

Introduction

While Achebe argues that *Heart of Darkness* is a racist text, Watts and others defend it as transcending racism insofar as it critiques imperialism. The interpretation of the story is further complicated by Conrad's impressionistic style, which some critics find to be a "means of obfuscation, allowing him to mask his 'nihilism,' maintain contradictory values, or both." Brantlinger himself believes that while the novel criticizes "certain manifestations of imperialism and racism," it does so in ways that are both imperialist and racist, with its impressionism "expressing—or disguising" the contradictions as an "apparently harmonious whole."

Section 1

Brantlinger introduces the idea that Conrad's works are not racist because they are inherently destructive to imperialist ideologies, despite the fact that Conrad himself had little faith in political activism. Conrad didn't witness the violence of imperialism first hand but instead found out about it from British media after his return. The lies that were used to cover up the violence enraged him more than the actual violence itself.

Section 2

Brantlinger presents *HofD* as an attack on imperialism. The ideals of imperialism, he argues, become "idols" in the story. Conrad compares the "evil" of European motives with the "evil" of Africa, condemning imperialism by using the imperialistic language. According to Brantlinger, Conrad knowingly omits historical facts and exaggerates others and Conrad made the novella intentionally ambiguous.

Section 3

Section three, put simply, is about ambiguity. It addresses the concept of separation of character and author views, stating that the views of one may not necessarily be the views of the other. The section also addresses that a piece's potential negative characteristics such as racism may not truly be racist, but simply accurate representations of a time and nothing more. Likewise, and perhaps converse to the perceived negativity, the piece may carry a strong social message about negative aspects of the time.

Section 4