Chapter V
CONCLUSION
Ideal Versus Pragmatic

A transgression, a crime, entering a man's existence eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever.

Conrad

Life is very short. It is very difficult to live without committing a crime. Life is like a school, a factory, where we go on learning.

Agavali.

In the introductory chapter it was proposed to make an analogical study of Conrad and Mu.Va. with reference to their moral stratification of humanity in their fiction. With brief biographical sketches of the two novelists, it was established that there is a sort of temperamental affinity between them in their rationalistic outlook of life. Both Conrad and Mu.Va. are secular moralists. They search for a natural/instinctual morality in the place of a religious one for the conduct of man/woman on earth. They strongly believe in the evolutionary theory of man that man cannot be separated from his animal partner and he is irretrievably bound to live with that shadow throughout his life. In other words, they share the view that man is a complex mixture of both good and evil. Apropos, their fiction deals with human beings inevitably caught in a moral dialectic of good and evil. Though they seem to be preoccupied with this complex variety, they also float two other categories which are morally or immorally involved in the tragic action of the earlier type.
The human typology of Conrad and Mu.Va. is viewed against the background of Western and Eastern thinking on mankind.

The complex category of humanity, discussed in Chapter 81, contains both the criminal and redemptive potentials within. His/Her criminal potential is revealed when he/she exercises his/her ontological freedom in an extreme situation and his/her redemptive potential when he/she develops a spiritual communion with his/her victim after prolonged suffering. Their tragic man/woman, though succumb to the devil within, is concomitantly disturbed by his/her moral consciousness. He/she is of a broad nature comprising of the other two varieties – the infra and the supra.

All the Conradian protagonists are professionals who are legally and morally bound to the secular ethics like the Merchant Mariner's code. But in extremity it becomes inevitable for them to violate their avowed professional ethics. In Conrad the crimes are professional, committed in a remote corner of the world, in utter loneliness, very often in darkness. In contrast, the tragic men/women of Mu.Va. involve themselves in domestic crimes in and around Madras in Hindu middle class families. In an orthodox Hindu society, sex is sanctified only in marriage. Pre-marital sex is considered to be a sin and extra-marital sex, a transgression. But all the tragic men/women of Mu.Va. violate this sexual code and are caught in the web of crime and punishment like their Conradian counterparts.
In the Con radi an world once the crime is committed, the punishment starts immediately and there is no question of evading or justifying it. Whereas, in the Mu. Vavian World the process of punishment takes its own time. The tragic men/women of Mu.Va. keep their crimes as a secret for quite sometime. They continue to live their normal life with the thorn of guilt but without being much afflicted by their conscience even for years. But once they encounter their victims or witness the consequences of their crime, the stored up guilt erupts like a long silent volcano and they find it impossible to harbour it any longer.

Though in the Con radi an world the crimes are professional and in the Mu.Vavian world domestic, the area of exploration in both their fiction is the human mind affected by crime. Both Conrad and Mu.Va. insist not on events as such but their effect upon the persons because the moral significance of any act interferes with the nature of things and it is capable of dimming the light of the Sun, destroying the perfume of flowers and killing the very desire to live. The tragic men/women realise this shattering truth only after the execution of their crime. According to Lehman, the conscience that "is born with every soul... is at once both the accuser and the judge... never does it depart by day or by night, but stabs as with a goad, and inflict wounds that know no healing until it snaps the thread of that soul's pitiful and accursed life" (1973:30). The suffering continues until they realise that a solitary and fearful existence is more horrible than poverty and death. In other words, they must come to terms with the claims of their unconscious mind. As C.G. Jung says, "the process of coming to terms with the
unconscious is true labor, a work which involves both action and suffering.

It represents a function based on rational and irrational data, then bridging the yawning gulf between the conscious and unconscious" (1956: 252). This bridging of the yawning gulf between the conscious and unconscious is done by developing a spiritual communion with their victims. After developing this spiritual communion they realise that their moral strength lies not in hiding the secret but in coming out openly with their confession. The act of confession, thus, comes from within. After their confession they are accepted as "one of us" both in the much advanced Western and the more conventional Tamil societies.

