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COLONIALIST ASSUMPTIONS ON COLONIAL SUBJECTS AND AGENTS IN LE CLÉZIO'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT
Stereotypes of the sub-Saharan African world, which were generated by colonial French writers and denounced by their African counterparts, usually degraded the Blacks to justify colonialism. This paper focuses on the representations of the colonised Africans in Onitsha, South-East Nigeria, in novels written by Le Clézio, a French writer. Postcolonial literary theory is applied to explore the experiences of representations and 'othering' in relation to the Western hegemonic discourse and Fanon's dichotomy between the coloniser and the colonised. The study establishes colonialists' assumptions permeating Le Clézio's Onitsha, L'Africain and Chercheur d'or. Sub-Saharan Africa is debased as an undeveloped and dirty land, with Africans dehumanised and infantilized as subalterns, redundant, bestial, superstitious and cannibalistic people. Also, their virtues are negated and trivialised by Europeans, who, conversely portray themselves as better and superior people, compassionate about the plight of Africans and willing to bring to Africa the knowledge and benefits of Western civilisation. These debasing representations of sub-Saharan Africans in Onitsha as the inferior 'Other' of the European 'Self' foreground the writer's intention to accept how colonial mentality, a result of hegemonic western discourse ,influences his fellow Europeans.
***Keywords**: Colonialist assumptions, Colonial subjects and agents, contemporary French novel, Le Clézio's novels*

"The settler paints the native as the quintessence of evil".
Fanon

INTRODUCTION

Before the colonial partition of the continent, colonial writers presented exotic images of Africa, which agreed to the stereotyping of Africans in Western colonial and neo-colonial discourses, labelling Africa as a place of savagery and chaos, with Africans as morally and intellectually deficient. Those denigrating images of Africa found their way into subsequent centuries, and are found in the narratives of contemporary French writers.

However, unlike the imaginary stories written about foreign societies in Asia and Africa by early exotic French writers, Le Clézio's narratives emanated from personal experiences in the colonised world. Understandably, Negritude poets dwell on the de-alienation of the Blacks in the 1930s while novelists from the colonised world denounce colonial practices around the 50s as found in Beti's novels [1954-58]; Ferdinand Oyono's *Le Vieux Nègre et la médaille* (1956);Sembène Ousmane's *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960) and Cheick Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure Ambiguë* (1961).

This study examines the extent to which colonised subjects are denigrated, while European colonialists are perceived to be in a dominant position. Le Clézio's *Chercheur d'or*(1985), *Onitsha* (1993) and *L'Africain* (2004) are purposively selected for their various representations of the

colonial agents and colonised subjects in Sub-Saharan Africa, precisely in the Eastern part of Nigeria and Cameroun. Even though Le Clézio sees colonialism from the perspective of an 'African', it is important to find out if his French and British origins smear colonialist ideologies in his works.

I. Colonial literature and representations in Sub-Saharan Africa

Chevrier (1984) claims that curiosity about Africa started in the 14th century when religion, business and adventure led Europeans to the Sahara for gold and spices. They never acknowledged Africans to possess any kind of thought, philosophy or religion as striking as the Orient and China. The 18th and especially the 19th century witnessed the rise of exotic (romantic and colonial) literatures.

Before the scramble for Africa and the peak of colonisation in the continent, Africa was labelled as the Dark Continent (as in Conrad's*Heart of Darkness*) since it was perceived as lacking (Western) civilisation, education, culture and knowledge to progress. Early explorers and writers associated the African landscape with the tropical jungle, arid open spaces, and indigenous flora and lugubrious fauna of Africa compared to the Europe of cities or countryside. Overwhelming negative reports and portrayals of Africa and Africans would trigger some Western intellectuals into thinking that it was the 'White man's burden'(Kipling, 1899)that is, a moral duty to colonise Africans and groom them into civilised beings. In other words, Europeans were, therefore, meant to be superior to Africans, who, assumedly, needed Western civilisation and education. Although André Gide and some other writers endeavour to highlight the sufferings of Africans during colonisation in the hands of the Western powers, they mostly present those indigenous people as childlike, innocent and noble savages. Besides, Africans are depicted as ignorant, superstitious and barbaric. Other reports highlighted practices such as ritual sacrifice and cannibalism: "Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place" (Conrad, 56).

