

T H E U N I V E R S I T Y

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# Chimères



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Spring 2001

**A JOURNAL OF FRENCH LITERATURE**

*A SPECIAL FRANCOPHONE ISSUE*

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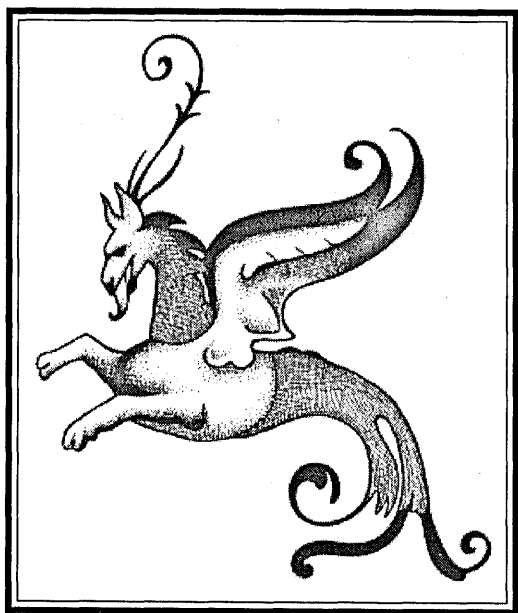
O F K A N S A S

# Chimères

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A Journal of French Literature

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A Special Francophone Issue:  
Questions of Cultural Identity

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# CHIMERES VOLUME XXV NO. 2 - SPRING 2001

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Daniela TEODORESCU

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The Department of French and Italian at the University of Kansas is pleased to present our special Francophone issue of *Chimères*. We thank our former editor Tina Isaac for her idea to have a Francophone issue, and the Department of African Studies for the academic exchange they have initiated with the University of Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, Senegal. It is this exchange that put us in contact with the Senegalese professors Mwamba Cabakulu and Babacar Kanté, who inspired us to open the horizons of our literary journal. We have asked both professors to contribute to our Carte Blanche, which request they graciously granted. Tina Isaac writes next an introduction about the exchange and about the work of professors Cabakulu and Kanté. I would also like to thank the members of the *Chimères* editorial staff, Sophie Delahaye, Angela Fines, Hilary Heffley, Catherine Meissner, Gloria Melgarejo and Jenny Skridulis for their prompt work and enthusiastic participation in the publication of the journal.

The articles included in the present issue, though geographically, temporally and methodologically diverse, converge on the concept of identity: individual identity, group identity, woman's identity, author's identity, and poetic identity. Our first selection, "A New Hybridity in Calixte Beyala's *La petite fille du réverbère*," written by Stacy Fifer, examines the work of Calixte Beyala, a Sub-Saharan writer who has lived both in Cameroon and Paris. Through a study of character in the semi-autobiographical novel *La petite fille du réverbère* (1998), Stacy Fifer challenges Homi Bhabha's concept of the possibility of a "Third Space" where cultures blend. Tapoussière, a young girl doubly chosen to reconstruct her grandmother's kingdom as new chief of the disintegrated tribe of the Issogos and to succeed in the French school system, develops a conflicting identity that requires perpetual choices. Our contributor, Stacy Fifer, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Interdisciplinary French Studies program in the Department of French at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign. She is currently beginning work on her dissertation in which she will discuss representations of female sexuality in the works of Calixthe Beyala and Ken Bugul.

Most of her research has been concentrated in the area of West African women's writing.

Our second selection, "Is the Other Elsewhere? Culture as a Dialectic of Identities in Driss Chraïbi's *Mother Spring*," written by Yaw Oteng, examines questions of the identity of a people in the work of the Moroccan writer Driss Chraïbi. Oteng does a historical analysis of the Aït Yafelman tribe and a character study of its leader Aswaw in the novel *La Mère du Printemps* (1982). He discusses the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial story of a Berber community, to show that its identity, determined especially by its geographical position, is always plural, the Other being present not only with the arrival of the French, but also before, with the influence of Islam, and earlier yet with the tribal differences and wars. In his study, Oteng makes reference to Julia Kristeva's idea that we are "strangers to ourselves," and to Homi Bhabha's concept of the "otherness of the people-as-one." Yaw Oteng will be receiving his Ph.D. in Francophone Literature from the University of Cincinnati in June, 2001. His main research interests are Francophone Literature, Literary Theory and Cultural Studies.

Our third selection, "Identity and Self-Representation in the Francophone African Novel: Finding Henri Lopes in *Le Lys et le flamboyant*," written by Deena Amiry, deals with issues of authorial identity in the fictional works and interviews of Congolese writer Henri Lopes, focusing primarily on his novel *Le Lys et le flamboyant* (1997). Addressing the assumption that Francophone works must be grounded in their historical, political and social context, Deena Amiry examines an author who believes that all real writers lie, and who creates a labyrinth of his own identity in his works to mislead the critic searching for an autobiography. The novel *Le Lys et le flamboyant* is the story of a narrator/filmmaker Victor-Augagneux Houang's written account of Kolélé, a Congolese singing legend. In the same novel appear several contradictory incarnations of Henri Lopes. One is Achel (after his initials H.L.) who has written a fictional biography of Kolélé that Houang, who values reality, criticizes. Victor also meets André Leclerc, a character from another novel by Henri Lopes, whom critics have tried to see as an autobiographical figure, and he thinks he recognizes Henri Lopes himself in him, so that the author is tripled in his own work. Besides the novel, Deena Amiry analyzes the interview as a source of reality and as a genre, concluding it can be as fictional and misleading as fiction itself, so that the quest of authorial identity remains difficult even when provided with such documents. In

conclusion, she notes that if the life of the author is pertinent in his work, it is because the author chooses it to be so.

Deena Amiry is in her final year of doctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation is entitled “Mirror Images? Authorial Self-Representations and Francophone African Fiction and Cinema.” She studies specifically the works of Henri Lopes, Leila Sebbar, Tahar Ben Jelloun and Sembene Ousmane and the relationship of their extratextual materials — specifically interviews, essays and letters — to their fiction. Up until now, these texts have primarily been used as mere biographical references, but Amiry believes that they offer an important theoretical dimension. Each author has his or her own theoretical preoccupation: for Lopes it is the postcolonial artist as métis and métissage in general, for Sebbar it is exile, for Ben Jelloun, alienation, and for Ousmane, nationalism. In her dissertation, Amiry elevates the status of these extratextual materials to where she believes they should be, which is the theoretical complement to these authors’ works and on a larger scale, an important addition to post-colonial theory as a whole. She is writing her dissertation under the direction of Lydie Moudileno.

Our fourth selection, “Considérations sur la poésie d’Aimé Césaire,” written by Lamarana Diallo, examines several poetic works by the Martinique poet Aimé Césaire (1913-), in a quest to define the nature of his poetry. He finds that far from being a poetry of art for art’s sake, Aimé Césaire’s is a functional poetry, engaged in a mission equivalent to the Resurrection of the crucified Black race. Césaire’s is a Promethean poetry of suffering. His poetic word incarnates the Black collectivity as a whole, appealing to collective memory to paint the true past of the Blacks. His is a racial poetry, and an Orphic poetry, a descent of the Black person in his or her own self to recover his and her dignity. Césaire’s poetry is also a weapon of battle, a means of revolution, a document of torture, a pamphlet. Through an analysis of language, Diallo shows that Césaire’s revolutionary poetry becomes iconoclastic, sibylline and hermetic, showing its rupture with French influence through the use of neologisms, ungrammatical structures, archaisms, exotic vocabulary and a symbolism nourished by realities of the Antilles. Lamarana Diallo is currently preparing his Ph.D. Dissertation (Thèse du 3ème Cycle) under the guidance of Professor Mwamba Cabakulu at the University of Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, Senegal. He is particularly interested in theatre, and his dissertation deals with death written in the first person in the works of Césaire, Soyinka and Ionesco.

Our fifth selection, “Liberté, propriété et sexualité dans le *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*,” written by Professor Andrzej Dziedzic, takes

us outside of traditional Francophone literature to the work of Dennis Diderot. However, the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772) addresses and anticipates problems of interest to Francophone studies. Dziedzic examines in his article woman's identity in Diderot's Tahiti at the time of the arrival of the French expedition led by Bougainville. Diderot's account is a mixture of historical and fictional elements. Dziedzic notes that Diderot is less interested in establishing the truth about Tahiti than in painting sexual mores in contrast with European conventions. However, through a close examination of Tahitian practices, Dziedzic demonstrates that beyond the surface differences, the situation of the Tahitian and the European woman is identical, in that they are possessions with a property value, that value being children in Tahiti. The sexual liberty in Tahiti is thus compromised by its utilitarian function and brings about the marginalizing of women who are sterile or ill. I would like to note that the utilitarian aspect of the sexual mores is one of the fictional elements introduced by Diderot. His fiction thus corrupts reality in a way similar to the way the presence of the French corrupts the mores of the Tahitians in the story.

Professor Andrzej Dziedzic received his Ph.D. at Northwestern University. He is an Assistant Professor of French at the University of Wisconsin. His research is in early modern French literature and culture, with a particular focus on the connections between literature and medicine. Currently he is working on an annotated critical edition of a sixteenth-century poet, René Bretonnayau's *De la génération de l'homme*. Professor Dziedzic published numerous articles in *Aevum*, *Dalhousie French Studies*, *Tropos*, *Romance Languages Annual* and *Neophilologus*, and presented papers on Maurice Scève, Guillaume du Bartas and Agrippa d'Aubigné.

Finally, we have also included in this issue an original poem, "Tambour," written by Jean-Benito Mercier. We are particularly honored by Jean-Benito's willingness to share with us such a beautiful example of his writing. Jean-Benito Mercier comes from Haiti, and he is a Ph.D. student in French at the University of Kansas. He is interested in Poetry, Law, and Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Literature.

We thank all our contributors for their valuable work, and we are proud to help further the interest in Francophone studies with our special issue of *Chimères*.





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Tina ISAAC—Outgoing Editor's Notes—

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The University of Kansas, through the extensive efforts of Professors Fiona McLaughlin and Leo Villalon, received a substantial grant from the United States Information Agency in order to establish an affiliation and exchange of faculty and administrators with the University of Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, Senegal. As part of that exchange, several important projects were initiated: the establishment of a writing center; a working committee on university pedagogy; and a collaborative project in Government and Public Affairs that focused on local public administration. During the course of the grant, more than thirty University of Kansas and University of Gaston Berger faculty members and administrators have exchanged campus visits. The University of Kansas has seen at least nine semester courses taught by University of Gaston Berger faculty members. Thanks to this new contact, many other departments were able to benefit from new friends and new understanding, and all our worlds became a little larger as a consequence. It is with great pleasure that I introduce our invited contributors from the University of Gaston Berger. Both distinguished scholars are active participants in the international community of world literature and politics.

Professor Mwamba Cabakulu is currently the chairperson of the Department of African Literature in Saint-Louis. A specialist of African theater, his academic publications and creative literary works cover comparative aspects of francophone studies which include not only theater but also the African novel, the history of the oral tradition, African proverbs and pedagogical methodology. He is also the editor of his university's literary journal, *Langues et Littératures*. In the Fall of 2000, Professor Cabakulu was in residence at the University of Kansas and conducted a graduate seminar on francophone writers such as Camara Laye, Ousmane Sembène and Léopold Senghor, along with public conferences that highlighted his current research interests. The Department of French & Italian and the graduate students with whom he worked extend a special appreciation to Professor Cabakulu for his insightful contributions. We remember him well and still speak of him fondly.

Our second guest, Professor Babacar Kanté is a renowned specialist in his field of Public Law. He is a frequent contributor to Development Program panels related to AIDS as well as to the Rights of Individuals at the United Nations; in addition, he is a consultant for the Department of State in Washington on African affairs, a tireless arbitrator of democratic elections in his country, an active political commentator throughout the continent of Africa and a faithful companion to many of Senegal's most eminent literary authors. Until recently, he served as the Dean of the Law School at the University in Saint Louis. As an invited guest of the University of Kansas in 1999, Professor Kanté delivered public forums here which were inspirational to all those in attendance. Both confirm the true spirit of academic excellence. We thank them for their contributions.

# C a r t e b l a n c h e

Mwamba CABAKULU

Rappelons d'emblée et rapidement que dans la variété des théories scientifiques ou pseudo-scientifiques de la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, après qu'on eut tenté de classer les habitants de la planète en fonction de leur race, un modeste géographe français (Onésime Reclus) imagina de répertorier les hommes en fonction de leur langue. Ainsi les écrits de Reclus (*France, Algérie et colonies*, 1880 et *La France et ses colonies*, 1887) donnèrent naissance au terme "francophonie" désignant le regroupement sur une base linguistique en tenant compte des relations historiques et géographiques. Mais la fortune du terme "francophonie" connut une acception non seulement descriptive (l'ensemble des utilisateurs de la langue française) mais aussi dynamique collant à l'évolution politique de notre temps. Le concept sous-tendit donc de plus en plus les liens de solidarité entre pays ayant en commun l'usage du français. Ces pays visèrent par la suite à institutionaliser leurs relations pour mieux organiser l'espace francophone. Ainsi de la francophonie comme pratique linguistique, on est passé à la francophonie comme stratégie géopolitique. Autrement dit, le signifié linguistique s'est chargé de tout un ensemble de connotations politiques.

La francophonie ainsi définie, c'est-à-dire envisagée comme un phénomène à la fois linguistique et géopolitique, présente schématiquement trois types de situations:

- Les situations dans lesquelles la langue française est majoritaire (France).
- Les situations dans lesquelles le français est l'une des langues officielles au sens juridique du terme (Belgique, Canada, Luxembourg, Suisse).
- Les situations dans lesquelles le français est la seule langue officielle mais existe conjointement à des langues nationales parlées par le peuple (Afrique francophone).

À ces trois situations, il convient d'ajouter les pays ou les régions où existent des survivances francophones (Vietnam, Cambodge, Liban, Syrie).

Une telle typologie montre la diversité de la francophonie se réclamant d'une langue et de plusieurs cultures. Mais la francophonie s'est organisée, elle est devenue une institution avec des structures politiques, économiques, culturelles et universitaires bien établies.

Dans le cadre modeste de cette carte blanche, intéressons-nous brièvement à la francophonie africaine pour apprécier son essence, ses vertus et ses ambitions.

