

## **I- Le Clezio, Anti-colonial Resistance and *Onitsha***

This research entitled "A Critique of Empire in Le Clezio's *Onitsha*" attempts to probe into the problem that how British Empire bears the seed of its destruction with the onset of its rise. The fall of British Empire was inevitable because the whole machine of Empire was ill-structured. It seeks to answers how the native Africans waged war against the English men and succeeded to over through their Colonial rule from the African states forever. Le Clezio's *Onitsha* is the novel which carries, anti-Colonial theme. Though the story concludes twenty years later at the time of the brutal Biafra war, fought by the then independent Nigeria, most of the part of *Onitsha* is set in Colonial Nigeria in 1948/49 when protest of native Nigerians against the British rule had been reaching its climax. The novel focuses on the cruelty and brutality of colonial officers in Nigeria.

*Onitsha* tells the story of Fintan, a youth who travels to Africa in 1949 with his Italian mother to Join the English father he has never met. Fintan is initially enchanted by the exotic world he discovers in Onitsha, bustling city prominently situated on the eastern bank of the Niger River. But gradually he comes to recognize the intolerance and brutality of the colonial system. His youthful point of view provides the novel with a notably direct horrified perspective on racism and colonialism.

*Onitsha*, originally written in French in 1991 was translated into English in 1997 by Alison Anderson who holds degrees in Russian and French from the Universities of Lausanne and Geneva, has taught English as a foreign language in Switzerland, Greece, and France, has served since 1990 as a tutor in French for the San Francisco University High school, and has worked since 1985 as a free-lance commercial translator in London, France, and the Bay Area. She is also the author of novel, *Hidden Latitudes*.

British Colonial mission begins with the Renaissance period. The British Empire continuously keeps on expanding till the Second World War which carries the message of freedom and independence along with it. Post-war period is also known as period of decolonization. People in the colonial states become more and more conscious about their rights and want to be free from the brutality of British colonialism. Love for their nation grows in the heart of countrymen and they vow to struggle against the British rule to make the country independent and free from colonial chains.

In the beginning, Britishers entered different African, Middle East and South East Asian countries with civilizing mission. Due to the invention of compass, gun powder and the printing press during Renaissance, the Europeans were considered to be superior to others. The agents of British colonialism explored the nooks and corners of the world even the uninhabited islands and established their rule, expanding the empire. Their holy mission of Christianity and civilization gradually turned to be exploitative and cruel to the native people. Mainly, African nations become the victim of their harsh suppression and brutality. Native Africans were deprived of their basic fundamental rights. They were treated as second class citizens. Colonizers exploited the labour and the natural resources of the colonized nations which led them towards industrial success and prosperity leaving native Africans bankrupt. European colonizers oppressed the natives to the extent that they could no longer have the patience and it broke down and they exploded through revolution. Despite the relentless efforts of the colonizers to protect and expand the empire, it ultimately disintegrates and writes back. The novel *Onitsha* seeks both to question the colonial mission of British and cast a critical eye upon the fall of British Empire which colonized Africans for ages.

*Onitsha* was published in 1991 with the hind sight of historical events. Le Clezio tells his story from all knowing third person narrator stand point with changing main protagonist. The focus shifts between the members of the small family. The main purpose of story is to show the real picture of inhuman and cruel treatment of colonizers upon native people during British colonial rule in Nigeria. The main characters are Finton, a young boy of eight; his mother Maria Luisa, who is Italian by birth; his father Geoffroy Allen, an English man who works for United Africa in Nigeria as ship's officer. Haylings is another Englishman whom Fintan and Maou meet in the ship. There are other characters like: Marima, who keeps house for Geoffrey Allen (and after whom Fintan's sister, conceived in *Onitsha*, will be named); Okawho, a servant in another European household; Boney, a fisherman's son who befriends Fintan ; Oya, a young woman upon whom Fintan and Bony spy as she bathes in the river appears from nowhere and seems to live outside real time or space. Fintan is completely mesmerized by her eerie beauty. Gerald Simpson, a colonial district officer of *Onitsha* is also equally important character in the Novel. Among the European community, there is a Sabine Rodes, the eccentric longer who seems to live in a different universe from the British community. He always thinks that the great ship of British Empire is sinking day by day.

*Onitsha* is a story about colonial Nigeria. Fintan, the protagonist is very much impressed by the physical environment of *Onitsha* in the beginning. He befriends Bony, fisherman's son in no time. Geoffroy and Maou do not want their son to go out with Bony because of their unequal social status. Fintan hates his father in the beginning of the story simply because he was English man. Later, their relationship becomes Smooth when he realizes that his father Geoffroy is different from many other Europeans. Both Fintan and Maou seem very much critical towards the cruelty of British colonizers. She speaks out her words of disdain publicly at the residence of

Gerald Simpson, where chained black convicts were employed to dig swimming pool for the club members without giving them anything to eat.

Geoffroy is dismissed from his job as ship's agent because he is accused of working as the benefactors of mankind rather than colonizers. Fintan is very much shocked by the act of Colonial army who shot down the chained convicts including Bony's older brother and the Uncle. Since the convicts uprising, Bony no longer wants to meet Fintan. This event primarily grows Fintan's strong hatred towards Empire. After witnessing the colonial brutality and injustice done upon the native Nigerians, he no longer wants to stay there.

The general tenor of idealization is furthered by Le Clezio's interest in African Mythology, which leads him to treat *Onitsha's* primary African Characters, the couple Okawho and Oya, as inscrutable warriors and goddess figures. This is done principally through the character of Fintan's father, Geoffroy, and his quest for the one legend, one river, a primarily academic journey that is told via intermittent, differently fonted chapters. *Onitsha* has obvious structural features—an opening journey, a concluding chapter set 20 years after the principle action of the book, but its division into four parts is too arbitrary, and there is little logic to the placement of the interjecting 'Geoffroy Chapters', which themselves wander from myth to narrative to history.

The main argument of the researcher is that the brutal treatment of the agents of British colonialism to the natives turns to be self-destructive or suicidal for the colonizers and becomes consciousness raising mechanism among the native Africans who yoke together to crush the British Empire to its inevitable fall. Europeans invade and start colonial rule in different parts of the world, Britishers invade various independent nations of South Africa and colonized them. They mistreat the local people and dominate them forcibly. After the age long suppression and

inhuman behavior of the colonizers, native Africans unitedly revolt against the colonial rule and wish to live in an independent nation being free from any type of restrictions. The African people can no longer tolerate the harsh treatment of the colonizer. They don't have any other alternatives except revolting against the colonizers. They think it better to die than to live under the harsh, inhuman and brutal treatment of the colonizers. In this way, the method of dehumanization and oppression they apply upon local people to continue their rule, ultimately becomes the cause of the end of British Empire. It also became very much helpful to grow the sense of unity and patriotism among the native Africans to fight against the colonial rule.

Jean-Marie Gustav Le Clezio, born 13 April 1940, in Nice, in France, to Raul Le Clezio, a medical doctor, and his wife, Simone nee Le Clezio, is one of France's major contemporary literary figures. He has written more than twenty novels in French. Besides this his works also include seven collections of short fiction and numerous essays published both individually and in collected edition since 1966. He is the winner of the number of awards including the 2008 Nobel Prize for literature.

Le Clezio spent his childhood in a little village in the south of France. At the age of eight, he went to Nigeria with his mother where his father worked as a physician for the English government during the Second World War. During a month long voyage to Nigeria, he began his literary career with two books, '*Un Long Voyage*' and *oradi noir*, which even contained a list of forthcoming books. He grew up with two languages French and English. In 1950 the family returned to Nice. After completing his secondary education, he studied English at Bristol University in 1950-59 and completed his undergraduate degree in Nice in 1963. He took a master's degree at the university of Aix-en-Provence in 1964 and wrote a doctoral thesis on

Mexico's early history at the University of Perignass in 1983. He has taught at Universities in Bangkok, Mexico city, Boston, Austin and Albuguergue among other places.

Le Clezio was brought up bilingual, but he always wrote in French. The main reasons behind this was, he started his literary career in French when he was small child. Answering the same question in a telephone interview with Adam Smith, editor-in-chief of Nobelprize. org. immediately following the announcement of the 2008 Nobel Prize in literature, Le Clezio States, "Well, Yes. In fact, when I was a child I grew up speaking French, I mean in French public school and that's the reasons why I write in French" (220).

Le Clezio is a prolific writer and is considered one of the most original literary artists writing in French. He started writing as a young child and has written over thirty books alone. He takes writing as a greatest pleasure in life. At one place Le Clezio himself says, "this is one of my greatest pleasures in life is to sit at a table, wherever it is. I don't have any office, I can write everywhere. So, I put piece of paper on the tables and then I travel. Literally, writing for me is traveling. It's getting out of myself and living another life, may be a better life" (Interview 221).

Le Clezio's language is always simple, lucid and appealing to our senses. The single dominant characteristic of Le Clezio's style is his enthusiastic espousal of an aesthetics of opposites, contradictions, paradoxes, decidedly not in an effort to reconcile them into a synthesis, but rather it seems, for the sheer love of the beauty of their dialectical tension, or perhaps from a vision of reality so broad that all exclusions must count as falsehoods.

Georgia Brown views that Le Clezio's novels "explore the transformation from childhood into adulthood, voyages that result in the conformation of cultures and the points where past, present and future collide" (233). His Novels ultimately center on the great questions of the philosophers: the meaning of life, death; the individual's relation to the physical world as well as

to the social order, and in particular, the ways in which these relations are mediated through language. Nature is both the great enigma and the great answer, but ever the great fascination, and natural forces the sun and the sea perhaps above all play a prominent role throughout his canon. His writings reflect his love of travel, his interest in knowing numerous peoples and cultures, race and colonial experience. In his telephone interview with Adam Smith just after the announcement of Nobel Prize, Le Clezio states the reason behind writing on Amerindian culture :

Well. It's probably because it's culture so different from European culture and on the other hand it didn't have the chance of expressing itself. It's a culture which has been in some ways broken by the modern world, and especially by the conquests from Europe. [. . .] So, I feel there is a strong message here for the Europeans to encounter this culture which is so different from the European culture. They have a lot to learn from this culture; the Amerindian cultures. (220-221)

Besides this, Le Clezio also writes about the colonial experience. He strongly criticizes the evil practices prevalent in the colonial system and gives much importance to the people and culture of colonized nations. He thinks that Europeans owe a lot to the colonized countries for their industrial success so, the people from colonized countries must be respected:

It's my feeling that the Europe and I would say also the American societies are –it owes a lot to the people that submitted during the colonial times. I mean the wealth of Europe comes from sugar, cotton, from the colonies. And from this wealth they began the industrial world. So they really owe a lot to the colonized

people. And they have to pay lot to the colonized people. And they have to pay their debts to them. (220-21)

Le Clezio received much attention with his first novel, *Le Proces Verbal* (1963; the Interrogation, 1964). It was written when he was 23 and received Renaudot Prize. His debut novel was the first in a series of descriptions of crisis, which includes the short story collection *La Fievre* (1965; Fever, 1966) and *Le Deluge*, (1966; The Flood, 1967), in which he points out the trouble and fear reigning in the major western cities.