Disregarding, neglecting or ignoring Africans' accomplishments, complexity and humanity, mythical representations are made by colonial writers about Africa, whereby colonial literature is characterised by *exotism*, denigration and disdain about Africa (Fanoudh-Siefer,1968) in works such as *Voyage au Congo* by André Gide, *L'Afrique fantôme* by Michel Leiris and *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (1881) by Pierre Loti. Chinua Achebe (1975) duly condemns Joseph Conrad's fiction set in Africa, *Heart of Darkness*, as racist for its pejorative presentation of Africans as less than human, childlike, lacking in free will and unable to act.

II. Theorising the representations of the 'Other'

In postcolonial studies, the entity that is represented outside one's gender, social group, class, culture or civilisation is termed the 'Other", acknowledged as the opposite of the 'Self':

> The most common representation of the 'Other' is as the darker side, the binary opposite of oneself: *we* are civilized, *they* are barbaric; the *colonists* are hard-working, the *natives* are lazy; *heterosexuals* are good and moral, *homosexuals* are immoral and evil." (Sardar and Van Loon, 2004: 13)

Postcolonial theory "explores the experiences of suppression, resistance, race, gender, representation, difference, displacement and migration in relation to the master Western discourses of History, Philosophy, Science and Linguistics" (Sardar and Van Loon, 115).Frantz Fanon and Edward Said assume that the representations by Western discourse about all other societies adjudged as the 'Other' are not objective, but carefully crafted to colonise the mind of the Other, to accept the West's supremacy and justify colonialism:

> From this position Fanon was able to characterize the colonial dichotomy (colonizer-colonized) as the product of a 'Manichaeism delirium' (Fanon 1967), the result of which condition is a radical division into paired oppositions such as good-evil; true-false; white-black, in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship. (The Empire writes back, 124-5)

Fanonian critical model is relevant where there is the black-white opposition or to a larger extent the coloniser and colonised dichotomy, with reference to colonialism.

Moreover, Fanoudh-Siefer (1968) centres on how French colonial literature portrays a negative image of Africa in a bid to justify the *Civilising Mission* embedded in colonialism. Nwezeh's study shows how French colonial writers present a sinister image of Africa with the flora full of desolation and despair, lugubrious animals and particularly abnormal people (Nwezeh, 1978: 20-21). The novels selected for this study, which were written between 1980 and 2004 by the French novelist Le Clézio, present images of Africa, in both the colonial and the post-colonial eras, which reinforce the idea that Africa was indeed a land of *darkness*, thereby revealing the Eurocentric universalism which assumed that Europeans were superior and better, while others were inferior and bad, with Africans as the worst.

McLeod (2000: 25-29) acknowledges that the initial *re-reading* of classical works on the colonial past aimed at examining how they sustained or queried the latent assumptions of colonial discourses; that inquiries made by critics such as Homi Bhabha and Spivakinto colonial texts were meant to discover cases of resistance from the colonised subjects while recent reading targeted new literatures whose texts actively subvert colonial discourses. This study intends to query latent assumptions of western hegemonic discourses in contemporary literary works that revive the colonial period.

III. Denigration of Africa

a. Africa as the 'Dark Continent'

From the scorching sun to the wild plants and animals, emphasis is laid on a sinister image of Africa:

> Through the evocation of the impenetrable forests and the wild life of Africa, the colonial writer wishes to express symbolically the savagery and primitivism of the *Dark Continent*. Africa is a place where nothing has changed since creation (Nwezeh,1978: 44).