Bien que née du contexte historique colonial, la francophonie africaine s'est révélée comme un nouvel élan de solidarité, et fut de nature à transcender le passé pour faire de la francophonie le catalyseur d'un nouvel espace géopolitique et géostratégique fondé sur une communauté d'intérêts réciproques bien compris. Dans cet ordre d'idées, l'Afrique francophone n'a cessé d'œuvrer de concert avec d'autres pays francophones, pour une communauté de partage, d'échanges et de coopération multiforme. C'est dans ce sens que le poète académicien Léopold Sédar Senghor, un "des pères" fondateurs de la francophonie, définira celle-ci comme "cet humanisme intégral qui se tisse autour de la terre: cette symbiose des énergies dormantes de tous les continents, de toutes les races, qui se réveillent à leur chaleur complémentaire" (*Esprit*, novembre 1962). Pour les Africains, la francophonie doit être et est une communauté plurielle où chaque peuple cherche à s'enraciner d'abord avant de s'ouvrir et d'apporter quelque chose au monde pour l'enrichir et le conduire à une plus grande culture, la future "civilisation de l'universel," concept cher à L. S. Senghor.

Dans cet idéal, il s'agit en fait d'une éthique universelle, c'est-à-dire des valeurs partagées, le sentiment d'appartenir à une même humanité au sein de laquelle peuvent coexister des cultures différentes.

Parmi les apports que l'Afrique francophone propose au monde, il y a "la substantifique moelle," sa culture dans ses diverses composantes dont notamment les arts plastiques, la musique, le cinéma et la littérature.

Examinons particulièrement cette dernière qui est un puissant moyen d'expression de la vision du monde de l'Africain, un miroir de ses valeurs traditionnelles authentiques. Elle est aujourd'hui une des voix de l'Afrique. En effet, riche de différents héritages littéraires exprimés dans un immense corpus d'ouvrages d'imagination et d'études critiques, cette littérature se présente comme une littérature autonome, affirmant son propre champ littéraire. Ce dernier est marqué par des usages sémantiques, linguistiques, formels, esthétiques, par une sensibilité et une poétique spécifiques. Bref, elle recèle son identité culturelle et historique et s'inscrit désormais dans

une tradition propre qui donne à l'Afrique une nouvelle chance de pouvoir accéder à d'autres formes de modernité et d'humanité. Sous ce rapport, la francophonie littéraire africaine mérite d'être connue et reconnue.

En outre, dans le contexte de mondialisation actuel, les rapports entre les cultures deviennent de plus en plus fréquents et revêtent toutes sortes de configurations (échanges, influence, conflits). Or, la littérature africaine francophone pose et résout quelques-uns des questionnements touchant à l'interculturel. Ainsi doit se comprendre le dialogue littéraire qui favorise aussi le dialogue culturel dans ce réseau complexe et varié de l'interculturel.

Je vous invite donc, chers lecteurs de *Chimères*, à aller à la rencontre et à la pratique de ces créateurs, interprètes et médiateurs de ces cultures venues d'ailleurs. Accueillons ces littératures non pas comme des curiosités exotiques, mais comme une source autre, porteuse d'un enrichissement fécond. Le québécois brésilien Sergio Kokis n'a pas eu tort d'affirmer que c'est la littérature qui explique le mieux l'être humain.

Mais la littérature et le dialogue interculturel interpelle aussi les universitaires qui savent, mieux que quiconque, que la francophonie, dans sa richesse et son dynamisme, constitue le symbole d'un monde ouvert et respectueux des différences. Cette donne explique et justifie la création et l'existence, dans beaucoup d'universités américaines et européennes, d'un département d'études francophones qui offre aux chercheurs et aux étudiants des bases solides et complètes dans les disciplines se rapportant aux pays francophones: histoire, politique, économie, productions culturelles. Ce sont là, à terme, des expériences de cultures et de sociétés francophones particulières dont les autres cultures non francophones n'ont pas le droit de s'en priver. Dans ce cadre universitaire comme dans le cadre politique, la francophonie africaine tend à devenir la "francopolyphonie." C'est pourquoi je me réjouis que les étudiants doctorants du Département de français, dans un esprit d'ouverture intellectuelle, aient consacré à la francophonie ce numéro de *Chimères*. Je les encourage et les remercie chaleureusement de m'avoir associé à leur initiative.

Mon souhait le plus ardent reste que mes collègues enseignants du Département de Français dont j'ai eu à apprécier au plus haut point la pertinence de leurs enseignements et recherches, sortent eux aussi de leur frilosité et du nombrilisme français. Il y a à manger et à boire dans la littérature africaine francophone. Investissons-nous et engageons les étudiants, dans la pure tradition universitaire, à pratiquer des textes littéraires francophones qui recèlent, de toute évidence, un humanisme original digne d'être découvert.

Pour terminer, il me plaît de rappeler cette pensée de l'anthropologue Claude Levi-Strauss: "La civilisation mondiale ne saurait être autre chose que la coalition à l'échelle mondiale de cultures préservant chacune son originalité."

Longue vie à *Chimères!*

**Professor Mwamba Cabakulu**  
Université Gaston Berger  
Saint-Louis, Sénégal

# C a r t e b l a n c h e

Babacar KANTÉ

**C**e témoignage s'inscrit dans le cadre de rapprochement entre l'Université du Kansas et les universités francophones ici, l'Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis au Sénégal.

C'était une belle soirée d'automne en septembre 1999, au deuxième jour de mon arrivée à Lawrence, chez les Professeurs Villalon et McLaughlin, que l'amitié mais aussi les traditions américaines m'autorisent à appeler respectivement Léo et Fiona. Leur collègue, le Professeur Caroline Jewers est arrivée en voisine, au dessert, à un moment où la discussion était encore animée avec les Professeurs Deborah Germer et Phil Schrodt. Nous parlâmes de littérature, ce qui donna un second souffle à ma soirée, en français. Rencontrer des professeurs de français me donne toujours une sensation agréable. C'est pour moi l'occasion de cultiver l'illusion de relire à travers eux de grands classiques, et de me faire à moindre frais un programme de lecture; ce que je n'ai pas toujours le temps de faire seul avec pertinence. La soirée s'est très bien terminée ce qui était un bon signe pour mon séjour d'un mois qui commençait.

Tout a commencé dans les locaux d'ACI à Dakar, alors que Fiona McLaughlin était en partance pour Niamey au Niger, afin d'y occuper un poste d'enseignante Fullbright en 1992. Accompagné d'Abdoulaye Barry de l'Université de Saint-Louis, j'ai envoyé par son intermédiaire à Léo Villalon une invitation à venir nous rendre visite à Saint-Louis, pour jeter les bases d'une collaboration avec notre filière science politique en voie de création, et qui correspond à sa spécialisation.

C'est bien connu: en matière de coopération, on peut bien jeter les bases, mais sans récolter les fruits avant longtemps. Dans le cas présent, la détermination de mes collègues américains, leur engagement au service de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, et leur foi dans le développement du continent africain ont fait la différence.

Après une période-test d'échange d'enseignants entre nos deux départements de science politique en la personne des Messieurs Ousmane Kane et Léo lui-même, et une visite du Professeur Arthur Drayton, alors

responsable du département d'études africaines, un projet fut élaboré et soumis au Gouvernement américain pour financement. Le succès a été éclatant. Le personnel enseignant et administratif a régulièrement fait la navette entre les deux universités pendant trois ans. Le paroxysme a été atteint avec les visites du Chancelier Robert Hemenway de l'Université du Kansas à Saint-Louis, et du Recteur Ahmadou Lamine Ndiaye, accompagné des doyens de faculté et du Président de la Commission Coopération. Tant par sa durée, qui vient d'être prorogée par le Chancelier Hemenway, que par sa substance, cette collaboration avec l'Université du Kansas est devenue une des plus fructueuses entretenues par l'Université Gaston Berger avec ses partenaires. Le Professeur Prosper Laléyé, coordonnateur de cette coopération du côté sénégalais pourrait certainement l'attester.

Les raisons de la réussite de cette coopération entre nos deux universités, qui m'a valu de me retrouver à Lawrence, tiennent à des facteurs qui n'apparaissent pas toujours parmi les critères d'évaluation, ni dans les rapports. Pourtant il faut en parler, au moins pour les partager surtout avec les différentes composantes de notre jeune université qui voudrait élargir son expérience en la matière. Elles tiennent pour l'essentiel à la qualité de différents responsables surtout du côté de Lawrence, et à la noblesse des principes à partir desquels ils ont conçu le projet.

Le secret du succès est d'être partis des valeurs fondatrices de l'Université et d'avoir su leur rester fidèles tout le long du processus malgré ou à cause des difficultés qui n'ont pas manqué. J'ai rencontré donc pendant mon séjour à Lawrence, tous les jours, et chez chacune des personnes avec lesquelles j'ai été en contact, ces valeurs sans lesquelles on ne saurait construire une université, et dont nous nous plaignons de la disparition en Afrique. Du Chancelier jusqu'aux enseignants en passant par le personnel administratif, tous allient merveilleusement un professionnalisme incontestable à des qualités humaines remarquables.

La perfection de la logistique coordonnée par Anne Meredith-Wolf, ajoutée aux différentes invitations organisées par le Chancelier, les Villalon, les Soppelsa, les Schrodte, et la disponibilité et l'hospitalité de mon hôte Moussa Sissoko en sont une parfaite illustration.

C'est donc à cette occasion que mes collègues dans le département de français me proposèrent de rédiger mes impressions. Tout en étant honoré par cette invitation, je ne pouvais m'empêcher de demander ce qui me valait ce privilège. Les réponses m'ont encouragé, malgré le fait que j'ai été envahi par l'angoisse que des personnes comme moi, n'ayant pas la plume facile, connaissent lorsqu'il s'agit de noircir une page blanche. J'ai



alors finalement décidé de raconter à ma manière l'histoire de mon séjour qui se confond avec celle de la coopération exemplaire entre notre université et celle du Kansas. C'était naturellement un excellent prétexte pour moi pour remercier et féliciter tous ceux et toutes celles qui l'ont rendue possible, mais aussi fructueuse.

**Professor Babacar Kanté**  
UFR de Sciences  
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## A New Hybridity in Calixthe Beyala's *La petite fille du réverbère*

---

Stacy FIFER

Calixthe Beyala belongs to a new generation of francophone Sub-Saharan African writers. As a Cameroonian living in Belleville in Paris, her works address the lives of immigrants, as well as life in the *bidonvilles* of Cameroon where she grew up. In particular, Beyala's writing focuses on the lives of women in post-colonial society where one of her main objectives is "RETROUVER LA FEMME" (*C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* 70). Through her writing, Beyala explores the many roles of women: women as mothers, daughters, grandmothers, lovers, wives, friends, and as girls growing up in a world "en voie de développement" (*Assèze l'Africaine* 348). Her writing centers on women in the Francophone, post-colonial context both in Cameroon and as immigrants living in France. Throughout her literary career, Beyala has not conformed to "perceived notions and accepted stereotypes of 'African literature'" (Jules-Rosette 269). One of her latest books, the semi-autobiographical *La petite fille du réverbère*, is no exception. In this story of the education of Tapoussière in a *bidonville* of Douala, Beyala succeeds in setting forth a new notion of hybridity or cultural synthesis, one that reflects the difficulties of negotiating two different cultural spaces at once. Tapoussière is growing up in a house where the traditions of her ancestor's village reign, and she spends most of her days at a French school where French cultural traditions are upheld and validated.

The notion of hybridity is not a new one. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba discusses different theories of hybridity as they have been used in the post-colonial and diasporic context. Loomba points to Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity as being "the most influential and controversial within recent post-colonial studies" (176). Bhabha's theory places hybridity in a "Third Space," a site "which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha 37). The Third Space, then, becomes a site of hybridity, a place where new cultural practices are negotiated when two or more cultures come into contact. In this site, the binaries of colonizer/colonized, black/white, colonial influence/traditional influence are dismantled and new cultural traditions are created.

Although Bhabha's concept of hybridity seems appealing, he has been criticized by other post-colonial theorists who claim that his concept "work[s] to downplay the bitter tension and the clash between the colonizers and the colonized and therefore misrepresent[s] the dynamics of anti-colonial struggle" (Loomba 181). It is this tension described by Loomba that Beyala represents as a part of the hybridity of her main character, Tapoussière. Tapoussière's character development is influenced by two very different types of education that complement and contradict each other at the same time. Her grandmother teaches her about her ancestors and their traditions while she attends a French school where she learns about "[ses] ancêtres les Gaulois" (44). As I will demonstrate in what follows, the approach and concerns of Tapoussière's two educators (her grandmother and her school teacher) serve as a basis for the main character's hybrid development.

Tapoussière grows up in her grandmother's house in Kassalafam, Cameroon. The story begins with a narration by Tapoussière of her family's history from before she was born until the present, at which time she is somewhere between the ages of 9 and 12. Her story includes a description of the society her grandmother had lived in before the invasion of the French. Grandmother (as Tapoussière calls her) was the chief of her village, Issogo.<sup>1</sup> From Tapoussière's description, we learn that Grandmother was a just and fair ruler with much authority until the day the colonizers arrived. With the influences of colonialism, life in Issogo changes and Grandmother begins to lose some of her power. The villagers then begin to leave the village for the city where there is more work and where they can live a more modern and Western life-style. Since her grandmother is un-

successful in stopping the migration and the village eventually empties, she decides “de quitter Issogo parce qu’il était temps de toucher du doigt cette France, ce *poulassie* qui avait foncé dans sa vie comme des milliers de criquets dans un champs, saccageant tout!” (14) This brief synopsis of Grandmother’s life before coming to the city demonstrates the mounting tension between the traditional society that Grandmother is trying to preserve and the modern society being created by colonial influence that results in a rural exodus. Traditional society is in conflict with modernity and thus, Grandmother goes to the city because “‘Il est temps d’affronter l’ennemi’” (14).

Tapoussièrè is the daughter of Andela, her grandmother’s youngest daughter. After leaving an unhappy marriage, Andela returns to her mother’s house where she proceeds to have relations with many different men. When she announces to her mother that she is pregnant, Grandmother responds, “Cet enfant m’appartient! . . . Je suis son père, je suis sa mère! Cet enfant a été conçu pour satisfaire mon désir de reconstruire mon Royaume” (33). Grandmother demands to raise Tapoussièrè so she may pass on her heritage. Thus, Tapoussièrè grows up under her grandmother’s supervision and Andela leaves after her birth in order to make a life for herself elsewhere. While growing up, Tapoussièrè benefits from the two educations mentioned before: one from her grandmother who represents Africa and her traditions and the other from the French school she attends. For her grandmother, the education of this young girl is of capital importance because, as Tapoussièrè says, “Grand-mère m’aimait parce que j’étais son espoir, celui de reconstruire un jour le royaume des Issogos” (43). So, in the name of her kingdom, her grandmother wants to pass on all of her knowledge hoping that Tapoussièrè will someday return and rebuild it.