The Infra Humanity, i.e., Conrad's "fools" and Mu.Va's "numb people" was discussed in Chapter III. The people of this category are the intensified versions of the dark aspect of tragic humanity living without the benefit of moral codes, that is why they are termed here as Infra Humanity. They are also endowed with criminal potentials but the redemptive potential is absent in them. They always remain in darkness, not even once making an attempt to come out morally alive. They are mostly odious, callous, vengeful and scheming hypocrites and some of them are evil incarnates and sexual immorals. Whatever evil qualities they are known for, all of them are completely governed by animalistic impulses. In fact, they are apes in a sinister jungle polluting the entire world with their unmitigated villainy. In Conrad, they are associated with animal images and in Mu.Va. their very names are suggestive of their respective crimes.
The infra humanity is always found in a murderous plot as a result of their dark, aggravating powers as the alter egos of their tragic counterparts. For example, Schomberg is the alter ego of Heyst, Cornelius of Jim, Mrs. Almayer of Almayer, Aissa of Willems, Vacikaram of Anavar, Kanakā of Tānappaṇ, Nākanātan and Kāncanai of Collector Celvanāyakam. As weeds do only harm to the plants in the field, so these people with their destructive potentials do as much harm as possible to their fellow human beings. They are the representatives of human "blackness" who violate all the established codes of human conduct. They continue to live in moral isolation till their shameful death. Even in death they fail to realise their follies and so the question of repentance never arises. Like their tragic counterparts, some of them are killed and others are allowed to live. However, in both the worlds, they are treated with sympathy and recognised as part of creation.

The Supra category — Conrad's "thunderingly exalted creatures", and Mu.Va's people who are "too careful to commit a crime" — was discussed in Chapter IV. In both Conrad and Mu.Va. the moral teachers perform the same priestly function in bringing the tragic heroes and heroines to the altar of confession, making them redeem their lost moral selves. In fact, the tragic men/women look up to them for their moral recovery. The relationship between these wise old men and the tragic humanity resembles that of a father and his children — the pairs in Conrad are Marlow-Jim; Lingard - Almayer, Willems; the Language Teacher - Razumov; and those in Mu.Va. are Arajali - Vatiku;
Somasundaram; Murugaiah - Arulappan; Meykanar - Meyyappan. The Supra category runs counter to the infra type in facilitating the tragic protagonists to resolve their moral dilemma.

The moral teachers of both the authors are modern versions of the archetypal wise old man and each one of them is filled with a missionary zeal. Since they are wise old men of vast and varied experience, they are quite capable of penetrating into normally impenetrable regions of the human psyche. Their simplicity, extreme generosity and a divine grace on their face, inspire such confidence that no one tries to hide anything from them. They act as the representatives of human conscience and succeed in preserving the moral order of the universe.

Both the tragic and the infra humanity are brought in contact with these wise old men. The tragic humanity with their redemptive potentials come forward for moral redemption and spiritual regeneration. Whereas, the infra humanity treats the moral teachers as their enemies and very often treat them with arrogance and contempt. In the absence of any redemptive potential, they never come forward for spiritual regeneration and so they are invariably left to their fate. On the other hand, the infra humanity succeeds in awakening the criminal potentials and aggravating the fall of the tragic humanity. Whereas, the supra humanity awakens the redemptive potentials in them and succeeds in bringing them back to the normal life of humanity as “one of us”. In other words, whatever destructive work is done by the infra humanity to the tragic humanity is morally repaired by the supra humanity.
In the fictional worlds of both Conrad and Mu.Va. life after crime and punishment is problematised because the crime punctures the very virginity of their protagonists's moral nature. In Almayer's Folly, Almayer's punishment is the loss of his daughter, Nina, the apple of his eyes, the only hope and moral support of his wretched existence in Sambir. In losing his daughter, Almayer loses everything in life. The very desire to live is killed. He takes refuge in the animal world after being disgusted with the treachery and betrayal of the human world. No news from the world has any interest for him and his face looks "like a blank wall of prison" (AF : 154). He dies a lonely and miserable death. Willems in An Outcast of the Islands is punished both by the Malay savages and his surrogate father, Lingard. Both of them desert him to his fate. He sees "death looking at him from everywhere, from the bushes, from the clouds... the sure death – everywhere" (OI : 267). It comes in the form of his wife and Willems ends his journey receiving two fatal shots from Aissaa. Though Jim in Lord Jim is given another chance after his Patna debacle to prove that his metal is a pure sovereign, once again he fails and is caught in the dialectic of crime and punishment. He neither listens to the girl he loved nor his body guard who asks him either to fight or escape. He decides in such a way that "the dark forces should not rob him twice of his peace" (LJ: 301). He submits himself to Doramin to be shot dead.

