

**CHAPTER THREE**

***TALES OF UNREST,  
YOUTH : A NARRATIVE AND TWO OTHER STORIES  
AND  
TYPHOON, AND OTHER SORIES***

Tales of Hearsay (1925) is made up of four tales- "The Warrior's Tale", "Prince Roman", "The Tale", and "The Black Mate".

### **PLAYS**

Conrad wrote only three plays, "Laughing Anne" (1925) and "One day More" (1905) : Two plays (1925) along with "The Secret Agent" which was based on his novel of the same title.

### **ESSAYS**

#### **1.The Mirror of the Sea (1906) –**

It is a series of essays based on his experiences in the oceans of the world. It records Conrad's going to sea with almost the same romance as A Personal Record records his going to the writing table. Conrad's outlook on life is the contribution of his long association with the sea. "The Mirror" is an autobiography with a difference, facts garbed in a style very close to that of fiction.

#### **2. Last Essays (1926) –**

The "Last Essays" and "Notes on Life and Letters" together serve a purpose that no other books written by Conrad can, not even "The Mirror" which represents a flexible stage between autobiography and fiction. In these two works, Conrad is represented as a non-fictional writer, his mind and feeling revealed at times inseparably together. Conrad wrote merely for relief and therefore gave rein to his mind and feeling, even in his

estimate of others, under no strain of caution. Whether he deals with life or literature, Conrad always reveals himself freely though he has not originally proposed to speak of himself.

### **1.3 LITERARY CRITICISM**

#### **1. Notes on Life and letters (1921)-**

The other collection of Conrad's non-fictional writings called "Notes" has a clear advantage over "Last Essays". It is as Conrad defines it in the Author's Note, 'one man show of one man', more importance attached to the second part of the observation.

In 'Autocracy and War', Conrad surveys in brief the ethics of all earlier revolutions, especially the French Revolution, and assesses the importance of another war that aims a fatal blow at the Russian autocracy. 'The Crime of partition' is full of reflections of Conrad's political view. 'Poland Revisited' is a personal account of a journey to and from his native land during war.

Some of Conrad's reactions in essays like 'First News' (1918), "Well Done"(1918), Tradition(1918), 'Confidence' (1919), 'Flight'(1917) and 'Loss of the Titanic' etc. are essentially personal and reveal Conrad's love for the sea and the Navy that he served long twenty years on the whole successfully.

In the critical section of this collection, Conrad's appreciation of European and American writers is quite revealing, mainly coloured by his personal contact with the authors and his love for them.

Conrad's non-fictional non-biographical writings, particularly in his last stage in a relaxed mood, give us one very clear idea that Conrad's personality is an informing force always all through his career.

## **2. A Personal Record (1912)-**

It is a work with full confession of a conscious penetration of the writer's personality into his writing. Conrad's familiar Preface to the book is a significant record as to the author's own idea of a biographical interpretation of his work.

„.....and I know that a novelist lives in his work. He stands there, the only reality in an invented world, among imaginary things, happenings, and people. Writing about them, he is only writing about himself. But the discourse is not complete. He remains to a certain extent, a figure behind the veil, a suspected rather than a seen presence- a movement and a voice behind the draperies of fiction. In these personal notes, there

is no such veil....." (p.XIII)

Conrad also refers to the 'ideas' in his work:

"Those who read me know my conviction  
that the world, the temporal world, rests  
on a few very simple ideas : so simple  
that they must be as old as hill. It  
rests, notably among others, on the idea  
of fidelity". (p.XIX)

Conrad has not adopted any disguise in this special kind of historical account of his life, as Wordsworth has not in his 'Prelude', so he can report here in the Preface his very psychological situation as he has nowhere done earlier in so clear terms.

### **3. Preface:-**

The Preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus" is Conrad's most explicit general statement about the art of the novelist. Usually, he avoided theorizing about his work, and once wrote (in his Preface to 'The Shorter Tales') that an author's feelings towards his own creation were so deep and complex that the disclosing of them was dangerous. That is why, many of his Prefaces are disappointing. They deal with what seem trivialities, and deal with them in a cursory, unplanned kind of way. But on this occasion of the writing of "The Nigger", fired by the excitement of

choosing for career the practice of an art form. Conrad formulated, some general considerations about it.

- i) “But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom: to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition-and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives, to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation –and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity which knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity-the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.”

ii) “My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel-it is, before all, to make you see. That-and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your desires : encouragement, consolation, fear, charm- all you demand-and, perhaps, also that glimpses of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.”

**Critical Assessment:**

**1.Virginia Woolf (The Comman Reader,1<sup>st</sup> Series, 1948: 282-283),** a leading exponent of stream of consciousness fiction, while praising Joseph Conrad, says:

“.....one opens his pages and feels as Helen must have felt when she looked in her glass and realized that, do what she would, she could never in any circumstances pass for a plain woman. So Conrad had been gifted, so he had schooled himself, and such was his obligation To a strange language wooed characteristically for its Latin qualities rather than its Saxon that it seemed impossible for him to make an ugly or insignificant movement of the pen .....

Though we shall make expeditions in to the later books and bring back wonderful trophies, large tracts of them will remain by most of us untrodden. It is the earlier books – Youth, Lord Jim, Typhoon, The Nigger of the “Narcissus”—that we shall read in their entirety. For when the question is asked, what of Conrad will survive and where in the ranks of novelists we are to place him, these books with their air of telling us something very old and perfectly true, which had lain under hidden but is now revealed, will come to mind and make such questions and comparisons seem a little futile. Complete and still, very chaste and very beautiful, they rise in memory as, on these hot summer nights, in their slow and stately way first one star comes out and then another.

When Conrad published his volume of stories ‘Youth’, G. Gissing expressed his opinion (N. Sherry : 1973 : 140) :

3. “..... Read Conrad’s new book. He is the strongest writer – in every sense of the word – at present publishing in English. Marvellous

writing! The other men are mere scribblers in comparison. That a foreigner should write like this, is one of the miracles of literature.”

4. Unsigned review of Morning Post dated 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1903 (Sherry: 1973:143) praises Conrad thus:

“Mr. Conrad is admittedly one of the most powerful writers of short stories, and there are many nowadays who write excellent short stories. Few, however, are as good as his. Mr. Kipling is the only one who can be compared with him. They have much in common. In the matter of style they are much on a level. Mr. Conrad’s is perhaps less forced. Both again have written stories of the sea, but if we allow Mr. Kipling to be supreme on land, Mr. Conrad has no equal on the seas.”

4. Edward Garnett (Sherry : 1973 : 82-83), while praising Conrad, says :

“...What is the quality of his art? The quality of Mr. Conrad’s art is seen in his faculty of making us perceive men’s lives in their natural relation to the seen universe around them; his men are a part of the great world of Nature, and the sea, land and sky around them are not drawn as a mere background, or as something inferior and secondary to the human will, as we have in most artists’ work. This faculty of seeing man’s life in relation to the seen and unseen forces of Nature it is that gives Mr. Conrad’s art its extreme delicacy and its great breadth of vision. It is pre-eminently the poet’s gift, and is very rarely conjoined with insight into human nature and a power of conceiving character. When the two gifts come together, we



have the poetic realism of the great Russian novels. Mr. Conrad's art is truly realism of that high order.....”.

5.The Unsigned review of the magazine Speaker (Sherry :1973 : 158) says :

“Mr. Conrad is in the line of our great writers of the romance of the sea, Smollett, Michael Scott and Marryat, and he has also introduced something new into our fiction. By no other author have we had the psychology of fiction so subtly and yet so vividly presented. There are times in reading his work when we think that Stevenson with new experiences has taken up his work when it broke off in his noble fragment Weir of Hermiston, and there are others when we think we are reading a translation of a work by Tolstoi or Maxim Gorki. But always we realise that Mr. Conrad writes from the fullness of his own experience—passing through a mind that with great and almost painful efforts snatches from it some secret of life and reveals it in the glow of a brilliant imagination.

