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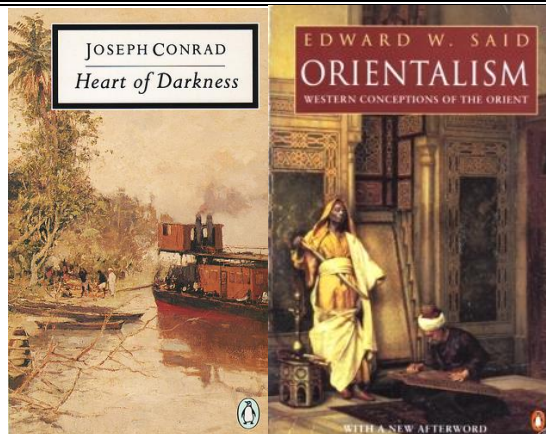
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## Orientalism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: An Influential Tool of Representing the Non-Europeans as Subjugated Entities in Literature

Azmi Azam, M.A.

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## Abstract

Edward Wadie Said's Orientalism is an encapsulated concept of Western authority over the Eastern. It not only contributed introducing diverse research areas for scholars but also evoked consciousness among the general readers. The term is a highly controversial and influential that deconstructs and prejudices minds of both the readers and researchers. Under its scholarly impact, Europeans cultivated a sense of digress and aversion toward the non-European and this sense is highly marked in the works of literature.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), inspired by Conrad's journey in Africa, is a controversial novella that depicts the harsh reality of European imperialist practices and the effects of orientalist aspects in Africa's Congo. The protagonist Charlie Marlow and Kurtz represent two different European individuals observing and describing The Congo from orientalist point of views. Such writings attracted the eyes of critics and therefore, Chinua Achebe attacks Conrad's orientalist writings and delivers his views as the voice of protest. Albert Camus' *The Outsider* (1942), William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1610-11) depict orientalism ideas too. Frederic Nietzsche's theory of superman and nihilism are also associated with Said's concept of orientalism.

The aim of this work is to illustrate Said's concept of orientalism and to explain its usage in various works of literature, especially in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe's arguments on Conrad's novella are presented and Nietzsche's theories are associated with Conrad's characters along with the reference of some other literary works to make the critical discussion more logical. At the end of this work, readers will achieve a more critical understanding of the term orientalism and its impacts in literature. Readers will also be able to analyze European writers from the viewpoints of racism, apartheid, imperialism, colonialism and psychoanalysis.

**Key Words:** Orientalism, Occident, Orient, subjugation, representation, nihilism, supremacy, subalterns, slavery, imperialism, prejudice, misinterpretation.

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## Introduction

*Orientalism* is a burning term that is used as a tool to define the non-Europeans in literature. Albert Camus's *The Outsider* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Tempest* are good examples where the non-Europeans are misrepresented. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* depicts the slavery of African Congo from an orientalist view points which arouse a lot of debate among the intellectual. Some critics believe it as a good book on European imperialism but most of the scholars highlight the hyperbolic representation of the Congolese regions of central Africa.

Conrad only shows the slavery of Congo and the uncivilized living of the Africans that marks him as an orientalist writer. Charlie Marlow, considered as Conrad's mouthpiece, explains the European orientalism and the helplessness of the Africans. The representation of Kurtz is of higher importance as he is presented not only as a European agent but also a victim of imperialistic and hegemonic impulses. To protest against such writings, Chinua Achebe's groundbreaking criticism harshly attacks Conrad. He believes him to be a racist and considers the novella as a piece of mockery of Africa.

## Analyses

### *Orientalism*

The term *Orientalism* is a debatable and controversial concept of the Eastern culture. It generally refers to the studies and research works, which describe and explain the diversity of culture in the territories of the Middle and Asian-Eastern world. It is a dynamic concept of difference between the East and the West on the basis of cultural multiplicity, architectural peculiarities and literary representations. The term became largely popular with Edward Said's *Orientalism* published in 1978. It allowed many academic and pedagogic fields to explore the term as a patronizing outlook of the Occidental or Western scholars toward the Eastern world setting the idea that the West is superior in all aspects comparing to the East including Asia, Africa and Arab territories. Many scholars define the term orientalism in different ways. Edward Said's definition of the term is the most controversial and resourceful but other critics have

associated other fields of researches which evoked from the very concept of Said's orientalism. Regarding this, Julie F. Codell and Dianne Sachki Macleod says:

Ever since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, twenty years ago, scholars have responded to his ground-breaking study by exploring, critiquing, expanding and re-defining its suppositions in a wider application of his term to cultural practices and the rhetoric of power. (1998, p.2)

Critic Anouar Abdel Malek marks orientalism as the traditional area of study of two different worlds of human civilization. He says:

'On the level of the position of the problem, and the problematic, the two groups consider the Orient and the Orientals as an 'object' of study, stamped with an otherness- as all that is different, whether it be 'subject' or 'object'- but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character...This 'object' of study will be, as is customary, passive, non-participating, endowed with a 'historical' subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or 'subject' which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, posed, understood, defined- and acted- by others. (Macfie, 2000, p.50)

A. L. Tibawi marks orientalism as the study of Islamic and Arabian ideologies done by the European Christians, therefore, having completely different interpretations devaluing the sentiments of others. In this regard, Tibawi again says:

Surely the authors must be aware that it offends Muslim sentiment to brush aside the cardinal Muslim belief that Islam is of divine origin, and to suggest, whether obliquely or bluntly, that Muhammad laid false claims to be the bearer of a divine message, and that the Qur'an itself is thus the composition of an imposter. Is it not more conducive to human understanding, and more scholarly, to leave matters of faith alone, and to turn to more tangible pursuits in such fields as literature, art, and the sciences which despite the orientalist's own efforts still bristle with question-marks? Surely it is possible for a

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Christian (or Jewish) orientalist, having a different faith from a Muslim, to state the Muslim's conception of his religion in Muslim terms. If he does so he will not only be more accurate, but he will place himself in a better position to comprehend Islam's manifestation in history. (ibid, p.63)

### **Edward Said and Orientalism**

Edward Wadie Said was born in Jerusalem, Palestine, in 1 November 1935 and died in 25 September 2003. He was literary theorist and a professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. As a cultural critic, he achieved his popularity by publishing his book *Orientalism* (1978) and by explaining the ways and their impacts of the Western study of the Eastern culture. The book highlights the quintessential tactics of the European and British authorities to subjugate and dominate non-Europeans and thus is recommended as a higher controversial topic of discussion. His book provided diverse issues to be researched on in post-structural and post-colonial fields of studies marking the groundbreaking notion:

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences...the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. (Said, 1995, pp.1-2)

In *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1995), which is a later printed and edited version of the previous book, Edward Said sets out to analyze the origin and impact of Orientalism through explorations of scholarly and creative writings on the East from the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The term is examined as 'a political doctrine' (Said, 1995, p. 204) and ideologically motivated idea that described Eastern individuals as 'Others' (ibid, p. 332) in various fields of interests. Apart from the survey of cultural supremacy and Orientalist disciplines of knowledge, the main areas of study are related to Western literature of Orientalism and literary critics who have conducted them. His arguments also combined Foucault's concept

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of discourse and Gramsci's ideas of cultural hegemony. Furthermore, he unmask the Western prejudices and orthodoxies with textual evidences focusing on the impact of history, politics and economic dominance with varied critical viewpoints.

According to Said, non-familiar cultures and religions are vast sources of attraction for European critics and the brief history of Western views of Islam makes the concept of Orientalism more powerful. The East has always been one of the 'deepest and most recurring images of the Other' (ibid, p.1) for the West. When renowned intellectuals of the West make representations, the general readers raise hardly any question. It is assumed that Orientalist writers have described Oriental history and characters before Orientalism 'accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution' (ibid, p.95). Therefore, Said strongly says:

Historical entities such as locals, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. 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. (ibid, p.5)

Moreover, Said clarifies that every writer carries some 'Oriental Precedents, some previous knowledge of the Orient' (ibid, p.20) which are unchecked and accepted as well as developed by influential critics for further studies. There is no denying to the fact that such powerful verbal attacks often seemed to go unquestioned. This also raises the question as to what makes the Orient an object of criticism for the Westerners? Said suggests that 'Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient' (ibid, p.6).

The term survives academically through significant researches and its canons are well-established as 'the corporate institution for the dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it' (ibid, p.1992). A further point of Said's argument is that Orientalism is not only a historical phenomenon but also a 'political actuality' (ibid) and a discourse that makes it a

controversial issue. Moreover, all the above highlight Althusser's and Foucault's ideas related to Orientalism.

Eastern writers have taken Orientalism as a topic of debate: 'The Orient now appeared to constitute a challenge, not just to the West in general, but to the West's spirit, knowledge, and imperium' (ibid, p 248). For example, Chinua Achebe in 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' (1902) protests against racial partiality, imperialistic imagery and the projection of Africa as maverick and this can be linked to Said's ideas. It is a matter of debate whether such protests ever surmount the powerful litany of Orientalist prejudices. It seems that Conrad, like other authors, believed that 'Our duty is to understand Oriental civilization. The humanistic problem consists, on an intellectual level, in making a sympathetic and intelligent effort to understand foreign civilizations in both their past and their future forms.' (Said, 1995, p.248). There is an inconsistency in this statement that indicates that the Orient is a topic of research, and that Western writers are licensed to display the East as if Eastern intellectuals are incapable of representing themselves.