Even early on Le Clezio stood out as an ecologically engaged author, an orientation that is accentuated with the novels *Terra Amata* (1967, Terra Amata, 1969), *Le Livre des fuits* (1969, The Book of flights, 1971), *La guerre* (1970; War, 1973) and *Les geants* (1973; The Giants, 1975). His definitive breakthrough as a novelist came with *Desert* (1980), for which he received a prize from the French Academy. This work contains magnificent images of a lost culture in the North African desert, contrasted with a depiction of Europe seen through the eyes of unwanted immigrants. The main character, the Algerian guest worker Lalla, is a utopian antithesis to the ugliness and brutality of European society.

The emphasis in Le Clezio's work has increasingly moved in the direction of an exploration of the world of childhood and of his own family history. This development began with *Onitsha* (1991; Onitsha, 1997), continued more explicitly with a *La quarantaine* (1995) and has culminated in *Revolutions* (2003) and *L' Africain* (2004). *Revolutions* sums up the most important themes of his work: memory, exile, the reorientations of youth, cultural conflict.

*Onitsha* can be taken as a dynamic & open-ended text. It is rich from its thematic point of view. It carries numerous themes. Speaking with the Editor-in-chief of Nobelprize.Org, Adam Smith, in a telephone interview, Le Clezio himself accepts that "reading is a free practice and the



readers are free to begin by the books where they want to". Le Clezio does not want to classify his writing; rather he gives full authority to the readers to interpret his works in their own way he also does not like to suggest any starting point for the readers who are unfamiliar with his works:

I feel that the writer is just a kind of witness of what is happening. A writer is not a prophet, is not a philosopher, he is just someone who is witness to what is around him. And so writing is a way to [. . .] it's the best way to testify, to be a witness. [. . .] I mean reading is a free practice. You have to; you have to be led by not haphazard, but to be led by your own feelings. I think the readers are free to begin by the books where they want to. They don't have to be led in their, in their reading. (221)

In the 1980s, Le Clezio begins to probe the conflicts of his own family's past, lured by the possibility of a secret to be revealed. *Le Chercheur d'or* (The Prospector, 1985) and *Voyage a Rodrigues* (Voyage to Rorigues, 1986) Chart his grandfathers quest for an elusive treasure and his own efforts to establish contact with his phantom ancestor. The effort becomes much more intense and much more overtly erotic as we move forward in generations with *Onitsha*. The line between Le Clezio as fiction writer and family past becomes as intensely embraced and as passionate as possible for the text is the true story of Le Clezio in his distant childhood. The novel transposes a journey Le Clezio made with his mother to join his father in Africa. In one of his reviews of the novel *Onitsha*, Nicole Casanova writes:

The Voyage lasted a month, but it was infinite [. . .]. I never stopped thinking about it. In simplest terms the text recounts the voyage aboard the *Surabaya* which the twelve year-old Fintan , Le Clezio's literary counterpart and his Italian-born mother, Maria Luisa, take to join the English Father Geoffroy Allen, whom

Fintan has never known in the Nigerian river town of Onitsha. It depicts the conflicts that occur when these three individuals come into contact with one another and with the British colonial administration. (4)

In the course of interpreting Le Clezio's *Onitsha*, some critics have analyzed this novel from psychoanalytical perspective. Along with the physical growth of 12 year old boy Fintan from childhood to adulthood, the story also tells about the mental and psychological development of young boy. It is also the story of oedipal conflicts. Fintan's sensual intimacy with his mother and his gaze upon the naked body or the sexual organ of his mother suggest the oedipal conflict in his unconscious level of the mind. For the first twelve years of his life, Fintan enjoyed the exclusivity of his mother's attention, unmarred by any paternal interference. Maria Luisa, whom Fintan at age ten chose to call maou, the name he had used when first entering the symbolic, is at once the boy's care-giver, sister and would be lover, whose seeping body he gazes on with the classic Freudian blend of castration anxiety and fascination [ . . . ] Fintan will never forget the beautiful and tormenting vision of Mau bathing, and the blatantly sexual sight and taste of the forbidden fruit, seemingly an avocado, pale green, cut in half around its swollen, obscene pit, which Maou repeatedly encourages him to try. Pointing towards the theme of oedipal conflicts in Le Clezio's *Onitsha* Karen D. Levy says:

The juxtaposed images of the mother's exposed body and the avocado set up the visual frame for the way in which Fintan will continue to respond to Maou as well as to other females he will encounter, starting rapturously and fetishizing the void form of the womb itself in order to preserve his vision of maternal plenitude. He will remain locked in this stage of the oedipal process, simultaneously possessing the female body through his gaze and suppressing his

anxiety over the threat of castration by valorizing the figure represented, particularly the smooth rounded shape of the impregnated uterus. (4-5)

Throughout the novel *Onitsha* Le Clezio plays on the idea of alterity, shaping it and nuancing it within the structure of the text in order to propose it as his principal theme. Gradually elaborating his novelistic vision of Africa, Le Clezio relies on a discourse of opposition : Seen through European eyes, Africa is a place where everything from social conventions to the most trivial protocols of daily life, is different. In this regard another critic Warren Motte points out:

In refining that difference Le Clezio exploits the notion of the exotic massively, involving it as both a natural and a cultural term. On the one hand Africa is a vast, tropical, abundant, and opulent, a perfect example of Mallarme's exotique nature. As a landscape, it is everything that metropolitan France is not. On the other hand its cultural conventions, as they are described in *Onitsha*, seem bizarre, 'foreign', and strangely encoded to Fintan and, by extension once again, to Le Clezio's readers.

For most of Le Clezio's readers, the word "Onitsha" is a floating signifier, waiting to be invested with meaning. As such it is the first cipher in the hermeneutic code of the text, for it serves to pique the readers' curiosity. Clearly the word is a "foreign" one whose resources, to a French ear at least, are exotic [. . .]. In other words, the title of the book itself serves to announce the theme of the journey towards the unknown; and it will serve throughout the novel as the principal locus of 'otherness'. (689-690)

Le Clezio's *Onitsha* also carries the theme of humanity. He sympathizes the pitiful condition of native Africans in Colonial Nigeria. Focusing upon the humanistic perspective another literary critic Marilyn Gaddis Rose says:

Once again J.M.G. le Clezio, a novelist fascinated by the non-western and an anthropologist respecting the other, takes readers to a site that destroys westerners; that is the site either encourages their most egregious exploitative colonialism or puts them in the thrall of difference. The latter happens when the new nonwestern environment casts a spell serving the westerners from their own kind but keeping a barrier between them and the natives. (304)

Similarly, William Riggan categorizes Le Clezio's *Onitsha* under 'The questing fiction.' Fintan's journey to Africa with his mother is symbolic to the literary or intellectual quest of Le Clezio himself. Riggan further remarks:

For all the philosophic seriousness and cosmic reach of the that on going literary quest, the single most vivid lasting impression of Le Clezio's nine-day tenure as the 1997 Puterbaugh fellow is the warmth, the accessibility, the approachability, the humanity of the man himself. Like the accessibility of such recent novels as *The Prospector* and *Onitsha* and the ready identification many readers feel with these two books young protagonists, Le Clezio himself quietly and easily engaged every one he encountered [. . .] and impressed upon them. (669-70)

Le Clezio's Language is always fluid and evocative. He frequently uses images in his writing which most of the time come from nature. Le Clezio's *Onitsha* also bears the features that we find in most of his works. We feel as if we are really traveling Africa by *Surabaya*, while reading

Le Clezio's *Onitsha*. The narrow, hot cabin on board the *Surabaya*, the expanse of the river, the sounds and smells of the market, Bony and Fintan running through the tall grass immediately impresses the reader and helps to create a mental image. Sharing the experience of translating Le Clerizo's *Onitsha*, translator Alison Anderson Comments upon the Languages which is fluid and evocative, and images used in the novels:

Obviously when one works with a text that is as rich and evocative as *Onitsha* is, it is as important to be a good reader as to have a good command of French or of English. There is an almost tactile projection to be made: The translator, in reading must travel to Africa, must reconstitute everything as faithfully as possible in her imagination [. . .]. (579-80)

In the same way commenting on the writing style of Le Clezio in *Ontisha*, Francoise Dubor states, " childhood occupies an ideal place in the work of Le Cleioz, thanks to its unconscious spontaneity and its very fragility in the time and space. Le Clezio's clean style and penetrating thought succeeds in preserving its seriousness" (210). Since *Onitsha* is an open-ended text different critics have interpreted it from different perspectives so far, but these interpretations alone can not do justice to the text. As the text carries multiple themes, it requires analysis from multiple perspectives. Though the text has been analyzed from various perspectives, the postcolonial approach has not been applied yet. The researcher is confident that without the application of postcolonial approach, the meaning of the text is always incomplete. As the setting of any novel supports its theme to a great extent, Maximum portion of the *Onitsha* is set in Colonial Nigeria, where, the struggle of native Africans against British colonial rule is at its climax during 1948/49. It encompasses 20 years time span from its opening scene of 1948. In this way it depicts both-colonial and postcolonial or independent Nigeria, or the most critical

event of the disintegration of British Empire from Nigeria. Le Clezio has willingly chosen this particular setting for the novel in order to explore the colonial brutality which caused the ruin of the British Empire throughout the world.

