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A Macat Analysis of Chinua Achebe's An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness

Lindsay Scorgie-Porter

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Nigerian novelist and professor Chinua Achebe was acutely conscious that Western views of Africa were inevitably the views of a culture that assumed itself superior. When confronted by what it took to be an inferior culture, the West identified itself as better - materially, intellectually, even spiritually. Achebe believed that even as original and subtle a work as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* - a novel seen by many as a criticism of colonialism and one that Achebe admired stylistically - reflected these assumptions.

For Achebe, *Heart of Darkness* was a book shot through with racist preconceptions that belittled and demeaned both Africa and Africans. As such it could never be considered a great work of art, as had consistently been claimed in the West. Achebe maintained that the novel's racism left it permanently tainted. This was a view that shocked, startled, stimulated, and colored all subsequent opinions of Conrad. It remains controversial and challenging - even divisive - today.

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