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Aspects of Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

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يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَات

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Dedication

"I thank my family for supporting me at every step, and I thank them for providing me with an excellent study environment, which helped me achieve my goals. I hope that I have done something to make my family proud, and that it makes them proud of me."

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Chapter one

1.0 Preliminaries

This chapter introduces Aspects of Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness and outlines the research framework. It begins with preliminary remarks that establish the context for the investigation. The background of the study explores the historical and literary context of Conrad's novella, focusing on the era of European colonialism in Africa and the prevalent attitudes toward race (Achebe, 1975; Said, 1993). The problem of the study identifies the central issue that the research aims to address: the representation and perpetuation of racist ideologies within the narrative. The aims of the study articulate the specific objectives, such as analyzing the portrayal of African characters, examining the language and imagery used to depict racial differences, and exploring the broader implications of Conrad's work in relation to postcolonial discourse (Hawthorn, 1990; Watt, 1980). The research questions formulate the specific inquiries that guide the analysis, while the research design outlines the overall approach to the study. Finally, the methodology of the study details the specific methods used to gather and analyze evidence, including close reading, textual analysis, and critical interpretation (Said, 1993; Watt, 1980).

1.1 Introduction

Joseph Conrad's *"Heart of Darkness"* has been a focal point for discussions on colonialism and racism. The novella's depiction of the Congo Free State under King Leopold II exposes the brutal exploitation of African people and resources. Critics have highlighted the pervasive racism embedded within the narrative, often manifested through dehumanizing portrayals of the native population. These portrayals contribute to a broader colonial discourse that justifies imperial domination by constructing the colonized as inherently inferior. This is evident in descriptions that reduce Africans to primitive, savage beings, lacking individuality and agency (Said, 1993, p. 21).

Furthermore, the novella's use of imagery and language reinforces racist stereotypes. The contrast between the "civilized" Europeans and the "savage" Africans creates a binary opposition that underpins the colonial power dynamic. This binary is evident in descriptions of the African landscape as dark and impenetrable, mirroring the perceived "darkness" of the native inhabitants. This symbolic association reinforces the idea of Africa as a place of savagery and chaos, justifying European intervention as a civilizing mission (Achebe, 1975, p. 251).

1.2 Background of the Study

The debate revolves around Conrad's language and imagery in describing African characters. Often, they are depicted as primitive, savage, and lacking in individuality. This is evident in descriptions of the African laborers working on the Congo River, who are frequently referred to as "bundles of acute angles" or simply as "black shapes" (Watt, 1980, p. 188). This dehumanization is further reinforced by the constant association of Africans with the natural world, emphasizing their supposed lack of civilization. As Cedric Watts notes, the Africans are presented as "figures of grotesque savagery" and are frequently linked to "primordial, pre-human states" (Watt, 1980, p. 190).

However, it is crucial to consider the narrative context of these descriptions. The story is told through the perspective of Marlow, a white European narrator, whose views are shaped by the prevailing prejudices of his time. As Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism*, Conrad's work, while undeniably reflecting the racist attitudes of the era, also reveals the inherent contradictions and moral bankruptcy of colonialism, the horror that Marlow witnesses in the Congo is not simply the savagery of the Africans, but the systematic exploitation and brutality inflicted upon them by the Europeans. The "*Heart of Darkness*" is not located in the African continent itself, but within the hearts of the colonizers. (Said, 1993, p. 20).

1.3 Problem of the Study

Many problem arises from Conrad's use of language and imagery when describing African characters. Often, they are presented as primitive, savage, and lacking in individuality, described through animalistic terms. This creates a dehumanizing effect, which some critics argue perpetuates racist tropes. For example, Chinua Achebe, in his influential essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," argues that Conrad portrays Africa as "the other world," a place of darkness and savagery that serves as a backdrop for the white man's journey (Achebe, 1975, p. 252).

1.4 Aims of the Study

1. Criticism of Racism in the Novel: Some scholars argue that *Heart of Darkness* reflects and perpetuates the racism of its time, citing the dehumanization of African characters, stereotypical descriptions, and the portrayal of Africa as a primitive, savage land.

