CHAPTER FIVE

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5.1 Preliminaries

The researcher would like to bring this work to its conclusion by presenting a number of general conclusions and observations regarding the postcolonial reading of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* as a means to investigate the image of imperialism in English literature. In other words, in this concluding chapter, the researcher aims at summarizing the arguments and findings arrived at in the preceding chapters as well as reviewing the assumptions made in the two opening chapters, which is the theoretical framework of this study.

5.2 Major Findings

This study is based – among others – upon the assumption that literary productions or narratives are aesthetic as well as socially oriented, and in result, there is a link between imperialism on the one hand, and culture and literature on the other; more specifically, between imperialism and the novel form. Fredric Jameson emphasizes this link; he notes that “the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing
imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions".\(^{(1)}\)

So, Western imperialists appropriated – among other discourses – cultural artifacts as ideological tools so as to disseminate their colonial ideas and provide primary support for colonial activities of expansions and, consequently, the subjugation of other peoples. They created binary oppositions where they evaluated the white race as superior to other races. And according to Mary L. Pratt, 'travel and exploration writing" was an important means of producing "Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to something it became possible to call "the rest of the world."'\(^{(2)}\) Pratt shows us also how this "rest of the world" has been produced for the European readers.

In their writings, colonial writers show that the non-Westerners are primitive, and in view of their primitivism and the advancement of the westerners, the former need the intervention of the latter so as to promote their progress. They make some contrapuntal or polyphonic appeal to other disciplines to achieve this purpose. They, for instance, weave their texts with the teachings of anthropology, biology, religion, and history, hence the importance they grant to the concept of 'difference' as it is viewed in evolutionary thought of the nineteenth century – the era of European imperialism – a period that is known for its prevalent ideas of "superiority" of European civilization and the "inferiority" of other races. In this atmosphere, there emerged what Edward Said coins the consolidating literature of empire, adding to the
existing Orientalist discourse, which provides ideological support for the imperial enterprise.

Moreover, Said's basic thesis, in *Orientalism*, is that the study of the Orient 'was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them").' (3) If the colonized people are static/primitive and sensual, Europeans can be seen as developing/evolving ahead, with their sexual appetites under control; if the former are barbaric, Europe is civilization itself. Such opposed conceptions are crucial, not only for creating images of non-Europeans, but also for constructing a European self image; they also provided a necessary support for imperial expansion.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century European writings on the subject of colonialism, the romantic image of the European imperialists is often emphasized as being one of the main reasons for the successes of the European colonial regime. The Europeans represented themselves as reformers, educators, virtuous nation of typical values. This is the image of Western imperialism as it was shaped and supported in their literature. However, the reversal is true. The real image of Western authority was no less than that of Roman as seen by Conrad's Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, "merely a squeeze, and nothing more ... It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale". (4)
Similar construction – to that of European self-portrait – has been made on the opposite side, that is, the resisting natives about their pre-colonial past, as in the case of Africa. The African writers resisted and challenged the distorted image of them created by the Whiteman. Through their literature, the African writers created "images of what they supposed themselves to have been prior to [European] colonization."\(^{(5)}\) In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe suggests that the Igbos had a highly developed value system prior to the advent of the Europeans in Africa. Achebe does, however, show the Igbo culture without romanticizing or idealizing it, and his text does not intend to offer the Igbo existence as the ideal alternative to colonized Africa. In all his work, he has drawn the reader’s attention to the fact that Africa had cultural values as valid as those of Europe, and that all existed before the white man took control of the continent. In his essay *The role of the Writer in a New nation*, Achebe informs us that "African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless, but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty ... and above all, they had dignity".\(^{(6)}\) Therefore, another fundamental assumption of this study has been that cultural representations, including literature, are central not only to the process of colonizing lands and ruling colonies, but to the process of postcolonial resistance and gaining liberty from the colonizer as well.
However, this dissertation has examined the lives and literary works of Joseph Conrad and Chinua Achebe in the context of the colonialist and racist conditions during the nineteenth and early twentieth-century European regime in Africa, and in the light of colonial and postcolonial discourse analysis of race and empire. The textual mapping of the colonial encounter relies upon a narrative of competing or contesting textualities. In such encounters, literary texts become the most significant purveyors of colonial power and its double, postcolonial resistance.

