

Kurtz as a Victim of Colonialism in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness

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Abstract

The noted Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe pleads against the universal appreciation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, arguing that the novel's reputation as a brilliant literary diatribe against colonialism obfuscates its callous denial of human attributes to the African characters. Predictably, Achebe does not criticise the plot's track that unreservedly depicts the colonisers' inhuman treatment of the colonised. Without discounting the preceding statement's logic, this essay seeks to present that the European's imperialistic foray into Africa inadvertently victimises Kurtz, ultimately proving fatal for him. This postulation is explicated by locating a commercial motive underpinning the colonial mission in Congo, represented through the trading company's plundering of ivory. Since Kurtz's madness causes hefty financial losses for the colonial machinery that thrives on profit maximisation, he does not receive the welfare schemes reserved for the economically viable colonial Agents. This disowning aggravates his debilitating ailment to a mortal degree, thus establishing the peculiar colonial system's culpability in Kurtz's untimely death.

Keywords: death; illness; madness; profit; trading company