Chapter 1

Joseph Conrad and the Modernist Matrix

"A great man works with the ideas of his age and regenerates them"... (qtd. in Avrom Fleishman vi). So says Bernard Bosanquet. This is true of Joseph Conrad whose political novels reflect the politics of his own time. In this connection, the comments of Morton D. Zabel are quite relevant. "[...] Conrad was an important spiritual historian, exceptionally aware of the destructive violence of the modern age" (qtd. in Albert J. Guerard x-xi). Joseph Conrad is considered as one of the leading twentieth century novelists who has a place in The Great Tradition.

On the basis of Conrad's 'moral concern' F.R. Leavis regards Conrad to be "among the very greatest novelists in the language - or any language", and places him in the 'great tradition' of English fiction (qtd. in R.J.Das 1)

The social, historical and literary background of his age needs to be understood to have a good and an accurate perception of his fiction. No writer can escape the influence of his social, cultural, political and intellectual environment. His writings express his age in many ways and his literary works cannot be understood without an understanding of times in which he has lived.

This introductory chapter is divided into four sections. The first section traces, in brief, the social, historical and political background of Conrad's period and how
contemporary politics is depicted in his political novels. The second section elaborates Conrad’s life and literary career and the various sources, which have moulded his literary writing. The third section explains the trends and the characteristic features of modern novels and how they are traced in Conrad’s novels. The fourth section deals with the methodology adopted by the researcher and the chapter scheme of this thesis.

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To understand and appreciate Conrad’s works in a better way, it is necessary to have a clear conception of his social milieu. The year 1890 may be regarded as a landmark in the literary and social history of England. By the last decade of the 19th century, there was a complete breakdown of the agrarian way of life and economy. It meant the end of rural England and the increasing urbanisation brought in their wake their own problems. Overcrowding and housing shortage posed acute problem. There was significant rise in vice and crime. Material interests started corrupting even the purest minds. Early twentieth century novels vividly reflect these evil effects of industrialization. Peter Faulkner’s statement deserves our attention regarding this:

...the modern world is more complex than previous forms of society, owing to the effects of a technology which has not only filled the world with more ‘things’ than ever before, but also changed the relatively settled relationship of the feudal era for the confused openness of the modern industrial state (21)
The modern novel brings out all boredom of city life and its agonising loneliness. The century ushered an era of moral perplexity and uncertainty. The rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism led to a questioning of accepted social beliefs, conventions and traditions. In matters of religion, it gave rise to skepticism and agnosticism.

The breakdown of accepted values resulted in increased inwardness, an increased withdrawal of the individual within his own shell. The study of psychology since Freud has highlighted this inwardness. The major preoccupation of the modern writers was to portray the life of people delving deep into the psychic world of human beings. Intellect was no longer regarded as the means of true and real understanding and emphasis was placed on feeling and intuition. Rationalism and humanism were at a discount.

The First World War strained the authoritarian pattern of family relationships and increased tensions, frustrations and neurosis. The reaction of the postwar world had been to suspect all manifestations of authority. Political and religious skepticism, general illusion, cynicism and irony etc., had become the order of the day. Politics had become very powerful.

The dictum “power corrupts” was the symbol of the postwar generation. In this connection, Peter Faulkner’s comments are quite apt:

The economic breakdown and mass unemployment of the West formed a grim continuity, while the development of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany initiated a process of violence which led to the invasion of
Abyssinia, the Spanish Civil War, and the Second World War. In such a world, politics became a primary concern... (66)

There was a shift of interest from "extrovert" to the "introvert" from the "outer" to the "inner". Economic depression, unemployment, over population and acute shortages increased the hardships of life and caused stress and strains and nervous breakdown. M.K. Bhatnagar throws light on this aspect clearly:

Twentieth century world is marked by sea changes in all realms of life - social, political, moral, psychological... Man's private behaviour has been profoundly affected both by the atmosphere of moral perplexity within which he lives and by the expansion of the public realm which characterizes our age. (1)