Based on the assumption that postcolonialism or resistance begins at the first instance of colonial encounter, the term "postcolonial" in this study referred to the period following the first contact of colonials in a country. However, as we have seen throughout the opening chapters, postcolonialism has proved to be a controversial term in definition; nevertheless, for its purpose, this study has considered postcolonial literary criticism as a set of reading practices that focus fundamentally on the intersections of domination and subordination – economically, historically, culturally and politically – between nations, races or cultures, between colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism.

The reinforcement of this colonial contact between the Western imperial powers and the non-Western world in the nineteenth century was accompanied with a large literary canon that represented this
encounter. The emergence of this literature has also generated some seminal works in postcolonial theory and literature. Accordingly, literature viewed as a cultural phenomenon with certain ideologies and aims. For this reason, a number of literary scholars and critics have systematically devoted their profession to the analysis of literature within the specific political, social, historical and cultural contexts from which it emerges. In adopting this analytical framework, this dissertation has relied on colonial and postcolonial critical analysis and views. As a domain within literary studies, postcolonialism analyses literature produced by both the colonizer and the colonized cultures from the point of encounter to the present.

In order to represent this cultural confrontation adequately, the researcher has chosen to discuss a literary text written from the Western/ex-colonizer perspective – Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, (chapter III) – with a text written from the non-Western/ex-colonized perspective – Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, (chapter IV). Conrad’s and Achebe’s literary works were the products of a period of intense political and social change marked by European regimes in Africa. The two works discussed in this study thus present themselves as texts of intervention, exemplifying the political nature of literary texts (colonial and postcolonial). In doing so, these texts illustrate how literary texts cannot be divorced from the political and social realities surrounding the author.
Hence, the ways in which different values permeate narratives reflect ideological considerations. Therefore, narrative fiction has had an important position in the history and world of empire; it helped to reinforce the dominant ideologies of their time by teaching their readers to see the world outside Europe, Africa for example, as a primitive, mysterious and dark place peopled by inferior savages, centuries behind Europeans in social and moral evolution, and thus called for European domination. (Conrad’s Heart of Darkness comes to mind here). What is interesting is the extent to which the genre of the novel has remained such an integral part of the imperial experience, recording, for example, the anxieties associated with expansion throughout the entire European imperial eras. What is likewise interesting is that the novel form has been appropriated by non-Western writers and perhaps more so than any other genre has become the artistic medium through which an oppositional voice to Western domination has been raised. Achebe, for example, sees his role as novelist as that of teacher, dispelling – in Things Fall Apart, the myths of supposedly 'savage' peoples generated by imperialist cultures and portrayed in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness.

As the survey of the colonial condition in Africa shows, in chapter III, despite the differences in their policies, all the European regimes justified their rule and expansion in this region based upon scientific, religious, cultural and moral grounds of their own. The evolutionary theory, for example, was used to support the ideology of the
Westerners being superior over non-Westerners and, by extension, the idea of colonial expansion. Therefore, the discourse of the European "civilizing mission" was pervasive in all the areas under their rule.

In relation to this atmosphere, and as he grew up in the time of the evolutionary theory, Conrad was almost certainly influenced by this colonial discourse before his Congo journey. And as for his interests in the colonial encounter, he echoes this nineteenth century climate and the evolutionary thought which suggested that there were more logical reasons for the gap between civilized man and his "animal" antecedents. The evocation of human history and the revolutionary theory is a part in the text of Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*. The most important evidence occurs during Marlow's trip up the Congo River. In fact, what captivates and yet frightens Marlow – the European – is how the wilderness and the African natives come to merge and acquire interchangeable characteristics. Marlow states,

> We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth ... But suddenly ... a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands ... of feet ... of eyes ... The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. *The prehistoric man* was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us – who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings ... we were traveling in the *night of first ages*, of those ages that are gone leaving hardly a sign ... \(^7\) (italics added).

