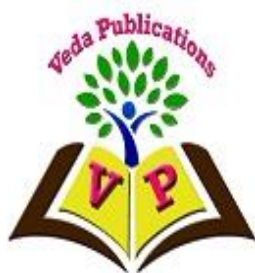




## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**RACE AND EMPIRE: A DECONSTRUCTIONIST READING OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS AND EDWARD MORGAN FORSTER'S A PASSAGE TO INDIA**

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*Department of English Language and Literature, Woldia University, Woldia City, Ethiopia*Email: [zeret1988@gmail.com](mailto:zeret1988@gmail.com)DOI: <http://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9409>**ABSTRACT**

The emergence of deconstruction as literary theory and criticism in the 1960s changed the understanding and of the relationship between text and meaning creation and formation. In his own theory, Jacques Derrida argues that there are no self-sufficient units of meaning in a literary text, because individual words or sentences in a text can only properly be understood in terms of how they fit into the larger structure of the text and language itself. This article examines race and empire and their relations of binary opposition in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Edward Morgan Forster's *A Passage to India* through deconstructionist approach. The study sees how these texts are racial and imperial in theme and to explore these themes in relations of binary oppositions like, light/dark, white/black, good/evil, and civilization/savagery as they represent racial ideology and self/other, colonizer/colonized and civilization/savagery as imperial ideology in *Heart of Darkness* and good/evil, white/ black, superior/inferior, civilization/savagery reflecting racial ideology and self/other, colonizer/colonized and west/east as imperial ideology in *A Passage to India*. In deconstructing the above major binary oppositions, the manifestations and conflicts of racial and imperial ideological paradigms; hence rendering both texts destabilizes themselves with the absence of determinate meaning.

**Keywords:** *;, Race, Empire, Derrida, Deconstruction, English Novel*



## INTRODUCTION

Literary texts, with their pluralistic nature, have been battlefields and self-contradictory for readers over the ages. This is for they are mirror of particular social, political, economic, and political relations among societies, similar or different. However, due to the development of studies in literary criticism, new approaches and literary theories emerged to study such texts, at different times. Among those theories and approaches to literary criticism, deconstruction which this article has modestly attempted to attest its theories and to analyze literary texts, is the major one.

Deconstruction, which has seriously attacked the metaphysical presence or the existence of absolute reality and its literary aspect, is concerned with the textual interpretation, where invention is essential to finding hidden alternative meanings in the text, has brought considerable changes in the study of literature (Shah, 2019:10). It is also worth mentioning the fact that deconstruction is both an academic and a social concern. This is because in the present day world the presence of ultimate truth is seriously challenged. Truth has become challenging, culture-specific and individualistic. This has been prevalent in the area of literature, especially after the emergence of deconstructionists who argue also that language is self-contradictory and thus, look for ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions in the language of literary texts (Sikirivwa, 2020:7); Shah, 2019:8). As there are always hidden operations and hidden ideas in literary texts, they are read superficially and a determinate meaning is arrived at, but such meaning is indeterminate and undecidable. Hence,

deconstructive criticism looks for meanings in the text that conflict with its main theme focusing on self-contradictions of which the text seems to be unaware.

For Derrida, there is no absolute or definitive "truth" or "meaning". Language is always shifting and moving, not fixed by a center and hence textual meaning is always ambiguous, multiple, and provisional. Derrida also discovered that there are binary oppositions that structure any literary text. These opposite terms, according to Derrida, cannot exist without the reference to the other. Derrida does not seek to reverse the hierarchies implied in binary pairs to make one binary favored over the other. Rather, deconstruction, according to his, tries to erase the boundaries (margin) between oppositions, because the value and order implied by the opposition is also not rigid.

This article deconstructs Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Forster's *A Passage to India* in terms of race and empire in content employing Derrida's binary oppositions. Though internationally acclaimed texts as realistic representations of their time and as comments on the relevant historical conditions through character development, scenic description and plot, (McClure, 1991), these two texts are also widely claimed by critics as they are racial and imperial in content by showing divisions between white characters and natives based on race and empire (Achebe, 1988:259; Todorove, 2006:16; Loria, 1907:142). Hence this article examines whether *Heart of Darkness* and *A Passage to India* are really racial and imperial in content and, if so, how this content is realized in textual representation, through a deconstructionist approach.

