homi Bhabha asserts, “is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.” Moreover, colonial discourse binds together “a range of discriminations” and “differences,” which is crucial to “the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchization.” (*Location* 67) Colonial discourse is thus a collection of narratives and statements about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonizing powers and the relationship between them.

One of the key aspects of European self-projection in literature is its representation of the natives, who are interpreted by way of stereotypic reproduction. The stereotypic representation is based on processes of othering, which are fundamental in colonization. In the words of Spivak “othering” is the “process by which imperial discourse creates its others” (*Postcolonial Studies* 188). The othering of the colonized peoples and their construction as savage and inferior depend upon what Jan Mohamed terms the Manichean Allegory, in which a binary discursive opposition between races is produced.

Fanon believes that the colonizer does not only aim at dismantling the natives present but also turns to his past and violently assaults its structure and the elements that hold it together. He strongly affirms that Western colonial discourse through, “a kind of perverted logic, [. . .] turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (*The Wretched of the Earth* 210). Thinking of themselves as a “civilization confronting barbarism” (Kiernan 154), colonial ideologues depicted the African world “through a haze of distortions and cheap mystifications.” (*Hopes and Impediments* 12) Orientalism is a mode of knowing and a form of authority over the Orient which “is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians and, more importantly, constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes.” (*Postcolonial Studies* 185) Said questions the objectivity of the knowledge of the Orient. He argues that such representation cannot be in anyway innocent or objective; it is produced by human beings who are necessarily embedded in colonial history and relationship. In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Forster’s *A Passage to India*, there are instances of Manichean divisions, which I examine in my analysis of these two texts.

2. The “Imaginary” in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

In the “imaginary” colonialist text, Jan Mohamed observes, the native becomes no more than a recipient of the negative elements of the self that the imperialist projects onto him. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow’s aunt talks about “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” (*HD* 18) and Kurtz goes to Africa equipped with “moral ideas” of “humanizing, improving, instructing.” (*HD* 44-47, *passim*) Similarly, in *A Passage to India*, Ronny feels the necessity of his presence in India to help bring peace, “the British were necessary to India; there would certainly have been bloodshed without them.” (*PI* 82) Thus, one of the pillars of the colonial ideology has always been the paternalistic attitude known as the civilizing mission. The colonials claim to rule the natives for their own good.

As far as the issue of the formation of the native into another is concerned, my first point is that the colonizers emphasize and exaggerate, through a system of cultural assumptions, the differences between the colonized and the colonizer and cite these differences as evidence that the colonizer is “naturally suited to govern as the colonized is to be governed.” (Memmi 71). This strategy can take the form of racism because skin color or

ethnicity is often the most obvious difference between the two groups. The West has created an image of the native as an inferior entity within the confines of Western discourse.

The first thing to acknowledge about the British as a group encountering the natives of their colonies is that they see things from a height. Therefore, their world is one of definitions and distinctions. As far as *A Passage to India* is concerned, Forster makes it clear that whether they are gathered together in the club or at the station, the Anglo-Indians perpetually insist upon their “difference” from the rest of India and upon the distinction between things English and things native. Likewise, throughout Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow insists upon the distinction between the self and the other, as a dichotomy that sustains the colonial enterprise. To borrow Jan Mohamed’s own words “the dominant model of power interest-relations in all colonial societies is the Manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native.” (MA 82) In fact, the Manichean allegory generates a chain of binary oppositions, which abounds in colonialist literature.

In *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India*, when the British characters go to live in a foreign culture in order to carry out their imperialistic duties, they carry with them their internalized ideological assumptions of their presumed natural superiority to the Africans and Indians respectively. However, their assumptions are strained simply because they are not inherently true but they are ideologically and culturally constructed and they play a vital role for the existence of the British Empire. Abdul Jan Mohamed asserts that “instead of being an exploration of the racial other, such literature merely affirms its own ethnocentric assumptions, instead of actually depicting the outer limits of “civilization” it simply codifies and preserves the structures of its own mentality.” (MA 84) The characters in both novels have different conceptions of the essential contradiction between systematic dehumanization for economic profit and the ideological justification of civilizing the natives.

The encounter with the other is rife with dichotomies and racist “tropics of discourse” to cite Hayden White. According to White, the widely held opinion is that “all peoples of other races [are] morally, intellectually and socially inferior to white Europeans.” “Consequently, their ostensible inferiority was a justification for domination” (*Tropics of Discourse* 154). The relationship between whites and blacks has always been thought of in terms of racist binary oppositions: white vs. black civilized vs. savage, benevolent vs. bloodthirsty, mature vs. childish, hardworking vs. lazy.... These are reminiscent of the Manichean nature of Western perceptions delineated by Abdul Jan Mohamed in *The Economy of Manichean Allegory*. The two novels in focus perpetuate such dichotomies.

In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the Africans are depicted as “black and naked,” “like ants,” “dark things,” with “violently dilated nostrils,” “phantoms” having “bundles of acute angles.” (HD 21-5; passim) In their encompassing totality, they are “a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling.” (HD 51) Again “you could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening.” (HD 20) Blacks’ “differentness” as Hayden White puts it, places them in a supposedly inferior position and serves as “a source of libidinal gratification.” (*Tropics of Discourse* 184) They are considered to be part of the vegetation and the fauna since, by Western standards, there is no humanity beyond the confines of Western civilization.

Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, exchange no more than “short grunting phrases” which shows linguistic and oratorical incompetence. They cannot speak, let alone write. Kurtz’s “peroration,” however, gives Marlow “the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence.” (HD 72) This benevolence stands in sharp contrast with the cannibalism of the bloodthirsty Africans. Marlow and his “friends the wood cutters were [. . .] scandalized” (HD 73) at the prospect of leaving a corpse hanging except that Marlow “had made up [his] mind that if [his] late helmsman was to be beaten, the fishes alone should have [such] a first class temptation.” (HD 74) Another dichotomy between the self and the other is that of the mature

white as opposed to the childish black. He goes “off on all-fours towards the river to drink.” “The man seemed young - almost a boy.” (*HD* 25) This explains the need for a mature white intervention motivated by a Christian sympathy for guidance and protection.