It is the primeval world, then, which Marlow faces! The importance of this representative passage is that it shows how the wilderness and its
black African dwellers are perceived as an indissoluble entity. The black native emerges to Marlow as prehistoric as the jungle he inhabits. In his description of the native and his land, Marlow perceives no distinguishing boundaries between them. It is this unbreakable and also incomprehensible bond between the black native and his land that challenges the understanding of the white Marlow. In yet another instance, Marlow reduces the native Africans to fragmented body parts, "a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands ... of feet ... of bodies ... of eyes." (8) The worst of it is that when Marlow cannot find better example than that of comparing the African workers as animals. The fireman, for instance, resembles "a dog in a parody of breeches ... walking on [its] hind legs". (9)

However, Conrad's image of Africa is not a positive one. Though his narrator passionately denounces the way King Leopold's men exploited and harmed Africa and the Africans, he also pictures Africa as dangerous and mysterious site that attracts and corrupts the white Europeans by its "unspeakable rites," (10) and the Africans as prehistoric, black savages and half-formed humans. For Marlow, then, things are either black/dark or white/light, where white represents civilization and black savagery. Thus, in Heart of Darkness, white and black are not merely colours to Marlow but an emblem of European "superiority" and African "inferiority".
Recognizing the alien structure imposed on the peoples of Africa by colonial rule and its cultural, political and social ideologies, and responding to the imperialist ideology of representation, Achebe attempts to parallel Conrad regarding the imperialist rhetoric of light and darkness aiming to invalidate this rhetoric as conveyed in *Heart of Darkness*. In this regard, Patrick McGee defines Achebe’s goal as that it partly "means re-writing Conrad’s 'controlling' figures in ways that resituate them in an African context they no longer mystify but describe ..." (11) Achebe rewriting Conrad’s central metaphor in ways that dispel the myth of its synonymity with Africa’s soul, even while allowing it its rightful place in the cultural traditions of Igbo lives: "Darkness held a vague terror for these people ... Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirit." (12) The "impenetrably dark nights" (13) that Achebe often evokes in his texts are facts of existence in communities where the wonder of technology had not (yet) brought illumination to every corner, but not necessarily the symbol of African evil as the Conradian text likes to imply: "a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart." (14) Achebe challenges this Western image of the Other as the evil doppelganger and evil omen of Europe.

In the exercise of rewriting Conrad in the postcolonial context, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* abounds with such reworked images and metaphors. If we trace the metaphorphosis of the meaning(s) of "darkness", for example, through *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall*
Apart, the latter also abounds with such reworking instances in ways that reverse the former’s dialectic of darkness/blackness and light/whiteness. Taking only one example, we find that a signal event takes on quite a different token and a different look in Achebe's portrayal of Africa and the Africans in the African context:

And then quite suddenly a shadow fell on the world, and the sun seemed hidden behind a thick cloud. Okonkwo looked up ... and wondered if it was going to rain ... But almost immediately a shout of joy broke out in all directions, and Umuofia, which had dozed in the noon-day haze, broke into life and activity.

"Locusts are descending," was joyfully chanted everywhere (15) (italics added).

In this passage, words that generally suggest darkness and an evil atmosphere – "shadow", hidden sun", "haze" – signify rain, joy, life and activity for the Africans. Furthermore, the coming of "locusts", a profoundly visible sign of plague and evil omen in one part of the world, however, is not so in another part. In Umuofia, it signals the arrival of a vast, yet rare, edible delicacy and is a good omen.

As for his responding to the image of colonial Africa (as conveyed in Conrad's text) – that Africa was a land of savages whose community has not established any form of social system or order and therefore does not have any worthwhile culture or civilization – Achebe began to address this image, echoing Conrad's style whenever Igbo structures and customs appear unnecessarily violent, pointing out, thus, that those images are just what Conrad's readers expect from Africa and
the Africans. Indeed, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* intentionally debunks notions of a "savage" Africa as portrayed in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. It portrays a society that cannot be described as one of primordial chaos. On the contrary, it shows a society in which there are clearly defined parameters of right conduct on both personal and communal levels.