**RACIAL DECONSTRUCTION IN HEART OF DARKNESS****LIGHT OVER DARK**

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* begins with the narrator's journeys into Africa on what Europeans termed a "civilizing" mission. The journey which is spiritual as much as it is physical becomes more than a simple mission. However the narrator confronts the powers of light and darkness: the drawing (light) realization is that the "civilizing" mission is inherently dark and light. By the end of the novella, it is understood that "instead of bringing light into darkness as it claims; the 'civilizing' mission uncovers the 'darkness at its own heart (p.96). In superstitions and stories, light is generally a symbol of good. However, in the case of *Heart of Darkness*, light did not serve as a proof of an underlying mission as evidenced below:

*The sunset; the dusk fell on the stream ,and lights began to appear along the shore...Lights of ships moved in the fair way-a great still marked stir of light going down..And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically...Immensity of unstained light...Only the gloom to the west ,brooding over the upper reaches, become more somber...but we look in the august light of abiding memories (p.2-3)*

The magnificent sunset is described in brightfull light color imagery. Everything is bathed in heavenly white light except the Western horizon, which shows that the West (as in Europe) may not be

as enlightened as it is conventionally seen. The sunlight grows darker as it falls towards the western horizon, thus indicating that light over darkness is reversed. Conrad here suggests that darkness, unlike light has greater layers of truth, and thus, is more profound than light. Even darkness falls upon the river; Marlow falls into deeper thought about it. The "august light" describes the illumination from the mind through "abiding memories."

"And this also" said Marlow suddenly "has been one of the dark places of the earth" (p.3). Here Marlow pronounces a hallmark Western City, London, as dark as the interior of Africa where he has recently travelled. This suggests that all English and all of Europe, by extension, are dark and morally corrupt as they claim native Africans are.

*Heart of Darkness* narrates about the Romans' colonization of England. In the novella, Marlow the major character, and narrator of the first chapter of the novella, tells his colleagues the ancient time when Romans came to colonize Europe. That time was just dark and he recalls it. In this sense, there is no intention that Marlow talks about Africa as dark. The extract details hereafter:

*I was thinking of very old times, when Romans first came here, nineteen hundred times ago-the other day...Light came out of this river since-you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of heightening in the clouds. We live in a flicker-may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling: But darkness was here yesterday (p.4)*

Conrad does not make a conscientious effort to produce the attitude of race on Africa and their person by saying light is superior to dark. He does



this by referring to the Roman colonization of Europe (England). By making that historical link, he portrays that darkness is not associated with racial outlook towards African natives. Within the language of binary opposition; there is still an implied moral imperative to bring the darkness into light. Light and darkness cannot exist without referencing to the other:

*But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be expected), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as glow brings out a haze, in likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine (p.4)*

Conrad reverses the typical light and darkness imagery, considers darkness at center. Marlow believes that meaning can only be brought by comparison; only when light shines can the human eye discern shadow. When one hundred the outside environment he/she begins to understand the dark depths in her/him. The binary opposition, dark over light is not clearly depicted; rather it is ambiguous for one term exists without the presence of other term. Through these binary oppositions, Conrad reinforces the ideologies of supernatural awareness. The word 'light' and 'dark' are replaced with similar description culminating similar effects, providing there is no fixed center. Dark as presence is defined as the absence of light. Furthermore, Marlow describes his experience that light cannot help him for it is not clear as described in the following:

*It was the farthest point of navigation and culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow throw a kind of light on everything about me-*

*and into my thoughts. It was somber enough, too-and pitiful-not extraordinary in anyway not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light (p.6).*

Here Marlow describes his meeting Kurtz as an experience that "throw (s) a kind of light (...) into my thought)." Though we may expect that light to help Marlow understand and clarify his experience, Marlow surprises us by saying that it was not very clear. This makes the distinction between light and darkness, again ambiguous, making meaning in the novella undecidable.

Conrad's descriptive passage about the "interminable waterway" (p.1) of the Congo and the Thames River shows that the connection between humanity and darkness. "Each river flows into one another, leads into heart of immense darkness" (p.97) indicates that all humanity is connected through the heart of darkness. Darkness is in all humans' soul. Conrad's use of symbolism illustrates the central theme of the novella. Kurtz is a catalyst for change and the symbol for the whites' failure in Africa. He is aware of his darkness and he is unable to fight it. His last words "The horror! The horror!" (p.97) depicts the darkness of human souls. For universal darkness, light represents the falsehoodness and corruption in the world, whereas darkness is the symbol for truth.

Marlow calls the natives at first station "Black shadows of disease and starvation" (p.12). This is racial outlook. However, after a few lines, Marlow is horrified by what is being seen, by the darkness he is presented with. Darkness represents innocence. The natives are black but in their blackness, before the coming of light they were happy, free and indeed



innocent. Marlow says "They were not dark until the coming of light (p.13). So darkness is presented with conflicting and complex and inconsistent meanings with the light/dark binary opposition.