In the selected novels, several references to the harsh effects of the climate, especially the sun on the lives of the settlers, are made by the narrators. The sun in Africa is presented as a destructive agent contrary to the sun in Europe that is welcomed in summer as a source of joy (*Onitsha,*38). Associated to the heat and dirt are ferocious insects; destructive rodents and harmful reptiles which make Africa a wild and dangerous land for white settlers (*Onitsha*,140). In the colonised space, the wilderness of the nature which remains unchanged and untamed until the arrival of Western settlers demonstrated that Africa lacked the technological ability to transform and subdue its forest for human needs. The backwardness of Africa in technology was reinforced by the primitive huts built by the indigenous people, including the rudimentary mud house serving as a king's palace: «le mur du palais, une simple case de briques de boues échée où brillent des brins de paille» (*L'Africain*, 74).

Primitiveness of Africa is equally shown in the interior decoration of the narrator's father's house in Forestry House, with the display of a big shield made of hippopotamus skin, matched with two crossed spears:« un grand bouclier en peau d'hippopotame, assorti de deux lances croisées » (*L'Africain*,65).According to

Nwezeh (44), the mention of this large, scaring amphibious African mammal buttressed the images of Africa as a land of bestiality, savagery, cannibalism, and danger (Nielipowicz, 19) with Africans sharing the same attributes.

b. The 'Inferior' and 'Uncivilised' Africans

As a visitor, the narrator finds magic in the continent which enables him to bring his body close to nature, to unleash his sensual freedom curbed by Western Civilisation (*L'Africain,* 14). The allusion to freedom justifies the licentiousness attributed to Africans in colonial discourse. Besides, recurrent mentions of mud reinforce the image of dirt.In *Onitsha* (53), the River Ogun is hyperbolically mentioned as an ocean of mud. Like Ogoja and Obudu, the Senegalese cities of Dakar and Gorée epitomise dirty colonial cities. The references to slave cells foregrounded the environment as hellish (O, 56). The narrator associates the nauseating feeling of pain and the dirty, smelly and deadly slave gaols of Gorée with Africa. The anaphoric use of « C'était donc cela, l'Afrique » (38) demonstrates how Maou was overwhelmed with disgust and shame. The selected texts perpetuate colonial assumptions because they depict sub-Saharan Africa as an apocalyptic location.

Fanon (1967, 92) accuses France of being a racist country: "France is a racist country, for the myth of the bad nigger is part of the collective unconscious".The prejudices, myths and collective attitudes of colonial France abound with images of Africans as lacking (Western) education, culture, industry and progress. References to nudity in the selected novels reinforce the idea of rudimentary life and a lack of civilisation attributed to the Blacks, which was a pointer to their inferiority on the hierarchy of races (*Onitsha*, 44) and (*L'Africain,* 12).With the additional pictures of an old woman with uncovered breasts (« vieille femme » [*L'Africain*, 12]), naked children ("enfants nus", "tout-petits tout nus", [*Africain*, 12, 24]), nakedness is portrayed as a way of life for the uncivilised, which Europe redressed by providing clothing (*L'Africain*: 12, 24). During ceremonies, women dance completely unclad, while men just cover themselves with mere raffia palms, which hardly cover their private parts (*L'Africain,* 74, 76).Nakedness is preponderant with some kings who are half-dressed, at official outings: (*L'Africain,* 69).

Thus, a population walloping in poverty, dirt and underdevelopment deserved nothing else than being subaltern. The black people in the narrators' daily lives and households are servants. This lower class of individuals, such as the boy and the cooks in *L'Africain* (15-16), as well as other employees such as Njong le chocra, Chindefondi the interpreter and Philippusthe chief carrier (*L'Africain*,66), live in their huts, segregated from the white settlers. Subalternity is even assumed with pride and accepted with faith by Africans. Although he is not paid for being the assistant to the narrator's father, Ahidjo finds prestige in serving a white medical doctor (*Africain*, 78-79). This type of satisfaction is enjoyed by the servants of a wretched European family in *L'Amant,* including Dô who feels privileged serving her European mistress throughout her life and following her all over the world, notwithstanding the risks:

> (Dô) C'est la gouvernante qui ne quittera jamais ma mère même lorsqu'elle rentrera en France, même lorsque mon frère essaiera de la violer dans la maison de fonction de Sadec, même lorsqu'elle ne sera plus payée. Dô a étéélevée chez les sœurs… (*L'Amant*. 28)

In *Le Chercheur d'or*, the natives not only hold subaltern positions, they appear as if they are born to serve European settlers: Mr. Cook and his grandson Denis are long-term cooks and servants to Alexis's family (13); an old black *coach driver* who willingly carries Alexis's luggage during the latter's journey on treasure hunt (194);

Alexis receives free and benevolent assistance from the young Fritz Castel who, on his adoptive father's orders, agrees to follow the treasure hunter in the excavations for the hidden treasure (*Onitsha*, 267). Africans, in the selected texts, are perceived to suffer from an inferiority complex due to the assumed exalted position of the Whites, as a result of the colonisation of the mind through the (colonial) discourse of 'interpellation' (*Onitsha*, 53). Inferiority complex is mixed with naivety as Casimir gets excited at the privilege for him to be enrolled in the White man's army and fight in the World War for Britain (CO, 264).

The subalternity of the indigenous people is worsened by their financial weakness. For instance, while Europeans used ships for traveling and commerce on the waterways, Africans used canoes: "Sur la plage sont les pirogues des pêcheurs »(O, 53).Moreover, on the *Surabaya* ship, during Fintan's journey to Nigeria, the African passengers had to work to pay for their travel expenses. Meanwhile, the Europeans, who could afford their fares, produced the skilled labour – like the sailors – and they were in charge of feeding (*Onitsha,* 41, 42). This inferiority is upheld by the texts as Europeans, in the image of Sabine, who, thinking that servants deserve no respect, unceremoniously marries off the mysterious girl Oya to his 'ugly' servant Okawho.

Lack of planning and redundancy permeate the whole African cultural set-up. Only Africans, like the 'garden boy', who are assimilated to European mentality find this lack of orientation in life perturbing (*L'Africain,* p. 28). Even, celebrations happen without any prior knowledge, notice and planning: "fêtes qui éclatent *soudain*, dans les villages"(*L'Africain,* 69).

Brutality, as bestial attribute of Africans, is presented in the strictness of African education. The narrator's maternal grand-father received a stricter upbringing in Mauritius (*L'Africain,*45). This African brutality imbibed by the father was opposed to the narrator's grand-mother and mother's gentle, soft, refined approach to child-rearing in Europe, which discarded corporal punishment (*L'Africain,* 45).

African tribes were believed to be waging war against each other until the colonizers waded in to establish justice, peace and unity. Two natives, namely Elijah and Bony, hated each other naturally because they belonged to separate tribes (*Onitsha*, 108). Laure warns her brother Alexis not to go further in search of his beloved Ouma because some tribes in Mauritius reportedly would kill any White who ventured into their territory: « Cook dit qu'il y a toujours des marrons à Mananava. Si tu vas là-bas, ils te tueront. » (*Chercheur d'or,* 69). The bellicosity of Africans blended with the image of primitiveness appended on them, which translated into negative artistic representations (*L'Africain*, 64). The earlier reported brutality and primitiveness of the natives make Europeans to consider Africans as backwards. On hearing that the narrator's mother is heading to Africa to meet her husband, her Parisian friend exclaims:

> Je sais seulement que, lorsque ma mère a décidé de se marier avec mon père, et d'aller vivre au Cameroun, ses amies parisiennes lui ont dit : « Quoi, chez les sauvages ? (*L'Africain,* 45)
>
> I only know that, when my mother decided to marry my father and to settle down with him in Cameroon, her friends from Paris told her: "What! With these uncivilised people?" [Our translation]

Among other derogatory images, the picture of the thief is shown in *Onitsha* (43) where Africans are described as boat wreckers, notably on the Sierra Leonean coast. Ugliness is equally ascribed to the Blacks. Fintan observes that Okawho, the black assistant and adoptive son of Rhodes, is very ugly with his face lacerated with tribal marks. Rhodes is stunned to discover that there could be such an ugly human-being (*Onitsha,* 112) on earth. His face is

similar to the masks in Rhodes' collection of artefacts, while his whole body is likened to the statutes.

