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Narrative and Representation in French Colonial Literature of Indochina.

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**Narrative and representation
in French colonial literature of Indochina**

Walls, Jean Marie Turcotte, Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1994

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106

**NARRATIVE AND REPRESENTATION
IN FRENCH COLONIAL LITERATURE OF INDOCHINA**

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 French and Italian

by

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May 1994**

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the establishment and critical legitimation of colonial literature as a genre during the period of intense colonial development in France from approximately 1871-1930. Fictional accounts of the French involvement in Indochina are used to examine the paradoxes of colonial representation. Les Civilisés by Claude Farrère, Le Kilomètre 83 by Henri Daguerches, and Sur la Route Mandarine by Roland Dorgelès are examined in terms of the inconsistencies and contradictions which emerge from the efforts of the narrator/colonizer to inscribe and represent the other in a composite colonial system. These texts are examined in terms of three textual processes: 1) assimilation, which effaces the difference of the other, the colonized; 2) exoticism, which removes the other from the realm of validation, short-circuiting the recognition of the other; and 3) translation/mediation, which acknowledges difference, but presumes to translate the other's being into mutually sufficient terms. In colonial novels, the processes of assimilation, exoticism, and translation/mediation are means by which the other can be variously accounted for, subsumed, or effaced. Ultimately, the novelistic form which engages the discourse of colonialism cannot successfully sustain efforts to portray either a theoretically seamless and unified system of colonial authority or a similarly univocal conception of self. The fact that objective realist colonial texts fail, intrinsically, to represent their purported subject and subjects derives partially from colonialism's social and ideological paradox: there was not nor could there be a logically unified, normalized society of colonizers and colonized.

Western conceptions of authority, totalization, transcendence, subjectivity, and objectivity are brought into question in works where colonialism and imperialism are dominant and organizing structures. The oppositions and questions that arise in the

juxtaposition of a Western "dominant" (the colonizer) over and against an Eastern "other" (the colonized) are played out textually in novels of a genre which sought to describe and represent colonialism faithfully, realistically, objectively. This study examines the colonial relationship, not only as a function of a socio-political construct, but also in terms of the cultural and philosophical implications and groundings of such a relationship.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Key questions concerning Western self-definition and representation are illuminated by the interplay of textual tensions within colonial literature. Western conceptions of authority, totalization, transcendence, subjectivity, and objectivity are brought into question in works where colonialism and imperialism are dominant and organizing structures. The oppositions and questions that arise in the juxtaposition of a Western "dominant" (the colonizer) over and against an Eastern "other" (the colonized) are played out textually in novels of a genre which sought to describe and represent colonialism faithfully, realistically, objectively. A central textual crisis--a representational fallacy--emerges from the overlay of Western ethic and aesthetic upon the indigenous culture of the colonized. The inability to inscribe and represent authentic difference either textually or philosophically in the composite colonial system is the root of this underlying textual tension. The fact that the objective realist colonial texts fail, intrinsically, to represent truly and fully their purported subject and subjects derives partially, of course, from colonialism's social and ideological paradox: there was not actually nor could there be a logically unified, normalized society of colonizers and colonized. But more significant, in terms of the aims and presumptions of the colonial novel's objective-realist representational terms, is the fact that the colonial novel, as a function of that literary formula and perspective, is subject not only to the bind of the socio-political aporia, but more broadly to the aporetic bind of language itself.

Issues related to colonial imperialism did not disappear with the official demise or rejection of colonial controls. Concerns about the nature of power and control as

they were magnified in the colonial context continue to be a source of critical debate. The political, cultural, and moral implications of such a system of power and control are a continuing source of interest and critical analysis. The focus of many recent analyses is the establishment and liberation of the voice of the formerly colonized within the realm of French writing.¹ The engagement of scholars in the study of Francophone literature is related not only to the analysis of the literature itself, but to the philosophical debate regarding the engenderment of the category itself. Less critical attention, on the other hand, has been given to the study of literature which was contemporaneous with the height of overt colonial activity and which promoted, or at least did not overtly disparage those activities. Certainly, doubts as to the viability of colonial activity can be seen to influence the relative acceptance, proliferation, and demise of a literary type which reflected what came to be an increasingly non-viable political and socio-economic policy.

As with any body of work, the quality and literary merit of the components vary greatly and these aspects of the colonial canon were treated by contemporaneous critics such as Marius and Ary Leblond, Roland Lebel, Louis Cario, and Charles Régismanset. A few studies such as Pierre Jourda's 1938 book on exoticism have dealt with isolated figural or thematic elements of colonial texts. Martine Astier-Loutfi's book Littérature et Colonialisme published in 1971 represents an important step in the consideration of the colonial novel as a function of its historical, political, and cultural context. More generally, works such as Edward Said's Orientalism have fueled scholarly interest in colonial relationships and the after-effects, decolonization. There are a number of excellent, recent studies which treat either directly or tangentially questions and topics related to the colonial imperial period of France and other European countries.² Yet, despite the number of recent works broaching issues

motivated by colonial-type intervention, little critical attention is given to those fictional works which directly recount overt colonial intervention from the perspective of the colonizer. In this study, I propose a re-examination of colonial texts in terms of the positing, actualization, and rationalization of colonial authority through the figure of the colonial narrator. An analysis of the relationship between self and other entails an examination of the processes of empowerment which infuse the writing and narrative processes at large. I will use the colonial relationship as a springboard for evaluating such processes as they are revealed in narrative and representation. The colonial relationship will be examined not only as a function of a socio-political construct, but in terms of the cultural and philosophical implications and groundings of such a relationship. This analysis will contribute to the on-going critical dialogue regarding the nature of the relationship between the (former) colonizer and colonized, and, more broadly, the relationship between self and other by focusing on a representation of that relationship in a body of work which has not been explored in modern critical terms.

The focus of this study is a period of intense colonial development in France from approximately 1871-1930, which many historians view as the height of French colonial imperialism. During this period, a great quantity of literature about the French colonial empire was produced. This study will focus on novels written after 1900 which were viewed by contemporary critics as being true and accurate representations of colonial life in Indochina. From among the fairly extensive bibliographies of colonial works relating to Indochina, as well as from anthologies and critiques of colonial literature, several texts stand out either because of their contemporary popularity or their acknowledged literary merit. The choice of texts for this study was based on the relative consistency of mention and acclaim of certain texts

within the contemporary critical circles. The depth and range of the objective-realist representational paradox seem especially well illustrated by Roland Dorgelès' Sur la Route Mandarine, Claude Farrère's Les Civilisés, and Henri Daguerches' Le Kilomètre 83. Although these three texts will be the principal focus of the study, other colonial novels such as Jean d'Esme's Les Dieux rouges, Jean Marquet's La Jaune et le Blanc: Roman des mœurs indochinoises, Emile Nolly's Hien le Maboul, as well as novels which deal with France's colonial ventures in other parts of the world such as Farrère's Un Homme nouveau, will be used to illustrate the textual strategies of colonialist discourse.

In this study, I will be examining the narrative voices in Sur la Route Mandarine, Les Civilisés, and Le Kilomètre 83 in terms of three processes: 1) assimilation, which effaces the difference of the other, the colonized; 2) exoticism, which removes the other out of the realm of validation, short-circuiting the "human" recognition of the other; 3) translation/mediation, which acknowledges difference, but presumes to translate the other's being into mutually sufficient terms. These processes function on two levels in the text. First, they are the means by which the colonial author reveals the colony to his audience. Included in this revelatory process is the establishment of the actual and potential relationship of the colonizer and the colonized politically, culturally, and socially, as well as the politics of power which are operative in those relationships. Secondly, these processes function as means by which the colonial author defines himself and his place in the world. On both levels, the central problem is figuring the other into the desired univocal, totalized picture. In colonial novels, the processes of assimilation, exoticism, and translation/mediation are means by which the other can be variously accounted for, subsumed, or effaced. Ultimately, the novelistic form which engages them cannot successfully sustain efforts

to portray either a theoretically seamless and unified system of colonial authority or a similarly univocal conception of self.

Colonialism is an interesting framework for exploring the implications and ramifications of a governing system, both in the literary text and, in a broader sense, as a process of constituting or defining the self within the construct of a prescribed system of authorization. The colonial novel (narrowly referred to here as one produced from 1900-1930) exemplifies the textual interplay and tensions which arise in representations of circumstances surrounding and propelled by the socio-political organizing structure of colonialism. In other words, the organizing patterns and relationships in the colonial novel reflect those processes of empowerment which occur on a socio-political level. While on one hand the colonial novel appears as a bastion of objective realism in its form and by its allegiance, this assumption must be tempered with observations about colonial texts which, along with the development of more modernist texts, in fact hail a weakening or, perhaps, a demise of objective realism as the central literary organizing mode and the philosophical basis of the French and European imperialistic advance. The subversive elements of textuality, that is, the narrative and representational fissures in colonial realist texts, threaten the stability of a mode of thought and orientation which presents itself as immutable and guileless.

Colonial ideology promoted the artificial imposition of a socio-political system on populations culturally distinct from the instigators of colonial rule. In the thrust of French colonization in the late nineteenth century, cultural systems and boundaries were discounted by the grid-like imposition of colonial rule. The *Ecole Coloniale* likewise set forth a structural grid of sorts with the goal of reflecting and promoting colonial ideology through education, political posturing, and literary prescriptions.

While the Ecole Coloniale's primary function was to train men for the colonial service and generally to promote the concept of colonial expansion, the Ecole Coloniale exerted varying influences on writers and their literary output in the early twentieth century during the perceived height of the colonial period. Equally important in the promotion of colonial writings were other organizations such as the various colonial societies which provided support and impetus for colonial documentation and interpretation.

Literature, in any form, was viewed as a particularly effective means of generating interest in the colonies and several things were done to actively promote its production and circulation. Marius and Ary Leblond were two influential colonial critics who reinforced this perception. In support of colonial literature as a harbinger of real understanding of the colonies, they state, "We will know the colonies through the writers" (Leblond 138). They, as well as many other colonial supporters, believed that literature was, in fact, the best way for the East to be known and understood by the metropolitan French. Journalists and novelists were encouraged to travel to the colonies to observe and report first hand the workings of colonial life. Colonial officers already in place were also considered fruitful sources of desirably positive observations of colonial "reality."

In general, the novels recognized and promoted by the Ecole Coloniale and the colonial societies attempted to maintain and sustain the validity of nineteenth century positivist ideology as they promoted, revealed, and explicated the French colonial territories. Other literary production about the colonies, while perhaps less overtly supportive of this Western ethic, nevertheless, was more or less officially sanctioned by the Ecole and supporting colonial societies if it served the purpose of arousing interest in the colonies. The sparking of interest was considered in some respects tantamount to supporting the colonial enterprise. The literary tenets characteristic of

the school, such as the adherence to realistic representation, reflected positivistic presumptions of comprehensible, known sets of rules. The prescription for objective realist representation in the colonial novel forced a binding of objective experience, a priori rules, and relationships which can be equated to an extent with the relational modes of the socio-political structure of colonialism. The static relational modes dictated by the ostensibly unerring authority and validity of colonialism in its broadest sense is theoretically unalterable. The resultant network of individual relationships is confined and defined by the structuring and dictating mechanism of the colonial system. The same patterns of static relational modes and control can be observed in the novels which describe the colonial enterprise.

The allegedly cohesive textual surfaces of novels classed as "colonial novels" seem to reflect the positivist leanings of the adherents of the school and their stated preference for the medium of the realist mode of representation. The status of these novels as objective realist texts revealing the "true" nature of colonialism is undermined, however, by the textual characteristics that arise in the representation of colonial ideology and the concurrent fallacies, flaws and inconsistencies of that system of thought. Such textual characteristics take the form of thematic revelations, textual inconsistencies, ambiguous narrative voice, and linguistic inversions. In truth, the novels mask and deform the underpinnings of colonial ideology. The works cover over and ignore the essential problematic and contradictory nature of colonialism as a structuring or organizing principal. They do not overtly analyze or criticize or even acknowledge the realities and exigencies of colonial society. This study will examine the treatments of common tropes, themes, and techniques in French colonial novels about Indochina which reveal fissures in the epistemological and

ontological assumptions which undergird colonial discourse and to an extent, objective realism.

Central to the maintenance of colonial ideology is the assumption of the colonizer's ultimate authority as perpetrator and interpreter of the structure of relationships within which he operates. Similarly, the colonial novelist is the perpetrator not only of a socio-political system, but of a textual system as well. The centrality and privileging of the author figure is, as Paul Bové notes, one of the traditional organizing modes of control and domination in Western thought (Lentricchia 63). In the colonial novel, the author, in effect, "colonizes" the text in that he theoretically dominates and manipulates all facets of the regulatory system of the narrative. Viewed in this way, the term colonialism can imply a textual strategy as well as a socio-political governing structure.

In colonial texts, the recognition of order or authority, broadly speaking, can be observed by the authorizing or empowering processes linked to the narrating voice. This study will focus on three of such processes--assimilation, exoticism, and translation/mediation. All involve the manner in which the narrating voice seeks to define his status and relationship within the matrix of colonialism. The empowerment of the narrator hinges on his success in writing out the element of difference within that colonial matrix.

The overriding adherence to the ideal that the colonial writer can make present the colony to the metropolitan reader suggests that in colonial discourse the other, as the object of discourse, could be known and difference obliterated. This assumption reflects the idea that the "otherness" inherent in language--that is the ultimate non-univocality of language--can likewise be overcome. The failure of this sort of undertaking, of course, is inscribed in the process of representation. Language as the

imperfect medium of representation is simultaneously a barrier and an opening, never a mirror. A literary stance that assumes accurate referentiality reflects the idea of self as an absolute presence hemmed in by the boundaries of its own individual existence. Beyond the illusion of external coherence, though, boundaries are never impenetrable barriers and by the very nature of textualization open inevitably out into a broader nexus of signification. The process of signification in the colonial context comes into question as it becomes a tool of enunciation to elucidate the cultural context of the other and to control and circumscribe the other through authorial modes of domination. The textual inscription and representation of the colonized in the language of the colonizer, or the "re-wording" of the indigene, amounts, then, to an epistemological and ontological binding of the other--the colonized--within the discursive field of the colonizer.

The discourse of colonialism, in terms of modern psychological and philosophical development, reveals a conception of the self as a totalized cohesive being, and, as such, reflects a conception of self characteristic of the objective realist text. Belsey points out that the expressive realist text, as she terms it, is a text written over and against the already written, that is, the already known. The narrative flow of the realist text conforms, as she points out, to our shared body of knowledge or perception of the world and is thus predicated upon the idea of narrative as a story brought to light in the unique social, political, and cultural climate of the author. Epistemological assumptions which imply the possibility of absolute knowledge and truth buttress the solidarity and security of this belief. Many of the colonial novels, however, subtly reveal in the narrative fabric and in the rhetorical devices a splintering of this totalized conception of self and a shattering of the textual unity which mark the classic realist text.

One element typical of the cohesive front of realist texts is the textual closure, which Catherine Belsey, among others, associates with the realist text (Belsey 70). The intelligibility of the narrative which this closure implies is suggested in colonial texts by an understanding of colonialist discourse as a cohesive and intelligible form of interactive social and discursive formulation and one which is capable of mapping human, cultural, social, and political relationships. However, narrative closure as a characteristic of classic realism is frequently compromised in novels touted as objective realist colonial texts. The closure or resolution which a realist text is purported to exhibit is undercut by the inefficacy of those texts to satisfactorily contain and explain convergent elements of colonial practice which arise in the representation of such activity. On a strictly formulaic level, some texts may be seen to exhibit a certain degree of closure. For example, the deaths in Les Civilisés, the departure in Le Kilomètre 83, or the displacement in Sur la Route Mandarine of central characters at the end of the novels illustrate what Belsey might consider as culminating resolutions in classic realists texts. Yet, the certitude and finality of such marks of resolution are often compromised by the thematic and rhetorical orientation of colonial texts. In colonial texts, the processes of assimilation, exoticism, and translation come to be revealed as textual orientations which subvert a classic realist aesthetic by putting into question the resolute closure of the text.

The textual satisfaction implied by narrative closure in realist texts is left unfulfilled in the colonial novel. This narrative closure, actually disclosure, is part of what constitutes classic realism as Catherine Belsey describes it (Belsey 70). The creation and subsequent (dis)covering or uncovering of enigma as a process of narrative which Roland Barthes describes in S/Z leads to this type of closure (Barthes 10-11). The requisite "reestablishment of order" is an essential element of the

classic realist text as Belsey notes. In the colonial text, the anticipated "reestablishment of order" may be undercut in some narratives by the free-floating unresolved nature of the exotic elements of the text. The infusion of exotic elements into an otherwise realist text potentially opens the narrative into an interminable nexus of unfulfilled, unaddressed, and unacknowledged fields of desire, desire being both the nemesis of and the drive toward textual closure. The expected resolution characteristic of realist texts is challenged by the implicit alterity of exoticism and the enigmatic nature of exotic representation. Francis Affergan ties the "inquiétude" which arises in the exoticizing of the other to the fact that representation of the other is ultimately impossible and irresolvable; ". . .l'altérité est non seulement irréductible, mais elle est de plus *asymétrique*, puisque l'interchangeabilité entre Je et Tu (les deux acteurs principaux de l'ethnologie) est impossible" (Affergan 18). Despite the seeming futile nature of the enterprise, the desire to see, to name, and to know the other and to appropriate what is not one's own is, in the eyes of some, an essential human trait (Affergan 41). The other, in terms of exotic representation, resists reduction to the terms of the self-definition which code realist representation. Exoticism, as unbounded metaphor, in a sense, frays the neat edges of classic realist closure. In texts ostensibly bound and bounded by the ideal of completeness and cohesiveness, exoticism or "metaphor places itself forever under the sign of want" (Coste 330), and the narrative remains always at the charged moment of almost-fulfilled desire.

Assimilation as a function of colonialist discourse is one of the paradoxical aspects of colonialism which undermines the authority of the colonial system and, in turn, the colonizer. M. E. Chamberlain and D. K. Fieldhouse, echoing a commonly held opinion, note that the goal of assimilation was more pronounced in the French colonial

effort than in that of other imperial powers (Chamberlain, Fieldhouse 56). The French ideal of assimilation can be seen as an outgrowth of the widely held conception of the universality and centrality of French culture. Reflecting the philosophical foothold of the eighteenth century notion of universal law, the French colonialists maintained the belief that diverse cultural threads could be interwoven into the fabric of their own culture and that those threads, once interwoven, would not threaten the integrity of the cultural whole. The theoretical goal of assimilation, however, is undermined on the practical as well as on the textual level. For example, in Roland Doreglès' novel Sur la Route Mandarine, assimilation is a central motif. In describing his search for the Mandarine Road, the narrator constantly strives to create an intersection of his idea of the Mandarine Road and the extant indigenous Mandarine Route. The fusion of these two roads though cannot occur and the impossibility of that fusion is written in the ellipses which mark the novel from start to finish.

Assimilation, as understood and attempted by French colonialists, negates the possibility of authentic difference, that is, the existence of a viable other as an unknown entity. The devalued "citizenship" bestowed on the colonized population reflects the front-loaded reciprocity of the colonial relationship. Similarly, these manufactured citizens, as Martine Astier-Loutfi remarks, often appear in colonial novels as caricatures of Western man--that is, as imperfect representations of the conception Western man has of himself (Astier-Loutfi 62). Cultural curiosities of the colonized reported by French writers heighten the caricatural impression.

Hypothetically, under the umbrella of assimilation all difference would be dissolved in the solution of utopian totalization. In this light then, the other, written as the colonized, is paradoxically exaggerated and effaced. Differences are effaced by the surface denial of the value or authenticity of the indigenous culture. This

devaluation, at times, reflects the belief that the other can be known in an absolute sense, and also the colonialists' desire to become coterminous with the other by eliminating the element of difference. As expressed through the notion of assimilation, the underlying desire to absorb the differences of the other implies the need of the author/colonizer to fill a gap (albeit denied in theory) in his being. Homi K Bhabha speaks of this gap as a silence or, more specifically, "colonial nonsense "(Collier 203) which occurs when one attempts to represent difference--a deformation of being at best, an impossible impasse of representation at worst.

Edward Said points out that fundamental elements of exoticism have become inextricably incorporated in the Western representation of the East in literature (Said, Orientalism 203). The colonial writer can disclaim the evocative power of exotic elements, but he can never effectively strip them of the wealth of exotic, other-worldly connotations that have built up through repeated representation of the East in Western literature. The continued incorporation of exotic elements into the colonial text works to unseat the surety with which the colonizer claims superior knowledge and understanding because always bound up in the notion of exoticism is the implication of an unknowable, unreachable realm of experience. Elaborating on Said's notion of the Orient, Christopher Miller describes the incorporation of an image of the East into Western thought as "a purely artificial construct based rhetorically more on direction than location" (Miller, BD 14). So, in one sense, the East the colonial writer seeks to define and elucidate for metropolitan France in objective realist terms is only a trope for the Western search for self-definition.

An examination of the functions of trope in the colonial novel reveals that the expected metonymical nature of realist narrative is colored by the metaphoric overlay of exoticism. The conception of realist narrative as being driven primarily by the

functions of cause and effect to a great degree derives from Roman Jakobson's articulation of the relation of verbal units in Fundamentals of Language and other of his seminal texts on the nature of language. His view of the pull of romantic and symbolist writing into the arena of metaphor versus the tendency of realist writing to be metonymically driven provides the basis for analyzing and classifying different types of writing according to their tropic orientation. The fusion of exoticism, which is a function of the symbolic, and objective realism constitutes an irresolvable paradox in the tropical structure of relationships. What exoticism does for the objective realist text is to suggest a move to the realm of the metaphoric rather than the metonymic. As Jonathan Culler (in line with the theories proposed by Jakobson), suggests in The Pursuit of Signs, metonymic discourse is based upon the contiguous nature of narrative as opposed to the metaphoric orientation of poetic discourse. The colonial text, while seemingly grounded metonymically, exhibits a strong metaphoric bias; that is, it appears to be based upon the relations of similarity as opposed to those of contiguity. Yet, the metaphORIZATION of the colonial text, is, in effect, only illusion. On one level, the narrative continues to be metonymically bound, that is grounded in objective realism's linear and causal chain of action and development, while on another level, the infusion of metaphor through exoticism creates the illusion of transcendence. The metaphoric element of the exotic realist text functions, then, at cross-purposes with the metonymic structure of the ideal realist text.

The French language was assumed by the colonizer to be more than sufficient for any society regardless of its cultural history. The imposition of the colonizer's language upon the indigenous population, while practical from the colonizer's perspective, points to a belief in the universality of the French language and culture. In this context, the only marginally valid representation of the other in the colonial

novel had to be in terms of the translated other--an other radically transformed by the language of the colonizer. For example, the translated indigenous character, that is, one who is perceived to have assumed as much of the outward trappings of French language and culture as possible, is typically treated much more favorably than one who ostensibly must always be translated anew, in other words, continues to operate in an indigenous setting according to the norms and expectations of that setting. In this sense, the imposition of the colonizer's language as the *modus operandi* of the colony effectively negates the idea of the contextuality of language, and by extension, the contextuality of being.

Language, as definer and interpreter of being, assumes an even more important role in the colonial system than in a homogeneous society. The authorial nature of language (that is its authorizing and authoring potential) is magnified in the colonial context where the struggle for control, political as well as linguistic, is inevitable. Tejaswini Niranjana in the book Siting Translation treats the function of translation in colonialist discourse extensively. She proposes that the "translation" of the colonial subject is done in such a way as to justify the hegemonic structure of colonialism. As a "strategy of containment" translation "reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representation, or objects without history" (Niranjana 2-3). In effect, then translation, just as assimilation and exoticism, functions in the colonial text as a discursive means of variously writing out and over the colonized subject. They are all means by which the narrating voice is implicitly empowered as the prioritized subject.

Notes

¹ Representative of recent works dealing specifically with the voice of the formerly colonized in Francophone literature are Littérature et développement, Bernard Mouralis, 1975; Nommo: African Fiction in French South of the Sahara, John D. Erickson, 1979; Le Discours antillais, Edouard Glissant, 1981; The Vietnamese Novel in French: A Literary Response to Colonialism, Jack Yeager, 1987; Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French, 1985, and Theories of Africans, 1990, Christopher Miller. Earlier works such as Discours sur le colonialisme, Aimé Césaire, 1950; Situations, V: Colonialisme et Neo-colonialisme, Jean-Paul Sartre, 1964; Portrait du Colonisé précédé du Portrait du Colonisateur, Albert Memmi, 1957; Franz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, set the course, so to speak, for the challenge to the dominating discourse of colonialism.

² Presses de la Renaissance has published recently biographies of two of the authors of primary consideration in this study--Claude Farrère and Roland Dorgelès. While both works are interesting and thorough treatments of the authors' lives, neither undertakes an in-depth critical analysis of the colonial question and problematic and its bearing on those authors' works. Works such as Tefaswini Niranjana's Siting Translation: History, Poststructuralism, and the Colonial Context, 1992 and Chris Bongie's Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle, 1991 are indicative of efforts to re-examine the role of colonialism in cultural, social, and philosophical systems and the interface of those systems in a literary context.

CHAPTER 2 COLONIALISM: POLITICS AND STRATEGY

Accounts of the practice, implementation, and effects of colonialism abound in literature. From antiquity to the present, Western literature is dotted with narratives describing the diverse processes of colonialism and the multitude of ways in which it has been represented and interpreted. The period of intense colonial development in France at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, approximately 1871-1930, is viewed by many historians as the height of French colonial imperialism. During this time, a great quantity of literature about the French colonial empire was produced. This study focuses on novels written after 1900 which were viewed by contemporary critics as being true and accurate representations of colonial life in Indochina and as being favorable to and supportive of the colonial enterprise. The colonial novels which I analyze differed from early travelogue or exotic works about the colonies. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the goal of objectively and realistically presenting the colonies to the metropolitan population was foremost in the minds of colonial writers. The subjective nature of earlier documentation of colonialism was eschewed in favor of a mode of representation perceived as truthful and accurate and objective.

In this chapter I examine facets of the historical and cultural foundation of colonial imperialism as it appeared in France at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Aspects of colonialism, such as the derivation and authorization of power within the system, the hierarchical imperatives buttressing the system, the economic and psychological justification, and the relationships of the actants in the colonial drama, are treated, as well as the "interpresentation" of

those aspects in fiction. (By interpresentation, I mean the presence and interpretation of ideological structures in and among the multiple levels of discourse.) In subsequent chapters these aspects will be brought to bear on the position of the narrator in colonial fiction--that is, the narrator as literal and figurative colonizer, and the way in which the narrator/colonizer defines and represents himself in relation to the colonized other. The process of defining oneself in and through the colonial matrix is underwritten by the Western hierarchical values which subtend not only colonial ideology, but the whole expanse of Western thought. This chapter treats some of the issues of colonialism which can be viewed as magnifying commonly held Western conceptions of power and authority in the socio-political arena. This will lead to an examination of the similarities between the narrative and textual inscription of authority in the colonial novel and the validation of authority in the political arena.

The acquisition, manipulation, and validation of authority or power are central to the politics of colonialism regardless of the time or the place. The configuration of power as it has been applied through history is revealed in very different ways. For example, the traditional Western vertical or hierarchical interpretation of power is less observable in parts of the world which were not or are not touched by certain events of history, which, in many Western minds, make those hierarchical structures of power seem natural instead of naturalized. The creation and use of power, socially, politically or textually speaking, cannot be viewed as an innate element of being, but rather a naturalized element which is realized in different ways given the particular time and place in history. The paradoxes, contradictions, and inconsistencies in the interpretation of colonial imperialism are related to problems arising from efforts to conflate differing conceptions of power. At the level of confrontation between two

conflicting conceptions of power, questions of legitimacy, and, inevitably blame come to light.

Machiavelli, Hobbes, Nietzsche, as well as innumerable contemporary philosophers and critics seek to explain and/or justify the workings of power in the socio-political sphere. They variously examine and critique the means of domination and the justifications regarding the implementation and use of power. Given the undeniable existence of created and imposed power structures in societies, the justification and legitimation of control mechanisms is a central concern. How is power legitimized and at what point does power become illegitimate and unacceptable? This brings up the question of contextuality. To what degree can control mechanisms of one governing system be laid over another system? Is authoritative behavior in one sphere theoretically non-translatable to another? What constitutes negative or affirmative recognition of empowerment processes? The presence of negative or affirmative recognition of these processes, as well as the option of implied refusal to accept traditional empowerment processes will ground the discussion of the representation of the colonial ideology in fiction.

Michel Foucault addresses the question of power in a number of his works, although he does not deal specifically with a colonial application. Power, the bête noire of colonial opponents such as Sartre, does not carry the same negative connotations for Foucault. In one of the Power/Knowledge interviews, Foucault comments

In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition....What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourses. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive. (Foucault P/K 119)

Power as Foucault considers it then cannot be tagged to any particular institution or societal representative, but rather must be considered as the vector of force which potentially connects given institutions and its participants. The stratification and rigidity traditionally associated with colonial imperial enterprises does not seem to fit Foucault's diagrammatic description of power. As opposed to a conception of power emanating from a single source, typically associated with the colonial scenario, Foucault rather views power-relations as not being "localized" spatially or temporally. That is, a subject which houses power is illusive. Power, then, might be conceived as gravitating from societal accord. Gilles Deleuze describes Foucault's perspective saying,

These power-relations, which are simulataneously local, unstable and diffuse, do not emanate from a central point or unique locus of sovereignty, but at each moment move 'from one point to another' in a field of forces, marking inflections, resistances, twists and turns, when one changes direction, or retraces one's steps. (73)

The distinction Foucault makes between power as system and power as situation does however address what seems to be the pivotal issue for both critics and apologists of the colonial enterprise--the processing and authorization of power in the colonial scheme. The work of power is apparent for Foucault in such sites as hospitals, asylums, prisons, schools. The textual processes that this study examines in colonial texts--assimilation, exoticism, and translation, might be compared to what Foucault sees as the local power relations or the sites of power. The reinforcement and circumvention of the authority of colonial discourse as it is revealed in colonial texts might be seen then to reside in the manipulation of such local sites of power as are represented in these textual strategies. These local sites of power are important, as Michael Walzer points out in an article on Foucault's politics, to an understanding of the workings of society and the individual's relationship to those networks of power

(Hoy 58). The understanding of power as system, that is, as a non-teleological construct, is in direct opposition to the logocentric and teleological construct of theories which justify colonialism as a viable socio-political system and which have been used to analyze pro- and anti-colonial writings. While it must be taken into consideration that Foucault writes primarily of situations of power play within a relatively defined socio-economic framework, that is, contextual power, the bare-bones relations nevertheless can be brought to bear in an examination of the play of power in a colonial context. In this light, the vectors of force which work to empower authority might be examined in a context less dominated by the moral and ethical overtones which infuse most critiques and analyses of colonial writing.

The conception of power (and by extension colonialism) as essentially organic as opposed to static cannot be used necessarily to distinguish between critics and apologists of the colonial enterprise. Taken to the extreme the organic view of colonialism may be used as justification or rationalization for the negative effects of colonialism. D. K. Fieldhouse, for one, leans toward a conception of colonialism as merely a happenstance construal of political events which made the ambivalent control by a European entity over an Eastern entity possible. This interpretation would lead us to assume that the colonizer, while perhaps at times mislead, cannot be ultimately blamed for the way the cards fell. Others, like Sartre, view the system (to keep Sartre's term) as inherently abusive and wrong and the instigators of that system should be held liable. In Machiavellean terms, of course, the political and ethical realms are not subject to the same set of assumptions and the question of blame is not one to consider. In colonial writings though, the political and the ethical are inevitably fused and the moral justifications or accusations regarding colonial rule will inevitably impinge on any analysis. The fusion of ethical and political notions in

analyses pose complex problems. Wolfgang Mommsen, in his book Theories of Imperialism, acknowledges the multiple and interpenetrating levels of the analysis surrounding the notion of imperialism.

Mommsen addresses the problem of trying to explain the exact causes and reasons for the rise of late nineteenth century colonial imperialism with any one particular theory. For example, to think of colonial imperialism as a naturally evolving construal of power does not account for the whole package of colonial rationale and implementation. Theories of power politics such as those put forth by William Langer and Winfried Baumgart only account for a part of the complex issues which propelled "the extraordinary dynamic force of imperialism." He goes on to say that theories "of this kind in fact make absolute what is no more than one factor among others; it certainly has an accelerating effect on imperialist processes, induced either by internal or by peripheral causes, but it does not itself originate them" (Mommsen 75).

Some theorists may construe the nature of colonialism as evolving yet, elements of the basic structure of relations are unalterable. There is and must always be a dominant and a subordinated element of the equation. Theoretically and practically some aspects are alterable, but the assumptions of authority and power in a colonial configuration are necessarily fixed by definition. Sartre explains the seemingly irreconcilable inconsistency, formulaic power as static or organic, in the introduction to Albert Memmi's The Colonizer and the Colonized where he describes the colonialist system as "a form in motion, born toward the middle of the last century, that will manufacture its own destruction of itself" (Memmi xxviii). In effect, then we have the image of a moving monolithic structure which does not have potential for indefinite sustenance or evolutionary alteration. The difficulties that arise in the representation

of colonialism stem in part from this essential problematic to which Sartre alludes--the superimposing of a singular ideal of power and authority in a context that did not and could not support or maintain that system.

The colonial scheme is not backed up by a cohesive, univocal lexicon. The lack of univocality with regard to an "empowering" lexicon perhaps is one way in which the fissures in the mask of control and authority typically put forward by colonial theorists are revealed. The vocabulary which references the political acts associated with colonialism is far from consistent. The legitimation of power implies, in a sense, a legitimation of terms. Common accord of the terms of power would seem to reflect positivistic assumptions about the absolute and indisputable perimeters of power and authority within a given realm, in this case colonialism. Certainly power is not legitimized simply by the cohesive linguistic appearance of the set of terms surrounding it. Yet, the lack of accord can be read as indicative of a broader problematic.

The opening pages of The Imperialism Reader: Documents and Readings on Modern Expansion by Louis Snyder offer numerous interpretations of the constellation of words surrounding the notion of empire and empire building--imperial, imperialism, colony, colonial, colonialism. The nebulous character of the terms is reflected by the rather expansive choice of definitions provided. The terms are gathered from a variety of documents reflecting the views of authors from various empire-driven European powers. Even among the so-called experts the usage of empire-related terms is hardly fixed. And within individual documents defining terms, usage is often inconsistent as well. For example, an excerpt from Parker Thomas Moon's 1926 book on imperialism contains at least 17 variations of the use of the term imperialism. The diversity of thought exhibited by the other excerpts in the

Snyder anthology indicates to some extent the range of interpretations associated with colonial imperialism and the empowerment of imperialistic authority.

