Narrating Empire and its Afterlives: Predacity, Moral and Structural Violence in Heart of Darkness

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The empire persists to be a vital priority in literary studies, as colonial authority functions not exclusively through invasion but also by discourse, representation and economic exploitation. Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness depicts a nuanced literary depiction of imperial brutality within colonial Congo, in which the discursive nature of civilization obscures exploitation, racial hierarchy and dehumanization. The study examines the transition of violence from overt imperial cruelty to entrenched systemic structures that control daily existence. The key objective is to examine how moral structural violence is implemented by predation, which is characterized as a system of predatory extraction and dominance, and this study examines how these cycles are mediated by narrative form and how power is replicated within global systems. The study's methodology integrates close reading with theoretical comprehension through qualitative textual analysis. With the aid of literary theories, it incorporates postcolonial theory, globalization frameworks, and feminist criticism, and the concepts of world theory, narrative framework, spatial representation, labour abuse, and economic mechanisms are all examined selectively. The results demonstrate that Heart of Darkness accentuates moral violence, a concept symbolized by dehumanization, moral breakdown, and the instability of European consciousness under imperial circumstances and it also exposes systemic violence caused by the corporation's exploitation of African people, land, and resources, emphasising that colonial injustice transcends individual cruelty and constitutes a system of perpetuated by economic materialism, racial labelling and institutional dominance. The analysis indicates that Conrad's novel reveals empire as a predatory system where moral decay and material exploitation are inextricably linked and by analysing Heart of Darkness through the lens of predacity, it enriches intellectual awareness of the narrative form, rationale and validation of colonial violence within imperial discourse.

Keywords: Structural Violence, Postcolonialism, Globalisation, Narrative, Predacity