Life of any person in modern time was complex. There was not a strong and sincere relationship among the kith and kins. But unconsciously we were netted with the people. An individual's life was affected by politics. There was an invisible determinant relationship, which bound every man. Chance and circumstance turned the good into evil. So, people's life was decided by several factors, which were not visible to them. Industrialization, corruption, bribery were very common. A programmed relationship was on one hand and the pragmatic choices were on the other hand. Capitalism and imperialism had emerged. As a result, colonialism had started strangulating the weaker nations. During Conrad's time, both capitalism and imperialism arrived hand in hand. The imperialistic nations had grabbed the rich resources from many countries to cement up their industrialization. Many capitalists
and imperialists walked on the dead bodies of others to sit in their thrones. Politics squeezed many people's lives. Individuals were adversely affected by it. Young Conrad was severely affected by the cruel clutches of politics. Russian imperialism engulfed his precious parents. Conrad's young mind was tormented by the Russian tyranny and his hatred towards Russia is clearly commented:

In 'Autocracy and War', Conrad describes Russia as a 'yawning chasm open between East and West; a bottomless abyss that has swallowed up every hope of mercy, every aspiration towards personal dignity, towards freedom, towards knowledge, every ennobling desire of the heart, every redeeming whisper of conscience' ...In the same essay, Russia is associated with 'the moral corruption and mental darkness of slavery'...

(Owen Knowles and Gene M. Moore 322)

The hero in the contemporary novel is an anti-hero, a neurotic, and a cripple emotionally, if not physically. There is an atmosphere of moral unease and uncertainty. The same perplexity and uncertainty is to be seen in the field of political theory too. Socialism and internationalism have replaced the old Victorian notion of the supremacy of the whites. The entire gamut of imperial relations has undergone a revolutionary change. Nationalism is no longer regarded as enough and imperialism has come in for a great deal of criticism. The relations between the nations of the world must be based on equality and mutual respect and not on the political subjection and imperial supremacy. The hero in the contemporary novel is a person to whom things happen. All these aspects are reflected in Conrad’s political novels.
As Conrad's works reflect his age and personal experiences, it is essential to form an idea of his life and character in order to appreciate his genius as a novelist. Teodor Josef Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski was born near the Ukrainian town of Berdichev in the South of Poland on 3 December 1857. He was the only son of Ewa and Apollo. He was called by the third of his names 'Konrad' which he was later to adopt as his English surname. He came from a family of Polish landowners who had lost most of their estates during and after Napoleonic Wars. His father, a patriot and man of letters was exiled by the Russian government for the part he took in secret meetings just before an uprising at Warsaw. Mother and child accompanied him in the exile into various Russian prison camps, where they all suffered much. When Conrad was three years old, the Russians arrested Apollo, as he was an active and vigorous leader in the struggle for Polish independence. He was sent into an exile to Vologda region of Northern Russia. Conrad's mother accompanied him voluntarily and due to her ill health died three years later. Conrad's father's health declined, when he returned to Poland. When he was in his deathbed, he made Conrad read aloud to him the proofs of his translations. So, Conrad was thorough with Hugo, Dickens and Thackeray, when he was ten. Even at the age of five, Conrad was reading every Polish book that he could lay hands on. Then, he was reading and speaking French also. Thereafter, verse, romance, history and travel in both the languages carried him in imagination away from the dismal scenes of which he was a part. Books of travel into all lands and seas were the boy's passion. Tales of the great explorers and navigators who had lain open to
view the vast spaces of the earth stirred his whole being. A mere map of Central Africa splashed with white to indicate unexplored regions, so thrilled Conrad that one day he put his finger on one of the white spots and told his schoolmates that he would go there some day. They laughed at him, but he kept his word and wrote *Heart of Darkness* after his journey through the Congo.

Conrad’s father passed away, when Conrad was eleven. He was left under the care of his maternal uncle Tadeusz Bobrowski who was a believer in order, reason and balance. Conrad’s political principles have sprung from his uncle. Avrom Fleishman says:

He learned to recognize the obsoleteness of his father’s theories, both in method and aim. Conrad’s subsequent political principles and aversion to radical violence were shaped by his uncle’s mentorship, not by his father’s example. Despite much chafing at the bit, Conrad retained his lessons in the very process of revolt against them. “I cannot write about Tadeusz Bobrowski, my Uncle, guardian and benefactor without emotion. Even now, after ten years, I still feel his loss. He was a man of great character and unusual qualities of mind. [...] I attribute to his devotion, care, and influence, whatever good qualities I may possess.”

So wrote the mature Conrad in an autobiographical account... (8)

Conrad wished to go to the sea for which his uncle objected first. But in 1874, he succeeded in going to sea in vessels sailing from Marseilles. After spending four years in the French Merchant Navy, Conrad got a job in a British ship, the “Mavis”.
During all that time he never met anyone of his countrymen. Like the ancient mariner of Coleridge, he often felt:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea!