First of all this research is significant in the sense that the researcher is analyzing the text from a completely new perspective-the postcolonial perspective, from which no critics has analyzed the text so far. Secondly, this research will prove to be a good secondary resource for the researchers or the students who want to research in the very text in the days to come. The researcher has done great labour to concretize this dissertation. It has come into this shape only after the intense study of the original text, criticisms of the different critics published on the text, the theoretical tool-post colonialism, views of various postcolonial critics like Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Chinua Achebe, Homi K. Bhabha, Benita Parry, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, M.L. Pratt, Lila Gandhi so on, and the consultation of different libraries. This research has been generally divided into four sections: Introduction, Discussion of theoretical tool, Textual Analysis and Conclusion. General Introduction of the author, text and the whole research is given in the first or introductory section. There is an intensive discussion of theoretical tool i.e. post colonialism given in the second section of the research. In the third or the main section, the researcher has tried to provide sufficient textual evidences in order to support his main argument or the research topic. Finally, the fourth chapter deals with the findings of the whole research that comes after the meticulous discussion and analysis of the particular text.



## II - A Historical Sketch of Postcolonial Discourse: A Methodological Overview

Post-Colonialism is a type of discourse which resists the imperial power and studies the history of once colonized country and impacts of colonizer on the native culture, language and many other aspects of society. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define post colonialism in their book *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* as, “Post colonialism deals with the effect of colonization on cultures and societies”(186). The term “Post-Colonial” generally refers to the post-independence or post war period. The prefix ‘post’ means after colonialism.

The most significant movement that began post colonial work was the subaltern studies group that re (examined) Indian history and historiography. Coming from a Gramscian perspective of the subaltern coupled with the insights of the various post structuralist analysis, writers like Gayatri Spivak, Ranjit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty sought to transform the ways in which the subaltern was located within discourse, history and philosophy. It was seen as a signifier of postcolonial criticism and discourse. Its project, as Gyan Prakash elaborates, “Seeks to undo the Euro centrism produced by the institution of the west’s trajectory its appropriation of the other as History” (1476).

Another important influence upon postcolonial theory, but of a different character and time period was Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. This work is perhaps the most significant and successful reworking of Foucault’s discourse analysis. Said examined the way in which the east (the orient) had been constructed in relation to the west in terms of discursive practices. *Orientalism* became, “an accepted grid for filtering through the orient into western consciousness” (6). Said concentrated on the intellectual and pedagogical ramifications of imperialism. In terms of postcolonialism, it is Aijaz Ahamed who has identified Said’s lasting



contributions as the first to provide, “a whole critical apparatus for defining a postmodern kind of anti-colonialism” (222) which also for the first time had little relation to Marxism.

Referring to the origin of postcolonial studies Mary Louise Pratt in her famous book *Imperial Eyes* writes, " It was not until the late 1970s as positivist reading habits gave way to interpretative studies and Eurocentric elitisms gave way to postcolonial pluralisms " (4). With the emergence of post colonialism, earlier texts began to be read and reread from a distinct i.e. postcolonial perspective. In this regard Pratt further writes:

The readability of Gauman Poma's letter today is another sign of the changing intellectual dynamics through which colonial meaning making has become a subject of critical investigation. His elaborate inter cultural text and its tragic history exemplify the possibilities and perils of writing in what I like to call 'Contact zones,' social spaces where desperate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today. (4)

Robert J.C. Young opines that "post-colonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well being" (2). The reality though is that the world today is a world of inequality and much of the difference falls across the broad division between people of the west and those of the non-west. This division between the rest and the west was made fairly absolute in the nineteenth century by the expansion of the European Empires as result of which nine tenths of the entire land surface of the globe was controlled by European powers. Colonial and imperial rule was legitimized by an anthropological theory which increasingly portrayed the

people of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests.

Much has been made of the term 'postcolonial' to describe a state of being. It has in various uses signified the period of time immediately after independence was granted for colonies a point at which colonial discourses no longer exist, a subjective state of being, or a type of literature. In this connection Jasper Goss writes, "As a signifier of the period immediately following colonial independence the term postcolonial is highly suspect. The implication that one is beyond colonialism after the achievement of independence would be laughable if it were not for the tragic consequences of contemporary colonialism" (245).

Postcolonial theory revisits the colonial past and it questions upon the ideological discourses of modernity or the false representation of non-western culture and societies by the imperial power. Homi K. Bhabha begins her essay, 'Postcolonial Criticism' with the statement "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political or social authority" (437).

The postcolonial inadvertently glosses over the fact that global hegemony, even in the post cold war era persists in forms other than overt conceptual frameworks generated over the last five hundred years can not be vanquished by waving the magical wand of the post-colonial discourse.

Over the last two decades, postcolonial studies have emerged both as a meeting point and battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories. While it has enabled a complete interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities, its incorporation of mutually antagonistic theories such as Marxism and post structuralism, confounds any uniformity of approach. In this respect in *Postcolonial theory: A Critical Introduction* Leela Gandhi writes:

[ . . . ] there is a little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies. Disagreement arising from usage and methodology are reflected in the semantic quibbling which haunts attempts to name post colonial terminology, where as some critics invoke the hyphenated form ‘post-colonialism’ as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath on the grounds that the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation. [ . . . ] the unbroken term post colonialism is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences. (3)

We use the term ‘Postcolonial’ to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the movement of colonization to the present day. The term ‘post-colonial’ has been used to describe writing and reading practice grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe which was a consequence of expansion and the exploitation of the other part of the world. This is because there is continuity of pre occupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. But the post-colonial writing foregrounds the imperial power and emphasizes the ‘differences’ from the assumptions of imperial centre. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write in *The Empire Writes Back*, “Post-colonial literatures have emerged out of colonization and asserted [ . . . ] the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their difference from the assumptions of imperial centre which makes them post-colonial” (2).

The movements of independence from colonial rule came across the Asian and African continents in 1950s. One of the common characteristics that influenced all independence movements was Europe. Various European states administered their colonizers differently and

finally transmitted to their colonies an institutional legacy. Naturally, people believed that this colonial indolence would bring prosperity and self-government. However, newly 'free' people worked up to discover that their colonial masters had simply been replaced by local body.

### **Post Colonialism and Feminism**

The history and concerns of feminist theory have strong parallels with postcolonial theory. Feminist and postcolonial theory both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the place of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist postcolonial criticism, sought to invert the structures of domination, substituting for instance, a female tradition or traditions in place of a male dominated canon. But like postcolonial criticism, feminist criticism has now turned away from such simple inversions towards a questioning of forms and modes. In this regard Lois Tyson in her *Critical Theory Today* writes:

Patriarchal subjugation of women is analogous to colonial subjugation of indigenous populations. [. . .] woman and colonized people poses very similar problems for both groups in term of achieving an independent personal and group identity; gaining access to political power and economic opportunities and finding ways to think speak and create that are not dominated by the ideology of the oppressor. (423)

The parallels between feminist and postcolonial concerns also underscore the double oppression suffered by post-colonial women for they are the victims of both colonialist ideology which devalues them because of their race and cultural ancestry and patriarchal ideology, which devalues them because of their sex.

Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak shows the problems in postcolonial studies. She urges local body (elite class) to reconsider the status or generalized margin especially women. Spivak theorizes the silence of the doubly oppressed subaltern woman. Her theorem on imperialism's epistemic violence extends to posting the native, male and female as a historically muted subject. In her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' She analytically studies an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse in constituting and disarticulating the native. She observes that:

In seeking to learn to speak to the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the post-colonial intellectual systematically unlearns female privilege. This systematic unlearning involves learning to critique post-colonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substitution the lost figure of the colonized. (91)

Spivak argues that because the construction of an English cultural identity was inseparable from othering the native as its object, the articulation of the female subject within the emerging norm of feminist individualism during the age of imperialism, necessarily excluded the native female, who was positioned on the boundary between human and animal as the object of imperialism's social mission or soul-making. Commenting upon the Spivak's writing, another prominent postcolonial critic Benita Parry says, "[. . .] Spivak's in her own writing severely restricts (eliminates?) the space in which the colonized can be written back into history, even when interventionist possibilities are exploited through the deconstructive strategies devised by the post-colonial intellectual" (40).

Ever since its development in the 1980s, post-colonialism has found itself in the company of disciplines such as women studies, cultural studies and gay/lesbian studies which are often classified under the rubric of 'New Humanities'. Each of these disciplinary areas has attempted

to represent the interest of a particular set of 'subjugated knowledges' which in Foucault's term for "knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (*Power* 82). These 'minor' knowledges as Deleuze and Guattari write "embody forms of thought and culture which have been violently deterritorialized" (18) by major or dominant knowledge systems. For Foucault, the proposal for a radical reclamation of subjugated/minor knowledge helps to expose the hidden contiguity between knowledge and power, "through which a society conveys its knowledge and ensures its survival under the mask of knowledge" (*Power* 225). Likewise, Deleuze, postulated the 'reterritorialisation' of minor literatures as "the relay for a revolutionary machine to come" (18).

Postcolonial studies follow feminism in its critique of seemingly foundational discourses. Unlike feminism, however, it directs its critique against the cultural hegemony of European knowledge's in an attempt to reassert the epistemological value and agency of the non-European world. The post-colonial reclamation of non-European knowledge's is in effect a refutation of Macaulay's infamous privileging of a single shelf of a 'good' European library over the entire corpus of 'Oriental' literary production. Macaulay's 1835 minute typifies the historical colonization of scholarship and pedagogy where by as Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, non-Western thought is consistently precluded from the constitution of knowledge proper. Third world's historians, as he says, "Feel a need to refer to works in Europeans history; historians of Europe do not even reciprocate [ . . . ] we can not even afford an equality or symmetry of ignorance at this level without taking the risk of appearing 'old fashioned' or 'out dated'" (2).

Feminist and postcolonial theory alike began with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender; culture, race and they have each progressively welcomed the

poststructuralist invitation to refuse the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself. The most significant collision and collusion of post colonial and feminist theory occur around the contentious figure of the 'third-world woman'. Critics such as Sara Suleri are instructive in their disavowal of the much too eager "coalition between postcolonial and feminist theories in which each term serves to reify the potential pietism of the other" (274). The imbrications of race and gender, as Suleri goes on to argue, invests the 'third world woman' with an iconicity which is almost "too good to be true" (273). Once again, then, as Gayatri Spivak Suggests, the margin is at the service of center: "When a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the centre wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the centre" (55). The Third World Woman is arguably housed in an 'identifiable margin' and as critics like Suleri and Spivak insist, this accommodation is ultimately unsatisfactory.