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### **3.1.Introduction:-**

Tales of Unrest, published in 1898, is Conrad's first volume of tales. The tales in this volume are more experimental than his novels. He has chosen an appropriate title for the five stories which form this volume. The title Tales of Unrest refers to the unrest that is born not of adventurous spirit, but of a constant struggle against a gloomy and burdensome fate. Most of these stories are based on memory and reminiscence. They make use of situations of murder and examine problems of conduct. Lawrence Graver (1969:39), while assessing the stories in this volume, remarks:

"Tales of Unrest" is inchoate yet typical  
Conrad-inchoate in the sense that it is  
marked by daring, diffuseness, energy,  
uncertainly, and all the other signs of  
apprentice hand."

The five stories in this volume "Karain :A Memory", "The Idiots", "An Outpost of Progress", "The Return" and "The Lagoon"- cover a wide range of subjects; but in each, either plot or setting overpowers the human figures. In Leo Gurko's opinion, the drowning process occurs in the Malay moonshine of "The Lagoon" as it does in the weird frenetics of the overheated London couple in "The Return". Conrad's first African tale, "An Outpost of Progress", has a certain technical interest as a precursor for

“Heart of Darkness” and “The Idiots”, which narrates an account of a Breton peasant woman who kills herself rather than continue to beget defective children. “Karain”, the best of the five, has a guilt-ridden Malay at its centre who is a bit more articulated than the others.

### **3.1.1. “Karain : A Memory”**

#### **Plot:-**

“Karain : A Memory” is a story of a chieftain, who is haunted by the ghost of his friend whom he had shot down deliberately when he was about to take the life of his sister and the Dutchman with whom she had fled from her own people. The narrator of the story is much closer to Marlow. He devotes first three chapters to recall the old adventurous days in the East and to create a visual impression of Karain and his land.

From the narrator’s account, Karain appears as the conqueror, the master, the chief of three villages with a quiet dignity of his bearing. He has devoted followers. He commands the utmost respect from his people who call themselves his slaves though they are free people. But he is vulnerable. He cannot bear to be alone, and is always accompanied by his sword-bearer. And he has decided not to return to his native country, Celebus.

The narrator, after telling us about Karain, informs that he has arrived there on a return journey. He is surprised not to be welcomed by Karain. He comes to know from native people that the old sword-bearer

has died and Karain is in seclusion. But on their last night before sailing, Karain appears on board and begs to be taken away.

He tells the narrator and his two friends, Jackson and Hollis, the reason of his uneasiness and begs for their help.

Karain had sworn to help his friend Pata Matara to find and kill his dishonoured sister and the Dutch trader who had taken her away. But during the long period of wandering and pursuit, Karain became obsessed with the image of the girl and fell in love with it. At the moment of crisis, he involuntarily shot Pata Matara instead of the Dutchman.

When the Dutchman asked his wife if she knew him, she replied negatively. Karain could not believe it. The woman, who had been haunting his vision for so many years, failed even to recognize him. His disillusionment was followed by hallucination. One day, he saw the shadowy re-appearance of Matara. His fierce gaze unnerved Karain, who was overpowered by the sense of guilt. In such a state of mental agony, he found moral support from his sword-bearer, who knew his secret and, could command a spirit stronger than the unrest of Matara.

As long as the old man lives with him, Karain reaches to the height of glory, but when he is no more, Karain emerges as a self-alienated individual. This inner conflict tears Karain into pieces. He further undergoes a painful consciousness of the past. He now attempts to leave his country and to go to a land where the dead do not speak. By the end of the story, one of the white men gives Karain a Jubilee sixpence, and

convinces him that Queen's image will be an effective propitiatory charm. Karain believes in it and goes away satisfactorily to rule his people.

The story does not end here. Seven years later, the narrator meets Jackson in the Strand. Jackson asks him whether Karain's experience was real. The reader is supposed to feel that Jackson's uneasiness offers a clue to the ultimate reality of the story. The theatrical posturings of Karain and his naïve faith in charms are perhaps more real than the confusions of a crowded city street.

### **Characters:-**

The main character in this story is that of Karain. The story deals with the life and psychological undercurrents of Karain. Karain kills Pata Matara only for the love of the image of the girl. But when the girl fails to recognize him, reality dawns upon him. He becomes guilt-conscious and is haunted by the ghost of his friend. The old man, his sword-bearer, gives him moral support and consequently, he gets victory over three villages. But when the old man dies, he again becomes the victim of his friend's ghost. After hearing his story, Jackson understands Karain's psychological condition and gives him a Talisman. After getting the image of Queen Victoria on a coin as Talisman, Karain becomes fearless and goes to rule his people. This shows that Karain always needed psychological support to overcome fear and guilt. The inner void in his personality could be filled by that coin which represented supreme power

in the world. The irony lies in the story when Jackson who has given Karain that coin, asks the narrator after seven years whether Karain's experience was real or not. Conrad here wants to suggest that it is difficult to convince civilized and more intellectual people like Jackson than men like Karain who easily believe in whatever is told them. We can compare Karain with Arsat in the story 'The Lagoon'. Both are guilt-conscious. But the difference is that Karain overcomes it at the end, while Arsat is shown as immobile.

**Critical Assessment:-**

The title of the story "Karain: A Memory" suggests that the story is concerned with the past experience of Karain. Karain is a socially responsible man. He is the chief of three villages. Outwardly, he appears strong and fearless; but psychologically, he is a weak person. He is a man who is loyal to a vision. He betrays his close friend for that reason by killing him. According to R.J.Das (1980:46), Conrad suggests in this tale that friendship is a deception, while love is a greater deception, an illusion.

It is voiced by the narrator of the story as,

"Everyone of us, you'll admit, has been  
haunted by some woman.....And.....  
as to friends....dropped by the way  
.....Well!.....ask yourselves".

Karain realizes the truth that he has lost both, love and friendship when the girl does not recognize him. Thus, the story deals also with the theme of Karain's transcendence and disillusionment.

Unsigned Review of Daily Telegraph dated 9 April, 1898, considers this story to be the finest one. It points out Conrad's popularity as a writer of Malay sketches, and brings vividly before us the wild, picturesque life of the curious untamable race that inhabits the Archipelago.

L.Graver, (1969) considers this story as the only one of the five stories in this volume that has a light-hearted ending. In the end of the story, Karain triumphs over his guilt-consciousness and becomes ready to rule his people. Graver takes this into account and adds that the theme of "Karain" is that illusions have the power to conquer remorse and guilt.

In the story "The Lagoon", the reader is made vaguely aware that Arsat's tale of love and betrayal is to evoke a moral response from the white listener, while in this story, this response is more important. The title "Karain: A Memory" gives a clue to it because it is in the memory of the white narrator that Malay lives. Undoubtedly, the theme of this story, like that of Lord Jim, is remorse and guilt. The end of that novel is tragic as Jim dies, while in this story, Karain overcomes his guilt-consciousness and lives happily afterwards.

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### 3.1.2. "The Idiots"

#### Plot:-

This story, written in 1896, is composed in four parts. A three page introduction in which the narrator sees idiot children at a Breton roadside is followed by parts two and three, in which he first tells the history of their unlucky parents and then focuses on the night the wife murdered the husband and fell to her death. The story concludes with a brief epilogue in which the restoration of order in the village is shown to have richly ironical overtones.

The narrator of the story is a tourist who sees ~~two~~ idiot children by the roadside. When he inquires about them, the carriage driver tells him that there are four of them in the village without parents. Curious to know about their life, he gets further information about them from native people and from an old fellow.