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony (Ancient Mariner 4. 8-12)

On June 18, 1878, he first set foot on English soil, at Lowest off. When his hand first touched the side of a British ship, he did not know six words of English. He was then in his twenty first year, very late for learning a language well enough to write novels in it. He had known English books in French and Polish since childhood. He had already read in translation Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and other English novelists who had gained European fame and was, thus, drawn indirectly into the great tradition of English fiction. As soon as he entered the British service, he took up the learning of the new language with zest, reading all sorts of books. Shakespeare was a constant companion on his voyages. The English language and literature, according to him, had a direct influence on his temperament and moulded his character. When asked why he wrote in English instead of French, which he had known better, his reply was that if he had not written in English, he would not have written at all. Najder cites Conrad’s needs to gain command of English to pass his Master’s examination as a contributing factor and he notes that Conrad wrote several letters in English long before the composition of Almayer’s Folly. However, Najder qualifies Conrad’s public stance on his choice of language:
It is true that his English was not a matter of "adoption" but simply a result of partly accidental turns his life had taken. Nevertheless, Conrad wished to infuse his life, and particularly the public aspect of it that he regarded as most precious - his works of fiction - with the sense of overriding purposefulness; he did not want the tricky problem ... to appear have been determined by external circumstances.

And yet this is exactly what happened making a start on *Almayer's Folly* Korzeniowski did not "choose" the language. For eleven years he had been in daily contact with English - speaking people, he spoke English, read English books, he even gradually accepted the English point of view on political matters [...] (qtd.in Ted Billy n.p)

As a stranger, Conrad was drawn to English by its flexibility and abundant synonyms, by the colour inherent in its words and the haunting magic of its rhythms.

Conrad's novels and themes are invaluable precious gems, which should be preserved for the enjoyment and benefit of mankind. He excels the English born writers. Emile Legouis passes an apt comment on Conrad, "His full, rich prose, more highly coloured and more sensuous than would be natural to an English born, has a place to itself in modern fiction (379). J.G. Sutherland, Conrad's shipmate pays similar encomiums on him, which deserve our attention:
Conrad's works would be interested to read of the great part he nobly played in the Great War for civilization... his kindness and thoughtfulness for others; his nobility; his bravery and everything about him, which brought to mind Kipling's conception of "The Hundredth Man" (150).

In 1895, Conrad married Jessie George who was working as a typist in London. Two sons were born to them, Borys in 1898 and John in 1906. Marriage and birth of sons necessarily meant more responsibility and he wanted to build up his fortune. He drove himself harder. His literary career started from 1894 and continued till 1924. From 1900 to the outbreak of World War I, Conrad's life was almost entirely given over to his writing, the only interruptions being illness and occasional continental holidays. His death came suddenly from a heart attack in 1924. As he was lowered into his grave in Canterbury Cemetery, the festivities of the cricket week were in full swing. The comments of Virginia Woolf, on the death of Joseph Conrad are quite apt:

Suddenly... without giving us time to arrange our thoughts or prepare our phrases, our guest has left us: and his withdrawal without farewell or ceremony is in keeping with his mysterious arrival, long years ago, to take up lodging in this country (qtd.in Neville H. New House 19)

Joseph Conrad's literary career can be divided into two main periods. His early works from Almayer's Folly to Typhoon in 1902 are based on his experiences at sea. The Nigger of the Narcissus, Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness and Typhoon are his important sea novels. In his second major period of writing, he turned from the 'seas' to
'politics'. Conrad started his literary career with his first novel *Almayer's Folly* during the course of a voyage in a blundering sort of way. It was published in 1895. Soon after his retirement from service, *An Outcast of the Islands* followed it in 1896. His powers have matured, he has acquired the necessary discipline and then has come one of his best novels. *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) is a moving story of life on sea. Then appears *Lord Jim*. It was followed by *Youth* and two other stories. *Heart of Darkness* in the former collection is remarkable for its treatment of an overwhelming sense of evil and corruption. *Typhoon* is unsurpassed as a book about the sea even by this supreme master of sea description. *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard* is full of vivid descriptions and has many well-drawn portraits. Some critics believe it to be his finest work and certainly 'nothing after *Nostromo* seems as good'. *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* (1907) suggests quite powerfully the atmosphere of the underworld. In *Under Western Eyes* (1911), the prominent character Razumov's story is powerfully dealt with. Conrad met with change of fortune during the same year. He was offered a Civil List Pension of hundred pounds and an American Lawyer wrote offering to buy his manuscripts. He then worked on a novel called *Chance*, which appeared in 1913. His next short story *Victory* brought him a real victory. He was given thousand pounds for its serialization rights. In 1920, *Suspense*, which is to be his last work, was published.