Tapoussièrè’s education begins with a number of lessons from her grandmother. It is through these lessons that we can see Tapoussièrè beginning to develop a sense of critical judgement. For example, Grandmother tells stories that convey certain morals to the young girl. Tapoussièrè learns to make inferences from the stories her grandmother tells. As she begins to develop an aptitude for critical thinking, she begins to question some of her grandmother’s teachings and stories. For instance, when Tapoussièrè expresses her desire to know who her father is, her grandmother gives her all kinds of opinions about men that Tapoussièrè does not believe:

– Arrête de poser des questions stupides! Qu’est-ce que tu ferais d’un père, hein?

Je n'osais répondre et Grand-mère en profita pour me dire que les hommes n'étaient que des assassins en puissance et j'en doutai; elle m'affirma qu'ils guerroyaient, détruisaient l'humanité et j'en doutai encore; elle dit aussi qu'ils pouvaient en toute bonne conscience cuire le cerveau d'un frère et le dévorer sans dégoût, j'en doutai toujours. (68)

Here, Grandmother is misleading Tapoussière out of the fear of possibly losing her granddaughter to the influence of a man. In Rangira Gallimore's analysis of Beyala's work, she reveals a quest to "se passer de l'homme pour retrouver la femme" (107). In *La Petite fille du réverbère*, the fulfillment of this quest seems possible in the relationship of Grandmother and Tapoussière which establishes a matrilineal link to the past. Grandmother tries to ensure this link by convincing Tapoussière that all men are violent and work to destroy society. However, Tapoussière shows her ability to recognize the exaggerations of her grandmother. She can distinguish between what she knows about the men who live in her community and the so-called "truth" her grandmother is trying to teach her. Therefore, although her grandmother may wish her to believe that men are evil, Tapoussière has learned important skills from her grandmother's teachings which allow her to think critically and judge for herself.

In this incident, we can see that Tapoussière's developing skills in the area of critical thinking work to turn her grandmother's lessons back against the very person teaching them. By judging her grandmother critically, Tapoussière learns to ignore certain information that her grandmother would like her to believe unconditionally. Tapoussière's position here leaves her open to influences outside her home, influences that may not work to instill in her the traditional values Grandmother wants her to appropriate. In essence, Tapoussière is open to accepting other cultural influences that may result in a hybrid identity.

At the same time that Tapoussière is receiving an education at home, she also attends the French school along with all of the other children in her neighborhood. At school she learns, as did all schoolchildren in French colonial schools, that the French are her "ancêtres les Gaulois" (44). She is only a mediocre student until the day when her schoolteacher becomes very irritated and decides by chance who his best students will be. One day in class, after the students rebel against him, the teacher decides "que sa mission n'était pas globale, mais sélective" (46). So, he calls six students to the front of the class, including Tapoussière, and tells them:

Vous êtes mes élus. Vous allez représenter notre classe et prouver aux yeux du monde entier que notre belle République est en

bonne santé. Cette année, vous êtes censés réussir votre concours d'entrée en sixième ainsi que votre certificat d'études primaires élémentaires. (46)

Tapoussière, then, is doubly chosen because her grandmother considers her to be the heir to the Issogo kingdom who will rebuild that lost civilization and her teacher chooses her as one of the students he will help to succeed in the French school system and by doing so, she will help prove Cameroon's worth to the rest of the world.

The random choice by Tapoussière's schoolteacher and his worry to prove his country's worth testify to an inferiority complex in the face of the colonizer's culture. We learn from Tapoussière that her teacher "avait été envoyé en France, pendant six mois, avant de revenir éduquer les Camerounais" (44). Tapoussière's language here reveals a tension that exists in the hybrid cultural identity of the schoolteacher. He was *sent* to France, implying that he himself did not *decide* to go. Upon his return to Cameroon, he becomes a representative of French culture for a new generation of Cameroonian children. At this point in his career, he decides that he will not be effective in shaping these Cameroonian children into proper representatives of their "beautiful" republic. His greatest concern is how the rest of the world views Cameroon. Therefore, he chooses to concentrate on educating only a select few instead of working with all of the children in order to give them a good education.

With Tapoussière under pressure from two opposing sides, being chosen by her grandmother and her teacher produces both positive and negative effects on her life. When she announces to her grandmother that she has been chosen at school, Grandmother's response provides an important lesson for this adolescent:

- J'ai été sélectionnée parmi les meilleurs élèves, Grand-mère! Je vais travailler pour faire honneur au pays, entrer en sixième et remporter mon certificat d'études primaires!

Le corps de Grand-mère se raidit. Un sourire crispé fendit sa bouche et s'y figea comme une lave incandescente.

- Bravo, ma fille!

Puis son regard se perdit au loin, là où montent des pousses de maïs.

- Le *poulassie*, cette langue des Blancs, est comme de la canne à sucre. On la mâche et on la recrache. Tu me comprends?

Elle enfonça ses orteils dans la poussière..

- Je suppose que je dois composer avec cette nouvelle réalité, continua-t-elle. Je l'accepte... Je ne peux pas descendre plus bas.

Et j'eus la chair de poule tant elle était imposante sur ma route. (49)

This exchange between Tapoussière and her grandmother reveals the tension that exists between the culture of traditional Cameroon represented by Grandmother and the culture Tapoussière is taught at school. At first, Grandmother is cautious to react positively to her granddaughter's news, congratulating her for a job well done. Her caution shows that she is aware of Tapoussière's difficult position as a young girl negotiating between two cultures. However, after a moment of thought, she gives Tapoussière a stern warning against assimilation, directing her to "chew up" and "spit out" the language that the colonizers are trying to impose upon her. She recognizes that she must come to terms with her granddaughter being educated in the ways of the French, but to Tapoussière's mind, she also seems to physically block total complicity with the French culture. Her warning against the language of the colonizer instead provides a model for Tapoussière's own hybridity. Grandmother allows her to develop ties to a different culture, but only in the context of conflict. Tapoussière may learn about this culture, but she is instructed to use it for her own gain. It is during this exchange between Tapoussière and her grandmother that Grandmother's reaction provides Tapoussière with one of the most crucial lessons of the novel: her education in the French school system may be useful, but only if she appropriates it to serve her own duty to Africa and to her grandmother's fallen kingdom.

Although her grandmother's influence is a major factor in her education, Tapoussière's grade school teacher also becomes very influential in her life. When he picks her as one of the students chosen to succeed, her attitude towards school changes dramatically. She explains, ". . . je n'avais pas de destin mais, comme disait Maître d'Ecole, 'il faut le créer.' J'avais foi en ces paroles telle une malade en Jésus, la preuve de notre égalité fraternelle" (91). Tapoussière begins to believe in the French school system represented by her teacher. She even shows a certain level of belief in the ideals taught at the French colonial school. She considers her teacher's words to be "proof of our fraternal equality," an ideal made famous by the French revolution. She does not yet understand that "equality" in the terms of her former colonizer may not include those colonized by them. Tapoussière's hybrid cultural identity begins to take root here when she starts believing in the possibility of equality. She is led to accept French culture, not in the way her grandmother has advised, but by accepting certain concepts wholeheartedly.

However, even as she seems to be espousing ideals taught by the French, she states her belief in the creation of her own destiny, a destiny that will not be determined by the binary structure established through colonialism. Tapoussière comes to believe that she must build her own destiny, that it will be a creation forged from her own experiences which include both her interactions with her grandmother and the community around her as well as her interactions at the French school even if these two influences are at odds.

Another way in which the reader may detect a budding hybridity in Tapoussière's education is by her reaction to the stories her grandmother tells about Issogo. Since her grandmother wants her to learn about life as she lived it during her reign as the ruler of the Issogos, she recounts stories to Tapoussière about what life was like in the village before the French came. These stories are to serve as examples to Tapoussière of how she should live. Although Tapoussière is somewhat seduced by these stories of a different Africa, an Africa that existed before the colonizers came, she does understand that this Africa no longer exists. Speaking of her grandmother's stories, Tapoussière says, "J'aimais cette période de sa vie, cette Afrique pastorale, cette Afrique de son enfance que sa voix égrenait comme une berceuse" (80). Tapoussière's opinion about her grandmother's tales reveals that even though she recognizes her grandmother's Africa as a place that exists only in stories, she feels an attachment to that traditional, past Africa. This Africa serves then to inform Tapoussière's vision of the modern society she observes around her. She carries the vision of her grandmother's Africa with her to school and as she interacts with other members of the community. Therefore, her cultural development is strongly influenced by the traditions of her grandmother.

On the other hand, as a student at a French school in Kassalafam, Tapoussière also learns of another "mythical" place called France. This place exists in conflict with the "mythical," past Africa she learns of at home. She alludes to the fact that she would like to go to France a few times throughout the novel. She claims to be like the other children of Kassalafam who dream of a distant place that, as she learns later in life, "s'acharnait à [la] rejeter" (107). This place is, of course, France. However, we learn that although France is captivating for Tapoussière, it does not stand at the center of her universe. In fact, her desire to go to France produces tension with her desire to prove Cameroon's worth to the world. In a pivotal incident in the novel, Tapoussière who is allowed to carry the Cameroonian flag during a parade, drops it while dreaming of going to



France. Her friend scolds her "Tu ne peux pas faire attention, dit Maria-Magdalena-des-Saints-Amours. Tu viens de salir le Cameroun!" Tapoussière, distressed, thinks, "Mon patriotisme m'étouffa et j'eus envie de pleurer. Je me baissais, triste d'avoir infligé des salissures à mon pays . . ." (108). This incident opposes the desire for France and French culture to the degradation of her own country. Thus, the tension that Tapoussière feels between her two different educations is reinforced by the guilt she feels for having dirtied the Cameroonian flag.

Beyala's *La petite fille* ends with the death of Tapoussière's grandmother who leaves her a legacy of tradition to be re-established. In addition, as predicted, Tapoussière receives her primary school certificate and continues to be successful in the French school system. The two educations that Tapoussière receives simultaneously push her into a position where she must reconcile the influence of her grandmother with the influence of her school and schoolteacher. Beyala's character is raised in a situation where the tension between the culture of the colonizer and the colonized is obvious. Unfortunately for Tapoussière, there is no neat hybrid position in the middle of the two cultures where she can live without the "bitter tension" produced by the colonial experience. Instead she seems to inhabit a new kind of hybridity that is a result of a duality within cultural identity. She appropriates both the traditions her grandmother passes on to her and the lessons she learns about France at school. The seed for a long, arduous struggle for cultural synthesis has been planted in the young girl.

Beyala's work advocates this kind of hybridity. She leaves Tapoussière's future open for her own development and transformation of both her grandmother's culture and the culture of the colonizers through a synthesis of the two. Yet, at the same time, she does not present the reader with a romanticized view of cultural plurality existing in a mystical place called the "Third Space." In Loomba's discussion of hybridity, she calls our attention to Neil ten Kortenaar's reminder that

. . . *neither* authenticity nor creolization has ontological validity, but both are valid metaphors that permit collective self-fashioning. . . . Authenticity and creolization are best regarded as valuable rhetorical tools that can be made to serve liberation. It may also be liberating to remember that these constructions are effectively rhetorical. (40-41)

Beyala's strategies of hybridity, just as Bhabha's, are as Kortenaar says, "effectively rhetorical." However, in *La petite fille du réverbère*, Beyala represents a version of hybridity that is more useful because it relies on a

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more culturally grounded approach to the question of subjective plurality. In her novel, Beyala clearly recognizes that hybridity is not simply a question of cultural melding. Instead, she shows that when a post-colonial subject appropriates and accepts aspects of both their traditional and the colonizer's cultures, she comes to be inhabited by a duality. This duality as represented by Beyala illustrates the ways in which a post-colonial subject may always live in conflict with the two opposing sides that are the result of the struggle for freedom.

## Notes

1. Although this topic is not the focus of my paper, I would like to mention that Beyala does claim that much of African society was based on a matrilineal heritage before the colonizers arrived.

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## Is the Other Elsewhere? Culture as a Dialectic of Identities in Driss Chraïbi's *Mother Spring*

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Yaw OTENG

In Chraïbi's novel, culture is an arena of competing identities. These various identities that dialectically inform cultural community also undergo the test of the transformational forces of time and history. The Moroccan writer who presently lives in France rethinks the dual notions of the Self and the Other normally conceptualized and examined in polarized manichaeian terms. In *Mother Spring*, Maghrebian culture is imaginatively recreated not only with reference to French colonization and islamization of indigenous cultures but also in connection with tribal differences and wars. Culture and identity are, therefore, re-examined within the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial spaces and through these three temporal sites, marginality becomes a dialectical space where cultural renewal takes place. It is this idea in the novel that one captures through the image of the border used by Homi Bhabha as the domain of cultural performance:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the per-

formance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia of living. *The Location of Culture*, 7  
 The nostalgia that stifles the present and the past that gives credibility to the cultural present are problematized in *Mother Spring*. In this historical novel, Chraïbi uses the literary text as an arena where he contests cultural purity and monologism. From the pre-colonial past where tribes fight each other to the present era where cultures are continuously westernized, through the era of Arabization of Berber culture, Driss Chraïbi discusses the discursive plurality of Maghrebian identity. Through this interconnection of identities, he emphasizes the communal aspect of culture as well as the identity differences that inform the cultural space as a whole.

Narrating the story of a Berber community and the (trans)formations of Maghrebian culture, Chraïbi situates the first section of his book in the twentieth century and the second section in 700 A.D. In these two sections, the novelist confronts the Berber with his own other as well as the voices of Arabic and Western others. In this way, otherness, whether internal or external, denies homogeneity and purity of culture and demystifies any unilateral claims to origins of identity. This is depicted through the agonistic co-existence of the Aït Yafelman tribe on the banks of the Oum-er-Bia, a river whose name becomes the title of the book, *Mother Spring*.

The story of this indigenous tribe before the advent of Arabic culture constitutes the pivotal narrative structure through which Chraïbi demonstrates the ways in which this small community is related to the larger Berber community scattered all over the Maghreb. Although united by language, the Berbers are distinctly differentiated through diverse cultural practices in the novel. The Aït Yafelman and the Far'oun are two Berber tribes who share certain identical cultural traits but differ as far as other cultural characteristics are concerned. If the Far'oun construct their houses using stones, the Aït Yafelman use clay to build theirs. The cock, a quasi-sacred animal for the Aït Yafelman tribe does not carry any sacredness within the Far'oun's cultural space. Insofar as these cultural practices and taboos are concerned, the Far'oun and the Aït Yafelman have two different identities while at the same time partaking in the general Berber culture.

