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Regarding Westernization in Central Africa: Hybridity in the Works of Three Chadian Playwrights

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**REGARDING WESTERNIZATION IN CENTRAL AFRICA: HYBRIDITY IN THE
WORKS OF THREE CHADIAN PLAYWRIGHTS**

A Dissertation

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

In

The Department of Theatre

By

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Dedication

For Trophine, Gracie, and Gloria: my warmth, my world, my life.

In loving memory of my mother and father: “the dead are not dead.”

Acknowledgments

This dissertation represents a long journey marked by setbacks and successes. It has been a collaborative endeavor. Many people have contributed toward the completion of this work, which is a huge accomplishment for my academic life, my family, and my entire community. The long journey has finally ended, and now is the time for offering acknowledgements.

Thus, I begin by giving “tribute to whom tribute is due.” I should like to borrow this Biblical phraseology to say “thank you” to the Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent God for His wisdom, sustenance, and provision, not only throughout this program but also throughout my entire stay in the United States. Thank you Lord for doing it again in my life!

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
Abstract.....	xi
Chapter	
One: Introduction: Chadian Playwrights and Hybridity.....	1
Two: Chadian Historical and Theatrical Contexts.....	65
Three: Tradition and Modernity in Ouaga-Ballé Danaï's <i>La malédiction</i>	108
Four: Social and Political Oppression in Maoundoé Naïndouba's <i>L'Etudiant de Soweto</i>	142
Five: Generational Conflict and the Future in Frank Kodbaye's <i>Un vent d'Est</i>	186
Six: Conclusion: Looking Back, Looking Ahead.....	225
Works Cited and Consulted.....	232
Vita.....	251

List of Abbreviations

ACFT: Adventure Camp for Teens

AEF : Afrique Equatoriale Française

ANC: African National Congress

BEPC: Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle

CAPEL: Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnel pour l'Enseignement du Lycée

CBLT: Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad

CCIIT: Chadian Center for International Institute of Theatre

CEFOD: Centre d'Etudes et de Formation pour le Développement

CEG: Collège d'Enseignement Général (a four-year middle school)

CEMAC : Communauté Économique et Monétaire des États de l'Afrique Centrale

CEPE: Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Élémentaires

CNS: Conférence Nationale Souveraine

CSTD: Centre for Studies and Training for Development

CTIIT: Centre Tchadien de l'Institut International de Théâtre

CYSC: Catholic Youth Summer Camp

D.E.A.: Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies

ECCAS: Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States

ENSAC: Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Afrique Centrale

EUFOR: European Forces

FEA: French Equatorial Africa

FIADPUP: Festival international d'art dramatique et plastique pour l'union et la paix.

FROLINAT : Front de Libération National

GERLIF : Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Littératures Francophones

IFDPAUP: International Festival of Dramatic and Plastic Art for Unity and Peace.

LCBC: Lake Chad Basin Commission

LYRC: Louisiana Young Readers' Choice

MINURCAT: United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

NGO: Non-Government Organization

NLF: National Liberation Front

NYCS: National Youth Service Corps

ONG: Organisation Non Gouvernementale

OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

RFI: Radio France Internationale

SNC: Sovereign National Conference

SPENSAC: Section Préparatoire de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Afrique Centrale

THEMACULT: Théâtre Maoundoh Culture

TVBM: Théâtre Vivant Baba Moustapha

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

USSYP: The United States Senate Youth Program

WWII: World War Two

YAC: Youth Adventure Camp

YAP: Youth Ambassadors Program

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

Abstract

The second half of the nineteenth century played a determining role in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of Africa. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 witnessed European interests bargaining over the territories of Africa and arbitrarily dividing much of the continent into different countries under European control. This historical moment may be regarded as the height of Western influence over Africa, though it only continued the colonial tradition of viewing Africa as a land without culture, theatre, literature, or history (prior to the advent of the white man). The legacy of this outlook has placed African intellectuals and literary artists on the defensive. The denigration of Africa has challenged writers to reassess African culture and to champion Africa's history and literature.

This study examines how three Chadian playwrights (notably, Danaï, Naïndouba, and Kodbaye) have through their literary craftsmanship challenged the colonial legacy and have invited a reconsideration and re-imagination of not only Chad but Africa as a whole. The plays of these writers criticize the Western-backed ruling class and attempt to restore dignity to the Chadian citizen. Unlike an earlier generation of African writers, who wished to go back to a romanticized past, these writers contest traditional outlooks that stand in the way of progress and modern viewpoints. They espouse a new vision of Chad, one that involves a hybrid notion of past, present, and future, an entity that may blend the better aspects of European and African politics and culture. While these writers give a strong critique of pro-French influence and the corruption that has become endemic to local governments,

they point the way to a hopeful future. Their plays express a new self-consciousness; they are a shout of affirmation. Most importantly, these playwrights envision a political and social reality for a new Chad, a country to be proudly called home.

Chapter One

Introduction: Chadian Playwrights and Hybridity

Africa has endured startling vicissitudes in the course of her history, which have understandably informed her culture, politics, literature, fundamental self-regard, and traditional values. Contact with Europe, dating back to the colonial era, has generated problems that still affect Africa today. The attitude of West¹ towards Africa is one that consists of subordination and denigration. By demeaning African culture, tradition, and its people, Europe has worked toward asserting its own cultural hegemony, economic control, colonial influence, and overall dominance by substituting human consideration with economic exploitation.

Given this history of exploitation, this dissertation investigates how African writers, specifically three prominent playwrights of Chad, have regarded this colonial legacy and have offered a vision of the future. Central to their writing is the fundamental relation between Africa and Europe, particularly between Chad and France, the country that for years held power over the colony. These writers wish to challenge the past. They also criticize the present, how colonial outlooks and attitudes, rooted in the minds of some European leaders and their African protégés, have led to failed leadership and a compromised democracy, to “political and

¹ By using the term “West,” I am chiefly referring to Europe and its influence on Africa.

corporate misdeeds” of “the intellectuals in decolonized (Chad),”² and to “greed and bureaucratic corruption.”³ These writers also have no romantic notions of a pre-colonial past; they challenge traditional or tribal outlooks that stand in the way of progress and modern viewpoints. In short, these writers promote a new vision of Chad, one that involves a hybrid notion of past, present, and future, an entity that may blend the better aspects of European and African politics and culture. While these writers give a strong critique of pro-French influence and the corruption that has become endemic to local governments, they point the way to a hopeful future. Their plays express a new self-consciousness; they are a shout of affirmation. Most importantly, these playwrights envision a political and social reality for a new Chad, a country to be proudly called home.

Challenges for African Writers of Today

1. Denial and Repression of African Culture

One of the key problems that has proved a challenge to African writers is the denial and repression of African culture during colonial rule. Through the French assimilation system of “Direct Rule,” colonialism denigrated everything in what would become francophone Africa. From the repression of religious beliefs to other traditional/African practices, the system simply stripped the natives of their cultural heritage.

Rather than revealing a lack of cultural significance, scholarship points to the

² Wole Soyinka, qtd in “Excremental Postcolonialism,” Joshua D. Esty, *Contemporary Literature* 40.1 (Spring 1999): 22-59.

³ Ayi Kwei Armah, qtd in “Excremental Postcolonialism,” Joshua D. Esty, *Contemporary Literature* 40.1 (Spring 1999): 22-59.

central role of Africa in world history that human civilization originated in Africa, more precisely, in Egypt:

“Herodotus, after relating his eyewitness account informing us that the Egyptians were Blacks . . . that Greece borrowed from Egypt all the elements of her civilization, even the cult of the gods, and that Egypt was the cradle of civilization.”⁴

One may claim with some justification that Africa is indeed the cradle of humanity. Besides, the latest paleo-anthropological discoveries in Chad show the hominid Toumai⁵ as the oldest human that ever lived on earth, dating back between 6 and 7 million years. Along with other evidence of early human activity, the study of Africa revealed some of the earliest cultural inventions, such as writing (hieroglyph) and architecture (pyramids), both given important value in Egypt. Yet, due to fear, arrogance, or selfishness, many in the West have failed or refused to acknowledge Africa’s key role in the foundation of humanity and world history.

In order to place Africa in its duly warranted historical and cultural contexts, and in view of creating a better future for her offspring, Cheikh Anta Diop believes that Africa needs her historians to correct the “falsified” understanding of Africa by Westerners. One aspect of this task involves linking the past of Africa to its contemporary state, that is, with an eye toward projecting a new Africa. It is in other words the quest for hybridity, which, according to Diop, is “to define the image

⁴ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1974) 4.

⁵ Toumai is a Goranne Tubu language of Chad given to the hominid meaning "hope of life."
<http://www.astronoo.com/articles/toumai-en.html>

of modern Africa reconciled with its past and preparing for its future”⁶ that may guide this quest.

For Diop, however, claiming the past is crucial to setting the course of the present. Diop writes:

Ancient Egypt was a Negro civilization. The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt . . . in a word, it will be impossible to build African humanities, a body of African human sciences, so long as that relationship does not appear legitimate. The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective, nor unruffled; he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic. Imagine, if you can, the uncomfortable position of a western historian who was to write the history of Europe without referring to Greco-Latin Antiquity and try to pass that off as a scientific approach.⁷

Diop’s work points to the active denial and repression of African culture and history that was common among Western scholars, who went on to indoctrinate their school children that “*l’Afrique est un continent sauvage, neuf et sans histoire, qui ne commence à exister réellement qu’à partir de sa découverte par l’homme blanc*” (Africa is a wild, new continent and ahistorical, which really only started to exist from its discovery by white men).⁸ Similarly, one finds a disparaging view in the work of Hegel, who wrote: “What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World’s History.”⁹ In

⁶ Diop xvi.

⁷ Diop xiv.

⁸ Musanji Ngalasso-Mwatha, Virginia Coulon, and Alain Ricard, *Littératures, savoirs et enseignement* (Bordeaux: Presse universitaire de Bordeaux, 2007) 147.

⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, (New York: Colonial Press, c1900) 99

further documenting how the history of Africa has been “falsified,” Diop points out the biases of European scholars:

Les égyptologues européens commencent--avec l'appui des États--leur travail d'interprétation, de gommage, de suggestions, d'omissions, d'orientation, de fixation. L'Égypte antique entre dans une ligne clairement tracée: elle est l'un des fondements, avant la Grèce et avant Rome, de la civilisation européenne. On lui donne une origine blanche: indoeuropéenne, sémite ou inconnue

(European Egyptologists began--with the support of States--their work of interpretation, deletion, suggestions, omissions, orientation, fixation. Ancient Egypt enters a clearly drawn line: it is one of the bases, prior to Greece and before Rome, of European civilization. It is given a white origin: Indo-European, Semitic or unknown).¹⁰

Such a European interpretation of world history has short-changed the importance of Africa. Conrad W. Worrill accurately points out “Hegel took Egypt out of Africa and Africans out of Egypt. He also removed Africans from history.”¹¹ Rather than denying the significance of African culture, Worrill affirms Africa’s heritage and history, noting that Herodotus’s “eyewitness account” indicated that “the Egyptians were Blacks,” that “Greece borrowed from Egypt all the elements of her civilization . . . and that Egypt [and therefore Africa] is the cradle of civilization.”¹² Notwithstanding such historical assessments, Europe unfortunately has too long rejected or minimized the richness and fullness of African traditional cultures.

2. The Influence of Western Education, Language, and Art Forms

¹⁰ “Cheikh Anta Diop, aux services du génie noir,”

<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20110204175937/senegal-hommage-sekou-toure-felix-moumiecheikh-anta-diop-aux-services-du-genie-noir.html>

¹¹ Conrad W. Worrill, “Egypt is in Africa,” in

http://www.nbufront.org/BushTelegraph/WorrillsWorld/11_02_16_EgyptAfrica.html

¹² Diop 4.

The advent of colonization brought with it a new wave of Western education that in the end overshadowed any other traditional forms of teaching and instruction. Many of the Europeans first came as missionaries, and their preaching and evangelization heavily influenced the kind of education they would bring to Africa.

This influential impact of European evangelism strongly affected educational practices; yet it is important to note that it also affected tribal community and organization, in short, how Africans saw themselves. When the French forces prevented Africans from practicing their native religion, another instance of colonial subjugation, African traditional beliefs were put in a bad light. Those who practiced this kind of religion were made to believe that they were inferior to those who were members of Christian sects. Thus, the conquerors were able to persuade people to adopt the conquerors' religion. And for better or worse, the adoption of this religion changed how the African people dealt with their fellows, in regards to tribal communities and broader traditional spiritualities. The assertion of Christianity, in short, fostered Western expansion and its hegemony. Like 4th century Rome, all other religious practices at the time in Africa were "condemned collectively as 'pagan,' and were gradually transformed, absorbed, or suppressed."¹³

The spread of Christianity demanded administrative practices to manage its control over native populations. Education became key to the maintenance of this

¹³ Glen Warren Bowersock, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999) 56.

religious ascendancy. Converts to the new religion were the first to send their children to missionary schools for modern education. In Chad and elsewhere in Africa, the missionaries brought with them imperatives for the expansion of Western hegemony, according to Chinua Achebe. Once fully enmeshed in the new forms of education, the young natives were indoctrinated, some to the point of denying their own cultural heritage. Yet, as Ouaga-Ballé Danaï has observed, and in spite of such influence, “*la littérature tchadienne est à la fois ancrée dans la tradition et tournée vers l’universel*” (Chadian literature is both rooted in tradition and geared toward the universal).¹⁴ Danaï in effect acknowledges the impact of such colonization but affirms for Africans the interplay of local tradition and broader human universals, a mixing we can understand as hybridity.

Western education not only influenced the religious beliefs of the colonized but brought significant changes in language usage and prominence of art forms. In Anglophone Africa, local languages were often taught in school curricula. Admission requirements would allow common usage of terms; for instance in Nigeria, the symbolic linguistic trio of *wa-zo-bia*, all meaning “come” in Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo languages of west, north and south of the country respectively, were acknowledged. Similarly, in East Africa, the peoples of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, among others, shared one national language, Swahili. Matters were different in Chad, however, as the French language was taught as the dominant form of communication. The emphasis on French assimilation hindered the use of the many local languages and

¹⁴ Ouaga-Ballé Danaï, *Littérature tchadienne en quinze parcours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011) 96.

prevented their development in reading and writing. Consequently, the main language of education was French, which by extension influenced the scope of creative and literary writing. By and large the composition of literary works occurred in French, which is the language of the colonizer.

The ascendancy of a European language (and literary forms of writing) brings important questions to the work of African authors and the relation between the native voice and Western forms. This issue informs Gayatri Spivak's challenging essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?"¹⁵ Spivak elucidates the problems of a native working within the colonizer's educational system. Although her essay deals primarily with the Middle East, it is applicable to any postcolonial world, where colonization gradually penetrates the minds and the bodies of the colonized and eventually affects their whole lives. Spivak examines how peoples who once had their own way of life suddenly find themselves in a new system, one that has stripped them of what they once held dear, their cultural heritage.

By using the example of *sati*, or "the Hindu woman who dies on her husband's funeral pyre." ¹⁶ Spivak demonstrates Europe's power over India and, to some extent, the entire Third World. For the Hindu women, this practice has been around and accepted for a while. It is a "ritual," and therefore helped in transitioning from one phase of life to another. The British however view such

¹⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, c1988) 271-309.

¹⁶ Rosalind C. Morris, ed., *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) 117.

practice with a different eye. For them, through a western vision, it was a bad practice and therefore the consideration passed from “ritual” to “crime.” By imposing such concept on the natives, the British succeeded in writing a new history of a colony, making them “saviors” of brown women--hence the saying that “white men are saving brown women from brown men.”¹⁷ If for the British, “the burning is barbaric and oppressive,” through indoctrination, the Hindu woman believes that sati is a best way to achieve “*moksha* or self-liberation from the cycle of rebirth).”¹⁸ The problem with *sati*, according to Spivak, is that it was “ideologically cathected as ‘reward’” for the Hindu, while the rejection of the practice for the British “was ideologically cathected as ‘social mission’.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, even though the British defended the fate of brown women, the “victims” themselves were never given voice. For Spivak, the “subaltern cannot speak” because in her estimation, “subalternity is a position without identity” and the subaltern is a name of a differential space, someone without access to lines of social mobility.”²⁰

While the problem of the colonized operating in a world dominated by the language and art of the colonizer--a problem insightfully expressed by Spivak--will remain important to a discussion of Chad and its recent playwrights, the notion of hybridity may serve as a means of addressing this problem and looking to a more empowering future.

¹⁷ Spivak 297.

¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, http://www.enotes.com/topic/Gayatri_Chakravorty_Spivak

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 301.

²⁰ Gayatri Spivak, “The Trajectory of the Subaltern in my Work” Columbia University Speech Series, September 2004.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZHH4ALRFHw&feature=player_embedded#at=577

3. The Importance or Use of Long- Held Traditions

Some parts of Africa, even in the 21st century, are still dominated by traditional practices. Some of these practices involve the concepts of “curse” and “fate” (which we will see in Ouaga-Ballé Danaï’s play, *La malédiction*). In light of such ideas, many people abstain from making efforts to change their lot, as they yield to “fate” and easily give in to such traditions. It is one thing to hold to or respect traditions, and another thing to depend on them, especially if they are detrimental to one’s self and the prospect of development or progress. Even though such practices might seem tempting, sometimes it is necessary to move beyond the comfortable zone to the “dangerous” realm. This is what Danaï calls “*la profanation de l’interdit qui déshumanise la société*” (the desecration of the prohibited that dehumanizes the society).²¹ Danaï thus challenges his people to examine tradition critically and to consider new possibilities.

An acceptance of a tradition, which may have oppressive aspects, should bring further consideration. Ousmane Sembène, for example, brought to light traditional practices of female circumcision in his film *Moolaadé*.²² The film shows one of the village women challenging the tradition by sheltering a group of young girls who run away to avoid this circumcision. Even though the woman’s challenge tears the village into two warring groups, she stands firm against long held tradition, which for her, has brought incurable scars. Such practices might have

²¹ Danaï 89.

²² Ousmane Sembène, *Moolaadé* 2004.

noble objectives, in affirming the rite of passage from childhood to wo/manhood. However, the methods of the ritual are deplorable. The priestess often uses the same blade on several girls; the blade becomes blunt before she changes it. The hygienic and health conditions under which the young women are initiated become therefore a concern.

Because the society is patriarchal, tradition sometimes demands much of young women, to the point they are victims and have no say in community affairs. Women in many places in Africa are considered second-class citizens whose place is in the kitchen and in the fields, who should aim only to take care of children and men. Little girls learn from their mothers in order to eventually taking care of their own families someday. As a result, they are not encouraged to attend schools, which are considered too liberal and capable of corrupting the mind. As Marie-Claire Matip writes: "*Une fille est faite pour travailler à la cuisine ou aux champs, mais jamais à l'école*" (a girl is made to work in the kitchen or in the fields, but never at school).²³ Boys on the other hand are given capital consideration in the family. Their births are delightfully celebrated because they bear family names and carry on the family lineage.

An over-emphasis of tradition can also affect the political realm, when a candidate imposes himself on the elders of the community, who in turn require their wives, children, relatives, and communities to vote for this select candidate. It does not matter what people think, as long as the family head or community leader issues

²³ Marie-Claire Matip, *Ngonda* (Paris: *Bibliothèque du Jeune Africain*, 1956) 19.

the command. This attitude is criticized by Frank Kodyaye in his work *Un vent d'Est*.²⁴ Whether in Sembène's *Moolaadé*, Danaï's *La malédiction*, or Matip's *Ngonda*, many African writings have cited the oppressive nature of patriarchy that weighs down on many people. At the same time, such writings enlighten the ways with which people have resisted such forces of domination in their communities.

Some communities in Africa and Chad particularly advocate the value of sharing. Both because of limited resources and long-held societal norms, people live in close communities; this leads to the social synergy where success is not all about individual effort. As a result, a successful person in his turn will help those in need for their eventual achievement in the future. A fulfilled life is often compared to a social ladder that takes the efforts of many to reach the top.

Another important aspect of tradition that deserves honor and preservation is the respect of parents, elders, even strangers. Such respect in many African societies engenders blessings on the parts of the children. Rooted in oral tradition, Africans also give a special consideration to their word. This means that their word is their bond. Thus, whatever they commit to, they are always reminded of their commitment and eventually fulfill it. Such respect and engagement help keep the society stable: there are fewer children on the street, fewer divorces in marriages, a lower number of suicides, etc.

Traditional practices can have both positive and negative effects on a populace. But when they serve to obstruct the development of a particular group of

²⁴ Frank Kodyaye, *Un vent d'Est* [*Wind from the East*] (2005).

a society, they become dangerous. The importance of women in the development of Africa should not be undermined. They are the first to wake up in the morning and the last to go to bed, taking care of every household chore, keeping the men and children moving. Sembène's protagonist Maimouna in *Les bouts de bois de Dieu : Banty mam Yall*²⁵ is a good illustration of such a strong woman. As the world evolves, much new writing in Africa calls for new ideas, for example, of gender relations, these works advocate the *métissage culturel*, a form of hybridity and fluidity that takes from both the old and the new to produce a better way forward.

4. Economic, Political and Technical Instability that Make the Production of Art/Writing Difficult

To the question as to "why he is interested in politics?"²⁶ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o comments:

Because I am an artist. Whatever affects the lives of human beings-- ecological, economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological-- is within my province as an artist. I am not in art because of politics. I am in politics because of my artistic calling.²⁷

From the above quote, it is clear the problems faced by Ngugi as a Kenyan and East African writer applies to any sub Saharan African writer. As an artist, s/he cannot, in Achebe's words, "stand aside . . . , or be indifferent to this [political] argument [because] at any rate, there is a clear duty to make a statement."²⁸ According to

²⁵ Ousmane Sembène, *Les bouts de bois de Dieu : Banty mam Yall* (Paris: Le Livre contemporain, 1989, c1960).

²⁶ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, "Moving the Center: Language, Culture and Globalisation" UCSC Humantas Lecture Series on (May 2005) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxyigzfSyBY>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kirsten Holts Petersen, *Criticism and ideology: Second African Writers' Conference*, (Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1986) 129.

Leopold Sédar Senghor, any “African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant,”²⁹ because “African literature is politically committed.”³⁰

Dipping their pen in the ink of politics, African writers have believed in helping eradicate the political instability and corruption problems that are endemic in Africa by advocating democracy over dictatorship. However, this effort becomes a challenge to writers and Africa in that some Western countries, notably France, have helped perpetuate the status quo by replacing African dictators with others, according to whether or not they safeguard French interests. Through corsairs, or “*les Affreux*” (the Dreadful)³¹ as nicknamed, they have been “engage(d) in either bolstering or overthrowing governments in former European colonies and other conflict zones (such as) Congo, Yemen, Iran, Nigeria, Benin, Chad and Angola, and, several times, in Comoros.”³²

A politically unstable nation is an economically poor and dependent nation. To reinforce this perception, there is a tendency that, in Africa and probably elsewhere, “public opinions about democracy and markets are connected.”³³ Well aware of this fact and to maintain their hegemony over Africa, European leaders

²⁹ Chinua Achebe, *A Reader's Guide to African Literature* (New York: African Publishing Corporation, 1971) 119.

³⁰ Gurram Seetaramulu, <http://gurramseetaramulu.wordpress.com/2009/08/04/language-politics-and-the-african-writer-with-reference-to-chinua-achebe>.

³¹ Marlise Simons “Bob Denard, Hired Gun for Coups, Is Dead at 78” <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/16/world/europe/16denard.html>.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ E. Gyimah-Boadi, ed. *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress* (London: Lynne Rienner: 2004) 89.

have used economic threats and instill fear in African leaders. Consequently, in order to ensure their own power, African leaders have “denied African(s) their political rights and civil liberties. Each time Africans protested against the cruelty of the colonial state, they were pummeled by the full battery of the coercive arsenal.”³⁴ On the other hand, leaders who attempt to center their politics on the populace have experienced resistance and violence. That is why, from the time of independence up to now; Africa has seen a mind-boggling number of coups. Presidential elections are sideshows and masquerades for selfish interests.

Election victories seldom reflect the will of the people, except in Africa. It is therefore not surprising that in the midst of presidential election victory celebration, or during presidential inauguration, there is a coup d’état. Cases like this are many, some of which happened “two months after Upper Volta President Maurice Yaméogo was elected with 99.7% percent of the popular vote, he was overthrown.”³⁵ Forty-five 45 years later, another President from the above mentioned country, Blaise Compaoré, who “won” elections 80.15%³⁶ faces, just two months after elections, street protests that shake the country and demands of his resignation.³⁷ Likewise in Chad, shortly after the boycotted presidential elections of 2006, many coup attempts occurred, including the most frightening one of February

³⁴ George Klay Kieh, Jr., ed., *Africa and the Third Millennium* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008) 6.

³⁵ Christian Potholm, *The Theory and Practice of African Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1988) 147.

³⁶ <http://africanelections.tripod.com/bf.html>

³⁷ “Nouvelles émeutes dans le Sud du Burkina Faso,”
<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20110430093749/>

2008, which President Idriss Déby averted thanks to France and Libya.³⁸ As such, African political instability, corruption problems, the matter of poverty, in short, the “crises of underdevelopment,” as Kieh argues, cannot be overcome “unless the neocolonial state is deconstructed, rethought, and democratically reconstituted.”³⁹

Another key challenge for African writers (mentioned earlier in relation to Spivak and the subaltern), who write in French, English or other languages, is the issue of using an alien language, that is, the language of colonizer. This linguistic issue renders the task quite difficult on their part. They must translate the aim and intent of the writer’s native language and culture into the new language, culture, and environment. As in any translation, sometimes the intention of the main or original story remains unclear to the audience, as some aspects may become lost in translation. For Ngugi,

The most obvious problem is one of language. The fact that you are writing in a foreign language means that you are operating in foreign cultural framework. This often leads African writers standing as referees between the common man and the elite.⁴⁰

The use or choice of language thus has strong political implications, demanding that the writer moves between several worlds and cultural frames.

With the linguistic issue, comes that of the audience. In Chad, for instance, with a high rate of illiteracy and a higher percentage of rural population, the writer’s work is directed toward an urban audience, or even an outsider audience. This

³⁸ “Fiche pays: Chronologie Tchad” in http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Chronologie-pays_84_Tchad

³⁹ Kieh 15.

⁴⁰ Ngugi, qtd in Reinhard Sander, Bernth Lindfors & Lynette Cintrón *Ngugi Wa Thiong’o Speaks: Interviews with the Kenyan Writer* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2006) 35.

demographic issue challenges and complicates the goal of much writing, which often seeks communication with the people. Because so many cannot read what is primarily addressed to them, their conditions may remain unaffected, distanced from the insights of literary works. This disconnect between the writer and the people remains a great challenge for Chad and Africa. It is hoped that Chad might see the wider publication of all literary genres, and that it might also see the wider production of plays and dramatic works.

Many African writers are also challenged by discursive practices, by the policies of academic and literary institutions. As a discipline imposed by Europe, publication practices often limit African writers, who are not necessarily trained to meet the technical requirements for publication. Coming from a culture that not only recognizes oral tradition but also values it, many Africans also find it difficult to effectively translate this oral work into written forms. As a result, some works that might meet the technical demands (forms) are published, yet they may lose something quintessential in content; other important *oeuvres* might fail to meet the publishing criteria and are therefore rejected, the loss being a detriment to the community. Different scholarly standards may also come into play. Cheikh Anta Diop experienced this situation in 1951 with the rejection of his dissertation “The African origin of civilization: myth or reality” by his dissertation committee at the Sorbonne, in France, probably because it argued that the “Egypt of the Pharaohs was

an African civilization.”⁴¹ The rejection of the research became controversial, however four years later, in 1955 the publishing company *Présence Africaine* printed the rejected work, which ironically turned to be the bedside book for most African scholars.

The lack of local printing presses and publication houses contribute to the already many problems faced by African writers. In Chad, for instance, there was no publication house in the country prior to the new millennium. This lack of opportunity means that local writers must publish their works outside the country-- a process that can lead to many difficulties and great hassle. Even now, local publishing can be expensive for the writer, beyond most writers’ means. Thus, many local writers keep drafts of their works in their drawers, unseen by the wider world. This experience is confirmed by the playwright Danaï, who had trouble placing his first play *La malédiction*: “After unsuccessful trial for submission in 1989 of my manuscript to RFI’s Theatre Contest, I kept it in my drawer.”⁴² Subsequent publication of Danaï’s play only came when he moved out of the country. His experience, however, indicates the general lack of opportunity and support for new writers, who too often find their works hidden in drawers rather than published for wider readership.

The economic development of a nation, and general opportunities for a writer, often depend on the political stability of that nation. And since most African

⁴¹ http://worldafropedia.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cheikh_Anta_Diop

⁴² <http://ialtchad.com/interdanai.htm>

countries have spent many years in armed conflict, leading to the negative results of political corruption, nepotism, and criminal impunity, the environment for the development of art and writing has been disadvantageous. In such situations, writing can become threatening, the enemy of power, and that is why so many writers are censored or detained, sometimes without trial. Ngugi and Soyinka are two who illustrate this point. Chad's recent past has had particular difficulties. The country has been at war for four decades, and is hardly known for anything else but war. For many, the simple mention of Chad brings a sense of alarm and apprehension. However, Chad is not alone in this respect. Many other African nations unfortunately find themselves in the same "ship of fools,"⁴³ as Michel Foucault would maintain, where reason and security are difficult to find.

5. Artificial National Boundary and Challenge of National Identity

The notions of nation, nationalism, and identity are particularly relevant to the people of Africa because the coherence of their countries is one of the great challenges today. Any discussion of nation and nationalism is highlighted by the fact that African nations are but artificial creations of six western countries that met in Berlin in 1884-1885. In reality, Africa is richly diverse. Apart from Asia, which speaks 2,197 languages,⁴⁴ Africa has more spoken languages than any other continent, with approximately 2000 languages and dialects.⁴⁵ Because of the

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988) 7.

⁴⁴ Stephen R. Anderson, "How Many Languages Are There in the World?"
<http://www.lsadc.org/info/ling-faqs-howmany.cfm>

⁴⁵ <http://www.wisegeek.com/how-many-languages-are-spoken-in-africa.htm>

arbitrary division of the land into countries, many people of similar cultural backgrounds find themselves in two different countries, and are often made to fight each other according to the mood of their leaders and western backers. How do we then come to terms with such issues--of diversity and arbitrary divisions--and gear our nations toward peace and development?

The Chadian playwrights under study, namely Danaï, Naïndouba, and Kodbaye, seem to agree with Benedict Anderson in that "nationality or nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind,"⁴⁶ or "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members."⁴⁷ The "nation," Anderson continues, is "imagined as both limited and sovereign."⁴⁸ For him, it is "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."⁴⁹ Put otherwise, the nation ought to be thought of in terms of kinship, of members sharing in a particular notion of community. Even if a country comes into being through an arbitrary or enforced process, its inhabitants may find and develop commonalities and commitments, ways to sustain their imagined relation.

For this kind of community, and nation, to take place, Chadian playwrights imply that leaders should, among other things, create an open society and foster

⁴⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (revised ed.) (New York: Verso, 2003) 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 5

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 6

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 7

bonds of belonging. They should also be open to criticism. When Naïndouba writes in French a play that deals with South African discrimination, he is in a way speaking to and directing criticism at the Chadian leaders. In his own country, he cannot communicate freely, so he writes with indirection, denouncing the ills that have befallen the South Africans (in French language). These writers, in short, seek a common culture available to all Chadians, irrespective of their origin, gender, or creed.

Though Wole Soyinka voices pessimism about the notion of “nation” and “nationalism,” he however believes it is not impossible to have viable countries. The fact of the matter is that African leaders have done little, if not nothing toward disseminating positive notions of national belonging in their citizens; “A fish rots from the head down,” one would be tempted to say, regarding the ineffectiveness of African leadership. Soyinka expresses suspicion; for him, “even geographical coherence within any arbitrarily elected measure of contemporaneity, does not appear to offer any certitudes”⁵⁰ of the nation. That point acknowledged, the hope remains. It will rather take sacrifice to change things, to make people believe in the unseen realm of an imagined community. Nation and nationalism are too abstract of concepts and therefore alien to Africa. Soyinka’s questions--“when *is* a nation?”⁵¹--and “when are all the conditions present that make a nation?”⁵² remain difficult to answer, even fifteen years later, that is, in this new millennium. Notwithstanding

⁵⁰ Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 21

⁵² *Ibid.* 21.

such difficulties, the Chadian playwrights purport to present a vision that challenges the present, the corruptions, and deficiencies, to offer a new understanding of a viable nation.

6. Other Challenges Particular to African Writers

In addition to the technical, political, economic, and financial challenges faced by African writers, it is important to mention the physical and mental trauma to which they are subjected. Like other artists in dictatorial regimes, Chadian and African dramatists face daunting problems in their careers. Though the personal will, stamina, and passion might be available to the writer, the social and political environment do not often warrant, reward, or inspire creativity. Yet, African dramatists willingly take up the challenge and consciously become political critics, as they help us “voir la hideur du monde, le chaos dans lequel est plongée l’Afrique” (to see the repugnance of the world, the chaos in which Africa is plunged).⁵³ Danaï for example declares:

L’écrivain adéquat est celui qui produit un langage libéré du carcan des discours aliénants et libéré de sa servilité à reproduire béatement le réel. Il doit donc raconter le réel en y enjoignant une part de fabulation à la fois thématique et rhématique (parce que) le livre est un vecteur d’unité et de progrès

(The committed writer is one who produces a language freed from the shackles of alienating speeches and freed from his subservience to complacently reproduce the real. He must therefore recount the actual by romanticizing both the thematic and the rhematic (because) the book is a vector of unity and progress).⁵⁴

⁵³ Danaï 89.

⁵⁴ Danaï 12, 42.

In many African countries today, such issues continue to challenge African writers, especially those in Chad, who are still struggling to make ends meet. The cost of living, the lack of basic social amenities, and the wide instances of injustice are just a few problems that are endemic to Chad. It is thus not surprising that many Chadians who write and produce artworks are now living outside of Chad. "*La littérature tchadienne est fille de l'exil de ses fils*" (Chadian literature is the daughter of her exiled children),⁵⁵ observes the playwright Danaï. Given that so many writers must live abroad, and that they welcome the encounter with different cultures and nationalities, one can see that the selected playwrights of this dissertation have been strongly affected by the experience of hybridity, and that their works may be understood as products of hybridity. They use *le métissage culturel* as a springboard to succeed in their goal of creating a better Chad. For them, the blending of the past and the present will suffice to birth a new Chad, a new Africa (and why not a new world?). It is therefore against the backdrop of these many problems and challenges that my study will examine the works of the three Chadian playwrights, how these writers have addressed these problems in their own lives and works--how their work seeks to move beyond these problems, to envision a better Chad for the future.

Three Phases of Chadian Writing

As a way of illustrating the aims and methods of these current writers in Chad, it is helpful to place them in an historical context, that is, to see them in

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 95.

relation to prior generations of African writers, who often had different goals and different attitudes toward Europe. These writers also had different regard for the past, for the idea of Africa, and a different notion of what would be the best course for Africa's future. Concerning Chadian literature, one can divide it into roughly three phases of writers, starting from 1962 and continuing to the present. This history reveals Chad as one of the newest on the African national literature scenes, according to Ahmed Taboye:

La colonisation a commencé tardivement au Tchad qui n'est devenu territoire français qu'entre 1900 et 1920. Il a fallu encore une vingtaine d'années pour que s'implantent des écoles qui vont scolariser les petits Tchadiens dans la langue de Voltaire et de Jaurès

[Colonization began late in Chad, which became part of French territory only between 1900 and 1920. It took about another twenty years for schools to be implanted before young Chadians began to learn the language of Voltaire and Jaurès].⁵⁶

Continuing in the same order, Taboye mentioned that "*la littérature écrite en français au Tchad est très récente. C'est une littérature jeune, et en plein essor*" (literature written in French in Chad is very recent. It is a young and growing literature).⁵⁷

The first phase of Chadian writers covers the period between 1962 and 1980. The second phase on the other hand spreads from the eighties to the nineties, and the last continues from the nineties to the present. While the first phase began with Bebnoné Palou, Joseph Brahim Seid, Antoine Bangui, etc., it is interesting to note

⁵⁶ Ahmed Taboye, "Littérature à découvrir: Chronique de la naissance d'une littérature" MFI HEBDO: Culture Société of 12/05/2003, <http://www.rfi.fr/fichiers/mfi/culturesociete/1111.asp>

⁵⁷ Taboye, *Panorama critique de la littérature tchadienne* (N'Djaména: Centre Al-Mouna, 2003) 13.

that most of the themes developed in their works might be summed up as “*la période de collecte ou de réécriture des texts de l’oralité (contes, légendes)*” (the collection period or the period of rewriting of oral texts (storytelling, legends)).⁵⁸ The second phase coincided with “*la période des concours littéraires organisés par RFI [Théâtre et nouvelle]*” (the period of Inter Literary Contests by RFI (theatre and storytelling)).⁵⁹ The playwrights belonging to this phase are Maoundoé Naïndouba, Baba Moustapha, Djékéry Nétonon, etc. Finally, the third phase, which includes Koulsy Lamko, Nimrod Bena Djangrang, Ahmed Taboye, Ouaga-Ballé Danaï, and Frank Kodbaye among others, represents a period that uses both traditional and modern themes to envision a better future of their country. Compared to the modern history of other African writers, though, these Chadian writers appear late on the literary scene and seem to work in isolation. Still, they have helped not only to draw the government’s attention to the plight of the public, but also to expose the youth to literature, and to represent and market the country before the wider world.

1. African Culture and the Aims of First-Generation Writers

Throughout its history, Africa has been renowned for its oral traditions, especially in respect to performance and culture. Myths and stories were transmitted by word of mouth, and special schools were set up for training young neophytes, called bards or griots, similar to Greek rhapsodies or Noh actors. Functioning as a kind of living archive (of secret collections), Chadian bards served

⁵⁸ Danaï, “Interviews” in <http://ialtchad.com/interdanai.htm>

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

as repositories of knowledge, of public announcements and communications. Both entertainers and announcers they disseminate information to the public, both locally and far away, with techniques that included the beating of drums and the blowing of horns; they would travel either by foot or on horse.

Rather than having no culture, as Europe assumed, revealing its preoccupation with written and documented artifacts, Africa can boast a rich culture of poetry and performance; though it is important to acknowledge that African culture primarily concerns oral traditions and its handed-down values. The preservation of this culture was mnemonic and its transmission from generation to generation was by word of mouth. This African emphasis on the spoken work is emphasized in Bâ's question: "*La parole n'est-elle pas, de toute façon, mère de l'écrit, et ce dernier n'est-il pas autre chose qu'une sorte de photographie du savoir et de la pensée humaine?*" (Is speech not, anyway, the mother of writing and the latter nothing else but kind of photography of human thought)?⁶⁰

Paula Gray recognizes the importance of the oral tradition and sees it as a component of a wider cultural appreciation "of good literature, music, art, and food."⁶¹ Edward B. Tylor correctly views culture as wider phenomenon, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."⁶² In this

⁶⁰ Amadou Touré et Ntji Idriss Mariko, *Amadou Hampâté Bâ, homme de science et de sagesse: mélanges pour le centième anniversaire de sa naissance* (Bamako : Khartala, 2005) 303.