Jean Pierre Bacadou retires from the army and comes to his village. There, he finds his parent's farm falling into ruin. Worried about the absence of men to work in the field, he marries quickly in hope of sons. But when his wife delivers idiot twins and then an idiot boy, Jean Pierre is reduced to a desperate rage. At the insistence of his mother-in-law, Madame Levaille, he goes to Mass to get the blessings of God. But his prayer is answered by the birth of still another imbecilic child. Jean's



rage turns to brutality. He begins regularly to beat Susan, his unfortunate wife.

One night, when he comes near Susan, she can not control herself, already exhausted by the fate of her children, and stabs him. When she realizes what she has done, she comes running to her mother's house and confesses her crime. Madame Leveille can not believe what her daughter has done and asks what compelled her to kill her husband. Susan tells her everything.

Madame Leveille understands the whole situation, fears her daughter's fate and says to her,

"There are worse misfortunes than  
idiot children. I wish you had been born  
to me simple-like your own....." [111]

Hearing the condemnation of her mother, Susan runs out alone toward the beach. At first, she imagines Jean-Pierre chasing her. But after some time, she becomes calm and decides to confess her crime before the village people. Moments later, at the edge of a cliff, Susan mistakes a would-be rescuer for her husband; and when he says, "I am perfectly alive", she shrieks and jumps into the sea. Next day, Madame Leveille watches four workmen carry her daughter's body on a handburrow. When she dispassionately remarks that her only child

cannot be buried in consecrated ground, the Marquis of Chavanes approaches and reassures her:

"I shall speak to the Cure. She was unquestionably insane, and the fall was accidental."(123)

And then the story ends as he trots off thinking that he will appoint this old woman as the guardian of those idiots and administrator of the farm.

### **Characters:**

There are three main characters in this story. Jean Pierre, his wife, Susan and Susan's mother, Madame Leveille.

Jean Pierre is a retired military man. When he sees that his farm has fallen into ruin because of shortage of workers, he decides to marry. But unfortunately, his wife, Susan gives birth to four idiot children one after another. Distressed by the situation, he becomes a drunkard and starts beating her regularly. Susan, already worried by the future of her idiot children can not tolerate his oppression and kills him. Then, haunted by the presence of her husband, she goes to the beach. There, she considers her would be-rescuer to be Jean and commits suicide.

Comparing to Jean and Susan, who submit themselves to circumstances instead of overcoming them, Madame Leveille, though old, is courageous. After Susan's and Jean's death, she looks after their idiot children and administers the farm.

### **Critical Assessment:-**

The story "The Idiots" was written in May 1896 during Conrad's honeymoon in Brittany. During that period, he began writing short stories to lighten the tension and help pay the bills. He found inspiration in the stories of Maupassant. Borrowing his long-suffering peasants, his accustomed reticence, and one of his favourite narrative devices, Conrad wrote this story which he later dismissed as an 'obviously derivative piece of work'.

One notable thing about this story is that although the setting, the grim situation and the narrative method are reminiscent of Maupassant, there are some elements which show Conrad's own voice beginning to break through. The confusion of tone is compounded by the subsequent collapse of Conrad's narrative method. We can not understand how, ten years after, the tourist narrator can describe the solitary heroine's most intimate thoughts as she faces death. At the end of the story, the epilogue is in the style of Maupassant. Thus, there is alternate use of Maupassant's technique and Conrad's own device.

In Lawrence Graver's opinion (1969), the characters in this story are victimized without ever being tested. Jean Pierre becomes a drunkard and beats Susan while Susan can not tolerate the humiliation which she faces in the society. Both of them become victims of circumstances and

die tragically. Conrad handled the same drama in his later novel The Secret Agent in which Winnie Verloc stabs her husband.

Thus, the story presents before us the tragic life and death of Jean and his wife; failure of marriage and lack of understanding are the two factors responsible for their tragedy.

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### **3.1.3. "An Outpost of Progress"**

#### **Plot:-**

In this story (Conrad:1997), the narrator tells us about two incompetent Belgian officials, Kayerts and Carlier, who were in charge of an up-river station in Africa. The third man on the staff was Makola, whose real name was Henry Price. The director of the Great Trading Company appointed Kayerts as the chief of the station and Carlier as his second-in-charge. He pointed out to them the promising aspect of their station. It was an exceptional opportunity for them to distinguish themselves and to earn percentages on the trade. Kayerts and Carlier happily thought of the primitive outpost as an ideal place for the exercise of their self-will and freedom. But the irony is that they could not use their 'freedom'. In such a world, they were

"like those life-long prisoners who,  
liberated after many years ,  
do not know what use to make of their freedom". (6)

Very soon, after only two months, they became weary of that atmosphere. They had lived like blind men in a large room. They were aware only of what came in contact with them but were unable to see the general aspect of things. Some times, people of some tribe would come there, but profitable visits with ivory were rare.

As they had no work there, Kayerts and Carlier began to read the novel left by the first in-charge of that station. Kayerts thought of the book as splendid as it spoke of.

"the rights and duties of civilization, of the sacredness of the civilizing work and extols the merits of those who went about bringing light, and faith, and commerce to the dark places of the earth ". (1997:8)

Carlier hoped that during hundred years, there will be a town and they would be called the first inhabitants of that town. Thus, they got great consolation from the book and began to think better of themselves.

Gobila, the chief of the neighbouring villages, was affectionate towards white people. He often visited and provided them fowls, sweet potatoes, palm wine and sometimes a goat as the Company never provisioned them regularly. But Kayerts' and Carlier's condition became bitter as they often fell ill. They nursed each other with love and care and waited for the steamer which would reach them home.

In such a situation, a canoe full of strangers with a lot of ivory arrived there. Makola served them properly in his hut and sold the workers at Company's station in exchange of ivory. As the strangers were in need of carriers, they also took some youths of Gobila's villages by force with them. Gobila's people became afraid of the white people. This incident opened the eyes of Kayerts and Carlier. For the first time, they realized that in primitive society, trade could be based only upon the buying and selling of human beings and not on the mercantile laws of European civilization.

Because of such corrupt atmosphere, Kayerts and Carlier began to feel certain hollowness within them, as if wilderness of Africa was taking hold of their hearts. As a result, as days passed,

"they became daily more like a pair of accomplices than like a couple of devoted friends". (1997:18)

In such a condition, months passed, but the steamer did not come. There was nothing left in the station but rice and coffee. They drank coffee without sugar. One day, Carlier asked for sugar and Kayerts refused him. The simple issue turned into a quarrel and Kayerts killed Carlier.

Next morning, Kayerts heard the whistles. The director had come with the steamer. Conrad says:

"Progress was calling to Kayerts from the river. Progress and civilization and all

the virtues. Society was calling to its  
accomplished child to come, to be taken  
care of, to be instructed, to be judged, to  
be condemned." (22)

Kayerts heard and understood. He looked round like a man who had lost his way. When the director of Company came there, he found the dead bodies of Carlier and Kayerts. The highly sarcastic picture of Kayerts, in a pose of stiff attention but with a taunting tongue extending out of his mouth, horrified the managing director. Here, the story ends.

**Characters:**

Kayerts and Carlier are the two protagonists of this story. They think of themselves, like Kurtz in "Heart of Darkness", as pioneers of trade and civilization. They are not able to spread the light of civilization in the hearts of the uncivilized Africans. Instead, the darkness of Africa and the futility of mercantile laws pervades them. Kayerts kills Carlier and realizes that, life and death both are impossible for him. He hangs himself on the cross over the 'ivory' house. Both Kurtz and Carlier find that their ideals are unable to survive the first-hand experience of imperialism, even though these same ideals have encouraged and justified imperialism from afar.