### WHITE OVER BLACK

Conrad's novella is a tale of two countries, Britain and Congo, two rivers, the Thames and the Congo River, the darkness of two, the Roman colonization of Europe and the darkness of the Africa and the tale of two white persons, Marlow and Kurtz. It also shows that Marlow with his companions travels from the Whiteland to the Black Africa.

The novella relies on the binary opposition of white and black. In white/black context, Marlow says, sometimes the black natives are mentally absent while naturally attractive at other times as seen below:

*Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks-those chaps; but they had bone, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement. That was as natural and true. They wanted no excuse for being there. They were great comfort to look at (p.25)*

Marlow, in the first few lines, shows racial ideology by calling the natives 'black fellows' and they are described only physically. In contrary to this, in the last lines, Marlow describes the black native Africans as "natural and true", absolutely invigorating in their wild vitality. They seem happy just to live and to Marlow, who feels struck in a dream, they are refreshingly real to look at. as Marlow appreciates the blacks; there is no binary discrimination of white

and black. He is simply praising the blacks regardless of their black color and describes what he sees. The opposition is deconstructed as it conflicts with the center. So, there is not united, rather there are internal contradictions. This also shows that human beings are fragmented by battlefields for competing ideologies whose only identity is the one way we invent and choose to believe.

*Heart of Darkness* offers a paradoxical reading of black and white. In the novella, Marlow narrates what he observed about the natives to one of his colleagues, as seen below:

*No they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it-this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped and spum, and made hurried faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity-like yours-the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar (p.43)*

As the above extract illustrates Conrad is not sure who are black and who are white. He simply narrates to his fellows about the black natives in a confused way. He sometimes insists on the native's being human, and he compares them to whites. Marlow comments that "When the sun rose there was a white fog, very warm, and clammy and more blinding the night" (p.47). This indicates the inconsistency of the binary of white and black and light and dark. Fog is a symbol of pure white, or simply white, but there Marlow says that it is "more blinding than night". Such expressions confuse readers to read a definite meaning.

**GOOD OVER EVIL**

*Heart of Darkness* relies on the binary opposition of good and evil. The indefinite battle between good and evil can destroy, refine, or rebuild the human soul by means of choice. The novella illustrates pure evil and its capacity to consume one's soul. The title of *Heart of Darkness* symbolizes the true evil in man, the improper use of knowledge and downfall of civilization. This is claimed by Marlow as he says: "But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river that you could see on map, resembling an immense snake. It fascinated me as a snake would a bird—a silly little bird" (p.4). The Congo River resembles a snake, one of the most primal symbols of evil and deception. Yet Marlow is fascinated by the snake, hypnotized like an innocent bird. The story does not tell us anything about good and evil. It implies subject and object reality. The evil snake attracts the white man, indicates that good and evil exists together wherever we are.

Marlow also says "It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape that, the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle" (p.97). This remark also suggests that the world is ultimately indifference to good and evil. There is no 'good' that give judgment on man's actions and the heaven does not, indeed, fall for trifles, such as small lies. This also indicates that language is always shifting and moving, not fixed by the center—hence meaning always ambiguous, multiple, and provisional. Good and evil are always, there influencing each other. So Conrad does not show racial outlook to the natives as this opposition depict. Conrad rather emphasizes evil always remains in

good and the reverse is true. He also suggests that "The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the utmost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an over cast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness" (p.97). As this extract shows, Conrad closes his novella with the scene over shadowed by darkness, suggesting quite—handedly that evil exists prominently in the world, and the world is indifferent to its existence. So the text deconstructs itself. Evil has occurred in Marlow 'heart even when he arrives at London with good intention. He is affected psychologically by the evil he encounters in Congo.

**CIVILIZATION OVER SAVAGERY**

Throughout the novella, Marlow insists upon the distinction between civilization and savagery. He is in line with the two, indicates there is no clear demarcation that shows Marlow's racist ideology for savages as oppressed and the whites as creating division, and that the latter alienate natives from no natives.

Marlow says "One ship is very much like another and the sea is always the same. In the Immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, there is no mystery to a seaman, unless it is the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence as in securable as destiny" (p.4). Here Marlow notes how he and other men on the yacht are liked but the link is not British civilization but the sea, which a metaphor for travel and my story and for exposure to far more of the world than most people oversees.