Although the ethics of the African community portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* encourage individuals to strive to be successful in life, they take care to shield the weak by restraining the mighty from intimidating their less fortunate. This is exemplified by the concept of "live and let live":

> We shall all live. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break.\(^{16}\)

Furthermore, the African society that one sees in *Things Fall Apart* is so highly organized and ethical that it has a week of peace and, even though it is a warlike community, it never fights an unjust war:

> ... The neighbouring clans ... feared Umuofia, and would not go to war against it without first trying a peaceful settlement. And in fairness to Umuofia it should be recorded that it never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle.\(^{17}\)

Thus, unlike the African society in *Heart of Darkness*, which is portrayed as having developed no social system and culture, the African society in *Things Fall Apart* has an intricate and admirable
structure, culture and civilization – a system that was doomed in its encounter with modernization and the new faith, perhaps, yet it is indeed a far cry from Conradian descriptions: "A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants ... All their meager breasts panted together ... this raw matter ..."(18) Achebe leaves us with little doubt that "this raw matter" had an acutely developed sense of self and society, conspicuously different though it was from Western civilization and faith.

Finally, Achebe emphasizes the importance of "voice", equating "voice" with "power". In Things Fall Apart and No Longer at Ease, at least, “voice” represents both personal and communal "force". Achebe suggests here that the African peoples have lost their agency and been denied any voice, only when the European invaders and missionaries managed to impose their culture, language and religious beliefs upon these peoples. Hence, throughout The African Trilogy, Achebe emphasizes traditional Igbo attitudes towards “voice” in order to suggest to his Igbo readers that they can become a “force” again in a free, postcolonial Nigeria.

We may rightly conclude that the portrait of the European colonizers in Heart of Darkness is the only aspect of the novel that is discernibly similar to any image in Things Fall Apart. Where the two novels are as different as night and day is in their portrait of Africa and its people. Conrad’s portrait depicts many of the prevalent European prejudices about the continent. Such images gave rise to the accusation – by
Achebe – of Conrad as being "racist". Achebe, on the other hand, creates a more realistic portrait of the continent.

However, though the researcher agrees with Achebe that Conrad's depiction strips Africans of their humanity, the researcher is not as convinced that Conrad himself was racist. If we judge him according to his time, it was his time that was racist. Conrad's intention was to expose the ugly face of the Western colonialists as inhuman exploiters of the Africans and their natural resources. In *Things Fall Apart*, these exploiters symbolize the malevolent force that destroys an existing African civilization; and when Western civilization does encroach upon a system that was undergoing minor crises from within, communal harmony crumbles.

In fact, as the *Trilogy* suggests, Achebe has observed that with the advent of white missionaries, everything does not hold together, and chaos reigns; in a talk between Obierika and Okonkwo, the former says,

> The white man came quietly and peaceably with his religion, ... we allowed him to stay. Now ... our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. \(^{(19)}\)

Above all, the advent of the white missionaries set of a spiral of violence that leads eventually not to the society's destruction only, but – one might venture and infer – to fanaticism and extremism. The white missionary Mr. Smith, in *Things Fall Apart*, for example,
encourages his new African converts to express their new faith zealously. The outcome of such teaching is the emergence of new groups that reveal themselves zealots and extremists. This progress goes further, where, in Arrow of God Goodcountry advocates a militant evangelism, that blood should be shed for Christianity’s sake.

Accordingly, is not it a just motive and a just question to be asked about the original originator of fanaticism and terrorism, as they have been known today?

Anyhow, this is the truth that Achebe had offered in the fifties of the past century, in answer to the general tendency of the colonial text to presume that the good intentions of the missionaries (colonizers) were realized when an existing system was shaken up, if not destroyed. This is also the "truth" as we live it now, in the twenty-first century, where stability breaks in many countries upon which Western powers have encroached. However, the researcher contends that these events/policies go much farther back – back to the Age of Empire and back to the Age of Discovery.

