

# Chinua achebe's response to conrad's heart of darkness novel



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Chinua Achebe on 'Heart of Darkness' The paradox of the critique presented by Achebe upon 'Heart of darkness' and in turn Conrad himself, that he is using the same premise to set up his case, as the one which he attempts to ridicule. The problem of racism, which he feels is evident in the writings and perception of Conrad, is actually an issue of localized conception of reality - something of which the critic has become a victim himself. He feels that the novel presents only a dark and limit side of the natives and inhabitants of Africa, and that the reality is otherwise. He is actually doing the same, when he is criticizing the author on being single-tracked, by viewing the theme and presentation of this epic novel through a tunnel-vision.

The issue of truth in terms of actual reality is a paradigm that has never really been understood to its fullest since man has learnt to think. This reality can be identified with, and the highest virtue can subsequently be attained by means of taking it in a way that it actually is. Contemplation gives insight, and ultimately self-actualization; this should in turn give way to the actual truth, and nullify any metaphor being used as a façade to a reality. On the same lines, Conrad has presented his version of the life that he saw in Africa. This version had ideas and experiences that were true to his own self, and he did not have a personal vendetta against the locals of the continent. He just found a striking cultural difference between himself and his hosts, and this he represented in the script subsequently.

If in the face of conflict, one tends to shy away from the true sense of being, then it can never really come out. Under normal circumstances, it is always simple to portray oneself; however, the true test of character is when there is antagonism, and yet still a person can attain truth by means of beings

what he truly is. This adversity was faced by the author in his own

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experiences. The symbolism and the gravity of events that unfold through the process of the novel, clearly indicate that the author himself is passing through a drastically intense time of his life – disregarding someone on account of race would be the last thing on his mind, where survival itself had become an issue.

Furthermore, there is no racism in explaining that a place is underdeveloped and that the people have a more crude way of living. The novel was originally published in 1902, and more than a hundred years on, even in the contemporary scientific and technological times of today, one can safely argue that ‘all’ of the things Conrad described about life in the central African continent are true! Hence, the claim made by Achebe can be rendered as void; his passion with his creed are understandable (being a Nigerian himself), but the ‘Heart of darkness’ should be taken in the spirit of literary delight, rather than political turmoil.

It is only after this, that one would be able to overcome all the subsidiary issues of life that have thus been masked by our connotations of language, art and expression, and would proceed to a stance wherein he would seek to discover the power within the truth. Once this is accomplishment, nothing else would seem difficult, as the lie would be distinguishable from the reality. Essentially, telling the truth is considered as a moral obligation in almost all cultures and theologies around the world. So it would go without saying, that if somebody is telling the truth, then an act of good is being conducted.

Conrad only presented what felt correct to him. Yes, literature has an eternal element of fiction and imagination with it, but is racism really something that comes to mind when one reads and reflects upon ‘Heart of Darkness’?

Hardly so; it is a psychological piece of literature, which ends up as a <https://assignbuster.com/chinua-achebes-response-to-conrads-heart-of-darkness-novel/>

historical document of anthropology - and it should be appreciated as such!

#### References

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