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**19TH CENTURY AND 20TH CENTURY FRENCH EXOTICISM:
PIERRE LOTI,
LOUIS-FERDINAND CÉLINE, MICHEL LEIRIS,
AND
SIMONE SCHWARZ-BART**

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Department of French Studies

**by
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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AF</i>	<i>L'Afrique fantôme</i>
<i>Digression</i>	“Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appelés griots.”
<i>Le Roman</i>	<i>Le Roman d'un spahi</i>
<i>Le Voyage</i>	<i>Le Voyage au bout de la nuit</i>
<i>Les Trois dames</i>	<i>Les Trois dames de la Kasbah</i>
<i>Memories</i>	<i>Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin-de-Siècle</i>
<i>Pluie et vent</i>	<i>Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle</i>

ABSTRACT

This study of four 19th and 20th century colonial texts, as well as a later postcolonial novel exposes the *cadres exotiques*, or exotic frameworks, of literary exoticism. The thesis names and interprets the moods of and reactions to exoticism, including *colonial exoticism*, *antiexoticism*, and *autoexoticism*. Poetic and theoretical interpretations of exoticism, such as Victor Segalen's *Notion du Divers* and Edouard Glissant's *Opacité* and *Poétique de la Relation* challenge the prevalent assumptions that the literary practice was only an unfortunate byproduct of colonialism.

The first chapter presents literary history and theoretical considerations relating to exoticism: *Orientalism*, nostalgia, colonial literary history, and a critical literature review. Chapter II explores *Le Roman d'un spahi* (1881) and *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* (1882) by Pierre Loti, two texts dating from France's high colonial period of the late 19th century. Chapter III studies works and contexts of the 1930s—Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932) and Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934). These modernist texts appeared with the decline of colonial exoticism's popularity. I conclude with an analysis of Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1973), a postcolonial novel about the life of a Creole woman in the former French colony of Guadeloupe.

CHAPTER I

19TH AND 20TH CENTURY TRADITIONS AND INVENTIONS —A KNOWLEDGE BECOMING

Introduction: La notion d'exotisme. Le Divers. Avant tout, déblayer le terrain. Jeter par-dessus bord tout ce qui contient de mésusé et de rance ce mot d'exotisme. Le dépouiller de tous ses oripeaux: le palmier et le chameau; casque de colonial; peaux noires et soleil jaune; et du même coup se débarrasser de tous ceux qui les employèrent avec une faconde niaise. Puis, dépouiller ensuite le mot d'exotisme de son acceptation seulement tropicale, seulement géographique.

-Victor Segalen
L'essai sur l'exotisme (1904-)

La pensée dessine l'imaginaire du passé: un savoir en devenir.

-Edouard Glissant
Poétique de la relation (1990)

Examining Colonial and Postcolonial Texts

In this dissertation, I will consider the *cadres exotiques*, or exotic frameworks, of various colonial texts, as well as one postcolonial novel of exoticism. In the introductory chapter, I present the literary history and theoretical considerations relating to exoticism. In Chapter II, I examine *Le Roman d'un spahi* (1881) and *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* (1882) by Pierre Loti, two works of fiction dating from colonial exoticism's heyday in the late 19th century. In the following chapter, I read two works from the 1930s: Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932) and Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934) which appeared as colonial exoticism's popularity declined. These chapters on Pierre Loti (1850-1923), L.F. Céline (1894-1961), and Michel Leiris (1901-1990) involve story lines reflecting on life in African colonies and the lives of the writers who undertook colonial missions. I conclude with an analysis of Simone Schwarz-Bart's

Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle (1973), a postcolonial novel about the former French colony of Guadeloupe.¹

Although the exotic literature that I study takes place in France's ex-colonies, these works do not specifically relate to one French colony or one colonized region. Instead I advance a theory of French exoticism drawn from various places that have been described in those terms. Ultimately, this is an attempt to understand exoticism as a phenomenon that is not only representative of colonialist and colonial ideologies. In the epigraph Victor Segalen (1878-1919) denounces the exoticism of *le casque de colonial...seulement tropicale, seulement géographique...* (the colonial's helmet. . .only tropical, only geographic...). However, Segalen also considers exoticism, at least in part, as an illustration of an alternative notion: *Le Divers*. Nonetheless, this term is controversial, thus, I shall subsequently explore underlying meanings of "Diversity."

Chapter II gives rise to new readings of exoticism based partially on the exegesis of Loti's texts. Loti describes the Franco-African colonial environment in bleak terms that underscore the illness and alienation from which varied members of colonial society suffered. Loti's fiction, replete in its "diversity," illustrates the colonial paragon of the literature of exoticism. The third chapter examines the rejection and mockery of exoticism in the two high-modernist texts by Céline and Leiris. The 20th century travel narratives on colonial Africa defy and imitate some of the conventions of the last century's exoticism. The final chapter analyzes a postcolonial appropriation of exoticism in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*. I shall examine the critical attention that the novel received due to its allegedly exoticist and placid ideological slant.

With the introduction, I attempt to show that from the rise of travel literature in the 16th century, inevitable repetitions, imitations, and tributes emerged in the 19th and

¹ Although I am not focusing on exclusively African colonial exoticism, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* has been accurately described as a work that places, ". . .Guadeloupe within an African sociohistorical framework." Pascale de Souza, "Guadeloupean Literature: Multiple Versions of Créolité." In *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures: Critical Essays*, edited by Kamal Salhi. (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), 178.

early 20th century's exoticism. By the end of the 19th century, many exoticists' unconscious insertions of imagery drawn from antecedent and contemporaneous literature occasioned the classical exotic mode, such as the oneiric and nostalgic *Orientalist* texts of Pierre Loti.² Loti, the writer and his fiction, incarnates what I call archetypal *colonial exoticism*. About thirty years after Loti's popular crest, the modern colonial travel literature of the 20th century, such as Leiris's *L'Afrique fantôme* or Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, possess a new consciousness whereby the older exoticism is deliberately referred to, mocked, and rejected. In Céline's work, I call this sardonic appropriation an *antiexoticism*. As the final point, I study a different case of exoticism discernible within a postcolonial novel written by a woman at the end of the 20th century. Schwarz-Bart's work reveals a return to some of the classical tropes of exoticism; the novel also generates a linguistically unique and personalized version of the literature, which I call *autoexoticism*.

The Exotic Background

The word "exotic" first appears in the chronicles of French literature when François Rabelais uses the adjective *exotique* to describe imported merchandise in his *Quart Livre et Faictes et dictes Heroïques du bon Pantagruel* (1552).³ Three hundred

² *Aziyadé* (1879) is Loti's best known novel, in which Roland Barthes views an exoticist archetype in the letters of the written name *Aziyadé*. Complete with its A's, Z, D and É's. Barthes reads a reiteration of *Schéhérazade* in the heroine's name, *Aziyadé*. *Schéhérazade* is, of course, the Arabic heroine of *Une mille et une nuits* who Richard Burton first presented to European readers in the late 18th century. Roland Barthes, *New Critical Essay*, Translated by Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.)

³ En cestuy iour, & les deux subsequens ne leurs apparut terre ne chose aultre nouvelle. Car Adoncques descendit on havre, contemplant, ce pendant que les chormes des naufz faisoient aiguade, divers tableaux, diverses tapisseries, divers animaux, poissons, oizeaulx, & aultres marchandises *exotiques* & peregrines, qui estoient en l'allée du mole, & par les halles du port. Car c'estoit le tiers iour des grandes & solennes foires du lieu: es quelles annuellement convenoient tous les plus riches & fameux marchans d'Afrique & Asie. (Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre* (1552).

On that day & the two subsequent days, nothing new appeared on the ground. Because Adoncques harbored, yet contemplating, those procuring fresh water, diverse paintings, diverse tapestries, diverse animals, fish, birds, & other exotic merchandise & peregrinations, that went to and from the embankment and by the arcades of the port. Because it was the third day of the big and solemn markets of the milieu at which annually all the richest and most famous merchants of Europe convene.

years before the *exotique* turned into the adjective and noun *exotisme*, Rabelais evokes the Asian and African merchants who bring their *marchandises exotiques* to a port in Europe. The Rabelaisian *exotique* denotes the word's classical etymology, which recognizably originates from the Greek *exôtikos*, signifying *stranger*—in the sense of “from far away, foreign.” However, this does not appear to be the only meaning involved in Rabelais' 16th century *exotique*. The passage from *Le Quart Livre* reveals that *exotique* is virtually inseparable from a notion of *Le Divers* (diversity). Rabelais describes items as “...divers tableaux, diverses tapisseries, divers animaux, poissons, oizeaulx, & aultres marchandises *exotiques* & peregrines, qui estoient en l'allée du mole, & par les halles du port. (...diverse paintings, diverse tapestries, diverse animals, fish, birds, & other exotic merchandise & peregrinations, that went to and from the embankment and by the arcades of the port.). Rabelais repeats *divers* three times in his invocation of “exotic merchandise.” It is as if in blissful ignorance, he foresees that another French doctor, Victor Segalen, who traveled and lived in the Pacific Islands and China, would write a book posthumously published called, *Essai sur l'exotisme: Une esthétique du divers* (1904).

As the epigraph reveals, Segalen's thought on the topic proposes an alternate sort of exoticism, exempted of its colonial connotations and replete in its diversity. Rabelais did not suspect exoticism's colonial implications to be addressed three hundred years later when Segalen wrote the *Essai sur l'exotisme*. Yet, in some sense, the 16th century *Quart Livre* employs Segalen's desired exoticist sensibility: *La notion d'exotisme. Le Divers*. In contemporary language, diversity suggests a multiplicity or an assortment of ethnicities or even gender identities. However, Segalen's somewhat esoteric *Divers* entails its own semantic field. Before I address the meanings and the manifestations of his *Divers*, I shall lend some historicity to the late 19th and 20th century exoticism discussed throughout this thesis. Thus, I commence by exploring the historical contexts in

which mid-19th and early 20th century exoticism flourished. Secondly, I provide background on the major styles and moods of exoticism.

At the end of the 16th century, thirty years after the appearance of the word “*exotique*” in the *Quart Livre*, essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) wrote *Des Cannibales* (1588). In this essay Montaigne condemns Spanish treatment of Amerindians as he undertook a relativist study of the differences between New World “sauvages” and Old World Europeans. Montaigne, an early armchair ethnographer, questioned the superiority of “civilization” by comparing it to American “sauvagerie.” Notable as a cultural comparativist, Montaigne assumes the role of future exoticists whom constantly contrasted and compared cultures.

By the 17th century we find influential examples of travel writing, such as *Voyage en Perse* by Jean Chardin (1643-1713). Chardin, a voyager who narrated his travels in the *Orient*, wrote *Voyage en Perse* consisting of ten volumes. He provided accounts of the literature, customs, clothes, architecture, and mores of Persian society and Chardin knew the language and some of the literature of Persia. As an early Orientalist, he influenced the 18th century philosopher Charles-Louis de Montesquieu (1689-1755).

Since the 18th century, the world outside of Europe significantly enters the world of French letters. Françoise de Graffigny wrote *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* in 1747. These *lettres* narrate the tale of a kidnapped Inca princess who discovers Parisian culture and describes her misadventures in France. This novel reveals a theme of a foreigner who has contact with French culture. A similar cosmopolitanism expressed itself in works of philosophers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Montesquieu wrote two masterpieces, *Les Lettres persanes* (1721) and *De l'Esprit des lois* (1748). *Les Lettres Persanes* is a novel ostensibly about Persians and Parisians. However, this work is more of a monograph of French life from the eyes of two fictional Persians who visit France and marvel at the strange and exotic France that they discover. The two Persians speak

French, and understand French culture quite well: ultimately, Persia appears as the foreign and exotic space.

Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois* (1748) presents the philosopher's beliefs that universal laws underlie all things—human, natural, and divine—as he compares different cultures' traditions and laws. Lauding the virtues of democracy, and rejecting the universality of monarchy, Montesquieu heralds 18th century revolutionary egalitarianism. In a similar egalitarian vein, Voltaire wrote the exotic classic *Candide* in 1759—in this fictive jaunt across the Atlantic to America, Candide meets a slave, *le Nègre de Surinam* (Dutch Guyana). From the encounter, the author draws a conclusion regarding a universal evil: slavery. Voltaire's *L'ingénu* (1767) is another text treating an exotic subject. The *ingénu*, a North American Huron Indian, represents a non-European blank *other* against which to contrast the French. The discovery of the New World led to such comprehensive and generalized portraits of “savage,” “natural,” and “primitive” human life, portraits upon which Europeans projected virtues and defects.

Philosophe Jean-Jacques Rousseau denotes one of the thinkers most reminiscent of 18th century exoticism, due to the association with his name to the concept of the Noble Savage (*le bon sauvage*).⁴ The Noble Savage figure implies that Native Americans, and by extension, “primitive,” indigenous, or “traditional” people, retained fundamental virtues and goodness, qualities that Europeans lost. Although not a figure in this study, the Rousseauian Noble Savage exemplifies an early and persistent exoticist archetype.

These works of the *siècle des lumières* reveal the *philosophes*' cosmopolitanism and philosophical deliberations: universalism, liberty, and equality. Ironically, by the 1789 French Revolution, exoticism is inextricable from the scenery of colonialism—ironic, insofar as I shall reveal that critics today do not consider exoticism a

revolutionary sort of expression. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's colorful *Paul et Virginie*⁵ (1788), set in the colony then known as *Île de France*,⁶ or Chateaubriand's colonial American romances, *Atala* and *René* (1801) typify the practice of early 19th century exotic literature. These works certainly do include *Rousseauian* characters describable as "Noble Savages." At the end of the 18th century, the new literary practice took shape with romanticized and idealized notions of cultures that Europeans considered foreign, different from, or even superior to their own.

Orientalism

In the early 19th century, as many have noted,⁷ French academicians expanded literary terminology and gave titles to previously unnamed literary styles and movements such as *le baroque*, *l'amour courtois*, *le romantisme*, and *l'exotisme*. Indeed, the first half of the 19th century was an age of Romanticism and *Orientalism*. Now considered a classic critique of what he described as the hegemonic European academic discipline of *Orientalism*, Edward Saïd's *Orientalism* (1978) focuses on the representations of geographic *otherness* embodied in the Orient. Saïd analyzes the geopolitical and cultural *Orient* as described in artistic and academic works stemming from the European imperial domination of the *Orient* in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Saïd reveals what he considers powerfully misrepresentative Eurocentric *Orientalist* discourses generated by Europeans about the *Orient* and its people. Many publications have followed in Saïd's

⁴ Strangely, however, recent scholarship reveals that in the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) there is actually no word-for-word mention of *bon* or noble savage. Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁵ The *Encyclopédie Larousse* says that the novel inaugurated the exotic genre in literature: *Paul et Virginie* de Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1788): *innocente idylle de deux enfants de l'île de France (île Maurice), qui inaugura en France le genre exotique*.

⁶ *Île de France* is present day Mauritius.

⁷ Michel Foucault makes references in *Les mots et les choses* to the 19th century academic propensity to invent and compartmentalize ideas into the classifications to which I refer. Foucault tells us that even that the seemingly *a priori* term "littérature" is actually a 19th century invention: "Le XIX^e siècle...il lui arrivera de laisser l'un en face de l'autre un savoir refermé sur lui-même, et un pur langage, devenu, en son être et sa fonction énigmatique, --quelque chose qu'on appelle, depuis cette époque Littérature. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, NRF (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 103.

wake, to apply, modify, or critique his viewpoints.⁸ As Edward Saïd describes *Orientalism*, the *Orient* signified an enormous malevolent force that was contrasted to European civilization—it was the East to the European West, it was Europe’s other. I use the *Orient* and the term *Orientalism* in a context somewhat different from Saïd’s *Orientalism*. In this thesis, *Orientalism* mainly, but not exclusively, refers to Ottoman, Turkish, Asia Minor, and North African inspired symbols, style, and art, insofar as places like Persia figured so significantly in 18th century imaginations.⁹

To introduce the background of 19th and 20th century exoticism, I begin with *Orientalism*¹⁰ because of the pervasiveness of *Orientalist* style and thought in French design and letters. *Orientalism* manifested itself in Europe’s 18th century expression—such as Montesquieu’s *Lettres Persanes*. 19th century France hosted a proliferation of literary portrayals of landscapes, scenes, and characters supposedly from the Middle East and North Africa. The following French works and artists signify 19th century French *Orientalism*: René de Chateaubriand, father to the Romantics, wrote a widely read *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem* (1811) containing chapters on Constantinople and Alexandria. In 1814 Ingres painted his famous imaginary “Turkishesque” *Grande odalisque*. At the *Salon de 1834*, Eugène Delacroix’s exposition of *Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement* (1834) met with overwhelming critical approval. Victor Hugo’s fanciful collection of poems entitled *Les Orientales* appeared three years later in 1838. To sit in a Paris concert hall in 1845, one might well have heard a new and

⁸ For example, in Reina Lewis’s *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (1996). Lewis argues that Saïd failed to take gender into sufficient consideration in *Orientalism*. Thus in *Gendering Orientalism*, Lewis examines the gendered positionalities of Orientalist painters who were women.

⁹ Clearly, the *Orient* and *Orientalism* are highly flawed expressions with respect to geography and culture. Without a doubt, the *Orient* in French literature and art can refer to regions, which are not only unrelated geographically, but which are also distinct ethnically, linguistically, or climatically. Illogically, countries as distant from one another as Morocco, Lebanon, or Indochina are all part of the *Orient* in late 19th century and early 20th century French discourses.

¹⁰ After the publication of Edward Saïd’s *Orientalism*, (1978) the term became highly visible in comparative literary criticism; in a broad sense the term refers the misrepresentation of Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East by Westerners (artists, academics, governmental agents.) I am not using *Orientalism*

“foreign” kind of music: Félicien David's *Symphonie du desert*, which received its première in 1844 at the Paris Conservatory. Théophile Gautier was in attendance, and the work enjoyed instant success.¹¹

Additionally, *Orientalism* entails the designs and styles initially seen in merchandise imported in the flow of colonial trade and mercantilism. The following terminology is telling: *morocainerie*, *chinoiserie*, and *niponoiserie*. In Europe, artists and craftsmen began to incorporate motifs from North Africa, Asia Minor, and Asia.¹² The popularity of ancient Egyptian design followed the era of *Napoleonic* conquest in Egypt. The well-known *Empire style* of Napoleon I's First Empire ostentatiously copied ancient Egyptian designs and motifs. As the *beaux-arts* tradition of Oriental design, or as the above painters' and musicians' works demonstrate, hybrid artificiality became a fundamental *trope* of *exoticist* style. Ingres, who never traveled east of Italy, painted anatomically curious women in the forms of odalisques or bathing Turks.¹³ Delacroix decorated the apartment of his *Femmes d'Alger* with imitation Arabic calligraphy. The *odalisques*, the *membres du sérail*, or the *Orientale qui sert le café* became clichés of popular *Orientalism*.¹⁴

in the same manner as Saïd's *Orientalism*—I am referring to 19th century French art and literature, which mostly seeks to represent North Africa and Asia Minor.

¹¹ Dorothy Venus Hagan, *Félicien David: 1810-1876 A Composer and a Cause*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985): 69.

¹² The English term “china,” or the East Indian inspired motif known as “paisley,” are further illustrations of anglo-*Orientalist* patterns.

¹³ *La Grande odalisque* has a strangely elongated vertebral column, as do the numerous women of the *Bain Turque* (1851) all appear to possess the same body.

¹⁴ *Le Harem colonial* (1982) by Malek Alloula shows these clichés incorporated in colonial postcards.

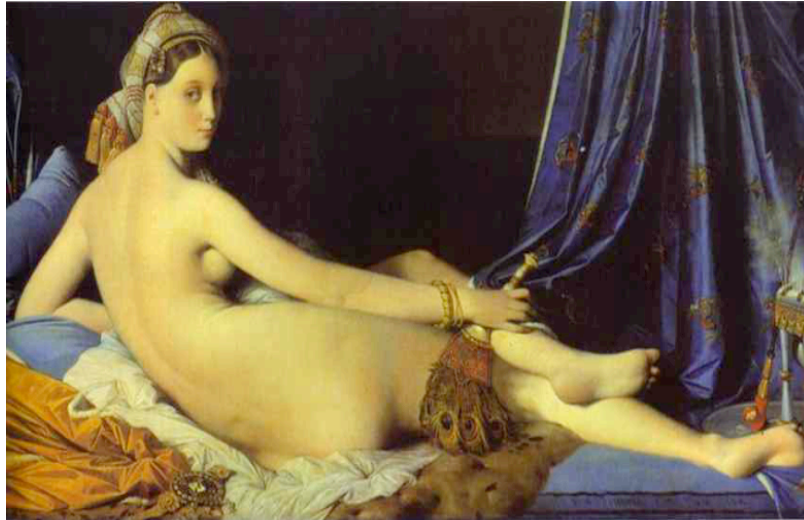


Fig. 1
La Grande Odalisque (1814) by Jean Dominique Ingres illustrates an archetypal artificial woman. Note the anatomically incorrect elongated back.



Fig. 2
Les Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement (1848) by Eugène Delacroix reveals the abundance of accessories and imaginary details typical of exoticist expression, such as the writing on the plaque that is a fantastic imitation of Arabic calligraphy.

The clichéd, imitative, and artificial nature of *Orientalism* constantly reappears in the exoticism of the plastic arts and in writing. For instance, Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1851) illustrates the pursuit and reproduction of female replicas and "types" that pervade the 19th century's *Orientalist* art and literature. *Voyage en Orient* is a fictive autobiographical letter written to a friend, in which the narrator describes his relationships with certain *Orientalists*. The protagonist Gérard travels to the "*Orient*,"¹⁵ where he finds varying degrees of friendship. According to the custom of his Cairo neighborhood, he is supposedly obliged to live with a woman. Gérard decides to buy one. He purchases a Javanese slave named *Zeynab* after visiting several slave markets and matchmakers. However, this narrative proves to be far more of a lyrical exploration of the imagery of *Orientalism*. He chooses *Zeynab* because she resembles a Dutch painting of a Javanese woman that he had seen in Europe. Hence, Gérard seeks a representation of a woman. In the *Orient*, he is in search of man-made representations, or *artificial* imagery, models of which he first viewed in Europe. Indeed, *Orientalism* cultivated an entire tradition of imitating or "discovering" European generated images of the *Orient*.¹⁶

By the 1850s, travel to the *Orient* and other previously far-flung regions became accessible to artists and writers with improved maritime navigation and with the ease of visiting the new European colonial holdings. Travel became an easier prospect. Steamships and trains reduced travel time by nearly half in the latter part of the century. Many artists and writers went abroad to experience firsthand what their literary predecessors such as René de Chateaubriand had described regarding America or the

¹⁵ Gérard travels to Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey. I chose to italicize the *Orient*, to emphasize the vagueness of the concept. Although I tend to refer to the former Ottoman Empire as the *Orient*, it may also imply the Far-East, East, Middle-East, Asia Minor, Arabia, India, Asia, Indochina, China, Japan, and North Africa.

¹⁶ Parna Nynador

Orient earlier in the century.¹⁷ In *Haunted Voyages: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (1991), Denis Porter makes reference to the almost obligatory artistic tradition of the 19th century *voyage en Orient*. He notes that apart from Lamartine's *Voyage*, this rite was not consciously undertaken in the name of French colonialism, but despite their anodyne artistic intentions, travel writers did assert "French geopolitical rights and civilizing duties." Porter states:

. . . French artists, writers, and scholars were not loath to follow the flag, especially in exploring North African and Middle Eastern countries and their cultures, for purposes that were frequently in conformity with the discourse of French public life but often were not. In fact, as far as writers were concerned, from Chateaubriand—whose *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem* of 1811 became something of a model—to Lamartine, Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Pierre Loti, and Maurice Barrès, the *voyage en Orient* came to assume the character of an obligatory journey, a challenge to one's imagination and a test of one's powers as a writer—although, as notable with Lamartine, that did not necessarily prevent writers from asserting French geopolitical rights and civilizing duties.
(Porter 165)

In *Haunted Voyages* Porter analyses desire and transgression in 18th and 19th century travel writing, but he does not address specifically how writers' desires aided and abetted French colonial projects. Nonetheless, Porter's thought historically corroborates what I am expressing in terms of literary history. A vogue of travel literature coincides with France's high period of colonialism, and the trend is contemporaneous, and perhaps synonymous with the appearance of exoticism. Many of the works by the writers whom Porter cites (Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, and Pierre Loti) are the authors now associated with the production of literature known as both *Orientalism* and exoticism. With a précis of colonial history, I will consider some of the other ways, outside of *Orientalism*, in which exoticism made its appearances.

¹⁷ Chateaubriand had visited the United States, and the French Louisiana which inspired his works *Atala* and *René* (1801), and in the aforementioned *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem*, he narrated his travels to the

Geopolitical Contradictions

The literati's interest in overseas culture was not limited to the *Orient*, nor was it restricted to *Orientalist* design in the arts. Writing on slave emancipation in the French colonies of the Americas, Michel Fabre states that, "it took efforts of Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, and other progressive intellectuals "to bring about permanent emancipation in a resolution taken by the newly proclaimed 1848 republic."¹⁸ Thus, in this first half of the 19th century, overseas civilizations, cultures, and even constitutional human rights abroad, increasingly entered the consciousness of the French metropolitan sphere.

This is a period that is contiguous with the onset of the conquest of Algeria. As France seized Algeria, and when the *Orient* figured so significantly in the musical, visual, and literary arts, Francophone people of color from the Americas were making their literary débuts in France. In the 1840s, free men of color in New Orleans imagined that their "cultural home" was France—they considered it a "land of aesthetic refinement and liberty." Many took inspiration from the Romantics (Fabre 11-12). Emancipation was proclaimed and black writers began to publish in France. Thus, the 1840s boded well for some French-speaking people of African descent in the old American colonies.

Concurrently, the French army mounted its campaigns of violence (*réfoulement*) against North Africans, while the French public embraced images of *Orientalism*. The ironic juxtapositions of colonialism, humanism, literary production, and aestheticism provided fertile ground for the growth of literary exoticism. According to *Le Grand Robert* (2001), the word "*exotisme*" enters literary French in 1845,¹⁹ three years prior to

Orient.

¹⁸ Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840-1980*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 10.

¹⁹ *Le Grand Robert* (2001) provides 1845 as the date for the first French use of "*exotisme*" :

"EXOTISME [exotism] n. m. 1845 Bescherelle; de exotique. et isme. (444)."

The English cognate, *exoticism*, is cited in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) as having appeared in English fifteen years after 1845: [f. EXOTIC *a.* + -ISM.]: **1827** HARE *Guesses* (1859) 503 The Greek original is tainted with many exoticisms and other defects. The *OED* provides the following definition: "a.

the new egalitarian principles that emancipation set in motion in the New World. Also, the 1840s hosted an upsurge in French colonial culture in Africa. Paradoxically, by the end of that decade, all French men finally were accorded a kind of equality, insofar as chattel slavery was abolished; but, the overseas' French projects of the day involved new and often brutal contact between colonizers and colonized in North Africa.

Europeans were becoming increasingly curious regarding the differences between themselves and non-Europeans. The following citation explores how one of the French founders of anthropology summarizes the mid-19th social-scientific century interests in studying human physiological differences such as race:

In France, anthropology was the earliest and most pivotal “human science.” A. De Quatrefages, the first French scholar to teach anthropology, opened his introductory lecture on June 17, 1856 with a description of anthropology as a branch of zoology in which human anatomy, physiology, and customs could be studied at different stages of their development. He considered “fossils” and “savages” to be the appropriate objects of anthropological inquiry. In his “Introduction Anthropologique” to Jules Rochard’s *Encyclopédie d’Hygiène et de Médecine Publique* (1889), De Quatrefages reiterated his classification of anthropology as a “branch of zoology or mammology” in which “man must be studied as an insect or a mammal” in terms of the physiological functions and “hygienic conditions necessary for each race.”²⁰

The first French institutionalized academic ventures in anthropology materialize a mere fifteen years after the appearance of *exotisme* in the French lexicon. Undeniably, the times reflect a French cultural preoccupation with differences between humans. Thus, the

Tendency to adopt what is exotic or foreign. **b.** Exotic character; an instance of this, anything exotic; *esp.* a foreign idiom or expression.” I do not use the English terminology—as the Oxford English Dictionary first defines exoticism as an adjective. Using the adjective and noun *exoticism*, I tend describe a literary “movement,” or what could be described as a style or mood in the arts. Although I use the English word *exoticism*, I am generally referring to the variable meanings of French *exotisme* as I disclose these meanings; I am referring to an international phenomenon, especially because non-French authors and works are mentioned, for instance, Shakespeare’s *Tempest* (1610) is an example of early exoticism.

²⁰ Jules-Rosette Benetta, “Speaking about Hidden Times: The Anthropology of V. Y. Mudimbé.” *Callaloo*, 14.4.(Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991) 944.

interest in things *Oriental* is only one element involved in the representation (painting, writing, photographing) of people originating from different cultures. Exoticism involves a larger trend of the speculations on differences. The inclination to view humans as essentially different, did not base itself on one specific ethnicity, nor on one cultural group, nor on one geographical region. For instance, some thinkers sought to define and delimit racial differences globally.

In *Blank Darkness*, Christopher Miller provides a concise profile of the notorious 19th century pseudo-anthropologist and writer Arthur Gobineau. Note Gobineau's division of the entirety of humanity into three distinct races. His categorization of people by race became characteristic of 20th century ethnography.

Joseph [*sic.*] Gobineau dubbed by Sartre “the father of racism,” has the distinction of being offensive to all the most basic of our contemporary assumptions on language, race, and difference in general. He produced the master text of nineteenth century thinking (although its influence is said to have been slight before the twentieth century), the *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-55). . . The *Essai* divided humanity into “three great races,” . . . “the black, the yellow, and the white.”²¹

Gobineau bases his conception of racial distinctions on a tricolor and tri-geographical description of difference.²² The anthropologic and academic propensity to class and describe differences along racial and geographical lines appears in exoticism. However, I believe that my following interpretation of exoticism within psychological/temporal terms better demonstrates how the literature attempts to represent differences. Although exoticism often relies on racial distinctions to convey strangeness, foreignness, otherness, and difference, exoticism entails evocations of supremely familiar imagery. Thus, I shall discuss the nostalgic mode, which seeks to return to a familiar “earlier,” more

²¹ Christopher Miller, *Blank Darkness*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 16-17.

“primitive,” or “better” time. Within exoticism, formal anthropological-like delineations or seemingly factual descriptions appear. However more frequently, we observe evocations of and reliance on familiar fanciful images, estimations, or comparisons to the past.

Nostalgia

Exoticism constantly resorts to antecedent and ancillary European generated imagery in order to represent differences between *us* and *them*, *here* and *there*, or *home* and *abroad*. Hence, frequently, perhaps in most cases, these differences are not particularly surprising or unfamiliar. As I noted in the case of the narrator from *Voyage en Orient*, Gérard sought a girl who resembled a painting. He looked for past imagery spawned in Europe. Exoticism relies on nostalgia that longs for the *past*, dwells upon it, and phantasmatically inserts the past into narrations of the present. Strangely, nostalgic yearning for something familiar is mistaken as a desire for something exotic. However, that longed-for past often refers back to “home.”

As defined by Freud in the essay, “Das Unheimliche” (1919), an “unheimlich” (uncanny) feeling refers to the return of a familiar phenomenon (be it an image, an object, a person, or an event) under an unfamiliar “unheimlich” guise due to the effect of psychic repression. Freud defines “unheimlich” in various languages including Greek. He cites, “Rost’s and Schenkl’s Lexicons. $\xi\epsilon\nu\omicron$ (i.e. strange, foreign).”²³ This Greek root $\xi\epsilon\nu\omicron$ (xeno), referring to a guest, stranger, or foreigner as in *xenophobic*, clearly involves the Greek root $\epsilon\chi\omega$, (exo) which means “outside.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *xeno* as follows:

²² The geographic correspondences to Gobineau’s races are Europe (White), Africa (Black), and Asia (Yellow).

²³ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 17. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co. Ltd., 1955), 221.

before a vowel xen-, repr. Gr. $\xi\epsilon\nu\omicron\xi\epsilon\nu$ combining form of a guest, stranger, foreigner, adj. foreign, strange; used in various scientific and other terms;

This is the *OED*'s definition of exotic:

ad. L. extic-us, a. Gr. $\epsilon\acute{\xi}\omega\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$, f. $\epsilon\acute{\xi}\omega$ outside. Cf. Fr. Exotique

exotic. **exotic**. Belonging to another country, foreign, alien (obs.). **exotic**. In narrowed sense: Introduced from abroad, not indigenous. Now chiefly of plants (in popular language with added sense of 'not naturalized or acclimatized'); also, of words, forms of speech or writing, fashions, etc.



The root of exotic is the same as the root of the word that Freud cites as Greek for “uncanny.” Hence the nostalgic mood and mode of exoticism involves strangeness, foreignness, and outside-ness. Paradoxically, according to Freud’s explanation, the “unheimlich” (uncomfortable, foreign, uncanny) entails home. Freud tells us that “heimlich” (“homey”) can actually mean its contrary: “unheimlich.” Thus, the “heimlich” is “unheimlich” and vice versa. Accordingly, it is quite comprehensible that the exotic, as it appears to be very closely related to the “unheimlich,” involves homesickness, or a longing for some kind of lost, but familiar past. Moreover, I simply state, the exotic evokes home.

In exotic literature, the familiar and home-like places surface in unexpected spaces. Virgin nature, as in Chateaubriand’s *Atala* and *René* embodies European men’s paradises lost.²⁴ The past can be symbolized by civilizations that declined or disappeared.

²⁴ Marie-Claire Vallois in the article entitled, "Exotic Femininity and the Rights of Man: *Paul Et Virginie* and *Atala*, or the Revolution in Stasis." The article *Rebel Daughters*, edited by Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) makes a case that aligns femininity and nature in French exoticism, this alliance of womanly, homey and exotic spheres is counter to the progress made for women during the French Revolution.

Writing on Africa, Loti evokes his characteristic *Eternelle Nostalgie*²⁵ for a French home. Moreover, he describes homesickness suffered by Frenchmen for Africa. In another manner of speaking, Africa evokes all too familiar images of Egypt, Babylonia, and Greece. Biblical, classical, mythological, and *Orientalist* referencing, within an otherwise realist writing style, has led to a widely held view of exoticism as aesthetically askew literary frivolity—it is considered rococo eclecticism, saccharine and fantastic. Depicting indigenes' family contentment and idealized kinship relations, European authors use but another means by which to express nostalgia for past home fires that never burnt. We shall view the major critiques of exoticism for its exclusion of serious historical or cultural likelihoods.

Language Questions

I shall show in the exegesis of exotic texts in the following chapters, that exoticism composes itself of nostalgic reveries from earlier periods or lost-but-not-forgotten places. Nonetheless, the literature of exoticism provides fertile ground for the frequent citations of language unfamiliar to French readers: foreign languages, anomalous expressions, unheard of pidgins, unspoken patois, or the creation of *idiolects*. If there is a longing for the past in these “transcriptions,” or more accurately phrased, “inventions,” of language patterns, it might be considered child-like or childish expression. The French patois put in print by Pierre Loti, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, and Simone Schwarz-Bart, authors studied in the following chapters, are their own peculiar alterations of French. Their expressions of “different” French are not necessarily childish. Nor, do these patois reflect precedents in actual language patterns. Céline received acclaim for his daringly modern attempts to write in the native tongue—that is to say his use of argot in *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. Writing on Africa, he invents an African patois. Simone Schwarz-Bart, a Creolophone, inserts Guadeloupian expressions into an

²⁵ The editors entitled an edition of Loti's journal, *Cette Eternelle Nostalgie*. Quella-Villéger Alain, Vercier Bruno, Guy Dugas, ed. *Pierre Loti: Cette Eternelle Nostalgie Journal Intime 1878-1911*. Paris:

otherwise standard French narrative. Alternate language patterns woven into French writing do not evoke pasts necessarily—this is an exoticist convention that deforms and alters standard French expression.

The Past in Exoticism's Present

I believe that it is too broad an assertion to consider nostalgia, in the form of cloaked or explicit evocations of the past, as the unique conduit of exoticism. Within exoticism we find metaphors of the past juxtaposed with modern figures. It is this hybrid *mélange* that best describes the scenery of exoticism. Exoticism regarding the very modern ventures of colonial occupation in Sub-Sahara Africa, North Africa, or the Caribbean involves classical and *Orientalist* representation—thus nostalgia.²⁶ Nevertheless, the modernity ought not be minimized. The 19th century French colonial figure of the *spahi* embodies this mix of nostalgia and novelty. The *spahis*, France's colonial cavalry corps of North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Indochina, sported uniforms replicating Ottoman Turkish garments. By the 20th century, the colorful *spahis* also carried carbines (automatic or semiautomatic rifles). The figure of the *spahi* exemplifies *Orientalist* and modern Euro-colonial hybridity—the indigenous and French *spahi* cavalry corps conveys the mixed metaphors of exoticism. Hence in the second chapter, I advance an interpretation of exoticism based partially on the exegesis of two texts of 19th century exoticism by Pierre Loti, both of which are set in French colonial Africa. The *Roman d'un spahi* features a French soldier's misadventures in Senegal. *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* takes place in Algiers as six sailors circulate through the city. Either one of these works reflects and invokes that which we are going to define as the exoticism of the French colonial realm—I refer to this as *colonial exoticism*.

Editions de la Table Ronde, 1997.

²⁶ Two examples of this sort of classicism and *Orientalism* are as follows: 1. New world slave names in modern 19th century historical actuality, as well as in literature, often recall names of Greek and Roman antiquity. 2. Claire de Duras, author of *Ourika* (1824) narrates the tale of a Senegalese girl who grows up in France, as a French child. As a child, she is dressed in *Orientalist* regalia.

Colonial exoticism does not invoke *Orientalist* expression only. *Orientalism* serves as an important example of the early late 19th century prevalence of often artificial and phantasmatic imagery within exoticism. From Orientalist art, we can observe that exoticism evinces nostalgia as images of imagined pasts surface. Nonetheless, evocations of the past are not the singular channels of the exotic mode. 19th and 20th century literary exoticism combines nostalgia and modernity. Examples of the modernity of exoticism include the figure of the *spahi*, colonial soldiers dressed in *Orientalist* regalia, or the alteration of standard French language within the colonial context. Indeed, the modern colonial framework is inseparable from the rise of the literature in the mid-19th century.

Colonialism and Exoticism's Historical Background

Exoticism's high point must be considered the late 19th century with the popularity of military writers such as Pierre Loti, a naval officer, or writer Ernest Psichari (1883-1914), a lieutenant in the colonial army. Concurrent with the heights of literary exoticism's popular successes of the 1880s and 90s, European powers capriciously expanded their global empires. At the Berlin Conference of 1885, Europe's national leaders drew arbitrary lines across African maps to claim and define "their" colonies. Two years subsequent to that event, by 1887 Laos and Cambodia were joined together with Vietnam; the French called the new colony *Indochine française*.

The *fin-de siècle* period and throughout the *belle époque*, the second great movement of French conquest commenced. France had already built colonial strongholds more than a century before in the Americas and in Africa. But this second wave of French colonialism far surpassed the earlier European conquests. It began in 1837 in Algeria, when General Bugeaud led a successful military campaign against the Emir Abd-el-Kader. Soon after this struggle, Bugeaud became the *gouverneur général de l'Algérie* (1840-1847). His military successes against indigenous resistance ushered in the steady colonization of Algeria, one of France's largest, longest, and most brutal colonial

campaigns. By the end of 1847, Abd-el-Kader was obliged to surrender to the commander of Oran Province, General Louis de Lamoricière.

France's colonial holdings steadily grew after the Algerian conquest of the 1840s. As we have noted, the word "*exotisme*" enters literary French in 1845. Simultaneous with the French colonial army's campaigns of violence against North Africans, the French public embraced images of *Orientalism*. Moreover, as I mentioned, the revolutionary year of 1848 provided for slave emancipation in the old colonies. The ironic historical juxtaposition of new colonialism, revived humanism, increased literary production, and varied aesthetics provided fertile ground for the growth of exoticism. Thus, French exoticism and colonialism developed side by side.

In 1815 the French overseas empire consisted of a few paltry possessions, ninety-nine years later, at the onset of World War I, France's empire was second only to Britain's. Up until the mid 20th century, France's colonial holdings expanded, and this is all the more impressive in so far as they grew from almost nothing at the beginning of the 19th century.²⁷ By the early 20th century, France occupied Indochina, some Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and Caribbean Sea islands, and huge colonial expanses that were made up of the North, West, Central, and East Africa. In the *fin-de-siècle* and *belle époque* periods of colonial expansionism, Pierre Loti averaged 30,000 and 35, 000 copies of each book he wrote—which is to say, he was as popular as the well-known writer Guy de Maupassant.²⁸

Essentially Colonial Ideologies

Terence Ranger, Eric Hobsbawm, Edward Saïd, Christopher Miller, James Clifford, and many others, in works such as *The Invention of Tradition* (1983),

²⁷Consider that after France sold Louisiana in 1803, Martinique, Guyana, and Guadeloupe were her only New World colonies, in addition to some older African and Indian Ocean colonies like *St. Louis*, *L'île de France* (Mauritius) and Réunion.

²⁸ Jacques Bardin, "Loti et Segalen: ou l'illusion de la difference," *Les Carnets d'exotisme*, Vol 21. (France: Le Torii Editions, 1998): 28.

Orientalism (1980), *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), *Blank Darkness* (1985), and *The Predicament of Culture* (1987) have argued in different manners, that not only did European cultural standards impose themselves on colonized subjects, but that colonization and imperialism greatly influenced the course of global art and culture with the invention of various new traditions. Ranger writes that the very “concept of Empire was central to the process of *inventing tradition* within Europe itself.” (Ranger 211, my italics) I have shown that the literature of exoticism constitutes one cultural tradition invented along side of Europe’s colonial forays.

The prevalent manner in which contemporary critics use the term *exoticism* suggests that the literature, the style in painting, music, architecture, and the decorative arts, never involved a neutral or equitable practice of depicting of ethnic differences and cultural diversity. Christopher Miller, James Clifford, Edward Saïd, and others to be discussed here, consider the art and literature of exoticism as imagery mostly invested in advancing identities and policies, in artificial terms, and according to ethnocentric conceptions of European colonialists and nationals. The word exoticism has come to signify the product of colonial mindsets—tropes, images, narratives, which invented, assigned, and defined essentialist ethnic, “tribal,” and national identities.

The denunciation of exoticism is often based on its “artificiality,” as exoticists allegedly molded fictions from realities concerning actual colonized people. Because exoticism arises at the same time as colonialism, and some exoticism portrays the colonies and their subjects in absurdly ethnocentric and dogmatic colors, the current body of criticism does not entirely err in its assessment of much exoticism as the colonialists’ expressions of “artificiality” and “bad taste.” In this introduction, I first will examine the analyses, which critique exoticism as an aesthetically trivial and ideologically flawed literature. However, I believe that shortsighted readings of exoticism exposes practice of literary exoticism as *only* the promotion of European colonial prejudices and misconceptions regarding the people of the colonies.

Much exoticism has been read in terms of propaganda. Throughout this study, I will discuss and determine colonial ideological inclinations of exoticist representations by questioning the presence of underlying French colonial policies such as cultural or linguistic “assimilation.” This is a reexamination of exoticism in order to gauge how certain texts represent, uphold, and at times reject French colonial ideologies. I shall examine how exoticism has been branded as the negligible literature of pro-colonial causes. My conceptions of 19th and 20th century exoticism do not necessarily exclude the critical assessments discussed here. However, the following summaries and denotations of exoticism are unsatisfactory, in as much as the word *exoticism* appears to remain significant of something, as it is frequently uttered, but very imprecise. According to contemporary postcolonial conventions, exoticism is understandable as cheap, artificial, tasteless, and imperialist art.

Before the postcolonial critiques of the late 20th century, in the early and mid-20th century, metropolitan writers, as well as colonial subjects, sought to disassociate themselves from earlier more common-place exoticism. In 1928, the year that exoticism’s dancer/chanteuse *par excellence*, Josephine Baker made her first film, *La sirène des tropiques*, Jane Nardal, an educated *salonnière martiniquaise* residing in Paris, wrote a scathing article entitled “Pantins exotiques.” Nardal castigated Josephine Baker for being an exotic *pantin* (marionette) of the moderns. Jane Nardal was loosely associated with the African and Caribbean students in Paris who later became the founders of the Negritude movement: Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. Her critique illustrates the ways in which many later thinkers, such as the aforementioned Clifford, conceive of exoticism.

Nardal attributed Baker’s popularity to an *avant-gardist* predilection for primitivism and exoticism. She writes, “. . . blasé artists and snobs find in them what they seek: the savourous [*sic.*], spicy contrast of primitive beings in an ultramodern frame of African frenzy unfurled in the cubist décor of a nightclub. This explains the unprecedented vogue and the swell of enthusiasm generated by a little *capresse* who was

begging on the sidewalks of St. Louis (Mississippi [*sic.*]).”²⁹ (*Negritude Women* 109).

However, negative reactions to exoticism, such as Nardal’s, did not prevent her contemporaries or subsequent writers in the colonial and postcolonial periods from producing various texts that were in fact later metamorphoses of exoticism.

By the late 20th century countless academic studies have undertaken analyses of representations of the colonized *other* within colonial literature. Many scholars express the current perspective that exoticism designates the flawed portrayals of colonized subjects; Europeans found their *other*, narcissistic reflections, or Manichean opposites in the colonies. For example, Saïd’s *Orientalism* (1980) where Saïd critiques the Occident’s monolithic representations of the Orient. Reina Lewis’s *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Feminity and Representation*, addresses the intentions and motivations of individual Orientalists. In fact, this raises the problem of whether European Orientalists can be grouped together as a monolithic assemblage—Lewis posits a theory that Saïd may have actually essentialized the Orientalists by lumping them together regardless of their ideological stances.³⁰

This point also concerns exoticism: indeed colonial period authors such as Pierre Loti exemplify the style, but his exoticism only partially reflects a pro-colonial mindset. Secondly, I wish to clarify that when I employ the words *Orient* and *Orientalism* with respect to the works discussed throughout this thesis, unless, specified otherwise, I usually refer to French imagery evocative of Asia Minor: Turkish, Persian, and Ottoman.³¹ Saïd’s work takes English, French, and to a lesser degree, German

²⁹ The second [*sic.*] refers to the biographical error made by Nardal. Baker came from St. Louis, Missouri, *not* Mississippi. In this instance, among an educated literary elite of who denounced popular exoticism, Baker’s actual regional identity was mistaken for being native of Mississippi. An ironic error because the author mistakenly draws on her own repertoire of exotic myths as she assumes that African Americans must originate from the legendary deep South.

³⁰ Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Feminity and Representation*, (New York: Routledge, 1996.)

³¹ We are emphasizing the importance of Ottoman, Asia Minor and Turkey’s culture regarding *Orientalism* in the French literary imagination. Several landmark works, such as Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* (1721) involve Ottoman traditions such as the ‘harem.’ Montesquieu was informed and inspired by earlier written accounts of Persia by Jean Chardin. Of course, not all French *Orientalism* is specific to Ottoman culture,

Orientalism into account; his version of academic and artistic *Orientalism* provides too large a point of reference in terms of what I attempt to define as French notions of the exotic. Aesthetic *Orientalism* (painting, writing, and design motifs) plays a role within exoticism, but exoticism does not exclusively relate only to an opposed or dualistic conception of *us* and *them*.

Many postcolonial critics have attempted to show that exoticist colonialist expression creates, differentiates, and ultimately vilifies the colonized *other*. Abdul JanMohamed who wrote *The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature* (1985), argues that in colonialist literature, *manichean* binarisms oppose colonized and colonizer along racial lines to privilege the former and degrade the latter.

Christopher Miller named and studied literary occurrences of *Blank Darkness* in his book by the same title (1985). Miller considers *blank* Africanist discourses as phenomena quite different from *Orientalism*. The critic does not view Africa in terms of Europe's binary opposite. This binarism is the manner in which Saïd presents the Orient in relation to Europe (for example, as the West's reflection of the East.) Miller's theory of Africanist discourses in French defines Africanist thought as blank, *informe*, and malleable, legendary, and not only specific to Africa. Africanist discourses represent *terra incognita*—Miller calls Africanist thought the “unhappy orientalism” in which nothing is positively represented—all is blank and unknowable. Unlike the theoretical approaches of Saïd and JanMohamed, Miller is not exclusively interested by European denigration of colonized subjects. He shows that Africanist representations are more likely projections, fantasies, or unknowns—comely or negative—malleable and unreliable. Africanist thought projects imagery onto screens of “blank darkness,” typified by vague, blank, empty, or mythical portraiture. Miller examines many Africanist works

for instance, *Voyage en Orient* (1851) by Gérard de Nerval does not refer to only Asia Minor as the narrator travels east—yet, when not specified otherwise, we are discussing styles and images evocative of Ottoman

that also constitute some of the classic texts of exoticism, for example Baudelaire's prose poem *La Belle Dorothée* (1869). Without a doubt, the exoticist mode often corresponds to Miller's thought on *Africanist discourses*. Highly unreliable in their portraiture of foreign environments and characters, exoticist authors create characters based on colonized subjects who often fluctuate between states of unreal god-like divinity and sickly melancholy. Indeed, the irreality of such creations suggests that exoticized characters are sheer figments of the author's imaginations: obscure invented creations.

As we have mentioned, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger forged a theory of "invented tradition." Their theories include a conception of exoticist colonial regalia, as the "invention" of traditions and culture. Ranger's chapter entitled "The Invention of Tradition in Africa" is especially germane as both European and African royalty and pageantry projected exoticism contrived to legitimize imperial domination. V.Y. Mudimbé expanded Hobsbawm and Ranger's notion of invented traditions and identities in *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (1988). Mudimbé advances a theory that European conceptions (exoticist and otherwise) wielded the power to construct an entire continent.