This means that the Berber cultural community exists but the real relational mechanisms that make common cultural dynamics possible are seen through each tribe's identity. This idea is made clear if one considers the dialectical relationship that Aswaw, leader of the Aït Yafelman tribe, establishes between the general Berber culture and individual tribes. Speak-

ing to the Far'oun, who are expelled from their homeland by the conquering Arabs, Aswaw uses the river Oum-er-Bia metaphorically as a human community that cannot survive without the contributions of its tributaries. Through this fluvial analogy, Aswaw explains the interrelationship that regulates the life of the source of the main river and its tributaries. He declares:

Yes, but it [the source] cannot survive very long with nothing but its springs. Its tributaries nourish it, numerous streams and rivers that cannot survive by themselves either. Each one of them contributes its water, and if a single stream ceases to contribute its water, the river runs dry. *Mother Spring*, 32

If, by analogy, the river becomes a human community, then the desire to live together that underlines any topos of culture is considered in terms of an obligatory sharing by its members. It is, therefore, significant that Aswaw does not select certain cultural traits to the detriment of others but emphasizes the dialectical bonding of differences that transforms the cultural space into a functional community. Seen in this light, the Berber culture comes alive through the vitality of individual tribal identities.

If, on a larger scale, the Berber culture translates itself through a network of tribal values, the same dialectical principle operates within the Aït Yafelman tribe itself. As a single community, the Aït Yafelman tribe thrives on the exchange of abilities of its individual members. Aswaw clearly explains this logic of cultural co-existence to the Far'oun tribe:

It is the same with us, the Aït Yafelman, the Sons of the Water. We are not a single family, but many. Nevertheless, we form a single community. Each one of us brings his own capacities, his own life experience, his honor and ability in what he knows to do with his hands and what to say with his tongue. *Mother Spring*, 32

Through this declaration, we can observe that the location of culture becomes a site of different identities in what Jean-Luc Nancy (1996) characterizes pertinently as "*l'être singulier pluriel*," "the singular plural being." In Chraïbi's novel, cultural commonality becomes in fact shared identity differences. For this writer, the Self, therefore, becomes meaningless without being related to the constituent alterities that inform it. Seeking to reveal the dynamic plurality of the Aït Yafelman culture through Aswaw, Chraïbi demonstrates that the totality of culture cannot be expressed without the Other(s) that create(s) the whole. In *Mother Spring*, the Other forms an integral component of the Self in what becomes an inseparable dialectic principle of the identity of the Aït Yafelman tribe. It is through



this principle that the discursive plurality of cultural dynamism ceases to be a fragmentary relativism but a site where different identities enter into communication with each other.

However, through these shared differences, the culture of the Self is lived in harmony as well in contestation. That is why agonistic interrelationship also characterizes the Berber cultural site in *Mother Spring*. This space, apparently harmonized through identical cultural traits, is treated in terms of historical conflicts by Far'oun the One-Eyed, Hineb's father and Aswaw's future father-in-law. In order to narrate the history of the Berbers to his daughter, Far'oun the One-Eyed, maimed by the Arabs, goes far back in time to reveal the fratricidal tribal wars that have preceded the arrival of the Arabs. He declares to his daughter Hineb:

Add to the countless wars, internal and intertribal! They date from the beginning of time, but they took place between brothers, over a woman, a harvest, some cattle, and often for no reason other than the urge to kill. That was the way it was, that was part of man. . . . The vanquished tribe submitted itself to the conquerors, became their vassal, bore the yoke, and lived in drudgery, until such time as history freed them once again—or were suzerain in their turn. That happened throughout the centuries, wherever there were communities of Imazighen, plains and valleys.

That was the law. *Mother Spring*, 27-8

This historical narrative transmitted orally by a fugitive Berber at the time of the Arabization of the Maghreb becomes a re-writing of the past almost always idealized exaggeratively by writers driven by a desire to treat pre-colonial Africa as a topos of non-violence. Chased away from his native land, Far'oun is an Other of the Arab conquerors. His otherness, however, constitutes only one dimension of the historical alterities contained within his own Berber community through the marginalizations and the dominations brought about by tribal wars. This otherness within the space of the Self is further evidenced by the inferior situation of the Far'oun when they seek refuge from the Aït Yafelman. Although they are all Berbers, the fact that the Far'oun are seeking hospitality from the Aït Yafelman demands a lowering of their social status. In fact, the Far'oun are later assimilated by the Aït Yafelman, a fact that is accomplished by the marriage between Aswaw and Hineb, the only surviving female figure in the Far'oun tribe. This means that marginalization does not only happen when a conquering "outsider" vanquishes an indigenous people but also occurs through alterities caused by cultural practices found within the Berber community itself.

This conflictual co-existence of Berbers makes one understand the ambivalence that Homi Bhabha considers as the very nature of cultural community. Revealed through hatred as well as through love, this ambivalence makes it impossible to homogenize cultural space. In fact, as the critic re-affirms pertinently, it reveals the otherness of the Self and shakes up the apparent stability of the communal identity of the same people:

Once the liminality of the nation-space is established, and its "difference" is turned from the boundary "outside" to its finitude "within," the threat of cultural difference is no longer the problem of "other" people. It becomes a question of the otherness of the people-as-one. *Nation and Narration*, 301

It is this "otherness of the people-as-one" that is exemplified through Far'oun's narration of Berber tribal wars, the rejection of the Far'oun by other Berbers when they are homeless, and their eventual domination by the Aït Yafelman.

Julia Kristeva re-examines this agonistic nature of culture and identity at the level of the individual for, according to her, we are all "strangers to ourselves":

The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. . . . Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible, the foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. *Strangers to Ourselves*,

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Within the cultural space of the Aït Yafelman, it is at the time of the Arabization of the Maghreb that the apparent harmonious co-existence of the tribe becomes problematic. This is seen in the confrontation between Aswaw and the Council of Elders who consider the past as the sole solution to the eventual assimilation of their tribe by the Arabs. Aswaw, a visionary marginalized within his own tribe, sees the danger of this total dependence on the past, filled with verbal promises but devoid of any practical solution to the present cultural problem:

How often he had foreseen the catastrophe of words! He knows that many tribes, once vigorous, broke up because they rested

on their past glories. And not simply tribes, but whole peoples: Romans, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Egyptians . . . whose bards now tell the story, truly both beautiful and sad. *Mother Spring*, 49

Aswaw embodies the “consciousness of difference” of Aït Yafelman community and symbolizes the border that questions traditions and provokes the transformation needed for the survival of his people:

The earth is reborn every spring-time, the river also, the Ocean. Why not us? We have lived for ourselves for ages and ages inside our own territory to the point where we have impoverished ourselves in ideas. We need to renew ourselves. What could be our death is going to give us new life. *Mother Spring*, 73

Aswaw adopts a policy of cultural openness because he knows that his tribe cannot live through the Arabic conquest without a certain amount of compromise of their identity. But by preserving the life of his tribe through this policy, Aswaw also recognizes the cultural transformation that the entire identity of his tribe will undergo. Yassin, the Arabic name that he gives his son, the dispersion of his people and their endless journey across the Maghreb are the indications of the impossible return to their origin. By becoming the muezzin of the larger Islamic community, Aswaw himself becomes the symbol of the accomplished version of cultural hybridity.

Converted to Islam but conscious of his Berber identity, Aswaw is in fact a personality that lives his own cultural ambiguities on a daily basis. He is not, however, one of those heroes who fight against cultural alienation for he accepts otherness of the self as a fact of life. On the narrative level, Aswaw the Berber, who has become Imam Filani, tells his own story. He interrogates himself constantly on his identity that has not only become a long endless journey but also a dialectic wrangling between the Berber and the Muslim within him:

Who will win? The Berber or the Muslim? Me or Me? The steps are steep and high. I climb them one by one with difficulty. A very ancient patience, coming from the depths of the ages and bearing its fruit in the centuries to come, climbs with me. Who will be the first to the top? The believer or the pagan? The two of us will give the cry for prayer with the same faith. . . . Allah will judge and so will Mother Spring. *Mother Spring*, 117

This reciprocity that regulates the existential duality of Aswaw’s identity further demonstrates the ambivalence of co-existence of identities in the

cultural space. It is in the light of this ambivalence that Aswaw's treason of Oqba, the Bedouin leader of the Arabs, whom he claims to love "with the madness of forebears" (*Mother Spring* 112) while hating him at the same time, can be understood. Aswaw's action can be likened to that of the Berbers who kill each other within their own cultural site. If the Berbers kill each other and the Afriks, Berbers too, repudiate their own brothers for an eventual economic gain, then one can consider Aswaw's action as an element of the ambiguities underlining the co-existence of identities. These agonistic historical relationships that regulate cultural performance in *Mother Spring* make it impossible to represent Maghrebian culture with reference to a simple past and identity as declared pertinently by Danielle Marx-Scouras:

By writing about the origins of Islam in the Maghreb, Chraïbi provides a genealogical perspective that restores the complexity of struggles and competing interests to the image of a reality from which oversimplified myths of origin spring. This is the reality that nationalists and fundamentalists often seek to deny, as if the Maghreb were not a site where Africa, Europe, and the Middle East intersect—a potential stage for the inter-play of cultural diversity, ethnic pluralism, and multilingualism. "Literature of Departure," 141

This representation of plural Maghreb is the main idea of the first part of *Mother Spring*, which in fact is its epilogue. Situated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this section of the novel shows islamized Berbers living alongside Arabs. The transformation of identity that will change the life of the Aït Yafelman tribe at the time of the Arabization of the Maghreb is accomplished thirteen centuries after Aswaw. The tribe, now completely Muslim, lives not on the banks of the river Mother Spring but in a mountaineous and desert region. The tribe has, therefore, become a diaspora community as evidenced through their geographic displacement as well as their identity transformation. Raho Aït Yafelman has become the modern avatar of Aswaw since, like his ancestor before him, he has to confront the problem of another cultural assimilation of his now Berbero-Muslim tribe, this time western.

It is significant that Chraïbi demonstrates the impact of western values not only on Raho, the islamized Berber, but also on the Arabs themselves. Chraïbi seems to show that within the present Maghrebian space, the effects of alienation caused by western culture have become a force to reckon with by all existing anterior cultures. The Arabization of the Maghreb that has caused the marginalization of Berber culture and identity is in fact

compared to French colonization that is in the process of westernizing both Arabs and Berbers:

What year could it be among the Arabs, according to the Hegira? No doubt they did not know themselves. Up to now, they counted dates and money in the manner of the Zéropeans. Like the Arabs, Raho was a Muslim at heart if not in thinking. He had learned their language, or at least their common vocabulary (and a few words of French) so that he could go through his human existence without too much poverty, racket, or misunderstanding.

*Mother Spring, 3*

The Westernization of indigenous cultures is also seen by the presence of city government officials who try to give new individual labels to a Berbero-Muslim community that thrives on its communal identity. Within this community, Raho Aït Yafelman comes to the bitter realization that his cultural community does not have the necessary tools at its disposal to resist the powerful process of post-colonial acculturation:

Raho knew very well that the resources of the the human soul were inexhaustible, and that he and his had used all sorts of artifices and subterfuges one year after another to escape the law of the greatest number and to preserve their peace. But he also knew full well that those were nothing more than tricks of children, and that inevitably there would come a day when all these mountains would be erased, and then where would their refuge be? *Mother Spring, 17*

Contrarily to the Arabization of the Maghreb that is effected through wars, it is now a question of the onslaught of “science itself (this jewel of the Occident)” (*Mother Spring 17*). Each historical moment has its own way of cultural transformation, and the condition of modernity that hangs over the tribal community is the presence of the city officials whose acculturation policy will eventually lead to the eradication and dispersal of the Aït Yafelman community. In fact, the transfer of western culture which will effect this change of identity is done not by the West itself but by already-assimilated indigenous people.

By insisting on this perpetual cultural transformation, Chraïbi makes history and time two important components of the formation of identity. In *Mother Spring*, he reminds us that to situate culture at one single moment and to talk about identity without the necessary temporal transformations is to situate oneself in an empty time. It is only through the historical dimensions of culture that the dialectical voices of others that constitute communal identity can be captured. In the Maghrebian cultural space, the

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voice of the Other is first of all depicted through identity differences among the Berbers themselves. This voice of the Other in the discourse of the Self reveals itself in the Arabization of Berbers. It is this dialectic of the Self and the Other that is finally seen in the Westernization of both Arabs and Berbers in the post-colonial Maghrebian space.

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## Identity and Self-Representation in the Francophone African Novel: Finding Henri Lopes in *Le Lys et le flamboyant*

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Deena AMIRY

Theories of self-representation and identity have been rigorously explored in Francophone African literature ever since the earliest waves of the *bildungsroman*.<sup>1</sup> The works of contemporary Congolese novelist Henri Lopes (1937-) provide an interesting perspective on the study of self-representation. Critics have gone to great lengths to comment on the autobiographical nature of Lopes' most recent novels and Lopes has given numerous interviews on the subject.<sup>2</sup> Despite critics' tendencies to cite these interviews in their literary analyses, very little attention has been dedicated to the interview as a genre.<sup>3</sup> I will dedicate this article to Henri Lopes' interviews and essays (Lopes' essays, like his interviews, focus primarily on himself) and their relationship to his fiction.

Postcolonial critics have highly polarized opinions regarding the use of facts about an author's life or other extra-textual information to interpret literary works. Proponents of this approach, such as Jean-Marc Moura, claim that grounding a text within its historical, political, or sociological context is crucial to interpreting a Francophone Literary work and distinguishing it from its Occidental counterpart.<sup>4</sup> Critics include Locha Mateso, who views the privileging of what he calls the "hors-texte" as inevitably detrimental to the text itself.<sup>5</sup>

Cognizant of the dangers that Mateso exposes, I maintain that an examination of Lopes' texts will reveal a mimetic relationship between the



image of Henri Lopes, the writer, and the artist figures of his most recent novel *Le lys et le flamboyant* (1997). Once established, this relationship will serve as a medium to re-evaluate the relevance of Lopes' interviews to contemporary literary criticism.

Raymond Jean's analysis of his interviews with twentieth-century poet Guillevec provides a starting point for my study of the interview as text. Jean examines the importance of both the author as a physical presence and of the utterances that the writer makes:

. . . [l]'importance grandissante accordée au corps, à la voix de l'artiste, à sa présence physique en général, modifie jusqu'aux processus habituels de lecture et de critique. Il n'en reste pas moins vrai qu'en tant que genre "l'entretien-lecture" constitue en lui-même quelque chose d'inhabituel qui peut désorienter le lecteur davantage familiarisé avec les essais littéraires ou avec des entretiens traditionnels. Mais qu'un poète puisse s'exprimer instantanément, au fil du texte, voilà une chance rare à ne pas manquer et qui devrait largement compenser les inconvénients.<sup>6</sup>

Jean admits a certain unusual quality of the Guillevec interviews: they are neither literary criticism nor "traditional interviews."<sup>7</sup> He envisions the "entretien-lecture" as a kind of immediate literature in which the writer's words go straight from the mouth to the page. At the end of his introduction, Jean mentions that there exist "disadvantages" to the interview process, yet unfortunately he never clarifies what these may be.