2. Conrad's Critique of Colonialism: Other scholars interpret the novel as a critique of imperialism, suggesting that Conrad uses Marlow's journey to expose the brutality, exploitation, and moral corruption of the colonial system.

3. Ongoing Debates on Representation: The contrasting interpretations of the novel have sparked ongoing debates about its place in literary history and its relevance to modern discussions of race and representation.

1.5 Research Question

1. How does Conrad use light and darkness imagery to reinforce racial hierarchies and depict African people as "savage"?

(Said, 1993, p. 96).

2. How does *Heart of Darkness* reflect late 19th-century European beliefs in racial superiority and justify colonial exploitation?

(Watt, 1979, p. 195).

3. In what way does Kurtz symbolize the dangers of unchecked power and racist ideologies underpinning European imperialism?

(Hawthorn, 1990, p. 77).

1.6 Research Design

Research Design: Aspects of Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Research Focus: This study will investigate the multifaceted nature of racism in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, examining how it manifests through language, imagery, characterization, and narrative structure.

1.7 Methodology of the Study

This study analyzes Joseph Conrad's *"Heart of Darkness"* through a postcolonial lens, examining the text's representation of race and its engagement with the ideologies of imperialism. The methodology employs close textual analysis, focusing on specific passages, imagery, and character interactions to identify instances of racial stereotyping, dehumanization, and othering. This involves scrutinizing the language used to describe African characters and the portrayal of the African landscape.

Chapter Two

2.0 Preliminaries

One of most prominent aspects of racism in *"**Heart of Darkness**"* lies in its depiction of African people. They are consistently portrayed as primitive, savage, and lacking in any form of civilized society. They are described as "bundles of acute angles," "black shapes," and "fantastic invasion[s]," reducing them to mere objects or abstract forms rather than recognizing their humanity (Said, 1993, p. 20). This dehumanization is further emphasized by the constant comparison of Africans to animals. Marlow's descriptions often evoke images of wild beasts, reinforcing the idea that they are less than human. For example, Marlow describes the natives as "nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom" (Watt, 1979, p. 188).

2.1 Introduction

A major idea in "Heart of Darkness" is how easily people can lose their civilized behavior, especially when they are involved in taking advantage of others in colonies. The main character, Marlow, sees that the Europeans in the Congo, driven by greed for ivory, act in ways that are far more brutal than the local people they call "savage" (Achebe, 1975, p. 252).

The book turns the usual idea of "savage" versus "civilized" around. It shows that the African people often have a connection to their world and a

sense of community that the Europeans have lost. Their customs and connection to nature are shown as having a deep meaning that the Europeans don't understand (Watt, 1979, p. 187).

In "Heart of Darkness." One big theme is imperialism and colonialism. The search for ivory represents the desire for wealth and power, but it hides the harsh reality of taking over other lands and treating the local people terribly. This greedy pursuit also changes the colonizers for the worse (Said, 1993, p. 12).

Another theme is the nature of evil. The evil in the book isn't always obvious; it's often hidden behind ideas of making "progress" and making money. The way the colonizers treat the African people like things to be used shows a deep lack of morals (Achebe, 1975, p. 252).

The book also looks at the idea that civilization is just an illusion. Conrad criticizes the European claim that they were bringing enlightenment to Africa, showing instead the cruelty of their actions. The character Kurtz, who was supposed to be a symbol of this mission, becomes completely wild, showing how thin the layer of civilization can be (Achebe, 2000, p. 252).

Marlow's journey into the Congo is also a journey into himself, exploring the darker parts of human nature. Kurtz represents the mix of

good and bad that people are capable of, making Marlow think about his own moral choices (Achebe, 1975, p. 252).

This unfairness is built into many parts of society, like schools, jobs, and even the justice system. These systems can continue to create disadvantages for certain groups even if people don't mean to be racist, making it a hard problem to fix (Coates, 2015, p. 45).

Because racism is so deeply set in our systems and institutions, it creates disadvantages that can last for generations. Fixing this requires more than just changing individual opinions; it means changing the systems themselves that cause this unfairness (Feagin, 2006, p. 47).