Marlow's non-conformity with racial ideology is "Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the



earth (...) they were nothing earthly now nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation (...)as in some picture of a massacre or pestilence (p.18-19).This indicates there is no distinction made between the Africa and the Africans. Everything is reduced to pictorial representation, depicting Africans metaphorical battlefield devoid of all recognizable or exact words to describe the European in between. Marlow's ideology constantly is changing and determined by context. He describes the trip as journey back in time ,to a "prehistoric earth" (p.40).This remark reflects the European inclination to view civilized peoples as primitive ,further back on the evolutionary scale than European and it recalls Marlow's comment at the beginning of his narrative of people he sees along the river ,in his words, "this suspicion of their not being inhuman" (p.43).In some deep way, theses "savages" are like Europeans ,perhaps just like the English were when Britain was colonized by Rome. Marlow's self imposed isolation from the manager and the rest of the travelers forces him to consider the African members of his crew, and he is confused about what he sees.

## IMPERIAL DECONSTRUCTION OF HEART OF DARKNESS

### SELF OVER OTHER

*Heart of Darkness* is written on a complex level, expressing not only discomfort with the colonial 'other' but also discomfort about the future happenings between the colonizer and the colonized. In the novella, the 'other' that Marlow and Kurtz encounter is the savage, wilder powerful and ultimately threatening to the order, efficiency and

stability of the colonizer and the colonized. Marlow is affected psychologically and Kurtz is affected both physically and psychologically as a corruptor, and dies later on. He never recovers from his damaging encounter with the 'other': he is overwhelmed completely, falling into the darkness "seductive trap of going with natives" (p.76). The 'other' is seen as vital, throbbing ,savage force of primal natives ,given an identity ,a face, a personage ,in the wild, "black limed natives that Marlow sees dancing along the river bed" (p.66).So Conrad's 'other' Africa is something illusive ,seen –but not seen, a reflection of nothing. The text does not fully comment the whites' empire over the 'others (Africans).

*In Heart of Darkness*, travelling down the river was like "travelling back to the beginning of the world" (p.42) and Marlow thinks his companions wondering of the "prehistoric man" (p.42).Marlow relies on the beginning of the world, new and the starting of everything and prehistoric man, which is like primitive. Marlow here does not distinguish who is 'self' and who is the 'other'. So there is an ever shifting of the center and disruption of the binary opposition.

The self/other binary in the novella is an important distinction, for it is this opposition that sustains the colonial enterprise. The lure and the fear of the 'other' initiate the pursuit of "discovery" (p.61) of imperialism; the convention of the inferiority of the 'other' justifies the undertaking. Yet despite Marlow's instance, all binary oppositions collapse in the course of his narrative: "colonists proved to be conquerors; the gang of virtue is indistinguishable from the gang of greed" (p.30).So there is no clear



distinction between self and other. The fundamental difference between self and other disappears.

Marlow also says that the white officers sit round on there ,and do nothing all day why crying about their petty diseases .He says that they are “half affected with the dim light” (p.65).This implies that Conrad presents the whites as natives and not nay real imperial practice on the natives of Africa.

### COLONIZER OVER COLONIZED

Conrad’s text deconstructs label of colonizer/colonized dictonomy.For example Marlow says “I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede’s Ship’s biscuits I had in my pocket” (p.91).Marlow here offers one of the natives biscuit and realizes that these people have suffered under European rule. Marlow also says, “They (natives) are not being enlightened to the efficient European ways” (p.19).This indicates that the Europeans Empire of the black African natives has failed as an empire. Marlow sees that European presence is not making the Africans more civilized; it is turning the Europeans into the savages that they despise. This epiphany is the beginning of Marlow understands that he is not taking his job for opportunity and money and “his job is filled with inefficient European people” (p.30), who have forgotten the reasons for colonizing Africa.

In the novella, Marlow observes that the European empire of the Congo black natives has failed as an empire. With his eyewitness he says: “I discovered that a lot of imported drainage –pipes for settlement had been tumbled in there...The accountant’s offices built of horizontal planks, and so badly put together. There was no enclosure or fence

of any kind; the trails, or whatever there had disappeared” (p.17).This shows the failure of practical implementation of imperialism in the African Congo. Marlow found out that all drainages, farm areas, and pipes are typical of functional extension of the British Empire, are damaged, which shows a lack of British imperial practice in Congo. Furthermore, Marlow condemns the white colonizers as robbers, and aggravated as “They were not colonists. I suspect they were conquerors and for that you want only brute-nothing. It was just robbery with violence and men going at it proper for those who tackle the darkness” (p.5-6), indicates the text deconstructs itself.