Moreover, another distinction between the self and the other is that of the hard-working white man as opposed to the lazy black. The chief accountant’s black laundress is lazy, “she had a distaste for the work.” (*HD* 26) The Whites and Marlow by contrast, take the lead in the Congo; they are hard-working by nature. They “like what is in the work, -the chance to find yourself. Your own reality - for yourself, not for others what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means.” (*HD* 41) This explains the perpetual need of the Africans for the tutelage of a master white man. The persistence of these dichotomies sets lines of demarcation between the self and the other. By setting his own self against the other, Marlow defines his own superiority against the inferiority of that other. However, it could be argued that the statements made against the native serve less as a verdict on the nature of the other and more as a sign of the nature of the self defined against it. Thus, in defining the colonized world as a world without values, the positional superiority of the self is established.

Turning now to *A Passage to India*, my first point is that Forster’s statements verge at times on the stereotypic colonialist generalizations. Like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Forster’s narrative perpetuates dichotomies between the self and the other. In fact, he seems to confirm some tendencies, which are at the time frequently attributed to the Indians: they are unpunctual, irresponsible, feckless, liars, emotional, inconsistent, living a precarious existence, dependent on the approval of the master race. In contrast, the whites are punctual, responsible, truth-tellers, rational, consistent and independent.

Like in *Heart of Darkness*, in *A Passage to India* I do find some imperial stereotypes built around the binary oppositions: master/slave, superior/inferior, mature/child; rational/irrational, which still survive in Forster’s text. Such binaries entail a violent hierarchy, in which the first term of the opposition is always dominant while the second term is dominated. These binary oppositions exist to confirm that domination. In Forster’s narrative the Anglo-Indians see themselves as superior to the Indians. Turton reassures Mrs. Moore: “You’re superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Ranis, and they’re on equality.” (*PI* 35) Given their supposed superiority, the Anglo-Indians keep warning Mrs. Moore, Miss Quested, and Fielding about the dangers of interacting with the natives in any intimate way because the contact may contaminate them.

Another dichotomy between the self and the other is that of the mature white as opposed to the childish black. Mr. Haq, the Inspector of Police, comes to arrest Aziz and the latter attempts to resist arrest. Fielding “pulled him back before a scandal started and shook him like a baby.” (*PI* 143) This explains the need for a mature white man intervention to inform the childish black how to behave in time of crisis. Aziz’s behavior is typical of the rather emotional Indian character that Forster has portrayed; nevertheless, it is exactly that of someone who is guilty. “Never, never act the Criminal,” says Fielding. (*PI* 143) This shows the need for a mature white intervention motivated by sympathy for direction and protection.

Another dichotomy between the self and the other is that of the civilized white as opposed to the “savage” black. Aziz, we are told, “was full of civilization this evening.” (*PI* 222) This is only to point how uncivilized Aziz had really been. Furthermore, Aziz is emotion to the British logic. Aziz is the simple mind as opposed to Adela’s “well-equipped mind.” (*PI* 120) The colonials start building their myth of the civilizing mission by claiming that the “natives” are “incapable of responsibility.” (*PI* 116-17) This explains the need of the Indians for the guidance of a master white man. The reality of such an attitude is that the colonials want to believe in the child-like status of the native, they want to believe in his inferiority.

John A. McClure writes in “The Colonial Other” that “the victims of imperial invasion are made to pay for the frustrations of the invaders.” (134) Yet, along with the physical torture, many of the British characters express deep hatred and aversion for the natives. This affirms Jan Mohamed’s argument that “in the imaginary colonialist realm, to say native is automatically to say evil and to evoke immediately the economy of the Manichean allegory” where “a non-dialectical, fixed opposition between the self and the native” (MA 84) structures the relationship between colonizers and colonized. Thus, the British feel entitled to act brutally and loathe unreservedly.

V.G. Kiernan in his book *The Lords of Human Kind: European Attitudes to Other Cultures in the Imperial Age* states that “by thinking the worst of their subjects they avoided having to think badly of themselves. Even years later when they were on better terms with their consciences, Englishmen went on thinking of Indians as hopelessly demoralized by climate, or social habits, or ages of Oriental misrule, and therefore permanently in need of foreign tutelage.” (36) Since the primary and ultimate aim of the colonizer is economic profit, such attitudes become necessary for the British to justify their actions to the world and to themselves, because to question these assumptions is to question one’s actions, one’s cultural and personal identity.

This same process is delineated by Jan Mohamed, who argues that the main reason behind all the evil characteristics and habits with which the colonialist endows the colonial other is to demonstrate that the inferiority and barbarism of the native are irreversible and irrecoverable, or at least deeply ingrained hence the “European’s attempt to civilize him can continue indefinitely, the exploitation of his resources can proceed without hindrance, and the European can persist in enjoying a position of moral superiority.” (MA 81) This is a way for the Europeans to legitimize their exploitation of the non-Westerners.

The Anglo-Indians have attempted to top the social hierarchy in India since they are more powerful than all other existing castes. Therefore, the social structure is totally altered so as to suit them, and a new social order supersedes the old one. Certainly, it is a structure that echoes their superiority, a racist structure predicated upon the economical requirements of colonization. A minority rules over an overpopulated India and claims an ethnic distinction and insists on a minimum contact with the natives, needless to say that the colonizers did not go to India to mix up with the natives and share their poverty. Instead, they meant to rule them and to make money.