### **Said into the Depth of Orientalism**

Said has highlighted that all cultures are complete and unique because of their respective conventions. A foreign author turns curiously toward the unfamiliar customs and tries to list peculiarities in his creative work to make this appeal to all. He contradicts himself saying that portraying a different culture can be appreciative but representing it in an altered way with the amalgamation of prejudices and imaginations is misleading. Similarly, Spivak (1990, p.53) says in an interview with Walter Adamson that the practice of aesthetic representation of a culture is a 'strategy of tracking the socio-economic' (ibid) by displaying the semiotic fields in different manners and fractures in written forms.

Also, it has been demonstrated that the representations of the Orient by the West are mere exaggerations of the unfamiliar rituals and have been possible because Orientals are viewed as a 'sort of surrogate and even underground self' (Said, 1995, p.3). He further says that 'The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or

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manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline or governing.’ (ibid, p.41) Besides, this is done without hesitations under the practice of linguistic hegemony, coined by Gramsci as if Orientalism is ‘an art-historical term’ (In Mackenzie, 1995, p.43). Said further says that literature is a world of imagination where the author’s mind speaks crossing the limitations of real and unreal. It is believed that if the empirical reality is directly presented in literature, it may lose its grandeur. In addition, it is undeniable that “the world of appearance, far from being a product of the ‘thing-in-itself’, is actually the product of man’s imagination, of his ‘erroneous’ conceptions” (Nietzsche, 2000, p.234). Therefore, every author has the license to use the imagination to create a piece of literature but the only danger, pointed-out by Said, is the skillful combination of the real with the unreal, coming out from the practice of the literary intelligentsia. In this regard, MacKenzie stresses:

Edward Said combined and adopted two influential theoretical constructs of the twentieth century to produce his major revaluation of Orientalism. He took Michel Foucault’s concept of the discourse, the linguistic apparatus through which the articulation of knowledge becomes an expression of power, and linked it to Antonio Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony through which elite control is maintained over the mass...where Gramsci dealt with class in a European content, Said transferred his hegemonic principles to racial representation and control in an imperial frame. (Mackenzie, 1995, pp.3-4)

Orientalism, an authoritative invention, is used as a tool to present the Orient under Western ideological lenses: ‘Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’ (Said, 1995, p.3). Moreover, it is a powerful term whose application is well acknowledged throughout centuries. Similarly MacKenzie says:

In *Orientalism*, he identifies an imperial totalizing of project, a ‘master narrative’ of western power...his master narrative is regressive, a tool of dominance which survives the end of formal imperialism to continue its destructive role in the world of today. As he has put it, decolonisation is an unfinished project. Thus he totalizes for the purpose of demolition. But his trademark is continuity: his Orientalist programme has had continuous showings

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from at least eighteenth century to the present day. It prepared the way for full-blown imperial rule and survives as the cultural and ideological superstructure of neo-colonialism. (1995, p.6)

It is a great challenge, Said suggests, to defend such an influential term, because it has been well established in various forms in several scholarly fields of interests. For instance, Gramsci's critical works extended the issues of class disintegration, which derived from the capitalist theories of imperialism. Perhaps, Said admits that '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' (1995, p.1991). Additionally, the rapid growth of industrialization class distinctions, such as- working class inferiority and ruling class superiority that strengthened the concept of Orientalism and introduces many other terms, such as- supremacy, sexism, Occidentalism, racism, apartheid amongst others.

### **The Oriental Silence**

Said has formulated the word 'Oriental Silence' (Said, 1995, p.9) to stress the fact that the East has never tried to protest against such dominations in the past and doing so, they have allowed the West to proceed. It denotes that they have accepted the intellectual subjugation and academic supremacy of the West or they are waiting for a perfect time to speak out. He has given no justification to such a doubt but mentioned that a scholarly protest in the near future may arise like the 'Field Day' movement (ibid, p.353). The East may not have pedagogic excellence compared to that of the West but they have many other hidden talents which will evoke the unawakened peak of conscience. Hence, it can be predicted that they may object to be called as subjects or subalterns but the certainty of such a revolution in future is on doubts.

There is no disagreement that general readers do not survey the actual facts and believe what the authors say in words. For example, when a person speaks of black man's sexuality and jealousy referring to *Othello* (1603), hardly any common reader protests. There is hardly any denial that Othello speaks black man's jealousy on love and sex and it makes readers believe that black people are more sexually provoked and the reason for this silence is supposed to be the

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stern establishment of orthodoxies regarding the black-skinned individuals rooted by the higher intelligentsia. Several psychoanalytic illustrations and historical documentary proofs forcefully convince the minds of the general readers to adopt such concepts. Another similar example is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* where the Africans are depicted as slaves who are unable to revolt against the slavery enforcement.

All writings on Eastern culture are presented in a contrast against the Western culture where the West is the superior one in all respects, strongly mentioned by Said. Moreover, the depiction is so attractive, convincing and believable that readers accept the way the writers present them. In this regard, Barry (2009, p.161) says that when general readers read a piece of post-colonial text, they do not critically review the written words the way a Marxist critic does by creating a division between the 'overt' and the 'covert'. Therefore, it becomes obvious for them to believe without hesitation and such an acceptance is being criticized by Said as 'silence'.