Scholars of late, following many of the cultural and literary studies' trends set in motion by critics including Saïd, Miller, and Ranger, have become more specific in their analysis of colonial and postcolonial cultural production; and exoticism has been given a closer look in the last twenty years in publications such as: Francis Affergan, *Exotisme et alterité. Essai sur les fondements d'une critique de l'anthropologie*, (1987), Tzvetan Todorov's *Nous et les autres: La Réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (1989), Christopher Bongie's *Exotic Memories* (1991), Roger Célestin's *From Cannibals to Radicals: Figures and Limits Exoticism* (1995), Panivong Norindr's *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film and Literature* (1996), Eric

culture—this will be seen more clearly in our discussion Loti's *Roman d'un spahi*.

Mason's *Infelicitities: Representations of the Exotic* (1998), Jacques Monnier's *L'Afrique dans l'imaginaire français (Fin du XIXe-début du XXe siècle)* (1999), Jennifer Yee's *Clichés de la Femme Exotique: Un regard sur la littérature française entre 1871 et 1914* (2000), and Louise Tythacott's *Surrealism and the Exotic* (2003). These works address the many representations of the exotic and consider not only colonial French exoticism, but works produced by postcolonial "exoticists" such as V.S. Naipaul, the postmodern exoticism of Roland Barthes (Célestin), or the ethnographic representations of the Scandinavian and Dutch visual arts (Mason).

Francis Affergan's *Exotisme et alterité* analyzes the anthropologic approaches of writers since Christopher Columbus, the Conquistadors to Clifford Geertz. Affergan, through philosophical argumentation, uncovers what he believes is anthropology's inherent exoticism. Yee and Monnier, in their respective comprehensive publications: *Clichés de la Femme Exotique Un regard sur la littérature française entre 1871 et 1914* and *L'Afrique dans l'imaginaire français (Fin du XIXe-début du XXe siècle)* focus on exoticism's heyday—the late 19th century. They cite, seemingly infinite exoticist commentaries stemming from colonial travel writing. Their thoughts convey what now appears as nearly a series of truisms: exoticism is rife with cliché, "bad taste," and stereotyping. For instance, Yee devotes an entire chapter to "Quelques métaphores animalières de la femme exotique chez Pierre Loti." Monnier discusses "Le regard sur le corps" made by colonial writers in Africa. They both explain that the *regard* (gaze) was not always negative, but usually debasing and often nostalgic. Yee and Monnier give a highly characteristic example of the nostalgic: They note the comparisons drawn between the bodies of the colonized and the physiques represented in European art. For instance, the portrayal of African physiognomy tended toward description of the body in classical and biblical terms. For Yee, portraiture emphasizing the classical beauty of the body, but overlooking the head, dwells on the corporal and ignores the intellect. Both Yee and Monnier note that a myriad of exoticism contains polarized references which represent

different sides of the same colonial coin: classical beauty on one side, and animal-like beastliness on the other. In all cases, the objectifying gaze of the late 19th century entails an obsession with the similarities and differences of the colonized subject contrasted to some kind of idealized European “norm” as the standard for comparison.

Questions surrounding the 18th century’s exoticist language, poetics, and representations of colonial people have been addressed in some recent publications including Srivinis Aravamudan’s *Tropicopolitans*, which is an analysis looking at the “tropes” and figures in “tropical” travel writing. Conversely Jeannie Suk’s *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing*: Césaire, Glissant, Condé (2001) takes up the important question of how 20th century Antillean anti-colonial, anti-exoticist authors have paradoxical intertextual relationships with 19th century metropolitan French exoticism. Despite a modernist rejection of 19th century exoticism such as the Negritude movement’s critique of the *Parnassien* poets and their imitators, the tradition did not vanish. Suk discusses the reappearance of exoticism among the very Francophone writers who sought to avoid exoticist aesthetics and tropes. In *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing*, she studies the appropriation of the “exotic” in texts by Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, Édouard Glissant, and Maryse Condé. In one salient example she examines the intertextual employ of baudelairian verse from *Parfum exotique* (1861) in Aimé Césaire’s play *Une Tempête* (1969). As Suk states, *Une Tempête* is the radical adaptation of the Shakespearian harbinger of exoticism, *The Tempest* (1610).

Occasionally universities, anthologies, or scholars champion exoticism as a necessary component of French literary studies. *Les Carnets d’exotisme* is an annual journal published in Poitiers.³² In this country the University of South Carolina published *French Literary Studies* “Exoticism in French Literature XIII” (1986), including articles

³² Alain Quella-Villéger, ed., *Les Carnets d’exotisme*, since 1990 (Poitiers).

on Loti, Nerval, and Flaubert.³³ In France a colloquium that took place in Nice in 1994 entitled “La Question Coloniale et Écriture,” which published a instructive paper on *Les métamorphoses de l'exotisme*.³⁴ This year Nathalie Schon published *L'auto-exotisme dans les littératures des Antilles françaises*.³⁵

Virtually countless studies exist regarding artistic exoticism, individual exoticists, exotic art and Orientalism, to which the following publications' titles attest: *Le Moyen Age Fantasque Antiquités Et Exotismes Dans L'art Gothique* (1955), *Les Orientalistes Peintres voyageurs: 1828-1908* (1983), *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse The Allure of North Africa and the Near East* (1984), *The East Imagined, Experienced, Remembered: Orientalist Nineteenth Century Painting* (1988). The following three texts are of particular interest and will be discussed in the subsequent chapter: Elwood Hartman's *Three Nineteenth-Century French Writer/Artists and the Maghreb: The Literary and Artistic Depictions of North Africa by Théophile Gautier, Eugène Fromentin, and Pierre Loti* (1994), Suzanne Lafont's *Les suprêmes clichés de Pierre Loti* (1993), and Irene Szyliowicz's *Pierre Loti and the Oriental woman* (1988).

What I believe has not been revealed yet, despite the existing scholarship on exoticism, is a reading that involves a critique of colonialism since the style's climax at the end of the 19th century, throughout its modernist incarnations, and in its latest avatars of the postcolonial period. I undertake an alternate reading of two works of Pierre Loti's fiction to first show that the master of 19th century colonial exoticism, as he employs racist and sexist language, does not entirely champion French colonialism. Secondly, I consider the ironical appropriation of exoticism in the high modern period by Louis-

³³ A Maynor Hardee, ed. *French Literary Studies*. Vol. Exoticism in French Literature XIII. (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1986.)

³⁴ Baroghel-Hanquier, Magalie. "Les métamorphoses de l'exotisme." In *Question Coloniale et Ecriture, Actes du Colloque du RIASEM*, edited by Martine Sagaert. Nice: Editions Torii, 1994.

Ferdinand Céline and Michel Leiris. Finally, I discuss the postcolonial adoption and adaptation of exoticism by Simone Schwarz-Bart, a Francophone woman. Let us begin by a critical literature review to examine more precisely how and why critics refute the style. This more specific analysis of the arguments against exoticism will be followed by an overview of the critical thought to recover exoticism. I conclude by taking Victor Segalen's *Divers* and Edouard Glissant's *Poétique de la Relation* into consideration as examples of alternate ways of writing about culture and people.

Lié à l'entreprise coloniale

Many ignore exoticist literature by denouncing it or writing it off as simply too cliché, reflective of "bad taste," and politically incorrect to be taken seriously.

Denise Brahimi, one rare scholar, has devoted many publications to exoticism.³⁶ Very cognizant of the predicament of the critic facing the exotic novel's colonialist politics, she explains this as follows:

La réflexion sur la littérature exotique met les chercheurs dans une situation désagréable, dont il n'y a pas lieu d'être satisfait. Il semble en effet que pour apprécier cette littérature, on en vienne inévitablement à des critères d'un autre ordre, idéologique, politique, voire moral, alors que les possibilités d'appréciation esthétique échappent ou font défaut : l'exotisme serait mauvais ou condamnable parce que lié à l'entreprise coloniale, en tout cas à l'impérialisme européen et à l'eurocentrisme culturel. Comment se plaire, sinon, honteusement, à ce qui n'était qu'un leurre pour cacher les pires exactions? Ainsi l'exotisme serait mauvais fondamentalement, quoi qu'il en soit par ailleurs de ses séductions littéraires.³⁷

The reflection on exotic literature puts researchers in a disagreeable situation where there is no satisfactory space. It seems, in effect, that to appreciate this literature, one inevitably deals with criteria of other orders: ideological, political, even moral, and then the possibilities for aesthetic appreciation flee or are defaulted: exoticism is bad or condemnable

³⁵ Nathalie Schon, *L'auto-exotisme dans les littératures des Antilles françaises*. (Paris: Karthala, 2003.) This book's title very coincidentally is similar to my last chapter's thesis and title, which I began to write before being aware of Schon's book.

³⁶ Denise Brahimi, *Pierre Loti, du roman exotique au roman colonial*. (Paris: Harmattan, 1982.); introduction by D. Brahimi, *Les Trois Dames de la Kasbah*. 1884 ed. Paris: Christian Piro, 2000.

³⁷ Denise Brahimi, "Enjeux et risques du roman exotique français," *Cahiers CRLH-CIRAOI*, no. 5 (1988), 11.

because it is tied to the colonial enterprise, at any rate, to European imperialism and to cultural Eurocentricism. How to enjoy that which was a lure to hide the worst abuses, if not shamefully? Thus, exoticism is fundamentally bad, if for no other reasons than its literary seduction.

Brahimi's rhetorical condemnation of the imperialist and Eurocentric exotic novel suggests that a study of exoticism must take recourse in "criteria of other orders," by which she implies orders outside of the aesthetic. Indeed, it would be highly limiting to examine exoticism as pure aesthetic form, without raising ideological, political, and moralistic questions. Brahimi points out some of the literature's troublesome qualities: the literature is strangely insubstantial, but nonetheless "seductive." More importantly, as I suggest, exoticism speaks to issues greater than the literature itself. Exoticism apparently always is, in one way or another, *lié à l'entreprise coloniale*. Brahimi's meditation on the criticism leveled against exoticism as a seductive colonial monolith, expressive of Eurocentric viewpoints synthesizes the current thought among the following French and Francophone scholars.

In the introduction of *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (1998), Christopher Miller writes on the importance of analyzing the "hegemonic forces" of France's colonial projects. He dismisses a strain of postcolonial studies, which has sought to fastidiously undo essentialisms. Miller writes,

It is not "essentialist" merely to read and interpret old essentialisms; rather it is, so to speak essential to do so. If we confront and analyze the degree to which hegemonic forces tried to be monolithic, we are not in any way foreclosing a reading of resistances that were mounted against those forces or hybridities that happened to confound them; on the contrary, we are giving due credit to those who struggled and to those who simply did not conform. As intellectual fashions shift, we should therefore guard against the tendency to color the past with only the latest and most glamorous crayons.³⁸ (*Nomads* 4)

³⁸ Miller notes that he is referring specifically to some of the recent argues made for and against JanMohamed's "Manichean difference" between colonial authorities and their subjects. See Miller's Note 10, *Ibid*, 212.

Miller's views suggest that it is important to name the old essentialisms in order to understand the resistance and actions mounted against them.³⁹ To do this he addresses the rejection and resistance to colonial exoticism promoted by events such as the famous *L'Exposition Coloniale* that took place outside of Paris, in Vincennes in 1931. The Colonial Exposition was an enormous state sponsored fair, and Miller (and others) argues that it served as hegemonic, colonial, and exoticist propaganda.

Miller's critique of exoticism implicitly emerges throughout his discussion of the Colonial Exposition as he reveals that the event was an invented, spectacular, and artificial gala that sought to further France's colonial motives. Citing the Colonial Exposition's *Livre d'or*, which "...explains that the "natives" (had) a note of genuine exoticism [*sic*.] to attract and hold a crowd." (*Ibid.*, 77). Miller employs "*sic*" in order to express his view that exoticism cannot possibly be genuine. According to him the Colonial Exposition constituted an experiment in artifice to create an "exotic place."⁴⁰ Throughout his chapter devoted to the Colonial Exposition, he discusses in detail the problem of "realness" and "authenticity" (*Ibid.*, 88-114). His critique of the Colonial Exposition suggests that the colonial exoticism of that event was entailed a larger essentializing project to represent and invent the colonies as Eurocentric fantasies. This reiterates one of the key arguments launched against exoticism—that colonial exoticism constitutes artificial and phantasmatic perceptions of colonial life in order to gloss over harsh realities that the colonial administrations carefully hid from the public's view.

Not only Miller uses the terminology *exotic* and *exoticism* in this light to discuss the 1930 Colonial Exposition. James Clifford, writing on Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique fantôme*, explains that the famous Exposition took place immediately before Michel

³⁹ In *Nationalists and Nomads*, Miller studies some little read and less "glamorous" anti-colonial Francophone African authors whose works date from the 1920s. Miller interprets these texts which expressed anticolonial sentiments before the inception of the international movement of *Négritude*—a literary, cultural, and political movement-turned-paradigm that took efforts to denounce literary exoticism.

Leiris's ethnographic mission *Dakar à Djibouti*—1931 to 1933.⁴¹ Clifford calls the Exposition “an enormous panoply of exotic worlds. . . Pavilions from all the colonies, costumes, statues, masks, curiosities of every sort, “savage dances” regale the traveler in a land of well-ordered enchantment,” (*Predicament* 169). Clifford also reveals that the Exposition comprised a project of artificial connections—an unreal mixture of disunited colonial cultures. The sum total of the Exposition's presentation of colonial life may be considered a kind of state-sponsored invention of exoticism. Indeed, a French woman interviewed in a documentary entitled, *Afrique dominée, Afrique libérée* corroborates the exoticism of that event.⁴² In a filmed conversation, conducted some fifty years after the exposition, the Parisian who attended the Exposition in 1931 explains the public's interest in the colonies as follows:

Interviewer: *Mais qu'est-ce que c'étaient pour vous des colonies, une exposition comme ça sur les colonies? Les colonies françaises pour vous, c'étaient des dromadaires, ou c'étaient quoi?*

Interviewer: What was it exactly for you, the colonies, an exposition like that on the colonies. The French colonies for you were dromedaries, or what?

Respondant: *Des colonies? Ça allait de soit. Ça existait. C'était {...}. C'était je pense dans l'esprit des français c'était quelque chose qui existait, c'était aussi l'exotisme sûrement, parce que maintenant nous sommes un peu blasés de voir des documentaires sur tous des pays, afin. . . , tandis qu'à l'époque, il n'y avait pas tous les moyens de connaître comme ça les images. C'était l'exotisme qui nous attirait, le folklore probablement.*

Respondant: The colonies? The colonies just *were*. They existed. They {...} I think that in the French mind they were just something that existed, they were also certainly *exoticism*, because now we are a little blasé, having seen documentaries on all the countries, so that..., whereas at the time we did not have all the

⁴⁰ Christopher Miller, email, November 6, 2003. Miller wrote, I didn't mean the "sic" to refer to an actual error but simply to draw attention to what seemed to me an oxymoron (...): I don't think of exoticism as "genuine" but artificial. Thursday, November 6, 2003, 1:36 PM.

⁴¹ The text, *L'Afrique fantôme* will be explored in Chapter III.

⁴² Didier Brummer, "Afrique dominée/Afrique Libérée." edited by Renée Paolini. (Iowa: PICS/The University of Iowa, 1981.)

means like that to know the images. It was exoticism that attracted us, the folklore probably.

The unadorned complication involved in the respondent's explanation for the attraction to the Colonial Exposition as "*exotisme*" elicits the following question: To what exactly does she refer by claiming that the colonies were *exoticism* for her? When exoticism is the enticement to visit the Colonial Exposition, or the lure to read certain literature, what do we mean by *exoticism*? Is it folkloric imagery, that according to the interviewee, attracted visitors to the Colonial Exposition? Is exoticism nostalgic fantasy and simulacrum dreamed of by Europeans? Is exoticism the aestheticized and artificial presentation of cultural differences? Is exoticism the inscription of Europe on the colonies and colonized subjects?

Before responding to these questions, I wish to *avoid* taking recourse in theoretical explanations by coloring the tradition in Miller's words, "with only the latest and most glamorous crayons," (*Nomads* 4). My aim is not a deconstructive project that seeks to contest that exoticism is part of a colonial monolith, nor do I wish to imply that the practice of exoticism is simply innocuous aestheticism, although I do intend to reconsider whether exoticism conveys only pro-colonial stances. As Brahimi points out, the ideological arguments launched against exoticism include several trajectories. We have thus seen that its artificiality and inauthenticity constitute two aspects to which critics object. The allegedly seductive "bad taste" and immorality of exoticism emerge as other factors that relate to a problem of colonial exploitation.

Bad Tastes

Contemporary critics fault exoticism for its mixture of artificiality involved in the representation of the colonized subject, also exoticism frequently entails phantasmatic erotic reverie. As erotic expression, the literature presents another kind of moral obstacle in the minds of some readers. Porter explains desire for the *other* in travel writing in concrete terms: "An essential element in the eroticism of travel resides in the potential for

exotic sexual experiences with bodies of different shades and shapes or arrestingly different in their adornments,” (Porter 81). The confrontation between the erotic and exotic appears to bolster critical resentments.

As I already noted, the Caribbean intellectual Jane Nardal disapproved of Josephine Baker’s persona as black erotic dancer. Tythacott discusses the sensuous associations between the exotic and the erotic and Baker in her chapter on Michel Leiris: “The exotic and the erotic had become enmeshed in 1920s Paris with the craze for *Africanisme* epitomized in the lithe dancing form of Josephine Baker.” (Tythacott 202). In an article on France’s *avant-gardist Négrophilia* of the 1930s, Clifford also refers to Baker’s popularity in a discussion of Parisian avant-garde tastes, the jazz scene, the art, and the eroticism present in both. The link between sexuality and exoticism hardly limits itself to the 20th century’s metropolitan *avant-gardist* predilections. The sensual strains of exoticism figure in colonial novels, paintings, and the banal and popular colonial postcards of France’s late 19th and early 20th century colonial period. Beginning with the case of the Hottentot Venus, Sander Gilmore reveals associations between eroticism and African bodies in his article, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature.” Gilmore analyzes the cultural delectation and disgust evoked by the display and exhibition at museums, in paintings, and in cartoons of African physiognomies and aberrant feminine sexuality.⁴³

Ostensibly, unrelated to the phenomenon of *Negrophilia*, a more mainstream manifestation of eroticism surfaced in the end of the 19th century with the popularity of the *Orientalism*. Art historian, Romy Golan calls the early 20th century’s infatuation with the Oriental *odalisque*, the “libidinal titillation of a subjugated female incarnation of the orient.” (Golan, 110) In Chapter II, I shall examine Szyliowicz’s critique of Pierre Loti’s

⁴³ Sander Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature.” *Critical Inquiry* 12.Autumn (1985): 204-38.

discursive treatment of the eroticized Oriental woman. Edward Saïd points out that an association between the exotic and the erotic stems from pre-19th century representations; since the 18th century there has been a European artistic current to render the *Orient* as a “sensual” locale of “idyllic pleasure” and “intense energy,” which figured in pre-Romantic works (*Orientalism* 118-119).

One critic, Malek Alloula, best expresses his scorn for the eroticism of exoticism in an extended condemnation of the invented colonial sexual fantasy incarnated in these *Orientalist* colonial postcards. In his introduction to *Le Harem colonial* (1982), entitled “L’Orient comme cliché et fantasme,” Alloula voices his objections to Algerian exoticist postcards by making the following claim, “...il n’y a de fantasme que sexuel.” (“there is no phantasm a part from the sexual.”). In the case of many of these exoticist pictures, the air of phantasmatic eroticism is undeniable: exposed recumbent women figure in several photos in the book.

The introduction to *Le Harem colonial* presents arguments that the production and display of “exotic” colonial images disguised, romanticized, sheltered, and promoted colonial abuses in Algeria. Alloula explains that popular postcards featuring Algerian women arranged with exotic Oriental props had its golden age from 1900 to 1930—that is to say, during France’s highest colonial period. Malek Alloula writes that, “exoticism is always established by the gaze of the other,”⁴⁴ in other words, in the case of the orientalist postcard, the exoticism is established by the manipulative and specular gaze cast by the numerous French colonial photographers.

The following passage drawn from the introduction introduces the theme of European fascination with the exoticism of an imaginary *Orient*.

Paré des vives couleurs de l'exotisme, suant d'une sensualité épanouie mais aussi équivoque du mystère impénétrable ou de scènes cruelles et barbares, l'Orient fascine et trouble l'Europe

⁴⁴ Laura Rice-Sayre, “Veiled Threats: Malek Alloula's Colonial Harem.” *Boundary* (15, no. 2 (1987), 351-63.) (359)

depuis longtemps. Il est son imaginaire rutilant, son fantasme, également son mirage. (*Ibid.*, 9)

Adorned by the bright colors of exoticism, dripping with blossoming sensuality, but also equivocal with the impenetrable mysteriousness or the cruel and barbarous scenes, since long ago, the Orient fascinates and troubles Europe. It is Europe's brilliant vision, the phantasm, and equally the mirage.

Alloula believes Europeans were hungry (*affamés*) for exoticism, and this European purchase of and delectation in the “bad taste” of the exotic postcard represented an open assault upon Algerian women. Alloula aligns the painters and photographers who craved vulgar and stereotyped exoticism with the European armies who came to colonize Algeria. After France's colonial domination of Algeria, the popularity of the images fueled the production and purchase of colonial fantasy. For Alloula, the Algerian colonial postcard was the ultimate manifestation of exploitative “bad taste” :

Les armées—entre autres celles qui débarquent un 5 juillet 1830 à l'est d'Alger emmènent leurs cantines évangélisateurs et savants mais also peintres et photographes toujours affamés d'exotisme....

La vulgarité, le stéréotype et le mauvais goût tirent toute la morale de l'autre orientalisme, le pré-colonial. (*Ibid.* , 9)

The armies—among others who disembarked on July 5, 1830 to the East of Algiers brought their establishments of evangelicals, and wise men, but also painters and photographers who were always hungry for exoticism...

The vulgarity, the stereotype and the bad taste took out all the worthiness of the other orientalism, the pre-colonial.

Alloula frowns at the postcards' “vulgarity,” by claiming that the modern exoticism of the popular art form comprised itself of degraded pre-colonial orientalism.⁴⁵ He

⁴⁵ It is difficult to determine which “pre-colonial” Alloula is referring to. Classical Orientalist artists, such as Eugène Delacroix who painted Algerian scenes in the 1840s or Ingres who never painted in the colonies are not strictly speaking-colonial—for instance, Ingres' *Bain Turque* (1851) is representative of my use or Orient. Although, as I am attempting to convey, the fact that Ingres painted the Turkish Orient in well-received paintings, is not divorced from colonial advances in North Africa. Strictly speaking, however, Ingres's work is not colonial. Also, perhaps Alloula refers to indigenous oriental art that is “pre-colonial.”

speculates that the new tasteless exoticism actually intensified hard conditions lived by real life women who modeled for the postcards. As the photographs did not reflect their “real” identities, the practice of photographing women for money was akin to colonial invasion upon their secluded lives. Writing that, “Il n'y a pas historiquement d'exemple de société où les femmes furent autant photographiées dans l'intention d'être livrées au regard public.” (Historically, there is not any example of a society in which women so avoided being photographed, if the intention of those photos was to deliver them to the public’s gaze.) Alloula asserts that the photographers’ controlling gaze was a violent assault on those women’s cultural norm of dignified privacy and seclusion.⁴⁶

Although Alloula has been rebuked for ignoring the possible signs of resistance reflected in the Algerians’ portraits, and for only seeing the European male manipulation of victimized women,⁴⁷ he nonetheless reiterates a persuasive and pervasive point of view regarding exoticism. That is to say, exoticism helped build deceptive colonial visions that Europeans produced to mask abject colonized subjects. If Alloula is correct, a conclusion may be drawn that such seemingly frivolous erotic photographic exoticism involves currents that are objectionable on moral and political grounds. The postcards titillated European spectators at the expense of the Algerian women photographed and controlled through imagery. Generally paid a pittance, the models suffered by posing for strangers in order to create exotic follies for the French colonizers and metropolitans. Alloula's objections to the Algerian colonial postcards are representative of charges made by numerous critics who challenge exoticism's exploitative eroticized allure.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10

⁴⁷ Nasrin Rahimieh argues in "Refocusing Alloula's Gaze: A Feminist Reading of the Colonial Harem." from *Atlantic Cross Currents: Translatedatlantics*, edited by EiYeen Julien Susan Z. Andrade, Micheline-Rice Maximin, Aliko Songolo. (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2001.) that Alloula failed to see the failure of the colonizers’ photographic project “The models maybe forced into erotic poses dictated by poses dictated by the desire for the exotic and alien other, but the very medium used to capture these images testifies to the colonizer’s failure.”(*Translatedatlantics* 97) Laura Rice-Sayre in the aforementioned article "Veiled Threats: Malek Alloula's Colonial Harem" discusses Carol Schloss’ critique of Alloula’s “masculinist gaze.” (*Veiled Threats*, 361)

As Alloula condemns the colonial Frenchmen's fondness for tasteless Oriental eroticism, early 19th century literature also makes reference to the immorality of adopted Oriental mores. One particularly erotic text by Honoré de Balzac, *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1832) insinuates that Oriental sensuality corrupts Frenchmen. This is a conception that is seemingly opposed to Alloula's version of French immorality, wherein colonial Frenchmen corrupt colonized indigenous subjects. However, we shall observe in the following case how metropolitan French conceptions of the exotic involve fears concerning the eroticism of colonial personages—this are the moral misgiving related to Alloula's moral objections.

Let us refer to an example of what Honoré de Balzac portrayed as maleficent colonial "bad taste" that impinged upon metropolitan morality. In his novella, *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, Balzac narrates a troublesome alliance between sexuality and exoticism. The novella is a tale focusing on a brother and sister who are Parisian aristocrats. The sister is a sort of colonial hybrid: Cuban, Spanish, and French. The siblings have intimate relations with the title's namesake, *la fille aux yeux d'or*, a Georgian girl. The introduction of *La Fille aux yeux d'or* includes the following passage in which the narrator denounces women who live *à l'orientale*. In Balzac's words these women are *exceptions exotiques*:

. . .il est à Paris une portion d'êtres privilégiés . . . Ces êtres sont les femmes. . . dans le monde féminin, de petites peuplades heureuses qui vivent à l'orientale, et peuvent conserver leur beauté; mais ces femmes se montrent rarement à pied dans les rues, elles demeurent cachées, comme des plantes rares qui ne déploient pas leurs pétales qu'à certaines heures, constituent de véritables exceptions exotiques. (Balzac, 265)

. . .there is in Paris a set of privileged beings . . . These beings are women. . . in a feminine world, of small happy tribes living *à l'orientale* and they can conserve their beauty, but, these women rarely set foot in the streets, they stay hidden, like rare plants that only spread their petals at certain times, and they constitute true exotic exceptions.

I wish to consider Balzac's thought on *exotic exceptions*, because, like Alloula he protests against exoticism's immorality. The dissolute connotations between exoticism and eroticism obviously do not originate with a 20th century postcolonial regard such as that of Malek Alloula.

Alloula's representation of the exploitation of colonized people in terms of their portrayal as languorous sexual playthings is strangely akin to Balzac's view of exotic women. However the main difference is that the "small happy tribes" of exotic women whom Balzac describes are not colonized people, but *Parisiennes*. In Balzac's text, the women who are *exotic exceptions* are metropolitans who have adopted supposedly Oriental practices. In the *balzacien* characterization, the ultimate *exotic exception* turns out to be an aristocratic colonial, a lesbian who lived in colonial Havana and she cruelly murders her lover-*la fille aux yeux d'or*. Balzac describes the lesbian as suffering from an identity overrun by "*les goûts ruineux des colonies*" ("ruinous tastes of the colonies.") (*Ibid.*, 272) Alloula's thought on the "bad taste" of exoticism reverberates throughout Balzac's lascivious scenarios involving the lesbian's "ruinous colonial taste."

Alloula argues that Europeans exploited Algerian women by misrepresenting them according to Frenchmen's proclivities. Posing for postcards in accordance to French assimilationist conceptions of what an *Algérienne* ought to resemble, these women were portrayed, more or less, as toys designed in conformity to Frenchmen's desires. They are recumbent *Odaliques*, young women lounging in the harem, smoking hookahs, making coffee, or sequestered while gazing out of barred windows. Alloula takes fault with exoticism in photography as an unrealistic, phantasmatic, invasive, and cheap practice that made women pose unnaturally.

Balzac's fiction faults the immorality of France's *exotic exceptions*. The licentiousness inherent in exoticized characters is an example of colonial depravity which may impinge upon metropolitans. *La fille aux yeux d'or* interposes exoticized beings as individuals in whom colonial and metropolitan identities blend; exotic sexuality

(homosexuality) is allied with depravity. The novel suggests that deviance stems from the *ruinous tastes of the colonies*—and there is an implicit fear that metropolitans assimilate or adopt exotic depravity.

Alloula blames the proliferation of exoticist postcards on the metropolitan's bad taste. Alloula's sociohistorical presentation takes issue with the Frenchmen's imposition of eccentric French desires upon Algerian subjects in order to objectify, and thus better control them. Balzac implies that "ruinous colonial tastes" infiltrate and corrode metropolitan morality. Either way, their conception of colonial "bad taste" is not incompatible. In both instances the authors fault what they consider the unconventional eroticism generated in and by colonial society—this suggests that exoticism is tainted by "bad" or "ruinous tastes."

Thus far, we have noted that the arguments against exoticism include Brahimi's discussion of the rejection of the literature due to its Eurocentricism and convey of deep-seated colonialist worldviews and ideologies. Exoticism is not only literary, but also encapsulated in varied realms of media and art. Miller, Clifford, and Alloula view exotic representations as those proffered by events like the Colonial Exposition, colonial postcards, as artificial phantasms of real colonized people. Exoticism is the representation of the *other* by way of artificial props and regalia, which ultimately cover up and misrepresent the lives of the colonized. Alloula's rejection of exploitative eroticism is not entirely removed from Balzac's negative view of the immortality of colonial "exotics."

These notions that exoticism conveys artificiality, bad taste, and titillation are neatly summarized in a critique published when Schwarz-Bart's novel *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* achieved popularity. The Guadeloupian writer Maryse Condé disliked her compatriot's novel, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, and she wrote the following review of it in *Présence Africaine*:

Nous sommes séduits, mais comme par un froufrou d'étoffes, un
bruissement de feuilles, un chant de ravine sur les cailloux. Tout reste à

fleur de peau. La pesanteur de la vie, l'opacité du désespoir, des contradictions, le désarroi, la confusion des masses ne nous sont pas sensibles, et les drames, quand ils sont évoqués, font figure d'épisodes comme dans un feuilleton dont il faut à tout prix épicer la sauce pour ne pas lasser le palais du lecteur... Que manque-t-il à *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*? Peut être simplement ce que nos frères afro-américains appellent: «Soul».

We are seduced, but as if by a swish of frilly fabric, a whisper of leaves, a song in a ravine on the rocks. It is all based on the flowery lightness. The heaviness of life, the opacity of desperation, the contradictions, the disarray, the confusion of the masses, we do not feel it, and the dramas, when they are evoked, figure as parts of episodes as in a soap-opera which, no matter what, we have to spice up in order to not bore the palate of the reader. What is missing from *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*? Maybe it is simply what our Afro-America brothers call "soul."

Although I discuss Condé's critique of *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* at greater length in the last chapter of this dissertation, I wish to note that Condé makes a condensed summary of many of exoticism's aesthetic and ideological problems. Exoticism is seductive, but empty of feeling. It is pretty, but too flowery. The style is spiced to the taste of soap-opera connoisseurs, but lacking from perspectives that include, for instance, international racial bonds. According to Condé, Schwarz-Bart's novel lacks some sort of "soul" appreciable by African-Americans. Artistically, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* is in conformity with the tastes of White bourgeois culture. Condé's ideas are a recapitulation of the aesthetic and ideological critiques launched against exoticism—the style is nostalgic European middle-brow expression, an overly glossy copy of the lives of *others*.

Thus, having established several views against exoticism by a range of critics, we shall now embark upon a discussion of the thought that upholds writing and reading exoticism. We shall view that in the following critiques many reiterations of exoticism's artifice, nostalgia, and ethnocentrism. "*Distasteful*" elements appear to be inherent to the style, yet exoticism is a subject of interest due to the style's attempt to encounter cultural differences and its failures in so doing.

The Embrace of Exoticism

Before venturing into an explanation of Segalen's notion of *Le Divers*, Glissant's *Relation* and exoticism, we shall consider other critics who have seen exoticism as a part of French humanist literary traditions. Exoticism has been maintained by an international array of modern authors who were not strictly part of the French tradition since at least the 1920s. The *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928) by Oswald de Andrade formalized penchants expressed by the Brazilian movement of *Anthropophagy*.⁴⁸ These Brazilian intellectuals' cannibalistic references were inspired by Montaigne's previously cited essay *Des Cannibals* on the Brazilian Tupinimba Indians. Andrade reinvented and cannibalized the exoticist trope of cannibalism or "anthropophagy" at the height of European colonialism and at the height of "popular exoticism."⁴⁹ Of course, as we have already established, this popularization lent to many intellectuals' opinion that the style was all the more discreditable.

A case can be made that *magic* or *marvelous realism* is simply one of exoticism's later designations. In the 1950s writers Alejo Carpentier, a Cuban and J.S. Alexis, a Haitian, respectively invoked *real maravilloso* and *réalisme merveilleux* to describe implausibly fantastic and folkloric fiction from the Caribbean and Latin America. Strangely only 20th century authors from the southern hemisphere produce "magic realism." Fantastic European art and literary works that fall into the Western canons as

⁴⁸ A profound influence on the development of contemporary Latin American cultural and intellectual identity and one that continues to be significant in contemporary dialogue, was the Brazilian movement of Anthropophagy. In particular the "Cannibalist Manifesto", by Oswald de Andrade in 1928, and also "Macunaima", by Mario de Andrade, written in the same year. The movement was a response to the Eurocentricism of the Modernists and their exoticizing of African, Asian, and Pacific cultures in their search for a "primitive" antitype to a decadent Europe (e.g.; Picasso, Brancusi, KYee, Gauguin). Oswald de Andrade advocated an "anthropophagic" devouring of the techniques and information of European cultures to synthesize a form of resistance that could be turned against the foreigner. The Brazilian anthropophagists slighted the "Noble Savage" of the European romantics in favor of the Tupinamba Indians who allegedly had a cannibalistic penchant for Europeans - the same Indians to whom Montaigne refers in "Des cannibales." This information is available the following web page: <http://www.gwangju-biennale.org/last-biennale/2000/english/mainex-concept-so.htm>.

fairy tales, adventure, or exoticism are rarely described as magic realism. Gérard Etienne has pointed out Homer's *Odyssey* is a case study in magic realism.⁵⁰ Indeed, Franz Roh has called magic realism the "New Exoticism."⁵¹

J. Suk's aforementioned *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing* examines specific references from Caribbean authors who draw from classical European exoticism. Suk notes the endurance of exoticism among the very Francophone writers who sought to avoid exoticist expression. Deliberate or unintentional imitation, mockery, and appropriation of French exoticism establish the basis of her analysis.⁵²

Roger Célestin author of *From Cannibals to Radicals: Figures and Limits of Exoticism* (1995)⁵³ is an author who writes in favor of the study of French exoticism. Unlike Suk, Célestin does not consider postcolonial appropriations or intertexts. Insofar as I subscribe to what I will describe as Segalen's rejection of geographic exoticism and Glissant's jettison of dualistic conceptions of the *other*, Célestin's approach is in some ways incompatible with my own. Célestin remains mired in conceptions of geographical *otherness*, as well as dualistic contrasts that oppose indigenes to Europeans.

Claiming to transcend simple binary oppositions, Célestin insists that the authors he "deals with are negotiating subjective and discursive positions *between* Home and the exotic rather than being incorporated into one or the other. . ."⁵⁴ (Célestin's italics)

⁴⁹ "Popular exoticism" refers to, for instance, Josephine Baker's celebrity. The year the *Manifesto Antropófago* was published coincides with the release of Baker's first film "Sirène des Tropiques." By the early 1930s Hollywood productions such as "Morocco" (193) attest to the exoticism's popularity.

⁵⁰ Gérard Étienne, "Le Merveilleux: un faux concept opératoire," Paper presented at the Congrès Internationale d'Etudes Francophone, (New Orleans, June 19, 2003)

⁵¹ Franz Roh, *German Art in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968.)

⁵² Suk's most salient example includes an explication of Césaire's *Tempête*, the adaptation of William Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest* (1610); a piece that may be considered an early exoticist work. Césaire created a Malcolm X inspired *Caliban* character, and an *Ariel* figure who professed Martin Luther King's peaceful and passive resistance to colonial forces. The playwright's radical cannibalization of classical French and English texts is an instance of the conscious appropriation of exoticism by an intellectual who struggled to reject various the European generated clichés of exoticism.

⁵³ Célestin analyses five authors and notions of home and the exotic: Montaigne, Diderot, Flaubert, Barthes and V.S. Naipal. With the obvious exception of Trinidadian V.S. Naipaul, the others are French. Roger Célestin, *From Cannibals to Radicals* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22-23 Further Célestin mentions that exoticism is "a *relation*, a triangular trade"⁵⁴(Célestin's italics) he does not cite Glissant or list him in the index.

Célestin attempts to look at what is in *between* Home and the exotic, but he continually delimits his field with the binarism made up of the two poles of Home and the exotic. In Chapter IV of this thesis, which analyzes S. Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle*, we observe *home* as a sphere exoticism. Célestin's outlook is based on *lands visited*, a notion of *Home*, (Célestin capitalizes Home) *natives visited*, and the *travelers who visit*. In one comment Célestin's thought verges on French ethnocentricity as he describes literary exoticism as a "peculiarly French tradition." (Célestin 23) Although I study authors writing in French, I believe that Célestin's thoughts are short-sited. It is odd that Célestin insists upon the "Frenchness" of exoticism because he devotes a chapter of his book to the work of Anglophone Trinidadian writer V.S. Naipaul. Naipaul is one of many colonial and postcolonial authors to write exoticism outside of the French tradition.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Célestin is a sort of vindicator of exoticism, as he views the various authors Montaigne, Diderot, Flaubert, Barthes as some of the exoticists whose humanist value surpass the style's supposed facile aestheticism.

We have already noted many exoticist works outside of the France's modern national and linguistic culture. Srinivas Aravamudan's *Tropicopolitans* (1999) is further evidence that exoticism is not, in Célestin's words, a "peculiarly" French phenomenon. Aravamudan regards 18th century colonial tropes from across a broad range of "*tropicalities*." Aravamudan discusses the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint Louverture, British novelist Daniel Defoe, and the English epistographer Lady Mary Wortley Mantagu, among other international "*tropical*" figures. Aravamudan points out that exoticist travel writing includes agency and resistance to colonial tropes found in the novels, epistolary form, and various 18th century works relating to the exotic. While he does not say as much, Aravamudan may also be considered a kind of champion of exoticism. His neologism *tropicopolitan* maintains that these exotic tropes/figures did not

⁵⁵ One might ask, *Who is a colonial author?* In the case of Naipaul, I am referring to authors born in the former colonies in the late 19th or early 20th centuries, but writers who were not members of the wealthy

abide to worn-out clichés of exotic travel writing. Aravamudan examines personages such as Toussaint Louverture who displayed agency and resistance in the face of French colonialist hegemony while having been very much a product of the French colonialism. Analogous to Aravamudan's conception of *tropicopolitans*, we shall next examine Victor Segalen's rejection of colonial exoticism, but his embrace of exoticism. The interpretation of Segalen's exoticism shall be followed by an examination of Edouard Glissant's poetics that theories on representing colonialism, differences and *others*.

Le Divers

Victor Segalen and Edouard Glissant are two authors who show that exoticism provides a literary space comprised of *Le Divers* and a poetics of *Relation*. Both authors express that literary exoticism can expose encounters with cultural differences, albeit that their thoughts are conveyed in quite individually.

It first must be stated that Segalen's notion of *Le Divers* (*Diversity*) is not what has recently come to mean "multiculturalism" in English. His endorsement of *Le Divers* is not a prescriptive corrective for intolerance and ethno/Eurocentric thinking among the residents of European societies. When writing of *Le Divers* Segalen does draw attention to the oft-overlooked levels of meaning that exoticism involves, especially exoticism's role in aiding Europeans to understand that their cultures are not humanity's only civilizations. However, Segalen's *Divers* is not akin to the "diversity" recently embraced in contemporary North American culture. For instance, Segalen does not discern the multicultural diversity of France. France's early 20th century metropolitan culture included immigrants, religious minorities, linguistic minorities, and distinct classes.⁵⁶

European colonial society.

⁵⁶ Several modern and postmodernist thinkers throughout the 20th century in both literary and anthropological domains have emphasized the importance of considering the various layers in cultural representation. Various anthropologists stress that culture exists as *heterogeneous*, *layered*, *composite*, in *archipelago* formation, or that culture is expressible in *poetics of relation*. These various theories of cultural and literary representation may be closer to the Diversity that Segalen describes than the explicit thought on diversity and multiculturalism.

Segalen's *Divers* is somewhat limited to an acknowledgement of cultural differences with respect to the French colonies and the other countries he visited and lived in such as China.

Segalen longed for an exoticism that transcended colonial clichés. Considering the literary arguments against exoticism reviewed throughout this chapter, it is impossible to justify the style's merit wholly on the basis of the style's embrace of the representation of ethnic differences or diverse global cultures. Nonetheless, I argue that exoticism's tarnished image, the perception of the style as pure colonialist cliché that is reflective of colonial "bad taste," is not entirely justified.

Victor Segalen's posthumously published *Essai sur l'exotisme* (1904) is a series of fragmentary journal-like entries in which the author discusses how exoticism involves very different inclinations. There is the colonialist version, which Victor Segalen rejects when he proposes to do away with the metaphorical "*casque de colonial*" (a symbol of colonial writing). He would also liked to have thrown overboard the other aspects of the style's colonial tropical connotations—camels, black skins, and yellow suns. He sought to replace colonial symbols with the *Le Divers*, or a sense of recognition of Diversity—awe and understanding before the *differences* of humans—a view that broadens Europeans' limited perceptions of human cultures. Segalen elucidates "The perception of Diversity" (*La perception du Divers*) in the following quote:

La connaissance que quelque chose n'est pas soi-même; et le pouvoir d'exotisme, qui n'est que le pouvoir de concevoir autre. (*Ibid.*, 41)

The understanding that something is not oneself; and the power of exoticism, which is nothing less than the power to conceive (of) other (wise.)

The translation of *concevoir autre* is ambiguous insofar as Segalen could refer to an understanding that *other* kinds of people exist outside of European norms—in this case, the *other* is that which is not the European subject. *Autre* may also suggest that European

subjects learn to conceive of things differently—as in seeing things *otherwise, differently, and diversely*.

However Segalen's wish to *concevoir autre*, in either manner of speaking, was not his original plan. He wrote the *Essai sur l'exotisme* between 1904 and 1918, and over those fourteen years his ideas on exoticism evolved. Ultimately, he gave exoticism two defining movements, the first can be summed up as what he calls, “les grossiers oripeaux de ceux qui reviennent on ne sait d'où. . .” (the vulgar junk of those who come back from who knows where, . . .) The second movement of exoticism is incorporated by his notion of “Le Divers.”

The tendency of *grossiers oripeaux* may be understood as largely representative of what we have described already as colonial cliché and “bad taste;” this is the manner in which, for instance, Malek Alloula describes exoticism—as a Eurocentric medium, highly misrepresentative of the *other*, fragments of which were sent back to metropolitans as pretty souvenirs of colonial life. Despite Segalen's rejection of this version of exoticism, it is nonetheless important to note that his thoughts reflect how he was, in many ways, a man of his times.

Segalen writes with a subjective voice, but he never makes references to his authoritative European subjectivity in which he has the liberty to distinguish a preferable sort of exoticism. He does not address European authority to generate gender roles, to exploit indigenes, or to invade land. Yet, he found strains of his era's colonial exoticism condescending, tawdry, and implausible. Segalen's critiques of the exoticism of *grossiers oripeaux* are most manifest in order to advance his alternate vision, the kind of exoticism characterized by “*Le Divers*.”

At the onset of the *Essai* Segalen cites the style's authors and he next claims there are geographically identifiable places that glimmer with exoticism. He attempts to limit exoticism to certain adventurers, colonial authors, and tropical places. In 1904 Segalen's introductory lines claim some of exoticism's “*initiateurs*,” including the legendary 13th

century Venetian traveler Marco Polo.⁵⁷ He alludes to the masters of colonial French exoticism—Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, René François de Chateaubriand and Pierre Loti.

Écrire un livre sur l'Exotisme. Bernardin de Saint-
Pierre—Chateaubriand—Marco Polo l'initiateur—Loti.
(*Ibid.*, 32)

To write a book on Exoticism. Bernardin de Saint-
Pierre—Chateaubriand—Marco Polo the initiator—Loti.

A few years later in 1907, still trying to grasp exoticism in terms of mostly colonial writers and regions, he claims that some spheres are well disposed to exoticism such as the tropics, but other places lack this. He writes that there is little of what he calls “polar exoticism.” “*L'exotisme est volontiers tropica. Cocotiers et ciels torrides. Peu d'exotisme polaire.*” (*Ibid.*, 36) (“Exoticism is happily “tropical.” Coconut trees and hot skies. There is little polar exoticism.”). His judgments reflected in the last two citations illustrate the mindset that aligns exoticism exclusively with writing about the tropical colonies, for instance: Bernardin de Saint-Pierre writing *Paul et Virginie* on the island of Mauritius, Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René* set in Louisiana, or Pierre Loti's numerous books about Tahiti, West Africa, or Indochina. Segalen writes this before having begun to grapple with Diversity. He does not continue in a geographical vein, accenting the “tropical” and rejecting the “polar” because by 1908 he indicates doing away with an exclusively geographic exoticism.⁵⁸ The reason that I employ the following quote as the epigraph to this chapter is because Segalen seems to have seized upon the style's latent potential to *not* be used a colonial tool.

⁵⁷ Gilles Manceron, ed., *Essai sur l'exotisme: Une esthétique du divers, Textes sur Gauguin et l'Océanie précédé de Segalen et l'exotisme*. (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1986), 32.

⁵⁸ Segalen's *divers* is not, however, congruent to recent discussions on diversity that have taken place in recent Anglo-cultural studies. Kwamé Anthony Appiah, for one, has found fault with the American academic “darling” of diversity. He notes that Africans have very diverse cultures (linguistically diverse, ethnically diverse, nationally diverse, etc.) and that this is not an inherent positive coupled with African civil wars and societal disaccord. (In *My Father's House*)

De l'exotisme comme une Esthétique du Divers.

Introduction: La notion d'exotisme. Le Divers.

Avant tout, déblayer le terrain. Jeter par-dessus bord tout ce que contient de mésusé et de rance ce mot d'exotisme. Le dépouiller de tous ses oripeaux: le palmier et le chameau; casque de colonial; peaux noires et soleil jaune; et du même coup se débarrasser de tous ceux qui les employèrent avec une faconde niaise. Puis, dépouiller ensuite le mot d'exotisme de son acceptation seulement tropicale, seulement géographique. (*Ibid.*, 41)

Exoticism as an Aesthetic of Diversity. Introduction: The Notion of Exoticism. Diversity. Before we get started, wipe the blackboard clean. Throw overboard everything that represents the misuse and rotten employ of the word exoticism. Get rid of all the trash: the palm tree, the camel, the colonial helmet; the black skins the yellow sun; while we are at it bar everyone who used all that in happy stupid ways. Then, rid the word exoticism of its solely tropical and geographic use.

We thus note Segalen's changing views and struggles with exoticism. In the beginning of his essay he naïvely claims that exoticism is *tropical*—a sort of trope or cliché of the exotic. But after several years of musing on the subject, he seeks an inclusive and poetic definition absolved of colonial clichés, and independent of geography—exoticism does not only refer to certain places. As we have seen, before arriving at the notion of Diversity, Segalen started the *Essai sur l'exotisme* with a vision lacking in a truly diversified and democratized conception of the exotic: That is to say, he does not first promote the conception he later advances as "*Le Divers*." But, brought to its ultimate conclusions, an exoticism divested of geographical significance implies that all places and people involve a kind of exotic potentiality—and such a philosophy decentralizes European subjectivity and ethnocentrism. Segalen eventually avoids privileging regions, such as the tropics, as the more significant milieus of exoticism.

He will suggest that exoticism may expose Europeans to *Le Divers*, thus making them at least aware of ethnic and cultural difference. Through an exercise in semantic etymology, he reproaches the kind of exoticism he defines as the *grossiers oripeaux* (colonial junk) brought back from "Negro kingdom[s]" by colonial adventurers. He also

states that it is due to exoticism that Europeans became aware of the differences among humans. Subsequently, he attributes to exoticism that which made Europeans less ethnocentric and less narcissistic:

Le mot exotisme fut à peine synonyme de «Impressions de pays lointains»; de climats, de races étrangères; et trop mésemployé par substitution à celui plus compromis encore de «Colonial». Sous les termes redoutables de «Littératures exotiques», «Impressions d'exotisme»...on réunissait et on réunit encore tout l'attirail clinquant d'un retour de chez un roi nègre; les grossiers oripeaux de ceux qui reviennent on ne sait d'où...Je ne disconviens pas qu'il n'existe un exotisme des pays et des races, un exotisme des climats, des faunes et des flores; un exotisme soumis à la géographie, à la position en latitude et c'est cet exotisme-là, précisément, qui, le plus apparent, imposa son nom à la chose, et donna à l'homme, trop porté au terrestre à se considérer comme identique à lui-même, la conception d'autres mondes que le sien. C'est de là que vient le mot. *(Ibid., 100)*

The word exoticism was just a synonym of "impressions of faraway countries;" of climates and foreign races; and a misused substitution for that which is even more compromised, "colonial." Under these dreadful terms "exotic literature," "impressions of exoticism"...we grouped together, and still associate all the attributes of a homecoming from a Negro Kingdom; the tacky junk of those who come back from who knows where. . .I don't dismiss that there exists an exoticism of countries and races, an exoticism of climates, fauna and flora; an exoticism subject to geography, to the latitudinal and longitudinal position. It is precisely this exoticism, which most obviously imposed its name on the thing, and which gave to men, who, too carried away with the beginning of their terrestrial adventure, who considered themselves identical to everyone, the conception of worlds other than their own. It is from there that this word comes.