Nostromo's punishment in Nostromo comes through Georgio who opens fire mistaking him for Ramirez who is hell-bent on taking away his younger daughter, Giselle. The wounded Nostromo
refusing any medical aid from the doctor, sends the doctor himself to bring Mrs. Gould for his confession. Mrs. Gould's total unconcern for the treasure closes the last chapter of his life. His remorse is such that he rejects all attempts to save his life. The Capataz de Cargadores dies, "without a word or a moan after an hour of immobility, broken by short shudders testifying to the most atrocious sufferings"(N:563). Mr. Verloc's punishment in The Secret Agent is the loss of his domestic peace. He looks no more than a betrayer to his uncompromising wife. The homeless soul of Stevie takes shelter in her breast and she stabs him to death. Heyst's punishment in Victory becomes complete with the death of Lena. After the death of Lena, Heyst has nothing to live for. He ignores Davidson's attempt to save him rather he wants to be left alone with the dead body of Lena only to burn himself with her. "He is—ashes... he and the girl together... he couldn't stand his thoughts before her dead body—and fire purifies everything" (V:410). Kurtz in Heart of Darkness kicks the very earth to pieces and as a punishment to his unspeakable atrocities in the virgin forest, the wilderness takes him completely to its pitiless breast. In spite of being rescued, he responds only to the call of the wilderness. He is too weak and demoralized to return to the world he left behind him. With a sombre pride, ruthless power, craven terror and an intense and helpless despair he cries twice "The horror! The horror!" (HOD:239), and, dies.
Razumov receives his punishment from the revolutionists for his betrayal of the revolutionary, Haldin. He is made a hopeless cripple for life. Tekla takes care of him — "she says she must never abandon him — never as long as she lives. He'll need somebody, a hopeless cripple, and stone-deaf with that" (UWE:373). In Conrad, once the moral nature of man's conduct is punctured, it is punctured for ever and hence, his heroes, after their moral discovery, meet with death. In Nostromo Conrad says, "a transgression, a crime, entering a man's existence eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever" (N:523). Hence, after the moral puncture, his heroes, except Razumov, either commit suicide or surrender to the external agencies to be punished by them.

Whereas, in the Mu.Vavian world, the tragic protagonists survive this crime and punishment and self-effacement. Chandran's punishment in Akalvilakkū, comes in the form of the dreaded disease, leprosy for his unrestrained sexual atrocities. When his friend, Vēlayyan brings medicines he asks, "Have you brought medicine? Rather, you pierce a hot spear into my wounds so that I may be cleansed of my sins" (AV: 391). Like Nostromo, he offers himself to death by refusing to accept any medical aid. Again, like Nostromo, he attains moral discovery in death through the most atrocious suffering. Tāṇappan in Vāṭāmalar, is punished for his unscrupulous life by his wife, Kaṇakā. When she returns to him, in spite of the divorce, her husband has already gone several steps higher, spiritually and morally. Since she belongs to the infra category, she is blind both to the spiritual and moral aspects of
human life. Like other infra men/women, she is led by passion and not by reason. Ultimately she takes revenge by poisoning him for his refusal to accept her as his wife. Tānappan looks sacred and dignified in his death. Cuppurattinam in Alli, is punished for his life long sexual immorality with venereal disease and several months imprisonment for his fraud. Like Chandran, he feels that he has nothing to live for after the moral discovery. He is too weak to continue his life. The spiritual regeneration that he attained through prolonged suffering, isolation and humiliation gives him the moral strength to leave a message for the suffering humanity, especially the sexual offenders, that variety in sex will lead to "misery, loss of reputation, endless disease, shameful existence and at last a lonely death" (A : 328). Ānvar's punishment in Kayamai comes in the form of his arrest by the police for the murder of Vacikaram. Being humiliated by court proceedings, unable to suppress the overwhelming guilt, he commits suicide in jail, thus redeeming a long and sinful life.