⁶¹ http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture_1.htm

⁶² Lowie, qtd in Edward B. Tylor, *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 19.2 (Apr.-Jun., 1917): 263.

light, Africa's lack of written cultural forms does not diminish the richness of its history. This point is affirmed by Bâ, who stated:

Le fait pour l'Afrique de ne pas avoir de la littérature écrite ne saurait donc signifier qu'elle n'a ni passé ni connaissance . . . « L'écriture est une chose et la connaissance en est une autre. L'écriture est une photographie de la connaissance, mais ce n'est pas la connaissance elle-même. La connaissance est une lumière qui est dans l'homme. C'est le patrimoine qui se compose de tout ce que les ancêtres ont pu connaître. Ce qu'ils nous communiquent sous forme séminale, tout comme le potentiel d'un baobab est contenu dans la graine

(The fact of not having a (written) literature does not prevent Africa from having a past and knowledge . . . "Writing is one thing and knowledge is another thing. Writing is a photograph of knowledge, but it is not knowledge itself. Knowledge is a light, which is in man. It is the heritage that consists of everything the ancestors have been able to know. This they transmit to us in seminal form, just as the potential for a baobab tree is contained in its seed").⁶³

Confrontation with the colonial attitudes of Europe posed a problem to African writers who wrote in the fifties and sixties. The downgrading of African culture forced African intellectuals and literary artists to engage in the revalorization of their homeland. Many difficult questions arose for these figures, including the basic question--how do we champion an African culture, a non-literary culture, in the form of writing?

Countering the views of French imperialism, notably its vilification of African heritage, the first African and Caribbean students in France, who also happened to be the "first-generation" writers, felt impelled to respond to such abuse by advocating the negritude movement. *Les Pères de la Négritude*, as fondly called,

⁶³ Amadou Hampaté Bâ, *Aspects de la civilisation africaine: personne, culture, religion* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1972) 22.

were Léon Gontran Damas,⁶⁴ Léopold Sédar Senghor,⁶⁵ and Aimé Césaire,⁶⁶ then students in France. From its inception in the thirties to late 1950s, the movement was successful in its objectives. In broad terms, negritude represented an “aesthetic and ideological movement aiming at affirming the independent nature, quality, and validity of Black culture.”⁶⁷ The chief objectives of the movement included the following:

- a. Artistic enunciation of African cultural values;
- b. Romantic evocation of an African heroic past;
- c. Denunciation of the ills of colonialism; and
- d. Criticism of the hallmark of occidental civilization such as elitism, capitalism . . .⁶⁸

These objectives can be summed up as “a purposeful perspective aimed not only at ‘returning’ to and reclaiming Africa, but perhaps more importantly, consciously creating an authentic African or black self.”⁶⁹ In a word, the movement sought witness, one that seeks to be a revelation and a message. These writers desired the revelation of an African reality, and the sharing of the Negro people’s message with other peoples of the world.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ A French Guyanan born in 1912 and died in 1978.

⁶⁵ A Senegalese first president born in 1913 and died in 2001.

⁶⁶ A Martinican born in 1913 and died in 2008.

⁶⁷ <http://www.answers.com/topic/negritude>

⁶⁸ “Negritude: A Historical Etiology.”

<http://www.nigerdeltadirectory.com/websiteseminars/negritude.html>

⁶⁹ Reiland Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory: Reconstructing the Black Radical Tradition, from W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James to Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral* (London: Lexington Books, 2009) 121

⁷⁰ Belinda Elizabeth Jack, *Negritude and Literary Criticism: the History and Theory of “Negro-African” Literature in French*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996) 128.

Reflecting these common goals of negritude, Césaire described the movement as a means to represent voiceless people. He declared: “*Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir*” (my mouth will be the mouth of the misfortunes that have no mouth, my voice, the freedom of those who sunk in the dungeon of despair).⁷¹ Senghor believed that “Negritude” represented “the crossroads of giving and receiving,”⁷² while his poem “Joal”⁷³ demonstrated his powerful mixed feelings about Africa, when he was studying in Europe at the time.

Through their movement, the founders of negritude laid foundations that contributed, along with the efforts of other African writers and literary artists, to the decolonization of Africa. In seeking this end, these figures used a very realistic literary style of writing (they also showed a fondness for Marxist ideas). However, like many other revolutionary movements, negritude started to dwindle in early sixties, as many of its objectives had been achieved. Yet, on its ashes, other works would continue to shoot up, denouncing the neo-colonialists and the nouveaux riches.

2. The Aims and Ideas of Second-Generation Writers

This generation of writers differed from the previous one in both the form and content of their works. It may be seen as a transitional period between the old and the new. For instance, they dealt with such themes as colonialism, the

⁷¹ Jeannie Suk, *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing: Césaire, Glissant, Condé* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 44.

⁷² Jack 127.

⁷³ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Poésie complète*, (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2007) 57.

generation gap, cultural contact and conflict, the European's settlement in Africa, the expropriation of land in exchange for the Bible, etc. In their works, one hears the cry of a society. This society, they believed, whose culture was once stable, peaceful, and autonomous, was suddenly brought into contact with a new system, a new approach that brought questions to the relative value and merits of what existed before. While their predecessors focused mostly on the revalorization of the "beautiful Africa," the second-generation writers directed their struggles toward the decolonization of Africa and against the implantation of new African regimes and the nouveaux riches, who replicated the outlooks of European sycophants who preceded them. Some of the second-generation writers include Frantz Fanon,⁷⁴ Camara Laye,⁷⁵ Cheik Hamidou Kane,⁷⁶ Chinua Achebe,⁷⁷ Wole Soyinka,⁷⁸ and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.⁷⁹

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*⁸⁰ (written in English with translations in over 50 languages) serves as a strong example of this transitional phase in African writing. The novel focuses on the protagonist Okonkwo and his failure to move from the old tradition he knows and values to the new one that he doubts and questions. These values here depicted in the Igbo society represent three eras, the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Prior to colonization, according to the

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon was an Algerian who lived from 1925 to 1961.

⁷⁵ Camara Laye was from Guinea Conakry. He was born in 1928 and passed away at the age of 52, in 1980).

⁷⁶ Another Senegalese who lived from 1928 till present.

⁷⁷ Nigerian: 1930-present.

⁷⁸ Another Nigerian: 1935...

⁷⁹ Kenyan: 1938...

⁸⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Astor-Honor, Inc, 1959) 3.

novelist, people earned titles and honors through hard labor. Likewise, a man's fame and reputation were measured by the size of his family and the number of his barns-
-the bigger the family (wives and children), the better off and better respected that family. Society compared a man without title to an *agbala* or a woman. A man could earn respect within his own community as well as beyond. Okonkwo, as an illustration, "was well known throughout the nine villages."⁸¹ People knew famous men by word of mouth, word passed from one town to another, to the point that each town would offer their daughters in marriage to that man. The strategy served social cohesion, sparing weaker and smaller towns from troubles (in case of battles), and contributed to the power of traditional local chiefs and kings (who had many wives and children).

The theme of cultural clash echoes in many writings of the second-generation writers. According to Tijan Sallah, the plot of *Things Fall Apart* tells "a story of the family struggling with internal and external forces, the forces of colonialism."⁸² These forces affect the colonized, presenting the dilemma of whether to accept or refuse encounter with Europe. It is not uncommon for one to be apprehensive of a stranger, and Achebe's grandmother was no exception. That is why she refused to join the new (Christian) religion. She went so far to justify herself as to compare their singing to "funeral"⁸³ songs.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 3

⁸² Tijan Sallah in <http://www.booktv.org/program.aspx?ProgramId=9269&SectionName=&PlayMedia=Yes>

⁸³ *Ibid.*

The “struggles,” “apprehensions,” and “fears” of the *other* have all contributed in some way to the collapse of Africa. Prior to colonization, people lived in communities, in *primat du groupe*, where one’s existence depended on others. These community-based cultures and traditions experienced conflict with new beliefs. The synergy of these traditional communities was eroded by new concepts and approaches--like individualism and capitalism, to name a few. Consequently, only those who befriended the newcomer and betrayed their own people could succeed; unfortunately, Okonkwo did not comprehend the need for such adjustment and compromise until his death.

In sum, Achebe’s novel represents the three eras of African history. The first part depicts the Igbo (African) society before colonization, where people lived in close-knit communities. In this order, one man’s joy is a cause for celebration by the whole, just as one family’s misfortune calls for communal sorrow. The second part of the novel corresponds to Africa’s transitional period, the time of colonization when Africans weighed the changes brought about by the new settlers. It was during this time that Okonkwo was banished from his village to his mother’s town because he accidentally shot a little girl during a funeral (such a crime demanded a seven-year retreat to the mother’s village, according to the Igbo tradition). Finally, the third part of the novel corresponds to the post-independence era, a period that brought many tumultuous changes to Africa. This was the time of Okonkwo’s homecoming, when he returned after seven years, noting the stark changes. The white man had settled in his Igbo community. Some of his own people converted to

Christianity. Worse, one of them changed his name to Enoch. The title of the novel in fact drew from the dislocated aspect of this last period. Okonkwo observes:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.⁸⁴

The dominant focus of the “second-generation” African writers was on cultural clash and conflict. They sought to condemn and expose the colonial legacy and domination of the European settlement in Africa, the establishment of colonial administration, and notably the Christian religion. These writers felt that their people had been left without roots, that their heritage and their land had been exchanged for the Bible and Western civilization. Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure* deals with such issues in a most illustrative manner, describing a story of an African society stricken and transformed by colonization.

The conflicting themes and sometimes difficult collaboration between Europe and Africa, as Kole Omotoso puts it, involved a basic misperception, as the settlers undertook a fundamental act of misrepresentation. Though Europeans arrived in Africa as missionaries, their real mission was the conquest of Africa for their kings and queens.⁸⁵ Omotoso elaborates on this European project:

They came as administrators, teachers and engineers . . . Their histories, their antecedents, their ancient backgrounds of primitivism and pre-Christianity did not accompany them. They came as if they

⁸⁴ Achebe 152.

⁸⁵ Kole Omotoso, “Concept of History and Theatre in Africa” *A History of Theatre in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 5-6

had always been Christians, as if they were always teachers, as if they were always the way they appeared in our towns and forests.⁸⁶

As seen in Achebe's work, the settler's "expertise" and "trickery" soon attracted some natives to their camp, contributing to the erosion of local culture. The novel depicts the external forces that destroyed Okonkwo; his failure and subsequent suicide signify the downfall of African traditional values. Second-generation writers thus highlighted the dangers of colonization, and exposed the missionaries' hypocrisy before the eyes of their readers.

The "old generation" writers, whether belonging to the first or second group, dreamt of their nostalgic Africa. One finds this tendency in Laye's novel *African Child*, where snakes and human beings share the world and live in harmony,⁸⁷ one that colonization would later destroy. Similarly, Senghor preached "his own strong passion for African culture."⁸⁸ By recounting these stories, African writers sought to prove European world wrong, especially on what they thought about Africa.

According to Achebe

African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity that they must now regain . . . The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Camara Laye, *L'enfant noir* (Paris: Plon, c1953) 1.

⁸⁸ http://www.beingblue.com/writing/essays/2000.05.12_senghor.php

⁸⁹ Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," <http://courses.wcupa.edu/fletcher/afrwritr.htm>.

3. The Aims and Ideas of Third-Generation Writers (Advancing Hybridity)

The “third-generation” African writers have not distanced themselves from the past or the present, but rather use their artistry to respond to both as they look to the future. Most importantly, they have attacked the ills and vices of the post-independence leaders. As committed writers, in the estimation of Shatto Arthur Gakwandi, they have “looked into the past to see whether it has any lessons to offer the present . . . (and) look into the future because of the implied faith into the ability of a people to change their history”⁹⁰ for the best. Unlike the older generations, they however find themselves in a conflicted position: they do not simply wish to go back to the old African ways, but they also recognize problems with Western influence and domination. They therefore focus on the birth pangs of their new African society by blending the elements of the past (tradition and colonization) with concerns of the present (political corruption, legal impunity, civil conflict, injustice, etc.) in order to beget a better future (hybridity). These writers include Danaï, Naïndouba, and Kodbaye, in short, the ones selected for the purpose of this project.

Like the rest of Africa, Chad’s history, from the pre-colonial to the present, has witnessed great change and upheaval. While Chad’s fifty years of independence makes it a relatively young country in relation to other nations of the world, Chad needs to encourage moves toward greater change and progress. Unfortunately, many of Chad’s leaders seek to maintain a status quo of corruption, poverty, and

⁹⁰ Shatto Arthur Gakwandi, *The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa* (New York: Heinemann, 1982) 108.

injustice. In sum, Chad needs to re-imagine its present and future. The country's leaders should seek, as the writers noted above, a hybrid condition where the best of Africa and the best of Europe may merge. Such a project would include not only the decolonization of Africa, but also the "decolonization of the mind," as Ngugi would say. Current leaders need to connect with the people, with present realities. In eyes of Ousmane Sembène, those in power who exploit and subjugate others are in need of inner change: "it isn't those who are taken by force, put in chains and sold as slaves who are real slaves: it is those who will accept it, morally and physically."⁹¹ Chad in its present state would benefit from a theatre of the oppressed, as advanced by Augusto Boal,⁹² where the leaders and the downtrodden of society could work together for a more just and prosperous nation.

The younger writers of today have experienced a different world from that of their predecessors, because of their more intimate knowledge of foreign countries and their facility with new global technologies. This greater sense of the world at large must be a positive aspect in helping to shape Chad and the new Africa. Whether these writers live and produce their literary works outside or inside the country, they remain connected to and in sympathy with the populace. In addition, because of their desire to see an emergent people, they regard hybridity as more of an accepted notion, as opposed to the views of earlier writers. These writers inhabit a newer perspective; they demonstrate frustration with dysfunction and current

⁹¹ Ousmane Sembène, *Les bouts de bois de Dieu : Banty mam Yall* (Paris: *Le Libre contemporain*, 1989, c1960) 20.

⁹² Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (New York: Urizen Books, 1979).

corruption and, in criticizing such ills, put forward a more complex and enlightened vision of what Chad can be.

The Definition of Hybridity

1. Hybridity According to Homi Bhabha

The concept of hybridity is very important to this study and has assumed a prominent status in postcolonial studies. Though the term and its application have brought much discussion, it offers a significant insight into the current situation of Chad and the task to which Chadian writers have set themselves. It is useful to clarify the term, to understand the background of Homi Bhabha, its chief advocate, and to examine aspects of hybridity that have brought both confirmation and criticism.

Professor of English and American Literature and Language, and Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University, Homi Bhabha has played a tremendous role in shaping contemporary post-colonial studies. One of his greatest contributions involves the devising of new fields and conceptualizations--hybridity being a notable example. For Bhabha, hybridity is the "emergence of new cultural forms from multiculturalism," or, as Neal Ascherson quoted Tom Nairn, hybridity is "the acceptance of irrevocable mixture as starting-point, rather than as a problem."⁹³ It is a consequence of the ways in which the "colonized peoples have

⁹³ Neal Ascherson, "From multiculturalism to where?" http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-multiculturalism/article_2052.jsp of 18 August 2004

resisted, contested, and adapted to colonial regimes.”⁹⁴ In other words, hybridity demonstrates the ways in which the colonized have both resisted and accommodated the power of the colonizer.

Bhabha’s own life story informs his theory. Born to a family of Persian migrants in 1949,⁹⁵ he grew up in Mumbai, India, where he graduated from the Jesuit St. Mary’s School in 1968. After gaining a B.A. from India’s Elphinstone College, he moved to Oxford, England, where he earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in English Literature.⁹⁶ Clearly, Bhabha’s early years gave him insight into the operations that occur between cultures and how cultures compete for power and authority. His intellectual concerns parallel those of the famous middle-eastern scholar Edward Said, whose landmark work *Orientalism* challenged Western perceptions of eastern cultures.

Bhabha sees hybridity as “in-between spaces” that “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood--singular or communal--that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”⁹⁷ In short, hybridity offers a fluid playing space where old and new identities can coexist in a form of mutual critique. Bhabha gives special attention to those who mediate between positions;

Parsis were the middle persons between various Indian communities and the British . . . they participated in the emergence of India's

⁹⁴ Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 3.

⁹⁵ David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 1.

⁹⁶ <http://www.scope.at/index.phtml?viewId=142&relId=2>

⁹⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 2.

urbanization and helped in developing commercial, mercantile, and professional infrastructures in the metropolitan areas. They were captains of industry, medical moguls, and honest clerks.⁹⁸

Bhaba gives focus to those who can work “in-between,” who can adapt to and alter different cultural traditions. Hybridity speaks to an ever-changing meaning in regards to cultural exchange and expression, especially in post-colonial Africa. In what Homi Bhabha calls the “Third Space of Enunciation,” he argues that the colonizer and the colonized have an interdependent relationship with one another. This concept challenges the view that cultures are singular entities that cannot be influenced by others, including the oppressed majority and the minority classes, as in Africa’s case.⁹⁹ The third space that Bhabha refers to offers the possibility of creating a cultural hybridity that transcends preconceived notions of political and social order. In this light, there is room for negotiation and change, freedom from idealized or long-held political, linguistic, and cultural paradigms that have had a stronghold on societies. A new perspective may be offered, as people may see social situations from new and different angles. One example is the way that Third World spectators might view the works of Shakespeare.

In his examination of *The Tempest*’s Caliban, Paulus Sarwoto writes:

Caliban (that) symbolized the Third World as imagined by Europe to justify colonialism . . . in Third World countries, this character has developed into a positive symbol of the Third World, a view that

⁹⁸ W.J.T. Mitchell, “Translator translated: Interview with Cultural Theorist Homi Bhabha” *Artforum* 33.7 (March, 1995) 80-84.

⁹⁹ Bill Ashcroft *et al.*, eds. *The Post-Colonial Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995).

highlights the implacable spirit of Caliban against Prospero's subjugation.¹⁰⁰

Here Shakespeare's text becomes a site of negotiation and play, used by the colonized to challenge and speak back to the colonizer.

Echoing the concerns and interests of Homi Bhabha, the selected Chadian authors under study here believe that the improvement of Chad's society depends on hybridity. In this vein, besides advocating an African and Western cultural blend, they bring together the past and present in order to "imagine" or "refashion" a positive and productive vision of Africa. Contrary to the novelist Achebe, who believes the European "has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart,"¹⁰¹ the playwrights under study seem to agree with the fact that healing a wound requires dressing. For a successful modern Africa, they believe, Africans need to take the good from both Europe and Africa, from the past and the present, while at the same time denouncing the limitations and drawbacks of each. It is only then that something positive can emerge. Their vision of a post-colonial Chad is the one that does not revert to tribal patterns but sees a progressive and democratic future. In *La malédiction*¹⁰² for example, Ouaga-Ballé Danaï makes it clear that there is no worse enemy outside of us and that only the sky is our limit. Success or failure depends on us. We should check our tendency to condemn the other and rather look for new possibilities and practical solutions. Danaï writes:

¹⁰⁰ Paulus Sarwoto, "The Figuration of Caliban in The Constellation of Postcolonial Theory" (MA Thesis), http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04122004-144735/unrestricted/Sarwoto_thesis.pdf 1.

¹⁰¹ Achebe 176.

¹⁰² Danaï *La malédiction*.

*Le Blanc dit que ma race est maudite
Le Noir a dit que le pauvre est maudit
Mon village a dit que ma famille est maudite
Et nous l'avons toujours accepté
Nous avons toujours cru que La malédiction était congénitale*

...

*Nous sommes tous maudits et par conséquent il n'y a pas de maudits
Blancs, Jaunes, Rouges, Noirs, nous sommes tous maudits.*

(The White man says my race is cursed
The Black man says the poor is cursed
My village says my family is cursed
And we have always accepted it
We have always believed that curse was inborn

...

We are all cursed and consequently, no one is cursed
White, Yellow, Red, Black, we are all cursed.)¹⁰³

For Danaï, Chad must progress beyond the limitation of the curse and must seek new patterns of being.

2. Critiques of Hybridity

Until recently, I did not see myself as a hybrid individual or product, or a victim of hybridity. In rethinking myself as I straddle between the various “persons” that I am, one question keeps coming to my mind: Who indeed am I? What and where is my space? My own questioning in a sense plays out the pros and cons of hybridity, as the term can offer a sense of liberation and cooperation, but also a feeling of loss and denial. I also myself struggle with the choice of language I use, as I spoke *Ngambaye* in my family but have been educated in both French and English.

Anjali Prabhu in fact argues that “the hybrid is a colonial concept,”¹⁰⁴ one that may present an “optimistic view of the effects of capitalism.”¹⁰⁵ Clearly, Bhabha’s

¹⁰³ Danaï, 63-4.

work has drawn different critical responses (which challenge me to consider my own experience and identity).

While Prabhu may voice certain reservations, she does articulate positive implications for Bhabha's concept:

Hybridity is a seductive idea (that) can lead us out of various constraints in conceiving agency. In its most politically articulated guises, hybridity is believed to reveal, or even provide, a politics of liberation for the subaltern constituencies in whose name postcolonial studies as a discipline emerged.¹⁰⁶

A positive take on the term is also evident in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, which commends "the mutuality of the process"¹⁰⁷ in hybridity. According to Bill Ashcroft,

Hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth.¹⁰⁸

Other scholars, however, have noted questionable aspects in the use of hybridity. Robert Young has observed that how "hybridity was influential in imperial and colonial discourse in giving damaging reports on the union of different races (because) at the turn of the century, hybridity had become a colonialist discourse of racism."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects*, (New York: State University of NY Press) xii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar, eds., *Planet TV: a Global Television Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2003) 162.

¹⁰⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 183.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Young, qtd. in Elizabeth Laragay, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/51393081/hybridity>

Against those who view Bhabha's thinking as a positive move toward solving postcolonial issues, scholars such as Jason Allen Snart notes its negativity. "The concept of the hybrid," he argues, "can sometime connote the negative sense of identity-erasing assimilation in popular culture."¹¹⁰ Likewise, in line with Robert Young, Elizabeth Laragy reiterates the suspect aspect of hybridity. For her, "at the turn of the century, 'hybridity' had become part of a colonialist discourse of racism."¹¹¹

Even though Bhabha's concept has been challenged on some fronts, my study finds the term useful and productive. If we view hybridity in a generous sense, as "fusion without loss,"¹¹² then this way of thinking, when applied in any cultural, literary, economic, or political aspect of life, can negotiate deep-rooted problems and help move toward a better future. In a simple sense, hybridity takes from different parts without loss to any one part.

In relating Bhabha's concept to Chadian writers, one notes many instances of hybridity. These writers believe in Western democracy (see Kodbaye's protagonist Manto); traditional outlooks where the youth and women have no say should make way for freedom of choice and social inclusion. Likewise, in education, scholarships should be awarded based on merit. Curriculum reforms should be based on real needs and not on political or racial factors, (Danaï's and Naïndouba's plays take up

¹¹⁰ Jason Allen Snart, *Hybrid Learning: the Perils and Promise of Blending Online and Face-to-Face Instruction on Higher Education*, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010) xvi

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Laragy, "Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies: Hybridity"
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/key-concepts/Hybridity.htm>

¹¹² Jason Allen Snart, *Hybrid Learning: the Perils and Promise of Blending Online and Face-to-Face*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2010) 57

questions of equity in education). To forward a progressive vision, these writers advocate bipartisanship; they ask both traditionalists and modernists to take place in the “in-between” or the “Third Space” for pursuit of solutions. The embrace of such an attitude could engender a new Chad, one less afflicted by the ills that are now so detrimental. In an optimistic light, such an outlook would allow for the voice of all, including the “subalterns,” to be heard. Ballots would triumph over bullets. Past wrongs might be righted, with common people respected and the ruling class rehabilitated.

In accordance with Bhabha, the playwrights call on leaders with a sense of patriotism to embrace what Edouard Glissant called *l'identité-rhizome*.¹¹³ This theory rejects "*l'identité-racine*" (root-identity) in favor of "*l'identité-rhizome*" (rhizome-identify).¹¹⁴ This view challenges purities of identity (and bloodlines) and sees identity as ever changing, absorbing, and adapting. Now that the world operates as one large global village, third world countries should look for ways to engage in the new global system. The adoption of such a system will oppose the notion of original identity, or identity with unique root (a Western model), and the perception that creates oppressive and oppressed cultures. In my estimation, the playwrights under study advocate the replacement of “the monolingual concept of root-identity with the concept of the rhizome-identity, which maintains the fact of

¹¹³ Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 23.

rootedness but rejects the idea of a totalitarian root."¹¹⁵ The unique identity is simply a system where a dominant few oppress the dominated many--this is the system that must change.

If we hold that hybridity, rhizome-identity, or creolization can offer the best model for identity and community progress, it might be important for countries like Chad to develop local and national languages, in addition to the ones bequeathed by colonialism. This development should occur under no political or religious compulsion. For the attainment of a new and hybrid Chad and Africa, we should, in the manner of Creole language, grow like "a rhizome without fixed roots," yet "absolutely original" and "open to multilingual influence . . . (for) extraordinary explosion of cultures."¹¹⁶

After 51 years of independence from France, Chad still fails to develop its own local languages. As evidence, there is no single instance during which the characters in the selected plays express themselves in their native languages; they primarily speak in French. This shows that, though people belong to the same nation, they do not feel as one. The problems are creating a national language (or sense of a national self) is made more difficult by the fact that many local or tribal languages have no written form and exist only as orature. That is why they have used a borrowed language to communicate. This situation renders the call to unity

¹¹⁵ <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/glissan.htm>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/glissan.htm>

difficult. As “people without culture are a dead people,”¹¹⁷ a nation without national languages is an instable nation and suspect to ethnic vicissitudes. Developing one common language spoken in the whole country, or by the majority, would not only unify the people but edify them as well. As a cohesive, common language creates nationalism by binding people together, it also creates “imagined communities,” to borrow Anderson’s term. Sometimes, people are easily attracted to those from other countries based on pure linguistic resemblance. For instance a Chadian from the extreme north of the country, whose *lingua franca* is Arabic, may feel more at home with a Libyan or a Sudanese, who speaks the same language, as opposed to his fellow Chadian from the south who does not. Unless committed civic work is done, people living in the same country will continue to feel distanced from one another and will feel no national allegiance.

The importance of language and culture cannot be underestimated. As Angela Carter declares, “Language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation.”¹¹⁸ Although they come from different parts of the country, the playwrights under study have communicated to each other and to the population through their writing. I must admit that I myself am from the South Chad and be inclined to privilege the writers of this area as being representative of Chad as a whole (as opposed to writers from the North). However, they have used a Western form and style to convey their message, which presents a

¹¹⁷ http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-12-28/news/1992363075_1_rites-of-passage-learning-the-culture-elders

¹¹⁸ Sarah Gamble, ed., *The Fiction of Angela Carter* (London: Icon Books Ltd, 2001) 181.

complicated situation, as language can be the tool of the oppressor but also the vehicle of liberation. Yet, in adopting such means of communication, these writers have looked beyond a large part of the populace. One can wonder how many Chadians do read in Western languages, even though it may be the only alternative for the kind of work attempted by these writers. The wide lack of literacy causes many of the target audience to miss the message of these works. Such a situation argues for the implementation of a common national language, and for greater investment in public education.

Three Chadian Playwrights and Dramatizations of a New Chad

The three selected playwrights belong to a “new crop” of committed Chadian writers who seem to incorporate postcolonial theory in their works to focus on the ills that plague their society. Having all experienced exile, it is no surprise that their work addresses the needs for political reforms. Maoundoé Naïndouba, the author of *L'Etudiant de Soweto*,¹¹⁹ was born in 1948 in southern Chad. At four years of age, he experienced colonial genocide in the nearby town of Bébalem, where people were killed after rejecting the colonial candidate to chieftaincy. This bloodshed would remain indelible in his mind and would inform his literary career. Born in 1963 in Sarh, in southern Chad, Ouaga-Ballé Danaï at 16 would lose his father to a landmine - his father was a civilian during the war. Close to his father and not understanding the absurdity of war, Danaï turned to writing as an outlet and a means of expression, as evidenced in his play *La malédiction*. Journalist, legal expert, and writer residing

¹¹⁹ Maoundoé Naïndouba, *L'Etudiant de Soweto*. (Paris: Hatier, 1981).

in Switzerland, Frank Kodbaye was also born in Sarh, in 1972 in southeastern Chad. In Kodbaye's estimation, writing is "*une arme redoutable dans le processus de conscientisation de la masse populaire*" (a weapon in the process of awareness of the masses).¹²⁰ His passion for theatre goes back to his teen years, during which he attended shows to "get fresh air and to live freely, against the cruelty and oppression of the former regime."¹²¹ His play *Un vent d'Est*¹²² is a testimony to his political commitment.

With unique talent, passion, and experience that has propelled them in their writing, along with their easiness in all genres, these playwrights deserve scholarly attention. Their works have received many prestigious awards. In consort with other fellow writers, they have helped influence Chadian literature and its attention to the country's social ills, including political greed born of colonial legacy, corruption, and social injustice. These factors have contributed to the poor social conditions of the country; its unemployment, low wages for the working class, and general instability. The (re)introduction of democracy in the 1990s brought hope to Chad; however, this optimism would soon concede to skepticism. "*Ce vent de démocratie qui a balayé l'Afrique à la fin du vingtième siècle (et qui est) venu de l'Est*" (this wind of democracy which swept Africa at the end of the 20th Century [and which] came from the East),¹²³ Kodbaye would argue, proved to be a hoax. The selected playwrights believe the recurrent ills of Chad issue from the failure of

¹²⁰ Frank Kodbaye. E-mail interview. 19-22 February 2007

¹²¹ This idea is paraphrased from my email interview with Frank Kodbaye OF 02/19/2007.

¹²² Kodbaye, *Un vent d'Est* (Fribourg: Rotex, 2005).

¹²³ Kodbaye, back cover.

African democracy. Chad's populace experiences a kind of Sisyphean existence, lacking in progress or hope. After decades under dictatorial regimes, Chadians have realized that "there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor."¹²⁴ Unlike Spivak's "brown women" who were saved by "white men," the writers' "black men" continue to suffer under the indirect oppression of "white men." Their only sin is that of living in a French colony, whose soil is rich with rare resources.

Through their work, the selected authors condemn colonialism, but at the same time recognize some of its positive aspect; they nonetheless view its impact as irreversible. French contact, like the movement of democracy that came to Africa at the end of the 20th century, did bring some worthwhile elements. Notwithstanding some of the damaging aspects of colonization, it is clear that as time passes Africans have become more educated, more exposed to the outside world, and therefore can make positives out of the system that has been imposed on them. Today, for instance, organizations for human rights, independent newspapers, and political parties have become reality, and, recently with the advent of Facebook, twitter, and blogs, Africa is experiencing its connection to the wider world, which is becoming one.

However, the playwrights believe the best education and best practices of democracy come from a *jambalaya*, or a *gumbo*, a combination of cultural recipes from both Chad and Europe. This hybrid species of Chad should promote its

¹²⁴ <http://members.bellatlantic.net/~samg2/sysiphus.html>

children based on their merit and qualification, irrespective of their origins. By telling the Director of Aborigine Education that South Africa belongs to both blacks and whites, Naïndouba shows, through his protagonist, the “interdependence of coloniser (sic) and colonized.”¹²⁵ Equally important, when Danaï’s protagonist argues that that “*nous sommes tous maudits et par conséquent il n’y a pas de maudits*” (we are all cursed and therefore nobody is cursed), and Kodbaye’s hero who rejects the candidacy of the elders, the playwrights are thus “focusing on the hybridized (sic) nature of postcolonial culture as strength rather than a weakness.”¹²⁶ As their works show, these writers do not oppose traditional values, except those that are detrimental to modern development.

Through decades of senseless wars and crimes committed by the very people supposed to protect the population, many in Chad find themselves under the spells of gods and therefore become hopeless. They wait for the gods to decide their fate. Yet, Danaï, Kodbaye, and Naïndouba, reveal to their audience that those gods are based in superstition and that a belief in their influence is a pipe dream. People cannot build a society on false prophets and their prophecies. Rather, their dreams should transcend ethnic, linguistic, and religious barriers. These writers seek to inform the masses about the importance of Western education. At the same time, their message aims at informing people as to how to envision a new and a progressive social reality. Their plays issue a call for self-awareness, tolerance,

¹²⁵ <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/key-concepts/Hybridity.htm>

¹²⁶ Bill Ashcroft, qtd in Elizabeth Laragy,
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/imperial/key-concepts/Hybridity.htm>

forgiveness, truth, and reconciliation, *sine qua non* conditions for a country's true peace and development. It is a search for a productive alliance between Africa and Europe, one that, to borrow Ngugi's term, would accomplish the "decolonization of the mind."

Guiding Ideas and Scholarly Influences

In conducting this research, the study has drawn upon four different areas of scholarship: the history, culture, and politics of Africa; African writing and theatre; colonialism and postcolonial theory; and finally, nationalism. Each area has been brought into conversation with the notion of hybridity, which has served as the primary focal point for my study.

1. General Scholarship on the history, Culture, and Politics of Africa

Most scholarship on Africa has been written by Europeans or historians from the West; in short, these outsiders have written the history, culture, and politics of Africa for Africans. This phenomenon extended well into the last century, until African intellectuals were able to use the language of the colonialist to recreate and rewrite their own history. Like most storytelling, the outlook and values of the story depend on the position and interests of the tellers. Hence, most European writings about Africa were Eurocentric, that is, they gave priority to the West to the detriment of Africa, viewed as a continent without history, as Hegel, Strauss, among others, have argued. This scholarly practice prompts the interesting yet unsettling question as to why African history should have been written (and judged) according to Western standards.

Key among African scholars who not only refute the European view of African history but also prove Africa's value--rewriting its history and arguing for the value and humanity of Africa's people--include Cheikh Anta Diop (*The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*), Amadou Hampaté Bâ (*Aspects de la civilisation africaine: personne, culture, religion*), Tidiane N'Diaye "*L'Afrique, berceau de l'humanité*" ("Africa, Cradle of Humanity"), etc. These scholars and their works shed new light on Africa's history and contest the Eurocentric viewpoint. They have provided historical frames and conceptual analyses that have assisted my contextualization of Chadian playwrights.

2. General Scholarship on African Writing and Theatre

African intellectuals and literary artists such as Wole Soyinka,¹²⁷ Ahmad Taboye,¹²⁸ Koulsy Lamko,¹²⁹ Femi Euba,¹³⁰ among others, have contributed to an in-depth understanding of African writing and theatre. While it is true that Africa is one of the latest continents to develop writing--even though writing originated in Egypt--its role in human development is significant (Chadian written literature and theatre are less than fifty years old) according to Taboye.¹³¹ Soyinka on the other hand traced the emergence of human culture back through his Yoruba people of

¹²⁷ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

¹²⁸ Ahmad Taboye, *Panorama critique de la littérature tchadienne* (N'Djaména : Centre Al-Mouna, 2003).

¹²⁹ Koulsy Lamko, « *Théâtres 'du Sud': l'épineuse question du répertoire* » *Théâtres contemporains du Sud 1990-2006. Notre librairie* 162 (juin-août 2006) 6-13

¹³⁰ Femi Euba, *Poetics of the Creative Process: an Organic Practicum to Playwriting* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2005) 3.

¹³¹ Taboye 13.

Nigeria. This assertion confirms Diop's argument that Africa is indeed the cradle of humanity. According to Soyinka:

Cheikh Anta Diop and Chancellor Williams go so far as to accuse their European counterparts not only of a deliberate falsification of history (as interpreted), but of the suppression and falsification of historic evidence. Diop's re-interpretation of the evidence for the history of civilization goes so far as to question the origin of European and Northern culture and replace it in the South, in the Negro cradle.¹³²

Since a criterion that has been used to judge Africa is Eurocentric, the very definition of African writing and theatre is problematic. As to whether Africa should reject the Eurocentric view that denigrates African tradition, Lamko has wondered if theatre should be called "*Théâtre africain ou théâtres en Afrique*" (African theatre or theatres in Africa).¹³³ In his creative work, Euba has attempted to blend different opinions about drama and "each came to the conclusion that drama is about life (in terms of conflict, love, anger, hate, death, etc.)."¹³⁴ Such an outlook might suggest that we look for universalist aspects of African writing, drama, and theatre (rather than Eurocentric measures).

3. General Scholarship on Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory

Equally important in this research is the general scholarship on colonialism and postcolonial theory. This area of study has developed after the decolonization of third world colonies. Key among the figures in this field is Homi Bhabha, who believes, like the selected Chadian playwrights, that colonization is a done deal

¹³² Soyinka 107.

¹³³ Lamko 2.

¹³⁴ Femi Euba, *Poetics of the Creative Process: An Organic Practicum to Playwriting* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2005) 3.

whose effects cannot be reversed. Therefore, he urges the colonized to seize the opportunity to turn things around on their behalf. Central to this thinking is his concept of hybridity, which may be understood as a “fusion without loss,” a taking from all sides to create a “Third Space of Enunciation.” This new space is important to the current study as we see that the selected playwrights do not reject Western values but rather advocate the blending of Africa and the West.

While Bhabha’s theory of hybridity will guide this research, Gayatri Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as well is helpful in questioning whether African “subalterns” can overcome the conditions in which they live. Other scholarship on post-colonialism that has informed this study includes Simon Durang (“Literature–Nationalism’s Other? The Case for Revision”), Leela Ghandi (*Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (*The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*), Ania Loomba (*Colonialism/Postcolonialism*), Duncan Ivison (*Postcolonial Liberalism*), Pamela McCallum and Wendy Faith (*Linked Histories: Postcolonial Studies in a Globalized World*), Mary Wollstonecraft (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*), among others.

4. General Scholarship on Nationalism

The political, economic, social, and cultural development of a nation requires the development of a common identity. This aspect brings us to Benedict Anderson’s notion of nationalism (in his work *Imagined Communities*). It is an open secret that colonialism has caused untold harm to the colonized. However, given that partitioning and the establishment of new nations is now decades old in African, it is important that African countries develop a sense of solidarity. As

advocated by Anderson, and supported by the playwrights under study, it is important how that a people can come to see themselves as one nation. Only then can disparate ethnic, racial, and religious communities come together to support one leader and to advance the development of their country.

Methodology, Materials, and Organization of Data

In this project, I will primarily focus on the plays of three Chadian writers: Ouaga-Ballé Danaï (*La malédiction*), Maoundoé Naïndouba (*L'Etudiant de Soweto*), and Frank Kodbaye (*Un vent d'Est*). In addition, I will support my analysis with reviews, newspaper articles, and internet sources, etc. as they become available. I will also use internet search engines along with the index databases "Project Muse" and "Academic Search Premiere" (via LSU PAWS/Library) to locate relevant articles for incorporation in my study. My primary research will also include phone and email interviews with the playwrights under examination. It should be noted that Chadian literature is relatively young, with the first literary piece published in 1962. From 1965 until the present, Chad has gone through an almost continuous civil unrest. This political instability has affected both literary creation and scholarship. According to Bios Diallo, "*le premier mouvement littéraire tchadien a vite été happé par des contradictions ethniques et linguistiques. La guerre est devenue la principale préoccupation et nombre d'intellectuels ont été forcés à l'exil*" (Chad's first literary movement was quickly shattered by ethnic and linguistic contradictions. The war

became the main concern and many intellectuals were forced into exile).¹³⁵ Due to the effects of war, the national literary landscape has been uneven and tumultuous. Little to no critical work has been done on the authors I am examining. Of the scholarly writing that is available, no single translation in English is available.