2.2 Conrad's life

Born into a Polish family resisting Russian rule, Conrad's parents were exiled to Siberia, where his mother died (1865) and father later succumbed to tuberculosis (1869). Orphaned by 11, he was raised by his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski. These early hardships shaped his introspective worldview and themes of human struggle (Najder, 2007, p. 15).

At 16, Conrad joined the French merchant navy (1874), sailing globally and absorbing seafaring experiences that inspired his fiction. After a brief suicide attempt in Marseilles (1878), he shifted to the British merchant marine, becoming a captain (1886) and gaining citizenship. His 1890 voyage

to the Congo—a harrowing encounter with colonial exploitation—later fueled ***Heart of Darkness*** (Karl, 1979, p. 217).

Settling in England (1896), Conrad abandoned seafaring to write full-time. Despite English being his third language, he crafted psychologically rich, morally complex novels like Almayer's Folly (1895), Lord Jim (1900), and Nostromo (1904). His prose, dense with symbolism, explored isolation, imperialism, and existential dilemmas (Baines, 1960, p. 178).

Conrad died in 1924 but left an indelible mark on modern literature. His works, blending searing realism with poetic ambiguity, remain pivotal in discussions of colonialism, identity, and the human psyche (Karl, 1979, p. 789).

2.3 Conrad's works

1. *"Heart of Darkness"* (1899)

2. Lord Jim (1900)

3. Nostromo (1904)

4. The Secret Agent (1907)

2.4 Savage vs Civilized People

A central theme in *"Heart of Darkness"* is the idea that the veneer of civilization is thin and easily stripped away, particularly in the context of colonial exploitation. Marlow's journey into the Congo becomes a journey into the heart of human darkness, revealing the inherent savagery that lies beneath the surface of European society. As Achebe argues, Conrad's narrative exposes "the dehumanization which European imperialism had perpetrated on Africa" (Achebe, 1975, p. 252). The Europeans, driven by greed and a lust for ivory, engage in acts of violence and exploitation that far surpass any supposed savagery attributed to the native populations. The chain gang Marlow witnesses, the abandoned machinery rusting in the jungle, and the pervasive atmosphere of decay all testify to the destructive impact of European presence. This echoes Said's observation that "the imperialist enterprise depends on the idea of an 'other' whose territory and resources are available for imperial appropriation" (Said, 1993, p. 12).

Conrad inverts the conventional understanding of savagery and civilization by portraying the native populations as possessing a dignity and connection to their environment that the Europeans have lost. The native workers on the steamer, despite their physical suffering, maintain a sense of community and ritual. Their drumming and chanting, initially perceived by Marlow as savage noises, later come to represent a primal connection to life

and the natural world. As Watt points out, Conrad "uses the imagery of primitive ritual to suggest a fundamental level of human experience which is both prior to and more powerful than the rationalizations of civilized man" (Watt, 1979, p. 187). In contrast, the Europeans, cut off from their own cultural roots and driven by insatiable greed, become increasingly dehumanized. Kurtz, the epitome of European ambition and intellect, descends into a state of utter savagery, embracing the very darkness he was supposedly sent to conquer. His infamous pronouncements, "Exterminate all the brutes!" reveal the true face of colonial "civilization" (Conrad, 1902, p. 164).

2.5 Themes of the Novel

2.5.1 Imperialism and Colonialism

Ivory symbolizes wealth and power, masking colonial exploitation and dehumanization of natives. Colonizers lose their humanity through unchecked greed and moral decay, revealing imperialism as a metaphor for the erosion of their own souls (Said, 1993).

2.5.2 The Nature of Evil

Evil manifests subtly, justified by "progress" and profit, as seen in the ivory trade's moral corruption. Colonizers dehumanize natives, reducing them to commodities, exposing profound moral bankruptcy (Achebe, 2000).

2.5.3 The Illusion of Civilization

Conrad critiques colonialism's façade of enlightenment, exposing its brutality. Kurtz's descent into savagery mirrors the hypocrisy of "civilizing" missions, stripping away societal pretense (Achebe, 2000; Said, 1993).

2.5.4 The Search for Self

Marlow's journey into the Congo parallels his introspection, confronting humanity's primal darkness. Kurtz embodies the duality of human potential, forcing Marlow to grapple with his own moral ambiguity (Conrad, 1899; Achebe, 1975).