Vaṭivu's suffering in Nēncil Oru Mul starts right from the day she involved herself in sexual transgression with her old lover, Palarāman. She continues to live with the thorn of guilt in her heart for nearly twenty years. She comes to the altar of confession when the moral situation reaches a critical stage. Vaṭivu is given another lease of life after her confession. She changes her living place into a humble surrounding, opens an orphanage and dedicates her life for the cause of society. Nirmalā Devi in Karittuṇṭu, like Vaṭivu, continues to live with the thorn of betrayal in her heart. When she encounters her former
husband, Mohan the suppressed guilt of her past erupts like a long silent volcano. The sight of her husband at the height of poverty, almost living on alms, touches her subconscious realms. She runs away once again from her second husband to hide her guilt. But, like Vaṭīvu, she is also given another lease of life. Meyyappan in Māṇkuṭicai is brought back to the moral fold, through the timely intervention of Meykantār; he forgets his painful past and once again starts his domestic life with his wife and children. Mohan in Karittuṇṭu, though becomes a cripple for life, like Conrad’s Razumov in Under Western Eyes, though he is very meanly betrayed by his wife Nirmalā Devi, gets another lease of life and resumes his domestic life in Madras marrying a poor coolie living in a slum. For Mu.Va., man/woman cannot escape but can only transcend the thorn of guilt by doing penance. In Neñcil Oru Mul-Kannalagāmasks, "Don’t we have the right to continue to live after repenting our crime? "(NOM:516). Thus, most of his tragic protagonists are allowed to lead a peaceful life after their moral discovery.

From the study of their fictions, we understand that Conrad turns out to be more idealistic and Mu.Va. more pragmatic in finding a solution to the moral dialectics in which their protagonists are caught. Except Razumov, all the tragic protagonists of Conrad meet with death. In other words, they could not survive the moral onslaught on their virgin nature. Whereas, in the Mu.Vavian world, except a few, others are allowed to lead a peaceful life, though not without occasional pinpricks of guilt after their crime.

Conrad, though a born Catholic, does not profess any
belief in any religion on earth. Similarly, Mu.Va. though born a Hindu, does not seem to have a total belief in Hinduism. In fact, they reject all religions and approach man without religious prejudices. For them a crime is the violation of a human bond or transgression of a moral code rather than a religious one. Conrad writes in his "Familiar Preface" to his A Personal Record:

Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as hills. It rests notably among others, on the idea of Fidelity (1912 : XIX).

Similarly, Mu.Va's idea of human life on this earth is revealed in Nēncil Oru Mul through Āravālī's disciple, Apparaci:

As far as our life on this earth is concerned we must live a disciplined, decent, honest and morally sound life with no concern for hell and heaven and pass all stages of life and finally die a natural death with utmost satisfaction...(NOM:339).

Thus, both of them set aside their respective religions and develop a secular morality for the betterment of humanity.

In their attempt at empowering secular morality Conrad leans towards the rigid Eastern philosophy and Mu.Va. towards the more liberal Western philosophy. Conrad seems to hold the extreme view that the wages of sin is death and Mu.Va. seems to believe that the wages of sin need not necessarily be death. Conrad's acquaintance with the eastern thought is confirmed when Marlow in Heart of Darkness is portrayed in the pose of Lord Buddha:
Marlow sat cross-legged right apt... he had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arm dropped, the palms of hands outward, resembled an idol... (HOD : 136).
He had the pose of Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus (HOD : 140).

Marlow's sitting "right apt", with a "straight back" and an "ascetic aspect" reflects the rigid attitude of his creator. Kurtz's impending fate is foretold in the Buddha tableaux. Again Marlow is rigid when he says:

You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies -- which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world -- what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do (HOD : 172).

The same rigidity is maintained by the Language Teacher when Razumov makes his confession to Miss Haldin. He struggles with astonishment, anger, disgust and quite deprived of the power of speech. Then with utmost contempt and rage, he asks Razumov to leave the place immediately:

"This is monstrous. What are you staying for? Don't let her catch sight of you again. Go away!..." He did not budge. "Don't you understand that your presence is intolerable -- even to me? If there's any sense of shame in you..." (UWE : 355).
Again, the same rigid attitude is maintained by Lingard when Willems appeals to him: "Captain Lingard... anything... a deserted Island... anywhere... I promise..." (OI: 225). Instead of consoling and helping a suffering soul, Lingard asks him to "shut Up" (OI:225).