From Jean, I take the notion of the immediacy of the interview process. I believe a link can be derived between this genre and the epistolary novel's Richardsonian ideal of "writing to the moment." Writers of the letter try to give their prose a heightened sense of the present, attempting to bridge the gap between themselves and their respective correspondents. In the interview, it is as if the "moment is written." The interviewer publishes the author's responses, trying to capture the writer's sentiment and spirit at the moment of enunciation. Secondly, both epistolarity and interviews are based on an exchange of ideas between two or more parties. Neither the questions nor the responses occur in a vacuum, but rather depend upon the participants' immediate moods, attitudes, and preoccupations. Finally, just as addressers strive to eliminate the distance between themselves and the addressees, an interviewer publishes an interview, in part, to eliminate distance between the writer and the reader. Critics exemplify this idea when they utilize interviews in their articles: they are going to "the source," thereby eliminating the distance between their

argument, the writer and the reader. On this topic Robert Root, who compiled a collection of unabridged interviews of several authors, writes:

I felt that the writers ought to be allowed to speak for themselves about the writing they had done and that readers ought to be able to read the finished pieces themselves in the context of their authors' comments. . . . Another justification, then, for publishing the interviews and articles along with the analysis is the opportunity it provides readers to go beyond my discussion of them.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to examine why Root believes that an interview allows a reader closer to the literary work, rather it draws the reader closer to the author. By valorizing this approach, Root clearly adheres to the notion that an author's ideas add to the discussion of the work, thereby making the interview an enriching experience. Root never prioritizes the author's words above the Text; he simply compares interviews to a critic's humble literary interpretation. Both attempt, but can equally fail, to decode or break down the text for the reader.

Thus, comparing the interview to epistolarity is useful in comprehending the immediacy of the genre, its focus on exchange, as well as its capacity to shrink the rift between author, subject, and reader. However, the comparison does not give a complete picture. Unlike epistolarity, which is necessarily a written genre, the published interview begins as a conversation. This specificity of the interview must be considered in order to attain a better understanding of the genre. In a preface to *Off Stage Voices: Interviews with Modern French Dramatists*, Robert Champigny writes: "By nature, interviews are closer to the theatre (logic of misunderstanding, comedy of errors) than to criticism."<sup>9</sup> Expanding upon Champigny's theatre analogy, I believe that interviews more precisely resemble a kind of improvisation act. They carry the same possibility of blunders and confusion. Moreover, interviews take place in a real space, like the stage of a theatre. For example, Raymond Jean goes so far as to define the room where his Guillevec interviews took place: "Les cinq entretiens ont eu lieu au domicile parisien du poète dans son bureau dont la fenêtre donne sur l'arrière du Val-de-Grace."<sup>10</sup> This description bears a striking resemblance to theatrical stage directions. Detailing the boundaries of the interview space to this degree once again implies that the writer's physical presence is as important as the remarks he makes.

Therefore, characterizing the interview as a genre requires a circular analysis. We begin with the published work, a written document that strives in part to eliminate distance between the author and his text as well

as between the author and the reader. Next, it is essential to step back and envision the interview as the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. Finally, a study of the interview must come full circle, forward again to the published document. Accepting that conversations risk miscommunication means that this same misinterpretation can find its way into the text. Hence, interviews can successfully bridge the gap between author, subject and reader; or interviews can, through such misinterpretation, thwart this objective.

As a result, when citing interviews to establish an argument, critics must use caution, for interviews can contain questionable material. On the other hand, when examined as a “moment written,” they are often successful. When documented, writers’ words have a potential artistic value, even if what they say is not necessarily factual or if they would not adhere to the statement made at a different period of time. The instant that the interview captures is quite possibly a significant moment that merits analysis as its own creation.

Before commencing an analysis of Lopes’ interviews as they relate to the *Le Lys et le flamboyant*, a brief summary of the novel might be useful here. The work is narrator/filmmaker Victor-Augagneur Houang’s written account of Kolélé, a Congolese singing legend. Not an author by profession, Victor writes the manuscript in preparation of the documentary film he plans to make about her life. Meanwhile, a certain Achel has already written a biography of the singer, entitled *Kolélé*. Victor’s manuscript denounces Achel’s for the liberties it takes in depicting certain aspects of Kolélé’s life which are unverifiable in reality.

We can draw a parallel between the focus on Kolélé’s biography and the way that journalists and literary critics have extended their interest beyond Lopes’ work and demonstrated a fascination with his personal life. While Lopes had always been in the public eye as a politician, it was not until the publication of *Le Chercheur d’Afrique* in 1990 that a surge of interest in Lopes’ life occurred.<sup>11</sup> Critics wanted to know whether the protagonist of the novel, André Leclerc, was simply a pen name for Henri Lopes. In short, they looked for answers about the novel in the author’s own life. For example, interviewer Hélène Koné asks Lopes: “A propos de votre roman *Le Chercheur d’Afrique*, doit-on parler de roman-autobiographique tout simplement?”<sup>12</sup> Here it appears that Koné is referring to Philippe Lejeune’s famous distinction between an autobiographical novel and an autobiography, which he describes in “The Autobiographical Pact.” Lejeune defines the autobiographical genre as a “[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story

of his personality.”<sup>13</sup> According to Lejeune, for a text to be an autobiography, strictly speaking, the author and the narrator must share the same name. In a situation where the narrator has a fictitious name, Lejeune insists that while the reader might see a resemblance between the author and the narrator, it can no longer be considered an autobiography. Rather the latter should more appropriately be deemed an “autobiographical novel.”

Within the framework of her question, Koné does not accept the possibility that *Le Chercheur* could be pure fiction, as even the term “roman autobiographique” implies a certain tie between author and subject. On the contrary, she pushes the realm of the autobiography beyond Lejeune’s definition. For Koné to postulate that *Le Chercheur* is an autobiography means that she willingly stretches Lejeune’s definition to include a situation where the author and the narrator do not share the same name. Instead, physical resemblance becomes the principal criteria for an autobiography.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, by not including fiction as one of her options, Koné assumes that there must be similarities between Lopes and André Leclerc.

In response to Koné, Lopes rejects both categories: “c’est un roman, et il n’est pas autobiographique.”<sup>15</sup> Lopes does not even entertain the notion of a degree of resemblance between himself and Leclerc. Instead, his response implies a desire to focus on the novel while the critic’s question suggests more of an interest in Lopes than in *Le Chercheur*.

*Le Lys et le flamboyant* represents Victor’s desire to discover the truth behind artist Kolélé’s identity, just as Lopes’ interviewers would like to discuss his true identity. Victor frequently denies the literary nature of his text, and claims to be on more of a fact-finding mission. His work is a reaction against a fictitious intradiegetic novel, entitled *Kolélé*. He explains: “La logique aurait commandé d’intituler cet ouvrage *Kolélé*, puisque tel est le nom de mon héroïne. Mais j’ai voulu éviter toute confusion avec le *Kolélé* d’un certain Achel, paru il y a bientôt vingt ans chez un éphémère éditeur de Kinshasa.”<sup>16</sup> Within the novel, there are three main artist figures: Victor, the filmmaker and makeshift writer; Kolélé, the singer whose life is the subject of the movie/manuscript; and Achel, the writer of *Kolélé*. In fact there is arguably a fourth artist, a writer who is only mentioned but never seen: a certain Marcia Wilkinson who translates *Kolélé* into English.

In his manuscript, Victor’s goal is to tell the truth about Kolélé’s life. According to him, Achel’s version is primarily false. Victor reproves every part of Achel’s manuscript that cannot be validated in reality. For in-

stance, Victor criticizes Achel's long psychoanalysis of Kolélé's decision to reuse her given name, Simone Fragonard. Achel claims that this choice is proof of a subconscious desire to recapture her father. In Victor's opinion, since no one can honestly penetrate another's thoughts, it is wrong to print such hypotheses under the guise of a biography. As someone who truly loved Kolélé, Victor believes that facts alone can do justice to her life. His methodology appears to be that real life should interest readers and spectators more than speculation or invention.

It is perhaps this desire for truth that leads Victor to seek out Kolélé's *Tam-Tam* interview (a newspaper and interview, which exist only in Lopes' novel). After all, what could more accurately represent Kolélé's life than her own words? Victor's wish to find and read the *Tam-Tam* interview as a means of learning more about Kolélé's identity mimics the reader's desire to examine a Lopes interview as a means of discovering him. In both cases, there exists the notion that "real life" is more interesting than fiction.

However, in both the novel and in life, evidence suggests that interviews are not always an effective way to learn about the artist. For example, in the *Tam-Tam* article, the interviewer appears more interested in Kolélé's political involvement than in her music. This offends Kolélé: "Vous me posez là des questions trop compliquées pour une artiste. J'avais espéré de votre part une interview sur mon métier, celui de chanteuse, or depuis le début de cet entretien vous m'entraînez dans des considérations d'ordre politique."<sup>17</sup> Kolélé's criticism is an excellent illustration of how interviews can turn into a series of miscommunications. In the essay "My Novels, My Characters, and Myself," Lopes writes of the conflation that bad readers make between himself and his characters: "Because superficial readers detect the tone of my voice in these characters, they believe they have discovered me. They forget that every real author is a liar."<sup>18</sup> When interviewers like Koné make this same mistake, one must question just how often interviews are successful in bridging the gap between author, subject and reader.

However, the fact that Victor includes an interview in his manuscript does not in and of itself prove that he relies upon the genre for its truth-value. For example, as Victor wonders whether he should have done an official interview of Kolélé, he debates whether or not it would have served any purpose:

Encore qu'il ne soit pas sûr qu'une interview serrée d'elle m'eut permis de percer les mystères qu'elle entretenait avec un brin de coquetterie. Et quand elle eut consenti à s'exprimer, eut-ce été pour livrer la vérité ou pour la dissimuler? Mais a-t-on

besoin de tout expliquer? La réalité n'est-elle pas tout à la fois l'ombre et la lumière, l'une à l'Autre soudées.<sup>19</sup>

Victor doubts the authenticity of the interview process and fundamentally questions our capacity to grasp reality. In essence, Victor refutes a reader's assumptions about the truth of the interview process. Furthermore, in the epilogue, while grappling with the notion of fiction versus reality, Victor concludes that "[l]e romancier pense n'avoir puisé que dans ses rêves, quand il a réinventé la vie ou prophétise le réel."<sup>20</sup> According to Victor, fiction is more real than we imagine whereas interviews are probably more fictitious.

Yet, in spite of the questionable reliability of the interview, the medium still holds a value within the novel *Le Lys et le Flamboyant*. Even though Victor questions the authenticity of an interview with Kolélé, he still includes the one from *Tam-Tam* in his story. This fact proves that while Victor might not entirely adhere to the practice, it maintains a certain worth for him, as it does for Lopes. *Le Lys* is Lopes' only first person narrative where the narrator is not the primary protagonist. Furthermore, since most of Lopes' novels are first-person narratives, it is rare that the protagonist would not have a venue to express his or her own voice. In *Le Lys*, ironically it is the singer who has no voice. Her story has been told by Achel and translated by Wilkinson<sup>21</sup> and thus exists in multiple languages without ever revealing the singer's own words. Thus, given Lopes' tendency for a fusion between narrator and protagonist and Victor's mission to reveal the true Kolélé, it is no surprise that, although Victor's view of the interviews is at best ambivalent, he would still include it in his narrative. Furthermore, as a filmmaker rather than a writer, Victor has little to lose by including the interview in his novel. He repeatedly insists that he is not concerned with what is "literary," as a writer would be. Instead, the interview blends well with his desire to create a documentary film. Because interviews cross over genres (they can be written or filmed), the inclusion of the *Tam Tam* article creates the feel of a documentary film within the framework of the novel, while conveniently giving the protagonist a voice.

Parallel to the importance of hearing the artist's voice is Lopes' inclusion of himself as a character in *Le Lys et le flamboyant*. As the reader learns on the first page of the novel, Achel is actually a pseudonym for Henri Lopes, "la transcription phonétique de ses initiales."<sup>22</sup> Not only is Lopes/Achel the author figure who writes *Kolélé*, but he was also one of Victor's childhood schoolmates. (For simplification, when I refer to the intradiegetic character Henri Lopes, I will use the name "Achel" even though Victor only refers to him as such on the first page, otherwise he

calls him Lopes. While somewhat artificial, this designation will alleviate the need for the wordy distinctions of the intradiegetic character Henri Lopes and the extradiegetic author Henri Lopes). In fact, Victor mocks Achel at several points in the novel. For instance, he reveals that Achel had difficulty accepting his métis identity as a child, demonstrated by his desire to always play the cowboy in a game of cowboys and Indians.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Victor divulges a lie in Achel's manuscript. Achel would have the reader believe that he grew up in the poorest of neighborhoods, when Victor knows for a fact that it is not true:

Ainsi peut-il se poser en nègre authentique qui aurait subi les humiliations du régime de l'indigénat. Comme s'il était nécessaire de recourir à de telles supercheries pour affirmer sa congolité.<sup>24</sup>

Whether or not Achel/Henri Lopes chose the cowboy over the Indian, or whether he lived in Poto-Poto as opposed to a more wealthy métis community, the reader cannot decide based on the information provided by the novel. Is Victor telling the truth or is Achel? In either case, it only adds to the extradiegetic reader's confusion as to the question: who is Henri Lopes? It appears that this masquerade is Lopes' response to the interviewers and readers who think that *all* of his main characters are purely autobiographical, because even when Lopes himself is a character in the novel, it is not necessarily *him*.

On the other hand, at a later moment in the novel, Lopes would seem to lend credence to past comparisons of himself and the protagonist of *Le Chercheur d'Afriques*, André Leclerc. While visiting Brussels, Victor spots someone he thinks to be Achel on the street.

-Je ne me trompe pas, c'est bien Henri Lopes? ai-je bégayé, en lui tendant une main qu'il a considérée un instant avant de la serer.

-Non, monsieur, mais ce n'est pas grave....

Effectivement, ce n'était pas la voix d'Henri Lopes.

-Ce n'est pas grave, monsieur. Permettez que je me présente: André Leclerc...