In an impressionistic and quasi-poetic book *Woman, Native, Other*, Trinh T. Minh-ha firmly attributes the rise of the 'third world woman' to the ideological tourism of western liberal feminism. Trinh argues, the veneer of cross cultural, sisterly, colloquium disguises an unpleasant ideology of separatism. Whenever she goes, the native woman is required to exhibit her ineluctable difference from the primary referent of western feminism, "It is as if every where we go, we become someone's private zoo" (82). This voyeuristic carving for the colorful alterity of native women seriously compromises the seemingly egalitarian politics of liberal Feminism.

In an influential article "Under Western Eyes Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", Chandra Talpade Mohanty similarly discerns the play of a discursive colonialism in the "production of the Third World Woman as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (western) feminist texts" (196). Talpade Mohanty shows how feminists working within the social

sciences invoke the narrative of 'double colonization' principally to contrast the political immaturity of third- world women with the progressive ethos of western feminism. To a large extent, Trinh's and Talpade Mohanty's Critique of liberal-feminist imperialism draws upon Said's understanding of colonial discourse as the cultural privilege of representing the subjugated other.

### **Post-Colonialism as a Resistance to Eurocentrism and Cultural Imperialism**

The use of European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted is called Eurocentrism. A common example of Eurocentrism in literary studies is the long standing philosophy of so-called Universalism. British, European and later American cultural standard bearers judged all literature in terms of its universality: to be considered a great work a literary text had to have universal characters and themes. The idea of Eurocentrism can be seen in terms of its division of four worlds, a specific form of othering called 'Orientalism' and the colonialist ideology.

Cultural imperialism is a direct result of economic domination. It consists of the takeover of one culture by another: the food, clothing, customs, recreation, and values of the economically dominant culture increasingly replace those of the economically vulnerable culture until the latter appears to be a kind of imitation of the former. American cultural imperialism has been one of the most pervasive forms of this phenomenon, as we see American fashions, movies, music, sports, fast food and consumerism squeeze out indigenous cultural traditions all over the world.

In this way post colonial criticism resists the Eurocentric ideology and the cultural imperialism by blurring the hierarchy between Occidental and Oriental. It resists the western colonialist ideology. In this respect postcolonial criticism is very close to deconstruction which has been used effectively to reveal the Euro centrism and cultural imperialism.



Colonizers use English language as a weapon to attack upon the native culture because culture of any society is embedded in language to a great extent. Imperial practices denigrate the native culture and traditions of the colonized countries. It even causes the extinction of great culture and civilizations of the world. With the wide-spread use of imperial language and culture, native language and culture of the colonized states get hybridized. People of the colonized countries are persuaded to adopt the so called superior or imperial culture. Natives feel dislocated in their own place along with the loss of their original cultural. Referring to the loss of 'self' due to cultural denigration by imperial exercise, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their book *Empire Writes Back* write:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation [. . .] or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model.

[ . . . ] Imperialism results in a profound linguistic alienation, is obviously the case in cultures in which pre-colonial culture is suppressed by military conquest or enslavement. (9-10)

The colonialist critics always think that their art, literature, music and culture is superior to Africans. They have written lengthy articles to prove the non-existence of African novels largely on the grounds that the novel is a peculiarly western genre. Critiquing such ideas of colonialist critics, a prominent Nigerian postcolonial critic Chinua Achebe in his essay 'Colonialist Criticism' writes:

[ . . . ] did not the black people in America, deprived of their own musical instruments, take the trumpet and the trombone and blow them as they had never

been blown before, as indeed they were not designed to be blown? And the result, was it not jazz? Is any one going to say that this was a loss to the world or that those first Negro slaves who began to play around with the discarded instrument of their masters should have played Waltzes and foxtrots? No! Let every people bring their gifts to the great festival of the world's cultural harvest and mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings.( 61 )

Post-colonial writers in the discourse of post colonialism try to emphasize the distinctive features of the particular national, regional, cultural and linguistic features of the colonized society which depict the particularity. In such situation, not only the regional feature but also the colonial tongue gets hybridized or syncretized. It is a way to "decolonize the normative value of Standard English" (*Empire* 53). In this regard Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin further write, "Privileging of the margin in the post-colonial writing asserts [ . . . ] the syncretic and hybridized nature of post-colonial experience, [ . . . ] refutes the privileged position of a standard code in the language and monocentric view of human experience" (40 ).

The postcolonial condition becomes the situations where the colonized language culture and history are remade and reconstituted through the formation of 'English'. John Docker in 'The Neocolonial Assumption in University Teaching of English' also focuses that the colonized countries should create literature placing their own culture and language at the centre and English becomes suitable means to express their voices which is improved to fit their cultural experiences in the discourse of post-colonialism. He says, "The challenge of the postcolonial literature is that by exposing and attacking anglocentric assumptions directly and it can replace English literature with the world literature in English" (445).

The post-colonial literatures are the product of imperial and imperialized culture, society and indigenusness and their fundamental practices. Edward Said, in an introduction to his book *Culture and Imperialism* defines culture as "a concept that includes a refining and elevating, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought" (xii). He further says, "Imperialism means thinking about setting on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant that is lined on the owned by others" (5). So Imperialism is an umbrella term which includes the activities not only controlling the land but even thinking about controlling the land.

The otherness has played crucial role to invade other's culture, territory and even the sovereignty of the non-European people. In this light Said's reference regarding invading and othering is:

The orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition the orient has helped to define Europe (or the west) as its controlling image, idea, personality, experience. (20)

In post-colonial era many theorists have pointed out various issues, which are problematic for independent nation both in short terms and long terms. African writers have constructed the literary, economic, psychological, social and cultural subject positions of their worlds. As an African writer Frantz Fanon focuses on the realization of political liberation. He objectively studies the instabilities going on in African countries is radical in his opinion regarding the idea of colonization. Commenting upon the forms and function of his writing, Michael Parker says, "Fanon has emphasized the inter connectedness and uniqueness of African literary and political discourse" (4).

Frantz Fanon concedes the importance of valorizing pre-colonial histories and cultures that have been systematically disfigured and devalued by colonialism. Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* writes:

It was with the greatest delight that they discovered that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory and solemnity. The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium is responsible for an important change in the native. (170)

The native culture of African people is great in terms of its original practice because people think that the imported or guest culture is only the conspiracy against natives. It suppresses the native voice and the teaching of white people whether directly or indirectly is a pseudo practice which may cause to vanish the aboriginal if it is kept on practicing. Here, Chinua Achebe focuses on to show imagination of English culture:

On one arm of the cross we sang hymns and read the Bible night and day. On the other my father's brother and his family, blinded by heathenism, offered food to idols. That was how it was supposed to be anyhow. But I know with known why it was too simple a way to describe what was going on. Those idols and that food had a strange pull on me in spite of my being such a through such a little Christian that often at Sunday service at the height of the grandeur [. . .] I would have dreams of mantle of gold falling on me while the choir of angels drowned our mortal song and the voice of God Himself thundering. (191)

Kwame Anothony Appiah in his essay 'Is the Post in Postmodernism the Post in Postcolonial?' opines that no one can escape out of colonial and neocolonial cultural power in postcolonial society:

All aspects of contemporary African cultural life have been influenced by the transition of African societies through colonialism, but they are not all in the relevant sense post-colonial. For [. . .] in postcolonial [era] . . . many areas of contemporary African cultural life are not [. . .] concerned with transcending, with going beyond coloniality. (63)

George Lamming, in his essay 'The Occasion for Speaking' opines that the West Indian and the African share a common political predicament which we call colonial; but the word colonial has a deeper meaning for the West Indian that it has for the African:

Colonialism is the very base and structure of the West Indian cultural awareness. His reluctance in asking for complete, political freedom [. . .] is due to the fear that has never had to stand. A foreign or absent Mother Culture has always cradled his judgment. Moreover, the freedom from physical fear has created a state of complacency in the west Indian awareness. (15)

The literature or novels by West-Indian writers investigate and project, the inner experiences of the West-Indian community. The West-Indian writer is the first to add a new dimension to writing about the West Indian Community. It is true that colonialist fiction and ideology do not exist in a vacuum. In order to appreciate them thoroughly, we must examine them in juxtaposition to domestic English fiction and the Anglophone fiction of the Third World which originates during the hegemonic phase of colonialism and establishes a dialogic relation with Colonialist Fiction. Abdual R. JanMohamed views that the Third World literary dialogue with

western cultures is marked by two broad characteristics, [. . .] its attempt to negate the prior European negation of colonized cultures and its adoption and creative modification of western languages and artistic forms in conjunction with indigenous languages and forms” (23).

In the process of independence violence is in the centre of practice. It is Europe which has taught the violence and killing to the native people. Fanon comments, the colonizer himself is the “bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of native people” (*Wretched* 38). It is through the bullets and blood stained knives that Europeans formed the programme of colonization. Now for the complete freedom, to subvert Europeans from the bottom, native people have adopted violence as the key weapon of their struggle, “the native, who decides to put the programme into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times” (*Wretched* 57).

Frantz Fanon has negative attitude towards the cultural invasion by an imperial authority. Europeans exercised power of bullets on the colonized people. They could not come to learn with native culture side by side. At last as native people became aware of the oppression, they returned the same cycle. Fanon further says:

During the period of decolonization, the native’s reason is appealed to. He is offered definite values, he is told frequently that decolonization need not mean, regression and that he must put his trust qualities which are well tried, solid and highly esteemed. But it so happens that when the native hears a speech about Western culture he pulls out his knife to at least he makes sure it is within reach [. . .] the native laughs in mockery when western values are mentioned in front of him [. . .] In the period of decolonization the colonized mass mock at these very values, insult them, and vomit them up. (*Wretched* 43)

The process of decolonization has importance of carrying the cultural and linguistic values of the post-colonial societies. It is a project which has significant roles in the re-creation of the post-colonial discourse. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write in their book *Empire Writes Back*:

Decolonizing projects [ . . . ] recognize the literature written in indigenous Indian languages, the relationship between those languages and the much less extensive writing in ‘english’ in post-colonial self assertion. In settler colonies, decolonizing projects underlay the drive to establish national cultures [ . . . ].  
(*Empire* 29)

Elleke Boehmer in *Colonial and Post Colonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* talks how English language is adopted by the post-colonial writers as a form of resistance:

However, at least in the medium of language and literary form, assimilation has remained for the nationalist writers and other anti-colonial writers an important mode of resistance. It is a mode constantly enacted into the bending and ‘misshaping’ of the English language by the postcolonial writers around the world today. Transposing the English conventions into an Indian, African or Caribbean context extended what it was possible to say within the framework. [ . . . ] Assimilation was at this time perhaps more subversive and effective. (173-74)

After age long domination of imperialism and colonialism over third world nations, processes of artistic and literary decolonization have involved a radical dismantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses. They, demand for an entirely new or wholly recovered ‘reality’, free of all colonial taint, such pre-colonial cultural purity can never be fully recovered. In this connection Helen Tiffin says:

Post-colonial culture are inevitably hybridized, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity. Decolonization is process, not arrival, it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them, between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling. (95)

Post colonial writings give emphasis on the native cultural values though the writers take 'alien' language. The contact literatures in English have several characteristics associated with the native in both content and style. In this regard Biraj B. Kachru in his book *The Alchemy of English* writes, "South Asian Literatures have maintained stylistic devices metaphors, imagery symbolism [. . .] as the language of national revival. It has provided new perspectives in India through an 'alien' language" (293).