Such attitudes of the readers encourage Orientalist writers to continue their practices of making a contrast between the Western and the non-Western countries. Furthermore, the impact of the previous World Wars and the triumph of the European and Atlantic powers which evoked 'power intellectual', 'power cultural', and 'power moral' are responsible for establishing 'the indisputable truth that Occidentals are superior to Orientals' (Said, 1995, p.2001). Therefore, there is no denying to the fact that "The superior 'order', 'rationality', and 'symmetry' of Europe, and the inferior 'disorder', 'irrationality' and 'primitivism' of non-Europe were the self-confirming parameters in which the various Orientalist disciplines circulated." (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001, p.51).

Said mentions Karl Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) highlighting Western thinking regarding the East that 'They cannot represent themselves, they must be spoken for' (Said, 1995, p.21). This raises the question that who has authorized them with such a duty? or why they think that it is their responsibility to represent the Eastern individuals? Such a vague explanation cannot provide a conclusion as it fails to show actual reasons. Spivak (2001, p.50) argues - no subjugated individual can speak without the help of an interpreter because the 'subaltern itinerary' (ibid) has not been properly disclosed in terms of representations. It seems that the West makes a judgment that the East is incapable of

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representing themselves academically. They are not even allowed to defend such injustices as if there is no legitimate scope for them to protest in any field. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the East itself 'has helped to define Europe' (Said, 1995, p.1) by being mute to the projections. Said further marks two tactics through which he will define and explain in his work the practicing orientalist authority over the Orient naming them as Strategic location and as strategic formation:

My principle methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called strategic location, which is a way of describing the author's position in the text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and strategic formation, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between the texts and the way in which groups of texts, even textual genres. Acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter, in the culture at large. (ibid, p.20)

Similarly, MacKenzie pointed out that 'for Said, the West transformed the East into a discourse. From the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries a vast corpus of scholarly, travel and imaginative writings consumed the Orient and disgorged it as a prefabricated construct.' (1995, p.8). Thus, it turns clear that the Orient which readers find in textbooks are the mere observation of the Western writers and it is so obvious that what they will present may be/may not be completely true.

### **Orientalism and Caliban**

Orientalist writers adopted a notion that they are bound to explain the East in literature as a source of entertainment with 'established opinion, myths and stereotypes' (Said, 1995, p. 353). The impression appears that in a manner of knowing the 'Other', it turns into constructing the other in 'a form of authority' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998, p. 168). For example, if Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is considered, Caliban, a deformed black creature, represents the East and the other characters, white-skinned well-educated individuals, represent the West. Caliban's feedback to Miranda highlights the sense of hidden revolt as a subjugated entity.

If the work is evaluated with reference to Said's ideas, it can be understood that Shakespeare has practiced imperialistic views in depicting his characters. Caliban's reply can be

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marked as a protest against such linguistic subjugation but he is an imaginary character. In reality, individuals like Caliban do not exist. Shakespeare could have depicted a white skinned deformed creature but he has given Caliban black skin. It can be said that because of the prejudice of the East, such depictions have been made before the practice of Orientalism was recognized. Such an overview links to Said's observation that the East has been recognized with all the negativities and has been represented with such orthodoxies for centuries, even before the term was clearly introduced.

When avant-garde scholars and writers like Shakespeare represents an individual of the East with confidence, like Othello and Caliban, no question is raised by the readers as they start to believe the following concept;

The Oriental is irrational, depraved, (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal". But the way enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of its own, a world with its own national, cultural and epistemological boundaries and principles of eternal coherence. Yet what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the results of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West. (Said, 1995, p.40)

Therefore, hardly any reader doubts the realism of such interpretations and accepts it without hesitation. Likewise, Said further speaks of the intellectual hegemony, a way in which the British intellectuals try to dominate the other races academically by imposing new English language with new stress, rhythms, metaphoric words and tonal expression in literary texts. Furthermore, Gramsci (2012) makes it clear that hegemony is always a sort of negotiation between the dominant and the subjugated individuals through the process of 'resistance' and 'incorporation'. In fact, these collaborations invoke the sense of racial superiority based on social and political hierarchy. For instance, Said mentions Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774), which explains the slave trades as perfectly acceptable institutions in Britain. Additionally, Duncan Macdonald's *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (1909) describes the Arabs satirically: 'The Arabs show themselves not as especially easy to belief, but as hard-headed, materialistic,

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questioning, doubting, scoffing at their own superstitions and usages, fond of tests of the supernatural – and all this in a curiously light-minded, almost childish fashion’ (Said, 1995, p.247).