Conrad is not only a novelist, but also a writer of memoirs, of essays, of politics, of history and even of letters. He has written nearly fourteen novels, thirty-five novellas and short stories and nearly sixty essays, reviews and notes. Collaborately he has finished three novels and several other writings, which are fifteen in number. He is the
last victorian and the first modernist. Modern and contemporary novelists influence
Conrad. Cooper, Marryat, Balzac, Daudet, Maupassant, Flaubert, Henry James and
Turgenev have shaped Conrad’s artistic sensibility. In this connection, Gustav Morf
says:

Marryat, Cooper, and that curious French artist and sailor, Louis -
Ambroise Garneray, were his favourite authors. The memories of the
heroes and events described in these books never left him. He sometimes
alludes to them in his books. (60)

Conrad himself openly accepts in his letters that Cooper is one of his masters:

When Conrad visited America in 1923, he told a group of reporters that
he had come with a clear sense of United States geography, learned long
ago from his reading of Cooper, who taught him what to expect from the
East River. Cooper was the only American writer of the early nineteenth
century whose significant impact Conrad readily admitted, the sea
novels of the American romancer having fed his boyhood desire to go to
sea. The impression Cooper made on the Polish youth was lasting, and
Conrad referred to him in two of his novels and in his letters, telling
Arthur Symons that Cooper was one of his “masters” and his “constant
companion”...(Robert Secor and Debra Moddelmog xii)

Conrad, who is, by birth a Pole, has crossed many hurdles in life and has become a
successful writer of modern fiction.
The modern novels of the twenties revealed distinctive characteristic features. They were realistic in nature, dealt with all facts of contemporary life; they did not present one-sided view of life. It was an age of disintegration and interrogation. Man was caught between two worlds, the one dying, the other seeking to be born. People were mad of power and material interests. Avrom Fleishman’s words are quite apt in this connection, “The perversion of national unity occurs when the state develops a tendency to pursue power for its own sake: “the fatal worship of force and the errors of national selfishness” (69).

The choice between capitalism and communism, science and religion, God and the atom bomb, was a difficult one and the result was that man was baffled and confused. The modern novel was not an entertainment, not merely a light story meant for after - dinner reading. It was like a well-cut garden than a tropical jungle, which the Victorian novel was. It presented realistically the doubts, conflicts and the frustrations of the modern world. It was considered, therefore, pessimistic in tone. The modern novel was not merely for entertainment. It is filled with a serious vital and living form of art. Henry James and Joseph Conrad evolved techniques, which had revolutionized the form of the modern novel. Basically, they amounted to an abandonment of the direct and loose biographical method in favour of an indirect oblique narrative method.

In the modern novel, the story was not given so much importance as in Victorian period. The modern novelist probed deep into the sub-conscious and lost himself in the complexities and subtleties of inner life. The novelist did not fail to
reflect his own age in his works. The modern novel was predominantly psychological. The ‘stream of consciousness novel’ was the peculiar product of the twentieth century. The rise of the art form marked an epoch in the history of the English novel. This particular kind of novel was also called the “novel of subjectivity” or “the psychological novel”. The aim of the modern psychological novelist like Conrad was to use the soul truthfully and realistically. With this end in view, he used the impressionistic technique. Novelists like Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf made the English novel extremely psychological in nature. In modern novels, the individual was more important than the society.

Conrad’s writings coincided with the contemporary novels. A man’s early education and upbringing play an important role in shaping his attitude to life. Conrad was no exception in this regard. As a child, he was lonely and was a lonely suffering soul. As he lost his parents in his young age, he met with shock after shock. The ordeal he passed through was terrible. He was saved from this predicament because he had turned to reading books. Under those circumstances, he could not but develop a gloomy outlook on life. Most of his novels are dark and gloomy and they end in tragedy. It is perhaps for this reason, that he was branded as a pessimist. He himself hotly denied it. A true pessimist would feel that life was not worth living. But Conrad’s attitude to life was never negative. His approach to life and its problems was constructive. He did not undermine normal human aspirations for living. He suggested the ways and means by which human sufferings could be mitigated and the maximum of happiness could be obtained. His attitude to life was realistic. Conrad was not blind to the life’s joys, its
greatness and its inherent nobility. He was a staunch humanitarian. An optimist sees only the ‘rose’ and the pessimist sees only the ‘thorn’. But, Conrad being a realist saw both the rose and the thorn.