Thus, “motivated by his desire to conquer and dominate, the imperialist configures the colonial realm as a confrontation based on differences in race, language, social custom, cultural values, and modes of production.” (MA 83). To suit this purpose, the colonizers insist on a simple social division. They maintain two clearly distinguishable sides: The whites and the blacks, the imperial race and the subject race, or to use two cherished terms of theirs “us” and “them.” In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow takes pains to establish polarities and distinctions between the self and the other. Although the entirety of *Heart of Darkness* attempts to deal with the other in “symbolic” terms, Marlow is able to deal with the other only in the realm of the “imaginary.” Throughout the text, he strives to separate savage customs from civilized behavior. Moreover, Marlow’s distinction between the intelligible language of civilized discourse and the unintelligible noise of savages “a violent babble of uncouth sounds” “fiendish row,” “tumultuous and mournful uproar,” “short grunting phrases” (HD 27-58; passim) collapses. In fact, Marlow’s attempts at separations disclose his intense need to sustain the manichean allegory so necessary to his sense of self in contradistinction to the other.

I would argue that Marlow’s attempts to maintain binary oppositions between self and other is justified by the colonizer’s intense anxiety about being taken over by the other. Being afraid to succumb to the other, the colonizer endeavors to contain it through subjugation,

oppression, or conversion. These strategies of containment are contrived to uphold the dichotomy and disparity between the self and the other that justifies the colonial enterprise. In Forster's *A Passage to India* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* there are typical racist statements and some residual racist attitudes, which diehard and fit into Jan Mohamed's categorizing of the "imaginary" type and "the emotive and cognitive intentionalities" which see the other in terms of threat to the white self. (MA 84). Within the colonizer's project of exclusion, the Western and rational White self is depicted as the antithesis of a degenerate and sub-human colonial subject. Hence racist views about India and Africa as backward and degenerate wastelands with neither a glorious past nor a promising future are acutely constructed and disseminated.

In *A Passage to India*, the Anglo-Indians used to call the Indians "niggers" (PI 160), and as it is stated in Forster's text color references inescapably come in: "Something racial intruded -not bitterly, but inevitably, like the color of their skins: coffee-color versus pinkogrey." (PI 229) Ironically, McBryde used to call the Indians "pitch." Using such a ground as skin-color, the colonizers offer themselves a good opportunity to claim a superiority that is meant to tell how pure white is and how ugly and ominous black is.

In labeling, fixing and denoting the colonial other, the strategies of what Said dubbed *Orientalism*, the colonizer constructs asymmetrical and unequal relation between the cultural position of the European and that of the native. West and East are symmetrical, but the East is marked, stereotyped and dehumanized, while the West is not. This has proved to be one of the most efficient devices for the dehumanization of the colonized. Forster's novel centers upon a trial in which an Indian male, Aziz, is allegedly convicted because of racial prejudice. Evil becomes tangible and all the Anglo-Indians of the Civil Station pontificate about the "evil nature" of Indians, so Adela begins to think of Aziz not as a human being but as a satanic force, a "principle of evil." They "all avoided mentioning that name. It had become synonymous with the Power of Evil." (PI 179) One is tempted to say that when it comes to the idea of a relationship between an Indian male and an Anglo-Indian woman, things get worse for the Indian male, for, having a dark skin, an Indian is considered a natural criminal and rapist.

Such absurdity is voiced by a partial Anglo-Indian, McBryde, who finds a good opportunity to illustrate his favorite theme- "Oriental Pathology"-and prove that "the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice-versa." (PI 193) McBryde goes on to illustrate his faulty theories when he claims that: "All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart." (PI 147) Besides, Ronny, who does not want Adela to take part in the excursion to the Marabar Caves, feels that his preconceived idea of Indian treachery in the dark is also justified.

The Anglo-Indians self-centeredness is obvious in the "sensibly planned" Civil Station (PI 6), which is physically separated from the Indian quarters by a "frontier" the Civil lines. (PI 12) Inside its frontier, the station has a club, a school, a theatre, tennis courts and polo grounds, its European shops and cemetery, in short, everything to make the community self-sufficient. Another life is thus created within India, a life, which is very much withdrawn onto itself. Forster deplors this Western type sensible planning of the station and sees it as a symbol of the oppression India has to live to under the alien rule of the British. "The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India." (PI 13) Furthermore, Forster notices the state of tension brought by the Westerners into the East. For him, the Civil Station "provokes no emotion. It charms not, neither does it repel." (PI 6) It suggests that something is in a state of disorder in that part of India.

Similarly, Conrad's narrative operates a "violence of the letter, a violence of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations," which allows it to subjugate and erase the

other's culture. (Derrida 110) The violence Marlow inflicts on the African culture appears primarily in the cannibalism he attributes to the African natives. In fact, the idea that physical violence originates in the violence of language finds an echo in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. In Conrad's narrative, we are told; the map of Africa is divided and colored according to the greedy claims of European nations. According to Marlow, due to the work undertaken by the jolly pioneers of progress in Africa, the blankest of them all "was not a blank space anymore. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery." (HD 11-12) What deserves emphasis in so far as the power of Cartography is concerned is the fact that by their being "blank" those peripheral geographical spaces are zones to be, ironically enough, "discovered" by the English. To borrow Abdul Jan Mohamed's own words, these are but spaces "at the boundaries of civilization, a world that has not [yet] been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology." (MA 83). By the emphasis I added to the word "names," I would like to show that the process of erasure set up by the so-called discovery of these areas is completed by naming which itself implies a wider process of appropriation.

Compared to Conrad's novella, Forster's *A Passage to India* recognizes the violence inherent in language. The novel's opening clearly indicts the nature of British planning for causing racial tension. The inscription upon the land of roads and railroads is obvious in "the roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles," which "were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India." (PI 13) After describing Chandrapore's segregated layout, Forster shows its effect when introducing us to Aziz. Called away from dinner at a friend's home to attend to his superior, Major Callendar, Aziz reluctantly journeys towards the "arid tidiness" of the civil lines. (PI 13) This troublesome journey to Chandrapore's Civil Station is significant not only because it shows the violence the colonials inscribe on India but also because it unveils its debilitating effects on the indigenous population.