Segalen admirably toils with the problem of Europeans' ethnocentrism as he attempts to define differences between exoticisms. He distinguishes between geographic, artistic, natural, tawdry, and colonial explorers' exoticism. His thought processes are foresighted if we consider that he makes an oblique critique of colonialism by writing that "colonial" is an unacceptable designation for what he attempts to define as exoticism in terms of Diversity. Albeit a simple critique, Segalen attempts to conceive of exotic cultures as admirable, independent from the conceptions of colonials. He admits to the problem of

colonists impressing their culture and identities on indigenes before many writers dreamed of speaking out against colonialism, and before some of French colonialism's worst abuses.⁵⁹

Segalen makes the distinction that exoticism does not represent a unified artistic or ideological vision. Written before and at the beginning of World War I, the *Essai sur l'exotisme* questions colonial representations prior to France's interwar period when many French intellectuals took an active stance against French overseas policies for the first time.⁶⁰ In some respects Victor Segalen appears dated because he does not explicitly describe or denounce the colonial violence and impositions wrought against people. In *La Poétique de la Relation* (1990), a text in which Edouard Glissant reformulates Segalen's thoughts on *Le Divers*, Glissant writes that Segalen was marked with “une dose non négligeable, même si inconsciente, d'ethnocentrisme. . .” (“a substantial, even if unconscious dose of ethnocentricism. . .”).⁶¹ (*Relation* 208) Glissant most likely refers to Segalen's lack of insight regarding his privileged status and franchise to review the exoticism of colonized subjects. Nonetheless, Segalen's praise and embrace of *Le Divers* within exoticism is not, perhaps, so far removed from some later and ethnographic thought and criticism on the explorations and representations of culture.⁶² As we

⁵⁹ I am referring to abuses such as the French employ of colonial subjects as soldiers (*tirailleurs*, *spahis*, etc.) in both of the world wars, which during Segalen's writing of the *Essai* had not taken place—France drafted colonial subjects for virtual cannon fodder in both wars.

⁶⁰ During the Colonial Exposition of 1930, the Surrealists used a slogan “Ne visitez pas l'Exposition!” this is indicative of the later interwar refusal of French colonialism. (Clifford, 1988; Miller, 1998)

⁶¹ Edward Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Translated by Betsy Wing, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 194.

⁶² The following authors, who are all ethnographers in some respect or other, have deliberated on culture and literature by assenting to the necessity of recognizing diversity of discourses within the pursuit of cultural representation. Georges Bataille, a student of the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, wrote an essay entitled *The Psychological Structure of Fascism* (1933) regarding coexistent *homogenous* and *heterogenous* cultures. This is one such call for Diversity within cultural and political representation. In anthropologist Clifford Geertz's discussion of ethnography in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), he stresses the importance of doing ethnographic inquiry drawn from descriptions that reveal the *layered*

mentioned, Segalen's *Divers* is not allied to what has been heralded within the last twenty years in Anglo-American academies as "diversity" in the sense of "multiculturalism."⁶³ It is perhaps an oversimplification, but Segalen's *Divers* may be considered the acknowledgement of cultural differences—differences with respect to monolithic European civilization.

La Relation

Needless to say, the negative critiques of exoticism's Eurocentricity, artificiality, and immorality, geographic or gender biases, can not be theoretically explained away by expressing that latter must not be expressed in isolation from exoticism's potential Diversity and *Poetics of Relation*. However, a more subtle understanding of the significance of exoticism's colonialist ideologies may be gleaned from what Glissant proposes with respect to his *Poetics of Relation*. According to the *Poétique de la Relation* literary reality is multiform and composite—all ideas exist in "relation," not in isolation (*Poetics of Relation* 198).

In the first section of *La Poétique de la Relation* entitled "La Barque ouverte," Glissant writes that *Relation* is a matter of shared knowledge, stripped of the astonishment of *étrangetés* (foreignness.) "*La Relation n'est pas d'étrangetés, mais de connaissance partagée.*" ("Relation is not made up of things that are foreign but of shared knowledge.")⁶⁴ (*Ibid.*, 20) If it is possible to transcend visions of "foreignness"

significances of cultural representations. James Clifford speaks of *composite* cultural texts in his archipelago theory proposed in *The Predicament of Culture*. These are theoretical penchants, which emphasize the multifaceted ideology, historicity, and aesthetics of literary cultural expression. Such approaches are incompatible with, for instance, the omnisciently narrated ethnographic monograph. The ethnographic monograph is a writing style that consciously avoids exoticism, as monographs are not supposed to melange facts and fictions, overly subjective observation, or exhibit only aesthetic culture facets.

⁶³ K. Anthony Appiah pointed out in the 1990s, diversity in terms of multiculturalism became an empty academic slogan. Appiah suggests that diversity is not a societal panacea for ethnic reconciliation or tolerance. If we consider the diversity of Africa, in terms of discrete ethnic and linguistic groups, Africa is perhaps more culturally diverse than any other continent. Nonetheless, regardless of its rich diversity, the continent suffers from chronic social unrest, civil wars, and violence between ethnic groups and nations.

⁶⁴ (*Poetics of Relation*, Trans. by Betsy Wing, 8)

encompassed by ethnocentric perspectives, exoticism may indeed be considered shared knowledge regarding differences.

Like Segalen, Edouard Glissant recognizes various movements within the literature of exoticism. In fact, the poet undertook what is clearly a work of exoticism in his poem *Les Indes* (1957). Reading Glissant's theoretical notion of *Relation* in conjunction with *Les Indes* reveals that exoticism can be a critical dispatch of colonialist thought. The poem's exoticist expression hosts an internal analysis of colonialism.

Although the poem was written almost thirty-five years before *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant indirectly refers to his poem at the beginning of the theoretical text when he writes "*Nous prenons parti pour ce jeu du monde, pour les Indes renouvelées vers lesquelles nous hélons, pour cette Relation. . .*" (*Ibid.*, 21) ("We take sides in this game of the world. We hail a new *Indies*; we are for it. And for this *Relation*. . .")⁶⁵ Conversely, the poem's final section is entitled *La Relation*.

Les Indes is composed of representations of diverse New World historical figures including Columbus, Spanish conquistadors, and Toussaint Louverture. Old and New World geography, ocean travel, and islands figure throughout *Les Indes*. Glissant employs the classical tropes of exoticism since the discovery of the New World.⁶⁶ The six parts of the poem are entitled "*L'Appelle*," "*Le Voyage*," "*La Conquête*," "*La Traite*," "*Les Heros*," and finally, "*La Relation*."⁶⁷ We thus note the self-referentiality between both the *Poétique de la Relation* and *Les Indes*. The poem is a radical and poetical conceptualization of the process of colonization as it is based on the loose interpretation of the journeys made when the New World was "discovered" and colonized. It is a

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8

⁶⁶ The Larousse dictionary makes the "discovery" of the "New World" exoticism's starting point. Le terme *exotisme* s'est introduit au cours du XIX^e s. pour désigner le goût des formes d'art et des moeurs des peuples lointains: mais la chose exista dès la révélation du Nouveau Monde. (*Grand Dictionnaire Larousse*) (The term *exoticism* presented itself during the course of the 19th century to designate the art forms and faraway peoples' mores: but the idea existed since the discovery of the New World.)

rewrite employing the various classical exotic tropes including European explorers, military men, merchants, and missionaries crossing the ocean in search of spices, gold, wealth and souls. *Les Indes* consideration of the slave trade (*La Traite*) and slave revolts (*Les Heros*) is the poetry's radicalizing angle. Throughout the verse, the violence of colonialism and slavery is portrayed along with the demise and denigration of those institutions. From the beginning to the end of the poem, readers are led to understand the *opacity*, or quite possibly the irrelevance, of geography. Much like Segalen's wish for an exoticism divested of its geographical implications, Glissant renders the exotic geographically unclear.

The geographic associations between the title *Les Indes* and its multiple referents, begs the following question: To which *Indes* is the poet referring? In standard contemporary French *Les Indes* signifies India, the islands off of the coast of East Africa in the Indian Ocean (such as Reunion), or the Antilles—the West Indies. The specific *Indes* that Columbus sought involve this ambiguity. However, geographic realities are perhaps less significant than what the poem conveys in terms of the process of imagining and conquering geography. The poet suggests that Europeans first dreamed of exotic realms to colonize. This view stands in contrast to the linear historical version of colonialism, in which Europeans coincidentally fell upon the New World Indies and then proceeded with the colonization of the New World.

The Glissantian conception of desire suggests that European wishes brought the actual islands, the Indies, into existence. The *Appelle* (Call) to find a passage to the elusive *Indes* turns out to be the chronicle of a pursuit of unrealizable desires. The poet declares a wish corresponding to the historical 18th, 19th, and 20th colonial powers' motives to create new worlds, new societies, and new markets. In making explicit the colonial plan to create material, stable and durable commodities from immaterial dreams

⁶⁷ His "*Le Voyage*" opaquely addresses the discovery of the New World(s). "*La Conquête*" addresses exploitation of virgin lands and native peoples. The poem closes with "*Les Heros*" which invokes

Glissant equates poetic and colonial desire:

Afin que mon désir prenne forme durable!/Afin que le matin
m'appartienne, et la lune aussi!

So that my desire takes on enduring form!/So that that morning belongs to
me, and the moon as well! (*Les Indes*)

Exhibiting these wishes to mold and possess impossible things, such as the *morning* and the *moon* out of desire, *Les Indes* implies that humans attempt to make their desires take form. In other words, the desires of European vanquishers, such as Columbus and the conquistadors, sought expression in the possession of material or temporal realities.

The overarching colonial plan is the possession and domination of land and people. Glissant's hyperbolic expression of that colonial task reveals a sort of human compulsion (desire) to possess unattainable things: such as the morning and the moon. In one sense, this is a reproach of colonial greed—the colonizer's desire to possess the impossible. However his words are also a poetic lament regarding human desire. Determined and limitless, poetic desires or colonial desires endeavor toward the creation of unrealizable goals.

Ultimately *Les Indes* is a subversive adoption of exoticism that condemns colonization and yet shares in the sorrow of ill-fated colonial desire. The poem is a sort of exoticism that reflects the multiform and oddly *related* wishes of both the colonialist and the poet. As Glissant expresses in *La Poétique de la Relation* that all ideas exist in relation to one another and not in isolation—exotic representations can not be drawn in isolation from colonialist thought. Exoticism is expressed in *Relation* to imagining the *other, foreignness, home, self, and differences*. In *Les Indes*, Glissant portrays the rapacity that drives colonial conquest, but he also shows us that exoticism does not exist as the immutable literary expression of a pro-colonialist mindset. His exoticist poetry reveals an internal critique of colonialism—the European colonial project was founded on and built from impossible desires.

At times the poetic voice in *Les Indes* asserts the position of the colonialist *other*. According to the *Poetics of Relation* dualistic relationships, or binarisms, are faulty impositions that stand in the way of knowing differences. In the following passage Glissant critically outlines the perception of self which extends into the conception of the “Other” as a binary opposition of the self.

La dualité de la pensée de soi (il y a le citoyen, et il y a l'étranger) retentit sur l'idée qu'on se fait de l'Autre (il y a le visiteur, et le visité; celui qui part et celui qui demeure; le conquérant, et sa conquête.) La pensée de l'Autre ne cessera d'être duelle qu'à ce moment où les différences auront été reconnues. (*Relation* 29-30)

The duality of self-perception (one is citizen or foreigner) has repercussions on one's idea of the Other (one is visitor or visited; one goes or stays; one conquers or is conquered). Thought of the Other cannot escape its own dualism until the time when differences are acknowledged.⁶⁸

Glissant rebukes the duality of self-perception as that of a “self” that opposes itself to the “other.” The self (poet) merges with the other (colonizer) and expresses stupefying colonial cupidity in the multivalent terms of exoticism. This conflation of the poetic self and colonizing other is very different from self-perception that negates, ignores, or denigrates differences. Glissant levels the hierarchical oppositions between self, other, colonizer, conqueror, and conquered. In this instance, readers are able to conceive of the *conqueror's* desires and motivations.

I believe that conceiving of the other's motivations allows for understanding differences divested of *étrangetés* (foreignness). As we have noted, one of Glissant's definitive conceptions of *Relation* is that *Relation* is not *étrangetés*, but shared knowledge (*La Relation n'est pas d'étrangetés, mais de connaissance partagée.*). Exoticism can be a literary sphere in which the conception of foreignness is attenuated, as

⁶⁸ (*Poetics of Relation*, Trans.by Betsy Wing),17.

authors identify with and vocalize *others'* motives and mindsets. It is in this way that I view exoticism as a vehicle for shared knowledge and the recognition of differences.

* * * * *

I devote the following three chapters of this dissertation to analyzing the exoticism of four authors. It is undeniable that the literature analyzed hereinafter operates in various degrees as inscriptions of French colonial ideologies. My analyses are based partially on the critical views first outlined in this introduction. I also intend to interpret the following works by taking into consideration Segalen's notion of *Le Divers*, which suggests that exoticism is an attempt to recognize differences. I also believe that Glissant's *Relation* involves a view of exoticism that affords multiple positions—such an adoption of others' perspectives and motivations actually undoes binary oppositions of *self* and *other*.

To conceive of exoticism as a literature of *Relation*, conveying representations of both the colonized and colonizers, is an approach that is indispensable to understanding the writing. I shall first consider Pierre Loti's fiction on colonial Senegal and Algeria in *Le Roman du Spahi* and *Les Trois femmes de la Kasbah*. In both texts, Loti's depictions of French colonial society involve the demise of all the main characters colonizers and colonized—their downfalls are brought about by colonial structures. The comparable fates of colonizer and colonized are condemnations of French colonialism.

CHAPTER II COLONIAL EXOTICISM

De pauvres spahis, comme lui, acclimatés,
énervés dans ce pays d'Afrique, on pleurait
quelque fois les rives désolées du Sénégal. Les
longues courses à cheval, et la vie plus libre, et
la grande lumière, et les horizons démesurés,
tout cela manque quand on s'y est habitué et
qu'on ne l'a plus; dans la tranquillité du foyer,
on éprouve quelque chose comme le besoin du
soleil dévorant et de l'éternelle chaleur, le regret
du désert, la nostalgie du sable.

-Pierre Loti

Le Roman d'un spahi (1881)

In this chapter, first I shall explore the extents to which Pierre Loti's early work is an example of exoticism according to the literature and the literature's significance discussed in the introductory chapter.¹ Loti is considered an inspiration to innumerable nameless authors who would produce successive nostalgic and artificial images of the colonies and colonized people. He is cited for having expressed racist and ethnocentric French colonial ideologies in his representations of indigenes' race and ethnicity. Much discussion also has been devoted to Loti's biased and highly subjective portrayal of Europeans among indigenes—the epigraph reveals a view of poor Frenchmen who suffer *cette éternelle nostalgie*.² Ironically, the citation above suggests that the French *spahis* endure *nostalgia for the African deserts and sands*—hence, homesickness suffered by Frenchmen is for the far away and exotic Africa.

¹ One conception that I have touched upon is that exoticism is considered an ideological arm, a kind of decentralized and informal propaganda for French government sponsored colonial projects.

I shall examine some of these conceptions of his writing as exoticism replete in its denigrating depictions of colonized people, especially colonized women. One notion that I touched upon in the last chapter is how exoticism is considered an ideological arm of French government sponsored colonial projects: The fact that Loti described the brutality of French colonial actions with a kind of delectation is emblematic of his colonial sympathies.³

Conversely, critics remark upon Loti's bitter visions of the French colonies and suggest that Loti actually condemned colonization by publishing gloomy stories and descriptions of colonial life. First, I consider Loti's critical reception as a pro-colonialist writer who embodied the French colonial armies' ideological bent. Next, and to the contrary, I wish to discuss whether two of Loti's works express antipathy towards colonialism. Ultimately, Loti's fiction incorporates both penchants: he concurrently expresses sympathies and hostilities through his depictions of European *colons* and the subjects of colonial rule. Loti's fictive accounts of colonial life support my introductory thesis that exoticism is a kind of literature wherein the era's colonial currents are omnipresent, but nonetheless, even the paramount figure of colonial exoticism, Loti, can afford perspectives that do not champion the French colonial cause.

² *Cette Eternelle Nostalgie* is the title of Loti's personal journal, these are words drawn from an entry. Alain Quella-Villéger, Bruno Vercier, Guy Dugas, ed. *Pierre Loti: Cette Eternelle Nostalgie: Journal Intime 1878-1911*, (Paris: Editions de la Table Ronde, 1997).

L'Exotisme a un nom: celui de Pierre Loti

Julien Viaud's *nom de plume*, Pierre Loti, is a name that is synonymous with late 19th century exoticism. On the first page of *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction* (1981) Alec Hargreaves writes, "Pierre Loti (1850-1923) was celebrated during his lifetime as the most popular exoticist writer in France." Tzvetan Todorov describes Pierre Loti's distinction within the canon of exoticism as follows: "A la fin du XIX^e siècle, en France, l'exotisme a un nom : celui de Pierre Loti." (Todorov 341) (At the end of the 19th century in France, exoticism went by the name of Pierre Loti.). One critic says succinctly, "Loti's popularity was enormous during his lifetime."⁴ First, I shall begin with a critical overview of four early fictive works. Secondly, I shall focus on two of Loti's early narratives, one of which, *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (1881), was indeed extremely popular.

The catalogue of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* lists no less than ten different editions of *Le Roman d'un Spahi* within five decades after its original publication.⁵ Recently the novel has been discussed among colonial and postcolonial scholars including T. Todorov, M.K. Miller, and Chris Bongie. The second text to be analyzed, a short story that concludes with a *morale*, entitled *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah (conte oriental)*⁶ (1882), is not as well known as many of Loti's novels. *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* was initially published a year after *Le Roman d'un Spahi* in

³ The occupation of Ist Africa, Vietnam, North Africa, and other regions that are mostly cited in the previous chapter by French colonials (settlers, merchants, and soldiers) is largely what I shall be referring to by the over general term: French colonialism.

⁴ Irene Szyliowicz, *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989), 1.

⁵ The Bibliothèque Nationale catalogue lists separate editions from 1881 to 1936: 1881, 1893, 1899, 1910, 1911, 1913, 1925, 1927, 1930, and 1936.

⁶ Loti, Pierre. *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah*. 1884 ed. Paris: Christian Pirot, 2000.

the compilation *Les Fleurs d'ennui* (1882), two years after which it came out as a separate edition.⁷ The *Bibliothèque Nationale* lists various editions of *Les Fleurs d'ennui* and *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah*, however neither one of these books gained the immense popularity of *Le Roman d'un spahi*.⁸

Le Roman d'un spahi and *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* were thus written within a year of one another. These books followed Loti's initial "exotic" anonymous novels about an English lieutenant sailor named "Loti," and his adventures, which took place respectively in Turkey and Tahiti: *Aziyadé* (by Anon., 1879) and *Mariage de Loti* (by *l'auteur de Aziyadé*, 1880). Either one of the former texts (hereinafter referred to as *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames*) narrate tales of a colonial presence in French Africa. The heroes of *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames* are archetypal "Loti" protagonists: soldiers and sailors who disembark in lands very different from their European homeland. The stories hinge on the characters' portraiture as young French soldiers who pursue, and are sought by, indigenous women. Unlike his first two novels (*Aziyadé* and *Le Mariage de Loti*), *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames* depict dismal lives and melancholic conclusions for all parties; that is to say, the French colonials and the colonized indigenes of Africa.

Although it is not only within the setting of the Franco-African colonies, where Loti creates sad fates for his protagonists. Nearly all of Loti's writing is

⁷ I shall be referring to this 1884 edition of *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah*, republished in 2000 with a preface written by Dénise Brahimi.

⁸ The *Bibliothèque Nationale* includes editions of *Les Trois Femmes* from 1884, 1896, 1897, 1932 and 2000—which is the republication in cited here. The *Bibliothèque Nationale* also cites several editions of *Les Fleurs d'ennui* including the 1883, 1893, 1924 and 1926 publications. Regardless of, to my knowledge, *Les Trois dames* is only discussed at any length in two accounts critical accounts: the preface in the 2000 edition and by Szyliowicz, only briefly.

described as an embodiment of 19th century currents of “*fin-de-siècle*” morbidity and despair. He is noted for expressing a romantic nostalgia for a simpler and more innocent age.⁹ In *Les Suprêmes clichés de Loti* (1994), Lafont claims that in his day, Loti’s work was adored for qualities which today’s readers consider cliché: “*Adulée hier, fanée aujourd’hui à peu près pour les mêmes raisons, l’oeuvre de Loti ne doit-elle pas précisément à ses clichés d’avoir quand même survécu?*” (Yesterday adulated, today withered, for more or less the same reasons, does not the work of Loti precisely owe to its clichés the fact that it has survived anyhow?). Lafont considers embellished expressions of melancholia and sentimentality as important parts of his “supreme clichés.” She does not concentrate on whether Loti’s work is rejected for its retrograde ideological bent that glorifies French colonial actions. Nonetheless, she underlines the tensions between the old and the new in Loti’s work. The *modern* versus the romantic *old-fashioned* clichés of his writing have been enumerated upon by several critics: Roland Barthes, for one, claims that Loti’s first novel *Aziyadé*, is a book about “nothing,” and he ponders the modern currents contained within the emptiness of *Aziyadé*:

Ai-je bien dit—et cependant sans forcer—que ce roman veillot—qui est à peine un roman—a quelque chose de moderne?
(*Nouveaux Essais Critiques* 186)

Have I managed to say—and yet without forcing—that this old-fashioned novel—which is barely a novel at all—has something modern about it? (*New Critical Essays*, Trans. by Richard Howard, 121)

⁹ Szyliowicz, 2.

Barthes arrives at a central question concerning Loti's style of exoticism—the modern. However, that “something modern” in his writing has been analyzed more in terms of its style.

Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle (1991) by Christopher Bongie contains a compelling theory that reveals a struggle between modernity and exoticism in *fin-de-siècle* exotic literature. Bongie reflects on the “modernism” of Loti's writing in a sense somewhat divorced from the questions of style upon which Lafont and Barthes remark. Bongie makes a case that all exoticism is an attempted escape from modern sensibilities of individualism, occidental technological progress, and the advances of colonialism. He suggests that the clichéd *fin-de-siècle* despair, conveyed by works such as *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames*, narrate attempts to portray an exotic realm—but, this is a nostalgic past, that is “moribund,” or already finished. Commenting on the English hero of *Aziyadé*, Bongie says the following,

. . .the subject [Loti] of *Aziyadé* is closed off from the native population; [there is an] impossibility for him of coming into contact with the exotic world and thereby distancing himself from the colonial one of which he is part. The space of the Other is moribund, covered with a funereal veil that Pierre Loti in his later works, will offer no hope of lifting. (*Memories* 89)

Bongie's theorizing on exoticism, suggests that a full immersion in the alternate, native, or traditional world is impossible for Loti's heroes. Colonialism has destroyed the traditional sphere, and hence the despair, melancholia, and the longing for the impossible, that exoticism expresses. Bongie's version of nostalgic melancholia relates back to a romanticized European past. For Bongie, the exotic is inaccessible

due to what exoticists imagine as the encroachment and achievement of European mores, culture, technology, and domination in the colonies. Thus according to the critic, *fin-de-siècle* exoticism involves “memory,” or nostalgia for pristine and idealized spheres, unspoiled by the modern colonial presence.¹⁰

In my view however, the exoticism which Loti’s work incarnates, is inseparably mired within the modern French colonial settings. The details, embellishments, and symbols of modern colonialism are simply constituent of what I understand as exoticism. Loti’s narratives present realms composed of natives and colonials or visiting Europeans. We shall view that what Loti (and Bongie) considers as a “cadre exotique” (*Le Roman* 149) is a world abroad, free from European and modern civilization. This pristine “exotic” is not what I attempt to define as exoticism. At the very least, exoticism is established by the gaze of an observer who notes and explains the scene in language understandable to modern outsiders. In the case of the authors studied here, the language is modern standard French. However, nearly all exoticist expression, and especially that of Pierre Loti, combines modern colonial accoutrements with details evocative of the “past,” or things “foreign,” or unfamiliar. The *combination* of Euro-modernity and native-traditionalism is what I consider an exotic framework. In Loti’s work, there is little or no separation of what Bongie calls the “colonial chaff” from the “exoticist wheat” (*Memories* 95). To begin with, Pierre Loti/Julien Viaud’s life indicates how the colonial and the exotic are entirely intertwined in his biographical persona.

¹⁰ I consider exoticism not so much the realm relating to a time before European presence, because this time can not be recuperated, only imagined within the constraints’ of modern imaginations—thus

Pierre Loti, *né* Julien Viaud, was born in 1850 to middleclass protestant parents in Rochefort. By 1891 he was to have become a colonial naval officer, artist, writer, and the youngest member to date of the *Académie Française*.¹¹ His childhood ambitions to travel as an overseas missionary were transformed into a military career, which was largely a choice that facilitated his desire to travel.¹² Julien Viaud's lifelong voyages may have also served to mourn and redress the death of his brother Gustave Viaud. Julien was fifteen years old when his brother died at sea while serving with the French Navy in French Indochina. Two years after the death of Gustave, Julien entered the *École Navale* in order to pursue his own overseas career.¹³ He spent the rest of his life travelling, drawing, and writing about the lands he visited.

The professional biography of Julien Viaud (less well known than that of the name Pierre Loti) signifies a life that was spent depicting colonial subjects. Bongie describes Viaud as the military, literary, and artistic figure he clearly was: "[a] French naval officer to 1877 [who] bore witness to the world's changing political dimensions in a series of articles and drawings from 1872 to 1877 for such journals as *Illustration* and *Monde Illustré*." (*Exotic Memories* 106). Hartman situates Viaud's illustration career as longer:

indivisible from the modern. Exoticism is an irreducible amalgam of nostalgia and modernity. This is a point to which I shall return upon examining the works *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames*.

¹¹ Todorov, 322

¹² Alec G. Hargreaves, *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), 22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22, 42

As a young naval officer, Viaud, who was to take the pen-name Loti only after his visit to Constantinople in 1878, worked as a correspondent and illustrator for Parisian journals from 1872 to 1889, not only for *Le Monde illustré*, (...) - but for *L'Illustration* and *L'Univers illustré*. He eventually published over 84 sketches in them. While sailing with the French navy, he had his sister publish some 40 sketches as well in his *Journal intime* and in *L'Illustration* from 1872 to 1873. The critic Flottes has pointed out that even though Loti abandoned his professional artistic career, actually just after the publication of his Breton tale, *Mon frère Yves* (1883), his interest in art really never diminished... (Hartman 58)

Various titles dating from the 1880s, which Hartman cites, are indicative of the colonial nature of Viaud's illustrations. Sketches such as, "Expédition française en Tunisie" (1881)¹⁴ or "Le Campement devant Mékinez" [*sic.*] (1889)¹⁵ correlate directly to France's colonial advances in the Maghreb. "Le Campement devant Mékinez" [*sic.*] stems from Viaud's participation in a government sponsored colonial mission in Morocco. As France had taken Algeria in the 1840s, she progressively colonized Tunisia in the 1880s, and finally made Morocco a protectorate by 1912. Viaud was officially appointed as a writer on this mission to explore Morocco. The book, *Au Maroc* (signed with his penname, Pierre Loti) was first printed in *L'Illustration* between August 1889 and October 1889. In the following citation, Hartman describes the readership of the non-fictive travelogue written during the mission. :

¹⁴ *L'Illustration*, 23 April 1881, pp. 264, planches LXXI, LXII, Elwood Hartman, *Three Nineteenth-Century French Writer/Artists and the Maghreb: The Literary and Artistic Depictions of North Africa by Théophile Gautier, Eugène Fromentin, and Pierre Loti*. (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen, 1994.), 59.

¹⁵ *L'Illustration*, 19 October 1889, p348, planche LXXVI.

In France, Loti's report was snapped up by the hungry home audience, which most certainly would never have the opportunity to go to that mysterious and closed land. Much like many middle-class American readers of *National Geographic* today, those 19th century French bourgeois devotees were quite content to accompany vicariously and comfortably their ambassador and favorite travel-writer . . .
(Hartman 61)

Hartman aptly compares the author's writings on Morocco to *National Geographic*-style journalism. Furthermore, Viaud's sketches and the other drawings featured in *L'Illustration* functioned similarly to documentary photography of *National Geographic*. The inexpensive and large format magazine *L'Illustration*, makes it clear that before photography or film were to become widespread media, hand-drawn illustrations and engravings of far-away places gave impressions, panoramas, and images to those whom Hartman calls the "19th century French bourgeois devotees."¹⁶ Viaud's career as government appointed naval officer, explorer, writer, and artist came together in a persona who was wholly employed to dispatch images of the colonies—which he did, in exoticist terms. He showed the scenery from abroad, as an overlap of colonial and indigenous life.

Concurrent with his journalistic popularity, Pierre Loti earned the respect of an academic elite. In 1891, Loti was elected over Zola to the *Académie Française*.¹⁷ He was not considered an artistic or aesthetic subordinate among his artistic contemporaries. Lafont mentions his renown among the modern writers of the era;

¹⁶ A section of Pierre Loti's *Au Maroc* appears with his sketch on page 348 in the 19 October 1889 edition. Other illustrations of *Au Maroc* were done by M. Aime Morot and Benjamin Constant beginning with the first section of the travelogue published 24 August 1889. *Illustration*, (Paris: 1889), 161. The overseas images published in *L'Illustration* dating from the 1889 *Au Maroc* period, are not entirely portrayals of the colonies, but in large part, the depictions from abroad normalize the foreign presence abroad and do not address any likelihood of indigenous resistance, of which there was plenty.

evidently, authors such as Mallarmé and Proust adored Loti. Lafont asks, “Faut-il relire ou seulement parcourir Loti que Mallarmé jugeait exquis, Proust savoureux...?” (Must we reread or only skim Loti who Mallarmé judged exquisite, Proust delectable. . .?)” (Lafont 7). However, Bardin phrases Loti’s fall from grace as follows:

Pierre Loti connaît une gloire anthume que suit un interminable purgatoire posthume... Puis vient l’épithaphe d’André Breton : ci-gît “l’Idiot”.
(Bardin 28)

Pierre Loti knew an antemortem glory that was followed by a posthumous purgatory... Then comes André Breton’s epitaph: Here lies “The Idiot.”

Following his death, critics complained of Loti’s alleged fictive dissimulations. In 1937 one claimed, “Il s’est fait propagateur de légendes imbéciles derriere lesquelles je ne trouve jamais personne.”¹⁸ (He made himself the perpetrator of imbecilic legends behind which I find no one.).¹⁹ A Moroccan scholar accused, “Loti of having bequeathed through his travelogue *Au Maroc ‘l’image exotique d’un Orient de pacotille’* to his countless imitators.” (“the exotic image of an Orient of worthless trinkets.”) (Hartman 62). Within the period of high-modernism, in the 1930s at the apex of colonialism,²⁰ Loti’s literary renown appeared dated, and implausible. His dismissal occurred during a decade when dissent against colonialism finally had been

¹⁷ Todorov, 322.

¹⁸ Quoted by Pierre Flottes, *Le drame intérieur de Pierre Loti* (Paris: Le Courrier Littéraire, 1937), 97.

¹⁹ Syzliowicz, 5.

²⁰ By the 1930s, colonies and ex-colonies covered 84.6 percent of the land surface of the globe. Only parts of Arabia, Persia, Afganistan, Mongolia, Tibet, China, Siam and Japan had never been under formal European government (Fieldhouse 1989: 373) cited in Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. (New York: Routledge, 1998.)

voiced in France.²¹ However, the major cause of his dismissal was for reasons akin to the aesthetic arguments launched against the artificiality of exoticism discussed in the introductory chapter. Loti the exoticist was accused of propagating an imagery of *pacotille*: that is to say, inauthentic, fake, and cheap images.

In contemporary criticism, parallel to the rejection of Loti's literature for its seemingly inauthentic qualities, the author is often remarked upon for his depiction of women. In *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman* (1988), Irene Szyliowicz begins by noting that in his day, many readers thought he portrayed women admirably. She cites Anatole France, among others, who appreciated Loti's treatment of "*amours exotiques*" in his writing (*Ibid.*, 52). Szyliowicz writes that some 19th century French women appreciated his conception of romantic love between the sexes, because in some respects they, "must have felt that he spoke for their condition." (*Ibid.*, 52). Nevertheless, throughout her study, Szyliowicz exposes Loti as an author who was terminally sealed in masculine gender bias despite his predilection for emotional love-stories. Szyliowicz summarizes her thought on Loti's treatment of Oriental women as follows:

²¹ In the early 1930s, Surrealists proffered the slogan: "Ne visitez pas L'Exposition coloniale!" in response to that event. Christopher Miller in *Nomads and Nationalists* regards some African Francophone literature from as early as the 1920s as anti-colonialist, nonetheless it was in the 1920s when criticism of French colonial actions became a polemical issue for the *Parti Communiste Français*. Azzedine Haddour writes, "Significantly, as early as 1920, the *Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique Française* accused communism of fostering Algerian nationalism through subversive and anti-colonialist ideology." Azzedine Haddour, *Colonial Myths: History and Narrative*, (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 8. It is clear that leftist factions of the French government have a long tradition of speaking out against colonialism, Raymond Betts writes of the Socialists' condemnation of imperialism from the 1890s in *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory: 1890-1914*, (New York: Columbia University Press: 1961): 5.

Because Loti couches negative attitudes in positive terms, his mistreatment of women is insidious. Although he pretends to care for the Oriental women, and even to love them, he manages to focus on their faults. The females depicted are generally idle, self-indulgent, and vacuous. They exist to please the men they attract (and never marry), and they become prostitutes or commit suicide when their lovers leave them.

(*Oriental Women* 52)

To better contextualize Loti's "mistreatment" of those who the critic groups together as "Oriental women," Szyliowicz makes an intelligent summary of French and Oriental (as well as African and Tahitian) women's debased social positions throughout the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. She convincingly establishes that French women were accepted as men's subordinates—disenfranchised and excluded from public roles and employment. That is to say, French women were virtually absent from the elevated posts that were accessible to men. Szyliowicz is correct insofar as she remarks upon Loti's dismal denouements that portray women as relatively powerless. In *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames* the fateful pit-falls include illness, prostitution, and suicide. On the one hand, in these works, women's unhappy fates are manifestations of larger 19th century tendencies to depict feminine morbidity and melancholia.²² On the other hand, I argue that the dreary circumstances that Loti invents for the heroines of *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames* may be read as a critique of French colonial tactics, which imposed precarious situations upon the lives of

²² As Szyliowicz mentions, the romanticized notions of femininity inherent to Loti's exoticism are in many respects reflections of 19th century France's limited cultural views of women's roles: respectable positions that only included marriage and mothering, or religious service. Szyliowicz however, does not draw attention to how fictive women of metropolitan literature, who neglected or rejected those duties, endure fates similar to Loti's heroines' demises: suicide or death by venereal disease. Readers need only be reminded of some of the most famous characters of 19th century French literature such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) or Zola's *Nana* (1880).

indigenous women. Szyliowicz's critique of Loti's gender bias, must be considered in conjunction with critiques of Loti's colonialist bent. I proceed by taking into account precisely how he has been seen as sympathetic to the French colonial projects of expansionism.

A singular allusion to Loti, which Marguerite Duras makes in one of her "autofictive" novels, implies that the exoticist was responsible for Frenchmen's attraction to the colonies as a desirable place to settle. Duras's mention of Loti obliquely labels the writer as a colonial propagandist. She evokes him in the opening of *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1958) and suggests that his literature operated as a kind of enticement.

Suzanne, the narrator of *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, recalls the deceitful seduction that the literature of exoticism exerted upon her provincial parents. She cites Loti as her parents' original inspiration for their decision to go to Indochina, that *grande colonie française* as follows:

Elle se maria avec un instituteur qui, comme elle, se mourait d'impatience dans un village du Nord, victime comme elle des ténébreuses lectures de Pierre Loti. Peu après leur mariage, il firent ensemble leur demande d'admission dans les cadres d'enseignement colonial et ils furent nommés dans cette grande colonie que l'on s'appelait alors l'Indochine française. (Duras 18)

She married a teacher who, like herself, was bored to death in a Northern town and who was also a victim of shady readings by Pierre Loti. Just after their marriage, together they made their request for admission into the colonial education cadres and they were assigned to that great colony that used to be called French Indochina.

The comment on Loti summarizes his ideological infamy as a fraud whom misrepresented dismal French colonial realities.

The novel is set in colonial Vietnam c. 1920s, and tells the tale of the absurd projects undertaken by a French family. Duras lifts the veil from an exoticized version of colonial Indochina, the dark and mysterious tropical civilization described by Loti in, for instance, his Asian travelogue *Un Pèlerin d'Angkor* (1912). She portrays a bleak urban and rural colonial world.

Duras's contempt for Loti is evident as Suzanne says that her parents were victims who seem almost fooled into going abroad after reading his books. *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* is the unfortunate unfolding of those *victims'* lives in the colony. M.K. Miller writes, "Duras's use of the word "victim" inculcates Loti's fiction for the devastating effects of its misrepresentation. . ." (M.K. Miller 42). The victims of this novel are *petits-colons*. The disillusionment with France's colonial intrusion on traditional cultures or the subjugation of colonized people is a denunciation of French colonialism that is ancillary to the subjugation of the *colons*.²³

Dating from the same period as Duras's *Un Barrage* and touching upon a description of Loti's Indochina, in *Le Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) Aimé

²³ Duras's title refers to the "devastating" aftermath of a *barrage* (dam) built by Suzanne's mother, a dejected colonialist functionary. The novel's machinations take place before the backdrop of the dam that stands in ruins against the ocean tides. The ruined dam stands as an extended metaphorical subplot of the inherent labor-in-vain involved in the French colonial project. The overt story line is more poignant than this possible subtext. *Un barrage* portrays the descent of a French family into a state of near dementia. Meanwhile, the fates of Indochinese characters remain unexplored. The plight of aughtotone servants and neighbors who built the dam are of lesser narrative import than the plights of the French family. Duras's novel portrays an abhorrent French colonial venture largely in terms of the distress suffered by colonialists.

Césaire holds the author responsible for his writing on a massacre of Vietnamese. Césaire reveals Loti as a sympathetic figure to the French colonial violence taken against Indochinese resistance. He refers to a bloody journalistic account of a battle waged against the *Annamese* (Indochinese), which Loti wrote and published in *Le Figaro* in 1883. This footnote from *Le Discours contre le colonialisme* cites lines taken from Loti's report:

...il s'agit du récit de la prise de Thouan-An paru dans *Le Figaro* en septembre 1883 et cité dans le livre de N. Serban: *Loti sa vie, son oeuvre*. « Alors la grande tuerie avait commencé. On avait fait des feux de salve-deux ! et c'était un plaisir de voir ces gerbes de balles, si facilement dirigeables, s'abattre sur eux deux fois par minute, au commandement d'une manière méthodique et sûre... On voyait d'absolument fous, qui se revelaient pris d'un vertige de courir... Ils faisaient zigzag et tout de travers cette course de la mort, se retroussant jusqu'aux reins d'une manière comique... et puis on s'amusait à compter les morts ... » etc.

(*Discours sur le colonialisme* note 1, 17)

...the account of the taking of Thuan-An which appeared in *Le Figaro* in September 1883 and is quoted in N. Serban's book, *Loti, sa vie, son oeuvre*. "Then the great slaughter had begun. They had fired double-salvos! and it was a pleasure to see these sprays of bullets, and were so easy to aim, come down on them twice a minute, surely and methodically, on command... I saw some who were quite mad and stood up seized with a dizzy desire to run... They zigzagged, running every which way in this race with death, holding their garments up around their waists in a comical way... and then I amused ourselves counting the dead, etc." (*Discourse on Colonialism*, Trans. Pinkham, Footnote 1, 19)

Césaire's consideration of Loti based on this article, casts the writer as a figure who stood in bemused support of French colonial warfare waged against innocents:

Et les voluptés sadiques, les innommables jouissances qui vous frissellent la carcasse de Loti quand il tient au bout de sa lorgnette d'officier un bon massacre d'Annamites? Vrai ou pas vrai? Et si ces faits sont vrais, comme il n'est au pouvoir de personne de nier, dira-t-on, pour les minimiser, que ces cadavres prouvent rien?

(*Discours sur le colonialisme* 17)

And the sadistic pleasures, the nameless delights that send voluptuous quivers through Loti's carcass when he focuses his field glasses on a good massacre of the Annamese? True or not true? And if these things are true, as no one can deny, well it be said, in order to minimize them, that these corpses don't prove anything? (*Discourse on colonialism* 19)

Le Discours sur le colonialisme is a thorough condemnation of the intentional misconduct wrought by French colonialism: Césaire's thought can not be discounted. As he goes about decrying French *savagery*, Césaire begins the *Discours* writing, "First I must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetous, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism;" (*Discours* 13). Césaire's unmasking of Loti's titillation and sadism that his report on the *Annamese* massacre is a convincing exposé of wherein the naval officer, Loti/ Viaud's sympathies lay: on the side of the French colonial army.

Nevertheless, I contend that Loti's works, *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames*, may add to Césaire's project to "study how colonization works." Given that Loti is the 19th century exoticist *par excellence*, and given that numerous writers and critics (Césaire, Duras, Todorov, Miller, Hartman, Sylowicz, et.al.) have documented Loti's status as

an exoticist blameworthy of the aesthetic and ideological problems inherent in exoticism, his fiction sheds light upon late 19th century colonial mindsets. Inauthentic, hypocritical, chauvinistic, in collusion with, and in deliberate collaboration with French colonials—Loti's work represents patterns to show how colonialism and exoticism work together.

Exotic Mirages?

Tzvetan Todorov's *Nous et les autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* includes a chapter on exoticism in which Todorov draws lines to distinguish between Loti's literature of exoticism and his colonial novels. Todorov interprets his first two novels *Aziyadé* and *Le Mariage de Loti* as the realms of enchanted exoticism due to his reading of a glorification of and enchantment with foreign realms and foreigners. Todorov considers Loti's the works on Turkey and Tahiti as examples of *exoticism*. Thus according to this critic, exoticism does not work within harsh colonial French contexts. T. Todorov, summarizes the plot of *Le Roman* as follows, "Il y a bien eu un mirage exotique au début, l'attrait de l'inconnu, mais ce mirage est dissipé, et Jean rêve maintenant de retourner chez les siens, dans son village des Cévennes; . . ." (Todorov 351) ("At first, he [Jean] experiences the exotic mirage, the attraction of the unknown, but the mirage dissipates rapidly, and Jean dreams of going back to his own people, to his village in the Cévennes; . . .")(Todorov, trans. Catherine Porter, 319). Todorov's reading suggests that exoticism does reveal indigenes who are subject to colonial denigration. According to him *Le Roman*, Loti's first work on a French African colony, is where exoticism gives way to the impediments of colonialism. Thus he considers *Le Roman* a colonial novel, and

deems it as follows: “*Le Roman d’un Spahi* est un livre raciste et impérialiste, sexiste et sadique. . .” (Todorov 354) (“*The Romance of a Spahi* is racist, imperialist, sexist, and sadistic. . .”) (Todorov, trans. Catherine Porter 322). Indeed, the novel presents “troublesome natives,” hostile climates, and pitiless violence committed against “innocent” Frenchmen in the name of local Africans’ sovereignty. Because the story takes place the Senegambian hinterlands and the old French colonial city of St. Louis, because it is about a colonial soldier (a *spahi*), and due to its disillusioned conclusion, Todorov calls *Le Roman d’un spahi* a “*roman colonial*” instead of “*exotisme*.”

However, only in limited and obvious senses does Todorov correctly distinguish the geo-political and ethnic differences between the exoticism of *Aziyadé*, *Le Mariage de Loti*, and the colonialism of *Le Roman*. Todorov appears to consider Turkey and the Pacific islands (*Aziyadé* and *Le Mariage de Loti*) as settings, which are more illustrative of the *exotic*, as opposed to a colonial *Franco-African* colonial backdrop. Todorov also views the melancholia experienced in Africa by the *spahi* hero of *Le Roman* as incompatible with the exuberant passion of exoticism.²⁴ Insofar as Turkey was not strictly speaking a French colony, Todorov is correct that *Aziyadé* is not a *roman colonial*. Brahimi elucidates the difference in the clearest terms :

Dans l’ensemble constitué par ses trois premiers romans, *Aziyadé* (1879), *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880), *Le Roman d’un Spahi* (1881), unis par l’exotisme et par de fortes ressemblances structurelles, le dernier seul peut être rangé dans la catégorie du roman colonial, et d’abord pour des raisons très objectives. La Turquie décrite dans *Aziyadé* n’est pas une colonie, même si elle se débat dans les années 1876-1877 évoquées par l’auteur, pour sauvegarder son indépendance,

²⁴ however , Todorov fails to keep in mind that even the most classic and colorful French exoticism involves melancholia and disillusionment with the colonies. The foremost text of French exoticism, St. Bernardin’s *Paul et Virginie* (1789), is set in the French colony of present-day Mauritius—that novel concludes with the death of Virginie. This work of supreme exoticism is nothing short of melancholic.

notamment contre les Russes. La Tahiti du *Mariage de Loti*... est unie à la France par des traités de protectorat, et il n'y a pas encore à date d'"Etablissements français" en Océanie. Le Sénégal en revanche est soumis à une violente action de colonisation, qui poursuit sous la Troisième République l'oeuvre bien avancée par le Second Empire.²⁵

In the ensemble that his first three novels constitute, *Aziyadé* (1879), *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880), *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (1881), united by exoticism and by strong structural similarities, the last is the only one that can be categorized as a "colonial novel," and first of all for very objective reasons. Turkey, described in *Aziyadé* is not a colony, even if she was fighting to save her independence against the Russians in the years 1876 to 1877 evoked by the author. The Tahiti of the *Mariage de Loti* is tied to France by protectorate treaties, and there is not yet any "Etablissements français" in Oceania. Senegal on the other hand, is submitted to colonialization's violent action that followed under the third Republic the already advanced work of the Second Empire.

However, in contrast to these assertions, Bongie argues that Loti's *Aziyadé* is indeed the commencement of Loti's fictive writing about the European imperial occupation.

Throughout Loti's entire *oeuvre* Bongie reads signs of an exoticist project in which he also views expressions of European imperialism, colonialism, and expansionism. In Bongie's *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle*, the critic situates *Aziyadé* within a historical episode of imperial expansionism and violence: the Russo-Turkish wars. Bongie makes it clear that although the Turkey of *Aziyadé* is not a French colony, the portrayal of that country is hardly disconnected from imperial global politics of the day. The English naval officer Loti serves in Turkey under the guise of imperial British defense against the Russian incursions upon the Balkans.

²⁵ Denise Brahimî, *Pierre Loti, du roman exotique au roman colonial*. (Paris: Harmattan, 1982), 15-16.

Bongie presents *Aziyadé* as Loti's inaugural work wherein readers discover the initial series of colonial images that have no true referents apart from the self-aggrandizing illusions of "*Loti*" travelling throughout colonial spheres. His first two anonymous books (*Aziyadé* and *Le Mariage de Loti*) feature a British sailor named "*Loti*," and the following works were written and signed by Pierre *Loti*. Bongie points out how the character and author named Loti come to represent an omnipresent versions of the colonial subject *Loti*—characters such as the naval officer named Loti in *Aziyadé* and *Le Mariage de Loti*, or the entirely fictive Jean Peyral, the military hero of *Le Roman*, or the nameless omniscient narrators. They are all insertions and inscriptions of the subjective stances of a European colonial.

Bongie also asserts that within Loti's expressions of exoticism, one finds significant imagery to contrast to the symbols of colonialism. For Bongie, exoticism dilutes what the exoticist perceives of as the modern menace which colonialism's threatening geopolitical project embodies. Bongie states, "[the] exoticist project attempts to defuse the supposed threat that for the exotic imaginary proves indissociable from the specifically modern form of territorial expansion that I will refer to as *colonialism*. (*Ibid.*, 11). Insofar as Bongie views an exotic imaginary as indissociable from colonialism, I agree with him concerning Loti's narratives. Nonetheless, ultimately Bongie differentiates exoticism, which is to say *exotic* memories of imagined but expired grandeur, to the impingement of colonialism.

For Bongie, the exoticism of *Aziyadé* or *Le Roman*, is a narrative mode seeking traditional "primitive" utopias that never existed. This is a literary project to describe alternate spaces sought out by Europeans tired of the individualistic and

degraded Europe. Historical and changing European culture stands in opposition to the exoticists' visions of static, primitive, and traditional culture. The *Exotic Memories* of Bongie's title refers to "remembering" the imagined and paradisaical places. He writes of the rapid changes from the end of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century in Europe's cultural history as what prompted memories of better or more traditional places:

... an epochal shift from a traditional to a modern society... Modernity has taken the place of tradition; a writing and colonizing society has devastated a primitive oral culture; and so on. But what the critic of exoticism knows and repeatedly brings into the fore—unlike its less self-conscious practitioners—is that such narratives of loss are indeed nothing more (or less) than stories, *ex post facto* hypotheses that do not, and cannot correspond to the reality of historical change. And in this knowledge lies the critical difference between my own use of this melancholy (hi)story and the sort of unproblematic belief in cultural decline characteristic of so many nineteenth and twentieth century exotic texts. (*Memories* 6)

By pointing to the oblivion on the part of those whom he calls exoticism's "less self-conscious practitioners," (exoticist writers) Bongie asserts his belief that the exoticist writer misinterprets the destruction of the cultures; exoticists invent melancholic narratives of loss. Thus, Loti envisions ahistorical people whose previously pristine and static civilizations are doomed to suffer the cultural changes and devastation brought on by the European imposition of colonialism. Bongie considers Loti's realms of exoticism as pure fantasy.