Kayerts and Carlier do not understand the complicity of imperialism based on ignorance, stupidity and moral laziness. They think better of

themselves, when they read a novel about it. It shows that they are completely vulnerable to the lies they read about imperialism. When Conrad describes them as prisoners, physically free but mentally prisoned, he wants to show that they have no critical judgement. They are unable to distance themselves from their immediate circumstances. Imperialism is able to lie and deceive about what it actually involves, because its servants are either unable or unwilling to question the reports they are given. In this connection, Makola is actually far more in control than are the two white men. He is in control because he is able to adapt himself to the dominant need of imperialism the maximal extraction of wealth disguised by the most convincing lies. When he makes an offer to Kayerts to sell native people for ivory, Kayerts rejects it. Makola is able to survive in that atmosphere, while both, Kayerts and Carlier, accept death in short time. Together, they combine some of the diverse characteristics which, in Heart of Darkness , we see united in the figure of Kurtz- idealistic, unrealistic rhetoric and eloquence, and the amoral pursuit of wealth irrespective of its human cost.

#### **Critical Assessment :-**

In his Author's Note to Tales of Unrest, Conrad refers to this story as the precursor of the novella "Heart of Darkness" which is Conrad's physical as well as symbolic journey in the heart of Africa and that of Kurtz. In this story also, Conrad's main target is European civilization and



it is expressed through Kayerts and Carlier. From the opening page to the end of the story, it is suggested that their conception of what civilization consists of, is laughably inadequate. "Heart of Darkness" treats this theme more clearly and Kurtz represents the further modification of Kayerts and Carlier. "An Outpost of Progress" is perhaps the first work of Conrad which has the perfection of great art. And this perfection is because of his uncompromising analysis of the mechanisms of imperialism.

Edward Said accepts that imperialism is the main concern of Conrad in his story, but he treats it from the Marxist point of view. In his book Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (1966), he remarks that the unexamined acceptance of the bourgeois idea of trade and imperialism is based on the belief that men are commodities. The idea destroys the proper individuality of a human being, turning him into a machine.

Dr. Kaith Carabine remarks in the Introduction to Selected Short Stories of Joseph Conrad that like its great successors, "An outpost" is also remarkable for its 'merciless vividness of detail' and for the sheer intelligence and inclusiveness of its commentary which embraces not only the two insignificant 'pioneers of trade and progress', but all 'whose existence is only rendered possible through the high organization of civilized crowds'.

What he thinks is right because it is easy to retain our sanity in crowds of people as men feel security there. But when some of them like Kayerts, Carlier and Kurtz come in contact with the wild and remote places on earth, the darkness and brutality of that atmosphere takes hold of their hearts. Kurtz realizes this at the end of his life when he utters the words "The horror! The horror!", while Kayerts kills Carlier and commits suicide. At the beginning, they think of themselves as pioneers of trade, progress and civilization in the jungles of Africa; but, later, they feel certain hollowness in their hearts as if the wilderness of Africa is taking hold of them. In this respect, the title of the story is ironic. Though it is "An Outpost of Progress", the representatives of civilized community can not change its atmosphere and themselves become slaves of it. In "Heart of Darkness", Conrad treats the same theme extensively where Kurtz is the representative of European civilization.

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#### **3.1.4. "The Return"**

##### **Plot:-**

One of the strangest works in Conrad canon, "The Return" (1997), treats the break-up of an upper-middle-class marriage. The story has no narrator and it is one of Conrad's few attempts to be " a straight writer".

The story opens with the description of Alvan Hervey. He is a successful, self-absorbed and respectable man of moderate wealth. One

afternoon, he returns to his home through the sordid and inhuman gloom of London, and finds a note saying that his wife has run off with another man. Shattered by the revelation, he collapses helplessly into a chair. But soon, he starts thinking about the social amenities and the impropriety of marital scandal. He attempts to bring his past into casual relation with the present crisis in order to determine why his wife betrayed him. He realizes that though they were living together for five years, they were far remote from each other. They were

“no more capable of real intimacy  
than two animals feeding at the  
same manger, under the same roof,  
in a luxurious stable.” (178)

They lived together as husband and wife, but there was certain kind of reserve in their behaviour. They did not share each other's problems by understanding themselves. They remained rather like solitary personalities. It was as if

“they skimmed over the surface of life  
hand in hand, in a pure and frosty  
atmosphere-like two skilful skaters cutting figures  
on thick ice for the admiration of the beholders,  
and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream,  
the stream restless and dark; the stream of life, profound  
and unfrozen.”(178-179)

While he sits thinking like this, his wife returns. But she refuses to discuss anything more than the simple fact of her betrayal and return. When he asks her about the letter, she says that it is the beginning and the end. Alvan, on the other hand, replies that his thing has no end. He tries to tell her what is the basis of married life. He says to her,

“Restraint, duty, fidelity-unswerving  
fidelity to what is expected of you. This-  
only this-secures the reward, the peace.

Everything else we should labour  
to subdue-to destroy.....You must  
respect the moral foundations of a  
society that has made you what you  
are. Be true to it. That’s duty –that’s  
honour-that’s honesty”. (228-229)

Alvan’s wife refuses to share his views by saying that he did not love her for herself. He wanted a woman who would think, speak and behave in a certain way he liked. He loved himself, not her.

When Alvan hears what his wife thinks of him, he realizes that reconciliation is not possible between them. As they have lost love and faith, two basic things for successful married life, they will deceive each other as well as the world by living together. So as the story ends, Alvan leaves the house never to return.

### **Characters:-**

There are only two characters in this story, Alvan Harvey and his wife.

Alvan and his wife, living happily for five years, are somewhat alienated from each other. Both of them do not realize it till the wife deserts her husband. From the story, we come to know that Alvan's wife had a distinct purpose when she married Alvan. She wanted to get away from the paternal roof, to assert her individuality, to move in her own set and to have her own share of the world's respect, envy and applause. So even after marriage, she tries to sustain her individuality. She revolts against her husband but only for few hours. After leaving home, she realizes that she cannot leave Alvan and his house permanently. So she returns home. During that period, Alvan realizes that their marriage was not the marriage of true minds. They were united physically, but there was lack of real intimacy, love and faith between them. That was the reason why he could not understand his wife's motif leaving him till the last moment. After her return, Alvan comes to know about his wife's feelings towards him and thinks that in future, she may leave him again. He understands the futility of their relationship and at last, decides to leave the house. His wife deserted him and returned but he will never come back; Conrad presents the points of view of both the wife and the husband and leaves it to the reader to decide who is right.

### **Critical Assessment:-**

Albert Guerard in his book "Conrad the Novelist (1958) says that "The Return" is the most troubled expression of Conrad's confused misogyny and the extreme example of his creative bewilderment in the presence of a sexual situation. According to him, the theme of the story is that husband and wife are incapable of "real intimacy".

Conrad himself does not like his creation and in the Author's Note, describes it as a "left-handed production" that cost him much "in sheer toil, in temper, and in disillusion".

Almost every critic thinks that this story is a total failure in Conrad's literary career. It is a revealing example of Conrad trying a straight forward, analytical method and finding it uncongenial.

An unsigned review of Daily Mail dated 12 April 1898 states that "The Return" grips and holds us by sheer force of the author's psychological insight and his unusual ability to see common things in an uncommon way.

Why Conrad wrote "The Idiots" and "The Return" within eighteen months of his own marriage is a question. In both of them, he discusses the problem of the failure of marriage. In "The Idiots", the wife kills her husband and commits suicide, while in this story, both are separated from each other permanently.

This story deals with the theme of failure of marriage. Most part of it deals with the consciousness of Alvan. In modern life, there is immense material advancement but lack of real feelings towards each other.

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### **3.1.5. "The Lagoon"**

#### **Plot:-**

The story opens with an unnamed white man who comes in a canoe to spend the night at the house of his young Malay friend, Arsat. We come to know from him that sometime in the past, he had been involved in a native intrigue with Arsat. When he reaches the stagnant lagoon where Arsat lives with his wife, he finds him caring for his dying wife. While at night the two men wait sadly for her life to end, Arsat tells the story of their great love.