Throughout *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow constantly attempts to strip the natives of their power and individuality. As far as the African woman is concerned, she is doubly othered by Marlow: she is female and savage as distinguished from the male and civilized, the binary oppositions upon which Western civilization and thought are based. She is stereotyped, dehumanized and caricatured. For Marlow, she is a distillation of alluring but frightening otherness. "She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent." (HD 87) As Achebe notes in his article "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," Kurtz's African mistress is the "savage counterpart to the refined, European woman." (255) Marlow considers her as alluring and threatening in her overt sexuality and aggressive claims upon Kurtz's person. Moreover, Marlow sees her as the embodiment of the wilderness. She is its "tenebrous and passionate soul." (HD 87) Therefore, I would safely argue that the Africans are debased through and through in Conrad's text.

Kurtz's mistress is treated as an erotic object and the land as an erotic space. The land is feminine like the mistress and the mistress is savage like the land. To use Mary Louise Pratt term, "the contact zone"^{‡‡} shows stillness, "and this stillness did not in the least resemble a peace. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect." (HD 48-49) Similarly, the native woman "stood looking at us without a stir, and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose." (HD 87) Said explains this process of the sexualization of the encounter zone that is the effeminization, of the land. Africa, and the colonized, the Africans

^{‡‡} Mary Louise Pratt introduced the concept of "the contact zone." She uses it term to refer to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today" (34) for further details refer to Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*.

in his “Orientalism Reconsidered.” He argues that the West conceives of the Orient “as feminine” its riches as fertile and refers to the notion of the harem as one of its main icons: “its main symbol the sensual woman, the harem and the despotic but curiously attractive ruler” (12). For Fanon, the colonial harem is an expression of a power relationship: “since he is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in the colonies” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 46). In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the colonial harem consists of the relationship the colonial engages in. This is reminiscent of Kurtz’s relationship with the native mistress. In the wilderness, Kurtz gives free rein to his sexual orgies. He revels in performing the rites of penetration and in the opening up of the dark land, his geographical mistress. The Dark Continent lay soft and yielding in his arms: “The wilderness had patted him on the head, he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite.” (*HD* 69) He then goes on gratifying his sexual relationship: “Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts.” (*HD* 83) His sexual relationship with the African mistress is meant as enjoyment than domination. Carola M. Kaplan writes “the savage woman is one with the wilderness that has claimed Kurtz for its harem.” (“Colonizers, Cannibals” 329). Kurtz’s African mistress is no more than a helper, an instrument and a sexual object.

As a permanent characteristic of the colonial discourse, cannibalism is always there to represent the native as a bloodthirsty savage. As Jan Mohamed writes cannibalism is depicted not “as the products of social and cultural difference but as characteristic inherent in the race in the blood of the native.” (*MA* 86). The colonialist anxiety of being taken over by the other leads to the attribution of cannibalism to the natives. In her article “Colonizers, Cannibals and the Horror of Good Intentions in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” Carola M. Kaplan argues that “cannibalism serves as the metaphor for the absolute violation of boundaries between one human being and another, the physical equivalent of the cultural absorption or ingestion by the other that the colonizer fears.” (329-30) However, the cannibalism Marlow ascribes to the Congolese may refer to the rapacity of the colonials who, through their invasion of the land, the violation property rights, and the torture of the natives’ bodies are but one step from literally devouring the inhabitants. Thus, Marlow depicts the insatiable Kurtz “opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind.” (*HD* 105) Although Marlow seems to approve of the restraint of the natives aboard ship which may entail an indictment of the colonials’ lack of restraint towards the Africans, he cannot free himself from the charge of the violence he inflicts on the African culture through the ascription of cannibalism to the natives.

In Conrad’s book Africa is depicted as the “heart of darkness” including trackless wilderness and primitive customs. It is meaningless and shapeless. Thus, for Marlow, “going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings.” (*HD* 48) Moreover, as Marlow and his companions “penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness” (*HD* 50), they encountered “fine fellows-cannibals-in their place.” (*HD* 49) It is conspicuous, then, that such a racist imagery used in depicting Africa contributes to the consolidation of an image of Africa that is presumably primitive and savage. Given this (mis)representation of Africa and its people, I would argue that it is not the actuality of Africa’s civilization which is being examined or the identities of her peoples, but the refractions of Africa as they are distorted through the lens of the British imagination.

Achebe argues that Conrad uncritically appropriates this image of Africa from Victorian England. He, then, points out that “it was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination.” Its function, he argues, seems to abate the West’s suffering from “deep

anxieties about the precariousness of its civilization by providing it with a foil against which its own superior virtues can be made manifest.” Thus, for Achebe: “Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray - a carrier onto whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate.” (“An Image of Africa” 261) From this perspective Europe is the African’s burden because Europe projects all its imperfections onto Africa.

Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow argue that: “In book after book about Africa identical images appear expressing similar attitudes and concepts, often similarly phrased. Literary license allows every author to depict Africa in much the same way as every other author. Such conformity cannot be a result of chance. It clearly indicates a governing literary tradition.” (*The Myth of Africa* 14) The projection of negative qualities on Africa that abound in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* reflects the European’s need for a place to set up as its antithesis. Such image is vital for their self-imagination and as a proof of their advancement. Thus, even if Africa does not exist it would be invented.

Unlike Conrad’s Africa, which remains shapeless, impenetrable wilderness, a heart of darkness and a no go area through the imperialists squeeze of its resources, Forster’s India seems to be a country unwilling to yield to colonization. She is the main character in Forster’s book since he gives her the first and the last word. From the first chapter, Forster presents a land that is aggressive, hostile, unyielding and unsatisfied. The Marabar Hills with their “extraordinary caves” are thrusting a group of fists and fingers (*PI* 7) upwards defending India against any intruder. India harbors an intense grudge against the colonials and does her best not to satisfy them. Being full of mystery traps and muddle, the colonials’ attempts to tame her have failed. She is constantly there to remind the Anglo-Indians of their vulnerability, weakness and loneliness. Miss. Quested, for instance, confirms such an argument when she says: “How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generation of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile.” (*PI* 120) In fact, the colonials’ attempts to hold India for their good are doomed to failure.