Clearly, Bongie makes keen insights regarding what he views as the exoticist's quest for nostalgic alternative utopias. However, the question that I wish

to consider is whether it is possible to subtract or extract exoticism from Loti's colonial representations, or to extract colonialism from Loti's exoticist expression, as Chris Bongie attempts to do. I shall bring to light the signs of Loti's exoticism and modern colonialist descriptions that are nearly analogous. As Julien Viaud's biography as an exoticist writer and illustrator reveals a man whose artistic expression was immersed in a French colonial career, his writing shows that exoticism is an inseparable weave of exoticist fictions and historical colonial facts. The relationship between colonialism and exoticism in *Le Roman* and *Les Trois Femmes* is *not* an oil and water bond wherein one can examine exoticism floating on top of a modern colonial mainspring. Within *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames*, the effects of the colonizers' modern European civilization actually create worlds of exoticism: the colonial and the exotic are homogenized.

A Colonial Exotic Hybrid—The Story of the *Spahi*, Assimilating the Exotic

In the presentation of the introductory chapter of this thesis, I discuss Victor Segalen's wish for an exoticism of *Le Divers*; exoticism that throws overboard the *oripeaux* ("trash") of colonial imagery exemplified by Segalen's evocation of the *casque colonial*. In strictly literal terms, the colonial helmet is absent from *Le Roman d'un Spahi*. The *casque colonial* is a metonymy for a defensive/offensive presence of colonial soldiers. In *Le Roman*, an Orientalist fez replaces the *casque colonial*. The novel's protagonist, Jean Peyral, a young French soldier sent to Senegal for five years, lovingly dons his fez. Thus, from the novel's onset, Jean Peyral is a manifestation and a sign of exoticism: a figure in whom the exotic and the colonial are united by his outward appearances, his desires, his imagined possession of

Senegal, and his actions. In Bongie's terms, by which the exotic far off and unattainable, this is an apparent contradiction. I consider the European colonial a character of exoticism. The *spahi* is a strange inverted figure of *assimilation*. First, I shall explain French assimilation policy, and secondly, I shall define *spahi*.

The Colonial Empire's New Clothes

With the ascendance of France's colonial supremacy of the Third Republic, the official policy of French colonialism was *assimilation*. Assimilation refers to France's ideological enactment of the belief that it was best to encourage colonized indigenes to conform to universalist French cultural norms and customs. Raymond Betts describes assimilation as follows, "Assimilation can be considered the traditional colonial doctrine of France. Although variously interpreted, in essence it meant that the colony was to become an integral, if noncontiguous, part of the mother country, with its society and population made over—to whatever extent possible in her image."²⁶ The French assimilationist mission included, but was not limited to, capricious attempts to encourage French speaking and literacy among select members of colonial society, who were then deemed *évolués* in the conspicuous language of colonialism.²⁷ The practice of Christianity, and adoption of Christian morality and familial configurations based on an occidental model, also figured in France's *mission civilisatrice*. However, the process of assimilation or forced acculturation was never straightforward—in fact, assimilation is a very contradictory notion. In a chapter entitled, "Assimilation: a colonialist stratagem in writing," in *Colonial myths* (2000),

²⁶ Betts, 8

²⁷ By conspicuous language of colonialism, I refer to hierarchical pseudo-social scientific terminology such as "*primitif*," "*natif*," or "*évolué*."

Azzedine Haddour writes that in Algeria, assimilation “meant solely the assimilation of land.” (Haddour 18). This is a deviation from the stated assimilationist theory as the adoption of French cultural norms by indigenes. Instead, according of Haddour, Europeans settlers moved to Algeria and expropriated land to assimilate Algerian land into European possession. Haddour describes assimilation as follows:

Assimilation was adopted as a stratagem, in order to pacify and mystify this people. The ideology of assimilation endeavoured to establish and maintain French coloniality. It was an ideology in the sense that it inverted the meaning of its content to mean exactly the opposite. (Haddour 18)

The figure of the *spahi* is an example in which the sense of assimilation is equally “inverted.” French colonial soldiers camouflaged themselves as natives.

From the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, French colonies were policed by and under military rule of French and indigenous enlisted cavalrymen called *spahis*. These men (French, African, Maghrebin, Asian, etc.) *assimilated* an exotic “native” identity in dress and lifestyle—an identity that appears to be largely invented. In a self-published pamphlet called *Exotic Cavalry in Europe* (1955),²⁸ Edward Tinker provides the following explanation for the name of France’s *Spahi* corps:

The *Spahis* have been part of the French armed forces for over a century, and have left a long and honorable tradition behind them. There are several explanations of the origin of their name. One is that it derives from the Arabic *Spah*, meaning “matitudinal,” and was given to them because they got up so early; another, more plausible, that it comes from the Turkish or Persian word for “cavalier,” *Sipahi*; while a third insists that they were so called by their first commander, Yusuf, after a cavalry division created by Sultan Mourad I. (Tinker 7)

²⁸Edward Larocque Tinker *Exotic Cavalry in Europe: The Spahis of France, The Guardia Mora of Spain*, (New York: Pamphlet Galord Binder, 1955), also cited as *The Spahis*, reprinted from *The American Society of the Legion of Honor Magazine*, Summer 1955 issue.

Tinker mentions that the Turkish or Persian word for cavalier is the most plausible etymology of the word “spahi.” In the French imagination, the Ottomans symbolized powerful imperial rulers who had exerted control over parts of Europe, Asia Minor, and the Balkans for centuries. Before French colonization of the Maghreb, Ottomans commanded regions of North Africa that became French, including regions of Algeria and Tunisia. Thus, the French *spahi* corps adopting the Ottoman dress signifies an imitation of another powerful empire’s clothing—Algiers was a part of the Ottoman Empire until French domination. The adoption of local dress by the French army was also an effort to blend into the regional culture—colonials took pains to camouflage French coloniality. The *spahis*, trained primarily in counter insurrection, did not look the part of foreign colonials who had come to rule. Indeed, many of them were not French; the original *spahis* were native to Algeria. The French recruits assimilated into their *spahi* corps by wearing the local (exotic) costume.

By the end of the 19th century, all colonial mounted soldiers were *spahis*: from the Sub-Saharan *Spahis soudanais* to the Indochinese *Spahis tonkinois*. *Spahis* were recruited from both the metropolitan French population and the indigenous populations of the colonies. Regardless of ethnic, cultural, regional identities, *spahis* sported the signs of a French model of Orientalism based on the Ottoman archetype. Their uniforms included stylized attributes and articles descended from the dress of Asia Minor. A red fez (*chéchia*), a large outer garment (*burnous*) held in place with braids of camel hair, red jacket and vest in *Zouave* style comprised the *spahi* regalia. In addition to which, *spahis* wore a camel hair cloak (*haik*) and pale blue baggy

Turkish pants with a red sash. The exoticism inherent in the dress of the *spahi* corps is a hybrid fantasy based on the assimilation of the exoticized figure (the Ottoman ruler) into the colonial identity (a French soldier).

The *spahi* incarnates an Orientalist exoticist reverie just as the word *spahi*, and the dress, evoke “Ottoman” Orientalism. The *Roman d'un spahi* takes place far from the Ottoman Empire. In Senegal, the *spahi* corps consisted of French and the indigenous *spahis soudanais*. Nonetheless, the *spahi* uniform worn by indigenous African corps members and Frenchmen maintained the Oriental appearance.

Thus, the *spahi* is an invention in which I view an inverted assimilation policy. *Spahis* dressed in Orientalist garb and resembled characters of *Thousand and One Nights*,²⁹ as if to better *assimilate*, or blend into the local cultures of the colonies. The first *spahis*' dress (that is to say, the Algerians who took the French side against resistant ethnic groups) had some continuity with the local culture, even if their nationalist sympathies lay with the French colonial regime. However, towards the last quarter of the 19th century, when Loti writes, it did not matter if the *spahis* were in Paris, North Africa, or West Africa, and thus, the uniform was exoticist adornment.³⁰

The *spahi* corps is the embodiment of an “invented tradition,” reflected in the fact that the French and the indigenous cavalymen were named and dressed *à la*

²⁹ On page 5 of Tinker writes, “As they sat in their mediaeval saddles, they looked as though they had ridden straight out of the “Thousand and One Nights”; *The Exotic Cavalry of Europe*.

³⁰ Tinker continues by describing the *spahi* culture, that had become a ill established “invented tradition” by 1955, at the time when he published his article. According to him, *spahi* culture placed emphasis on the love of their uniforms, love of women, and most of all, love of their horses—Tinker provides a romantic and inaccurate view of the *spahis*, as he fails to note that Frenchmen were also *spahis*—he portrays them as if they were all Algerians. Furthermore, he neglects to reveal the

Turque, to maintain cultural affinities between colonial authority and local culture—even when the local culture of a place such as Senegal, was never an Ottoman stronghold. The hero of *Le Roman d'un spahi*, Jean Peyral, assimilates his exotic identity as a *spahi*. This identity is based upon his role as an exotic colonial soldier.

Le Roman d'un Spahi—*The Archetypal Cadre Exotique*

The actual historical *spahis* and the fictive hero of *Le Roman*, Jean Peyral, are figures of exoticism that are in some senses hybrid combinations of cultural difference and ethnic variation. Before describing Peyral, it is worth describing Jean's best friend Nyaour Fall. He is a Sengalese *spahi*, who integrates several of the tropes of exoticism, which I have cited. Fall is both orientalized and compared to classical marble statuary.

Mais le véritable ami de Jean, c'était Nyaour Fall, le spahi noir, un géant africain de la magnifique race Fouta-Diallonké: singulière figure impassible, avec un fin profil arabe et un sourire mystique à demeure sur ses lèvres minces: une belle statue de marbre noir.

But Jean's true friend was Nyaour Fall, the black spahi, an African giant of the magnificent Fouta-Diallonké race: singular impassible face, with a fine Arab profile, and a mystical smile that rests on his thin lips: a beautiful black marble statue. (*Le Roman* 38)

This description specifies that Nyaour Fall was of the magnificent "Fouta-Diallonké race," or *Fulani*, *Peulh*, or *Toucouleur* ethnicity. This is a trope that might fit nicely in a lexicon of African exoticism. Jean-Loup Amselle has shown in *Logiques Métisses* that the *Peulh* of the Sahel are one of the ethnic groups most dear to

modernity of the *spahis* who were officially armed with only a saber until W.W.I. but there are pictures of them carrying carbines prior to this.

ethnographers. Moreover, according to Amselle, the *Peulh* are, in various senses, a fabricated colonial construct.³¹ Nyaor Fall is positively identified as a member of the magnificent “Fouta-Diallonké race, and he also possesses the generic *singulière figure impassible* (singular impassible face), which is assigned to so many exotic characters. The impassible, immobile, native face reappears continuously in the literature of exoticism. It is not surprising that an indigenous Senegalese *spahi* character might embody various exoticist tropes. However, the Frenchmen Jean Peyral is equally exoticized.

The narrator of *Le Roman* draws much attention to the origins, outfits and outer appearances of the *spahis*. Jean Peyral comes from the *Cévennes*, a rural and isolated region in southern France. Yet, the novel’s first pages denote Jean’s Orientalist traits, aspects that are comparable to his friend Nyoar Fall’s. Jean’s race is evoked, his skin is described as “*basané*” (tan), his eyes are long like those of “Arabs,” and he wears his ubiquitous fez.

C’était un homme de haute taille, portant la tête droite et fière; il était de pure race blanche, bien que le soleil d’Afrique eût déjà fortement basané son visage et sa poitrine. Ce spahi était extrêmement beau, d’une beauté mâle et grave, avec de grands yeux clairs, allongés comme des yeux d’Arabe; son fez, rejeté en arrière, laissait échapper une mèche de cheveux bruns qui retombaient au hasard sur son large front pur.

La veste rouge seyait admirablement à sa taille cambrée; il y avait dans toute sa tournure un mélange de souplesse et de force.

Il était d’ordinaire sérieux et pensif; mais son sourire avait une grâce féline et découvrait des dents d’une rare blancheur. (*Ibid.*, 8-9)

³¹ Jean-Loup Amselle goes so far as to claim that there was no such thing as a bounded ethnic group in precolonial Africa, *Logiques Métisses*

He was a tall man, carrying his head straight and proud; he was of the pure white race, although the African sun had already deeply tanned his face and chest. This *spahi* was extremely handsome, he had a serious and male beauty, with big light eyes, spread out like Arabs' eyes, his fez, pushed back, let a lock of brown hair escape, which hung casually on his large pure forehead.

The red jacket went well with his slender waist, there was in his entire stance, a mix of suppleness and grace.

Normally, he was serious and pensive, but his smile had a feline grace and uncovered his exceptionally white teeth.

Peyral's physiognomy incorporates several attributes of the clichéd exotic figure. He *was* of a pure white race (*il était de pure race blanche*) but, his skin had become *basané*—a word that is difficult to translate, as it denotes not so much “tan,” as simply dark skinned *otherness*.³² Jean Peyral's smile is animal-like. In the aforementioned, *Les clichés de la femme exotique*, a chapter entitled, “Bestiaire,” involves a subheading, “Quelques Métaphores animalières de la Femme Exotique chez Loti,” under which is found a section on “Le singe,” followed by “Les chatteries.” Yee devotes an entire chapter to Loti's “exoticizing” bestial characterizations of women. Hence, Jean Peyral's animal-like attribute (*une grâce féline*,) is a cliché of exoticism. The bright outfit, his masculine beauty (*une beauté mâle*,) his feline grace, and his fez are all manifestations of Jean Peyral's hybrid exoticist characterization.

³² In one telling dictionary definition, *basané* is defined first as *noirâtre*...blackish? *MicroRobert*, 1980.

At various points, he described as a *pauvre petit paysan*; this is an identity seemingly at odds with his colonial exotic spahi appearance. Indeed, Jean is disconcerted by his exiled persona within the colonial *exotique*.

Pourquoi l'avait-on exilé sur cette terre d'Afrique? Quoi de commun entre lui et ce pays? Et ce costume rouge et ce fez arabe, dont on l'affublé, et qui pourtant lui donnaient si grand air,—quel déguisement pour lui, pauvre petit paysan des Cévennes! (*Ibid.*, 18)

Why did they exile him to this African land? What did he have in common with this country? And this red uniform and this Arab fez that they stuck him with, even if they gave him such a distinguished look,—what a disguise for him, poor little peasant from the *Cévennes*!

With this nostalgic memory of France and of Jean's former-self, Loti presents the character as longing for a French hearth and haven where his parents and fiancée wait for him. He intermittently suffers great distress as an exiled Frenchman in Africa. These recollections of his old identity are not in accordance with Bongie's conception of exoticism. Here, the melancholic and ultimately impossible alternative to the *spahi*'s colonial/exotic world turns out to be the *Cévennes*. This is nostalgia in its most commonly understood sense: homesickness. However, Jean's nostalgic longing takes form in various guises. He desires an escape from one exoticist construct of *ce costume rouge et ce fez arabe* (this red uniform and Arab fez), to another construct of the *pauvre petit paysan des Cévennes*! (the poor little peasant from the *Cévennes*!). However, given the opportunity to return to his homeland, France, he decides to stay in *his* Senegal:

Hélas! il aimait son Sénégal, le malheureux; il s'en apercevait bien maintenant; il y était attaché par une foule de liens intimes et mystérieux. Il était comme fou de joie à l'idée de ce retour;—mais il tenait au pays de sable, à la maison de Samba-Hamet, —même à toute cette grande tristesse morne,—même à ces excès de chaleur et de lumière. (*Ibid.*, 193)

Alas, he loved his Senegal, the unfortunate, he really realized it now, he was attached to it by a host of intimate and mysterious ties. He was insanely happy with the idea of his return;— but he had taken to the sandy country, to Samba-Hamet's house,—even to all the great mournful sadness, even to the excesses of heat and light.

In this citation, Jean is a colonial Frenchman, who fallaciously assumes possession of *his* Senegalese land. He is also a highly artificial construct, and a figure of exoticism.

Although the narration says that he loves his Senegal, Jean does not actually engage himself with, or immerse himself in Senegalese culture. Instead he becomes consumed by the exoticism of the *spahi* identity—he begins to embody the invented tradition. By the third part of the novel, Jean no longer feels disguised as a *spahi*, he fully assumes his *grand air* (of exoticism). He loves his outfit, his sword, his horse—he has assimilated the Orientalized, colonialist, exoticist reverie. His identity and manhood becomes a fully realized hybrid mix of a French colonial soldier and exoticized hero.

C'était sous le costume rouge qu'il avait appris la vie, c'était sur le sol d'Afrique qu'il s'était fait homme, et, plus qu'il ne le croyait; il aimait tout cela: il aimait son fez arabe, son sabre, son cheval,—son grand pays maudit, son désert. (*Ibid.*, 275)

It was in the red uniform that he had learned about life, it was on African land that he became a man, and more that he knew, he loved it all: he loved his Arab fez, his sword, his horse—his great and damned land, his desert.

The reiterated possessive pronoun *son* (his) (*son fez arabe, son sabre, son cheval,—son grand pays maudit, son désert*) suggests the relationship of “inverted” assimilation to which Haddour refers. Jean’s assimilation into Senegal is punctuated by the love for *his* country, *his* desert, as if he asserts control over *his* French colony. As he assimilates *spahi* manhood, he (mistakenly) assumes possession of Senegal. Jean becomes emblematic of the most poignant artificial colonial fantasy put into action—possession and occupation of another culture. Thus, I have attempted to show how Jean Peyral is an exotic: His physiognomy, his costume, and his hyperbolized attachments to both Africa and France are emblematic of an exoticist character.

I shall now examine to the book’s heroine Fatou-gaye who, unlike Jean, is a stereotypical exoticist character in the eyes of most scholars. Fatou-gaye is Jean’s African mistress who tries to keep the *spahi* from leaving Africa; she prevents him from going back to France where Jean is expected to marry. I agree with the notion that Fatou-gaye is a figure of exoticism, as she is described in hybrid, artificial, and picturesque terms. Her descriptions range from “une vraie odalisque” (*Ibid.*, 136) (a true odalisque), to “un singe” (a monkey,) to a “petite négresse comique” (*Ibid.*, 49) (a little comical negresse). It has been pointed out again and again by critics previously cited, (Yee, Szyliowicz, Todorov, Miller, and Bongie) the negative ways in which *Le Roman* portrays the indigenous Senegalese woman. It is customary to read Fatou-gaye as representative of an African racial and gender stereotype.³³

³³ The narrative in some respects, is comparable to the ways some modern readers object to Mark Twain’s *The Adventures Huckleberry Finn* (1884), as Huck expresses his simple acceptance of the principles of slavery and uses racial stereotypes and the insulting term “nigger” to refer to the runaway Jim. The writer, Twain, however poses less of a conjectural problem, as he was unequivocally liberal on racial issues.

What I wish to reveal in this examination of Loti's portrait of Fatou-gaye are the expressions of racism that pertain most specifically to the utterances of the *spahi* characters—Jean Peyral and his *spahi* peers sustain many of the novel's askew racial visions. The narration also upholds dated conceptions of race: the novel persistently expresses essentialist perspectives regarding whiteness and blackness, which in this case translates, more or less as, European and African essences. Hence I argue that when the essentialist racial categories are violated, the novel comes to a close.

In *Le Roman* French colonial soldiers provide the most racist comments and at times they act quite violently toward the indigenes. I shall explore further in *Les Trois dame* that the French soldiers are at best, naïve and simple, but at worst, they are sadists. What is interesting in *Le Roman* is that Fatou-gaye is not portrayed as a silent victim to the colonials. The fact that Fatou-gaye defends her humanity in the face of the consistently derisive *spahis*, and that the narrator acknowledges the racial prejudice against her, remains unnoticed in the critical commentary.

Moreover, the divergence between the narrative voices and the characters' voices also has gone unobserved, despite an obtrusive narration contained within the novel. Towards the middle of *Le Roman* an extraordinary four page semi-ethnographic passage on music and *griots* appears. Entitled, "Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appelés griots." (*Ibid.*, 146-149) (Pedantic Digression on Music and on a Category of People Called Griots) this parenthesis in the plot's narrative is relevant to our reading of exoticism in several manners. The narrator questions African culture's subordinate status with respect to European culture. He treats the notion of Senegalese musical "inferiority" with suspicion, as he

takes care to underline musical “*difference*.” (*Ibid.*, 149). Further, the *Digression* on music and *griots* reveals the novel’s unique employ of the word *exotique*. Perhaps the “Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appelés griots” remains unheeded within the large critical commentary on the exoticism of *Le Roman* because it is incompatible with the familiar interpretation of Loti as the pro-colonialist, gender biased, and racist propagandist. I do not wish to redeem Loti as anticolonialist, however this *Digression* is of importance to consider what Loti cites as an “exotic framework.” In fact, the narration on music and griots does not appear in congruence with what we have thus seen as exoticism.

Fatou-gaye—Une petite négresse très comique

The main critique of Loti’s portrayal of Fatou-gaye is that she given a less than human characterization. In the following quotation, M.K. Miller synthesizes the novel’s failure to create a character, who, according to Miller, “is never more or less than radically other.”

[*Le Roman*] narrates his [Peyral’s] corruption and progressive detachment from his parents, village, fiancée, and French provincial life in general, as he immerses himself in Senegal and takes a Senegalese lover. Although the novel explicitly narrates the protagonist’s increasing involvement in Senegalese culture, one finds that Senegal, again like the mistress, is never more nor less than radically other, leaving the protagonist in a no man’s land.
(M.K. Miller 112)

Miller goes on to define what she means by Fatou-gaye’s portrayal as “radically other.” She says that Fatou-gaye is “Other” (the author’s capitalization) according to “the Western male concept of the Other: Woman, African, amoral, and uncivilized.”

(M.K. Miller 112). Miller insists that Fatou-gaye's portrayal is one of, in her words, "inhumanness." She views Loti's depiction of the novel's heroine as follows:

Loti paints the consummate portrait of the lazy, deceitful, dishonest "native," in contrast to the misguided but fundamentally innocent protagonist. Fatou has lied, cheated, stolen; and Jean, though he has tried to sever his ties to her and to Senegal, finds himself irresistibly drawn back to both...the portrait of Fatou culminates in an act of brutality that establishes once and for all her inhumanness [*sic.*], her unnaturalness.

(M.K. Miller 112-113)

The critic refers to plot's conclusion in which Fatou-gaye becomes the tragic mother of Jean Peyral's child. When Jean dies in combat, Fatou-gaye commits infanticide and proceeds to kill herself in grief. According to Miller, this act of infanticide proves her inhumanity according to the novel's logic.

Inasmuch as Miller reads Fatou-gaye as deficient in human characteristics, she is not alone in her criticism. One passage on Fatou-gaye receives the most frequent critical observation. This section involves the Senegalese woman's hands—appendages that Jean compares to those of a monkey.

Les mains de Fatou, qui étaient d'un beau noir au dehors, avaient le dedans rose.

Longtemps cela avait fait peur au spahi : il n'aimait pas voir le dedans des mains de Fatou, qui lui causait malgré lui, une vilaine impression froide de pattes de singe.

Ces mains étaient pourtant petites, délicates—et reliées au bras rond par un poignet très fin.—Mais cette décoloration intérieure, ces doigts teints mi-partie, avaient quelque chose de *pas humain* qui était effrayant. (*Le Roman* 164-165, author's italics)

Fatou's hands, that were beautifully black on the outside, had pink insides.

This had scared the *spahi* for a long time; he did not like to see the insides of Fatou's hands, despite himself, they gave him an ugly cold impression of monkey paws.

Yet, these hands were small, delicate,—and bound to her round arms by a very fine wrist.—But this interior discoloration, these fingers half-colored, had something inhuman about them that was terrifying.

Bongie provides the most theoretical reading of Jean's impressions. He evokes Homi Bhabba's thought on stereotyping and the monkey comparisons are obviously a negative racial stereotype. Bongie considers the passage a "repression of difference," by which "the exotic subject, ...end[s] up producing a negative reading of whatever traces of difference he may encounter." (*Memories* 102-103). Although Bongie applies his effective theory, as well as Bhabba's, he more or less, reiterates the outrage of various critics, who indignantly note Loti's racism in comparing a Senegalese woman to a monkey. Todorov writes, "Jean n'aime pas voir la paume de la main de Fatou, rose et non noire, « qui lui causait, malgré lui, une vilaine impression froide de pattes de singe »..." (Todorov 353) ("Jean does not like to see the palms of Fatou's hands, pink instead of black: "They reminded him of monkey's paws!" (Todorov, trans. Catherine Porter 320). Szyliowicz indignantly notes that, "her hands remind Jean of "monkey paws." (Szyliowicz 78). Yee cites the passage as follows: "...parce qu'elles la rappellent brusquement les mains de Fatou, roses au-dédans, lui causent « une vilaine impression froide de pattes de singe»; ces doigts avaient « quelque chose de *pas humain* qui était effrayant» (italiques de l'auteur)" (Yee121) (...because they brusquely remind him of Fatou's hands, pink on the inside, and cause him "an ugly cold impression of monkey paws;" these fingers had "something *not human* that was frightening." (Loti's italics). Brahimi considers the passage by reflecting on the morality of colonial society, which she believes

prevents Jean from truly loving Fatou-gaye. Brahim writes the following on Fatou-gaye and the monkey comparisons: “Il lui faut démontrer qu’un amour véritable serait ici monstrueux. *Le Roman d’un Spahi* est un roman colonial marqué par du sceau de cette impossibilité. La transgression est mortelle.” (It is necessary for him to show that veritable love would be monstrous.³⁴ *Le Roman d’un Spahi* is a colonial novel marked by the seal of this impossibility. Transgression is mortal.) Brahim makes reference to the fatal outcome for characters, before considering this conclusion, let us reflect on the passage.

It is undeniable that Fatou-gaye is described as simian-like, and nearly inhuman. At any rate, Jean Peyral and his *spahi* colleague (an Alsatian named Fritz Muller) describe her as such. Peyral exclaims in the lingua franca of exoticism, the artificial patois of the indigenes, “*Toi tout à fait même chose comme singe.*” (“You’s the same as a monkey.”) (*Le Roman* 166, author’s italics). To which Loti has Fatou-Gaye angrily reply,

Ah! Tjean! Toi n’y a pas dire a, mon blanc! D’abord, singe, lui, n’y a pas connaît manière pour parler,—et moi connais très bien! (Ibid., 166, author’s italics)

Ah, Ti Jean, you don’t have what to say about it, my whitey. First of all, monkey, he don’t know the way to talk—and I knows very well.

Fatou-Gaye is shrewd to assert her humanity in the face of Jean’s condescension—humans speak and monkeys (animals) do not. Ultimately, Fatou-Gaye has difficulty maintaining her dignity within the colonial order of things: she suffers the casualties of her colonial circumstances. I believe that *Le Roman* actually

, *Pierre Loti, du roman exotique au roman colonial*. (Paris: Harmattan, 1982), 24.

emphasizes the colonial soldiers' racist precepts, which work to undermine Fatou-gaye.

However, critical readings of the character, Fatou-gaye, ironically concede to the *spahi*'s conception of his mistress. Yee finalizes her discussion of the above passage on Fatou-gaye as follows: "Conclusion: c'est un « très joli petit singe »." (Yee 120) (Conclusion: she is a "very pretty little monkey.") This, however, is the *spahis*' and Yee's conclusive thought on this character. Despite the cruelty of the *spahis*, Fatou-gaye does not see herself this way, according to the narration she is critical of those conclusions:

Alors Fritz Muller partit d'un grand éclat de rire,—et puis Jean aussi, en voyant surtout l'air digne et comme il faut que Fatou-gaye s'efforçait de prendre, afin de protester par son maintien contre ces conclusions impolies. (*Le Roman* 166)

Then Fritz Muller left with a burst of laughter,—and then, Jean as well, especially seeing her grave air, and how it was necessary that Fatou-gaye made every effort to attempt to show, by her posture, that she could protest against these impolite conclusions.

Before leaving, Miller repeats two more times, "Très joli petit singe." Previous to that incident, Peyral is cited for using a nickname that means "*petite fille singe*" (little monkey girl).

. . .il l'appelait même, en riant, d'un bizarre nom wolof qui signifiait: *petite fille singe*.'

Elle était très mortifiée, Fatou, de ce nom d'amitié. . .
(*Ibid.*, 166, author's italics)

. . .he even called her, laughing, a strange Wolof name that meant: *little monkey girl*.

Fatou, she was very mortified by this nickname...

Szyliowicz mistakenly comments on the passage as follows, “Jean even nicknames her ‘yolof’, which means little monkey girl.” [*sic*] (Szyliowicz, 78). “Yolof” does not mean “little monkey girl,” Peyral calls her a name in the language “yolof.” He calls her an unspecified word in the Senegalese language *Wolof* that means “monkey.” The critic’s error is indicative of the generalized idle misreadings of Fatou-gaye as a stereotype of an African “other.” Although it would be difficult to argue that Fatou-gaye is an exceptionally smart, moral, or strong character—she is, nonetheless cast as speaking person who *protests* (*afin de protester. . .*) against the way she is treated, and who suffers very human emotions, such as mortification.

Moreover, Fatou-gaye is not uninteresting, as she is caught in colonial entanglement. Her introduction as *une petite négresse très comique* is evocative of Baudelaire’s verse referring to the *albatross*, captured and tortured by the boatmen in the poem *L’Albatros* (1857): *qu’il est comique et laid!* Fatou-gaye is the “comical” captive of Jean’s first unfaithful lover, Cora: Une petite négresse très comique, . . . habitait la maison de Cora en qualité de *captive*. (*Le Roman*, 49, author’s italics) (A little comical negresse, . . . lived in Cora’s house, as a captive.). Moorish slave-traders caught Fatou-gaye as a child, and sold her to Cora.

Elle avait été tout dernièrement amenée à Saint-Louis et vendue comme esclave par des Maures Douaïche, qui l’avaient capturée, dans une de leurs razzias, au pays des Khassonkés. (*Ibid.*, 49)

She had been last brought to Saint-Louis and sold as a slave by the Douaïche Moors, who had captured her in Khassonké country in one of their campaigns.

Before she grows up, Jean would throw the “petite créature” coins (*Ibid.*, 51). Then despite himself, he takes her as a lover. Mostly as a result of this relationship, she

becomes a cast-off by different sectors of Senegalese culture. The novel points out to how she already is alienated from her ethnic group, the *Khassonké*, because at a certain point upon seeing some of her ethnic *confrères*, they will not speak with her.

However, it is the religious moral religious codes of the French and Islamic Senegalese brand her as an out-cast due to her relations with the *spahi*:

Mais avoir, pour soi tout seul, détourné du sentier de la vertu une petite captive de bonne maison, munie du sacrement du baptême,—voilà qui ne saurait être admis...

Elle est *keffir*, (infidèle) qui est *roumi* des Algériens, ou le *giaour* des Orientaux.
(*Ibid.*, 128)

But, to have, for himself alone, turned, a little captive from a good house, away from the path of virtue, bestowed with the baptismal sacrament,—*voilà*, that which could never be allowed...

She is *keffir*, (infidel) that is *roumi* of the Algériens, or the *giaour* of the Orientals.

As a baptized Christian female, whose virtue has been ruined by the *spahi*, her womanly value has been corrupted. As a Christian, she is an *infidel* in the eyes of her Islamic countrymen. Fatou-gaye is labeled a sexual infidel from the Christian perspective, and a religious infidel in the Islamic view of things. Subject to both harsh Christian and Moslem morality, the narrator views Fatou-gaye not so much as an animal, but as a character whose plight is worsened by her dealings with Jean Peyral. In the following citation, the narrator questions Jean's love, conception, and treatment of Fatou-gaye:

Jean aimait-il Fatou-gaye?

Il n'en savait trop rien lui-même, le pauvre spahi. Il la considérait, du reste, comme un être inférieur, l'égal à peu près de son *laobé* jaune; il

ne se donnait guère la peine de chercher à démêler ce qu'il pouvait bien y avoir au fond de cette petite âme noire,—noire comme son enveloppe de Khassonkée (*Le Roman* 179)

Did Jean love Fatou-gaye?

He himself hardly knew, the poor *spahi*. At any rate he considered her to be an inferior being. Somewhat like his yellow *laobé* (dog); he hardly troubled himself to find out and uncover what was really in her little black soul, black like her Khassonké envelope.

These lines have been read with much distaste due to the comparison of Fatou-gaye to Jean's *laobé* (dog,) and the negative racial connotations of a *black soul* (Yee 123; Todorov 320). Nonetheless, it is the *spahi* who considers her to be an inferior being consonant with his dog. The narrator comments on how Jean never took it upon himself to know her "black soul." Loti's evocation of a "black soul" implies that Fatou-gaye's racial difference extends right to her essence—hence Loti's firm belief in racial categories. But, the narrator alludes to how race prejudice is an insidious pretext for her rejection. Jean suffers professional dismissal from his *spahi* superiors: His lack of medals and honors is attributed to the "scandal" involved in his living with a black woman: "Pas de protecteurs, d'abord, et puis surtout, oh! scandale, vivre avec une femme noire!..." (*Ibid.*, 125) (No protectors, and also, especially, oh! scandal, to live with a black woman!...). The narrator does not find Jean's cohabitation with Fatou-gaye scandalous. He presents the hypocrisy of the situation such that, due to Jean's black mistress, the *spahi* loses the esteem of his colonial peers.

Yet, despite the narrator's sympathy for Fatou-gaye, he has no doubt that race determines human qualities. Descriptions of Jean's racial pride suggest that the *spahi*

accords arrogant self-importance to his whiteness. Loti writes, “Quelquefois sa grande fierté se réveillait, sa dignité d’*homme blanc* se révoltait.” (*Le Roman*, 180, author’s italics) (Sometimes his great pride would awaken, and his *white man*’s dignity would arise.). The lines following the evocation of his racial pride, cite that Fatou-gaye had become “bien belle”(very beautiful) (*Ibid.*, 180). It thus appears that despite her beauty, it is Jean’s sense of racial superiority that keeps him from loving her. The novel emphasizes Jean’s racially motivated disgust for African women.

Autrefois Jean, aux premiers moments de son arrivée, avait jeté un regard de dégoût sur cette population noire: à ses yeux, tous se ressemblaient; c’était toujours pour lui le même masque simiesque, et, sous ce poli d’ébène huilé, il n’eût pas su reconnaître un individu d’un autre.

Peu à peu pourtant il s’était fait à ces visages; maintenant il les distinguait; en voyant passer les filles noires aux bracelets d’argent, il les comparait: il trouvait celle-ci laide, celle-là jolie,—celle-ci fine, celle-là bestiale; —les négresses avait pour lui une physionomie tous comme les femmes blanches, et lui répugnaient moins.
(*Le Roman* 103)

Before, Jean, in the first days of his arrival, threw disgusted glances on this black population: Before his eyes, they all resembled one another; it was always the same monkey-like mask, and under that polish of oiled ebony, he was not able to recognize one individual from another.

Little by little however, he became used those faces; now he distinguished them; in seeing the black girls with silver bracelets pass by, he compared them: he found this one ugly, that one pretty,—this one here refined, that one there beast-like;—the *negresses* had for him a physiognomy exactly like white women, and they disgusted him less.

Jean begins to view Africans as beautiful or ugly, in a manner comparable to his assessment of white women. While his misogyny is apparent regardless of whether he is viewing African or French women, he is given to a less prejudicial outlook in

terms of race. However, toward the end of the plot's machinations, Jean's racism returns with a vengeance. He assumes a sadistic and an increasingly self-righteous point of view based on his color. By the last chapter, when Jean discovers that Fatou-gaye has stolen a beloved watch that his father gave to him, the *spahi's* misogyny and sense of racial superiority intensify. It seems to him that his perfect racial composition as *homme blanc* is sullied, and he becomes pathological. Jean begins to cruelly beat Fatou-gaye and banishes her in an attempt to regain his *white man's* dignity. "Il lui semblait d'ailleurs qu'il avait retrouvé sa dignité de d'*homme blanc*, souillée par le contact de cette chair noire;" (*Le Roman* 263, author's italics) (It seemed to him that he had rediscovered his white man's dignity, sullied by the contact of this black flesh,). The banishment proves useless when he discovers that she is the mother of his son. Consumed with narcissistic pride, Jean finds their child irresistible, as the infant resembles him physically. Once again, the *spahi* becomes receptive to Fatou-gaye.

In spite of this glimmer of hope that Fatou-gaye and Jean might be able to get along by virtue of Jean's newfound paternal tenderness, the novel concludes with the entire family's horrible death. Jean perishes in a battle against an indomitable African ethnic group led by a character named Boubakar-Ségou. Boubakar-Ségou helped his region successfully resist French colonization and his forces slaughter the *spahis*. After the battle, Boubakar-Ségou's people strip the dead soldiers' uniforms of valuable buttons and the contents of their pockets. The infanticide and Fatou-gaye's suicide result from her grief after viewing Jean slain in the aftermath of the battle.

The final lines describe the three cadavers (Jean, Fatou-gaye and the baby) rotting in the sun.

Demain, de grands vautours chauves continueront l'oeuvre de destruction,—et leurs os traîneront sur le sable, éparpillés par toutes les bêtes du désert,—et leurs crânes blanchiront au soleil, fouillés par le vent et par les sauterelles. (*Ibid.*, 359)

Tomorrow, the great bald vultures will continue the work of their destruction,—and their bones will be laid out on the sand, spread about by all the desert beasts, —and their skulls will whiten in the sun, probed by the wind and grasshoppers.

The novel's apotheosis neutralizes Jean's racial pride, as the entire family is reduced to vulture fodder and bones bleaching in the sun. Chris Bongie considers *Le Roman*'s end as a demonstration of the *impossibility* of the fictive exotic realm, as Jean is killed fighting against an indigenous sovereignty. The hero's classically morbid *fin-de-siècle* death bolsters Bongie's theory that exotic spaces are as unattainable as utopias, the exotic is only dreamed up in the minds of moderns. Bongie writes, "Peyral has fallen, and will always fall, to one side, the wrong side of the line that separates the exotic world of his desire..." (*Memories* 104). Brahimî views the end of the story, as a sort of punishment suffered by the couple's transgression of the colonial codes. She phrases this as follows:

On ne saurait condamner plus violemment cette tentation ou cette illusion de procréer dans le cadre de ce que l'administration coloniale appelle le *mariage mixte*, et qu'elle déconseille d'ailleurs formellement. On a appris au cours du livre que Jean était blâmé par ses supérieurs du fait qu'il vit avec une femme noire. La société coloniale caractérise par l'interdit, et très précisément sur ce point, qu'elle juge essentiel à sa conservation.

(Brahimi, *Pierre Loti, du roman exotique* 21, author's italics)

One could not too violently condemn this temptation or this illusion to procreate in the framework of what the colonial administration calls

mixed marriage, which the administration formally admonished. We learned throughout the course of the book that Jean's superiors blamed him because he lived with a black woman. The colonial society designates by interdiction this point most precisely, which the administration considers essential to its conservation.

Brahimi presents Jean and Fatou-gaye's fate almost as if it were a moral punishment.

She considers the historical context of the society that Loti describes. Jean and Fatou-gaye did not respect the colonial administrative codes, and thus the couple perishes.

I wish to close the discussion of the plot of *Le Roman d'un Spahi* by offering an alternate interpretation of the dénouement to those of Bongie and Brahimi. The end of the novel draws near as the story's artificiality diminishes—that is to say, as a more *natural* representation of Jean and Fatou-gaye's relationship develops. The essentialist racial categories fall apart with the birth of their child. The exotic novel sustains itself with artificial imagery and *stereotypes*. It must be noted that a stereotype first refers to a kind of print off of a press. The definitions proffered by the *Encyclopédie Larousse* are as follows: 1. *Cliché typographique obtenu par coulage de plomb dans une empreinte. (On dit aussi cliché.)* (Typographic cliché obtained by pouring lead in an imprint. (Also called a cliché.) It is secondly cited as a banal formula, an opinion lacking originality: 2. *Formule banale ; opinion dépourvue d'originalité.*

The novel creates an exotic sphere that is made of artistic clichés comprised of motifs, tropes, and portraits. In one previously cited instance, Fatou-gaye is described as *une vraie odalisque*—the word *odalisque* invokes the innumerable recumbent female figures by Orientalist painters, such as Ingres's *Grand Odalisque*.

At another point she is described as having “un air de divinté hindou. . .” (*Le Roman* 135) (a look of a Hindu divinty . . .). In addition to which, Fatou-gaye is portrayed as a “creature,” “monkey-girl,” “dog,” and “divinty”—different modes of her presentation as an artificial or unnatural semi-human character. She possesses a “black soul,” and this expression appears as the most essentializing, and least mortal category possible.

As for Jean, he is conveyed with a picturesque language of written portraiture to reveal his Arab physiognomy, masculine beauty, and manhood emanating from beneath the fez. The following line best portrays the *spahi* as the object of a portrait: “Un peintre l’eût choisi comme type accompli de charme noble et de perfection virile.” (*Ibid.*, 265) (A painter might have chosen him as the accomplished archetype of noble charm and virile perfection.). These descriptions encapsulate how Fatou-gaye and Jean are artistic visions—they are, obviously, creative inventions stemming from the artifice of the author. As I have noted, as well as many other critics, this artificial quality is an important aspect of exoticism.

Nonetheless, the alliance between Jean and Fatou-gaye produces a child; this turn in the plot complicates their portraits as artificial exotic archetypes. The relationship “normalizes” when Fatou-gaye presents Jean with their infant. Suddenly, a new picture unfolds: Now Fatou-gaye is undeniably a natural human and a woman. If we recall M.J. Miller’s comments on Fatou-gaye, she writes, “the portrait of Fatou . . . establishes once and for all her inhumanness [*sic.*], her unnaturalness.” (M.K. Miller 112-113). However, because she has procreated with Jean, her womanly capacity for motherhood and her status as a human being are

instituted. Likewise, Jean becomes more human; abruptly, he demonstrates his humanity toward Fatou-gaye and his son. Taken with his child, Jean decides that he will return to live in Africa:

Certes il allait retourner d'abord voir ces parents;...Mais après, il lui faudrait bien revenir en Afrique, à présent qu'il avait un fils...Il sentait bien qu'il l'aimait déjà de tout son coeur, ce petit enfant, et que pour rien au monde il ne pourrait décider à l'abandonner...(*Le Roman* 327)

Certainly he was going first to return to see his parents;...But afterwards, he would have to come back to Africa, now he had a son...he already loved him with all his heart, and for nothing in the world would he abandon him.

The almost final result of the romance is a family constructed of a mother, child, and a devoted *pater familias*. This begins to resemble a “normal” Occidental bourgeois family. The “normal” and “natural” scenario replaces the former artifice of their images as exoticized divinities, portraits, or stereotypes. But, the *natural biological* reproduction of Jean and Fatou-gaye does not fit well within a continuation of a novel of colonial exoticism for three reasons.

First, as I have just pointed out, the narration drops the exoticizing descriptive language that it previously used to portray Fatou-gaye and Jean. The reasons that Brahimî cites are highly *à propos*: a colonial world precludes the development of a family unit. The rules set by the colonial administration do not allow for a felicitous conclusion. Colonial regulations formally interdicting *mariage mixte* constituted an ethnocentric logic used to maintain racial, national, and ethnic regimes. The French occupied the ladder of colonial hierarchy's top rungs. Historically, however, this was an impossible hierarchy to maintain. Indigenous populations always outnumbered

colonial populations in Europe's colonies. The European presence was comprised mainly of men such as the *spahis*. The "natural" children who were the outcomes of alliances between European men and indigenous women, frequently went unrecognized by their fathers.

Hence, Loti respects those racial colonial codes. Instead of narrating a continued romance between the French Jean and the African Fatou-gaye, a bond that became secured by their "natural child," Loti does away with these characters, and *Le Roman* ends. That family would be an inadmissible scenario in the colonial exotic novel—their deaths put an end to the possibility of a more scandalous narrative of racial miscegenation and ethnic blending.

Bongie also is accurate in his analysis of the exotic subject's (Jean's) demise. Bongie's analysis of exoticism as a whole suggests the impossibility of an exotic alternative. At any rate, there are no alternatives for Jean. Even the possibility of a permanent exile in Africa is snuffed out in *Le Roman*. Jean, who ultimately decided to return to Africa, can not attain either realm of his exotic reveries. He can reach his much-missed Cévennes, and he can not bask in his affections for Senegal.

The Exotic Framework within an Exotic Framework

Yet, the novel does involve an alternate space of difference: The "Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appelés griots" reveals Loti's *exotique*, which is more or less, comparable to a 19th century ethnographic description. The exotic framework, according to Loti, is not the impossible exoticist utopian memory described by Bongie. Nor is Loti's description of the *exotique* the

“artificial” amalgamate of a colonial and the exotic universe that I attempt to define.

Loti’s “exotic framework” is an essentialized space of racial and ethnic difference.

Before addressing how Loti defines the exotic, I wish to once again review my conception of exoticism, in order to leave no doubts as to what this artificial exoticism of colonial hybridity refers. Jean’s first mistress Cora and her *habitation* are incarnations of what I understand as typical of exoticism:

Mulâtresse de Bourbon, elle avait été élevée dans l’oisiveté sensuelle et le luxe des créoles riches,...

L’habitation de Cora était une immense maison...ayant cet aspect un peu égyptien...blanche comme un caravansérail arabe.

En bas, de grandes cours, où venaient s’accroupir dans le sable les chameaux et le Maures du désert, où grouillait un bizarre mélange de bétail, de chiens, d’autruches et d’esclaves noirs. En haut, d’interminable vérandas, soutenues par de massives colonnes carrées, comme les terrasses de Babylone (*Ibid.*, 45-46)

A Bourbon Mulatress, she had been brought up in the sensual laziness and luxury of rich creoles,...

Cora’s *habitation* was an immense house...having that slightly Egyptian aspect. . .white like an Arabic seraglio caravan.

Down in the great courts, where camels and Moors from the desert came to squat, where a strange melange of livestock, dogs, ostriches, and black slaves swarmed. Up top, the interminable verandas supported by massive square columns, like the terraces of Babylon.

Cora and her home are a mix of the old and the new. As a Bourbon Mulatress, she is a descendant of the old colonial regime of the Second Empire. However, the description of her *habitation*’s interior includes a bedroom, where “...tout est plus riant et plus moderne.” (*Ibid.*, 47) (. . .everything is more amusing and more modern;). The furniture is all from Paris—luxurious and modern.

The house's exterior and interior reminds us of the artificial descriptions of the *spahis* or Fatou-gaye, wherein their physiognomies and identities are brought together in a strange combination of classicism, Orientalism, and modernism. *Chez Cora* is Egyptian, Babylonian, caravan-like, and Parisian. "Artificial?" In "bad taste?" A "colonial reverie?" The responses are clearly, "Yes." The exoticism exemplified by Cora and her environs include her mixed racial, identity and ethnic heritage (Franco-African), her diverse entourage of people and animals, and her modernity. She and the *habitation* represent a rococo portrait of artifice, hybridity, and diversity.

Loti's conception of a "cadre exotique," however, is not akin to our interpretation exemplified by colonial/exotic hybrids such as the *spahis* and Cora. To the contrary, Loti considers the *exotic* that which he is able to contrast to France. Describing the music and musicians, in the *Digression* the author continually returns to the possessive pronoun "notre" (our). The exotic is thus that which he can not claim as "ours," that is to say, what he believes does not belong to the French, or to France's traditions. The expression in the *Digression* is comparable to an ethnographic or a journalistic account of Senegal; a report written for French armchair travelers.

Appearing in the first half of the novel, the *Digression* has nothing to do with the plot. Moreover, the harsh colonial realm and the signs of modernity are utterly absent from this "exotic framework" wherein he describes women singing:

Les négresses chantent beaucoup en travaillant, ou pendant ce demi-sommeil nonchalant qui compose leur sieste. Au milieu de ce grand calme de midi, plus accablant là-bas que dans nos compagnes de

France, ce chant des femmes nubiennes a son charme à lui, mêlé à l'éternel bruissement des sauterelles. —Mais il serait impossible de le transporter en dehors de son cadre exotique de soleil et de sable; entendu ailleurs, ce chant ne serait plus lui-même. (*Ibid.*, 149)

The negresses sing a lot while working, or during this nonchalant sleepiness that comprises their siesta. In the middle of this great noon calm, more crushing there than in our French countryside, this song of the Nubian women has its own charm, mixed in the eternal rustle of the grasshoppers. But it would be impossible to transport it outside of its exotic framework of sun and sand, heard anywhere else, this song would not be itself anymore.

This gracious vision of the African countryside stands in contrast to Jean's utterly melancholic perception of Senegal as a country eternally mired in what he calls, "toute cette grande tristesse morne." (*Ibid.*, 193) (all this great mournful sadness.). If Loti's exotic milieu is represented as a bucolic alternate space to modern French colonialism, Bongie's theory is pertinent. However, Bongie's notion of the exoticists' "belief in cultural decline characteristic of so many nineteenth and twentieth century exotic texts" (*Memories* 6) is nonexistent in Loti's *Digression*. There are no *fin-de-siècle* moribound descriptions, there is no melancholia, and there is no sense of cultural decline. Loti describes the Senegalese musical scenery as an animated actuality.

Un contretemps perpétuel des accompagnateurs, et des syncopes inattendues, parfaitement comprises et observées par tous les exécutants, sont les traits les plus caractéristiques de cet art—inférieur peut-être, mais assurément très différent du nôtre,—que nos organisations européennes ne nous permettent pas de parfaitement comprendre. (*Ibid.*, 149)

A perpetual contretemps of accompanists, and of unexpected syncopation, perfectly comprised and observed by the all the executors, are the most characteristic traits of this art— maybe

inferior, but assuredly very different from ours,—that our European sensibilities do not let us perfectly understand. . .

It must be acknowledged that he judges the Senegalese music as unknowable or unfathomable to Europeans. However, admitting musical differences, the narration questions African music's inferiority compared with European music. Loti's answer is "maybe" (*inférieur peut-être*).

Perhaps critics of exoticism and Loti ignore the "exotic framework" described in the *Digression* because it has virtually nothing to do with the novel's intrigue. Nonetheless, I believe that Loti's utterance of "maybe" in the *Digression* is the appropriate response to Todorov's terse summary of the novel: "*Le Roman d'un Spahi* est un livre raciste et impérialiste, sexiste et sadique. . ." (Todorov 354) ("*The Romance of a Spahi* is racist, imperialist, sexist, and sadistic...") (Todorov, trans. Catherine Porter 322). As I have noted, the narration regarding Africa and African people in *Le Roman* is frequently disparaging, although this exegesis also revealed Loti's deliberate attention paid to the colonial hypocrisy of claims of racial superiority. I believe that it is a more productive analysis to question how Loti's belief in set racial categories determines the exoticism of the novel. When racial boundaries disintegrate with the birth of a Franco-African child, Loti has nothing left to say regarding that story.