The simple dictionary definition of the word colonialism "control by one power over a dependent area or people" (Websters) hardly belies the complexity of reactions to and representations of colonialism in the modern world. (The O.E.D. entries for colonialism and related terms, however, do not use words such as control, dependent, or dominant in the description of colonial practice.) Colonialism is frequently more narrowly interpreted by the modern Western reader as the European control and domination of a non-Western entity. In an attempt to broadly draw the outline of colonialism and define the area of reference, Fieldhouse divides the world of observers into Marxist and non-Marxists. He says:

To the Marxists imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism all express the changing character of the hegemony exercised by the capitalist West over the rest of the world. To non-Marxists imperialism and its consequences may indicate a reluctant response to otherwise insoluble global problems or the pursuit of specific objectives of various kinds. (5)

With both factions though, we come back to the notions of power, control, and authority and the ultimate legitimacy of the practice carried out in the name of colonial imperialism. As is the case with many events of history, it is only a posteriori that interpretations arise that seem more or less to describe the events which fall under the shadow of the colonial umbrella. In fact, as D. K Fieldhouse notes, it was only after 1950 that the terms colonialism and imperialism were particularly distinguished as being different processes. According to him, the commonly held understanding of the term after 1950 is "a general description of the state of subjection--political, economic, and intellectual--of a non-European society which was the product of imperialism" (Fieldhouse 6). Whatever descriptions or interpretations are

proposed, the complex issues involved in the creation and destruction of empire through colonial expansion disallow easy definitions and answers.

From among the many critics and historians who have sought to describe and clarify the processes involved in colonial imperialism, the following writers voice representative stances for or against colonialism. While some critics and historians such as A. P. Thornton and Hannah Arendt stand back from the colonial battlefield and attempt to examine the issues in light of both actants. Others like Jean-Paul Sartre, Aimé Césaire, and Franz Fanon are vehement in their assessments and assignation of colonial guilt. On the other extreme, others like D. K. Fieldhouse and Henri Brunschwig tend to maintain a more Eurocentric view. The legitimacy of the enterprise, although not always directly addressed, is variously accepted, ignored, or refuted. The question of legitimacy, in terms of the colonial process, necessarily broaches moral and ethical issues which are difficult or impossible to extricate from many critiques. This difficulty is addressed in A.P. Thornton's Doctrines of Imperialism as he attempts to explain the complexity of defining the term colonialism.

He says:

It is a concept that has been unable to shake free of the bitterness that bred it. It is therefore not a "manageable" idea. It contains the recognition of one's own weakness, which acts as a corrosive, burning out the possibility that a dependent relationship can hold anything of value. Colonialism is only imperialism seen from below. (6)

For him then, the emotional baggage that goes along with any analysis of colonialism will necessarily impinge on the presentation and interpretation of that system.

Thornton goes on at length to distinguish and compare the notions of colonialism and imperialism. For him the term colonialism necessarily evokes the image of domination and subordination in human terms. In other words, there is the implication of illegitimate pre-empting of power. Imperialism, while not free from

this web of accountability is not in theory so weighted down with emotional and moral judgements. From a distance, imperialism can be rationalized as rather more economically motivated. Yet, in practice, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century European push for empire, the differences between colonialism and imperialism appear negligible.

Hannah Arendt is precise in her clarification of terms of empire in The Origins of Totalitarianism:

. . . imperialism, which grew out of colonialism and was caused by the incongruity of the nation-state system with the economic and industrial developments in the last third of the nineteenth century, started its politics of expansion for expansion's sake no sooner than around 1884, and this new version of power politics was as different from national conquests in border-wars as it was from true empire-building Roman style. (Arendt v)

She interprets the terms as period specific with a recognizable beginning and end. A point that must also be noted with regard to her theories is that imperialism is not a structure relegated to the purely political arena, but it is rather an outgrowth of a new type of expansion propelled by commercial interest. So, in fact, the base of so-called traditional colonization is broadened. In the eyes of some proponents, the broadened economic base would be increased justification for expansion. For others, the commercial interest would simply further taint an already compromised and compromising enterprise.

The rise of nationalism is another explanation given for the push for colonial acquisitions at the end of the nineteenth century. Competition, particularly with England, was always a very strong component in the maintenance of a national prestige. The politics of colonialism and the representation colonial practice were both sources of competition. Henri Brunschwig comments on the strength of this nationalistic fervor:

L'impérialisme colonial, comme le nationalisme dont il procéda, fut une vertu. Ses protagonistes servirent les grands idéaux de l'époque, l'idéal national et l'idéal humanitaire. Ils eurent bonne conscience . . .

En Angleterre, en France, aux États-Unis, en Allemagne, partout la même foi se retrouve en la mission du peuple civilisé de la race supérieure envers les populations qu'il fallait, pour leur bien, coloniser. Et cette passion humanitaire s'allie à la gloire d'accomplir cette mission plutôt de l'abandonner au voisin (173)

The glorification of one's country was seen as substantial justification for colonial expansion. Particularly in the case of France, the need to bolster the country's self-esteem on the international front was a consideration. The losses of Alsace and Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 necessitated in many minds the need to polish France's world image. Success in colonial ventures was perceived as one way of pursuing this end.

Jean-Paul Sartre's definition of the term colonialism in Situations V does not reveal any ambivalent hesitation regarding the process of empire-building. His ideas are not couched in the compromised language of many historians:

C'est que la colonisation n'est ni un ensemble de hasards ni le résultat statistique de milliers d'entreprises individuelles. C'est un système qui fut mis en place vers le milieu du XIXe siècle, commença de porter ses fruits vers 1880, entra dans son déclin après la Première Guerre mondiale et se retourne aujourd'hui contre la nation colonisatrice. (Sartre 26)

For him colonialism must be viewed as what was and remains an indisputably indefensible position which cannot be excused or white-washed.

He goes on to describe what he perceives as the hard edges of the rigorous system of colonialism: "Je voudrais vous faire voir la rigueur du colonialisme, sa nécessité interne, comment il devait nous conduire exactement où nous sommes et comment l'intention la plus pure, si elle naît à l'intérieur de ce cercle infernal, est pourrie sur-le-champ" (Sartre 27). The blame for the series of events which led to

nineteenth century colonialism for him cannot be deflected. The enterprise cannot be legitimized. As he notes in his introduction to Albert Memmi's book The Colonizer and the Colonized, colonialism is for him a system and for Memmi it is a situation (Memmi xxv). In delineating his position of colonial imposition, Sartre notes that

. . . quand nous parlons de "système colonial", il faut nous entendre: il ne s'agit pas d'un mécanisme abstrait. Le système existe, il fonctionne; le cycle infernel du colonialisme est une réalité. Mais cette réalité s'incarne dans un million de colons, fils et petits-fils de colons, qui ont été modelés par le colonialisme et qui pensent, parlent et agissent selon les principes mêmes du système colonial. (Sartre 43)

As a system then, colonialism is a purposeful imposition of authority. In Sartre's critique, late nineteenth century colonialism and its outgrowths may be viewed as motivated primarily by the expectation of economic gain. It is for him illegitimate domination. Although Memmi is no defender of the colonial system, the word situation somehow deflects the blame a little. Situation is more likely to imply a coterminous relationship between the parties involved rather than the implied a priori imposition of control of one entity on a hapless other entity. For Sartre, colonialism as a systemitized structure of oppression and repression, necessarily dehumanizes the colonized. For him, there cannot be two human sides to the colonial equation, otherwise the system could not function. The colonized other must be reduced in status to a non-being or at the very least a greatly less valorized form of human being. By eliminating or distorting indigenous forms of social organization, colonialism takes away the forms by which groups are constituted as valid cultural units. Sartre notes the effects of this process saying that it

. . . *fabrique* des "indigènes" par un double mouvement qui les sépare de la collectivité archaïque en leur donnant ou en leur conservant, *dans la solitude de l'individualisme libéral*, une mentalité dont l'archaïsme ne peut se perpétuer qu'en relation avec l'archaïsme de la société. Elle crée

des *masses*, mais les empêche de devenir prolétariat conscient en les mystifiant par la caricature de leur propre idéologie. (Sartre 40)

From this arises the double bind of the colonizer. The negation of the humanity of the other in effect negates the colonizer's own humanity in Sartre's eyes, and forces his own alienation. In other words, either there is being or there is nothingness.

As for Sartre, for Aimé Césaire, the willful act of colonial intervention was and is inexcusable. Unlike other critics and apologists who attempt to describe colonialism in terms of what it is, Césaire, in Discours sur le Colonialisme, defines colonialism in terms of what it is not:

De convenir de ce qu'elle n'est point; ni évangélisation, ni entreprise philanthropique, ni volonté de reculer les frontières de l'ignorance, de la maladie, de la tyrannie, ni élargissement de *Dieu*, ni extension du *Droit*; d'admettre une fois pour toutes, sans volonté de broncher aux conséquences, que le geste décisif est ici de l'aventurier et du pirate, de l'épicier en grand et de l'armateur, du chercheur d'or et du marchand, de l'appétit et de la force, avec, derrière, l'ombre portée, maléfique, d'une forme de civilisation qui, à un moment de son histoire, se constate obligée, de façon interne, d'étendre à l'échelle mondiale la concurrence de ses économies antagonistes. (11)

In the scope of one passage, Césaire manages to eliminate all the traditional hiding places for rationalizing and justifying colonialism. The exclusionary exercise in negative dialectics breaks down the monolith of colonial structure into manageable pieces for attack. The passage, divided into three parts, condemns in turn practice, individual, and system. No aspect of the colonial apparatus is left guileless. The accusatory terms and tone leave no doubt as to his judgement of European colonialism. It is interesting to note that the strongest opponents as well as the strongest proponents tend not to anchor their most vigorous points of defense in the realm of politics and economy, but rather in the social and cultural human drama where neither guilt nor justification is easily abstracted.

Similarly, Franz Fanon, in Les Damnés de la terre is scathing in his interpretation of the colonial dilemma. The notion of nationalism, which critics such as Brunschwig mention as propelling the colonial drive to subjugate new territories, is central to Fanon's indictment of the colonial powers. Fanon's view of nationalism, in contrast to that of someone like Brunschwig, alters the conception of nationalism to focus more on the individual uniqueness as opposed to a homogeneous ideal. He states:

A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover people's true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the everpresent reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. (Wretched 233)

Fanon sees the imposition of colonial rule as the stripping away of the national culture and identity of the colonized people. The negation of the indigene's sense of nationalism served to strengthen the colonizer's identity as a "superior" culture. Fanon acknowledges the interpenetration of economic and cultural justifications in the imposition of colonial rule. Economic reasons, he notes, are often the wedge which allows an initial opening for the colonizer. The cultural destruction which follows is inevitable. Fanon is vehement on this point of cultural rape: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it (Wretched 210). As I will discuss in later chapters, the effacement of the time and place of the other in this way serves to write him out of history in the Western sense of the word.

In contrast to the defensive tone of Sartre, Césaire, and Fanon and their belief in the deliberate and rational imposition of authority, is Ronald Robinson's pluralistic model of colonialism. Wolfgang Mommsen, in his book on the theory of imperialism,

summarizes Robinson's view saying that colonialism "was not a rational, deliberate, well-planned enterprise but a highly complex process which both its European agents and their victims regarded as accidental but inevitable, and which increasingly escaped their control" (Mommson 111). In his view, the perception of colonialism as a process rather than an a priori structure implies an operation which evolved and changed as it developed. The agents and victims (a rather gratuitous ascription given what follows in the text) are tossed together in an accidental, inevitable, and uncontrollable situation with an assumedly unpredictable outcome. The perceived natural snow-balling effect can be taken as means of deflecting blame for colonial rule and deflecting accusations of misappropriation of power since the movement of events is beyond the control of the individuals involved.

D. K. Fieldhouse's description of colonialism, like Robinson's, reflects a sort of rationalization through natural process. He states, "Wherever the blame lies, the one fundamental truth about European colonialism is that it was from the start an unstable and transient condition, the product of a particular conjunction in world history which disappeared as surely as spring succeeds winter" (Fieldhouse 49). In this statement can be read many of the questionable assumptions regarding colonialism as it appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first word "wherever" deflects the blame to follow by displacing blame from the voice of the colonizer, here represented by the historical narrator of the European viewpoint. With blame fully deflected, he can move on to truth, which occupies an undeniably paradoxical position in the statement since Fieldhouse's absolute truth "is" anchored in instability and transiency. The subtle validation of European authority can be read in the phrase "the product of a particular conjunction in world history" which implies that those who assumed the position of colonial authority did so only in response to a justified

socio-political need. And finally, the ultimate absolution--colonialism disappears. With the "natural" disappearance of colonialism, the European narrator is freed from semantic guilt because colonialism was only a process as natural as spring following winter. The unpredictable patterns of culture seem to appear then as unpredictable as the patterns of nature. Similarly, the words and phrases which describe the political acts called colonial imperialism escape control and a priori definition. The work of empire and the implied constructions of power and authority can be read in both the socio-political arena and in the textual representation of that arena .

Analyses of representative colonial novels will reveal the textual skirting of issues related to the validity and legitimacy of the colonial enterprise, as well as the implications of those avoidance strategies which reinforce the security of those positions of superiority. The side-stepping of issues of validity and legitimacy might be interpreted in several ways. First, agreement with the colonial system might be presupposed, given the fact that it exists unchallenged, at least superficially, as the context and setting for the novels. Secondly, ambivalence about the colonial system might be revealed in less direct ways than overt challenge to a seemingly officially endorsed system of expansion. Thirdly, the appropriation of only the setting of colonialism, as an extension of exoticism, might be interpreted as an apolitical stance on the part of the author. Whatever the slant though, the choice of colonial context for the novel places it necessarily within the canon of texts which are at once subjects of and subjected to colonial strictures and authority. Falling whether purposely or accidentally under the sway of colonial imperialism, the positioning of the text in that setting necessitates consideration. The frequent avoidance of political issues in a genre deemed to be politically motivated and motivating is in itself a point worthy of thought and examination.

A continuing examination of the common structures and characteristics which mark colonialism has contemporary relevance as societies constantly strive to reevaluate the perimeters and constitution of their being in the world. As A.P. Thornton notes, the world "lies in the shadow of other men's victories, defeats, won and lost yesterday. We use a spiritual and intellectual currency we did not ourselves mint" (15). The literary textual canon casting a "shadow" in this study--colonial authority structures and power dynamics--is marked and recorded in frequently ambivalent, ambiguous, and inconsistent terms. Perhaps more interestingly, it is a record of the natural failing of the discourse--that is, the text, the terminology, the tropes, the themes, the whole literary record of colonial experience--to sustain the positivistic, a priori ethic of Western imperialism.

The realist texts of the colonial school provide interesting examples of the competing levels of authorization and empowerment. A recognition of what constitutes power and how power underwrites authority is crucial for analysing the impetus and propulsion of recognizable patterns of hegemony both in the socio-political and linguistic sphere. The colonial novel, as it was envisioned by colonial critics such as Roiland Lebel, should adhere to the tenets of realism and "truthful" representation. The prioritizing of this mode of literary representation is consistent with the acceptance of the static nature of the colonial system typically held by colonial supporters. The colonial context can thus be seen as reinforcing the circumscribed system of empowerment typically associated with the objective realist novel. Edward Said in his recent book Culture and Imperialism notes the connection between the underlying impetus of realist texts and colonial practice. Calling for modes of analysis which take into consideration the interpenetration of various levels and facets of cultural practice of imperialism, he says ". . . the literature itself makes constant

references to itself as somehow participating in Europe's overseas expansion, and therefore creates . . . 'structures of feeling' that support, elaborate, and consolidate the practice of empire" (Said C/I 14). He also remarks that the examination of the realist novel and colonial practice as interpenetrating systems of thought is an aspect of both systems of thought that has not been adequately examined.

Foucault comments in L'Ordre du discours in broader terms but along similar lines about the mutually informing levels of social practice. He refers to the ways in which various aspects of cultural practice work simultaneously to construct or reinforce set notions of truth. He states:

Or cette volonté de vérité, comme les autres systèmes d'exclusion, s'appuie sur un support institutionnel: elle est à la fois renforcée et reconduite par toute une épaisseur de pratiques comme la pédagogie, bien sûr, comme le système des livres, de l'édition, des bibliothèques, comme les sociétés savantes d'autrefois, les laboratoires d'aujourd'hui. Mais elle est reconduite aussi, plus profondément sans doute par la manière dont le savoir est mis en oeuvre dans une société, dont il est valorisé, distribué, réparti et en quelque sorte attribué. (Foucault L/D 19-20)

We can compare this construction of truth, in some respects to the construction of a "colonial truth," and by extension a "colonial reality," in the sense that colonial imperialism was a systemitized practice which was variously informed, formulated, and enacted through processes similar to those which Foucault addresses.

The acquiescence to a circumscribed system of empowerment, as implied in the objective realist mode of representation, necessitates the acknowledgement of an acropetal inscription of power. The term acropetal would describe a power which is hierarchically structured and derives its authority from a singular figure or position at the apex of the hierarchical structure. It is a form of power which is inherent both in the colonial system and in the objective realist mode of representation. The

adherence to accepted narrative techniques, chronologies, and organization reinforces the inscription of this sort of empowerment.

We can view the configurations of authority and power in some respects, as indicative of the manner in which we define ourselves and our place in the world. How we simultaneously create and efface boundaries that define the realms of acceptable, non-acceptable, and marginal modes of power and authority can be read in the traces of efforts to convey or document the ambiguous and ambivalent construal of power at a given point in history. It is important to realize that the exported brand of power and authority we see revealed in the colonial enterprise is not necessarily the domestic brand, but often an exaggerated configuration of traditional power structures. An "exported" political structure, in some ways, though can serve as a magnifying glass for the exporter and his accepted mode of domination. Literary texts which to varying degrees set themselves historically or thematically within the context of colonialism alternately conceal and reveal the traces of the power struggle which inevitably arises when differing conceptions of power are brought to the same arena. This study will examine how the relations of power and authority are constituted and reflected in novels written by French metropolitan authors and how the novels relate to the colonial enterprise as it appeared and functioned in Indochina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Assumptions and Justifications of Colonial Imperialism

French colonial imperialism relied on certain assumptions or justifications which from a modern critical perspective seem flawed or inconsistent with actual practice. Part of the paradox of the colonial system resides in the inconsistencies between the presuppositions of colonial imperialism, the manner in which colonial imperialism was enacted by the French and the explicit or implicit denial of the

presuppositions and justifications which sustained the enactment. The disparity between theory and practice in colonial imperialism is observable in a number of different instances. The ideological justifications of colonial expansion can be roughly divided into two categories 1) moral, ethical or idealistic reasons, and 2) economic or political reasons. Justifications falling in these categories in many cases are intertwined and can be analysed from both perspectives.

The notion of the “civilizing mission” of France is one of the paramount justifications of the colonial enterprise and one that is used extensively in fictional documentation of the enterprise. An essential element of that “civilizing mission” and perhaps a paradigm paradox of the whole French colonial enterprise is the notion of assimilation, which I will mention briefly in this section and develop at more length in Chapter 4. Raymond Betts remarks that much of the concern with colonial theory in the two decades following the establishment of the Ecole Coloniale in 1889 focused on the applicability of the doctrine of assimilation as a grounding for native policy (Betts 8). The civilizing mission was driven by the moral and ethical imperative of France to share her perceived superior culture, language, and civilization. The auspices of good intentions grounded this desire to spread “civilization.” Expanding the empirical horizons of the French population by providing some new body of knowledge through the appropriated colony justified the colonial pursuits for some proponents. The appropriation of the indigene and the colony as objects of knowledge is indicative of an alignment of power and knowledge in the colonial scheme as both the individual and the context of the other are re-written in the terms of the colonizer. Like power, knowledge was not something the colonizer could share with the colonized, if indeed the system were to be preserved. The paradoxical nature of this assumption in

conjunction with the justification of the “civilizing mission” and the related assimilationist policy will be treated in the textual analyses of Chapter 4, 5, and 6.

Mannoni writes of the disparity between abstract intentions and practical encounters, that is, what the French perceived as ideal and what they actually practiced on the colonial front. For him “it is an obvious over-simplification to think of two cultures as two vessels unequally filled and to suppose that they have only to be connected up for their contents to find a common level” (Mannoni 23). This image echoes the ideals of the French “mission civilisatrice” which propelled the notion of filling the inferior vessel and achieving an ideal state of assimilation--a utopian solution.

The underlying notion of cultural superiority has to be confronted when dealing with the ideal of assimilation. An extensive examination could be pursued as to the reasons why the French have traditionally regarded their culture as superior even to the point of being universal, but for the purposes of this study, the historical build-up of supporting documentation for that assumption will not be pursued at length. Betts elaborates on the roots of French superiority/universality in his book Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory and the changes that occurred in colonial policy which mark what he perceives to be the height of French colonial expansion 1890-1914. Henry James summed up the perception of that veil of superiority in a letter to the New York Tribune in 1876 saying, “certainly France occasionally produces individuals who express the national conceit with a transcendent fatuity which is not elsewhere to be matched” (Betts 28). In describing the idea of superiority and universality as it relates to assimilation, Betts quotes an 1885 work on colonial theory by Yves Guyot and then comments on these assumptions:

. . . "In France we confuse assimilation and uniformity. We are still with the old Platonic idea of universals. We want to model everyone in our own image, as if it had attained an absolute perfection, and as if all Frenchmen were alike."

The simplicity, symmetry, and intrinsic appeal of the theory had long seduced those French minds which were concerned with colonial problems. Not only did assimilation appeal to the French love of order, belief in man's equality, and ever-present desire to spread French culture; it also appeared to provide for a uniform colonial administration. (Betts 8)

While on the official level the policy of assimilation was altered as its inefficacy became apparent, the philosophical basis for the support of the policy could not so easily be erased.

Thomas Sowell points out in his recent work Preferential Policies that innate superiority of one group over another is not something subject to empirical analysis. In citing examples of power politics based on the notion of innate superiority he says, "the argument has not had to convince others logically or empirically, but only to evoke a sense of solidarity within a group already possessed of the political power needed to give themselves special benefits" (Sowell 145). Interestingly he notes that even in situations where the simple political power for domination is not in question, preferential treatments of one group "are seldom content to rest explicitly on brute power and narrow self-interest, but reflect a need for some moral patina, often felt to be genuine" (Sowell 144). This overlay of "moral patina" is an important component of the driving "civilizing mission" and French assimilationist policy. Betts also underscores the importance of this sort of moral justification:

Partly because such thoughts were seductive to the French, and partly because they helped allay fears about the expense and possible foolhardiness of overseas ventures, ideas like "duty" and "civilizing mission" were broadcast by the imperialists of the late nineteenth century, anxious as they were to justify their stand to a nation traditionally anti-colonial. (Betts 30)

Such emotive justifications appeared far more frequently in colonial novels than justifications based on economic or political motivation.

The notion of assimilation, more marked in French colonial imperialism than in the other European expansion, implies the recreation of the indigenous other in terms of the colonizer. The supposition was that the indigene could be made over to become a true Frenchman and that the colony thus composed of "new" Frenchmen would become an integral and functioning part of France. The important term here is integral, in the sense of non-distinct and unified. As opposed to a true synthesis of cultures, assimilation, as it was practiced by the French, simply renamed the differences and supposed that the marks of difference would either disappear or in any case not be recognizable under the guise of renamed difference. The blatant paradox of this view did not preclude the citation of assimilation as a central goal of the "civilizing mission" which many French colonial advocates used as justification for colonial expansion.

Historically speaking, assimilationist thought in France can be traced back to Richelieu. It was magnified and expounded upon during the Enlightenment and by the time of the Revolution, the doctrine had come to be more or less accepted as a process of natural law. At this period of history, the religious overtones of assimilationist practice came to be overshadowed by the idea of political assimilation. Betts notes that assimilation, "thus nourished by the Republic as a symbol of equality . . . never ceased henceforth to play an important role in colonial policy and doctrine" and further that "after each period during which assimilation was deemphasized or apparently rejected, it was reasserted with renewed vigor" (Betts 16). At the end of the nineteenth century in the face of new developments in sociology and psychology, some objections were raised, yet the doctrine continued to hold a place in colonial policy.

The proliferation of these new ideas in scientific thought and nationalism and their conjunction with the doctrine of assimilation, Betts remarks, make the Third Republic a particularly interesting juncture in history for examining the paradoxes of assimilationist theory. The new ideas were used on one hand to support assimilationist theory and on the other to refute it. By the beginning of the twentieth century, strong opposition to assimilation was evident. The ideas certainly did not disappear and the historical identification with some of the tenets of the doctrine continued to be fully operative. The colonial novel is one stage on which the debate is repeatedly carried out. The representation of this paradox in colonial novels will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

Although frequently upheld as the ideal, assimilation, in practice, gave way to what was termed association, a greatly watered-down version of the initial "charitable" impulse. Association implied a status not quite of an equal, but at least a more "civilized" position than would have been otherwise possible for the indigene had he not been "touched" by the superior culture of the French. Among other influences, the pervasiveness of evolutionary theory served to make assimilationist based colonial theory less palatable in the early part of the twentieth century. Emile Durkheim and Alfred Fouillée were two of the theorists who signaled this shift in orientation to a model of social evolution. Léopold de Saussure, writing in 1899, voiced a very strong condemnation of assimilation in his work La Psychologie de la colonisation française. He pointed out what he believed to be two erroneous assumptions on which assimilationist policy was based and which he believed were the nexus of French colonial inefficacy: "the belief in the unity of mankind and belief in the efficacy of pure reason, both of which run counter to the laws of evolution" (Betts 71). With the colonial congress of 1900, the official endorsement of the assimilation

was replaced by a “realistic colonial policy based on current scientific precepts . . . Observation, investigation, analysis became the key words used” (Betts 77). The goal of scientific accuracy and exactitude called for in colonial management is evident as well in the many colonial novels which followed this adjustment of policy. Jean d'Esme's Les Dieux rouges, Jean Marquet's La Jaune et le Blanc: roman des mœurs indochinoises, and Emile Nolly's Hiên le Maboul might be considered as indicative of the policy of “observation, investigation, and analysis.” As opposed to many colonial novels where members of the indigenous population are marginalized, these texts take as central issues the examination of different segments of the indigenous population. The application of social evolutionary theory cast the old problems of colonial management in a new light, but the theory was certainly not the panacea that its adherents claimed. The shadow of assimilationist theory continued to be evident in official and fictional documentation of the period.

The degree of analysis regarding the establishment of the ontological and epistemological place of the other is not unique to this juncture in colonial history. Francis Affergan, in his recent book on exoticism, treats at length various types of processing that the other might undergo in order to bring him into an appropriately manageable form. Drawing an example from the time of the colonization of North American, he refers to a point at which

Autrui devient sécable, dissécable, opérable. Il est soumis à une entreprise de décomposition et lorsqu'enfin il est recomposé, en vue d'une approche synthétique et conclusive, il est méconnaissable; il n'est plus, stricto sensu, le Même ni l'Autre. Il est devenu un objet étendu neutre, prêt aux manipulations coloniales et normatives. (Affergan 81)

It is the necessary “neutering” of the other which is implicit both in the processes of assimilation and association. The re-formation of the other becomes possible only after the requisite obliteration of difference.

Another paradox related to the assimilationist debate deals with the establishment and subsequent violations of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (Fieldhouse 45). From a Eurocentric perspective a person indigenous to the colonized territory was not acknowledged in the same terms that a person from other European or "advanced" societies were acknowledged, despite the ostensible assumption that the indigenous people could be assimilated into the French culture. The terms "primitive," "uncivilized," and "savage" are used to distinguish and shelve the indigeneous population. For example, in Les Dieux rouges, a priest admonishes some of his native flock saying, "combien de fois vous ai-je répété qu'un chrétien ne doit pas croire aux sorcières" and later remarks, "je les ai soignés, guéris, et peu à peu, je me suis mis à les aimer comme des enfants, comme des enfants et je les ai baptisés" (d'Esme 79-80). The indigene, as the "other," is described in terms that are anathema to the linguistic construction of the European "self." The "other" is re-scribed in alternative terms which mark his difference and distance from civilized culture. The different lexicon from which one would construct the "self" of the colonizer and that of the colonized would seem to negate the possibility of any form of assimilation. The erecting of these semantic barriers is ironic in that they allow the indigene to be alternately perceived and represented as repulsive or desirable, alien or kindred.

These semantic differences which mark the "other" in the colonial arena echo the situation Sartre describes where the other must be dehumanized in order to justify the domination. Not only were the colonized semantically cordoned off, but they were isolated socially and politically as well. In a passage from Dorgelès' Sur la Route Mandarine, we see an example of this notion of absolute "otherness" and the cordoning off of that other element. Describing elements of the indigenous population, the

narrator remarks, the Annamites had "avant notre venue, leur civilization. Ils pouvaient évoluer. Les Moïs, eux, n'ont jamais approché de civilisés ni jaunes, ni blancs Refugiés dans les forêts des hauts plateaux depuis des millénaires . . . Ils chassent, paissent les buffles Pas d'écriture, donc pas d'histoire. Pas de religion Pas d'ombre d'une connaissance" (Dorgelès 260). In the colonies, non-European structures of organization were discounted or ignored. In light of this linguistic and socio-political discounting of indigeneous government and authority, the assumption that the indigenous population might accept colonial rule unheedingly as an alternative for traditional overrule was common.

The good intentions of the colonizer constitute another element of the "civilizing mission" and the paradoxical nature of the colonial enterprise. Mannoni touches on the notion of "good" intentions. He points out that in many respects the colonizers "did not set themselves up as models; they offered to others their own ideals, something greater than they" (32). And in fact, in the opening pages of the colonial story, the colonial relationship might have been perceived as beneficial for the indigene and the misreadings that were to follow could hardly have been prefigured. A.P. Thornton begins The Doctrines of Imperialism with a quote by Louis Faidherbe which also reflects the idea of good intentions, "Our intentions are pure and noble, our cause just; the future cannot fail us" (Thornton 0). It was not difficult for the colonialist to convince himself of his civilizing mission when driven by thoughts such as this one. This justification could be used to support the presumption that turn of the century colonialism was indeed a unique juncture in history propelled by a unique configuration of events.

The assumption of good intentions though had a tendency to cover-over the not so good motivations and intentions. Whatever "good" might have occurred from the

imposition of colonialist rule was bought at a price, both literal and figurative, higher than anyone was willing to admit. The tendency to disregard the price of supporting and maintaining the colonial enterprise is one aspect of denial in the system. While there were certainly literal fortunes made and lost at the sacrifice of the indigenous people, the losses entailed were not only economic, but spiritual as well. I use the term spiritual not in the religious sense, but in the sense of self-knowledge and self-acknowledgement. The colonial bind was vice-like for both colonizer and colonized and exacted a heavy toll from those who prescribed the system as well as those who were inscribed within it. Ironically, the prescriber of the system was as tightly bound by the system as the ones for whom the inscription was intended. The double bind of the colonial relationship will be dealt with more extensively in the last section of this chapter.

The economic and political justifications for colonialism are perhaps somewhat easier to rationalize than the emotive justifications just cited. The establishment and maintenance of overseas territories for the purposes of economic gain represents a more tangible and visible justification for colonial expansion. While the economic benefit of the colonies was repeatedly mentioned as an important justification, the balance sheets never supported the soundness of the investment. As Fieldhouse points out, "colonialism was found to involve considerable and apparently endless financial costs to the metropolis" (Fieldhouse 23). So, in point of fact, the assumed economic benefit or necessity of colonial possessions never matched the projected returns.

From an economic standpoint, the disparity between the original conception and the ultimate evolution of colonialism is an integral part of the colonial paradox according to D. K. Fieldhouse (Fieldhouse 23). For politicians attempting to promote colonial expansion, such as Jules Ferry in the late nineteenth century, the economic

justification was central. As Raymond Betts remarks in Assimilation and Association, "strategic needs and patriotic duty" were definitely part of the colonial package, but potential economic development was the primary cornerstone of Ferry's justifications as it was for other contemporary European colonial powers (Betts 3). Overseas territories, in this line of thinking, provided the essential element for the continued growth of industrial-based capitalism. Despite the zeal of its proponents, the impetus for colonial expansion came from a very limited segment of the government and met with negligible support from the metropolitan populace. With this limited base of support, the need for mechanisms and avenues to promote and validate the enterprise was pressing.

After 1889, support and promotion of the colonies became more widespread and visible as evidenced by the founding of the *Ecole Coloniale* in that year. The establishment of several publications such as Dépeche coloniale and Revue indigène and the interest in novels about the colonies are also indicative of increased interest and support (Betts 5). The colonial novel was one means by which the abstractness of the colonies could be allayed for the metropolitan populace. It can also be viewed as a sort of figurative binding of the abstract moral justifications and the more concrete economic justifications of the enterprise. As Said remarks, "Neither culture nor imperialism is inert, and so the connections between them as historical experiences are dynamic and complex" (Said 14). The colonial novel is then one way to explore this dynamism.

Politically speaking, the small group of colonial activists who worked to promote colonial involvement did so by concentrating their efforts through two agencies--1) colonial societies and 2) a colonial group in the Chamber of Deputies. By 1905 there were 35 operative colonial societies who variously supported

exploration, publications, and promotion of the colonies. Betts points out that the central concern at the end of the nineteenth century was "the advisability of assimilation as the basis for native policy." Interest in colonial theory was at a high point during this period--around 1890, when assimilation was last given broad sanction at the National Colonial Congress, to 1914 when the enormity of the situation of world war appeared (Betts 6).

While assimilationist theory as a management policy had a long history in France, the management style which came to overshadow it--the theory of association--could not be so clearly historically grounded or defined (Betts 106). The policy of association basically can be viewed as a reaction to the strong centrist and universalizing character of assimilationist doctrine. Under the terms of association theory, each colony was to be dealt with in a way most suited to its geographic and ethnic orientation. Indigenous systems were to be used to the benefit of the colony. A spirit of cooperation was to be fostered between colonizer and colonized. There was no proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, though, for the colonized. While the economic situation of the indigenous population was certainly envisioned as improved, the most gain was still to be potentially in the pocket of the colonizer. Despite the assumption that the doctrine of association was more rational and realistic, less moralistically tinged than previous ones, the inherent dichotomy in the colonial structure between dominant and subordinate was not erased. In terms of officially sanctioned political doctrine, association was the most widely accepted mode for dealing with the colonies for most of the period of time this study covers. Assimilation as an ideal did not however completely disappear.

Fieldhouse mentions a number of other political justifications commonly posited as reasons for establishing colonies: 1) establishment of strategic bases to

ensure world power, 2) maintenance and control of areas against rival powers, 3) diplomacy, and 4) satisfaction of national pride (20). The assumption that the colonial system was a permanent sort of arrangement which would always address and fill these needs is an assumption that continued to linger in colonial thought throughout the early part of the twentieth century. Thornton mentions that the French, unlike the British, made virtually no accommodation for effective change even when the end of the empire appeared inevitable (41). His observation brings up again the question of different theories regarding the derivation of power in society and the competing nature of hegemonic structures.