Compared to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Forster’s *A Passage to India* too uses imperial stereotypes. Forster reworks those stereotypes and revitalizes them into new images, which are less imperialistic but never empowering for the other. Forster’s India is defined by nothingness and then it brought back to existence through literalness. “Nothing in India is identifiable” “the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else.” (*PI* 84) In these explicit terms the author seems to set the Indian identity under erasure or to transform it into vastness and unreadability.

India resists definition and as such it is denied any identity. Forster’s India becomes inapprehensible and difficult to represent or narrate except as a mystery or a muddle. It is a mystery Adela Quested strives hard to understand but cannot: “How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried but they remain in exile [. . .] India knows of the whole world’s trouble, to its uttermost depth she calls “come” through hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined.” (*PI* 22) Whether India is defined as a mystery or a muddle, the unreadability of India becomes ambiguous: it denies the Indian any cultural recognizability as the antithetical other. Cultural otherness cannot be apprehended, for Anglo-India remains undecipherable. In other words, the imperial eye cannot see through India and reads its secrets without the help of India. The paradigm of binarism is not inverted, to put it differently, the subjugated East is never allowed to become the master, but the West is put into the impossibility of becoming the powerful Centre of hegemony without the help of the “little Oriental” as Dr Aziz is called in *A Passage to India*. Sara Suleri argues “this unreadability is of course simply one instance of a discursive transfer of power, which fetishizes a colonial fear of its own cultural ignorance into the potential threats posed by an Indian alterity.” (*The Rhetoric of English India* 6) The English

colonizer, confronted to his own ignorance of Indian culture, experiences anxiety and by so doing loses some of his power and the more one loses the more the other gains.

India is thus made to regain a certain visibility and power by reducing the English colonizer to fear and anxiety over its own ignorance. It is fear to lose discursive control over the other. "Aziz undertook to explain, but it presently appeared that he had never visited the caves himself, had always been meaning to go, but work or private business had prevented him." (PI 96) The unreadability of the caves presses the imperial gaze against its own anxiety only to transform it into a new channel of power. The attempt at intimacy brings against Aziz the imperial accusation of rape.

That there is a set of racist English characters is evident in the two works and examples may be Ronny Heaslop, Mrs. Turton, Mrs. Lesley and Mrs. Callendar in Forster's book and Marlow and his companions in Conrad's novella. That there are typical racist attitudes and statements is also evident and some residual racist attitudes diehard and fit into Jan Mohamed's categorizing of the "imaginary" type and the "emotive" and "cognitive intentionalities" which see the other in terms of threat to the white self. (MA 84) Yet, while Conrad has never attempted to give voice to the natives let alone to rid them of the denigrating images and stereotypes imposed on them, Forster attempts to rid the other of mean characterizing through the rehabilitation of the image of Indians and sets his novel in contrast to the colonial practice of absencing the native, and negating his individuality and subjectivity. In Forster's novel, the colonial character has no longer the dominant role of the early white interloper and conqueror in a space made void- the space is peopled now with less objectified different others.

In fact, this is a departure from Jan Mohamed's "imaginary" category of fiction, which becomes residual. Yet, the "symbolic" category is still operating in the novel and I maintain its second type about the realization of the facts of domination, which prevents the self to mix up with the other. What I find in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, however, is a rigorous scrutiny of the "imaginary" mechanism of colonialist mentality. This is due to Conrad's awareness that any attempt to amalgamate with the other is doomed to failure because the relation between colonizer and colonized is caught into a paradigm of colonization where the other is dominated and the self is dominant.

Forster's achievement lies in his correct assessment of the colonial situation in his book where those few characters who are British and who remain prejudiced against the natives like Ronny, Mrs. Turton, Mrs. Lesley and Mrs. Callendar are mocked and made instrumental to explore futile clinging to the conventional racist palaver. This at least reduces the heavy weight of racial attitudes characteristic of colonial types. This attempt to satirize the Anglo-Indians and to rid the other of distorted images and mean characterizing sets Forster on the opposite side to Conrad, who constructs an image of the African as subaltern and subhuman colonial other positioned between bestiality and humanity and whose narrative is fraught with instances of colonial misrepresentation exclusion and othering.

Unlike Conrad's characters who are dehumanized, debased and denied speech and individuality, Forster's most important characters in *A Passage to India* are actually Indians, holding high positions in their society and, in many ways, literally overshadowing the British characters. In the second chapter of *A Passage to India*, Forster says that politics among the colonized are "eternal." Here lies one of Forster's strong and objective points. The author, in fact, must be praised for his effort at a realistic characterization. The Indians, their problems, and their "eternal politics" (PI 10) are indeed given their due importance. Unlike Conrad's natives who are relegated onto the margin of his narrative and who, like the women, were "out of it should be out of it" (HD 69), Forster's Indians are by no means the eternal secondary characters who come late in the story and are used as mere accessories, servants and such like.

In *A Passage to India*, Indians have the chance of discussing their rulers, showing their point of view and revealing their feelings of hatred and resentment for the colonials. Conrad, however, hardly ever gives the Africans the opportunity to discuss politics. They are more expected to be submissive, docile and show gratefulness than challenge. His policy is simple. He labels them as subhuman, inferior and cannibals, hence he denies them voice and agency.

Forster and Conrad differ in their treatment of the colonial other. While Forster attempts to rid the other of mean characterizing in spite of some residual elements which still survive in his text, Conrad perpetuates stereotypes that dehumanize the Africans. But then the racist and separatist attitudes detected in the two books are not the only ones the colonials strike. Other attitudes are possible; attitude that suggest that reconciliation between certain colonials and colonized could hopefully be achieved. Can the gulf be actually bridged? Is there a ground for a genuine meeting between the two sides? Where do Forster and Conrad stand as far as the relationship between East and West is concerned?

