CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Stories are at the heart of what explorers say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonised people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history.

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

Colonialism is a political phenomenon and a historical reality. It is the subjugation and direct political control of a society by a more powerful society often involving exploitation, denial of basic freedom and violence which is physical and epistemic. Robin W. Winks is of the opinion that those who enjoy power always arrange matters in such a way as to give their tyranny an appearance of justice. He also maintains that Empire always mixes power, tyranny, and the desire for a just world in a way at once inextricable, confusing and challenging. In his introduction to *British Imperialism: Gold, God, and Glory*, he writes:

Imperialism most readily associated with Britain, primarily because she was so successful in building a vast empire that blanketed the globe and stretched its height into every continent, covering the maps of the world with cartographer’s red. British imperialism was ‘imperialism par excellence’. The study of
imperialism, whether expanding or waning, ‘good’ or bad’, must first of all be a study of the imperialism of a greater Britain.

(Winks 4)

Almost obscure until the nineteenth century, the word ‘imperialism’ came into popular usage from a variety of sources. The term made its appearance in England in the mid nineteenth century, first as a word to characterize the aggressive policies of Napoleon, and then to describe the ambitious action of Disraeli who secured for Britain a controlling interest in the Suez Canal and added ‘Empress of India’ to queen Victoria’s other titles. When used by the detractors of Imperial Britain the term was meant to bear an abusive sense. The term was somewhat redeemed by the English poet-novelist Rudyard Kipling who spoke of the ‘white man’s burden’ and of the ‘civilizing mission’ of the British race as though it were a well defined case of the racial noblesse oblige.

Colonialism can be defined in the simplest way as the subjugation and control of other people’s land and resources. Colonialism as it is understood in the modern sense is the expanding influence and dominion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards. When searching its history one can find precedents to colonialism in the form of military
advances and conquests by certain powerful groups and individuals. During the second century AD, the Roman Empire had its sway from Armenia to the Atlantic. Genghis Khan, who gave leadership to the Mongols in the thirteenth century, conquered the Middle East as well as China. The roots of the Aztec Empire was established when, one of the various ethnic groups which settled in the valley of Mexico subjugated other societies around them. So were the Aztecs and the Incas who controlled vast regions and received tributes in services and goods from conquered regions in the Americas. In the fifteenth century various kingdoms in southern India came under the influence of the Vijayanagara Empire. The Ottoman Empire, which began as a minor Islamic kingdom in the western Turkey, was later made into an empire which extended itself over most of Asia Minor and the Balkans. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it stretched from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. It must be noted that the Chinese Empire was larger than any thing that any European power had seen.

Colonialism is a politically turbulent phenomenon. This phenomenon divides the world into two, the world of the coloniser and that of the colonised. Just as any other binary opposition in the western thought, this one claimed the supremacy of the coloniser over the colonised. The role of culture in validating western superiority was
pivotal. The coloniser was able to generate a discourse on ‘the colonised’ or ‘the other’ which placed them in a vantage point of superiority. This power which they assumed through their discourse can be called ‘epistemic advantage’ because it was knowledge which vindicated their rule over foreign lands. Later in the postcolonial era one can see how the colonised reacts to this cultural hegemony.

Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson are of the opinion that imperial relations may have been established initially by physical force but it was maintained in its interpellative phase largely by textuality. They also maintain that colonialism (like its counterpart racism) is an operation of discourse and as such it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation (3). As Peter Hulme formulates it, colonialist discourse is “an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their deployment in the management of colonial relationships” (Hulme 1986:2). It is interesting to note that colonial discourse alternately fetishized and feared its others- both race and place.

Colonialism conceptually nullified the native population either by acknowledging the subjects but relegating them to the category of the subhuman, or simply by looking through the native subject and denying his/her existence. These were necessary practices for invoking the claim
of *terra nullius*¹ upon which the now disputed legality of imperial settlement (as opposed to ‘invasion’) was based. Only empty spaces can be settled in and so the space had to be made empty by ignoring or dehumanizing the inhabitants. “The topic of land [was] dissimulated in the topic of savagery, this move being characteristic of all narratives of the colonial encounter”, as Peter Hulme (1986:3) has pointed out.