Some years before, the Malayan, Arsat fell in love with one of the Ruler's servants. As authorities did not approve of their marriage, there was no way for them but to run away. Arsat told the whole matter to his brother and with his help, ran away with the girl. Arsat's brother wanted to tell people about it and challenge the authority, because he thought that they were free people and so they could do anything. But Arsat forbade him for the sake of his love. At that time, he said to Arsat:

"You are half a man now-the other half  
is in that woman. I can wait. When you  
are a whole man again, you will come

back with me here to shout defiance. We  
are sons of the same mother." (31)

They flew away from their country silently and reached an island. But unfortunately the men of the Ruler pursued them. Arsat's brother asked him to run off from there with the girl and remained behind to hold off the first warriors. Arsat and the girl got the canoe afloat. At the last moment, Arsat heard his brother calling his name three times for help. But Arsat failed to respond, choosing instead to escape with the girl. He tells his friend,

"Tuan, I pushed the canoe!.....Three times  
he called-but I was not afraid of life.  
Was she not there in that canoe? And could  
I not with her find a country where death  
Is forgotten-where death is unknown!" (33)

The crime of desertion is presented in this story, as in Lord Jim, as an involuntary act, to be paid for by years of remorse. As Arsat ends his story, a saving breeze comes up, the sun rises and inside the house, the woman is dead. Arsat is now free to go back to avenge his brother's death.

When the story ends, the white man sees from his canoe Arsat, who stands

"lonely in the searching sunshine; and



he looked beyond the great light of a  
cloudless day into the darkness of a  
world of illusions.” (ibid,p.35)

The end of the story has puzzled many readers. Some critics think that the final scene is the prelude to his act of redemption. According to this view, Arsat can prove his courage by dying honourably. However, some readers think that even if Arsat does return, he will receive little consolation from his act. The price for betrayal has already been exacted.

**Characters:-**

There are three main characters in this story, Arsat, the white man and Arsat's brother.

Arsat is a very sensitive man. He loves his brother very much. When he falls in love, he immediately tells it to him. But he faces a dilemma when his brother was calling him for help and he, instead of going back to help him, escaped with the girl. But he has not forgotten the sacrifice of his brother's life. Many years have passed but he is conscious of his guilt and is repentant. When his wife dies, he is free to go back to his country and avenge his brother's death. Lawrence Graver (1969:27) does not approve of this act:

“By failing to understand the moral implications  
of his fatal choice and by thinking that a simple  
act of revenge will provide final  
retribution, Arsat remains a permanent

victim of his inadequate dreams”.

The role of the white man who is also a listener and a narrator is important because it helps in the development of Conrad's narrative technique. He listens to Arsat's story and appears to embody a moral position. So, he appears as a shadowy precursor of Marlow.

Arsat's brother is a loving and brave man. Arsat is able to marry the girl only because of his support. He sacrifices his life for his dear brother.

One note worthy characteristic of this story is that as the story proceeds, the setting of the story, that is, the lagoon, changes as an ironical commentator on the actions of the human figures. At the beginning of the story, the atmosphere is stagnant and immobile like the protagonist Arsat who is also “motionless and shadowy.” At the very end, there comes fresh breeze and a great brilliance bursts upon the lagoon and Arsat also is ready for “strike” for action.

**Critical Assessment:-**

This story, like Lord Jim, is the story of crime and punishment. The crime is that of desertion. Arsat does not desert his brother deliberately. Circumstances compel him to act like this. He lives with his wife on an unknown island, but he is always conscious of his guilt. When his wife dies, he wishes to go back and avenge his brother's death. In this way, he

tries to get consolation; but, he is already punished as he loses his wife. In this connection, what Lawrence Graver has said seems to be right.

Albert Guerard is also of the same opinion. In his book Conrad: The Novelist (1958), he expresses his opinion that there is uncertainty of impulse behind "The Lagoon". It is at once a symbolist prose-poem, story of crime and punishment and exotic local colour.

Conrad says in his Author's Note to Tales of Unrest that "The Lagoon" was his first story, perhaps written at a time when love was the highest concern of his life. R.N. Sarkar(1993):- supports this view saying that the story is about love realized at the cost of dear life.

One important thing about this story is that it is Conrad's only work of fiction to take its title from a physical place rather than from an individual, a natural phenomenon, or an ironical description of a human situation. The subject of impulsive betrayal and permanent remorse is treated with great suggestiveness in this story. Lord Jim is a full-length novel; but, in this short story also, Conrad has been successful in handling such a vast theme.

### **3.2.Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories**

#### **Introduction:-**

Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories, published in 1902, contains three stories – "Youth": A Narrative", Heart of darkness" and "The End of the Tether". Of these three, "Youth : ANarrative" is the shortest

story and may be styled a modern epic of the sea . This and the second one may be regarded as a kind of sequence . "The End of the Tether" is admirable , but in comparison with the others , the tension is relaxed here. Both follow Conrad's particular convention. They are the outpourings of Marlow's experiences.

John Masefield (N.sherry : 1903:141 ) while praising this volume says in a review of Speaker:

".....In this volume, Mr. Conrad shows a notable advance upon the technique and the matter of his former work. His manner, indeed, shows a tendency towards the 'precious', towards the making of fine phrases and polishing of perfect lines."

In my dissertation, I have discussed only one story "Youth A narrative" from this collection, excluding the other two because these are considered as novellas rather than short stories and they are often presented as separate individual books.

### **3.2.1 "Youth: A Narrative"**

#### **Plot:-**

After his novel The Nigger of the Narcissus, Conrad wrote one of his noteworthy sea-voyages named "Youth". In this story ,the physical journey is undertaken by an ancient freighter, the Judea, from London to Bangkok, and the psychic journey by its second mate, Charlie Marlow.

One remarkable feature of this story is that Conrad uses Marlow for the first time in his fiction as his 'alter-ego'. Marlow is forty-two years old and he remembers the events of twenty-two years ago when he was young and made his first trip to the East. The story is mingled with the note of sadness and loss as well as a mature man's reflections on the strength and limitations of romantic illusion. But what remains in our memory is Marlow's voice rather than the specific events themselves. His main object is to modify certain conventional notions held by the four respectable men who listen to his story. It is not simply an account of youth, with the illusion of an absolute belief in its own powers, but an account of youth as seen through the eyes of men not living through it but looking back upon it. But twenty-two years later, memory and the sense of loss inevitable with the passing of time, have romanticized and glamourized the journey. So Marlow sees it in terms of its excitement, glory and sense of boundless adventure when all things seem possible. The illusion can flare up only boldly like the fire aboard the *Judea*.

The fire is caused by spontaneous combustion. It is not man-made but in the natural order of things, just as the drawing to a close of youth is in the natural order of things. The physical details support the psychic ones. Marlow and his other ship-mates try to control the situation but the fire has become so dangerous that *Judea* cannot reach its destination. Marlow sails in a small life-boat which is his first journey in command. The *Somerville* takes the *Judea* in tow but when the fire becomes too

dangerous , the tow-line is cut off . Marlow is not towed into port . He continues his voyage and reaches its destination with the first view of the East . He is overcome by

“the mysterious East ... perfumed like a  
flower , silent like death , dark like a  
grave ...” (38) .

The East epitomizes the approaching period in Marlow's life . A sense of difficulty replaces enthusiasm as the keynote of endeavour . The natives on the jetty , who stare silently at the white seaman as they awaken in the morning from an exhausted sleep , embody not only the new world in geography but the new world in spirit . Just before this world comes into focus , Marlow says good bye to his youth .

“I remember my youth and the feeling  
that will never come back anymore  
- the feeling that I could last forever ,  
outlast the sea , the earth , and all men...” (36) .

As Leo Gurko says , nowhere do the beneficent aspects of Nature blaze more splendidly than in “Youth”, an appropriate accompaniment to the narrator's recollected state of mind . The journey of Judea is in space , but it carries Marlow in a deeper sense on a journey through time .