Conrad, the novelist, was content to let the character speak for himself by his actions and to save his soul or lose it by loyalty or disloyalty to a moral ideal. In Conrad’s writings, we see a combination of nineteenth century and twentieth century pre-occupations:

...he stands at the intersection of the later Victorian and the early modernist cultural phases, he is both romantic and anti-romantic, both conservative and subversive. Morally and politically, psychologically and philosophically, he can be a probing and challenging writer...

(Cedric Watts 46)

Conrad was very particular about human relationships in his novels. An individual in isolation could not survive without relating himself to other members and institutions of the society. He had to emerge out of himself and rise to a level of perfection through love, compassion and sacrifice. It was the attainment of this state that eventually gave him a sense of fulfillment and a joy of salvation. Conrad had a deep trust in the ultimate value of human relationships such as human solidarity, fidelity etc. Obviously, life for his characters was a journey in search of simple joys of household and relationships of love. Mostly in his politically oriented novels, this was apparent. Schwarz describes Conrad, ... “a skeptical humanist who believed that men’s best hope rests in personal relationships...” (qtd.in V.T. Girdhari 18)
Zdzislaw Najder observes:

Conrad belonged to Poland of the tradition when "the moral problems of an individual were posed in terms of the social results of his actions; and his ethical principles were based on the idea that an individual, however exceptional he might be, is always a member of a group responsible for its welfare" (qtd.in V.T. Girdhari 18)

Conrad's work was complex owing to its highly introspective nature. Conrad had intrinsic faith in the values of fidelity and solidarity as essential moral attributes of an individual. He believed that no man was an island and was through relationships that man could achieve a sense of fulfillment. Nothing stirred his admiration so profoundly as the keeping of the faith between man and man. He had portrayed the theme of betrayal in his novels, which was yet another characteristic feature in the modern novel. Loneliness for Conrad posed serious threat to human existence.

Conrad was primarily concerned with the pernicious problem of evil and he saw evil within man as well as in the environment in which he lived. He strongly affirmed that it was only fidelity, the sense of solidarity with the human race, which could enable him to wage a successful war against evil and overcome it. Another area of his deep concern was the exploitation of the poor by the imperialists, the capitalists and the wealthy people for their selfishness. It is a fact of life that those who are mighty and skilled in maneuvering ways of the world do ruthlessly take advantage of the mild, tame and weak nature of the fellow human beings to enrich themselves. The common refrain is that a ferocious tiger is not slaughtered, but a trusting tame goat becomes an
easy prey. Conrad, who was himself a victim of the Russian imperialism, strongly and vehemently condemned the imperialists and the wealthy who sucked the blood of the hapless, poor people mercilessly. He was a staunch sympathiser and supporter of the oppressed, suppressed and the depressed sections of the society.

Conrad was a cosmopolitan in outlook. His characters were drawn from different countries. There are many non-Europeans in Conrad’s pages. His characters were drawn from different races too. His belief was that just as a common thread that runs through a garland made of variety of flowers, the common thread of humanity passed through all human beings, irrespective of their culture, race, religion or region. “Conrad’s work is the most striking illustration of the merits and possibilities of cosmopolitanism in literature”. (Emile Legouis 379)

Conrad’s chief characters were dominated with a single idea, which almost became obsession with them, which ultimately led to their undoing. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness was dominated by the idea of “ivory”. Conrad was not mainly interested in the creation of characters, but in the conveying of the conception of life and his vision of life. His purpose was to explore the real person, the psyche or soul of his personages.