Next I shall examine how the short-story *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah: conte oriental*, presents no less ambiguous responses to the problem of Loti's "racist, imperialist, and sadistic" proclivities. Although this is not my main point, it is arguable that *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* better discloses Loti's sympathy for

women subjected to colonial rule than *Le Roman*. I have shown that critics correctly read pro-colonialist and anti-colonialist messages in his work. However, ultimately I attempt to reveal that in many respects, whether Loti is a colonialist or an anti-colonialist writer is a moot question. The two texts *Le Roman d'un Spahi*, and *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* reflect a tight weave of imagery in which racist, sexist and ethnocentric perspectives are included in such a manner that these books may be read as exposés of the doomed plights of French colonial realms.

The Opacity of Exoticism—*Les Trois dames de la Kasbah: conte oriental*

Les Fleurs d'ennui (1882) is an epistolary novel comprised of correspondences between a character, who is named Loti, and his friend Plumkett; the short stories *Les Trois dames* and *Suleima* were first published as a part of *Les Fleurs d'ennui*. Pierre Loti wrote *Les Fleurs d'ennui* after a voyage he took to Algeria in 1880.

In a redemptory preface to the text, published in 2000, Dénise Brahimy calls *Les Trois dames* “un pamphlet anticolonialiste déguisé en conte oriental,…” (*Les Trois dames, Pref.*, 7) (an anti-colonialist pamphlet disguised as an oriental tale,...). Brahimy reminds us that Loti visited Algiers twice, first in 1869, and then, importantly, in 1880, when “la colonisation et la francisation de l’Algérie ont considérablement avancé.” (*Ibid.*, 8) (Algeria’s colonization and “frenchification” [*sic.*] had advanced considerably.) Brahimy considers *Les Trois dames* a politically foresighted work.

According to Brahimy, Loti is one of the earliest authors to have described the cultural catastrophe that the city of Algiers was becoming. Brahimy suggests that contemporary Algeria bears the effects of the political imbroglio started and sustained by

the French.³⁵ Indeed, the French wrought extensive social and political disorder throughout the entire country by way of progressive colonization punctuated by the policy of *réfoulement* and counter insurgency campaigns since the 1830s. Brahimi writes, “Voilà ce que Loti avait compris dès 1880; ce qui incite à réviser la légende d’un amateur d’exotisme anodin, pour prendre son intelligence politique en considération.” (*Ibid.*, 14) (*Voilà* that which Loti had understood since 1880; this is what incites us to revise his legend as an amateur of anodyne exoticism, and to take his political intelligence into consideration.).

In many senses, Brahimi’s introduction to the seldom-read story vindicates Loti from his reputation as a pro-colonialist dilettante. Brahimi’s well-researched historical analysis reveals Loti’s sensitivity to the transformation of Algier’s *Kasbah* (old quarter) into what she calls “un lieu de prostitution.” (*Ibid.*, 14). This change in the Kasbah was due to in large part to France’s military occupation that brought so many companionless men to Algiers. Unattached men with an income generated prostitution. The tale takes this state of affairs into account when the narrator describes a group of sailors disembarking in Algier’s port:

Leur navire était venu le jour même mouiller dans le port, et, en arrivant, ils avaient touché leur solde de six mois. (*Ibid.*, 32)

Their boat had come that very day to soak in the port, and, upon arrival, they received their salary for six months.

³⁵ Of course, the tragedy of that particular colonial project of *réfoulement* and assimilation plays itself out to this day, as Algerian nationals have suffered a military takeover of a democratically elected government within the last decade.

In possession of what appears to be half of their annual salary, the sailors are free and moneyed. The Frenchmen appear affluent especially when compared to the city's indigenous population, which according to the text, is mired in poverty.

Brahimi suggests that the *Oriental* fiction (the operative word *Oriental*, may be read as what I have defined as exoticism ³⁶) is limited to the beginning. She writes: “la fiction orientale ne dure pas longtemps,” (*Ibid.*, 7) (the oriental fiction does not go on for long,). The short-lived *fiction orientale* most likely refers to the story's first ten pages, before the introduction of the French sailors. However, as I have been arguing throughout, Loti's exoticist fictions and his portraits of modern French colonialism are inseparable from one another. I intend to bracket and explicate episodes of *Les Trois dames* in which appear the indissociable weave of colonial exoticism. This may be understood as the “opacity” of Loti's exoticism.

In a chapter entitled “Pour l'opacité” of *Poétique de la relation*, Edouard Glissant critiques a kind of thought which attempts to create scales of hierarchical differences among humans—he considers such efforts to render ethnic differences transparent as useless. Glissant's concept of opacity is a critique of academic/literary endeavors made at grasp cultural identities in order to render them reducible to transparent singular components. Describing “opacities, he writes, “Des opacités peuvent coexister, confluer, tramant des tissus dont la véritable compréhension porterait sur la texture de cette trame et non pas sur la nature des composantes.

³⁶ I assert that *Oriental* may be read as *exotic* in lieu of what I discuss regarding Chris Miller's thought on French Orientalism—Miller writes that Orientalism plays itself out in many contexts, such as Black Africa. In some respects that I discuss above, the Oriental fiction of *Les Trois dames* is specific to North Africa, and Algerian colonization, however in other respects such as the décor, the

Renoncer,....à cette vieille hantise de surprendre le fond des natures.” (Relation 204)

(Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components. . .give up this old obsession with discovering what lies at the bottom of natures.” (*Poetics of Relation*, Trans. Betsy Wing, 190). Glissant’s theory of opacities is not limited to his discussion of cultural difference—it is a theory of poetics. The writer believes that by accepting the opacities of representations, readers can escape from vainly attempting to comprehend absolute truths.³⁷

It is difficult to avoid categorizing the components of the *Les Trois dames* in terms of its historical truths and exoticist fictions in a manner that privileges the historic, factual, and seemingly authentic parts. I believe however, that it is relevant to read the Oriental tale as a colonial tale and *vice versa*; it is both. Fantastic and realist components are interwoven throughout the entire narration from the beginning to the conclusion. The text illustrates a kind of opacity in which the fictive, fantastic, and folkloric elements operate in conjunction with the realistic, historical, and colonial elements. *Les Trois dames* entangles history and fiction in a deceptively simple story.

Language evoking Islamic prayer, Oriental décor, and indigenous North African characters’ dress and activities, constantly emerges and fades away. The first pages describe the three ladies of Kasbah of Algiers: “Kadidja était la mère: Fatmah et Fizah étaient les deux filles. (*Ibid.*, 19) (Kadidja was the mother: Fatmah and Fizah

ladies’ activities, the sailors, and the city comprised of old city (the Kasbah) and the French quarters are reflective of the hybrid mélange typical of exoticism that is not specific to Orientalism.

³⁷ (*Poetics of Relation*, Trans. by Betsy Wing, 8)

were the two daughters.). The *dames*’ appearances and secluded quarters are described in highly Orientalist and exoticist terms: This includes Loti’s detail of their coffee ritual, perfume making, hookah smoking, musical distractions and their immobility. The following citations reveal an Orientalist postcard-like picture, replete in much of the paraphernalia of classical 19th century Orientalism.³⁸

Parfois elles s’occupaient à presser des roses ou des fleurs d’oranger, pour composer des parfums. Elles fumaient aussi des narghuilés, ou s’exerçaient à chanter en jouant du tambour basque et en battant la *derboucca*.

Elles étaient comme plongées dans une tristesse immense, dans un écoeurement d’abruties, filles d’une race condamnée, subissant des choses fatales avec une résignation morne.

Sometimes they occupied themselves by expressing roses or orange flowers to make perfumes. They also smoked hookahs, or exerted themselves singing and playing the basque tambourine and beating the *derboucca*.

It was as if they were sunk in an immense sadness, in a dumb sickness, daughters of a condemned race, suffering fatalistic things with a mournful resignation.

Not only do the characters live within a setting surrounded by their exotic accessories (hookahs, perfume, musical instruments) they are bathed in exoticist melancholia—*plongées dans une tristesse immense*. Their surroundings are “immobilisé, comme les rues de la vieille Kasbah,” (*Ibid.*, 23) (immobilized, like the streets of the old Kasbah,). This suggests atemporality, or an ahistoric and moribund

³⁸ By exotic paraphernalia, I refer to the hookah, the tambourine, and the Arabic coffee referred to on page 43: the three ladies “prisent, dans de toutes petites tasses, du café plus épais que du mortier à bâtir.” (took coffee in little cups, coffee thicker than brick mortar.) Such décor can be seen in classical Orientalist painting such as Delacroix’s *Les Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement*. (Louvre, 1834) or Comte de Noüy’s *L’Esclave blanche* (1889) The perfume references are evocative of Baudelaire’s poem *Parfum exotique* (1869). The exoticism of their zone maybe considered a comprehensive study of 19th century exoticist Orientalism.

native sphere. A few paragraphs after describing the three ladies listless actions, the narrator provides a fragment of historical context in order to identify one cause of this “immense sadness.”

Il y avait bien des années, le mari de Kadidja, Cheik-ben-Abdallah, avait été tué dans une insurrection contre les Français, et Fizah et Fatmah-ben-Cheikh étaient orphelines.

Malgré les bijoux anciens qui les couvraient, débris des richesses de leur mère, il était aisé de voir que maintenant elles étaient pauvres. *(Ibid., 30)*

Many years had gone by, Kadidja’s husband, Cheik-ben-Abdallah, had been killed in an insurrection against the French, and Fizah and Fatmah-ben-Cheikh were orphans.

Despite the old jewells that covered them, the debris of their mother’s riches, it was easy to see that they were poor now.

Awash in the old tropes of exoticism—loss and sadness, their melancholia is specific to their situation as colonized Algerian women. Kadidja is widowed and her daughters are orphaned owing to French counter insurgency violence. The portrait of the *trois dames* simultaneously evokes an exoticist daydream and a colonial nightmare.

Little by little, it is revealed that these women prostitute themselves to the sailors and soldiers who drunkenly wander into the Kasbah. The image of the prostitute is metaphorically extended to the situation in which the city of Algiers finds itself.

Alger avait le débraillement cynique des lieux qui ont perdu leur nationalité pour se prostituer, s’ouvrir à tous.

Et sur tout cela, en haut, le ciel était bleu, et, sur cette Babel, des alignements de belles maisons régulières jetaient comme une impression d'un Paris très chaud, qui était étrange. (*Ibid.*, 36)

Algiers had the cynical slovenliness of spheres that had lost their nationality to prostitute themselves, to open themselves to everyone.

And on top of all of that, up high, the sky was blue, and, in this Babel, the alignment of straight beautiful houses cast an impression of a very hot Paris, that was strange.

The passage characterizes Algiers as a forlorn space; the city has become debased and vulnerable—open to everyone. Paradoxically, this passage metonymically aligns Algiers to the women of the Kasbah who prostitute themselves to the soldiers and sailors who land in the city, and the citation likens Algiers to Paris.

The image of a desecrated colonized city, which reflects impressions of Paris, is not surprising considering my argument that exoticism is an opaque weave. The modern French architecture built next to the Kasbah evokes the kind of hybridity that I consider archetypal imagery within the literature of exoticism.

Algiers prostitutes herself, as do the three *dames* of the Kasbah. Yet, parts of the city reflect an impression of a hot and strange Paris. The narration demonstrates exoticism's structure of exchange by which the great French metropole is turned into an altered image. The story is a labyrinthine hall of mirrors that reflects fragmented images of the transformations that French colonization brought to Algeria. However, the transformative power of colonization changes Paris's profile. If Algiers looks like the French capital, then logically, Paris resembles Algiers. Loti's exoticism transmits new impressions of France and Frenchmen back to the metropole.

An economy of exchange operating between the colonized and colonizers is illustrated further when we learn that the three Algerian ladies of the Kasbah give syphilis to the French *matelots*. Loti exculpates the women for the fact that they *knowingly* transmit the disease to the *giaours*. He sardonically labels the sailors, “*giaours*,” a Turkish word for infidel, non-moslem, or foreigner.³⁹ The narrator suggests that the women give back to the foreigners the same disease, syphilis, which previous foreigners had brought to the women. He exculpates the *dames* of the Kasbah, as they are not responsible for their “vice” and “misery.”

Irresponsables de leur vice et de leur misère, elles avaient rendu à ces *giaours* ce que d’autres *giaours* leur avaient apporté. (*Ibid.*, 86)

Not responsible for their vice and their misery, they had given back to these *giaours* what other *giaours* had brought to them.

This is an unambiguous moral message. Unlike the prostitutes, the *giaours*, the French sailors, are accountable for their vice. Regardless of their childishness, ultimately, the *matelots* are held responsible for the spread of syphilis. The six sailors are introduced immediately after the narrative mentions Kadidja’s husband’s death at the hands of the French. Drunk, bored, with pockets full of money, the men foolishly wander around Algiers:

Six matelots qui se donnaient le bras circulaient un soir dans la ville d’Alger.

Ils étaient tellement gris, que la rue Bâb-Azoun ne semblait plus assez large pour leur donner passage, et, en marchant de travers, ils chantaient une monotone chanson de bord qui n’avait ni rime ni raison:

Joli baleinier, veux-tu naviguer
Joli baleinier
Joli baleinier (*Ibid.*, 31)

³⁹ Denise Brahimî, preface, *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah*, (Paris: Christian Pirot, 2000), 13.

One evening six sailors arm in arm circulated in the city of Algiers.

They were so soused, that Bâb-Azoun street did not seem big enough to let them through, and in walking along, they sang a monotone boat song that had no rhyme nor reason:

Pretty whaler, do you want to navigate
Pretty whaler
Pretty whaler

The sailors are illustrative of the French colonial presence, but their ethnic identities further impart the opacity of the weave of exoticism. The Algerian colonial subjects are not the only characters marked with the signs of linguistic and ethnic otherness. Referred to as “Les trois Basques. . . Les trois Bretons. . .” (*Ibid.*, 40) (The three Basques. . . The three Bretons. . .) the sailors are French ethnic minorities. The Bretons speak their language. The Basques have names that may be described as linguistically “other,” as these names hardly look like French: Elsagarray, Guiaberry, and Barazère. Loti portrays the *matelots* as folkloric hooligans. The men, who endlessly sing their song, cannot resist playing cruel pranks. The author writes that they possess, “des cervelles d’enfants de huit ou neuf ans, gouvernant des corps d’hommes.” (*Ibid.*, 32) (eight or nine year olds’ brains, governing the bodies of men.).

Circulating through Algiers, they lose themselves in the Kasbah, the “native quarter,” where they encounter the three *dames*. The Basques agree to the ladies’ price, thus, these three characters spend the night with the prostitutes. Meanwhile the Bretons continue to spend money, drink, and make mischief. The Breton pranksters

let the municipal dogcatchers' dogs out of their cage, in which they lock up the dogcatchers. This is not a negligible detail, as *Les Trois dames* ends with the following lesson entitled "Moralité."

Moralité

On a toujours tort de chercher à faire du mal aux gens, surtout lorsque ce sont de bons loulous affectueux comme ceux de cette histoire; tôt ou tard, on est fatalement puni.

Cela est bien prouvé, Plumkett, par le sort de ces attrapeurs de chiens. (*Ibid.*, 89)

Morality

One is always wrong to try and hurt people, especially when they are affectionate doggies as in this story, sooner or later, one is always punished.

This is proven, Plumkett, by the dogcatchers' fate.

Les Trois dames is a moral tale, which may be understood in the various senses of *moral*, as an adjective or a noun. *Moral* (adj.): relating to issues of right and wrong; *moral* (noun): a conclusion about how to behave drawn from a story; and, *morals* (noun): relating to issues of right and wrong as they govern standards of sexual behavior. The last lines of the story relate the moral message that suggests that it is "wrong" to do cruel or bad things to people. (*On a toujours tort de chercher à faire du mal aux gens.*). Even a religious sense of *moral* is alluded to in the very first words of *Les Trois dames*. The story begins with a formal Moslem evocation: "*Au nom d'Allah très clément et très miséricordieux!*" (*Ibid.*, 19, author's italics) (In the name

of the very kind and merciful Allah!), Kindness and mercy are not lavished upon the story's wrongdoers, as the Basques suffer moral retribution. Indeed, a moral lesson is easily gleaned from the Basques' misconduct and the fates they suffer.

Soon after spending the fateful night with the prostitutes, the Basques are afflicted with a "horrible malady." (Les trois Basques se virent bientôt atteints d'une maladie horrible.) (*Ibid.*, 86). The cruelest Basque, Barazère, after realizing that he had slept the old mother, Kadidja, kicks her away with his foot ("la repoussant du pied...") (*Ibid.*, 79). Barazère is the only sailor to die from syphilis. The other two Basques' sons are born with syphilitic sores. Their newborns are brought into the world, "covered with sores that were shameful to see." (...[ils] vint au monde couvert de plaies qui étaient honteuses à voir.) (*Ibid.*, 87). According to the tale's moral, sooner or later, one is fatally punished (*tôt ou tard, on est fatalement puni.*).

This leaves an aspect of the tale's "Morality" open to interpretation. To whom does Loti refer when writing of the wrong done to "*les gens*," who are the "*bons loulous affectueux*?" On a literal level, the *loulous* are the dogs, which the Bretons let out of the dogcatchers' cage. However, as in La Fontaine's 17th century moral fables, Loti's animals are metaphors for humans. The affectionate *loulous* may symbolize the three ladies of the Kasbah. Moreover, the reference to Algeria prostituting herself, suggests that the three ladies metonymically stand in for Algiers by extension of their act of prostitution. The *loulous* appear to be analogous to the indigenous population of Algiers.

Finally, the last line of the paragraph entitled, "Moralité," which is also the last line of story, refers to the dogcatchers' fate: *Cela est bien prouvé, Plumkett, par le*

sort de ces attrapeurs de chiens. The Bretons capture the dogcatchers, jail them, and throw away the key. Loti suggests that the dogcatchers whose job it is to confine innocent *loulous*, have erred morally. The dogcatchers receive just punishment when locked in the very cage that they use to constrain the city's stray dogs. The plot bestows fateful retribution upon wrongdoers. It is not a far-fetched interpretation to suggest that Loti writes as if the French colonial forces, which seek to limit the freedoms of colonized indigenes, sooner or later, will receive payback.

Beyond Us-Dogcatchers and Them-Dogs

In this chapter I have shown the author's conception of a "cadre exotique" in the "Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appels griots." Loti's *exotic* is comprised of an indigenous *them*, and not a colonial, French *us*. I have also shown how, on a simple level, the moral tale, *Les Trois dames*, regards retribution between *us* and *them*. At the end of *Les Trois dames*, the victimized dogs are liberated and their cruel perpetrators are caged. Loti tells a tale of moral paybacks—the dogcatchers are caught in their own cages.

Loti writes a dualistic conclusion in which Denise Brahimi reads the condemnation of French colonialism. However, I believe that the interesting aspects of the Loti's writing are not reducible to an inverted Manichean⁴⁰ relationship of the *good* colonized women and the *bad* colonial sailors. The opaque narrative of Loti's exoticism in *Les Trois dames* draws a world featuring boorish sailors and sick

⁴⁰ I differ in my thought with respect to Abdul JanMohamed's essay entitled, *The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature* (1985), obviously, Manichean divisions between colonials and colonized function in some colonialist literature. What I attempt to show with respect to Loti's colonial exoticism, is that the division is reversed as the women

prostitutes. An act of moral retribution is expressed when the narrator explains how syphilis is transmitted back and forth between *giaours* and locals—ironically, foreigners catch the disease that the antecedent foreigners had spread to the local Algerian population.⁴¹

Although Loti mentions that the ladies are not responsible for their *vice*, they are, nonetheless, still conscious that they give the sailors the disease: *Ces femmes la leur avaient donnée, presque inconsciemment. (Ibid., 81)* (These women had given to them *almost* unconsciously.) (my italics). In the end, both factions of colonial society are infected. Loti describes the sailors leaving the ladies as follows:

Ils allaient gaiement, savourant ce bien-être matinal, ne se doutant pas que c'était à jamais leur saine et belle jeunesse, et qu'ils emportaient avec eux dans leur sang de hideux germes de mort. (*Ibid.*, 81)

They went along gaily, savoring that lovely matitudinal feeling, unaware that their healthy and beautiful youth was forever lost, and that they carried with them, in their blood, the hideous germs of death.

Nonetheless, the source of the disease is not important. Glissant's suggestion to give up the "old obsession with discovering what lies at the bottom of natures" is highly applicable to the story-line involving syphilis. I have noted Loti's belief that the prostitutes gave the disease back to the sailors—the same disease that earlier foreign clients had given to them. In fact, syphilis is the subject of long academic debates over who gave whom the disease. It remains unknown whether syphilis was brought to Europe by sailors who caught it in the New World, or whether the Crusaders caught syphilis in the Orient and carried it back to Europe. Whichever the case, the

of the Kasbah are portrayed as innocents, and the sailors are portrayed as at fault. Although, in the end, the reversal of terms is not what makes the story important.

disease propagated itself: identifying the origins of that malady does not render the history of the transmission of syphilis any less complex. In a book-length analysis entitled *Syphilis: Essai sur la Littérature française du XIXe siècle*, Lasowski writes the following regarding the syphilis:

...il est vain de chercher le coupable. *Syphilis* a définitivement résolu le conflit Nature et Civilisation : ici et là, des vices civilisateurs aux reveries d'innocence, toutes les responsabilités se sont usées à son frottement.⁴²

...it is vain to look for the guilty one. Syphilis definitively has resolved the conflict between Nature and Civilization: here and there, the civilizing vices to the reveries of innocence, all the responsibilities have worn themselves out.

It is indeed a vain effort to look for the disease's original source. With this in mind, I assert that whether Pierre Loti is an originator of pro-colonial or anti-colonial literature is largely immaterial. His relevance as a writer rests in the opacity of his colonial vision.

In *Poétique de la relation*, Glissant ends a chapter entitled, "Pour l'opacité" with the following assertion, "I clamor for the right to opacity for everyone." In *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Aimé Césaire makes the most poignant critique of Loti discussed in this chapter. In the *Discours* Césaire expresses a plan to "study how colonization works." It is as if, despite himself, Loti writes opaque hybrid portraits of colonial societies in *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* and *Le Roman d'un spahi*, which

⁴² Patrick Wald Lasowski, *Syphilis: Essai sur la Littérature française du XIXe siècle*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1982):30. Lasowski refers to Gauguin's thought on syphilis, that is nearly identical to Loti's assessment of the disease brought by the *giaours*: « Et puis on disait de beaucoup d'elles étaient maladies—malades de ce mal que les Européens ont apporté aux sauvages comme un premier élément essentiel de civilization. »

show us how colonization works. Paradoxically, the hybrid characterizations that Loti creates in his literature of colonial exoticism, undermines his belief in both essentialist ethnic/racial categories, and *us* versus *them* divisions. Cultural overlaps, which blurred ethnic and racial lines, and increased human contact that rendered certain diseases universal, are some of the manners in which colonization worked against itself.

CHAPTER III

LE MIRAGE EXOTIQUE EST FINI: EXOTICISM IN THE 1930S

Rien à dire. «Va t'en!... qu'ils m'ont fait. T'es plus bon à rien! . . .—En Afrique! que j'ai dit, moi. Plus que ça sera loin, mieux ça vaudra! » C'était un bateau comme les autres de la Compagnie des corsaires Réunis qui m'a embarqué. Il s'en allait vers les *Tropiques*. . .

—Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932)

. . .le mirage exotique est fini. Plus envie d'aller à Calcutta, plus de désir de femmes de couleur (autant faire l'amour avec des vaches: certaines ont un si beau pelage.

—Michel Leiris, *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934)

Incomparable Authors

Louis Ferdinand Céline (1887-1961) and Michel Leiris (1900-1991) were two unacquainted writers who experienced colonial Africa firsthand. Céline went to French Cameroon as an employee of the *Société forestière Sangha Oubangui* from 1916 to 1917, upon being discharged from World War I military service.¹ He later wrote about colonial Africa in the fictive *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (1932). At the same time as the debut of Céline's novel, Leiris was crossing continental Africa from 1931 to 1933, while writing

¹ Jean-Pierre Dauphin, ed. *Lettres et premiers écrits d'Afrique*, Vol. 4, *Cahiers Céline*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1978.)

and compiling the book that he would publish a year later entitled, *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934).

Louis-Ferdinand Céline was an unknown author until *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (henceforth referred to as *Voyage*) brought him instant fame. Céline (*né* Louis-Ferdinand Destouches) burst into the high-modernist literary world of the 1930s, when he is said to have deposited a manuscript of *Voyage* at publishing houses Gallimard and Denoël's doors—the former refused the book. In the annals of Céline criticism, in what has come to be referred to as the “*scandale du Prix Goncourt*,” the unheard of author was selected to receive the eminent *Prix Goncourt* of 1933—however the novel won the slightly less prestigious *Prix Renaudot*.² Since the publication of *Voyage*, Céline has become an international object of interest—both adored and despised. His fame derives from a publishing history, which is convoluted, legendary, and inextricable from his biography.

Like his first novel's hero *Bardamu*, Céline was a Parisian, and a veteran of the *Grande Guerre*. Also akin to *Voyage*'s protagonist *Bardamu*, he spent a brief period in Africa; Céline sought and gained employment as a colonial overseer. Upon return to France, he studied medicine and became a doctor. He never participated in a literary circle, but nonetheless, he is now considered an influential modernist pioneer inasmuch as he wrote many dialogues and narratives of his novels in Parisian *argot*.³ *Voyage* and *Mort à crédit* (1936), his second semi-autobiographical novel, misanthropically portray everyday people who spew obscenities and spout-off about the crude material realities of their lives. Céline assumed the identity of a “man of the people,” insofar as he claimed to have endured a very modest petit-bourgeois childhood, the military, wartime injuries, and

a life working with the poor. Moreover, he portrayed proletarian characters and wrote in a style that imitated working-class speech.

Céline's anti-Semitic political orientation surfaced in the late 1930s, and his subsequent writings alienated him from intellectual left-leaning audiences who had found messages supporting Marxist social and economic theory in his two earliest novels.⁴ With the publication of rabidly anti-Semitic political "pamphlets,"⁵ beginning with *Mea Culpa* (1936), followed by the noxious *Bagatelles pour un massacre* (1937), and two more racist, anti-Semitic, anti-homosexual, and anti-communist works, written before and at the beginning of World War II, Céline's renown as a voice of the people ended.⁶ After the war he fled persecution in France, troubled by accusations of *Vichyist* collaboration. He traversed Germany, was arrested in Denmark, and spent time in a Danish prison. Upon re-entry to France, he wrote a trilogy of novels relating to his exile, which included *D'un château l'autre* (1957), *Nord* (1960), and *Rigadon* (1969, posthumous.) After his death in 1961, Céline received a great deal of critical attention by members of the *Tel Quel*⁷ literary group.⁸ Since the publication of *Voyage*, Céline has become what may be called a critics' favorite.⁹

² Due disagreement by committee members, the Céline lost the prize to the now virtually unknown writer Guy Mazeline.

³ The originality of Céline's language is a great topic of debate, see note above on Yves Pagès.

⁴ Not only did the exiled Russian Leon Trotsky write favorably of *Voyage*, but it was also embraced by right-wing extremist Léon Daudet.

⁵ In French, "pamphlet" means something different from its English usage—*Bagatelles pour un massacre*, and the other pamphlets that Céline wrote, are hardback polemical treatises, not indicative of leaflets or booklets that the word signifies in English.

⁶ The pamphlets include: *Mea Culpa*, (Paris: Denoël, 1936.) *Bagatelles Pour Un Massacre*, (Paris: Denoël et Steele, 1937); *L'Ecole des Cadavres*, (Paris: Denoël, 1938); *Les Beaux Draps*, (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Françaises, 1941).

⁷ Consider that these editions of *Tel Quel* contain articles on, or mention of Céline: *Tel Quel*, (Paris: Editions de Seuil 1960, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1971, 1972(v.48-52) 1977, 1980, 1981)

⁸ Céline's works has been read and analyzed at length by critics such as Philippe Sollers and Julia Kristeva Claude Simon, "Claude Simon, Entretien avec Philippe Sollers." *Année Céline* (1997).

Unlike Céline, Michel Leiris was too young to enlist in the war, and he acknowledged his bourgeois Parisian background. After a tumultuous bohemian youth, Leiris became a professional ethnographer, and a man of letters. He is best known for a long autobiographical series. Until 1927, he was an official Surrealist of André Breton's circle. Throughout his life, Leiris's associates and friends included some of the preeminent writers, thinkers, and artists of his generation, including: Raymond Roussel, Max Jacob, André Masson, Picasso, Georges Bataille, Marcel Mauss, and J.P. Sartre.

As Michel Leiris had been a participant in various 20th century modernist movements, I wish to situate the writer with respect to the different factions of modernists: *avant gardist* writers and artists, anthropologists, and psychoanalysts. The modernism of which Leiris was a part began to thrive two to three decades prior to Leiris's publication of *L'Afrique fantôme*, and that work is highly reflective of the times. I shall consider how Michel Leiris was heir to the great modernist artistic and intellectual movements—in addition to which, he was heir to the tradition of 19th century colonial exoticism. As the writer is such a notable figure of the modern times, critics have not tended to consider the influence of the 19th century's exoticism on Leiris. In contrast to *L'Afrique fantôme*, we shall view Céline's *Voyage* as a reaction to the last century's

Philippe Sollers, *Théorie D'ensemble*, (Paris: Editions Seuil Collection Tel Quel, 1968), Julia Kristeva, "L'actualité De Céline." *Tel Quel Revue trimestrielle*. (1977): 71-73.

———. *Pouvoirs De L'horreur: Essais Sur L'abjection*. Paris: Editions Seuil Collection Tel Quel, 1980.

———. "Psychoanalysis and the Polis." *Critical Inquiry University of Chicago Press* September (1982): 77.

⁹ One only need to consider that immediately after the publication of *Voyage*, an array of intellectual figures, including Claude Lévi-Strauss and Leon Trotsky, wrote essays on the novel. The critical responses that *Voyage* inspired have been collected in *70 Critiques de Voyage au bout de la nuit: 1932-1935* (1996). He has remained a literary icon—at present *L'Année Céline* publishes a yearly international bibliography of Céline criticism. André Derval, ed. 1993. *70 Critiques de Voyage au bout de la nuit 1932-1935*. Paris: IMEC Editions.

exoticist mode. Although more or less contemporaneous with Leiris, Céline did not directly associate himself with Leiris's various Parisian intellectual groups.

James Clifford calls Leiris of *L'Afrique fantôme* a "surrealist ethnographer."¹⁰ Indeed, by the late 1920s, Michel Leiris had adopted an amalgam of Surrealism combined with ethnographic subject matters such as popular music and an interest in the "sacred." In *L'Afrique fantôme*, many of these themes were expressed using psychoanalytic approaches—Leiris tries to explore his unconscious by recording dreams, constantly questioning his underlying motivations, and he attempts to reveal his mental pictures. Before leaving to traverse continental Africa from Senegal to Djibouti, Leiris had indeed undergone a brief treatment with a Freudian psychoanalyst. Yet, we shall discover, that in spite of Leiris's immersion in French 20th century high-modern *avant-gardism*, much of *L'Afrique fantôme* appears as if it were the subsequent stage of *fin-de-siècle* colonial exoticism.

In a sense, Leiris's continuity with colonial exoticism is not surprising. Historically speaking, the 20th century modernist movement took place during the apex of French colonial control. In part due to French colonial connections, in Paris things African were entirely *à la mode*. Also, African-American musicians played jazz in clubs in Montmartre, Josephine Baker danced her way off of the stage into film. Antiquarians and gallery owners started to collect and sell African sculpture. James Clifford calls the popularity of what was known as *l'art nègre* "*negrophilia*."¹¹

Concurrent with those "negrophilic" tendencies, French writers were experimenting with new writing techniques such as *l'écriture-automatique*, or the

¹⁰ James Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 168.

fragmentary documentary style exemplified by Breton's *Nadja* (1928). *Nadja*, a Surrealist work includes a string of photographs in which is found a random picture of an African sculpture. This 20th century wave of modernism was started with the Dadaist movement, whose founders included the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, who was a great enthusiast of African arts and primitivism. The appearance of dada in Paris led to the development of Surrealism in 1924. Breton participated in the activities of the Dada group in Paris between 1919 and 1921. In 1924, Breton founded the Surrealism movement, which, of course, he led until his death.

Breton's Surrealism attempted to discard the conventions of chronological and well-reasoned prose and classical poetic form. With the modernist appreciation of creative spontaneity and experimentation, the creation of improvisational music or extemporized artistic expression prospered. *L'Afrique fantôme* consists of impromptu field notes starting on May 19, 1931 when Leiris set sail aboard the *Saint Firmin* in Bordeaux, to embark upon a two-year ethnographic mission across the mostly colonized countries from West to East Africa—Dakar to Djibouti. It must be recalled that in the 1920s and 1930s, virtually the entire globe was under European imperial and colonial control, or had been part of one European empire or another. All of the countries that Leiris visits in Africa, excepting Ethiopia, were European colonies.

The Surrealists, their splinter groups, and most of Paris's left-leaning intellectuals were officially against colonialism. When Leiris departed for the colonies, the Colonial Exposition in Vincennes was under way. The Surrealists came up with a frank motto of

¹¹ James Clifford, Denis Hollier, ed. "Negrophilia," *A New History of French Literature*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.) 901-908.

protest: “Ne visitez pas l’Exposition coloniale!” (Don’t go to the Colonial Exposition!). The Surrealist exploration of the colonies’ arts, religions, and societies was an attempted shift away from ethnocentrism, as well as an effort to reexamine European bourgeois moral, religious, and cultural norms. However, despite the “appreciation” of the *others’* arts, often contradictory and condescending regards of colonial cultures ensued. The art brought back to Europe by ethnographers and collectors was often read entirely out of context in private collections, galleries, and museums. *L’Afrique fantôme* involves scenes relating to the purchase and the plunder of objects such as “fetishes” from Africans. The ethnographers simply steal sculptures and masks—almost as if they were hunting for trophies.

When Leiris published *L’Afrique fantôme* upon return to France, his relationship with Marcel Griaule faltered due to Leiris’s printed admissions of thievery. Marcel Griaule was one of France’s chief anthropologists of the day. He led the *Mission Dakar-Djibouti* and chose the inexperienced Leiris to be the mission’s “*secrétaire archiviste*.” Griaule was a kind of mentor to Leiris, who was very much a fledgling within professional anthropology.

Leiris went through various professional and artistic transformations in his life. As former member of the Breton’s Surrealist group, Leiris subscribed to Breton’s notions of freeing the imagination and “reimpassioning life.” Even after defecting from the group, Leiris largely adhered to principles set forth in Breton’s *Manifesto Surréaliste* (1924), which preaches against the numbing effects of reason and convention that can be overcome with the full measure of love, poetry, and liberty. By 1929, Leiris had decided to become an ethnographer and *L’Afrique fantôme* is his initial ethnographic text. A few

years after his return from Africa, Leiris co-founded the short-lived *Collège de sociologie* (1937-1939) with Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois. During the post-World War II years of the 1940s, he was an adherent to the politics of engagement that was advocated by Sartre and de Beauvoir. As a *fonctionnaire* at the ethnographic *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris, Leiris may have been the first French anthropologist to explicitly critique French colonialism in an address given before the *Association des Travailleurs Scientifiques* entitled “L’Ethnologue devant le colonialisme” (1950).¹²

Largely, independent of his professional ethnographic pursuits, Leiris wrote a series of autobiographical works beginning with *L’âge d’homme précédé de “De la Littérature considérée comme une tauromachie,”*¹³ which was followed by his successive four-part autobiography *La Règle du Jeu. I: Biffures. II: Fourbis. III: Fibrilles. IV: Frêle Bruit.*¹⁴ J.B. Pontalis named Leiris’s lengthy autobiographical expression, an “endless psychoanalysis.”¹⁵

Leiris’s *L’Afrique fantôme: Mission Dakar-Djibouti 1931-1933* is, in some respects, the first work of his life-long autobiographical project wherein he delved into a psychoanalytical exploration by which he probed his psyche, transcribed dreams and memories, and engaged in personal language play. Without doubt, Leiris’s use of “je” in *L’Afrique fantôme* is the emergent subjective narrative of his continual auto-portrait.¹⁶ Nearly six hundred pages of ethnographic field notes, including two series of

¹² Michel Leiris, “L’Ethnologue Devant Le Colonialisme.” (Paris: Association des Travailleurs Scientifiques, 1950.)

¹³ Michel Leiris, *L’âge d’homme Précédé de “De la Littérature considérée comme une tauromachie”* (1 ed, *Nrf*. Paris: Gallimard, 1946.)

¹⁴ Leiris, Michel. *La Règle Du Jeu. I: Biffures. II: Fourbis. III: Fibrilles. IV: Frêle Bruit.*: Gallimard.

¹⁵ Jean-Baptiste Pontalis “Michel Leiris, Ou La Psychanalyse Sans Fin.” In *Après Freud*, edited by Gallimard, (Paris: Gallimard, 1965.)

photographs, *L'Afrique fantôme* is a travelogue narrated by this subjective voice. At its commencement, the journal is less personal; Leiris sets out to objectively record facts as *L'Afrique fantôme* consists of the observations that were intended to document an official ethnographic exploration. However, traveling across Africa, Leiris develops a discontented discourse in which he deflates his objectivity and subjectively articulates his experiences with increasingly revealing introspective entries.

Differing Works

First appearances suggest that the only correlation between *Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *L'Afrique fantôme* is their size. Christopher Miller reveals that Céline called his book a “monster.” Miller writes, “*Voyage au bout de la nuit* appeared in 1932, over 600 pages written half in proletarian argot, half in the belle-lettristic language of the novel: a monster by Céline’s own description.”¹⁶ Clifford, begins the chapter on *L'Afrique fantôme* as follows, “*L'Afrique fantôme* is a monster: 533 pages of ethnography, travel diary, self-exploration, “oneirgraphy.”¹⁷ Aside from their “monstrous” proportion and excepting their publication dates, which separate the works by two years—1932 and 1934—the texts analyzed in this chapter do not present immediate similarities. We have mentioned that the authors were unrelated by literary movements. The genres and structures of *Voyage* and *L'Afrique fantôme* are dissimilar as well. *Voyage* is a novel, only seventy-five pages of which narrate the protagonist’s misadventures in colonial Africa. *L'Afrique fantôme* is a daily ethnographic journal documenting a colonial African

¹⁶ Michel Beaujour’s article, “L'autobiographie Et L'autoportrait.” *Poétique* 32 (1977) as well as his book, *Miroirs D'encre: Rhétorique De L'autoportrait*, (Paris: Collections Poétique aux Editions du Seuil, 1980) describe Leiris’s work as “autoportraiture.”

¹⁷ Christopher Miller, *Blank Darkness*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), Miller documents this assertion at length in footnotes 5 and 6 in *Blank Darkness*, pp. 203.

¹⁸ James Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 165.

mission to collect objects and information. Nonetheless, analyses of these texts reveal the basis by which to argue that these two early 20th century modernists took efforts to break from the traditional clichés of exoticism.

The nihilistic Céline plays with colonial exoticist tropes such as the exoticist patois. He dashes his protagonist's hopes to discover "The great and real Africa..." Moreover, Céline literally rejects what he calls "*poésie des Tropiques*." Whereas Michel Leiris's mind is filled with the imagery of 19th century colonial exoticism, in addition to which, he embraces 20th century modernist aestheticism and theorizing. A melancholic, Leiris sifts through the imagery of his imagination, while trying to clearly corroborate any evidence of either a real Africa or a real African exoticism.

Céline's Nihilism: A Dystopic Vision and Style

Much of Céline's literary renown is due to reputation as writer who made particularly dystopic visions of Western civilization's 20th century landscapes, cityscapes and people.¹⁹ In *Voyage*, Céline populates the streets of Detroit and New York with a particularly degraded portrait of the American proletariat. In the following citation, Céline describes the immigrants with whom the protagonist waits outside of a Ford plant in Detroit where he looks for work:

J'étais pas le seul à attendre. Un de ceux qui patientaient là m'a appris qu'il y était lui depuis deux jours et au même endroit encore. Il était venu de Yougoslavie, ce brebis, pour se faire embaucher. Un autre miteux m'a adressé la parole, il venait bosser qu'il prétendait, rien que pour son plaisir, un maniaque, un bluffeur.

¹⁹ Crystel Pinçonat, "Le fantasme du retour au chaos dans l'écriture de New York." *French Review* LXXII (1989), Michel Lussault, "La Citadinité: Pour une approche problématique." 15. Tours: L'Université de Tours.

Dans cette foule presque personne ne parlait l'anglais. Ils s'épiaient entre eux comme des bêtes sans confiance, souvent battues. De leur masse montait l'odeur d'entrejambes urineux comme à l'hôpital.
(*Voyage* 223)

I wasn't the only one waiting. One of the men cooling their heels told me he had been there, on the same spot, for two days. The poor sucker had come all the way from Yugoslavia for this job. Another dead beat spoke to me, he said he'd decided to work just for the fun of it—a nut, a phony.

Hardly anybody spoke English. They eyed each other distrustfully like animals who had often been beaten. They gave off a smell of urinous crotches, like in the hospital.²⁰

Céline's portraits of Paris are no better. Bardamu works as doctor in a *banlieue* called Rancy—a name suggesting *rance* (rancid). He claims that he would have been happy to have never gone back to there: "J'aurais été content de ne jamais avoir à retourner à Rancy." (*Ibid.*, 287) (I'd have been glad if I'd never have had to go back to Rancy.) (Manheim, trans., 247). But, Céline's characters circumambulate, and the antihero, Bardamu ends up back at Rancy. Céline exposes the most demoralized side of France's urban *petites-gens*. "La vieille Henrouille," is illustrative. She is a particularly resilient old woman, who suffers from a somewhat paranoid obsession that her daughter-in-law and son want to kill her:

« Ah ! les saligauds ! Ah ! les bandits ! Docteur ! Ils ont voulu me tuer ! »
« Tuer » fis-je, comme tout surpris. Et pourquoi donc ?
—Parce que je voulais point crever assez vite, dame!
—Maman! Maman! l'interrompait la belle-fille Vous n'avez plus votre bon sens! Vous racontez au Docteur des horreurs voyons maman!...
—Des horreurs que je dis moi? Eh bien, ma salope, vous en avez un sacré culot! Plus mon bon sens moi? J'en ai encore assez du bon sens pour vous faire pendre tous, moi! (*Ibid.*, 319)

²⁰ Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Ralph Manheim, trans., *Journey to the End of the Night*, (New York: New Directions Books, 1983), 192.

“Oh, the monsters! The bandits! Doctor! They tried to kill me!”
 “Kill you?” I said with an air of surprise. “Why would they want to do that?”
 “Because I was taking too long to die!”
 “Mother! Mother!” the daughter-in-law broke in, “You’ve taken leave of your wits! How can you say such awful things to the doctor?”
 “Awful things, is it? Well, you slut, you’ve got all-fired nerve! I’ve got enough wits to see the whole lot of you hanged! Believe you me!”²¹

“La vieille Henrouille” and company are highly representative of characters throughout the novel. Above the “people” lurks an arrogant, but equally dysfunctional bourgeoisie. In *Voyage*, typically “célinian” characters are subject to bouts of paranoia, disease, alcoholism, prostitution, and violence—they are also perpetrators of prostitution or child-abuse. *Voyage* presents Céline’s adversarial view of metropolitan humankind, however, Africa’s provincial colonial populace offers little in the way of exceptions to alternatives the metropole.

The voyage does not begin in Africa. Bardamu starts to describe his travels with a departure to the World War I front as follows:

...je m’étais embarqué dans une croisade apocalyptique.
 On est puceau de l’Horreur comme on l’est de la volupté.
 Comment aurais-je pu me douter moi de cette horreur en quittant la place Clichy? Qui aurait pu prévoir avant d’entrer vraiment dans la guerre, tout ce que contenait la sale âme héroïque et fainéante des homes? (*Ibid.*, 14)

...this crusade I’d let myself in for was the apocalypse.
 You can be a virgin in horror the same as in sex. How, when I left the Place Clichy, could I have imagined such horror? Who could have suspected before really getting into the war, all the ingredients that go to make up the rotten, heroic, good-for-nothing soul of man?²²

²¹ Ralph Manheim, trans., 192

²² *Ibid.*, 9

It would seem as if Bardamu found an escape from the wartime *Horrors*. He lands himself in the hospital, but he is not sure how he arrived:

Alors je suis tombé malade, fiévreux, rendu fou, qu'ils ont expliqué à l'hôpital, par la peur. C'était possible. La meilleure chose de faire, n'est-ce pas, quand on est dans ce monde, c'est d'en sortir? Fou ou pas, peur ou pas. (*Ibid.*, 60)

Then I fell sick. I was delirious, driven mad by fear, they said at the hospital. Maybe so. The best thing to do when you're in this world, don't you agree, is to get out of it. Crazy or not, scared or not.²³

His explanation for escaping the battlefields relates to the rest of his travels to Africa, to the United States, back to the suburb of Rancy, and to a mental asylum where he finally finds work. He gets himself out of one miserable location only to land himself in the next one.

When the alienated protagonist of *Voyage* leaves France for Africa upon a boat called the *Admiral Bragueton*, he satirically exclaims that he will find “l’Afrique, la vraie, la grande...” (*Voyage* 112) (The great and real Africa...), but instead, he discovers strident colors, disease, nauseating food, and nothing to do. In Africa, the bright colors of Loti’s tropics, the *Parnassien* cult of nature, the *Orientalist* seraglios, and the African regalia of 19th century exoticism are not at all present. Any natural beauty or scenery deserving of poetic lyricism is entirely eclipsed by Céline’s nihilistic gloom.²⁴

²³ *Ibid.*, 49

Ex(otic) Nihilo—A Voyage from Nowhere to Nowhere

In this chapter's epigraph we cite Céline's imperative—*Va -t'en*—Go away, and go away as far as possible...to Africa. The trip to Africa implies an arrival to the "Dark Continent" or "L'Afrique noire." As the title states, this is a *voyage to the end of the night*. Where and what is the end of the night? Is it the darkest hour? Is it just before the beginning of morning? I posit that Bardamu makes a trip to nowhere and nothingness. Céline's protagonist does go away, as far as possible to deepest Africa, but figuratively, he goes nowhere. Yves Pagès asks the question on the first page of his book devoted to Céline, "Céline *ex nihilo*?"²⁵ (Céline *out of nowhere*?). The thematic circularity of *Voyage* functions in such a way that the novel's protagonist, like its author, emerges *ex nihilo*, as if out of nothing and nowhere. He travels in a great circle leading back to nothing. Preceding the journey to Africa, *Voyage* begins with the hero's enlistment in a World War I army battalion. His flight from the World War I "no man's lands" and wartime trenches lands him in the hospital. As a wounded escapee from the army, the antihero goes to colonial Africa looking for a job and peace of mind. But, he gets nowhere in terms of procuring work, comfort, or peace. He discovers a disconcerting "nothingness." In Africa he notes the indifferent colonial functionaries who make reports on nothing, "le sergent Alcide préparait beaucoup d'états « Néant » que Grappa signait sans retard..."²⁶ (*Voyage* 149) (Sergeant Alcide prepared in advance a whole sheaf of

²⁴ Christopher Miller devotes a chapter of *Blank Darkness* to *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, in which he emphasizes the themes of darkness, night, obscurity in the novel.

²⁵ Yves Pagès, *Les fictions du Politique chez L.F. Céline*, (Paris :Éditions du Seuil, 1994), Pagès presents the myth of a writer who promoted himself as a literary autodidact and auto-progenitor. According to Pagès, Céline's *argotique* was borrowed, or at least influenced by earlier anarchist publications—thus, Céline's use of the people's tongue was not solely of his genius and inventiveness.

²⁶ Christopher Miller devotes a chapter of *Blank Darkness* to Céline, emphasizing the "nothingingness" of the narrative. Comparing *Voyage* to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Miller writes, "The superficial similarity of plot between *Voyage* and *Heart of Darkness* is a sign of the common ground on which they are working,

“Nothing to report” reports, which Grappa signed without delay...)(Ralph Manheim, trans., 128). Leaving Africa, the protagonist miraculously discovers himself on a boat on its way to the United States. Once in America, the supposed land of hope and opportunity, he suffers further discontents, only slightly different from what he felt in Africa, but with equal intensity. Many have noted the Bardamu’s “malaise” in New York is comparable to that felt in Africa: “Au coeur de la cité—Broadway—Bardamu est victime d’un malaise à la vue des gratte-ciel uniformes. Un peu comme dans la forêt africaine,...”²⁷ (In the heart of the city—Broadway—Bardamu is victim to a malaise of the sight of the uniform skyscrapers. Somewhat like in the forest of Africa,...). Subsequent to his American travels, he reappears where his journey began, back in the depressing *banlieues* of Paris.

Indeed, the novel pessimistically portrays the modern world (of which Africa is a part) as antagonistic to human life. Nonetheless, *Voyage* has been compared to early classics of exotic literature, including Voltaire’s optimistic *Candide* (1759).²⁸ Moreover, in an almost picaresque adventure across continents, wherever protagonist Ferdinand Bardamu goes, his strange alter ego named Robinson appears. The name, Robinson, evokes the stranded hero of the 18th century English classic of exoticism: Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)—although the comparison ends there. Bardamu and Robinson

the problems they describe. If *Heart of Darkness* works by condensation, making something out of nothing and remaining faithful to it as to a fetish, *Voyage* does the same but tells the other side of the story as well: if nothing can become a thing (a report of “Nothing to report”; an “unreadable report”) then things can become nothing again and people can do both.” (*Blank Darkness* 210) Miller refers to the reports of nothing in Conrad’s book, although they appear in *Voyage* as well.

