

The colonialistic bias of the heart of darkness essay sample

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



In the colonialistic bias of Heart of Darkness by Francis B. Singh, he argues that Conrad wrote the story from first hand experience of imperialism. Conrad was a victim of Russia's colonialistic policies toward Poland. Singh says that the basis of Heart of Darkness comes from Conrad's own experience in the Belgian Congo, one of the most exploited areas in Africa. Conrad doesn't tell the story directly, he uses Marlow. Marlow's impressions of colonialism fall into three classes. One is exemplified by comparing present colonialism to the Roman's colonizing ancient Britain. The second is characterized by the " noble cause" the " jolly pioneers of progress" and the " improved specimen." The third class is used to lash out against colonialism. " The African natives, victims of Belgian exploitation, are described as " shapes" and " bundles of acute angles" to show the dehumanizing effect of colonialistic rule on the ruled. Singh says that Kurtz becomes an animated image of death carved out of old ivory a voice and a shadow, suggesting the loss of personality that colonialism effects on the rulers.

Singh then looks at the title of the book to focus on. He says that on one level it indicates the geographical location of the Belgian Congo and the color of its inhabitants, or the Africans. It also refers to the evil practices of the colonizers of the Congo, their exploitation of the natives, and suggests that the real darkness is not in Africa but in Europe, and that its heart is not in the breasts of black Africans but in all whites who engage in colonialistic enterprise. He is suggesting that what is apparently black is really white, and what is apparently white is really black.

According to Marlow the colonizers became psychologically deprived because, being cut off from the norms of civilization, they turned to the lawless jungle. Singh implies that Marlow's trip upriver into the heart of Africa represents a similar experience. He says, "the utterly savage state of being that existed before civilization tamed the unconscious with its absolute desire for egotistic self-fulfillment by means of moral restraints." Marlow uses the unknown, remote and primitive Africa as a symbol for an evil and primeval force. Singh says that the evil, which the title refers to, is to be associated with Africans, their customs, and their "satanic litany" of Kurtz's followers.

Singh suggests that Marlow's sympathy for the oppressed blacks is only superficial. He feels sorry for them when he sees them dying, but when he sees them healthy, practicing their customs, he feels nothing but abhorrence and loathing, like a good colonizer to who such a feeling offers a perfect rationalization for his policies. If blacks are evil then they must be conquered and put under the white man's rule for their own good. He may sympathize with the blacks, he may be disgusted by the effects of economic colonialism but because he has no desire to understand or appreciate people of any culture other than his own, he is not emancipated from the mentality of a colonizer.

When is Marlow's attitudes Conrad's? By showing Marlow's views of Africa as limited, Conrad would be making the larger point that those who see others as less than human are themselves dehumanized by their own vision. If

Conrad shares Marlow's prejudices then *Heart of Darkness* was written, consciously or unconsciously, from a colonialistic point of view.

Singh implies that the narrator who frames Marlow's story represents a more comprehensive point of view than Marlow, his role is to interpret the meaning of the tale and give it a universal significance. The meaning he draws from it is ultimately no different from Marlow's. At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, he is an upholder of English colonialism, calling the English "bearers of a spark from the sacred fire." At the end he realizes that the Thames leads "into the heart of an immense darkness" meaning that English colonizers are as evil as any other, and that those who set forth on colonialistic enterprises, no matter how nobly they were conceived, lose themselves in the progress, like Kurtz. Singh says that inside every white man there is a black man, who is evil and that to become, like Kurtz literally did.