

Post-Colonial Healing Through Environmental Justice: A Psychoanalytic Reading of J.M.G. Le Clézio's Literature

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Abstract:

This research links post-colonial and eco-critical theories through a psychoanalytic reading of *Desert* (2009) and *The Prospector* (2008) by the Francophone and Nobel-prize novelist J.M.G. Le Clézio. The rationale behind this interdisciplinary approach stems from Frantz Fanon's position that colonialism damaged both minds and the colonized earth. Relying on the research of psychoanalysts, three critical arguments are advanced. First, Le Clézio's character Lalla develops a relationship of interdependence with nature (rather than one of interconnectedness), which guarantees freedom and in turn healing from the trauma of colonialism. Second, this agency to define herself on her own terms—as united with nature—is a keen example of justice that also applies to the natural environment. This concept of justice and environmental justice is inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notion of rendering the other his/her "due". Third, the character Ouma defies Homi Bhabha's positions regarding the colonized subject and fulfills instead a special role. By living close to nature and sharing the trauma of colonialism, she is privileged to speak out on behalf of it; the post-colonial figure Alexis conversely reverts to automatic and scattered behavior, as he struggles in vain to heal from the role of the colonizer. This leads to the conclusion that although humans might have an overinflated sense of specialness as a species, colonized peoples who have lived a similar fate as the earth are well-positioned to advance justice for the natural environment and may very well serve as members of a keystone species that will determine the well-being of so many other living species on the planet.

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