3. The “Symbolic” in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

As we move from the “imaginary” “objectification and aggression” of a representation based on opposition and a superiority/inferiority binarism, to forms of “syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized” (MA 85), we, in fact, move from the racist attitudes to the apparently more humanistic ones among the colonials. This in turn entails a move from the general to the particular, from the group to the individual, and from stereotypes and prejudices to individual personal yearnings for friendship and meeting with the colonized. Thus, one can detect certain liberalism in the attitudes of a few colonials. Liberalism here is a moral liberalism, a liberalism of the mind. “The core values of liberalism are individualism, rationalism, freedom, justice and toleration.” (Saffu Yaw 1) Indeed, liberal minded colonials have come to take such a different stand from the stereotyped colonials we have already seen. But how much liberal can a colonial actually be?

The first type of “symbolic texts endeavors to find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition” of self and other, while the second type “realizes that syncretism is impossible within the power relations of colonial society because such a context traps the writer in the libidinal economy of the imaginary.” In fact, this firm refusal of a “rapprochement between self and other, is the most important factor distinguishing the imaginary from the symbolic colonialist text.” (MA 93) The writer of the symbolic colonialist text makes possible a dialectic encounter between the colonizer and the natives in which the dominant culture is able to bracket its own values and thus radically question its basis for cultural inference and interpretation. Let us then see where Forster and Conrad stand as far as the issue of the possibility of a genuine meeting between the colonizer and the colonized is concerned.

I have already shown in Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* how badly and inhumanly the colonials in general treat the colonized. Yet, one should not fail to notice that sometimes they adopt a different attitude with some natives. Their racist views tend to become milder and moderate with some natives. I may say that this liberal new turn of mind comes as a true surprise. However, there should be no surprise because this so-called liberalism is but an appearance. While Forster’s novel provides interesting attempts to overcome the barriers of racial difference in order to guarantee a rapprochement between self and other, Conrad’s novella exposes the limitations and self-contradictions of Marlow’s views to open up a dialogue on issues of culture and race.

In Forster’s novel, characters like Mrs. Moore and Fielding have the stature to resist their English opposites. Their tolerance and liberalism are shown to be coherent and unchanging and their statements do provide a sense of condemnation of racist attitudes. However, in Conrad’s novella we hardly find liberal and tolerant characters. His characters

are caught into a paradigm of colonization where they are unable to transcend the differences between self and other, hence the regression to the economy of the “imaginary” phase where the old Manichean dichotomies surface once again.

Mrs. Moore is very easily moved by the plight of the Indians; she makes herself known for her kindness, courtesies and readiness to meet the Indians. Persisting in her attitude to see the real aspects of the land and the Indians, Mrs. Moore comes to a clash with her son Ronny. She openly condemns the way he treats the Indians and deplores his God-like attitudes. She is intuitive, sympathetic and understanding, and as such, she is amongst the most open of all the characters. She represents in the novel the humane British colonialist and functions as a kind of bridge of understanding between the two cultures. Ultimately, Mrs. Moore suggests an ideal: “The English are out here to be pleasant” [and] “[b]ecause India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. “God ... is ... love.” (PI 43) She is definitely too idealistic. Her words are far from being convincing; they even sound absurd in such an actual political context.

However warm her sympathy towards Aziz might be, and however sure her intuition might be about his innocence, she remains helpless and sterile. She cannot acquit him of his alleged rape of Adela. Compassion for those who suffer is simply insufficient. Being out-of-joint in the colonial situation, she has to leave British India altogether. Almost a symbol of defeatism, she is overwhelmed by the actual situation and by her son and his community. She leaves India utterly helpless and dies at sea.

Despite of the many barriers to developing and maintaining good friendships, Forster shows that it might be possible between the most tolerant, kindhearted and open-minded individuals. Adela, for instance, does not appreciate the way Indians are treated by the Anglo-Indians. She says she comes to India to discover and see “real India;” and to meet the Indians as individuals, not as inferiors. She simply does not want to see the image of India that has been drawn by the colonials. However, she is shocked at finding that India and the Indians are not ready to satisfy her wishes. She knows that the main reason is the colonials' attitudes towards the Indians.

Fielding is also known for his individuality. “He had no racial feeling -not because he was superior to his brother civilians, but because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herd-instinct does not flourish” (PI 53). Unbiased, he would talk to Indians and entertain Indian guests at his place. Being sensitive, disinterested and tolerant, Fielding would never intimidate the Indians by any kind of compulsive nearness in his room or formality in his ways. His free-mindedness and free-intelligence are the main reason of his wish to see harmony and understanding between colonials and colonized as individuals.

From what preceded, I would argue that the dialectic encounter between the self and the other and the building of good friendship, as Forster shows in his novel, might be possible between the most open-minded and good-hearted individuals. Although there are many barriers to such a genuine meeting between colonizer and colonized, Forster, through Dr. Aziz and Mr. Fielding two of the most intellectual individuals in his novel, demonstrates that a chance at breaking through the stereotypes and becoming good friends might be possible. In fact, their education, being a doctor and a learned college principal respectively, might be the reason, which gives birth to the possibility of transcending their own cultural differences and overlooking each other's given stereotypes.

To use Jan Mohamed's terms their mutual understanding “proceeds through self-understanding [they are] freer from the codes and motifs of the deeper, collective classification system of [their] cultures.” (MA 93) Aziz's and Fielding's kindheartedness and open-mindedness allow them to give sympathy to each other's nationalities. Fielding has no objection to the idea of Indian mingling with the English when he invites both Aziz and the

newcomers to tea. Aziz in turn invites the English women and Fielding to the Marabar Caves hoping fervently to bridge the gap between the English and the Indians.