Superstition is a major stereotype appended on Africans. It is narrated that when Britain brought the warship *George Sotton*to colonise Africa, Africans attempted to repel what they perceived as a giant animal with rudimentary arms and charms (*Onitsha*, 151). Superstition is also shown in Denis's fear of some ruins, which he believes belonged to Mouna Mouna where the evil drum was beaten (80). Meanwhile, Alexis, the white boy, is not scared.

There exist, in many portions of the selected novels, myths, traditions and prejudices produced by colonial discourse in such a way as they assign negative images on Africa and justify the superiority of the Whites and the relevance of the colonial project as a 'Civilising Mission'. In *L'Africain,* Africans believe that the termite god had created the rivers of the world and had assigned itself into guarding and protecting water for the inhabitants of the earth (*L'Africain,* 27). Europeans do not believe in the myth, as the narrator and his brother would destroy termite mounds in the absence of their African playmates. In *Le Chercheur d'or,* there is the myth of places where women should not be (CO, 147-149).Thus, because of its irrationality, African religions are called 'animism' and 'fetishism'(*L'Africain,* 85-86)

There are also stories of cannibalism. In *Onitsha,* terrible stories are narrated at the Club (155). Cases of disappearance and abduction, the oracle *Long Juju,* human sacrifices and sales of human flesh in the markets and in the bush are reported. In *L'Africain,* Europeans reported that, in a village, ambush was laid on individuals riding bicycles. When they were captured, the victims were chopped and set for eating. The District Officer had reportedly seized human flesh which was presumably on sale at a butcher's shop as pork meat. Children's hands were also sold to tourists who were made to believe that they were gorillas. (*L'Africain,* 86). The father used to tell these frightening stories to his family, claiming that, although there were no substantive proofs, he admitted that he treated and made autopsy on several victims of murder (*L'Africain,* 86). These stories of tribal wars, acts of vengeance and reprisal attacks among villages in Ogoja portray Africans as violent by nature and unable to resolve conflicts.

IV. Occidentalist views about the West

a. The Civilising Mission

Although Occidentalism includes both positive and negative representations of the West, this study focuses on the stereotypes that sustain the Eurocentric hegemonic western mentality which justified colonialism. The 'Civilising Mission' is presented as a humanitarian cause undertaken by the Western world to help and save the other races. Therefore, and according to Nwezeh (92), the presence of the White in Africa is to enforce any aspect of the civilising mission as every European in Africa is an agent of civilisation". Nwezeh adds that:

> In order to make the work of civilisation more beautiful and worthwhile, colonial writers often emphasized and exaggerated the difficulties of the white man in Africa – loneliness, inhospitable environment and the degenerating effects resulting from the contact with black savages. (Nwezeh, 95)

In *L'Africain*, the doctor and his family come to stay in a primitive territory, with a hut as official quarters (*L'Africain*, 9-10). The sacrifice is all the bigger as they are isolated from the remaining Europeans in the colony (*L'Africain*, 9), for twenty-two (22) years (*L'Africain,* 61). Another sacrifice is the remoteness of the medical territory to be covered by the doctor, the harshness and the dangers involved in his functions (*L'Africain,*31). Africa needed the intervention of the West because it could not handle diseases. The medical doctor was overwhelmed by the high number of

patients, suffering from fever, cancer, ulcer, elephantiasis, leprosy, syphilis, malnutrition, uraemia, tapeworm (*L'Africain,* 87). Other sacrifices made by settlers were braving the heat (*Onitsha,* 27), suffering from malaria fevers (Onitsha, 39), having accidents (Onitsha, 36) and suffering financial losses. It was an African storm that sealed bankruptcy on Alexis's father's business in *Chercheur d'or*: « C'est fini »(90).

