

Savagery and Civilization: Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness"

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Abstract

This research paper highlights Joseph Conrad's satirical portrayal of "The Heart of Darkness" and shows how the white European people, the colonizers, take their lead in the novel to be civilized enough to go over the world and civilize people. Among those people the black people of Dark Continent Africa who were marginalized in the novel and to be called 'uncivilized' and 'savage' people. Some great empires like the British Empire used the cover of the civilization so as to achieve their desires over the third world countries. Joseph Conrad in his Heart of Darkness talked about these important themes, by showing the hypocritical ways that the British Empire used to colonize the third world countries and how did they use wicked plans to convince the world with their occupation. The British Empire colonized Africa so as to exploit their main resources, especially ivory, to use them in their manufactories. Also, this study aims to show how the British Empire used the cover of religion so as to convince the world of their deeds and to make them legal. This study focuses on the real 'savagery' concealing under the cover of 'civilization' and the real darkness existing inside the veil of white men. This study is based on historical research linked with a political background of imperialism. This study comes to its conclusion by showing the wicked ways that great empires used to colonize other countries, like Great British, and their policy to spread their control.

Keywords: Civilization, Colonialism, Imperialism, Savagery

Introduction

The concept of civilization is the stage of human social growth and organization that is considered most advanced. While savagery is the uncivilized or barbaric state or condition. Some great empires like the British Empire used the cover of the civilization so as to achieve their desires over the third world countries. All they did is a kind of savagery but in the shape of civilization. Over the ages, the savagery of the great Empires dominated the entire world, especially the third world countries. They used their power to get controlled over those countries so as to get the raw materials, particularly after the industrial revolution. One of the great empires was the British Empire, which colonized many countries to exploit their resources. Africa was one of the richest countries, so the British decided to occupy it. Ivory was their main aim to occupy; it is considered the oil of our time because it was used in many industries, such as art manufacturing and decoration industries. Their pretext for colonize Africa was to spread the Christian religion.

This research shows its problem that colonization is considered as one of the savage faces. The British Empire was able to convince the world that their colonization is innocent and they just wanted to spread the Christian religion. In a matter of fact, hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, all had gone on that stream, sharpened their swords, and decided to do whatever necessary to achieve their goals. The British Empire used special strategies to apply their greed to exploit African resources and get their raw materials. The hypocrisy that the British Empire used was

powerful enough to make the world believe that their occupation is legal. This is the problem that my study will focus on.

The purpose of my study is to focus on the hypocritical ways that the great empires used so as to occupy the third world countries and exploit their resources, as what the British Empire did with Africa. The wicked plans that they used to achieve their purpose like using religion as a cover of their bad deeds were to make the world under their control.

The British Empire also used different ways to occupy and control the world. And to show the deception of these empires so as to convince the world of their evil deeds. Also, this way of occupation inspired many other evil movements to trace the way that these empires used to occupy, like ISIS functions, which used the cover of religion too so as to achieve their desires.

This study has a significance that is useful for those academic people who are interested in the history of the British Empire, or those who want to explore the ways that they used to increase their empire. Also, the different strategies by which they could dominate over the world and convince the world for their deeds. Besides the non-academic people who are interested in knowing the truths about the great British and how did they use hypocritical ways to convince the world to accept their wicked plans.

Research Questions

What are the plans that the British Empire used to deceive and control third world countries?

To what extent did the great empires inspire the racism movement?

Literature Review

Many studies have been written on this topic, as well as many authors and critics talked about Savagery and Civilization in Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness". He wrote his novel then, the story has been criticized for racism by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. In his book, *The Location of Culture* Homi shows how Conrad explained the changing stages of African culture. "Conrad is associated with the production of transcultural narratives in the colonial world" (Bahbha, 1994) In *Gaming the Heart of Darkness* an article was written.

Pittner et al (state that Conrad's desire to express the terror he encountered is still highly tied to how Europe's sees Africa, the colonies, their people, and how they differ from the 'civilized world'. This Eurocentric perspective, intentional or not, permeates the novella and its adaptations to differing degrees in showing stories that all pose the same question in some capacity: What happens to civilized people when faced with the "dark places of the earth"? (Pittner et al., 2018) Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness" has drawn criticism for being an imperialist backer and defender. Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" Another literary work in which Francis speaks about the theme of civilization and savagery, in which he shares my research from the point of view of that the British Empire used savage's actions in their policy of colonizing Africa. On the Three Themes of "The Heart of Darkness", which is written by ZHANG Songcun, talks about the depiction of the three themes in the novel and how they play an important role in the main topic that I'm trying to investigate. Fanon rightly mentions that the technological weapon of colonialism makes people's lives external to them as they delegitimizes their previous social status (Fitzpatrick, 1992). For Arendt, "Legitimacy is defended by referring to the past when it is challenged, while justification based on the goal that is in the future" (Arendt, 1969, p52). All of these works have discussed the topic from different angles. On the other hand, my study *Savagery and Civilization* in the book "The Heart of Darkness" by Joseph Conrad focuses on the hypocritical deeds of the British Empire, which used its wicked ways to colonize the third world countries, and how could they convince the world by their imperialistic deeds through the passing of time, as this study is based on a

historical approach linked with a political background and using sociocultural studies as the main approach ?