### **Characters:-**

Marlow is the main character in this story . Through “Youth”, he appears for the first time in Conradian world. Although “Youth” is a

short story and not an autobiographical record , it is based on Conrad's own voyage to Bangkok in the 'Palestine', a ship which underwent misfortunes similar to the ones in "Youth". Conrad wants to evoke the thrill of being young and of journeying to a romantic far-off part of the world through this story .

Marlow recounts the events of his life chronologically . At the same time , he makes highly poetic and frequent comments on the 'strength , faith and imagination of youth'. Conrad looks at events through the eyes of Marlow who is much older and wiser , and can recapture the flavour of his own youth and yet avoid sentimentality . Thus,he can also explore the nature and meaning of what befell him as a young man . Conrad is careful to point out that only the older Marlow understands the full implications of human dependence .

Another useful clue to Marlow's personality can be traced to the books he reads while waiting for the *Judea* to be repaired at Tyne . In describing the two selections – Thomas Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" and Burnaby's "Ride to Khiva"- he expresses preference for the work of the soldier to that of the philosopher . Marlow's preference is also the preference of Conrad.

The importance of Marlow's shifting tone of voice lies in the fact that he is the bard of youthful self-reliance at one moment and at another , the measured spokesman for experience who is aware of tradition , the

continuity of craft , and the fact of growing old . In the delicate interplay of these two tones lies the major distinction of the story .

### **Critical Assessment :-**

Several critics have tried to suggest that Conrad's use of Marlow was more a matter of necessity rather than convention . After the varied narrative experiments in Tales of Unrest and The Nigger of the Narcissus , Conrad moved towards the development of a persona . He wanted a narrator who might observe events and interpret them as he saw them and Marlow fulfilled all his conditions . Through him , Conrad found a satisfactory solution to the problem of achieving workable distance from his works .

The dominant feature of Marlow's narration in this story is the careful alternation between realism and romance . Conrad keeps Marlow's rhetoric under control by forcing him again and again to return to the present . Five middle-aged men drinking together around a table and Marlow continually asking for another drink – this situation appears frequently and allows Marlow and the reader also to come out of past .

The three stories in this volume cover total period of man's life and youth represents the initial phase of it . The thread that links these stories is the sequence of time .



### **3.3. Introduction :-**

Conrad's third volume of short stories Typhoon, and Other Stories was published in 1903. After finishing "Heart of Darkness", Conrad did not begin work on "The End of the Tether", the third of the pieces in Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories, for which he was under contract to William Blackwood. He decided instead to fulfil an old promise to William Heinemann for a volume of four stories. After completing Lord Jim, he wrote "Typhoon", "Falk", "Amy Foster" and "Tomorrow" in quick succession between early September 1900 and January 1902.

In this book, he conveys to us exactly the right impression-that his main concern is nothing but the sea, that he has no eye but for its furrowed expanse, its panoramic scenery of storm and calm. His characters appear vaguely and in a half-light. It is only as the sea that acts upon them that Conrad sees and reveals to us.

An Unsigned review of Daily Mail dated 22 April 1903 (N.Sherry: 1973:147), while praising this volume, remarks:

"Between its covers is caught and preserved  
some essence of the fragrance, the  
cleanness, the cruelty, the coldness, the  
hoary age, the salt youth of the sea.....  
Mr. Conrad is a consummate artist, and  
there is in these pages the variety of the sea."

All the stories in this volume are masterpieces, "Typhoon" being the best. It is the only story which directly deals with the sea. The remaining stories in this volume - "Amy Foster", "Falk :A Reminiscence" and "Tomorrow " - deal less directly with the sea, though through all of them runs the note of it, and over all of them broods the spirit of it.

### **3.3.1. "Typhoon"**

#### **Plot :-**

"Typhoon" is the first story in Conrad's next volume of short stories, Typhoon and other stories (1903). Leo Gurko considers "Typhoon" as a drama of survival. The great storm flogs and punishes the ship Nan-shan as brutally as it did the Narcissus. Conrad describes the violent upheavals of Nature with fineness, but it is not Nature that concerns him much but man.

When the barometer falls precipitously, Captain MacWhirr is prepared for dirty weather. He rejects the idea of going off course to avoid the typhoon and says to Mr. Jukes,

"A gale is gale, Mr. Jukes.... and a full-powered steam-ship has got to face it. There's just so much dirty weather knocking about the world, and the proper thing is to go through it." (25)

He reads a book on storms but finds it only full of advice, supposition and hard work. Exhausted by the palaver and by the

suddenly oppressive heat, he gives orders to plow straight ahead on course and falls asleep. When he wakes, typhoon is at hand. It is plain that he is responsible for all the things. He could have avoided it but chose not to.

The raging storm pounds the ship, batters the crew and demoralizes the coolies. Jukes is convinced that all is lost. While he wrings his hands, shouting "My God! My God! My God! My God!" (42), he hears MacWhirr's voice from a great distance saying "All right" (44). Except MacWhirr, everyone on the ship falters in spirit. As the ship, physically and emotionally, threatens to collapse, it is shored up by the counter-vailing spirit of MacWhirr. By a deliberate act of will, he has caused the crisis, and by a deliberate act of courage survives it.

However, the storm is not the only danger faced by the Nan-Shan. Rioting breaks out among the Chinese as their possessions, chiefly silvers dollars, scatter through their hold. Jukes does not want to interfere in the matter, but MacWhirr can not tolerate the thought of fighting aboard his ship. It violates his sense of order.

" If the ship had to go after all, then, at least,  
she wouldn't be going to the bottom with  
a lot of people in her fighting teeth and claw". (85)

The man who distrusts speech and can not understand what people have to talk about utters right words when others are mute. Rout's last letter to home expresses his wonder. Jukes concludes the story, with

a letter to a friend detailing the experience at great length and remarking about the exploits of the Captain,

“I think that he got out of it very well  
for such a stupid man”. (102)

### **Characters:-**

Captain MacWhirr and Mr. Jukes are the two chief characters in this story who are totally opposite in temperament. The clue of the story lies in understanding not only their relationship but also the special role assigned to MacWhirr.

Young Jukes, the mate of the ship Nan-shan, is a man of good sense, imagination and sympathy. He is a competent officer who is temporarily overcome by fear only when he is exposed to the fury of the storm. At first sight, he appears like Jim, but they differ from each other. Jim fails while seeking to escape the trials of his profession, whereas Jukes' world is confined by the reasonable man's concept of order.

Whereas Jukes confirms to the mean of human nature, MacWhirr is exceptional in his unerring response to fact. He is an uneducated man of no distinction, but his one great virtue is his ability to face what is before him with his whole being. MacWhirr is seen in this story both as a measure of the limitations of the average man, Jukes, and as a warning of what is required of the individual who expects to survive evils outside the communal frontier.

Captain MacWhirr is one of Conrad's remarkable creations. He is presented to us as stupid, unimaginative, pedantic and lacking in sense of humour. He is not loved by his wife, regarded as a freak by his chief mate and as an object of patronizing amusement by his chief engineer. Conrad says about him :

"Captain MacWhirr had sailed over the  
surface of the oceans as some men  
go skimming over the years of existence  
to sink gently into a placid grave,  
ignorant of life to the last." (19)

Yet MacWhirr is the hero of the story. He is a hero in truth and not only in verbal sense. He displays two qualities essential to survive in the China Sea. One is courage and the other is a passion for order and justice. These two enable the ship and the ship's company to limp into port as a battered but civilized entity instead of a disorganized, self-destroying mob. Only MacWhirr can do so. Jukes is intelligent, Rout, the chief engineer is more sensitive and aware but it is MacWhirr who controls the ship in bad weather. These two qualities are concealed so deeply beneath his visible surface that their emergence under pressure comes as a great surprise.