Besides, reference is made to sugar cane plantations owned by Ludovic and his family in *Chercheur d'or*. Such an allusion to colonial plantations is a testimony of colonial discourse. It is assumed that, as a scheme of the 'Civilising Mission', the introduction of cash crops in Africa will boost the economic status of Africans:

> The plantations were the first establishments of an economic nature. They were one of the first distinguishing features of colonial societies. In addition to the new cities which were built, with their distinctive architecture – particularly the churches – the colonies were subsequently crisis-crossed with railways and dotted with hospitals and schools. All of these were signs of progress in the eyes of the conqueror. (Ferro,125)

Some passages in the novels promote the superiority of Europe over Africa. In *Onitsha,* as Geoffroy is dying, the medical doctor treating him advises Maou to take her husband to Europe, because he will never recover in Africa: « Emmenez votre mari en Europe, faites-le manger. Ici, il ne guérira jamais. » (*O*nitsha, 251). Since Geoffroy lost his job, the family had resolved to move back to Europe where a better life would start. For Maou, her son would have the opportunity to go to school and acquire education, to make friends of his age, to play with them, to smile with them. They would fight like kids, but without scratching each other's faces like in Africa. Their fights would be mild, not as wild as the ones in Africa. Fintan would feed well on potatoes, bread, milk and apples (*O*nitsha, 251-252). Maou considers Europe as a better place for her son to grow. What Maou would miss from Africa was insignificant, namely, the faces of women and the laughter and caresses of children: "Ce qu'elle imaginait qu'elle regretterait, là-bas, en Europe, c'est la douceur des visages des femmes, les rires des enfants, leurs caresses." (O, 259)

In *Chercheur d'or,* islands in Mauritius could not survive, except with the help of Europe. The islands relies heavily on the shipments made by Captain Bradmer. During the First World War in Europe, when ships stopped coming to those African islands, there erupted famine, sickness and death. Besides, rats took over the city of Port Mathurin. Alexis became worried about the fate of the manafs, of Ouma's tribe, who used to live in the remote desertic mountains, away from the rest of the world (*Chercheur d'or*, 325). As such, those passages explicate how doomed Africa would be without the superior knowledge and presence of Europe.

b. Typical Colonial Characters

This study adopts both Occidentalism and Archetypal Criticism to examine recurring character types in Le Clézio's colonial stories, precisely, how the myths of characters such as the hero, the outcast (Ouma in *Chercheur d'or*), the female figure ('Femme fatale', the mother) are told in such a way as they sustain colonial assumptions.The narrators of *Onitsha, L'Africain* and*Chercheur d'or* are all Europeans. The narrator in *L'Africain* and his brother are reported to have grown up in an atmosphere of total freedom in France where children were pampered, showered with love and tenderness. In *Onitsha,* Fintan is referred to as a wild boy when, unlike Europeans, he removes his shoes and runs barefooted (*Onitsha*, 72).Therefore, the narrators' lives translate that they were civilised children in Europe, but became wild when they came into contact with Africa.

In *L'Africain,* the father's African identity points to the brutality of Africans in child-upbringing, the lack of advancement seen in the rudimentary huts, and the sacrifices many Europeans made by accepting to go to the colonies. As a medical doctor, he is a colonial agent who dedicates and sacrifices his active life for Africa, in very harsh conditions. With a modest apartment, he is isolated and covers a large territory performing alone all kinds of medical functions, ranging from child delivery to autopsy (*L'Africain,* 37). He suffers a lot for his stay in Africa, from premature aging, sickness and loneliness. He is influenced by African culture, especially in child-upbringing. He would cane rather than laugh off any misdemeanour from his European 'spoilt' children, thereby imposing an African *superego* to repress the children's *id* (unacceptable desires back into the unconscious) in line with African morality and ethics (*L'Africain*, 91).