The Condradian moral rigidity is countered by the moral teachers in the Mu.Vavian world who are influenced by the more liberal Western thought. Kamalakkannar in Karittuṇṭu talks about the concept of fidelity in connection with his wife's past life:

In fact, I am a rationalist in this matter. I had clearly understood that Nirmala should have had sexual relationship already. Am I not a psychologist? Can't I understand this? But I didn't bother about it. When she lived with me, she was faithful and that is more than enough. People think that a man and woman to be faithful as long as they live is called fidelity.... So long as a woman lives with a man and if she is faithful to him, it is more than enough. Such a faithfulness is called fidelity. In America, fidelity is understood and practised only in this way .... Arunakirinātar actually lived a lascivious life when he was young, but in his later life he changed himself thoroughly; Didn't we accept him as one of our great men? Similarly, in America, no one cares for the early life of women and if they are faithful after marriage, they are appreciated and accepted (KT:218 - 19).
In a similar vein, Celvanāyakam in Malarvīḷi advises the narrator:

But I tell you one thing. Give freedom to your wife. Even if three or four families are ruined, it doesn't matter. At least Tamil Nadu may have a good future on account of this. Look at the western countries. They are advanced in every field because of the freedom that the family enjoys. When a westerner finds his wife talking to another man, he doesn't mind, and, in fact, he enters the room only after getting his wife's permission (MV:132-33).

In identical terms, Mu.Va's Aravāli in Nēncil Oru Mul, in quite contrast to the Language Teacher in Under Western Eyes, consoles Vaṭīvu after her confession:

You need not suffer any longer. Life is very short. It is very difficult to live without committing a crime. Life is like a school, a factory, where we go on learning (NOM: 435).

This striking contrast between Conrad and Mu.Va. makes us wonder how Conrad belonging to the Western culture which is avowedly pragmatic turns out to be idealistic and how Mu.Va. belonging to the Eastern tradition which mostly tends to see life from the idealistic perspective turns out to be pragmatic in their exploration of evil. But the striking similarity between them in their belief in the existence of evil – be it tragic, infra or supra – and its social manifestation is to be seen in their aesthetic rendering of criminality in their fiction.

Though both use 'land' as a symbol of the human mind, Conrad seems to be more place-conscious than Mu.Va., because he
extracts a sinister force from his settings in his fiction. He makes his settings an integral part of human action for they contribute to and collaborate with it. Whereas, Mu.Va's employment of land imagery is not sui generis, it is only analogical. Conrad also converts places like Africa into an aesthetic symbol. Whereas, Mu.Va. does not do so.

Conrad does not explicitly state that Africa is the setting of his novelette, Heart of Darkness, but it is only an artistic evasion, for the 'heart of darkness' is evidently Africa, variously described by him as "a vast and dark country", "the land of darkness and sorrow" and "an unexplained brutality". It is surprisingly equated to the human heart in geographical terms also. Greene says, "Africa will always be the Africa of the Victorian atlas, the blank unexplored continent, the shape of the human heart" (1961: 106). Kurtz's soul is mapped out in the African wilderness which is divided between the forces of light and darkness. Like Kurtz, his counterparts Jim, Nostromo, Mr.Verloc, Razumov and Hyst - all find their settings with the attributes of their souls. The Bornean jungle and river in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, the immense sky and sea in Lord Jim, the devil-haunted South American city, Sulaco, in Nostromo, the monstrous city of London in The Secret Agent and the mediterranean archipelago, Samburan, with its volcano, in Victory -- all take the African flavour in their basic division between the forces of light and darkness and serve as physical embodiments of the warped human psyche. The darkness of the mind and that of the land are symbolic of each other and the logical conclusion is that darkness/criminality is the inherent quality of the human mind.
Mu.Va. also shares Conrad's view, for he makes his characters see "criminality as inherent in the mind" (NOM : 90). Like Conrad, Mu.Va. also in his own way shows the metaphorical relationship between the mind and the land:

If only we are accustomed to restraining our instincts, we can keep our minds under control. If not, it is said that the mind will become a plant amongst the weeds. Consequently weeds will, one day, root out the plant (NOM : 101).