Hormis les yeux verts, c'était pourtant la copie de la silhouette du visage de Lopes...<sup>25</sup>

Victor's mistaking André for Achel would seem to further the notion of a physical resemblance between character and author. Later in their conversation, as Leclerc describes his connection to the Lopes family, there is even a hint that Achel and he might share the same father. Supposing a genetic link between Achel and Leclerc is either the ultimate affirma-

tion of a connection between author and subject or the author's way of poking fun at the many resemblance theories postulated by critics. The answer appears to be the latter because subsequent elements of the conversation reveal that André Leclerc whom Victor meets in Brussels is not even the Leclerc of *Le Chercheur d'Afriques*. In *Le Chercheur*, André's father was French, not Belgian, and André lived in France, not Belgium. Furthermore, *Le Chercheur* ends with the adult protagonist's return to Africa, whereas the Leclerc in *Le Lys* has not been to his homeland since adolescence. Thus, Achel for Henri Lopes might very well resemble André Leclerc, but it is an André unknown to the reader. Lastly, it is significant to note that Achel and Leclerc, while capable of passing for identical twins (minus the eyecolor), do not share the same voice. Given Lopes' tendency to experiment with genres and language combined with the limited nature of physical descriptions in his works, voice is a more significant marker of resemblance or difference than appearance. Therefore, instead of envisioning a situation of a few characters that are actually one and the same, we must picture many characters who may resemble one another, but who are in fact distinct because their voices do not match. Lopes creates two Leclercs, but each *tells* a distinct story; similarly his "Achel" or Lopes character *writes* a different story than he does: *Kolélé*.

In addition, by examining the Achel character, we can discern both his distinction from Lopes and his fictitious nature. For example, the insinuation that André and Achel share the same father does not draw André closer to the "real" world, but instead sends Achel farther into an imaginary one. Anyone who reads Lopes' interviews or his commentary "My Novels, My Characters, and Myself" knows that he is the son of two métis parents, and unlike André, does not have a colonial father. Therefore, implying that Achel shares the same father with André only clarifies further that the Henri Lopes of *Le Lys et le flamboyant* is almost as illusory as the other characters in the novel. Even when they share the same name, Lopes goes through efforts to confuse fiction with reality. This diversion takes the attention off the way in which Lopes' life and experiences have influenced his novels, instead of demonstrating the author's willingness to play with his identity in fiction.

Multiple characters, personas and identities dominate Lopes' fiction. We no longer simply ask "who is Henri Lopes?" Several other inquiries are now raised. Who is André Leclerc? Who did Victor meet in Brussels? While he is not the character of *Le Chercheur*, he has green eyes just like the other André. Does the real André of *Le Chercheur* match the image of Achel? *Le Lys* only confirms that André Leclerc from Brussels does. The



reader is no farther along in the quest to find out if André Leclerc from *Le Chercheur* is the incarnation of Henri Lopes. Instead, a new character is introduced, and the lines between fiction and reality remain muddled.

But whether imaginary or real, autobiographical or not, Lopes' incorporation of himself into *Le Lys* illustrates the importance that he places upon his name in his work. By including himself in the list of characters, Lopes wants the focus to be on him. In this case, the author is not simply "hors-texte." On the contrary, by consulting Lopes' interviews regarding his biography, the reader learns that the depiction he provides of the Henri character is primarily fictitious: he is not the child of a colonial father, and he never wrote a manuscript entitled *Kolélé*. Only by reading about Lopes, the artist, can the reader find his way through one of Lopes' favorite games, the confusion of fiction and reality. In an interview about *Le Lys*, Lopes admits that tricking the reader is one of his intentions: "... il y a un autre jeu: le désir de troubler, de perdre le lecteur avec deux autres réalités, celle de la fiction et celle de l'histoire."<sup>26</sup> Interviews are important when investigating Lopes' work because of his willingness to play at the boundary between the real and the imaginary. Lopes pushes the reader to verify history through extratextual means because his version of the facts is at times intertwined with fiction.

To conclude, artist figures Kolélé and Henri Lopes possess an element in common insofar as their portraits are incomplete. In *Le Lys et le flamboyant*, Victor's reluctance to interpret Kolélé's words or actions leads him to paint a limited picture of her. While the reader has several media through which to discover Lopes (interviews, essays and *Le Lys*), each seems to provide a conflicting image of the author. I believe this is all Lopes' intention: he wants the reader to question what he writes. If few certainties are revealed about his characters, it is because the reader is responsible for "writing" the text in the way he decides and for "drawing" the portraits of the artists himself. Similarly, if Lopes includes his own name in a novel, it is because he wants the reader to ask about him, to question him. The author is relevant in this case because Lopes wishes it so and not because an author's life is always pertinent to his work. Literary criticism, such as Mateso's, should allow for exceptions. It should recognize that the focus on an author could stem from that same author's desire to be emphasized. It should also take into consideration an author, like Lopes, whose attraction to describing artist figures includes a fascination, perhaps a narcissistic one, with depicting himself.

## Notes

1. Examples of autobiographies and autobiographical novels include Oyono: *Une Vie de Boy*, Laye: *L'Enfant noir*, Kane: *L'Aventure ambiguë*, Dadié: *Un Nègre à Paris*. Without a doubt, Jacques Chevrier has written the most renowned critical analysis of autobiography and self-representation.

2. See bibliography.

3. For example, Koffi Anyinefa's article entitled "Postcolonial Postmodernity in Henri Lopes' *Le pleurer-rire*" cites a Lopes interview in order to comment on the political nature of the novel.

4. Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures francophones et théories postcoloniales*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999) 7.

5. Locha Mateso, *La Littérature africaine et sa critique*, (Paris: Karthala, 1986) 153.

6. Jacques Lardoux, *Humour-Terraqué! Entretiens-Lectures*, Saint-(Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1997) 8.

7. Jean never defines what he understands to be a "traditional interview." I interpret his statement to mean interviews in all fields where the primary goal is to learn a few facts about the interviewee's life or work. This can be contrasted with the "entretien-lecture," a published interview with an author whose power as a storyteller transcends writing to include responses to questions of an interview.

8. Robert L. Root, Jr., *Working at Writing, Columnists and Critics Composing*, Preface (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1991) xi.

9. Bettina Knapp, *Off-Stage Voices: Interviews with Modern French Dramatists*, (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston Pub. Co., 1975) iii.

10. Lardoux 11.

11. Note that not one of Lopes' interviews occurred before 1990 even though *Tribaliques* won the "Grand Prix de la littérature de l'Afrique noire" in 1972 and *Le Pleurer-Rire* received excellent reviews (see bibliography for references). "The protagonist of *Le Chercheur d'Afriques*, André Leclerc, is métis like the author. The reader can infer that it was the métissage question that fueled these interviews. In fact, the titles of the interviews support this theory. Critics have asked the question: how much of Henri Lopes is in André Leclerc ?

12. Hélène Koné, "Tout métissage est un acte enrichissant," *Fraternité-Matin* 10 Nov. 1992, 10.

13. Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989) 4.

14. One could argue that Leclerc's Congolese origins beg for the comparison. But aside from *Le Pleurer-rire*, which took place in an imaginary land, all of Lopes' novels have Congolese protagonists, and yet the novels' autobiographical nature was never presupposed. For this reason, I believe that only the métissage trait leads Koné to his conclusion.

15. Koné 10.

16. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 7.

17. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 400.

18. Lopes, "My Novels, My Characters, and Myself," *African Urban Quarterly* (1993) 86.

19. Lopes, *Le Lys et le Flamboyant* 373.

20. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 429.

21. The notion of translation, while secondary to my analysis, is still a phenomenon worth noting. Why does Lopes include Wilkinson's translation? What is the benefit or significance to the reader to mention that *Kolélé* was translated into English? I believe that it represents the state of affairs of the transmission of Francophone novels today. As stated in the first line of the prologue, Achel's novel *Kolélé* was published by an unknown and now out of business African publishing house. As is the case of many contemporary African novels, only as they are published abroad, and in this case translated, do they become known and read.

22. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 7.

23. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 136.

24. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 133.

25. Lopes, *Le Lys et le flamboyant* 312.

26. Boniface Mongo-Mboussa, 67. Notice that I have just used an excerpt from a Lopes interview to further my argument, thus placing myself amongst the critics that I talk about who do so.

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## Considérations sur la poésie d'Aimé Césaire

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*Lamarana DIALLO*

**P**longé dans un univers orphelin et hostile, condamné à périr sous le joug de la servitude et soumis à une existence infernale, le monde noir attendait l'avènement d'un prophète laïc. Déjà il s'impatientait, tant profonde avait été son amertume, grande sa douleur séculaire et angoissante son aliénation. Ainsi, il fallait que des entrailles d'une Martinique en pleurs sortît "un grand poète noir" pour exprimer les frustrations et les rancœurs d'une race crucifiée par la colonisation et la traite négrière. Et Aimé Césaire, le poète de la souffrance, vint. "Et c'est un Noir qui manie la langue française comme il n'est pas aujourd'hui un Blanc pour la manier."<sup>1</sup> Et c'est un Nègre inconsolé qui apparaît comme le promoteur d'une poésie prométhéenne, d'une poésie qui vise à briser les chaînes du Noir, à lui rendre sa dignité perdue et à lui redonner foi dans l'homme. Et c'est un poète de l'excès, de la démesure et des recherches interdites qui entend revisiter le passé douloureux des Noirs.

Poésie prophétique et évangélique, la poésie d'Aimé Césaire l'est dans l'exacte mesure où elle transmue le poète lyrique et intimiste en un porte-parole de la collectivité noire. Visionnaire, il examine le présent à la lumière d'un passé douloureux en vue d'annoncer des lendemains qui chantent dans une cité future où la béatitude le dispute à la servitude. Cette poésie prophétique semble tirer sa légitimité d'une double fidélité: celle à la "parole transcendante" et celle "au peuple auquel [le poète] a

charge de transmettre”<sup>2</sup> ce message. Du reste, il n’en saurait être autrement, d’autant que sa poésie s’affirme comme la mise en évidence d’un thème doloriste, celui d’une race déshumanisée. Dès lors, on conçoit qu’il ait voulu être la “bouche des malheurs qui n’ont point de bouche.”<sup>3</sup>

Bien loin d’être une poésie ornementale, la poésie césairienne semble d’autant plus fonctionnelle qu’elle ne procède aucunement d’une gratuité esthétique. Au vrai, c’est à manifester emphatiquement l’âme noire qu’elle s’emploie. En se faisant l’écho sonore de la conscience nègre, de ses souffrances et de ses haines, elle transcende les exigences de l’art-pour-l’art pour exprimer les réalités sociologiques du monde noir:

*Pour Césaire, la poésie n’a jamais été séparée de la vie. Il a toujours su qu’elle fournissait à ceux qui ressentent dans leur chair la morsure des ans et la misère du monde, un cadre idéal pour exprimer leur colère et leur désespoir, leurs amours et leurs espérances.*<sup>4</sup>

Il est une passion aussi furieuse que dévorante qui parcourt la poésie césairienne. Faisant siennes les aspirations révolutionnaires du Nègre opprimé, cette “*poésie d’agriculteurs*”<sup>5</sup> non seulement verse dans une revendication superbe de la “*non-technicité*,”<sup>6</sup> mais encore pourfend les tenants de la culture blanche et de sa raison raisonnante. Sous ce rapport, il est significatif que le poète se soit littéralement gaussé de la prétendue supériorité de l’Occident et qu’il ait éprouvé de la compassion à l’égard d’une Europe malade:

Ecoutez le monde blanc  
 Horriblement las de son effort immense  
 Ses articulations rebelles craquer  
 Sous les étoiles dures  
 Ses raideurs d’acier bleu  
 Transperçant la chair mystique  
 Ecoute ses victoires proditoires trompeter ses défaites  
 Ecoute aux alibis grandioses son piètre trébuchement  
 Pitié pour nos vainqueurs omniscients et naïfs!<sup>7</sup>

Est fortement engagée cette poésie qui fait le procès de l’Europe orgueilleuse. Mais qu’est-ce donc que la poésie? Dans cette perspective, il semble qu’il faille s’interroger sur l’être de la poésie césairienne; il sied de donner à ce dernier l’opportunité de mettre en lumière sa conception de la parole poétique. A ce sujet, il est symptomatique qu’il ait regardé la poésie comme une “*démarche qui, par le mot, l’image, le mythe, l’amour et l’humour [l’]installe au cœur vivant de [lui]-même et du monde.*”<sup>8</sup> L’entreprise de dénomination à laquelle fait allusion Césaire vise à prendre

possession du monde tant par la baguette magique des mots que par les "armes miraculeuses."<sup>9</sup> C'est à faire siennes les puissances des choses que Césaire s'emploie lorsqu'il les nomme. D'autre part, l'imagination du poète demeure orientée vers l'astre du jour autour duquel gravitent nombre d'images symbolisant une source de "lumière, de vie."<sup>10</sup> Le recours à la mythologie africaine donne au pape de la négritude la mission de faire revivre le passé du peuple nègre. Toutefois, le regard nostalgique qu'il jette sur l'histoire de sa race reste des plus critiques. Il nie vigoureusement que son peuple ait des origines aussi mythiques que sublimes:

Non, nous n'avons jamais été amazones du roi du Dahomey, ni  
princes

De Ghana avec huit cents chameaux, ni docteurs à  
Tombouctou Askia le Grand étant roi,  
Ni architectes de Djenné, ni Madhi. Nous ne sentons pas sous  
L'aisselle la démangeaison de ceux qui  
Tinrent jadis la lance. Et puisque j'ai  
Juré de ne rien celer de notre histoire  
Je veux avouer que nous fûmes de tout  
Temps d'assez piètres laveurs de vaisselle,  
Des cirieurs de chaussures sans envergures  
Ni guerriers  
D'assez consciencieux sorciers et le seul  
Indiscutable record que nous ayons  
Battu est celui d'endurance à la chicotte.<sup>11</sup>

Cette peinture sans complaisance du passé des Noirs met en exergue une mémoire collective empreinte de blessures tant morales que physiques. Que la poésie de Césaire soit révoltée et douloureuse ne doit plus étonner personne. Toujours est-il que "l'amour tyrannique" qu'il nourrit à l'égard de "ceux qui n'ont inventé ni la poudre ni la boussole"<sup>12</sup> transmue la poésie de Césaire en une poésie essentiellement raciale. Ni satirique ni imprécatoire, cette poésie apparaît comme une prise de conscience de la situation abjecte dans laquelle plongent les Noirs. Elle n'est rien de moins qu'un chant de souffrances destiné à ceux qui croupissent dans la misère la plus noire. La poésie césairienne sera "orphique" ou ne sera pas dans l'exacte mesure où le recouvrement de sa dignité insultée demeure fonction de cette descente du Nègre en soi-même:

*Ainsi, par un bonheur poétique exceptionnel, c'est en  
s'abandonnant aux transes, en se roulant par terre comme un  
possédé en prise à soi-même, en chantant ses colères, ses re-  
grets ou ses détestations, en exhibant ses plaies, sa vie déchirée*



*entre la "civilisation" et le vieux fond noir, bref en se montrant le plus lyrique, que le poète noir atteint le plus sûrement à la grande poésie collective.*<sup>13</sup>

On comprend qu'il ait usé de l'humour dans l'intention de se gausser des "agresseurs de la race nègre et de secouer les agressés."<sup>14</sup> Les poèmes de Césaire procèdent d'une veine "militante"<sup>15</sup>; ils fonctionnent comme une "arme de combat" et s'acharnent à dénoncer avec la dernière énergie les maux aussi multiformes qu'injustifiés dont souffrent les Noirs depuis les temps immémoriaux. Pendant les siècles de plomb de l'esclavage, le Noir a bu la coupe de l'amertume jusqu'à la lie. Le Rebelle qui passe pour être le porte-parole du poète révolté se remémore jusque dans le détail les scènes terrifiantes du passé; les terribles images qui sourdent de ces évocations semblent friser la déraison, tant ignobles sont les actes des tortionnaires blancs:

Et l'on nous vendait comme des bêtes  
 Et l'on nous comptait les dents...  
 Et l'on nous tâtait les bourses et  
 L'on examinait le cati ou décati  
 De notre peau et l'on nous palpait  
 Et pesait et soupesait et l'on passait  
 A notre cou de bête domptée le collier,  
 De la servitude et du sobriquet.<sup>16</sup>

L'usage de l'accumulation suggère la douleur plurielle à laquelle le Noir est en proie. Du point de vue de la création poétique, l'oppression sans nom subie par le peuple noir au cours de l'esclavage semble positive en tant qu'elle débouche sur une poésie révolutionnaire.