There is a remembrance of things past in Heart of Darkness; and there is a remembrance of things past in current events. In both, the trope is shaped by the history of Western empire and thus clearly entrenched in the old fantasies of invasion, objectification, and aggression. And Said reminds us that "the meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, ... [for] its existence as shared
memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force\(^{(20)}\) (italics added). Such a colonial text as *Heart of Darkness*, thus, demonstrates that modern narrative is not independent of the past, for they are influenced by the metaphor of the imperial quest – much in the same way that we are today. Thus, is the past really past? Or does it endure – especially via figuration – in modern memory?

The researcher thinks that one of the broader implications of this study is that it is important to raise consciousness about the way metaphors manufacture consent for questionable praxis. The imperial quest (and the euphemistic language and media that glorify and cloak it) survived and survives modern critique to surface again and again.

In *The Geopolitics of Information*, Anthony Smith warns quite clearly about the power of the new media "to penetrate more deeply into a 'receiving' culture than any previous manifestation of Western technology," and that it could be even "greater than was colonialism itself".\(^{(21)}\) Consider some of the Western coverage regarding the Third World in general and the Middle East in particular. The media typically depicts Western intervention in terms of the quest trope – (so it becomes hard to escape from the trap of the trope, and eventually from the Western troops). The West – seeking to promote "freedom" – drops into the (frequently mystified) focal point, crushes the demonic Other, and returns (having secured the world for "democracy"). This is the customary pattern.
The irony of the "idea" rests (as it always has) on the fact that it is predicated on conquest and focused on very material boons (like oil) while insisting that it is only concerned with higher matters; it "had nothing to do with oil, literally nothing to do with oil".\(^{(22)}\)

Of course, the questions that remain to be asked are: What was the authentic motive for conquest then? Is the West denying its role in "the merry dance of death and trade"\(^{(23)}\) now in so many Arab countries and that has long characterized its participation in the world? It is a prefabricated trope that can be deployed (in all kinds of texts and in all kinds of circumstances) to induce mass hysteria or mass of aphasia. Moreover, its deployment deepens the relationship between culture and imperialism especially when ideological apparatuses in the West suggest that the boon may only gained by a quest based on invasion, objectification, and aggression.

The researcher does not suggest that we dispense (as if we could) with a long tradition of remarkable and powerful myth and narrative, which can be interpreted in many different ways. The researcher just suggests that it is critical to explore the past in order to understand the present. T.S. Eliot is quite right when he observes that the historical sense is "nearly indispensable" and that it "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence".\(^{(24)}\) It is important to calls modes of narrative representation into question in order to understand the cultural traditions that contribute to and
shape contemporaneity. This type of critical activity should interrogate the ways in which tropes are shaped and deployed. And such great modern novels as *Heart of Darkness* help us to understand the total cultural form of our present life by revealing the ways in which the Age of Empire as well as the Modern Age have shaped contemporaneity. All the same, the postcolonial contexts – as a critical mode and literature – play an important role in refracting back on the pre-texts in question, opening up possibilities of variant readings. Thus, such positional texts as *Things Fall Apart* direct one back to the reading of such colonial pre-texts as *Heart of Darkness*.

What the researcher hopes to have illustrated is that:

- In the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western writings on the subject of colonialism, the romantic image of the Western world is often emphasized. Whites have been represented as civilized, reformers, a virtuous nation of typical values – an image in contrast to that which has stereotyped the non-whites: savages, brutes, cursed territories with no ethics.
- Cultural or literary representation has a political dimension, however highly one may value artistic qualities.
- From the perspective of the relationship between culture and imperialism; cultural representations, including literature, are central first to the process of colonizing lands, and then again to the process of decolonization.
- Novels, in particular, are the most significant originators and disseminators of colonial power and its double, postcolonial resistance and reaction.
- What the researcher has tried to relate is that a novel like *HoD*, beside its aesthetic merits, is somehow expected also to convey
social facts and meanings with regard to Africa's reality and Europe's contribution to its social reform or destruction. Nevertheless, when applying a postcolonial reading of the text, colonial implications emerge, which might otherwise remain hidden; moreover, the social realities and experiences and facts of Africa's resistance have been evaded.