By mentioning this portion of a work, it has been critically evaluated that the main verb is *show*, which spots the Arabs with fragile attributes caused from their hierarchical personalities. The title of the book and the inside description of Arabs denote a larger part of the West in words with the intention to demonstrate it in front of the world where the presentation is a sort of lampooning rather than anything else. Another such similar example is Chaim Weizmann’s remark to Arthur Balfour on May 30, 1918: ‘The Arabs, who are superficially clever and quick witted, worship one thing, and one thing only-power and success’ (ibid, p.306). Here, the demonstration is more satirical than simple.

### **Orientalism and Camus**

Albert Camus was born in 7 November, 1913 and died in 4 January 1960. He was a French Nobel Prize winner and renowned author, journalist and philosopher. His popularity was based on his philosophies on absurdity, existentialism and nihilism. His famous novel *The Outsider* (1942) depicts his philosophies but it also represents the aversion between the West and the East. On one hand, the protagonist is represented as a victim of the effect of orientalism and on the other hand, the Arabs, depicted in the story, mark the author’s partiality to the European authority.

*The Outsider* depicts ridiculing definitions of the West under the license of creative aestheticism. According to the story, the protagonist, a European, stabs an Arab in the name of self-defense and accepts judicial punishment without regrets. The way the Arabs have been described as well as the incident of the dispute has been portrayed, the writer can be charged as an Orientalist whose every word has been hyperbolic. The writer’s attitude suggests that it has been his duty to show the rudeness and aggression of the Eastern people to the readers. In fact, by depicting the audacity and rudeness of the Arabs, the writer indirectly recommends them to be civilized. A strong link can be made to Said’s concept when he points out Faure’s idea that the Orientals have to be depicted the way they are and no sort of amalgamation will be shown in

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order to be polite to them and ‘unless the Oriental learns to be rational, to develop techniques of knowledge and positivity, there can be no rapprochement between East and West’ (Said, 1995, p.253).

It has been emphasized as well that it is not only a matter of ‘provincial chauvinism’ but also being real to the things the way they are. It follows that it is ‘White Man’s difficult civilizing mission’ (ibid, p.254) after the impact of world wars to provide ‘summational statements’ (ibid) regarding the culture and beliefs. It is also apparent that the writers have been honest by stressing the behavioral characteristics of the Western individuals ‘antipositivistically and intuitively’ (ibid). If they show the ‘barbarism, narrow technical concerns, moral aridity, strident nationalism and so forth’ (ibid, p.258) of the Orient, it will create awareness in them to generate a change for the better. This raises the question as to why such cultures are considered uncivilized or why they need to be changed for being different from the British. Said has been straight forward with the view that ‘No scholar or thinker, of course, is a perfect representative of some ideal type or school in which, by virtue of national origin or the accidents of history, he participates’ (ibid, p. 263). Thus, representations cannot be wholly honest to the things they portray because of the authors’ limitations, but it is also true that the practice of representations will never come to an end in the fields of literature.

### **Orientalism as an On-going Process**

Orientalism evokes many branches of critical thinking among distinguished authors such as – Spivak, who talks about the gender and race issues in her famous ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988), Gentile, who explains his neo-Hegelian philosophies, and Croce who explains his critical views on anti-Marxism, amongst many other critics, who have introduced their debatable concerns. Though the term has always been a burning topic of debate, many critical concepts have been established from its varied illustrations.

Said stresses that the negative emergence of Orientalist studies could only be reduced if the East starts to speak for itself. Similarly, Selden, Widdowson and Brooker (2005, p.224) declare that ‘the oppressed and the silent’ will fail to achieve ‘self-legitimation’ unless they revolt against the entitlements suppressed upon them under the impact of neo-colonialism.

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Though, the most serious limitation of this method is the acceptance of the authority to start ‘the idea of rethinking and re-formulating historical experiences’ (Said, 1995, p.353).

There is no doubt to the fact that Orientalism is a way of conceiving post-colonialism and post-modernism. Moreover, it has been recognized as a powerful discipline whose principles are hard enough to deconstruct. The studies rising from Said, especially those contributed by Marxists and Freudians are a matter of debate for the critics and historians. It is admirable that Said has demonstrated Orientalism from multiple points of views with textual evidences as well as illustrated its varied implicit and explicit interpretations, but his work has always been sharply criticized by many intellectuals.

For instance, MacKenzie (1995, p.5) shows sympathy to Said’s work and marks it as ‘polemic’ and ‘distinctly schizophrenic’ (ibid) because of its scholarly influences in the fields of Humanities and the Social Sciences. He states four challenges to Said’s concept of Orientalism (ibid, p.11): passiveness of the East, uncertainty between truth and ideology, ‘theoretical inconsistency’ (ibid) and ‘male-originated discourse’ (ibid). Moreover, he denotes Said’s frailty to distinguish between ‘high art’ and ‘popular culture’ and strongly suggests for a revision of Said’s conformity of theories (ibid, p.14). Even, Said admits, self-criticizing his work, that Orientalism is an ‘exclusively male province’ (In Macfie, 2000, p.113) and a source of racial influence.