It is interesting to note what Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson have to say about this:

Inscribing the natives as primitive and unable to make use of the natural resources around them allowed first the biblical parable of the ten talents, and then the Darwinian theory of natural selection to justify their dispossession as part of the plan of Destiny. Resistance was interpreted as malignant treachery and a justification for brutal suppression and even annihilation. (5)

In order to gain power over the colonised the coloniser has to maintain ‘difference’ from the natives by assuming the superiority of European values. Colonial discourse analysis as an academic discipline was inaugurated by Edward Said. It was Said who pioneered the study of colonialism in terms of its discursive operations. He showed the connection between language and forms of knowledge developed for the

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¹ Latin expression meaning “Land belonging to no one”
study of cultures and the history of colonialism and imperialism. The main implication for this was that the kind of concepts and representations used in artifacts including literary texts could be analyzed as a means for understanding the diverse ideological practices of colonialism. Said exposes the complicity of western literary and academic knowledge with the history of European colonialism.

He also maintains that the seemingly impartial, objective academic disciplines had in fact connived with the production of actual forms of colonial subjugation and administration. Orientalism provided powerful evidence of the complicity between politics and knowledge. This idea is affirmed by Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* (1987) which demonstrated the way in which an apparently non-political classic was determined by racism and Eurocentrism. Bernal’s book suggests that the parameters that have already been set up for defining the limits of colonial discourse need to be extended much more widely into the history of academic disciplines.

Said’s *Orientalism* is a pioneering work in postcolonial studies. It says that with the start of European colonisation the Europeans came into contact with the ‘lesser developed’ countries of the orient and they found their civilization and culture very exotic and established the
discourse of orientalism, which was the study of the people from these ‘exotic civilizations’. Said summarised his ideas in these terms:

My contention is that Orientalism is a fundamentally political doctrine willed over the orient because the orient was weaker than the west, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness… As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgement, will-to-truth, and knowledge. (204)

Said also wrote:

My whole point about this system is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence – in which I do not for a moment believe – but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting. (204)

Said defines Orientalism thus:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and “the Occident”. (2)

Principally a study of 19th century literary discourse and strongly influenced by the work of thinkers like Chomsky, Foucault and Gramsci, Said’s work had a huge impact in the realm of cultural studies. Said begins his analysis of colonialism by inviting us to the fact that
Europeans divided the world into two parts; the east or the west or the orient and the occident or the civilized and the uncivilized. This was only a boundary drawn with the political purpose of affirming and asserting the relative merit and superiority of the European culture. Said says:

the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. The Orient was orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘Oriental’ in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be – that is, submitted to being – made Oriental. (5, 6)

The Europeans used their knowledge of the orient to define themselves. Some particular attributes were associated with the Orientals, and whatever the Orientals weren’t the Occidents were. As mentioned above, the Europeans defined themselves as a superior race compared to the Orientals; and they justified their colonial endeavors by this concept. They considered it their duty to civilize the uncivilized, a duty that was described by English poet Rudyard Kipling as the ‘white man’s burden.’ Besides, the discourse of Orientlism helped the European to define and affirm European culture itself.
Said observes:

The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. (2)

He continues:

The European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self… Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. (3-5)