Fielding's marriage to Stella intensifies his affinities towards his British friends. After the trial, Aziz too retreats to his Indian lot and becomes less open-minded. What impedes their growing friendship, Forster seems to suggest, is their inability to completely tolerate the cultural differences and to adopt the tendencies of the opposing nationality. It seems that the only way for an interracial friendship to succeed is if one side completely deserts his loyalties and joins the other side. Jan Mohamed argues that the "symbolic" writer's "success in comprehending or appreciating alterity will depend on his ability to bracket the values and bases of his culture" (MA 93). Forster follows this course by offering interesting attempts to overcome the barriers of cultural and racial differences.

4. Failure of Syncretism between East and West

As the analysis of the two texts shows, any attempt to bridge the gulf between East and West is doomed to failure. Aziz and Fielding are not able to transcend and severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideology of their cultures. Therefore, their friendship cannot last forever. The relationship between Aziz and Fielding is destined to fail, if only because of the power disparity inevitable in a still-existing Anglo-India. The forces of reconciliation and togetherness, which are at work in part one "Mosque," are doomed to failure. Textual evidence might suggest bad government or the men's own racism as the likely causes of separation between East and West.

Some Indian characters attempt to meet the colonials and enjoy a genuine friendship with them. Godbole, for instance, manages in his own way to reconcile East and West. His exterior appearance as well as his inner deep beliefs account for a man who is on good terms with everything around. He is a Brahman who "wore a turban that looked like pole purple macaroni, coat, waistcoat, dhoti, socks with clocks. The clocks matched the turban, and his whole appearance suggested harmony-as if he had reconciled the products of East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be discomposed" (PI 62). Forster seems to be hopeful and optimistic about human relationships in British India. This is conspicuous in his use of such words as harmony and reconciliation.

Forster wishes all the colonized were like Godbole. Therefore, I would argue that Hinduism is apparently his message. Yet, Godbole who embodies Hinduism, is impractical, angelical man, lacking in realism and so distant from everyday matters. In his book: *E. M. Forster*, Rex Warner wonders "how far is Forster offering and not just within the Indian framework of the story- the "sacred contagion" of Hinduism as a spiritual corrective to the limitations of individualism, an all-inclusive salvation for a world doomed to fragmentation by its own ignorance and selfishness?" (105). The answer may be that Hinduism, like individualism and liberal humanism, has its own limitations. Hence it cannot be a force of union between the colonials and the colonized. Hinduists are too deep in vast matters and seem to forget totally about the practical, materialist aspects of life.

Such spells of "liberalism" are very rare, indeed, in Conrad's book; they are also so weak that their efficiency is very doubtful. In fact, Conrad's narrative promises no meeting between the self and the colonial other. His book offers a general picture of East versus West. This may be due to Conrad's own "understanding that differences between self and other cannot be adequately transcended within the colonial context" (MA 100). As a result, Conrad focuses exclusively on the subjugating process and on the mentality of the colonizer. This tendency is obvious in his narrator Marlow who is presented as both an agent of European imperialism and a wise liberal European who understands the drive behind the Empire.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow treats the occasions when Africans meet the British not for their potential to establish cross-racial community, but rather to suggest his racial superiority. Marlow focuses on achieving unity with Kurtz rather than with blacks. His energies are directed exclusively towards Kurtz, and the racist overtones of his language markedly curtail not only the possibility of a dialectic encounter between self and other, but also the very notion of African subjectivity. Ironically enough, Marlow's pondering over the savagery of the blacks in the "bush" develops out of his moment of eye contact with an African. This instant of human interaction rather than creating a bond, leads to a dehumanized vision of dismembered African bodies: "deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes, -the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement, glistening, of bronze color." (*HD* 64) Again, this is a distancing description that strips the Africans of their subjectivity.

When men come together, as Jan Mohamed has argued in the context of colonialism and colonialist literature, the result has less to do with the creation of cross-racial community than with the essential splintering of the colonized's subjectivity in the service of the colonizer's self-image. Jan Mohamed contends that colonialist literature "is essentially specular: instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it uses him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image" (*MA* 84). Thus, Marlow's need to preserve the opposition and inequality between self and other that justifies the imperialist enterprise, requires a complete containment of other bonds that may disrupt racial hierarchies. Consequently, cross-racial interaction, Conrad seems to imply, is impossible within a colonial context.

Forster's *A Passage to India* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deal with different parts of Britain's imperial presence in India and Africa but share similar insights into the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Both writers castigate British imperialism, and both argue its harmful effects are seen not only in the lives of the oppressed, but also in the corrupted souls of the oppressors, although the corruption Forster describes is not as thoroughgoing as that of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. Forster "manages to resist the pull of the "imaginary" realm by rigorously eschewing the temptation to represent the other" (*MA* 100) and to "find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of the colonizer and the colonized" (*MA* 85).

If Forster's novel fails to bridge the gulf between colonizers and colonized because of the impossible cutting off with the imaginary, Conrad's novella, we are told, by examining the "imaginary" mechanism of colonialist mentality, manages to free itself from the Manichean allegory" (*MA* 85). As far as personal relationships between colonizer and colonized are concerned, it seems that we have come to a sort of dead-end. The colonial situation indeed offers almost no way-out. In other words, a genuine meeting between colonials and colonized has proved to be virtually impossible.

As I have shown so far, any attempt to bridge the gap between colonizers and colonized is doomed to failure. Both sides seem determined to preserve the gulf that divides them. While Forster ascribes this failure to dissimilarities in character and culture between the two races, Conrad attributes the failure of syncretism to colonialism, which entraps colonizer and colonized into a paradigm, where the "other" is dominated and the self is dominant. Neither the colonizers nor the colonized are able "to negate or at least to severely bracket the values, assumptions, and ideology of [their own] culture." (*MA* 84). The non-Westerners see the British as intruders, insular, superior; the British in turn see them as superstitious, barbaric, and inferior.