In my approach, I will do a close reading of the primary play texts of these Chadian playwrights. With reference to supporting theoretical and critical materials, I will analyze the plays according to aspects such as plot, theme, and literary style. In chief, I will be looking at the ways in which these playwrights are guided by issues of hybridity (“fusion without loss”¹³⁶ according to Jason Allen Snart) and advocate a new postcolonial reality for Chad.

I also wish to emphasize in this study the courage and accomplishment of these writers. Despite the dangers that prevail in their country, the selected writers have jeopardized their own lives and those of loved ones to advocate social justice and equality. These ideals have proven an impetus to their literary artistry. Rejecting the romanticization of the past, criticizing the influence of colonialism, these writers seek to create a “third Space,” a compromise, or bipartisanship, where both the old and the new can contribute to each other to better the lives of their fellows in Chad and in Africa.

From the above, it is clear that no comprehensive research has been done on the selected works I will be examining. Nor does any scholarship currently exist on

¹³⁵ Bios Diallo, “Ecrire le Thad: Ahmad Taboye dresse un panorama de quarante ans de création littéraire”, <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/LIN19103criredahcte0/of10/21/2003>.

¹³⁶ Snart 57.

the question of how hybridity can contribute to the birth of a new Chad. Supporting materials are limited. Danaï's play has received only limited attention. Interviews with the playwright are few (note the important interview with Danaï in an online paper¹³⁷). Little has been published on Naïndouba, though a short interview does appear at the end of his play. There is scant material related to Kodbaye's play. Internet searches find little material on the world-wide-web. Furthermore, the plays have only been published in French. Because of this lack of translation, I am compelled to reproduce, where necessary, passages from the plays in their original French version in *italics*; I then put following my own English translation. Given the limited scholarly material that has been written on Chadian literature, and on these three playwrights in particular, my research becomes even more imperative, as this dissertation represents the first attempt to study these writers and to situate their work in a postcolonial context.

As a scholar and citizen of Chad, I should also declare my personal interest in the success of this project. Having lived in different countries, I have been overwhelmed by the degree to which Chad means different things to different people. Yet, the majority of impressions are negative. Some see that Chad by 1978 had "virtually ceased to exist as a State."¹³⁸ To others, Chad is synonymous with war, corruption, and bad governance. Other negatives follow: illiteracy, abuse, insecurity, famine, dictatorship, poverty, and crime. A 2010 "Transparency

¹³⁷ <http://www.ialtchad.com>

¹³⁸ Lemarchand 450

International” classified Chad 171 out of 178 countries studied for corruption.¹³⁹

While it is true that many of the aforementioned problems are present in Chad, as they are in other countries, I have undertaken this research with an eye toward balancing such perspective. I seek to show that it is unfair to scrutinize Chad only through pessimistic lens. Like any country, Chad has its troubles and deficiencies; there is also much that is beautiful and courageous.

While the study is indeed a personal challenge, I see my work as contributing to more than my own scholarly career. This research is one way that Chadian literature, drama, and performance can gain visibility before the outside world. This research might also promote dialogue between the government and the people. It might also work to persuade those in power that the creation of theatre companies in Chad might serve to improve both the local and global image of our country.

As a former educator in Chad, I hope that my research will contribute to the furtherance of theatre education in my country. Should I return to university teaching in Chad, my research will help with my coursework and instruction. I would propose theatre syllabi to the government to introduce the teaching of drama and theatre in Chadian schools. At the same time, I would encourage theatrical productions as a means of education and artistic endeavor at all educational levels. Such instruction would expose children to theatre appreciation at an early stage of their life and would better the youth, schools, and country. Through an exploration

¹³⁹ RFI, “Transparency international : état des lieux de la corruption en Afrique,” <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20101027-transparency-international-etat-lieux-corruption-afrique>

of staging practices, of costumes, props, and storytelling, the children would take pride in their own heritage, their own roots. Their work and creative efforts would also serve to present a positive image that could be promoted to the outside world.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation is organized in six chapters.

Chapter One is an introduction that lays the foundation of the dissertation. It sets a tension between Europe and Africa, and goes on to demonstrate how, in the name of “civilization,” colonialism has burdened Africa and exploited its natural resources. The chapter’s various subsections highlight the challenges faced by contemporary African writers in relation to their careers. The lack of a common local language forces African writers to borrow the language of the colonizer, which poses a great challenge. Transposing African culture, which is chiefly oral, to meet Western standards for publication is also not an easy task. Also, because they are mostly despots in positions of leadership, many writers find that criticizing unjust regimes may put their own lives and those of their loved ones at stake. The chapter also discusses briefly its objectives regarding how the three Chadian playwrights’ works connect to Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, how these writers fuse the old and the new, Europe and Africa, to envision a blended Chad.

Chapter Two will offer a survey of Chad and its current social and political conditions. It will discuss Chad in the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras and will trace the evolution of its present problems. Despite having gained independence from France, Chad remains strongly under its influence. The chapter will examine the legacy of this influence and how it continues to perpetuate internal

divisions. Along with sixteen other African French colonies, Chad labors under a *françafrique*, the “secret criminality in the upper echelons of French politics and economy, where a kind of underground Republic is hidden from view.”¹⁴⁰ This legacy continues to hold Africans hostage by France. Under this system, France is able to achieve two ends. It politically imposes presidents of its choice, regardless of the will of the populace. It also controls the monetary system through FCFA, the Franc for the French Community in Africa, whose value is subject to France’s economic needs. In addition to discussing the current political and social climate of Chad, the chapter will point to how the visions of the three Chadian playwrights critique such French influence, how their call for a hybrid nationalism may engender on upheaval, on behalf of the populace who continue to live in squalid conditions.

Chapter Three will focus on the life and work of Ouaga-Ballé Danaï. Like the following two chapters, it will open with the playwright’s biography and will continue with a thematic and stylistic analysis of the writer’s work. Set in a small town in the south of Chad, *La malédiction* is a complex and a fascinating story that includes themes of curse, war, incest, etc. We see how, because of one man’s sacrilege, the whole family suffers as the victim of a curse. Analyzing this play through the lens of hybridity, the study shows how Ouaga-Ballé Danaï challenges the prevailing order and concludes that either the curse does not exist, or everybody

¹⁴⁰ François-Xavier Verschave, qtd. in K. Martial Frindéthié, *Globalization and the Seduction of Africa’s Ruling Class: An Argument for a New Philosophy of Development* (Jefferson, North California: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010) 56.

is cursed. “*Non, La malédiction n’existe pas*” (No, there is no curse).¹⁴¹ In addition to looking at Danaï’s play as primary source, the chapter will draw upon other plays, novels, films, articles, etc., that will illuminate Danaï’s work and aims as a writer.

Chapter Four follows the same pattern as chapter Three, though it focuses upon the work of Maoundoé Naïndouba. Having recently died in 2003, Naïndouba experienced persecution for his writing activism. The playwright was one of Chad’s politically committed writers who did not tolerate “bad governance.” Set during South African apartheid, Naïndouba’s play was awarded the prestigious Inter Theater Contest prize. The chapter’s framework examines the author’s painful life and discusses how, though he had never been to South Africa, he could write such a moving play (that won him one of the top literary awards). The chapter focuses on the conflict between a young black South African, Mulubé, and a white police officer. Analysis will also employ Benedict Anderson’s notion of nationalism. The chapter will look at the elements of the play as precursor to the victory of democracy and justice over apartheid in South Africa.

Chapter Five deals with Frank Kodbaye and his play, *Un vent d’Est*. The chapter looks at the playwright’s early life, especially his teenage years and the influence of theatre upon him at this time. The chapter traces his career as jurist, journalist, and writer, and shows how his experience as a young man growing up under dictatorial regimes shaped his perspective. It is no coincidence that his play, *Un vent d’Est*, is expressly political in nature. It is a criticism of patriarchy and how

¹⁴¹ Danaï 54.

parents, especially fathers, decide for their families--children and wives alike--and enforce their wills; in this case, the father forces a vote for his chosen candidate. Manto, the play's protagonist, refuses to comply with the directive, signifying the youth's revolt against coercive older traditions. In this play, Kodbaye examines his country's past and looks to a more progressive future.

Chapter Six concludes the dissertation. It gives a synopsis of the study and draws together the vision of the playwrights and their directives for a reformed and refashioned Chad.

Significance of This Study

Attempting to write a dissertation on Chadian theatre is what a friend called a "suicide operation." My immediate reaction was to laugh and toss off the idea. However, as time passes, this statement became truer to some degree, in that the deeper I have gotten into the research, the more aware I became of the difficulty not only posed by the lack of scholarly works on the materials, but also by the linguistic hindrance. This is because all the primary texts and critical materials available are in French, with no translations in English. Working in two languages has doubled the time I have needed to undertake this study, as I have had to read the original version in French and then translate it in English for the sake of this analysis.

That problem noted, I believe that the work and time given to this study have been worthwhile. The history of black theatre--of Diaspora in general and Africa in particular--includes very little mention of Chad, especially in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, as the fifth largest country in Africa (after Sudan, Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Libya), Chad has a rich and varied culture with

over two hundred ethnic groups and 134 languages and dialects, with French and Arabic as official languages (and Sara in the south). As a significant African nation, its literary and theatrical production warrant scholarly attention. In addition, given the country's diversity, theatre may serve as a kind of cultural bridge, connecting different populations and helping to create a vision of imagined community.

An original research, this project will benefit scholars interested in knowing more about Chad's committed playwrights and Chadian theatre. It is also important to those concerned with the relationship between Chad and France, with the legacy of colonialism, and how the "sovereign" leaders of the country still depend on France to gain or maintain their power. The victims of Chad's disreputable politics, such as Sonia Rolley,¹⁴² may gain witness, may find in this work some explanation for why Chad always remains at the bottom of development, even in the 21st century (and during its oil boom). In light of my study's theoretical framework, many scholars in the fields of dramatic literature, African literature, postcolonial and cultural studies may benefit from my work. The work may also be of value to political scientists, historians, anthropologists, and scholars of ritual studies. Finally, however, the dissertation is about Chadian theatre. Consequently, it is meant for theatre practitioners, scholars and students who wish to acquaint themselves with Chadian and African theatre. It is also my hope that my research will draw the attention of the Chadian Ministries of (Higher) Education, Human Rights, Justice, Culture Departments, and Youth. On one level, this work is a

¹⁴² http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xfk03e_la-france-et-les-dictatures-sanguinaires_news

scholarly analysis, though I also wish for it to serve as a political document and a humanitarian script. Through my work, I seek to awaken the awareness and consciousness of the masses through a “collective action for progressive social change.”¹⁴³ I believe that a vision of enlightened hybridity can offer hope to the future of Chad, one of fusion without friction, where all my country’s people can experience peace and progress. At such a time, we could join hands to sing the words of the French artist Jacques Brel:

<i>Quand on a que l’amour</i>	When we have but love
<i>Pour parler aux canons</i>	To speak to combat field guns
<i>Et rien qu’une chanson</i>	And nothing but a song
<i>Pour convaincre un tambour</i>	To convince a drum
<i>Alors sans avoir rien</i>	So without anything else
<i>Que la force d’aimer</i>	But the force to love
<i>Nous aurons dans nos mains</i>	We will have in our hands
<i>Amis, le monde entier</i>	Friends, the whole world

¹⁴³ Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey, eds. *Women’s Lives: Multicultural Perspectives* (Toronto: McGrawHill, 2003).

Chapter Two

Chadian Historical and Theatrical Contexts

Chad has experienced an unusual history in its evolution into a modern country. From its past as a home to a mixture of tribal communities to an emerging African nation, attempting to deal with huge challenges, Chad has struggled to achieve a sense of itself as a unified modern nation. This struggle continues to occur in Chad's political and social life. The reason due partly to the fact that its leaders, especially those in political office, have not designed or encouraged strong civic and nationalistic programs, in short public policies that are helpful to Chadians. While this is general, the most affected victims are the younger generation. As the country's leaders of tomorrow, they have the right to know, respect and love, even without seeing them, their counterparts, their fellow citizens, from other parts of the country.

In an effort to meet these challenges, many misperceptions, prejudices, and blind spots, appear in writings on Chad and its efforts to become a vibrant and prosperous nation. Sam C. Nolutshungu, for example, writes in his *Limits of Anarchy: Intervention and State Formations in Chad*,

Desperately poor and locked in perpetual strife, Chad-which has lived suspended between creation and destruction for most of its three or so decades-was not of much consequence in the strategic competition of the great powers. At the highest estimate one more theater of Libyan mischief making in the Sahel, Chad was aberrant, marginal, a fictive state at a time when other states, whatever their weaknesses, generally seemed permanent, even in an Africa marked by an

economic and political failure. Chad's domestic political evolution seemed a model of failure with little to teach the outside world.¹

I begin this chapter by acknowledging and refuting the above statement. On one hand, it is true that, fifty years after Chad gained independence from France, Chad's independence is only nominal, and therefore a matter of debate--France still plays a strong role in Chad's affairs. It is also true that the country has seen great conflict. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw Chad in a series of devastating wars that placed Chadians as primary combatants, while, in fact, they were serving as proxies for European super powers, who sought their own interests, along with the selling of their weapons and war machineries. Also during that time, Moammar Gadhafi, the Libyan president, annexed the Aouzou strip, which is located in the extreme north of the country. Chad in these years was "*un état néant*" (a stateless state). Put otherwise, Chad's "nation-ness" was threatened by wars, and its map was almost redesigned. Libyan annexation lasted until February 1994, until the International Court of Justice in The Hague restituted the Aouzou strip to Chad.

On the other hand, the quoted excerpt from *Limits of Anarchy* demonstrates a bias in its outlook. It is Eurocentric in its perspective, and, like many Eurocentric statements on Chad, it portrays the country only in a negative manner. In fact, the aim of such arguments seems to be that of keeping Chad in a liminal stage, a condition between and betwixt,² to impair the country's power and autonomy

¹ Sam C. Nolutshungu, *Limits of Anarchy: Intervention and State Formation in Chad* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1996) 2.

² Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (London: Cornell University Press, 1970) 97.

(which allows Europe to exploit Chadians and plunder its rich resources). Such an attitude of Western arrogance is not uncommon to Chadians, who were reminded of this presumption in the sixties, when France declared Chad a nation without any mineral resources. In fact, the *Bureau de Recherches Pétrolières* (BRP), a French Oil Research Bureau affirmed in 1966, after its oil exploration adventure in Chad that “*il n’y avait que du sable et des cailloux au Chad, pas une goutte de pétrole*” (there was only sand and pebbles in Chad, but not a drop of oil).³ Three years later in 1969, the French President De Gaulle confirmed the above declaration. For him, “*de l’avis de tous les services français consultés, étant donné la géographie et la connaissance du sol il n’y avait aucun espoir d’y trouver du pétrole*” (in the opinion of all the French services available, given the geography and knowledge of the soil there was no hope of finding oil).⁴

Not happy with the French results, President Tombalbaye appealed in 1969 to the North American oil company CONOCO, for oil prospecting and research in Chad. The 1974 results released by CONOCO were simply stunning: “non seulement le sous-sol tchadien est une nappe de pétrole, mais disait-on, le Tchad est un Eldorado africain” (not only the Chadian basement is an oil slick, but it was also said, “Chad is an African Eldorado”).⁵ Yet, contradictory reasons circulated as to why this resource went untapped. Some explained this inattention by reference to “the

³ Renodji Djimrambaye, “Pétrole et dette: Cas du Tchad”
http://www.oilwatch.org/2005/documentos/deuda_tchad_fra.pdf 5.

⁴ Djimrambaye 5.

⁵ Djimrambaye 5

remoteness of the land-locked country and lack of infrastructure.”⁶ Others explained this situation in terms of general uneasiness, of “fears of political instability and corruption.”⁷ Such explanations were partially correct. However, the primary reason that Chad’s reserves were not drilled at the time was because Europe was still enjoying oil extraction in other African countries, including Cameroon, Gabon, and Congo.

As the playwrights under study show in their writings (and as I will argue in this dissertation), Chad is not a grief-stricken country, neither is its population wanting in optimism. Even in the midst of all the suffering inflicted on Chad by external powers, it has remained a most hospitable country, and Chadians reflect a happy and open outlook. I can remember my 2006 conversation in New Orleans with an American Peace Corps Volunteer who had just returned from Chad. He related that, if you rode in a cab in Chad, the driver would invite you to his house, and then he would want you to pack up your house and live with him, rent-free. Such an anecdote shows the importance of hospitality in my country, despite its suffering. In this regard and in many others, it is certainly untrue that Chad is “a model of failure with little to teach the outside world.”⁸

Chad’s general instability since its independence five decades ago is not fortuitous. Europe, especially France, has deliberately promoted unrest and dissent,

⁶ Andrew McGregor “Oil Industry at the Heart of the Zaghawa Power Struggle in Chad” in *Terrorism Monitor* Volume: 6 Issue: 5.

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4776](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4776).

⁷ Carin Zissis, “Chad’s Oil Troubles.” http://www.cfr.org/publication/10532/chads_oil_troubles.html

⁸ Nolutshungu, 2.

with an eye toward exploiting Chad's untapped potentials and denying Chadian citizens the benefits of such resources. Western influence maintains its hegemony by installing and supporting unpatriotic leaders in Chad, who as heads of state rule by force and mistake the country for their own personal property. When not maintaining their power by arms, such leaders organize pseudo-elections whose results are known beforehand, even by the least informed of citizens. Whether under one party or multiparty systems, the results are the same: brilliant re-elections of the incumbent candidate. In short, the influence of France remains dominant, indirectly ruling countries like Chad, while local resources --financial, logistic, human, etc.--are wasted on censuses, campaigns, elections, and other related activities. When the machinery of election rigging threatens to fail, elections are suddenly postponed, as when the current House and Presidential elections were delayed, to February and April 2011 respectively. On the other hand, if the fraud-system is running well, not even widespread insecurity and unrest can stop the elections. A good illustration is the 2006 presidential election, following a *coup d'état* that occurred the same month (notwithstanding the opposition's and the general public's request for delay).

In this chapter, my study will attempt to provide an understanding of Chad's evolution as a modern African nation, to demonstrate its many problems but also its great potential. It will highlight both the country's historical and theatrical contexts. With attention to various stages of colonialism, the chapter will identify problems that have continued to challenge the country (and will relate these problems to the

outlooks of the playwrights under study). In addition, in surveying the theatrical history of Chad, the chapter will point to the problems of the current theatre scene in the country and will account for the playwrights' expatriate status. Yet, attention will also focus on the positive interchange of past and present --how Chadian playwrights seek to give a hopeful vision of the future, one that values the positives of hybridity. It is hoped that the material of this chapter will help inform and contextualize the analyses of the specific plays that will follow subsequently in the dissertation.

Chad's Physical Location, Resources, and Demographics

Chad is located in the "heart" of Africa, as our third grade geography teacher used to tell us. It borders Libya in the north, Sudan in the east, Central African Republic in the southeast, Cameroon in the south, Nigeria and Niger in Europe. During the pre-colonial era, Muslim states dominated the northern and central parts of the country. Currently, Chad is the fifth largest⁹ of 53 countries in Africa, after Sudan, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Libya, and is the 21st largest¹⁰ of 260 countries worldwide.¹¹ According to July, 2010 estimates, Chad's population is 10,329,208,¹² thus ranking 79th in the world.¹³

⁹ http://www.blatantworld.com/feature/africa/largest_countries.html

¹⁰ http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/countries_by_area.htm

¹¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>

¹² <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cd.html>

¹³ Ibid.

Chad has 1,259,200 sq. km of land and 24,800 sq. km of water, together covering a total area of 1,284,000 sq. km (495,752 square miles), slightly three times the size of California and more than twice that of France (632,834 sq. km). Most of the country's north is in the Sahara, a harsh place to grow crops as well as to live. The south on the other hand is the basket of the nation, a region that produces the many different crops that feed the country. Chad is a landlocked nation, with Lake Chad as the most important water body in the Sahel. The country has been grouped with four other nations (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger and Nigeria) under the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), or *Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad* (CBLT), founded in 1964.

Just as the physical landscape of the country demonstrates different kinds of terrains and climates, the population of Chad also reveals its diversity. The country has 200 distinct ethnic groups,¹⁴ speaking about 134 different languages,¹⁵ the official ones being French, Arabic, and Sara. Chadian religions include Islam (51% of populace), Christianity (35%), and other affiliations (14%).¹⁶

Because of its ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, and the fact that Islamic neighbors, such as Niger, Libya, and Sudan surround the country it is easy for outsiders to turn Chadians against one another. By appealing to ethnic, regional, or religious attachments, agitators have sometimes been able to turn neighbor

¹⁴ http://www.france.net/Colonies/Eq_Africa.shtml#

¹⁵ <http://www.ethnonet-africa.org/data/tChad/genpop.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cd.html>

against neighbor. A good illustration is the recent fight with Sudan and the deployment of EUFOR (European Forces), later relieved by MINURCAT (the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad) in eastern Chad. Although its mission was to protect the Sudanese and Central African refugees and displaced Chadians in eastern Chad, the French organized this alliance, and its real mission was to protect the Chadian president, favored by France, from overthrow by the rebel movements operating in the area. The objectives of the alliance also included the dismantling of Sudan's regime, probably because of El-Bashir's non-compliance with Western policies.

Chad has many resources. It produces cotton as a cash crop and exports livestock to its neighboring countries. Its natural resources include uranium, potassium, kaolin, fish (Lake Chad), gold, limestone, sand, gravel, and salt.¹⁷ However, the resource that has come to dominate the Chadian landscape is oil, which has increased Western involvement in the country. Chad is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), with an estimated production of 115,000 barrels of crude oil per day in 2009, placing Chad 51st out of 114 world oil-exporting countries.¹⁸

From a Pre-colonial to a Post-colonial Chad

Prior to colonization, and quite like many other African nations, what is Chad today was a grouping of kingdoms and chieftaincies. Some were weak, others were

¹⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2111.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cd.html>

strong, and like in modern organizations, both their qualities and weaknesses depended on their leadership and the relation between such leaders and their people. Although it is hard to present detailed information on this issue (due to a scarcity of adequate scholarly sources), it is important to note that local dignitaries governed kingdoms and sultanates. There were for instance the kingdoms of Kanem--Northeast Chad, the kingdom of Bornou--North, Ouadai--East and Baguirmi--Center and others in the south, although the latter was not as strong as the former.¹⁹ One of the kingdoms that proved successful and which merits our attention was the Kanem kingdom:

« A première vue, cette région disposerait de certains atouts dont ne bénéficient pas les autres régions du tchad : une ethnie largement dominante (les Kanembou), une langue parlée par tous (le Kanembou) et un chef traditionnel respecté de tous, l'Alifa (calife) de Mao »

(At first glance, this region would have certain advantages not enjoyed by other regions of Chad: an overwhelmingly dominant ethnic group (the Kanembou), a language spoken by all (Kanembou) and a respected traditional ruler of all, Alifa (Caliph) of Mao).²⁰

Local dignitaries governed kingdoms and sultanates. Importantly, people were organized according to cultural and kinship entities and lived in relative peace. During that era, not only were people closer to one another, but they also knew each other, because they lived in smaller communities (based on shared language, ethnicity, and culture). Consequently, what befell one family, whether fortune or misfortune, affected the entire community.

¹⁹ Jon G. Abbink, "Countries and their Cultures: Chad" in <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Chad.html>

²⁰ Esther Rosenkranz « *Survivances précoloniales : les problèmes politiques du Kanem (Tchad)* » <http://www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/033124.pdf> 124-129.

Often described as the cradle of humanity, Chad was already a prosperous and vital area. It had nothing to envy from its Western counterparts, according to historian Heinrich Barth.²¹ In pre-colonial times, peoples of this area would migrate and could settle in new habitats. Thus, in the extreme north of Chad for instance, archeological remains show evidence that indicates cultural similarities with people from the south. According to Brahim Chihite, two important instances, notably cultural and linguistic, illustrate this relation. Regarding the cultural aspect in Chad prior to colonization, Chihite writes:

Les peintures rupestres dans certaines grottes du Tibesti (ouadi gonoa) font apparaître des éléments qui n'ont rien à voir avec le milieu humain local (extrême nord) mais qui, par contre, correspondent de façon frappante avec celui de l'extrême sud du pays

(The rupestral painting in some grottos of Tibesti (ouadi gonoa) show cultural elements that have nothing to do with the local human milieu (extreme north) but fascinatingly, are very familiar with those from the extreme south of the country.)²²

Linguistic similarities also appear, linking groups that presently live far away from each other, distinct ethnic groups such as the Bilala (Batha), Kenga (Guera), Baguirmi (Chari Baguirmi), Sara (the two Logones, Moyen Chari, parts of Tandjilé and Mayo Kebbi),²³ all of which share a common linguistic origin. In a similar way, the Mboum (Mont de Lam) and the Moundang (Mayo Kebbi) fall in the same linguistic group. The advent of colonization, Chihite argues, caused disruption and discord.

²¹ Heinrich Barth, qtd. In Brahim Ibni-Oumar Mht-saleh Yakhoub Chihite, "Histoire du Tchad." http://tchachadi.com/Histoire_du_Tchad.aspx

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

In surveying pre-colonial Chad, one finds different rich and complex cultures (often related by past linguistic similarities) with traditions and beliefs that would be undermined by Europe. These peoples had their own ways of educating their members and honoring the gods. They had their own religious mythologies and forms of ritual observance, practices that would be deemed “primitive” by European settlers.

One interesting example of pre-colonial culture in the area that would become Chad is that of the *Sara* community. These people were farmers, hunters, and fishermen. Organized in the forms of a traditional society, the *Sara* lived with an abundance of resources, as the soil, forests, and rivers were very productive. The community had a strong religious aspect and strong religious leadership. According to legend, the god *Sou* revealed himself to the people and gave guidance -not unlike the notion found in the Indian *Natyasastra*. This community experienced peace and prosperity for generations, and enjoyed an affirming relationship with their deities.

The stories of the *Sara* culture explain different religious beliefs and practices (and the affirmation of communal myths that promote group cohesion). According to *Sara* religious narratives, the ritual practices and ritual drama of the culture come from a time of extreme hardship, which brought divine prophesies and consequent practices of purification for the survival of that particular society.

The survival of any society requires that knowledge be passed from one generation to another. In many Chadian societies, this transmission is marked by ritual. Knowledge of the world and its forces is limited to adults; among the predominantly patrilineal societies of Chad, it is further limited to men in particular. Rituals often mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. However,

they actively "transform" children into adults, teaching them what adults must know to assume societal responsibilities.²⁴

In this same society, the living and the dead seem to share in some commonalities. It is in this line that Birago Diop argued that the "dead are not dead."²⁵ In times of unparalleled drought, people were starving, animals were dying, and the rivers were running dry. Many fled the community, hopeless in outlook and unaware of the cause of this misfortune. An old man on his dying bed sent for the king and related a revelation he had received the night before from the gods. The old man explained that the *Sara* people were being afflicted by a divine punishment due to incest in the community, and that they needed to make sacrifices for the sin. No sooner had he finished telling of his dream than he died, leaving the matter of what, and how to sacrifice to offer on open question. Meanwhile, people continued to suffer and die.

Then a second revelation came to another tribe member, who gathered the community leaders that same night and informed them of the oracle's message and what rituals should be performed--every family should sacrifice an unblemished animal, and in addition a jar of local beer. The family in which the incest had occurred would sacrifice a dog (dogs are of paramount importance in a hunting community) and two jars of palm wine. Asking one at this time to kill his dog would have been a difficult demand. While the oracle would proclaim that the sacrifices were only curative, not preventive, the leaders established initiation rites that

²⁴ Thomas Collelo, ed. *Chad: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988 in <http://countrystudies.us/chad/>

²⁵ "Birago Diop, un poème à écouter" in <http://levieramots.over-blog.com/article-377994.html>

would teach youths a proper code of conduct: to proceed from childhood to wo/manhood would thus require this necessary passage through such initiation. This narrative and its resultant practices account for the beginning of the *Sara* ritual drama, which, in addition to help the youth transit to adulthood, appease the ancestors/gods/*Sou's* anger, the Sara practice such rituals during their

New year (which) begins with the appearance of the first new moon following the harvest. The next day, people hunt with nets and fire, offering the catch to ancestors. Libations are offered to ancestors, and the first meal from the new harvest is consumed.²⁶

This example of Sara religious belief and ritual indicates how most traditional religions came into being. In addition, it shows how religious outlooks came to govern shared community practices, shared performances that would guide youths in their passage to adult members of the community. Clearly, for the colonizers and first missionaries, such practices were viewed as superstition and an offence to the living God. Yet in challenging local religious observance, the colonizers were eradicating a way of life and the bonds that had served to hold communities intact:

In the cultural realm, the imperialist powers made concerted efforts to obliterate Africa's indigenous African cultures as 'paganistic, barbaric and uncivilized.' This was then followed by the imposition of culture of the colonial power on their respective colonies. Specifically, this involved the wholesale replacement of indigenous African cultural values, norms and mores by European ones.²⁷

²⁶ Thomas Collelo, "Classical African Religions" in *Chad: A Country Study*.
<http://countrystudies.us/chad/> in <http://countrystudies.us/chad/>

²⁷ Kieh 5-6.

As shown in the example above, one understands that it is needless to say that, prior to colonization, Africa in general and Chad in particular had their own types of theatre and performance. These performances revolved, for the most part, around songs, music, and dance. Actors hardly differentiated themselves from audiences due to the high degree of audience participation. In the *Sara* community of Chad, for instance, there was the particular ritual theatre we may understand as hieropraxis performative theatre. By hieropraxis, I mean the sacred drama generally seen in the South and South East of Chad that was known as *Yondo* or *Lao*. These rituals aimed at helping teenagers transition into manhood. Unlike Western traditional drama, which “*instruit par la distraction*” (teaches through entertainment), and affords the audience a position from which they can criticize, in ritual drama “*instruit par la participation . . . Tout le monde doit participer dans un rituel, personne ne peut sortir ou trouver le sujet mauvais* » (Everyone must participate in a ritual, no one can leave or find the practice wrong).²⁸ And it was this ritual drama that colonization destroyed, along with other cultural practices.

One of the most troubling intrusions that affected the long-held outlooks and organizations of native cultures was that of the slave trade. At times with the complicity of their local leaders, areas of Chad became slave trade fiefdoms. This situation began as early as the Arab penetration of the 14th century,²⁹ and continued

²⁸ H. Kuper, qtd. in Koulsy Lamko, « Théâtres ‘du Sud’ : l’épineuse question du répertoire” in *Théâtres contemporains du Sud 1990-2006*, http://www.institutfrancais.com/librairie/derniers/pdf/nl162_1.pdf 4.

²⁹ <http://countrystudies.us/chad/28.htm>

until the end of 19th century. As one form of (Arab) slavery ended, another one (Western) emerged.

It was in fact the practice and contestation of the slave trade that led to French domination of this area of Africa. At the end of the 19th century, a feud developed between the French and the Sudanese slave-raider Rabeh al-Zubayr, who came from the east and was conquering parts of the region.³⁰ French forces challenged the Sudanese bandit, and during a battle, Rabeh was slain. The French commandant Fort Lamy, who led the operations, died from his injuries, though the advance and victory of the French forces marked the beginning of French colonization in Chad.

One of the most important watershed moments in the history of Europe's colonization of Africa came in 1884-1885, when European powers met in Berlin to determine the fate of Africa and its populace. It was at this conference that European nations bargained over the division of Africa and set in operation the geographical boundaries that would define numerous African countries (areas that had never been united in any official way prior to this time).

While the announced aim of the Berlin meeting involved the division and subordination of the African territories, the maneuvers of the Berlin Conference worked in an unofficial way to stifle the infighting between European nations that had been going on for at least two centuries. Let us make clear that Europe was at

³⁰ Jon G. Abbink, <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Chad.html>

war with itself, having come to a point of exhaustion due to continuous conflicts and depletion of resources. Unhappy with the French prince's inheritance of the Spanish throne, countries like the United Netherlands, Austria, and Brandenburg-Prussia had rallied behind Great Britain to wage war against France from 1702 to 1713, a conflict that became known as the eleven-year War of Spanish Succession. The war ended in a temporary settlement, however, the nations involved thus turned to Africa for conquest, a land of milk and honey, viewed as a rich and pliant continent, with resources ready for the taking. For years following, Africa would prove a point of disagreement and challenge between European countries, as each sought to advance its wealth and power through colonial adventure.

The participants of the Berlin Conference, which hosted the past and future "masters" of Africa, included Belgium, England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the United States, among others. In "The General Act of February 26, 1885," "Act VI" singularly encouraged the protection of the native tribes:

All the Powers exercising sovereign rights or influence in the aforesaid territories bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the Slave Trade.³¹

Contrary to the expressed aim of improving conditions for African and "bringing light from the civilized Europe to the dark Africa," as advocated by the Act, the real mission derived from political and economic concerns. Indicative of this

³¹ J. D., Ogundere, "The Development of International Environmental Law and Policy in Africa" in <http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/narj12&div=25&id=&page=>

desire to assert Western hegemony, the first act of the Conference was to launch militaries (mercenaries) in Africa and to engage in acts of violence. The participants of the conference embraced and sought to advance the colonial trinity, the three Cs equation of Civilization, Christianity, and Commerce,³² to which a fourth C we might add: Colonization.

Chad became a French colony according to the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885. In reality, however, this status was not overt until the battle of Kousséri in 1900, in which the French army defeated the Sudanese invader Rabeh. A series of events followed, and, even though Chad in 1910 became a part of French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique Equatoriale Française, AEF*), an administrative grouping of the present Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, and Gabon, comprising a total area of 969,112 square miles (2,500,000 sq. km),³³ did not gain official colonial status until 1920. Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea would later join the AEF--this group currently constitutes a regional economic co-operation known as the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (ECCAS), or *la Communauté Économique et Monétaire des États de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC)*.

Chad experienced conditions and impositions common to the colonized of Africa. While some colonies like Nigeria had a more open kind of governance (colonial schools allowed the display of local cultures by organizing inter-school dramas and the like), no such tolerance was shown in Chad, where the preservation

³² Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876-1912* (New York: Aven Books, 1991) xxii.

³³ http://www.discoverfrance.net/Colonies/Eq_Africa.shtml#

of local cultures, as advocated in “Act VI” of “The General Act” of the Berlin Conference, went neglected. Rather, the Europeans, especially the French in Chad, helped in destroying the native cultures, which were viewed as primitive and obsolete. The introduction of Western education and Christianity separated the natives from their traditional roots. Again, this occurrence was not peculiar to Chad but could be seen in most of France’s Africa colonies, dating back to the colonial system of “Direct Rule.”

The African novelist Camara Laye denounced this kind of foreign rule and imposition in his *The African Child*, which describes a beautiful Africa and how colonization destroyed its culture. While some critics question Laye’s writing, as his book did not openly challenge Europe, his work insightfully projects the future of his Guinea and, to some extent, that of Africa as a whole. In this visionary novel, the arrival of Europe threatens the well-being of the peaceful “black snake,” the family mascot and bearer of luck, important to the ceremonial rituals of purification. The cultural elements and mystic powers symbolized by the “black snake,” representing the sacredness of the family traditions passed down from generations to generations, yield to the forces of colonization, effectively bringing an end to a traditional way of life.

The Berlin Conference proved Africa's undoing in more ways than one. The colonial powers clearly imposed their domains on the African continent. Importantly, the conference did not consider “the cultural and linguistic boundaries

already established by the native African population.”³⁴ As result, the arbitrarily defined countries had no organic or historical coherence. The continuance of colonial oversight resulted in not only the destruction of tradition practices but also the exploitation of natural resources and the political oppression of the native populace.

Chad during this time remained heavily under the control of France and extended great loyalty to its European overseers. In 1940 for instance, Chad was the first country to respond to General Charles De Gaulle’s call by sending regiments to assist France in its conflict with Nazi Germany. Chadian troops, along with the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, or Senegalese Skirmishers, played a significant role in the allies’ victory. To reward this contribution, France made Chad an overseas territory at the end of WWII. Later in 1958, Chad was proclaimed a Republic, and finally on August 11, 1960, it became independent. However, what did the veterans receive for their job well done? They received frock coats and insignificant payments, compensations criticized by novelists Ferdinand Oyono and Ahmadou Kourouma in their respective novels *The Old Man and the Medal*³⁵ and *Suns of Independence*.³⁶

When Chad was granted its independence in 1960, there was great jubilation and celebration. The nation welcomed its autonomy and looked at its future with hope and optimism. However, the independent Chad faced great difficulties and

³⁴ “Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to Divide Africa.”

<http://geography.about.com/cs/politicalgeog/a/berlinconferenc.htm>

³⁵ Ferdinand Oyono, *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (Paris: Union Générale d'éditions, 1979, c1956).

³⁶ Ahmadou Kourouma, *The Suns of Independence* (London: Heineman, 1981).

acquired a legacy of political fragmentation. The move to independence proved a difficult task to accomplish.

The independence phase did not, and has not fundamentally changed the conditions on the continent. In fact, colonialism was replaced with neo-colonialism. In the latter phase, the imperialist powers broaden the scope of their domination of Africa and maintained their stranglehold over the continent through various mechanisms, including the neo-colonial state and pliant ruling classes.³⁷

While other liberated peoples, whether in Asia or the Americas, have enjoyed the transition to prosperity and independence, Chad has remained troubled during its post-colonial history. In many respects, the effects of French oversight remain in place, and in some cases, the influence of France continues in a direct way.

One major challenge for an independent Chad has been the continued tensions between the northern and southern areas of the country, and the warfare that has followed. This conflict is the legacy of a French tactic that sought to limit native unification. As a rule, France's political involvement in Chad has followed the principle, to "divide and conquer." The French attempted to benefit from this cleavage. The settlers when in the south followed the common practice of saying disrespectful things about the north, for instance, calling it the "useless north," the "north of cows," of "desert," etc. Likewise, when in the presence of northerners, the settlers would slander the southerners. Nolutshungu confirms this practice and observes the open manipulation of regional hostilities:

That the images of North and South should have crystallized to feed such intolerance and violence as they did, was largely the result of

³⁷ Kieh 19.

political manipulation by the settler parties in the transfer of power and of the failure of the actors involved, including the French government, to conceive viable political arrangements for dealing with regional differences and cleavages.³⁸

From early in its colonial history to the present, Chad seems to be a country marked for wars. Though independent in name, Chad has endured continuous meddling by the French, who have worked to establish and protect Chadian politicians favorable to their interests. Also, Chad continues to suffer from economic exploitation, as Europe and its corporate agents seek to access the country's natural resource, continuing what Blij and Muller have identified as the ignorant and greedy acquisitiveness of Europe, and its insatiable search for minerals and markets.³⁹

It is here relevant to note that, in general, African countries without natural resources have not suffered the traumas of wars and political instability seen in Chad--for example, Tanzania, Kenya, etc. Outside of the resistance of the *Maji Maji* against British colonial rule, Tanzania has not experienced any civil war. Kenya has experienced a time of extended peace, except for the recent events of 2008 involving electoral fraud, which prompted an immediate solution by the United Nations. One wonders why such resolutions, aided by Europe, cannot occur in other countries. Nations such as Chad, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone among others have become victims of war sponsored if not tolerated by Europe--their sin being the riches of their soil.