Allusions and mythical references are also the sources of post colonial writings which are suppressed by the colonizers. Allusions and myths have association with the native cultural context. They have power to create the linguistic and cultural distance from the colonizers. The process of allusions and myths "[. . .] install linguistic distance as a subject of the text. The maintenance of this 'gap' in the cross-cultural text has the profound importance to its ethnographic function" (*Alchemy* 57). The assertion of such references maintains 'gap' and 'distance' from the colonizers' culture and provides the dynamic possibility of writing within the tension of center and margin. They have social and cultural function in native location to emphasize the particular meanings. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O in his essay 'On the Abolition of the English Department' writes, "Tale dance, song, myth etc can be performed. They have social purposes"(44). The post colonial writers adapt such native features to evoke the suppressed



culture in the process of decolonization. The assertion of allusions and mythical references make the non- native speakers feel difficult in the proper understanding of the text. In this regard Sisir Kumar Das in *A History of Indian struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy* writes, "The feature of patriotic writing is the assertion of Indian identity in terms of religion, language, myth and history. The patriotic writings grow almost spontaneously in different languages as the resistance of a community against the foreign rules" (61).

Third world nations become the victim of age long colonial domination of European powers. Along with the military invasion the invaded colonies, they economically and culturally dominated the nations. Colonizers heavily imposed their white or so called superior culture upon the native people. It lost the purity of original native culture. They were extremely successful to create cultural hegemony upon the mind of colonial subjects. In this connection Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* writes:

Many [ . . . ] individuals tried to imitate their colonizers as much as possible, in dress, speech, behavior and life style. Post colonial critics refers to this phenomenon as ‘mimicry’, and it reflects both desire of colonized individuals concerning their own culture which they were programmed to see as inferior.  
(421)

Mimicry, hybridity, diaspora, unhomlines, double consciousnesses, alterity and the exile are some important features of postcolonial criticism. Mimicry is an unreal imitation of the colonial language, culture life style by indigenous peoples. Hybridity is also caused by the colonial encounter with indigenous culture in contact zones. When two completely different cultures meet in contact zones, a third or hybrid culture is emerged, which consists the feature of both culture. Diaspora is the feeling of rootlessness. Colonization caused forced migration, either as a quest

for employment from the rural farm or village to the city, including indentured servitude or as the result of enslavement, scattered large numbers of peoples around the globe, and large population of their descendants have remained in the diaspora or separated from their homeland.

In this regard Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* writes:

This feeling of being caught between cultures of belonging to neither rather than to both of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives, is referred to by Homi Bhabha and others as 'unhomliness'.(421)

Alterity or the otherness is another feature of postcolonial criticism. The colonizers behave to the member of the indigenous culture as less than fully human. They create hierarchy between West & the East Westerners treat orient as 'other' imposing all negative attributes to it. Exile is also another postcolonial experience or being an 'outsider' in one's own land or a foreign wanderer in Britain. By mobilizing the theoretical insights of post colonialism developed in this chapter, the researcher analyses Le Clezio's text *Onitsha* by applying the mythology in following chapter three.

### III - A Critique of Empire in Le Clezio's *Onitsha*

*Onitsha* is a startling account and indictment of colonialism which successfully portrays the intolerance and brutal colonial system in Nigeria. It is true picture of the people of colonized countries especially black Africans who were crushed under the stone of racial segregation or cruel and animalistic treatment of the British colonizers for a long time. Le Clezio critiques upon the colonialist ideology by employing life-like characters and historical events in the novel. He has deep concern with the expansion of British empire and its Eurocentric ideology. The novel is replete with local myth and history which are quite supportive to the theme of the novel.

*Onitsha* is set in colonial Nigeria during 1948. This is the very time when all the colonized countries were trying to come out of the clutch of European colonialism. The novel *Onitsha* explores the evils of colonialism and tries to know how the native Nigerians were compelled to revolt against the animalistic or inhuman treatment and cruelty of British colonialism. Le Clezio tells his story from all-knowing third person narrator stand point, with changing main protagonists. The focus shifts between the members of a small family. Fintan, a young boy of fourteen or the protagonist, seems innocent about colonial brutality in the beginning. In the course of time when he witnesses the real subjugation of native Nigerians by the whites, he becomes very much critical towards the British Imperialism.

Le Clezio has divided the novel into four sections: A Long Voyage, Onitsha, Aro Chuku and Far from Onitsha. This division of the author is very much arbitrary. The sequence of these four interrelated chapters gives us the glimpse of the process of colonization. After the invention of compass during Renaissance period, European colonizers made long voyages in search of new territories. They entered into many Latin American, Middle Eastern, South East-Asian and South African countries like Nigeria and started ruling over the native people. 'Aro Chuku' shows the

cultural phenomenon of the colonized Nigeria. It is related to the local myth and history of Nigeria. Colonizers violated the original culture of the colonized countries like Nigeria by imposing their so called superior white culture. The last section of the novel 'far from Onitsha' refers to the period of decolonization. After the disintegration of empire, colonizers return back to their homeland Europe. They are killed in war, defeated or chased away by the natives of the ex-colonized countries.

The story of *Onitsha* opens with the description of the ship named *Surabaya*, "the *Surabaya*, an aging three hundred ton ship of the Holland Africa line, had just left the dirty waters of the Gironde estuary, [. . .]" (3). Fintan, the young protagonist set off his journey to Onitsha, a small colonial city in Nigeria with his mother. Fintan's grandmother Aurelia had told him so many interesting stories about Africa so, he was very much eager to go to Africa "[...], it had burned within him, made him speechless, in Marseilles, in Grandmother Aurelia's little apartment" (7). Aurelia had also described about the man who would be waiting at the end of their journey in Africa to receive them. He was his father Geotfroy Allen whom Fintan had never met before. Fintan hates him so strongly that he even does not want to go there, 'I hate him, I hate him, I don't want to leave, I don't want to go there. "I hate him, he is not my father" (6). He hate his father only because he is an English man he is also the part of British run united Africa Company in West Africa.

During mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans had started to realize that their mission of colonization was really against the flow of time. It could no longer sustain against the violent uprising of native Africans. The fall of British Empire was inevitable and unavoidable. In this connection, Maou writes in a note to her husband Geoffroy Allen:

I remember the last time we spoke, in San Remo ; you spoke to me of the silence of the desert, as if you were going to go back against the flows of time as far as Meroe to find the truth; and now I myself here in the silence and the wildness of the sea, feel I am going back in time to find the truth of my life, there in Onitsha. (16)

Maou indeed, finds the truth of her life there in Onitsha. She gets chance to view the real picture of colonial brutality and injustice done upon the native Nigerians by the British colonizers in front of her own eyes. Since this incident, she finds a newer truth of her life that she had never experienced before, and becomes very much critical towards colonizers & their activities.

On their way to Onitsha when they reached in Goree, Mr. Botrou tells them "it was in Goree that the slaves had been locked away in the old days" (19). When she hears Mr Botrou, she feels disgusted and ashamed. She no longer wants to stay there when she visits 'the accursed fortress' where the slaves awaited journey to hell, "through the middle of the cells ran a gutter to drain off the urine. On the walls were rings where the chains had been attached. This was Africa, this darkness heavy with suffering, this odor of sweat from the depths of jails, this odor of death. (22). This is only single example of the in justice and cruel treatment done upon the slaves or black Africans in their own land. Such monstrous concentration camps were pervasive during colonization to punish the native Africans in African colonized countries. Fintan also can not digest the most inhuman things he witness in Goree. He is hot with fever that evening. He perceives the negative image of Africa. His idealistic vision of Africa as a beautiful place changes momentarily. He wonders in and out of delirium. Fintan also wants to return back to France, "I want to see Grandmother Aurelia again -when are we going back to France?" (22)

This is the very event that creates negative image of British Empire in the mind of Fintan and his mother.

Native African were treated as a second class citizens by the white colonizers. They were exploited both physically and mentally. They had to work for their boss all the time but they did not have money, even to pay for their own and their families' transportation to the next port. Black Africans were treated as an object. They had no place in passenger deck while traveling by ship. There was a special first-class lounge for white Europeans where blacks were not allowed to enter. They were destined to travel in cargo deck. Their job was to remove the rust from the ship in order to pay for their transportation, "the entire foredeck of the *Surabaya* was crowded with blacks. They crouched down and were beating with hammers on the hatches, the hull, and the framers to remove the rust" (23). Maou expresses her sympathy towards 'the poor souls' (24). Fintan also feels very much sorry for these poor souls and goes near them in order to listen the sad music produced by their hammers. He is restricted to go near them, "you are not allowed on the cargo deck and you know it!" says Mr. Heylings, one of the Englishmen Maou and Fintan meet in the ship (26).

From the beginning of the novel English officers are looked upon with the sense of disdain and scorn by different characters in the novel. Maou and Fintan are the one who openly criticize colonial officers from beginning to the end. First of all Fintan dislikes his own father Geoffroy Allen because he is an English man but his mother is an Italian. As Mr. Heylings stops Fintan going to the cargo deck where a blacks were kept, Fintan grows very much furious and asks his mother, 'Tell me, Maou, why did you marry an Englishman?' (27). Fintan even does not like to speak with any Englishman on board. When Gerald Simpson, who was going to take up his new post of district officer (D.O.) in Onitsha speaks with Maou in the ship "Fintan took an

instant dislike to him" (28). Fintan can not stand Mr. Simpson mocking blacks on the cargo deck by imitating their language, "Pickaninny stop along him fellow!" (41). He felt "so angry, so ashamed that for a moment he wanted to go back to the first class lounge" (41). Another Belgian citizen on board named Florizel looked on the English officers with scorn [ . . .]" (29).