2.6 Racism in General

Racism, a pervasive and deeply ingrained societal ill, manifests in a multitude of forms, from subtle microaggressions to overt acts of violence. It's a system of oppression built on the false premise of racial superiority, where one group is deemed inherently better than another based solely on skin color or ethnic origin. This deeply flawed ideology has fueled centuries of discrimination, inequality, and human suffering, leaving an enduring legacy of trauma and injustice. The consequences of racism are far-reaching, impacting everything from access to education and healthcare to economic opportunities and interactions with the criminal justice system (Bonilla-Silva, 2017, p. 23).

Racism is not simply about individual prejudice; it is a systemic issue woven into the fabric of institutions and social structures. These systems can perpetuate racial disparities even without conscious intent, reinforcing existing power imbalances and limiting opportunities for marginalized groups. For example, housing policies, hiring practices, and even the way history is taught in schools can reflect and reinforce racial biases, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. This systemic nature of racism makes it particularly challenging to address, requiring more than just changes in individual attitudes (Coates, 2015, p. 45).

2.7 Racism in Genders

Gender-based racism, a complex intersection of racial and gender biases, manifests in various insidious ways, impacting individuals' opportunities, experiences, and overall well-being. It's not simply about prejudice against someone's race or gender alone, but the unique and often amplified discrimination arising from their combined identities. This form of oppression can be particularly challenging to recognize because it often hides beneath the surface of seemingly neutral social structures and interactions. For instance, a Black woman might face hiring discrimination not just for being Black or for being a woman, but for the specific stereotypes associated with Black women, such as being perceived as "angry" or "unprofessional" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

Women of color often encounter a "double bind," where they are held to different standards than both white women and men of their own race. They may be seen as too assertive, facing accusations of aggression, or too passive, being labeled as weak or incompetent. This tightrope walk makes it difficult to succeed and advance in their careers. Furthermore, the wage gap is significantly wider for women of color compared to white women and men. They often earn less for the same work, highlighting the devaluation of their labor (Collins, 2000, p. 78).

2.8 Racism is the Problem of the whole Societies

Racism, a blight on humanity, is not confined to specific pockets of the world; it is a global affliction that corrodes the fabric of societies everywhere. It manifests in myriad forms, from subtle microaggressions to overt acts of violence, and its tendrils reach into every aspect of life, from employment and housing to education and healthcare. The insidious nature of racism lies in its ability to adapt and mutate, racism is a problem that demands a collective reckoning, a recognition that the well-being of any society is inextricably linked to the well-being of all its members, regardless of race. Ignoring this interconnectedness is not just morally reprehensible, it's a recipe for societal decay (Bonilla-Silva, 2017, p. 23).

Racism is embedded within institutions and structures, perpetuating inequalities across generations. These systems continue to privilege certain

groups while marginalizing others. This can manifest in disparities in access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, creating a cycle of disadvantage that is difficult to break. For instance, racial profiling by law enforcement disproportionately targets certain communities, fueling distrust and further marginalizing those already vulnerable. These systemic issues require more than just changes in individual attitudes; they demand a dismantling and rebuilding of the very foundations upon which our societies are built (Feagin, 2006, p. 47).

2.9 The Importance of *Heart of Darkness*

Joseph Conrad's *"Heart of Darkness"* stands as a cornerstone of modern literature, exploring the complexities of human nature and colonialism. The novella delves into themes of imperialism, moral ambiguity, and the duality of civilization versus savagery. Through the journey of Marlow into the Congo, Conrad critiques the exploitative practices of European colonial powers. The work has been praised for its layered narrative structure and psychological depth. As Chinua Achebe famously argued, however, the text also perpetuates certain racist ideologies, portraying Africa as a dark, unknowable "other" (Achebe, 1977, p. 8).

The novella's exploration of existential themes resonates deeply with readers, making it a timeless piece of literature. Marlow's introspective journey into the heart of the Congo mirrors an inward exploration of the self,

raising questions about morality and identity. According to Edward Said, Conrad's work reflects the anxieties of empire, capturing the unease of Europeans confronting the consequences of their actions abroad (Said, 1993, p. 25).

