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Joseph Conrad **—Postcolonialism and Imperialism**

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Abstract

This essay begins with a reconsideration of Chinua Achebe's famous criticism of Conrad as a "thoroughgoing racist." It starts by examining the context of Achebe's lecture and analysing what "Conrad" meant at that time as a critical construction through a reading of the two critics Achebe cites—Albert J. Guerard and F. R. Leavis. It explores, in particular, how "Heart of Darkness" was read in the United States before Achebe's intervention by a close examination of Guerard's Introduction to the popular edition of "Heart of Darkness" published by The New American Library, and it compares this with the reading provided by Edward Garnett in his early review. The comparison shows how Guerard's psychological approach to the novella de-Africanises the novel and wipes out the topical specificity and the politics which were part of the novel's original reception. It then examines in detail Achebe's charges against "Heart of Darkness" and offers an alternative reading of the novella, paying particular attention to Conrad's narrative strategies, his engagement with

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imperialist discourse, and the hierarchy of languages in the work. It then considers Conrad's other African story "An Outpost of Progress" to support the reading of Marlow as distanced from Conrad: since "An Outpost of Progress" presents a non-Marlovian "image of Africa," it allows us to see Marlow's perspective on Africa more clearly. The essay then contextualises the reading of Conrad's African fiction by reference to his earlier Malay fiction, and finally considers *Nostromo* in relation to globalisation.

Key Words: Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe, "Heart of Darkness," "An Outpost of Progress"