### **Orientalism and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness***



Joseph Conrad 1857-1924

Courtesy: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Conrad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Conrad)

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Joseph Conrad was called Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski and was born in December 3, 1857, in the Polish Ukraine. This Polish-born writer learned English later in life but was familiar with the impact of colonialism and orientalism concepts earlier in childhood. When Conrad was quite young, his father was exiled to Siberia on suspicion of plotting against the Russian government. After the death of Conrad's mother, his father sent him to his mother's brother in Kraków to be educated, and Conrad never again saw his father. At seventeen, he traveled to Marseilles and spent the next twenty years as a sailor. In 1878, he signed on to an English ship in 1878, and eight years later he became a British subject. In 1889, he began his first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), and fulfilled his boyhood dream of traveling to the Congo. Joseph Conrad has acknowledged that *Heart of Darkness* is in part based on his own experiences during his travels in Africa. At the age of 31, he was appointed by a Belgian trading company to serve as the captain of a steamer on the Congo River in 1890, his experiences led him depict the fundamental effects of European imperialism and trade-market exploitations of the Congo during his time in the novella.

The story in the novella is based on the slavery of the Congo during King Leopold II reign and is also based on Conrad's journey to the African Congo. The novella earns a vital position in the canon of Western global discourses on human rights. Criticizing it as a sexist and racist work, it is well acknowledged as a book depicting European Imperialism. Later, this novella was used as a protest against the maltreatment of European imperialism raising a campaign in Belgium to highlight slavery enforcement.

In the aftermath of World War II, the rights of common people which were subjugated were formally enumerated in the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to protect all people from persecution, victimization, cruel and inhuman treatment, barbarity, threats to their lives, and despoliation of property, as well as to ensure a reasonable quality of life. Conrad's depiction of the condition of life in an area of central Africa in the novella identified with the Belgian Congo suggests his acceptance of the causal relationship with the protest of the U.N. Declaration's Preamble.

Through Charlie Marlow, the protagonist and mouthpiece of Conrad in the novella who

goes to the Congo as a company agent appointed by the headquarters of Brussels, we get an idea of the practice of orientalism in African regions. Marlow describes:

I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! These were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils that swayed and drove men-men. I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly. (Conrad, 2008, p.33)

We learn that under Leopold's rule, people were forced to flee their villages, made to work even though they were starving to death, and died of sicknesses; these images of human rights violations lead to and culminate in the presentation of Kurtz as a government agent who has preached and practiced orientalism on the helpless people of the Congo. This is the situation that *Heart of Darkness* presents which can be associated with the concepts of Said's orientalism.

### **Orientalism and Conrad's own observation**

The imagery of Africa which Conrad depicts in the novella is highly influenced by his own experiences in the African territories, especially his journey to the Congo and it highlights the concept of orientalist writings too. When Conrad was in Africa, he kept a diary with him and the things fascinated him were written in it. The diary, which he kept with him during June to August 1890, gives hint of his being inspired by his actual observation but the Congo described in the diary is very much different than the Congo depicted in the novella. In his diary on July 1890, he noted one of his experiences.

He says he encounters the drumming sound coming from the deep jungle, which reminds him of the primitivism and savagery of uncivilized Africans. Such an experiences created horror and terror and he includes a similar incident in the novella. The description indicates terror, which Marlow feels and the sound signifies primitivism. But Marlow also says that the Africans are human beings and not beasts to be feared. A similarity is found here regarding Said's concept of Orientalists and that is they depict Orientals, the Africans in the novella, as maverick

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individuals:

They were dying slowly-it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation...lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air- and nearly as thin (Conrad, 2008, p.34)

He further illustrates:

According to Orientalism, Orientals can be observed as possessing certain habits of mind, traits of character and idiosyncrasies of history and temperament; the sum total of these characteristics inclines Orientals toward certain types of action. (Macfie, 2000, p.90)

The picture of the Congo and Africans in Conrad's diary is very agreeable and fascinating whereas the Congo in the novella is depressing and somber. It depicts the primitive instincts of human beings, the civilization, dissatisfaction and helplessness of misfortune sufferers, the Africans in the Congo, who are bound to serve the European authority. When Conrad went to the Congo, he suffered from dysentery and fever, therefore, there is an indication in the novella that those who go to exotic and uncivilized places with the Congo and live with the company of locals, suffers from diseases. The change in Dane Fresleven is indicative here. He is expressed as a calm, gentle and quiet person who turns ferocious and extremely angry after coming to the Congo. Moreover, he is killed by the locals on the debate of the possession of two chickens.

Conrad could have depicted the greenery and simple living of the Africans. He could have explained the cultural diversity of them by describing the African rituals in a positive manner appreciating cultural diversity and multiplicity but he only depicts the rudimentary side of it that creates a horror and terror for readers:

I could see ever rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose

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bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking...All their meagre breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared stonily uphill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages (Conrad, 2008, p.33)

He depicts the Africans as repressed mutinous individuals believing uncivilized norms of living life. Their act of attacking Marlow's steamboat is marked as their inherent savage attitude. Their urge for Kurtz to stay with them depicts an ancient belief of the demigod.