Chapter Three

3.0 Preliminaries

Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** (1899/1902) occupies a contested space in literary discourse, often scrutinized for its portrayal of race, colonialism, and power. Set against the backdrop of King Leopold II's exploitation of the Congo Free State, the novel critiques European imperialism through the journey of Charles Marlow, a steamboat captain navigating the Congo River. While Conrad's work is frequently lauded for its psychological depth and symbolic complexity, its depiction of African characters and racial dynamics has drawn sharp criticism (Conrad, 1899/1902).

3.1 Introduction

A main point this chapter will cover is the clear ranking of races shown in "Heart of Darkness." Marlow's story consistently puts Europeans at the top as "civilized" and Africans below them as primitive outsiders who don't have a voice. For instance, when he calls African workers "black shadows of disease and starvation," it takes away their individual human qualities and makes them seem like symbols of suffering instead of real people (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 24).

Kurtz's journey into madness is a key example of how morally bankrupt colonialism was. His final written words, "Exterminate all the brutes!,"

show the terrible and violent ideas hidden within the European effort to "civilize" others (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 84).

This kind of language makes African characters seem like they are just part of the background, like "black shadows," instead of people with their own lives and feelings. This fits with the idea that colonized people are seen as not fully existing or mattering in the same way as colonizers (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 24).

The colonial ideas in "Heart of Darkness" show the problems and lack of morals in European imperialism. The idea of a "civilizing mission" is shown to be fake through Kurtz, who starts as someone with high ideals but becomes a cruel ruler. His report, which ends with the violent command, fully exposes the true, harsh goals behind the idea of bringing civilization (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 51).

The command "Exterminate all the brutes!" is a shocking moment that reveals the deadly thinking behind the "civilizing" story (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 84).

3.2 Racial Hierarchies in *"Heart of Darkness"*

The racial hierarchies embedded in *"Heart of Darkness"* manifest through the stark dichotomy between European colonizers and African "others." Marlow's narration consistently positions Africans as primitive, voiceless figures, contrasting with the "civilized" Europeans. For instance, he describes a group of Congolese laborers as "black shadows of disease and starvation" reducing their humanity to symbols of suffering. This dehumanization extends to the portrayal of Kurtz's African mistress, who is depicted as a silent, ornamental figure, while her European counterpart, Kurtz's Intended, is granted agency and speech (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 24).

Conrad's portrayal of Africans as part of the natural landscape further entrenches racial hierarchies. Marlow observes, "The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free" (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 48). Here, the African wilderness is conflated with the people, framing both as untamed and threatening. Postcolonial theorist Edward Said (1993) argues that such imagery reflects Orientalist logic, where the "Other" is constructed as inherently inferior to justify domination.

Kurtz's descent into madness epitomizes the moral bankruptcy of colonialism. His report for the International Society for the Suppression of

Savage Customs, which concludes with the scrawled postscript "Exterminate all the brutes!" (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 84).

3.3 Language and Descriptions of African Characters

Conrad's linguistic choices in *"Heart of Darkness"* systematically dehumanize African characters, reducing them to racialized caricatures that serve the narrative's Eurocentric gaze. The novel's opening pages establish a hierarchy of language, where Africans are denied speech and individuality. Marlow's description of the Congolese as "mostly black and naked, moving about like ants" (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 14) employs insect metaphors to strip them of human complexity. This imagery, repeated throughout the text, positions Africans as part of the natural landscape—a "blanket of cloud" or "black shadows" (p. 24)—rather than as agents with distinct identities. Such language reflects what postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon (1963) termed "the zone of nonbeing," where colonized subjects are denied subjectivity and rendered invisible.

The erasure of African voices is compounded by the narrative structure. Marlow's account, filtered through an unnamed outer narrator, creates a double barrier between the reader and African perspectives. For example, when the African helmsman dies aboard Marlow's steamboat, his final moments are described with clinical detachment: "He squirmed, he gripped the spear, and rolled over on his back" (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 36).