Il est heureux que le thème de l'accusation sous-tende cette production poétique qui a son origine dans "l'existence effective de la douleur éprouvée par le monde noir et de l'humiliation qu'il a subie."<sup>17</sup> L'époque esclavagiste dépeinte par Césaire apparaît comme le commencement de l'enfer. On conçoit que sa poésie qui semble imprégnée de conscience raciale et qui respire une violence rare, ait cherché à flageller les auteurs de ce fléau inique. En pourfendant ce crime contre l'humanité, Césaire, ce poète de la colère, instruit le procès de l'occident. Au nom de son peuple qui est considéré comme une non-valeur, le porte-parole des "damnés de la terre" accuse le Nord d'avoir violé le sol nègre, d'avoir profané les religions traditionnelles, d'avoir humilié la race noire en la chosifiant, d'avoir assassiné les immenses possibilités artistiques et humaines qui dormaient en lui.

A cette poésie pamphlétaire et iconoclaste qui se recommande par un lyrisme collectif, succède une forme poétique sibylline et décriée. Dans cette optique, il est éloquent que tous les exégètes de la poésie césairienne se soient accordés pour en souligner le caractère hermétique. L'impressionnante étendue de ses connaissances dans maints domaines du savoir humain transmuient Césaire en un poète des plus difficiles. En effet, nourri de littératures grecque, latine et française, Césaire use d'un vocabulaire aussi vaste que spécialisé pour exprimer avec des mots européens des paroles africaines. Néanmoins l'usage des mots rares et des néologismes ne saurait étonner dans l'exacte mesure où la poésie renâcle fondamentalement à se servir des expressions qui semblent inhérentes à la prose. Que la poésie césairienne soit difficile, cela est sans conteste, car l'hermétisme auquel appartiendrait son œuvre participe d'une esthétique de rupture avec la prosodie française; ce dont témoigne l'usage délibéré de "l'agrammaticalité,"<sup>18</sup> d'images surréalistes, d'archaïsmes et de néologismes déroutants. A cela s'ajoutent un vocabulaire exotique, une symbolique nourrie des réalités antillaises et une écriture sophistiquée. D'aucuns regardent la poésie de Césaire comme une poésie savante, mettent l'accent sur son abord difficile et invitent le chantre des souffrances nègres à produire des œuvres poétiques qui satisfassent l'entendement de la *vox-populi*. Cependant le propos de Césaire ne consiste nullement à répondre aux inclinations contradictoires d'un public, dût-il être populaire. Le poète s'explique mal l'éreintement dont il est victime. Par le biais d'un plaidoyer *pro domo*, il s'inscrit en faux contre le prétendu ésotérisme de sa poésie:

*Où, je sais qu'on me trouve obscur, voire maniéré, soucieux d'exotisme. C'est absurde. Je suis antillais. Je veux une poésie concrète, très antillaise, martiniquaise. Je dois nommer les choses martiniquaises, les appeler par leur nom.*<sup>19</sup>

On le voit, ces lignes ne sauraient prétendre à l'exhaustivité; à tout le moins tâchent-elles de réhabiliter une poésie considérée jusque-là comme inintelligible. Il n'empêche que Césaire "compris ou non, bien ou mal interprété . . . exerce une influence considérable sur le développement des lettres françaises."<sup>20</sup> Au vrai, il est des obstacles apparemment insurmontables auxquels se heurte l'herméneutique de la poésie césairienne. Toutefois, Césaire, à l'inverse de Mallarmé ne passe pas pour un héraut de l'hermétisme. Bien au contraire, sa poésie prophétique transcende les limites étroites d'un lyrisme individuel, s'affranchit du corset surréaliste et embouche la trompette de la négritude dans l'intention de mourir à la servitude blanche pour renaître à la dignité nègre. Du reste,

“l’originalité de Césaire est d’avoir coulé son souci étroit et puissant de nègre, d’opprimé et de militant dans le monde de la poésie la plus destructrice, la plus libre et la plus métaphysique.”<sup>21</sup>

Belle comme une bouffée d’oxygène, la poésie de Césaire exprime les souffrances universelles, chante les heurs et les malheurs des Noirs et annonce des lendemains meilleurs. De cette poésie savante et prophétique naît un théâtre qui aspire à l’universel.

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Notes

1. André Breton, préface, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, d'Aimé Césaire, (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983) 80.
2. Jean-Claude Bajeux, *Antilia retrouvée. Claude McKay Luis Palés, Aimé Césaire, poètes noirs antillais*, (Paris: Editions caribéennes, 1983) 190.
3. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* 22.
4. Jean-Michel Devésa, "Un grand poète noir," *Europe* 832-833 (1998): 5.
5. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Orphé Noir," *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, éd. Léopold Sédar Senghor, (Paris: PUF, 1969) xxxi.
6. Sartre, *Anthologie* xxx.
7. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* 48.
8. Aimé Césaire, *Poésie*, (Paris: Seuil, 1994) 5.
9. Le titre de son premier recueil poétique: *Les Armes miraculeuses*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1946).
10. M. aM. Ngal, *Aimé Césaire. Un homme à la recherche d'une patrie*, (Dakar-Abidjan: Les nouvelles éditions africaines, 1975) 156.
11. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* 38.
12. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* 46.
13. Sartre, *Anthologie* xvii.
14. Jean-Claude Bajeux, *Antilia retrouvée* 290.
15. David Diop, *Coups de pilon*, (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973) 72.
16. Aimé Césaire, *Et les chiens se taisaient*, (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956-8) 91.
17. J.P. Makouta-Mboukou, *Introduction à l'étude du roman négro-africain de langue française. Problèmes culturels et littéraires*, (Dakar-Abidjan-Lomé: Les nouvelles éditions africaines, 1980) 27.
18. Jean-Claude Bajeux, *Antilia retrouvée* 277.
19. Césaire, cité dans *Antilia retrouvée* 275.
20. Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu, l'homme africain et la culture néo-africaine*, (Paris: Seuil, 1961) 126.
21. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations III. Lendemain de guerre*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1949) 260.

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## Liberté, propriété et sexualité dans le *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*

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Andrzej DZIEDZIC

Quoiqu'un grand nombre de problèmes soient discutés dans le *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, la question des rapports et des mœurs sexuels à Tahiti constitue le thème central du récit. Diderot replace son débat dans un contexte plus général de la différence entre les deux civilisations: tahitienne et européenne. Le dialogue entre l'indigène Orou et l'Aumônier développe un parallèle entre la civilisation du premier, où la société s'organise suivant les exigences de l'être humain, et celle du deuxième, dans laquelle l'organisation sociale trahit profondément l'authenticité de l'individu. A travers l'opposition Tahiti-Europe et la vision utopique de la société naturelle, Diderot effectue une critique acerbe et s'il y a une conclusion à tirer de cette opposition, c'est que les mœurs et la morale de l'Europe sont mauvaises. Rappelons que tout en représentant de la réalité une image qui se veut radicalement autre, l'utopie se constitue en un outil épistémologique qui nous propose d'échapper momentanément aux impasses du vécu en empruntant les voies de l'imaginaire. Pourtant elle peut aussi nous engager dans une confrontation avec la réalité dont elle entend souligner les insuffisances ou les tares. Elle peut enfin s'affirmer comme altérité absolue et se proposer en modèle achevé de société. Etant le lieu d'une contradiction entre une société dite "réelle" et son opposé, une société idéale, l'utopie semble se présenter toujours sous une double face—ici/ailleurs, réel/imaginaire, cul-

ture/nature, etc. Elle met en évidence un ailleurs, une société autre qui réalise dans l'imaginaire une transparence que ne pourra jamais réaliser la société visée par la critique.<sup>1</sup>

L'image de Tahiti est composée à partir de renseignements trouvés soit dans le *Voyage de Bougainville*, soit dans d'autres relations de l'expédition, et d'éléments fictifs inventés par Diderot. L'île de Tahiti existe, ce n'est pas un produit de l'imagination et pourtant il y a une "fable de Tahiti"—un grand nombre d'incidents relatés par Diderot sont exacts alors que d'autres ne le sont point. Tahiti est hors de vicissitudes du temps et, dans un certain sens, aussi hors de l'espace, car l'auteur l'idéalise et la transforme en une île fortunée. Si l'image de Tahiti représente un état utopique, imaginaire et irréalisable, c'est d'abord parce que ses habitants sont heureux, car ils vivent dans des conditions géographiques et climatiques exceptionnelles, ensuite et surtout à cause de la liberté des rapports sexuels. Pourtant, à y regarder de près, ce n'est que dans l'esprit masculin européen que l'île évoque une vision de la liberté sexuelle; la résistance des femmes aux désirs de l'homme est considérée, dans une large mesure, comme le résultat des craintes et des conventions artificielles créées par la société. En fait, Diderot s'intéresse moins à établir la vérité à propos de Tahiti qu'à trouver une peinture des mœurs sexuelles qui contrastent avec les conventions européennes et qui servent de base pour une discussion morale, philosophique et idéologique. En faisant un éloge du bonheur des sens et du droit de l'individu à la jouissance physique, l'écrivain attaque les tabous imposés par la société sur les rapports sexuels, se révolte contre les effets de ces restrictions et s'oppose aux entraves de la civilisation où il vit et dont il souffre.

Afin d'expliquer l'attrait que le comportement sexuel tahitien présente pour Diderot, les critiques ont souvent fait référence à sa propre vie émotionnelle. A la suite des liaisons malheureuses avec Sophie Volland, puis avec Madame de Meaux, l'écrivain a éprouvé la nostalgie de l'état de la nature, de la vie simple et heureuse, des sentiments spontanés et directs. Par conséquent, il aurait pu envisager un endroit exotique où, comme l'a dit l'Aumônier: "la passion de l'amour a été réduite à un simple appetit physique."<sup>2</sup> S'abandonnant à ce rêve, Diderot décide de placer l'état de la nature dans une île lointaine et ce renvoi de l'action à un pays d'outre-mer est une tentative de concrétiser de façon manifeste l'écart avec la réalité européenne.

Il n'y a pas lieu d'évoquer davantage les expériences de la vie personnelle de l'auteur pour expliquer sa fascination vis-à-vis de cette île idyllique. Le texte lui-même fournit de nombreux exemples qui permettent

de voir dans la description de Tahiti une sorte de fantasme érotique masculin. Lorsque les Tahitiennes montent à bord du vaisseau des étrangers, Bougainville avoue qu'à ce moment-là il a trouvé aussi difficile de contrôler ses désirs et ses passions que de contrôler son équipage. Dans ses considérations sur la représentation de Tahiti chez Diderot, Ralph Leigh a très justement remarqué: "the girls offered themselves to the weary traveller, with open arms, and as it were, no strings attached,"<sup>3</sup> et a constaté en conclusion "...even for men who had not been at sea for six months, but who had merely been living subject to the normal restraints of European society, the picture of Tahiti might well seem to be an enticing paradise, a veritable fantasy" (119).

L'aspiration à la liberté sexuelle est un trait fondamental psychologique de l'homme civilisé; c'est une aspiration ancienne qui a trouvé son expression dans de nombreux mythes. Dans le *Supplément*, à plusieurs reprises Bougainville compare Tahiti à "la nouvelle Cythère," l'île grecque dont l'histoire était l'expression la plus puissante du mythe. Cette île était le site du culte d'Aphrodite qui, selon une des versions de la légende, est née dans la mousse des flots émouvant la mer par des organes génitaux d'Uranus et portée d'abord à Cythère avant de débarquer à Chypre. Le symbole offert par l'île liée au culte d'Aphrodite a hanté l'imagination des générations de poètes et de peintres. On pense souvent à deux peintures de Watteau—"Le pèlerinage à l'île de Cythère" et "L'embarquement pour Cythère" ou bien au poème amer "Un voyage à Cythère" dans lequel Baudelaire juxtapose l'île à "l'Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons."<sup>4</sup> La description de l'effort que fait Bougainville pour empêcher les membres de son équipage de succomber à la tentation est réminiscente d'un autre mythe, celui d'Ulysse et des sirènes. L'association est confirmée par une référence aux origines de la guerre de Troyes et se fait jour avec une netteté particulière dans l'épisode où la jeune Tahitienne enlève ses vêtements devant les marins et "paraît aux yeux de tous telle que Vénus se fit voir au berger phrygien" (35). Il est donc juste de se mettre d'accord avec Stephen Warner qui, tout en analysant le mythe comme expression de l'aspiration, remarque: "Bougainville as well as Diderot could not avoid having their response to reality shaped by their consciousness of the myth."<sup>5</sup> Où qu'il aille, Bougainville porte avec lui son bagage culturel et mythologique et interprète ce qu'il voit selon ce bagage.

Au moment où le héros et ses coéquipiers arrivent à Tahiti, le peuple indigène les accueille chaleureusement; dès les premières pages du récit, cette hospitalité est dépeinte de façon explicite: "On invitait à entrer dans les maisons, on leur donnait à manger; mais ce n'est pas à une collation



légère que se borne ici la civilité des maîtres; ils leur offraient des jeunes filles” (24). La juxtaposition de la nourriture aux filles ne laisse aucun doute que la faim et la soif dont il s’agit sont avant tout sexuelles et que cette offre d’hospitalité est une invitation à jouir des voluptés de l’amour. Le bonheur n’est obtenu que quand il s’exprime par un simple appétit physique, ce qui est d’ailleurs souligné tout au début par la description des rapports sexuels entre le jeune Tahitien et la jeune Tahitienne qui cède à l’appel de la nature. Les Français jouissent des dons offerts par les indigènes, mais en même temps ils allument dans les jeunes filles et les femmes “des fureurs inconnues” (53). Un des violents reproches que le Vieillard leur adresse au moment de leur départ est exactement d’avoir perverti et détruit la naïveté et l’innocence, d’avoir troublé les esprits des indigènes.