The assumed advantages and economic benefits for the colonizer in the colonial enterprise were illusive. What was foreseen as a potentially profitable situation became increasingly burdensome and overwhelming. As Fieldhouse points out, the financial liability of the colonizing country initially was perceived to be limited. As the situation evolved, the liability increased to unbearable levels. The colonial empire became essentially a house of cards which was increasingly difficult to maintain, certainly from an economic standpoint, but philosophically as well. The propagandist apparatus of the *Ecole Coloniale* and the various colonial societies which supported the colonial enterprise bore the burden of promoting and maintaining the authorial albatross necessary to economically and philosophically sustain the colonial effort. Many colonial novels of the period, either overtly or unintentionally, bear witness to these struggles and difficulties which arose from the continued maintenance of colonial ideology.

In a sense, the instability of colonialism rested in its inability to sustain a vice-like grip on the colonial structure of relationships, that is, a static and unalterable configuration of relationships over and against the implicitly organic

nature of political systems. The relational modes characteristic of colonialism as it was practiced by the French are theoretically static and unalterable, which in essence negates effective change in and through the system. The paradoxical side of this justification comes in what Fieldhouse sees as the narrowing of the gap between the rulers and the ruled-- the colonizer and the colonized. That is to say, the structure of relationships pre-ordained in the colonial system was not and could not be effectively maintained in the face of an increasingly Westernized social schema and "assimilation" of the colonized. The assumed permanence of the structural relationships stands in stark contrast to the reality of the instability and insecurity which marked the system as a whole. Even as the growth and development of the colony conveyed a sense of progression, the structures which governed the process had to be perceived necessarily as permanent and stable. Assumptions and justifications regarding power, colonial relationships, intentionality, and stability are all countered by varying degrees of denial and negation both in actual practice and in the documents which recount the undertaking.

The critics and historians cited in the beginning of this chapter all write from a distanced perspective. The political and economic dynamics of the colonial enterprise touted by those critics at times seem to overshadow the purportedly more altruistic aspects of colonial justification which characterized the work of contemporary critics and theorists. Writers, such as Octave Homberg, who wrote during the period when overt colonial practice was still the norm, frequently focused on the later more nebulous aspects of the colonial enterprise. Homberg's 1929 work L'Ecole des colonies, justifies the colonial enterprise in moral and ethical terms rather than in political terms, saying,

Partout y éclate que le besoin d'expansion de notre race a été toujours animé par un esprit de curiosité et, au sens très largement humain du mot, par un esprit de charité, au lieu d'être inspiré par un appétit de conquêtes Le pur esprit de conquête qu'il soit le désir de la gloire ou la recherche du lucre, n'a jamais rien fondé de durable. (Homberg 26-27)

He soft-pedals the socio-political side of the colonial question, preferring to deal with the moral and ethical impulses which propel the French to continue expanding their literal and figurative horizons. Rather than dwelling on the negative aspects of appropriation and domination, he prefers to justify the interest of the French in other lands as a natural outgrowth of their curiosity, their desire to "know" other peoples, and their willingness to open the doors of French civilization to all those who wished to partake. This romanticized view is not at all uncommon in the contemporary accounts and literature of French colonial expansion. The moral and ethical responsibility of the French nation to spread language and culture is used as sufficient rationale for pursuing new colonial quests. In one respect then, the legitimacy of colonial authority is based seemingly on the legitimacy of the need to expand the knowledge base of the French population.

The satisfying of curiosity in the colonial scenario though is not the innocent process of cumulative knowledge and altruistic regard that Homberg's statement implies. It is a negation of what Francis Affergan purports should be the essentially shared nature of observation of the other. He says, "Dans le dispositif du regard, celui qui voit n'est pas seul. La question du partage dans la production du visible entre ce qui appartient à la chose vue et ce qui appartient à celui qui voit scelle par là même le rapport du symbolique à la culture . . . Mais le vœu de tout voir demeure illusoire et fantasmatique" (Affergan 151-52). In the colonial context of cultural observation, vision is singularly directed and authorized. The totalizing and codifying view of the

other which typifies the colonizer's observation of the colonized reflects Affergan's description of the inefficacy of the type of observation which Homberg's work implies. Totalization or codification of observation tends to overlook "tous les effets transformationnels, de tension, d'acculturation, de contradictions perverses, de contacts plus ou moins inégaux que sédimentent tout processus culturel" (Affergan 151). The outcome of a totalizing view of colonial observation then is not the validation or even exploration of the culture of the other, but is rather a processing of that other culture into the rubric of the originary culture of the colonizer. It is often this exclusionary processing which characterizes colonial fiction. The complex elements of culture which cannot be fastened neatly into the codified, sedimented conception of the colonized other are variously excised, distorted, or ignored.

The privileging of the perception of colonialism as an altruistic enterprise is reinforced time and again and as often, subverted and negated on the subconscious level. For example, Homberg calls for the dissolution of the term colony as superfluous nomenclature; "Je me suis attaché pour ma part à prêcher que metropole et colonies sont termes qui ne doivent jamais s'opposer et qu'il n'y a qu'une France" (Homberg 46). Just paragraphs after this statement in the text is another statement which essentially negates the universalizing attitude expressed in the preceding sentence. In the statements which follow, the colonized are figuratively subsumed and appropriated by the use of possessive pronouns. The colonized are subsequently referred to in terms which leave no doubt as to their implied inferior position relative to the position of the colonizer.

The attitude of French colonial novelists toward colonialism more typically leaned in the direction of Homberg's interpretation and perceptions of expansion. In the canon of colonial literature, novels of exploration, revelation, and personal quests

are more prevalent than novels delving into questions regarding colonialism as a valid political configuration. Political and economic considerations factor in secondary if at all. Roland Dorgelès, for example, was sent to Indochina on the ostensible “mission” of producing a novel to vivify colonial life. The novel that was produced, Sur la Route Mandarine, however, was one of personal quest and discovery couched metaphorically as the quest and discovery of the exotic indigene. In this case, as in numerous others, the individual's circulation within the colonial system becomes the focus of the colonial literary enterprise and the goal of uncovering and revealing the unknown world of the other gives way to the search for self-definition and validation. The absence of overt challenge to political stricture and systems implies a tacit accord with regard to the given assumptions of power and authority. This sort of acceptance of naturalized power structure is even more evident in Claude Farrère's novel Les Civilisés. The lines are clearly drawn between those, the European colonialists, who are empowered by the system and those, the colonized, who are “over”-powered by it. The assumptions and justifications of colonial policy are accepted unquestionably with no blatant challenge to them. The political and textual security of all actants is assured.

The assumptions and justifications of colonial imperialism in the face of the denials and paradoxes lead inevitably to questions of blame or culpability with regard to the legitimation of power. The question inevitably surfaces as to whether a well-dealt hand for one player in the colonial game necessarily constitutes legitimate authority or was it always already a question of a stacked deck? In the eyes of the colonizer, must he be blamed for holding the right cards so to speak?

Fieldhouse, Thornton, and others soften the barbs of blame which are destined to fly from advocates supporting former colonized entities by posing the question of what would have been the “fate” of the political, cultural, and social entities if the

intervention of colonial imperialism had not occurred. Throughout history, Thornton points out, the colonial relationship had frequently been characterized by at least a degree of attraction or admiration for some aspect of the dominant group by the subordinated group, although this certainly could not in most cases be considered an instigating factor. He makes this statement not to defend the colonizer, but ostensibly to seek to uncover how and why the system came to be.

Hannah Arendt points out that admiration had nothing to do with the peculiar alignment of events which allowed large-scale annexation of non-European territory. For her, the motivating factor is above all economic. The assumption appears to be that economic motivation is not subject to the same moral and ethical evaluation that would arise if colonial imperialism were driven by other forces. While the economic motivation can be viewed as a reason or cause for colonial expansion, the moral or ethical legitimacy of power and authority resides elsewhere.

Writers such as Albert Memmi, O. Mannoni, Jean-Paul Sartre, and numerous others speak for the colonized as they reject any rationalization or justification for the legitimacy of power and authority which were assumed under colonial imperialism. The fueling of the economic machinery cannot justify or legitimize what they perceive as unacceptable action under any circumstances. A myriad of negative ramifications stemming from the colonial enterprise are aimed accusingly and judgementally at the instigators of colonial domination.

In contrast to these a posteriori perspectives, Homberg, among many other colonial proponents and writers, makes no apologies or excuses for colonialism and justifies colonial practice as legitimate on the basis of the perceived moral and ethical superiority of the French. In this line of thinking, authority is not subject to question or challenge because it is a "natural" authority based on the possession of the

appropriate social, cultural, or moral apparatus. Alliances and networks of control then should simply fall in line under the presupposed order of governance. The tacit accord with this theory of natural authority is characteristic of the genre of colonial fiction.

Writers such as Gustave Le Bon, Ernest Seillère, Charles Régismanset, and Jules Harmand based their colonial theories on the notion of force and natural authority. Inspired in part by the work of Nietzsche and Spencer, as well as the contemporary interest in the applications of biological evolution theory, Le Bon underscores the basis for this belief in natural authority in the following passage: "The right of the strongest! It is in vain that the humanitarian philosophers from the depth of their studies would contest its potency. It is the only law which always imposes itself, and it is also the one which has made humanity progress the most" (Betts 92). This centrist and universalising concept of law can be viewed as a sort of over-arching justification in colonial practice. Whatever presumptions of natural authority guided colonial theorists and supporters, they were still unable to depend on widespread endorsement of their policies. Régismanset notes in Le Miracle français en Asie that despite the work of writers and documentors of the colonial project, it was exceedingly difficult to garner the support of the French population at large for what he views as "notre merveilleux patrimoine d'outre mer" (14-15).

The basic assumptions and denials of the colonial enterprise at the turn of the century which, in some ways can be read as historically specific, continue to linger in the process of decolonization and, to use Sowell's term, in preferential policies. Perhaps they are differently represented now in ways less overt than the unapologetic aggressiveness of colonialism. The processes governing the empowerment of authority figures have not and will not disappear. Critics such as Fieldhouse and Thornton,

among others, see the same strategies being carried over into the relationships between former colonies and their former colonizers. The processes and strategies remain a constant in the everpresent and everchanging makeup of the groups of people who populate the earth. A study of these processes of empowerment operative on the socio-political, theoretical, or literary level will perhaps in some way illuminate paradoxes, questions, and absurdities which mark the human condition.

Role of the Colonizer

The justifications and theories that informed and drove colonial process changed through the years. What did not change and could never change was the bind of the colonizer and colonized. I use those terms--colonizer and colonized--to describe not only the specific political relationship which gives rise to the terminology, but the dynamics of the relationship in colonial theory, practice, and texts. The situation of the colonized and the decolonized has been and continues to be the focus of much critical attention and debate. The narrative and linguistic paradoxes and problems unique to francophone literature open up an interesting field of study and a myriad of complex questions. The focus of this study, though, is the bind of the colonizer and the manner in which that bind is textually represented--alternately revealed, effaced, and distorted.

Albert Memmi in The Colonizer and the Colonized delineates the positions which constitute the simplest unit of the colonial schema--a dominant and a subordinate. In the French version of the book, the predication of the colonized is spelled out in the title a bit differently--Portrait du Colonisé précédé du Portrait du Colonisateur. The order of the actants is reversed and the grammatical connection between the two is altered. In the English title, the two actants are posited in relative equality given the coordinating conjunction. In the original French title, the colonized

is prioritized and the colonizer is tucked under the verbal construction “preceded by.” The translated title of this work is indication of the type of covering over and obscuring linked to the broader problems of representation in colonial fiction. In the French title, the allegedly more powerful role of the dominator is diminished as semantic precedence is given to the generally perceived subordinated party of the relationship. It might be said as well that neither the French nor English title is particularly revealing of the nature of the colonial program. Memmi draws the line in the dust with the opposition he creates first in the title and then in the chapter organization. The divisions, Chapter 1, Portrait of the Colonizer, Chapter 2, Portrait of the Colonized, set up the positions as antithetical. The non-alignment, particularly in the French version, of the title and the textual organization hints at the ambivalent tension in the colonial relationship. A conclusion, or synthesis of sorts, follows the portraits. In this section Memmi attempts to show, as he does throughout the text, how the two positions are both mutually exclusive and mutually binding. Again, the broad textual organization--thesis, antithesis, synthesis--is paradoxical given the impossibility of that scenario in practice.

There are three possible characterizations, according to Memmi, for the colonizer--as colonial, as reluctant colonizer, or as wholehearted colonizer. Memmi defines the colonial as “a European living in a colony but having no privileges, whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonized person of equivalent economic and social status” (Memmi 10). He essentially negates the possibility of this position because for him the colonial, whatever his conscious intention, is always, already privileged, and by extension guilty, because he is linked by birth to the dominating group. So unless one chooses to completely forsake his identity and align himself

unquestionably with the colonized, the colonial does not exist. Memmi views this total re-identification as impossible in any case.

The two subsequent options imply subscription to the system, either reservedly or overtly. Whether reluctant or supportive, the colonizer is irrefutably in the wrong place at the wrong time. Following Memmi's line of thought, both positions are untenable in that they require a negation of self and a denial of contextual being. If one chooses to live in a colony, acceptance of the colonial apparatus is necessarily implied, regardless of the degree of regret the colonizer feels over particular conditions or occurrences. Describing the scenario of the reluctant colonizer, Memmi points out that it "is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships" and in these circumstances the colonizer "lives his life under the sign of a contradiction which looms at every step, depriving him of all coherence and tranquillity" (Memmi 20). The dynamics in this "concrete situation" and the representation of the "contradictions" inherent in that situation are the elements of colonial theory under particular scrutiny in this study. The representation and inscription of the narrator in colonial fiction are analysed in terms of these dynamics.

The third alternative for the "dominant" in the colonial equation is the colonizer who accepts the structure and system as valid. Memmi contrasts the positions of the one who refuses and the one who accepts. The colonizer who accepts the givens

. . . seeks to legitimize colonization. This is a more logical attitude, materially more coherent than the tormented dance of the colonizer who refuses and continues to live in a colony. The colonizer who accepts his role tries in vain to adjust his life to his ideology. The colonizer who refuses, tries in vain to adjust his ideology to his life, thereby unifying and justifying his conduct. (Memmi 45)

The fictional representation of “legitimate practice” is not without its own kind of paradoxes and contradictions. In fiction, the textual playing out of these roles is visible in the ways the narrator positions himself in relationship to colonial ideology. The “logical and coherent” attitude of the accepting colonizer to which Memmi alludes comes about by bracketing non-coherent elements in the system through textual processes such as the processes that will be examined in the subsequent chapters of this work--assimilation, exoticism, and translation. For the reluctant colonizer, these same processes are visible, but to differing degrees. The narrator as colonizer is similarly driven by the same forces to create a unified, cohesive vision of his place in the world of the text. In a strongly imperialistic novel like Les Civilisés, the exclusionary tactics for textually subordinating the indigene are one indication of adherence to rigid colonial policy and politics. The position of the refusing colonizer might be represented by the work of someone like Victor Segalen.

Theoretically, the three stances that the colonizer can assume, according to Memmi, are precise, but it is often difficult to pinpoint an ideal adherent to any of the positions. The classifications are useful though as we begin to examine the narrator of the colonial text as operating from these theoretical perspectives. In Farrère's novels Les Civilisés and Un Homme nouveau, the narrators operate from a perspective of acceptance or at least one of no overt challenge to standard colonial authority. Similarly, the narrator of Le Kilomètre 83 aligns himself with colonial advocacy. Still falling in the canon of colonial novels, Sur la Route Mandarine exhibits more subtle ambivalence toward the accepted tenets of the colonial project than the other novels mentioned. The strategies of assimilation, exoticism, and translation come into play to a greater extent in a novel such as this one, since more effort is involved in creating that univocal, cohesive surface that ideally characterizes the colonizer. In

very pronounced pro-colonial novels, we see less effort to textually smooth over inconsistencies. Rather, inconsistencies are bracketed, displaced, or covered over.

As Memmi indicates, the potential space in the colonial schema delegated to the colonizer comes laden with privilege and guilt from which the individual who occupies that space cannot extricate himself. To look at this "guilt" figuratively, we might examine the idea in terms of a textual process. A textual web of "guilt" is one way we might describe the inscription of the colonizer in the colonial novels. The contradictions and inconsistencies in the colonial network form the filaments of that web, the complexity of which can be viewed more clearly by the distanced observer. At the risk of falling into fable-like explanations, if we continue the image of a web and a predator, a spider can circulate through and over and around the web without being tangled within the threads. Upon entry into the web, the outsider, written as the other, can quickly become trapped, or at the extreme, break away the web entirely. While this image certainly does not explain away the complexity of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, perhaps it will serve to illuminate an aspect of the problematic--particularly the manner in which the spinner of the web is able to move through it seemingly unhampered and unentangled. This can also recall the manner in which the accepting colonizer circulates freely through the system, oblivious to the entangling complexities of the web.

Memmi acknowledges the toll of the colonial enterprise on the colonizer--a toll brought about by the bracketing or compromising necessary to maintain the colonial front. Aimé Césaire too writes of this bind, in terms of the relationship between the two colonial actants. For Césaire the bind cannot be rationally justified because it is based initially on a flawed foundation--the lie of the colonizer (9). Memmi refers to the colonial lie in terms of myth making. Faced with a myriad of irresolvable

paradoxes and inconsistencies, he says the only solution left to the colonizer is to “construct myths” (Memmi 32). These myths or lies are written into colonial literature and rationalized or accommodated through such textual processes as assimilation, exoticism, and translation which account for the alternate space in the text.

The textual processes that I will examine in colonial texts can be viewed as ways of either covering over, bracketing, or transforming the guilt of the colonizing subject. In other words, these processes describe the ways in which the colonizer, and in the case of the novel, the narrator as colonizing subject, manages to circulate unhampered and unentangled through the colonial matrix. The double bind image of Memmi and Césaire, that is the intimate and necessary binding of colonizer and colonized as a constitutive of the colonial matrix, is only sparingly acknowledged in colonial texts. What is more obvious are the textual processes which hide the existence of a double bind.

Césaire addresses the bind of the colonizer in very uncompromising language. The ramifications of the colonial bind are an utter degradation to the perpetrator of practices of colonial domination. Before he describes the effects of colonization on an indigenous population, he first outlines the effects on the initiators of the system:

Il faudrait d'abord étudier comment la colonisation travaille à déciviliser le colonisateur, à l'abrutir au sens propre du mot, à le dégrader, à le réveiller aux instincts enfouis, à la convoitise, à la violence, à la haine raciale, au relativisme moral, et montrer que, chaque fois qu'il y a au Viet-Nam, une tête coupée et un oeil crevé et qu'en France on accepte, il y a un acquis de la civilisation qui pèse de son poids mort, une régression universelle qui s'opère . . . il y a le poison instillé dans les veines de l'Europe, et le progrès lent, mais sûr de l'ensauvagement du continent. (Césaire 14)

The enslavement of both the colonizer and the colonized in an unalterable equation of production removes both elements from the realm of human interaction. Césaire posits the equation as “colonisation = chosification” (Césaire 22). This accusation stands in sharp contrast to the moral and ethical justifications which French colonial theorists used to support and complement the economic and political reasons for pursuing colonial quests. In that line of thinking, the goal of the project was to render more human the circumstances and contexts of existence for all participants. The inhumanity of the quest and conquest for critics like Césaire refutes completely the perceived humanitarian spreading of French culture and civilization.

In Discours sur le colonialisme Césaire examines passages from a number of works supporting the colonial enterprise and defending the position of the colonizer. To account for the illogical premises of one particular colonial theorist, he brings up the idea of a filtering process. He says of Jules Romains: “Seulement son cerveau fonctionne à la manière de certains appareils digestifs de type élémentaire. Il filtre. Et le filtre ne laisse passer que ce qui peut alimenter la couenne de la bonne conscience bougeoise (Césaire 36). Césaire’s perception of the colonizers ability or rather inability to perceive clearly the implications of his position as colonizer is quite evident. Whether we use Césaire’s filtering image or Hegel’s bracketing image, something of the sort takes place in the colonizer’s representation of himself and his position both in the socio-political arena and in the textual arena as well. (When I use the term colonizer, I am broadly encompassing the theorizers, the practitioners and the representors, i.e. novelists and poets.)

Césaire also strongly criticizes the work of O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban (Césaire 46).³ The subtitle The Psychology of Colonization is interesting given the fact that it is a more telling psychology of the colonizer. In recounting the particulars

of one colonial situation--Madagascar--and the peculiarities of the indigenous population, and the effects of colonization on that population, Mannoni reveals more the implicit inadequacies of the colonizers than the stated problems of colonized populations. Unlike Memmi who attempts to paint an adequate portrait of the two sides of the colonial equation, even while maintaining the integrity of his position, Mannoni examines the colonized in essentially the same set of terms which characterize colonial discourse in the broad sense--the divisive lexicon, the linguistic subordination, the assumption of natural authority. This psychology of colonialism, in effect, recreates the same scenarios as the colonial novel did. It is another example of the interpenetration of colonial discourse into varying types of texts--both non-fiction and fiction. In essence, the image of the colonizer that appears is an image constructed in relief. That is, the manipulator of data in this non-fiction text figuratively occupies and sustains the place of the colonizer in the narrative frame of the text. We can figure the relative weights or implied status of the colonial actants based on Mannoni's manipulation of data. Mannoni asks for complicity from the start requesting acknowledgement of superiority of the colonizer: "we can never entirely eradicate this assumption of superiority from our unconscious, and it must be included among the data of the problem if we are to avoid all risk of error" (Mannoni 19). The scientific certitude of Mannoni's statement aligns him philosophically to an extent with the documentors of colonialism who chose fiction rather than non-fiction as their means of shedding light on the colonial dilemma. The novelists too took pride in the scientific certitude and veracity of their observations. Césaire puts Mannoni's psychology in the same basket that he does others who have tried to explain away colonial domination in similar scientific and humanitarian ways.

Moving from Memmi and Césaire's abstract image of the colonizer, Maurice Delafosse, a contemporary advocate of the colonial enterprise, attempts a realistic exemplary portrait of a "true colonial." The colonial he draws is not the only type of "true colonial," but the one which his experience authorizes him to share. The African "broussard" or woodsman is the focus of his analysis. He sweeps the reader immediately into the stream of analysis saying, "C'est lui que nous allons suivre à travers sa carrière, essayant d'analyser ses divers états d'âme, ou plutôt les étapes successives par lesquelles passe, en se transformant sans cesse, son être intellectuel et moral" (Delafosse 1). The initial setting for Delafosse's colonial (colonial, that is, in Delafosse's lexicon and not Memmi's) is the wilderness, where the solitude of the colonial stands in stark relief against the elements of nature: "Il songe qu'il est seul, bien seul, seul à penser, alors que tous les êtres humains qui l'entourent dorment d'un sommeil profond . . . il se grise de solitude." (Delafosse 33-34). The emphasis on the colonial's solitude is ironic because it is a subtle negation of the inherent social and relational network of colonialism in general and the necessary predication of the colonizer's position on the colonized. It is an indication as well of the singularity of vision which allows the colonial to function within a context that theoretically undermines the autonomy of the individual, in other words, a negation of the colonial bind. In this passage, it is the individual colonial who thinks and reflects and acts autonomously in contrast to those who are unseeing and oblivious. Paradoxically, it is the individual, such as the "broussard," who is blind to the exigencies of the colonial bind. In the harshest critiques of colonialism, it is this blindness which so condemns and marks the colonizer. In colonial novels, we will see the privileged and unique vision of individual colonizers praised and validated and the flip side of blindness excused or overlooked.

The isolation of the colonial is mentioned as well once he reaches his post. He is isolated in the wilderness, not necessarily from other people, but from other Frenchmen. His association with the indigenes at his post is negligible in the sense that communication between the colonial and indigenes amounts to little more than stifled exchanges in broken language. The rejection of the indigene as "human" company and the non-acknowledgement of linguistic validity are two ways in which Delafosse textually subordinates the colonized in his own text.

Despite the colonial's physical and linguistic isolation in the colony, the fact that the French flag flies over the post makes it "home," that is, a part of France. Delafosse describes the feelings of the colonial upon seeing the French flag as "joie d'en avoir fini avec la vie nomade et de trouver enfin un 'chez soi'" (34). As opposed to an Englishman who must surround himself with the accoutrements of his home (and Delafosse uses the English term "home" here), the Frenchman is "chez soi" because the colony is indeed France. Delafosse is willing to acknowledge a different style of being for the Englishman--a validated style though, falling as it does within the Western matrix of understanding. The use of the English term home as opposed to the French "chez soi" is also more broadly indicative of the different colonial governing styles of the French and the English. The colony for the British was never envisioned as being a true extension of British soil. The colony was owned by Britain, but it was not and never would be Britain. Conversely, in the idealized versions of colonial theory in late nineteenth century France, the colony was theoretically to be France. The term "France d'outre mer" is indicative of this accommodation of the colony within the unity of France. Though the practicality of this theory was challenged in the early twentieth century, vestiges of the assumptions linger in fictional and non-fictional documentation of colonialism.

France, the homeland, was viewed by the colonizer as a solid, unchanging entity, which would be the same for him when he returned as it had been when he left. The participant in colonial society created for himself another zone of permanence in the colony by inscribing himself within that closed political and social structure. Thornton mentions this isolation as one of the main weaknesses of colonialism. In many cases it was "looked on as a trophy to be preserved" (43). These two perceived static forces--the colony and the homeland-- essentially served to lock the colonizer into a space of non-movement. The creation of such zones of permanence is indicative of the efforts on the part of the colonizer to create a cohesive face for the colonial enterprise and a concomitant univocal conception of himself.

The univocal conception of self is also apparent in the correspondance of outward appearance and inward essence in Delafosse's colonial. In the "France," of the colony he is at one with what he envisions as his raison d'être. He is because he does, he creates. He is what he appears to be. He is not bound by "les paperasses . . . les règlements" but rather is an initiator, a creator (Delafosse 38). In other words, his authority and power derive from actions and not the terms which prescribe and inscribe those actions. He acknowledges, according to Delafosse, the unique privilege of his situation and concomitant authority: "il songe qu'en France un fonctionnaire de son âge serait l'un des mille rouages anonymes dont l'ensemble constitue une grande administration, tandis qu'ici, dans la brousse, il est quelqu'un, et à l'instant d'un maître du monde" (Delafosse 38). These particular assumptions lead back to considerations regarding the empowerment and validation of authority in the colonial context discussed in the first part of this chapter. This interpretation of colonial authority illustrates the implied natural authority touted by many political theorists of the time. In Delafosse's terms, the colonizer is cast in a unique position of authority

because of his context--a context not of equals, but a context where his superiority is unchallenged. He is "someone" by virtue of the fact that there is literally "no one" else--that is, no one who can be classed within the same lexicon. He is what he appears to be. Thus, in this scenario, reality and appearance are fused. The transparency of representation is assured.

The initial honeymoon period when the colonial is still enamored with his situation gives way to a nostalgic longing for the "better" colony of metropolitan France with family, friends, and known surroundings. The terms which make the colonial at "home" in the colony shift to terms which make of him an exile. Delafosse notes that there are particular points in the so-called development of the colonial when these feelings are more intense, but that they are only temporary swells of intensity.

The psychological characteristics that Delafosse attributes to the colonizer can be observed fairly consistently in colonial texts, both fiction and non-fiction. What stands out in the representation of the colonizer is the priority of the individual's comportment and positioning in the colonial context as opposed to any delving into the machinations and politics which create and sustain the position of the colonizer to begin with. This is again indicative of the tendency to cover over and filter aspects of the whole scheme which interfere with the justification of particular aspects of the enterprise.

Martine Astier-Loutfi in Littérature et colonialisme gives a more distanced perspective than Delafosse, whose work was contemporaneous with the height of colonial imperialism. As opposed to the other theorists mentioned in this section, Astier-Loutfi deals particularly with the portrait of the colonizer as it is revealed in colonial literature. Rather than just the theoretical positioning of the colonial actants, she focuses on the ironies that appear in the representation of the colonizer in colonial

texts. The internal contradiction of the colonizer's position, that is the colonial bind, is shown in the following passage:

Dans ces ouvrages, la contradiction ou tout au moins l'absence de cohérence entre la psychologie du colonisateur et les buts de la colonisation produisent un malaise chez le lecteur. On ne peut admettre que le colonisateur ait cru à sa mission de civilisateur, qu'il ait véritablement voulu conduire le colonisé dans la voie d'évolution et de l'émancipation, parce que ses raisons d'être apparaissent liées à un système de rapports politiques et humains fondés sur la domination du faible par le fort. Aurait-il réussi à "civiliser" le colonisé, comme il le proposait, le colonisateur aurait détruit lui-même la situation dont il tirait les satisfactions et le sens de son existence. (Astier-Loutfi 103)

Given the impossible premise, then, of the colonizer's position both initially and in an extended sense, it is hardly surprising that the textualization of this position pushed the limits of vraisemblance to the point of caricature as Astier-Loutfi later points out. (Interestingly, Loutfi remarks that the representation of the colonizer is perhaps more successful in the correspondence of someone like Lyautey than in many colonial novels. We might add as well the accounts of Delafosse.) The tendency in colonial novels to stereotype the colonizer, overlooking the particularities of various situations, can be viewed in two ways. First, it might be interpreted as the necessary bracketing of the inconsistencies inherent in the colonizer's position in the colonial configuration of authority. This bracketing, in effect, forces a superficial cohesiveness, which allows the colonizer to function more or less unheeded by moral and ethical restraints in the colonial arena. Secondly, it could be taken as an attempt to efface difference, which is interesting because the elimination of difference is more likely to be associated with the representation of the colonized rather than the colonizer. This effacement or obscuring of difference, as mentioned earlier, is crucial in attempts of either practical or textual assimilation. The stereotyping of the colonizer reinforces the assumption that colonialism is indeed a bind which inscribes

and, in a sense, destroys the colonized as well as the colonizer. To go further, the caricaturish or stereotypic portrayal of both actants in the colonial drama pushes some of colonial fiction into the category of propaganda. And propaganda itself might be considered a caricature--that is, an exaggerated representation of the perceived reality which eliminates the place of alternative viewpoint.

From a distanced perspective colonialism seems a program damned and doomed from the start and one difficult to defend. However, for the individual colonizer, the lure of potential profit and certain privilege was great. Whatever the problematic assumptions and contradictory modes of operation were from a theoretical standpoint, the colonizer had to stand willing either to ignore them completely or to live in the compromised space of blurred reality. The narrator as colonizer or perhaps the colonizer as narrator, as he appeared in colonial fiction is perpetrator of paradox and paradoxal perpetrator. He propagates the myths and transgressions of colonialism under the auspices of truth and anchors his truthful allegations in his authority as center and source of knowledge and truth.

The marketing of colonial truth conveyed a sense of security and justification of the enterprise. In much of colonial fiction the sense of stability and security of the system is conveyed in the implication that the text contains and reveals an absolute, objective truth. The narrator of the colonial novel becomes, in a sense, a standard measure for colonial truth. He is represented as being truthful and truth-seeking. His conveyance of the message of truth is based on the understanding of the transparency of representation--that is not the presentation of reality, but rather the uncovering of reality. Appearance and reality in this context correspond ultimately. The construction of truth though in the colonial context is problematic and one fraught with myths and transgressions. The manner in which "truth" is alternatively

revealed, concealed, distorted, and destroyed will be examined in terms of the realist valence of colonial texts. The terms of that mode of literary construction are the terms which most adequately describe the literary project of colonial fiction. Objective truth as it appears in the realist texts of colonial fiction is subject to dismantling as the structures which purport to bind that truth to its reality are revealed to be fallacious. Thornton suggests that "a meridian decides what is truth" (59). In colonial literature, this is a particularly cogent point. A meridional conception of truth undermines the notion of truth as an absolute. The "truth" revealed in colonial literature is always on the cusp of the evershifting meridian of reference.

Notes

³ Roberto Fernández Retamar, twenty years after Mannoni's work, examines the question of domination and subordination under the same metaphorical rubric of Prospero and Caliban in his essay "Caliban." He deals, in contrast to Mannoni, with the "other" side of the question and the implications of the colonial question in terms of contemporary culture and political unrest. In another essay dating from 1986, "Caliban Revisited," he evaluates the reception of the first essay and attempts to explain the context of the writing of that text. Tzvetan Todorov, in La Conquête de l'Amérique: La question de l'autre (1982), deals at greater length with the theoretical positioning of the other in the context of the colonial question in the Americas.

CHAPTER 3 COLONIALISM: DISCOURSE AND TEXT

The genre cast as "colonial fiction" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lies at a turning point that many critics deem crucial in the reevaluation of the terms of Western discourse. At this juncture, the essential components of Western discourse--"the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought" (Bové 54-55)--become subject to more frequent questioning and challenge. Timothy Reiss, for one, sees this time period as a crossroads or a point of intersection between the dominance of a discourse maintained in the Western world since the 16th century, which he terms *analytico-referential*, and the emerging dominance of a new discourse which is still evolving. Reiss views the functioning of discourse in society not in exclusive, fixed terms, but in terms of relative dominance, that is, there is always overlapping and doubling back to earlier dominant forms. For example, even in the present, the *analytico-referential* form of discourse continues to circulate in contemporary discursive fields (Reiss 14) even though other forms of signifying practice are operative.

Typically, what I will call colonial discourse requires no special fitting to be categorized as a function of the *analytico-referential* mode of discourse since on the surface it adheres to the general expectations involved in that form of discourse. Those general expectations, according to Reiss, give rise to a discourse "of assertion and possession, of permanent and universal reason, and of absolute objective truth" (Reiss 37). The period of intense colonial effort in France does in fact coincide with the time frame Reiss sees as pivotal in the evaluation of the dominance of the *analytico*

referential mode of discourse. Colonial discourse tends to uphold these assumptions.

The descriptive terms which Reiss uses are an uncanny echo of the tenets and justifications for colonial expansion. The uniqueness of colonial discourse may lie more in its exaggerations and magnifications of commonly held Western discursive notions rather than any unique or novel display of operations or patterns.

Assumptions regarding knowledge, structure, power, authority, stability, and truth seem to stand in sharp relief when viewed through the lens of colonial discourse as if the boundaries of that discourse exert a pressure which calls such notions into question. An analysis of colonial discourse can provide the grounds for examining the ideology of imperialism as "the system of representations produced by established institutions through which individuals living their roles within the class structure of late capitalism learn to assimilate their existing positions and relationships as natural, permanent and conforming to a transcendent ethical plan" (Parry, C/I 8-9). Benita Parry describes the ideological undergirdings of this system as "an assemblage fusing pragmatism and irrationalism, utilitarianism and metaphysics in a noxious conflation" (Parry, C/I 9). The conflation of these incompatible means of perception and interpretation necessarily renders problematic the representation of what was perceived to be a stable construct of cultural and socio-political organization. Knowledge, structure, power, authority, stability, and truth then come under scrutiny as they are examined in terms of their relative leverage and not in terms of their absolute integrity.