5. Conclusion

As far as the representation of the other is concerned, I have argued that Forster attempts to rid the other of the denigrating images the colonizers have attempted to stick on them.) What I found in his book is something pointing to evident discontinuities with early colonial narratives. In his novel, the colonial character has no longer the dominant role of the early interloper and conqueror in a space made void. The space is peopled now with less objectified different others. This is a departure from Jan Mohamed's imaginary category of fiction, which becomes residual. Yet, some residual colonial attitudes and some imperial stereotypes, as shown throughout the paper, may still be detected in his book. He in fact, revitalizes these stereotypes into new images, which are less imperialist but never radically empowering for the other.

Unlike Forster's, Conrad's representation of the other constitutes an overt transgression and distortion of African culture and identity. His novella, to use Achebe's own words, "parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities [and] in which the very humanity of black people is called in question." ("An Image of Africa" 259) From a postcolonial perspective, Conrad's apparent sympathy for the Africans and his denunciation of the Belgian colonial presence in the Congo should by no means redeem the serious instances of devaluation, dehumanization and dehistoricization imposed on Africa and Africans. Conrad's Africans are silenced, and they are relegated onto the margin of his narrative.

Regarding the imperial enterprise, Forster seems not to question imperialism itself, he is interested in the problems human relationships suffer from as a consequence of imperialism. He is concerned with the clash between two fundamentally different cultures, those of East and West. His approach was to shed light on the cultural and social differences that prevented the formation of lasting friendships between the colonizers and the colonized in British India. Thus, Forster's novel is considered by critics as a good commentary on the crucial role of social and cultural identity in creating, widening, and perpetuating the gulf between nations and races.

Similarly, Conrad does nothing to deflect the course of colonial history. His disillusionment is not with imperialism as much as with its maladministration and its misconduct. What the narrative provides is primarily a criticism of the perversion of "true imperialism" by the selfish practices of a minority of capitalists. In their book *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad*, Owen Knowles and Gene M. Moore argue that "Conrad's equating of colonialism with commercialism in his fiction" should not "surprise us for the very ships in which he served and sailed the world in the final phase of British expansionism were themselves engaged in the pursuit of material interests." (79) They go on to argue that:

[P]repared to be censorious to varying degrees about the imperialism of other nations, [Conrad] generally regarded Britain's overseas rule as benevolent and paternal [. . .] thus, not only did the Anglophile Conrad extend the libertarian values he associated with England to its colonialism, but as Watts argues, some of his sea tales 'are clearly inflicted so as to flatter a British readership (79).

Conrad's narrative though not an outright celebration of empire, it stops short of any disapproval of the imperial enterprise. He seems to celebrate the presumed civilizing work in Africa - despite his awareness of the criminality stemming from such an incursion.

Concerning Forster's and Conrad's respective views of the colonial encounter, I have argued that Forster examines the possibilities of cultural and racial rapprochement, yet his novel fails if only because of the impossible cutting of with the imaginary. Conrad, however "seems to have understood implicitly that such involvement in the colonial situation entailed a regression to the economy of the imaginary phase and its concomitant domination of the

psyche.” (MA 89) In other words, Conrad has already realized that syncretism is impossible within the power relations of colonial society.

Finally, I would argue that the representations of contemporary third world Societies build on the same assumptions and images that underlay representations of primitive societies in the last century. The members of these societies may not now be referred to as primitive or savage, but new coinages such as ethnic, underdeveloped, terrorists often carry the same messages. It can now be seen that colonialist literature has played a vital role in the distortion and consolidation of the image of non-Western societies and peoples as backward, savage, and irrational.

This, in fact, shows how narrative creates and consolidates power, an issue that is brilliantly debated in Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, and how power validates the authority of narrative, a point that is widely discussed by new historicists like Hayden white. It is left for postcolonial counter narratives to recover spaces for peripheral rebuttal. This paper does not only challenge those scholars who do not see Orientalism as problematic but also those who tend to overlook the role of fictional representations in shaping the image of the Other within a wider multidisciplinary study of knowledge and power.

References

- Achebe, Chinua. “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.” *The Massachusetts Review* 18 (1977): 782-94.
- . *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays, 1965-1987*. London: Heinemann, 1989.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 1995.
- . *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 1986.
- . *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. London: Penguin Books, 1965.
- Forster, E. M. *A Passage to India*. London: Penguin Student Editions, 2000.
- Hammond, Dorothy and Jabio, Alta. *The Myth of Africa*. New York: The Library of Social Science, 1977.
- Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).
- Jan Mohamed, Abdul R. “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature.” Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. ed. “Race Writing and difference 78-106. Chicago: University Press, 1985.
- Kaplan, Carola. M. “Colonizers, Cannibals, and the Horror of Good Intentions in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.” *Studies in Short Fiction* 34, 3 (Newberry College: Summer 1997) 323-333 <<http://www.questia.com/PM, qst?a = o&d = 5001627107>.
- Kieman, V. G. *The Lords of Human Kind*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969.
- Kiernan, V.G, and Harvey J. Kaye. *Imperialism and Its Contradictions*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Knowles, Owen, and Gene M. Moore. *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Conrad*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- McClure, John. “Problematic Presence: The Colonial Other in Kipling and Conrad.” Ed. David Dabydeen. *The Black Presence in English Literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985: 154-167.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Trans. Howard Greenfield. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967 (1972).

- Pratt, Marie Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Ridouani, Driss. "The Representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western Media". 2011. <http://ddd.uab.cat/record/70865>.
- Saffu, Yaw. *Liberalism in Ghana Since Independence*. Accra: Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 2007.
- Said, Edward W. "Orientalism Reconsidered". *Race and Class*, 27 (1985): 1-15.
- . *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.
- . *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin Books, 1995 (1978).
- Suleri, Sara. *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Warner, Rex. *E.M. Forster*. Great Britain: Longman Group, 1960.
- White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

How to cite this manuscript: Abdelkader Ben Rhit, The Imaginary and the Symbolic in E.M. Forster's a Passage to India and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, *Journal of English Literature and Cultural Studies*, 2019, 2(4), 33-52.