²⁷ Alain Cresciucci, *Les Territoires céliniens: Expression dans l’espace et expérience du monde dans les romans de L.F. Céline*, (Paris: Amateurs de Livres, 1990), 36.

²⁸ Marie-Christine Bellosta, *Céline ou l’art de la contradiction: lecture de Voyage au bout de la nuit*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990.)

never find themselves on an island, except in the metaphorical psychosocial sense of their chronic alienation.

Africa is alienating in different ways than the United States or France. Bardamu's misery and anomie are often due to acute physical discomfort: heat, painful beds, lack of food and water, and near fatal illnesses. Céline's meditation on the corporal and material problems of colonial life is a refutation of African colonial exoticism. He concentrates on the physical, secular, and material issues that make Africa a living nightmare. Set in an imaginary French African colony where place names are semi-invented (Bambola-Bragamance, Bikomimbo, Petit Togo, Petit Congo, the boulevard Bugeaud, the square Faidherbe) the colonies do not present an aesthetic, mystical, mythical, or sacred space. This is what I deem Céline's *antiexoticism*. As an uncompromising materialist who expresses a secular vision of the world, Céline's colonial Africa largely differentiates itself from what we have seen in Loti's artificial and mythical portrayal of Africa and Africans. This depressing vision of a French colony is a strangely convincing and realistic perspective, despite that it is almost entirely *imaginary*.

Before arriving, Bardamu hopes that the colony will offer him some peace of mind. Bardamu's voyage to Africa and his desire to escape are means by which he attempts to jettison the violence suffered while in the army and the tedium of unemployment. He sets out without any promise of a job, and once there, he barely finds employment with the *Compagnie de la Pordurière*:

Le Directeur de la Compagnie de la Pordurière du Petit Congo cherchait, m'assura-t-on, un employé debutant pour tenir une des factories de la brousse. J'allai sans plus tarder lui offrir mes incompetents mais empressés services. Ce ne fut pas une reception enchantée qu'il me réserva.
(*Voyage* 128)

The director of the Compagnie Pordurière du Petit Congo, so I heard, was looking for an inexperienced man to take charge of one of the trading posts in the bush. I went without delay to offer my incompetent but enthusiastic services. The director's reception of me was not exactly friendly.²⁹

It is not lacking in irony that Céline creates a colonial company called "*Pordurière*." In French, the company's name suggests *ordure*, which means to "filth" or "garbage," and this is largely the way in which Bardamu views life—sullied and polluted. Needless to say, the Parisian quartier of *Rancy* is equally filthy. While working for the *Compagnie de la Pordurière*, Bardamu does not procure a house, food, or anything to do in terms of an actual job—he goes upcountry to the "bush," but upon arrival, he discovers that the man (Robinson) whom he is to replace, had been doing nothing since he arrived at the post. There is nothing for him to do but to contemplate the African nature upcountry. Unfortunaetly, he detests nature.

Céline pays a small tribute to that time-honored literary tradition of painting a colonial landscape. However, Africa's natural scenery is flawed, as plants and animals transmit disease and gloom. Céline's fictive colonized Africa is desecrated, but it appears to have always been so. This is a picture of Africa refuting the exoticism of picturesque people or places that we described in Chapter II—it is an *antiexoticism*.

As we have mentioned, in the United States and France, Bardamu expresses a deep sense of hopelessness and alienation with respect to European civilization—the war, the alienating enormity of New York, the misery of the Parisian *banlieue*, and the dehumanizing Ford plant in Detroit. Ironically, his despair reveals itself most clearly in Africa, when he is furthest from European "civilization." Leaving Marseille, on board the

²⁹ Ralph Manheim, trans., 109

Admiral Bragueton, Bardamu reflects on what he calls the “mad international slaughterhouse” of Europe, however, he foresees problems ahead in Africa:

Quand on a pu s'échapper vivant d'un abattoir international en folie, c'est tout de même une référence sous le rapport du tact et de la discrétion. Mais revenons à ce voyage. Tant que nous restâmes dans les eaux d'Europe, ça ne s'annoçait pas mal. Les passagers croupissaient, répartis dans l'ombre des entreponts, dans les w.-c., au fumoir, par petits groupes soupçonneux et nasillards. Tout ça, bien imbibé de picons et cancons, du matin au soir. On en rotait, sommeillait et vociférait tout à tout et semblait-il sans jamais regretter rien de l'Europe. (*Voyage* 112)

After all, if you manage to escape alive from an international slaughterhouse run rampant, it's a sign of tact and discretion. But let's get back to our trip. It looked fairly promising as long as we were in European waters. In small, adenoidal, mutually suspicious groups, the passengers lolled and lounged in the shade between decks, in the toilets and in the smoking room. From morning to night they steeped themselves in Picon and gossip. They belched, they dozed, they shouted, and never expressed any regret for anything they had left behind in Europe.³⁰

Bardamu explains that as long as the boat and its cargo were in the interstitial “European waters,” before arriving in Africa, the journey went along satisfactorily. However, as they near the continent, the boat ride turns out to be nearly fatal, but only for Bardamu. The hotter it becomes as they approach the African coast, the more surly the passengers grow, in fact, they threaten to throw Bardamu overboard the *Admiral Bragueton*.

At the beginning of this African adventure, before his fellow passengers take a dislike to Bardamu, he reveals certain fantasies regarding the continent. He exclaims:

Nous voguions vers l'Afrique, la vraie, la grande; celle des insondables forêts, des miasmes délétères, des solitudes inviolées, vers les grands tyrans nègres vautrés aux croisements de fleuves qui n'en finissent plus. Pour un paquet de lames « Pilett » j'allais trafiquer avec eux des ivoires longs comme ça, des oiseaux flamboyants, des esclaves mineures. C'était

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94-95

promis. La vie quoi ! . . . Nous allions nous la voir dans son jus, la vraie Afrique ! (*Voyage* 112)

We were headed for Africa, the real, grandiose Africa of impenetrable forests, fetid swamps, inviolate wilderness, where black tyrants wallowed in sloth and cruelty on the banks of neverending rivers. I would barter a pack of “Pilett” razor blades for big long elephant’s tusks, gaudy-colored birds, and juvenile slaves. Guaranteed. We’d be seeing Africa in the raw, the real Africa!³¹

The African sequence of *Voyage* is set in motion by this leap of Bardamu’s imagination into the realms of the exotic. For an instant, he is immersed in an imaginary world seemingly inspired by the tales of ivory trade such as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899). However Céline quickly rejects any such exoticist desire to find adventure. In a strange turn of events, Bardamu becomes the passengers’ scapegoat. As the only paying traveler, the colonial functionaries are suspicious, and they take deep dislike to the strange one. The voyage to “undisturbed solitudes” does not bode well for Bardamu from the beginning, as he narrowly escapes death before even reaching shore.

Modernist Exoticism

We shall further explore Céline’s bitter visions of Africa, his *antiexoticism*, as part of a modernist reaction against exoticism, however first we shall examine Leiris’s *L’Afrique fantôme* as a fusion of early 20th century modernist theorizing and aesthetics. The themes of ritualized eroticism, the “sacred,” and psychoanalytic attempts to explore the unconscious, all fit securely within Leiris’s Surrealist and post-Surrealist writings. Despite these high modernist tendencies, Leiris’s expression also corresponds to the preceding century’s colonial exoticism.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 95

The Surrealists, their defected members, and the publishing circles around the short-lived journals *Documents*,³² *Minotaure*,³³ as well as the literary/intellectual group the *Collège de sociologie* delved into a quasi-religious fetishistic exploration of eroticism and exoticism. As we have noted throughout the previous chapters, a conflation of sexuality and African allusions has roots in art predating 20th century modernist art. In his examination of iconography in the late-19th century Europe, Sander Gilman reveals the ideological formation of certain aesthetic and scientific conventions—especially in relation to medicine.³⁴ Gilman focuses on the link between two female images: the icon of the Hottentot and that of the (European white) prostitute. In Manet's *Olympia* (1862-3), Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1731), and Bayros's *The Servant* (1890), there is a juxtaposition of a white woman (prostitute) and a black servant, whose function in 18th and 19th century European art was to sexualize the context in which the black was found. In European imagery, black figures become icons of deviant sexuality.³⁵ In France, this association was clearly replicated among early 20th century jazz and art enthusiasts.

As I mentioned, Clifford has deemed the 1920s Parisian obsession with jazz, dance, and African art *negrophilia*. After World War I, a significant number of Africans and African-Americans expatriated themselves to Paris. Writing on art and music in what

³² Georges Bataille, ed. *Documents*, 1929-1934.

³³ *Minotaure*, Paris, 1933.

³⁴ Sander Gilman, *Difference and pathology: stereotypes of sexuality, race, and madness*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1985.)

³⁵ The Hottentot, the "essence" of the black, works as the antithesis of European sexual norms on the basis of polygenetic difference between the races. This is how Gilman makes a study of medical history as well. Medicine presents the medical norm of sex as opposition to the sexuality of the Hottentot. The dominant idea was that their sexual organs are overdeveloped, the representative example of which is the case of Saartjie Bartman. Her buttocks represented and replaced her concealed genitalia, the icon of sexual anomalies. In the 19th-century, the prostitute and homosexual were linked to the black in the point that their sexuality represents their primitive and abnormal nature. This "nature" or "essence" emerges as the

he considers Paris's *Jazz Age*, between 1900 and 1930, Blake references some of the works that manifested erotic and Africanist currents, such as *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Olympia) (MOMA, 1907). As it is a brothel scene, the eroticism of Picasso's work is patent. Two of the prostitutes' faces exhibit formal similarities to African masks; these faces reveal the influence of what was then called *l'art nègre*.³⁶

By 1928, Surrealist leader André Breton had published *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, a book that contemplates erotic images alongside Oceanic, African, Caribbean, Mexican, and Indian art.³⁷ The Parisian *avant gardists* engrossed themselves in an eclectic array of "primitive" art and eroticized imagery. African sculpture and masks were especially popular due to the colonial incursions made by the French in Sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the partially government sponsored *Mission Dakar-Djibouti*, was to bring back art for Paris's ethnographic *Musée Trocadéro*, which later became the *Musée de l'Homme*, where Michel Leiris was employed for most of his life.³⁸

Leiris's exotic/erotic absorption in art and ethnographic study did not wane after his return from Africa. In late 1930s, the short lived *Collège de sociologie* made anthropological studies of the "sacred" in contemporary society, to forge new, quasi-

physical, visible sign, which becomes the indicator of hidden disease inside the body, to the "scientific" eyes.

³⁶ Blake writes, "In Picasso's *Femmes d'Alger* (1907), the bold stylization of facial figures [were] encouraged by works such as Kota reliquary figures and Fang masks. Similarly, the exaggerated articulation of the breasts, hips, and buttocks of Matisse's *Blue Nude* (1907) seems to have been inspired by works such as Baule and Fang figures. (14-15)

³⁸ The Mission resulted in the collection of approximately 3,500 objects for the Museum d'Ethnographie at the Trocadero in Paris, plus the annotation and transcription of 30 African dialects, they shot of 6,000 photographs, 1,600 meters of film, recorded ethnomusical documents, and procured scores of original documents for the Museum Ethnologie's soon to be remodeled museum. In 1937 the Museum Ethnologie

mystical interpretations of the human condition. Georges Bataille, in particular, wrote extensively on eroticism and on the sacred implications of the orgiastic expression in various rituals.³⁹ Bataille's biographer, Michel Surya⁴⁰ summarizes Bataille's obsessions as follows:

L'activité sexuelle...La défécation, la miction; la mort et le culte des cadavres; les tabous, l'anthropophagie rituelle, les sacrifices, le rire et les sanglots; l'extase et en une seule et sacrée, l'attitude devant la mort, la merde et les dieux; les femmes brillantes et lubriques, les dépenses ruineuse;... la sanglante excentricité des Aztèques, du jeune supplié chinois, de Sade, de la Tauromachie, des bordels que des « culs breneux » et proéminents des singes trouvent ici un sens certé autant que définitif. (Surya 149)

...sexual activity...defecation, urination, death and the cult of cadavers; taboos, ritual cannibalism, sacrifices, laughing cries; ecstasy in oneself, and the sacred, the attitude before death, shit and gods; brilliant playful women, ruinous expenditure;...the eccentric bloodiness of the Aztecs, of the young sacrificed Chinese man, of Sade, of the bull-fight, of the bordellos that the "big asses," the protruding monkey butts, indeed all this finds a definitive meaning as possible.

Leiris shared Bataille's combined interests in primitivism, ritualism, eroticism, and the sacred. Many of the themes that fascinated them, were derivatives of Freudian psychoanalytic thought embraced by Leiris and his contemporaries. Surya's esoteric reference to the *jeune supplié chinois* refers to a series of photographs given to Bataille by Michel Leiris's psychoanalyst Adrien Borel, which appear in Bataille's *Larmes d'éros* (1961). During the ethnographic mission in Africa, Leiris continued to consider the

became the *Museum of Man*. The *Museum of Man* resides in Museum national d'Histoire Naturelle 17, place du Trocadéro—still various objects from the *Mission* are on permanent display there.

³⁹ Bataille, Georges. *Documents*, 1929-1934, Bataille, Georges. *Minotaure*, 1933. Bataille, Georges. *L'Érotisme*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957.

———. *Les Larmes d'Eros*. Paris: J.J. Pauvert, 1961. Bataille, Georges. *Anus Solaire*. Paris: André Simon et CIE 1931, 1927.

significance of psychoanalysis to elucidate dreams. He goes so far as to cite the psychoanalytic material he reads while traveling in Africa:

J'y rélis le passage suivant, remarqué déjà hier: « *Bien que Freud, à qui nous devons le premier exposé clair des mécanismes du rêve, pense que la sphère sexuelle a sur eux une influence prédominante...* »
(AF 309, author's italics)

I reread the following passage that I had already noticed yesterday,
“*Although Freud, to whom we owe the first clear exposé of the dream mechanisms, thinks that the sexual sphere exerts a predominant influence...*”

What must be noted from the above quotation is that during the ethnographer's writing project to document a mission through Africa, he is given to reflecting on Freud and Jung by contemplating “the function of the dream mechanism.”

As did so many members of his generation, Leiris had a great deal of faith in psychoanalytic theory. He also believed that dance, art, music, and rituals embodied secrets to liberate Europeans constricted by their stringent bourgeois morality.

Psychoanalytic devotees lent credence to the conception of the unconscious as an uninhibited sphere of the psyche. They aligned non-Occidental art and artistic expression (theater, rituals, dance, music, etc.) with a more genuine immersion in the unconscious. The Surrealists and their kindred, sought to experience the unconscious in various ways mediated by psychoanalysis, *l'écriture automatique*, recording dreams, or ritual acts.

Fascinated by unconscious and conscious ritual, in *L'Afrique fantôme* Leiris acquaints himself with a secret men's society of the *Dogon* while in Mali. The material he gathers eventually became his ethnographic thesis entitled, *La langue secrète des*

———. *Histoire de l'Oeil, sous le pseudonym de Lord Auch, accompagné de huit lithographies anonymes* (André Masson), sans nom d'éditeur (René Bonnel), 1928.

⁴⁰ Michel Surya, *Georges Bataille: La Mort à l'oeuvre*. Paris: Editions Garamont Librairie Seguiet, 1987.

dogons de Sanga (1948). On a more intimate level, throughout his travels, the ethnographer notes his dreams, and transcribes as many of his personal obsessive experiences as possible, such as that which he deems “*pollutions nocturnes*” (nocturnal emissions). *L’Afrique fantôme* is a joint writing exercise in ethnography, psychoanalysis, and Surrealism. But despite the 20th century’s great influence on Leiris, the book reiterates one of the great *topoi* of the last century’s colonial exoticism: the erotic encounter with the native. Leiris writes of an Ethiopian woman named Emawayish who he meets and initially adores. Love-struck, he finds her lyricism and her thoughts on poetry noteworthy:

Paroles d’Emawayish cet après-midi quand, lui parlant du manuscrit, je lui disais qu’il serait bon surtout qu’elle écrive des chansons amoureuses, comme celles de l’autre nuit: *Est-ce que la poésie existe en France?* Puis: *Est-ce que l’amour existe en France?* (Ibid., 444)

Emawayish’s words from this afternoon when speaking to her about the manuscript, I said to her that it would be especially good if she would write the love songs like those of the other night: *Does poetry exist in France?* Then: *Does love exist in France?*

Buoyant, the ethnographer encourages Emawayish to write down her songs. Although Leiris is only intermittently a starry-eyed romantic, such as the above citation suggests. He fluctuates between states of naïve optimism and bitter resentment. Disillusionment always sets in, Leiris begins to doubt and even detest Emawayish. He questions his alternating roles in Africa: as a colonial ethnographer, as a writer, as a friend to the people he meets.

In order to fully understand the idea of exoticism, I emphasize Céline’s *antiexoticism*. Hence, in the following section of this chapter I shall juxtapose Céline’s

consistent refusal of exoticism in the colonial realm to Leiris's ambivalent hunt for exoticism.

A Secularist's Voyage

Bardamu is in search of security and a refuge from the war—he seeks solace (and finds none) in material necessities: work, food, water, and shelter. One of Bardamu's greatest concerns is avoiding disease. By the end of the Africa sequence, he falls ill with malaria and almost dies. For Bardamu, material wellbeing figures more importantly than beauty or lyricism. The escape from the war, only to discover further pain and suffering, is an important aspect of Céline's *antiexoticism*. Although Céline creates awe-inspiring descriptions of African landscapes, Bardamu has no spiritual, aesthetic, or intellectual sensitivity to African beauty. The “ocean of red,” and the “magnificent” trees of the countryside leave him indifferent:

À moi donc seul le paysage ! J'aurais désormais tout le temps d'y revenir, songeais-je, à la surface, à la profondeur de cette immensité de feuillages, de cet océan de rouge, de marbré jaune, de salaisons flamboyantes magnifiques sans doute pour ceux qui aiment la nature. Je ne l'aimais décidément pas. La poésie des Tropiques me dégoûtait. Mon regard, ma pensée sur ces ensembles me revenaient comme du thon. On aura beau dire, ça sera toujours un pays pour les moutiques et les panthères. Chacun sa place. (*Voyage* 171)

So the whole landscape was mine! I'd have all the time I needed, I thought, to study the surface and the depths of this leafy immensity, this ocean of red, of mottled yellow, of flamboyant hams and head cheeses, magnificent no doubt for people who love nature. I definitely didn't. They poetry of the tropics turned my stomach. The thought of all those vistas repeated on me like tuna fish. Say what you like, it will never be anything but a country of mosquitos and panthers. And not for me.⁴¹

⁴¹ Ralph Manheim, trans., 147

Bardamu simply states that the *poetry of the tropics* always disgusted him. He very well could be referring to *Parnassien* poetry such as the verse by Lecomte de Lisle.⁴² De Lisle meditates on African landscapes and animals in poems such as *Les Éléphants* of the *Poèmes Barbares* (1884). Written in precise *alexandrin* verse, *Les Eléphants* begins with the following line:

Le sable rouge est comme une mer sans limite,
The red sand is like a limitless sea

Céline's image of an "ocean of red" in the preceeding citation is quite similar to de Lisle's "red sea of sand." But the rest of Céline's description is inconsistent with the harmonious and poetical bestiary of African animals included in de Lisle's poem. *Les Eléphants* includes archetypal kiplingesque *jungle* characters: *panthères*, *girafes*, *lions*, *boas*, *hippopotames*, and, of course, *éléphants*.⁴³ (See the *Appendix* to read poem in its entirety.) These animals from the *poetry of the tropics*, appear to belong together, especially compared with Bardamu's joyless menagerie: *thon*, *moustiques*, and *panthères* (tuna, mosquitoes, and panthers). Bardamu evokes a bestial mix of banality—a fish, pesky insects, big cats. *Antiexoticism* expresses itself through Bardamu's repudiation of a paradisiacal Africa. Cresciucci writes calls the negative references to clichéd African

⁴² There is surprisingly little critical commentary on this passage. Alice Kaplan was unable to refer me to any critics who make mention of the line in our conversations. (Email from Wednesday, March 31, 2004 1:31 PM *Poétique de L.F. Céline* by Henri Godard, does not make reference to this phrase.

⁴³ Lecomte de Lisle's poem is clearly indicative of *Poésie des Tropiques*, it begins with this colorful line: *Le sable rouge est comme une mer sans limite*, and the elephants are *pèlerins* who *Vont au pays natal à travers les deserts*, please see the *Appendix* for the poem in its entirety.

symbols, “exotisme discredité...” (Cresciucci 25)(discredited exoticism...). He detests nature and finds the *poetry of the Tropics* disgusting. Bardamu muddles through the African landscape only hoping to slake his thirst and hunger. He describes what African edibles he is able to procure in the following terms:

Des négrellons m’apportaient bien des bananes, des grosses, des menues et des sanguines, et toujours de ces « papayes », mais j’avais tellement mal au ventre de tout ça et de tout ! J’aurais vomi la terre entière. (*Ibid.*, 173)

The little black boys brought me bananas, big ones, little ones, red ones, and more and more papayas, but I was so sick of all that everything else! I’d have vomited up the whole globe.⁴⁴

The hero notes how the tropical fruit upsets his stomach to the point of nausea.

Bardamu leaves Africa with a terrible tropical fever. In Africa he is sickened, nearly mad, and if we recall that during the war, Bardamu fled by falling ill, then Africa and his wartime experiences appear as if they were parallel worlds of physical and mental illness. Similarly, in Africa, the tropical colors boil over. For Bardamu, this vibrancy is unpleasant to look at. In the following citation, an object reflecting bright light and color catches Bardamu’s eye:

Il est difficile de regarder en conscience les gens et les choses des Tropiques à cause des couleurs qui en émanent. Elles sont en ébullition les couleurs et les choses. Une petite boîte de sardines ouverte en plein midi sur la chaussée projette tant de reflets divers qu’elle prend pour les yeux l’importance d’un accident. Faut faire attention. (*Ibid.*, 126)

It is hard to get a faithful look at people and things in the tropics because of the colors that emanate from them. In the tropics colors and things are in a turmoil. To the eye, a small sardine can lying upon the road at

⁴⁴ Ralph Manheim, trans., 149

midday can take on the dimensions of an accident. You've got to watch out.⁴⁵

How does Bardamu view ebullient African color? The colorful brilliance along the roadside is remarkable, however Bardamu can only concentrate on the ugliness of material bits and pieces—the reflections off a sardine can that shimmer in the noon sunlight disconcert the man. He sees the glimmer as a potentially dangerous means to an accident. We have thus viewed the manner in which Céline makes his hero reject *tropical poetics*. Earlier, I noted Michel Leiris's enthusiastic response to the poetic love songs he heard Emawayish sing. Leiris's passions are often rooted in finding his deeply entrenched belief in poetic objects of desire.

Leiris: African Imagery and Poetic Illusions

Combien de kilomètres a-t-il fallu que nous
fussions pour nous sentir enfin au seuil de
l'exotisme!

--Michel Leiris, *L'Afrique fantôme*

After the initial visions of ivory-trade, Bardamu suffers very few nostalgic wishes to discover any poetical African exoticism. For Bardamu the past is composed of wartime horrors—Africa's past and present are no different. For Leiris the past emerges constantly by way of literary referencing and historical indexing. Phantoms of Africa flutter through his mind's eye. At one point he makes a specific list of *Imagerie Africaine*—all of the artistic, cultural, visual images and references he knew before arriving in Africa. These images further his anticipation of what may lay ahead in the future scenes of Africa. Through a process of identification and recognition, the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 108

following list reveals that Leiris attempts to identify the fantastical images that influence his vision:

Imagerie Africaine:

L'Africaine, l'opéra de Meyerbeer, avec son fameux « unison » et le grand air de Vasco de Gama;
la casquette du père Bugeaud et la smalah d'Abd el Kader;
Aïda, que Verdi composa pour les fêtes d'inauguration du Canal du Suez;
l'histoire du prêtre Jean;
la mort de Livingstone;
Fachoda;
Arthur Rimbaud vendant des armes à Menelik;
Savorgnan de Brazza;
le Prince impérial tué par les Zoulous;
les massacreurs Voulet-Chanoine;
les dynamiteurs Gaud-Tocquet;
l'Affaire de la N'Goko Sanga;
le scandale du Thies-Kayes
le Congo-Océan;
la bataille des Pyramides;
le coup d'Agadir;
la conférence d'Algerissia;
Impressions d'Afrique
la reine Ranaivo;
les amazones de Behanzin;
et le sirdar Kitchener, et la guerre du Mahdi, et Samori, etc.

(AF 365)

African Imagery

L'Africaine, Meyerbeer's opera with its famous "unison" and Vasco de Gama's grand air;
Father Bugeaud's helmet and d'Abd el Kader's smalah;
Aïda, that Verdi composed of the inaugural parties of the Suez canal;
the legend of Prester Jean;
the death of Livingstone;
Fachoda;
Arthur Rimbaud selling weapons to Menelik;
Savorgnan de Brazza;
the Imperial Prince killed by the Zulus;
the massacres of Voulet-Chanoine;
the dynamiters of Gaud-Tocquet;
the N'Goko Sanga affair;
the Thies-Kayes scandal;
the Congo-Ocean;

the Battle of the Pyramids;
the coup of Agadir;
the conférence d'Algerissia;
Impressions of Africa
the queen Ranavaloa;
the amazons of Behanzin;
and the sirdar Kitchener, and the war of Mahdi, and Samori, etc.

This *A to Z (Aïda to Zulus)* of African Imagery is revelatory of Leiris's desires to both see through and to enter into a realm of poetical phantasm. He never fulfills either desire. Instead, Leiris travels along seeing illusions; then he becomes disillusioned and disappointed. He concludes one illusory sequence, only to delve into another, then the process resumes itself as he writes his way across Africa.

Insofar as *L'Afrique fantôme* is comprised of entirely spontaneous field-notes by the young ethnographer, it is impressive how well Leiris recalls past images of Africa—the list includes no less than twenty references. All but one of the allusions,⁴⁶ relate to imagery, texts, or events predating the 20th century. In fact, Leiris is haunted by the 19th century in various manners: his personality type could be described as melancholic and nostalgic. He suffers from his own personal *mal de siècle*: impotency. Although Leiris is young and able-bodied, I will show that he cannot transcend this psycho-physical infirmity when he is approached by Emawayish. Next, we shall see how his language is often comparable to the 19th century prose of Loti's conventional colonial exoticism.

⁴⁶ Raymond Roussel's *Impressions d'Afrique* (1912) is the exceptional 20th century work cited in the list of *Imagérie Africaine*.

The title “*L’Afrique fantôme*” may be considered a rewording of the sequel to Loti’s *Aziyadé*, which is entitled, *Fantôme d’orient* (1891).⁴⁷ Even more striking however, is that the subject matter of *L’Afrique fantôme*, at times, resembles a 20th century paraphrase of one of Pierre Loti’s main passions: his fascination with the women of the colonies. Consider the following citation that recalls the last chapter’s *spahi* Jean Peyral, and the *spahi*’s estimation of the sexual appeal of African women compared with European women. Leiris writes:

Ce qui empêche, à mes yeux, les femmes noires d’être réellement excitantes, c’est qu’elles sont habituellement trop nues et que faire l’amour avec elles ne mettrait en jeu rien de social. Faire l’amour avec une femme blanche, c’est la dépouiller d’un grand nombre de conventions, la mettre nue aussi bien au point de vue matériel des institutions. Rien n’est possible avec une femme dont les institutions sont si différentes des nôtres. A certains égards, ce n’est plus une « femme » à proprement parler. (*AF* 148)

From my way of seeing things, what keeps black women from being really sexually exciting, is that they are normally too nude and that sex with them would not put into play anything social. To make love with a white woman, is to pull from her a great number of social conventions, to make her naked is to take away a great number of social conventions, to make her naked in the material sense of institutions. Nothing is possible with a woman whose institutions are so different from ours. In certain respects, it is not strictly speaking a ‘woman.’

Jean Peyral might have said as much, albeit in much less academic terms. The ethnographer makes intellectualized variations on the classical airs of 19th century colonial exoticism. Indeed, one idea that haunts Leiris, throughout his entire voyage in Africa, is the prospect of an erotic encounter with an African woman.

⁴⁷ Although *L’Afrique fantôme* was André Malraux’s suggestion for the title, Leiris evidently seized it.

We shall concentrate on the second part of the book in which Leiris describes his all but erotic experiences in Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia). Within the Abyssinian sequence, Leiris's expression changes tenor, and he develops a more personal narrative revealing the nature of his relationships with the Africans whom he begins to frequent. The author relates the stay in a rural village where he indulges in a dual infatuation with the *zar* cult of spirit possession and one of the cult's "*adepts*," Emawayish. Initially delighted by the possibility of communion with the exoticized *other*, Leiris slowly becomes disillusioned with the Ethiopian woman. His time spent among the spirit cult turns out to be a combined love fiasco and a lesson in colonial ethnographic training.

The text's reflexivity and meta-critical consideration of the exotic increase just before being entering Ethiopia. On the last page of the book's *Première Partie*, Leiris, held up in a diplomatic crisis at the Ethiopian border, complains about the tight colonial "casque" that he dons while exclaiming the words cited in this chapter's epigraph, "Combien de kilomètres a-t-il fallu que nous fassions pour nous sentir enfin au seuil de l'exotisme!" (AF 281) (How many kilometers did we need to cover in order to finally feel like we have arrived at the threshold of exoticism!). He believes that he will find "exoticism" across the frontier in Ethiopia. Unbeknownst to him, Leiris had already crossed colonial exoticism's literary threshold in his writing.

The similarities between the *fin-de-siècle* expression and the 20th century author come to a head as Leiris describes two Ethiopian women. Intrigued by the poetical *zar* cult members, his images of Emawayish and her mother are eerily consistent with Loti's descriptions of the three Algerian ladies of the night from *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah*. Reading the following citations drawn from both *L'Afrique fantôme* and *Les Trois dames*,

I first note how the two authors describe the mothers and daughters. The respective authors place an emphasis on their physical characteristics. “Wax-faced,” with priestess-like appearances, they embody sacred eroticism in the minds of the Frenchmen. In the first quote, Leiris describes the mother (*la dame des zar*) and her daughter, Emawayish (*la princesse au pur visage de cire*).

A l'improviste, visite de la dame des zar. Comme un veillard honorable, elle porte toge—à large bande rouge et grand bâton ferré. Sa fille—la princesse au pur visage de cire, mais aux mammelles flétrie.
(*L'Afrique fantôme* 412-413)

Impromptu visit to the lady of the *zar*. Like an old venerable, she wears a toga—with a wide red sash and a large iron staff. Her daughter—the princess with a pure face of wax, but with wilted mammaries.

Leiris contrasts the daughter's pure wax face (*pur visage de cire*) to her less appealing wilted bosom. Next we observe how Loti compares the prostitutes' brown bodies to their immobile white wax faces (*figures de cire*):

Le fauve de leur bras ronds contrastait avec le rose artificiel et la pâleur peinte de leurs visages; elles avaient l'air de figures de cire ayant un corps d'ambre; leurs grands yeux, tout noyés dans du noir, se tenaient baissés avec une expression mystique. (*Les trois femmes de la Kasbah* 23)

The tawnyess of their brown arms contrasted with the artificial pink and paleness of their faces; they had an air of wax faces with amber bodies; their huge eyes, all drown in black, looked down with a mystique expression.

In both citations, the women's wax/white faces are weighed against their bodies—brown, or in Emawayish's case—*flétrie*—wilted. Leiris makes the same remarks ten days later, “...sa fille Emawayish, la belle—bien qu'un peu flétrie—princesse de cire.” (...her daughter, the belle—although wilted—a wax princess.). The authors' beautiful wax-faces

appear as if they are objects of ritual adoration. Likewise, within Leiris and Loti's narratives, the women assume the function of the Frenchmen's shadowy prostitutes. The *trois dames* are similar to the priestesses of ritual prostitution whom Leiris evokes with Emawayish and her mother in mind.

J'ai toujours plus ou moins regardé le coït comme un acte magique, attendu de certaines femmes ce qu'on peut attendre des oracles, traité les prostituées comme des pythonisses...Ainsi, je pense toujours à la vieille *entremetteuse* mystique avec un respect mêlé d'affection. Quel dommage qu'il n'existe plus, de nos jours et en nos pays, de prostitution rituelle!
(AF 413, my italics)

I have always regarded coitus as, more or less, a magic act, I have expected of certain women that which one expects of oracles, treated prostitutes like the python priestesses... Thus, I think of the old mystic *madam* with respect mixed with affection. What a shame that ritual prostitution no longer exists, in our days and in our country.

From Leiris's portrait of Emawayish and her mother, the *vieille entremetteuse mystique*, it is not a far stretch to Loti's *dames*. The ritual-sex priestesses above could easily integrate into the following descriptions of the next quote taken from Loti. Loti describes *les trois dames* as kneeling priestesses and sacred courtesans of Baal's sanctuary.

Dans cette pénombre bleu, elles semblaient des êtres chimériques, des prêtresses accroupies dans un temple, des courtisanes sacrées dans un sanctuaire de Baal. (*Les trois dames* 24)

In this blue dusk, they seemed like chimerical beings, priestesses kneeling down in a temple, sacred courtesans in sanctuary of Baal.

Sacred but malevolent eroticism is inherent in the sphere of Loti's *trois dames*, and in Leiris's Abyssinia. These women's faces are inert and immobile, *wax-like*, but their bodies

are harmful. As he hesitantly lifts his rose-colored glasses, Leiris discovers that Emawayish suffers from syphilis:

En passant, nous enregistrons au tableau trois nouveaux syphilitiques: Emawayish, l'idiote de village, la grosse à l'oeil vitreux... Vu l'absence d'hygiène et la multiplicité des mariages, il est probable qu'il n'y a pas une seule personne saine dans le pays. (AF 535)

In passing, we record three new syphilitics on the board: Emawayish, the village idiot, the fat woman with the oozing eye. Considering the absence of hygiene and the numerous marriages, it is probable that there is not one single healthy person in the country.

Thus, Emawayish, exactly like Loti's *dames de la Kasbah*, is syphilitic—these women's bodies are vessels of disease. However, Leiris's poetic love object, Emawayish is also the subject to his 20th century modern ethno-sociological explanations. In the face of the malady, Leiris, casts aside his exoticist writing style, and resumes social scientific explanations: lack of hygiene, multiple marriages, etc.

Immediately prior to the revelation of her illness, Emawayish comes to flirt with the ethnographer. Although Leiris remains physically unfulfilled, as he is spiritually dissatisfied. He is impotent beside her. He wonders, "Pourquoi faut-il qu'elle soit venue se présenter devant moi, vers la fin de ce voyage, comme s'il s'agissait uniquement de me rappeler que je suis hanté par un fantôme, plus mauvais que tous les zar du monde?" (*Ibid.*, 535) (Why must she come present herself in front of me, at the end of this trip, as if only to remind me that I am haunted by a worse phantom than any *zar* in the world?) In this instance, Leiris believes that he is haunted by his stilted European sexuality. These are personal phantoms, which keep him from having physical relations with Emawayish. Ultimately, Leiris seeks evasion and escape, he would like to have found a subterfuge in

Africa, in the zar cult, in sexual relations. However, he did not find any escape routes from Europe, from his consciousness, or from his old phantoms. In *L'Age d'homme* he writes of his return from Africa to France, “En 1933, je revins, ayant tué au moins un mythe, celui du voyage en tant que moyen d'évasion.” (*L'Age d'homme* 201) (In 1933, I came back, having killed at least one myth, the myth of travel as means to escape.). Hence, the title *L'Afrique fantôme*, refers to the unreal, imaginary, wishful subterfuge that Leiris had hoped Africa would be. What he discovered were only phantoms of things seen and known from his French environment.

The Mission: The Sacred of Everyday Exoticism—Phantoms of Africa

On parlait de l'Orient. L'Orient avec un grand O, au sens rimbaldien: ce qui n'est pas Occident. Quelqu'un comme Artaud et nous autres à sa suite nous vomissons le pape et rendions hommage au Dalaï-Lama. C'était un peu biscornu.⁴⁸

—Michel Leiris, 1988

In the above quote taken from an interview with Sally Price, Leiris (then in his eighties) recollects how he and his colleagues viewed *other* cultures in the 1920s and 1930s. He says, “We spoke of the Orient, The Orient with a big O, in the rimbaldien sense, that which was not the Occident. Someone like Artaud and all of us after him, we were sick of the pope and we payed our respects to the Dali-Lama. It was a bit odd.” His reflections on the manner in which he and his contemporaries glorified all that was *not* (in their

⁴⁸ Sally Price and Jean Jamin, “Entretien avec Michel Leiris,” *Gradhiva, Revue et d'Archives de l'Anthropologie*, (Paris:Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales),30. Footnote 2 of this article cites Leiris's reference to Antonin Artaud's “Adresse au Pape. Adresse au Dalaï-Lama”: “Lettres aux écoles du Bouddha.” *La Révolution surréaliste*. 1925 (3): 16-17 and 22.

minds) Occidental, resonates in his fascination with the expressions of different kinds of religiosity he witnesses in Africa.

In Ethiopia, Leiris's inquiry into the *zar* cult of spirit possession reflects the early 20th century modernists' belief in the nearly sacrosanct realm of unconsciousness, and trance-states. Blake writes the following on Leiris's articles on jazz music in *Documents* (1929-1930), "Leiris stated that jazz was the period's only 'true sacred music,' capable of 'making a crowd go into a trance.'"⁴⁹ Parisian crowds, since the turn of the century, had taken to African-American dance styles such as the "cake-walk." Slightly later, in the 1920s and 30s, jazz was the favored music among Parisian avant-gardists. In *L'Age d'homme* (1946) Leiris describes the period after World War I as follows:

Dans la période de grande licence qui suivit les hostilités, le jazz fut un signe de ralliement, un étendard orgiaque, aux couleurs du moment. Il agissait magiquement et son mode d'influence peut être comparé à une possession. C'était le meilleur élément pour donner leur vrai sens ces fêtes, un sens religieux, avec communion par la danse, l'érotisme latent ou manifesté... (*L'Age d'homme* 161)

In the period of great liberty that followed the hostilities, jazz was a rallying sign, an orgiastic flag of the moment's colors. It worked magically and the manner of its influence could be compared to possession. It was the best way to give real meaning to these parties, a religious sense, with communion by dance, and a latent eroticism...

Leiris's thoughts on the "sacredness" of that American music and the trance state it evoked in crowds, has much in common with his interest in trance and possession ceremonies that he documents two years later while in Africa. Among the *zar* cult, Leiris finds himself wishing to join the entranced participants during a possession ceremony.

⁴⁹ Blake 124

He longs to cast off his Western identity of ethnographer and to embrace the *sacred* realm of the spirit possession. After attending a possession ceremony he goes so far as to suggest that a spirit took hold of him, and he ate more than he would have normally. He writes, “Il faut vraiment que ce soit le zar qui mange, non le “cheval,” car je ne me serais jamais soupçonné une telle capacité.” (AF 548-549) (I must really have been the *zar* who eats, not the “horse” because I never would have suspected myself of such a capacity.) The “cheval” is Leiris—his body, his subjectivity in a normal state of affairs. Leiris’s attempt to embrace the *zar* culture is not only emblematic of his modern belief in the unconscious, but also it reflects the 19th century exoticist quest for immersion in alternate worlds, which Chris Bongie defines. However, we shall discover how quickly Leiris stops believing in the *zar* cult and departs from Ethiopia disillusioned. As his interview reveals, the thinkers of his day longed for spiritual alternatives to the Occident—they sneered at the Pope, and praised the Dalaï-Lama, simply substituting one religious figure with another.

As I have noted, Leiris’s wish to cross over the threshold into “exoticism” is tantamount to his hunt to cross the entrance of his consciousness into a realm of sacred possession. After enjoying an African dance, which he views as debauchery, he describes himself as a religious man, “Noblesse extreme de la débauche, de la magie et du charlatanisme. Tout ceci est religieux, et je suis décidément un homme religieux...” (AF 109)(The extreme noblesse of debauchery, of magic and charlatanism. All of this is religious, and I am a religious man. . .) In this quote, there is a slight tone of irony, which Leiris expresses towards religiosity in general. However, keeping in mind his comments on rejecting the Pope, and paying homage to the Dali-Lama, it appears as if he attempts

to sincerely turn away from European religion (which is, in his case, Catholicism) in order to seek alternate religious and sacred communion. The search for the sacred stands in sharp contrast to the expedition for a job and food, which Bardamu undertakes in Africa. The only spiritual synergy that Bardamu experiences might be described as sentiments of horror, awe, and fear in the face of death.

The Secular Céline and The Spiritual Leiris

Bardamu refuses to revel in the *poetry of the Tropics*, much in the way Céline refused to join any of the current literary trends of the day. Despite the fact that Céline was such an important literary figure and so notorious for his politics, the author attached himself to no artistic or political movements—he was neither friend nor foe of the *avant-gardists* of the 1930s.⁵⁰ Although in *Louis-Ferdinand Céline*, Michel Beaujour points out Céline's proximity to the Surrealists, in terms of his thanatopsis and the Surrealists' ecstatic enchantment with the erotic.

Céline donne voix à ce qui se défait en nous. Il fait parler la mort que nous portons comme un cancer et dont nul n'a été plus douloureusement conscient que lui. Céline apparaît donc comme le frère ténébreux du Surréalisme. Si les surréalistes surent faire jaillir les images du désir érotique, Céline arrache, avec Thanatos, les apparences qui dissimulent le suintement de notre vie baveuse.⁵¹

Céline gives a voice to what is demolished in us. He makes death speak, which we carry in us like a cancer, and of which no one was more painfully aware than him. Thus, Céline seems like the dark brother of Surrealism. If the Surrealists knew how to spout out the images of erotic desire, Céline tears off, with Thanatos, appearances which hide the outpour of our slobbering lives.

⁵⁰ Although I could not find a single referencet to Céline in Surrealist literature and criticism, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* was written on by Georges Bataille and who found political messages that could be read as reinforcement to Marxist economic theorizing.

Beaujour indicates an important difference between Michel Leiris's erotic Surrealist expression in *L'Afrique fantôme*, and what I call Céline's *antiexoticism* in *Voyage*. It would be incorrect to say that Bardamu never experiences awe. If we recall his pathos regarding the war, he compares sexual innocence with the unaccustomed awe he experienced before the death and suffering of the war: "On est puceau de l'Horreur comme on l'est de la volupté." (You are a virgin to Horror like you are to sensuality.) This awe is akin to fear—and this is a fear of dying. In Beaujour's words, Céline "makes death speak." Bardamu constantly evokes the heat, thirst, hunger, and disease of the African hinterlands. He describes the French colonials as follows:

Ainsi, les rares énergies qui échappaient au paludisme, à la soif, au soleil, se consumaient en haines si mordantes, si insistantes, que beaucoup de colons finissaient par en crever sur place, empoisonnés d'eux-mêmes, comme des scorpions. (*Voyage* 125-126)

The little energy that hadn't been sapped by malaria, thirst, and the heat, was consumed by hatred so fierce and deep seated that it wasn't uncommon for these colonials to drop dead on the spot, poisoned by themselves like scorpions.⁵²

Bardamu pours scorn on the diseased African colonial environment. Leiris, by his own claim, a "religious" man, only occasionally complains of illness, and physical discomfort. Although more often dispassionate, Michel Leiris alternates between objective descriptions regarding his environs, and a passionate yet intellectualized frenzy. When he meets the practitioners of the *zar* cult, the ethnographer to waxes poetic regarding the lyricism of certain rituals. Beaujour is accurate in writing that the Surrealists "spout out

⁵¹ Michel Beaujour, *Louis-Ferdinand Céline*, Herne, 13.

⁵² Ralph Manheim, trans., 107

the images of erotic desire.” Indeed, Leiris does just that when writing on the *zar* cult member Emawayish and the Ethiopian environment.

As I have cited, Leiris is infatuated by the African imagery of exoticism. The phantoms of the book’s title are the past images of Africa that haunt him. Leiris’s attention paid to information gathering for his ethnographic mission is frequently eclipsed by invocations of a literary visions and memories. Hence, Leiris’s writing is a transformation of what I consider various points of 19th century colonial exoticism—this is a hybrid expression of the expiring French colonial thought merging with literary, historical, ethnographic, and local imagery.

In *L’Afrique fantôme* the writing becomes a layering of colonial, ethnographic (local), and exoticist allusions—consider the manner in which Leiris evokes that classic text of exoticism, *Paul et Virginie*, when spending time with the *zar* cult, “Début de matinée très Paul et Virginie. Assis par terre devant l’abri cuisine, nous mangeons des cannes à sucre qu’Emawayish est allée récolter dans le jardin.” (AF 545) (Early morning very *Paul et Virginie*. Sitting on the ground in the shade of the kitchen, we eat some sugar cane that Emawayish had gone to harvest from the garden.). The ethnographer is momentarily delighted to chew sugarcane while reminding himself of St. Bernardin’s classic text of exoticism.

Nevertheless, Leiris’s disillusionment is imminent. He begins to suspect that the *zar* cult practitioners are more interested in the ethnographers’ gifts and money than in sharing their fantastic secrets. They are no longer “magi,” and his poetic musing wanes as a “cold” and critical objectivity returns.

Je commençais à me lasser de l’enquête. Malkam Ayyahou et sa famille commençaient à m’ennuyer. J’tais moins en moins capable de voir des

images et des Atrides dans ces paysans tout simplement d'une avarice sordide. Emawayish et sa mère ne m'éblouissent plus. J'étais écoeuré que toute cette aventure—qui durant longtemps m'avait semblé parfaite—s'abimât brutalement dans ce qui depuis toujours avait constitué son armature plus ou moins secrète: une question de gros sous. J'étais devenu tout à fait froid. (*Ibid.*, 552)

I've started to get tired of this research. Malkam Ayyahou and her family have started to bore me. I was less and less capable of seeing the magi and the Atrides in these peasants than simply a sordid avariciousness. Emawayish and her mother do not blow me away anymore. I was sickened by this adventure that seemed so perfect, and lasted such a long time—that it suddenly got messed up, and what always had constituted the perfect cover: a question of money. I had become totally indifferent.

Leaving Ethiopia, and the *zar* cult, the ethnographer critically remarks that Emawayish takes the ethnographers' discarded luggage:

J'ai expédié Emawayish, qui est venue nous dire au revoir et—poliment—montre de la tristesse, comme à une visite de condoléances. Elle surtout, je ne puis la supporter...Elle ne s'en va pas sans avoir obtenu deux vieilles caisses que nous avons abandonnées.
(*Ibid.*, 570)

I sent away Emawayish, who had come to say goodbye to us and politely show her sadness, like a visit of condolences. Especially her, I can't stand her anymore...she didn't go away without getting two old boxes that we had left behind.

Ironically, Leiris departs from his former friends, seemingly fretful that *he* was exploited by the Ethiopian peasants' "avarice sordide" (sordid avariciousness).

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, Leiris's publication of *L'Afrique fantôme* upon his return home leaves little doubt that he fully understood who in Africa ultimately behaved with avarice. With the last explanation of Céline's *antiexoticism*, in conjunction with an analysis of Leiris's revamped version of 19th century colonial exoticism, we shall conclude by commenting on themes of colonial exploitation in both authors' works.

Material Exploitation of Natives

Bardamu is not only disenchanted by African nature, he is disenchanted by African colonial culture. In the series of quotations that follow, Céline's bitter portrait of colonial functionaries and merchants reveals how these parties worked to exploit Africans. This picture of colonial Africa conveys none of sacred allure that African cultures exerted on his contemporaries. Instead, Céline's most poignant depiction of the indigenes of Bambola-Bragamance relates to the material and financial exploitation imposed upon them. Bardamu claims that nothing escapes the colonials' plundering: "Plus une noix de coco, plus une cacahète, sur tout le territoire, qui échappait à leurs rapines." (*Voyage* 125) (Not even a coconut, not even a peanut, in the whole territory escaped from their rapines.). Speaking with Bardamu, a *colon* explains the end of traditional hunting and the natives' entry into a profitable agricultural economy, as follows:

Plus de tribus ! Plus de chichis ! Plus de flaflas ! Mais de la main-d'œuvre et des cacahuètes ! Au boulot ! Plus de chasse ! Plus de fusils ! Des cacahouettes et du caoutchouc ! Pour payer l'impôt ! L'impôt pour faire venir à nous du caoutchouc et des cacahuètes encore ! C'est la vie Bardamu ! Cacahuètes ! Cacahuètes et caoutchouc ! (*Ibid.*,140)

No more tribes! ...No more flimflam and foolmuch! Today we've got a labor force and peanuts! Good hard work! No more hunting! No more guns! Peanuts and rubber! To pay the taxes! The taxes to bring us more rubber and peanuts! This is life, Bardamu! Peanuts! Peanuts and rubber!⁵³

⁵³ Ralph Manheim, trans., 120

Bardamu did not head for Africa in search of divine poetic revelation, or to discover the “other,” reveling in the languorous Tropics. His reasons for coming to Africa involve anticipated job opportunities. He seeks work and an escape from nightmarish European civilization. He finds neither, despite the rural agricultural economy. He looks for peace, but is reminded of the war. The next passage requires lengthy transcription to further expose those themes. In addition to which, we note a mockery of the colonials and their use of the “native” patois.

The Exotic Mocked and Colonial Collaboration

Céline creates an exoticist patois in *Voyage*, but only certain despicable merchants are able to speak the language fluently. One colonial shopkeeper, in particular, presents a terrifying figure: diseased, mean, and rapacious. He suffers from a skin condition called “Corocoro,” and continually scratches at himself:

Il n’arrêtait pas de se gratter tout autour de lui-même, giratoirement pour ainsi dire, de l’extrémité de la colonne vertébrale à la naissance du cou. Il se sillonnait l’épiderme et le derme même de rayures d’ongles sanglantes, sans cesser pour cela de servir les clients, nombreux, des nègres presque toujours nus plus ou moins.

Cette maladie qui lui rongeaient la peau, il lui donnait un nom local « Corocoro ». Cette vache de « Corocoro » !... Quand je pense que ce saligaud de Directeur ne l’a pas encore attrapé le “Corocoro”, s’emportait-il. Ça me fait mal au ventre davantage !... Il prendra sur lui le Corocoro ! ... Il est bien trop pourri. C’est pas un homme ce maquereau-là, c’est une infection !... C’est une vraie merde ! (*Voyage* 136)

He never stopped scratching, in ellipses so to speak, from the lower end of his spinal column to the top of his neck. He dug furrows into his epidermis and dermis with his bloody fingernails, while continuing to wait on his numerous customers, most of them virtually naked.