38 Nolutshungu 35

39 H.J. de Blij and Peter O. Muller, "The Scramble for Africa Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to Divide Africa" in http://www.cabinda.net/Berlin_Conference.htm

Since gaining its independence fifty years ago, Chad has endured continued difficulties. “Peace” is still new lingo in Chadian terminology. Few Chadians can remember any prolonged time of political stability the country has experienced. For the generations of Chadians born in the mid-sixties onward, myself included, peace, along with basic amenities such as clean water, health care, energy, transportation, housing, and decent schooling, is just another rare commodity. In his novel *Violence*,⁴⁰ the Nigerian writer describes a condition of want that is not uncommon in Africa, and certainly not in Chad. He writes of acceptance of the status quo that damages the populace and brings despair:

(C)ontinual, demoralizing structure that eliminates hope, pride, self-esteem, health, and the ability to live independently . . . [that] leaves deep scars of shame and guilt . . . on the lower classes, the have-nots, and renders them helpless against the socio-political machine powered solely by money, corruption, and privilege.⁴¹

Challenges for a Post-colonial Chad

1. Legacy of Civil Conflict:

Scarcely after five years of independence, had Chad seen its first insurgency arise in Mangalmé. *La révolte de Mangalmé* (Mangalmé Revolt), as it was known, resulted from what the Hadjarai people of central Chad thought to be acts of oppression brought against them by the first regime. The revolt encouraged northern elites to sponsor different factions of rebellion under FROLINAT (*Front de*

⁴⁰ Susie deVille, updated by Michael A. Chaney, “Festus Iyayi Biography,” in <http://biography.jrank.org/pages/4457/Iyayi-Festus.html> Festus Iyayi Biography

⁴¹ <http://biography.jrank.org/pages/4457/Iyayi-Festus.html>

Libération National--National Liberation Front), whose main objective was to resist the central government. This conflict aggravated the north-south cleavage, and succeeding governments did little or nothing to counter the divisive outlook, which is still vivid today. One finds the north associated with the Arab and Muslim, regarded as “Chad of the cows.” The south emerged as the “useful Chad,” “Chad of the cadres,” or “Christian Chad.”⁴² As mentioned earlier, such regional tensions had been kept alive by colonial French governance, and independent Chad has continued to pay the price of this internal discord.

Suffice it to say that Chadians born after the independence have practically grown up in war times and war zones. Religious, regional, and selfish interests have troubled the country and have fueled continuous conflicts, plunging the country into decades of political instability.

2. Economic Problems:

Several generations of Chadians have since the country's independence found themselves in a cyclic cataclysm, born into poverty and remaining in poverty. This impoverishment comes despite the fact that Chad abounds with mineral resources of all kinds, enough to bring its people into a condition of wealth and to a much higher standard of living. Fiscal mismanagement and the caprices of political leadership, however, have worked to squander the country's wealth, and the populace unfortunately find themselves as one of the world's poorest peoples -they are simply, to borrow Fanon's term, the “wretched of the earth.” As if that was not

⁴² Ibid., 32-3.

enough, the oil production adds high cost of living that the common person cannot afford: sky rocketing cost of living far beyond eighty percent (80%) of the population.

3. Corruption of leaders and the political system:

Francois Xavier Verschave has written of the abuses of Africa's political leadership, calling attention to the many ills brought about by the "gorged, burnt-out dictators."⁴³ Even with Chad's recent exploitation of oil and the wealth that it has generated, the country remains enmeshed in unprecedented social misery and turmoil. Much of this deprivation can be blamed on the ineffectiveness and self-centeredness of Chad's political leaders, who are often insensitive to the needs of the people and make decisions with no concern for consequences. In 2009, for example, the government passed a law that prohibited the selling and use of charcoal and firewood, the main sources of local energy, without providing for any alternative measures. I can vividly remember my last trip home three winters ago, when I saw people using their tables, stools, and chairs as firewood.

Chad's political order currently exists in a troubled condition, what might be called a "democraship," a combination of democracy and dictatorship. As discussed earlier, this corruption of leadership is sustained by fraudulent elections. Three times since the advent of the current regime has the president won a questionable election--while public discontent would lead one to believe that votes against the

⁴³ "Defining Francafrique by François Xavier Verschave."
<http://survie.org/francafrique/article/defining-francafrique-by-francois>

president would be high, “official” ballots have declared him the winner with more than seventy percent of the electorate. Such victories come for this “officially elected” leader, who is widely despised by the public, even by his close collaborators, who regularly turn against him and join armed rebellions.

Such poor leadership participates in and promotes a culture of corruption. Often corporate contracts are signed hurriedly, with an eye toward gaining quick profit from deals with oil consortia. Large-scale public construction works, such as bridges, roads, schools, hospitals, official buildings, etc., are executed at a cost of billions, much of the monies diverted from the projects themselves. When these constructions demonstrate their shoddy handiwork, some show cracks or even collapse in the first year, no disciplinary or judicial action is taken against the contractors. Honest audits are not conducted, and such corruption has become expected. It is thus not surprising that the current First Lady (and Special Secretary to her president-husband) is nicknamed “*Madame 10%*” (Mrs. 10%). She derives the nickname from the fact that, prior to granting any large-scale contracts, she requires 10% pay of the money awarded to contractors.

Endowed with ill-gained power, these leaders rule with an iron hand. They also enrich those close to them (including their wives, children, fathers, mothers, nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends). Family members are placed in powerful governmental positions. They can get any job they want, whether in the public or private sector, notwithstanding their qualifications. What is worse is the way that such leaders invest the nation’s wealth outside of the country. A French police

investigation uncovered the following results regarding embezzlement by President Déby. According to the investigation,

Dans un communiqué transmis par une ONG, celle-ci qualifie d'illégal et illégitime le parlement tchadien. Elle s'apprêterait aussi à déposer une plainte contre Deby, ses proches et protégés pour détournement des biens publics. L'ONG a recensé au total plus de 132 immeubles et appartements appartenant à Deby, ses épouses et ses proches en France et en Belgique

(In a statement transmitted by an NGO, it [the NGO] qualifies as illegal and illegitimate Chadian Parliament. It would also be engaging in a court procedure to file a complaint against Deby, his relatives and protégés for misappropriation of public property. The NGO has identified a total of more than 132 houses and apartments owned by Deby, his wives and relatives in France and Belgium.)⁴⁴

While few people have it all, with the benefaction of Europe, the vast majority of the population in African countries, which became independent in the fifties and sixties, seem to be, sadly enough, struggling with a multitude of issues that continue to hold them back. Many of these problems are man-made, the direct consequences of the selfishness of political and military leaders in power. In Chad, the incompetence and corruption of the political leadership is supported by external intrusion, by Western influence, chiefly that of France and corporate interests. For his part, Frantz Fanon would qualify such African neo colonial leaders as “Black Skins, White Masks,” meaning that, even though the present African leaders are blacks and Africans, they hide their blackness behind white masks, to appease and profit from Europe as they disregard and exploit their own African people. Such practices are so common that they simply seem normal. Under the current regime,

⁴⁴ Philippe Bernard, “Les patrimoines des francs maçons chefs d'Etat africains en France.” *lemonde.fr* of 01/31/2008

one cannot spend half a day in N'Djamena, Chad's capital, without expecting an electric power failure. Mbaïdedji Ndjénodji Frédéric, one of the weekly press reviewers of CEFOD (*Centre d'Etudes et de Formation pour le Développement*--Centre for Studies and Training for Development based in N'Djamena, Chad) could not say more. In his press review of March 30 - April 5, 2009, he quoted the daily newspaper "*Le Progrès*:" "*dans la capitale tchadienne, c'est nuit noire pendant la majeure partie de l'année; les nuits éclairées par l'électricité sont plutôt l'exception*" (In Chad's capital, it is black night most of the times during the year; illuminated nights by electricity are rather an exception.)⁴⁵

It is very unfortunate that attempts at reformation find little success. Any leader who emerges and looks to care for the development of his people, instead of protecting Western and neocolonial interests, is *de facto* labeled a communist or socialist, an enemy requiring overthrow or assassination. Political opposition is thus muted, and corrupt leadership remains entrenched. In Africa, power is intoxicating, and many leaders, once in power, respect no constitution or laws. Many too cling to power, fearful of being removed and having to face the consequences of the atrocities they have committed in their tenure. Examples include, but are not limited to, Bongo (died after 41 years in power), Khadafi (42 years), Biya (29 years), Nguesso (27 years), and Deby Itno (21 years).

⁴⁵ <http://www.cefod.org/spip.php?article2032>

To illustrate in a powerful and personal way the nature of this political order, I would like to share my own experience with Chadian authorities, as I sadly and vividly recall the evening of Sunday, June 11, 1989.

This difficult experience began around 10:30 PM, when my friend and I decided to go out for a drink. Her older sister was preparing for her *baccalauréat* (a high school exam), and we did not want to disturb her. My friend and I were at that time freshmen at the university. We chose a small bar not far from her house for that evening. We sat quietly in a dark corner of the bar, waiting for our dinner. We sipped our drinks and enjoyed watching people dancing. Every now and then, a tipsy customer would miss a step or two, making an awkward movement that would provoke general laughter. However, our pleasant night out would soon turn to a nightmare.

It seemed from nowhere that twelve armed military men appeared. They came straight to our table, took our drinks, and started to beat us mercilessly before the eyes of all. The reason for this punishment, according to police, was that I was *dating* their commandant's wife--the commandant was fighting at the warfront to defend b***dy civilians like me. I had no idea what they were talking about. Our protests of innocence only angered them more. The other customers in the bar slipped out, and the bartenders quickly closed up. Never in my life, except in the movies, had I seen or experienced such a scene.

We were then dragged out and continued to be assaulted as if it were a sideshow. When I saw another military man passing on the street, I rushed to him and called for help, which was denied. He said to me: "Next time you are dealing

with soldiers, don't ever call another soldier to your rescue or he will join them and beat the hell out of you." Military solidarity, I thought. At that point, my friend and I were separated, and beaten by different groups of soldiers. No one could call the police. There were no cellular phones then, and even so, police only came for emergencies, and then would require "gas money" from the victims. That was the last time I saw my friend that night. Poor Chad! Poor Africa!

Where the soldiers took my friend I did not know, but they kidnapped and brutalized her. The next morning, she was found in an abandoned house, completely exhausted and bleeding from rape. For my part, I was so terrified I could not go home that night; I spent the evening with another acquaintance that was living in the neighborhood. In the morning, I learned that my friend had been taken to the hospital for treatment.

However, while on my way to her house, I was intercepted by someone who recognized me as the victim of the night's military brutality. At first, I thought he was one of them and that he was going to shoot me. Nonetheless, he pulled me close to him and whispered the name of one of the offenders in my ears. Half-heartedly, I thanked him, and, with the aid of my friend's uncle, himself a commandant in the army, an investigation identified the perpetrators. Since we were never called for the hearing at court, I am not even sure if these criminals were really imprisoned. However, one year, five months, and three weeks later, on December 1, 1990, the present regime took power, by ousting the previous dictator. During the coup, prisons were broken open and convicts released. It could be that the culprits, had they been incarcerated at all, were on this day free to walk the streets.

My personal story only contributes to the many experiences of injustice and deprivation experienced by the populace of Chad. In light of such sorrow and suffering, one can understand the first generation writers who idealized the Africa of the past and sought a return to a remembered time of peace and social cohesion. Colonizers appear as the source of ills. This is probably why Achebe declares: “they have put a knife in things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”⁴⁶

The project of colonialism reveals a shameful history; the Berlin Conference in particular enforced a

Hodgepodge of geometric boundaries that divided Africa into fifty (sic)-irregular countries. This new map of the continent was superimposed over the one thousand indigenous cultures and religions of Africa. [As a result] the new countries lacked rhyme or reason and divided coherent groups of people and merged together disparate groups who really did not get along.⁴⁷

Much of the instability in Chad, and in Africa generally, results from this colonial imposition. The current want of effective leadership can also be attributed to Western influence and meddling. Too many leaders are puppets, ill equipped for the task. Former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, acknowledged that most African political leaders have come to power ignorant of the ways to best lead their countries, unprepared to face the challenges of governing, and therefore have failed to meet the expectations of the African people.⁴⁸ In this declaration, General Obasanjo alleges that those leaders, including himself, have been inserted by Europe

⁴⁶ Achebe 125.

⁴⁷ “Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to Divide Africa.”

<http://geography.about.com/cs/politicalgeog/a/berlinconferenc.htm>

⁴⁸ Olusegun Obasanjo, “Where Did We Go Wrong?” in *Hope for Africa: Selected Speeches Of Olusegun Obasanjo* (Ogun State, Nigeria: ALF Publications, 1993) 177.

into leadership, and are therefore little more than actors playing a part, one determined by Western interests and not the welfare of the populace.

The situation of modern Africa has largely been one of dissatisfaction and want. Danaï captures the sense of frustration in his character Myriam, who waits desperately for relief and offers the following supplication:

*Oh! Père
Où commencer, où s'arrêter?
Si courts les jours
Si longs
Si interminables
Les nuits
Si brèves
Les ténèbres m'envahissent et le fossé
M'engloutit
Mon trajet ensoleillé
Aux profondeurs aboutit
Je ne sais plus mesurer le temps
Je ne sais plus évaluer l'espace
J'ai oublié les saveurs de la vie*

(Oh! Father
Where do I begin, where do I stop?
So short the days
So long
So endless
The nights
So brief
The darkness invades me and the ditch
Swallows me up
My sunny journey
To the depths leads to
I don't know as to whether measure time
Or evaluate space
I have forgotten life's flavors).⁴⁹

Positives of Europe/Exchange/Encounter

⁴⁹ Danaï 20

In light of the afore-mentioned sufferings and persistent problems, it can be a challenge to consider what might be any good that has come from colonialism, that is, how Chadians of the present moment might find something to take from this Western intrusion of Africa, in order to envision a better nation and inspiring vision of the future.

The denunciation of colonization is as controversial as colonization itself. It is a theme that has been debated, sometimes disputed, for decades. However, for clarity, let it be recalled that, for the older generation of writers, notably the Fathers of the Negritude Movement, the pains and plight of Africa today were viewed as the consequence of colonization. And like most conservatives, they wished to undo this affliction, which for them meant looking far to the past. Others, on the other hand, especially the younger generation, represented by such writers as Ouaga-Ballé Danaï, regard colonization as a done and sealed deal. What comes of this attitude is a call for self-renewal and a forward-looking perspective. Instead of blaming the colonizers, Africans should turn an old page and move on to a new life. In other words, Africans should use the past as a springboard to propel themselves to a new order.

As the playwrights under study believe, modernity is irreversible. Yet these playwrights illustrate hope. There are reasons to be hopeful. As more Chadians become exposed to the outside world--through traveling, education, and the internet with its online resources--changes have begun to occur.

Also, in endorsing a view of hybridity, these playwrights find positives in the present. They do not call for a return to a tradition past but embrace certain aspects

of the colonial heritage, or the benefits of what Europe has to offer, realizing that the present-day Chad has come to be a new entity, a mixture and blend of African heritage and European outlook.

One of the positive aspects and a common denominator found in the works of the selected Chadian playwrights is the theme of education. Through Western forms of learning, Chadians and Africans have become more and more aware of the political, economic, social, and cultural situations of their country and of countries around the world. This system, which might appear in contradiction with African traditional culture, carries benefits. Certainly, some aspects may seem advantageous or disadvantageous, depending on one's perspective. Nevertheless, a fair judgment would admit that Westernization has brought some positives. E.

Gyimah-Boadi, in *Democratic Reform in Africa* made this pertinent remark:

Civil society bodies such as Civitas, Street Law, and legal literary groups, as well as advocacy groups, are increasingly involved in civic education, thus helping to break the longtime monopoly of state and parastatal civic education agencies . . . These nonstate civic education bodies, Street Law programs, and human rights advocacy groups are helping to effect a much needed change in the content of African civic education. They are moving civic education toward the development of democratic citizenship and away from the traditional overemphasis on citizen responsibility, political education (indoctrination), and agitprop . . . and the resultant political docility.⁵⁰

Agreeing with Gyimah-Boadi, the selected Chadian playwrights advocate the type of education that can contribute to the well-being of the masses, and minimize the impact of obsolete traditions. If education, as a product of colonization bears

⁵⁰ E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2004) 103-104

some fruit for the colonized, we can as well argue that Western influence has brought benefits in medicine and health care. People in Chad are living longer, healthier lives.

We should also mention the beneficial effects of Western technologies. Many technological devices are indispensable in today's world, and make worldwide communication much easier. For example, when I was studying in Nigeria over a decade ago, I could spend weeks, even months before I could communicate--through the postal service--with my parents back home, even though Nigeria is a neighboring country to Chad. At that time cell phones and emails had not yet come into wide use. However, with the popularization of these technologies, communication has become much easier. Even though I live thousands of miles away from my relatives, I can still talk to them whenever I want and wherever I am. In addition to cell phones, internet videos, Skype, etc., have been helpful in drawing people together. The benefits of Facebook are beyond measure, especially to human rights and freedom advocacy groups; Facebook has helped dethrone dictators.

Thus, we can affirm that even though Europe has been culpable in its treatment of Africa, and must own its long legacy of exploitation, it has offered advantages to Africa, including education and technologies that Africans can use to better themselves (and challenge the continuing problems of Western interference).

Survey of Chadian Dramatic Literature and Theatre

As we have noted, twelve years after the Berlin Conference, Chad became a French protectorate, and sixty-three years later, it gained its independence. As the country has struggled to prosper in a post-colonial era, numerous literary figures

have emerged who have addressed and explored the troubled conditions of Chad and its many unrealized potentials. While this study will subsequently focus on three of Chad's prominent playwrights--Danaï, Kodbaye, and Naïndouba-- a number of individuals have brought their visions to dramatic form in the country. The three playwrights of this study owe a debt to these writers, who paved the way and helped to establish an acceptance of and respect for Chadian playwriting.

Two years after independence one can mark the birth of dramatic literature in Chad. Certainly, the country has a rich history of oral performance and native ritual theatre, a legacy that many writers draw upon; nonetheless, Bebdoné Palou and Joseph Brahim Seid stand as the first to employ Western dramatic forms in service to the Chadian experience.

Teacher by profession, Bebdone Palou (author of *La Dot*, or *Dowry*, published in 1962) proved a pioneer in Chadian theatre. Though written in a Western form, his plays display a deep regard for indigenous culture; the works were based heavily on myths and legends, the strongholds of Chadian oral literature.

Dowry for instance is a play that focuses on the issues of power and leadership, and the complications of caste and social immobility, a matter that affects many countries and the possibilities of intermarriage. In neighboring Nigeria, for instance, marrying an *osu* (an outcast) is an abomination to the clan and to society. Chinua Achebe also examines this aspect in his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease*. Similar traditions cause concern in Indian society as well as Christian cultures (in regard to interfaith marriages). Marriage and class/clan

prohibitions, one can see, can stand as an obstruction to the development and unification of a nation.

In this play, Palou sets his drama around such taboos and the sacrifice they demand. In *Dowry* the protagonist Padja rises from the lower class of slaves to become the Chief of Army Staff. His rise in fortune, however, inflames M'Barma, a nobleman from the royal court, who desires the post for himself and therefore becomes a sworn enemy of the newly nominated chief. By using such characterization which consists in propelling lower people to high standards of living, Palou, like the selected playwrights is reinforcing the Biblical love of God that there will be no Jews nor Gentiles and that all are free, if they believe in God. This type of fluidity used by the Chadian playwright in the 1960s will later be dramatized in a Nigerian movie *Royal Palace* where the King himself recognizes and encourages the blending of Christianity and tradition: "Christianity and tradition can come together" to make a better society, especially in relation to class, caste and marriage.

In his attempt to envision a new future and a prosperous Chad, Palou was trying to show the importance of loosening barriers that might close off social inter-relations and hinder social movement (offering a kind of universal outlook--in the sight of God there are no Jews or gentiles). Three years after his first play in 1965, Palou would publish two other plays, *Kaltouma*⁵¹ and *Mbang-Gaourang II*. These

⁵¹ Marcel Bourdette-Donon, *Anthologie de la littérature et des arts tchadiens* (Paris: Harmattan, 2003) 249-52

works continue to explore similar concerns and Palou's hope for a more open-minded country.

It is telling that, almost five decades after the appearance of *Dowry*, that Chad and its populace are still struggling over similar issues. It seems that where Palou stopped, the new generation of writers picked up, continuing with the hope that Chad, and Africa as whole, might show the rest of the world how its efforts toward unity and progress might lead its people forward.

Even though Palou was the first Chadian playwright, Chadian literary tend to attribute Chadian literary paternity to Joseph Brahim Seid, probably because of his academic credentials: he is the first Chadian *bachelier* (high school graduate) and the first Chadian to receive a doctorate in Law from France. One finds in his life and in his work a strong regard for both the cultural heritage of Chad and the benefits of a Western education. His first published work, which is a collection of short stories, is *Au Tchad sous les étoiles* in 1962. Five years later, in 1967, he published *Un enfant du Tchad*, an autobiography. As an autobiographical piece, the piece describes Seid's school years in Fort-Lamy, now N'Djaména. The stories give a first-hand account of the writer's education and his exposure to traditional and colonial values.

Au Tchad sous les étoiles draws upon Chad's pre-colonial history. The work focuses on the genesis of the Chadian people, with reference to the kingdoms of Baguirmi, Ouaddai, Lac Fitri, among others. Seid's play is crowned with "*une conclusion morale, une leçon de tolérance, d'humilité et d'acceptation*" (a moral

message of tolerance, humility and acceptance).⁵² Like his fellow playwright Palou, Seid based his stories on oral tradition, culture, beliefs, legends, and magic occurrences, while simultaneously offering a message of peace and unity. It was a common technique of Seid to set humans and animals in relationship in a way that would dramatize positive values:

L'intention moralisatrice des contes qui mettent en scène indistinctement des hommes ou des animaux qui vivent dans une paisible coexistence, échangent leurs valeurs, se prêtent à la satire sociale et font l'apologie de vertus telles que l'équité, le courage, la beauté ou l'amour

(The moralizing intention behind the stories which stage inarticulately men or animals who live in a peaceful coexistence, exchange their values, take part in social satire and eulogize virtues such as equity, courage, beauty or love).⁵³

By applying these literary devices in his works, Seid was advocating for unity in diversity, for the drawing together of the strong and the weak.

Although there is debate over who was the first Chadian playwright, Palou or Seid, it is important to recognize the start of a tradition of dramatic writing. Antoine Bangui owns a prominent place among the second generation of African writers. His novel *Prisonnier de Tombalbaye*⁵⁴ documents his three imprisonments and serves to denounce the dictatorship of the first regime. For Bangui, questions of politics were of key importance, as he saw that violence, repression, and dehumanizing conditions continued in Chad, even after independence. He noted the continuance of the country's problems and challenges:

⁵² Bourdette-Donon 268.

⁵³ Bourdette-Donon 268.

⁵⁴ Antoine Bangui, *Prisonnier de Tombalbaye* (Paris: Hatier, 1980).

To make the distinction between “before independence” and “after independence” is something rather delicate. I don’t believe in the wall that separates the times. Times roll by in a continuous manner. What is true is that at a certain point in a person’s life there are moments that stand out. My generation lives them with the abuses of autocrats who seized power almost everywhere, in all of the African States. We saw them through a number of certain characters who let themselves go to corruption instead of being role models, the consciousness of their people. To approach this type of problem by way of a text constitutes a commitment, because the writer is, above all, a witness to his age.⁵⁵

Bangui’s struggles for human rights may have begun in his writing but they have not stopped there. He has ventured into the political arenas as well, as illustrated in the many ministerial positions he held in the same regime that incarcerated him. Reflecting his participation in this tumultuous political context, Bangui has related how he “see(s) injustice all around,” how “that human rights are not respected,” and he consequently declares that he and his people “cannot remain insensitive.”⁵⁶

Another important figure in Chadian theatre and one of the first playwrights was Baba Moustapha, a writer who shared a committed political consciousness with Bangui. Moustapha was unfortunately taken away in 1982 by premature death, at the young age of thirty. Nonetheless, he left behind an important number of plays and short stories, including *Le Maître des Djinns*, *Le Souffle de l'Harmattan* and *Makarie aux Épines*. Published posthumously in 1983, his last play, *Commandant Chaka*, is considered his masterpiece. Ute Fendler praises this work and notes its

⁵⁵ Bangui, qtd. in “Antoine Bangui or The Prisoner of Tombalbaye: Interviews by Hubert Bénadji and Debra Boyd-Buggs” in *Camel Tracks: Critical Perspectives on Sahelian Literatures*, Debra Boyd-Buggs and Joyce Hope Scott, eds. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2003) 131.

⁵⁶ Boyd-Buggs and Scott 125.

similarity to other important “literary texts by African authors.” For Fendler, *Commandant Chaka* “reflect(s), describe(s), and critique(s) a political and social reality that they [African writers] have experienced,”⁵⁷ including military coups and repressive dictatorships. Owing to the esteem in which he is held, and because of his premature death, a famous national theatre company, Théâtre Vivant Baba Moustapha (TVBM), took his name to honor him. Up to his death, Moustapha was considered one of the finest literary artists of and hopes for the country.

In examining prominent playwrights of recent years, one notes that a few have remained in Chad, while others have gained attention and advanced their careers by operating outside of the country. Koulsy Lamko is an example of the latter. For those familiar with Chadian, Togolese, Burkinabé, and Rwandan theatre and literature, the name Koulsy Lamko should not be unfamiliar. Born in Chad in 1959, he is a playwright, poet, novelist, scriptwriter, cultural entrepreneur, and actor. His writings have won him numerous literary prizes, and different theatre companies in Africa, Europe, and Canada have staged his pieces. One of the pioneers of community theatre, he helped in developing a local theatre in Burkina Faso (he later wrote of the emerging theatrical aesthetics in Africa in his doctoral dissertation, gained in Limoges, France). To Lamko’s credit are several plays, short stories and tales, poetry, essays, and a novel, *La phalène des collines*, published in 2000, which dealt with the Rwandan genocide. He has lived and worked in various

⁵⁷ Ute Fendler, “Political Power in the Burkinabe Novel: From Realistic to Mythic Representation” in *Camel Tracks: Critical Perspectives on Sahelian Literatures*. Debra Boyd-Buggs and Joyce Hope Scott, eds. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2003) 89.

African countries and in France. He currently lives in Mexico and teaches in a university there.

Nocky Djedanoum is another prominent playwright who has left Chad and gained international attention. A poet and journalist by trade, Djedanoum is one of the founding members and artistic director of *Fest'Africa*, a cultural and artistic festival held yearly in Lille, France. As an advocate for peace, and horrified by the Rwandan genocide (and shocked by the intellectuals' indifference à propos), he launched a writing residency named "*Rwanda: Ecrire par devoir de mémoire*" [Rwanda: Writing as Duty of Memory] that gathered ten writers, two filmmakers, and a sculptor in Rwanda for two years. The conclusion of this workshop has seen the publication or release of numerous literary works, films, and plays on the Rwandan experience. Djedanoum is also the founder of the *Nouveau congrès des écrivains d'Afrique et de ses diasporas* [New Congress of Writers of Africa and its Diasporas] held in N'Djamena, Chad in October 2003. In summer of 2007, Djedanoum launched a further enterprise, *Voix africaines, voix universelles* [African Voices, Universal Voices]. As with the Rwandan workshop and residency, the aim of this project was to bring African artists to eastern Chad and western Sudan, areas that had been prey to proxy wars that had cost the lives of more than 200,000. In undertaking such a mission, Djedanoum has made clear his concern for Africa and its people; he wishes to bring attention to the tragedies at play and to help bring them to an end. Winner of an award from the Simone Grac Foundation for his great contribution to Francophone African Literature, Djedanoum currently lives in France, where he pursues his literary and artistic projects.

Dorsouma Vangdar, born in N'Djamena in 1967, represents a Chadian playwright who has remained in his native country. Playwright, comedian, and stage director, he currently chairs the *Centre Tchadien de l'Institut International de Théâtre (ITI)* and the national project coordinator of culture, UNESCO branch, in Chad. He is also the director of *Théâtre Maoundoh-culture (Themacult)* and *Festival international d'art dramatique et plastiques pour l'union et la paix (Fiadpup)* [International Festival of Dramatic and Plastic Art for Unity and Peace], which is held every two years in Chad. One of his plays, *Abrasse-Afine ou la confidente* (1997), won second prize in the Lotus Contest in 1997 in Cambodia.

Despite Chad's rich and diverse cultural resources, the country still struggles to promote its theatre and literature outside its boundaries to the rest of the world. It is likely that the unstable political environment and troubled social life of the country has inhibited Chad's creative life. However, in challenging circumstances, and often with rudimentary means, many playwrights have braved all odds to publish and produce their work, receiving both national and international attention. Many excellent plays however have yet to receive attention, either in production or in print.

This draws us to an important conclusion: plays are meant to be performed on a stage and witnessed by an audience. As one theatre scholar reminds us, the "life of drama is, in fact, so intimately connected to stage performance that a single word--"theater"--is often used to refer both to plays and to the place where they are

performed and witnessed.”⁵⁸ This quote invites the question as to whether or not the theatre of Chad can nurture, support, and advance the work of its country’s playwrights.

⁵⁸ Carl H. Klaus *et al.* eds., *Stages of Drama: Classical to Contemporary Theater* (New York: Bedford, 1994) 1.

Chapter Three

Tradition and Modernity in Ouaga-Ballé Danaï's *La malédiction*

Chad is a culturally rich nation that reveals much ethnic and linguistic diversity. Numerous tribal entities have lived in the area for centuries, with their own languages and customs. In addition, Chad has felt the impact of the Muslim entry from the East, which has affected much of the nation's north. The country and its populace have further experienced colonial intrusion, as France has long exerted a powerful influence upon Chad's governance, economy, and education. The Muslim and French influence remains powerful to the present day. Chadians speak the language of both their masters (the French and the Arabs), though the populace has remained diverse in terms of its beliefs and cultural practices.

Reflective of this diverse cultural context and its pre-colonial history, Chad enjoys a strong and complex oral tradition that is demonstrated in its many folktales and legends. Most Chadians have had a sense of narrative and storytelling ingrained in them; the folktales can to them seem both highly fantastical yet close to home. Fables have been a means for Chadians to convey moral themes and transmit cultural values; examples include the tale of the dog that lived with people and that of the monkey, which rescued the hyena from the well⁵⁹ (whose moral lesson concerns wisdom and the warning not to harm one's rescuers).

In this aspect of its literature, Chadian stories offer intriguing representations of the life and outlook of its people, often illustrating a culture that

⁵⁹ Martha Kneib, *Chad* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2007) 104.

is very much different from that of their former colonists. In contrast to the sensibility of the foreigner, these works define a sense of the true Chadian. However, this very assertion raises problems and questions as to how anyone might define the true identity of the country, a “true Chad,” especially from a present-day perspective, as the country has certainly in past decades assimilated much of both the Islamic and French cultures.

Due to a range of problems, including constant political instability and a very high illiteracy rate in the country, Chad has so far failed to nurture a strong and coherent literary movement; only a few Chadian authors, including Ouaga-Ballé Danaï, have found recognition not only in their home country but in Europe as well.⁶⁰ As this study has discussed earlier, the matter of a national or literary language poses complicated questions to the Chadian writer, who must determine how to convey a sense of Chadian identity often through the vehicle of a European language. Many of Chad’s writers use French, thus making their work more available to the European audience than any other, even the people themselves of Chad. That point acknowledged, Chadian literature has maintained a significant degree of Chadian identity, representing cultural beliefs unique to its people, including practices and outlooks that might be considered taboo in the eyes of their former colonizers.

For the Chadian writer, as for African writers in general, a delicate balance is often the aim, that is, such writers face a challenging dilemma as they situate their

⁶⁰ Kneib 103.

work before different audiences. They must be wary of how their writing might operate in different ways, regarding the key categories of nationalism, exoticism, and imperialism. Many post-colonial works express a significant degree of nationalism, though problems can emerge as to how an arbitrarily defined nation (set by European dictate) can generate a national identity from a range of linguistically and culturally different communities. The writer must also be attentive to the matter of exoticism, as colonial cultures regularly expect and look forward to this element in African writing, as it heightens their sense of an engagement with a primitive “other.” How then can a work be true to local outlooks and legends without inviting the viewer/reader to categorize the work according to its exoticism? African works also walk the line regarding the degree to which they accept or renounce colonial culture -do they reject imperialism? Do they acknowledge any positives in the encounter between Africa and Europe?⁶¹ Jan Mohamed surveys this situation and correctly assesses the dilemma of the African writer:

(Colonialism) puts the native in a double bind: if he chooses conservatively and remains loyal to his indigenous culture, then he opts to stay in a calcified society whose developmental momentum has been checked by colonization. If, however, the colonized person chooses assimilation, then he is trapped in a form of historical catalepsy because colonial education severs him from his own past and replaces it with the study of the colonizer’s past.⁶²

⁶¹ Jonathan Arac & Harriet Ritvo, eds. *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995) 79

⁶² Mohamed, qtd. in Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature & the Politics of Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004) 7.

An example of this “double bind” appears in the matter of how writers deal with issues of gender. Many traditional African communities position women at a lower level than men; they are not given the same rights and opportunities. One thus finds that African narratives typically have a strong patriarchal orientation. In relation to the above, would not it be right for one to wonder: should African writers then alter this aspect in the creation of their stories? How can they remain faithful to their own culture and yet acknowledge the positives of Western liberalism?

Danaï walks this difficult line in his play *La malédiction*. The premise of the play involves traditional outlooks and tribal taboos, elements that could repel or fascinate the viewer/reader (according to degrees of exoticism and its appeal). One may question if Danaï wishes to replicate an old culture. Alternatively, has the writer taken the view of the colonizer? How does the play reflect hybridity?

The play further begs questions as to how the fictive world of the play is to be understood. Is the society that Danaï dramatizes reflective of an historical reality, or does the play simply present an imagined order? *La malédiction* places the story in a Chadian town named Sindou; however, there is no substantial “French” or “Arabic” influence in the setting. In fact, what people believe and how they behave in Sindou appears distinctly removed from any French or Islamic outlooks. One may ask if Sindou is meant to convey a “real” Chadian culture, or whether the locale serves only to create an exotic remove.

True to many post-colonial works,⁶³ there is an implicit nationalist agenda in the story. Danaï embraces a hopeful attitude for the future of Chad and the national unity of its people. While he may regard Chad's contemporary situation with honesty, aware of its imperfections and legacy of external interference, he remains positive in outlook, believing that the country can be mended, or even bettered, through a collective consciousness. Despite the messiness of the present, there are elements to embrace and affirm. In this regard, Danaï views the positives of hybridity, holding that there is no romantic return, and looks to shape what is present to make a better future.

Biography of Ouaga-Ballé Danaï:

Teacher, playwright, poet, novelist, and stage director, Ouaga-Ballé Danaï is a Chadian national who lives and works currently in Libreville, Gabon. He was born December 1, 1963 in Sarh, in the southern part of Chad, to Danaï Djoulou Kossé and Lombaye Koutou Germaine. Sarh is home to the first Chadian president and is the third largest city after N'Djamena and Moundou, the Washington, D.C. and New York of Chad respectively. Danaï attended a local elementary school before moving to N'Djamena.

In his new home, he was enrolled in a middle school from 1976 to 1979. As it appears, all seemed fine until one fateful day in February of 1979, when a *coup d'état* ousted the country's second president, General Félix Malloum N'Gakoutou. As

⁶³ Anderson 5.

with many Chadians of the time, Danaï experienced the disruption of his studies and the dislocation of his parents' employment.

In the time following the dramatist-to-be withdrew with his parents to the southern town of Kyabé where he attended a new middle school, from 1980 to 1981. As things continued to go further awry in the country, the family took residence in Sarh from 1981 to 1982. When the political tensions began to cool down, Danaï moved back to N'Djamena, where he attended the famous high school, the *Lycée Félix Éboué*, named after the French Equatorial African Governor. He eventually graduated from there with a Baccalauréat A₄ in 1984.⁶⁴

Chad's turmoil in the late seventies and eighties had a tremendous impact on Danaï's young mind. In the course of eight years, Danaï lived in four different cities and attended four different schools. However, the worse moment of Danaï's young life came when he lost his father to a land-mine explosion. This event not only marks a turning point in his life, as it would remain indelible in his memory, but it also awakened the first stirring of his muse and would prove an inspiration to his literary efforts.

Danaï has rejected the idea of "art for art's sake." For him, writing is an imperative, a means to denounce social oppression (and the absurdities it breeds) and to defend a cause. When asked about the impetus for his writing, Danaï related the following:

⁶⁴ <http://ialtchad.com/interdanai.htm>

J'ai perdu mon père très tôt dans une guerre qui ne concernait pas ma famille a priori puisque mon père n'était pas militaire. Imaginez un garçon de 14 ans qui, le matin, regarde son père partir et à qui l'on vient annoncer le soir qu'il a sauté sur une mine. Lorsque je suis parti en Côte d'Ivoire, je me suis retrouvé dans une grande solitude. Il fallait que je dise ce que j'avais sur le cœur. Le premier texte a été une thérapie, un exutoire. Je ne l'ai pas écrit dans un autre but. Il est resté une dizaine d'années dans un tiroir et puis des amis qui cherchaient une pièce à jouer m'ont poussé à l'envoyer à un éditeur. Ensuite, je me suis rendu compte que j'avais encore des choses à dire et que je pourrais continuer à écrire

(I lost my father very early in a war that did not involve my family since my father was not a soldier in the first place. Imagine a 14-year-old boy who, in the morning, sees his father go out and learns later in the evening that his father has stepped on a mine. When I went to Ivory Coast, I found myself in a great solitude. I had to say what I had on my heart. The first text was a therapy, an outlet. I did not write it for any other purpose. It stayed in a drawer for ten years and then one day, some friends who were looking for a play for a show encouraged me to send it to a publisher. Then I realized that I still have things to say and I could keep writing.)⁶⁵

From the above, it is clear that Danaï's writing followed from the personal tragedy of his family, one related to the broader tumult of his country. His experience triggered a moral and philosophical response. His outlook corresponds to the insight of the Cameroonian philosopher Ebenezer Njoh-Mouelle:

La philosophie . . . naît . . . d'une conscience angoissée, d'une conscience sommée de s'adapter à un univers devenu inhabituel, un univers dont le silence, parce qu'il nous laisse démunis, inquiète et trouble. La philosophie naît de situations troubles . . . c'est à partir du manque que nous discernons dans le réel que nous philosophons comme pour résoudre, supprimer l'insatisfaction née de la prise de conscience de ce manque ou de cette absence. La philosophie n'est pas, ne saurait être cette spéculation brumeuse détachée de la réalité et des problèmes concrets des hommes . . . L'initiative philosophique est indétachable des préoccupations. Et l'initiative philosophique ne saurait être qu'une

⁶⁵http://www.ouagaballe.com/Litterature_et_creations_tchadiennes/Blog_de_lauteur/Entrees/2006/3/24_Interview_de_lauteur_realise_par_la_revue_%22Machine_a_Feuille%22.html

intention créatrice de grande envergure à l'échelle des sociétés humaines

(Philosophy . . . is born . . . of an anguished conscience, a conscience summoned to adapt to a universe that became unusual, a universe whose silence, because it leaves us deprived, worries and troubled. Philosophy is born of troubling situations . . . it is from the lack that we discern in the real that we philosophy as if to resolve, suppress the dissatisfaction derived from the awareness of this lack or this absence. Philosophy is not, cannot be this foggy speculation detached from reality and practical problems of humans . . . This initiative is non-detachable from philosophical concerns. And philosophical initiative can only be a creative intention of large scale to human societies).⁶⁶

Though he successfully completed high school, Danaï' found himself living in a country still at war. The playwright-to-be could not gain admission into Chad's only university at the time, nor could he find work. His family did not have the adequate class standing to help him gain a scholarship to study abroad. However, with the support of his uncle, who was on staff with an airline company, *Air Afrique*, Danaï left his home country in 1985 for Abidjan, in Ivory Coast.