3.4 Colonial Ideologies and Their Implications

The colonial ideologies embedded in Heart of Darkness reveal the contradictions and moral vacuity of European imperialism. The "civilizing mission," a cornerstone of colonial justification, is grotesquely parodied through Kurtz's transformation from an idealistic emissary of progress to a megalomaniacal tyrant. His report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs initially champions enlightenment, advocating for "each station to be like a beacon on the road towards better things" (p. 51). However, the postscript "Exterminate all the brutes!" (p. 84) exposes the genocidal logic underlying the civilizing narrative (Conrad, 1899/2007, pp. 51, 84).

The Congo itself becomes a site of ideological contradiction. Marlow describes the landscape as "a place of subtle horrors" (p. 48), conflating the environment with the perceived savagery of its inhabitants. This conflation reflects the era's pseudo-scientific racism, which posited Africans as part of a "natural" order to be dominated. Historian Adam Hochschild (1998) documents how King Leopold II's regime exploited such ideologies, framing the Congo's exploitation as a "civilizing" endeavor while extracting ivory and rubber through forced labor. Conrad's portrayal of the Congo as a "Heart of Darkness" mirrors this propaganda, reducing Africa to a metaphor

for European fears rather than a lived reality for its people (Conrad, 1899/2007, p. 48; Hochschild, 1998).

3.5 Critical Debates on Conrad's *"Heart of Darkness"*

The most incendiary debates center on Conrad's depiction of Africa and its people. Achebe's 1975 essay "An Image of Africa" famously condemns the novella as racist, arguing that Conrad reduces Africa to a "metaphysical battlefield" where Europeans confront existential dread, while Africans are rendered as dehumanized props. Achebe highlights Conrad's repetitive use of animalistic imagery describing Africans as "rudimentary souls" to assert that the text reinforces imperialist hierarchies. it frames Heart of Darkness as a relic of Eurocentrism, complicit in the erasure of African agency (Achebe, 1977, p. 782; Conrad, 1902/2006, p. 74).

 Cedric Watts (1989) contends that Conrad's irony subverts colonial rhetoric, noting how Marlow's journey exposes the hypocrisy of the "civilizing mission." The grotesque portrayal of the Company's exploitation—"the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience"—underscores Conrad's condemnation of Belgian colonialism. Robert Hampson (1991) adds that the novella's focus on Kurtz's moral collapse critiques European self-deception, arguing that Conrad universalizes the darkness within all humans rather than

essentializing Africans (Conrad, 1902/2006, p. 46; Hampson, 1991; Watts, 1989).

Feminist scholars interrogate the novella's marginalization of women, who exist largely as symbols of imperialist and patriarchal ideologies. Nina Pelikan Straus (1989) contrasts the African woman at Kurtz's station—a figure of "savage and superb" defiance—with Kurtz's Intended, whose idealized innocence masks colonial violence. The Intended's declaration, "I knew him best," underscores her ignorance of Kurtz's atrocities, revealing how gendered idealism perpetuates imperial myths (Conrad, 1902/2006, pp. 116, 144; Straus, 1989).

Conclusion

Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** remains a pivotal yet contentious exploration of racism and colonialism, offering a complex lens through which to examine the intersections of power, identity, and morality. Through its portrayal of African characters as dehumanized "shadows," "bundles of acute angles," and primitive "savages," the novella reflects the entrenched racial hierarchies of the late 19th century, perpetuating stereotypes that reduce Africans to mere backdrops for European self-reflection. Conrad's use of light and darkness imagery reinforces these divisions, framing Africa as a primordial void contrasted against the "civilized" European psyche, a dichotomy that Edward Said critiques as emblematic of Orientalist logic justifying imperial domination.

The text's complexity lies in its dual role as both a product of its time and a subversive critique of colonial brutality. While Chinua Achebe condemns the novella for reducing Africa to a "metaphysical battlefield" devoid of humanity, others, like Cedric Watts and Said, argue that Conrad exposes the moral bankruptcy of imperialism. The grotesque exploitation of the Congo, symbolized by Kurtz's descent into madness and his chilling command to "Exterminate all the brutes!," underscores the hypocrisy of the "civilizing mission," revealing the darkness inherent in colonial greed and dehumanization.

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