

Good essay on heart of darkness by joseph conrad an analysis

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Conrad's approach to his story of the rationalization and justification of racist Western imperialism presents a record of this despicable time that continues echoing the long-term evil in parts of former colonial holdings in 21st century Africa. Debate continues today about Conrad's intention writing this factual-based fiction (Bloom 6), and surely, exemplifies another literary offering of how racist ideas "were the basis of colonization" (Ginio 185). This academic exercise presents discourse about "Heart of Darkness" by Conrad with an analysis of the ideology of the justification of 19th century Western racism/imperialism connected to the distortion of Darwin's theory of natural selection.

Bringing the discussion to the connection of "enlightened" Western view of the genetic superiority of the white man seems appropriate. The superior attitude of the Westerner portrayed in "Heart" toward the non-white African native derives from social Darwinism. It was the broad application of Darwin's theory that no less, fueled the colonials' attitude for justifying the exploitation of the people and the lands they colonized (Noren 1-120).

Based upon the distortion of Darwin's natural selection theory, evolved the dominant race theory by Western philosophers over a century and a half ago. In truth, there was never anything natural about this absurd ideology as so aptly presented in this story Conrad's narrative peels away at the layers to get to the core of imperialistic evil in the colonial process in Africa (as was colonialism elsewhere including actions in the American colonies). Darwin's life work during most of the 19th century studying natural science and developing the theory of evolution also contributed to earlier social and political theory perspectives including Lamarck (1744-1829) as well as

Malthus (1766-1834). Botanist Lamarck debated how environment influenced human traits passed to descendants with only the strongest of these traits surviving (Noren 1-121)

Imperialism begat colonialism framed in the idea Westerners were the dominant race and had the right and the obligation to take advantage of the native African wielding this as the power structure feeding the capitalist intentions economically and politically in Africa, Conrad's narrative brings the ugly, inhumane, and criminal actions to the reader. Thus, it becomes apparent reading "Heart" that scientific racism connected to the ideals of the white characters in the story viewed Africans as the inferior race.

Another look at Conrad's intentions in writing this story reminds how the images he portrays of Africa was not original. Conrad's image was the dominant image of Africa held by the Western imagination with "Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his own mind to bear on it" (Achibe 251-261).

What Conrad achieves in his book is construction of the harsh reality of colonialism through the incidental scenery presented throughout. Marlow's character in particular, shows Conrad's motivation creating his adventures as symbolic of "the hypocrisy inherent in the rhetoric used to justify imperialism" (Achibe 251-261). This type of writing content in "Heart" that spurs the intellectual and ongoing debate about Conrad and this novel among different fields of thought. Did Conrad cleverly hide his intrinsic belief in imperialism with white as the dominant race justified in the actions plagued upon the African natives during the colonial era, or if it was a subliminal message of the absurdity of imperialism?

Another of Conrad's treatment of imperialism and the words he uses to circumvent the reality of the situation is how the Company men refer to their deeds as part of "trade" and the abhorrent treatment of native Africans in the process "is part of a benevolent project of 'civilization'" (Achibe 251-261). Conversely, Kurtz at least does not exhibit the hypocrisy of calling himself a trader but insists he takes ivory by force. as well as aptly describing the extermination and suppression he doles out to natives as ruling through intimidation and violence (Achibe 1977).

While both carefully admiring and recoiling in disgust at the perverse honesty of Kurtz, the fact remains Conrad uses the demise of this character as the chance vehicle that would overtly expose European evil practices in their activities in the Dark Continent as "colonials". Conrad succeeds making the Africans depicted in his story appear more as consequential objects without any character development. This may result from his lack of understanding of race and culture so typical of the Western attitude in the era. Again, within the debate of the intentions of Conrad writing this story are those opinions his story is far more insidious and damaging than even the profundities of the characters of Kurtz or the Company about their presence in Africa. The character Marlowe in particular, becomes Conrad's screen or canvas serving as a backdrop for expressing both his existential and philosophical struggles through the horrors and mysteries of the events he observes about the native Africans.

Through his empirical renderings of the African natives, through the eyes and consciousness of Marlowe, Conrad conveys a sense of rudimentary liberal ideas. It is through exotic existence in Marlowe's (Western ideology)

eyes that pulls his character into self-contemplation on the reality of the situation. by dehumanizing the native African. Clearly, the intention of Conrad developing this nuance of the character of Marlowe in contrast to the transparent racism and violence of colonialism would assign it to a condemnation of the hypocrisy of how imperialism plays out in the colonial process.

A telling aspect of the story relates to madness connection to imperialism. The precept of racism framing imperialism is a conjecture of madness itself. Therefore, the story's incorporation of madness and the white man succumbing to it makes metaphoric sense. While there is an irony in the madness engaging sympathy from the reader about Kurtz' madness the relativity of this condition is also apparent. On the other hand, applying insanity to the dealings of the Company is not as easy. This leads the reader (as well as Marlowe) on a sympathetic relationship with Kurtz that escapes any identification of madness with the Company. The Company represents, perhaps, the efforts of the madness of group harmony as a social function among even those who dole out evil.

In conclusion, as posited in the introduction, this academic exercise presents discourse about "Heart of Darkness" by Conrad with an analysis of the ideology of the justification of 19th century Western racism/imperialism connected to the distortion of Darwin's theory of natural selection. The intentions of Conrad creating this novel, remains argumentative. At the same time, by understanding the impetus of Western ideology about imperialism the novel provides, as described, plenty of examples of racism acting as the

fodder feeding the fire of the evils of colonialism in 19th century Africa as depicted in "Heart of Darkness".

Works Cited

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