At the time of Danaï's arrival, his new host country was suffering under the iron rule of the dean of African dictators, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who had been in power since November 1960. It is important to see that, despite his experiences of oppression and loss, he did not lose his idealism. In his novel *Violence*,⁶⁷ Festus Iyayi depicts the terrible exploitation and violence experienced by the Nigerian populace; the novel suggests that people are obliged to answer violence with

⁶⁶ Léon Sobel Diagne, "Le problème de la philosophie africaine"
http://sfc.education.sn/IMG/pdf/LE_PROBLEME_DE_LA_PHILOSOPHIE_AFRICAINE_Leon_OK.pdf. 8

⁶⁷ Festus Iyayi, *Violence* (Essex: Longman, 1979).

violence. Danaï clearly rejects this viewpoint. He has rather chosen the power of the pen and the application of compassion over the Talion's law of "an eye for an eye." Danaï has taken the scars of wars in his Chad, the memories of the atrocities that will unfortunately follow him forever, and has used these difficulties to propel his writing. In fact, Danaï has worked to turn bad situations into good ones, as did his fellow playwright Kodbaye, whom we will discuss in the fifth chapter.

Once on the Ivorian soil, Danaï attempted to train to become a lawyer or a journalist. Unfortunately, he could not gain admission into law or journalism school in the Ivorian national University of Abidjan. Rather, he joined the department of French there. He at first did not like the program, though, unenthusiastically, he continued his studies and graduated in 1988 with a Bachelor's Degree in French literature. The following years saw him gain advanced degrees, with the successful completion of a D.E.A., or Master's Degree in 1989, a Master's in Philosophy (M. Phil) in 1990, and a Doctorate Degree (*doctorat 3^{ème} cycle*) in comparative literature. The title of his doctoral dissertation was "*Les transformations significatives des personnages de Chaka et de Soundjata au regard des réalités historiques*" (The Significant Transformations of Chaka and Soundjata Characters in the Light of Historical Realities).⁶⁸

Danaï pursued a profession in education and taught French from 1989 to 1998, at the French schools *Henri Point Carré* and *René Descartes*, both in *Bouaké*. He also taught at the *Lycée Saint-Exupéry* in Yamoussoukro. While teaching in Ivory

⁶⁸ Ouaga balle Danaï, <http://doballe.voila.net/page2/index.html>

Coast middle and high schools, he served as an assistant professor in the Department of French at the University of *Bouaké*. While he never gave an explicit reason for leaving the Ivory Coast, Danaï moved to Gabon in 1998, where he has ever since taught French at *Franceville's* high school, *Eugène Marcel Amogho*.

Besides teaching, Danaï has been quite productive in other areas, and has been prolific as a writer. It is fascinating that, even though Danaï has lived outside of his native Chad for 25 years, he remains attached to the country and still sees himself as a war victim. His play *La malédiction* demonstrates these feelings and loyalties. The play has been staged several times, in both the Ivory Coast and Gabon.

With Danaï serving as one of the stage directors with Bouaké University Theatre, *Malediction* won the second position in the twelfth National Theatre Festival for High Schools and Colleges in Ivory Coast. In addition, the Best Actress Award went to Ms. Hélène Brou for her portrayal in the lead role Myriam. The university theatre company also won the Best Directing Award the following year during the thirteenth Festival, with Danaï's second play, *L'Enfant de Frica* (*Child of Frica*). The same play, highly appreciated and commended by the jury, was shortlisted in 1998 by *Découverte RFI-Théâtre Sud*.

Since leaving the Ivory Coast and moving to Gabon, Danaï has continued teaching and directing for the stage. He was promoted the artistic director position in *Eugène Marcel Amogho* High School Theatre. A production of his third play, *La tour de poubelle* (*The Tower of Trash*), won one of his performers the second position for Best Actor in the 2001 Theatre Festival in Libreville, Gabon.

Danaï has remained an impressive public figure. He has been a motivational speaker and a counselor. In addition to his playwriting, teaching, researching, and directing, he has written numerous articles, short stories, and novels. His latest anthology, *La littérature tchadienne en quinze parcours (Chadian Literature in Fifteen Journeys)*, was published in the summer of 2010. His scholarly writing has been published in various academic journals, such as *Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Littératures Francophones (GERLIF)*, and journals sponsored by numerous universities, including the University of Cocody-Abidjan, the Universities of *Nice Antipolis* and *Chambéry* in France, and the University of *Laval* in Canada, to mention a few. He has published seven books: *La littérature tchadienne en quinze parcours* (2010), *Pour qui siffle le Moutouki?* (2008), *Je suis né en prison* (2008), *Paroles de mes regards* (2004), *Djim Zougrou* (2003), *Mon amour l'autre* (2002), and *La malédiction* (1998--a play). He currently continues with many writing projects. In addition to his professional life, he has enjoyed his family. He is a husband and father of two children.

As the Chadian playwright Danaï has enjoyed an impressive career as a theatre educator in the Ivory Coast and Gabon, it is worthwhile to note how educational theatre has grown in this area of Africa, and how it has greatly influenced a number of significant figures.

Modern sub-Saharan theatre in francophone Africa owes great deal to the William Ponty Teacher's College of Senegal and the *ENSAC* in Congo Republic. While the former was established in the early 20th century, the latter was founded in the middle of the century. It is important to note that most of the first African leaders

and statesmen who fought for the decolonization and independence of sub Saharan Africa were graduates of these schools. This number includes the late Chadian president François Tombalbaye, the respected Ivorians Félix Houphouët Boigny and Bernard Dadié, the Malian Hamani Diori, and the Burkinabé Maurice Yaméogo.

While the two colleges developed solid teaching programs, theatre received greater emphasis at the Ponty College, whereas ENSAC gave more attention to teacher training. From the beginning of Ponty's theatre program, the school promoted an African theatre in French, whose characters were of noble birth, notably chiefs, kings, and their like. These works followed the rules of tragedy and of French drama. Because the focus of the college curriculum concerned the study of local culture, it is understandable that such characters would dominate the college's stage. Also, in drawing from familiar types, from the elders and leaders of the community, who were also the guardians of tradition, the school forwarded work that was warmly received by its local audience. However, such characterizations were presented in the name of "historical interests" and "either reflected the spirit of colonial history or . . . evoked a pre-colonial past based on legends."⁶⁹ Unfortunately, such staging never aimed at questioning colonialism and its influence. In fact, as Jean-Hervé Jézéquel mentioned,

(L)oin de résister au processus d'acculturation, la majorité des Pontins vont le devancer. C'est à travers cette adhésion que l'ensemble des normes transmises à Ponty prend les dimensions d'un

⁶⁹ Jézéquel, qted in Oyin Ogunba et al., *Cahiers d'études africaines* Volume 45 Issues 177-178 (2005) 524.

ethos reconnu et revendiqué beaucoup plus qu'un simple modèle imposé par le haut et accepté de façon passive."

(Far from resisting the process of acculturation, the majority of the Pontins envision it. Through this membership, the transmitted standards of the Ponty are geared toward dimensions of an ethos recognized and claimed more than just a model imposed from above and accepted passively.)⁷⁰

As a result, many people view the William Ponty College as another ideological mechanism to alienate African intellectuals.

While the particular contribution of the William Ponty College to Africa's educational theatre may remain a point of debate, it is clear that Africa's schools and colleges have accomplished good work -and the success of the playwright Danaï stands as an exceptional case in point. His educational example and the work that he has presented point to a progressive Africa and a theatre that speaks effectively to present times.

Ouaga-Ballé Danaï's *La Malédiction*

La prophésie s'est réalisée. La malédiction m'a pourchassé. Oh! Qu'ai-je fait à la nature? ... Tu as raison. Je n'ai jamais voulu te révéler ce secret lorsque tu m'as parlé de ta mésaventure. Etsa le jeune homme de sable est ton frère ... Sindou, mon village

(The prophecy is fulfilled ... I am hunted by the curse. Oh! What have I done to nature? ... You are right. I never wanted to reveal to you this secret when you spoke of your misadventure. Etsa the young sandy man is your brother ... Sindou, my village.)⁷¹

Set in a small town of Sindou, in southern Chad in the eighties, *La malédiction* is an epic story, a narrative about family and a curse that befalls it. The play

⁷⁰ Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, "Les enseignants comme élite politique en AOF (1930-1945):

Des 'meneurs de galopins' dans l'arène politique" <http://etudesafricaines.revues.org/5458>

⁷¹ Danaï, 59.

demonstrates a symbolic or metaphorical dimension, as it shows the impact of soothsayers and a resultant curse. It is clearly not a realistic documentation of the political and social challenges of Chad. Rather the play intrigues and provokes its viewer. It perhaps functions as a kind of allegory of Chad, one that speaks to the country's colonial legacy and post-colonial future.

The basic story of the play begins when a mother falls ill and her children seek to save her. Because the mother's disease seems incurable, the children consult with a soothsayer as to what they should do. The soothsayer responds with a surprising and disturbing prescription. He suggests that the brother and sister should sleep with each other, that such an incestuous relationship is the only thing that will save the mother. Baldet, the protagonist's father, relates the following about the soothsayer:

Oui. Il y a de cela très longtemps, mère fut malade. Nous consultâmes tous les guérisseurs de la région et même au-delà. Tous échouèrent. Celui qui était susceptible de guérir mère nous dit ceci: "Seule une relation incestueuse des enfants pourrait sauver la mère". Après hésitation, nous décidâmes d'essayer le remède. Nous étions au bord du gouffre. Je couchai donc avec ma petite soeur. Hélas! Non seulement mère mourut mais tout le village apprit notre forfait. La prophétie disait que tant qu'il y aura des descendants, le phénomène se reproduirait jusqu'à extinction totale de la lignée. Pour éviter cela, je partis pour la ville, je changeai mon identité, j'oubiai mon passé.

(Yes. Very long time ago, mother was ill. We consulted all the healers of the region and even beyond. All failed. One who was likely to heal mother says this: "Only an incestuous relationship of the children could save the mother." After some hesitation, we decided to try the remedy. We were at the brink. So I slept with my sister. Alas! Mother not only died but the whole village heard of our forfeiture. The prophecy said that as long as there are descendants, the

phenomenon would recur until total extinction of the lineage. To avoid this, I went to the city, I changed my identity, I forgot my past).⁷²

Even though the brother, Baldet, sleeps with his sister, as the soothsayer has decreed, the mother dies nonetheless. It is at this point that we begin to get the sense of a curse that has befallen the family. This perception is furthered when we learn that the sister has become pregnant by her brother. Upon learning of this news, Baldet decides it is best to flee his home. He departs and subsequently changes his identity. In his new locale, he finds a wife and experiences a degree of peace and happiness. He and his wife have a child together, a daughter they name Myriam.

Although it seems that Baldet's fate has turned for the better, the "curse" will again rear its head. His daughter Myriam proves to be an independent and strong-headed woman. As she grows, she reveals her intelligence. She later decides that she would like to study overseas; she wishes to pursue electrical engineering. We see that Myriam is an unusual character, as women in Chadian and African societies are normally held as inferior citizens. Nonetheless, Myriam finds an opportunity and actually undertakes her study abroad with the support of a scholarship. However, because she is a common citizen with no influential background, the government strips her of the scholarship and gives it to one of the children of the top officials.

⁷² Danaï 59.

Hurt and humiliated by this turn of fate, Myriam joins the rebel forces and takes up arms against the government. The rebels attempt to provide resistance against government brutalities and to protect local villages from violation and massacre. Myriam comes to meet the survivor of a village that had suffered a government attack. She falls in love with this man, and they have an affair. It is at this juncture that the curse again reveals itself. It turns out that this young man is the child born to Baldet's sister--he is Myriam's half-brother. Myriam continues to carry on the family's curse in her womb. The play ends with the death of Myriam in child-birth, though the infant survives, leaving the suggestion that the curse will continue: *"(T)ant qu'il y aura des descendants, le phénomène se reproduirait jusqu'à extinction totale de la lignée"* (As long as there are descendants, the phenomenon would recur until total extinction of the lineage).⁷³

La malédiction begins with captivating and intriguing elements: the dying mother, the soothsayer/oracle, the brother and sister, and the curse. On the one hand, the dramatic situation can speak across cultural boundaries, as the children's concern for their dying mother demonstrates the universal love between mother and child. It is not unreasonable that the children should want to do their utmost to save her. As Baldet relates: *"Après hésitation, nous décidâmes d'essayer le remède. Nous étions au bord du gouffre. Je couchai donc avec ma petite soeur. Hélas! Non seulement mère mourut mais tout le village apprit notre forfait"* (After some hesitation, we decided to try the remedy. We were at the brink. So I slept with my

⁷³ *Ibid.*

sister. Alas! Mother not only died but the whole village heard of our forfeiture).⁷⁴

On the other hand, the demand of the soothsayer may bring a sense of repulsion or disbelief--how could the oracle call for such an act between brother and sister?

It is here that Danaï's play looks back in time and brings forth an exotic sense of the past. There are still many communities in the world, especially those who are not significantly Westernized, that still turn to their old ways when they want to find answers. Even with Western medicine, some communities will seek out a soothsayer, an oracle, or a "medicine man" to assist in problems or illnesses that affect their families. It is possible that even today, some soothsayers may operate in Chad. The point, however, is that such a regard for the soothsayer points to cultural practices and outlooks that have long existed in Chadian society, in times before the arrival and influence of the colonizers. Danaï introduces this element; it seems, to focus attention on a traditional form, to highlight Chad's pre-colonial past, before the arrival of foreigners.

The "solution" proposed by the oracle is certainly taboo. The suggestion of letting incest take place between the brother and sister as a means to cure the mother is an important turn for not only the story but also concerning the play's effect upon an intended audience. The practice of incest is unacceptable to most societies; however, a Western viewer might decide that such a practice could occur in a place like Chad, as it represents an exotic realm. For audiences outside of Chad,

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

the idea of consensual incest is unacceptable but, since the story does not take place in *their* society, the premise becomes a source of intrigue in itself.

In *La malédiction*, incest is initially, however, represented as a necessity. The soothsayer's command actually places the brother and sister in a heroic position, because they believe that performing the "forbidden" act with each other might save the life of their mother. Nonetheless, as is common with many dramatic twists, an act intended for the good proves the cause of a curse. The mother dies, the sister becomes pregnant, and the brother, Baldet, is banished from the town. Incest in *La malédiction* somehow does not make any sense. Unlike the common occurrence of incest, in which a violator merits punishment, we see that incest took place here with no criminal intent. The act is indeed justified by the demands of the story, though the outcome provides no sense of justice in terms of what befalls the characters of the play.

It appears as though Danaï is choosing to baffle his viewers, in that the play does not follow expectations and deliver any clear understanding. What is interesting in play's turn of events is that the "solution" does not result in expected outcomes. What is common in Western literature, and a Western viewpoint, is the expectation of a logical and reasonable unfolding of dramatic events, that events and results must be justified. That is to say that, since Baldet and his sister follow the suggestion of the oracle, it was expected that the mother would be cured. This particular aspect of the play presents a double-edged sword for the brother and sister: proceeding with the incestuous relationship might save the mother while bringing a curse upon the family.

The element of a “family curse” is evident in literatures from many different nations and societies. The Oedipus complex, which has been employed in a theoretical context that extends to father-daughter/son, mother-son/daughter, and even brother-sister, shows how complex family dynamics can be also psycho-cultural. Johnson and Price-Williams⁷⁵ argued that the Oedipus complex is universal and thus can be apparent in any family. Interestingly, the Oedipus story, like *La malédiction*, begins with an oracle and a directive meant to alter a bad and difficult situation. However, in the case of Oedipus, his act of incest occurred in a state of ignorance. It was in fact the killing of his father that brought the plague to Thebes. In Danaï’s play, the incestuous relationship is entered into willingly, as a response to the soothsayer’s demand. The two commit the act with the idea that they are doing good.

What one sees in Danaï’s work is an intended confusion. On the one hand, we understand that the playwright is drawing upon a pre-colonial order. In this respect he is emphasizing a world before the colonizer, and a cultural practice that would defy Western understanding. It thus is not surprising that the lack of reason or justice in the play would challenge the expectations of a Western viewer. On the other hand, the play often emphasizes elements that favor a Western outlook. It appears that the play attempts to straddle two worlds. We might correctly regard the play as Danaï’s attempt to understand the process of hybridity, as he explores

⁷⁵ Allen W. Johnson, Douglass Richard Price-Williams, *Oedipus Ubiquitous: the Family Complex in World Folk Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996) 71.

contradictory and complicated aspects that appear when the old and new are brought together. The function and meaning of the curse, therefore, remains difficult to pin down. What does this curse represent? Why is there a curse in the first place? How is this reflective of Chadian history, especially regarding its colonial past?

One important way of approaching the effect and meaning of the play is to look at the role and treatment of gender. How men and women relate shows much about a given society and its values.⁷⁶ In *La malédiction* we see that a traditional understanding of gender relations faces challenge and change.

Just as Danaï's play looks to the past in its use of soothsayers and the demands of an oracle, there is much in the work that points to the past hierarchies of gender relations in Africa. Much of the play is patriarchal in attitude, as there are many instances where the male has the upper hand. This male power, pride, and corruption can be seen in the scene between the director and Myriam after she has been expelled from school:

... je voudrais vous aider ... Bien sûr, je vous demanderai juste un petit service en retour . . . Voilà, que diriez-vous d'un poste de secrétaire auprès de moi, . . . être ma secrétaire. Je n'ai besoin de diplôme, je vous engage. Vous aurez pour commencer un salaire de 250.000 F . . . En contrepartie, vous travaillerez pour moi tous les week-end (sic). J'ai une maison au bord de la mer où de jeunes garçons et filles s'occupent de mes invités, illustres personnalités de ce pays.

(I want to help you . . . I ask you just a little favor in return . . . Here, how about a post of secretary . . . be my secretary. I do not need a degree from you, you are employed. You'll have to start at a salary of

⁷⁶ Lizbeth Goodman, & Alison Smith, "Literature and Gender" in *Literature and Gender*, ed., L. Goodman (London: The Open University, 1996) 4.

250,000 F ... In return you will work for me all weekend. I have a house beside the sea where young men and girls take care of my guests, eminent personalities of this country.)⁷⁷

At the same time, when Baldet is excommunicated from their village, he bears the burden of the family sin, though his sister is equally guilty. However, it should be noted that African women have not been allowed to go out in the world, and part of the sister's punishment was for her to remain home, in the female position, and take care of household affairs (though she would subsequently die during the delivery of the child). The fact that Baldet could indeed leave the village and try his fortune elsewhere indicates the superior status of men and the greater freedoms given them.

Although the play acknowledges the patriarchal tradition, there are important elements in the play that challenge patriarchal assumptions and the established relations of gender in Africa. First, we note, when Baldet and his sister decide to perform the forbidden act that the two share in the decision, each having equal weight in the matter: "Après hesitation, nous décidâmes d'essayer le remède" (After hesitation, we decided to try the remedy.)⁷⁸ Another important element is the respect and value that the children give to their mother. If the female is considered inferior by society, within this family we see a different case. Here the utmost sin is committed in order to save the life of the matriarch.

⁷⁷ Danaï 37-38.

⁷⁸ Danaï, 59.

Perhaps the playwright goes the farthest in his challenge of traditional gender assumptions in his portrayal of Myriam, who is in no way a typical African female. She is presented as a very strong woman who always knows what she wants. She challenges her male superior: « *Camarades, compagnons de quelques heures, compagnons de longue misère, écoutez! Cet homme dont vous redoutez tant la colère n'est qu'un vulgaire proxénète, un maître chanteur . . . Combien d'innocents a-t-il exploités* » (Comrades, companions of a few hours, companions of long misery, hear! This man whom you fear so much the anger is but just vulgar pimp, a blackmailer ... How many innocents has he abused)?⁷⁹

As a person, Myriam is intelligent and assertive in her actions. Her distinction from the average women of her age can also be seen in her determination to study at a university, an opportunity that many Chadian women do not have. Furthermore, it is unusual that she wants to study electrical engineering, a field that has primarily been a male domain. It is her determination that gets her the scholarship for study abroad, and, when this scholarship is taken away, she does not surrender but takes up the fight with rebel forces against the authorities. One may see Myriam as a female role model for the present day. Danaï's presentation of Myriam indicates the complexity of the play he has written; it is work that highlights pre-colonial traditions while at the same time asserting the liberation of post-colonial women.

In the post-colonial discourse, hybridity emphasizes how a new society emerges from its combined past; in the case of Chad, we see a country with

⁷⁹ Danaï 39.

indigenous cultural practices and connections put through a period of colonization under European domination, finally emerging in a time of independence as a fractured and quarrelsome state. The hope of a more prosperous future depends on how the country can best call upon and utilize the multidimensional aspects that have contributed to Chad in its current state, how to organize a future from the given conditions of the present.

It is hard to come up with a general assessment as to how and to what degree some colonies have been “Westernized.” Some show such influence in their language and religion, in how the populace has embraced the foreign cultural elements. However, it is also common to see that some societies have hung on to their traditional practices, those which are often used to determine the mark of a “true” local culture. For instance, in Chad, where French is the widely spoken language, the country does not “own” this language as it was the language of their former colonizers. The same way is true with Islam, which was introduced to the Chadian society from the outside. There are those who would argue that the “real” Chad can only be seen in the ethnicities and local languages that have been in place before these colonizers and foreigners came in.

Unfortunately, the matter is not so straightforward or simple. It is not reasonable to disregard the fact that Chad does have a French side; in the long run, the country decided to embrace the practices of their colonizers. This elicits the question as to whether Chad has given way to imperialism, or whether its society has acknowledged the “desirable culture” though it is truly not their own. Hence, hybridity emerges as an important factor in post-colonial Chad. Can one say that

Chadians who have embraced Western outlooks are somehow *less* Chadian than those who have tried to maintain a pre-colonial way of life? Identity is a critical component in this discussion, and hybridity serves as a helpful notion, as it allows for a complex and multidimensional aspect to a person's cultural background and development. As Homi Bhabha has suggested, it is impossible today to speak of a pure or authentic identity in any race, religion, gender, or society.⁸⁰

It should be noted, however, that hybridity does not suggest the *unculturing* of an "original" culture; rather, hybridity results from the historical evolution of a society. A society is never isolated, and a culture is always subject to influences outside its "original" place and condition. This phenomenon occurs today with even greater pace, as globalization exerts itself across the world. The current mixing of cultures and peoples demonstrates that the idea of a pure culture has passed.

In a sense, these questions can be seen to be symbolically integrated in African literature, and *La malédiction* is no exception. In this case, can it be said that the curse in the story is actually the curse of colonization? That the dying mother is the motherland? And that the children, in order to save the motherland, have gone to great lengths and engaged in a series of mistakes in order to achieve their goals of salvation? In this case, does the curse relate to some kind of notion of nationalism, or a Chadian "imagined community" that should be valued and protected?

⁸⁰ Bhabha, qtd. in Soo Young Chon, "Hybridity as a Mode of Postcolonial Existence in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*" *Flight from Certainty: the Dilemma of Identity & Exile*, Ed. F. (Tolron, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) 71.

One is challenged to find possible answers to such question, as the effect of *La malédiction* should have broader meanings, as the play is not simply a tragic tale where bad things happen to well-intentioned characters. Analysis can be guided by numerous factors, and one can ask the degree to which the play is actually representative of Westernization. Viewing the play from a post-colonialism perspective invites an analysis that looks at *La malédiction* according to certain concerns, specifically, those of exoticism, imperialism, and nationalism.

The previous section already highlighted how the story itself brings in elements of exoticism, that is, how the exotic remove and actions of the play might engage a viewer with an outsider perspective. In this respect, a viewer might believe that the situation presented in *La malédiction* could actually happen in Chad, that people in Chad would indeed do unacceptable things just because an oracle told them to do so. Such viewers might then “accept” the terms of the play, even though it is not representative of Western sensibilities. They might find *La malédiction* an intriguing piece, simply because it is “Chadian.”

The exotic elements, as opposed to a Western perspective, may however function differently from an insider or African outlook. For a Chadian audience, the element of the soothsayer and the curse might recall pre-colonial traditions or practices. How should a Chadian audience regard such elements? Should these elements be embraced as a part of a Chadian legacy? Do they contribute to a more authentic Chadian identity?

Such questions lead to another important matter and to deeper analysis, that is, to what extent does the play accept or reject the influence of imperialism? In

Danaï's play, one significant sign of imperialism is Myriam's desire to study abroad. This desire in some way shows that Myriam seeks an identity beyond that of traditional Chadian culture, where the typical Chadian female finds herself confined at home, being wife and homemaker. Myriam's ambition takes her outside of this frame. It asks the question of whether the influence of imperialism has come to the point where a "better culture" is defined, where better options are offered.

Myriam's desire to leave at first comes not just from the fact that she wants to study and further her education but also from her seeing and believing in something better outside of Chad because electrical engineering schools do not exist in Chad. Besides, the school she is admitted to is regional and therefore the best available, besides the fact that it offers scholarships and housing to its students. However, because of her lack of political affiliation back home, Myriam, is expelled and replaced by those whose parents are well-to-do people. Even though corruption looms large in Africa, the present case seems beyond the registrars' understanding.

He relates:

De ma longue carrière d'enseignant, je n'ai jamais eu à prendre une décision aussi difficile . . . Vous êtes parmi mes meilleurs étudiants malgré le retard accusé, surtout toi, mademoiselle Baldet. Je vous annonce avec beaucoup de regret que vous ne faites plus partie de mon école . . . Je suis désolé . . . Je ne comprends pas l'inconscience de votre ministère

(Never in my long career in teaching, have I ever made such a difficult decision . . . You are among my best students, despite the delay, especially you, Miss Baldet. I announce with great regret that you are

no longer part of my school . . . I am sorry. . . I do not understand the inconsciable outlook of your ministry).⁸¹

In addition, Myriam's ambition to study electricity is another important element, as, even in European world, that is a subject mostly studied by males. Hence, Myriam actually becomes an antithesis of anything Chadian. She can be seen as one who has endorsed aspects of imperialism. Yet, even with her modern and Western-leaning sensibilities, she is positively presented in the play. This element suggests that Danaï understands that the hope of Chad comes in looking forward, not just in retaining the past (even as this means accepting certain effects or influences of colonialism).

This tension between the traditional and imperialist legacies leads to questions about nationalism, and how Chad sees itself as an independent country. As will be discussed further, one can see how the dying mother may symbolize the motherland and how the children may represent the people of Chad trying to save their home. Another key aspect of the story, one that draws attention to the issue of nationalism, can be seen in the presence and actions of the rebels, who are trying to save the country from an abusive government. Myriam describes the atrocities of the troops:

J'ai quitté Sindou parce qu'il a été détruit. Les troupes gouvernementales avaient fait une descente comme elles se plaisaient à le dire. J'ai vu grand père implorer le pardon de soldats impitoyables, j'ai vu des cerveaux d'enfants éclatés sur les murs, j'ai entendu des mères gémir sous le boudoir de corps immondes, j'ai entendu le rire amer de soldats satisfaire leur désir diabolique sur de jeunes filles et garçons. Le

⁸¹ Danaï 22.

village fut violé, reviolé puis massacré. Le feu et le sang attirèrent les charognards.

(I left Sindou because it was destroyed. Government troops raided as they liked to say. I saw grandfather implore forgiveness from ruthless soldiers, I saw the brains of children exploded on the walls, I heard mothers groan under the bedchamber of unclean bodies, I heard the bitter laughter of soldiers satisfy their diabolical desire on young girls and boys. The village was raped, re-raped and then murdered. The fire and blood attracted vultures).⁸²

As has been demonstrated earlier, Chad's history has been filled with conflict, especially evident in the existing rift between north and south. There have also been many instances of tribal wars, which have led to the massacres of many communities. The rebels in Danaï's play here seek to protect the populace; in this regard, they are fighting for an "imagined community," one that indicates a greater whole or a common good. The rebels regard the corrupt government as a threat to this greater community. When Myriam experiences the loss of her dream, when she loses her scholarship and must look to remain at home, she understands that the withdrawal of her educational opportunity did not come from outside influence or oppression. Rather, she sees the corruption of her own government as the culprit. It is her nationalistic attitude that leads her to join the rebels. Her insight as to the abuses of her own government brings about a transformation in her. She wishes to change the present and bring a new future, a better nation, which has moved beyond conflict, corruption, injustice, and inequality.

Although these events in Myriam's life can be understood in terms of her personal loss, and how this loss shapes her own identity and purpose, the efforts she

⁸² Danaï 46.

undertakes to protest her situation lead to broader concerns. In some respect, Myriam's joining with the rebels shows that she is not simply avenging an injustice that affected her personally, but that she is seeking to save her "dying mother," that is, the country and community of Chad.

Danaï's play, like the work of most post-colonial writers, cannot discount or avoid an acknowledgement of their former colonizers. In fact, the introduction of a new culture has proven a source of creativity for many artists not only in Chad but also in the rest of Africa. This "dying mother," we find, may be seen as a symbol, a hybrid of nationalism and imperialism, as an image of Chad itself. But how then should one understand the curse? What is to be done regarding the cycle of problems that it has generated?

The curse in the play works in an ambiguous and unpredictable manner. It seems a coincidence that Myriam would have an affair with her rebel-lover, only to discover him as her half-brother. Although Myriam's involvement with her lover/brother is not forced or demanded by an oracle--they are united by a common cause: to fight the government and to save the "dying" motherland--it seems that the curse has followed her and brought sorrow into her life.

As we witness the effects of the curse, we see how it creates a vicious cycle, one that the characters cannot escape. It is not clear how we should understand the curse. Is it colonialism? Is colonialism the curse that killed the motherland and brought conflict to Chad's people? Is the curse Westernization? How should we in fact assess the curse, if we regard the family as a symbol of Chad, and even of other

African countries? Or is the curse to be understood as an attachment to tribal traditions, to the ways of a pre-colonial Chad?

Finally, the play does not give a settled conclusion nor does it explain how the curse should be understood. However, there are various aspects of the curse, which point to various dilemmas experienced by the Chadian populace. It is this multidimensional aspect of the curse that may shed the most light, as it points to the problems of negotiating the complexities of a post-colonial world.

On one level, the curse may relate to a matter of attachment. The play does not give a clue as to how this curse is resolved, though it may reveal how the characters give themselves to certain ideas or attachments. One may conclude that the curse has to do with the inability of the family members to “let go.” This is not to say that they do not value the “dying mother” and what she represents, but as she was dying from an incurable disease one might have considered her a lost cause. It may then be troubling that the brother and sister would be willing to go to such extremes, that they would take such desperate measures that could do great damage to each other. Might it be possible to here consider the dying mother the dying traditions of pre-colonial Chad? Does the play suggest that holding too closely to such traditions can effectively be similar to suffering a curse?

With no clear resolution, *La malédiction* causes one to reflect. Is the curse an attachment to tribal traditions? Or is the curse simply related to the matter of living in a post-colonial world, where something is always dying and something is always being born? If the latter view is true, the populace of Chad seems to be caught in a vicious cycle. The origins of the curse are unknown but that does not alleviate the

problems they encounter. Or is the curse Africa itself? There are those like Myriam who try to get out, but cannot do so. It appears as though she is “cursed” to remain at home, where a corrupt government reigns. If one sees the curse in this light, one might heed the advice of a character in Ben Okri’s novel *The Famished Road*: “The only way to get out of Africa . . . is to get Africa out of you.”⁸³ Does Myriam believe such a view, that escaping Africa is the only way to escape the curse? Does Danaï himself endorse such a harsh imperative?

While the play offers no clear definition of the curse and gives no real explanation of how the viewer should interpret it, it seems that Danaï is in no way suggesting that the populace turn its back on Africa, that the only solution to the curse is in leaving Africa altogether (or in denying aspects of African heritage). It is important to look at the ending of the play and to assess what light it may bring to understanding Danaï’s work. *La malédiction* ends as follows:

The white man said my race was cursed
The black man said the poor was cursed
My village said my family was cursed
And we always accept it
We always believe that curse is congenital
We are all cursed and therefore there is no cursed
White, Yellow, Red, Black, we are all cursed.⁸⁴

This play ends with a poetic and philosophical conclusion. It makes numerous accusations, but it also offers a final note of reconciliation. The first line, “The white man said my race was cursed” points to the imperialist aspect of the

⁸³ Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (London: Heineman, 1991) 483.

⁸⁴ Ouaga-Ballé Danaï, *La malédiction* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998) 54.

play. The white man looks down upon any other race or people and has no qualms about conquering them. He thus feels justified in taking advantage of their resources. The next line, "The black man said the poor was cursed," suggests that the poor are the lowest of all. Even the black man, who is "cursed" according to the white man, looks to see someone else who is "below" him. The line that follows, "My village said my family was cursed / And we always accept it," points to the dynamics of a social order, where place and hierarchy determine how members relate to one another. Also, the line indicates how many accept their treatment and their subordinate position. However, the concluding line takes a different thrust and serves to counteract what has just gone before: "We are all cursed and therefore there is no cursed/White, Yellow, Red, Black, we are all cursed." One notes that the early lines of the play's conclusion focus on difference and what determines the curse or prejudice that separates people--some believe they are better than others; some believe they are worse. However, the passage sweeps away all difference. It concludes that being cursed is "congenital," that it is something we all share.

What is evident in this philosophical closing is a Universalist intent. The early lines of the passage focus on difference, between Africa and Europe, between rich and poor, between white, yellow, red and black. These differences inform lines of division which cause each one to see the "other" as the cursed. The ending thus criticizes any colonial outlook, which would see one as privileged and another as inferior. In concluding that all are cursed, differences are leveled, and the suggestion follows that we are equals, all faced with sorrow and suffering.

La malédiction is a play that is challenging to analyze. It is a literary achievement, which does more than tell the tragic story of Baldet's family. It brings up a number of challenging questions and unsettling viewpoints. The play seems to honor past tradition and pre-colonial culture; yet, it also gives positive aspect to certain elements of Europe. The play seems to succeed, not as a polemic, but as a symbolic and representative presentation of the post-colonial realities in Chad.

This aspect of Danaï's play brings to mind the insights of Simon Durang's⁸⁵ work upon the function of literature and nationalism. On a basic level, despite other intentions they may have, writers understand that their works have political dimensions, and that they may act as political weapons, especially when it comes to conveying important messages to the society. One fascinating aspect of *La malédiction* is that it can be seen as having been written for both a Western and a local Chadian audience, with implicit messages aimed at both. The play suggests that Europe should recognize and acknowledge the damages of the colonial legacy, that it should not just see the work as an example of African exoticism. In addition, *La malédiction* challenges the motivations and outlooks of Chad and other African countries. The play invites them to gain a better understanding of what the colonial times meant to them, its impact, and how the current hybrid state of the region is instrumental in any future rise from Africa's difficult current conditions.

⁸⁵ Simon Durang, "Literature--Nationalism's Other? The Case for Revision" in *Nation and Narration*, ed., H. Bhabha, (London: Routledge, 1990) 138.

Many of the conflicts in Africa are internal and can be seen as power plays and rivalries that are self-made. What this brings to mind are the incestuous children of the story and their suspect actions, where were meant to build up and heal the mother/land. The play thus acts for Africa to look at itself, its past traditions, its corrupt governments, and its efforts in bringing progressive change. Indeed, *La malédiction* does more than tell the story of taboo in Chadian society and the misfortunes of a family; the play shed light on the recent realities the country and the problems that Chad and its neighbors have been facing all these years.

Chapter Four

Social and Political Oppression in Maoundoé Naindoubá's *L'Etudiant de Soweto*

"Homo homini lupus" or "man is a wolf to man," points to the regrettable occurrence of man's inhumanity to man. This popular Roman proverb, first stated by Titus Maccius Plautus,¹ still resonates in the contemporary world, especially in Africa. Looking back, however, one sees that oppression has long been present in Africa's history. Bible stories tell of the harsh rule of the pharaohs. Later on, the continent fell prey to a series of invasions and colonizations, some of which were inflicted by the Arabs, others by the Europeans. Much of Africa's recent history has been shaped by the struggles of its people to gain freedom, and to prosper in a condition of independence. The pattern of conflict and colonization explains why the political map of the African continent has undergone almost constant change. Harm J. De Blij reminds us: "Since 1946, colonies and protectorates have become independent states, boundaries have been drawn and redrawn, and federations have been formed and failed."² Just this last July South Sudan became officially recognized as Africa's 54th country.

Chad has unfortunately been a part of Africa's history of oppression. As discussed earlier, the country of Chad came about as a result of European determination; the Berlin Conference established the map of the country, uniting diverse peoples in its boundaries. Martha Kneib, who describes Chad as "one of the

¹ <http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc21.html>

² Harm J. De Blij, *Africa South* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962) 3.

least known countries in Africa, despite having a rich history,” emphasizes “Chad’s location at the cross road of the Sahara desert and Central Africa [which] has made it a land where people have passed through, met, settled, and resettled for many centuries.”¹ Chad’s location in part explains why Chad was and still is a country where different cultures meet and unite. Its geography has made it a primary location for settling--and for colonizing.

It is against this backdrop of colonization and oppression that the current chapter is set. While Chapter Three focuses on some of the fundamental issues that have been detrimental to the modern development of Chad, matters such as traditions and curses, incest, and limitations for women, this chapter examines the theme of political oppression and the call for an open democratic society, where race does not make one a second-class citizen. This chapter focuses on the Chadian playwright Maoundoé Naïndouba, whose work draws attention to the political troubles that have affected Africa, and, of course, Chad itself.

Biography of Maoundoé Naïndouba

Oldest child of nine (two boys and seven girls), Maoundoé Naïndouba was born on May 19, 1948 in Bénouye, in the *Prefecture of Logone Occidental* (in the south of Chad). His father was Thomas Naïndouba, a county administrative clerk, and Tabita Toranguel, a housewife, was his mother. At four years of age, Naïndouba

¹ Kneib 103.

witnessed colonial genocide in the nearby town of Bébalem, where people were killed after rejecting the colonial candidate to chieftaincy. This bloodshed would remain indelible in his mind and would inform his literary career.²

As violence continues to exist in Chad today, it is not fortuitous. This is not because Chadians are warriors; rather, such violence traces back to the colonial era and the sway held over the populace. Marielle Debos describes the horrors perpetrated by the French colonial soldiers:

At Bébalem, in the Logone, the results of local elections are challenged by supporters of Gabriel Lisette: the PPT (Parti Progressiste Tchadien cofounded by the first Chadian President) has lost. When the peasants mobilize and demonstrate armed with blades, the colonial authorities decide on the dispatch of two companies of colonial infantrymen. Between 120 and 150 men enter Bébalem on April 16, 1952. They fire on the crowd: there are 24 death (sic) according to the historian Bernard Lanne . . . , 70 according to the circle of the canton chief, and 375 according to survivors met by Elie Ndoubayidi Dionmadji . . . The leaders are arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.³

Such instances of violence in Chad and the struggles of its early years of independence would play heavily in determining Naïndouba's literary career.