The term discourse is often used in tandem with other words to describe specific frames of reference, and I will use the term colonial discourse to describe the terms which subtend a particular network of socio-economic and cultural relationships characteristic of the colonial imperialism which arose in the late

nineteenth century. The configuration of relationships or socio-political patterns displayed in the fiction, documentation, history, and commentary recounting the colonial enterprise reveals the outline of colonialist discourse. The principle axis on which colonial discourse turns is the implicit dichotomy in the colonial relationship--the position of the colonizer as dominant and the position of colonized as subordinate. It is the rationalizing, justifying, and legitimizing of this relationship which drives the discourse. Colonial discourse, in the broad sense, covers and conceals inconsistent and contradictory process in the colonial project, both on the socio-political and literary level. The consistency of the concealment and the processes which constitute that concealment are points of departure for this study.

The assumed permanence of the colonial system is implied by the stratified nature of colonial discourse which defined itself in terms of reasoned and justified legitimacy and which grounded itself in the surety of the absolute and transparent nature of truth. Assumptions about the analytico-referential mode of discourse that Reiss puts forth are reinforced and solidified in the discourse of colonialism. The idea of discourse as defense is applicable in the colonial scenario in the sense that the discourse circumscribes and overrides what may be perceived as rebellious and aberrant occurrences--ones which would potentially challenge the colonizer's ultimate power and authority and undermine his place in the colonial scheme. In colonial texts these occurrences take the shape of affronts to the stability and authority of colonialism, its representation, or its representatives. While these may be couched in terms of overt doubts on the part of the colonizer as to the validity of colonial activity, the affronts to authority are more likely evident in the subtleties of textual contradictions and inconsistencies.

Orientalism, as described by Edward Said, also figures into the construction and maintenance of colonialist discourse as a means of accommodating the other into the colonial scheme. Said describes the discourse of orientalism as being “a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political, . . . power intellectual, . . . power cultural, . . . power moral” (Said 12). Colonialist discourse viewed within this rubric then might be considered as a function of Orientalist discourse with the “power political” pushed into the forefront. What Said says about Orientalism--that it “has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world” is valid for what we will consider as colonial discourse (Said 12). The discourse is self-sustaining by virtue of the fact that the components of the discourse are validated “in house” so to speak. That is to say, the discourse is propped up by tropes of dominance through which the other and his difference are figuratively mastered and ironically, subsequently effaced. The particular tropes of dominance that will be examined in this study are assimilation, exoticism, and translation.

Many of the patterns and assumptions which mark nineteenth century Orientalist discourse also mark colonial discourse. It incorporates much of the discursive practice of Orientalism as discussed by Edward Said. Orientalism, as a discourse, exhibits “the will to totalization and transparency, the ability to naturalize its own content, which in the operation of such an apparatus represents the most tenacious and the most infernal elements” (Terdiman 235). Richard Terdiman works from this assumption as he examines Orientalist discourse in light of Flaubert’s Voyage en Orient and not in terms of what he calls a “certain vulgar and guilty colonialist mentality” (Terdiman 235). Although Flaubert’s project might be deemed

more abstractly "artful" and guileless and removed from the hand-dirtying enterprise of colonialism, the same modes of dominance and subordination are apparent. The dominance and subordination are simply not so openly coded as they are in colonialist texts.

The open coding of the colonial relationship--the validation of the dominant/subordinate axis--is one of the most obvious markers between the orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century and colonialist discourse. The Orient Flaubert was seeking, as Terdiman mentions, was the Near East--for the nineteenth century writer an already written, already known entity. Flaubert went looking for himself in the already inscribed place of North Africa : "this region . . . had value because it could be imagined as unknown" and it "was impregnated by a textual network so dense that it threatened to exhaust its own referent completely" (Terdiman 236). Astier-Loutfi also mentions this over-writing of North Africa: "la vision est encore déformée par les souvenirs littéraires qui se superposent aux spectacles observés et les transforment. Ceci est vrai surtout de l'Afrique du Nord où tous les voyageurs sont décidés à retrouver l'univers de Fromentin" (Astier-Louti 47). The colonial literature of other more distant colonies provided a realm of the more exotic which perhaps was not so over-written as the Near East. Marius and Ary Leblond in Après l'exotisme de Loti: Le Roman colonial, express the potentially higher degree of interest generated by another place of the other in the subtitle of the section on Indochina and the Indian Ocean: "C'est le génie français qui a exprimé avec le plus de majesté le génie de l'Inde et de L'Indochine" (Leblond 42). While perhaps this can be attributable to the Leblonds personal link to that part of the world, it is perhaps to some extent indicative of a perceived higher level of exotic stimulation. The other subtitles, while positively worded, do not generate the same level of interest. The

subtitles referring to the literature of North Africa are rather straightforward, such as "Notre Ecole littéraire de l'Afrique du Nord" and "Livres français sur le Maroc et la Syrie." The colonies further removed from the over-coded North Africa have more imagistic titles such as the previously mentioned one for the Far East and "Le Mysticisme du voyage: Nau et les Antilles" for the Caribbean. So it appears that the solution for "the empty referent" might be simply further displacement. Colonialist discourse brings under scrutiny the distancing potential of discourse. The displacement strategies which underlie that distancing figure heavily into the analysis of colonial discourse. The strategies examined in the following three chapters are three strategies which in one way or another serve to distance or displace the other, while at the same time enclosing the discursive other within the realm of the "readable." In terms of colonialist discourse, the "readable" is, as it is for Barthes, the knowable.

At the extreme, colonial discourse might be considered only propagandist posturing--that is, a narrow, one-sided conscription of knowledge, yet there is much that falls under the umbrella of "colonial literature" which escapes the hermetic or didactic nature of propagandist literature. Just as discourse in general cannot be taken as air-tight packaging of signifying practice, colonial discourse cannot be read as a hermetic codification of the colonial enterprise. The seepages from the seemingly hermetic codification of colonial propaganda are the points where the working of multiple levels of discursive practice or "contamination," so to speak, of the reigning discourse, are apparent. Such points of intersection or contamination underscore Reiss's analysis of the role of literature: "literature undoes or deconstructs the self-sufficient security of authority" (Reiss 383). The "undoing" of authority in these terms can be observed in many colonial novels that were ostensible upholders of

colonial ideology. Thus, the security of colonial authority is alternatively supported and undermined in the processing of the reality that is colonial discourse.

The discourse of colonialism, while very visible in colonial fiction, is certainly not confined to the novel. It permeates journalistic, documentary, and scientific accounts of the period of intense colonization. It is interesting to note that because of the emphasis on "exactitude" and "truth" in colonialist discourse the lines between fiction and non-fiction are frequently blurred. In the colonial anthology, L'Asie française vue par ses écrivains, Marius and Ary Leblond, two of the most productive and important colonial critics, mix fictional, epistolary, historical, and journalist works, unheeding of pre-set categories. It is as if the cover of colonialism hides the multifarious expressions and realizations of difference even within its own prescribed sphere. It appears that genre classifications are usurped by the colonial classification. René Lalou mentions this sort of overlapping or overlooking of genre lines in his anthology of French literature. The tendency toward what he terms "journalese" is apparent in some of the later novels of Farrère. "By dint of keeping close to journalism, he ends by writing and thinking journalese. . . . And in Les Hommes Nouveaux, all the reportorial commonplaces spoil the solid portrait of Amédée Bourron, African money-grabber" (Lalou 297). Ironically, Farrère considered Les Hommes Nouveaux to be a textbook sort of colonial novel (Quella-Villéger 286) and not a journalistic account. Farrère's biographer, Alain Quella-Villéger, comments of Farrère's tendency to writing outside the lines, so to speak, of discursive categories. He notes:

En réalité, Claude Farrère n'est pas tellement un historien d'archives et de documents inédits. En romancier, il écrit une histoire de seconde main, loin des courants récents de la recherche historique. En marin, il a tendance à ne voir l'histoire française qu'au prisme de l'histoire maritime. Conteur, qui pourtant prétend faire autorité, c'est un marin

qui juge plus qu'un historien qui explique. Et même son *Histoire de la Marine* est plutôt des grand marins, une histoire d'hommes et de batailles navales, trop événementielle pour saisir les réalités économiques et sociales déjà mises à la mode par l'écoles des *Annales*. L'obsession du fait maritime apparaît dans cette sentence des *Hommes nouveaux* selon laquelle <<les grands malfaiteurs de notre histoire>> ne sont ni Robespierre, ni Marat, ni Boulanger, ni Combes, ni même les jésuites ou les francs-maçons, <<mais uniquement, mais exclusivement tout ce que nous avons eu de soi-disant ministres de la Marine de 1890 à 1921--à trois ou quatre exceptions près>> (Quella-Villéger 281-282)

History, it seems, for Farrère, is fictionalized or at least weighted with Farrère's own unique perspective. While no writing of history is absolved of the unique perspective of the individual, Farrère's history and, to some extent, his fiction, reflect a markedly personal construction of factual data. This orientation has a tendency to lend authority to fiction and to subvert authority in historical writings. The frequently journalistic tone in colonialist writings might then perhaps be viewed as indicative of this sort of "borrowing" of authority from the perceived aura of authority which surrounds historical writings.

In the colonial canon, texts referred to as novels by the authors and some critics are variously classed as documentary or travelogue by other critics or organizing systems. Martine Astier-Loutfi comments in Littérature et colonialisme on this ambiguity, particularly apparent in early colonial writings: "La frontière reste vague, ici, entre la fiction et le témoignage, la plupart de ces ouvrages n'appartenant clairement ni à un genre, ni à l'autre (Astier-Loutfi 25). Sur la Route Mandarine is a good example of this mixed classing. Roland Lebel, one of the major contemporary colonial critics, lists the work along with other novels. Raphael Barquissau, in the bibliography L'Asie française et ses écrivains, files it under "Souvenirs et relations de voyage" along with novels and documentary accounts (although within the introduction of the chapter where Dorgelès work figures, he

refers to him as a novelist). He more or less puts all colonial writers in the same class and then divides the work thematically, fiction and non-fiction bundled together to reveal the “true” nature of the colony. This processing is an indication of the usurpation of genre lines by the colonial matrix. The Library of Congress classification system shelves the work as non-fiction. The work according to Dorgelès’ personal correspondence was conceived as a work of fiction. His directives for the book were found in a telegram: “Roland Dorgelès donnera des articles au *Journal* et écrira un roman dont l'intrigue située dans une colonie évoquant vie indochinoise, constituera publicité intéressante” (Dupray 246). Contemporary comments on the novel, as indicated by Dorgelès’ biographer, frequently deal with the question of either the too journalist slant of a piece of literature or a too literary slant on a piece of journalism. While Farrère viewed himself as first and foremost a novelist, Dorgelès was comfortable with his mixed legacy of journalism and fiction. These examples will perhaps suggest both the interest and the difficulty of clearly drawing genre lines in colonial literature. The blurred line between factual accounts and fictional accounts of colonial involvement brings up interesting questions about the various discursive practices which are implied for the reading or writing of different types and categories of texts. Fictional fact bleeds unabashedly into factual fiction. However it is tagged, the illusion of historical accuracy is sustained by the implied security and veracity of colonialist discourse and the assumption of transparent representation.

The sustaining impetus of transparent or mimetic representation is reflected in the push for accuracy which appears at times so keen that colonial authors are compelled to strain the barriers of genre and write a novelistic documentary or a documentary novel as if the truth and reality of what he wants to portray are too great a burden for any one genre to bear. Benita Parry in commenting on the importance of

mimetic representation in colonial discourse notes that "Mimeticism was the name of its interpretative mode; establishing the historical accuracy, psychological truthfulness and humanist perception of the fictions, its game." She goes on to say that the illusion of verisimilitude was reinforced by the incorporation of all sorts of sources and documents in and out of the realm of fictional narrative (Parry/ OLR 33). In seeking to portray realistically the colonies in fictional accounts there is frequently a journalistic or historical exactitude of analysis. Journalistic or historical analysis might be read as less likely, mutually, to condemn the author and the reader in the final judgement of the colonial enterprise. Belsey states: "History narrates events apparently without the intervention of a speaker. In history there is no mention of 'you' and 'I'; "the events seem to narrate themselves. Discourse on the other hand, assumes a speaker and a hearer, the 'you' and 'I' of dialogue" (Belsey 71). So, in a situation such as colonialism, which is potentially fraught with blame, culpability, and self-righteousness, historical or journalistic narratives function perhaps as a means of deflecting responsibility by allowing the "I" and "you" an escape from a potentially guilty verdict for what was done to the colonized "them." To further deflect fault of dominance, the other is not posited in the colonial text as the dialogic you, but moved to the always voiceless third person. The discomfort created by the implied collusion between colonial author and reader in the expulsion of the other might explain the seeming uncomfortable adherence of colonial authors to strict fictional classification.

Jean Ajalbert mentions the oscillation between discursive registers in the introduction to Les Destinées de L'Indochine (which the classifiers have put under the rubric of history or non-fiction). He states:

. . . des pages qui veulent être de l'histoire. J'écris avec passion? Oui,--avec la passion de la Vérité Maintenant, je ne défendrai pas outre mesure cette tentative de vulgarisation par mélange de la littérature et des questions pour ainsi dire techniques. . . . Hélas . . . je n'eusse satisfait personne,--pas même moi! . . . Les économistes purs dédaigneront une contribution trop dépourvue de la sécheresse accoutumée, et les amateurs de lettres et d'art, pour quelques paragraphes spéciaux, que j'ai allégés de mon mieux, seront rebutés, quand même. . . . (12)

Ajalbert, in other words, chose to tip the scales in the other direction and placed his work on the side of fiction, a fiction though which received mixed reviews. Ajalbert's fictional work was classed as the type of exoticism which Victor Segalen characterized as being facile and excessively loquacious (Astier-Loutfi 133). Roland Lebel refers to Ajalbert as "cet observateur subtil et cet artiste réputé" and his work as being a poetic, yet exact echo of Indochina (Lebel 169). Despite his journalistic leanings, Ajalbert's use of exoticism was considered as lyrical and poetic. The difficulty of finding an appropriate register in which to place the colonial text is not unusual in colonial literature. Rather, it is indicative of the feeling of being caught in an irreconcilable bind--the bind which broadly characterizes the colonial experience.

A number of colonial writers were journalists first and novelists second, a position which for some critics might place them in another category altogether removed from the literary arena. Some novelists were French officers for whom fiction was an avocation. Among numerous others, Farrère and Daguerches were military men. Segalen was a physician in the military. Colonial critics tended to give someone like Daguerches, who devoted his career to service in Indochina, a bit of edge in terms of credibility (Lebel 170). Thus,

in terms of the pool of authors concerned, there were a large number of writers for whom a realistic, documentary presentation of life would seem to have been natural, in part because of their nonalignment with traditional literary circles and their eventually, as opposed to philosophically or literarily oriented lives. Yet, despite the propensity for realistic, action-oriented works, there is the inevitable and necessary infusion of exoticism into colonial texts. This infusion has the tendency to undercut the solid, stable, and cohesive front of colonialism couched in the language of objective realism. The representation of difference is problematic in any class of writing and it is doubly so in a class of writing devoted to an ethic of power and authority. Difference, or "le Divers," as Segalen terms it, is named as the exotic. The "exotic" wears many masks in the colonial novel and is itself subject to various applications. The colonial posture is a stance shackled by the desire to express absolute reality (which in this discourse fuses into absolute truth). Integral to that absolute reality is the encompassing of absolute otherness--a problematic irresolvable fictionally or historically speaking.

Works classed as colonial "fiction," in general, reflect and promote the waning configuration of power and rigidity of thought characteristic of the colonial enterprise. The particular conception of power and authority reflected in the security of the fixed frame of reference subtends the analytico-referential mode of discourse. In colonial texts, the discursive security of colonialism is reflected by the narrative structure of the novels, as well as the technical and thematic constructions, which support the positivistic, objective, and totalizing assumptions typically associated with the socio-economic and political structure of colonialism and the

analytico-referential mode of discourse. The surface predominance of the analytico-referential mode of discourse reflects a potential acceptance--at least discursive grounding, of the colonial structure of authority or the illusion of power and authority which constitute and secure the colonial system. The security of the system of a dominant discourse is "always totalitarian by implication" (Terdiman 14). And it is this totalizing, unifying rationale which the colonial text employs to cover over and attempt to efface difference. The assumption of the unquestionable rightness of the dominant discourse leads, as Terdiman points out, to the perception that there is nothing repressive about the attempts to maintain and sustain the prevailing mode of discourse. In colonial texts, the subtle and at times not so subtle challenges to the prevailing notions of authority are revealed in the undercurrents or subversive elements of textuality, to use Terdiman's phraseology. Yet this subversion--these "efforts to produce difference--the new, the subversive, the *other*--inevitably meet the resistance that sustains the stability of all cultural systems" (Terdiman 14). Even texts which seemingly support most strongly the colonial enterprise exhibit these conflicting levels of discourse, particularly from a vantage point removed from the stage of conflict. The subtlety of subversion is in part due to the way the conflict is cordoned off. Terdiman uses Jameson's terms "strategy of containment" to describe this process which he says is "a mechanism to disguise the existence of a conflict unresolved" (Terdiman 17). Jameson remarks in The Political Unconscious that these mechanisms are not just exclusionary in nature, but potentially repressive (213). We can apply this observation to the colonial scenario as we

discuss the textual cordoning off of the colonized from the dominant voice of the colonizer.

With regard to power which subtends colonial authority, the relational modes of development are stymied and held unalterable in the grip of the colonizer/colonized dyad. This implied stability might be interpreted as anchoring or securing the discourse. If we make the leap into a "social semiotics" as Terdiman terms it, and use Saussurian terms to describe relationships outside of linguistics, we can compare Saussure's dyadic conception of the sign and aspects of structuralism's adaptation of that concept, and apply those terms to the fixed, dyadic quality of the colonial relationship. Without the supplementarity of a third element in the posited duality, a relationship is "dimensionless, directionless." "Like a clone, the dyad and its abstract internal relation can reproduce, indeed endlessly--but only at the price of remaining forever unchanged" (Terdiman 26). The colonial relationship is, in a sense, a "walling-off" of time, the third element, from the posited relationship. Johannes Fabian remarks in his book Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object, that the "possibility of identifying and analyzing semiological systems is unequivocally said to rest on the elimination of Time and, by implication, of such notions as process, genesis, emergence, production, and other concepts bound up with "history" (56). In colonial texts where the colonized are inserted or described as being outside the temporal and thus historical framework of the writers of the colonial story, there can be no dynamic interaction or movement. As Terdiman points out, it is the element of time which breaks the stability of the dyad.

It is interesting that in colonial texts, frequent efforts are made to stress the idea of a time-locked image of colonial practice--one that will not alter with time. People and their places are locked out of time. In Le Kilomètre 83, the narrator comments on the people of the forest who cannot be described within the temporal framework of the narrator: "Ce sont des orgueilleux brutaux. Ils appartiennent à un cycle révolu, résidus de ces âges où la force aux yeux courts tenait le sceptre" (Daguerches 34). In describing their "timeless" place, the narrator writes of the indigenous forest:

Quelquefois j'ai peur et haine de la forêt, de cette forêt dont j'ignore les lois et les caprices, dont le rythme des scèves m'échappe, dont le vert perpétuel se corrompt ou s'exalte pour des causes que je ne sais préciser, de cette forêt qui amalgame les fleurs et les graines, qui n'a pas de saisons, pas de sommeil hivernal, pas d'éveil tendre et printanier. . . rien qu'une poussée barbare de vie, rien que ce soulèvement gonflé de corps d'esclave sous la caresse du sultan solaire! (Daguerches 35)

In this scenario, there is no "other" time, there is only one time: the time of the colonizer. This time, like power, language, and knowledge is not a commodity to be shared between the colonial actants. Yet, as evident in the preceding passage, the exclusionary tactics of temporal imperialism are often couched in terms which suggest the discomfort of the narrator with such a univocal configuration of time.

The idea of cloning carried into the colonial field is interesting to look at in the portrayal of the individual colonizer and colonized. The identity elements of each group are assigned or at least implied at the outset of most texts. The tendency of stereotyping which pervades colonial texts is also indicative of this type of cloning. Astier-Loutfi refers to the stereotyping done under the auspices of objective or ethnographic observations as only "efforts plus ou moins conscients de légitimation de la situation privilégiée de l'observateur-colonisateur face à l'objet-colonisé" (63). On the other hand, there is a degree of stereotyping on the colonizing side of the

equation as well. References to the training and making of colonial men through the French institutions which produced the colonial bureaucracy and the military support personnel are one way in which the colonizers are cloned. The closed community of French colonizers represented in colonial texts is another indication of the stereotyping called upon to stabilize the dominant actant in the dyadic relationship. Stereotyping also serves as a sort of locking device. The image of Western colonial structure as static and permanent reinforces this idea. The synchronicity of structural constructs, such as colonialism, is paradoxically overlaid with the bustling linear progression of the individual. The Western individuals who comprise the colonial unit are portrayed in terms of their actions and movement. Their status as colonizer, though, remains as the anchor and boundary for the flurry of excess movement and surplus time. The indigene, on the other hand, has no time, no history, no movement. René Lalou mentions this contrast in his critique of some of Farrère's novels which he says "rendered sensible the enigmatic power of the stationary Oriental civilizations compared to which our feverish activities appeared childish" (Lalou 296).

Theme as a function of discourse frequently works in the colonial novel to figuratively arrest time. The immutable landscape, the indistinguishability of the indigenous population, the oppressive climate all work on the thematic level to give the impression of the colonized as a people and a land out of time. The impression of an overarching sameness of the other and his place ties into what Anouar Abdel-Malek, in an article "Orientalism in Crisis," sees as a function of ethnic typology which typifies observations in the Orientalist context. He remarks:

According to traditional orientalists, an essence should exist--sometimes even clearly described in metaphysical terms-- which constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all the beings considered; this essence is both "historical," since it goes back to the dawn of history, and fundamentally a-historical since it transfixes the being, "the object" of

study, within its inalienable and non-evolutive specificity, instead of defining it as all other beings, states, nations, peoples and cultures--as a product, a resultant of the vention of the forces operating in the field of historical evolution. (108)

Written out of Western or historical "time," the colonized is written out of history, as well as the arena of legitimacy or validity. The colonized and their culture are viewed as "out of time," that is out of Western time. For example, the ageless and timeless quality of monuments and statues refers to a different conception of time for the culture of the other.

In light of Abdel-Malek's comments, the temporal reference in the following passage does not take into consideration the "vection of forces" which constitute and validate the standard Western concept of historical "being." In a late nineteenth century text by Paul-Emile-Marie Reveillère, L'Ame khmère, an ancient temple is described and compared to Western edifices:

Un des caractères les plus remarquables de cette oeuvre immense est l'unité--l'unité dans la complexité, tel est son caractère essentiel de grandeur. . . . L'oeuvre a été rapidement accomplie dans un coup d'élan d'une société, nombreuse, riche, très organisée; sans cela une pareille unité serait impossible. Toutes nos cathédrales dans leur édification portent la trace du temps. Ici, on est en face d'une oeuvre gigantesque, exécuté, comme dans un conte de fées, par un coup de baguette. (Leblond 1946, 237)

The distinguishing feature he points out between Western edifices and Eastern ones is the univocal, harmonious impression of the Eastern temple which he equates with the effacement of the visible effects of time. Western edifices in contrast carry the visible traces of their construction through and in time.

The security of colonial texts in the realm of "truth and fact" provides firm footing for the positing of a secure and positive source of that truth--colonial authority. The assurance of authority is first of all based on the value attributed to

truth at large and the status of the accesser of truth. The place of authority is designated by plan to the colonizer, and in the colonial text to the narrator. One frequent manner of securing the authority of the French colonizer is by the perception of their elevated position on the scale of societal development. The superiority of the French culture opposed to indigenous cultures is a given in the colonial context. One example of the open coding of the colonizer's relative superiority is in Farrère's Les Civilisés. The authority associated with the place of the colonizer is apparent by how one of the eminent, wealthy members of the colonial community is referred to both by the indigenes and by his fellow colonizers. Although not of the military, he is named as "Cap'taine Malais," a term which acknowledges the set hierarchical arrangement of the military. The narrator explains the use of the name: "le mot Cap'taine, dans le jargon des Annamites, signifie gentleman, et n'a aucun sens guerrier. . ." (Farrère 14). The blond, blue-eyed Dr. Mevil uses the term as well when he relays his destination to a carriage driver on the way to the home of the "Cap'taine." The usage of the term by representatives of both groups simultaneously covers over and brings to light the indigenes' perception of the colonizer. While the authority of the position of the colonizer is recognized by the use of the term "Cap'taine," the use of the term also carries the subtle implication of the misappropriation of power, in the sense that it is used out of context, so to speak. If the indigene indeed had only the gentlemanly qualities of the colonizer to consider, then the term "Cap'taine" would be uncalled for. It is ironic that Farrère mentions the possible misreading of the term in the sense of "guerrier," but then he dismisses the undertones of conflict suggested by the term with the qualifier 'aucun sens.' A passage such as this one perhaps suggests a moment of slippage from an otherwise solidly installed textual front of authority. It also calls to mind what Homi Bhabha would describe as one of "those moments when colonial

discourse already disturbed at its source by a doubleness of enunciation, is further subverted by the object of its address; when the scenario written by colonialism is given a performance by the native that estranges and undermines the colonialist script" (Parry/OLR 42). In other words, the adaptation of the French military term by the colonized and its circulation in the associated lexicon diminishes the perceived power and authority of the term in the strictly controlled lexicon of colonial domination.

There are allusions to the fact in colonial writings that the power held might only be illusion, but the importance of maintaining that illusion is overwhelming. Marius and Ary Leblond begin their Anthologie coloniale with such a situation cited from a book by Edourd Foa: "Il faut qu'un Européen ait un prestige considérable, et s'il ne l'a pas, il faut qu'il l'acquière. Pour peu qu'il se laisse intimider, c'est un homme perdu; non seulement son autorité, mais sa vie quelquefois en dépend" (Leblond, 1946, 7). The power (or illusion of power) of this bearer of truth, the colonizer, then is not subject to question or debate in the colonial scheme. It is rather a natural assumption, ostensibly based on "natural superiority." In colonial works, the notions of authority and derivative power and the translation of those notions into the linkages between self and other are magnified. Colonial authority, as possessor and bestower of truth, comes into question and under scrutiny as the perception of power based on fixed hierarchy comes into question and as the overall positivistic and absolutist character of this discourse of dominance is deflated.

The figurehead of authority which circumscribed colonial activity, broadly speaking, was the Ecole Coloniale. In reality, the colonial societies and the colonial party itself were more active in pursuing the advancement of the colonial project. In texts associated with or appropriated by the Ecole and colonial critics, one would

expect to find unswerving adherence to colonial ideology. The novels deemed “colonial” though do not always ring true to the ordained discourse. The discordant resonance of conflicting levels of discourse strikes the modern reader perhaps more jarringly than it did the contemporary reader. For, as Reiss comments, it is only in looking back on past events or texts that the moments of conflict or discord are likely to be apparent (Reiss 381).

The colonial novel sustains and maintains the positivistic and objective forms of nineteenth-century realist texts. Roland Dorgelès, for example, saw himself as a successor to Zola and his work as a bastion against innovative usurpers such as Proust (Dupray 50). The Leblond critique of colonial literature, Après l'exotisme de Loti, le roman colonial, openly acknowledges not only the stylistic alignment with the tenets of nineteenth-century realism, but what is perceived to be the broader social function and place of that sort of literature. The colonial novel then “n'est pas seulement une machine à décors et une matière à aventures, il aborde les revendications et les grands problèmes sociaux ou spirituels qu'on ne trouvait jusqu'ici que dans les romans métropolitains des Balzac, des Zola ou des Bourget” (Leblond 8). Ironically, though, colonial novels did not typically broach the justifications of what would seem to be the central social problematic of that sort of text--colonialism itself.

Colonial novelists frequently pictured themselves as defenders of the status quo--politically, philosophically, and literarily. Carroll Yoder in referring to this tendency remarks that colonial writers saw their task as presenting a realist view of the colonies as opposed to the distorted views that had been passed off as exotic observation in the past. They were typically “conservative, patriotic, optimistic and strongly committed to their work” (Yoder 45). Particularly after World War I, the

claim of objective observation came to be more pronounced as the number of novels and critics of colonial literature increased.

Colonial critics promoted and attempted to propel the colonial enterprise as they took it upon themselves to describe and prescribe its structuring and organizing relationships in past, current, and future texts. One colonial critic of note, Robert Randeau, sets the beginning of what he terms colonial literature around 1900 with the founding of the publication Grand France by Marius and Ary Leblond. Prior to that time, literature about the colonies in Randau's opinion falls under the rubric of travelogue. In other words, it was a literature written by the casual and less than serious observer of colonial life. Interestingly, when critics such as Lebel and the Leblonds in their later critiques are pulling up shining examples of "colonial work," the citations are frequently to authors who predate Randau's arbitrary dividing date.⁴ At the other extreme, works which fall into the period when colonial practice is more openly challenged such as René Maran's Barouala (Prix Goncourt, 1921), are also shelved under the colonial heading.

Within the arena of fictional narrative, the principal colonial critics favored realist presentation as the ideal way in which to reveal the colonies to the metropolis. The necessity of maintaining an objective viewpoint is indicated by well-known colonial critics, Marius and Ary Leblond. The adherence to objectivity is described as an almost mystical devotion to absolute certitude: "alors, loin de se complaire au subjectivisme des voyageurs préoccupés de s'enrichir, on regard avec un sens religieux et fraternel de l'objectivité" (Leblond 10). This sentiment is repeated time and again by the critics of colonial literature.

In general, colonial critics saw the role of the colonial novel to promote interest in and support for France's overseas colonies and, as is frequently stated, to make known (in the fullest sense of the word) the colonies to the metropolis. Roland Lebel, René Barquissau, Marius-Ary Leblond, Charles Régismanset, Louis Cario, Robert Randau, and Eugene Pujarniscule⁵ are among the numerous critics who sought to codify and sanction the genre of colonial literature. It is ironic that advocates of the colonial school often claimed works which did not toe the party line, so to speak, of colonial rhetoric. The stated goals of the colonial work were often negated in those works claimed as "colonial novels." The intended parameters of the genre were frequently stretched and ignored. In a sense then, there can be read two levels of inconsistency involving colonial literature. On one hand there is the inconsistency in the establishment of the canon, as previously mentioned. The texts gathered under the colonial roof by no means express a univocity of opinion. They range in scope from the hard-line colonial advocacy of someone like Robert Randeau or Henry Daguerches to the relative refusal of someone like Victor Segalen to textually broach colonial issues. On the other hand, in addition to the intertextual inconsistencies, there are intratextual inconsistencies. That is to say, the perceived adherence to the colonial prescription of portraying an accurate and truthful picture of the colonies is undermined by technical, thematic, and narrative construction of the texts. The problems which generally arise in the legitimation of any realist text are magnified in the colonial arena where the binding of the mode has the additional circumscription of colonialism.

Randau makes the emphatic statement in a 1929 article in Revue des Deux Mondes that there is a colonial literature, as if to quell any lingering doubts about the genre's existence. This literature does not stand unsupported according to Randau, but

rather is buttressed by the work of "colonial organizers and learned societies." He states, it is "l'oeuvre des organisateurs qui donnerent à notre empire colonial sa cohésion . . ." (Randau 426). It is interesting to note the implied interpenetration of the political and the aesthetic realms. A mutual discourse for both the political and literary realm is not unique to Randau, but figures also into the criticism of other important colonial critics such as Lebel and Leblond. Randau goes on to say, "La connaissance intime des peuples est assurée, dans nos colonies, par des sociétés savantes que subventionne l'autorité supérieure" (Randau 425 and 427). Again, this is an interesting comment on the interdependent nature of colonial discourse, that is the fusion of the political and the aesthetic. It is also an example of the hierarchical validation of the knowledge circulated as truth in colonial literature. Knowledge about the indigene is validated by the learned society which is in turn validated by higher authority. Knowledge as absolute is assured by the acropetal inscription of that knowledge in a fixed system of reference. Colonial documentation then, derives its alleged validity both from external supporting structures and its internal truth-relaying capacity.

Hugh Ridley comments on another example of interpenetration and interdependence of the critical/historical aspect of the "objective" documentation about the colonial enterprise and the "subjective" literary accounts of that activity. He attributes the "shared ethos of subject matter" between colonial criticism and literature to what René Wellek calls "the ingenious belief in the accumulation of fact" (Ridley 46). Ridley is of the opinion that colonial literature is no more than a house of cards built upon the accumulation of a multitude works of frequently questionable or negligible value. He makes it very clear that he is not going out on a limb to argue the inherent value of the genre of colonial literature--a genre fallaciously grounded in the

belief that one could construct a valid and viable canon by simply amassing a sufficient number of works to call colonial. The "excessive confidence in literary history" that Ridley attributes to the critics and advocates of colonial literature adds an interesting twist to the face of a genre already burdened with the task of smoothing over the rough edges of a socio-political problematic. The belief in the power to amass a canon is an interesting shadow of the colonial imperial notions of the power and authority requisite in the amassing of an empire. This "excessive confidence in literary history" and the faith in their own authority exhibited by colonial critics might in some way be indicative of the broader confidence in the French national destiny and the superiority of that destiny. Based upon Ridley's assumption we might surmise that the rationale and justification for genre building mimic, in a sense, the rationale and justification for empire building.

The major colonial critics all make a special case for the place of the writer in the colonial venture. The work and success of colonial ventures, the critics say, is in large part attributable to the success of colonial writers (and by extension, of course, the critics), in adequately and realistically portraying the colonial scene. Randau is among those critics who are of this persuasion. Randau describes his conception of the role of the colonial writer in the following passage:

Il convient donc de l'éclairer sur la nécessité d'une politique coloniale. C'est le rôle des écrivains. Leur devoir est de connaître les milieux qu'ils décrivent; leur tâche est de guider, d'instruire, de dire le vrai, de combattre le préjugé, de dénoncer la charlatanerie, de courir sus aux illuminés, aux malveillants, aux détracteurs et aux maladroits. (416)

According to Randau, the public would not have been aware of all the "beauty," "usefulness," and finally "cosmic value" of the colonial empire had colonial writers not taken it upon themselves to elucidate the whole picture. However, the relationship between colonial critics as initiators and arbitrators of the canon, and writers as

extensions and enactors of literary policy, is not always a cut and dried matter. Often writers were gathered into the colonial fold, so to speak, under only the illusion of dialogic interaction between critic and novelist. Consequently, the placement or alignment with the genre of colonial literature is frequently problematic. By whatever means the canon was created, overall, the role of colonial literature is perceived to be a didactic one and, in the extreme, propagandistic. It is authorized ostensibly by virtue of the fact that it conveys truth.