The main problem is that when Europeans started generalizing the attributes they associated with Orientals, it created a certain image about the colonised that infused a bias in the European attitude towards the Orientals.
The Orientalists divided the world into two parts by using the concept of *ours* and *theirs*. The Orientals were regarded as uncivilized people; and the westerners said that since they were the refined race it was their duty to civilize these people and in order to achieve their goal they had to colonise and rule the Orientals. They argued that the Orientals were incapable of running their own governments. The Europeans also thought that they had the right to represent the Orientals in the way they desired. In doing so, they shaped the Orientals in the exact way they perceived them, or, in other words, they were *orientalizing* the Orients. The colonisers who went to the colonised countries and stayed there perceived the native culture as irrational, lazy, immoral and barbaric. This happened because the colonisers tried to judge the culture of the colonised through their own paradigms of understanding without considering its context. The colonisers who went back to their home countries circulated such ideas about the colonised. On the other hand, European culture was held to be active, enterprising, morally strong, rational and civilized. The Oriental land and behaviour was highly *romanticized* by European poets and writers and then presented to the western world. The Europeans said that since the Orientals lacked sophistication and cultural merit they needed the European fatherly role to assist them.
Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson say that resistance was interpreted as malignant treachery and justification for brutal oppression and even annihilation. If labour was required in the coffee plantations or on cattle stations to exploit the ‘natural’ wealth of the seemingly limitless tracts of land, a new way of encoding the native had to be arrived at. The solution was to see the native as, in Kipling’s phrase, ‘half savage half child’ (5).

Frantz Fanon is known for his brilliant exegesis of racial relations in his work *Black Skin White Masks* (1952). Fanon focuses on the problems of identity created for the colonial subject by colonial racism. The underlying argument of the book has been summarized in these words:

The central idea is that the confrontation of ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’ men creates a special situation- colonial situation- and brings about the emergence of a mass of illusions and misunderstandings that only a psychological analysis can place and define (66).

Fanon’s work aims at the development of a political philosophy for decolonization that starts with an account of the psychological harm that colonization has produced. He presents the complexity of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The fundamental
problem with the colonised is the feeling of inferiority that he or she feels in the presence of a white man or white woman. The dominant colonial culture identifies the skin color of the colonised with impurity and the colonised accept this association and so come to despise themselves. Fanon argues that black women exhibit their identification with whiteness by attempting neurotically to avoid black men and to get close to white men, a process he calls ‘affective erethism’ (44). Fanon observes that black children raised within the racist cultural assumptions of the colonial system can partially resolve the tension between contempt for blackness and their own dark skins by coming to think of themselves, in some sense, as white. The ‘Black Man,’ remarks Fanon ‘wants to be white.’

A black individual, in other words, can no more overcome racism by desperately putting himself into the idea of a mythic or cosmic civilization, than a neurotic will himself to health with knowledge alone. Fanon maintains ‘There is but one destiny for the black man. And it is white’ (202). But, paradoxically, the obverse, that whiteness is the flipside of blackness, is false. The black man, remarks Fanon, offers ‘no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man’ (90). One must observe that the problematic relationship between the races results in a massive psycho-existential complex. A ‘cure’ can only be had if one
analyses racism as a symptom. Fanon thus develops an analysis of racism rather than of race – the naturalization of race is the object of this critique. The role of the analyst, says Fanon, is to assist the analysand to ‘consciousnessize’ his unconscious, so that he or she is no longer tempted by a hallucinatory lactification. To simply identify one politically as either black or white is to eschew the hard work of psychoanalysis.

Fanon concludes his analysis with these comments:

The black man is not. No more than the white man. Both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born. Before embarking on a positive voice, freedom needs to make an effort at disalienation. At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child (206).

Fanon’s critique of colonialism attacks the African elites for their colonialist bourgeois tendencies, calling on African intellectuals to sympathize with the peasants and to join them in the fight against foreign colonialists. Criticizing the nationalist parties, Fanon predicts that after independence, these parties will keep up the colonialist regime. The nationalist parties copy the system of colonization. The concept of a
‘political party’ is itself a Western idea. Fanon felt that a peaceful revolution only indicated a shift in power to the native bourgeoisie which is as parasitic and corrupt as the European.

Albert Memmi’s *The Coloniser and Colonised* is another work that has contributed a great deal towards analysing the complex relationship between the coloniser and colonized. It was published in 1957 and was the product of Memmi’s direct experiences in North Africa which provides psychological effects of colonialism rather than its economic aspects. He explains how colonialism leads to the loss of memory, history and language of the colonised. Since all the colonial institutions of power use the language of the coloniser, the institutions of the colonised are freezed to death. Memmi observes that collapse of colonialism is inevitable and it will end only in revolt. He extensively uses psychoanalysis to explain the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. His arguments are best explained by his statement that “man is a product of his objective situation” (8).