### CIVILIZATION OVER SAVAGERY

The preface of the novella follows the darkness to come in the future chapters. This can be seen when the narrator explains how the sea can “unfold the secret of the whole continent, and generally he finds the secret note worth knowing” (p.4).Conrad must have felt an excitement upon hearing the news that he was to travel to the Congo for six months. After witnessing the “abomination” (p.6) that took place in the Congo under the rule of Leopard II, Conrad felt that “the secret he was so enthusiastic about six months prior was never worth knowing” (p.7).Thus the novella’s theme is the immortality and corruption of imperialism. The narrator expresses the widespread opinion that imperialism was a glorious and worthy enterprise. However, Conrad sees the evil of imperialism as this passage is to figure out if Conrad agrees with torture being inflicted on the natives. “The natives were building a railway” (p.20) indicates the natives are





contributing to the whites' expansion, while being reduced to animals.

In the novella it has been seen that civilized people become savages and uncivilized when they live with people they consider to have those traits. For example Marlow encounters with "starving natives" (p.19). Knowing civilized people's tendencies and having experienced imperialism, Conrad makes a detailed portray the change from civilization to savagery when he says, "Marlow sits down in the shadow of the forest to escape the heat, and realizes he is surrounded by starving people" (p.61) Conrad is equally critical of the Europeans living in the Congo, making his position more ambivalent. The text says the "wild" and "the passionate" (p.9), and "in away akin to the European" (p.10). This humanity, although described by a disgusted Marlow as "ugly" management on many silent occasions proves how ridiculous the institution of western civilization is. The quotation "so unless they swallowed the wire itself...could be them" (p.59) shows though Africans are still silent in many occasions, their silent can reflect the stupidity of western ideas.

Conrad says, "I felt in the danger, not in the savagery itself, but in the potential for savagery" (p.23). This is to appreciate the capacity of the savages to live and resist others. Marlow's judgment about the agents of imperialism rises out of an outraged morality, or rather ineffectually of the nations. "While on the board the ship, dense fog surrounds it and Marlow is uncertain as to where it is heading" (p.35), which parallels his confusion concerning to the supposedly savage cannibals who showed great restraint, which is in great contrast to the travelers who seemed only able to show a

surface restraint. Marlow says that the natives look civilized and are aware of being oneness.

#### **RACIAL DECONSTRUCTION OF A PASSAGE TO INDIA**

##### **GOOD OVER EVIL**

*A Passage to India* is a tale of two countries through which we follow a handful of central characters travelling from England to India, into Mosques, Temples, and through the Marabar Caves. The novel relies on binary opposition of good and evil and hateful friendship. These binary oppositions are suggested through the setting of scenes, characters, and the moment of dialogues in the novel. Forster says "Having seen such one cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether she has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all (p.6)". In the caves Mrs. Moore, the visitor was confused. She suffered physically and psychologically, and dies later on. The mysterious events of the caves need to be translated in one way or the other.

Forster describes the Marabar caves as only naturally created and have nothing special in them. He says "Nothing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure, if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good and evil (p.107)" The quotation indicates that the Marabar Caves are only part of landscape. It is made clear that nothing is presented in the Indian caves like Britain's'. It is a place to visit and whoever comes to see the caves brings his or her experiences, feelings and emotions. Indeed evil is presented in the caves.



Love of Ronny and Adela is causing for ambiguity and confusion being evil itself. Adela lost her confidence in love with Ronny after he broke their engagement. This is the cause for accusing Aziz of raping her in the cave as seen below:

*What about love'...She and Ronny-not, they did not love each other...There was esteem and animal contact at dusk, but the emotion that links them was absent. While looking at sparking ideas, her eyes sparked with this idea, which was a self-discovery of the fact that they do not love each other. Having these thoughts in her mind, having that they do no love each other regrets that neither she nor Ronny had physical charm (as compared to Aziz).It does not make difference in relation-beauty, thick hair, fine skin she went into a cave, thinking with her mind "sight seeing bores me", and wondering with the other half about her marriage (p.130-131)*

Adela is confused while thinking about her relation with Ronny. This state of ambiguity is with her in the caves to. Having the issue of marriage in her mind, surrounded by extra darkness, having the physical fear, she assumes that Aziz has touched her and tried to rape her. Here there is no clear demarcation between where is evil and where is good. As the Marabar caves contain no evil, so evil is not geographical or racial but within the human beings, whether white or black.