Le monologue du Vieillard occupe dans le récit une place particulière. Il s’adresse à des compatriotes et les exhorte à se réjouir du départ des Européens en livrant une attaque contre la culture corruptrice, celle qui a contaminé le bonheur des Tahitiens. Tout son discours se construit à partir d’antithèses visant une description de la société tahitienne par rapport à la culture européenne: bonheur/malheur, liberté/esclavage, santé/maladie, vie/mort, etc. De nouveau Tahiti est décrite comme idéal de liberté et de simplicité naturelle: “Nous sommes tous innocents, nous sommes heureux, et tu ne peux pas nuire à notre bonheur. Nous suivons le pur instinct de la nature. Ici, tout est à tous” (13). Cependant, on s’aperçoit que dans l’expression “tout est à tous,” le mot “tous” est exclusivement masculin, il désigne seulement la population mâle de l’île. La suite du monologue du Vieillard rend implicite cette masculinisation de la notion de l’individu: “Nos filles et nos femmes nous sont communes . . . nous sommes libres . . . nous avons respecté notre image en toi” (13). Le “nous” qui semblait initialement désigner la communauté tahitienne dans sa totalité apparaît maintenant comme un “nous” masculin puisque la collectivité en question est celle des hommes. La mise en valeur des deux constatations, “nos filles et nos femmes nous sont communes” et “tout est à tous,” exclut définitivement les femmes de la classe des individus, puisqu’elles deviennent une partie du “tout” possédé par “tous.” La limitation de la notion de l’individu à celle d’individu mâle est d’autant plus évidente que l’équipage, comme le “nous” évoqué par le Vieillard, est exclusivement mâle à l’exception de la jeune femme Barré, le domestique d’un des officiers de Bougainville, en qui précisément les Tahitiens ne reconnaissent pas un être autonome: “Ce domestique était déguisé en homme. Ignorée de

l'équipage entier, pendant tout le temps d'une longue traversée, les Otaitiens devinèrent son sexe au premier coup d'œil" (20).

Bien que l'égalité entre les deux sexes soit prêchée par le Vieillard, la société dont il est représentant ne diffère pas de la société européenne; dans les deux, la liberté sexuelle n'existe pas. En réalité, la femme tahitienne n'est pas un sujet autonome; au contraire, elle est traitée en propriété commune. C'est pour cette raison que la jeune fille offerte aux Français n'a pas de voix personnelle et doit simplement être "complaisante et voluptueuse" puisqu'elle sert "la tendre victime du devoir hospitalier" (49). Orou a donc le droit d'offrir les filles aux voyageurs parce qu'il les considère comme des objets qu'il peut, à son gré, garder, rejeter, passer à un autre homme, échanger contre une autre femme et dont il peut disposer librement: "Elles m'appartiennent, je te les offre. . . . Nos filles et nos femmes nous sont communes (65). Par là il affirme que les femmes sont des objets que l'homme possède et qu'il partage généreusement avec les autres hommes. A ce moment-là, on regarde avec soupçon Orou exaltant l'égalité sexuelle de la femme par rapport à l'homme et son droit au plaisir.

La constatation de l'Aumônier, selon laquelle dans la société civilisée la règle de tout rapport doit être la constance, provoque l'indignation d'Orou: ". . . ne vois-tu pas qu'on a confondu, dans ton pays, la chose qui n'a ni sensibilité, ni pensée, ni désir, ni volonté; qu'on quitte, qu'on prend, qu'on garde, qu'on échange sans qu'elle souffre et qu'elle se plaigne, avec la chose qui ne s'échange point, qui ne s'acquiert point; qui a liberté, volonté, désir" (64). Certes, semblable traitement des femmes comme marchandise et comme objet d'échange apparaît en transparence dans d'autres œuvres du même siècle, parmi lesquelles *Manon Lescaut*, *Les lettres persanes* ou bien *Les liaisons dangereuses*. Cependant, dans le *Supplément* cet échange acquiert une résonance particulièrement tenace: la valeur de la femme-objet augmente avec le nombre d'enfants qu'elle peut produire. Il n'est donc pas surprenant d'entendre Bougainville dire: "plus les filles ont d'enfants, plus elles sont recherchées" (32). Il n'est pas étonnant non plus de voir Orou répliquer à l'Aumônier qui refuse de coucher avec Thia: "Je ne sais ce qu'est la chose que tu appelles religion; mais je ne puis qu'en penser mal, puisqu'elle t'empêche de goûter un plaisir innocent auquel la nature, la souveraine maîtresse nous invite tous" (56). Or, précisément, l'amour à Tahiti n'est pas ce "plaisir innocent" puisqu'il est toujours assujéti à la fonction utilitaire. Le souci du renouvellement de la race apparaît assez tôt dans le texte; le réalisme et les considérations utilitaires et économiques se substituent à l'union libre, car en fait la société tahitienne n'envisage le plaisir ni comme un droit ni

comme une valeur absolue. Au contraire, elle donne à la jouissance sexuelle une signification et une direction précises en lui confiant une finalité procréatrice. Puisque le plaisir n'est pas un droit, mais un devoir dont dépend l'existence même de la nation, les relations amoureuses sont donc entièrement subordonnées à la continuité de la race et à l'intérêt public. Par conséquent, la liberté dans les rapports entre les deux sexes ne devient que préoccupation démographique. Même au moment où Orou parle du mariage comme "le consentement d'habiter une même cabane et de coucher dans le même lit, tant que nous nous y trouvons bien" (72), le but de cette union n'est pas le plaisir considéré en lui-même, mais la génération des enfants. Ainsi d'ailleurs l'acte sexuel devient justifié et même sanctifié par le désir de Thia d'égaliser ses sœurs en fécondité.

Dans de nombreux épisodes du récit, les rapports entre l'homme et la femme sont mentionnés directement; pas de scène de séduction entre Thia et l'Aumônier, pas de détails évocateurs sur la nuit qu'ils ont passée ensemble, le plaisir des sens n'est mentionné que brièvement et les arguments en faveur de la procréation pèsent plus lourd que le reste. Même l'idéal de la beauté féminine à Tahiti est déterminé par le rôle maternel de la femme: "Il n'y a presque rien de commun entre la Vénus d'Athènes et celle d'Otaïti. Une Otaïtienne disait un jour avec mépris à une autre femme du pays, tu es belle; mais tu fais de laids enfants; je suis laide, mais je fais de beaux enfants, et c'est moi que les hommes préfèrent" (36). Ainsi les femmes stériles ou atteintes de maladies sont marginalisées et considérées comme un handicap à la société.

Puisque l'intérêt qui gouverne l'union libre à Tahiti supplante les sentiments, l'amour est conçu comme un devoir et comme une transaction entre la femme et le voyageur qui, à son tour, doit remplir ce devoir pour ne pas violer les lois de la nature. Les règles de l'hospitalité ordonnent de respecter les usages du pays où l'on est et de s'en acquitter en remplissant le vœu de l'hôte de la nation. Ce vœu est d'ailleurs en accord avec la foi de la nature qui attend de l'homme qu'il fasse son devoir et accroisse le nombre d'enfants: "tous les sauvages que nous sommes, nous savons aussi calculer" (73). Les enfants à Tahiti sont un enrichissement et la mort d'un parmi eux est considérée comme une diminution de fortune. Lorsqu'Orou offre aux voyageurs sa femme et ses filles, il ajoute qu'il n'agit pas contre leur liberté et leur volonté; c'est d'elles que vient l'offre. Thia, la plus jeune, implore l'Aumônier qu'il ne la repousse pas, qu'il l'élève au contraire au rang de ses sœurs qui sont déjà mères, et par conséquent plus haut dans l'estime de ses parents et des habitants de l'île. Pour la femme donc, l'acte sexuel est aussi un devoir qu'elle ne peut

pas refuser de remplir. Et c'est dans ce contexte qu'il faut comprendre le reproche que la mère fait à sa fille: "Thia, à quoi penses-tu donc: tu ne deviens point grosse; tu as dix-neuf ans et tu n'en a point" (41).

L'amour entre les Tahitiens est dénué de tout aspect d'intimité ou d'affection; ils s'aiment librement en présence des autres car les sentiments de frayeur, de honte, de remords sont inconnus. L'amour est accordé librement et entièrement, sans hésitation et sans réserve. A Tahiti l'homme atteint le bonheur et le secret du bonheur dans le principe que: "rien n'y était mal par l'opinion ou par la loi que ce qui était mal dans la nature" (65). Le bien particulier et le bien général coïncident, l'idée de la propriété privée est inconnue et même en amour les habitants de l'île sont tous les membres d'une grande famille: "Vénus est ici la déesse de l'hospitalité, son culte n'y admet point de mystères et chaque jouissance est une fête pour la nation" (67). Même quand les Tahitiennes vivent leurs rapports sexuels sans "frayeur" et sans "honte" (16), elles ne se libèrent pas; au contraire, elles rendent plus libérateur l'énergie de l'homme. Les membres de l'équipage empoisonnent les sentiments amoureux des jeunes filles par des actes qui ne sont plus naturels et directs, mais qui ont été pervertis précisément par le remords, la honte et la frayeur.

Dans un développement inattendu, la question des idées morales et de l'union entre l'homme et la femme est située dans la perspective du mariage et des rapports entre deux êtres qui affirment leur liberté de vouloir et désirer contre les lois qui en font des choses et des objets de possession. Pour Orou, le mariage est une union où les lois fondamentales de la nature sont ignorées et violées. La conception même du mariage comme un lien permanent entre deux personnes est contraire à la nature, car selon cette conception un être pensant, libre dans sa volonté et ses désirs est un objet de propriété et sa liberté d'accepter ou de refuser est détruite. En outre, en imposant à deux personnes une constance, le mariage viole aussi la loi générale des êtres car il proscriit le changement qui est en nous.

Ainsi, la lecture du *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* révèle que le monde de la liberté sexuelle décrit par Orou n'est qu'une illusion et que les rapports entre les deux sexes obéissent à des règles bien définies et dans la même mesure que dans le monde de l'Aumônier. Les deux sociétés se ressemblent parce qu'elles réglementent l'énergie sexuelle de l'être humain. Dans les deux cas, la femme est opprimée et mise en esclavage à cause de sa réduction à l'état de marchandise. Son comportement est induit par une forme de "pédagogie" qui lui apprend, justement, à être complaisante. Si Diderot rêve d'une société non-hiérarchique du point de vue des rapports entre les sexes, le monde tahitien ne semble pas

correspondre à sa vision puisque l'attitude égocentrique du mâle lui fait rapporter toute chose au mâle et lui fait analyser toute chose par rapport au mâle.

Remarquons en conclusion que si la véritable liberté sexuelle dans la société tahitienne n'existe pas, il existe au contraire une morale bien sévère. Le monde sauvage ne diffère pas trop du monde civilisé; il s'en rapproche parce que lui aussi soumet l'énergie humaine naturelle aux exigences d'un organisme que Diderot considère supérieur à l'intérêt particulier. On ne peut donc que se mettre d'accord avec Merle Perkins qui constate: "the picture of Tahiti does not seem to have been something of a self-indulgent erotic fantasy . . . unless, that is, one accepts that woman's deepest aspirations are indeed to submit to the male as Diderot implies by the 'elles sont à elles, elles se donnent à toi.'"<sup>6</sup>

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Notes

1. Pour de plus amples réflexions sur le concept de l'utopie renvoyons à *Utopiques: jeux d'espace* (Paris: Minuit, 1973).
2. Diderot, Dennis. *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*. éd. Herbert Dieckmann (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1955) 32. Par la suite, toute citation du *Supplément* renverra à la même édition et sera simplement suivie du numéro de la page.
3. Leigh, Ralph. "Diderot's Tahiti." *Studies in Eighteenth Century* 5 (1983): 117.
4. Baudelaire, Charles. *Les fleurs du mal*. (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1968) 230-34.
5. Werner, Stephen. "Diderot's *Supplément* and the Late Enlightenment Thought." *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 85 (1971): 231.
6. Perkins, Merle. "Community Planning in Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*." *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 21 (1974): 412.

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## Tambour

Pourquoi trahis-tu mon cœur?  
Pourquoi pleures-tu avec les larmes de mon sang?  
Sang d'eau de mer  
Sang de guildives  
Sang de cristaux de sucre  
Sang de cristaux de sel  
Rythme! Tafia! Extase!  
Pourquoi dévoiles-tu le recto de mon âme?  
Pourquoi souffres-tu avec tant de plaisir?  
Tu vibres, tu palpites, tu frémis  
Tambour balaféré  
Tambour fouetté  
Tambour torturé  
Tambour crucifié  
Pourquoi meurs-tu avec tant de vie?  
Remparts de plaisir  
Avatars de vibration  
Pourquoi faufiles-tu sous ma peau?  
Confondu avec mon moi vif  
Pourquoi? Pourquoi parles-tu le langage des déportés, martyrs?  
Tambour dévoré, poignardé, blessé  
Balaféré de coups de baguettes  
Aux blessures saupoudrées de poivre  
De grains de piments en feu  
Parle tambour! Souffre!  
Hurle, hurle tambour!  
Moi je suis muet, aphone  
Tu es moi tambour  
Dis ma voix, dis mon être, parle, déparle...  
Je suis ton rythme, tu es mon sang  
Sang d'eau salée  
Sang de sirop

Sang de cristaux de sel  
Sang de cristaux de sucre  
Parle tambour, déparle...  
Tambour trahison  
Tambour négritude  
Pourquoi te bats-tu avec les tic-tac de mon cœur?  
Tambour fraternité  
Tambour africanité  
Tambour West-Indies  
Tambour Louisiane  
Tambour ghetto  
Tambour bateys  
Tambour cannes-à-sucre, factories  
Rhum, tafia, extase  
Tambour ivresse  
Tambour aliénation  
Tambour mimétisme  
Tambour fratricide  
Hèle tambour!  
Résonne tambour!  
Tambour négrier  
Tambour voyages-sans-fin  
Tambour dépaysement  
Tambour hybride  
Ton rythme à la senteur de la terre cuite  
Et des femmes en fleurs...  
Tu danses les nymphes au soleil  
Et galvanizes les dieux de nos terres...  
Portes les rythmes au flanc  
Et accouches des négresses en pleines lunes...  
Rythmes, tafia, extase  
Ton rythme perche à nos montagnes ensorcelées  
Et ton echo retentit en amont  
De la source dense, de la source noire  
Parle tambour!

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