There has been a great spate of reviews, criticisms and full-fledged studies on Conrad. In the period after World War II, there was an advent of very high standard of secondary material on Conrad. In 1948, F. R. Leavis published The Great Tradition, which places Conrad in the great tradition of English novel along with Jane Austen, George Eliot and Henry James. Since then, Conrad and his criticism have never suffered low ebb.
A row of prominent critics such as Douglas Hewitt, Thomas Moser has made substantial contribution on the study of Conrad. In 1963, Eloise Knapp Hay offered a valuable contribution to Conrad’s criticism through *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* with special reference to *Heart of Darkness, Nostromo, The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. This led to a number of books on Conrad’s political novels. J.I.M. Stewart’s *Eight Modern Writers* (1963) placed Conrad among the eight authors who could claim to occupy an unchallengeable position as British writers. An important book is Avrom Fleishman’s *Conrad’s Politics, Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad*. It provided continuity to Hay’s work on the same subject. Claire Rosenfield’s *Paradise of Snakes* is an archetypal analysis of Conard’s novels. *Conrad and the Human Dilemma* by Christopher Cooper was an attempt at a vertical study of Conrad’s three political novels *Nostromo, The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. Cooper examined the different moralities of Conradian heroes and proved quite convincingly that more than their political framework; it was the moral focus of the novels that was of utmost importance. He said that Conrad’s basic theme was morality. Conrad was a novelist of extreme situation. Themes of betrayal, isolation, guilt, alienation and redemption were very effectively portrayed in Conrad’s novels. The present researcher, in due consideration of the already done critical research, chooses to highlight one important aspect in the life of Conradian characters, namely the “survival crisis” and relates it with the politics of the time and the destiny of the individual.
The methodology adopted in this research work is thematological. Themes have been seen through the narrative structures. From the thematological point of view, the thesis aims to analyse the four major political novels of Conrad so as to identify the author and his views in the light of politics of his time. The researcher has restricted her choice to the four novels of Conrad, *Heart of Darkness, Nostromo, The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* for detailed examination dealt with in four chapters. The Conradian scholars as predominantly political in content have identified these novels. V. T. Girdhari’s views in this context are quite relevant, “*Nostromo, The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* have been generally categorized as political novels. But political intrigues and manipulations are present even in the earlier novels”. (65)

Politically, Conrad stands apart from his contemporaries. He prefers to deal with the socio-political issues in the crucible of his art, instead of becoming a political activist. Irving Howe has already noted how *Nostromo* the first of the three is preview of recent history in Cuba and Argentina, down to the very itemization of personality motives, procedures. What has happened in Conrad’s mythological Costaguana is, in fact, an imaginative blue print of revolution in primitive countries everywhere. The second of the political novels *The Secret Agent* explores nineteenth century anarchism and defines superlatively the motives, not of the ideological leaders, but of shabby hanger son, the obscure gents, ambiguous fringe figures who are standard in political movement. The third *Under Western Eyes* is a prescient analysis of Russia and Russian psyche and almost ten years before the Bolshevik Revolution, twenty years before the
emergence of Stalin and a half-century before the rise of Khrushchev. In politics, no less than in psychology and art, Conrad demonstrates how much of the future could be anticipated and seized by the imaginative mastery of the present. Apart from the above three novels, Conrad in his earlier novella *Heart of Darkness*, has elaborately described the various atrocities perpetrated by the evil minded white colonizers of the Belgian Imperialist Rule on the native black savages of the Congo to extract ivory.

This thesis, apart from this “Introduction”, contains five chapters. Chapter two entitled “The Compass of Evil” deals with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, undertakes a journey into Belgian Congo. He is taken aback by the atrocities of the white colonizers, though he is a white man. All the white colonizers except Marlow are money minded. The evil mind of the white colonizers makes them exploit the native savages to grab ivory. In the name of civilizing the savages, the white colonizers torture them. Kurtz, the white man executes many to obtain ivory. He mingles with the native savages in lustful activities, forgetting his Intended i.e., his fiancee. In course of time, his health declines and Marlow takes him away from the Congo. On the way, he dies uttering the words, ‘The horror! The horror!’ Marlow who meets Kurtz’s Intended after a few months utters a lie that Kurtz has died pronouncing her name. She is deeply moved by these words. This chapter explains about the evil and cruel face of Belgian imperialism and its brutal attitude to the savages. The colonizers for getting ivory mercilessly exploit the native savages. It also deals with the two sides of the protagonist Kurtz. Conrad’s view on the native
savages is discussed in this chapter. Marlow's characteristic features and his meeting with the Intended are also detailed.