Adela says "I'm not...Speech was more difficult than vision. I'm not quite sure" (p.132), which shows there is no racial discrimination between Adela and Aziz. Adela is not sure who attacked her. She is not referring her attacker. In the caves Adela was confused and because of extreme

emotional imbalance, she assumed that Aziz had attacked her.

#### **WHITE OVER BLACK**

Forester's novel also shows the binary opposition that is not distinct clearly in terms of white or black. The characters in the novel belong to the two, but they do not identify one or the other as black or white due to their color and tells us there is no racial discrimination between the blacks and the whites. Forester evidences hereafter:

*When the villagers broke the cordon for a glimpse of these silver image, the most beautiful. radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused the mall to resemble one another during the moment of its dwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods (p.248)*

The novel attacks race again and again, the color of skin, as the basis for community, whether it is the white Anglo-Indians or the Indians. Instead when communities come together for a worthy cave, as in these religious festivals their faces acquire "beautiful and radiant expression" it is this expression, rather than the color of their skin that represents their belonging to the community. Here Forester does not talk whether the villagers are black; rather he distinguishes them as villagers, an accepted term in the west also. However, a few pages before in the text, Ronny says "Indians are different from ours in color" (p.46), which is a racial ideology towards Indians. This implies that the novel replies that the novel relies on the indeterminate meaning over white/black binary opposites.



Aziz's defender, Fielding says "I'm waiting for the verdict of the courts. If he is guilty I resign from my service, and leave for India I resign from the club now."(p.163).Fielding assumes that Aziz is innocent by reversing the occidental assumption that whites are more innocent than the blacks. Fielding and Aziz are white and black respectively but their function in the novel is interrelated and they become a part when circumstances change at the end of the novel only.

### **SUPERIOR OVER INFERIOR**

Forster's novel portrays a colonial India under the British rule, before its publication. The novel shows the separation of the English and the Indians as superior and inferior exists along cultural and friendship and spiritual lines, not as a matter of superiority/inferiority. In the preface of the novel, Mrs. Moore expresses to her companions that she wants to see "the real India" (p.22).By this time, she visits Marabar caves located 20 miles from Chandrapore on the invitation of Aziz and with a local Indian as her guide.The binary opposition superior/inferior is reversed here though the English binary creates unequal division between the East (India) and the West (Britain).

The problem with this and most of western binaries is that the descriptions of the East are artificially created by the West making the comparisons both untrue and unjust. Mrs. Moore ;however, does not accept the idea that the West is superior in all aspects to the East as demonstrated by the way in which she thinks about her experience in the cave not generalizing "all Indian caves as horrid, depicting the echo through a human alphabet" (p.12)

Throughout the novel Forster presents Fielding as tolerant, respectful and sympathetic to Indian in the club, in the mongo farm, in the school, and the administrative offices to show Britain's respect for Indians. Forster says "Fielding has no racial feelings; not because he was superior to his brother civilians, but because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herd instinct does not flourish. He respects the Indians in the club... (p.50)". Forster has reversed the western racial superiority over Indians through the major character, Fielding's sympathy to Indians and especially to Aziz. Fielding and Aziz are not superior and inferior in race to each other. For the most part of the novel, their function is interconnected and they help each other.

In the novel, Mrs. Moore is a sympathetic female character to all human beings especially after she is experienced in the Marabar caves. She preaches that God has created all of us equally. Let's see the extract taken from the speech of her in the text below:

*The English are out her to be pleasant. Because India is part of the Earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God...is...Love. God put us on the earth to love our neighbors and to show it. He is omnipresent even in India to see how we are succeeding (p.40)*

Here superior racial binary is reversed by Mrs. Moore, who engages herself in the help of Indians, treating them like everyone else in the world due to the influence of her religion. She is teaching her son, Ronny who sometimes has racial superiority over Indians due to the influence of his former wiser Anglo-Indians, not himself, that God created the world's peoples with no intention of superiority or



inferiority. So the novel is perceived as having racial content, it is evidenced by the characters' ideology towards to the inferior groups. This creates ambiguity and unstable meaning in the text. Miss Adela challenges the ideas of western racial superiority .She says "We are quite strangers to your country; we do not know you have victory" (p.33).This shows that Adela accepts Indians are people who have a land like hers.