Grandmother Aurelia and Aunt Rosa also strongly dislike Englishmen. In Marseilles, grandmother Aurelia describes Fintan everything about Onitsha but she never tells him about his father, "Grandmother Aurelia did not speak of Geoffroy Allen. He was an Englishman, an enemy" (51). They take Englishmen as their enemy. Aunt Rosa is much more critical towards Englishmen. She likes to say an abusive term "*porco inglese*" (51) to them. She teaches this word to Fintan when he is only five. In this way, Le Clezio has created so many characters throughout the novel who hate the colonial rule of Britain in order to uncover the evils and injustices done by the colonizers.

*Onitsha* primarily focuses upon the effect of colonialism in indigenous African society. It is the heart rending account of cruelty, brutality or both mental and physical exploitation of the native Africans by the British colonizers. Le Clezio strongly critiques such oppressive ideology of colonialism. He writes this novel from black native Africans' perspective. He critiques the notion of colonialism and British imperialism with the help of different instances in the novel. One of such major instances is that the novel ends with the description of bombing raid in Onitsha and the death of colonial officers there. One of them is Sabine Rodes, a spy or the Special agents of British Government in West Africa who is also killed in bombing raid in Onitsha. The novel also gives emphasis on how the native language and culture gets violated and hybridized when it is encountered with imperial European language and culture which causes the

eternal loss of the original African language and culture, by creating the sense of diasporas and unhomeliness in their own land.

Le Clezio has explicitly portrayed a picture of extreme exploitation of the indigenous African society in the novel. Gerald Simpson, the district officer of Onitsha, plans to dig a swimming pool in the garden for the club members. He employs black convicts that he obtains from Rally, the resident to dig the swimming pool because he shouldn't have to pay them for their work, "The workers arrived at the same time as the guests bound by a long chain that was linked by ring to their left ankle; in order not to fall they had to walk in step, as if on parade"(59).

There is a gathering at district officer's residence on the very day. Geoffroy and Maou are also present there. Maou watches the line of chained black convicts with astonishment from the terrace, "[...] these chained men were crossing the garden, their shovels on their shoulder, with a regular noise each time the rings around their ankle pulled on the chain- left, left. Their black skin shone through their rags like metal [...]' their faces were eroded by fatigue and suffering" (59).

On one hand, white colonial officers, with their family members enjoy dinner sitting in the shade of veranda whereas on the other, black convict dig into the earth at the other end of the garden, under the scorching heat of the sun. The very event has been highly emphasized by the novelist in the novel and tries to show that how the system of imperialism created a vast crevasse between whites and blacks or colonizers and colonized. English officers and their family members are served "huge dishes of *foufou* and grilled mutton, glasses of guava juice filled with crushed ice" (59). On a long table there is a white table cloth and bouquets of flowers ordered by the Resident's wife herself. Besides this, the black convicts are not made completely free while working too. Their ankles are tied with chain and they are compelled to work under the



sweltering heat of the sun. They hack at the hard earth with pick and shovel where Simpson has planned to make his swimming pool.

The pathetic situation of the black convicts is not noticed by any of the participants present in the dinner party, except Maou. All the party members discuss in different issues, laugh and have full entertainment but Maou does not take part in their discussion. She turns very much sad and gloomy. She is deeply observing the situation of the black convicts who were working at the end of the garden. Her mind is fully distracted by the terrifying scene of the convicts. She hears "the hammering against the hard earth, the sound of the convicts breathing, the clanking of the ring around their ankles" (59). She feels her throat tightened as if she might cry. Then, she looks at the English officers around the table but she doesn't find anyone paying attention to her. All men and women continue to eat and laugh. At the same time Gerald Simpson's gaze pauses for a moment upon Maou and her heart, suddenly, is filled up with strong hatred. The most pathetic condition of the black convicts that is completely ignored or unfelt by the stone-hearted English officers is described as, "At the end of the garden, near the grille which acted as a fence, the black men were burning beneath the sun, sweat glistening on their backs on their shoulders. And, always, the sound of their breathing, a hunh ! Of pain each time they struck the earth"(60).

Native Africans were the victim of open oppression, brutality and injustice in the hands of British colonizers. No one would dare to raise voice against their brutal treatment. The one who would defy their order, had to go into the realm of *Yamaraj* either being hanged or being shot. In the novel, Maou has played the role of valiant lady character who dares to raise voice against the cruel and inhuman treatment of the colonial officers in Nigeria (Onitsha). She can not remain silent even after witnessing the cruelty and the labour exploitation of the local people there in Onitsha. She can not tolerate the most pitiful condition of the black convicts who were

continuously working under the sweltering heat of the sun. They are not given any thing to eat or drink. Maou gets up suddenly, and in a voice trembling with anger, with her strange French and Italian accent in English, she says, "But you must give them something to eat and drink, look, there poor fellows, they are hungry and thirsty ! " (60)

Even after such a serious comment of Maou, Gerald Simpson tries to blow it up in the air simply taking it as a light joke. He lightly says, " Ah yes, quite right, I suppose ..." (60) and gives order to a boy to take them out of sight, behind the house instead of giving them anything to drink or eat. Then, looking at Maou, he ironically says, "well, that's better now, isn't it, they were making a wretched noise, we shall have a bit of a rest ourselves now too" (60). He still makes fun of her and the poor black convicts. All other participants do not take any side. They remain silent and do not support any body. It clearly shows that how much negligent the colonial officers are to the feelings of innocent blacks.

The black convicts always return back from their work at 6o'clock in the evening and they are taken to the prison in town by their guards. During their return from the work their family members and the relatives want to meet them and give them different things to eat. Bony, a local fisherman's son watches for their arrival in the evening. There are other people too, mainly women and children who wait on the dusty road to town. They bring food and cigarettes with them. They curiously wait for the arrival of convicts in order to give those parcels and letters or simply call out by their names. The black convicts are never set free form their chain, no matter whether they are on the way or at work, "First of all come the sound of the chain moving forward in fits and starts, then the voice of the policemen, chanting the rhythm of their steps: 'One! One!' If a convict fell out of step, the weight of the chain would trip his left leg and throw him to the ground" (86).

Fintan goes on the road with Bony to see the black prisoners. He loves black people. He befriends Bony in no time when he first arrives in Onitsha. Fintan is equally sympathetic to the black prisoners as their family members or relatives are, Fintan looks sadly at, "the ragged prisoners walked quickly, one behind the other, carrying a shovel or a pick on their shoulders. Their faces shone with sweat: their bodies were dusted with red powder" (86). The policemen who are on the guard on either side of the prisoners do not allow the women and the children at the road side who "try to give them (prisoners) what they had brought" (86). It is the example of extreme exploitation of the black Africans which later turns to be the major cause of the decadence of whole British Empire.

Geoffroy Allen also extremely dislikes the behavior of English officers. Since the incident with Maou, Geoffroy becomes insolent, sarcastic and hateful. He revisits the place where black convicts were digging the swimming pool. He finds them still working in chain and there is no progress with the pool. The sides are not shored up properly and one of them is collapsed, injuring the convicts. Geoffroy comes home indignant, "that bastard, he could have removed their chain to let them work!" (995). After listening the remark of Geoffroy, Maou becomes too much furious. She is on the verge of tears and says, "How can you go to see him, how can you go into his house" (95).

This excessive oppression or subjugation of the naive natives of the colonized countries does not last forever. The hatred of the native Africans towards the cruelty of the colonizers becomes intolerable and it finally explodes. They wage their decisive war of righteousness against their white enemies. The unbearable pain and torture given to them helps to germinate the seed of patriotism and fraternity among the blacks. Their strong determination to gain

freedom and independence turns to be successful after a long struggle with Britishers. They succeed to chase the colonizers away from their land and to establish their own rule over there.

In the novel *Onitsha*, Le Clezio has clearly depicted the movement of Native Nigerians against the British colonial rule. He critiques empire by showing the successful overthrow of British regime or the disintegration of whole British Empire throughout the world. The uprising begins for the first time among the convicts at Gerald Simpson's house who were digging the hole for the swimming pool. The district officer thinks that every thing would go back to normal and parcells out few wacks with his stick but the situation becomes worse:

The convicts seized one of the guards and drowned him in the hole full of muddy water, then, no one knows exactly how, some of them got free of their chain and instead of running away, entrenched themselves at the top of the property, against the wire fence, and they were shouting and threatening the D.O. and the English guests at the club. (167)

English officers are failed to understand the feelings of black convicts. They think it as a normal resistance and try to suppress it with violence. But, In the course of time colonial officers realize that the situation was getting out of their hand. It was the outburst of the repressed emotions and hatred of the poor Africans that no force of the world could resist and stop it. Though English officers use Military power to repress the voices of the protest, it ultimately proves to be ineffective in front of the protest of thousands of native Africans. Gerald Simpson "rang up the resident just before the mutineers pulled the post to the ground. The resident sounded the alarm at the barracks"(167).

Even after the presence of Army personnel's, the convicts try to rip the fence out and continue shouting and threatening them from time to time. They are ready to sacrifice their lives

for freedom and independence of whole nation but they never surrender in front their age long enemies. Meanwhile there is a short cry of the convicts and the sound of the gunshot. The spectators leave the terrace and run into the house. "The chained convicts were falling one on top of the other onto the ground" (168). This event clearly shows that how the indigenous Africans were dehumanized by the European colonizers. They were not considered as important as any pet animal raised in their homes. The right to life of the poor Africans became the thing of charity for English rulers. Their life became just like a plaything in the hands of white masters. The very incident makes us clear that how easily they can take the life of native people without any serious cause, "Bodies had fallen at the foot of the wire fence. One very tall black man, bare chested, one of those who had led the mutiny, remained half hanging from the fence like a broken rag doll. It was terrifying [. . .] in an instant they were upon the convicts and had overcome them" (168).