The mind is also likened to the soil which nourishes not only the plants but also the weeds:

If the mind were like the land in which grow the seeds, then criminality is inherent in the mind (NOM : 102).

The weeds (criminal instincts) must be periodically removed from the mind, because the seeds of the weeds are organically mixed within the mind:

The seeds of the weeds are mixed with the land. When it rains, they grow naturally. Similarly in the minds of men, the criminal instincts are mixed. Whenever there is an opportunity, it raises its head. However educated one may be one is not completely free from this instinct. It has permeated into our flesh and veins. It is so because, the human body has its own evolution. For millions and millions of years, generation after generation, this instinct has continued in the human body. Hence, whenever they raise their heads, it is our duty to weed them out carefully. This process of action and counter-action continues as long as we live (NOM : 103).
The language here does not smack of any religious overtones because it is out and out Darwinian. In a sense, Darwin is not opposed to religion for he, in quite a scientific way proves that man is an animal, i.e., a sinner. Mu.Va. concurs with Darwin in his concept of man but he is not a 'naturalist' but a 'moralist', which is evident in his insistence on the 'restraining' side of the human mind.

Though Conrad and Mu.Va. consider 'criminality' as inherent in man, we cannot dub them as pessimists because they see evil not separated from but co-existent with good. By considering good and evil as stemming from the same root, they dismantle the traditional dualism between them. Darwin's evolutionary theory posits only a temporal continuum, but Conrad and Mu.Va. see a spatial continuum, between ape and man — ape is part of man and man, part of the ape — the one is the inescapable partner of the other. In their worlds, man is tragic because he is not only divided between these antagonistic impulses within him but also a victim to these contrary stresses.

The "war-like conditions of existence" is dramatized in Conrad. Conrad's Nina Almayer owes her duality to her "birth and selection". Two cultures co-mingle in her conception. She is a child of a white father and a black mother: "Between these two beings, so dissimilar, so antagonistic" Nina stands, "With mute heart, wondering and angry at the fact of her existence" (AF : 17). Marlow in Lord Jim says, "I am willing to believe each of us has a guardian angel, if you fellows concede to me that each of us has a familiar devil as well" (LJ : 26). Jim also appeals to all sides at once — to the side turned perpetually to the light of the day.
and to that side of us, which, "like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge" (LJ: 69). Peyrol in The Rover seems "to have adopted the notion of a double personality".

Mu.Va's characters are also afflicted with a warped psyche. In Kayamai, Venkateson refutes Prakasam's view that good and evil are mutually exclusive of each other in the world:

Prakasam, you are mistaken about this world. You erroneously think that God is on one side and evil on the other side of the world; but it is not so. Like air, good and evil are inextricably mixed. Could the good and bad air exist separately in a street?

So is the world (K: 163).

From the time of its birth, the world has remained a complex amalgam of good and evil. Not only the macrocosm, but even the microcosm is also riven with contradictions. Vaibhu in Nenil Oru Mool is amazed at the antiquity of the mind:

The mind is capable of changing itself to any state. Like the fine balance used for weighing the light kumkum powder, it is sensitive enough to be easily disturbed even by a small weight. Or like the the balance used for weighing heavy materials like firewood, it is strong enough not to be affected even by a heavy weight. Like the ball, the mind tends to jump off whenever it strikes against the wall. At the same time, like a piece of iron, it also tends to remain in the same place (NOM: 156).
Marutappan in Centāmarai is still more specific in his surmise of the mind: 'Science has achieved a lot. Still there is no use. It has not yet invented an instrument to measure the waves of joy and sorrow that appear in the mind. There is no initiative either to invent one' (CM: 67).

But it is Murugaiah who is fully aware of the destructive potentials of the human mind:

Life, my dear son! It is not just a game. A big fort! It is difficult to build, but quite easy to destroy. The human mind is capable of destroying sixty years of happy married life in no time (KK: 89).

Conrad’s Marlow in Heart of Darkness comments exasperatingly on its nature thus:

The mind of man is capable of anything — because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage — who can tell? But truth — truth stripped of its cloak of time (HOD: 186-87).

The fictions of Conrad and Mu.Va have, thus, addressed themselves to the mysterious workings of the human mind — so their fictions turn out to be more psychological than sociological renderings of the criminality of humanity.