- There is no doubt that Conrad has exposed and accused the imperialists of inhuman treatment of the natives; nevertheless, he remains unrealistic in his portrayal of the African character. He uses clichés, stereotypes and generalizations about Africans – evil, backward, savage – for example.

- Today we hear many such general statements – unpunctuality, lack of administration, 'axis of evil', terrorist...etc. – about the Orientals in general.

- However, since HoD is immensely affiliated to the world of politics it should be affected by the political atmosphere and the dominant ideologies governing the setting.

- Perhaps there is some truth to the statement that the 'African' we know in fiction was originally created by European 'master-texts'. Therefore, Achebe's TFA provides an alternative reading of such colonial texts.

- Achebe's text debunks and challenges this Western representation of the Other, and as such, presents a coherent picture of an organic society – a picture in contrast to that which had been depicted in Conrad's HoD.

- In TFA, the author has drawn the reader's attention to the fact that Africans are people, and "often highly gifted people with life and society", and that Africa had cultural values as valid as those of Europe, and even existed before the white man and his civilization took control of the continent.

- Such Western negative stereotypes and distorting images of the Other were reason why Africa and several other nations came under the yoke of Western subjugation. With the pretence of
shouldering the burden of spreading civilization, Christianity, and progress, Westerners have plunged Africa, and the Third World in general, into an irretrievable situation; and as a result, everything had fallen (and still falling) apart.

- Achebe focuses on issues of race and power, and his text questions the "silencing" act of colonial imposition, challenging colonial constructs that had been imposed upon the subjugated nations.
- Thus, in this contrapuntal reading, *TFA* announces that the 'days of ignorance are over'.

The researcher hopes to have raised awareness of the vital role that English language and literature play in the development and dissemination of colonial representation and power, and then again in challenging and resisting such dominant devices, as well. The two works discussed in this study thus present themselves as texts of intervention, exemplifying the political nature of literary texts (colonial and postcolonial). In so doing, they illustrate how literary texts cannot be divorced from the political and social realities surrounding the author.

### 5.3 Suggestion for Further Research

It seems that there is a general consent among critics, at least among postcolonial critics, that in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad does not give us the sense that he could imagine an alternative to European imperialism, and that he was unwilling and unable to represent non-European points of view. The researcher would like to argue – in a further work – that in *Lord Jim*, Conrad does indeed develop an
alternative frame of reference. In this novel, Conrad even goes further, not only offering "native" perspectives on imperialism but imagining its end, a time when the indigenous peoples would be free from European domination.

This study, then, has completed only a very short story in the long novel that is still being written, namely, the story of imperialism in literature. Further in-depth studies on many more writers of different cultures with different perspectives – many more "short stories" – should be undertaken. The researcher hopes that my recent and future efforts will help sustain inquiry into the various relationships between language, culture and thought.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

This study provides a quick and comprehensive guide for teachers who wish to introduce their students to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and to choose works to read together with it. That is to say, we might now read *Heart of Darkness* in the light of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, for example. Such a way guides us toward reading discourses, literary or otherwise, both intertextually and contextually.

Students who use the lens of postcolonial theory to read works of literature are being acquainted with a mode of inquiry that asks them to explore the discursive "dialogue" within texts. Teaching students to use postcolonial theory to read literature critically could encourage them, by extension, to read *life* critically. We can empower students,
in other words, to look up from their books and out into the world, and to see that the dominant ideology that might cast them, and other people, as somehow outside of the norm (whether by nature of their gender, race, class, and so on) is ideologically constructed, not self-evident, "natural," or "true."

Teaching students of literature to approach the so-called realities that surround them as contestable "texts," is the means to making them more active participants in the ongoing construction and revision of their worlds.
Notes:


8. ibid., p. 56.

9. ibid., p. 58.

10. ibid., p. 77.


13. ibid., p. 86.


17. ibid., pp. 11-12.