### CIVILIZATION OVER SAVAGERY

Throughout the novel, the characters insist on the distinction between civilization and savages. They are supposed to belong to one of the two, but there is no clear indication that shows they or the text is racist for Indians as oppressed. During the first part of the novel, Mrs. Moore expresses to her companions that she wants to see "the real India" (p.22).By this time she is visited by Aziz who invites her to see the real India represented by the Marabar caves. As soon as she enters the caves, she finds herself "unable to breath in the stifling air" (p.106).However she does not only dislikes the caves because of the echo and stuffiness but because of the dark sides of the cave." She decides she never visits such caves again" (p.106).Though this happened to her mind, she accepts the fact as follows:

*The cave had became too full, because all their retinue followed them inside...She lost Aziz and Adela in the dark, didn't know who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile naked thing struck her face...She tried to regain the entrance tunnel, but an influx of villagers and servants stench-alarmed her; there was also a terrifying echo (p.126)*

Here Mrs. Moore is pushed by villagers and servants who are entering the caves. Although most of the people in and entering the cave are Indian in nationality, they are distinguished as two groups- "villagers" and "servants" instead of grouping together all Indians as servants. Here, she does not discriminate between the English as civilized and the Indians as uncivilized. Mrs. Moore contests both binaries because she recognizes class differences within Indian society. Just like among the British, Indians are villagers and servants. Her shift from her occidental view to what she experienced shows the undecidability of the text's meaning. She also considers Indians as people of high dignity just like Britain's as Forster says "Mrs. Moore didn't want Aziz to think his treat was failure, so smiled too...She looked for a villain...She realized that as the mildest individuals whose only desire was to honor her- nothing evil had been in the cave"(p.127). Moore appreciates and distinguishes Indians who are in the cave as the; mildest' persons and praises them for their guidance to have the caves in her visit. She does not refer to them as savages, or uncivilized or nay other negative term simply because their nationality is Indian.

### IMPERIAL DECONSTRUCTION OF A PASSAGE TO INDIA

#### SELF OVER OTHER

The self/other binary opposition establishes whether one is operating in one's place. Forester creates the parallel of the unknown India via the Marabar caves and utilizes the caves to symbolize the unknown ability of a place. He says "Except for the Marabar caves –and they are twenty miles off-the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary"



(p.1).The unknowability of India is crystallized in the Marabar caves. Adela has also subscribed to the "mystery of India" (p.33).And the caves symbolize the "mysterious" of the place. Caves are the center of ambiguity and unidentifiability.So, Forster creates the parallel to the unknown India by utilizing the caves to dismantle the concept of a fixed authentic place. Caves illustrate their fruitlessness of trying to fix the identity of a place.

Aziz speaks of all Englishwomen in the same way; in this he is operating from his idea of place within the binary of self/other. In some aspects Aziz rejects how colonial discourse has "othered" him when he sees himself as "self." "When Aziz is arguing with Mahamoud Ali, he describes all Englishmen as one and Forster says "Aziz also comments "I give Englishman two years be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any Englishwoman six months. All are exactly alike." (p.4).In this quotation, it is indicated that, in a reversal of the standard colonial binary, Aziz is the "self" while all Englishmen are "other". Aziz is full of his own prejudgments about his Hindu countrymen. As he tells Adela and Moore in explaining why the Hindu family's innovation fell through Aziz and admonishes:

*Slack Hindus-they have no idea of society. I know them very well because of a doctor at hospital. Such a slack unpunctual fellow; it is well you didn't go to their house, for it would give you wrong idea of India, nothing sanity (p.56)*

Aziz's prejudices about Hindus and his insistent of their racial difference from himself as 'other' replicates the colonizers positioning of self/other. Aziz's mode of operation of place is

consistent with the English. Aziz also shifts from self/other to other/self. Fielding says "You are with or against us" (p.86).This implies there is no in between.

Forster's novel waffles in the middle, it neither condemns nor defends British imperialism over India; it does not condemn or defend Indian independence as:

*The tumult increased, the innovation of Mrs. Moore continued, and people who didn't know the syllables meant repeated them like a charm. They become Indianized into Esmis Esmoor; they were taken up in the street outside. In vain the Magistrate threatened and expelled. Until the magic exhausted itself he was powerless (p.195)*

Mr. Moore does not take any side. The Empire cannot allow. Her death is symbolic. Neither English nor India, she dies between the nations, she then reappears in India in the voice of the "other." So to change the landmark is to lose the self. Forster reveals the infinity that stands in for the "other" /self is absent. The nothingness rises in its place. Only within it can be truly represented, not as a single Varsity but as complex culture of multiple faces and voices.