Portrayal of Immorality and Religion in the Main Character “Kurtz”

This part highlights the portrayal of the issue of morality and religion through the main character in the novel as one of the reasons behind the exploitation of the Congo people by the colonizers, and it works as an aid for the coming and the control of colonialism by dividing people into civilized and uncivilized. The colonizers come to Congo Free State and take advantage of the ignorance of its people and widen their control through their focusing on a very sensitive issue in the Congo society and accordingly they get used to their advanced situations. The presentation of an alternative lifestyle and the new faith break the characters and encourage the colonizers. The ‘strange faith’, which is the nickname of Christianity among the Congolese, shatters the integrity and unification of the society. Religion was the first to break into traditional society, and by blaspheming the Congolese Gods.

It becomes evident in the study of African Traditional Religion that African religion gives traditional Christianity very different options with regard to its view of heaven, ancestors and spirits, life force, and, of particular significance for this study, shame, guilt, and sin. The worldwide emphasis of African religion considers reconciliation to take place at a predominantly human level rather than between humans and God. (Meiring, 2006, p. 4). Marlow continues to tell lies about the history of Europe and keeps his dialogue to deform the culture of Africa as it was described in the novel where he says, "The heavens do not fall for such a trifle." (Qtd. in Bahaba, 2012, p. 304).

Kurtz as the main character in the novel, who was the purpose of the narrator Marlow to find him, yielded to their joint influence by using his authority as a god to help him achieve his aims: the desire to get wealthy from ivory and the desire to discover latent kinship with the savages. But he should not be seen as merely a man who, of his own will, did it all. In contrary, he represented the role of the European colonizers, and his acts were consistent with the will of his group. Such as, the Trade Company was neither accused nor prevented by his actions of using them as slaves and then killing them inside the station. He was praised, as Marlow told us, solely for his “talented capacity” of collecting ivory. (Zhao, 2017, p. 148).

When it comes to the textual significance we see how Joseph Conrad mentions his main character. Kurtz is one of those characters who play a very significant role in controlling Congolese, as he tries to announce himself as a god for the primitive African people. Conrad wrote "The Heart of Darkness" in a way that conveys the meaning of the names through the behavior of the characters. It is very true about Kurtz, as his name includes a textual significance that signifies of his name. “Kurtz—Kurtz— doesn’t it imply short in German. doesn't it?” (Conrad, 1996 87).

Everything about Kurtz was brief and straightforward : his prominence as a fluent orator, his work as an agent of ivory, and his life as well as. Yet his impact on some specific individuals persisted for a very long time. However, Marlow didn’t have the ability to warn Kurtz of his fate of being swallowed by the wildness, which was dominated by Kurtz's choice to represent a civilization in Dark Africa. We felt very sorry for Kurtz, however, since he was the victim of history, the colonialism, and slavery ideals that he had devoted himself to have been disproven by those goals (Zhao, 2017).

He embodied several things: a representation of the wilderness, a god-like being, an imperialist, and an ancestral representative of power. Kurtz lived for a long time in the jungle with his forces. Kurtz was a bright man who wasn't able to adapt to the environment. The skulls of the men who had betrayed him surrounded his hut, which served as a reminder to anyone in the jungle who contemplated going against his will. Kurtz once fixedly thought of the world: birth,

life, and ultimately death. As he mentioned in his quote "I'm lying here in the dark waiting for death"(Assad Nassab, 2006).

When we read the cultural heroism of Africans besides the systematic individualism of the colonizers, it becomes clear that the effects of colonialism on Congolese are extremely vast and profound. Colonialism makes significant progress in Africa because of the anthropological studies they have on the Africans to gain information about their cultural systems and through which it is possible to overthrow their institutions (Reichman, 2004, p. 57). . Anthropology was a great help to the main character in the novel, in reality, Kurtz's role and performance in protecting the Inner Station, and also the ivory collection, prophesy of his certain survival ,because he was the colonizers' agent who was going to take advantage of the General Manager's dying conditions to his own advantage . Kurtz takes advantage of the ignorance of the Congolese to achieve his materialistic approaches.