He referred to the ailment that was eating away his skin by its local name, “corocoro.” “This miserable “corocoro!” When I think that the stinking director hasn’t caught it yet, it makes me itch a hundred times

worse! The corocoro can't get a hold on him...he's too rotten already. That pimp isn't a man. He's a smell!...Pure unadulterated shit.”⁵⁴

Bardamu observes the following spectacle in which the merchant, the hideous itchy “colleague of the ‘corocoro,’” buys raw rubber from an African family. The silent Africans have no say in what happens to them during the transaction.

Le collègue au « corocoro » achetait du caoutchouc de traite, brut, qu'on lui apportait de la brousse, en sacs, en boules humides.

Comme nous étions là, jamais las de l'entendre, une famille de récolteurs, timide, vient se figer sur le seuil de sa porte. Le père en avant des autres, ridés, ceinturé d'un petit pagne orange, son long coupe-coupe à bout de bras. (*Ibid.*,137)

My colleague with the corocoro traded in crude rubber, it came in sticky balls that the natives would bring in from the bush in big sacks.

While we were in the store, listening to him by the hour, a family of rubber gatherers came to the door and froze with timidity, the father in the lead, wrinkled, girt in a skimpy orange loincloth and holding his long machete.⁵⁵

It is at this point when the narration begins to sarcastically reveal who the real “*sauvages*” are. The “corocoro” merchant and his assistant begin to scream in a “savage tongue” of their own invention. The indigenous family hangs back, intimidated and unsure of what takes place:

Il n'osait pas entrer le sauvage. Un des commis indigènes l'invitait pourtant : « Viens bougnole ! Viens voir ici ! Nous y a pas bouffer sauvages ! » Ce langage finit par les décider. Ils pénétrèrent dans la cagna cuisante au fond de laquelle tempêtait notre homme au « corocoro ».

⁵⁴ Ralph Manheim, trans., 116-117

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 117

Ce Noir n'avait encore, semblait-il, jamais vu de boutique, ni de Blanc peut-être. Une de ses femmes le suivait, yeux baissés, portant sur le sommet de la tête, en équilibre, le gros panier rempli de caoutchouc brut.

D'autorité les commis recruteurs s'en saisirent de son panier pour peser le contenu sur la balance. Le sauvage ne comprenait pas plus le truc de la balance que le reste. La femme n'osait toujours pas relever la tête. Les autres nègres de la famille les attendaient dehors, avec les yeux bien écarquillés. On les fit entrer aussi, enfants compris et tous, pour qu'ils ne perdent rien du spectacle.

C'était la première fois qu'ils venaient comme ça tous ensemble de la forêt, vers les Blancs en ville. Ils avaient dû s'y mettre depuis bien longtemps les uns et les autres pour les intéressait tous. C'est long à suinter le caoutchouc dans les petits godets qu'on accroche au tronc des arbres. Souvent, on n'en a pas plein un petit verre en deux mois.

Pesée faite, notre gratteur entraîna le père, éberlué, derrière son comptoir et avec un crayon lui fit son compte pièces en argent. Et puis : « Va-t'en ! qu'il lui a dit comme ça. C'est ton compte !... »

Tous les petits amis blancs s'en tordaient de rigolade, tellement il avait bien mené son business. Le nègre restait planté penaud devant le comptoir avec son petit caleçon orange autour du sexe. (*Voyage* 137)

The savage was afraid to come in despite the encouragements of one of the native clerks : "C'mon nigger! Come look see! We no eat savages!" Won over by these kind words, they stepped into the sweltering shack, at the back of which our corocoro man was ranting.

Apparently that native had never seen a store or possibly even a white man before. One of the women, with a big basket of crude rubber balanced on her head, followed him with downcast eyes.

Quickly the recruiting clerks grabbed her basket and put the contents on the scales. The savage didn't know what the scales were about or anything else. His wife was still afraid to raise her head. The rest of the family waited outside. The clerk told them to come in, too bad if they missed the show.

That was the first time they had all trekked in from the bush to the white man's town. It must have taken them a good long time to collect all that rubber. So naturally they were interested in the outcome. You hang little cups on the trunks of the trees, and the rubber oozes into them very very slowly. Sometimes you don't get so much as a small glassful in two months.

After the weighing, our scratcher dragged the bewildered native behind the counter, did a little reckoning with a pencil stub, and shoved a few coins into the man's hand. Then he said: "Beat it! That's it!"

All his little white friends were convulsed to see how cleverly he had handled this transaction. The black man stood there by the counter, looking lost in his skimpy orange underdrawers.⁵⁶

When speaking to the quiet Africans the merchant speaks a *mélange* of French interspersed with strange words. In an article entitled “Caught in the Dialogic: The Celinian Narrator Silenced,” (1992), Silk opens the discussion on the merchant by suggesting that the “Colonizer” has turned “Colonized.”⁵⁷ However, using the absurd language, the colonizer merchant very much maintains the racial and national colonial order of things. He insults the father and manages to rob the harvesters of their rubber without paying them anything in cash.

« Toi y a pas savoir argent? Sauvage, alors?—que l'interpelle pour le réveiller l'un de nos commis débrouillard habitué et bien dressé sans doute à ces transactions péremptoires. —Toi y en a pas parler "francé" dis? Toi y en a gorille encore hein?...Toi y en a parler quoi hein! Kous Kous? Mabillia? Toi y en a couillon! Bushman! Plein couillon! »

Mais il restait devant nous le sauvage la main renfermée sur les pièces. Il se serait bien sauvé s'il avait osé, mais il n'osait pas.

(*Ibid.*, 137-138)

“You no savvy money? You savage?” This clerk knew his onions, he was used to these peremptory transactions, he had probably been trained. “You no speakie French?” he went on. “You missing link, eh?... “What you speakum anyway? Couscous? Mabillia? Jackass! Bushman! You heap big jackass!”

The savage just stood there with his hand closed on his coins. He would have run away if he dared, but he didn't dare.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-118

⁵⁷ Sally Silk, “Caught in the Dialogic: The Celinian Narrator Silenced.” *Modern Language Notes* 107, no. French (1992): 797.

⁵⁸ Ralph Manheim, trans., 118

Céline makes a crucial point: The rubber harvester does understand the value of money, but he is too intimidated to leave with the cash. The merchant opportunistically snatches back the money and gives the family a piece of green fabric.

« Toi y en a acheté alors quoi avec ton pognon? intervint le "gratteur" opportunément. J'en ai pas vu un aussi con que lui tout de même depuis longtemps, voulut-il bien remarquer. Il doit venir de loin celui-là! Qu'est-ce que tu veux? Donne-moi-le ton pognon! »

Il lui reprit l'argent d'autorité et à la place des pièces lui chiffona dans le creux de la main un grand mouchoir très vert qu'il avait été cueillir finement dans une cachette du comptoir.

Le père nègre hésitait à s'en aller avec ce mouchoir. Le gratteur fit alors mieux encore. Il connaissait décidément tous les trucs du commerce conquérant. Agitant devant les yeux d'un des petits Noirs enfants, le grand morceau vert d'étamine : « Tu le trouves pas beau toi dis morpion ? T'en souvent vu comme ça dis ma petite mignonne, dis ma petite charogne, dis mon petit boudin, des mouchoirs ? » Et il le lui noua autour du cou d'autorité, question de l'habiller. (*Ibid.*, 138)

What you buy with dough?" The scratcher put in. "I haven't seen such as jughead in a long time! He must have come a long way.—What you wait for? Gimme that dough!"

He grabbed the money, and in place of the coins gave the black man a bright green handkerchief that he had deftly spirited from some secret hiding place under the counter.

When the black man hesitated to leave with the handkerchief, the scratcher went a step further. He certainly knew the tricks of the conqueror's trade. Shaking the big square of muslin before the eyes of the sww black child, he said: "Ain't it pretty, you little turd? Did you ever see one like it, little sweetie, little stinkpot, little fart?" And one-two-three he tied it around the child's neck. Nows the child was dressed.⁵⁹

Céline does not elucidate the extent of the family's disappointment with the hankerchief.

Nonetheless, Silk makes an interesting point regarding this scenario, she writes:

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 118

Although he [Bardamu] appears cynically indifferent to the incident, Bardamu does, in effect, demonstrate his complicity in an imperialist discourse. For just as the child wears this symbol of civilisation around his neck, so too does Bardamu occupy the voice of an ethnographer, a role that authoritatively describes the handkerchief's introduction into the family as if he understood the natives' symbolic systems.⁶⁰

Thus, the natives are simply the silent subjects of the cruel greed of the merchant, and the hushed ethnographic subjects of Céline's narrative. Silk considers this "Bardamu's unwillingness to recognize the natives as a legitimate other [which] allows him to appropriate a colonial discourse that silences them." (Silk 798). The merchants' brutality and Bardamu's complicity are punctuated with a kick given to the father as the family exits:

La famille sauvage contemplait à présent le petit orné de cette grande chose en cotonnade verte...il n'y avait plus rien à faire puisque le mouchoir venait d'entrer dans la famille. Il n'y avait plus qu'à accepter, le prendre et s'en aller.

Tous se mirent donc à reculer lentement, franchirent la porte, et au moment où le père se retournait, en dernier, pour dire quelque chose, le commis le plus dessalé qui avait les chaussures le stimula, le père, par un grand coup de botte en plein dans les fesses.

Toute la petite tribu, regroupée, silencieuse, de l'autre côté de l'avenue Faïdherbe, sous le magnolier, nous regarda finir notre apéritif. On aurait dit qu'ils essayaient de comprendre ce qui venait de leur arriver.

(*Ibid.*, 138)

The savage family contemplated what happened to them at present, the little one dressed with the big thing in green cotton...there was nothing left to be done because the handkerchief had entered into the family. There was nothing to be done but accept it, take it, and go away.

Everyone looked at one another and slowly backed out, crossed the door, and at the instant when the father was going to go back, the last one,

⁶⁰ *Silk*, 797

to say something, the nastiest assistant who was wearing shoes, pushed the father with a great kick in the ass.

The whole little tribe, regrouped, silent, on the other side of the avenue Faidherbe, under the magnolia tree, they watched us finishing our appetitif. You would have thought that they were trying to understand what had just happened to them.

The whole family stared at the child, decked out in the green cotton object... There was noting more they could do, becacsue the handkerchief had come into the family. The could only accept it, take it, and go.

They all backed slowly out. They crossed the threshold. When the father, who was the last, turned around to say something, the sharpest of the clerks, who was wearing shoes, helped him loeave with a swift kick in the ass.

The entire little tribe stood silently on the other side of the Avenue Faidherbe, under the magnolia tree, watching us finsih our apéritifs. It looked as if they were trying to understand what had happened to them.⁶¹

This scene exposes the merchant's greed and exploitation of the colonized. "Toute la petite tribu" look on, as if in shock, at the father's humilating treatment at the hands of the shopkeeper and his assistants. In Céline's fictive colony of Bambola-Bragamance, as in most colonial societies, there is tacit conspiracy among European colonials who tend to socialize among themselves. The itchy storekeeper celebrates his thievery by buying a round of drinks for Bardamu and the other Frenchmen who sat by and watched. It is not farfetched to suggest that he buys off the spectators who watched his manipulations and pilfering.

C'était l'homme du «*corocoro*» qui nous régala. Il nous fit même marcher son phonographe. On trouvait de tout dans sa boutique. Ça me rappelait les convois de la guerre. (*Ibid.*, 138)

The corocoro man was treating us. He even played his phonograph for us. You could find anything in his store. It made me think of the supply depots in the war.⁶²

⁶¹ Ralph Manheim, trans., 118

⁶² *Ibid.*, 118

Céline relates the exploitation that the merchant engages in by writing a tragic-comical scenario that ridicules the colonials and turns the natives into silenced and grave marionnette-like figures. In the end, Bardamu is reminded of the wartime convoys, which brought soldiers food and supplies. It is as if the scene that he just witnessed is as horrifying as what he went through in the war. The merchant offers Baradamu and his associates drinks and music—sardonic crumb of relief in the face of the “Horreur.”

Taking Things from Africans: *Mais ça n'en est pas moins moche...*

Michel Leiris exposes the exploitative practices of the ethnographic Mission in quite different terms than does Céline. To begin with, Leiris implicates himself while stealing from Africans. According to Leiris's journal entitled *Journal 1922-1989*, the main objective of the Mission was to bring back objects for the Musée Trocadéro. “...cette mission a pour objectif principal d’accroître les collections africaines du musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro.”⁶³ (The objective of this mission is to increase the Ethnographic Trocadéro Museum’s collections.). Leiris's job as secretary-archivist of the Mission was to bring back writing (material) from Africa. In the writing with which he returned to France, were the admissions of illicit ethnographic methodologies: namely, theft.

The following examples provide the reader with some of the most seemingly obvious instances of Michel Leiris's and his ethnographic colleagues' colonial proclivities—exploitation of local resources. The mission participants steal ritual objects

⁶³ While this is frequently mentioned, the fact that the mission's goal was to augment the African collection for the *Musée Trocadéro*, I am citing Leiris's most recent biographer, Armel Alette's quotation from Leiris's posthumously published *Journal 1922-1989* (1992). Armel Alette, *Michel Leiris* (Paris: Fayard, 1997): 303.

from African altars and sacred caves. In the next quotation, an entry from *L'Afrique fantôme* dated 7 September 1931, Leiris explains how he and his colleague Eric Lutten, steal a *kono* (a kind of fetish statue) from a sanctuary in, what was then the French Sudan, and what is now modern day Mali.

7 septembre.

Avant de quitter Dyabougou, visite du village et enlèvement d'un deuxième Kono, que Griaule à repéré en s'introduisant subrepticement dans la case réservée. Cette fois, c'est Lutten et moi qui nous chargeons de l'opération. Mon coeur bat très fort car, depuis le scandale d'hier, je perçois avec plus d'acuité l'énormité de ce que nous commettons. De son couteau de chasse, Lutten détache le masque du costume garni de plumes auquel il est relié, me le passe, pour que je l'enveloppe dans la toile que nous avons apportée, et me donne aussi, sur ma demande—car il s'agit d'une des formes bizarres qui hier nous avait si fort intrigués—une sorte de cochon de lait, toujours en nougat brun (c'est-à-dire sang coagulé) qui pèse au moins 15 kilos et que j'emballer avec le masque. Le tout est rapidement sorti du village et nous regagnons les voitures par les champs. Lorsque nous partons, le chef veut rendre à Lutten les 20 francs que nous lui avons donnés. Lutten les lui laisse, naturellement. Mais ça n'en est pas moins moche...
(AF 105)

7 September 1931

Before leaving Dyabougou, we visit the village and take a second *kono* that Griaule found upon surreptitiously entering an off-limits cave. This time it was Lutten and me who take care of the operation. My heart beats hard, . . . I perceive with more acuity the enormity of what we are doing. With his hunting knife, Lutten detaches the decorated costume mask with feathers tied to it, he hands it to me so that I can envelop it in the fabric that we brought. Upon my request—because it is one of those bizarre forms that so intrigued us yesterday—he also gives me a sort of suckling-pig like figure, made out of brown nougat (that is to say coagulated blood) that weighs two kilograms and I wrap it up with the mask. The whole thing is rapidly taken out of the village and we reached the cars by the fields. When we are leaving, the chief wants to give back to Lutten the 30 Francs that we had given to him. Lutten lets it go, naturally. But, that does not make it any less disgusting....

Leiris points the finger at himself saying that they take another object “sur ma demande...” Clearly, Leiris and his friend Lutten experience guilt after their raid, as they refuse to accept the money that the chief owes to them. Leiris admits that by declining to take their money the whole affair is not “any less disgusting.”

After stealing the *kono*, Leiris who is subject to daydreaming, compares the next village his visits to the genre *Robinson Crusoe* and, once again he evokes *Paul et Virginie*.

Très peu après le rapt, arrivée à San, déjeuner, puis prise de contact, dans un village voisin, avec des Bobo oulé, qui sont des gens charmants. Nudités idylliques et parures de paille ou de cauris, jeunes gens aux cheveux très joliment tressés et femmes au crâne souvent rasé (surtout les vieilles), c'est plus qu'il n'en faut pour me séduire, me faire oublier toute piraterie et ne plus penser qu'au genre *Robinson Crusoe et Paul et Virginie*. (AF 105)

A bit after the rapt, arrival at San, lunch, then contacts, in a neighboring village with the Bobo, who are charming people. Idyllic nudes and clothes of straw or cauri shells, young ones with very pretty braided hair and frequent women with their heads shaved (especially the old ones), that is more than enough to seduce me, to make me forget all the piraterie and only think of the genre *Robinson Crusoe* and *Paul et Virginie*.

These revelations, which report the theft of the *kono* expose Leiris's subsequent literary escapism by making allusions to the invented and idealized characters of exoticism.

Leiris thinks of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Paul et Virginie*, as if to further alleviate his guilt.

Leiris tries to forget the “piratrie” in which he involved himself in order to enter the make believe realms of exotic literature.

Continuities

Throughout *Voyage* Céline has Bardamu travel across continents only in order to return to dismal Parisian suburbs. If all of Bardamu's experiences abroad only bring the

hero back to his starting point, this indicates that a break with one world to another did not take place. The place that concerns this chapter, colonial Africa, is nightmarish. What he sees in Africa, frequently serves to remind Bardamu of his wartime experiences. The horrendous civilized realm proves pervasive. There are no escapes, no modern civilized alternatives, no exits, and certainly no exotic sanctuaries. Bardamu comes from nowhere—he travels only to find nothing—he returns to nowhere and to nothingness. Céline denies any possibility of an exotic realm—his *Voyage au bout de la nuit* is a novel of *antiexoticism*.

Leiris leaves France and goes to Africa fixated on the exoticism that he knows so well. He continually tries to revel in and escape to that exoticism. On his way to Africa, he describes the dramatic music to which he and his fellow passengers listen onboard of the ship:

Nous choisissons des disques de phonographes appropriés, nous basant sur les traditions anciennes du cinéma et ne manquant pas l'inévitable tempête de *Schéhérazade*. (AF 20)

We chose the appropriate phonographs, basing our choices on the old cinematic tradition, and not missing out on the inevitable tempest of *Schéhérazade*.

Before afoot on the continent, already Leiris exhibits his own exotic imagination filled by fictive and mythical figures such as *Schéhérazade*. Frequently, the ethnographer casts himself as if he were a character in the old tradition of colonial exoticism—he calls stealing from Africans his “*piraterie*.” He uses an escapist’s vocabulary by which he wishes to lose himself in literary references, memories, and past experiences. In

particular, with his erotic interest in the *zar* cult member Emawayish, he longs for a transcendent entry into the loss of consciousness—spiritual possession.

Leiris, however, is *not* a master of deceit. He does not pretend for long to belong to the *zar* cult despite his best efforts to join the cult. Michel Leiris can never entirely exorcize his neurotic European subjectivity: he remains impotent, he falls out of love, he flees the cult by venting sullen disillusionment—he never puts down his pen. Unable to exorcize the constant presence of the hovering phantoms of 19th century colonial exoticism, he continues to travel hoping to find exotic surprises. However, the hybrid self-reflective revelations, especially his admissions of the deceitful practice of ethnographic thievery, transform the text from its original design as an objective ethnographic narration into a more honest exposé of the exoticism of that ethnographic venture.

CHAPTER IV AUTOEXOTICISM—AN EXOTICISM OF ONE’S OWN

Dans toute langue autorisée, tu bâtiras ton langage.
—Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*

C’était Tac-Tac qui commençait à parler, selon son dire,
toutes les langues de la terre.
—S. Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*

Introduction—Inconspicuous Exoticism

The names of classical heroes, gods, and other notables of Greek and Roman antiquity are characteristic of the language and literature of exoticism.¹ The name *Télumée*, heroine of *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972) by Simone Schwarz-Bart (b. 1938), evokes *The Odyssey*’s Telemachus. Homer’s Telemachus is neither a god, nor a hero, nor a villain. Hardly an epic character, Telemachus, Penelope and Odysseus’s impervious son, is one of the most inconspicuous characters in the *Homeric* pantheon of heroes and heroines. Simone Schwarz-Bart’s figure of Guadeloupean femininity, *Télumée Miracle*, is a tribute to an inconspicuous character, and individual who stands for the *petites gens*—the ordinary folk of Guadeloupe. Around the modest character *Télumée*, Schwarz-Bart, in Glissant’s words cited in the epigraph, builds her poetic language of French and Guadeloupean Creole. This is a language that refracts exoticist tropes regarding the tropics—the author creates a personal and intimate exoticism that

¹ The name *Télumée* may be conceived of as a metalepsis: Baudelaire’s *Le Cygne* commences with a recollection of *The Iliad*’s Andromaque. The poet reflects on a woman in the first line of the first stanza, *Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve!* His reflections are restated in the eleventh stanza’s first verse: *Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phystique/ Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l’œil haggard,/ Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique.* I attribute this reflection on the association between Andromaque, the *négresse*, and the name *Télumée*, this instance of metalepsis, or coincidence of Homeric names relating to a wan *négresse* to observations made by Jeff Humphries in Autumn 2001.

may be considered *autoexoticism*. Throughout the following chapter we reflect on the inherent difficulties involved in writing a novel about an autochthonous rural Creole culture in the metropolitan French language.

Autoexoticism refers to a narrative in which a native explains her country to outsiders—unlike the realms and locales of exoticism we have studied in Chapters II and III, Télumée’s *autoexotic* milieu is home. Within Loti’s narration, from the perspective of Céline’s character Bardamu, and inherent in Leiris’s autobiographical expression, a presupposed French homeland is discernible: France is home, Africa is exotic. Within *autoexoticism* the strange paradox of a native/exotic land arises; this is paradoxical in so far as exotic and native are binary opposites. In this novel, the exotic land is the native home. Without any doubt, Schwarz-Bart’s *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* depicts an archetypal exotic landscape—an island fraught by tempests and a tropical environment lavish in its flora and fauna. This exoticism is narrated from the perspective of a native Guadeloupean.

We thus have devoted two chapters to works of exoticism written by Frenchmen during France’s second great colonial era from the late 19th century until the period *entre les guerres*. Focusing on various sorts of exoticism: *fin-de-siècle* colonial exoticism, disillusioned and melancholic exoticism, Céline’s *antiexoticism*, and Leiris’s modernist/exoticist hybrid, I next consider a postcolonial example of the literature. In this final chapter, we turn away from our discussion of African exoticism written by Frenchmen during the colonial era to study the latest avatar of the literature incarnated by a Francophone Caribbean text written by a woman. In an article aptly entitled “The Others' Others: "Francophone" Women and Writing” (1988), Christiane Cazenave and

Odile Makward posit that Francophone women writers such as Schwarz-Bart are doubly “different;” they are “the others’ others,” who not only write outside of European metropolitan traditions, but express gender specific views which compound their differences.²

In *Postcolonial Paradoxes*, Jeannie Suk rhetorically asks, “How does difference...become complicated when the exotic landscape is one’s home, when the difference is one’s own?”³ Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* affords responses to those questions: For one, language becomes complicated. Writing about ethnic differences and distinctions is complicated when the local language, the language of the fictive autobiographical narrator, the language that the narrative “je,” speaks, is different from the author’s written language. Revealing cultural differences is complicated if for over three centuries the implicitly and commonly understood discourse to describe difference is the European *lingua franca* called exoticism. Simone Schwarz-Bart chose to write in that language, as she employed many of the standard tropes of exoticism to describe the particularities of a tropical island. However, Schwarz-Bart accessed an “alternative” means of expression by which to write and narrate a Creole woman’s worldview: She incorporated Guadeloupean Creole.⁴

² Odile Cazenave and Christiane Makward, "The Others' Others: "Francophone" Women and Writing." *Yale French Studies* 0, no. 75, The Politics of Tradition: Placing Women in French Literature (1988): 190-207.

³ Jeannie Suk, *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 25.

⁴ Creole Francophone authors tend to consider French the best way to reach the largest audiences—moreover, many writers remain uninspired by the possibility of writing in Creole, as an existing body of written Creole literature is small. There are notable exceptions who publish in Creole, such as the famed threesome Raphael Confiant, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Jean Bernabé who wrote *Eloge de la Créolité* (1989). Since the late 1970s a much larger number of Creole works have been written and published in the Antilles. Nonetheless, considering that a limited number of people speak, let alone read the Creole, it has not been an entirely viable choice for writing and publication in French. Moreover, the languages and dialects of Guadeloupe, (pop. 335,00) include: French, French Lesser Antillean Creole, Guadeloupe creole (patwa, patois, kreyol) Dialects include: St. Martin Creole, Marie Galante creole, St. Barth Creole, Virginie Island Creole (English).

Aside from her original use of Creole, by the 1970s, the author had various Caribbean literary models from which to draw. She was hardly limited by the exoticist vernaculars of a Pierre Loti or the Parnassian poets. Four decades prior to the publication of *Pluie and vent sur Télumée Miracle*, the language, figures, and approaches to narrating the tropical landscape had been radically challenged by an international array of Caribbean and Pan-African intellectuals and artists. The *Négritude* movement started in Paris in the 1930s was comprised of African and Caribbean students-turned-writers. Authors such as Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor, Léon Damas, and later Frantz Fanon, challenged ethnocentric and colonial precepts concerning European racial, cultural and economic superiority. In addition to which, in the 1940s, Caribbean artists and writers influenced by European Surrealists began to create vibrant Caribbean artistic traditions. Cuban artist Wifredo Lam painted modernist, collage-like, and erotic tropical scenes.⁵ Literature, such as the plays and poetry of Aimé Césaire, the fierce poetry of René Depestre, or the “opaque” novels and poems of Edouard Glissant did not blatantly exoticize the Caribbean realm. Beginning in the 1940s, and in the decades to follow, works such as Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1947), or Glissant’s *Les Indes* (1956), or Depestre’s long poem *Un arc en ciel pour un occident chrétien* (1967) exhibit distinct strains of exoticist intertextual referencing, and appropriations of classic exoticism interspersed in the Surrealist and experimental poetic expressions evoking Afro-Caribbean figures such as Voodoo *loas*.

Jeannie Suk brilliantly analyzed Aimé Césaire’s politicized play *Une Tempête* (1969) (a rewrite of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*) in order to examine Césaire’s exoticist intertexts. In an ironical appropriation of Baudelarian verse from *Parfum exotique* (1861)

⁵ Maria Balderrama, *Wifredo Lam and his Contemporaries: 1938-1952*, (New York: Narry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992.)

the playwright includes a line from that poem to describe the ‘natives’ of an imaginary tropical island: *Et des femmes dont l'oeil par sa franchise étonne* (And the women whose frank eyes startle). In the play, *Une Tempête*, Césaire’s expression is collage-like; he cuts and pastes from varied literary sources such as Shakespearian verse, and Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du mal*. Furthermore, *Une Tempête* is highly politicized—Césaire allegorizes American civil-right figures Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. From this example we observe an instance of liberal literary appropriation within an almost chaotic array of cultural references: Shakespeare, Baudelaire, and Martin Luther King.

Yet, Simone Schwarz-Bart’s novel, written within three years of *Une Tempête*, is quite different from the example set by Aimé Césaire, and her other modern Antillean precursors. Schwarz-Bart’s expression in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* makes no outright literary or political references. The novel develops in a chronological manner as the narrator tells her life-story. Schwarz-Bart’s incorporation of archetypal exoticist imagery is seamless—that is to say, she makes no overt intertextual references. Allusions to literature outside of the novel are so subtle that the correlation between the classical Greek *Telemachus* and the Caribbean *Télumée* may be considered an impressionistic or metaleptical association at best. In fact, Schwarz-Bart claims to have based the character not on a literary model, but on a Guadeloupean who actually bore the poetic name *Télumée Miracle*.⁶ She conceived of the exotic fictive character called *Télumée* from having known that woman. Schwarz-Bart also refers to the islands’ extant natural attributes, including its *palmiers*, *orangiers*, *nénuphars*, *fleurs de coco*, *alizés*, *cannelle*, *vanille et. al*. These are words that ring of exoticism, as does the heroine’s name. Indeed,

⁶ Mary-Jean Green, “Simone Schwarz-Bart et la tradition féminine aux Antilles.” *Presence Francophone: Revue Internationale de Langue et de Litterature*, (1990; 36) 130-32.

we shall observe how such tropical allusions are considered constitutive of exoticism. Schwarz-Bart does not avoid, reject or ironize the language of exoticism. It is in this sense, that the novel is not an appropriation or mockery of old poetic tropes. She does, however, alter exoticist terms, characters, and contexts. Schwarz-Bart adjusts standard French to narrate Creole culture. She finely tunes her language into a work of *autoexoticism*.

A Conspicuous Literary Impasse

The problematic of breaking away from the exoticist tradition in Caribbean letters clearly surfaces in 20th century French Antillean criticism. Writers struggled to jettison their exoticist, and in particular, Parnassian, predecessors. At the forefront of the culture quarrels, Martiniquan intellectuals appealed to readers to disengage from the old colonial variety of Caribbean poetics. Aimé Césaire published the literary, ethnographic, and naturalist journal *Tropiques* in Fort-de-France from 1941 to 1945. The journal boldly surfaced during the repressive years of the *Vichy* regime in France, when the procolonial Admiral Robert governed in the colonies. *Tropiques* included articles and poetry challenging colonial assumptions of the inferiority of African and Caribbean culture.

In the 4th volume of *Tropiques* (1942), Aimé Césaire's wife, Suzanne Césaire daringly criticized “professeurs coloniaux” who admired and taught literary *doudouism*—that is to say nostalgic, sweet, and exotic poetic lyricism relating to the Antillean tropics. She proposed to move beyond colonial poetics—*doudouism*. In her article, “Misère d’une Poésie,” she dismissed the imitation of Parnassians, including José Marie de Hérédia and de Lisle. More specifically, she accused poet John Antoine-Nau of writing “Littérature de hamac” (Hammock literature). She refers to poetry that she

considered placid and contented—the sort of poetry that was ultimately destined for saccharine tastes of readers abroad. Denouncing “Littérature de sucre et vanille. Tourisme littéraire.” (Literature of sugar and vanilla. Literary tourism.). Césaire suggested that writers go “far away” (*loin*) from clichés such as *alizés*⁷ and parakeets. She wrote, “Allons loin. . . des alizés, des perroquets.” (*Tropiques* vol. 4, 50) (Let’s go far away. . . from the soft trade winds, from the parakeets.). Indeed, the surrealistic poetry and prose of the Césaires and their contemporaries, did, in most senses, avoid exoticist and *doudouist* language. Suzanne Césaire concluded “Misère d’une Poésie” with a surrealist injunction, inspired by André Breton: “La poésie martiniquaise sera cannibale, ou ne sera pas!” (*Ibid.*, 50) (Martiniquan poetry will be cannibalistic, or it will not be!). This thought expresses a resolution to end the paradigmatic Parnassian expressions of the Antilles in the terms of French poets. Her cannibalistic dictum infers a preference for the revolutionary, expressive, discordant, even violent linguistic surges that Aimé Césaire’s poetry and plays embodied in the decades to follow.

Yet, there was one definite linguistic means to go far away (*allons loin de...*) from the French literary traditions of *doudouism*. Among Francophone Caribbeans who grew up immersed in the diglossia of the French/Creole environment, the option of writing in Creole appears viable. Had Caribbean intellectuals adopted Creole literacy, writing in Creole may well have been the medium to write far outside of colonial French literary traditions. However, broadly speaking, a break from a classical French literary expression

⁷ *Alizés*: in English, *alizés* are known as the cool trade winds which blow from the northeast to the southeast towards the equator. The *Encyclopédie Larousse* defines them as follows: Se dit de vents réguliers qui soufflent constamment sur près du tiers de la surface du globe, des hautes pressions subtropicales vers les basses pressions équatoriales. (L’alizé de l’hémisphère Nord souffle du nord-est vers le sud-ouest, l’alizé de l’hémisphère Sud, du sud-est vers le nord-ouest.) If there is any doubt that *alizés* are an exoticist symbol for tropical island life, a specifically Guadeloupian tourist group is named *Les Alizés*, as are countless Francophone tourist organizations from Tahiti to Réunion offering *croisières* (cruises), etc.

did not take place. Guadeloupean and Martiniquan authors, living in Creole-speaking society, persisted and persist in publishing in the old colonial language—standard French.⁸

Since at least the 1960s, critics have examined the problem of writing in French while living in Creolophone society. In an interview conducted thirty years after the publication of *Tropiques*, Jacqueline Leiner asked Aimé Césaire whether the journal *Tropiques* would not have had a larger readership if written in Creole: “. . .écrite en créole, la revue n’aurait-elle pas atteint un public plus étendu?”⁹ (. . .written in Creole, would not the journal have reached a greater audience?). Césaire replied: “C’est une question qui n’a *pas de sens*, parce qu’une telle revue *n’est pas concevable en créole*.” (*Tropiques*, Intro. x, *author’s italics*) (That’s a question that makes *no sense*, because such a journal *is not* conceivable in *Creole*). Based on his education, Césaire’s dismissal of Creole is quite normal. Aimé Césaire, as any student who attended school in the French colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe, was educated in classical French language and within the French system.¹⁰ Today, in the departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe, students still undergo the centralized curriculum set in Paris. Hence, Francophone Caribbean authors, with some notable exceptions, generally write mostly in French. Simone Schwarz-Bart is not exceptional regarding the Franco-Antillean

⁸ For instance, in the 1990s the aforementioned *Eloge à la Créolité* (1989) was written in French, and was published in France. Ironically, this may be considered typical of Caribbean publishing and writing, although recently Creole publishing houses have appeared. However, as footnote 4 indicates, as so many variations of the language exist, standardization of Creole is not simple.

⁹ René Ménénil, ed., *Tropiques (Tomes I-5)*, (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1978), x.

¹⁰ Césaire (*Agrégé de Lettres, L’Ecole Normale*) underwent the system in which national curriculums were (and still are) established in Paris. Aside from the fact that writers learn French in school, there are many other reasons that writing in Creole is a complicated undertaking: Martiniquan, Guadeloupean, and Haitian Creole varies in terms of the orthography, syntax, and vocabulary. It is perhaps in Haiti where the possibility of a Creole education has been taken the most seriously in their primary school system. With the Haitian Diaspora to Canada and the United States, some

publishing model —she writes in French.

Miraculous Amalgams

What is exceptional, however, in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, is Schwarz-Bart's language, in terms of its syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. Schwarz-Bart writes French prose inflected with Creole. Jean Bernabé suggests in "Le Travail de l'Écriture Chez Simone Schwartz-Bart [*sic*]: Contribution à l'étude de la Diglossie Littéraire Créole-Français" that Schwarz-Bart's French-Creole expression verges on the miraculous:

Serait-ce que la liturgie du miracle, inscrite dans le matériau lexical et musical du titre fonctionne également au bénéfice de l'écriture romanesque ici à l'oeuvre?¹¹

Would it not be anything short of miraculous Liturgy, inscribed in the lexical and musical material of the title which functions equally to the benefit of the novelistic writing here at work?

The linguist refers to Schwarz-Bart's use of both French and Creole. Bernabé, who has published in Creole,¹² states that promoting the language and culture is a necessarily complex task: "La volonté de promouvoir le créole comme langue et culture peut et doit éviter les pièges d'une pensée simpliste et mécanique."¹³ (The will to promote Créole as a language and culture can and must avoid the traps of simplistic and mechanical thinking.). Schwarz-Bart's expression in French is clear nevertheless, it is not a simplified version of standard French. She creates a personal and composite language in which she spins Guadeloupean and Creole references into classical French. Certain

notable writing has been undertaken by Haitians writing in English: Edwidge Danticat is one Haitian author, writing in English.

¹¹ Jean Bernabé, "Le Travail de l'Écriture Chez Simone Schwartz-Bart [*sic*]: Contribution à l'étude de la Diglossie Littéraire Créole-Français" *Présence Africaine* (Paris:1982), 166.

¹² Among other works, Jean Bernabé is author of a Creole grammar book: *Grammaire créole* (fondas-kreyol-la) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987.)

words, proverbs, and songs are highly specific to Guadeloupe. The narrator's intimate and vacillating *weltanschauung* relates to the distinctive climate, *mornes*, villages, forests, and seaside of the Guadeloupean environment.

Thus, we shall further examine the aspects of her work as a linguistic (in the broadest sense of linguistic) conduit, in which Schwarz-Bart personalizes and describes the Antillean environment. Her melodious portraits of landscapes and nature (flora and fauna) have not gone unnoticed by the critics. In *Le cri du Morne : La Poétique du paysage césairien et la littérature antillaise*,¹⁴ Michael Dash likens what he considers to be Schwarz-Bart's tamer picture of Guadeloupe to the portraits of the Martiniquan landscape written by Aimé Césaire. Regarding *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, Dash writes:

Dans son imagination de création, S. S-B. cherche à apprivoiser la poétique d'antagonismes topographiques du cadastre césairien.

Télumée découvre cet univers pour la première fois quand elle traverse le pont de l'Autre Bord avec sa grand-mère. Fond-Zombi est un monde merveilleux, enivrant avec son "halo de mystère" où les formes solides se décomposent et les sons s'atténuent:

Et soudain ce fut l'Autre Bord, la région de
Fond-Zombi qui déferlait devant mes yeux, dans une
lointaine éclairici fantasque, mornes après mornes, savanes
après savanes jusqu'à l'entaille dans le ciel qui était la
montagne même et qu'on appelait Balata Bel Bois.¹⁵
(Dash, *op.cit.*, *Pluie et Vent* 47)

In her creative imagination, Simone Schwarz-Bart attempts to tame the poetics of topographic antagonisms of the *césairien* land.

¹³ Ibid., 166

¹⁴ J. Michael Dash Edité par Jaqueline Leiner, "Le cri du Morne : La Poétique du Paysage césairien et la littérature antillaise," Soleil Eclaté: Mélanges offerts à Aime Césaire à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire par une équipe internationale d'artistes et de chercheurs. (Tubingen :Gunter Nar Verlag, 1984).

¹⁵ Ibid., 107

Téluée discovers this universe when she crosses the bridge to the Other Side for the first time with her grandmother. Fond-Zombi is a marvelous world, drunk with its “mysterious halo” where the solid forms decompose and sounds attenuate.

And suddenly it was the Other Side, the
Fond-Zombi region that unfolded before my eyes, in the lit
up fantastic distance, *mornes* after *mornes*, savannahs after
savannahs, right up to the gash in the sky, that was the very
mountain that we called *Balata Bel Bois*.

Dash notes that Simone Schwarz-Bart tames (*apprivoiser*) the tropical landscape with attenuated poetics. Without a doubt, the place names are poetic fictions such as *Balata Bel Bois*, *morne La Folie*, and *l'Autre Bord*.¹⁶ These invented geographical designations may be compared to the names of the novel's fictive autobiographical characters. Obviously, the invented place and people names are laden with semantic import. The metaphorical bridge to *L'Autre Bord* leads to *Fond-Zombi*, a small village where the heroine Téluée spends her childhood with her grandmother. The residents of *Fond-Zombi* paradoxically give the name *Reine Sans Nom* to Téluée's grandmother. The *L'Autre Bord* (*Other side*) of Guadeloupe is the where the nameless shopkeepers, the unknown gardeners, the exploited sugarcane field hands, the *ti-bandes* of children, and the *ammareurs* come alive by way of Schwarz-Bart's language. *Ti-bandes* and *ammareurs*, which both refer to cane-workers, are but two examples of the Guadeloupe-specific language. For the uninitiated readers outside of that world, the mostly standard

¹⁶ David J. Danielson's article on the nature and *Pluie et vent* locates the environs of the story as follows:

Though many of the author's place names cannot be found on the best maps I have seen—*Guadeloupe: Carte touristique et routière* (Paris: Institut Géographique National, 1972)—such evidence as there is seems to favor a sector in northern Basse-Terre, between La Boucan and Pointe Allègre, though other details (no doubt purposefully) tend to blur the picture.

David J. Danielson, "Antillean Nature and Creole World Awareness." (*Revue du Pacifique*, Spring, no. 3, 1977): 33.

French imbues these unfamiliar people and corners of Guadeloupe with significance. As we have demonstrated, 19th century exoticism was destined for readers at *home*—that is to say, audiences in France. *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* serves a parallel narrative purpose, in as much as the book at times, appears almost as if it were a French study of Guadeloupe.

Although *Télumée* does not go to school for long in *Fond-Zombi*, she narrates her rural Guadeloupean visions, sympathies, and travails in a French replete in its use of the literary *passé simple* and elegant wording. Yet, as we have noted, Creole language patterns are not entirely transparent. This is one way in which *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* answers Suk's above query regarding how "difference is complicated." The *exotic* landscape that the narrator explores and illuminates is her *home*. The *differences* that she narrates are her own. However, in a certain manner of speaking, the language that she speaks is not "hers," in so far as it is standard, at times erudite literary French. It appears superfluous to point out the following truism, but the narrator's language is the author's language.¹⁷ In the following passage we draw attention to Schwarz-Bart/Télumée's smooth layering of Creole and literary French. The folkloric Creole figure, "la Guiabliesse" is woven into an otherwise straightforward passage in French:

Ils se consultèrent, en vinrent à l'idée que Jérémie était sous l'emprise maléfique entre toutes, la Guiabliesse, cette femme au pied fourchu qui se nourrit exclusivement de votre goût de vivre, vous amenant un jour ou l'autre par ses charmes, au suicide. (*Pluie et vent* 15)

¹⁷ It is in this sense that the novel is in all senses a fictive autobiography. P. Lejeune's famous "autobiographical pact" does not support the *author=I=narrator* triad. Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique*, (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

They consulted one another, and came to the conclusion that Jérémie was caught by that most evil one “la Guiablesse,” that woman with the cloven feet that feeds on your desire to live, with her charms she brings you to the point where, one day or another, you kill yourself.

Téluée employs the *passé simple* and makes reference to a mythic Créole character “la Guiablesse.” In standard French, she may be called a “diablesse,” however, Schwarz-Bart uses vocabulary from Guadeloupe’s “Other side” to evoke the malefic Creole creature. Conversely, Téluée speaks the *other* Guadeloupean language: French. Glissant explains in *La Poétique de la Relation* that Rimbaud’s famous “Je est un autre” is historically literal:

Nous « savons » que l’Autre est en nous, qui non seulement retentit sur notre devenir mais aussi sur le gros de nos conceptions et sur le mouvement de notre sensibilité. Le « Je est un autre » de Rimbaud est historiquement littéral. Une sorte de « conscience de la conscience » nous ouvre malgré nous et fait de chacun l’acteur troublé de la poétique de la Relation. (Poétique de la Relation 39)

We “know” that the Other is within us, and affects how we evolve as well as the bulk of our conceptions and the movement of our sensibility. Rimbaud’s “I is an other” is literal in terms of history. In spite of ourselves, a sort of “conscience of the conscience” opens us up and turns each of us into a disconcerted actor in the poetics of Relation.¹⁸

As an actress performing the poetics of diglossia, Schwarz-Bart creates a fictive autobiographical “je,” who is not at all Schwarz-Bart. This “je” writes her own language to describe Guadeloupe. The autobiographical narrative *other*, the character Téluée, might be described as a Francophone who speaks French permeated by Guadeloupean Creole. Her vocabulary includes endless native plant and animal names, foods, and place

¹⁸ Betsy Wing, Trans., *Poetics of Relation*.

names—this language is composed of a myriad of specifically Guadeloupean natural and cultural references.¹⁹

Apparently, Schwarz-Bart did not create only a linguistically and poetically specialized vision of Guadeloupe, but also, she made a particularly feminine image of Guadeloupean Creole existence. Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant laud Schwarz-Bart for having elucidated the arcane of the Antillean women's world:

Le relire, et le relire encore, et s'en enrichir chaque fois. Qui peut en effet prétendre avoir déjà cerné toute la connaissance romanesque qu'a développée ce roman sur l'existence créole guadeloupéenne? Qui a épuisé les dimensions de *Téluée Miracle*? Parmi les études sociologiques récemment publiées, laquelle nous restitue l'univers mental de la femme créole antillaise avec autant de force, de profondeur, et d'acuité? Quant au langage de la Guadeloupéenne, nul ne peut arguer en avoir élucidé l'arcane.²⁰

To read it and read it again, is to enrich oneself each time. In effect, who can claim to have discerned all the novelistic knowledge that this novel developed on the Guadeloupean Creole existence? Who has drawn all the dimensions of *Téluée Miracle*? Among the recently published sociological studies, which one restitutes the Créole woman's mental universe with so much strength, depth, and precision? As for the language of the *Guadeloupéenne*, no one can argue to have elucidated its arcane.

Chamoiseau and Confiant's conviction that *Pluie et vent sur Téluée Miracle* contains untapped literary, cultural, and sociological depth coincides with Bernabé and Dash's high esteem of the work. Their assessments fly in the face of one of the earliest critiques

¹⁹ Didactic annotations, such as Monique Bouchard's *Pluie et vent sur Téluée Miracle de Simone Schwarz-Bart* (1990) have been published to explicate some of the French/Creole vocabulary because the Caribbean references are unfamiliar to many French readers. Bouchard's study includes a lexicon entitled, "Quelques termes créoles ou designant des réalités propres aux pays tropicaux." (Some Créole terms designating the realities in tropical countries.) Not surprisingly more than half of the vocabulary defined in the lexicon is related to the *flora* and *fauna* of the Caribbean such as *agouti*, *balisier*, *carapate*. Naturally, metropolitan readers do not know the "realities" of the Caribbean landscape.

of the novel made by their fellow Caribbean writer and critic, Maryse Condé. However before turning to a discussion of Condé's criticism, we shall briefly introduce the author and her interest in "little people" and little languages.

Simone Schwarz-Bart—An Exoteric Exoticist

In the late 1960s, five years prior to the publication of *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, Schwarz-Bart began her writing career in Switzerland alongside of her husband, André Schwarz-Bart—an acclaimed author in his own right.²¹ In an unusual collaborative project, the couple co-authored a novel about an old Caribbean woman living in Paris entitled, *Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes*.²² Following this work, Simone Schwarz-Bart embarked on a solo project by writing and publishing *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, which won the *Prix de lectrices d'Elle* in 1973.²³

It was rare, perhaps unprecedented, for a Francophone woman writer to gain such popular readership from an international non-academic audience. *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* defied Francophone literary precedents in so far as it was acclaimed both in the Caribbean and in France. Mireille Rosello states in *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles* (1992) that the novel was a, "Best-seller en France métropolitaine aussi bien qu'aux Antilles. . ."²⁴ (Best seller in France as well as in the Antilles. . .).

Francophone writers have received only moderate recognition in France and in the

²⁰ Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Lettres créoles: Tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature 1655-1975: Haïti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane* (Paris: Haitier, 1991), 182.

²¹ When she was eighteen and a student in Paris, Simone met writer André Schwarz-Bart. They married in 1961 and, two years later, he won the Prix Goncourt for *Le Dernier Des Justes*. A Polish Jew, André Schwarz-Bart lost both of his parents during the Holocaust. His novel, *Le Dernier Des Justes* charts the history of one Jewish family since the year 1000. The couple began a stunning creative collaboration which resulted in two historical novels, *Un Plat de Porc aux Bananes Vertes* and *La Mulâtresse Solitude*.

²² André and Simon Schwarz-Bart, *Un Plat De Porc Aux Bananes Vertes*. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967) In the same year that *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* was published, André Schwarz-Bart wrote another fictive work about an Antillean native entitled, *La Mulâtresse Solitude*.²²

²³ Schwarz-Bart's four novels have received attention in array of international journals including: *Présence Africaine*, *Figaro Littéraire*, *Savacou*, *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Sunday Times*, *The New Yorker*.

“overseas territories” since the period of colonial rule.²⁵ Presently, racial and ethnic democracy in Francophone letters is not as far off of the cultural map as it once was. For instance, in 2000, *Côte d’Ivoire* national Amadou Kouroumba won both the *Prix Renaudot* and the *Goncourt* for a novel written partially in Ivoirian *argot*.²⁶ Nonetheless, having written a work of feminine literature that attained best-selling status both within and outside of the Antilles, Simone Schwarz-Bart accomplished a triumph in the early 1970s.²⁷ Mireille Rosello’s chapter in *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles* devoted to *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* is aptly entitled “L’art de survivre.” She discusses the reception of the novel, and indeed refers not only to Télumée’s survival skills, but also to Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *art of survival* amid the frequently unreceptive French publishing world.

Interestingly, in a 1987 interview, Simone Schwarz-Bart does not cite French or Francophone writers as her main literary influences. Instead, she lists American, Russian, Eastern European, and mainly Jewish authors who chronicle the lives of the “little people.” She names the following authors: A. Chekhov, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Isaac Babel, Sholem Aleichem, and James Agee.²⁸ In the first analysis, it may appear surprising that Simone Schwarz-Bart does not recall a single antecedent Francophone

²⁴ Mireille Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles*, (Paris: Karthala, 1992), 71.

²⁵ Some notable exceptions are Martiniquan René Maran’s *Batouala* (1928) which resulted in a *Prix Goncourt* scandal, as he reported on colonial horrors in Central Africa. The nomination of the Senegalese statesman and poet, Léopold Sédar Senghor to the *Académie française*. The production of Aimé Césaire’s play *La Tragédie de Roi Christophe* at the *Comédie française* was a similar landmark in French literary history.

²⁶ Amadou Kouroumba, *Allah n’est pas obligé*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2000).

²⁷ There are of course many notable Francophone women writers— who have received recognition, especially since the 1980s, including Miriama Bâ, Senegalese author of the novel entitled *Une si longue lettre* (1980), Maryse Condé author of numerous novels and critical works, or Assia Djébar, the Franco-Algerian feminist. However an imbalance of gender and race within French literary culture is still quite perceptible—in some senses these writers remain “Other’s others.”

