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Abstract

The paper contends to explore Negritude, the 1950s theoretical and literary movement by leading African intellectuals, which surfaced as a consequence of the hegemonic Western discourse and the misrepresentation of African culture and identity. With the fall of imperialism and formation of new liberated states, the third world writers challenged the Western construct of Africa and contested against European ethnocentric ideology that considered the European culture as the 'centre' thereby relegating all other cultures to the periphery. The African writers realized the values of the 'third world' cultures and emphasized on the glorification of native-identity, culture and beauty in blackness. The central thought of Negritude movement was blacks take pride in all indigenous aspects. The paper explores the virtues of Negro culture and demonstrates the black man's distinct identity as against that of white. The paper also analyses how Aime Cesaire's play A Tempest (1968) reclaimed native culture, identity and gave voice to the devoiced. The play explores the idea of freedom and reflects on the ways to gain the freedom. Cesaire in the play delivers his idea of Negritude through Caliban and Ariel. The cultural context of this play is pertinent to Cesaire because it explores the hierarchical system during slavery based on racial dynamics.

KEYWORDS: Negritude, Colonialism, Third world, Racism.

African culture endured grievous boorishness at the hands of the colonizers. The indigenous social, political, cultural, and religious civilizations were dominated and subjugated by the imposition of colonial rule. The arrival of imperialism in Africa wiped away highly developed ancient cultural practices. Imperial powers glorified the western culture and deliberately marginalized and eventually misrepresented the native culture, religion, tradition, and identity of Africans in their discourse. Edward Said in his book Orientalism (1978) examines the imperial discourse about the non-western 'other'. He writes, "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). He uses the phrase 'the other' to describe the Western captivity with the Orient and insist that Orient does not exist and has never existed outside the imagination of the West. In this context the orient (East) is represented as irrational, exotic, inferior, backward, intellectually retarded and culturally passive.