This is the most hideous picture of the cruelty, violence and injustice done upon the Nigerians. The massacre of the black convicts is extremely criticized by all members of the Geoffroy family. It is hated especially by the protagonist (s) of the novel like, Fintan, Maou and Geoffroy who are also the mouth piece of the novelist himself. In this sense, we can easily deduce that with the help of such events in the novel, Le Clezio wants to attack upon the evils of British colonialism and the cruel and brutal treatment of the agents of Colonial rule in West Africa.

The incident with black convicts has completely negative impact upon the immature child psychology of Fintan. It changes his perspective of looking Africa. Fintan is so frightened to see the incident. He runs home along the road with his bare feet striking the red earth and tells everything to Maou with tears in his eyes, "They were shouting, they killed them, they shot the men in chains, they fell down" (169). Since the incident with black convicts Fintan starts to hate

Onitsha. He hates Gerald Simpson, the Resident and his wife, the lieutenant and the soldiers. Though he loves his friend Bony and the place very much, the cruel and inhuman treatment of the colonial agents in Onitsha compels him to leave the place. He sincerely begs his mother, Maou, to leave the place, "I want to leave this place; I don't want to stay anymore" (169) .

Right from the beginning of his childhood Fintan was taught by his Grand mother Aurelia and Aunt Rosa that Englishmen are cruel, selfish and feelingless. So, he started openly hating the word 'Englishmen'. He even hated his own father Geoffroy Allen only because he was an Englishman. In this way Fintan got negative impression of all Englishmen from the early childhood. He hated his father Geoffroy to the extent that he was not ready to accept him as a father. While staying with Geoffroy in Onitsha for a long time Fintan gets chance to be familiar with him and to read his feelings. Fintan finds his father Geoffroy completely different from the image he had created of him in his mind. He doesn't find any similarity between his father and other Englishmen. Now, for the first time Fintan realizes that all Englishmen are not ruthlessly cruel. So, Fintan starts loving his father, "for the first time he thought that this was his father. Not a stranger, a usurper, but his own father" (169). Fintan finds Geoffroy kind and very much sensitive to the sufferings of native Africans. Fintan comes to know that Geoffroy is the person who severely criticizes the activities of colonial officers in Africa though he himself is one of the members of united Africa Company in West Africa. Due to Geoffroy's loyalty towards natives, he is ultimately dismissed from his post by the English officers.

The words or phrases that refer to the extreme heat of exploitation are pervasive in the novel. In order to show the feverish exploitation of the black Africans by the British colonizers, the author has frequently used the imagery of scorching heat of the sun. The place Onitsha itself is described as a very hot place which is very much symbolic:

The cabin was a hiding place of gray, sweltering heat and shadow (21) [. . .] before the rains the sun was burning (58). [. . .] The heat was sweltering. The black workers were prisoners... (59). [. . .] The black men were burning beneath the sun (60). [. . .] The sun baked the red earth (62). [. . .] the rain began to fall on the cement on the terrace, so hot that... (63). The queen has begun to walk barefoot over the scorched earth ... (106). Heat crackled the red earth before the rain (120). She thought she had never hated anything as much as this little colonial town- crushed by the sun... (120). The sun's heat was already burning, causing drops of sweat to break out on their skin (131). [. . .] This place obliterated everything, even the burning of the sun and stinging of poisonous leaves... (132). [. . .] the red earth was already cracking (147). [. . .] It was hot and close and the wind only rose towards the end of the day... (165). [. . .] Africa burns like a secret, like a fever. (71)

There are some of the instances in the novel where the reference of the sweltering heat of the sun is given. Le Clezio arbitrarily uses the words or phrases which express excessive heat in order to show the harsh brutality, exploitation and the injustice done upon the native Africans by the colonial agents in Africa.

One of such agents in West Africa is Sabine Rodes. He seems to be different from other Europeans. He is supposed to have worked as a spy and still has some connection with the Ministry of Defense of the British government. Europeans gather a lot of information about local myth, history, language and culture of Africa and create a type of discourse by misrepresenting the truth and reality, "Sabine Rodes had a library with a great many books on the archeology and anthropology of West Africa, and a collection of objects and masks from Benin, Niger..."

(78). Besides this, they also exploit the natural resources of the colonized countries. One of the rooms of Rodes' castle is filled up with "the dark skins of forest leopards hung on the wall, surrounded by woven leather, sculpted panels, thrones, stools, Baoule-statues with their elongated eyes, Bantu shields, Fang masks, carafes in laid with pearls lengths of cloth" (79).

Colonizers never tried to understand the feelings of native Africans. Mostly, colonial officers were very much cruel who could not see their civil servants even being slightly liberal and sympathetic to the sufferings of native people. They dismissed such civil servants from their post or transferred them to distant places if they did not follow them strictly. Gerald Simpson makes fun of Maou's inquisitive outings to town and of her friendship with the fishermen's wives or the market vendors. Simpson again thinks it as a great fun to frighten her by saying, "Fifty miles away from here near Owerri, there used to be the oracle of Aro Chuku, the center of sorcery for all of the West where they preached holy war against the British Empire!" (118). Then, after she has taken up the defense of the convicts digging his swimming pool, he looks upon her with disdain and hostility. At the club Geoffroy is subjected to Simpson's ironic gaze and his barbed remarks. Geoffroy and Maou are compelled to leave Onitsha due to their critique of colonial system or British Empire in Africa and the mistreatment of native Nigerians in the hands of colonizers, "Gerald Simpson could not forgive Maou for her independence and imagination [. . .]. He had decided that Geoffroy and Maou would have to leave Onitsha" (119). Maou thinks that, "she had never hated anything as much as this little colonial town - crushed by the sun asleep on the shore of the muddy river" (120).

Maou is certain that Sabine Rodes, the spy of the British Empire is the one who plotted Geoffroy's dismissal from the United Africa Company. In her meeting with Rodes, she finds the sense of cruelty still hidden in his eyes, "He had a soft voice, but she detected once a cruelty in



his eyes" (140). Sabine Rodes treats her with the unbearable mockery. He is very much critical to her and her husband Geoffroy Allen. He hates Maou much more than Geoffroy because she was more scornful to the Englishmen, "I am not implying that he is wrong, any more than you are, but one must be realistic, one must see things as they are and not as one would like them to be" (141). English officers are very much furious with Geoffroy family for trying to be the 'benefactors of mankind' by raising voice against the colonial domination and injustice over black Africans. It is clear from the remark of Sabine Rodes that, "we are colonizers, not the benefactors of mankind. Have you considered what would happen if the English you are so, scornful of were to withdraw the canons and their guns?"(141)

Colonizers used native women as their personal object. They made them slaves and employed as a household servant. They took unwanted benefit from such women. They could not speak anything against the wish of their white masters, so they always remained mute and speechless. Maou openly criticizes such type of tendencies of the English officers. Thus, white colonial masters get angry with Maou. Sabine Rodes has a woman servant named Oya in his house. He treats her like a slave and behaves like a puppet. she also carries a bastard child in her belly. Maou turns to be violent and aggressive when she observes the monotonous and gloomy life of Oya in the house of a colonial master. She threatens Sabine Rodes and says, "Leave her alone [. . .] she is not a mad. She is a poor deaf and dumb girl everyone takes advantage of, you have no right to treat her like a slave!"(142).

Sabine Rodes seems to be quite conscious of upcoming inevitable fall of the British Empire. The voices of the protest coming from the each and every huts of the native Africans, and their suicidal attack upon the colonial officers in different places turns to be a reliable evidence for Sabine Rodes to predict the fall of empire. Although Sabine Rodes is Sure about

the fall of Empire in the near future he wants to stay there until the great ship of Empire goes down. In this regard Sabine Rodes tells to Maou that:

The empire is finished, Signoria, it's crumbling on every side, turning to dust; the great ship of empire is sinking, honorably! [...] and meanwhile everything is crumbling around you. But I shan't leave. I shall stay here to see it all, that's my mission, my vocation, to watch the ship go under". (143)

Le Clezio uses Sabine Rode's old ship *George shotton* as a symbol in the novel. According to Rodes, "It was the most powerful boat of the Empire here on the river" (107). *George Shotton*, which was the finest and the largest boat of the empire carried supplies, weapons, Norden felt cannons on their tripods, as well as officers, medical supplies local people for ages, is now in dilapidated condition. Trees have grown into the carcass of the *George shotton* and the stories of the *George shotton* have become the stories of the past. The ship *George shotton* symbolizes the great ship of empire. As the *George shotton*, one of the finest and largest ship of empire in the past, is changed into a wreck in the course of time, the great ship of British Empire is bound to crumble down after certain time in the future.

The incessant drumbeating at night and the celebration of local festivals by the black Africans is also symbolic to the possible protest or uprising of the blacks in the near future. Drum beating generally refers to the expression of long repressed emotions, anger or hatred of the natives towards British colonizers and public appeal to the fellow- inhabitants. Maou gets frightened by listening the drumbeating at night. The celebrations of local festivals by local people symbolizes their unity. It explicitly shows that the cruel domination of the colonial Masters acted as a consciousness raising mechanism among the blacks. They unite and fight

against colonial government in order to protect their language, tradition and cultural identity. They are ready to pay any type of cost for the sake of freedom and national independence.

As the uprising of the black natives turns to be more and more violent, the situation of the country goes out of the control of English rulers. They are attacked upon, killed and injured by the blacks. All Englishmen get frightened and run away in order to save their life. In the concluding section of the novel, almost all English officers are deserted and left alone by the assistants who were supposed to be their nearest one. They become fearful to the extent that they even lock themselves inside the room in order to forget the world outside. They remain helpless and frustrated. Okawho and Oya flee away from Sabine Rodes. When Sabine Rodes finally understands the reality, he becomes frustrated and wants to forget the world outside by locking himself inside the room forever, "he locked himself into the big, gloomy room with its masks and its shutters forever closed" (172). Rodes loses his conscience and speaks to himself, "The end of empire. Foreigners set up camps to the south, at Nun river, Ughe Ili, Ignita, Apará, Afam. Everything is going to change" (172) .