²⁸ Mary-Jean Green, “Simone Schwarz-Bart et la tradition féminine aux Antilles,” *Presence Francophone: Revue Internationale de Langue et de Litterature*, 1990) 36, 131.

author. However, she elucidates the commonalities between her own interest in disappearing cultures and those writers:

Il y a une histoire de la souffrance qui est commune. Ce sont des mondes qui sont différents. Certes, le *stetl*, le ghetto ont disparu maintenant. Chez nous aussi ça peut disparaître, d'un moment à l'autre. et c'est dans ce but que je lutte et que j'écris. Ces petites choses qui sont tellement importantes, c'est l'âme d'un peuple.²⁹

There is a history of suffering which is common. These are worlds that are different. Certainly the shtetle and the ghetto have now disappeared. Here, as well, that eventually can disappear, and it is with this objective that I struggle and that I write. These little things which are so important, that's the soul of a people.

Schwarz-Bart sees a parallel between the persecuted Diaspora Jews and the destiny of Diaspora Africans. In addition to which, she evokes the old rural American South of James Agee. Drawing lines between common histories of affliction and vanishing cultures, the author considers her role as writer as almost that of documentarist. Since the early 1960s, a decade before the publication of *Pluie et vent sur Têlumée Miracle*, the lives of the *paysans*, *paysannes*, and *petites gens* of the Antilles have steadily modernized to the point where that culture has all but disappeared.³⁰ The losses of rural Creole culture included a decrease of “oral literature” (storytelling, jokes, and songs). The decline of Creole oral culture is analogous to the almost total evaporation of Yiddish. Thus, it is not a coincidence that Schwarz-Bart's cited influential authors, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Isaak Babel, and Sholem Aleichem, spoke, wrote, and interwove Yiddish into their narratives.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 131

We first note the similarity between the compound language of the writers who Schwarz-Bart calls “*yiddishants*”³¹ and the Creole/French expression she uses in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*. More relevant to our overall thesis on exoticism, Schwarz-Bart relates a preoccupation with cultural loss. The aforementioned exoticist themes of melancholia and nostalgia for lost and longed for cultures are in plain sight. Moreover, the melancholic or dejected disposition of various characters in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* are, in some senses, redolent of exoticism. However, before exploring the novel’s *autoexoticism*, I shall consider the accusation of exoticism leveled at Schwarz-Bart by Maryse Condé the same year the book was published.

The Soul of Exoticism

In a discussion on exoticism, concerns of ethnic stereotyping appear immanent. Simone Schwarz-Bart’s mention of *the soul of a people* merits attention. In 1972, the same year that the novel was published, the *grande dame* of Antillean literature, Maryse Condé reviewed the novel in *Présence Africaine*. In the quotation from Condé’s review cited in Chapter I, Condé explicitly claims that *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* is a kind of skin-deep exotic soap-opera—the critic implicitly charges Schwarz-Bart with having written a work of exoticism. Thus, I wish to refer back to a key question and answer: “Que manque-t-il à *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*? Peut-être simplement ce que nos frères afro-américains appellent: « Soul »”. (What is missing from *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*? Maybe it is simply what our Afro-American brothers call “Soul.”). Both writers, in their respective evocations of “soul” make critical determinations with that esoteric word. “Soul” is esoteric in the sense that it is vague and mystical. According

³⁰ Sidney Mintz and Sally Price, *Caribbean Contours* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press c. 1985).

³¹ Green 131

to Condé, “Soul” is best understood in the English vernacular of African-American men. (Condé refers to African-American *brothers*.) Moreover, the term implies a collective “soul,” in the way in which both writers use of the term: a collective soul, as in the spirit, the heart, or the rhythm of a people.

Soul also refers to divine spirit and life after death. We have already noted that recourse to mystical and divine rhetoric is a pertinent facet of both Loti and Leiris’s exoticist expression. However, as a final point I recall Loti’s exoticist lingo, which so many have found racist. Loti employs “soul” as a reflection of race and ethnicity. The protagonist of *Le Roman d’un spahi*, Jean Peyral, did not trouble himself to get to know his African lover, Fatou-gaye and her “soul as black like her Khassonkée envelope.” Fatou-gaye’s “soul,” in Loti’s words, is a simile for ethnicity (Khassonké) and skin color (black). We re-cite Loti, “il ne se donnait guère la peine de chercher à démêler ce qu’il pouvait bien y avoir au fond de cette petite *âme* noire,—noire comme son enveloppe de Khassonkée.” (*Le Roman*, 179, my italics) (he hardly troubled himself to find out and uncover what was really in her little black *soul*, black like her Khassonkée envelope.).

It appears that both Schwarz-Bart’s evocation of the “soul of a people” and Condé’s extraction of fraternal Afro-American erudition (*ce que nos frères afro-américains appellent: « Soul »*) imply a belief in a distinct ethnic spirit—or what is sometimes deemed “ethnic *essentialism*.” Simone Schwarz-Bart mentions that she writes the “little things” to capture “the soul of a people.” We are constrained to ask how far removed this notion of “the soul of a people” is from ethnic typecasting? Maryse Condé, however, more closely posits an essentialist and a racial stereotype as she accuses Schwarz-Bart of exoticism. Ironically, Condé critiques the novel for its exoticism by

concluding her book review by employing expressions that claim that the novel lacks what is known to Afro-American men as “Soul.” Granted, Condé uses the popular parlance of the 1970s, however, the language is, at best esoteric, and at worst, essentializing.

The Novel as Testimonial

In an article entitled “Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer,” which appeared twenty years subsequent to her *Présence Africaine* review of *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, Maryse Condé writes that, “Before being hailed by the critics abroad, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* received a great many adverse comments at home. It was thought to be pessimistic, negative, and fatalistic since it contained no elements of the conventional revolutionary *bric à brac*.”³² Furthermore, according to Kitzie McKinney’s “Memory, Voice, and Metaphor in the Works of Simone Schwarz-Bart” (1995), there were “criticisms leveled at *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* for its lack of an explicit political message and its self-indulgent (women’s) “intimism” . . .³³ These are convincing words on the parts of both McKinney and Condé; but, unfortunately neither author cites references. The only negative review of *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* that I have been able to locate is Condé’s.

However, both Condé and McKinney’s mention of the novel’s objectionable ‘intimism’ and lack of political messages is quite pertinent. I counter the notion that the book is an apolitical text. In so far as *Télumée* operates metonymically, as an individualized and intimate figure that stands in for a populace of rural Guadeloupeans,

³² Maryse Conde, “Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer” *Yale French Studies*, No. 97, 50 Years of Yale French Studies: A Commemorative Anthology Part 2: 1980-1998 (2000), 151-165.

³³ *Postcolonial Subjects: Francophone Women Writers* Mary Jean Green, et al., eds., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1995).

she is a politicized figure. As we mentioned, Simone Schwarz-Bart personally knew the *guadeloupéenne* upon whom she based the fictive *Téluée*. The woman died in the 1960s, and Schwarz-Bart remembers her from her childhood:

Je l'ai connue dans mon enfance et chaque fois que je revenais au pays, j'allais la voir. J'allais recevoir d'elle un peu de *savoir-vivre* et de *savoir-faire* de ce pays. Chaque fois j'étais confortée dans l'idée que les gens ici avaient vécu une vie exemplaire, une vie qui méritait d'être rapportée, qui ne méritait pas de prendre fin ou de disparaître avec ces gens-là.³⁴

I knew her during my childhood and each time I came back to the country, I would go and see her. I went to receive a little bit of her *savoir-vivre* and *savoir-faire* of this country. Each time I was comforted by the idea that the people here had lived exemplary lives, lives worthy to be reported, that did not merit ending or disappearing with these people.

Thus, the novel is a double project in remembrance. Schwarz-Bart recollected that Guadeloupean individual in order to write *Téluée*'s fictive autobiography. The character remembers her life story and the histories of her primarily female kin. It is a testament to the woman whom Schwarz-Bart knew, and it is the fictive *Téluée*'s testimonial of her rural world. "To testify," writes Shoshana Felman, "is more than simply to report a fact or an event or to relate what has been lived, recorded and remembered. Memory is conjured here essentially in order to address another, to impress upon a listener, to appeal to a community."³⁵ Felman emphasizes that testimony extends beyond simple factual documentation and reaches into a realm of conjured memories. *Téluée* remembers from where and from whom she came as she narrates the lives of her great-grandmother

³⁴ Mary-Jean Green, "Simone Schwarz-Bart et la tradition féminine aux Antilles." *Presence Francophone: Revue Internationale de Langue et de Litterature*, (1990; 36): 131.

³⁵ Shoshana Felman, *Testimony: crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history*, (New York: Routledge, 1992) 204.

Lougandor, her grandmother, her mother and her own life. The Lougandor lineage ends with Télumée as an old childless woman who remembers, and thus narrates.

Hence, the novel meets Felman's first condition of testimony: to remember and to relate. Secondly, Schwarz-Bart in her words, remembers the people's "lives worthy to be reported, that did not merit ending or disappearing . . ." Without a doubt, Télumée is a storyteller and an autobiographer who testifies her life to readers. It is the testimony of common suffering, the retelling of affliction relating to and concerning a populace. If the words "political message" appear too strong, it is nonetheless, quite clear that the novel relates the plights of common people. In this, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* differs from the other works of exoticism which we have analyzed, with the exception of Loti's *Trois dames de la kasbah*. Loti's text, however, does not involve the same process of an autobiographical author, or a character who remembers her grievous life.

The Native Exotic

The audience, to whom the *raconteur*, Télumée, tells her story, are French readers who the narrator assumes are largely unacquainted with Guadeloupe. This is clear because, at points, the story is written for readers who require explanations of Guadeloupean behaviors and customs. As the novel describes the island it makes ample use of exoticist embellishments. At times, Télumée's narration gives the impression of a *foreign*, unfamiliar locale—Télumée describes her little corners of the island for outsiders. Consider the manner in which the protagonist recalls life in her great-grandparents' village of *Abandonnée*:

Ici comme partout ailleurs, rire et chanter, danser, rêver n'est pas exactement toute la réalité; et pour un rayon de soleil sur une case, le reste du village demeure dans les ténèbres. (*Pluie et vent* 18)

Here, like everywhere else, to smile and to sing, to dance, to dream is not exactly the whole reality; and for each ray of sunshine cast on one house, the rest of the village resides in gloom.

Télumée, the ‘locuteur’ describes her “here,” the village *Abandonnée*, as if readers require explanations and details. In fact, she almost reminds readers that *Abandonnée* is *not* an exoticist reverie of laughing, singing and dancing.

As we have discussed throughout the first three chapters, in works of exoticism, the setting, the backdrop, the environs are noteworthy insofar as the surroundings entail descriptions for uninformed readers. However, Télumée’s subjective stance as insider, or *local*, represents an obvious divergence from the narrations of Loti, Céline, and Leiris. The latter narrate from the position of the French male outsider or at times, Loti in particular, resort to an omniscient and transparent French narration. (Loti’s *Fatou-gaye*, is no exception from the male narrative, insofar as she is contained within the narrator’s greater omniscient voice). Télumée relates her various island dwelling places. She speaks of the environs as her native land, and as we have mentioned, she uses many native Creole expressions. Yet, sometimes she describes the land as if these places were foreign. This is the way in which Télumée collapses the binary opposition of *native* and *exotic*. If we are to believe *Le Grand Robert* (2001), *exotique* is “qui n’appartient pas à la civilisation de référence (*celle du locuteur*)” (my italics) (that which does not belong to the referred to civilization (*that of the speaker*)). Yet, the bucolic life of *Abandonnée* and its residents, such as Télumée’s great-grandmother Minerve and grandmother Toussine (who later becomes *Reine Sans Nom*) are depicted with fairly exoticist characterization.

Physiognomic definition based on skin color, tropical plants (bananas and vanilla), and bright native necklaces all figure in the following passage:

Minerve avait une peau d'acajou rouge et patinée, des yeux noirs débordants de mansuétude... Tout au long de l'année, elle fécondait vanille, récoltait café, sarclait bananeraies et rangs d'ignames. Sa fille Toussine n'était pas non plus portée aux longues reveries. Enfant, à peine debout, Toussine aimait à se rendre utile, balayait, aidait à la cueillette des fruits, épluchait les racines. L'après-midi, elle se rendait en forêt, arrachait aux broussailles le feuillage des lapins, et, parfois, prise d'un caprice subit, elle s'agenouillait à l'ombre des mahoganys, pour chercher de ces graines plates et vives dont on fait des colliers. (*Pluie et vent* 13)

Minerva had a shiny mahogany red skin, and black eyes brimming with kindness... All year long, she grew vanilla, harvested coffee, weeded banana groves and rows of yams. Her daughter Toussine, no more than her, was not taken to long reveries. A child, hardly walking, Toussine liked to make herself useful, she swept, she helped gather fruits, she peeled the tubers. In the afternoon, she went to the forest and pulled up the wild grasses for the rabbits, and sometimes, taken with a sudden capriciousness, she would kneel in the mahoganies' shade to look for those flat colorful seeds with which one makes necklaces.

The Guadeloupean agriculture involving the cultivation of *vanille*, *ignames*, *bananeraies*, and *café*, is reminiscent of countless tropical exoticized landscapes.³⁶ Minerve and Toussine are portraits of Guadeloupean femininity: mahogany-skinned, working and playing in the tropical woods, among bananas and colorful seeds. Nonetheless, Minerve

³⁶ We have mentioned at various intervals that *Paul et Virginie* is a kind of literary touchstone of exoticism. Let us consider some crops grown by *Dominique*, a native who "belongs" to Virginie's mother. The following description include the same tropical crops that Minerve cultivates: Celui de Marguerite, appelé Dominique, était un noir yolof, encore robuste, quoique déjà sur l'âge. Il avait de l'expérience et un bon sens naturel. Il cultivait indifféremment sur les deux habitations les terrains qui lui semblaient les plus fertiles, et il y mettait les semences qui leur convenaient le mieux. Il semait du petit mil et du maïs dans les endroits médiocres, un peu de froment dans les bonnes terres, du riz dans les fonds marécageux; au pied des roches, des giraumons, des courges et des concombres qui se plaisent à y grimper. Il plantait dans les lieux secs des **patates** qui y viennent très sucrées, des cotonniers sur les hauteurs, des **cannes à sucre** dans les terres fortes et pieds de **café** sur les collines, où le grain est petit, mais excellent; le long de la rivière et autour des cases, des **bananiers** qui donnaient toute l'année de longs régimes de fruits avec un bel ombragé, et enfin quelques plantes de tabac pour charmer ses soucis et ceux de ses bonnes maîtresses.

and Toussine do not conform to 19th century exoticist stereotypes of femininity in their laboriousness: They are not representative of the “wax” faced, immobile, lounging, syphilitic natives of Loti and Leiris’s colonial African milieus. However, they are “exotics,” in the sense of colorful foreign figures presented to French readers. As native/exotics they collapse the binary opposition: native and exotic are antonyms. Minerve, Toussine, and Télumée are natives to Guadeloupe, working at home, and leading ordinary lives—it is almost as if the reader is the exotic, outsider and foreigner. I shall proceed with an analysis of the paradoxical language of the exotic/native—the language of *autoexoticism*.

Littérature de Sucre et Vanille

The allusions to the cultivation of exotic-sounding bananas and coffee are indirect, and may be an entirely accurate account of Guadeloupe’s agriculture. However, at intervals *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* depicts a consummate environment of exoticism, an environment which is described in *doudouist* terms. Islanders are caressed by the *alizés*, and battered by tempests (*pluie et vent*). One fisherman, whose boat is aptly named *Vent d’avant* lives only to feel the caresses of the soft trade winds (“pour sentir les caresses de l’alizé sur son visage.”) The following passage from the novel is a romantic exoticist reverie of a fisherman on the sea:

...sa barque, *Vent d’avant*, avec laquelle il partait à l’infini, du matin au soir et du soir au matin, car il ne vivait que pour entendre le bruit des vagues à ses oreilles et pour sentir les caresses de l’alizé sur son visage.
(*Pluie et vent* 14)

(*Paul et Virginie* 87, my emphasis). We find a repetition of tropical crops, *coffee, bananas, sugarcane* and *sweet potatoes* (related to the *igname*) cited in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*.

His craft, *Vent d'avant*, with which he departed for infinity, from morning to evening and from evening to morning, for he lived only to hear the sound of the waves in his ears and to feel the caresses of the *alizé* on his face.

The Caribbean fisherman in his little boat is a folkloric/tourist image, however it is the *alizé* on his face that is indicative of Susanne Césaire's description of the language of *doudouism*. Césaire suggested that Caribbean writers move away from the *alizés* and the *littérature de sucre et vanille*. Schwarz-Bart's novel persists in its narration of those exoticist clichés. Télumée constantly evokes *sucre*: sorbets, candies, and sugarcane. Télumée explains what she and her grandmother sell in a small store, "Reine Sans Nom m'envoyait y porter cassaves, *sucres à coco, cornets de kilibibis ou fruits cristallisés...*" (*Ibid.*, 55) (Reine Sans Nom sent me to carry cassava, sugared coconut, packets of *kilibibis* or crystallized fruit.). The narration refers to young girls as *gousse de vanille* (vanilla bean). This is literally, in Césaire's words, a *littérature de sucre et vanille*. Let us now examine some of the ways in which Schwarz-Bart rethinks and refracts the exoticist clichés.

Metaphorical *Pluie et Vent*

The elements, in particular the famed tropical tempests, rain and wind (*pluie et vent sur Télumée*), batter Télumée. As we have pointed out, the character operates metonymically—she, like her island, lives through tempests—travails, catastrophes, and sorrows symbolically shower down on Télumée and her kin.

The first part of the novel, entitled, "Présentation des miens" begins with Télumée recounting her matriarchal family line. After which, she tells her own tale in the book's second part, called "Histoire de ma vie." The historical era may be approximated as the

modern colonial era—the early part of the 20th century. We can approximate the years insofar as her great-grandmother *Minerve* was freed from slavery during French abolition in 1848.³⁷ The historical setting reflects a time when a vast majority of the island's population worked the sugarcane fields of white landowners to whom the novel refers in Creole as *békés*. The story discloses the social layout of the old Caribbean sugar-plantation economy where *paysans* such as Télumée have very little money. Télumée works at several jobs: as a child in a *ti bande*, at a wealthy *béké's* house, and eventually in the sugarcane plant as an *ammareuse*. Her final job at the sugar plantation represents the bane of the rural Guadeloupians' existence. The second heroine, Télumée's grandmother refuses to condone her working in the cane. Moreover, Télumée loses her favored lover during a strike at the sugar processing plant. After having been abandoned by her mother, harassed by her *béké* boss, beaten by her husband, and losing her beloved grandmother, the downcast heroine exiles herself to the *morne La Folie* where the maroons live. Here, Télumée consorts with the novel's third heroine—an old *soricière*/healer named Man Cia, who comforts her after her grandmother's death. However, eventually Man Cia transforms herself permanently into a dog, and in effect, she too abandons Télumée. When she reaches old age, childless, poor, and alone, Télumée remains *debout* (upright), in spite of the constant symbolic *pluie* and *vent* of adversity. The novel opens with the following passage, a pensive, even dreamy, reminiscence of her island of volcanoes, cyclones, and mosquitoes.

Le pays dépend bien souvent du coeur de l'homme: il est minuscule si le coeur est petit, et immense si le coeur est grand. Je n'ai jamais souffert de l'exiguïté de mon pays, sans pour autant prétendre que j'aie un grand coeur. Si on m'en donnait le pouvoir, c'est ici même, en Guadeloupe, que

³⁷ Monique Bouchard estimates the novel's era as early the early 20th century in her comprehensive study entitled, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle de Simone Schwarz-Bart*. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990.)

je choisirais de renaître, souffrir et mourir. Pourtant, il n'y a guère, mes ancêtres furent esclaves en cette île de volcans, de cyclones et moustiques, à mauvaise mentalité. Mais je ne suis pas venue sur terre pour soupeser toute la tristesse du monde. A cela, je préfère rêver, encore et encore, debout au milieu de mon jardin, comme le font toutes les vieilles de mon âge, jusqu'à ce que la mort me prenne dans mon rêve, avec toute ma joie...
(*Pluie et vent* 11)

The country very often depends on the heart of the man: it is tiny if the heart is small, and immense if the heart is large. I never suffered from the exiguity of my country, only insofar as I claim a large heart. If I were given the power, it would still be here, in Guadeloupe, where I would choose to be reborn, to suffer and to die. Even though, my ancestors were slaves in this island of volcanoes, with its cyclones and mosquitoes, and its bad mentality. But I did not come to the earth in order to weigh up all the sadness of the world. With that, I prefer to dream, upright, upright in the middle of my garden, like all the old women of my age, until death takes to me in my dream, with all my joy...

Like the island of Guadeloupe, the heroine weathers *cyclones* in a metaphorical sense of her life's difficulties. The book's opening paragraph refers to tropical cyclones and the remainder of the novel makes ample use of the wind metaphor. Télumée attributes everything to the winds:

Tout dépend du vent, il y en a qui vous font tomber, et d'autres qui raffermissent vos attaches, vous fortifient... (*Ibid.*, 121)

Everything depends on the wind, there are winds that make you fall, and others that will tighten up your lines, strengthen you...

In its best signification, the wind is invigorating:

Ainsi, au long des ses derniers jours, grand-mère fabriquait-elle du vent pour gonfler mes voiles, me permettre de reprendre mon voyage sur l'eau...(*Ibid.*, 173)

Thus, during her last days, grandma brought about winds to inflate my sails, to let me again take up my voyage on the waters...

Even as her grandmother lay dieing, this particular image of inflated sails ready to embark upon a journey makes it appear as if T  l  m  e were permeated with an eternal blithe optimism. To the contrary, throughout the novel there is a constant profound pessimism to counterbalance the optimism. Consider the following depiction of “life” as crazy cruel woman:

Malheur    celui qui rit une fois et s’y habitue, car la sc  l  ratesse de la vie est sans limites et lorsqu’elle vous comble d’une main, c’est pour vous pi  tiner des deux pieds, lancer    vos trousses cette femme folle, la d  veine, qui vous happe et vous d  chire et voltige les lambeaux de votre chair de corbeaux... .(*Ibid.*, 24)

A curse on those who laugh once and get used to laughing, because the bitterness of life is without limits and when life indulges you with one hand, actually it will kick you with two feet, insult your needs, life, this crazy woman, she is adversity, that traps you and tears you up and throws the shreds of your flesh to the crows...

The pessimistic outlook that we have studied in the case of C  line’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* indicates that human culture or civilization are ruined projects. The perspective that Schwarz-Bart creates is not akin to the gloom that we viewed in C  line’s *antiexoticism*. As I define *antiexoticism*, separate, better, or alternate worlds do not exist—thus wherever Bardamu, protagonist of *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, finds himself, life is dire. In other words, as Bardamu travels away from one very different place to another, and nothing changes. T  l  m  e’s fatalistic tale reveals that the world is in a state of constant flux. The winds vary: The classical exotic tempests strike and the *aliz  s* caress. Circumstances change, and places are different from one region to another. The smallest, furthest flung, and seemingly most insignificant location may be astonishing. This last point is best illustrated as T  l  m  e recounts the particulars of *le morne La Folie*.

The Languages of Exoticism

Télumée leaves the village of *Fond Zombi* in order to go to *La Folie* to mourn her grand-mother; grieving, she makes the following observation:

L'homme n'est pas un nuage au vent que la mort dissipe et efface d'un seul coup. (*Ibid.*, 187)

Man is not a cloud in the wind that death can squander and erase with one clean strike.

Thus, humans are not clouds, or wind, they are the akin to the land, fraught by the rains and winds, suffering, but resilient. Conversely, the land is akin to humans—it speaks. When she goes to *La Folie*, she has been told listen to the *morne*, because, in the words of Télumée's lover Amboise, "Ce morne parlera." (*Ibid.*, 190) (This morne will speak.).

In this section, the role of speaking a language has very little to do with human communication. In fact, the only speaking resident of the morne, Man Cia, turns herself into a dog in the novel's singular display of what might be considered "magic realism." Télumée asks Man Cia-turned-canine, "...et pourquoi t'être mise en chien, puisque vous autres n'avez plus la parole?... pourquoi laisser nos petits causements?" (*Ibid.*, 197) (...and why did you turn yourself into a dog, because all of you can't speak anymore?....why throw away our little discussions?). Man Cia is a maroon and she and the other maroon residents of *La Folie* live at the margins of an already marginal world. This is a world where language and verbal communication assume new meaning.

In *La Folie*, Télumée meets the resistant but rejected people who have escaped the trappings of civilization, including agriculture and a cash economy. These are the maroons of whom there exists two groups: *les Déplacés* (the Pushed-Off-Ones) and *les*

Egarés (the Lost Ones). *Les Egarés*, in particular, have no use for money, they gather game, and they manage to live off the land, even though the land is described as “ingrate”(Ibid., 190). *Le morne La Folie* is an isolated and mysterious place, which Téliumée describes as a country of spirits—it is its own little exotic world within Guadeloupe:

Le morne La Folie était habité par des nègres errants, disparates, rejetés des trente-deux communes de l’île et qui menaient une existence exempte de toute règles, sans souvenirs, étonnements, ni craintes. La plus proche boutique se trouvait à trois kilomètres et ne connaissant nul visage, nul sourire, l’endroit me semblait irréel, hanté: une sorte de pays d’esprits. Les gens du morne La Folie se dénommaient eux-mêmes la confrérie des Déplacés. Le souffle de la misère les avait lâchés là, sur cette terre ingrate, mais ils s’efforçaient de vivre comme tout le monde, de se faufiler tant bien que mal, entre éclair et orage, dans l’éternelle incertitude. Mais plus haut sur la montagne, enfoncées dans des bois profonds, vivait quelques âmes franchement perdues auxquelles on avait donné ce nom: Egarés. Ces derniers ne plantaient pas, ils ne coupaient pas la canne, ils n’achetaient ni ne vendaient, leurs seules ressources étant quelques écrevisses, des pièces de gibier, des fruits sauvages qu’il [*sic*] échangeaient à la boutique contre du rhum et du tabac, des allumettes. Ils n’aimaient pas d’argent, et si on leur glissait une pièces dans la main, ils la laissaient tomber à terre, l’air ennuyé.

The morne *La Folie* was inhabited by stray Negroes, disparate, rejected by the thirty-two communes of the island and they undertook an existence exempted of rules, without memories, surprises, or fears. The closest store was three kilometers away and not knowing any faces, any smiles, the spot seemed unreal to me, haunted: a land of spirits. The people of morne *La Folie* called themselves the Brotherhood of Pushed-Off-Ones. Misery’s breeze left them there, on that ungrateful land, but they made do like everyone, they slid through good as well as bad, through clear intervals and storms in eternal uncertainty. But, up higher on the mountain lived some frankly lost souls who we named The Lost Ones. These ones did not farm, they did not cut cane, they did not buy or sell, their only resources being some crawfish, some pieces of game, the wild fruits that they exchanged at the store for rum and tobacco, some matches. They did not like money, and if you slid a coin in their hand, they let it fall to the ground with an annoyed air.

Needless to say, the people of *La Folie* are exoticized: “exempt of rules,” “unreal,” “spirits.” They exist far away from “civilized” society. Their irreality harkens back to the artificial, unreal, and divine exotic figures we have observed in Loti and Leiris’s exoticism. Moreover, we have noted the immobile and imperturbable exoticized faces incarnated in Loti and Leiris’s *visages de cire*. Indeed the residents of La Folie bear this trait: They have “impassible faces,” which is the exact same words that Loti used to describe the indigenous *spahi*, Nyaor Fall. Furthermore, a mystical language intercedes in the exoticized realm of *La Folie*. The maroons’ eyes are “powerful” and “immortal.”

Ils avaient des visages impassibles, des yeux imprenables, puissants, immortels. Et une force étrange déferlait en moi à les voir, une douceur alanguissait mes os et sans savoir pourquoi, je me sentais pareille à eux, rejetée, irréductible. (*Ibid.*, 191)

They had impassible faces, impregnable eyes, powerful, immortal. And a strange force unfurled in me in seeing them, a languorous softness penetrated my bones and without knowing why, I felt the same as them, rejected, irreducible.

If there is any doubt that these are a “mysterious” people, Télumée tells us that she meets “le plus mystérieux entre eux...” (*Ibid.*, 191) (The most mysterious of them all...). He is a flautist called, Tac-Tac, named after his musical instrument, a flute known as a *voum tac*.

Et il soufflait de tout son corps par saccadés, longue, breve, longue, breve, longue, longue, longue, longue, longue qui traversaient la voûte de la forêt tout droit pour venir s'engouffrer dans nos poitrines, en frissons, en sanglots, en amour et ça vous soulevait comme ça de terre tout droit, quand vous ouvriez les yeux. Et c'est debout qu'il était, debout devant sa longue flûte de bambou et il n'y avait pas moyen de ne pas l'écouter, car ça ne faisait que rentrer : voum-tac et ça vous retournait dans le même temps que vous ouvriez les yeux, et c'était ainsi, vous ne pouviez rien y faire, Tac-Tac s'envolait devant son bambou après avoir déversé tout ce qui l'avait rempli, tout ce qu'il avait senti, ce matin-là...(*Ibid.*, 192)

And he breathed with his whole body in belted fragments, long, brief, brief, long, brief, long, long, long, long, that crossed the forest's ceiling straight to come and hit you in the chest, in shivers, in sobs, in love and it lifted you like that right off the earth when you opened your eyes. And upright he was, upright in front of his long bamboo flute and there was no way to not listen, because it just got inside of you: *voum-tac* and it would return at the same time as you opened your eyes, it was like that you couldn't do anything, Tac-Tac took off in front of his bamboo after having emptied it of all that he filled it with, all that he felt that morning...

A musician, Tac-Tac can speak all the languages in the world through his music. In this chapter's epigraph we cite the description of the mysterious one: "C'était Tac-Tac qui commençait à parler, selon son dire, toutes les langues de la terre." (*Ibid.*, 192).

The reference to his music speaking all languages suggests that music is full of an abstract equalizing effect. In a multi-linguistic world, music contains a means of communication that surpasses discrete language groups such as *French*, *Creole*, *English*, etc. As we know, the slaves came to the Caribbean and the New World speaking different African languages, thus music served as one common means of communication.

The Comprehensible Language of Autoexoticism

The notion that Tac-Tac's music speaks all languages implies that specific geographical, ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences do not prevent his music from containing comprehensible messages regardless of auditors' limited linguistic capacity. This proposal thwarts one of Pierre Loti's conviction from the "Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appels griots." in *Le Roman d'un Spahi*. Loti insists that African music would not be the same outside of its "exotic framework," as he claims, "Mais il serait impossible de le transporter en dehors de son cadre exotique de soleil et de sable; entendu ailleurs, ce chant ne serait plus lui-même." (*Le Roman* 149)

(But it would be impossible to transport it outside of its exotic framework of sun and sand, heard anywhere else, this song would not be itself anymore.). Schwarz-Bart takes an exoticist trope—the “mysterious” and musical native embodied in Tac-Tac—and turns that trope into a universalizing agent. Despite the strange and different world where Tac-Tac resides in *le morne La Folie*, despite the trappings of that exoticized framework, his *voum tac* music speaks all languages, and thus he is capable of communicating with all people. The maroon’s musical compositions are not inferior or superior to European music, as Loti was compelled to query regarding African music:

Un contretemps perpétuel des accompagnateurs, et des syncopes inattendues, parfaitement comprises et observées par tous les exécutants, sont les traits les plus caractéristiques de cet art—inférieur peut-être, mais assurément très différent du nôtre,—que nos organisations européennes ne nous permettent pas de parfaitement comprendre.

(*Le Roman* 149)

A perpetual contretemps of accompanists, and of unexpected syncopation, perfectly comprised and observed by the all the executors, are the most characteristic traits of this art—maybe inferior, but assuredly very different from ours,—that our European sensibilities do not let us perfectly understand. . .

Loti’s stiff “European sensibilities,” preventing him from perfectly understanding is a refusal to comprehend difference exempted of scales of “inferiority” and “superiority.” This is precisely counter to Schwarz-Bart’s *autoexoticist* project, which allows for linguistic difference and local exoticism, without privileging one language or one culture. Indeed, she amalgamates cultures and language and averts weighing and measuring in terms of superiority and inferiority.

Beyond Language

With the proposition that Tac-Tac speaks all the languages of the earth, Schwarz-Bart hyperbolizes her own act of *autoexotici* expression in the novel. To paraphrase Glissant, she builds her own language out of various authorized and unauthorized languages: French exoticist language, standard French, Creole expressions, and personal speech. This language is simultaneously individual, powerful, comprehensible, and unimposing—it is a language that can calmly breach European sensibilities.

As we have seen throughout this study of Simone Schwarz-Bart's novel, questions of language permeate a critical discussion of exoticism. We have noted the limitations of using an old colonial language, which may or may not suitably express the particularities of a colonized region. Moreover, the work presents a narrative incongruity wherein the written language is different from what the narrator might actually speak. Simone Schwarz-Bart solves these problems, among others, by admirably creating an original version of standard French inflected with Creole. However, also, she alludes to the limitations of language in general, by making music the vehicle of all languages—this may be a demonstration of Segalen's notion of the Diverse from his *Essai sur l'exotisme*.

Francis Affergan concludes his lengthy study entitled *Alterité et l'exotisme* by asking the following cryptic questions:

Segalen ne voulait-il pas finalement dire, à travers l'énigmatique figure de l'exotisme, que tout discours, et partant toute parole et tout texte, s'abolit dans le temps de sa manifestation? Toute culture ne nous force-t-elle pas dès lors interroger 'origine du langage?' Et reconnaître qu'en venant de loin (aboleo) il exhibe et dissimule à la fois le lointain qui fait être? ³⁸

Did not Segalen finally mean, that through the enigmatic figure of exoticism, that all discourses, and all speech, and all text cease to exist in

³⁸ Francis Affergan, *Exotisme et alterité. Essai sur les fondements d'une critique de l'anthropologie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987): 187.

the time of their manifestation? All culture, does it not force us to just as much interrogate the ‘origin of language?’ And to recognize that in coming from afar (aboleo) it simultaneously exhibits and hides the far away that makes it exist?

Affergan’s thought recalls Segalen’s *La perception du Divers*, the comprehension of something outside of oneself, the power to conceive of things differently:

La connaissance que quelque chose n’est pas soi-même; et le pouvoir d’exotisme, qui n’est que le pouvoir de concevoir autre. (*Essai* 41)

(The understanding that something is not oneself; and the power of exoticism, which is nothing less than the power to conceive (of) other (wise.)

Segalen’s ideal exoticism, replete in his notion of the Diverse, is perhaps the capacity to conceive of language differently. Suggesting that Segalen’s enigmatic notion of exoticism actually exceeds language, Affergan wonders whether *all discourses, and all speech, and all text cease to exist in the time of their manifestation?* Hence, Simone Schwarz-Bart’s view of Tac-Tac’s music speaking all the languages in the world is the perfect manifestation of Segalen’s *Divers* and exoticism: to understand something outside oneself, to conceive of *language* otherwise. It is indeed plausible to conceive of, music, which lacks language in terms of discourses, speech, and text, as a veritable expression of Segalen’s “enigmatic” exoticism and *Le Divers*.

CONCLUSIONS

This project's general findings and conclusions have already been stated several times. Exoticism grew from and within several related cultural traditions, including music, painting, decorative arts, and literature. French literary exoticism is the practice of writing, which had its popular heights in the late 19th century as colonial expansionism increased. The colonial exoticism upon which I concentrate, is exemplified by the writer Pierre Loti. The significations, the senses, the scenery, and the colonial contexts of this author's exoticism imply seemingly far-off, foreign, and unfamiliar landscapes and people. Largely dependent on "artificial" imagery, antecedent artistic representations, and stereotypes to portray cultural differences, Loti's exoticism has been considered inaccurate and tawdry.

In two of Loti's works, I first attempted to reveal that his work is a mix of nostalgia and modernity. Nostalgia implies longing for things of the past. However Loti's *past* is entirely enmeshed in a modern colonial *present*. For example, the French colonial cavalymen, the *spahis*, who came into being during France's ascendant colonial control of the late 19th century, are figures of both nostalgia and modernity. The epigraph to the second chapter reminds us that the French *spahis* are melancholic and nostalgic characters—in their "homeland" France, Loti imagines that they are homesick for the colonial exotic: *l'éternelle chaleur, le regret du désert, la nostalgie du sable*. My position and my observations on *fin-de-siècle* exoticism correspond, in certain respects, to those of Chris Bongie in *Exotic Memories*. However, Bongie posits that the exotic is an unattainable traditional, primitive, earlier, idealized sphere, of which exoticists

melancholically and nostalgically dream and describe. For Bongie, the exotic is unreachable, and unknowable. I believe that aspects of Bongie's exoticism can be viewed as such in Loti's work. For instance, Loti's "Digression pédantesque sur la musique et sur une catégorie de gens appelés griots" in *Le Roman* makes direct reference to the "cadre exotique" of traditional musicians. The narrator says that the music would be different anywhere else outside of its exotic framework—his notion of the exotic is what Bongie posits, however that scene lacks exoticist melancholia. But, generally, for Bongie and Loti, the exotic is a realm far away from modern European sensibilities, unknowable and dreamed up by moderns. I, however, do not consider portraits of traditional and indigenous spheres as the prime examples of the exotic or exoticism.

I have attempted to show that literary exoticism is a written hybrid of mixed imagery. Modern, colonial, European generated motifs and figures appear indissoluble from traditional symbols and representations of indigenes. Loti's work narrates the French colonial soldier dressed in traditional Ottoman garb. The author refers to the colonial capital Algiers that resembles the metropolitan capital Paris. He recounts the tale of the indigenous prostitutes, whose syphilitic microorganisms flow into the bloodlines of French sailors. These figures typify the fusion and blend of "traditional" or indigenous emblems with modern colonial imagery. Exoticism is a mélange of pasts and presents, home and abroad, natives and foreigners. Nonetheless, despite the fact that Loti's writing reflects this fusion or *métissage* of cultural imagery, *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames* expose an essentializing representations of ethnicity and race, which differs from the synthesis, fusion and hybridity of his writing.

Pierre Loti demonstrates a belief in defined racial types and categories, as well as strict ethnic divisions. I demonstrate that in both *Le Roman* and *Les Trois dames*, characters are described as Black, Arab, and White and are given stereotypical “racial” attributes. Those categories are further broken down in tribal or ethnic minority divisions: *Khassonkée*, *Peulh*, *Breton*, *Basque*, or *payson des Cévennes*. This brings the problem of ethnic essentialism to the forefront. Clearly, in many senses, the literature of exoticism is highly invested in the portrayal of “diverse” human “types.” Indeed, these essentialist portraits of human diversity, may be one of the ways in which Victor Segalen’s term, the “notion” or “aesthetic of the Diverse,” manifests itself. Jacques Bardin states in “Loti et Segalen, ou l’illusion de la difference” that Loti’s posthumous fall from literary grace, and Segalen’s posthumous embrace by intellectuals, is a strange reversal of fates. Bardin suggests that the nearly contemporaneous authors *both* advance the importance of writing, delineating and describing “other” ethnic groups. In Loti’s case, even when he valorizes the non-French *other*, his delineations may be narrowed down to an *us* and *them*, that is to say, a *French* and *other* dualism. Nonetheless, *despite* the author’s entrenched beliefs in racial essence or ethnic purity, his narratives betray such notions of purity. I have attempted to describe, reveal and analyze the indissoluble exotic/modern hybridity of Loti’s writing.

The social history of the children of the mixed marriages may be a field for further research. Alongside such a study, I suspect that the stories of the actual Fatou-gayes exist and herein lay another vein of exoticism to explore.

In the following chapter on two texts dating from the early 1930s, *Le Voyage au bout de la nuit* and *L'Afrique fantôme*, my conclusions both confirm and revise previous existing scholarship. I show that in the period “entre les guerres” Louis Ferdinand Céline and Michel Leiris consciously struggle with the old 19th century tropes. Céline’s novel has been compared to 18th century exotic travel classics such as *Candide* or *Robinson Crusoe*. Before Céline’s anti-Semitic publications, *Le Voyage* earned positive reviews for its depiction of the proletariat conditions across national frontiers—in France, in the United States, and in Africa. However, I consider Céline’s novel an example of what I call *antiexoticism*. The author reacts to exoticism, such as the “poetry of the Tropics,” as he seeks to expose the banality of all civilizations. Instead of portraying peculiar, diverse, distinct, or aesthetically pleasing differences, he portrays similar horrors wherever his protagonist, Bardamu goes. Secondly, Bardamu observes the economic exploitation that takes place in the colony, and he almost admits to a kind of complicity. I believe that in *Le Voyage* there is a palpable indifference towards African characters. Céline does not portray the natives of Bambola-Bragamance as thinking and speaking people. The author’s Africans are silent. Michel Beaujour is correct in that Céline makes “death speak,” and thus the silent African figures are all the more poignant—neither, dead nor alive—they are the ultimate *antiexotic* figures of nothingness. Céline avoids, blocks, and represses the characterization of African difference.

Michel Leiris’s *L'Afrique fantôme* is a work of ethnographic and literary renown. As I mentioned, during Leiris’s youth, he participated in Surrealist activities, and he published in *avant gardist* journals. His thought was very much influenced by the modernist thought of the day including, Surrealism and Freudian psychoanalysis. He

possessed those French high-modern predilections for extemporaneous literary expression, experimental music such as jazz, and “things primitive.” Leiris spent a life within an ensemble of France’s 20th century moderns: he counted J.P. Sartre, Georges Bataille, and Henri Malraux as friends. Just before his death, Malian ethnographic filmmaker and critic, Manthia Diawara, wrote a complimentary article calling Leiris “The Other (’s) Archivist.”¹ After Leiris died in 1991, *Yale French Studies* published a memorial issue on the author in which appeared articles by some of the most important intellectual figures of 20th century French culture and letters, including Emmanuel Levinas, J.B. Pontalis, Maurice Blanchot, and Edouard Glissant.² Leiris is a progressive thinker and he is admired for his bold admissions by both literary critics and anthropologists. *L’Afrique fantôme* may be considered a kind of postmodern text, *avant la lettre*. Anthropologist James Clifford lauds *L’Afrique fantôme* for its early experimentation with ethnographic self-reflexivity.

I hardly wish to revise the previous existing scholarship that demonstrates Leiris’s ethnographic and literary importance in the last century. However, after studying Leiris in conjunction with the late 19th century exoticist, Loti and the 20th century modernist *par excellence*, Céline, I note Leiris’s reliance on the classical exoticist tropes of the 19th century. The book’s title, the colonial travelogue form, and the erotic obsession with an African woman indicate the previous century’s favorite exoticist styles and contents. Furthermore, Leiris’s undying search for sacred spheres is simply a variation of what

¹ Manthia Diawara, "The Other (’s) Archivist" *Diacritics*, 1988.

² Emmanuel Levinas’s "Transcending Words: Concerning Word-Erasing," J.B. Pontalis’s "Michel Leiris, or Psychoanalysis without End," Maurice Blanchot’s "Glances from Beyond the Grave" and, Edouard Glissant’s "Michel Leiris: The Repli and Dépli," appear in the 1992 *Yale French Studies* devoted to Michel Leiris.

Bongie considers the *fin-de-siècle* exoticists' quest for alternate utopias that exist far away from the Occidental civilized realm.

I would like to conclude my discussion on *L'Afrique fantôme* by mentioning that despite its allusions to 19th century exoticism, the text operates in a manner that is contrary of what I have argued regarding literary exoticism. I reiterate that exoticism is largely composed of hybrid imagery that obscures clear ethnic, national or racial lines of identity. I maintain that among the authors studied here, Leiris preserves the greatest division between the French realms and the indigenous worlds.

Leiris's exclusive use of transparent academic French illustrates neat divides between cultures. In the case of Loti, the African character, Fatou-gaye speaks broken French—as does Frenchman Jean Peyral. Céline's colonial merchant speaks an imitative native prattle. Unlike these authors, Leiris quotes Emawayish in flawless French, as she queries: *Est-ce que la poésie existe en France?* Leiris avoids blurring language lines in order to preserve the dignity of the indigenous speaker. He is the only writer studied in this thesis who does not alter French expression with an imitative *pidgin*, or creolized writing style. It must be mentioned that upon return to France, he wrote a lengthy ethnographic monograph on an African language, entitled *La langue secrète des dogons de Sanga*. Questions of language fascinated Michel Leiris, and, this is indeed a subject that further study might address: Does academic ethnographic language instead of exoticist expression, distance, estrange, and alienate its subjects? As an example of ethnographic documentation, *L'Afrique fantôme* narrates distant and seemingly very different cultures, because, *L'Afrique fantôme* is a Frenchman's mission to observe and study African cultures. Leiris's clear and scholarly expression bolsters a clear divide

between French culture and African cultures. He documents his trip to Africa, he describes two years spent crossing the continent, and he returns to France. This work offers the neatest segregation of *home* and *abroad* and *us* and *them*. From the examples of Loti, Céline, and Leiris, Frenchmen on missions in Africa, I have come to the conclusion that colonial settler writers, who lived and stayed in the French colonies, may provide for greater insights into the colonial mindset. The settlers' literature may offer better examples of *home* and *abroad* boundary uncertainties and distinctions.

I concluded this study with a chapter on Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle*, due to that novel's illustration of how complicated a notion the exotic is. I recall what I stated in the introduction: Freud translates "unheimlich" in Greek, with the root of exotic: ξένος (xeno) "guest," "stranger," or "foreigner," as in "xenophobic." The letter "ξ" is at the root of ἐξω, (exo) which means "outside." Freud's essay, "Das Unheimlich" explains that the notion "unheimlich" incorporates its antonym, "heimlich." The "heimlich" or "homey" implies a nostalgia for the familiar—or home. In the case of Loti's exoticism, we have seen an example wherein exoticized Africa becomes a nostalgic longed for object. I have also shown the manners in which the exotic evokes all too familiar imagery, which travelers first see at home and then seek abroad. For instance, Leiris's hunt for African imagery such as "Aïda" or "Amazons," is an incorporation of home in the exotic.

However, *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* illustrates a different manner in which the exotic involves home. The island of Guadeloupe is the native home of the native heroine Télumée. Guadeloupe is also the exotic island where exoticized characters reside. I have attempted to reveal an instance of the failure of neat dividing lines between

a *native home* and an *exotic abroad*. Most interestingly, Schwarz-Bart's written language further disintegrates notions of pure national, ethnic, or linguistic divides. Her use of standard yet, creolized French, resists linguistic purity. Although I have shown various ways in which exoticism espouses ethnic, racial, and linguistic essentialisms, the language of Schwarz-Bart's *autoexoticism* demonstrates that exoticism need not be composed of static, pure, or ahistorical essences. Her use of altered French, shows how linguistic expression can fluctuate and evolve. Language is an element of ethnic or cultural identity. By extension of that thought, that language is a part of culture and ethnic identity, I suggest that Simone Schwarz-Bart's original use of French demonstrates an anti-essentialist manner of viewing ethnicity. Ethnicity is not static, unchanging or unalterable.

I close by stating that I believe there are research possibilities in the field of music and exoticism. I noted that in Loti's "Digression" on music and *griots* in *Le Roman*, he considers the musical sphere as an "exotic framework." Schwarz-Bart's mention of music in the exoticized realm of *morne la Folie* in *Pluie et vent sur Télumée miracle* relates to extraordinary flautist *Tac-Tac*. That character, whose flute music "speaks" all languages in the world, suggests a sort of diversity exists beyond language—communication through musical expression. The concept of music, as an abstract and often nonlinguistic form of communication, entails implications for further research on diversity and exoticism, exoticisms beyond essentialisms.

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APPENDIX *LES ÉLÉPHANTS*

Parnassian poet Leconte de Lisle's "Les Éléphants" is representative of Bardamu's "poésie des Tropiques." It is also an example of Suzanne Césaire's "doudouism."

Les Éléphants

Le sable rouge est comme une mer sans limite,
Et qui flambe, muette, affaissée en son lit.
Une ondulation immobile remplit
L'horizon aux vapeurs de cuivre où l'homme
habite.

Nulle vie et nul bruit. Tous lions repus
Dorment au fond de l'ancre éloigné de cent
lieues,
Et la girafe boit dans les fontaines bleues,
Là-bas, sous les dattiers des panthères connus.

Pas un oiseau ne passe en fouettant de son aile
L'air épais, où circule un immense soleil.
Parfois quelque boa, chauffé dans son sommeil,
Fait onduler son dos dont l'écaille étincelle.

Tel l'espace enflammé brûle sous les cieux
clairs.
Mais, tandis que tout dort aux mornes solitudes,
Les éléphants rugueux, voyageurs lents et rudes,
Vont au pays natal à travers les deserts.

D'un point de l'horizon, comme des masses
brunes,
Ils viennent, soulevant la poussière, et l'on voit,
Pour ne point dévier du chemin le plus droit,
Sous leur pied large et sûr crouler au loin les
dunes.

Celui qui tient la tête est un vieux chef. Son
corps
Est gercé comme un tronc que le temps ronge et
mine;
Sa tête est comme un roc, et l'arc de son échine
Se voûte puissamment à ses moindres efforts.

Sans ralentir jamais et sans hâter sa marche,
Il guide au but certain ses compagnons
poudreux;
Et, creusant par-derrière un sillon sablonneux,
Les pèlerins massifs suivent leur patriarche.

L'oreille en éventail, la trompe entre les dents,
Ils cheminent, l'oeil clos. Leur ventre bat et
fume,
Et leur sueur dans l'air embrasé monte et brume;
Et bourdonnent autour mille insectes ardent.
Mais qu'importent la soif et la mouche vorace,
Et le soleil cuisant leur dos noir et plissé?

Ils rêvent en marchant du pays délaissé,
Des forêts de figuiers où s'abrita leur race.
Ils reverront le fleuve échappé des grands monts,
Où nage en mugissant l'hippopotame énorme,
Où blanchis par la lune et projetant leur forme,
Ils descendaient pour boire en écrasant les joncs.

Aussi, pleins de courage et de lenteur, ils passent
Comme une ligne noire, au sable illimité;
Et le desert reprend son immobilité
Quand les lourds voyageurs à l'horizon
s'effacent.

Leconte de Lisle
Originaire de Réunion

From *Poèmes barbares* (1884)

VITA

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