#### **COLONIZER OVER COLONIZED**

*A Passage to India* though criticized as imperia text it deconstructs itself by destabilizing colonizer/colonized binary oppositions.Forster claims "One touch of regret-not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart would have made him a different man and the British Empire a different institution (p.40)". Forster says that Fielding refrains



himself from the imperial practices towards Indians. He keeps a firm relation with them.

Fielding, the English school teacher in India, has "gone native", at least in the eyes of the other English people. He likes Indians and keeps his distance from the imperial prejudices of the club. His school teaching is convenient to everyone. Forester portrays him as sympathetic to Indians as fit to be administrators.

Forester discussed the Empire in his novel in terms of western exclusion in the speech of Ronny who says "we must exclude someone from our gathering or we should be left with nothing" (p.58). The "nothing" is the precise message of the caves. Forester places this in comparison with inclusion he finds typical of India and Indians. "I will invite you all" (p.86) is a representative phrase for Fielding to give to Aziz. This inclusiveness is equated with a lack of discrimination evident in all life in India. Colonizer /colonized binary oppositions are not distinguished as their boundaries are dismantled.

*I'm not a missionary or a Labor Member, or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. I'm just a servant of the Government; it's the profession you wanted me to choose myself, and that is that. We are not pleasant in India and we don't intend to be pleasant. We have nothing more important to do. He spoke sincerely (p.40).*

In the above extract, Ronny says that his mother and the British presence in India is difficult. His inconsistent position in the imperial rule in India is stated as follows:

*Ronny approved of religion as long as it endorsed National Anthem, but he objected when it*

*attempted to influence his life. Then he would say in respectful yet decided tones. I don't think it talks these things, every fellow has to work out his own religion; and any fellow who heard him muttered 'Hear' (p.41)*

In the extract, though Ronny is represented as an English ruler over Indian, but he is accepting the idea that everyone has the right to follow his/her own religion and free life. He behaves both as powerful ruler and allowing others to lead a free life.

#### WEST OVER EAST

Forster's novel is criticized as imperial in content portraying Orientals as oppressed, emotional and more sexual than their Occidental counterparts. Such imperial conflicts can be examined through deconstruction in relations of binary oppositions to see whether the text really is imperial.

*Perhaps (the wasp) mistook the peg for a branch-no east (India) animal has any sense of inferiority. Bats, rats, brides, insects will soon nest inside a house as out ;it is to them a normal growth of eternal jungle, which alternatively produces houses, trees,...There he hung asleep while Jackals in the pain boyed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums (p.28)*

It is interesting that Forester chooses to use an English characters' observation of insects living compatibly with humans to convey the Indians' attitude that all life is significant. Moore comes to understand the country and its consideration for all life, contrasting the world view of her home in the west (England).The easterners are more mysterious, intelligent and encouraging than the westerners, according to Forster.



Forester's novel also reverses the western domination over Indian through presenting oriental imperial attitude of the east as portrayed in "But every human act in the East is tainted with officialism, and while honoring (Ronny) him they condemned Aziz and India (p.162)". Indians here appreciate the Magistrate while condemning their countrymen, this indicates there is no fixed imperial them in the novel."Victory is to the East (p.203), as said by the Superintendent indicates that the East is more dominant than the west and hence the failure of the practical implementation of more imperial system in India.

Fielding agrees with the Idea that "it is possible to keep in with the East" (p.215), and "Touched by occidental feeling, Aziz disliked union with a woman whom he had never seen" (p.44). However, in other sections of the novel, Aziz shows good relations with occidentals. For example, the text says that "Aziz loves Adela and he is positive to Ronny's rule" (p.86). In this way, the binary pairs of opposition are shown to be inconsistent in their imperial representation whereby they are shown constantly changing their positions.

## CONCLUSION

Deconstruction, coined by Jacques Derrida in the 1960s, is a methodology that shows the meaning of a particular literary text, object, or word, is never stable, but always in the process of change. It examines hierarchical binary oppositions, such as speech/writing, white/black, good/evil etc., in which one term is privileged over the other. These opposites for Derrida are structures of a literary text. From this perspective the analysis of a literary work is to erase the boundaries between such oppositions,

and to show that the values and order implied by the opposition are also rigid. This article examines the themes of race and empire in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Edward Morgan Forster's *A Passage to India* and their relations of binary opposition, through deconstructionist approach.

In deconstructing the racial and imperial themes in the selected texts through deconstructing the major binary oppositions and in the course of analysis, it has been shown that there is no polarity of existence represented by the binary oppositions. The meaning of one member is already found as a trace in the other member in the pair and one basic issue seems to remain unresolved concerning the notion of determinate meaning.

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