Herbert R. Lottman has explained, *"l'écrivain engagé est celui (ou celle) qui, s'appuyant sur une oeuvre déjà conséquente, a placé son nom, respecté et admiré, au service d'une cause"* (a committed writer is one who places the respect and

² I received Naïndouba's bibliographic information through both email and telephone conversation with his oldest son, Eric Naïndouba who lives in Chad. Along with his younger brother Serge Naïndouba, they have founded "Association Maoundoé Naïndouba" (Maoundoé Naïndouba Association) in Moundou, Chad.

³ Marielle Debos, « Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence -Chronological Index: Chad 1900 – 1960 » <http://www.massviolence.org/Chad-1900-1960?artpage=8-12>

admiration his name has accrued in the service of a cause).⁴ It is clear that Naïndouba follows in this tradition of writing, as his works have strong political themes and seek the betterment of the Chadian populace.

One of the strong elements of Naïndouba's life story has been his love of and commitment to learning. He began his education in October 1956, and started elementary school at the age of eight in his home town of Bénouye. Six years later, in the spring of 1962, Naïndouba graduated from elementary school with a CEPE, an elementary school certificate and one of the two requirements to gain admission into middle school. The following year in 1963, Naïndouba passed the *concours d'entrée à l'école secondaire*, the common entrance, and joined the *Lycée Adoum Dallah* of Moundou, one of the five secondary schools of the time. Inherited from France, Chadian educational system demands 6 years in elementary school, 4 years in middle school, 3 years in high school, and 3 years in college for the bachelor degree. In 1968, when Naïndouba earned his BEPC, a middle school certificate, he at the same time successfully passed a professional exam and joined SPENSAC, a prep section of the famous Teacher's College for Central Africa in Brazzaville, Congo in 1968-1969. SPENSAC is to French Equatorial Africa as the William Ponty Teacher's College of Senegal is to French West Africa.

With his teacher's degree in hand, Naïndouba sat for his baccalauréat A₄, which he eventually passed in 1970. Following that year, he enrolled in ENSAC (a

⁴ Herbert R. Lottman, *L'Ecrivain engagé et ses ambivalences: De Chateaubriand à Malreaux* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2003) 7-8.

higher level of SPENSAC) in the departments of History, Geography, and French. In 1972, he graduated from the college with distinction and, as a result, was promoted to the graduate level. Due to circumstances beyond his control, however, it was almost ten years later, in 1980-1981, before he graduated with his CAPEL, a high school teacher's degree in History.

Poet, novelist, playwright, teacher, and school administrator, Maoundoé Naïndouba is married and has fathered nine children (eight boys and one girl). His first marriage was to Honorine Koumbaye Maihoudou and was celebrated on September 11, 1971 in Moundou. She later became a nurse and currently works as a superintendent at the Regional Hospital of Moundou. After many years of marriage, the couple divorce. On March 7, 1992, he married his second wife, Martine Khadidja, presently an elementary school teacher in N'Djaména, Chad's capital.

Naïndouba was obviously talented as a child and benefitted from his contact with civil service workers, as his father was an administrative clerk in the sous-prefecture of Bénoué. In that time, few Chadians were civil servants, especially in the administration office. The young Naïndouba met many employees, including Europeans, especially the French. With his exposure to workers who would only communicate to each other in the French language, Naïndouba gained in his proficiency with French and learned the language than most of his classmates and relatives. Owing to the fewer number of schools in the country at the time, the educational system was not as corrupt as it is today. Most of the teachers then were French people.

With this background, Naïndouba received a solid educational foundation. I can imagine him at home at night, under the moonlight, or flickering oil lamp, doing his assignments or showing his notebooks (textbooks were rare commodities) to his father. He enjoyed his studies and undertook writing. While in high school, he wrote poems and short stories (all of which were lost to the civil wars); he also wrote sports stories as he covered live soccer games. These early natural gifts would later blossom in his impressive literary career.

A trained teacher, Naïndouba chiefly made his living in education. He taught and managed various school establishments in Chad. From 1972 to 1973, he taught in the CEG (Middle School) de Fianga, the prefecture of Mayo Kebbi, in southwest Chad. The following year, he was transferred to another middle school in the same Prefecture, where he taught for two years. The following three years would see him carrying out his teaching duties in Bénoye, his native land.

Another three years (from 1978-1981) Naïndouba taught in Moundou, Chad's economic capital at the CEG de Moundou. Those years were crucial to Chad's history. In February 12, 1979, a civil war broke out in N'Djaména, Chad's capital, and this event would have political and economic repercussions on the country to this very day. Many of those years were lost to war, and Chad struggled greatly.

It was due to this tumultuous situation in his own country, and not being able to publically denounce it, that Naïndouba therefore set his *chef-d'oeuvre*, *L'Etudiant de Soweto* in South Africa. The play won the first Grand Prize of the ninth Inter Theatrical Contest organized by *Radio France International (RFI)* in 1978.

Naïndouba's political sensitivities were also heightened by a frightening personal experience. While making a trip to Libreville in Gabon, the playwright was one night ambushed, beaten, and almost killed by anonymous culprits. I was a senior in Bénouye middle school when Naïndouba relocated there in 1983. I had the chance to personally meet this great man a couple of times, and I heard him speak to my class about the incidence that almost cost him his life in Libreville. According to the writer, the attack had been ordered by Chadian authorities; this was due to the fact that *Pour un baril de pétrole*, one of Naïndouba's plays had made harsh criticisms of the regime.

For the next six years (1984 – 1990), Naïndouba experienced much transition. He transferred to teach at *Lycée Adoum Dallah de Moundou*. From 1990 – 2001, he taught at Lycée Félix Eboué in N'Djaména. The next year, he became a librarian in the same school, but would relocate the next school session in 2002 to be the principal of Moundou CEG, a position he will hold until his death on January 13, 2003; he died of a heart attack in his office. Maoundoé Naïndouba is survived by nine children (eight boys and one girl) and eight grandchildren (five boys and three girls).

Naïndouba is credited with many plays, novels and short stories, most of which, however, remain unpublished. This is understandable in a country like Chad, where the culture of reading and writing are not encouraged. Naïndouba nonetheless left behind him a rich body of work. All of his plays have been staged and well received: *L'Etudiant de Soweto* (published in 1981); *Pour un Baril de Pétrole* (*For a Barrel of Gas*--an unpublished play), *fièvre jaune* (*Yellow fever*, an

unpublished play that won Second Prize at *Centre Dombao* of Moundou in 1979). The play was also shortlisted by RFI in 1980. *Le lion du Drakensberg* (*The Lion of Drakensberg*), a play written in 1988 has yet to be published. His last play “*D*” *comme désastre* (“*D*” as in *Disaster*) written in 1996 is unpublished as well.

Naïndouba did not only write plays but a number of novels and short stories. He wrote three novels; unfortunately, none of them has been published so far. His first novel dates back to 1990, *On l'appellera Désiré* (*He will be called Desiré*). The second, *Un Arc-en-ciel pour une saison sèche* (*A Rainbow for Dry Season*) was written in 1992, and the third was completed four years later in 1996 under the title *Ah! Sacré Silvin Gondjé* (*Ah! Silvin Gondjé*).

The playwright's short stories include *Double Détresse* (*Double Distress*), published in the collection “*Les dix nouvelles de . . .*” The story won first prize for the best short story in the French language in 1973. Another short story, *Le Puits hanté* (*Haunted Well*) won second prize and was published in the short story collection “*Les dix nouvelles de . . .*” *La lèpre* (*Leper*) and *Les uns et les autres* (*One Another*), both unpublished, were written in 1979 and 1994 respectively.

As seen in various works, Naïndouba brings light to issues that threaten and endanger the people of Chad. Though his writing might seem harsh, it aims to help improve the lot of the downtrodden, who have no one to come to their rescue. His work reminds the rulers of their obligation, of creating a fair and safe environment for all. Unlike Soyinka's “*tigritude*,” that aims at pouncing on the prey and devouring it, or the three fathers' “*négritude*,” which looks at the past with remorse, Naïndouba

seeks to locate the identity and hope of Chad in the mixture of the present, where tradition and modernity create new possible relations.

Analysis of Naïndouba's *L'Etudiant de Soweto*

Maoundoé Naïndouba has proven himself as a playwright concerned with oppression and political injustice. His play *Pour un baril de pétrole (For a Barrel of Oil)* demonstrates how oil countries in Africa poorly negotiate their contracts and sell their resources at a very cheap rate. He writes of how for each barrel of oil there is Chadian blood that is shed. He criticizes foreign oil companies (who take advantage of African countries) and the African governments that do not look out for the welfare of their people. In another play, *Yellow Fever*, he draws attention to the few elites in Chad, especially the warlords, who embezzle public funds and leave the majority to languish. It is clear that Naïndouba holds African leadership responsible for their self-interest and for the problems that brings. He also argues for the rights of the populace and an open and fair democratic system.

This chapter will give primary attention to Naïndouba's play *L'Etudiant de Soweto*⁵ (*The Student from Soweto*), which deals with the legacy of the Boers⁶ and their suppression of human rights. It is not surprising that a major element of this play is the practice of apartheid. In 1948 South African law institutionalized

⁵ Maoundoé Naïndouba, *L'Etudiant de Soweto* (Paris: Hatier, 1981).

⁶ The Boers –farmers in Dutch- were people who settled in the Transvaal region of South Africa in the 17th century ... credited with the institutionalized racism, which came to be known as apartheid in South Africa. Boers were originally from Netherlands, but they can also be found in Germany, France, Ireland, England, Wales, Spain, Poland, Italy, and numerous other places.

apartheid as “racial discrimination, territorial separation, and police repression.”⁷

As this legislation became law, the unequal relations between black South Africans and their white counterparts became legal. Inhuman and oppressive living conditions became a fixed reality for the black populace. Though apartheid affected South Africa, it should be noted that most of the continent has been at some time under Western colonization and different forms of oppression. This condition has brought general turbulence and frustration, which only contributes to Africa’s social, political, and economic instability.

Geographically, linguistically, and culturally, Chad and South Africa, however, do not at first glance have too much in common. Why then did a Chadian playwright write a play, in the French language, which is set in South Africa, situated over 3,195.1 miles away?⁸ Why would Naïndouba write about apartheid in South Africa, while his own country was politically on fire?

The choice by Naïndouba to set his play *L'Etudiant de Soweto* in South Africa is not coincidental. To the contrary, this choice of locale reinforces the fact that the issues faced by South African people were similar to those faced by the rest of Africa. One cannot identify any African country that has not in some way felt the wrath or intrusion of Western colonization. Apartheid thus stands as a cruel example of the general oppression experienced by the continent.

⁷ “The History of Apartheid in South Africa” in <http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html>.

⁸ <http://www.distancefromto.net/distance-from/Chad/to/South+Africa>

Another factor plays into Naïndouba's decision to locate his play in South Africa. The 1976 Soweto incidences motivated black African writers to address apartheid, but the events also served as a justification for the denunciation of social injustice in their own countries. At that time, most African countries were under the iron grip of dictators, and oppression was common. Guy Ossito Midiohouan comments:

Et bien que les régimes les plus répressifs du continent se fussent sentis diplomatiquement obligés de dénoncer la violence aveugle du pouvoir politique sud-africain, Soweto est devenu un symbole; le symbole d'une Afrique qui souffre et qui saigne mais qui lutte sans relâche pour sa dignité

(And even though the most repressive regimes of the continent felt diplomatically compelled to denounce the absurd violence of political power in South Africa, Soweto has become a symbol; the symbol of an Africa that grieves and bleeds yet tirelessly fights for its dignity).⁹

Midiohouan goes on to make a crucial point about the strategy of many African writers:

Dans l'impossibilité de parler de la situation politique dans leurs propres pays, les dramaturges africains trouvent dans Soweto un exutoire, ce qui peut être considéré de prime abord et à juste titre comme une fuite vers un ailleurs. Mais en réalité non seulement la souffrance des Noirs sud-africains leur permet d'évoquer la souffrance de leur peuple de façon allusive mais encore il apparaît que la situation qui prévaut aujourd'hui en Afrique du Sud n'est pas sans rapport avec la situation politique globale du reste de l'Afrique

(Unable to talk about the political situation in their countries, African playwrights found in Soweto an outlet, which can be considered at first and rightly so, as an escape to another place. However, in reality not only the suffering of black South Africans allows them to evoke and allude to the suffering of their people but it also appears that the

⁹ Guy Ossito Midiohouan, "Le théâtre Nègro-Africain d'expression française depuis 1960" *Peuples Noirs Peuples Africains* no. 31 (1983) 54-78
http://mongobeti.arts.uwa.edu.au/issues/pnpa31/pnpa31_04.html

prevailing situation in South Africa is not unrelated to the overall political situation in the rest of Africa).¹⁰

Midiohouan's insights help us understand one reason for Naïndouba's decision to set his play in South Africa, that is, he could point his criticism to the political situation there, without making any direct statement about the oppressive conditions of Chad. In this way, he could better protect himself against any retaliation from political leaders in his own country.

Naïndouba's focus on the political dimension places attention on the historical problems of Chad, and of African generally; the play is an avenue to explore Europeanization of the region. The political focus of the play also begs questions about the future of Chad and its political progress. It is here that we may bring in the matter of hybridity.

Because different cultures have their own myths, cultural habits, and forms of organization, often spanning hundreds of years, the coming together of two cultures may create a clash or conflict. Nevertheless, such encounter may also result in new forms of cultural or political expression.¹¹ African playwrights have struggled with issues stemming from colonialism, racial segregation and their after-effects. They have tried to advocate for the interests of Africa, so that the voice of the oppressed and marginalized might be heard. But other influences of Europe have also been palpable. The playwrights have learned of ideals of human rights

¹⁰ Midiohouan 65-66.

¹¹ Ashcroft 118.

and democracy. How can a new Africa retain a sense its cultural traditions and reject the effects of colonialism, while embracing the values of Western democracy?

For a successful Africa, Naïndouba sees the need for hybridity, which involves blending African and Western cultures to birth a new Chad and a new Africa, devoid of political opportunists and predators, where people might be judged according to their work and character, and not based on nepotism, favoritism, or any other kind of social privilege. He also dreams of a Chad where ballots triumph bullets, where right corrects wrongs, and where democracy overcomes dictatorship. Like the two other playwrights under study, Naïndouba in essence advocates justice for all. He is against “justice for some,” for those who are able to make deals or call upon political favor. We see the playwright’s concern in the thoughts and actions of the play’s protagonist, who chooses resistance as a way to counteract bias and injustice.

Naïndouba’s focus on political equality connects to matters of leadership and forms of governance; it also brings up questions about the nation, how to rule the nation, how even to help the populace see themselves as a nation. What Chad needs and Africa generally, is strong, honest, and competent leadership. True leadership requires high qualities. Good leaders are those whose regard for their country transcends their selfish interests. Unfortunately, such leaders are virtually absent in Africa. Those who attempt to promote change and political equality often become *de facto* the enemies of Europe, as they challenge governments that Europe has installed.

Beyond the matter of effective leaders, the idea of the nation, or belonging to a nation, can play a strong role in affecting the populace. However, in Chad this concept for some remains unclear. For many Africans, “even geographical coherence” as Wole Soyinka relates, “within any arbitrarily elected measure of contemporaneity, does not appear to offer any certitudes.”¹² To what degree do Chadians feel a connection to their country and its government? Do they see themselves as citizens of a nation?

Many Chadians may have little interest in nationalism, since those at the top have the most wealth and power and the majority have little to nothing. Until recently, notions such as nationalism and patriotism have been but shallow concepts in most African countries, especially the former French colonies. For an allegiance to the nation to form, and for the idea of the nation to become a reality in the minds of many Africans, a movement must come from the top, that is, from enlightened leadership that has the interests of the populace at heart. It takes sacrifice to change a situation, to make people believe in an unseen realm--an invisible connection between citizens. Nation and nationalism are often too abstract of concepts, and therefore alien to Africa.

Many in Chad might on some level question what makes a nation. They may wonder as to “when are all the conditions present that make a nation.”¹³ Soyinka

¹² Soyinka 21.

¹³ *Ibid.* 19.

emphasizes that something dramatic must occur to help bring this sense of cohesion:

If we choose to confront reality . . . many nations on the African continent are only in a state of limbo, that they exist in a halfway space of purgatory until, by mundane processes or through dramatic events, their citizens are enabled to raise the nation reality to a higher level . . . ¹⁴

It may be that African countries need a powerful event to achieve a sense of national unity. Or it may be that a commitment to the nation can only come when oppressions have been overturned, and when the populace feels that it has a role and a voice in direction of the country, when dictatorship has been replaced by democracy.

Chadians may take courage in the sudden revolutions in the nearby region. Could the hunger for democracy that has begun to sweep the Arab world carry a message of hope for sub-Saharan African people? Could the new wave of “street democracy,” where empty-handed citizens face heavily armed police, come to sub-Saharan Africa, as it has to Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, etc.? While Naïndouba’s play was written some time ago, its spirit would be with such democratic uprisings. The play is a call for justice and for the renunciation of racial division. This plea for a South African without apartheid is also a plea for a Chad without oppression.

Play Synopsis and Analysis of Themes

L'Etudiant de Soweto (The Student of Soweto) revolves around the Soweto uprising of 1976. Naïndouba’s play gives a forceful expression to frustrations and

¹⁴ Soyinka 23.

yearnings of many Africans who felt oppressed by the political systems of their countries. As Pius Andesanmi declares:

Any attempt to apprehend literary and cultural flows between the Republic of South Africa and the rest of the African continent in the 20th century must take into account the manner in which the narrative of *apartheid*¹⁵ constructed the notions of space and boundary.¹⁶

L'Etudiant de Soweto takes up the issue of apartheid and challenges the notion that native Africans should experience limitations and exclusions in their own country. This unfair policy of discrimination on the mere basis of race compelled many African writers to clamor for a moral response to this legal practice. They also sought to draw attention to the more general effects of colonization, how Europeans had moved the natives from their homes and seized their land, which they had tilled and taken care of for hundreds of years. Natives thus found themselves aliens in their homeland. Writers such as Naïndouba felt the obligation to write about and protest this situation. As Taylor and Francis have pointed out, such "Black artists . . . are writers of conscience [and] they have responded to their people's needs and to the true creative urge within them . . ."¹⁷ Through plays depicting unfair policies such as that of racial segregation, African writers attempted to gain the attention of the international community, in hope that

¹⁵ Roger B. Beck, *The History of South Africa* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 125. The term "*apartheid* in Afrikaans means 'apart-ness' or 'separate-ness'."

¹⁶ Pius Adesanmi, « Literature Across Boundaries », *Cahiers d'études africaines* [En ligne], 158 | 2000, mis en ligne le 02 mai 2003. URL : <http://etudesafricaines.revues.org/173>, 2.

¹⁷ "Briefings," *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 7, Special Issue on South Africa (Sep. - Dec., 1976) 113-114.

external pressure might help alleviate the suppression of human rights in the African regions.

The power and impact of Naïndouba's play has been significant, and the work received an enthusiastic reception from the outset. The first production of *L'Etudiant de Soweto* won the Grand Prize of the ninth Inter Theatrical Contest organized by Radio France International (RFI). Praise for the work came from all over Africa. Christian Matingou, a student from what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, affirmed that the play "shows that Blacks are brave men, that they can do something. It teaches us the love of neighbor, the sacrifice."¹⁸ Landu Makiese M'Banzulu responded that "*Cette pièce est un vibrant appel lancée au monde pour que tous les peuples viennent au secours des opprimés. Le drame est bien conçu et raconté d'une manière touchante. Mention spéciale pour les interprètes*" (This play is a heartfelt appeal to the world for all people to come to the rescue of the oppressed . . . The drama is well conceived and told in a touching manner).¹⁹

The story of *L'Etudiant de Soweto* is powerful and unsettling, as its central character demonstrates an unwillingness to accept a limited status in his society. Mulubé is a student leader in Soweto, who, like Myriam in Danaï's *La malédiction* and Mayo in Kodbaye's *Un vent d'Est*, resists the powers of authority. He refuses to live by the unfair dictates of his government.

¹⁸ Ibid., 83.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The dramatic tension of the play comes from Mulubé's decision to challenge the Bantu Education Authorities. In opposition to the recently passed legislation that would block black students from a full education, Mulubé organizes a student strike and challenges the authorities, effectively defying the white segregationist regime of Pretoria.

The background to the story involves an educational provision made into law in 1976. While the national government of Pretoria had passed legislation in the forties to "institutionalize" apartheid, this measure, taken some thirty years later, aimed at closing the black population out of the classroom. Unhappy that native students were following curricula in English, the regime decided to reform the educational system, by legislating that black students could only be taught in South African local languages. The impact of this legislation was explosive. "In 1976, the South African Government declared a State of Emergency. For the next thirteen years, the schoolchildren adopted a campaign of resistance. Over 750 were killed, over 10,000 arrested, many more tortured and assaulted."²⁰

Naïndouba's central character chafes under this injustice and believes that such an educational practice would only further reinforce apartheid and its insistence on "separate development."²¹ Mulubé understands that this kind of educational exclusion would limit the political and economic possibilities of the black populace. By "studying in his already very poor mother tongue," Mulubé

²⁰ This excerpt is taken from *Sarafina*, a 1992 movie set in South African that featured Whoopi Goldberg.

²¹ Naïndouba 19

argues, "the Negro will be able only to manipulate the broom, the pick, or the spud bar."²²

Upon learning the news of this discriminating legislation, Mulubé meets with his student colleagues involved in the Student Government of Soweto. They cheer him with great enthusiasm and unanimously call for a student protest--they are determined to see that the regime reverses this legislation. However, when Mulubé informs his parents about the student organization and its decision, he finds no encouragement. His father tries to persuade him not to carry through with the protest, and his mother goes into a lamentation. His father, Bakuolé, declares: "*Cette grève se soldera par un échec, comme toutes les autres grèves jusqu'ici tentées par les Nègres: fusillade, arrestations*" (This strike will end in failure, like all other strikes so far attempted by the Negroes: shooting, arrest).²³ Still, Mulubé does not turn back; he remains united with his colleagues as though by a blood pact.

Though Mulubé's family does not support his decision, he is encouraged by the father of a acquaintance, a female student who (like Myriam in Danaï's *La malédiction*) seeks to pursue an advanced education. When he tells Papa Andrew, the student's father, about the upcoming protest, he is skeptical though encouraging. Mulubé explains the damaging consequences that the legislation would have on the black South Africans in general and his daughter in particular--she would have to yield her dream of gaining equality to the whites and the possibility of achieving an

²² Naïndouba 20.

²³ Naïndouba 35

advanced education. Mulubé states: “*Ta fille a raison de pleurer, Andrews. Oui, avec les nouveaux programmes, elle ne pourra jamais devenir la femme qu’elle voudrait tant devenir, c’est-à-dire celle qui égale la femme blanche en savoir. Tu comprends, maintenant*” (Your daughter is right to cry, Andrew. Yes, with the new programs, she will never become the woman she would like to become, that is to say, equal to the white woman in knowledge. Do you understand now)?²⁴ Though troubled by what he has witnessed of oppression, he nonetheless gives Mulubé his blessing, as he wants what is best for both his fellow black Africans and for his daughter.

The major dramatic moments of the play come in two scenes where Mulubé meets with authorities. The first of the major confrontations occurs when he is summoned to the office of the Director General of Aborigine Education. We see that the director is a stern and uncompromising man, set in his racist attitudes. Mulubé nonetheless comes before the director without fear, even though he knows it might cost him his life. His resolute attitude recalls the Chadian adage that a “dead goat fears no knife.” Mulubé also illustrates the principle that it is better to “die on one’s feet than to live on one’s knees.” He does not defer but steps before the director and addresses him. Although Mulubé knows the difficulty and the dangers of the task at hand, he recognizes that retreat is out of the question.

Recalling Papa Andrew’s words, that meeting with the Director of Aborigine Education was “*un mauvais signe*” (a bad omen,)²⁵ Mulubé fights back his worry and

²⁴ Naïndouba 11.

²⁵ Naïndouba 9

displays defiance. What matters for Mulubé is twofold: on one hand, he seeks to show the oppressor the cruelty that he has shown toward the oppressed; on the other hand, he wishes to publically declare this injustice, to inform the world of the inhumanity of this educational discrimination.

The meeting between Mulubé and the Director of Aborigine Education does not go well. In fact, neither party expects much from it, as the opening scene shows: *“Ah! Tiens! Bonjour jeune homme, vous êtes en retard. Remarquez, c’est inné chez vous, je veux dire, chez tous les Nègres. La notion du temps, ça n’existe pas. Le temps n’est jamais de l’argent pour vous”* (Hey! Look! Young man, you are late. Come on, it is innate in you, I mean, in all Negroes. The notion of time does not exist. Time is never money for you).²⁶ Mulubé replies: *“Qu’est-ce que vous voulez, Monsieur le Directeur? Lorsqu’on a des moyens de déplacement étiquetés “Black only” qui se comptent au bout des doigts, ça n’arrange pas grand-chose ”* (What could you expect, Sir? When public transportation labeled "Black only" can be counted at your fingertips, it does not help much).²⁷

Initially meant to inform Mulubé, the Student Union Chair, and to convince him to back the school program changes, the meeting called by the Director proves a failure. This curriculum decision of course is not the first time that the powerful few have decided for the many. As the students refuse to comply with the new system,

²⁶ Naïndouba 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the play reveals the brutal results, of the hundreds of deaths and injuries caused by police attacks on the protestors.

If the protagonist was expected in the office of the Director of Aborigine Education, he certainly was not expected in the home of the white police inspector. Indeed, Inspector Nelson had no clue as to what was waiting for him in his own house. However, what seems certain for him though, is that after such a difficult day on the job, he was expecting to relax, and that his houseboy would, in Nelson's words, bring him "*un bon verre de bière avant d'aller faire (s)on rapport au commissaire*" (a chilled glass of beer before reporting to the Police Commissioner).²⁸ Inspector Nelson, nevertheless, found himself held up not only by a young black man, but by a young black man with a gun.

At that time in South Africa, only black people with valid "pass books" and identifications were allowed in white neighborhoods. Yet, it is in such a neighborhood and in the Police Inspector's very home, that Mulubé comes to make his point. Holding neither a "pass book" nor identifications, and not being in employment as a houseboy, he ventures into this dangerous zone, in order to "somehow, have his last wish, as a condemned, fulfilled."²⁹

Leader of the student body and *de facto* mastermind behind the student protest, Mulubé is "wanted" by the police. Authorities believe the solution to the unrest is his death. All possible means are set toward his arrest. Aware of his

²⁸ *Ibid.* 55.

²⁹ Naïndouba 58.

difficult situation, he does not wait for the police to come to him; rather, he chooses to surrender himself to the police, on the condition that his parents are released. Mulubé declares: *“Je viens m’offrir gracieusement à vous contre la libération de mes parents, Monsieur l’Inspecteur. . . Remarquez que vous n’avez aucune raison de les emprisonner. Ils ne sont responsables de rien . . . ”* (I graciously come to surrender myself to you in exchange for the release of my parents, Inspector . . . Look, you have no reason to imprison them. They are not responsible for anything).³⁰ To this, the Inspector responds: *“Ils sont reponsables d’avoir fait un délinquant, un ... danger public”* (They are responsible for making a delinquent, a public danger).³¹

At the outset of the scene, Inspector Nelson uses racial stereotypes and demeans Mulubé, to the extent of taking him as a thief. Nelson declares: *“Qu’est-ce que vous me voulez? De l’argent? Vous n’avez pas de chance! Je n’en garde ni sur moi ni à la maison”* (What do you want from me? Money? You are not lucky! I do not have any on me, nor at home).³² Mulubé responds calmly: *“A quelques minutes de ma mort, je veux parler à un Blanc, mieux, à un inspecteur de police de Johannesburg, lui ouvrir mon coeur. Des occasions comme celle-là sont plutôt rares pour un Nègre”* (A few minutes before my death, I want to talk to a White man, better, a police inspector in Johannesburg, to open my heart to him. Opportunities like this are rare for a Negro).³³

³⁰ Naïndouba 59.

³¹ Naïndouba 59.

³² Naïndouba 57.

³³ Naïndouba 57.

The fact of the situation is that Mulubé is surrendering himself in exchange for the liberation of his parents. Constitutional law in most countries holds people responsible for their acts after the age 18. However, in such environment as Soweto, the law is variable. As an adult, Mulubé should have been responsible himself for his “crimes” of challenging apartheid. Unfortunately, in this society, the police opted to arrest Mulubé’s parents, and to keep them in custody until they had their hands on the “guilty” one. Not knowing why the parents should want to associate with the son, the white police inspector makes it clear to the hero that their crime was in “having a delinquent,”³⁴ was in being parents to the “Wanted of Soweto.”³⁵

However, as earlier with the director of Aborigine Education, Mulubé forces this white authority figure into a dialogue. Importantly, the subsequent conversation and exchange works to open the officer’s eyes to the cruelty of his government. It might be said that both Mulubé and the Police Inspector experience moments of catharsis, though in different ways and at different times. In some sense, both come to a perception that, irrespective of skin color, gender, creed, and class, dialogue can occur, and a human can address a fellow human. Unfortunately, where dialogue fails, the consequences are considerable.

In spite of the fact that the black student leader and the white police inspector surprise themselves by their communication, the hopefulness of the scene

³⁴ Naïndouba 59.

³⁵ Naïndouba 58.

is dashed. N’Koukou, Inspector Nelson’s houseboy alerts the police. The inspector’s house is ambushed by the police; Mulubé is shot and killed before the inspector’s eyes. However, before this happened, Mulubé made it known to the Inspector that cowards are not the Blacks:

Qui a peur de qui? Vous pourriez avoir raison dans la mesure où vous avez des armes et nous, rien. Mais les peureux, c’est vous. Nous, Negres, constituons pour vous, une force redoutable . . . Nous vous inondons, vous avalons, vous obsedons, bien que vous soyez armés jusqu’aux dents. Vos moyens physiques vous semblent encore insuffisants, et vous avez trouvé quelque chose de plus subtil, de plus raffiné . . . Il faut rabaisser le niveau intellectuel du Nègre . . . Tous les moyens sont bons pour vous. Oui, c’est vous qui avez peur, messieurs les Blancs! Peur de nous, le géant noir croupissant dans la misère

(Who’s afraid of whom? You might be right insofar as you have weapons and we, nothing. But the cowards are you. We Negroes, constitute for you, a fearsome force . . . We engulf you, swallow you, obsess you, though you are armed to the teeth. Your physical means still seem insufficient to you, and you’ve found something more subtle, more refined . . . You must lower the intellectual level of the Negro. . . All means are good for you. Yes, it is you who, misters ... who are scared! Scared of us, the giant black languishing in misery).³⁶

One of the most important elements of *L’Etudiant de Soweto* is the transformation we see in Inspector Nelson’s outlook. After Mulubé’s death, Inspector Nelson is called before the Police Commissioner, and the two begin to quarrel. Inspector Nelson argues that Mulubé’s parents should be released from incarceration, especially after the death of their son. He argues: “*Vous pouvez faire relâcher les parents de Mulubé, Commissaire! Il n’y a plus de raison de les garder*” (You can have Mulubé’s parents released from jail, Commissioner! There is no reason to

³⁶ Naïndouba 60.

keep them.)³⁷ Later in the scene, Inspector Nelson shares his experience of speaking with Mulubé and the change in feeling that came over him:

Il s'est rendu pour sauver ses parents. C'est tout de même assez émouvant, ce geste, même si on n'aime pas les Nègres. Je pense aussi qu'il voulait signifier par la même occasion le désir des Noirs d'engager un dialogue avec les Blancs

(He surrendered himself in order to save his parents. Anyway, it is quite moving, this gesture, even if we do not like Negroes. I also think that at the same time, he wanted to show the desire of Blacks to engage in dialogue with Whites).³⁸

While Inspector Nelson gives evidence of sensitivity and an outlook open to change, the Police Commissioner represents the kind of governmental official who believes that the killing of activists such as Mulubé is not enough. He wishes for all their family members to be punished and taken down as well, because defending a convict is equal to siding with them; they are therefore supporting high treason. Such attitudes at this point sadden Inspector Nelson, who states that he too “knows a lot of things” about South Africa; what he knows makes him want to resign from the police and move out of the country.³⁹

By deliberately refusing to “listen” to the Blacks, unlike the Inspector, the Commissioner shows that he lives behind a myth, that is, the wall of superiority. Thus, he can only hear the natives’ pleas from afar. Unfortunately, such remove can

³⁷ Naïndouba 72.

³⁸ Naïndouba 66-67.

³⁹ Naïndouba 72.

lead to feelings of mistrust among the colonized and finally explode into violence.⁴⁰

This turn is obvious when the students take their anger into the streets of Soweto.

Naïndouba's play should be praised for taking a stereotype of colonial rule, that is, the figure of the police inspector, and turning the negative image into a positive one. Inspector Nelson gives a strong example of one who can change, and this change comes by his listening to Mulubé. Inspector Nelson here defies the manipulation of information by authorities and their disregard for truth, especially in relation to the violence brought upon the student protestors. He rejects the report's assertions: "*deux morts et six blessés, tout en précisant que ces victimes ont été tuées et blessées dans la panique des manifestants à l'approche des policiers*" (Two dead and six wounded, while specifying that these victims were killed and injured in the panic of protesters approaching the police)!⁴¹ The truth, according to the Inspector, reveals a much higher loss: "*quatre cent quatre-vingt-dix-sept morts et mille huit cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf blessés et tous de jeunes*" (Four hundred and ninety seven dead and one thousand eight hundred and ninety nine wounded and all of them are young).⁴²

It is to be regretted that in challenging the authority of the Police Commissioner Inspector Nelson becomes regarded as a "traitor," becomes a "threat" to his white community--he is therefore fit for death. Yet, both Mulubé and Inspector Nelson exhibit heroic qualities, and on a symbolic level serve as martyrs

⁴⁰ John C. Rowe, *"Culture" and the Problems of Disciplines* (New York: Columbia University Press, c1998) 51.

⁴¹ Naïndouba 67.

⁴² Naïndouba 66.

to the “historical development of Africa in its tracks and its revolutionary vocation.”⁴³

The police inspector expresses a newfound recognition of basic human rights. His engagement with Mulubé teaches him that, irrespective of race, gender, or social status, there is always a worth in a human being, and that humans can seek to bring the best to one another, to support improvement and to seek better dreams. His lament for humanity comes in seeing the protestors and the brutality brought to bear against them by the police. At the end and like Mulubé, the Inspector believes that discrimination and ill-treatment of one class by another cannot better and improve any society.

Nelson Mandela has written on the deepening of human feeling and connection. He shares:

Plays like *Antigone* ... Those Greek plays ... are really worth reading. It's like the classics ... the works of Tolstoy and so on, because after reading ... that literature, you always come out ... feeling very elevated and your sensitivities to ... fellow human beings having been deepened. It is one of the greatest experiences ...⁴⁴

What Mandela is explaining here can compare to what Inspector Nelson experiences in his own life. His encounter with Mulubé proves cathartic; the inspector is shortly relieved on his unseen burdens and finds himself looking differently at a fellow human being. At this moment, Mulubé's race and social status are not barriers. In this frame mind, Inspector Nelson cannot conceal his feelings,

⁴³ Rowe 54.

⁴⁴ Nelson Mandela, *Conversations with Myself* (New York: PQ Blackwell Limited, 2010) 113.

nor hide the truth. He cannot abide hypocrisy. He thus responds to the Police Commissioner:

... Vous avez peut-être raison de dire que je suis fatigué. Oui, je suis fatigué. Fatigué des Noirs qui se font tuer par milliers depuis des années et des années! Fatigué des Blancs, bourreaux des Nègres, qui tiennent à un principe qui les rend aveugles et cruels: la sauvegarde de leurs sacro-saints intérêts! Je suis fatigué de l'aisance et de l'égoïsme des uns, de la pauvreté et de la misère des autres. Je suis fatigué de tout, Commissaire! De vous et de moi

(Perhaps you are right to say that I am tired. Yes, I am tired. Tired of Blacks being killed by the thousands for years and years! Tired of Whites, assassins of Blacks, who are but committed to one principle, which makes them blind and cruel: the safety of their sacrosanct interests! I am tired of the opulence and selfishness of some, of the poverty and misery of others. I am tired of everything, Commissioner! Of you and of me)!⁴⁵

Recently in the protests in the Arab world that have toppled dictatorships, we have seen unexpected turns. We have seen many turn their backs on governmental oppression; many men in uniform have indeed taken the side of democracy and human rights, and that turn is what we see in the actions of Inspector Nelson.

It is on a sad note that the play ends. The meeting and conversation between Inspector Nelson and the Commissioner does not open communication but closes it. The commissioner asserts his loyalty to the apartheid regime, and the policy that native South Africans should be assigned to a second-class position. He absolutely rejects the possibility of relations with Blacks: “*Je n’écouterai jamais un Nègre*” (I will

⁴⁵ Naïndouba 69.

never listen to a Negro.)⁴⁶ He identifies the student revolt as high treason and directs his anger toward the inspector: "*Vous êtes la honte de la race blanche d'Afrique du Sud*" (You are a shame to the white race of South Africa).⁴⁷

Inspector Nelson demonstrates courage and integrity in his words and actions. He refuses the Commissioner's bribe of a luxurious vacation. He takes the side of black youth. It is not surprising that the Commissioner would see him as mad. The Commissioner would certainly feel justified in killing this unbalanced and untrustworthy inspector, and that is what he does--he shoots the inspector. He asserts: "*Je n'ai pas tué l'Inspecteur principal, brigadier Whitehead! J'ai tué Nelson, un traître*" (I did not kill the Chief Inspector, Brigadier Whitehead! I killed Nelson, a traitor).⁴⁸

Like that of Mulubé, however, Inspector Nelson's death is not seen as a waste; his death is not vain. The play does not end in an attitude of defeat. Perhaps the play's most important lines come near the moment of Mulubé's death, when he utters his last words: "*Nous, nous vaincrons*" (We, we will win).⁴⁹

The youth's dying words may be seen as prophetic, as Mulubé's dream would be fulfilled 14 years later, with Nelson Mandela's release from prison. It was only four years after that time that Mandela would lead his party in the negotiations that

⁴⁶ Naïndouba 71.

⁴⁷ Naïndouba 71.

⁴⁸ Naïndouba 72-73.

⁴⁹ Naïndouba 63.

would result in a multi-racial democracy in 1994, that would see him as winner of the presidential elections, making him the first black president of South Africa.⁵⁰

L'Etudiant de Soweto can be seen as a play that carries a message of hope.

The South African situation had for decades seemed hopeless. The courage of Mulubé and that of the student protestors proved that a segregationist society could be challenged. The transformation of Inspector also shows that those of good will and open to communication can turn their backs on an unjust system. Echoing the conclusion of Danaï's play, which declared: "White, Yellow, Red, Black" are all cursed and therefore there is no cursed,⁵¹ Naïndouba's work affirms the value of basic human rights and argues for no special distinctions or privilege. He calls for white and black to unite, to work in unison to build a better Africa, one rid of those who would let others languish in abject poverty, who would elevate themselves and hoard their riches abroad. Mulubé and Inspector Nelson present themselves as unlikely alliance, yet they demonstrate the kind of courage and conviction of belief that would alter their country forever.