Raphael Barquissau's work L'Asie française et ses écrivains is another indication of the belief that the colony is best known through the writers. Anthologies such as this one are indicative of the manner in which the colonies could become "known." It covers a broad range of subjects--history, language, art, religion, customs. These different aspects of the colonies are "revealed" by excerpts from a broad spectrum of writings by journalists, novelists, administrators, and military men. This type of gathering up of documentation is perhaps an indication on a small scale of what Ridley sees as the artificial construction of a colonial literary empire.

The critical activity which constructed the field of colonial literature can perhaps explain to an extent the variance in the components of the canon. For if indeed, we agree with Ridley, and take the construct of colonial literature to be an a posteriori accounting for and justification for a broad range of production, then the variance in what was deemed "colonial" is understandable. That the official projections and expectations regarding colonial literature were not always fulfilled in practice is not surprising under these circumstances. Frequently, assessments were made by the critics about works which were fitted one way or another into the colonial canon despite their variance from the ideal vision put forth by the critics. Sur la Route Mandarine was taken by some critics to be anti-colonial because Dorgelès'

"objectivity" was perceived as revealing negative aspects of the colonial venture (Dupray 260). Les Civilisés is footnoted in Leblond's Après l'exotisme de Loti: le roman coloniale as being in a category to itself because it borders on satire of the colonial situation. Yet, René Lalou in his book on contemporary French literature writes admiringly of the novel:

Very different from the lyrical Loti, Farrère revealed himself a master of the dramatic novel . . . Each book was a cosmopolitan fan. The strokes of his brush were so sure that the depiction of the external attitudes sufficed to evoke the most complex psychology to indicate, across an enormous gulf, subtle analogies between East and West. Capable of passion in the epic pages which terminate 'Les Civilisés,' Farrère excelled in awakening the sense of the mysterious. (29)

So, in fact, the creation and establishment of the colonial canon itself belies the univocal, cohesive stance that the school, the canon, and colonialism in general are perceived to exhibit.

The works of many writers who considered themselves above the fray of colonial politics were taken into the colonial fold, in spite of the lack of total commitment or approval of the colonial system. One example is Victor Segalen who openly disavowed association with the school and openly stated his disagreement with colonial policy. The modern judgement of his work reinforces this disavowal. His work exemplifies both levels of inconsistency--intertextual and intratextual--with the colonial school. In spite of his distance from colonial apologists and advocates, Segalen's acknowledgement and acceptance by some members of the colonial school is noted both in Randau's article and in Lalou's anthology, where he is claimed as one of the best writers of the genre. Segalen, as opposed to many of the colonial writers focuses on the indigenous populations rather than on the populations of the colonizing country who happen to be in a particular colony at a given moment. The intricacies of colonial society do not hold the place of importance in his texts that those intrigues do in many

colonial texts. Segalen's open disagreement with colonial policy contrasts with the tacit complicity of typical colonial authors regarding the colonial enterprise.

Astier-Loutfi remarks on his position regarding the results of colonial expansion:

Ségalen a vu dans la colonisation, non pas simplement la fin d'un monde pittoresque et coloré, comme Loti, mais une tragédie sans égale. La tentative du colonisateur d'imposer au monde entier un destin unique aboutit à d'irréparables désastres, qui détruisent à jamais "la Valeur de la Vie." (Astier-Loutfi 133)

Segalen's case is unusual though and because his disavowal of colonialism is unquestionable, his work does not open itself up to the same sort of scrutiny for ambivalent readings that other texts do. His work on exoticism and the positing of the exotic other do offer some interesting options which can inform a study of that process.

Claude Farrère's novel, Les Civilisés, is included in most listings of colonial fiction, though frequently with qualification. In some respects, the novel may have appeared to be anti-colonialist at the time, a fact which his biographer Alain Quella-Villéger notes (Quella-Villéger 283). The novel was apparently well received by at least some of the public as it was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1905. Pierre Jourda in 1938, mentions Farrère along with Daguerches as examples of what he calls the fourth stage of exoticism--colonial exoticism. Although Farrère does not overtly challenge the colonial ideology, the cracks in the colonial veneer at times might seem thinly varnished over in this novel--too thinly in the eyes of some. His failure, in the Leblonds opinion, is in pushing the colonizer and his position to the point of satire. Even though the Leblonds in 1934 marginalize Les Civilisés by putting this work in a footnote and designate it "à part," Farrère is obviously still in the colonial club, so to speak. As opposed to Segalen, his differences with colonial policy are not necessarily ideological, but rather they are disagreements with the enactment of specific policy in particular cases and with particular individuals. Interesting, Segalen and Farrère,

although considered at the opposite end of the spectrum in the use of literary exoticism, communicated and corresponded about their work. Farrère's biographer notes the documented evidence of the mutual appreciation of each other's work (Quella-Villéger 120-123). The public face of Claude Farrère, according to Quella-Villéger, was, for the most part, supportive of French colonial undertakings. And in his work, the tacit accord with the mechanisms of colonial domination is still in place. Among colonial novelists, Maurice Barrès referred to Farrère and Pierre Loti as "les plus grands représentants, qui nous a révélé les voluptés et les dangers de l'Asie." As far as colonial literature was concerned, Farrère actively supported the promotion of the colonies through literary venues such as his involvement in the Français d'Asie organization and by his promotion of an award to encourage the production of literary works which would provoke interest in overseas involvements (Quella-Villéger 286).

Segalen and Farrère are only two of the authors, among many, who either plugged into or were plugged into the colonial circuits of involvement. If one can take these cases as only two examples of the broad spectrum of works which fall under the colonial heading, the conclusion that the unified voice of the colonial school was merely an illusion of cohesiveness is likely. In both the texts of collusion and opposition, the dominant voice is threatened or at least nagged by a dissonance echoing and reverberating in the text.

Martine Astier-Loutfi, in Littérature et colonialisme, acknowledges the lack of univocal accord in the writings of even the most ardent supporters of the colonial enterprise. She states, "Tous les écrivains qui exalterent l'image impériale, n'eurent pas une confiance absolue dans la réussite de l'entreprise: on trouve, à l'intérieur même de certaines oeuvres consacrées à célébrer la gloire de l'Empire, des

expressions d'inquiétudes" (Astier-Loutfi 120). The disquieting effects of competing discourses did not lead the colonial writer necessarily to a reevaluation of colonial imperialism as a system, but rather, had a tendency to strengthen his conviction regarding the validity of the system. As more and more contradictions were voiced, Astier-Loutfi points out, "les colonisateurs, loin de questionner ou d'amender leur vision, se sont au contraire durcis dans leurs convictions, ils ne se sont pas adaptés à la réalité, ils ont essayé de l'ignorer ou de l'interpréter à leur avantage" (123).

Henry Daguerches' Le Kilomètre 83 is an example of a text broaching uncomfortable issues, such as the enormous sacrifice of lives for the building of a new roadway, yet at the same time rationalizing such an issue as necessary for the greater goal. The following passage from one of the final chapters of the novel relates how the narrator feels on looking back at the work he has accomplished in the colony:

Nous avons coulé de bon béton, nous avons lié de bon fer, nous avons encastré de bonnes pierres, nous avons conjuré le mauvaus limon . . . C'était droit, net, du'un trait, comme notre volonté tendue, comme les lignes de nos épures . . . Et j'étais sûr qu'il ne pouvait rien contre elle, ce frottement flasque et sournois: j'étais content, c'était notre oeuvre. Dieul qu'elle nous avait coûté de soins et de peines! Du sang aussi . . . Du sang vraiment? Pas assez de sang . . . Que sont quelques gouttelettes, à peine grosses comme ces fleurettes rouges qui couvrent du marais? Ah! si notre ciment en était imbibé, pétri, comme l'oeuvre serait plus belle, plus rose, plus indestructible . . . N'importe, je suis content!
(Daguerches 341)

Instances like this one reflect the real necessity, both politically and textually, of the bracketing, that is, the elimination of inconsistent or problematic elements, which must take place in colonial discourse in order to contend with the contradictions and difficulties within the system. The tragedy of the loss of lives over the course of the project is bracketed by the stated satisfaction of the narrator--"j'étais content...je suis content." In addition, the human element of the project is figuratively embedded

in the solidity of construction materials, the description of which opens and closes the passage.

In the colonial novel, bracketing takes place textually under the guise of realism with its ungirding of authoritative truth, which functions as a systematic covering over of contradictions and inconsistencies. Efforts by colonial administrators to make the reality of the colonial enterprise correspond to the ideal conception of that enterprise can be compared, then, to the efforts of the colonial authors to couch their observations in the ideal terms of realistic presentation. Both the political and textual colonial actants process and are processed through the discursive veil of an authoritatively grounded realist aesthetic in the attempt to portray, or rather attempt to portray, a system perceived as unchallengeable, infallible, and justifiable in its construction.

Certain aspects of the realist aesthetic commonly associated with nineteenth century realism are particularly pertinent in the consideration of the colonial canon. First, the assumed mimetic nature of representation provides the intertextual and intratextual framework of the literary work. Secondly, the purported stability, cohesiveness, and closed nature of the discursive system of literary realism and the power and authority of that system to maintain a cohesive narrative front are important in the examination of two concurrent systems of ostensible stability--the colonial construct and the textual systems which inform and are chosen to reveal that construct. Thirdly, the establishment and maintenance of the authority of the discursive practice which informs the realist aesthetic also can be seen to inform the authorization and empowerment of colonial ideology as well as the definers and defenders of that system. Finally, the positing of the whole process and practice of literary realism as the bearer of a certain objective, a priori truth is realized on

several levels in colonial works. The “truthful” nature of the colonial construct is buttressed by the “truth-generating” form of objective realism.

Catherine Belsey, along with other recent critics, uses the term classic realism to designate literature which creates an effect or illusion of reality and offers itself up as a transparent representation of that reality (Belsey 51). The “reality” revealed in this mode of expression is a comfortable, secure reality because the transparency of representation characteristic of that mode relies on *re*-presentation as opposed to presentation. That is to say, realism relies on categorized, recognizable, and conventional patterns of discursive posturing. Works exhibiting characteristics of classic realism, such as those of Balzac attempt to reveal or to show the world as it really is, was, or will be. The illusion of reality is created by and through the process of mimetic representation.

The notion of art as imitation and as true, accurate, and realistic representation certainly is not new to the nineteenth century. Christopher Prendergast in The Order of Mimesis acknowledges the long history of mimesis and remarks that given its long history, defining the term is not at all unproblematic. He does go on to elaborate on the characteristics of mimesis, albeit a bit reservedly, due to what he terms the “multifarious historical guises” of the process:

Mimesis is an order, in the dual sense of a set of arrangements and a set of commands. On one interpretation, the mimetic ‘command’ consists, through a stress on the values of imitation and repetition, in an imperative to submit to the set of symbolic arrangements (the mimetic ‘plot’), as if the latter corresponded to the natural order of things. The key question concerns the origins and status of this command. . . The ‘order’ of mimesis is repressive and claustrating. ..The authoritarian gesture of mimesis is to imprison us in a world which, by virtue of its familiarity, is closed to analysis and criticism. . . . (Prendergast 5,6)

The assumptions Prendergast mentions in this passage were played out in the construction of colonial texts and their implantation as texts imitating and repeating colonial life and "reality." In general, the colonial novel continued to operate under the same "guise" of mimetic representation that imbued the nineteenth century realists texts.

Imitation and repetition create the illusion of stability by tracing and retracing the already known. Prendergast refers to the association of stability with mimetic representation. The notion of stability refers both to "a 'stable' reality and a correspondingly stable system of 'representation'" (Prendergast 4). This dual sense of stability is heightened in the context of colonial literature because the justification, defense, and rationale for the systemic imposition of the colonial mode of thought are processes of stabilization. Thus, it is not surprising that colonialist discourse is a stabilizing discourse--one that partakes of the discourse of realism to right the ship, so to speak.

Another cushion of stability that realist representation provides is the comfort taken in what Roland Barthes terms the "readable" text, that is, one that proffers collusion as opposed to challenge. The collusion of author and reader creates a shared matrix of understanding which characterizes classic realism according to the reading of that mode by Catherine Belsey. There is a shared duplicity in creating a discursive space in which the author and the reader are sworn to secrecy or to the bracketing of elements which negate the truth and threaten the stability derived from that allegedly univocal discursive space. Belsey points out as well that Barthes' "readable" text implies a degree of collusion in that the text must become a space of accord, of at least momentary agreement between author and reader.

The goal of readability is certainly one that can be related to the colonial novel because the goal of that genre was to make ultimately “readable” the colony, or the trope of the other. One of the simple ways in which this was repeatedly reinforced in colonial works was through the use of the possessive pronoun “notre” when referring to either the colony or indigenous population of the colony. In the shared matrix of understanding, then, the reader must assume at least temporarily the status of the colonizer and fall heir and victim to the rewards and guilt of that position. The implications of this accord between author/narrator/colonizer and reader is that it “does the work of ideology in suppressing the relationship between language and subjectivity” (Belsey 72). Given this situation then, assigning language (or the text) a status of objectivity granted by a stabilized discourse necessarily negates the free circulation and independence of the author and reader, that is their status as subjective and unbound individuals.

The derivation of authority in the process of representation is just as difficult to pinpoint as the theoretical and practical authorizations of colonial practice. Jean-François Lyotard in Le Différend comments about the difficulty of ascertaining precisely a point over and against which to stabilise authority: “L'autorité ne se déduit pas. Les essais de légitimation de l'autorité conduisent au cercle vicieux (j'ai autorité sur toi parce que tu m'autorises à l'avoir), à la pétition de principe (l'autorisation autorise l'autorité), à la régression à l'infini. . .” (Lyotard 1983, 10). In other words, in terms of Lyotard's theory, there can be no absolute over and against which we can set authority. Authority, like truth is con/textually derived and con/textually validated. Establishing textual authority is, in essence, establishing meaning, or in any case attempting to plumb the depths of potential meaning. While the originary site of authority or meaning can be variously conceived and located or dismissed, Belsey

notes that in expressive realism, the "guarantee" of meaning or perhaps the truth value of meaning is found "in the author's mind, or in the world we all know, or in the conjunction of the two--the author's perception of the world we know" (Belsey 52). In the case of the realist colonial text, this is particularly true. Lyotard views this derivation of authority as "systemic self-regulation" (12). The site of authority--the colonial author or narrator--is doubly reinforced. His position as guarantor of the validity of the textual system is derived by his place in the colonial scheme as originator of the construct and then again within the text as the holder and disseminator of truth or meaning to which he is specially privileged.

Whether or not he is in complete accord with all aspects of the project of colonial expansion, the colonial author, by his choice of topic and setting, necessarily aligns himself with the position and power of the colonizer. Given these circumstances then, the colonial author, the textual narrator, and the colonizer occupy similar authorial positions in their respective fields of circulation. While the terms are not in all situations interchangeable, they can all be used to designate a common authorial position in the colonial scheme--a position both authoring in the originary sense and a position of authority based on hierarchical supremacy. This sort of natural ordering of authority is evident in a number of passages from Le Kilomètre 83. In one instance, the narrator refers to his acceptance of the appointment of one of his peers to a position of authority: "Au demeurant, je suis heureux de le féliciter. Car c'est bien le meilleur homme de notre équipe" (Daguerches 37). Here, as elsewhere in the text, we are made aware of the narrator's perception of a naturally ordered hierarchy of authority and his place within that hierarchy.

In another passage from the same novel, the narrator discusses the relative position of the Europeans in the colonial arena with a M. de Sibaldi:

Anglais, Français, Allemands, Espagnols . . . Elle ne leur demande qu'une épreuve, comme aux nouveau-nés de Sparte: la justification physique de leur droit d'aller au soleil . . . Et de ces gens de comptoir, elle fait des "maîtres."

Des maîtres! A ces mots, je regardai vers le nord, . . . --Et me souvenant que, d'impression, dès mon arrivée, j'avais baptisé cela; "le jardin des maîtres," je me mis à sourire.

--Oui, "des maîtres," j'ai dit le mot; je veux, s'il le faut, l'expliquer . . . Ces employés, ces fonctionnaires, n'est-ce pas?--on dit volontiers qu'ils payent de leur pâleur leur avidité de luxe, leur goût de paraître, de jouir. . . eux pauvres hères aux bottines poudreuses, par droit de naissance! . . . Ils payent, je vous dis, la sensation d'être des maîtres, des "sahibs," et ce n'est pas trop la payer que de faire, pour cela, leur épiderme plus blanc! (Daguerches 123-124)

Again, there appears to be a sort of natural ordering to the system, based not on ability, but on the relative tint of the skin. M. Sibaldi comments further on along these same lines that the prestige of the masters in the colonies has grown over the past thirty years as they have remade the city of Saigon. He remarks: "Aujourd'hui les femmes exigent ce qu'il faut de leurs couturières et de leurs modistes, et nous portons le smoking et le frac; et cela est bien, nous devons cela à notre dignité de maîtres" (Daguerches 127). The endowment of special privilege upon the colonial narrator draws necessarily and always upon this assumed "dignité de maîtres."

As Albert Memmi points out, the Frenchman or the European occupies a place in the preordained network of the colonial system. By his very birth, he is always, already privileged in the colonial hierarchy (Memmi 9). His authority and superiority in terms of the colonial relationship is unchallengeable. It is not surprising then how this privilege is realized in colonial novels. The locus of interest in colonial novels is frequently colonial society, that is French society, transplanted on colonial soil, and the players in the drama are for the most part the French colonizers with only the minor "subservient" roles being played by the indigenes. Space allocated to the development of non-native French characters generally functions not to

elucidate the character or context of the indigene, but rather to serve as a foil for the development of the major players, the French colonizers. For example, in Le Kilomètre 83, when the Chinese workers are brought in by the Catholic priest to work on the railroad, the narrator's reaction to the oddity of the accoutrements of Western religion in the Oriental context is emphasized more than the culture of the Oriental. In this novel, as well as others, the mystery of the Oriental as other does not reside in the acknowledgement or validation of the uniqueness of that other culture, but rather in its potential to reveal to the colonial actant some vision which would smooth the way of his journey toward self-definition and discovery. The secret is sometimes couched in the image of the road. In Sur la Route Mandarine, the focus of the novel is the discovery of the old Mandarine Road which the narrator perceives as potentially holding some sort of special secret which would illuminate his personal journey. Similarly, in Le Kilomètre 83, the old Khmer route is presented as somehow both desirable and potentially threatening--a bit like a bite of the forbidden apple. In the following passage, the narrator of Le Kilomètre 83 recounts a conversation with his superior about the discovery of the old road and the possible use of the road for the bed of the railway:

C'est un article de la *Revue de l'École française*, vous savez, l'École des Études extrême-orientales d'Hanoï, qui lui a donné l'idée de rechercher les voies khmères et de les utiliser. . . Et c'est lui, lui seul, qui est allé sur le marais pour les sondages. Moi, je lui ai gardé le secret, c'est tout; mais cela, j'avais le droit de le faire, car c'était mon chef. . . Et si le tracé est meilleur, est-ce qu'on ne doit pas le suivre . . . même si nous devons tous laisser nos os sur la route . . . sur la vieille route khmère? (205)

The presence of the road in the text remains an ambiguous and essentially unexplored image, as do the representatives of the indigenous population. The maintenance of the image of the other as unexplored and unwritten allows a space for the surplus of the

unknown in the reckoning of the colonial narrator's self-definition. It serves as the receptacle, in a sense, for either what the narrator refuses to acknowledge or what he cannot know. So the marginality of the "other" element of the text frequently provides an alternate route or at least a detour in the controlled and mapped parameters of the narrator's journey toward self-understanding. When an indigene is allowed the narrating voice as in Hien le Maboul by Emile Nolly, the authority of that narrating voice is undercut and denigrated almost from the start and is held in check by the other "real," that is, French narrator of the text.

The centrality and privileging of the author figure is, as Paul Bové notes, one of the traditional organizing modes of control and domination in Western thought. This control and domination can be viewed from several perspectives. In the colonial novel, the author in effect "colonizes" the text in that he theoretically dominates and manipulates all facets of the regulatory system of the narrative. The position of the narrator is most frequently aligned with that of the colonial author and reflects similar leanings. The relationship between the author and reader can also be placed under the rubric of the colonization metaphor in that given the adherence to the classic realist mode of representation, the reader is under the sway and control of the authoreal power of the originating figure.⁶

The packaging of a realist text does convey a sense of truth, not the truth, as the proponents of realist writing may have wished. The truth conceived of by means of an indefinite article cannot provide the certitude of truth preceded by the definite article. Yet, it is "definite article" truth the colonial critics and writers heralded as the by-product of colonial writing. Truth as it was revealed in colonial realist texts is based on the same tenuous foundation as the other supports of the discursive system. The deeper problematic with regard to truth is perhaps the fact that the other supports--

mimetic representation, stability, authority--depend on the assumption of a "solid" basis of truth on which to ground their validity. Representation, stability, authority as components of colonial discourse are grounded in the pretext of "truth." Truth has nothing on which to anchor except the elusive notion of a metaphysical absolute. In other, words colonial truth has no pre-text, no a priori grounding for its certitude. Colonial truth has a trick though. It buys into a sort of hermeneutic of truth, that is, it forms a circular sort of grounding whereby the notions which prop themselves on truth become the basis on which that truth anchors its presentation as absolute. Unlike a true hermeneutics though, there is no out, there is no opening, there is no projecting. The circle of truth in the colonial sense is thus closed and must depend on the repetition of what is already there, what is already circumscribed, to perpetuate the unchanging, unchallengeable truth it is doomed to repeat.

A broad consideration which links all these aspects of signifying practice--representation and its complement of stability, authority, and truth--is the question of their being posited and circulated as natural. Jonathan Culler in Structuralist Poetics deals with the tactics of naturalization. He notes that "to naturalize a text is to bring it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible" (Culler 138). In essence, any narrative is naturalization in the sense that it is transcribed in language, which itself naturalizes or makes readable what is not immanent. To look at naturalization in terms of colonial practice and particularly in "fictional" texts, we see both an intertextual and intratextual process of naturalization. The genre itself required a bit of naturalizing, and, as different critiques were presented, perhaps it was evident to some degree that the construction and defense of the genre were, in effect, efforts to naturalize the genre to the point where a colonial genre could itself become readable as such. Many colonial

proponents and critics stressed repeatedly the importance of the writer in making the colonies known. Barthes' image of the "readable" works particularly well in this instance, given the situation of colonial involvement that did indeed need to be read as natural by a public neither knowledgeable nor convinced of the need and practicality of such involvement. Barthes indicates the importance of choice with regard to representational practice since it amounts to setting up the boundaries and rules of the game. The choice of realism in the case of colonial writers reflects their "continued confidence in a representation aesthetic" which he terms "écriture classique" (Barthes 42).⁷ Theoretically, true to form, colonial texts upheld and promoted the discursive practices of a realist aesthetic in a time when that mode was challenged and confronted with modes of writing and representation which dislodged the authority and stability of conventional beliefs.

This processing is linked as well to the question of the dynamic relationship between language and ideology. The naturalizing process is in essence a discursive covering-over of "tacit collusions and unexamined assumptions" (Prendergast 53).

As Mary Douglas remarks

although the moral order and the knowledge which sustains it are created by social convention, if their man-made origins were not hidden they would be stripped of some of their authority . . . the moral 'contract' may be written by men, but it is presented and experienced as a charter handed down by Nature It is this reduction of ethical norms to naturalistic laws, specifying the area of what is plausible, normal, natural, that moral action can be presented as a natural action, and infractions of moral norms as nothing other than a departure from the order of 'reality' itself (implausible, abnormal, unnatural and in its extreme forms as 'mad.' (Prendergast 53)

The problematics addressed in this passage are particularly highlighted in the colonial arena with the profusion of linguistic and political gymnastics of justification.

Catherine Belsey remarks on this inevitable fusion and the impossibility of extracting

single elements as significant events: "Ideology is inscribed in signifying practices--in discourses, myths, presentations and re-presentations of the way 'things' are the signifying system can have an important role in naturalizing the way things are" (Belsey 42). The "signifying practices" associated with colonial discourse render natural through a discursive contract of implied accord the relationship of dominant and subordinate--the colonizer and the colonized. The qualification "implied accord" is important because the operative mode of the colonial contract in the representational sense is not dynamic, but static. The dialogic is factored out of the contract. That is to say, the subordinated is voiceless in the contract. The accord is dictated and upheld by the dominant actant--either the colonizer or the colonial narrator. The interpretation of the contractual accord is limited by the already known, already written, already drawn parameters of the agreement as set up by the originator of the contract. In the textual sense, the representational contract is signed under the terms of literary realism.

The underwriting of this mode of representation by the advocates of the colonial school implied that the novelist could make present the colony to the reader. Writing in 1931, E. Pujarniscule describes the goal of the colonial writer: "la littérature coloniale a pour condition essentielle d'être réaliste, au sens riche et plein du mot . . . c'est la réalité morale beaucoup plus que la réalité physique qu'elle se proposera de saisir" (14). Randau's assertion of the truth-conveying power of the colonial novel reflects this belief as well. Acceptance of the validity of the novels as truth-conveying and revealing implies that the external reality will in turn reveal the hidden reality and thus the reader will come truly to know, in all of his complexity, the indigene. The broader implication is that objective realism can show us reality from the inside out and from the outside in. Objective realism, in novelistic terms, is as close to truthful

representation as the colonial author felt he could get. Ironically, the mode was perceived in some instances to be more capable of truth-telling than journalistic accounts. Randau accuses journalists writing about the colonies of propagating untruths and misinformation (Randau 426). Even if flawed, misrepresentation of the colonies too has its purpose, he says. These accounts made the general public aware of the colonies, which in turn created an interest in and market for what he perceived to be the true colonial literature.

The stated goal of realist representation frequently appeared not only in critical writings, but also in the opening pages of colonial novels where the author shares his desire to either reveal the secret of the colony or to make present or known the colony to the reader. Roland Dorgelès in Sur la route Mandarine voices the desire to make the reader truly know the colony and the indigene through this work. In a passage in the first chapter, he describes the desire to discover the unknown: "Ce qui m'intrigue, ce n'est pas le secret de ces temples qu'on rencontre partout, sous le feuillage des flamboyants . . . ce n'est pas le passé millénaire de ce peuple déchu, non, c'est le secret actuel, le secret vivant de ces pauvres Jacques aux yeux bridés qui trottaient pieds nus et s'écartent, craintifs, devant l'auto qui file" (Dorgelès 14). In Chapter 2, the desire to know or to make present reality through language is described in a passage where he expresses the poignant need to make the colony, or the world of the "other," a named, thus known reality. He writes:

En France, lorsque nous traversons un bois, nous disons simplement 'des arbres' sans chercher à les distinguer ni à leur donner de nom, mais dès qu'on se trouve sous d'autres méridiens on est poussé par le besoin de savoir, comme l'enfant curieux qui vous harcèle de questions. (Dorgelès 21)

The implication of the closure and finitude, though, which would mark the knowledge is repeatedly denied. Dorgelès carries the reader to the point where that knowledge and

understanding seem almost within reach. He then abandons the reader to ellipsis as the moment moves beyond explanation or words. At the beginning of Chapter 2, the narrator is contemplating his search for the Mandarine Route:

--Eh bien, et la Route Mandarine?
 La Route Mandarine?. . . Bastel! Je n'y pensais plus, je l'avais oubliée. Ce n'était plus pour moi qu'une expression topographique, quelque chose de banal, un trait noir tiré sur la carte tout le long de la côte. La Route Coloniale no 1, quoi . . .
 Et tout à coup (Dorgeles 20)

Later in the chapter, he thinks he has found the Mandarine Route, yet the certainty of that discovery is again undercut by ellipsis and the excess space between words and punctuation: "La Route Mandarine ! . . . C'était bien elle, cette fois. . . . Je l'avais enfin trouvée. . ." (Dorgelès 22). The reader is subsequently lead along circuitous paths which end up being only detours or distractions and not solutions to the quest the narrator has posed for himself.

Claude Farrère in his novel Les Civilisés, explains his adherence to a traditional realist mode of expression saying that the reader does not want to be presented with a challenge, but rather wants to know and understand what he is reading (Quella-Villéger 398). The goal of literature for him was not to be obscure or hermetic like some of the early twentieth century writers such as Claudel and Mallarmé whom he reproaches for their self-involvement. Freud was a target as well for his accusations of excessive analysis and self-involvement (Quella-Villéger 399). For Farrère, the literary enterprise is directed outward instead of inward. His texts are motivated by action and sequence rather than introspection or psychology. His choice of realism as a mode of literary expression thus is in keeping with the literary project he perceives himself as pursuing.

Of the three principal novels of this study, Le Kilomètre 83 by Henry Daguerches probably best represents the fulfillment of the task colonial critics set up for the colonial writer. Lebel describes the work as “un beau roman, riche de pensée coloniale, et qui n'est pas l'oeuvre d'un passant” (Lebel 170). In other colonial critiques as in this one, the work's status as a novel is not questioned. The work reflects colonial ideology as it is perceived by contemporary critics. And it was written by a “true” colonizer and not by a traveler, journalist, or armchair speculator. It reflects what most of the critics surveyed expected to see in a colonial novel in form or content. Exoticism is appropriately coded into the realist formula and the subject matter of the novel is suitably “colonial”--the construction of a railway directed by French engineers with indigenous labor.

The incorporation of exoticism into a genre typically characterized by authors and critics alike as strongly bound by the tendencies of objective realism is ironic. Some critics such as Randau refute the element of exoticism in colonial fiction, associating exoticism with “lesser” types of narrative, specifically late nineteenth-century travelogues and personal accounts of overseas colonies. Louis Cario and Charles Régismanset view realist exoticism as expressed in colonial literature as offering a new, more incisive way of revealing “true life.” Their work L'Exotisme: la littérature coloniale, in fact is constructed as a build-up and support of the genre of colonial literature as a successful fusion of the realist and exotic modes of expression. Other colonial writers did not deny the use of exoticism within the colonial genre, but distinguished their form of exoticism as different from earlier forms. The work of writers such as Pierre Loti and Pierre Mille in the nineteenth century was typical of the exoticism disdained by the proponents of “realist” colonial exoticism. The varying uses of the exoticism can in some instances be linked to public taste and changing

sensibilities. In the case of colonial exoticism, these influences must be considered, as well as the explicit and implicit assumptions regarding the incorporation of exoticism into a realist work. Broadly speaking, we might attribute particular characteristics of colonial exoticism to an effort to write or cover over the conflicting ontological and epistemological bearings which were circulating at the time. Exoticism provided a way in which the transcendent could be written in an otherwise deadlocked form of discourse and a way in which difference could be appropriately inscribed. The relative success of the style is still debatable.

Pierre Jourda in L'Exotisme dans la littérature française, explains to an extent part of the rationale behind this taste for realistic exoticism. He cites the particular sequences of events leading to the establishment of overseas colonies by France as opening a door in the French consciousness to other worlds and other peoples. This push he says gave rise to a growth in the literature of exoticism. Other indications of the broadening scope of French interest were the establishment of such publications as the Revue des Deux Mondes which described the French overseas involvements as well as analyzing and presenting other literature and documentation regarding the colonies. The expanding circuits and paths of knowledge and information which appeared in the nineteenth century piqued an interest in and taste for exoticism. Jourda describes this environment as

la recherche d'émotions nouvelles que l'on ne trouve plus en France, l'activité coloniale, après 1830, qui réveillera le mirage des pays lointains, les progrès des moyens de communication,--amélioration des routes, progrès de la poste, découverte du chemin de fer et du paquebot, en attendant l'automobile et l'avion. (21)

Interesting, colonial activity is placed within the catalogue of modern innovations with no more semantic importance granted it than air travel. Expectations regarding knowledge and its acquisition and circulation at this time were strongly colored by the

dominance of scientific and positivist trends in thought. So the combination of novel stimuli and positivist leanings created a situation where a sort of "realistic exoticism" arose, and also created inherently, a paradox which allowed the admission of a subjective or transcendent reality into what was thought to be an otherwise objectively bound textual space.

Cario and Régismanset bring up the possibility of a "realist exoticism" in a summary statement of the first half of their work L'Exotisme: la littérature coloniale published in 1911.⁸ The statement is set up as a rhetorical bridge between the analysis of what is deemed strictly exotic literature as it is discussed in the first half of the text and what will be a unique application of exoticism as a function of the so-called colonial realist text:

A la fin du XIXe siècle, et au début de XXe siècle, va régner une intense "activité coloniale", fait historique considérable, fait mondial et non limité à notre seul pays. Nous aurons à examiner si les prosateurs et les poètes de cette "activité coloniale" ont enfin réalisé une formule exotique moins conventionnelle, moins artificielle, plus proche du Fait, et, partant, de la Vie. (Cario and Régismanset 155)

The "activité coloniale" is the organizing motif and the authorizing principle for the perceived unique sort of literary expression. The setting off of colonial activity in quotes draws attention to the activity as something out of the ordinary which in turn they imply might lead to a literary expression likewise out of the ordinary. The uniqueness of the colonial frame as a "self-regulating system" seems to be set up by colonial critics as the factor which might enable colonial writers to fuse exoticism and realism in ways that were not observable in earlier instances of so-called colonial texts. Set in the frame of realist expression, the veracity of exotic representation would thus be validated "in house" by appropriation of such a self-validating form. Critics of the time do suggest a positive identification of what they perceived to be the

literary coupling of realism and exoticism. One such acknowledgement is in a passage about the work of Marius and Ary Leblond. Among the many references in the text to these writers, a passage in the third section adds another laudatory note about their work:

Marius et Ary Leblond viennent de nous donner la vraie formule du roman colonial, celle qui, unissant la sensibilité aiguë et le charme poétique de l'ancien exotisme à la précision documentaire du roman moderne, doit obtenir, à la fois, le suffrage des artistes et l'attention des savants.
(Cario and Régismanset 230)

Immediately following this passage is a quote from the Leblonds themselves reinforcing the importance of exoticism in colonial writing. For them, exoticism “n’est point seulement un ornement, mais le grand courant vivificateur, pareil au *gulf stream*” (Cario and Régismanset 230). It is almost as if they were presenting the exotic as the reviving breath that realism needed to sustain its form. The open coding of the exotic into the realist text, though, has the effect of more or less neutralizing whatever free reign of difference there can be in exotic representation. The formulaic construction that the Leblonds refer to encapsulates exoticism to the point where it circulates only as another trope of dominance in colonial discourse. Despite the seemingly positive identification of something that could be deemed colonial literature, Cario and Régismanset, well into the second book, are still inclined to qualify their remarks by a statement such as “sans préjuger de la question de savoir s’il existe vraiment en France *une littérature coloniale*” (244). Although the establishment of a colonial literature appears to be the goal of the text, colonial literature as such, seems destined to remain within quotes, in italics, or in diminutive type.