If order and justice are the elements of civilization, the Captain is responsive to both them. In the end, he painstakingly divides the money evenly among the Chinese, and the three dollars left over went to the

three most damaged coolies, one to each. All this he does by force of character.

**Critical Assessment:-**

In "Typhoon", Conrad describes how the seamen on the ship, Nan-Shan, undergo certain experiences of isolation caused by the furies of the sea and the hurricane. As in "Youth : A Narrative", the ship is described as a living creature being tossed in a hostile universe. But she struggles for her existence and characters like Captain MacWhirr show through their efforts that man may be crushed but not defeated.

The Daily Mail review of 22 April 1903 entitled "The Sea Between Covers:Mr. Conrad's New Book" praises this story as 'the most elaborate stormpiece that one can recall in English literature'.

"Typhoon" chronicles, of course, a struggle for physical survival, for human order against the disorder of nature. It is also a psychic penetration into one of Conrad's most deceptive figures, a relentlessly common man who, under pressure, reveals himself remarkably and astonishingly uncommon. Through MacWhirr, Conrad asserts the importance of the most cherished values in life-courage, order and justice.

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**3.3.2. "Amy Foster"**

**Plot:-**

"Amy Foster" is a story of a stranger observed closely and described by Dr. Kennedy, a country doctor who lives in Colebrook on the

shores of East bay. He tells the story to the narrator of the story. The protagonist, Yanko Goorall, is a castaway, a poor emigrant from Central Europe bound for America. While telling the tragic story of this ship-wrecked man, the doctor refers to those people who

“suffered violent death or else slavery,  
passing through years of precarious  
existence with people to whom their  
strangeness was an object of suspicion,  
dislike or fear.” (100)

He further comments:

“It is indeed hard upon a man to find himself  
a lost stranger, helpless, incomprehensible,  
and of a mysterious origin, in some obscure  
corner of the earth.” (100)

Yanko’s story is the story of such a lost stranger who did not know the name of his ship. He did not even know that ships had names. The emigrant ship in which he is hustled at the mouth of the Elbe is a suffocating place where he loses touch with his only companion. An awful sickness overcomes him making him neglect even his prayers.

After the ship-wreck, Yanko always feels himself an alien. The doctor describes his utter loneliness:

“- this soft and passionate adventurer,  
taken thus out of his knowledge, and feeling

bitterly as he lay in his immigrant bunk  
his utter loneliness; for his was a highly  
sensitive nature." (103)

Though Yanko is a kind-hearted man originally, to this strange society, he becomes a man with a voice crying piercingly strange words in the night. The tragedy of Yanko is that he is trying to get in touch with someone to feel less lonely, but everywhere, he is treated as a stranger. His pleas for help and food are answered by the lash of a carter's whip, the stones of children and a beating by a woman's umbrella. He could talk to no one and had no hope of ever understanding anybody.

By chance, he comes across Amy Foster, a dim-witted, plain-faced servant girl, whose heart is full of sympathy and kindness for every living creature. Amy is sympathetic towards this man. When Yanko is shut up in a wood lodge by Smith who considers him a dangerous maniac, he faces insufferable loneliness. He finds some relief when Amy appears to him and gives him half a loaf of white bread. Thus, he is brought back again in the community by Amy.

But still he is looking for life. Then comes a time of temporary relief when Amy willingly unites herself with him and they have a son. Yanko is overjoyed; but somehow Amy is not happy with him. Domestic differences arise and Amy's disgust with Yanko increases. He falls ill and in illness becomes all the more strange and fearful to Amy. Burning with fever, he asks for water; but, she remains still because his passionate



remonstrances only increase her fear of that strange man. She opens the door and runs out with the child in her arms, leaving him to die fevered and thirsty. The doctor observes that Yanko expires miserably asking the Maker "Why?" and ironically uttering the word "Merciful!"

### **Characters:-**

There are two main characters in this story, Yanko Goorall and Amy Foster.

Albert Guerard(1958) while assessing the story, says that it is a generalized comment on the lonely, uncomprehended absurd human destiny. He considers Yanko as an Everyman. This man longs only for happiness and friendship and is thrust upon a bleak shore where he is a perfect stranger. Ultimately, he surrenders his hopes and dies like a bird "caught in a snare". The same words are used for the son at the end of the story. Further, he considers Yanko's brief passage through England as whole life and his arrival on that island as painful birth.

Amy is not a beautiful girl. The beauty of her character lies in her sympathy towards every living creature. While working in the house of Mr. Smith, she devotes herself to every object in that house. The narrator tells one incident from her life which points out the weakness in her personality. Once, in Mr. Smith's house, the tame parrot was attacked by a cat. Instead of helping the parrot, Amy ran out into the yard closing her ears, and did not prevent the crime. Amy's frantic inability to help the parrot is

the first hint of the fatal weakness that later caused her to abandon her husband.

Lawrence Graver (1969) comments that as a physical being, she suffered from a curious want of definiteness, but she achieved moral identity by the force of her instinct for charity. However, as the story unfolds, Kennedy reveals that Amy's altruism was flawed by its narrowness and inflexibility.

Dr. Kennedy, the narrator of the story, has both the intelligence and wide range of experience to place the tale in a large context. But his voice is not like that of Marlow, who is a sufferer and not a detached narrator.

**Critical Assessment:-**

Many critics have related this story to Conrad who left Poland on an improbable adventure, and who carried a foreign accent to the end of his days. R. N. Sarkar is also of the same opinion and adds that Yanko Goorall represents Conrad's own side while Amy represents that of Jessie, his wife. He further equates Yanko with Gulliver and says that Yanko is a modern Gulliver in a strange land. The only difference is that he made love to a young girl from a different cultural and natural background.

When Conrad began "Amy Foster", he called it "A Husband" and then later "A Castaway" which places the emphasis on right place; but as he wanted to sell the story to a particular magazine, he thought that it would be better if Amy were the centre of interest. The reader, however,

would regard Yanko as the centre of interest. It seems that had Conrad stuck to the earlier title "A Castaway" he would have done justice to the central figure and also the central motif in the story.

The theme of this story is the inability of simple-minded altruism to calm the basic fear of the unfamiliar. Amy is attracted towards Yanko only sexually. When she realizes the wide communication gap between them, she submits herself to the situation and leaves Yanko to die when he is in much need of love and care. In the story "The Return", marriage is unsuccessful even though there is no lack of communication and in this story, it is unsuccessful because there is no communication.

### **3.3.3. "Falk : A Reminiscence"**

#### **Plot:-**

The next story in this volume "Falk : A Reminiscence" begins in much the same way as "Heart of Darkness". Several men, who are related to sea in one way or another, are dining in a small hotel. These modern men tell artless tales to one another. At that time, one of the group starts talking about an absurd episode in his life. His story begins at the moment of initiation.

"Falk" is narrated by a young Captain who has just received a command in the Dutch East Indies. While engaged in clearing up the confusion left by his predecessor, he spends time visiting another ship in the same port. The other ship is the "Diana" of Bremen, commanded by a dour Teutonic captain named Hermann. On board the "Diana" are

Hermann's wife, four children and niece, a lovely, taciturn girl who attracts the attention of Falk who is the owner of the only tugboat in the area. The Captain can not move his ship without the assistance of a tug. But Falk, considering him a rival for the girl, refuses to do the job. At one point, he actually abducts the Diana for a short time in an effort to keep the girl away from the Captain. After a series of misunderstandings, the narrator makes it clear that he has no interest in the girl. He also agrees to speak for Falk if he will help to move his ship. Falk provides still another complication by insisting that there is a grim fact of his past which he wants to make clear. Years earlier, he had murdered a man and committed cannibalism on a stranded steamer. Hermann is shocked to hear this. But soon, he recovers and realizes that Falk is a true hero whose endurance, cunning and superb strength represent the absolute truth of primitive passion. Finally, when Falk marries the girl, the Captain is delighted at the match of this "complete couple", this bearded god and his nameless goddess.