During King Leopold's reign, forced labor, torture, and sadistic cruelties were elements of international trade in ivory and rubber. Millions of Congolese have been victims of crimes against humanity during 1885-1908 that formed the Congo Reform Association to eradicate maltreatments. Conrad's novella depicts the cruelties of slavery and thus his work is a sort of protest against brutal and exploitative imperial regime. He has written the novella to bring awareness of the atrocities committed in the Congo to a wider audience of his time and to depict a history different than the formal version propagated by the Belgians and presented in the textbooks long after the exclusion of imperial rule in Africa. Therefore, it can be said that the novella is viewed through Victorian anthropology that represents the devastating glimpse of Africans. Orientalist ideas, in the novella, turns more apparent when Marlow says: "we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, "must necessarily appear to them (savages) in the nature of supernatural beings – we approach them with the might as of a deity", and so on, and so on" (Conrad, 2008, p.76)

The way Conrad depicts the European imperialism and African helplessness, marks the ideas of Said: 'A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery' (1995, p.44). He could have depicted both the positive and negative sides of Africa but he only highlighted the negative sides of it.

### **Achebe and *Heart of Darkness***

Albert Chinualumogu Achebe was born on November 16, 1930, in Ogidi, Nigeria.

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Achebe attended the Government College in Umuahia from 1944 to 1947, graduated from University College, Ibadan, in 1953 studying history and theology. He also developed his interest in indigenous Nigerian cultures, and he rejected his Christian name, Albert, for his indigenous one, Chinua. In the 1950s, Achebe was one of the founders of a Nigerian literary movement and in 1959, he published *Things Fall Apart* as a response to novels, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, that treated Africa as a primordial and cultureless foil for Europe: "black figures strolled about listlessly, pouring water on the glow, whence proceeded a sound of hissing; steam ascended in the moonlight, the beaten nigger groaned somewhere. "What a row the brute makes!" (Conrad, 2008, p.45). Achebe noticed the white writer's observation of black people as primitive, socially backward, and language-less native Africans.

Achebe's criticism to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* becomes a burning topic of controversial issue and is considered a voice against the suppression of Europeans literary figures in case of representing the Orient. He says: '*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as "the other world", the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality.' (in Norton, p. 1785). He strongly recommends Conrad as partial to European colonialism and imperialism: 'the point of my observations should be quite clear by now, namely that Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist.' (ibid, p.1789). This ground breaking comment of Achebe attracts diverse critics to dive deep into the matter and discover more issues related to it. Achebe further says:

Which is partly the point. Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the Africans as humane factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at this peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. 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. My answer is: No, it cannot.(ibid, p.1790)

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Achebe expresses his full aversion toward Conrad's representations of the Africans. He views the novella as an insult to the culture of Africans. As he is an African and belongs to an African ethnic group, his anger toward a white European writer is understandable. Though, it is Achebe's personal criticism and it expresses his aggression toward the whole European community who treat Africans as a matter of research topic. Whereas, many critics in later periods find the novella as a good book of European imperialism as it unhesitatingly depicts the harsh cruelty of slavery enforcement and maltreatment of human rights. The character named Kurtz has been the burning topic of research for many researchers. The most famous is the association of Nietzsche's superman theory with Kurtz's transformation.

### **Nietzsche and the Superman Theory**

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born in 15 October, 1844 and died in 25 August 1900. He was a German philologist, philosopher, cultural critic, poet and composer. He wrote several critical texts on religion, morality, contemporary culture, philosophy and science. Nietzsche's key ideas include the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy, the Will to Power, the "death of God", the *Übermensch* and eternal recurrence. His superman theory is well acknowledged worldwide. "Superman" is a term significantly used by Friedrich Nietzsche, particularly in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–85). George Bernard Shaw popularized the term "superman" in his play *Man and Superman* (1903).

Generally, superman means a strong man flying and saving the lives of common people in daily basis fighting the evil but Nietzsche's superman is not battling for truth and justice. Rather, Nietzsche's Superman is a human who has battled modern values and overcome the flaws of humanity. Nietzsche's philosophy has been associated with everything from socialism and fascism to Marilyn Manson. Superman, according to Nietzsche, is a man who reaches a state of being where he is no longer affected by pity, suffering, tolerance of the weak, the power of the soul over the body, the belief in an afterlife, the corruption of modern values. Critic A. H. J. Knight points out some of the potential features of being a superman:

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Freedom from ethical restrictions, for great ends; active, creative greatness; joy; these shall be good. Fetters shall be thrown off and authority denied. This life shall be accepted as the only life, and as good, through terrible. All that impedes greatness, power, beauty, shall be abolished. The fears of sin, hell, death, conscience, shall be exorcised. As there is no soul without body, there can be no spiritual greatness where the body is sick: therefore health is immeasurably valuable. Pity is a sickness or a selfishness. It hinders action, or serves to give an unhealthy pleasure to the pitier. Hardness is a virtue beyond all prices. (Knight, 1933, p.127)

Moreover, Superman is constantly changing and in a state of rebirth and growth. He determines what is good and what is evil, not allowing religion or society to determine these things for him. The Superman finds his happiness in this way. He uses a reason that is independent of the modern values of society or religion. He determines his own values. This creation of his own values gives him joy, and in order for the Superman to cope with a changing world, the Superman must constantly change. The Superman does not believe in an afterlife or the power of the soul over the body because he does not believe in religion and has no proof of an afterlife or a God. Therefore, he makes the most out of this life.

Moreover, Nietzsche marks nihilism as an essential characteristic of human beings and superman is the active controller of such a humane feature. Superman uses nihilism as a tool to fuel his constant progressive attempts not to change the world but to change himself for his own betterment. On the other hand, Nietzsche has a different concept of nihilism as well. Kurtz, in *Heart of Darkness*, is a European who changes from a civilized European to a primitive leader of uncivilized Africans. His transformation is described as a alteration which is far more different than just a change. Kurtz is like a superman to the Africans as well as to his fiancé too. His transformation is marked into two categories: 1) He is a superman to the Congo slaves. 2) He is the example to the Europeans as the impact of exotic African jungle. To some extent, he is marked featuring Nietzsche's nihilism too.

## **Nietzsche and Nihilism**

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In general terms, Nihilism is the philosophical doctrine that highlights the negation of one or more putatively meaningful aspects of life. Most commonly, nihilism argues that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. The term *nihilism* was first used by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Immanuel Kant. The term is sometimes used in association with anomie to explain the general mood of despair at a perceived pointlessness of existence that one may develop upon realising there are no necessary norms, rules, or laws. According to many critics, it is divided into categories of metaphysical, epistemological, mereological, existential, moral and political. As a philosopher, Nietzsche defines nihilism into three categorical stages: religious, radical and complete nihilism. He says:

A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of 'in vain' is the nihilists' pathos-at the same time, as pathos, an inconsistency on the part of the nihilists (In White, 1990, p.19)

Pearson and Large translated from *European Nihilism* and defined:

Nihilism as a symptom of the fact that those who turned out badly have no consolation left: that they destroy in order to be destroyed, that, relieved of morality, they no longer have any reason to 'surrender themselves' – that they position themselves on the territory of the opposing principle and *want power* for themselves, too, by forcing the powerful to be their executioners. This is the European form of Buddhism: doing no, after all existence has lost its 'sense' (2006, p.388)

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* represents such orientalist nihilism in both Marlow and Kurtz. It is found that Kurtz transformed himself to achieve greater pleasure but his achievement fail to satisfy his urge for tranquility. Whereas Marlow joins the work and goes to the Congo to start a life better from his past but what he achieves is the harsh cruel truth of imperialism: "Unexpected, wild, and violent as they had been, they had given me an irresistible impression of sorrow...Even extreme grief may ultimately vent itself in violence-but more generally takes the

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form of apathy” (Conrad, 2008, p.68). The African mistress of Kurtz also suffers from nihilism, as she is helpless to stop Kurtz returning to Europe. Her silence marks the deep depression that only marks oriental nihilism but also marks personal aggression that turned into

## Conclusion

Said’s contributions to Orientalism are controversial because his views challenge the questions of legitimacy in case of cultural subjugations. As scholarly protests are being invoked by the new critics of non-European territories with strong agreements to eradicate the orthodoxies, more diverse criticisms and critical theories can be predicted in the future.

The concept has introduced new fields of research in multiple sectors of humanities and social science but the certainty of the facts will always be in doubts as Said, as well as others, vaguely provides solutions to the arguments. In fact, Said admits the limitations of his effort mentioning that the book fails “to use the term ‘Orientalism’ in neutral sense, so much had it become a term of abuse” (Said, 1995, p.341). The end of the book suggests the emergence of a hidden revolution but further clarification is needed to be more explicit.

It could be recommended that application of new academic techniques and revision of previous researches would be a better way to explore the problem between the East and the West. Though its application is seen in art, architecture and other fields, in literature its use is marked through the representation of the non-Europeans. Older works like Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and *Othello* provide glimpse of racism and orientalism.

In the works of French literature like Camus’s *The Outsider*, Said’s concepts are also highlighted but its application is more marked in the literary works of European writers like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. The Orient depicted in this novella is both convincing, as it is true from the historical point of view, and controversial, as it is written but the observation and imagination of a European toward a non-European territory. It is highly appreciative that Said’s work has given researchers more fields to work on the problem of the East and the West and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* contributed in this respect being marked as a racist literary production.

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