Reflecting the symbiotic perception of realism and exoticism, René Lalou, in a 1922 anthology of French literature Contemporary French Literature, puts Claude Farrère in a category of writers whose work is at once couched in terms of realism and

exoticism. Heralding back to the examples of Pierre Mille and Pierre Loti, Lalou says "Once more a naval officer was going to renew exoticism . . . The strokes of this brush were so sure that the depiction of the external attitudes sufficed to evoke the most complex psychology, to indicate, across an enormous gulf, subtle analogies between East and West" (Lalou 296). Lalou suggests that Farrère, a military officer and a first hand observer, displays realistically the exoticism of the French colonies in the manner of his predecessors. (Interestingly, the section of the anthology in which Farrère, among other colonial writers, is categorized is titled "Exoticism and Adventure." The "colonial" category did not figure into this anthology at all. Exoticism in this instance preempted realism.) Many of the same novels are cited in Lalou's anthology as exotic and in Randau's article as realist. The inclusion of the brothers Marius and Ary Leblond at the end of the section does mention that their aim was to "make our colonies better loved" (Lalou 302). But that is the only nod to classing the 40-odd novels in the section as colonial.

A number of colonial critics distinguish the exoticism of someone like Farrère from that of Loti and Mille. Colonial critics tend to denigrate the type of novels written by Loti and Mille as simple, picturesque exoticism intended only for pleasurable consumption. Farrère, on the other hand, typified what was upheld as an admirable and realistic use of exoticism. The perceived broader depth and purpose of the work of someone like Farrère's is reflected in statements Lalou makes about his work. The "new and improved" exoticism of the early twentieth century then seemingly had to go beyond the aesthetics of curiosity and portrait painting and venture into the realm of knowing and understanding the other by making his difference perfectly known and perfectly transparent. Exoticism, in this sense,

becomes a trope of dominance as the other and his difference are figuratively mastered and, ironically, subsequently effaced.

The desire to explore the means and ends of these avenues and networks of knowledge and information can be observed in the working of colonial texts. The fact that the novels are set in what were perceived to be exotic cultures necessitates a degree of difference which must be somehow accounted for. It is the way that these contextual elements are treated and incorporated in the text which distinguishes the different types of exoticisms. Realist or colonial exoticism was thought to run counter to the poetic exoticism characterized by ephemeral, fleeting exotic images circulating in the typically nineteenth century exotic novel set in the colony, unencumbered by the restraints of realism and its contingent demands of domination and control. Chris Bongie distinguishes between these two sorts of exoticism, which he terms imperialist and exoticizing exoticism. He states, "Whereas imperialist exoticism affirms the hegemony of modern civilization over less developed, savage territories, exoticizing exoticism privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity" (Bongie 17). The realist exoticism or imperial exoticism of the colonial text is an exoticism subject to the same terms of knowability as objective fact and subsequent representation of that fact. The exotic elements, stimuli, and artifacts in the text were ostensibly hemmed in and circumscribed by the fact that they were presented as assimilable under the same assumptions as any objective fact. Whereas colonial exoticism tends to overwrite the other, "exoticizing exoticism," on the other hand, tends to underwrite the other in the sense that the other is theoretically allowed the utopian context of unmapped and unbounded space. While in some ways exoticism and realism may seem mutually exclusive, the symbiotic relationship between the two literary tendencies that appears

in many colonial novels is to an extent understandable as a product of the period of colonial imperialism.

As opposed to the “romantic” exoticism of the nineteenth century and the “realist” exoticism of the early twentieth century, a third reading or interpretation of exoticism is as a sort of mediated exoticism, as evident in the work of Victor Segalen. Astier-Loutfi distinguishes Segalen’s work from either simplistic exoticism or realist exoticism. What marks his work is his effort not to write over or write out difference, but to write in difference. In the novel Les Immémoriaux, he in fact tries out this mediated exoticism which Astier-Loutfi calls “une réplique proprement littéraire à l’impérialisme” (Loutfi 132). Rather than seeking to “know” difference, or, in other words, master difference, Segalen prefers the idea of recognizing or conceiving “le Divers” (Astier-Loutfi 133). This is, in essence, an affront to the ideology of colonial imperialism which does not allow the free circulation of difference. So the uniqueness of the exoticism of Segalen rests in his effort to let “le Divers” be in the truest sense of the word.

The type of exoticism proffered by Segalen is rare in colonial circles. However, even in the ideologically-bound colonial form, exoticism made a place in the text for the other, the different, the East-- not a free space, but a space nevertheless. The seemingly strictured form of objective realism appears to have been technically altered in its colonial form by the adjectival addition of exotic. In the scope of objective realism, there is no place for the other, the different, the East, so in fact this addition makes sense given the goals of presentation and representation of colonial fiction. The realm of the exotic provided a textual space to which the other could be relegated, an enclosure where he could be safely admired, desired, hated, or feared without threatening the position of the colonizer. In terms of a colonial discourse,

then, exoticism fused with objective realism to create a form of expression which, although not technically or stylistically innovative by typical literary standards, is a recognizable juncture in the competing and conflicting arena of discourses in the early twentieth century.

What in fact occurs in the colonial text, or any text for that matter, is an always, already subjective interpretation of the observations of an individual who is in turn an interpretation of his context. What distinguishes both the discourse of colonialism and objective realism is the assumed transparency and power of language to make present and clear what is distinctly other. This is one fallacy of objective realism, and what places it firmly in the camp of analytico-referential discourse. The privileging of an all powerful signifying system exacts a toll on all concerned--the representor as well as the represented. Colonialism, objective realism, and in the final analysis discourse itself are dissonant, contradictory, incomplete echoes of those situations, contexts, and movements which ostensibly are within the sway of those organizing systems.

Notes

⁴ Bonnetain, Boissière, and Pouvourville are cited by Lebel as “the first authors who knew how to interpret our colonies in Indochina” (Lebel 169).

⁵ Roland Lebel was the author of a number of critical studies on colonial literature among which are L'Afrique-Occidentale dans la littérature, 1925; Études de littérature coloniale, 1938; Histoire de littérature coloniale en France, 1931. Lebel's 1931 work was printed in a series under the direction of Georges Hardy, director of the École Coloniale. Among critics mentioned in various sources, his work, along with the Leblonds work—appears to have been considered an authoritative source of colonial literary guidance. For the purposes of this study, his sanctioning by the École as an authoritative voice is important in the verification of the genre lines posited. Raphaël Barquissau was active in the promotion of the colonies through literary avenues. He published extensively from around 1921-1947. He published both critical and original work about the colonies. His work was not confined to literary ventures and included historical work about the colonies. Several of his works received recognition from the Académie Française. Marius-Ary Leblond was the pen name of Georges Athénas and Aimé Merlo, both born in Réunion. The two men produced a number of fictional works among which En France was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1909 and several volumes of critical studies and anthologies of colonial work. They are, along with Lebel, among the most frequently referenced authorities on colonial literature. Charles Régismanset published critical, fictional, and philosophical texts beginning in 1900. He collaborated on several works with Louis Cario. Robert Randau is, like Lebel, a forceful voice for the very formulaic colonial novel of unwavering colonial advocacy. He wrote extensively about North Africa. Eugène Pujarniscule published a number of colonial critiques, Philoxène, ou de la littérature, being the most frequently cited.

⁶ The implied reader of the text is aligned with the colonial orientation of the narrator. The circumscription of the classic realist mode dictates a collusion, at least in the sense of a shared world view. Yet the reader is in the uncanny position of being both a colonizer, in terms of his alignment with the narrator, and colonized, as he is over-written by the narrative codes to which he is expected to adhere.

⁷ The terms of Reiss' analytico-referential discourse and Terdiman's dominant discourse and Barthes *écriture classique* echo similar observations of representational practice.

⁸ It is interesting to note the priority of exoticism in the title. L'Exotisme is not only granted sequential priority, but graphic priority as well over the subtitle La Littérature coloniale. L'Exotisme is printed in type almost eight times larger on the title page than La Littérature coloniale. The work is divided into three “Livres.” The first simply “Les Origines” deals with the history of exoticism in literature and then more specifically with French literature. The second and third books deal respectively with “L'Activité coloniale” and “Littérature coloniale.” Building up in a sense to the possible establishment of a “colonial literature,” the authors map the work of many

writers who have paved the way for such a genre. Ironically, the build-up of the whole text toward the edifice of "colonial literature," which is written as the conclusion, is undercut on the title page and subordinated to the domination of exoticism.

CHAPTER 4
ASSIMILATION: STRATEGIES OF EFFACEMENT--
SUR LA ROUTE MANDARINE, ROLAND DORGELES

In colonial novels, assimilation, exoticism, and translation/mediation are strategies negotiating difference on both the socio-political and textual level. Difference--the distance or mark between self and other--is variously negated, overstepped, covered over or rendered invalid in texts circumscribed by the discourse of colonialism. Ironically, these practices put in sharp relief the difference which they attempt to control. These narrative practices reveal textually the way in which the other, the colonized, is accommodated in the colonial situation. They suggest as well the orientation of the colonizer/author in the colonial matrix. That is, they reveal how that figure of authority situates himself in terms of the perceived authorial modes which inform his (con)text. Individual works may exhibit one or all of these strategies depending on the degree to which the indigene is portrayed within the narrative as well as the level of involvement of the colonizer's with the indigene in the text. In other words, the strategies of assimilation, exoticism, and translation mediate the interstices at which the colonizer confronts the colonized.

Theoretically, the term assimilation would seem to imply a sort of leveling or balancing process in which elements from each "cultural container" are poured back and forth in order to achieve a homogenized mixture. But, the French version of assimilation operated under the assumption that French culture was the "utopian solution" and that disparate indigenous colonial cultures would be subsumed by the allegedly more highly developed and refined French culture. The rationale for covering over indigenous socio-political and cultural patterns was based upon the perception of

indigenous cultures as weaker or less civilized in their modes of thought, and thus subject to overrule by the “higher” order processing which French culture could provide. As Barbara Harlow remarks in the introduction to Malek Alloula's The Colonial Harem, “too extensive an assimilation would have been counterproductive” (xviii). The efforts of assimilation are subverted from the outset by the implicit duplicity of assimilationist ideology. The narrator of Roland Dorgelès' Sur la Route Mandarine reflects this attitude when he refers to the way in which the Annamites have abandoned their traditional religion and philosophy in the pursuit of French ways:

C'est vrai. Mais l'Européen, même sans foi religieuse, porte en lui les principes essentiels d'une morale à laquelle il obéit d'autant mieux que les gendarmes et les juges sont chargés de son application, tandis que l'Asiatique, privé de sa morale héréditaire et ignorant nos lois, n'a plus rien qui le guide. Cette incertitude morale se constate jusque dans le petit peuple . . . C'était à la fois burlesque et touchant. (Dorgelès 56)

The “essential” principles to which this narrator alludes reflect the cultural presumptions which were used to justify cultural assimilation in the colonial context. The security of the European's position is held up in sharp relief against the “other” culture portrayed as bereft of the moral fiber which allegedly undergirds Western culture. The perceived moral bankruptcy of the “other” is taken as entitlement for the assimilation of the other into a system driven by the secured currency of European moral infallibility and certitude. This line of reasoning though does not seem to fit with the tentative suggestions of synthetic assimilation which come later in the work. The narrator, early in the text, writes the script for the other, and even as the script slips and deviates at points along the journey, the roles, nevertheless, have been assigned from the outset.

Analyzing the indigenous population's suitability for assimilation, the narrator describes the place of the other in the script:

Cette race annamite, remarquablement intelligente, et où le savoir est révéé plus que tout, s'est pliée à la civilisation occidentale avec la même aisance que le Japon. Elle n'a même pas marqué de surprise: elle a suivi.

C'est ici la grande force de peuple malingre. Il ne résist pas: il s'adapte. Doué d'une faculté d'assimilation exceptionnelle il épouse à l'instant les pratiques du vainqueur. Etrange mimétisme, c'est la plante, cette fois, qui prend la teinte du lézarde . . . --combien de fois cela m'a fait sourire--que des Annamites élégants, vêtus comme des Parisiens, et qui envoient leurs fils faire leurs études chez nous, affectent de ne plus bien comprendre quand un compatriote leur parle dans leur langue et s'y expriment eux-mêmes péniblement cherchant leurs mots, comme s'ils étaient obligés de traduire. (Dorgelès 54-55)

The directional flow of assimilative practice is unambiguous in this passage where the terms of domination and superiority enfold the other. The easy acceptance of imposed standards which is attributed to the colonized faction is met by the condescending smile of the narrator who is securely posed and set apart by dashes. The enclosed space of the narrator at this point in the text may be seen as indicative of his status as standard-bearer. All that surrounds him figuratively in the passage is the strange mimeticism of the colonized other. The repetition of the pronoun "leur" in the description following that point delineates the space of the other as different from that of the colonizer. The figurative space opened in the initial assimilative move of the passage is gradually closed to where there is no viable place for the other. As the linguistic distance, the gap of language between the colonizer and colonized, effectively diminishes, the status of the other as potentially assimilable is concomitantly negated. The ultimate "success" of assimilation which would entail linguistic assimilation is thwarted by the implication that the colonized are not real representations of the standard, but are only affected or false representations. The text vacillates between implicit tones of overweening self-aggrandizement, which situate the alleged

superiority of the colonizer, and poetic revery over the loss of the picturesque or exotic other.

Derivations of Darwin's survival-of-the-fittest theory were not lost in the political arguments for assimilationist policy. The effects of this influence carry over to the literary arena as well. The hierarchical ordering and evolutionary patterns of analysis characteristic of Darwin's theories shadow much of colonialist writing. Darwin's theories of race, as well, tend to color colonial writings. For example, Martine Astier-Loutfi in Littérature et colonialisme describes how the colonizer positions himself in the relationship:

. . . il ne peut apprécier les traits, les mœurs et les valeurs des autres que par rapport aux critères esthétiques et moraux établis par la société dans laquelle il vit . . . L'observateur européen voit dans l'Autre une version inachevée, imparfaite, négative de lui-même: un singe. (58)

In other words, authentic difference is essentially negated because all meaning or signification in the colonizer/colonized relationship is generated and validated through the channel of the colonizer. The colonizer, as instigator of the relationship, constructs generative meaning and is the measure of authentic being. In this respect, then, the colonizer, sees himself as that against which all else must be substantiated or measured and that to which all else must be subjected. Assimilation, as practiced by the French, necessarily rested upon the assumption of the innate superiority of the French culture and the judgement of indigenous culture, as Astier-Loutfi terms it, as only a pseudo-culture--an as yet unfinished, unrefined construct of being which could then be justifiably dissolved or altered.

Paul Clay Sorum, in Intellectuals and the Decolonization of France, attempts to explain the roots of this sort of ethnocentrism as an outgrowth of the commonly-held belief that

. . . the essence of civilization was its culture . . . and that the French culture was distinguished from other Western as well as non-Western cultures by "universalism". . . . France's "humanist" culture seemed to express the essential and supreme values of humanity.
 . . . The French also believed that such cultural assimilation would elevate the colonial people morally and intellectually. They ignored and scorned indigenous cultures. (211)

The prioritizing of French culture in the colonial arena is of course evident in all areas of the enactment of colonial policy from politics to education to economic exchange. Sorum acknowledges the fact that there was not unanimity of opinion with regard to the colonial policy and assimilationist tactics implicit in these assumptions:

The belief of the French in their special colonial vocation was one of the foundations of the persisting imperial idea. The moralists were reluctant to admit that the colonial peoples might be better off without continued French tutelage. The realists tended to assume that the colonial peoples, whatever their future political status, would want to stay attached to France. A few intellectuals, however, denounced the ethnocentrism underlying these notions. (209)

The lack of accord between the ethics of colonial policy in general and the practical enactment of those policies, though, does not diminish the power of those policies in either the political or textual arena. Ross Chambers, in Room For Maneuver, addresses this notion of the necessity of opposition in the play or constitution of power. He states:

For what this phenomenon of the institutionalization of opposition itself demonstrates, . . . is that, whereas the *establishment* of power may be a relatively straightforward matter of legitimizing and institutionalizing practices, the *practice* of power--its maintenance --is no simple matter at all. It involves some quite tricky manipulations and maneuverings involving subtle and flexible judgements, together with some tolerance of paradox and the ability to compromise. Thus, power needs opposition, as one of the means by which it maintains itself; but it cannot allow opposition to evolve too far in the direction of resistance, becoming overly conscious of itself and hence tending to delegitimize the power structure. (57)

It is not surprising then that the narrative practices which negotiate in one way or another the pervasive discord surrounding colonial policy and its representations are marked by paradox and irony. The deployment of strategies to accommodate difference either politically or textually is evident in such practices as assimilation, exoticism, and translation. The colonial novelists, like other factions of society which Sorum mentions, were diverse in their reactions and interpretations of the assimilationist argument in colonial policy. Despite the various interpretations of colonialism in the metropole, the assimilationist process, as discussed in chapter one, was a dominant strategy in colonial thought even after its effective demise as an official management policy which worked to maintain the existing power structure. In colonial writings, as in colonial politics, the notion of assimilation continued to circulate as a sort of nostalgic ideal. For example, Sur la Route Mandarine, written in 1931, comes decades after association replaced assimilation as a management policy. Yet, the echo of assimilation reverberates in the representation of the relationship between self and other which drives that text.

The “mission civilisatrice” goes hand in hand with the assimilationist doctrine in the colonial enterprise and is repeatedly referred to as the underlying rationale for such undertakings. While this sort of justification necessarily implies the superiority of the French culture, the fascination with and attraction to indigenous cultures cannot be ignored. When an indigenous culture is acknowledged as possessing characteristics of a developed culture (culture, that is, as the colonial Frenchman interpreted it), it is with the disclaimer, either implied or explicit, that the indigenous culture cannot be classed as “civilized” in the sense that French culture can be.

In the case of Indochina, as opposed to other colonial possessions,⁹ colonial authors often suggest the possibility of an ancient development or refinement of culture which at one point in history may have in fact rivaled Western culture. The acknowledgement of limited parity is always undercut, though, by the operation of colonial discourse as a dominating strategy. There is the implication at times that the Annamite, as a vestige of this past level of cultural development, may be more adaptable to Western ways than other ethnic groups such as the Moïs. Unlike the Annamites, whom the narrator in Sur la Route Mandarine mentions as being suitable and fit for assimilation, the Moïs appear to resist representation within the assimilation construct. The narrator comments on his reaction to the Moïs people and the comparison of that group to the Annamites:

Comment une race si attardée va-t-elle pouvoir accueillir notre civilisation? Comment faire un tel saut, de la barbarie aux Droits de l'Homme Les Annamites fréquentaient les Européens depuis plusieurs siècles; ils avaient, avant notre venue, leur civilisation. Ils pouvaient évoluer. Les Moïs, eux, n'ont jamais approché de civilisés, ni jaunes, ni blancs. Réfugiés dans les forêts des hauts plateaux, ils y vivent depuis des millénaires, comme devaient vivre leurs ancêtres, venus de la Malaisie en des temps inconnus. (Dorgelès 260)

The Moïs, in the opinion of the narrator, are out of that arbitrary circuit of representation which would entitle a group to be assimilated and given the “gift” of Western culture. Ironically, what the narrator subsequently observes and relates about the Moïs does not support this judgement against them. Only a page after this injunction against the Moïs, he remarks on their adaptability to the invasions of “civilization”:

J'ai vue de ces sauvages, vêtus d'un torchon sale, s'en aller en forêt, leurs outils sur l'épaule, pour réparer la ligne du télégraphe dont les éléphants avaient arraché les poteaux; j'ai vu mon chauffeur nu ressouder, à la lampe, le flotteur percé de son carburateur; j'ai vu un Moïsse aux oreilles allongées par le poids des anneaux demander au

téléphone un chasseur d'éléphants de Bandon, qui devait brailler comme un sourd dans le cornet de bois, et j'en ai vu une autre, une sauvageonne à peine sortie de la brousse, qui huilait une machine à coudre et léchait ensuite la burette d'une langue gourmande. (Dorgelès 261)

His explanation of this behavior is that while the Moïs may be able to adapt, in a limited sense, certain accoutrements of Western culture, they do not understand, nor are they capable of understanding what they are doing in a broader construct of civilization. The element of Western culture in each of the cases cited is an inanimate piece of equipment set off from the "savage" by some visibly perceptible barrier or mark of difference--a dirty cloth, nudity, bizarrely elongated ear lobes or some skewed perspective of "natural" use. These indigenous adapters of Western equipment are linguistically cordoned off from the people, who, in the narrator's eye, would be "naturally" inclined to use the equipment or technology. The terms "sauvages," "Moïsse," "sauvageonne," in addition to the other alterations in perspective make the adaptations of Western technology a farce of "authentic" use. In other words, the descriptions exceed the limit of what would be perceived as caricatural representation. The inversions which typically mark the notion of carnival might be interestingly applied here. Unlike the Annamite, whom the narrator remarks is a good imitator, the Moïs can only adapt, not mimic. Ironically, the disallowance for the worth of the Moïs in the assimilationist equation is in essence a validation of their right to *be* authentically. That is, their place and time are marked off as inviolable in contrast to the usurpation of the Annamite's time and place.

In describing the Moïs, this group, whom the narrator has set apart as absolutely "other," exhibits traits which seduce the narrator inevitably into another potential sphere of reference. At several points in the final chapter, the narrator implies that there are things about that "other" culture, though strange, which impel him to feel

an affinity for that “other” world. The uni-directional predication of assimilation typically associated with colonial texts splinters in this work in which the narrator is seduced by the other. The superiority of French culture, though not directly challenged, is undermined by the undercurrent of attraction which draws the narrator away from the security of his narrative and cultural foothold. The ambivalence toward the colonial relationship is particularly interesting in Dorgelès’ work as the narrator vacillates in and out of the traditional colonial code. Reflecting this vacillating cadence, the narrator alternates between journalistic prose, on one hand, centering on the colonial relationship and the literary representation of that relationship, and on the other hand, the subjective search for self-revelation couched in the poetically descriptive language which describes the relationship between self and other.

In Sur la Route Mandarine, the narrator’s journey is the unifying thread of the text. The centrality of the journey motif in this text provides the means for paralleling the inward and outward journey of the narrator. The search for self and the concomitant search for the “authentic” other are suggested in the overlay of the Route Coloniale on the Route Mandarine. Certainly the journey or road motif is not original in colonial fiction, for as Michel Butor notes “Toute fiction s’inscrit donc en notre espace comme voyage, et l’on peut dire à cette égard que c’est la thème fondamental de toute littérature romanesque” (50).¹⁰ The implications of this statement, are of course, far-reaching and could lead interestingly to discussions of the perception of time, space, and place in fictional representation.

Sur la Route Mandarine is propelled by the narrator’s desire to uncover what is hidden, what is unknown. The narrator is undeniably attracted by what he perceives as a mysterious and unnamed essence of the other. The fascination, though, is marked by a less than total acknowledgement of the other’s homologous position as evidenced in the

passages quoted earlier. The progression toward this essential other is written in the efforts to uncover the traces of the Mandarine Route in order to find the "true" other. The assimilation of the indigene as a subtext in the process of this search becomes a pretext in the narrator's search for meaning and self-definition.

The notion of assimilation associated with the practices of colonial imperialism is necessarily contingent on the security of the colonizer as culturally superior. The elusive nature of what is civilized or what was civilized, and consequently how superiority is determined, is one source of the colonial author's ambivalence in writing within the construct of colonialist discourse and constitutes, in part, what can be termed the "colonial paradox." In colonial fiction, the presumption of superiority is carried over to the privileged position of the narrator. The narrator, in this sense, can be viewed as the standard-bearer through whom and for whom meaning is constituted in the text. In colonial discourse, there can be no "upper case Other." For if in fact, a working dialectic were posited, a synthesis would have to follow which would hypothetically allow for the movement of the other into the realm of the colonizer.

There are some tentative propositions which suggest synthetic assimilation in Sur la Route Mandarine, that is, the idealized blending of cultures. Yet, some sort of intervention seems to preclude unicity when the narrative appears to approach a point where this sort of synthesis might occur. For the narrator, it is frequently his language which disallows the staging of synthetic assimilation, either by its exclusionary nature or its constrictive nature. The narrator is bound by his language and to his place in language as he appropriates all "others" by first-person possessive pronouns: "mon chauffeur," "mon Chinois," "mon Annamite." As frequently the only European observer, the narrator is privileged in his gaze and privy to what has not

been observed by other Westerners, and is thus free to appropriate for his own, the unknown. Instances in the text where he approaches points of synthetic assimilation are marked by loss of words. The inability to translate the moment or experience is one way in which synthesis is precluded and the constrictive nature of language revealed. This loss is written in several ways. The loss may be posited in terms of punctuation, that is, either through ellipsis points or question marks. At one point in the novel the narrator describes the return of a French educated Annamite prince to his native land:

Je songeais au retour de jeune prince d'Annam lorsque le jour sera venu pour lui de prendre le sceptre de jade et qu'il franchira, jeune Français aux paupières bridées et aux joues de vieil ivoir. . . . il montera sur le trône ancestral et recevra l'hommage de tous les mandarins prosternés sur les dalles de la Suprême Paix. Que pensera-t-il à cette instant? Comment naît la royauté dans le coeur d'un roi?

Peut-on savoir? . . . Le coeur de l'homme est un puits obscur et, quand cet homme est Jaune, et quand ce Jaune est un roi(Dorgelès 138)

The prince who was educated in France and seemingly taken with French ways was unremittingly cruel. He was ultimately deposed not by his own people, but by the French colonial authorities. The implied fusion of authority through assimilation which appears at the outset is quickly negated as the "real" presence of power takes action. Subsequent to this event, the "real" representatives of power choose another "prince" to replace the one whose assimilation was ineffectual. The narrator backs away from the explanation of this failed assimilation, in a sense, leaving the questions open. The incertitude of the question mark is reinforced by the ellipsis points which follow.

On other occasions, the narrator's translator intervenes, or in some cases fails to intervene, leaving the narrator out of the circuit of signification. In the city of

Cholon, the narrator finds himself without sufficient terms to navigate the chaos he perceives around him:

On n'a jamais pu me dire tout ce qu'ils contenaient: l'interprète français ne savait pas assez de chinois et le Chinois ne connaissait pas assez de français . . .

Tout est désaccord, rien ne s'explique. Ils sont astucieux et crédules C'est le servage et c'est l'anarchie. On vit sans règles, sans discipline, chacun pour soi. Le tricot qu'ils portent tous finit par les rendre presque égaux. (Dorgelès 154-155)

The narrator is rendered speechless and thus powerless in the context of the situation. Because the other cannot be brought or assimilated into the language of the narrator, the context of the other is assumed to be without form, and by extension without meaning. What cannot be linguistically appropriated is assumed to be chaotic. The blanket of sameness which the narrator casts over the other's physical presence effectively negates the "sense" of the other's being and thus his potential as assimilable.

At the other extreme, the narrator writes of a Frenchman's assimilation into the culture of the other. It is a compromised assimilation though since he is still doing the "work" of a "colon." He gradually adopts the ways of the indigenous culture and in a sense becomes a part of it:

Souvent le colon vit au milieu de ses Annamites. Seul, toujours seul, parlant, vivant comme eux. Certains se sont "encongaïés." Des petits métis sont nés, qui bredouillent un drôle d'idiome et mangent leur riz avec les baguettes. La France? On y pense de moins en moins: un paradis où nul n'est sûr d'entrer. Les plus chers visages s'effacent dans la mémoire. On s'écrit moins souvent. On oublie (Dorgelès 194)

In this passage, the possibility of assimilation is denied in several respects. First the delineation of the man as a "colon" sets him apart, as well as the fact that the Annamites are immediately subordinated by the possessive pronoun "ses." In the next sentence the repetition of the word "seul" encloses the colonizer and sets him apart

from "them." The implication of the colonizer's isolation in the midst of the indigenes reinforces the idea of the disparity in the relative positions of colonizer and colonized. In other instances in the text, the enclosure or isolation of the colonizer is expressed as the overwhelming sense of sameness he perceives in all aspects of the culture of the other. Phrases such as "la même chaleur immobile, la même vapeur qui vous imprègne" are indicative of the oppressive sameness of the other (Dorgèles 173). The term "encongaïés" instead of married places the male/female relationship outside the terms of standard expectation. The children from this relationship do not reflect any assimilative processing, but are rather presented as out of the normal linguistic reckoning, communicating in "un drôle d'idiome." Yet, in spite of these distancing features, some sort of assimilation is effected as France fades from the forefront and the ties of language with that identity fade as well. The open-endedness of the last sentence, while not doing away with the assumptions set up in the first part of the paragraph, does undercut the final security.

In contrast to the sometimes ambiguous positioning of the European in the colonial scheme in Sur la Route Mandarine, Claude Farrère's novel Les Civilisés draws a nonnegotiable line between that which is "civilized" and that which is not. The French hold the indisputably superior upper hand in the contest of the "civilisés." Farrère's narrator is a good deal more emphatic about the imaginary circle around the "civilisés" than Dorgèles'. In Sur la Route Mandarine, at moments where the sense of surety wavers, the narrator tends to lapse into ellipses or speechlessness. Farrère's narrator, on the other hand, rarely lets the mask of superiority slip or the ambiguity of the ellipsis enter. The style of narrative is on the whole more solid and less ambivalent than that of Dorgèles, reflecting the assurance of the security of a stable frame of reference. The novel Farrère wrote as a prototype colonial novel, Les

Hommes nouveaux, adheres to the standards of colonial security to such an extent that his biographer calls it a caricature of the colonial novel (Quella-Villéger 286).

Les Hommes nouveaux, set in Morocco, conforms to the expectations of colonial critics--realistic presentation, colorful and exotic background, and justification of the French colonial venture. The indigene is hardly present at all. The Moroccan setting serves principally as an exotic backdrop for the European drama being acted out. There is essentially no mention in this novel of efforts made to assimilate the native population. Yet the subtext of assimilation is always present. It is a given, an unspoken bond which undergirds the French colonial ethic. Morocco will become French. The overriding impression is that Morocco did not in fact exist until it existed for and through the French. Amédée Bourron, a Frenchman who has succeeded in the colony of Morocco remarks about the good he perceives has followed on the heels of the French presence in Morocco:

Et n'allez pas dire que c'était beaucoup de mal pour guère de bien: car ils mentent, les imbéciles qui protestent contre les expéditions coloniales au nom de la liberté des peuples et de l'humanité souffrante! Le Maroc, avant nous c'était une terre affreusement sanglante, peuplée de cinq cents tribus dont pas une n'était en paix avec une des quatre cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf autres! On n'y trouvait qu'anarchie et férocité . . . depuis que nous sommes au Maroc, je vous donne ma parole d'honneur que nous y avons apporté de la justice, de la clémence, de la sécurité, de l'abondance et du bonheur, et que tout le monde a profité de tout cela . . . (Farrère Hommes 40)

The assimilationist drive infuses the creative process of building a new society--a French one constructed on Moroccan soil. In the novel, it is the French who pull the economic strings of the country, and, in fact, seem to create the strings to pull as well. The role of the indigenous population is relegated to providing the raw materials for the fabrication of a new culture--a Moroccan France. And the emphasis here must be upon the colonized society as adjectival rather than nominative, for the colonized

culture, both textually and politically, is necessarily the “unnamed,” thus, the unvalidated, in the semantic construct.

Assimilation, in these terms, is a process by which the indigene is slowly blended in the agglomerate French culture with minimal carryover or interference from his original culture. For many colonial novelists, of whom Farrère is representative, this type of assimilation is the processing or accommodating strategy desired for the subordinated native population. It succeeds as Mannoni points out only “if the personality of the native is first destroyed through uprooting, enslavement, and collapse of the social structure” (Mannoni 27). It is a presumed uni-directional processing, that is, the colonized must relinquish his cultural orientation while the colonizer stands firmly upon the unshakable ground of the French culture. In both Les Civilisés and Les Hommes nouveaux, Farrère secures the French culture with the term “civilisés,” yet he expends negligible energy or time in the narrative examining the process of assimilating the indigene to this “higher” status of being. In fact, given the portrayal of the indigenes as mere props in his novels, particularly in Les Civilisés, the assimilationist solution might be viewed as the invisible glue which holds the colonial house of cards together.

The indigene is frequently given no more narrative significance than to be numbered among the catalogue of details of the narrated landscape of the other. This sort of treatment of the indigeneous population permeates not only distinctly colonial fiction of the period dealt with in this study, but other fictions which deal more broadly with the boundaries and distinctions of self and other. For example, John Erickson notes such a tendency in the work of Albert Camus’ portrayal of the Arab in Algeria. The covering over of the individuality of the Arab and the subsequent blending of persona and landscape is apparent in “the descriptive elements denoting the Arabs as

mute and immobilized . . . , their lack of proper names, the reference to them as a “group” and the third-person plural pronoun *leur* which fix them in a general category of differentiation”. Such treatment “depersonalizes and objectifies the Arab” (Albert Camus 76). When the individual or group is removed or narrated out of the circuit of validation in human terms, he or it can be shuffled along with the other elements of alterity and dealt with according to the call of the narrating subject.

Despite the theoretical openness of the assimilationist theory as a blending of cultures, colonial society was virtually impenetrable by the indigene. Mannoni touches on the nature of colonialist assumptions in the following passage:

. . . the French, . . . long held truly Utopian beliefs about possibilities of assimilation In the past people have . . . failed to distinguish clearly between the question of the assimilation of the single individual and the question of the mutual adaptation of two groups with different mentalities. Some regarded the isolated cases as exceptions which proved nothing; others, on the other hand, saw them as conclusive proof of the assimilability and felt that they should serve as a model for the masses The problem of assimilation then amounted to finding out whether the cultural graft would take and bear in the hereditary stock: in other words, it was felt to be a question of natural aptitudes. (27-28)

The “natural aptitude” though was not particularly sought out, and seldom acknowledged. The closed nature of the colonial system is echoed in a passage where one of the main characters in Les Civilisés, Fierce, speaks of the “société coloniale” as “le cercle” (Farrère 106). This figuratively enclosed space is open to those only who are naturally defined under the term “colonial.” And that natural alignment is the only means of entry into the circle, an entry which is not after all an entry, but a place always, already “possessed” by virtue of European birth. It is the place or position in the colonial code that is valued and not the individual. The particular circle of colonials Fierce describes is not a particularly stellar group, but by virtue of their common positions on the sociological ladder, they are the dominant element in the

always underlying assimilationist equation. The priority of the position over the individual is reflected in Fierce's description of the colonial group: ". . . elle était trop réellement le fumier humain qu'avait dit le gouverneur général. Beaucoup des membres du cercle n'était que gens équivoques, acceptés par défaut de concurrence, et considérés surtout pour leur heureuse impunité" (Farrère 106). This type of judgement of colonial society as somewhat less than admirable is not at all uncommon in colonial literature. The accusation surfaces frequently that colonial society is in fact made up of metropolitan rejects. Farrère does bring up this sentiment numerous times in the text. His regard for the majority of his fellow colonials is very low. But again, this notion reinforces the relative importance of sociological hierarchization in the colonial context and the unimportance of individual mistake, misbehavior, or misinterpretation.