The Value of Hybridity in Facing Africa's Challenges

L'Etudiant de Soweto dramatizes an equality that comes through encounter; we see a joining of the student and Inspector Nelson. This relation on a basic level is one of hybridity, of differences coming into a new kind of relation. If we step back and look at this phenomenon more broadly--with reference to the play and to Africa

⁵⁰ <http://www.answers.com/topic/nelson-mandela>

⁵¹ Danaï 64.

(and Chad) generally--we can see hybridity at work in many of the most important elements of African culture, in religion, in education, and, perhaps most significantly, in social justice and democracy. In short, hybridity may provide Africa a way to look forward.

If we return to Bhabha's fascination with hybridity, we see that this inclination is not fortuitous. Strong instances of social and economic mixing were very much around him in his youth. He writes of his family history, as Persian migrants coming to India. He notes the position of the "parsis" and the in-between status they held:

Parsis were the middle persons between various Indian communities and the British (and who,) (a)round the mid 19th (sic) century they participated in the emergence of India's urbanization and helped in developing commercial, mercantile, and professional infrastructures in the metropolitan areas. They were captains of industry, medical moguls, and honest clerks.⁵²

While South Africa, or Chad for that matter, is not identical to India, what these countries all exhibit is a diverse population living in close proximity. For Bhabha the relations of these differences are very important, and their interconnections may provide positions that any individual identity could not allow. As Homi Bhabha writes: "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood--singular or communal--that initiate new signs of

⁵² Bhabha, qtd in W.J.T. Mitchell, Translator translated: Interview with Cultural Theorist Homi Bhabha (*Artforum* 33.7 (March 1995) 80-84.

identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”⁵³

What Bhabha suggests here is the positive possibilities of hybridity, which allows for an ever changing of meaning in regards to cultural exchange and expression, especially in post-colonial Africa. In what he calls the “Third Space of Enunciation,” he argues that the colonizer and the colonized have an interdependent relationship with one another. This concept reinforces the idea that cultures are not singular entities that cannot be influenced by others, including the oppressed majority and the minority ruling class, as in Africa's case.⁵⁴ The third space that Bhabha refers to can offer the possibility of creating a cultural hybridity that transcends preconceived notions of political and social positions and forms. It provides a way beyond the traditional versions of political, linguistic, and cultural forms that can have a stronghold on societies. As Bhabha notes, hybridity can “initiate new signs of identity,” a claim that suggests the possible re-imagination of new communities and new nations.

It is interesting that in his analysis of inter-cultural aspects of India Bhabha treats religion as a “hybridized community.” He writes how the Parsis “often ... pay formal respect to Hindu customs and rituals while articulating their own religious and ethnic identity.”⁵⁵ This illustration points to a similar occurrence in Africa, where one sees the co-existence and intermingling of many forms of religion. Out of

⁵³ Bhabha 2.

⁵⁴ Ashcroft 43.

⁵⁵ Ashcroft 2

this religious mix--which can also show a racial mix--comes different political positions, that is, different religious viewpoints (which may be in various combinations) have at times been conservative and limiting, and at other times progressive and liberating.

Certainly, religion has played an oppressive force in Africa's history, as efforts in baptizing and Christianization were strategies to conquer the natives and take over their lands. Religion in this instance becomes a social control. It was a way of making people believe and follow a certain set of rules and standards specified as moral or godly. Different texts, such as the Bible, the Koran, and other religious scriptures, were used to this end.

When the French forces discouraged Chadians from practicing their tradition religions, the French were practicing a form of colonization. Paganism was put in a bad light. Those who practiced this kind of religion were made to believe that they were inferior to those who were members of a Christian sect. For better or worse, the adoption of Christianity changed how the Chadian people dealt with their fellows, and how they saw themselves. The turn to the new religion induced attitudes that were more than likely pro-colonial. Marx famously declared, "religion is the opium of the people."⁵⁶ In Africa's case, religion served to divert the natives' attention, causing them to affirm the colonial system that was in fact oppressing them in many ways, socially and economically. Unlike Chad, Churches play a

⁵⁶ Alan Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World: a Sociological Introduction* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007) 66.

tremendous role in the fight against apartheid in South Africa where Christians “became involved in efforts to reverse or to ameliorate the effects of apartheid policies.”⁵⁷

In Naïndouba’s *L’Etudiant de Soweto*, the issue of religion does not take a large role. Little mention is given to the effects or impact of Christianity. However, it is interesting to note that the play does highlight a traditional African practice. During Mulubé’s last visit to see his parents, his father reverts to the African religion for the protection of his son. After failing to convince Mulubé to back away from the student protest, his father states:

Attends! Attends-moi un peu, mon fils! ...

Ce revolver, je l’ai arraché à un policier blanc tué lors de notre grève en juin. Il y a des cartouches dans le chargeur. Emporte-le, ça peut te servir...

Ceci est un talisman. Je le tiens de mon père qui le tenait de son père, lequel l’a reçu de son grand-père. Je l’ai bien gardé en l’attachant à mes reins. Il m’a toujours porté chance. Prends-le. Je songeais déjà à te le remettre

(Wait! Wait a minute, my son! ...)

This revolver, I took it from a white police officer killed during our strike in June. There are rounds in the magazine. Take it with you, it can serve you ...

This is a talisman. I got it from my father who inherited it from his father, who has received it from his grandfather. I jealously preserved it by tying it around my waist. It has always brought me luck. Take it. I was already thinking of giving it to you).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ “Religion and Apartheid” <http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/53.htm>

⁵⁸ Naïndouba 36.

This moment in the play takes the characters back to the African of oral tradition and indigenous religion. Given that he believed his son to be in danger, Mulubé's father grasped for whatever support and help he could enlist.

While the history of Africa shows Christianity as a tool of colonization, there are also instances where Africans have used Christianity against their oppressors. There are clearly Christian elements in the play *Woza Albert!*⁵⁹ (meaning, Arise Albert), which may be viewed as a revolutionary play. In this work, the natives, specifically the character Zuluboy, attempt to raise black heroes, such as the Nobel Peace Prize winner and late African National Congress (ANC) leader, Steve Biko, among others. This device in the play fuses Christian faith (and its images of resurrection) with an impassioned desire for political change. While the play describes the absurd conditions for the blacks in South Africans under apartheid, an ultimate belief is affirmed in the coming of a savior in the return of black heroes, such as Albert Luthuli; the play calls upon the "biblical prophecies that the dead will rise."⁶⁰ What one sees in this instance is a hybridity that looks to change the status quo, calling upon religious images and outlooks to defy oppression.

Hybridity in education is also important, and clearly, this element makes for a major theme in *L'Etudiant de Soweto*. An implicit question in the play concerns the use of education as a tool of indoctrination, set opposite the view of education as a path to betterment. Through Naïndouba's character Mulubé, like other playwrights

⁵⁹ Mtwla, Percy, Mbongeni Ngema, Barney Simon, *Woza Albert!* (London: Methuen, 1983).

⁶⁰ Christel N. Temple. "Woza Albert!." *Masterplots II: Drama, Revised Edition*. Salem Press, 2004. eNotes.com. 2006. 9 Mar, 2011 <<http://www.enotes.com/woza-albert-salem/woza-albert>>

under study, the search for the middle ground is very important. It is through this ground or “third space” as Bhabha would call, that societies can improve. By accepting who he is, and longing to learn in the oppressor’s language, Mulubé demonstrates his desire for hybridity (as does his rejection of the talisman and acceptance of the revolver). Mulubé explains:

L’Afrique du Sud est la patrie des Noirs et des Blancs. Les deux races sont condamnés à vivre ensemble, que vous le vouliez ou non. Rien ne peut se décider qui ne soit conforme aux intérêts bien compris des deux communautés

(South Africa is the homeland of blacks and whites. The two races are condemned to live together, whether you like it or not. Nothing can be decided which does not meet the best interests of both communities)⁶¹

While schools are meant to train young children to be the leaders of tomorrow, they are at the same time a place of indoctrination. In South Africa, as elsewhere, educational establishments are the reflection of society’s political philosophy and goals. For instance, until

(T)he mid-1990s, no other social institution reflected the government’s racial philosophy of apartheid more clearly than the education system. Because the schools were required both to teach and to practice apartheid, they were especially important in the maintenance of the political system.⁶²

It is in this contextual that we find Naïndouba’s play. The school curriculum reforms in the work look only to train the natives in their own African language, which would take away their already slim chances for economic advancement. The legislation that was passed at this time clearly intended to maintain racial

⁶¹ Naïndouba, 21.

⁶² “Legislative Implementation of Apartheid” <http://countrystudies.us/south-africa/25.htm>

separation and to provide black South Africans a second-class education: “The Bantu Education . . . decreed that blacks should be provided with separate educational facilities”⁶³ and taught in their local languages instead of English. Seeing the hopelessness of such reforms, the students were left with only one choice: that of protesting.

Students in Naïndouba’s play rightfully feared the limitations that would be built into the “aboriginal” school system, and, resentful about these reforms, the students decided to boycott the institution. Therefore, they rallied behind their leader for the cause of an open education. Mulubé voices the frustration of the students when he declares: “*l’éducation pour l’obscurantisme et pour l’infériorité est pire que pas d’éducation du tout*” (education for obscurantism and inferiority is worse than no education at all).⁶⁴

Students like Mulubé do not wish for the separation of cultures or races. For the protestors, any reforms should go toward improving the needs of both the black and white communities. But the question of education brings up interesting matters regarding hybridity. It is clear that the government in the play wants to use education as a tool of oppression. However, the students want an open education. They want to learn more than their native cultures and to acquire more language skills, particularly those of the Europeans. In some respects, the students seek to gain the education of the ruling settlers (to take the possible good of colonialism).

⁶³ Rita M. Byrnes, ed. *South Africa: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1996).

⁶⁴ Naïndouba 21.

One ask, however, if training the African students in a European language works to erase their own heritage, or rather does it provide a means by which they can gain economic mobility and access to the wider world.

Naïndouba's *L'Etudiant de Soweto* is a criticism of the teaching and curriculum reforms imposed by colonial rule, which only perpetuates the black South Africans' state of inferiority and incapacity. After talking with Mulubé and seeing him shot, Inspector Nelson shares: "*j'ai eu un entretien avec Mulubé quelques minutes avant sa mort. Il avait raison: chacun de nous, Blancs, a dans le ventre une peur morbide. C'est la triste vérité*" (I had a conversation with Mulubé a few minutes before his death. He was right: each of us, Whites, have in our inner beings, a morbid fear. That is the sad truth).⁶⁵ Inspector Nelson speaks of the fear that the oppressors have of the oppressed, one that seeks to secure boundaries and separations. In this play education--and by suggestion "dialogue"--is in the best sense shown to be an agent that can challenge divisions and boundaries. Education is viewed as a way of bringing differences into relation, rather than hardening racial or ethnic separation.

Denunciation of Apartheid as Social and Political Injustice

A number of powerful plays have been written that present the oppression of apartheid. Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*⁶⁶ is one of the more well know of such works. The play is about the requirements of "pass books," that all black people age

⁶⁵ Naïndouba 70-71.

⁶⁶ Athol Fugard, *Sizwe Bansi is dead and The Island* (New York: Viking Press, 1976).

sixteen and older were commanded to carry these identifications with them at all times, for employment and movement from place to place. Such restrictions made the black populace feel as if they were aliens in their own country. Fugard's play also draws attention to the "alarming rate⁶⁷" by which many blacks on this basis were sent to jail.

The recent movie "Sarafina" also sheds light on the repression and violence experienced by black South Africans under apartheid. We see in this film how those in power assign "dirty" jobs to black workers. The film also presents students being spied upon and tortured. Some are brutalized and made to be informants. We see a police dog set upon a student, under the mocking eyes of white officers.

Maoundoé Naïndouba, *L'Etudiant de Soweto* takes its place among the artistic works that have denounced apartheid. It represents the kind of theatre that relates "to the lives of all Black people . . . [it] does not just show--it shows the way, it leads and is led, it proceeds from reflection to action, it rejects the fantasy for the reality."

⁶⁸ Naïndouba's work is a protest against injustice. For Koufecou Traoré, "*L'auteur a, avec talent, décrit le drame de Soweto en mettant en relief la soif de liberté et de justice. Il montre tout au long de son oeuvre que la liberté ne se marchande pas*" (the author has, with talent, described the drama of Soweto, highlighting the thirst for

⁶⁷ http://www.enotes.com/topic/Sizwe_Banzi_Is_Dead#Plot_synopsis

⁶⁸ "Briefings," *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 7, Special Issue on South Africa (Sep. - Dec., 1976) 114.

freedom and justice. He shows throughout his work that freedom is not bargained).⁶⁹

Such pieces recognize apartheid as the dark side of colonialism. Steve Biko has written that “(a)partheid ... is obviously evil ... Nothing can justify the arrogant assumption that a clique of foreigners has the right to decide on the lives of a majority.”⁷⁰ Naïndouba’s play agrees with Biko’s words. *L’Etudiant de Soweto* argues for an equality of the races, for political justice, and the human rights of every individual. One may hear the call in his play for a true democracy that does not discriminate against or punish some to the advantage of a few.

If we apply the lessons of such work on South Africa, we can see many similar issues relating to Chad and all of Africa. Despite the fact that most African countries are celebrating over fifty years of independence, oppression remains. African leaders often take on a mask, pretending to watch out for their people, while they conspire with Western interests that siphon away African resources. Those who challenge the status quo are labeled socialists or communists. Though Europe has hailed the outstanding courage of the recent peaceful “street” protesters in Arab countries, it is important to remember that Europe supported the dictatorships in those same countries for decades.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷⁰ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1987) 27.

Some Western politicians and neo-colonialists, such as former French president Jacques Chirac, have argued, "Africa is not ready for democracy."⁷¹ This view implies that Africans are not capable of self-governance and thus require Western oversight. Many Africans have clearly rejected such claims. Rather they argue for a true democracy, one that rejects political systems that discriminate (such as apartheid) against the black citizen, that "seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity."⁷² Intellectuals such as Yale law professor Stephen L. Carter confirm that changes have come to Africa and that long-held assumptions should be rejected. He argues:

There has been a sense that liberty and democracy are unsuited to the region, that absolute rulers are somehow natural to the people, or the history, or perhaps to the climate. Overthrow one, and another will take his place. The key to protecting your strategic interests, then, is making sure that as many of the leaders as possible are your guys rather than someone else's. As of today, that essentially racist assumption is dead.⁷³

It is clear that Mulubé in *L'Etudiant de Soweto* calls for an honoring of the basic principles of democracy. When he comes before the Director of Aborigine Education, he declares:

L'Afrique du Sud est la patrie des Noirs et des Blancs. Les deux races sont condamnées à vivre ensemble, que vous le vouliez ou non. Rien ne peut se décider qui ne soit conforme aux intérêts bien compris des deux communautés

⁷¹ Olusegun Ogundeji, "Africa is Not Ready for Democracy - is Jacque Chirac Right?" in <http://allafrica.com/stories/200703191427.html>.

"Briefings," Review of African Political Economy. No. 7, Special Issue on South Africa (Sep. - Dec., 1976) 114.

⁷³ Stephen L. Carter, "Egypt Proves Bush Right," <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2011-02-01/egypt-protests-prove-george-w-bush-doctrine-right/>.

(South Africa is the homeland of Blacks and Whites. The two races are condemned to live together, whether you like it or not. Nothing can be decided which does not meet the best interests of both communities).⁷⁴

Mulubé's call is echoed in the words of Steve Biko. The aim is not revenge or retaliation but a relation of cohabitation between different identities and interests. Biko writes: "We are looking forward to a nonracial, just and egalitarian society in which color, creed and race shall form no point of reference."⁷⁵

What one sees in these calls for democracy is an unusual hybridity. While such advocates call for democracy, they are calling upon ideas and conceptions that come from Europe. They note such terms as equality, justice, and human rights. In this way, African activists can actually use the political language and ideas of Europe to combat Western oppression. These writers do not seek a return to tribal organization; rather, they seek the just operation of Western political ideals. They hold this path as the best way forward for Africa's future.

In looking to apply such insights to Chad, one finds great challenges. According to René Lemarchand,

If Chad ever existed as a nation, by 1978 (sic) it virtually ceased to exist as a State. After almost twenty years of independence under the control of Sara elements, the collapse of the Ndjamenia (sic) authorities under the blows of the northern rebellion has left a vacuum at the center which none of the several competing factions has yet been able to fill.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Naïndouba, 21.

⁷⁵ Millard Arnold, ed., *Steve Biko: Black Consciousness in South Africa* (New York: Random House, 1978) 5.

⁷⁶ René Lemarchand, "The Politics of Sara Ethnicity: A Note on the Origins of the Civil War in Chad" *Cahiers d'études africaines* (Vol. 20 N° 80. 1980) 449.

The difficulty of filling this “vacuum” that Lemarchand points out relates to the many conflicts and wars experienced by Chad, which saw part of the country invaded and its map almost redesigned. Also related to this vacuum is one of the central problems that remain for the country, that is, how to increase the Chadians’ sense of their own nationhood. How is it possible to strengthen the awareness of themselves as citizens of a unified country? One possible path to that end is the practice of actual democratic principles. When Chadians see the operation of a fair and just central government--the kind of political order called for by Maoundoé Naïndouba in his *L’Etudiant de Soweto*--then they may understand that they are participants in democracy, and proud to see themselves as citizens of a just nation.

Chapter Five:

Generational Conflict and the Future in Frank Kodbaye's *Un vent d'Est*

Various movements and agents of resistance have fought the forces of European domination and have sought the goal of Africa's decolonization. When independence finally came to the African nations, Africa experienced widespread hope and jubilation. Members of the former colonies looked with expectation to their future. They pinned their hopes on the coming of freedom, social justice, and equal opportunity, to better their own lot and that of their families and fellow citizens. Kieh in *Africa and the Third Millenium*, emphasizes this anticipation of the future:

The collective hope of the African peoples was that with the end of colonialism the continent would be able to realize its fullest potentials. Specifically, with its rich and fertile soil, vast natural resources and industrious peoples, the mass hope was that each independent African state would replace the European authoritarian multiplex with a pro-people, pro-democracy and pro-development one.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, this dream of a new Africa, held dear to so many, has failed to materialize. The ghosts of Western forces and influence still linger. Though power may now be in the hands of local authorities, they show themselves as little more than the re-embodiment of colonialists, serving their own ends and failing to meet the expectations of their own people. The playwright under study in this chapter, Frank Kodbaye, defined the problem for Chad in a recent interview:

⁷⁷ Kieh 6-7.

Un problème originel des pays francophones d'Afrique: le colon n'est jamais parti. Il a maintenu sa présence sous une forme de sous-traitance du pouvoir avec des sous-fifres sanguinaires. Une occasion de libération s'est présentée après la chute du mur de Berlin ... Mais la faiblesse des forces populaires – pas du tout préparées et sous éduquées - et l'aliénation totale des élites politiques sur plusieurs générations n'ont permis que d'effleurer ce changement

(A problem from the start in French-speaking Africa: the colonizer is never gone. He maintained his presence in a form of subcontracting authority with bloodthirsty cronies. A golden liberation opportunity has arisen . . . But the weakness of popular forces--not at all prepared and under-educated--and the total alienation of the political elite over several generations only succeeded in playing at the margins of this change).¹

Such problems therefore continue to haunt Chad and other African nations, from corruption, to illiteracy, to epidemics. Kieh points out this unfortunate situation and describes that even in the 21st century; Africa remains “the most underdeveloped region in the world in terms of all of the economic and social indicators.”² While admitting that profound problems face Africa in the years ahead, one should not see all as dismal for the continent. Africa is a place of hope, and its potential remains great. As the playwrights under study suggest, Africa must find a way to create a blended future, meshing the strengths of the past and its traditions with the opportunities and assets of the present. Africa possesses great natural resources along with the immense potential of its population. It should not hesitate in uniting with the global order. What the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain

¹ Kodbaye. E-mail interview. 19-22 February 2007.

² Kieh 3.

Juppé, suggests for France, that “English is the future of French,”³ in some respect applies to Africa as well, that is, its nations should honor tradition but look to move forward in engagement with the wider world.

The importance of the future is a defining theme in Frank Kodbaye’s play *Un vent d’Est* (2003). Though the playwright believes that, even after fifty years of so-called independence for African nations, the colonizer has never left Africa, especially francophone Africa, he holds out hope for his native Chad.

This chapter will examine the life and work of Frank Kodbaye. In giving particular examination to his play *Un vent d’Est*, this analysis will look at how the work dramatizes the tension between the old and the new that exists for the Chadian people. We find that Kodbaye, like his fellow playwrights Danaï and Naïndouba, values the positives of hybridity. *Un vent d’Est* is a powerful dramatic work that invites its viewer to consider the future of Africa. Kodbaye gives emphasis to several key matters, especially the generational conflict of the family, which poses a choice of perspective--whether to cling to tradition or follow change. It is in this generational conflict that we find elements that have fascinated the other playwrights under study; namely, the liberation of African women and the country’s initial striving toward democracy. Kodbaye suggests that tradition and modernity must work in relation to one another, that hybridity must be accomplished, for Africans to gain the promise of its future.

³ Nimrod Djangrang, *Interview with Sonia Rolley. Livres Chad*. <http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20110410-Nimrod-Bena-Djangrang-ecrivain-poete-essayiste-tchadien>

The Life of the Playwright and His Experience in Exile

This chapter will give extended attention to the life and experience of the playwright Frank Kodbaye in the following pages (he provided an abundance of interview responses for this study). Beyond helping to establish the writer (and biography) behind *Un vent d'Est*, this section will importantly demonstrate how Kodbaye's experience as a Chadian playwright serves to illustrate many of the key problems faced by African writers at large. One sees the strong influence of his international travels upon his outlook; but we also find the unfortunate situation that he has been forced to live in exile. Kodbaye is one of Chad's leading intellectuals and artists but can no longer live in his homeland.

Born in 1972 in Sarh, in the Moyen Chari Prefecture of southeastern Chad, Frank Djimong NGabam Kodbaye is journalist, jurist, and writer who has lived as a political refugee in Geneva, Switzerland since 2001. As a young child, he could have had no expectation that he would live in exile for much of his career. In his early years, Kodbaye experienced an uncommon youth growing up in Chad. He attended elementary school in his local Sarh before moving to N'Djaména, one of Chad's major metropolises, where he completed middle and high school. He subsequently gained admission to the University of N'Djaména to pursue his dream, to study law and enjoy a career as a lawyer.

What was unusual about Kodbaye's early years was his strong interest in theatre. While most teenagers in his city chose clubs and other "joints" to spend their evenings, Kodbaye preferred attending theatrical productions. He saw shows at many of the city's leading venues, including the *Théâtre Vivant Baba Moustapha*

and Chari Culture,⁴ among others. The companies he saw and the many performances he attended would have a tremendous impact on the mind of Kodbaye and would eventually prove an impetus to his literary career. But above all, at that time, they helped him escape from the daily pressures of school and the barbaric actions of the government. Kodbaye shares that he attended because he believed “*théâtre constitue une arme redoutable dans le processus de conscientisation de la masse populaire*” (theatre is a best means to awaken the consciousness of the masses).⁵

During these days under the former repressive regime, freedom of expression was in short supply and the value of human life seemed cheap. People could be arrested for a simple “yes” or “no,” depending on the whims and caprices of the passing uniformed men or of secret agents. It was under such despotic rule that young Kodbaye sought out theatre and opted to be a regular attendee. For him, theatre was more than a simple show or entertainment; rather, it was way artists risked their lives and the lives of those dear to them, in order to draw attention to the squalid conditions of the populace and the common injustices of the authorities. As Kodbaye relates, “*Les spectacles de théâtre sous l’ère Habré délivraient subtilement des messages de liberté et d’épanouissement*” (Theatre under the Habré administration delivered subtle messages of freedom and fulfillment).⁶ As a young

⁴ “Théâtre Vivant Baba Moustapha” or TVBM was a name given to one of Chadian Theatre Companies in memory of the prominent and prolific Chadian playwright Baba Moustapha who died in France in 1982, at the age of 30.

⁵ Kodbaye. E-mail interview. 19-22 February 2007.

⁶ Ibid.

man searching for the meaning of his existence, longing for freedom and fulfillment, Kodbaye could not have found a better place to prepare his mind and soul for his future.

Affirming the insight of Shakespeare's Rosencrantz, that "many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills,"⁷ Kodbaye would learn through theatre and writing of the power of the pen. As he attended shows, finding solace and inspiration in the theatre, Kodbaye knew as a young adult that his future would lie in joining the privileged rank of writers who fight against the ills that plague their societies. This recognition would eventually translate into a literary career, one dipped in the "ink of the revolt and responsibility."⁸ *Un vent d'es* would demonstrate this very aim and attitude.

Kodbaye has shared that « *La dramaturgie est une vieille passion . . . Fort de cette conviction doublée d'une passion, j'écris des pièces et des sketches depuis mes années de lycée* » (Dramaturgy is an old passion . . . With this conviction coupled with a passion, I have written plays and skits since my high school years)⁹ Beyond providing him with a breath of "fresh air," that is, an escape from personal and political pressures, the theatre also demonstrated for Kodbaye its potential as a site for debate and criticism. The stage, he came to believe, could bring about social change, that it could issue a call for justice and humanity: "*Réveillez-vous! Ouvrez les yeux, apprenez vite par vous-mêmes et agissez pour le bien de l'humain, avec fermeté*"

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, William J. Rolfe. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879) 85.

⁸ Kodbaye cover page.

⁹ *Ibid.* E-mail interview. 19-22 February 2007.

(Wake up! Open your eyes learn quickly on your own and act with firmness for the sake of humanity).¹⁰

A man of much energy and many passions, Kodbaye, in addition to his theatrical activities and emerging legal career, decided to pursue his interest in journalism. Self-taught in this field, he nonetheless was able to find work as an intern for the independent newspaper *N'Djaména-Hebdo*. Despite his lack of formal training in journalism, his drive and intelligence won him recommendations and praise from his newspaper bosses. While his turn to journalism might have seemed a diversion from his career, the impetus behind his newspaper work is understandable; Kodbaye wished to use the printed word and the press to convey his strong commitment to addressing social wrongs.

It is important to note that *N'Djaména-Hebdo* was the only opposition newspaper founded during the Hissein Habré administration. The paper appeared weekly (now twice a week), and gained a reputation for its altercations with Chadian authorities. Under the eye of secret agents and uniformed police, *N'Djaména-Hebdo* journalists were under constant threat of attack. This scrutiny is understandable in that the paper was the first independent news agency in the history of Chad's media. The paper, despite government intimidation, did not hesitate to criticize the country's leaders. Rather than intern shipping in a paper that might have paid him a decent salary, Kodbaye decided to join the "opposition" newspaper, as labeled by government officials, for his first work as a journalist.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

However, with his law degree in hand, and his increasing knowledge and experience as a newspaper writer, it did not take long for Kodbaye to become victim of governmental brutality.

In his journalism and in his playwriting, Kodbaye has shown a continued concern for political oppression and social injustice. He sees his role as a writer as that of a spokesperson, to give voice to the downtrodden of the world. He not only sympathizes with them but also attempts to make them aware of the unjust conditions in which they live. In a recent interview, Kodbaye shared:

Je m'adresse à tous les hommes et femmes sensibles aux souffrances des gens de chez moi ou d'ailleurs qui n'ont pas de porte-parole. Pendant que les autres s'acharnent à semer à tout vent la mondialisation commerciale qui a pour seul but d'écraser la majorité des terriens au profit de l'opulence débordante d'une minorité de riches, je joins ma voix à d'illustres aînés et contemporains qui osent porter à la connaissance du monde entier les problèmes des sans-voix. J'essaie de faire la même chose avec ma petite plume

(I appeal to all men and women who are sensitive to the suffering of the voiceless people of my country, and those elsewhere. While others are concerned with promoting the globalization of trade, which aims at exploiting the majority of people on behalf of the wealthy few, I join my voice to those of my illustrious predecessors and contemporaries who dare to inform the world of the problems of the voiceless. I try to do the same thing with my little pen).¹¹

How Kodbaye describes his role as a writer compares to how Aimé Césaire once explained his own function as a voice of conscience. In *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* Césaire declares: "*Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir*" (My

¹¹ Kodbaye interview.

mouth will be the mouth of the misfortunate ones who have no mouth, my voice, the freedom of those who collapse in the dungeon of despair).¹²

Faithful to this mission, Kodbaye continued advocating for freedom and gave voice to the sufferings of his people. However, such expression in Chad and Africa in general does not come without consequence. Like many activists and artists before him, Kodbaye experienced censure and threat of reprisal. He has shared that “*à la suite de dénonciations qui lui faisaient risquer la prison dans son pays*” (as a result of his denunciations there was the risk of his being put in prison in his own country).¹³ This threat finally caused Kodbaye to seek sanctuary in Switzerland.

Kodbaye’s career as writer indicates many of the problems faced by Chadian authors. One deep problem is the country’s literacy rate, estimated at 25.7% of the population.¹⁴ This figure explains the limited market for writers and book publishers. Writers can scarcely live on their earnings. Given that so many of the populace live in impoverished conditions, many prefer to borrow books from others, or choose to acquire illegal copies without respect to copyrights. Those who can afford books often avoid purchasing them, especially works of critical content, out of fear that the government might target them. Also, the costs of local publication are so high that very few local writers seek to have their works published at home. And those that do buy books often prefer those written by

¹² Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000) 44.

¹³ Philippe Graf, “«Voix d’Exils» inaugure son site Internet, in *Le Courrier: L’essentiel, autrement*, http://www.lecourrier.ch/voix_d_exils_inaugure_son_site_internet du Jeudi, 3 Février, 2005.

¹⁴ “Chad Literacy: The World Factbook” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cd.html#top>

foreign authors, as opposed to the works written by their own countrymen and women. Such conditions certainly have worked to obstruct creativity and to discourage artists from pursuing their craft.

Another aspect of the troubled condition that Chadian authors experience is what Kodbaye describes as “acculturation,” that is, writers must frequently look to foreign publishers and markets for their work, which can influence the aim and style of their writing, in a way that reduces local appeal. Kodbaye explains:

L'écrivain tchadien est un acculturé malgré lui. Il doit plaire aux éditeurs étrangers qui ne le comprennent pas forcément dans l'expression de son message. En le faisant, il prend des distances avec sa propre culture et s'expose à un grand risque d'isolement, incompris chez lui et dans l'autre monde qu'il souhaite « conquérir ». C'est un état de fait qui a de grandes chances de perdurer, vu la gouvernance médiocre qui plombe le développement de notre pays, reléguant la culture à la portion congrue

(A Chadian writer is after all an assimilated writer. He has to appeal to foreign publishers who do not necessarily understand the expression of his message. In doing so, he distances himself from his own culture and exposes himself to a high risk of isolation, misunderstood at home and by the other world he wishes to "conquer." It is a fact that has significant likelihood of continuing, given the governance that suppresses the development of our country, relegating culture to the privileged portion).¹⁵

Kodbaye's comments put blame upon the incompetence and corruption of Chadian officials who do little or nothing to support the education of the populace, or to impart to them the notions of patriotism or nationalism. As a result, only a small number of citizens have the ability to read, and only few of them take pride in their national literature.

¹⁵ Kodbaye interview.

The above quote, however, also reveals a troubling dilemma for Chadian writers, that is, they must compromise their writing--and concerns for their country's successes and failures, for their country's culture and arts--in order to attract foreign publishers and readers. They thus must write with a divided voice and divided loyalty.

Though now established in his host country since 2001, where he lives with his wife and son, Kodbaye has not relinquished the power of the pen. Continuing to fight for progressive social and political change, he has joined various social and professional organizations, and has gained respect and praise. In Geneva, he has served as the chief editor for the newspaper *Voix d'Exils*. He has also continued his studies and has gained a Master's Degree in Economic Development. It is telling that he describes his work with the newspaper in Switzerland as a *rapprochement*, a "pont" or a "bridge." His explanation echoes Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Kodbaye « compare *Voix d'Exils* à un pont que ses rédacteurs tentent d'ériger entre deux interlocuteurs: leur 'population d'accueil' sur une rive et, sur l'autre, les requérants d'asile--des 'sans voix' » (compare *Voices from Exile* to a bridge that the authors are trying to build between two parties: their "host population," on one hand, and, on the other hand, asylum seekers--the "voiceless").¹⁶

The theme of the "bridge" occupies a central role in Kodbaye's *Un vent d'Est*, which argues for the coming together of politicians and their constituencies with the

¹⁶ Philippe Graf, «'Voix d'Exils' inaugure son site Internet» in http://www.lecourrier.ch/voix_d_exils_inaugure_son_site_internet

aim of building a better future for the country. The fact that Kodbaye has worked in different fields, as journalist, jurist, and playwright, demonstrates its own kind of hybridity. His work is eclectic, ranging across a variety of themes, including human rights, conflict resolution, politics, political figures, democracy, art, etc. His work has appeared in a wide array of publication forms--national and international newspapers, journals, and internet websites, among others:

N'Djaména-Hebdo (<http://www.ndjh.org/45/index.asp>)

Le Temps

Notre Temps

InfoSud Tribune des droits humains (<http://www.infosud.com>);

<http://www.carrefour-soleil.org>;

<http://www.tchadforum.com>;

<http://www.kintera.com>;

Reporters Without Borders (<http://en.rsf.org/>);

http://www.humanitary.ch/rubriques/plus_inforubrique.php?idnews=118;

http://www.worldcivilsociety.org/REPORT/EN/06/15-jul-02/summ_15.11.html];

Western Sahara Weekly News (<http://www.arso.org/01-e03-15.htm>), etc.

Even though the playwright currently lives in Geneva, Switzerland, where he can experience greater freedom as a writer and more chance of success than his counterparts back home in Chad, Kodbaye seems to feel a void, one that is difficult to fill. He believes that were he in Chad, that he could contribute more to the development of his country. However, returning to Chad would only jeopardize himself and his family. He believes that wherever he is located, that he can still play a significant role in his country's affairs that he can continue to denounce the ills

that beset his homeland. When asked why he has chosen to live in Europe instead of Chad, he conveyed some remorse in sharing the following:

Ma vie à Genève n'est qu'une étape que j'aurai aimé éviter. J'y ai trouvé à mon corps défendant un refuge où je peux continuer à m'adonner à ma passion : écrire et m'exprimer librement. C'est une contrainte supplémentaire à surmonter sur le chemin de la liberté. Peu importe le lieu où je vis, je me concentre sur l'essentiel en me posant chaque matin cette question : suis-je dans le camp de ceux qui œuvrent avec constance pour le changement espéré par mes compatriotes

(My life in Geneva is but a phase that I would like to leave. I found in it a refuge where I can continue to pursue my passion: to write and speak freely. It is an additional constraint to be overcome on the path to freedom. No matter where I live, I focus on the essentials, while asking myself every morning this question: am I on the side of those who work consistently for the change hoped for by my fellow citizens)?¹⁷

Kodbaye's experience in exile is not uncommon for African writers, who gain new experiences but miss the many things that occur back home. Being away creates a sense of distance and disconnection. Living in such a condition exhibits what Homi Bhabha calls "the transformational value of change . . . or translation, of elements that are *neither the One nor the Other*."¹⁸ Because of this dislocation, writers can sometimes feel lost between two worlds. Yet, as Nimrod Bena Djangrang, Kodbaye's fellow writer declared in a recent interview, there is value in places like Switzerland that offer asylum, despite the difficulties: "*il y a la liberté (et) ça nous permet de faire ce qu'on veut*" (there is freedom there, and it allows us to do

¹⁷ Kodbaye interview.

¹⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Cultures* 41.

what we want).¹⁹ Still, Kodbaye has mixed feelings about his native country, and he speaks of good memories battling with the bad:

En toute franchise, les mauvais souvenirs ont le dessus. Ils s'imposent à moi comme les symptômes d'un mal sans remèdes pour le moment. Mais l'écriture m'aide à tenir la tête hors de l'eau et à redécouvrir la vraie richesse de mon pays: les hommes qui l'habitent

(Frankly, the bad memories have the upper hand. They linger on me like the symptoms of a disease without a cure. But writing helps me keep my head above water and to rediscover the true richness of my country, and the people who inhabit it.)²⁰

Synopsis of *Un vent d'est*

While he has written widely, with numerous essays, novels, and unpublished plays, Frank Kodbaye is credited with two successful published dramas, notably *La folie du bâton* (1997) and *Un vent d'Est* (2003). Various theatre companies in Chad have produced both plays. Now living in Switzerland, Kodbaye continues to be a prolific writer who engages social and political issues in his work.

The action of *Un vent d'Est* focuses upon the tension and conflicts that surround an upcoming presidential election in Chad, an event that is always highly contested and productive of strong emotions. In this play, we are introduced to Manga, the family patriarch, who has been the Minister of Finance under the old one-party regime. Father of Manto, the play's protagonist, Manga, despite his standing as a prominent member of the ruling party, is nervous that the new force of

¹⁹ Nimrod Djangrang, *Interview with Sonia Rolley. Livres Chad*. <http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20110410-Nimrod-Bena-Djangrang-ecrivain-poete-essayiste-tchadien>.

²⁰ Kodbaye, interview.

democracy (the wind from the east) and the call for a multi-party system might overthrow the current regime.

Anxious over the possibility of defeat, Manga engages in heated debate with his wife Mélanie, who herself has become outspoken on political matters; she in fact has come to side with the opposition party. Thus, in their opulent living room, the couple experiences a difficult tension. Such a strong disagreement between husband and wife stands out as an unusual occurrence, as Africa very much remains a male-dominated society.

Following this heated exchange, Mélanie remains alone in the living room in a state of disbelief; she had always thought her husband to be different, unlike the other domineering men, to the point of associating him with liberalism, and his behavior thus greatly disturbs her. In the past, the two had shown tact and respect toward the other and their viewpoints, no matter how divergent their opinions. Unfortunately, in the present situation, she comes to the realization that Manga's change of attitude derives from her activism in the new party, which advocates freedom, justice, and opportunity for all. She considers his attitude with regret, as she believes that his party is facing an irreversible situation. She comments on her husband's stubborn outlook: "*Manga doit se dire que le parti unique n'est plus. C'est bien fini*" (Manga should realize that the unique party is no more. It is indeed finished).²¹

²¹ Kodbaye, 6.

Conscious of the fact that militating in two opposing parties is dangerous for their marriage, Mélanie nonetheless feels that she cannot relinquish her position and outlook. She condemns her husband's alliance and notes the ill effects of his political actions. In an interview, Kodbaye has commented on this aspect of Manga: « *Malgré sa franchise et sa compétence, il a fait bande avec des aigrefins, des escrocs et d'autres démons qui ont dévalisé et humilié le peuple* » (In spite of his frankness and competence, he has joined hands with swindlers, crooks, and other demons that have robbed and humiliated the people).²² As opposed to her husband, Mélanie believes that supporting the opposition is the only way to resolve Chad's many societal issues, especially those detrimental to women and children. She declares that she has joined the political arena in order to « *éradiquer à jamais l'injustice, la corruption, la répression et l'exploitation des femmes dans ce pays* » (eradicate injustice, corruption, repression, and exploitation of women in this country.)²³

Dining together as a family for the first time after the *Conférence Nationale Souveraine--CNS* (Sovereign National Conference), Manga, Mélanie, and their son Manto discuss the conference and the direction of the country's political affairs. The National Conference, established with the aim of leading the country to times that are more prosperous meant different things to different Chadians. For many like Manga, in the older generation, the conference is « *fichue* » (damned).²⁴ However, for women and for the youth, the conference represents many positives: change,

²² Kodbaye 6.