The most notable thing in "Falk" is Conrad's manipulation of his materials to make a compelling point about a formidable social taboo. Falk's cannibalism is seen not as criminal barbarism but as an act of simple necessity. Conrad deliberately arranged the sequence of events to make Falk's cannibalism seem inevitable and trivially unimportant compared with the maliciousness of Schomberg and the stupidity of Hermann. Falk's guilt is caused by his fear of what society would do to

him if his secret came to light. His confession is prompted by a need to clear the air, to make himself understood.

**Characters:-**

Falk is the protagonist of this story. He is a Scandinavian tugboat skipper who has the experience of cannibalism. The act which enabled him to survive upsets the balance of his life. Years later, the same strong life force requires him to take a wife and attracts him to Hermann's niece. Falk is such a straightforward man that he tells about his past to Hermann, the guardian of the girl. At first, he rejects Falk; but, later on, consents to their marriage.

Falk is, therefore, a Conradian hero of much the same type as Jim, a man with a hidden guilty past and bad reputation who seeks to overcome these disadvantages by making a new start in a new sphere. The new start in Falk's case is the world of Herman's niece, symbolized by the ship "Diana" of Bremen which is a comfortable, reputable, chaste, pure and ordinary ship.

Falk's move towards the world of the "Diana" is typically centred on Hermann's niece. She is a modest, neat, even-tempered and domestically inclined girl. At the same time, there is about her a power, size and vitality which attracts the attention of Falk.

Hermann is presented in the story, as Falk's rival. He resents Falk on the ground that he falls outside the pole of orthodoxy. But at last, he gives his consent to his niece's marriage with Falk.

The narrator's part in "Falk" resembles that of Marlow in "Heart of Darkness". Just as Marlow intervenes to shield Kurtz from the manager's malice, in this story, the narrator takes Falk under his protection and helps him to circumvent the effects of Schomburg's hostile gossip. In both these cases, the narrator undertakes the role of guardian of the hero's reputation.

**Critical Assessment:-**

In the Author's Note to "Falk", written nearly twenty years after the story, Conrad insisted that his primary interest was not in the events but in their effect upon the persons in the tale. It is clear from the full title "Falk : A Reminiscence", that the piece is about something lived through and remembered. It tells in essence how a young, inexperienced Captain learns that there are critical moments in life when the codes of society are useless against the elemental pressures of instinctive egoism.

Stephen Land is of the opinion that in this story, Conrad develops his favourite theme of reputation. Falk's reputation, like his predecessors', springs directly from the very qualities of his character which make him distinctive. Falk is particularly sensitive about the suspicions which others have of him. His one desire except survival and marriage with Hermann's niece is for respectability and social acceptance.

R. N. Sarkar (1993) traces autobiographical elements in this story. Falk's love is successful unlike Amy's, a success of Conrad's

own kind, only artistically altered, after an exasperating experience of isolation.

Leo Gurko in his book Giant in Exile(1979) says that in "Falk", Conrad deals with the florid conception of a man who has eaten his way out of the human race through cannibalism and wishes to win his way back to it through love. He further mentions that in "Falk", it was the girl who never spoke a word, while in "Amy Foster", both hero and heroine are virtually mute. Once again, love between two essentially inarticulate people is further complicated by language barriers.

This story also deals with one of the recurring themes in Conrad's work. The hero is guilty of his past and wants to overcome it by marrying a socially respectable person. The theme of love is underneath the main theme of guilt-consciousness. Falk is guilty of his past like Karain and Arsat. One interesting thing to note about this story and "Typhoon" is that both end happily, while other two stories "Amy Foster" and "Tomorrow" are tragic.

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#### **3.3.4. "Tomorrow"**

##### **Plot:-**

"Tomorrow", the last story in the "Typhoon" volume, is a trifle. One interesting thing to note about this story is that it is the last story of Conrad's early period, the last story before Nostromo. It is a companion piece to "Amy Foster". Just as that story had been first called "The

Husband”, the story “Tomorrow” was originally titled “The Son”. It has for its setting the same village, Colebrook, in which the story “Amy Foster” takes place.

The story describes the obsession of old Captain Hagberd who has come to Colebrook with the idea that his long-lost son will come there “in one day more”. He buys two houses, rents one to a young girl and her blind father, and settles down to wait for his son. Josia Carvil tyrannises his daughter Bessie Carvil in his blind and desolate state of decrepitude. The same case is with Captain Hagberd. He wanted his son to submit to his unquestioned guidance and authority. He wanted to set him up as lawyer’s clerk against his will; so, he left his home and went to sea.

When Bessie comes to live in his house with her father, Hagberd’s fantasy takes more complex shape. He implicates Bessie by promising that his son will marry her. Self-effacing and unable to resist the Captain’s compulsion, Bessie forgets her initial misgivings and romantically shares his hope. The whole situation is very distressing. Harberd is deranged; old Carvil exploits his infirmity to keep Bessie as his nurse and Bessie herself is so frustrated that she conceives of the unknown Harry as her lover. Finally, Harry arrives home through an advertisement. But his chief concern is to pick money from his father. But when the old man fails to recognize him and wildly reveals the marriage scheme, Harry draws back.

Captain Hagberd has gone mad and he thinks that his son will come ‘tomorrow’, not ‘today’. For him, ‘today’ does not exist. Harry



understands the situation. He borrows a half-sovereign from Bessie, kisses her with great pomp and runs off to resume his life as a thoughtless adventurer. While old Hagberd stands shouting about his 'trust' in an everlasting 'tomorrow', Bessie is left stricken with humiliation and despair.

**Characters:-**

There are three main characters in this story , Captain Hagberd, Harry, his son and Bessie Carvil. Lawrence Graver thinks that the basic situation in "Tomorrow" resembles that of "Falk" and "Amy Foster". The lives of several people suffering from illusion, diseased imagination or repressed desire are dramatically affected by the sudden appearance of a figure from a different, less restrictive society. Falk defies Hermann and the young Captain, Yanko Goorall challenges Amy and the towns-people and Harry Hagberd defeats his father and Bessie Carvil.

Conrad says at one point in "Tomorrow" that every mental state, even madness, has its equilibrium based on self-esteem. In this light, Captain Hagberd's lunacy can be seen as the disease of obsessive egoist, whose entire view of the world rests on the return of his son. He does not achieve universality like other characters of Conrad's, because his neurosis remains a private rather than a public catastrophe.

Bessie Carvil is one of those mute and soulful women whom Conrad could not bring alive on the page. Described as profound, sensitive and compassionate, she says nothing in the story to live up to her advance notices. She usually expresses her emotions by catching her

breath or crying with dry, noiseless sobs. The story progresses but her dilemma is never made meaningful, because she lacks the basic power to communicate it .

Harry's character is also not impressive. He is a hard-hearted man who can not understand the misery of his father. His heart does not melt when he sees his father gone mad. At the end of the story, he leaves his father and Bessie forever.

**Critical Assessment:-**

This story is one of Conrad's most pessimistic stories. The main character in this story, Captain Hagberd, appears as a stern and rather egoistic man. He tries to impose his decisions on his son, Harry, by asking him to become a clerk; but, Harry who is a free-minded man can not accept it. So he leaves his father. Captain Hagberd can not tolerate this shock and goes mad. Indirectly, he himself is responsible for his misery and because of that guilt-consciousness, he goes mad. The worse thing is that he can not recognize his son when he returns because he thinks that his son will come 'tomorrow' and not 'today'. Harry, an irresponsible and thoughtless son, is only after his money. If he had decided to look after his father, the situation might be improved. But when the story ends, we see him leaving his father and Bessie. The irony is that Captain becomes happy as he thinks that he has got rid of something wrong.