Chapter three entitled "Capitalism and its Victims" analyses Conrad's views in the light of *Nostromo*. The capitalists betray Nostromo, an ordinary man, who leads a calm life and honoured by people for his incorruptibility. Charles Gould who owns the San Tome Silver Mine exploits him to transport the silver blocks to a place of safety. Martin Decoud who accompanies Nostromo in this mission commits suicide later in the absence of Nostromo, on account of isolation. Nostromo feels that the selfish capitalists exploit him and as revenge; he wants to keep the silver for himself, since he alone knows the whereabouts of silver. He buries it secretly in The Great Isabels and a lighthouse is constructed there. Georgio Viola, a Garibaldian, who has two daughters Linda and Giselle, guards it. Nostromo is betrothed to Linda but he loves Giselle. Nostromo steals silver from the hidden place slowly and becomes rich gradually. The Garibaldino shoots Nostromo one day, when he comes to take silver, thinking that he is a despised suitor of Giselle. This chapter details the origin and growth of capitalism and the contemporary Latin American politics. The political power and the commercial power portrayed in the novel are discussed. How both politics and capitalism wipe out the moral interests of the people is analysed. The overpowering evil influence of capitalism is elaborated. It tells how the capitalists make Nostromo an individual a hero. This chapter also reveals Nostromo's metamorphosis as a hero, a victim and a villain.
Chapter four entitled “Commitment and Crisis” dwells upon Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*. Verloc, the secret agent to the Russian Embassy is also a police informer and runs a pornographic shop. His wife Winnie who has a mother and a half-witted brother Stevie marries him thinking he will protect her family. When Vladimir, the first secretary of the Russian Embassy in London, orders Verloc to engineer a bomb attack on the Greenwich Observatory in London, he makes use of Stevie for this purpose. Vladimir orders Verloc to do so, in order to activate the London Police to take action against the anarchists in London since the Russian imperialists are scared of them. When Verloc uses Stevie for this purpose, Stevie stumbles and dies in the explosion of the bomb he has carried with him. When Winnie learns this, her rage intensifies and she stabs her husband to death. She believes that Comrade Ossipon will help her. But he seduces her and grabs her money and ditches her. Winnie who is sent in the boat by Ossipon, jumps from it and commits suicide. Political activities engulf many lives. This chapter traces the contemporary anarchist trends and how Conrad has got the source of this novel. Conrad’s scheme of commitment and crisis is detailed in this chapter. The characters commit themselves against their wishes and meet their crisis. How Conrad has blended the political story with the domestic story is also analysed in this chapter. The encounter between good and evil is also discussed in this chapter.

The fifth chapter, which is entitled “The crisis of choice”, studies Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes*. It tells the story of Razumov, who alienated from community and motivated by self interest, betrays his fellow student Haldin to the Russian authorities and tormented by his guilty sense and prompted by his genuine love for Haldin’s sister,
confesses his crime and achieves redemption. His confession to Natalia is the climatic moment in the novel. The novel, besides telling a political story, is a psychological story. It discusses Conrad’s two types of people in this novel; one is about the Russian tyranny and the other is about the Russian revolutionaries. Two types of revolutionaries, i.e., the revolutionaries of Russia and the revolutionaries of Geneva are depicted. It details how ‘choice’ and ‘chance’ play a prominent role throughout the novel. The choice is classified into two, the choice of an individual and the choice of the state. There is a conflict between the two. The relationship between Natalia and Razumov is quite ironical. Two levels of betrayals and two levels of confessions are described in this chapter. Sense of guilt is activated by the pure love and confidence of Natalia and Razumov comes forward with his two confessions. The career of Razumov, the protagonist, who has kept in his mind lots of dreams about his bright future, is ruined finally. The choice of the Russian government drives the protagonist to meet his crisis.

The sixth chapter which winds up the thesis entitled “Living by Surviving” is the summation which is a synthetic and synoptic analysis of the discussion of the earlier chapters reviewed and focused in the light of the points discussed in each of the four political novels Heart of Darkness, Nostromo, The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes.

Though many attempts have been made by the critics of different nations, on the politic slant of Conradian fiction, this researcher attempts to isolate the modernist individual caught in the crisis of market industrial capitalism created by the politics of
the time. The actions and the choices, the dilemmas and the failures of Conradian subjects are read by this researcher as caused by an inevitable "survival crisis". This is to say, the entire political scenario intervenes, conditions and corrupts the individual mind. The story of the individuals negotiating with politics is studied in each of the four novels considered for study. The entire four novels foreground the twentieth century man as a creature of condition, largely of a negative scenario. Conradian characters struggle to live. Politics does not spare anyone. Escape is not possible. Nobody escapes the cosmos of crisis. The findings ask for a redefinition of man as one conditioned by the survival crisis.
Works Cited