Fintan loves Bony very much but since the uprising of the convicts in the property of Gerald Simpson, Bony no longer wants to meet and speak with Fintan. There is Bony's uncle and elder brother among the convicts that lieutenant Fry's army shot against the fence. So, Bony is angry with Fintan, though Fintan also strongly dislikes the event. Fintan feels ashamed when Bony doesn't speak with him on the way to Omerun. Tears drop down from his eyes and he thinks that, "What Simpson and Lieutenant fry had done was not his fault, "[. . .] If I killed Simpson, could I see Bony again?" (180) It is the outburst of Fintan's anger and hatred to the colonial system in Africa. Before leaving Onitsha ,Fintan visits the house of Gerald Simpson which has already been deserted by Simpson, "The house seemed strangely empty, abandoned"

(180). The huge hole of the swimming pool is like a flooded tomb. The water is muddy, blood coloured. Fintan thinks that "Gerald Simpson would never get his swimming pool" (180). Now, Fintan remembers the words of Sabine Rodes that 'the great ship of empire is sinking day by day and everything is going to change'.

The prediction of Sabine Rodes turns to be true as the war breaks out and it destroys everything in Onitsha. Marima writes in her letters that she sends to Geoffroy family in France from Onitsha that, "Now everything has changed. War is erasing memories devouring the plains of grass, the ravines, the village houses [. . .] perhaps there will be nothing left of Onitsha" (196). The domination of British colonizers no longer exists in Onitsha. There is bombing raid in Onitsha in the houses of English officers and the castle of British Empire crumbles down. The houses and buildings of colonial agents are burnt down. Most of the colonial officers are killed in bombing raid. As Marima informs, "Sabine Rodes had met his death during a bombing raid in Onitsha [. . .]" (206). The death of Sabine Rodes, an officer of British Empire refers to the end of whole British empire from West Africa because he had promised to stay there until the last moment 'to see the ship go under'.

English colonizers exploit the natural resources of the colonized countries. Along with natural environment they consciously or unconsciously violate the cultural phenomenon of such nations. The colonial interference over original native culture and tradition cause the hybridization of culture or complete loss of such original African cultures. the novelist Le clezio is very much anxious about the lost Amerindian culture and so many other native African cultures that are lost due to their encounter with so called superior English culture.

In the novel, Geoffroy kills the bird falcon (*Ugo*) which is supposed to be a god among the natives, while it was tracing circles above hens in the sky. It is said that, "Geoffroy placed his

rifle on his shoulder fired and the bird fell" (55). According to African culture, to kill the bird falcon (Ugo/God) is a great sin but Geoffroy is completely unknown about this. He simply kills the falcon without any sense of pity which helps to violate the traditional beliefs and culture of West Africa. Bony is very much angry with Geoffroy Allen. He points to the empty sky, to where the falcon had been tracing its circles and says, "Him God! It's a God" (55).

Fintan also happens to destroy the nest of termites due to his innocent child psychology. He might have done it in order to avoid the fear or the loneliness of the city, "Fintan picked up a stick and began to strike the termites' nests" (56). This time too Bony turns furious and looks at Fintan angrily. It was the same anger as the time Geoffroy Allen had killed the falcon. He scolds Fintan severely. He takes the soil and the termite larvae in his hand and says, "you ravin mad, you crazy! This is God!" (57). In this sense colonial interference highly affected the local culture and tradition of Africa.

*Onitsha* is also remarkable for its mythological evocation of local history and beliefs. There are some differently fonted chapters in the novel where we find a subtle description of local myth, history and beliefs of native Nigerians. The character of Geoffroy Allen is dominant in such chapters so, the researcher calls them as 'Geaffroy Chapters'. These chapters are all about the research of Geoffroy Allen on local myth, history and culture of West Africa. Geoffroy chapters have their own significance in the novel. These Chapters also support the anti - colonial theme of the novel. It has anti- imperial voice in common which strongly critiques empire from its historical, cultural or mythological perspective.

According to the local myth of Nigeria, all aboriginal or indigenous Nigeians are the children of *Chuus*, the sun God. They bear *itsi* sign upon their faces since the time of *Ndri*. It is the sign of liberation. It liberates people from any type of fear and suffering. It liberated the

children of *Chuku* from starvation for the first time. It is believed that, "the sign which liberates those who wear it. Enemies can no longer kill them; the English can no longer chain them together and made them work" (73). In this way the local myth of Nigeria contains anti-colonial theme by privileging the native Africans as the children of sun who can never be subjugated by any power of the world. It also refers to the ultimate victory of native Africans over European colonizers along with individual freedom and national independence.

Oracle of the *Long juju* at Aro Chuku preaches the destruction of English Empire. When the colonial agents hear the news, British Government sends colonial Montanaro, commanding officer of British forces in Aro with his troops to attack upon Aro Chuku. They are given order to destroy the oracle of the *Long juju* which foresees the defeat or disintegration of British Empire from West Africa, "In the night, strange stories begin to circulate in the mercenaries camp. It is said that the *Ofa* Oracle has spoken, announcing the victory of the Aros' and the defeat and death of the English" (174).

When British troops are informed of these rumors, Montanaro decides to attack and kills all people of Aro chuku above ten year old including Oji, the king of Aro. Although the troops of Montanaro destroys everything except the children below ten years, he again fails to protect the British empire from the curse of the oracle. The small children of Aro who bear the sign of *itsi*, the sun and the moon and the plumes of the wings and tail of the falcon on their forehead, keep on wandering begging for food. Okawho, a servant in the house of Sabine Rodes, grows up in the same way until he meets Oya who carries the last message of the Oracle. The children of *Ndri* ultimately succeed to prove the oracle to be true by defeating the English forever from the land of Black Natives

#### IV. Conclusion

After the meticulous analysis and discussion on Le Clezio's *Onitsha* from postcolonial perspective, the researcher comes to the conclusion that harsh and brutal treatment of the British colonizers turns to be the major cause of the decline of whole British Empire. The total interference and violence upon indigenous African society, nature and culture by the agents of British colonialism helps to bring the native Africans at a common place of nationality and fraternity. As the oppression, currently and injustices of the white colonizers exceed the limitation, the blacks or the victims of such colonial subjugation become ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of truth, justice, individual freedom and national independence.

*Onitsha* sets light upon the evils of colonialism. Most of the time, Le Clezio takes the help of Geoffroy family in order to analyze and critique upon the evils of colonialism. Right from the beginning of the novel, the members of Geoffroy family, Fintan, Maou and Geoffroy himself severely criticize the inhuman behaviors of English officers. Geoffroy is even accused of being benefactor of human kind rather than colonizer and is dismissed from his post. Le Clezio has employed the mass murder of black convicts at DO's residence as a central event in the novel. With the help of this event the novelist wants to present a lively example of the extreme exploitation of the English officers in Nigeria. The massacre of innocent black convicts touches the heart of everyone that reads the novel and tries to create negative image of colonial rule in West Africa in the mind of common readers.

Le Clezio, through his novel *Onitsha*, wants to disseminate an important message that the fall of British Empire was inevitable. No human beings can live under the dark shadows of colonial subjugation for a long time. Everyone loves freedom, equality and to live a happy life. The chained black convicts can not tolerate the most brutal treatment of the colonizers and are

finally compelled to protest or revolt against them. They turn to be suicidal and explode. The black convicts who dig the swimming pool for Gerald Simpson openly threaten the English officers and attack upon them without taking least care of their life.

*Onitsha* also expresses its worry about lost native African culture and traditions and tries to explore how the Amerindian culture gets lost when it comes in contact with so called superior imperial culture. Along with the expansion of Empire, Britishers try to spread their language and culture through out the world. European colonizers create a discourse by misinterpreting the old African language & culture. They keep their culture at the center and look at other cultures from the perspective of their white culture. They think their cultures as a standard to judge all other culture which is also called Euro centrism. They forcibly impose their religion and culture upon the indigenous African society which violates the original old African culture and pulls it on the verge of extinction. Geoffroy, the protagonist of the novel is very much worried about the loss of ancient African cultures due to colonial intervention and bases his research on the same.

Le Clezio's *Onitsha* dramatizes the fall of British Empire from post colonial point of view. The author looks down upon the Englishmen right from the beginning of the novel. He employs the characters from different age and sex to attack upon the empire. A strong female character Maria Luisa (Maou) and the young boy Fintan openly challenge the English officers to correct their way of treating indigenous African society. They publically speak on the behalf of poor Africans two are the age long victim of the cruelty and injustice of white rulers.

*Onitsha* also focuses upon the disintegration of British Empire. The fall of British empire can easily be predicted from the different incidents presented in the novel. Long ago, the Oracle of *Aro Chuku* announces the defeat of Englishmen and the end of British Empire from Africa. In those days oracle often turned true and people had great faith on oracle. So, in order to show the



inevitability of the end of empire Le Clezio announces the same thing from the mouth of oracle in the novel. Next to this, after analyzing the situation of West Africa for a long time Sabine Rodes, one of the colonial officers and the spy for British government in West Africa, comes to the conclusion that the great ship of empire was sinking. In this regard, Le Clezio seems to be completely against the colonial system. He uses different events and characters to show that colonial system is not good from any aspect for the native Africans. He, through his novel *Onitsha*, wishes and longs for the end of colonial rule from Africa.

*Onitsha* attacks upon the various aspects of the colonial system. European colonizers exploit the labour and the natural resources of the colonized nations that lead them towards industrial success and prosperity. They find Africa both as a good source of raw materials as per the need of their industrial production and the proper market to sell their products. Native Africans are obliged to sell their labour in cheap price and to pay high rate for the things that they themselves produce in English companies. *Onitsha* exposes labour exploitation as one of the evils of colonialism in Africa. Gerald Simpson gets black convicts to dig this swimming pool from Rally, the resident because he should neither have to pay them for their work nor to give them anything to eat or drink. The black convicts are ordered to work from morning to evening with the chain tied in their ankles under the scorching heat of the sun. They are not given anything to eat or free time to have rest.

*Onitsha* ends with the depiction of war in Africa which formally declares the end of British Empire. Geoffroy family returns France before the end of the novel and they receive letters from Marima, Geoffrey's house keeper in Onitsha in which she writes about the changing situation in Onitsha. In the last scene of the novel, Geoffroy is seen lying on the death bed. The last moment of Geoffroy's life is parallel to the death of British Empire from the whole world.

Fintan also receives the news of Sabine Rode's death during a bombing raid in Onitsha at the end of the summer of 1968. The death of Sabine Rodes shows the end of empire because he promised to stay in Onitsha until the last moment to see the great ship of empire goes under. In this way the novel *Onitsha* clearly depicts the victory of black Africans over the British colonizers. They no longer become the victim of colonial subjugation and succeed to achieve individual freedom and national independence.

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