Settlers should be considered as members of the European colonial community who have settled down in the colonies by virtue of their administrative functions or their relationships with colonial administrators. Their clean and white dresses are in contrast with the nakedness and dirt of the natives' adornments. The settlers constitute a cast, living away from the colonised. The colonial setting of the white society is made up of servants who must yield to all whims and caprices of the colonists' children: « … des domestiques qui doivent s'incliner devant les caprices des enfants des maîtres (*L'Africain,* 19). This reference to the servants is a procedure of classification between the White at the top being served and the Blacks below the hierarchy of race.

The District Officer maintains dogs better fed than the native intellectuals and the remaining indigenous population. Europeans see the countryside as a ground for hunting at leisure time as they continue to consider Africa as the wild land of beasts. The District Officer in Abakaliki was fond of killing gorillas and displaying their skulls to his visitors. All the chained prisoners kept by the settlers are natives. Gerald Simpson, a District Officer in Onitsha, made prisoners, to dig a swimming pool for him, for the use of the white community. Settlers had all unconsciously accepted that Africans were just beasts of burden who deserved nothing, not even food.

Among the female figures, Maou is a mother figure, whose adventure exposed that Europeans made sacrifices as they suffered in Africa, land of medical hazards, danger and infections. The French woman came to Africa with great expectations. She planned to start a new life with her husband and was determined not to let any prejudice on Africa discourage her: the people, the smells, the weather and the water. But when she fell sick, she wished she had stayed in Europe, in Saint-Martin (*Onitsha*, 74).

Oya is a mystery African girl; she is considered as a lunatic by her fellow Africans: « Viens, pikin. Ne la regarde pas. Elle est folle. » (*Onitsha*, 155).She has no sense of decency, as she will bathe naked in the river, ignoring possible gazes from other individuals (173). She runs away from the dispensary and prefers to give birth like an animal in the wilderness, without any medical assistance (*Onitsha*, 230).With Maou trying to rehabilitate Oya, the narrative portrays the West as capable of solving Africa's abandoned and helpless people.

Ouma, the oriental girl who saves Alexis, the European treasure hunter in *Chercheurd'or*, dresses like a wild and 'uncivilised' girl and behaves like an animal(216). The immoral-looking girl (230) does not reject Alexis's attempt to kiss her, as if she is privileged to be loved by a male white man.The only traces of education she imbibes, that makes her appealing to a 'civilised' European, is acquired in France through the roman catholic mission.The debasement of the African characters as the irrational, immoral, inefficient and duplicitous Other underpins a self-affirmation of Europeans as rational, moral, efficient, honest and superior.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Le Clézio's novels shows occurrences of negative archetypal images against Africa vis-à-vis positive representations of the West. The difference in literary narratives and styles notwithstanding, the stereotypes of the natives match up with those spread by hegemonic western discourse to support their pretentious Civilising Mission and justify the domination of other races and territories. The acceptance of Europeans to come to Africa is presented as a huge sacrifice made toward enforcing the Civilising Mission on the continent of Africa which could not survive alone. In the relationship between the Centre and the Periphery, Europe is treated as superior to Africa.

This study has shown that, even if Le Clézio does not support colonial discourses overtly, numerous presentations of these debasing images meant an unconscious acceptance of their existence and their effects in and on postcolonial societies. However, he might not mean to belittle African cultures and societies, rather his novels give a realistic picture of the continent and the way representations operate as a result of the interactions between Europeans and the other societies in Sub-Saharan Africa which have been affected by colonialism. Therefore, images of the West shown as superior could be harnessed towards condemning colonialism and the racist, exploitative and wicked colonial class in Africa rather than praise any Civilising Mission.

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