Just as the colonizers are justified and validated as a group by their relative positions in colonial society, so are the others in the texts. In Farrère's texts, the others, the indigenes, form an indistinguishable mass of otherness--a mass even sexually undifferentiated. As the narrator of Les Civilisés describes a crowd in Saigon, he speaks of how its diversity is illuminated, yet paradoxically effaced. The arrangements and divisions of types of people are very graphically drawn as Farrère sets them up and parcels them out with dashes, colons and semicolons:

Il y a des gens de tous les pays: Européens, Français surtout coudoyant l'indigène avec une insolence bienveillante de conquérants; et Françaises en robes de soir, promenant leurs épaules sous la convoitise des hommes; --Asiatiques de toute l'Asie: Chinois du Nord, grands, glabres et vêtus de soie bleue; Chinois du Sud, petits, jaunes et vifs; Malabars, rapaces et câlins; Siamois, Cambodgiens, Moïs, Laotiens, Tondinois; --Annamites, enfin, hommes et femmes tellement pareils qu'on s'y trompe tout d'abord, et que bientôt on fait semblant de s'y tromper. (30)

The colonizer/colonized dichotomy is clearly enforced in this passage. The crowding of such an extensive mix of people into one long sentence, creatively punctuated, reinforces the whirling, conglomerate mixture of people described. The colonizer--the European, here the Frenchman--dominates the scene. The political superiority of the European, whoever he may be, is clear from the outset, and neither his position nor his corporate nature requires extensive description because he is the given, the understood, the measure against which all is judged. The French male is the undisputed superior presence in this crowd, this mix of people from everywhere. The European women, like the indigenes, are represented as being also under the tutelage, or at least the protective arm of the male colonizer. The Orientals are distanced and separated textually from the European by both a semicolon and a dash (while European women are separated only by means of the semicolon). The Annamites are distanced as well by the double separation of semicolon and dash. As opposed to the Europeans, whose place and being are already understood and defined, the Orientals are described with series of adjectives which attempt to typify and circumscribe their differences. The descriptions of the other, on one level, might seem an attempt to distinguish and validate difference, yet in fact they serve to render the other so different as to seem inassimilable. At the end of the sentence though, those who are "other" are diffused into an indistinguishable mass where even the distinctions between male and female blur. Anouar Abdel-Malek considers this sort of essentializing of the other as one of the distinguishing features of traditional orientalist thought. The representation of the Oriental is "stamped with an otherness--as all that is different, whether it be 'subject' or 'object'". Abdel-Malek notes that on a thematic level, the mark of otherness is revealed in "a characterized ethnist typology" which "constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all beings considered" (Abdel-Malek 107). The

essentializing of the other removes him from the circuit of textual validation by immobilizing him and thus preventing his participation in what was and is perhaps considered as the constitutive productive forces of social and cultural interaction in the Western matrix of understanding.

In the paragraph which follows this description of a throng of people in a crowded Saigon street, the narrator describes the sense of community and commonality of the crowd. "On marche à pas désœuvrés, on cause et on rit . . . On se salue et on se frôle . . ." (Farrère 30). In Les Civilisés, the "on" of the community, while not explicitly delineated as such, is obviously the "on" of the colonizing, narrating community. The "on" which excludes the delineated "other" of the preceding paragraph effaces the tenuously posited authenticity of the other and reflects the French assimilationist tendencies which necessitate the other being over-written and effaced.

Sur la Route Mandarine, on the other hand, is in a sense driven by a sort of comprehensive or synthetic notion of assimilation, that is, the possibility is entertained that a European might want to assimilate within the indigenous culture. Assimilation as a broad management practice in colonial affairs becomes a thematic organizer in the personal quest for self-definition and fulfillment, and the broad outlines of colonial practice and assumption are collapsed into individual perception. Desirable elements deriving from the culture of the other are acknowledged in the text. Where for Farrère, the place of the other is a void, for Dorgelès the place of the other, though unknown and indescribable, is somehow mysterious and potentially seductive. This suggestion of a moment of univocal presence, an admission of the non-written, the incomprehensible, takes the text a step away from the strict party line of colonialist

discourse. Even so, the discourse of domination and the gaze of control compromise the narrator's experimental posturing.

In describing his search for the Mandarine Road, the narrator constantly strives to create an intersection of his Mandarine Road and the extant indigenous Mandarine Road, the result of which would be a univocal place or moment of presence. The roads, in a sense, may be viewed as mapping the essays of assimilation which the narrator proposes in this work. The ultimate fusion of the two routes is as problematic as the ultimate fusion of multiple cultures through colonial intervention. The fusion of these two roads cannot occur and the impossibility of that fusion is written in the ellipses which mark the novel from start to finish. Moments where the hoped for fusion or transcendence might occur trail off into ellipsis. Perhaps, though, the marked presence of ellipses in the novel does indeed place the "unwritten." In any case, the ellipses provide the hypothetical space in the text where an authentic "other" might be, if not written, at least suggested.

The organizing motif of Sur la Route Mandarine, as previously indicated, is the retrieval of the traces of the ancient Mandarine Road which would bring the narrator into sync with the distant, covered-over past of the other. Unlike the present of the other, which has been corrupted by Western culture in his eyes, the past of the other is nostalgically reckoned as a pure and authentic moment. The narrator seeks an experience which would link him to the purely "authentic" presence of the other, at once coeval and coterminous. The appropriation of the road motif implies that self-definition is a linear process leading to closure. Read in this way, self-definition and understanding are posited as attainable ends that can be circumscribed and inscribed within a narrative-like structure. In other words, the literal and figurative unfolding of the road image is sustained by the image of closure and finitude which also

undergirds a realist aesthetic. The incorporation of such an image reflects the teleological nature of the quest and its alliance with a realist aesthetic.

The novel begins with vignettes of various scenes the narrator has observed during his stay in Indochina. In a flurry of picturesque details, the narrator mentions the Mandarine Route as something which had for some time intrigued and attracted him. The very name of the road is enough to evoke all the splendors of the East, he states. However, the interest in and desire to find the Mandarine Route became for him trivialized and effaced with time and other activity. The mysterious and unique nature of the road is covered over by incidents such as the one the narrator relates in the first chapter where the novelty and picturesque nature of the Orient are something of a past era. The apparently effective work of assimilation policy seems to take precedence initially. The language of the other has been subsumed by the language of the colonizer. The Mandarine Route appears to be nothing more than a sort of side show in the myriad of images which crowd the narrator's view of the city. A dull-witted passer-by, as the narrator describes him, points out a sign--Route Coloniale No. 1, "Tenez, la voilà, votre Route Mandarine." He then goes on to describe his reaction to this directive: "Et il vous montre un poteau à plaque bleue, dans le plus pur style des Ponts et Chaussées, où on lit tout bonnement: Route Coloniale No 1. Oui, voilà tout ce qu'on lit . . ." (Dorgelès 11). The perspective in this passage is rather unexpected given what precedes and what follows it. The narrator has just recounted an interview with Renan in which Renan, answering a journalist's question regarding the most beautiful place he has ever seen, responds with a description of that place. When asked where exactly was this place, Renan responded " Je ne l'ai jamais vu . . . C'est dans mon esprit qu'il est né" (Dorgelès 10). Similarly, the Mandarine Route which the narrator seeks may exist only in his mind, and whatever signs are

externally visible are only caricatures of the landscapes of interior images. The Mandarin Route as an object of desire is an unreadable text for the narrator. He only sees and is in the end only capable of seeing the Route Coloniale No.1, but what he wants to see is what lies behind the already written, the already assimilated. This is in essence part of the assimilationist paradox: the other must be virtually effaced in order to be assimilated, but the frequent attraction and desire for what is effaced is difficult at times to cover over.

The implication by the native direction-giver is that the only route perceptible to the narrator is one marked by his own language--the language of the colonizer/narrator. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the sign is described visually as being like any other marker or sign placed by French authorities. The more perceptive vision in this passage ironically is exhibited by the "dull-witted" indigene. The illusive Mandarin Route, as the path to a hidden place of the narrator's dreams, is available to him though only in translation. The quest, in a sense, loses its attraction upon the realization that "le secret actuel" is available to him only through mediation. In the following passage, the narrator describes his disillusionment: "J'ai boudé la Route Mandarine. Je lui en voulais. Délibérément, je lui ai tourné le dos" (Dorgelès 11). The narrator's ambivalence about the search is evident in this passage. His desire for the "true" Mandarin Route is compromised by his disillusionment in being able to know the Mandarin Route only in terms of his own language, his own matrix of understanding.

The opening of chapter two brings the Mandarin Route into focus again. The road appears on the narrative horizon virtually unannounced. The very physical placement of the text on the page reflects the intrusive nature of the Mandarin Route on the

narrator's mental horizon. The dash opening the chapter gives the impression of interruption and non-contiguity with the narrator's perspective:

--Eh, et la Route Mandarine?
 La Route Mandarine? . . . Bastel! Je n'y pensais plus, je l'avais oubliée.
 Ce n'était plus pour moi qu'une expression topographique, quelque chose
 de banal, un trait noir tiré sur la carte le long de la côte. La Route
 Coloniale No. 1, quoi . . .
 Et tout à coup . . . (Dorgelès 20)

The initial seduction of the Mandarine Route is covered over by the routine fabric of the "colonial road." Sufficiently translated into practical, objective terms, the road appears to have no meaning beyond its graphic inscription on the colonial map. Then, suddenly, in what appears as a momentary flash of insight, the narrator feels that he grasps the full presence of ancient Annam.

La Route Mandarine! . . . C'était bien elle, cette fois . . . Je l'avais enfin
 trouvée . . . Tout le vieil Annam venait de m'apparaître et, encore étouffé
 par la surprise, j'absorbais de tout mon être cette vision unique, je
 l'absorbais comme on respire, pour m'en gonfler, la retenir en moi.
 (Dorgelès 22)

The moment of univocal presence propels the narrator to reconsider attempting to recover the traces of the Mandarine Route. The replacement of the definite article "la" by the possessive pronoun "ma" reestablishes the personal significance of the quest for the narrator. The search for the traces of the ancient road merge fluidly with the narrator's quest for truth of meaning and self-understanding.

The physical traces of the ancient road are as hidden from the narrator as the signs which mark the way to self-discovery and understanding. The manner in which the narrator reads the roadsigns of the journey and of the Indochinese culture implies that he views, on one level, these signs or markers as interpretable or assimilable. The unmapped journey is composed of a series of looping and dead-end attempts to recover that illusive element of alterity for which the narrator is searching. The

narrator does not perceive the dead ends or detours negatively, but rather as near-misses or close approximations of the revelation he seeks. These instances of near revelation suggest an horizon of plenitude and understanding which is always just beyond the reach of the narrator. The moment of presence when the narrator would "know" or encompass the other in his sphere of being is impenetrable. The implication of this appropriation of alterity is that by being able to understand, in the fullest sense of the word, the other, the realm of self is similarly definable and comprehensible. Inscribed within the context of the ostensibly "truth"-conveying vehicle of objective realism, the absolute nature of the self as a fully constructed being is, by extension, transmissible through the text. In this line of reasoning then, the reader becomes privy to the special truth and insight sought, experienced, and subsequently revealed by the narrator. The perceived transparency of truth as interpretable by the narrator and transmissible to the reader is characteristic of both the colonial novel and objective realism. The failure of the process of representing truth is revealed by the inadequacy of language as the carrier of that truth which Ross Chambers describes as the necessary duplicity of language (Room 55).

The narrator of Sur la Route Mandarine hints at this necessary duplicity. The failure of visible marks of difference, either linguistic or physical, to adequately reveal what is hidden or clothed is broached in a number of ways. One of the most interesting examples dealing with the questionable accuracy of perception is the use of photographic and cinematographic images in the text. The photograph is a frozen image of what was, what might have been, or what was perceived to have been. It also is an example of mediated experience--the intervention of a third element which breaks the stability of the secure and assumed direct relationship between subject and object. Malek Alloula describes this sort of idealized relationship between photographer and

photographed: "The photographer's gaze reflects his dream of total transparency, of an absence of shadows, of a world in which uninterrupted communication would reign between two mutually exclusive spaces" (38). It captures, in a sense, the object of desire within a presumed static image. The static image allows for the "knowing" eye to figuratively assimilate the other in the field of vision, unhindered by the jagged edges of uniqueness or difference. The image of the other is immobilized and controlled by the artificial pose and posturing directed by the colonizing gaze of the photographer. In colonial texts, such as Sur la Route Mandarine, the adoption of this sort of posing of the other reflects the same sort of process guiding the photographers who create the "exotic" images Alloula dissects in his book. It freezes the image of otherness so that the image may be appropriated as a stable and "true" image.

The photographic or cinematographic image provides a "visual" cue in the literary text for what is desired. Chambers comments on this sort of mediated desire: "One desires the desirable, and the desirable is identifiable as that which is seen or known to be already desired by another; hence, the structure of desire is always triangular because it is always mediated" (Room 31). In the absence of any developed characters in Sur la Route Mandarine, aside from the narrator, the photograph or film substitutes for a mediating party, that is the triadic element Chambers refers to which incites desire.

The narrator, though, is ambivalent to the static image as a means of possessing or knowing the object of desire. The implication of the narrator's use of the photographic image is that the veracity of any given presumption can have no more solid a base than what could be conveyed by the mediated image of the photograph or film. That is to say, there can be no truth conveyed through mediating or mediated means. By extension, one would assume that the veracity of the written text is called

into question as well. In recalling the moment he perceives he has found the essence of ancient Annam, the narrator describes the recall in terms of cinematographic replay:

Route Mandarine . . . Et tandis que, les yeux clos, je fais le noir dans la salle, le beau film que j'ai tourné là-bas se déroule pour moi seul. Voici les rizières de jade . . . des salines blanches...des routes rouges . . . les petits ours noirs . . . je revois éclairé à la chinoise, par d'énormes lanternes ronde en colle de poisson Pourquoi notre mémoire retient-elle de ces images insignifiantes, alors qu'elle oublie tant de choses dont on voudrait se souvenir toujours? A-t-elle des caprices qu'elle ne nous dit pas? (Dorgelès 29)

The vividness of the specific images the narrator recalls are in stark contrast to the blackness which precedes the parade of images. The posited accuracy of the perception is haunted by the question of whether what is recalled is actually what is desired from the experience.

In another passage, the ambiguity of the perceived stable image captured on film is suggested as a group watches a Western film: "Et ces salles de cinéma où les indigènes hurlaient aux acrobaties de Douglas. Tout cela a-t-il quelque chose d'européen? Non, plus rien" (Dorgelès 51). Even the security of the fixed images of film cannot dictate the circumstances of interpretation. This passage follows a section where the narrator broaches the difficulties of dictating standards of interpretation:

Plantez en Indochine des légumes de France, ce sera, en deux récoltes, un produit du pays; affadie, la pomme de terre devient patate, la tomate gonflée d'eau perd sa saveur, l'épinard s'étale en feuilles gigantesques. De même nos usages, nos créations jusqu'à nos ustensiles deviennent annamites en s'implantant ici. Rien ne résiste à cette lente absorption, pas même le chemin de fer. (50)

The futility of assimilative practice is apparent in this passage as the narrator acknowledges the impossibility of rescribing the other in the terms of the colonizing actant.

Despite the examples of failed and compromised assimilative practice revealed at various points in the text, the desirability of assimilation is not completely thwarted. The desire to “rescribe” oneself, that is to define oneself in terms of an alternate discourse requires the rescindment of certain elements of the cultural context which heretofore have served as modes of self-definition. The most cogent of these elements is the arena of language. The colonizer moves closer to assimilation when he loses or lets go of his own language, which is, in the colonial context, a function of power and domination. Dorgelès' narrator describes this process, this letting go as, “On s'écrit moins souvent. On oublie . . .” (196). The chain or continuum of language--in this case writing--is weakened, forgotten, and sent off into the linguistic never-never land of the ellipsis. The desire to become one with the “other” drives the narrator to obliterate the traces of his difference--the most important of which is his language. This total identification or merging with the “other” though is never completely successful because the “other” can never become the identity element for the self, and the traces of one's own linguistic context can never be totally effaced.

Of the three novels on which this study focuses, Sur la Route Mandarine exhibits the broadest and most extensive range of strategies in the effort to override the implicit dichotomy and difference in the colonial relationship. Assimilation, exoticism, and translation/mediation are all tried out in turn in the attempt to break through what the narrator perceives as an impenetrable barrier of understanding. The apprehension of the “other” and the symbolic synthesis of that “other” within his being is an integral part of what the narrator perceives to be a journey toward self-understanding and awareness.

In comparison to Sur la Route Mandarine and Les Civilisés, Le Kilomètre 83 by Henri Daguerches might be placed at a mid-point between the two in terms of its

adherence to colonial discursive strategies. Daguerches' work, as Dorgelès', is marked by an attraction to the mysterious, unnamed essence of alterity. On the other hand, Daguerches, like Farrère, is more bound by the narrative closure of the traditional realist text. The titles of the works may suggest the degree of adherence to the traditional realist form. The title Sur la Route Mandarine in a sense avoids the subject/object polemic given its construction as a prepositional phrase. It implies process orientation; that is, the emphasis is on the journey or movement rather than the destination. The prepositional phrase, which could function grammatically as neither subject nor object, suggests a degree of ambiguity as to the narrative orientation. Le Kilomètre 83, on the other hand, seems to be more "product" oriented. The title is indicative of an end, or at least a point of recognition, a modicum of closure. The exactitude of the mark provides an accessible point of reference in a linear and chronological narrative such as this one. The precise nature of the referent as a numerical coefficient, in contrast to the movement implied by the prepositional construction, in some respects reflects differing interpretations of the process of assimilation. We might relate this perception to the Bergsonian conception of movement and stability. In The Creative Mind, Bergson points out that the perception of discreet units of stable matter is a natural inclination of the eye and facilitates our organization of perceived images. On the other hand, he remarks that "there is neither a rigid, immovable substratum nor distinct states passing over it like actors on a state" (149). The prioritizing of movement over fixity in the titles mentioned, then, perhaps can be tied into Bergson's notion: "There are changes, but there are underneath the change no things which change: change has no need of support. There are movements, but there is no inert or invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile" (147).

The more traditionally realist texts tend to support the notion of assimilation as an overriding adherence to French culture and values and the essential negation of authentic difference. More modernist texts, such as Sur la Route Mandarine, are less marked by efforts to cover over difference. Rather than effacing difference, the goal is, rather, "becoming (in)difference." This recalls the Bergsonian opposition to the classical notion that "becoming is ontologically inferior to being" (Champigny). The idea of "becoming" rather than "being" reflects the ontological and epistemological shift apparent in the beginning of the twentieth century to which Timothy Reiss alludes in The Discourse of Modernism, a shift in which the theories of Henri Bergson played a significant role. The identification of the self as a fixed and unchanging entity is replaced by a more fluid notion of self-constitution. In Bergson's thought, the portrayal of self or other as a stable entity is untenable. This orientation is indicative perhaps of a loosening of positivistic signification which binds the roles assigned to such categories as subject/object, sign/signifier, colonizer/colonized. A hermeneutical conception of the self as an interpretable and interpreting being becomes more apparent than the notion of the self as a definable and defined entity in more conformist colonial texts. The adherence to these strictly delineated categories tends to hold the traditional colonial novel tightly within the confines of a positivist model.

Stanley Rosen examines various interpretations of difference as a mark of the postmodern condition in his book, Hermeneutics as Politics. The "celebration" of difference which he associates with the postmodernist works of the 1960's is hinted at, perhaps fortuitously, in such works as Sur la Route Mandarine where the narrator's search or journey is threaded with allusions to the accommodation and desirability of difference or plurality. While this work can certainly not be viewed as

any ground-breaking innovation in postmodern-like thought, the broaching and treatment of the question of difference in the text is interesting. The loosening of the bonds of positivist orientation are apparent in the illusiveness and ambiguity of the quest as it is revealed or, rather, not revealed, in the journey along the Mandarin Route. While the text is bound within colonial discourse in its tacit acquiescence to the systemization of colonial politics, the unbounded parade of difference in the work leads to a celebration of sorts, to use Rosen's term.

Assimilation in Sur la Route Mandarine is reflected in the narrator's efforts to assimilate various aspects of his being into a univocal whole. The assimilation process, on one level, then, functions metaphorically as a process of self-examination and discovery. The reality of political and social assimilation as it relates to the indigenous population takes a back seat to the metaphorical adaptation of the process. In Sur la Route Mandarine, there is the implication of return to and nostalgia for what is absent or unexpressed, for the narrator appears to be trying to recover something, to retrace a path. As the title implies, it is the process leading to a return or recovery which is validated. It is the accepting and validating of a "participial" as opposed to a "nominative" sort of being which subtly permeates this text. Being then can be visualized, not as subject, object, or action, but rather as a vector extending from action through description--a descriptive movement which cannot be logged-in at any one particular point on the traditional narrative time line. In essence, then, the process of assimilation can appear as a self-induced directive to uncover the extant, though hidden elements of the self, metaphorically written as the "other." Paradoxically, the assimilative writing of the other in colonial texts underscores the impossibility of writing or "assimilating" that which is always other, and that which is both theoretically and practically inassimilable.

Notes

⁹ Parts of Africa, like some of the “uncivilized” tribes of Indochina, were considered as blank slates. They were considered nothing until they were “written” and “known” by the European. Christopher Miller deals with this treatment of Africa in Blank Darkness and Theories of Africans.

¹⁰ Mildred Mortimer examines the journey motif in African fiction in Journeys Through the French African Novel. She treats a variety of texts in terms of the idea of the inward and outward journey in the changing African context from colonialism through decolonization.

CHAPTER 5
EXOTICISM: STRATEGIES OF DISPLACEMENT--
LES CIVILISES, CLAUDE FARRERE

In this chapter I will be looking at how exoticism in colonial texts serves as a means of displacing and/or accommodating the other. As a textual strategy in the strictured confines of colonial realism, exoticism serves as both a means of displacing the other and as a means of textually inscribing elements of being which do not fit comfortably within the Western matrix of self-constitution as it is revealed in colonial literature. For some colonial critics, exoticism was viewed more as an accommodating function as opposed to a displacing function. That is to say, as exoticism came under the sway of colonialism, the aspects of exoticism that stand out in the typical nineteenth-century interpretation of exoticism are underplayed. The idea of exoticism as excess or ornamentation associated with the nineteenth-century exotic literature is a frequent observation aimed at pre-colonial exoticism. The works of writers such as Pierre Loti tended to draw upon the images of Romantic exoticism and, thus, tended to be categorized as escape literature.

The exoticism which colonial writers embraced, albeit sometimes grudgingly, might be termed an integral exoticism. By integral, I mean an exoticism purportedly threaded into a realist aesthetic, not as an element over and apart, but as a reading strategy for accommodating and explicating the other. Marius and Ary Leblond, in Après l'exotisme de Loti: le roman colonial, for example, distinguished colonial exoticism from the exoticism of Pierre Loti (whose work they viewed as an extension of nineteenth-century exoticism), saying that "aujourd'hui, dans le roman colonial nos camarades et nous entendons révéler l'*intimité* des *raças* et des *âmes* des colons

ou d'indigènes".¹¹ This "intimité" would be part of what the Leblonds envisioned as "une nouvelle humanité" which would come about in the incorporation of the colonized in the colonial matrix (7, italics are the Leblonds'). They go on to say that "il faut s'attacher étroitement et durablement cet empire" (Leblond 8). The literary use of exoticism, then might be taken to illustrate the idealization of the process by which diverse socio-cultural strands would be woven into the fabric of metropolitan culture. The processes of assimilation and translation, as well, could be considered avenues by which these colonial ideals might be brought about.

In the Leblonds' work, the literary representation of colonialism fuses smoothly with observations about the socio-political construct of colonial work. Colonialism is not expressed or described as a solely political construct, but as an organizing motif which would bring together diverse cultural threads to form a "new humanity". The writing of the colonial scheme is one way of attempting to insure the desired rapprochement and the solidification of the colonial relationship. The rapprochement predicted by the Leblonds is destined to be as illusive as the ornamental or metaphysical textual excursions of earlier exotic writers. More often than not the use of exotic elements served to displace rather than accommodate the element of difference which the exotic in its "purest" and most developed form, according to colonial critics, promised.

The Leblonds' work represents one of the more supportive voices for achieving a socio-political and literary rapprochement--that is, the accommodation of the exotic other in the colonial (con)text. In the literary text, this comes about by the infusion of exoticism into the traditional realist text. Charles Régismanset and Louis Cario, writing in 1911, are more or less comfortable with the idea of the literary rapprochement of realism/colonialism and exoticism. Others, like Lebel, who

acknowledge that colonial exoticism is indeed a new type of exoticism, are not quite as confident in the ultimate unity and harmony the Leblonds idealized or the energizing effect that Régismanset envisioned. Robert Randau, like Lebel, cautions against the too heavy reliance upon exoticism at the risk of jeopardizing the security of the realist perspective. Randau refers to Lebel's work, saying that "elles ont exposés, avec l'appareil scientifique exigé par la tradition universitaire, que l'exotisme qui fut en France un prétexte d'art, ne se confondait plus avec la littérature coloniale qui applique au roman et à l'essai" ¹² In his concluding remarks, Randau again aligns himself with Lebel, citing a lengthy passage from his work including these comments on exoticism: "L'exotisme est plus romantique que colonial. Exotisme s'oppose à colonialisme, comme romantisme s'oppose à naturisme" (Randau 422,434). In this context, we see rather a setting apart of the ideals of exoticism and colonial writing, while with other critics and writers, the coming together of the two tendencies results in a sum greater than the parts.

In approaching exotic figuring in colonial texts, it is necessary to determine or at least allude to the existence of a body of literature which falls under the heading of exotic. The literature of exoticism could be treated as a class itself though it flows variously with and against the prevailing tides of literary style. Through the nineteenth century there is a recognizable current of exoticism in literature, enough so that we can fit it into the stream of what critics look upon as the exotic canon. It is this canon of nineteenth-century exotic literature that many colonial critics view as unsuitable for their purposes of realistically representing the colonies to the metropole.

The work of Victor Segalen partakes uniquely of the old exoticism and the new, while at the same time removing itself, in a sense, from both. ¹³ While, in some

respects, Segalen's project might be considered just as fated as the other projects of exotic venture, it nevertheless seems to edge closer to what might be conceived of as a "purer" exoticism. The "success" of Segalen's venture, in the eyes of some critics, most likely resides in the fact that the goal of his project did not lie in the ultimate assimilation, translation, or exoticizing of the other, but in a concerted effort to retain "le Divers." On the other hand, whatever evidence is perceived of the "generosity" of the Occident in Segalen's work in letting the other be, is negated, in Edouard Glissant's opinion, by Segalen's inability to see beyond "les projets de transmutations." Glissant describes his impression of Segalen's failure: "il est mort de l'opacité de l'Autre, de l'impossibilité où il s'était trouvé de parfaire la transmutation à laquelle il rêvait" (Poétique 208). In other words, the work of Segalen is still underwritten by the assumption of the transparency or ultimate knowability of the other. Glissant, on the contrary, sees this point of confrontation as opacity as opposed to transparency. The opacity, he remarks, is not as a negation of solidarity, as he terms it, but rather an admission that self and other can never be coterminous. He sums up this notion saying, "nous réclamons pour tous le droit à l'opacité" (Poétique 209).

Segalen's perception of the exotic is outlined in the following passage. In this passage we see perhaps what Glissant perceives to be the problematic in Segalen's conception of the exotic. The references to knowledge and power in the last phrases which permit the knowing of the other represent the "step through the looking glass" which Glissant does not accept.

L'exotisme n'est pas seulement donné dans l'espace, mais également en fonction du temps....à définir, à poser la sensation d'Exotisme: qui n'est autre que la notion du différent; la perception du Divers; la connaissance que quelque chose n'est pas soi-même; et le pouvoir d'exotisme, qui n'est que le pouvoir de concevoir autre (Segalen 36).

It is interesting that this positing of Segalen's aesthetics of exoticism is set forth in the very exclusionary terms by which he conceives of the "Divers." In other words, by way of the negative and the exclusionary "ne . . . que," the exotic becomes anything which spatially, temporally, or aesthetically falls outside one's "horizon." The horizon is another important aspect of Segalen's aesthetic in that the "Divers" is always in terms of an elsewhere, that is, always just beyond the horizon. The insistence upon maintaining an horizon is one thing that distinguishes Segalen from colonial writers. For the colonial writer, the horizon is posited in terms of challenge and something that must be broached or met. Segalen, on the other hand, is content with the figurative horizon which in terms of colonial discourse we might call unwritten otherness. If we accept the terms of Segalen's exotic aesthetic which houses the "power" of the exotic in the ability to conceive of "other," then we might consider the exoticism of the colonial writer to be a disempowered exoticism--disempowered in the sense that the elsewhere, the otherwise, the other way of the colonial text is written as an extension, not an alternative to the positing and inscription of the colonial self. Exoticism, in this sense, comes to function as a trope of dominance and as a means of writing over the other instead of an un-writing of the other through the free play of difference.

The literature which is described and describes itself as colonial literature partakes of a dual heritage--realist and exotic. On the one hand, it eschews the nineteenth-century heritage of exotic writings--works which are deemed as rather too frivolous or too metaphysical a manifestation of exoticism. On the other hand, there can be no colonial writing without the inclusion (or perhaps, more appropriately, exclusion) of the other. Thus, colonial literature must necessarily partake of the "other" in one way or another. This partaking of the other,

paradoxically, draws the other into the colonial circumscription while at the same time holding him at a distance. As Francis Affergan notes, "l'Autre y est par essence *lointain et désiré* parce que lointain" (16).

Colonial critics such as Lebel, Leblond, and Randau prioritize a realist aesthetic which partakes of the exotic, but which does not ground itself in an aesthetic of exoticism. Based on the division and chapter organization of several important colonial critiques--Lebel's history of colonial literature, Régismanset's and Cario's work on exoticism and colonial literature, the Leblonds' work on the colonial novel--the dual lineage of colonial literature is openly acknowledged. All three of these works are organized to treat exoticism first (usually the first half or so of the book) and then the particular application of exoticism in the realm of colonial writing. It is interesting that, while vehemently proclaiming the distinctiveness and distance of colonial writing from merely exotic writing, the major critics have tended to textually subordinate the colonial to the exotic in terms of the order of treatment. Providing this anterior space of writing for that which is always posited apart, indefinable, and unconfined appears an ironic reversal in its prioritizing and acknowledgement of the other.

Perhaps, though, this seemingly ironic positing of exoticism may simply be due to what Chris Bongie, among others, refers to in Exotic Memories as the effort to recapture a lost presence, totality or origin. By placing colonialism in the stream of exoticism, so to speak, we can perhaps assume colonialism to be in the process of recovery or recuperation which Bongie sees as undergirding the exotic enterprise. Bongie analyzes carefully this notion of exoticism as the desire to recover a purer, more coherent moment. At the same time he acknowledges the impossibility of recovery or recuperation, and suggests that all that remains is essentially the memory

of the illusion of univocality. He says that his argument for exoticism “depends upon the *definitive* loss of values(s) and a *real* absence of alternative worlds” (Bongie 5-6).¹⁴ The careful positing of what was exotic also provides the springboard for the colonial critic to posit what is now exotic.

The novels of primary consideration in this study are in the category of works where the emphasis is more on the colonial than the exotic. None of the works being considered, however, is what critics view as strictly propagandistic. Rather, they all occupy that ambiguous space of texts more or less “claimed” by the reigning colonial critics. By the same token, they should not be taken as necessarily always complying unproblematically with colonial thought.¹⁵ Given the colonial/realist valence of the texts I have chosen to examine, I will consider exoticism as a textual strategy which operates under the sway of the dominant valence of colonial realism, rather than as an organizing or representational matrix as Segalen envisioned. Farrère, Daguerches, and Dorgelès all rely on the play of the exotic, but to varying degrees. Based on the writings of a number of colonial critics,¹⁶ they are perceived as successfully incorporating exoticism into the colonial frame. In terms of the ideal fusion of colonialism and exoticism, Daguerches, of the three novelist cited, probably illustrates best the incorporation of the exotic into a colonial realist text without threatening the stability of that order. The exotic for Dorgelès is intimately linked with assimilationist ideas, in that exotic elements are presented as potential points of fusion between the other and the colonial narrator. He assumes a certain symmetry in the configuration of culture which might be challenged by Francis Affergan’s perception of the relationship between self and other and the subsequent representation of that relationship. Affergan notes that “l’altérité est non seulement irréductible, mais elle est de plus *asymétrique*, puisque l’interchangeabilité entre Je et Tu est impossible.

Non fondée s'avère alors une logique de l'altérité, dans la mesure où elle est une propriété irréductible et incontournable du jugement prescriptif" (18). In this sense, then, the containment of the exotic through assimilation is unsuccessful. The text is suggestive of the type of exoticism that Victor Segalen proffers--an exoticism where difference is celebrated and textually (to the extent possible) liberated. However, the assimilationist tendencies override the total acquiescence to a free play of difference. The exoticism of Farrère seems to be the most critically debatable of the three. Gilles Manceron, in the preface to Segalen's Essai sur l'exotisme, aligns Farrère with Pierre Loti, Jules Boissière, and Albert Pouvoirville in terms of their use of exoticism. It is perhaps due in part to the work Fumée d'opium which precedes Les Civilisés that Farrère is aligned with the more "exotic" colonial writers. Among contemporary colonial critics though, Boissière and Pouvoirville are sometimes brought into the circle of "real" colonial writers, while Loti is generally excluded on the grounds of his excessive use of exoticism as ornamentation. It is ironic that Farrère so openly states his admiration for Loti, yet in the eyes of his critics, his use of exoticism is unsuccessful in terms of Loti's style. The Leblonds, as mentioned before, viewed Farrère with a degree of reserve. Pierre Jourda, in L'Exotisme dans la littérature française, places Farrère, as well as Daguerches, in what he terms the fourth stage of exoticism--colonial exoticism, which for some is viewed as the final resting place of exoticism. In that final stage, the exotic becomes locked in the prism of realism.