It is possible to call this rejection of a good reason his steady degradation of ethical and moral values. The book, in a way, sets forth Kurtz's incremental spiritual degeneration at the end. This often occurs for other characters, like Russian characters. In his context, we can conclude that the very source of materialistic exploitation and immorality is the European imperialist mission itself since it is characterized by an unstable desire for wealth and power by subjugating indigenous people. These are two instincts in "The Heart of Darkness" that make Kurtz and other individuals lose their idealistic purpose and rule over the Congolese (Gadekar, 2018).

Colonialism as the Catalyst of Racism

Racism, racial discrimination, and related intolerance, whenever might be considered to racism and racial discrimination, are matters that constitute serious violations and obstacles to the full enjoyment of all human rights and represent a denial of the self-evident fact that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and are obstacles Given the establishment of friendly and peaceful relations among peoples and nations, which are among the root causes of many internal and international conflicts, including armed conflicts, and the consequently forced displacement of the population. Although there were important differences, European empires in both Africa and Asia emulated each other in terms of their policies, institutions, and methods of imposing control. And ancient history says that Great Britain preferred indirect methods of government. France used direct rule, and in fact, all empires used both direct and indirect mechanisms to impose their control over time and space.

Despite, Joseph Conrad depicting in his work " The Heart of Darkness" that white people are civilized while black people are uncivilized and savage, he dismissed , and also ignored the psychological analyzing of human behavior, Conrad has only tied the idea of enlightenment to the religion of white people ,Christianity," and Ignored the traditions and beliefs of the African people just because they were black-skinned. In addition to that, when the colonizers came to Africa, they came with the purpose of enlightening African people about their religion, they came as missionaries, but as I have stated above that Great Britain uses indirect methods to impose their policies. After they came, they did not ask people about their needs or to help them to rise, as readers we did not deny the advanced "technology" the colonizers had, instead colonizers used them and exploit them in all possible ways.

Kurtz, the narrator's purpose of his mission and the writer's main character was the representative of colonialism, savagely uses his tragic past to impose his hegemony over the Congolese taking advantage of their ignorance, were are not in scope to take about the shortcomings of African culture and the Congolese culture in particular, but colonialism took these shortcomings as an advantage to exploit them and then to describe them as savages. As colonialism creates a stereotypical image about the African continent as they are black, wild, savages, lower-class people and even they call them 'the other', besides describing the 'Congo

River' as the ill-fated river and sneak which indicates the evil side and representative of savagery, while they described 'The River Thames' as clear and straight and as the

Representative of civilization while they brought destruction and corruption to Africa. "Chinua Achebe declared: Conrad was a bloody racist" (qtd. In Watts, 1983).

The colonizers themselves created the idea of racism. In Home Bhabha's book, the location of culture stated that" according to Anderson, racism system from antiquated class ideologies that are a part of the aristocratic 'pre-history' of the contemporary nation . "(356). As they insisted on the notion that they are civilized people and found themselves above other people and their religion is the only right religion on this earth, so that they blasphemed the religions of the Congolese without any attempt to have a dialogue about the two religions, following this path paves the notion that they were savage and imposed their savagery on the African people and exploit them. Africans lacked a feeling faith and sin, they complained. "They were frustrated because they failed to induce this sense of sinfulness; they referred to the Africans as incorrigible savages and other derogatory names . " (qtd. in Meiring, 2006, p. 100).

When it comes to the conclusion, this research reflects on the ironic side of the depiction of Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness " of how white Europeans portray themselves as 'civilized' while portraying black people in Dark Continent Africa as 'uncivilized' and 'savage.' "Therefore, he claims that the bitter irony lies in the truth that the characters depicted in the novel as seemingly civilized in practice are exceedingly wild. In fact, the desire for strength, envy, and greed for ivory led them to their odious metamorphosis into corrupt, monstrous, and barbaric people that, for their selfish reasons, exploit the natives as their slaves and then throw them away like a waste. In the name of a 'civilizing venture,' their extreme cruelty is exposed as they attacked the natives and their land by transplanting the trappings of their own culture into the local environment. Thus, Joseph Conrad's binary picture of "civilization and savagery" serves as a potent tool to deliver a radical criticism of our readily supposed societal norms: "What are the criteria of civility and savagery?" Are white people still humans, and are black-skinned people wild indeed?" Therefore, in "The Heart of Darkness", Conrad in a way questions the stereotypical ideas of white society and the reasonableness of transferring its faith in the name of the 'mission of civilization' to the so-called 'primitive' nations. This research explored the true 'savagery' concealed under the 'civilization' Eurocentric mantle and the underlying chaos residing within the white skin mask.

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