The present study analyzes how ‘the novel’ as an art form was used to propagate ideas which helped Europeans to justify colonialism during the colonial era. The novels of Joseph Conrad are analyzed for that purpose. Edward Said says that the novel participates in the project of England’s overseas empire building. ‘A picture was built up in these
narratives of the early 19th century with England at the centre and overseas territories at the peripheries.’ (Culture and Imperialism 88)

Said continues, ‘The continuity of British imperial policy throughout the nineteenth century is actively accompanied by this novelistic process, whose main purpose is to keep the empire in place’ (88). ‘The novel’, he says, ‘contributed a great deal to the colonial discourse and became a main element in the consolidated vision of the globe. England was surveyed evaluated and made known, while the Orient was briefly mentioned without the kind of presence or immediacy lavished on the west’ (Culture and Imperialism 85).

This is very significant in the case of Joseph Conrad, especially with regard to his novel Heart of Darkness which despite its apparent anti-Colonial posture is noted for its imperialist and racist undertones. Conrad is, to quote Chinua Achebe a ‘thoroughgoing racist.’ According to Chinua Achebe in a lecture said, ‘Conrad was a bloody racist… And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art’ (An Image of Africa 35).

Joseph Conrad (Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski) was a Polish author who wrote in English after settling down in England, and became a naturalized British citizen in 1886. Conrad is regarded as one
of the greatest novelists in English. He wrote stories and novels, usually at far-off settings, which portrayed the trials and tribulations of the human individuals in the midst of a hostile universe. He was called a great prose stylist who brought a distinctly non-English melancholic and skeptical sensibility into English literature.

Joseph Conrad enjoys a rich critical attention. His novels, especially *Heart of Darkness*, received unprecedented critical scrutiny in modern English fiction. Critics like Jocelyne Baines, Lionel Trilling and Eloise Knapp Hay initiated this rich critical appreciation of Joseph Conrad. The moral elusiveness and ambiguity in his novels were the main concern of such critics. Critics like Eloise Knapp argued that Conrad’s work was didactical in an imperialist context (301). Some critics like F.R.Leavis were skeptical about Conrad’s style especially what he termed as Conrads ‘adjectival insistence’ (*The Great Tradition* 177). Critic J.Hillis Miller lays bare another facet of Conrad’s works. Miller maintains that Conrad brought to the surface the nihilism covertly dominant in modern literature. (*Conrad Revisited* 31-35). In the 1980s critics like Benita Parry spoke about the ideological implications of *Heart of Darkness* (1987:117).

It is interesting to note that the novel form was also adopted by colonial subjects to counter the imperialist hegemony in the post-

In this study of Joseph Conrad and Chinua Achebe the theoretical concept of hybridity as discussed by Homi K. Bhabha is important. The fact that Joseph Conrad and Chinua Achebe are studied together in a thesis is inspired by the idea of hybridity. Bhabha’s psychoanalysis of modernity has given a colonial and post-colonial genealogy to it. He uncovers an anxiety and inconsistency in the colonial ideology and also
highlights the subsequent resistance from the colonised. The inclusion of Joseph Conrad and Chinua Achebe in this study helps to analyze both the colonial discourse and the resistance to it by the ‘colonized’. Many post-colonial writers have employed literary forms and techniques of the colonial power’s own language and so used allegory, disrupted narrative flow, and irony and so on to create alternative views of the colonial situation. This appropriation demonstrates the ability of the post colonial writers to use the ‘tools’ of the metropolitan language, that is, the language emanating from the colonial centre, against itself. The strategic application of these literary techniques themselves, in the way they are self – consciously used to demonstrate alternative and oppositional ideological principles, as well as to expose dubious and biased ones is very pivotal in the postcolonial practice.