²³ Kodbaye 6.

²⁴ Kodbaye 6.

bipartisanship, dialogue, and wider inclusion of citizens in public affairs. As the son Manto remarks, « *grâce à ce forum, les jeunes peuvent maintenant prendre leur responsabilité dans notre pays* » (thanks to this forum, young people can now take up their responsibility in our country).²⁵

The family members are careful to express their opinions with tact; they realize the need to protect the family bonds and emotions, as political differences can bring heated and divisive feelings. Nonetheless, their conversation only masks a hidden power play. Each tries to persuade the other as to what is the best political position. In essence, the campaign comes to their dinner table. Manga, for instance, declares that the new party leaders are nothing but « *des canards boîteux . . . poursuivis pour détournements des deniers publics* » “lame ducks . . . wanted by justice for embezzlement of public funds).²⁶ For Mélanie, it is dictatorship that ruined the country; only the democratic opposition party can help put the country on the right track: « *l’opposition compte des hommes compétents et probes, disposés à relever le pays, le sauver des effets corrosifs de la dictature* » (the opposition has honest and competent men, willing to face the country, and save it from the corroding effects of dictatorship).²⁷

While both father and mother try to prove the validity of their arguments and to assure the other of the seriousness of his and her respective parties, they in fact direct their debate toward Manto their son, who serves as the chair of the

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 9

²⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

university's student government. In fact, the focus of the play's action concerns the dilemma regarding what Manto should thus do.

Resentful of his parents' attempts to "woo" him to one side or the other, Manto shows that he is his own man, with his own outlooks, difficult if not impossible to persuade or bribe. In the presentation of this character, Kodbaye shows the powerful pressure of the older generation and how the country's youth may resist such manipulation. Manto stands for his independence. Just because he is the Student Government Chair does not mean he should attempt to exercise power over his fellow students, to sway them in favor of either of the candidates backed by his father and mother. Manto holds that in current times the country's youth are conscientious in their political decision-making and need no imposition from any direction. He explains that the days of such coercion are gone and that he will not use his position to influence his peers:

Je suis certes le président des élèves et étudiants de Dakiley. Mais ne puis user de mon influence pour ranger toute la jeunesse du côté de mon père ou de ma mère. Ce serait un acte inadmissible. D'ailleurs notre organisation ne s'occupe pas trop des querelles des partis. Nous aurons notre mot à dire lors des prochaines échéances électorales . . . Cessez donc de me courtoiser ardemment

(I am certainly the president of the students of Dakiley. But I can in no way use my influence as a leader to draw the youth to the side of my father or my mother. It would be an unacceptable act. Besides, our organization does not care much about bickering parties. We will have our say in the upcoming elections . . . So stop trying to convince me).²⁸

²⁸ Kodbaye 9.

In the midst of this campaign fever, we see the occurrence of a gala, one celebrating not the political life but the personal life of Manga; a huge party is thrown for his diamond jubilee. However, what should be a celebration among family and friends comes to an unhappy end, with political implications. Many arrive to honor Manga, even a representative from the country's president. Yet his wife is absent--her absence is explained as a scheduling conflict. The absence of an immediate family member angers his comrades, especially his friend Tassal who, seizing the opportunity, urges Manga to put his household in order. Tassal also argues that Manga should get his son on his side, to rally the students, who constitute half of the population, on behalf of their candidate. Manga becomes uncomfortable with Tassal's suggestion, and he explains that his son is a "*poli . . . intransigent et franc-tireur*" (polite and uncompromising maverick).²⁹ Manga's discomfort increases at the suggestion that he should "force" his wife to resign from the competing party. Tassal then relates that he will take matters into his own hands.

Shortly after this conversation at Manga's birthday celebration, Tassal invites Manto to his office for a meeting. He presents his arguments before the young student but to no avail. He even goes so far as to offer Manto a bribe, which Manto rejects. The end of the meeting finds Tassal humiliated and confused, unsure of why his efforts in persuasion have so miserably failed.

²⁹ Kodbaye 16.

For Kodbaye, Tassal is clearly meant to represent the older generation of politicians, who wonder why a multi-party system should be considered in the first place. They only see the advantage of the one-party system, which requires that less money, energy, and other vital resources be spent on electoral campaigns. People, they hold, still have a choice, to vote for the candidate of the single party or not. This attitude was expressed in the 1989 presidential inaugural speech, when the former Chad Hissain Habré spoke the following over the national radio television: *“Je suis le Président. Oui, je suis le Président de tous les Tchadiens, y compris la toute petite minorité qui a dit non”* (I am the President. Yes, I am the President of all Chadians, including the small minority who had said no)!³⁰ Despite the fact that Africa has entered the third millennium, many like Tassal and his peers still believe that the candidates preferred by a coterie of the powerful should win the country’s election, no matter what it takes.

Back in the living room of his home, Manga, alone, paces up and down, and worries about the outcome of the election and his political future. He considers how he can get rid of any incriminating evidence that might be used to frame him should his party lose. The situation, we see turns from bad to worse. His wife soon enters, in a highly agitated state. Next enters Manto, who is followed by a hail of bullets. The condition has become one of civil war.

As in Naïndouba’s *L’Etudiant de Soweto*, where Mulubé comes to tell his parents of his decision to support the student protest, and effectively to tell them

³⁰ Presidential inaugural speech over the Chadian national radio television by Hissain Habre in 1989.

goodbye, *Un Vent d'East* presents an emotional farewell scene. Despite his mother's cries and supplications, Manto remains determined to return to his colleagues and to take up the task of bringing Chad into a more progressive political condition. When he leaves his home, his mother follows. Magna is left to consider his isolation and future of loneliness.

Tassal soon appears before Manga and urges that, irrespective of the circumstances, they should keep on fighting. Unfortunately, hopelessness and dejection have overtaken Manga. He sees no path but to resign from the party, whose loss is impending. Beyond the loss of his political ambitions, Manga mourns the loss of his wife and son, the two whom he has held most dear. He understands that they are now beyond his control, as the new wind of democracy has come in from the East.

Alone in the living room, Manga experiences flashbacks of the past, revisiting both his professional and political lives. Questions arise--what is the worth of it all? How much damage has he inflicted upon his community, despite his best intentions? As a party member and minister of finance, has he helped a few prosper at the expense of the many. The play reveals that he has helped alter documents that allowed for the embezzlement of taxpayer money. How much money does he have in his own personal account? While the answers to such questions remain unresolved, one thing for Manga is clear--his wife has turned against him; she herself will run for a house of representative position. Moreover, his son has rejected him as well (Manto may face prison time for his political activism). Manga only has his opulent home, where at sixty years of age he will live by himself. Like

Igbos in Achebe's novel, Manga finds that something new--in this case the wind of democracy--has "come and put a knife on that which held them together and then things just fell apart."³¹

Quest for Identity in *Un vent d'Est*

Kodbaye's pen bleeds for his home country. His work addresses a totalitarian regime of a small group, supported by foreign powers, namely Europe, who rules in disregard of the vast majority, many of whom languish in abject misery. In his *Un vent d'Est*, Kodbaye not only criticizes the authorities, but he also denounces the abusive and unjustifiable behavior of some parents who would deprive their offspring of their rights and basic freedom of choice, to stand behind whatever political faction they choose. It is regrettable in Kodbaye's eyes that a Chadian father would use his influence to impose his political preferences on the members of his family. Such a situation puts undue pressure on the young especially, who must decide whether to stand by their families (and honor the patriarch) or choose a candidate on his or her merits. Determining the political future according to family loyalties blocks the progress of democracy, and it limits a sense of the youths' connection to the wider community, to the nation of Chad.

Kodbaye uses the character of Manto to dramatize this difficult situation. As the emblematic leader of the oppressed youth and head of the Association of Students of Dakile, Manto shows the independence of the young and their ability to make their own political decisions. Manto refuses to join the political party of his

³¹ Margaret Jean Hay, ed., *African Novels in the Classroom*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2000) 54.

father; he refuses bribes. He in sum renounces and exposes the system of governance based on corruption and mismanagement that rigs elections to maintain power. The play is a collective call to the youth of Chad. It encourages them to think less in terms of family and blood connection than civic responsibility. Kodbaye wants the youth to see themselves not only as sons and daughters of particular parents, but also as children of the country itself. He wants them to embrace their identity as Chadians.

Youth and the Dream of Better Tomorrow

In any country, the importance of the youth cannot be underestimated. The young should be viewed as a sustainable resource, in need of nurturance and development, as they will become a country's future leaders. Chad is no exception. Regrettably, in Chad, as in most African nations, the young fail to receive significant guidance and are often left to their own fates. In developed countries, special programs are designed for youths, such as No Child Left Behind, The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), The Youth Ambassadors Program (YAP), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Louisiana Young Readers' Choice (LYRC), Youth Adventure Camp (YAC), Catholic Youth Summer Camp (CYSC), and Adventure Camp for Teens (ACFT), among others. Such programs serve to support the development of the young and help them consider their futures.

Nigeria may be an exception among African nations. In that country, one sees a solid and effective program for college graduates, similar to the American Peace Corps, called the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Created in 1973, the "NYSC scheme was created in a bid to reconstruct, reconcile and rebuild the country after

the Nigerian Civil war . . . with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity."³² Such organizations also serve to inculcate the notion of patriotism and a responsibility to others in the Nigerian youth.

Unfortunately, in Chad and in most francophone African countries, programs such as the NYSC hardly exist. Even college graduation ceremonies, except for medical schools, are rare occurrences. In addition, the majority of schools and universities have no provision for boarding, and the students are thus deprived of the opportunity of living close together with other students. It is unfortunate that the country's Student Government includes those from middle, high schools and colleges, as the needs of university students might be different.

By using Manto, the candid and charismatic student leader as his protagonist, Kodbaye is able to direct criticism toward the weak leadership of the elders, who seek to protect their self-interests. They are inattentive to the youth of the country and do nothing to enable their future prospects. This attitude is evident in a family dinner scene in *Un vent d'Est*, where Manga dismisses the importance of the student government association, the same organization that Manto holds so dear. Manga declares the following before his son:

Fiston, cela fait longtemps que nous n'avons pas dîner ensemble, depuis cette fichue conférence nationale ... Nous comptons sur vous pour que le désordre social fomenté par les imposteurs cesse. On ne construit pas un pays en entretenant des illusions et en les servant copieusement à la population

³² <http://www.nysc.gov.ng/history2.php>

(Son, for a while we have not dined together, since the damn national conference ... We rely on you to bring the social disorder generated by these imposters to a stop. You do not build a country by maintaining illusions and serving them wholeheartedly to people).³³

We find that it is a common tactic of African playwrights and novelists to use young protagonists as the central figures of their works. Such a strategy puts focus on the youths as agents of change, that they may prove the best bet for leading Africa to a better future. The young characters stand as emblems of change, but, importantly, they also represent the possibility of new relations. They stand as a bridge, as figures of rapprochement, linking differences together. They therefore embody a principle of hybridity, as they stand between the old and the new, between tradition and the modern. The NYSC recognizes that the nurturance of the youth is a vital focus for any country: "leadership in a modern society requires a certain degree of preparation and orientation before the assumption of that role."³⁴ It should be the hope that Chad's youth could negotiate the old and the new, and serve to lead the country to more democratic and prosperous time.

Like Maoundoé Naïndouba's Mulubé, who challenged both the Director of Aborigine Education and the Police Inspector Nelson, and Ouaga-Ballé Danaï's Myriam, who defied the "*malédiction*," Kodbaye's Manto shows his refusal to accept the injustice and corruption of the status quo. His defiance is clear in his refusal to accept the bribe of his father's party; he tells the party secretary « *votre intention fume comme du mauvais bois en combustion. Elle ne peut tromper personne sur sa*

³³ Kodbaye, 7.

³⁴ "Historical Background of the NYSC," <http://www.nysc.gov.ng/history.php>.

nature. Ne vous faites pas trop d'illusions. Avec nous, la corruption et les marchandages ne marchent pas » (your intention smokes like bad wood burning. It cannot deceive anyone about its nature. Do not create illusions. With us, corruption and the haggling do not work).³⁵

In a corrupt society like this, it is not easy for one to grow up and mature with clean hands. The young are challenged on many fronts. In dictatorial systems, even though the youth constitute an important percentage of the voting bloc, their views, or opinions are hardly ever solicited by the candidates. Indeed, many of the young do not see the point in voting in a one-party system. In a multi-party system, even when there is vote rigging, the young at least can feel some sense of political power, as all sorts of politicians befriend them. Such manipulation is evident when Tassal comes before Manto and uses duplicitous terms to sway the youth's thinking.

However, the language and approach used by Tassal reveals his hypocrisy, and the conversation makes it clear that African politicians do not care about anyone but themselves. In this instance Tassal pleads for the support of the Student Government Chair, though in a very short time the regime would look to throw him in jail for having the courage to protest the country's political and social conditions. Like a serious student, Manto listens to the two-faced politician, but then he speaks his own mind:

³⁵ Kodbaye 20.

J'en ai assez de vos propos abracadabrants . . . Les jeunes constituent une réserve considérable d'électeurs. Mais ils ne sont pas à vendre. Ils sauront se prononcer au moment opportun. Sachez dès maintenant qu'ils soutiendront un parti dans lequel militent des hommes nouveaux, probes et compétents.

(Enough with your charades . . . The youth constitute a considerable pool of voters. But they are not for sale. They will decide in due course. May you know as of now that they will support a new party led by honest and competent men.)³⁶

The Importance of Women in Kodbaye's *Un vent d'Est*

In *Re-inventing Africa: matriarchy, religion, and culture*, Ifi Amadiume writes that in most third world countries, "women are seen as objects to be moved, owned or shared, ... as an exchangeable and stealable object, while men generated hostility and managed warfare."³⁷ This situation is regrettably the case in Chad, a country with a high percentage of rural population, where a woman is considered a second-class citizen and is therefore relegated to the lowest position in society. As a teenager, sometimes even at birth, a girl is given in marriage by her parents to a prospective husband. The choice is theirs rather than hers. It does not matter whether the person she is going to spend the rest of her life with pleases her or not. It is simply her duty to please her husband, and her opinion is not sought in family matters.

Western education, for instance, is considered a luxury for an African girl, because exposure to the external world is synonymous with "emancipation," which is also a euphemism for "debauchery." What is more common is for young women

³⁶ Kodbaye 21.

³⁷ Ifi Amadi, *Re-inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture* (New York: St. Martins Press, Inc. 2001) 75.

to be denied access to education. Girls are meant to work in the kitchens and in the farm fields. Examples of this assumption are commonplace, though the Cameroonian writer Marie-Claire Matip creates a young female character, Ngonda, who challenges such preconceptions, as she deliberates over her choice regarding whether she should go to a Western school. Some, including her mother, advise against it: « *une fille est faite pour travailler à la cuisine ou aux champs mais jamais à l'école* » (a girl is meant to work in the kitchen and in the fields but never to go to school.)³⁸ Such a statement coming from her own mother can be explained by the fact that such was her mother's experience, and she could imagine no other. Matip's hero nonetheless shows her determination to attend a modern school, irrespective of what people think about her. Her challenge to the parental, as well as the societal, outlook goes even further. She declares that she will accept no arranged marriage; Ngonda speaks of the importance of choice and affection, asserting « *Je ne voulais pas me marier à un homme que je n'aurais pas aimé* » (I would not want to marry a man that I would not love).³⁹

In many African societies, girls are the “properties” of their first masters (fathers), who later hand them over to their new masters (husbands). The latter exercises his will upon the wife, to the extent of fixing the number of children they will have. While other parts of the world, specifically Europe, see the decision of having children to be a matter of mutual consent between husband and wife, this is

³⁸ Marie-Claire Matip, *Ngonda*, (Paris: Bibliothèque du Jeune Africain, 1958) 18.

³⁹ Matip, 46.

certainly not the case in Africa. What is worse, no matter how many children a wife “makes” for the husband, they are not valued unless they are boys. This insistence of having a boy child comes from the fear in a patriarchal society that the father’s lineage might eventually die out. It is also the case that the wife is blamed if she delivers a girl child, while the birth of a boy is credited to the father.

Matip expresses a feminist outlook and criticizes such domination of women, challenging the view that young girls are the commodities of their fathers. Certainly women in African cultures can excel as easily as men excel, and have talents that are equal (if in some case not superior) to those of males. However, it is common for women in Africa to take care of all household business, to care for the children, and to work as well in the fields, all without recognition or appreciation.

We have noted the presence of a strong female character in Danaï’s *La malédiction*; Myriam seeks a Western education, and when this is denied her, she joins in active revolt against the government. Though Mélanie in Kodbaye’s *Un vent d’Est* does not go so far as to take up arms, she nonetheless also represents a woman who refuses the constraints of a patriarchal order. In some situations we see that Mélanie truly loves her husband and seeks his comfort; she in one scene has music playing as a means of soothing her husband’s ill disposition. Yet this effort only brings his complaint: « *Je ne veux rien d’autre que lire mon journal. Laisse-moi tranquille et moins de bruit, s’il te plaît . . . On ne peut pas lire dans le bruit. Tu le sais très bien, je crois* » (I do not want anything but to read my newspaper. Leave me

alone and let us have less noise, please . . . One cannot read in a noisy environment. I believe you are aware of it).⁴⁰ Significantly Mélanie does not shrink before her husband. Rather she shows willfulness and asserts her own right to choose: « *Tu es libre de lire ton journal. De mon côté, je suis libre d'écouter ma musique. Alors, où se situe le problème* » (You are free to read your newspaper. For my part, I am free to listen to my music. So where is the problem).⁴¹

Like Matip's young hero Ngonda, who is determined to go to school and to marry the love of her life, despite the dictates of tradition, Mélanie refuses to wear the manacles of patriarchy. She expresses her freedom by deciding to join a party that opposes that of her husband, who consequently feels frustrated and humiliated. All his colleagues in the party have their family members on their side. Though their marriage seems exemplary--they enjoy a relatively well-to-do lifestyle--we see growing fissures in their relationship. Mélanie's actions and attitudes threaten Manga, who experiences increasing anxiety over his inability to control his wife. He in some way represents the attitude of many African men, who fear the emancipated outlooks of modern women and their feminist principles; his uneasiness results in sarcasm and aggression, as he asserts his pride of place:

Tu veux bien me mettre le dos au mur, me juger et me condamner à ta guise. Madame brûle d'envie de dominer son homme, de s'imposer à lui, de le baigner dans sa soi-disante doctrine triomphante. Elle croit vivement qu'il est affaibli. Qu'elle se désillusionne très vite car il restera maître de lui jusqu'au dernier souffle

⁴⁰ Kodbaye 4.

⁴¹ Kodbaye, 4.

(You want to put me against the wall, judge me and condemn me as you please. Madame is dying with desire to dominate her man, to impose herself upon him, to indoctrinate him in her so-called triumphant ideology. She believes strongly that he is weakened. May she be disillusioned very quickly because he will remain the master of himself until the last breath)!⁴²

African tradition would want a wife to follow her husband, in politics as in the household. In this case, Mélanie is not only voting for another candidate but has joined a rival party. What is worse for Manga, she becomes a candidate for office herself. His order of domination has come completely undone.

The importance of Mélanie in Kodbaye's play cannot be underestimated. Her actions and outlook dramatize the theme of hybridity, as her resistance opens a new world, one that exists in counterpoint to her husband's. Can the two orders exist in any kind of relation, without causing the social order to break open? Although Manga becomes intransigent, Mélanie searches for ways to right the wrongs of the past. She believes that multiple options are better than a single one (she favors the multi-party system over that of the single-party). She also believes that dialogue and debate are preferable to command and edict--that is the path for Africa's future. Mélanie nonetheless recognizes the difficulty of her situation but accepts the costs that come with her decision:

Cette scène que je viens de vivre montre bien que Manga est contre le fait que moi, sa femme, milite dans un parti de l'opposition. Il se sent vexé en tant que membre de l'ancien parti unique. Que faire maintenant que la situation devient de plus en plus délicate? Nos divergences politiques vont se répercuter sur notre vie en famille. Dorénavant,

⁴² Kodbaye, 5.

l'atmosphère, ici, deviendra âpre, difficilement supportable. Car je sens que Manga va me livrer un gigantesque combat politique à domicile

Que l'orage passe sans trop laisser de dégâts! Il faut que je sache aborder le problème avec tact. Mais mon amour pour mon mari et ma famille n'exclut pas l'attachement à mes convictions politiques. Manga doit se dire que le parti unique n'est plus. C'est bien fini

(What I just experienced shows that Manga cannot accept the fact that I, his wife, am an active member in an opposition party. He feels offended as a member of the former single-party system. What am I to do now that the situation is becoming so much more difficult? Our political differences will affect our family life. From here on, Henceforth, the atmosphere will become bitter and unbearable. Because I feel that Manga will wage a huge political battle against me within our home.

May the hurricane pass without leaving too much damage! I have to know how to address the issue tactfully. But my love for my husband and my family does not preclude the commitment to my political beliefs. Manga must realize that the time for the one-party system is over. It is done.)⁴³

In sum, Mélanie embraces change and multiple viewpoints, whereas Manga cannot. He is tied to the past and shows that he is unable to function in the present. Mélanie, for Kodbaye, is the one who can point the country forward.

Democracy and the Politics of Double Standards

While *Un vent d'Est* desires political progress for African citizens in this new millennium, sub-Saharan francophone Africa has, with very few exceptions (such as Benin and Mali), never seen elections that have been free and fair. Constituencies vote under the fear of gun, as bullets transcend ballots. Consequently, these nations continue to trail behind every other country in the world, in terms of political freedom, economic development, and general quality of life.

⁴³ Kodbaye 5-6.

In directing attention to the present day and the recent political tumult in Africa, one can see Europe advocating “democracy” and supporting the “oppressed” in some countries, in Tunisia, Egypt, Ivory Coast, and Libya. At the same time, however, Europe has been supporting dictatorships, and condoning the long-term suffering of populations in other countries, such as Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo, Togo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among others. What Europe practices is the politics of double standards, an approach that has been put to use for decades, especially by France, which has sought to maintain its colonies under perpetual dependence. If Europe can “rescue” the suffering populations in Tunisia,⁴⁴ Egypt,⁴⁵ Libya,⁴⁶ Ivory Coast,⁴⁷ why would it not seek to aid the thousands of protestors who are being crushed and silenced in sub-Saharan countries, like Burkina Faso,⁴⁸ Chad,⁴⁹ Equatorial Guinea?⁵⁰

Europe uses both overt and subtle means of maintaining Africa and Africans in a continuous state of subordination. Following September 11, 2001, a new

⁴⁴ « *Immolation par le feu : un Algérien succombe à ses blessures* » in <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20110124090911/>

⁴⁵ « *EN DIRECT: Moubarak est tombé sous la pression de la rue* » in <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/actu/20110211T184839Z20110211T184742Z/>

⁴⁶ AFP, « *Violamment critiquée, la diplomatie française menace Kadhafi de la CPI*, » <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/actu/20110224T153705Z20110224T153636Z/> du 24/02/2011 à 15h:37.

⁴⁷ *Jeune Afrique*, « *Ce que Sarkozy a dit aux candidats à l'élection présidentielle*, » in <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/actu/20110224T153705Z20110224T153636Z/>

⁴⁸ « *Nouvelles émeutes dans le Sud du Burkina Faso* » in <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20110430093749/gouvernement-pauvrete-manifestation-blaise-compaorenouvelles-emeutes-dans-le-sud-du-burkina-faso.html>.

⁴⁹ « *Le candidat à l'élection présidentielle de 2011, M. Ngarlejo Yorongar* » in <http://yorongar.com/spip.php?article270>

⁵⁰ « *Guinée équatoriale: pas de rassemblement ni de marche du 1er mai* » in <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/actu/20110430T191823Z20110430T191816Z/>

situation has arisen which impedes change in many African countries, as Europe seeks above all to protect the security of its citizens. In undertaking its “war on terror,” Europe has looked for friendly countries that would denounce the ideology of terrorists. However, we note that African dictators may continue to loot their nations and kill their people, so long as they stand with Europe in the war on terror. The threat of collapsing governments, and the resulting vacuum that might be filled by terrorists, has been used to help prop up faltering and corrupt regimes. In a recent interview with the magazine *Jeune Afrique*, Idriss Deby Itno, Chad’s current president had this to say about the possible fall of his mentor, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi:

Si la Libye implose, les conséquences seront incalculables pour la région ... Ce qui m'inquiète, c'est ce qui se passe aujourd'hui en Libye et les risques d'implosion de ce pays. Les islamistes d'Al-Qaïda ont profité du pillage des arsenaux en zone rebelle pour s'approvisionner en armes, y compris en missiles sol-air, qui ont été par la suite exfiltrés dans leurs sanctuaires du Ténéré. C'est très grave. Aqmi est en passe de devenir une véritable armée, la mieux équipée de la région

(If Libya implodes, the consequences will be incalculable to the region ... My concern is for what is happening today in Libya and the risk of the implosion of that country. The Al-Qaeda Islamists have taken advantage, looting arsenals in the rebel zone, and have stocked up on weapons, including surface and air missiles, which they subsequently conveyed to their sanctuaries in Ténéré. This is very serious. AQIM is becoming a real army, the best equipped in the region).⁵¹

In this same vein, Gadhafi has often warned Europe that, if he were to fall from power, terrorism would overflow in Europe (since, in his view, he is the only

⁵¹ Idriss Déby Itno, an Interview with François Soudan, “Si la Libye implose, les conséquences seront incalculables pour la région,” <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2620p036-043.xml0/> du 06/04/2010.

leader in the Middle East that suppresses terrorists). Regardless of the veracity of the dictator's claims, fears of terrorism should not inhibit criticism of corrupt and cruel governance and its attempts to maintain its power.

In terms of economics, several factors have come into play when it comes to protecting (or deposing) the region's dictators. Western leaders back regimes alternately according to which one best protects and advances Western corporate interests--the control of oil supplies certainly is of great concern. The finances of the weapons' industry also have effect; as such companies (and their home nations) look to open new markets. And all too often Africa's political leaders, with an eye to their own profit, have abetted Western governments and companies. The result for Africa has been disastrous. Clearly, the abuses of African leaders have been encouraged and sustained by Europe, which has benefited from its opportunism.

Kieh describes this situation in clear terms:

Given the fact that Africa's ruling classes lacked a people-centered vision of national development, they plundered and pillaged the various African states' resources for their personal benefits. Additionally, the ruling classes mismanaged state resources by, among other things, wasting resources on frivolous non-revenue generating projects. Strapped for money, African states turned to the imperialist powers, international financial institutions and commercial banks for loans. Being cognizant that loan giving would help consolidate their stranglehold over Africa, the imperialist powers and their banks and global financial institutions doled out loans to various African states.⁵²

Many in Africa have long felt resentful of such maneuvers by Europe. Add to this the 2008 world economic crisis, which has had a crippling effect on many

⁵² Kieh 9-10.

Africans. Great numbers of migrants now living in Europe have been affected by the crisis, and many of them have lost their jobs. Consequently, they find it financially difficult to assist their relatives back in Africa. This decrease in financial support has tremendous impact on the family members back home, which rely on such monies for their basic living needs.

In sum, Chad, like its fellow African countries, has long suffered the effects of colonialism. Its people continue to feel the impact of Western decisions. While we are past the time of colonist occupation, Europe continues to exert new and different forms of influence over Africa, which bring new challenges to countries like Chad, which are trying to piece together a national identity and forward vision.

The Notion of Hybridity in *Un vent d'Est*

In an interview with French journalist Sonia Rolley, Nimrod, a Chadian writer, poet and essayist, gives a rather despairing assessment of current life in Chad:

« Il n'y a pas de pays aussi violents que le Tchad. On trouve encore des gens qui ont su se tenir jusque-là mais ces deux dernières années, vous reconnaissez plus personne. N'importe quidam veut vivre comme les gens qui dirigent . . . Et en face vous avez des jeunes qui dépensent des millions comme ça en un tour de main et les gens commencent à les imiter . . . Le pouvoir au Tchad est une forme d'appauvrissement de la population »

(There is no country as violent as Chad. There are still people who have managed to hang in, but since the last two years, you do not recognize anyone. Any quidam wants to live like the people from the ruling class . . . And in front of you, there are young people who spend

millions in a twinkle of an eye and people start to imitate them ...
Power in Chad is a form of impoverishment).⁵³

Nimrod's view gives emphasis to the discouraging environment of Chad today, though many retain hope for their country. The playwrights under study, Kodbaye demonstrates optimism, despite the troubling events that occur in their plays. As the study argues, an affirmation of hybridity is one position pathway ahead.

According to Anjali Prabhu, hybridity is a 'racial' term and "hybrid individuals in the colonies testified to real encounters between the white colonizer and the native (most often slave) and subsequently required an active inscription in the laws and policies that managed and oversaw colonial activity."⁵⁴ Prabhu emphasizes the racial aspect of the term, we understand that hybridity goes beyond "racial" circumstances, and the concept can be applied to include a range of factors. We can bring into discussion matters that relate to gender, to generational conflict, and to political organization.

English writer Mary Wollstonecraft played a tremendous role in women's emancipation through her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.⁵⁵ Though she lived far from Africa, her insights can still be applied to an African context. By standing up against her husband, a representative of male dominated order, Mélanie

⁵³ Nimrod Djangrang, *Interview with Sonia Rolley. Livres Chad*.
[http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20110410-Nimrod Bena Djangrang-ecrivain-poete-essayiste-tchadien](http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20110410-Nimrod+Bena+Djangrang-ecrivain-poete-essayiste-tchadien)

⁵⁴ Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007) xii.

⁵⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

is calling not only on all other women, but all the oppressed of the world to stand up for their rights. Through her actions and those of her son Manto, we see that the pattern of blind obedience has been broken. In showing this resistance, Kodbaye advocates for an open society and the application of democratic rights for all. If we imagine an idyllic Dakiley as a free society, we would find women and the marginalized participating in political debates, national forums and eventually, and even running for national positions.

Such a vision of Kodbaye's dramatic world, and Chad itself, goes hand in hand with Prabhu's insight, that "postcolonial theories of hybridity (which) do away with the old dichotomy of colonizer/colonized, which is substituted by ideas of multiplicity, plurality, and difference in a less specifiable way."⁵⁶ One indication of plurality relates to the push for a multiparty system, which would be a positive development for the nation. As different people try to bring their ideas to the table, it is more likely that sustainable solutions to social problems can emerge. Like his Danaï and Naïndouba, Kodbaye emphasizes the drawing together of difference, what Claude Lévi-Strauss calls "*métissage*,"⁵⁷ and the three playwrights assign this notion a positive value.

To close this chapter, we might hold up the positive direction of women's rights in Africa. We can point to the character Collé Ardo, who resists the practice of

⁵⁶ Prabhu xiii.

⁵⁷ Françoise Lionnet, quoted in Anjali Prabhu 8.

female circumcision in Ousmane Sembène's film, *Moolaadé*.⁵⁸ (Kaboro's film *Weni Kuni*⁵⁹ also takes up the cause against this patriarchal practice.) What one sees in Africa today are strivings to break from oppressive traditions. However, Africans should not embrace Europe whole-cloth, as its emphasis on capital and consumerism may not provide the best model. Rather, Africa needs to blend the best of its past, with what is positive in Europe, to create a new African *métissage*.

⁵⁸ Ousmane Sembène, *Moolaadé: A Film*, 2004.

⁵⁹ Kaboro, *Weni Kuni: A Film*.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

The end of the nineteenth-century marked a significant historical time for both Africa and Europe, because it set the dynamics in place that would decide and direct the destiny of the African continent--Chad being no exception to the rule. Countries on the African continent have been victims of colonization and exploitation, oppression that still affects them to date. Even though the official aim of colonialism was to bring "light" and "civilization" to the "dark" and "uncivilized" continent; in essence, the effort was hegemonic and economic. Africa became a pawn in European countries' wars with themselves; Africa also became a source for valued natural resources to help the European economies

The strategic partitioning of Africa was devised during the Berlin Conference that took place in Germany from November 1884 to February 1885. And while many European powers and the United States took part in the conference, no single African representative was present at the meeting (or even knew about it). According to De Blij and Muller, while "in 1884, the foreign ministers of fourteen European powers and the United States established ground rules for the future exploitation of the 'dark continent,' Africans were not invited or made privy to their decisions."¹

¹ H. J. de Blij and Peter O. Muller, *Realms, Regions and Concepts* (United States of America: Wiley, 2003) 304-305.

Likewise, the project demonstrated that, contrary to the claims of the conference to “protect” and “preserve” native cultures, the explorers and colonizers did not respect their engagement with the African peoples. The division was arbitrary and, as a result, many Africans who shared a culture found themselves living on different sides of the arbitrary borders, while others, who had little in common, who had different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, were forced together. The consequences of this arbitrary division continue to trouble Africa today.

As the research of this study has shown, African writers responded differently to the conditions and influence of colonization. The “three fathers,” namely Césaire, Senghor, and Damas for instance founded the negritude movement in the 1930s, while students in Paris. In sum, the movement’s objective was the revalorization of African cultural values. In Africa, on the other hand, movements such as *Mau Mau*, *Maji Maji* among others were founded in Kenya and Tanganika, the present Tanzania. Literary artists and intellectuals in Africa were also important in the resistance against colonialism.

Writers that followed, such as Soyinka, Achebe, Ngugi, Kane, and Laye, among others, by the power of their pen, made significant literary contributions toward the decolonization of Africa. Through their various works, they criticized the way the colonialists came to Africa in the name of religion, notably Christianity, and how the white missionary took African land through the tool of the Bible. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, in fact explained this situation with some sarcasm and humor:

(T)he white man in Africa was very clever: he came with his Bible, he preached and sung hymns, and we Africans were very amused. He then said, "Close your eyes and let us pray." When he said, "Amen!", and we opened our eyes, he had taken over our land and we were holding the Bible!²

Whether in Kenya, Chad, Nigeria or elsewhere in Africa, the colonial situation was virtually the same. The colonizer came and then "domesticated" the natives in the name of religion and 3Cs, converting them into Christianity and taking from them their land and resources. One may see that the situation was worse in francophone Africa, as opposed to Anglophone Africa, in that the natives in the French colonies were more completely assimilated, as they own cultures were repressed.

This study has shown that the contact between Africa and Europe has been at times been exploitative and damaging, though there are positives to note in this troubled history. On the negative side, even more than a hundred years after the Berlin Conference, the relationship between the two remains unbalanced rather than complementary, with one side (Europe) gaining more than the other. Most English speaking countries in Africa, however, have become politically "independent" from their colonial masters, in that they can by and large choose their leaders. Multi-party politics has brought change to the situation. As Kieh has noted, "one-partyism was replaced by multi-partyism,"³ which represented a good turn and

² "Ngugi and the World of Christianity: a Dialectic" http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-4364804/Ngugi-and-the-world-of.html of 01-OCT-04

³ Kieh, 12.

a new hope for many Africans, as it became possible to vote out dictatorships. Kieh writes:

(A)another favorable outcome was that it became possible for incumbents to lose free and fair elections . . . two well entrenched autocrats--Kamuzu Banda, the president of Malawi and Kenneth Kaunda, the President of Zambia--who had governed their respective countries since they gained independence in the 1960s, lost in competitive elections held during the early 1990s.⁴

One can add countries like South Africa and Ghana to the list of those who voted out long-ruling incumbents. France, however, has largely remained involved in the electoral process in francophone Africa. Illustrations of incumbents being removed from office are rare if not non-existent; as such leaders are often maintained in office through the influence of Europe. No matter the actual votes, the elections go to the incumbent candidates. The list of such occurrences is long, and everyone knows that fraud takes place (though the populace feels that little can be done). A recent election in Gabon serves as illustration. Ali Bongo, the son of the late president who had ruled the country for over forty years, lost to his opponent Mr. Obame, who received 42% of the vote to Bongo's 37%. Yet, « *les résultats étaient renversés* » (the results were reversed),⁵ and Bongo became the president; he was immediately congratulated by France. This situation is common in francophone Africa, where we have seen three sons succeeding their fathers, or "*Présidents ... fils du père.*"

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dSN1XEdS5M>

While the study reveals the detrimental shortcomings in the relationship between the two continents, it at the same time recognizes some strength that has evolved. In the works of three playwrights from Chad, notably Danaï, Maoundoé and Kodbaye, we see the depiction of an Africa whose relationship with Europe is neither wholly pessimistic nor optimistic. Reflecting the implications of Bhabha's hybridity, they advocate a mixing and inter-relating of Europe and Africa, as a way of birthing a new and better Chad and Africa.

By using the female protagonist Myriam in his play, centered on the themes of incest, curse, and education, Danaï awakens the consciousness of Chadians and Africans as to the dangers of clinging to such traditional beliefs. His play also seeks the advancement of African women, who have long been considered second-class citizens. The playwright argues for their integration in society and for the great contributions they can offer. Finally, Danaï believes in an equality and universalism-
-if we are all cursed, then no one is cursed.

Naïndouba's play deals with segregation in South Africa. By setting his work in a faraway land, he was able to avoid the political retaliation he might have experienced had he located the work in Chad, while simultaneously criticizing the kind of oppression that occurs in Chadian society. His protagonists search for dialogue, for the affirmation of common ground, which demonstrates an endorsement of hybridity.

Kodbaye's play deals with politics and the interference of patriarchs on the lives of their wives and children. Such dominance represents the traditions that continue to hold back Africa and its children. Manto's leadership in the student

protest represents his efforts not only to reject the tradition of patriarchy but also to defy the colonial system, which still has francophone leaders influencing political candidates and helping to determine election outcomes.

All the playwrights, in their respective works, advocate social justice and equality for all, and they dream of a Chad, of an Africa, devoid of corrupt official and predators, where any citizen can rise according to his merit and not by social affiliation or political favoritism. By using the language of the colonizer, they are building a bridge that brings Africa and Europe into a new relationship, one that values difference and multiple viewpoints.

Through this study, it is clear that the three generations of African writers have somewhat different views on the relationship between Africa and Europe. The first-generation writers--Césaire, Senghor, Damas, Diop, etc--looked at the past with nostalgia. Their wish was to go back to their African past and recreate their own history. The second-generation--Achebe, Soyinka, Kane, Laye, Ngugi, etc--gave full attention to the effects of colonialism and the damage of the White man. Through Achebe, this generation believed that the White man “put a knife in things that held us together and we have fallen apart.”⁶ The three Chadian playwrights on their part recognize that the influence of colonialism is a done deal, that Africa and Europe have already experienced a mixing that is irretrievable. What they desire, however, is to begin with the perception of an already established inter-relation, and to explore how elements--from both Africa and West--might be best aligned for a more

⁶ Achebe 125.

progressive African future. Though they strongly oppose Western domination and exploitation, these playwrights, like the scholar Jason Allen Snart, believe in “fusion without loss,”⁷ where the drawing together and relationship of diverse cultural elements does not come at the expense of any one outlook, where the best of both Africa and Europe might align to produce a more peaceful and prosperous Chad.

⁷ Snart, 57

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Vita

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