The dedication of Farrère's Les Civilisés sets the stage for what we will see develop as this sort of locking-in process, in other words, the containment of the exotic. Farrère dedicates the work to Pierre Louÿs, whose work Aphrodite he credits for being the inspiration for Les Civilisés. What he perceived being able to do through

Les Civilisés was to memorialize the beautiful. He envisioned being able to capture what he termed "chair vibrante" in the literary cage. In other words, he apparently felt that he had the means to capture the rare bird of exotic imaging and, once captured, the image would be immobilized. Referring to his production of the work, he says, "j'ai compris la possibilité d'écrire à notre époque des livres tout ensemble modernes et antiques,--classiques et vivants" (Farrère 7). The exotic, for a writer like Farrère, can be comfortably written within the scope of his traditional realist mode of representation, for it functions as a displacement and containment process to remove the other from the validated realm of colonial space. Exoticism is, in this sense, an inwardly directed process. That is, it is contrary to Segalen's notion of the exotic--one through which the celebration of difference was ostensibly done selflessly and where the other was not necessarily confined to a definition which was a conscious projection of self-exploration. In contrast, the presence of exotic elements--people, landscapes, comestibles--in Farrère's novel appear to exist for the pleasure or the fulfillment of the one or ones who are not typed as exotic.

As much as Farrère may have wanted to harken back to the exotic days of Loti as he perceived them, his self-conscious partaking of the exotic menu tends to undercut his standing in terms of literary magnitude. Maxime Revon, in Claude Farrère: Son oeuvre, wrote in 1924 that Farrère's work, while "un ragoût épicé qui complétait la mise en appétit du lecteur," appeals more to a female audience than an implied more prestigious male audience.¹⁷ The piquing of interest by means of the exotic is the key to maintaining the female audience according to this critic (Revon 6). The appeal of the exotic for Farrère seems to be a combination of his stated intent in the preface as well as his own economic interest in promoting the exotic.

Farrère's stated position in the prefatory remarks of the text gives us an indication as to his position on the place of the exotic in his text. The exotic, as ecstatic moment of loss of self, is counter to what this author seemingly seeks from the representation of the other. The experience of the exotic for him appears to be the containment of the different, the other, and, as he stated and illustrated from the outset, something to be immobilized for the pleasure of the observer. We can compare this type of still-life exoticism to Malek Alloula's observations about early twentieth century postcards featuring aspects of life and culture in North Africa. The pieces of culture in the picture postcard and in the colonial realist text are assembled pleasingly to resemble a perception of reality that is fixed in the controlled and controlling perception of the colonizer as observer. The power to control and manipulate the elements of culture implies a transparency of the culture of the other. Alloula comments that the staging of culture by means of the indigenous model amounts to a staging of the indigenous population's compliance with the violation of colonial rule. He states: "In its illusive dissolution of actual resistance, the colonial postcard offers a view of a pacified reality, restored to the colonial order, which presently proceeds to draw up an inventory of it" (64). In much the same way, the exotic, for Farrère, is such a "pacified reality." The other is stilled and fragmented and then reassembled for easy consumption.

The narrative center in Les Civilisés is unambiguous. Exotic elements are held in by the centripetal force of the realist narrative which propels all textual elements back toward that narrative center. The colonial narrator, as the voice of that center, is the intimate observer of the circle of colonial society. The matrix of interpretation is strictly limited to the colonial circle. There are, though, two concentric circles-- colonial society at large and the circle composed of the three main characters, Mévil,

Torral, and Fierce. Outside of these circles is that which is other or exotic. The narrator appears to maintain the security of colonial authority in the text in spite of the individual violations of the bounds of reason by the inner core of "civilisés." The securely realist orientation of the text and the ostensibly adequate containment of the exotic perhaps tap into the same ideological spring of security upon which the colonial enterprise relies. The indigene in this novel is rarely subject to the processing of assimilation or even translation, but held apart, distanced and objectified, through Farrère's type of exotic coding. Exoticism serves to hold the other immobile for awe, observation, aesthetic titillation, or disdain.

The novel begins with a description of a rickshaw and the exotic appeal and beauty of that object:

Dans la cour, plantée de grand flamboyants ombreux, entre la maison et la grille, les deux coureurs tonkinois avancèrent le pousse, un pousse très élégant, laqué et argenté. Et ils s'attelèrent entre les brancards, en flèche. Après quoi, ils attendirent le maître, immobiles comme des idoles jaunes vêtues de soie . . . Mais le docteur Raymond Mévil avait beaucoup d'originalité, et possédait d'ailleurs une victoria et de beaux trotteurs. En sorte que le monde lui passait sa fantaisie d'aller en pousse, et de violer la mode,--luxueusement (Farrère 9).

The rickshaw drivers are held immobile in a scene where they are appropriately inscribed in the coded language of the exotic. The figurative coding is reflected in the description of the physical space and boundaries which the drivers are assigned. From the beginning they are imagistically framed by the courtyard, by the shadows, between the house and the fence, between the shafts of the rickshaw. They are locked into a motionless moment as they await the source of movement-- "le maître." They are captured and immobilized as objects of picturesque interest as they--the other(s), are framed as "yellow idols dressed in silk." The inessential or superfluous nature of the indigene's presence in the text is reinforced by Mevil's use of the rickshaw as only

"fantaisie" and not a "real" means of transportation. He has other European carriages and means of transportation which do the real work of moving him around the city. The exotic coding of the other, in this case, the rickshaw and its driver, amounts, then, to a code of excess for the colonial actant--a legitimate means "de violer la mode." The violation here and, as we will see later, is only an over-stepping of coded lines within the realm of the acceptable. The fact that the colonizer is so surely posited as "maître" in this beginning passage suggests the inviolability of his self-referentiality--a security which will prevail throughout the text. Thus, the exotic is not a threat or even a challenge, but a rhetorical space to which violations can be legitimately allocated, an escape valve. And in this text, the safety valve is a secure one from which very little excess or linguistic pollutant will escape.

We can refer to these linguistic pollutants as traces of uncontained or uncontainable matter or imagery. The first chapter of Les Civilisés offers another example of what we might take to be evidence of the controls understood to be in place in a novel of this sort. The leaving of traces textually or thematically implies a degree of forgetting, which would in turn imply a certain loss of control. In this text, even the notion of forgetting and the traces left by the momentary loss of control are contrived as conscious efforts of manipulation. In this passage Dr. Mevil has just left a group of French women after having had a medical consultation with one of them:

La minute après, une curieuse alla regarder l'ordonnance laissée sur le guéridon.

--"Ah! fit-elle, M. Mévil a oublié son porte-cartes.

--M. Mévil oublie toujours quelque chose," prononça Mme Ariette en souriant avec sérénité . . . Raymond Mévil souriait aussi, en remontant en pousse (Farrère 14).

Even the act of forgetfulness is circumscribed by the conscious intention to use the ostensible forgetting for some other purpose, in this case, insuring the need for a

subsequent consultation with a desirable woman. The complicitous smile which carries over from one paragraph to the other seals the agreement.

The conscious irony of passages such as this one is characteristic of the novel as a whole. The accusations aimed at the novel by the Leblonds, for example, may perhaps have been directed at the winks, nods or smiles of complicity that the writer grants his characters and their actions. As mentioned previously, Astier-Loutfi remarks that the revelation of the colonizer's feet of clay, so to speak, does not necessarily imply lack of agreement with the enterprise as a whole. The foibles and weaknesses of the colonizing population are not ignored in this novel as the intricacies of the closed colonial society are played out. The foibles and weaknesses though tend to be attributed to the lure of some particular aspect of the culture of the other. In other words, they are relegated to the escape valve of exoticism. The narrator of Les Civilisés, although sure of the relative superiority of the colonizers in the context of the colony, is not so willing to stack them up against the cream of the metropolitan crop. He calls the civilized of the colony "un fumier humain," hardly a flattering synonym for "les civilisés." The displacement of "non-civilized" behavior to the realm of the exotic provides a means for the colonial narrator to neutralize the misbehavior or straying of his colonial actants. The "non-civilized" moment or action can also be equated with forgetting which is variously written as a state attained through women, drugs, or stimulation due to a unique environment. In other words, these items or themes function as the exotic elements which provide the potential space for the suspended state of forgetting; they provide the absence over and against which the solid presence of the colonial actant is posited. The absence though, in the case of colonial exoticism, as Farrère uses it, is only a figurative absence in the already over-written space of the other. The context and origination of these exotic items or descriptions can be attributed to the

culture of the other and removed from the terms of definition which identify the colonial actant. Thus, the matrix of self-definition can remain undisturbed and the colonial enterprise or colonial textual space likewise can remain inviolable.

The exotic takes on a decidedly feminine cast in Farrère's novel. From the opening chapter, women are immobilized and objectified as are the representatives of the indigenous population, both male and female.¹⁷ In the following passage, the indigene is again portrayed, as in the case of the rickshaw drivers, as a crystallized image: "Une congai à chignon lisse ouvrit la porte . . . et s'immobilisa tout à coup, douceuse: le maître paraissait . . . Il descendit le perron . . . caressa du doigt le sein de la femme à travers le ke-hao de soie noire" (Farrère 10). The congai is held motionless by the presence of the master and she is further objectified by the touch of the "master." He touches her breast as he would touch a statue, which is exactly the image the narrator set up for the indigene in the opening paragraph.

Even the European women in this novel are positioned similarly to the Eastern women. The narrator's description of Mévil's female "patients" reinforces this cordoning off of the exotic or other: "Dans le salon, huit ou dix femmes caquetaient, élégantes et négligées dans leurs robes saïgonnaises qui ressemblaient à des peignoirs de luxe" (Farrère 12). The women in this passage, as well as a number of others, are presented as an indistinguishable mass of aural and visual stimulation. Here they are physically clothed in the apparel of Oriental women--a fact which further aligns them with the indistinguishable mass of feminine otherness associated with the indigenous female. Mévil immobilizes the European women in a sense by prescribing pills which takes the edge off their potential ability to negotiate perception. A few pages on "les boys annamites" are described as muted like the women. Their movements are

described as “gestes feutrés” as they serve “les fruits asiatiques que l'Europe ne sait pas” to the narrative's core of masters, Mévil, Torral, and Fierce.

Julia Douthwaite's observations about the place of the exotic other in eighteenth-century fiction are perhaps applicable as well to Farrère's representation of the other in feminine terms. She suggests that “the emphasis on gender in the novel complicates the representation of cultural difference by signaling the internal conflicts within seemingly unified communities and evoking the psychological ramifications of European exploration and colonization abroad” (17). In her opinion gendered conflict, like cultural conflict might be interestingly and productively examined together.

The blending of the other into an image of feminine otherness is suggested in an incident set in Saigon. As the three men walk along Rue Catinat, the primary locus of activity in the city, they see women of all types. The overwhelming image though is again of the mass of women as indistinguishable. The narrator describes the scene:

On se salue et on se frôle, et les femmes vous tendent des mains moites qui brûlent de fièvre. Des parfums forts montent des corsages, et les éventails les mélangent et les jettent au nez de chacun. Une volupté commune agrandit tous les yeux, et la même pensée fait rougir et sourire chaque femme, la pensée que, sous la toile mince des smokings blancs, sous la soie légère des robes pâles, il n'y a rien, ni jupes, ni corsets, ni gilets, ni chemises,--et qu'on est nu, que tout le monde est nu . . .
(Farrère 30).

The slippage into ellipsis is rare in this novel, unlike Sur la Route Mandarine which is marked throughout with the ambiguity and evasiveness of ellipsis. It is interesting how the narrator constructs this moment of apparent slippage into forgetfulness, or rather in this case, nakedness. There is a certain loss of centeredness as the narrator moves to the ambiguous pronoun “on” in this paragraph. And here the “on” appears to include the female element of the crowd. He describes the myriad of sensory images, which bombard the crowd from all directions. In the midst of this confusion of sensory

input, the authoritative gaze of the colonial actant becomes blurred and dislodged. At the end of the passage, the exterior trappings which mark difference--male and female, self and other--fall, and all is laid bare. The dichotomy between masculine and feminine that the narrator has so carefully maintained up to this point is overshadowed by the non-gendered "on" and the falling away of the marks of gender via apparel.

In the first part of the text, Fierce, like Mévil, sees women, both Eastern and European in a prostituted manner. In a passage where he is describing his experience with Japanese women he says, "On peut regarder et toucher: la vue n'en coûte rien, et le toucher peu de chose. L'ensemble est économique, rafraîchissant et presque agréable." Upon his return to Indochina, he plans to choose one or several Annamite women for himself because he says "il ne faut pas abuser des produits d'exportation" (Farrère 26). Women are for him a commodity of exchange. The only difference in his eyes between the European and Eastern woman is the price. Even in a relationship conceivable outside of the range of economic exchange, the price is still a consideration, in emotional rather than monetary terms. As the novel progresses, Fierce becomes painfully aware of the inordinately high price of self-abandonment in love and ultimately puts himself in a position of absolute abandonment. He falls in love with a young French girl and abandons his "civilized" way of life; he loses the security of masculine reason. The result of this loss of reason puts him in a position of abandoning life altogether. On board ship in a battle with the English, he places himself in a position where death is inevitable.

Mévil continues the image of women as commodity:

. . . voici des femmes jaunes, bleues, noires, vertes,--même blanches
 . . . Celles-ci diffèrent des autres . . . elles ne sont pas hypocrites. Toutes
 sont à vendre,--comme en Europe,--mais à vendre pour de l'argent, et
 pas pour ces monnaies compliquées et tartufes qu'on nomme plaisir,
 vanité, honneurs ou tendresse (Farrère 31).

Women are again represented through Mévil as an indistinguishable mass to be differentiated only in terms of their price or value. He repeats an image of women as a swirling mass of color from a previous passage where he described the group of European women in terms of their colorful silks. European women are granted an only slightly higher status within the realm of the other as they are set apart here by the mark of the dash. The phrases in this passage which refer to the distinction of European women are both offset with dashes. The price of Eastern women though is easier to pay. Mévil perceives the quantifiable terms of monetary exchange as a more honest representation of the exchange relationship. In this passage as well as others, the involvement with women, who in this colonial scenario are posited as other, is curtailed or at least contained by keeping the involvement within the realm of the quantifiable. To extend this image to the broader colonial relationship, we see much the same sort of quantification done as justification for the perpetration of the colonial enterprise at large. When the terms of the colonial relationship are maintained at the quantifiable level of economic exchange value, the higher price exacted for such intangible cost as "pleasure, vanity, honor, tenderness" can be ignored. The ineffable justifications for colonial intrusion though surface just as the ineffable male/female relationship in the text.

The youngest of the three men, Fierce fails though to keep his relationship within the confines of economic exchange and becomes enamored with a young French girl, Sélysette Sylva. Torral, the one who most strongly exemplifies the rational, exacting order most appropriate for colonial life, admonishes Fierce for his weakness in abandoning his mistress for the "fausse marchandise, fausse monnaie" of his new amorous interest. For Torral, this changes Fierce from one of the "civilisés" to what he disparagingly refers to as "cette chose grotesque: un homme du monde" (Farrère

151-2). While certainly we must consider Torral as part of what critics considered to be the overdrawn portrait of the colonial mindset in Farrère's work, the ideal of control and rational measure that Torral brings to the story and the tightly wrought ideal of what was for him civilized do reflect to a degree certain similar ideals that circulated in colonial circles.

Despite the containment of the exotic by the narrating figure, we do see an element of dialogue concerning the nature of the exotic. Fierce's momentary immersion in the exotic other, here, a very coded representation of the exotic--a European woman--is attributed to the naivety of youth. Fierce from the start has been set up as the youngest and most inexperienced member of the colonial core of the novel. The narrator relates Fierce's hesitation to decode the other: "il ne désirait rien que le sourire et l'amitié de Sélysette. Trop de femmes, toutes méprisées, s'étaient succédé dans son lit pour qu'il trouvât souhaitable d'y coucher son unique idole" (Farrère 172). This willingness to let the other be, so to speak, is viewed by the narrator as being indicative of the innocence and optimism of youth, traits which certainly do not belong to the rational and controlled countenance of the narrator. Fierce's innocent immersion in the exotic is further indicated by his tearing away of all the gray fabric from his apartments and replacing it with a very particular color of light blue with green overtones. He recovers the walls with silks that match the color of Sélysette's eyes, a rather overdone effort to infuse his world with the being of another.

The recognition of the paths of reason and folly is not left to chance. They are drawn and marked in a typically (for Farrère) overdetermined manner. One example is at the end of Chapter 14 as Mévil decides, to the derision of Torral, to accompany Fierce on a visit to the Malais home to visit the girl:

"-- Ici, dit-il, nos routes bifurquent."
 Il regarda Fierce.
 ". . . Bifurquent même plus que ça n'en a l'air! Par la route des sottises;
 -- par ici, route de la raison."
 Il prit la route de la raison.
 -- "Je ne sais plus où aller," plaisanta Mévil, hésitant.
 Il suivit quand même Fierce sur la route des sottises. (160-1)

The unintelligent choice in Torral's view is a world where difference may be subject to non-quantifiable, non-rational terms and where the other, in this case posited as female, might have to be dealt with in terms not already prefaced by the bounds of reason. The threat of the uncontained feminine element of the text becomes more pronounced in the second half of the novel. As long as the female is kept in the quantifiable relation of monetary exchange, or in the unambiguous position of servant or congai, the narrative can continue relatively undisturbed.

At the end of the chapter, we see just how nebulous of an end the road of non-reason has. The loss of control associated with Fierce's love for Sélysette is described in terms of drunkenness, a spring whose source is hidden and promises of love. Paralleling the ending of the previous chapter, we see the road of folly stretching out before Fierce: "il sembla que la vie s'ouvrait désormais pareille à cette voie radieuse" (Farrère 168). This chapter figuratively is left open with the image of the radiant way and the implication of the uncircumscribed nature of the pleasure associated with the loss of self in the sexual relation.

The chapter which follows this figurative loose end or rational lapse is begun with the ellipsis mark, the only one of thirty-five whose opening is offset in such a way. This visible fissure in the text after the lapse of reason highlights the potential lack of resolution tied to such behavior. It is also at this point after the ellipsis that the narrative "je" steps out of the quotation marks of assigned dialogue and back into the place of originary voice. The stability of the narrative is righted, so to speak, by

the return of the creator and center of the text. The narrative center is reset as the narrator reinscribes himself: "J'avais passé la nuit, dans mon harem de Skutari, et je regagnais ma maison de Stamboul, où j'écris ce livre" (Farrère 169). The potential loss of control suggested by Fierce's abandonment to the unscripted feminine exotic is neutralized by the narrator's return to the scripted arena of contained desire, the harem. The exotic figuring of the feminine is contained and locked into that ultimate symbol of closure--the harem, which is an appropriate image for the broader figuring of the exotic within the colonial text. The return to the text, the writing of the book, further scripts and codes the excess of the exotic implied by the mention of the harem. The perception of the harem as "a universe of generalized perversion and of the absolute limitlessness of pleasure" (Alloula 95) is safely contained and locked away as the narrator returns to the site of his writing--"ma maison...où j'écris ce livre."

Astier-Loutfi notes the melding of the feminine elements of the text (108). The blending of the European woman and the Eastern woman opens up a feminine space in which the Eastern male is also encompassed. She explains this over-writing as resulting in a "curiously feminized vision of the conquered country." The feminized is also the disempowered, the voiceless, the contained other. The feminine is, not surprisingly, subordinated both on a socio-political plane and a thematic plane as well. Farrère's text illustrates this feminization in several respects. As we have seen and will see, women, both European and Eastern, are typically immobilized and portrayed as objects of manipulation. The indigenous men, although rarely mentioned, are similarly immobilized. The "boys" of the texts are the only indigenous masculine presence, and their place within the text is always marginal, with regard both to the descriptions of their physical placement in the rooms, houses, and streets of the novel and the infrequency of their appearance in the text as a whole. While Torral is the

character who seems to hold most vehemently to the order of objective reason, he is also the most sexually ambiguous character of the novel. The marginality of the character Torral is reinforced by his sexual preference for the indigenous "boys." Interestingly, though, he is the character who most frequently calls upon his identification as a "civilisé"--a rational, controlled "civilisé." He, in the end, is the only one of the three core "civilisés" who is able to survive the ultimate threat of the subversive feminine element of the text. I use the term subversive here because at the end of the novel Fierce and Mévil are both destroyed by the inability to navigate the ambiguous and ambivalent feminine element that they sought to contain.

For Torral, women do not fit within the mathematically generated confines of his existence. Women, European or Eastern, do not interest him. His entry into the realm of the other, the exotic, exists rather through opium and living among the indigenes. It is only the outward appearance of the indigenous quarter which he perceives as exotic, for entering into that realm is not posed as an option for him. It is not the people among whom he lives that generate the exotic revery for him, but rather the physical trappings of the scene. Opium is his only experiential entry into the realm of forgetting, and even that is done in measured doses so as not to lose himself completely. Thus, for the character of Torral, the hermetic seal of the exotic remains unbroken and there is no adequate discharge of the exotic as excess. It is circumscribed and contained from the outset. Torral, an engineer in the novel, the one who operates in a world of mathematical security, is a good example of one of the "civilisés" whose actions and behavior diminish his standing as one of the "civilisés" in eyes of the "colonial circle," but do not obliterate the relative position which he holds as a European. While judged by the group standards of those of the colonial circle, as they are referred to in the novel, he takes advantage of the exotic by partaking of its images

though measured consumption. Living on the wrong side of town in the indigenous quarter and maintaining an opium habit marginalize him among those of the colonial circle, but his control in the face of the lure of the exotic types him into the colonial mold.

The function of thematic and narrative space is another indication of the containment of the exotic in Les Civilisés. Unlike Sur la Route Mandarin and Le Kilomètre 83 which make extensive use of the exotic potential of the "uncivilized" space of vistas outside the mapped space of the cities, Les Civilisés takes place within the circumscribed arena of the cities of Saigon and Cholon. The narrative is confined to the city limits except for several carriage rides in the country and the fated trip to the outskirts of the city which precipitates the tragic conclusion to the story. On one of the rides through the country, we see what is outside the city--silence, tombs, unmapped space. In the following passage, the narrator describes one such excursion:

Tout de suite, ce fut le silence, la solitude et l'obscurité . . . on n'avait point désir de bavarder dans cette plaine-là,--la Plaine des Tombeaux . . . Et toujours, jusqu'à l'infini, les tombes uniformes,--innombrables et monotones comme les vagues de la mer. Innombrables: les morts asiatiques possèdent pour l'éternité leurs demeures funèbres Torral la nomma à voix haute, pour parler, et rompre d'un bruit humain l'intolérable silence . . . Fierce, presque assoupi, s'amusait à rêver qu'ils erraient dans un labyrinthe de l'Hadès, et que jamais, jamais ils ne rentreraient dans le monde des vivants . . . (Farrère 46).

The silence of uncircumscribed space, the place of the other, is overwhelming. The portrayal of the "real" East, the exotic, as being in the vestiges of the past reinforces what Farrère says in his preface is his image of the other, one trapped out of time, out of space, out of language. This image of the endless tombs captures well that image which he initiates in the preface and carries through the novel. "Le silence, la solitude, l'obscurité" hide that which is not scripted within the colonial space. Only

gray outlines are perceptible in this space of the other as opposed to the clear delineations of space and being within the containment of the city. It is Torral who tries to voice the space and break "l'intolérable silence." In contrast to Torral's need to break the silent space, Fierce prefers to enjoy the momentary loss of reason and control in the maze-like space of the other. Out of the silence and the reverie, the carriage re-enters the city as suddenly as it had broken away: "Cholon, brusquement, apparut, dans l'ombre, et surgie véritablement autour d'eux. Sans transition, ils se trouvèrent au milieu d'une ville . . ." (Farrère 46). In this novel, the break between self and other is as brutal as the jarring transition between city and country and the associated lightness and darkness of the two spaces.

To step back from a perspective where rural and urban space are distinguishable as in the previous passage, the colonial space as a whole can be viewed in the broader sense as a receptacle for excess from the metropole. In a passage recounting a conversation among various government officials, the potential space of the other is claimed as a metropolitan, in this case, French space, allocated for the excess or "impure" elements of the French population. The governor refers to this line of thinking in the following passage:

. . . aux yeux unanimes de la nation française, les colonies ont la réputation d'être la dernière ressource et le suprême asile des déclassés de toutes les classes et des repris de toutes les justices. En foi de quoi la métropole garde pour elle, soigneusement, toutes ses recrues de valeur, et n'exporte jamais que le rebut de son contingent. Nous hébergeons ici les malfaisants et les inutiles, les pique-assiette et les vide-goussets.--
Ceux qui défrichent en Indo-Chine n'ont pas su labourer en France . . .
(Farrère 94).

While this perspective certainly cannot be taken as characteristic of colonial advocates, it is indicative of a recognizable current of thought regarding the colonies. In one sense, it might be taken as indication of hierarchical dilution of prestige. This

type of partitioning of colonial space into excess metropolitan space also reflects on one level the textualizing of the space of the exotic, the place of the other.

The governor's closing statement , "il ne faut point s'étonner qu'en ce pays l'Occidental soit moralement inférieur à l'Asiatique, comme il l'est intellectuellement en tous pays . . ." (Farrère 94) goes a step further than the already caustic comments on the character of the colonial populace. The severity of this characterization of colonial populations is undercut, in a sense though, by embedding the thought within a lengthy quote within a conversation in which the narrator is not a participant. The suppositions can be addressed without necessarily the consensus of the narrator, though the narrator himself is not wont to let colonial vice go unheralded in a variety of other circumstances. The condemnation, however, does not alter the implicit justification of colonial practice within the novel as a whole, even though there are no exemplary colonial actants within the text unless we consider the narrative voice to be posited as a model. The difficulty of negotiating ontological space, that is, the essential differentiation between self and other, is apparent in the unsuccessful attempts of the main characters to negotiate within the given perimeters of colonial space.

Stepping beyond the rural/urban distinction and then the colony/metropole distinction, the narrator continues the concentric containment of the other. A broader construct is drawn by layering over Indochina with the images of North Africa. The uniqueness of Indochina as a setting is subsumed within the larger colonial picture which is in turn subsumed under the image of the North. The containment of the exotic is thus continued with the location of the narrator in North Africa.

The narrator ostensibly recounts this story of Indochina from a location in North Africa. As previously noted, Terdiman discusses the problem of the over-written exoticism of North Africa. By the beginning of the century, the stimulation

derived from the other, from "le Divers" as Segalen calls it, was in a sense only a trace of stimulation. Bongie, too, refers to this case of over-coding as the memory of the exotic. The return to the preset categories of the exotic is an interesting interruption in this novel set in Indochina, a place removed from the overworn stimulus of North Africa. We see the narrator though trying to find the traces and the memory of that stimulation in the already known outlines of the physical environment of Istanbul.

That environment, North Africa, is further inscribed and contained within the realm of the known and knowable by its comparison to a city of the North, of Europe, that is. Farrère describes the city as he sees it in that moment: "Stamboul, entre le ciel pâle et la mer grise, était comme une ville du Nord" (Farrère 169). The wear and tear on the standard images of the exotic are quite evident in this passage. Within the realm of the exotic coding of the East, very little is pale or gray or northerly, for that matter. Typically, color is exaggerated and exploited to the point of swirling images as we saw earlier in the descriptions of women. To retrieve the exotic stimulation of his immediate surroundings, the narrator calls upon all the standard images of a North African city and a full catalogue of Sultans and picturesque figures, seemingly in an attempt to recapture the "light" of exoticism. The image of light does play heavily into this moment of retrieval, for it is only the uncontained and uncontainable element of light which can rescue the traces of the exotic images of the past. And the narrator goes so far as to make this link for us "--Ce fut un miracle: une résurrection; une résurrection si prompte, que j'en demeurai émerveillé.--Il suffi d'un rayon de soleil . . ." (Farrère 171). This might be read as another example of what critics deem Farrère's "canned" exoticism.

The narrator pushes the image of "enlightenment" even further, comparing Fierce's relationship with Sélysette to the "enlightening" experience of recapturing the exotic sense of the city. The idea of the re-presentation of the exotic is also captured in the writer's closing of the text not with the notation of Western dating, but with the North African system of referencing time, "Stamboul, an 1321 de l'hégire" (Farrère 308). So the exotic is not tied to the infinitely deferred image of Segalen's "Divers," but rather is already overtly contained and consciously over-written within the concentric imaging of the text.

The surety of the enclosure of the other within the concentric imaging of the narrative is unseated toward the end of the novel, although the closure of the novel, in terms of its construction as a realist text, is adequate to the presupposed tenets of that mode. Several incidents of combat, both with the indigenes and the English, are marked by a seeming puzzlement on the part of the narrator as to the nature of the enemy and how to recognize him. In referring to skirmishes with the French and the Indochinese, the narrator describes the nature of the fight: "Point de combat. Des ambuscades, des guets-apens; --un coup de fusil jailli d'une haie; une sentinelle égorgée sans cri dans sa guérite. --Les soldats s'énervaient à cette lutte contre un ennemi sans corps" (Farrère 234).¹⁸ The illusive nature of the enemy and the difficulty of determining the site of combat echo more broadly the novel's treatment of the other in non-combat related situations. While to a certain degree, the other as the indigene, is immobilized by exotic imaging, the resultant image is only a shadow or hint of the being which is behind that surface reflection. The other in the novel is posited as the "ennemi sans corps." The actions and strategies of that enemy are what is evident to the Western soldier. In a strange sort of reversal, the other, up to this point of the novel, is described principally in terms of the physical body and not in terms of participatory

action. When called into confrontation though, the pre-established categories which define and confine the colonial relationship are broken down leaving the field open to what can be described as guerilla conflict, both in the usual sense of the word, as well as in the sense of textual encroachment.

In the context of confrontation which pervades the final chapters of the novel, the security of terms of domination is undercut. One such instance which suggests challenge to the terms of dominance is the recounting of a night of conflict:

La nuit tombait cependant, et dans les fourrés noirs, une fusillade tardive éclatait; des balles sifflaient jusqu'au fleuve, et les tôles des canonnières sonnaient sous les coups; le canon s'en mêlait; c'était enfin une vraie bataille qui durait jusqu'à l'aube. Mais à l'aube, le feu cessait soudain, car on s'était trompé: il n'y avait point d'ennemi. Egaré ou trahi, on s'était fusillé entre soi, on s'était massacré par mégarde. Dix, vingt morts jonchaient le sol. On les enterrait,--et l'on recommençait d'autres erreurs. On tuait et on mourait sans gloire, avec lassitude et ennui (Farrère 235).

As in other sections of the novel (the foray into the countryside, the fateful excursion of Mevil, Torral, and Fierce which ruins Fierce's love relationship) the night obscures judgement and reason. The apparent "rightness" of the fight in terms of military manoeuvre is exposed in the light of day as a glaring error of self-destruction. The "comfort" of the battle lies in the pre-determined form of combative exchange in conventional warfare. The return to a state of discomfiture is immediate at dawn after the fight and the promise of defined terms and definitive results evaporates as the narrator dissolves the terms of combat into the "lassitude" and "ennui" of the soldiers. The tentative security of known tactics is further diluted as the battleground fades into a sensual and imagistic description of the forest in the next paragraph.

The narrative flow from the long paragraph describing the combat scene and the equally lengthy paragraph following are interesting projections into the mythical space of the other. The combat scene though set within the jungle appears at one point to be potentially negotiable space because of the presumed known lines of battle. As previously stated, the comfort of the certitude of known boundaries quickly fades in the face of misjudgment. The paragraph following gradually moves from the forest as a battleground to the forest as a space of the unknown, the exotic. And in the terms set up by the novel, that which belies reason and lodges in the emotive realm is irrelevant to colonial concerns. Yet, in this instance the sensual overtakes the rational as the gaze of the narrator shifts from the space of the other as combat zone to the space of the other as unfathomable mystery. Such a description of the forest as the holder of mystery is characteristic of the portrayal of that landscape in colonial texts as well as other writings about the Orient. The narrator's description of the forest scene is an oddly discordant contrast to the preceding paragraph:

Mais si loin que l'on fût, on n'évitait pas le tiédeur humide de la forêt, ni son odeur sensuelle, où vibrent pêle-mêle tous les parfums de fleurs et de feuilles, et l'effluve fiévreux de la terre qui fermente. C'étaient des nuits vivantes, pleines de bruissements et de tressaillements. La forêt fourmillait de choses secrètes, qu'on entendait remuer, souffler, haleter . . . Il n'y a rien au monde qui vive plus sensuellement qu'une forêt tropicale. (Farrère 236)

The forest as battleground or quantifiable and objective space is replaced with the subjective and emotive description of the forest as a non-quantifiable, non-objective space. The image of the exchange of fire is replaced with the image of the mélange of sensory images. In a short one-sentence paragraph following this exoticizing of the landscape, Fierce is fused into that non-quantifiable space: "Fierce, de son banc de quart, écoutait et respirait la forêt tropicale" (Farrère 236). Fierce's visible cordoning off in the text by his isolation in this one-sentence paragraph reflects his

figurative cordoning off from the circle of "les civilisés." His fusion with the exotic landscape puts him in a position of being subject as well to the prioritizing of the exotic or feminine, that is non-rational, over the rational masculine matrix of understanding. His dissolution into the exotic setting decenters the narrative balance which is based upon the symmetrical alignment of colonized as opposed to non-colonized space. By extension it threatens the precariously balanced colonizer/colonized, male/female, self/other symmetries which are posited in the text. Julia Douthwaite notes this sort of double reading of the rhetoric of the exotic. It "is not only an outer-directed discourse aiming to control and dominate non-European peoples, but also an inner-directed discourse which masks the (male) controller's secret fears of losing power, as well as his sexual anxieties, self-loathing and apprehension of religious, class or national difference" (3). In other words, the play of battle on colonized ground can be read both as a challenge to colonial dominance and as a subversion to the stability of the discourse within which the colonizing narrator defines himself.

A few chapters later the narrator recounts a battle between the English and the French, one which seemingly would be carried out in terms of conventional warfare. Revon finds the conflict rather odd for a novel purportedly attempting to realistically portray the colonies. He remarks, "Cette supposition d'un événement notaire, mais faux au milieu d'un roman du plus certain réalisme par ses autres parties, ressort peut-être du goût de M. Farrère pour les anticipations et pronostications, mais elle n'est pas sans donner à son livre une étrange disparate" (Revon 31). It is also ironic that earlier in the novel, there was a degree of interaction with the English which did not prefigure the positing of those two groups as opponents at the end of the novel. As fellow Europeans, the English were initially portrayed as understandable within a similar set of terms as the French colonizers. The troubling ambiguity of the final

conflict brings up interesting questions as to the stability of the colonial discourse as it is revealed in this work.

The lexicon of warfare applied to the literary techniques of colonial literature makes for an interesting foray. The opposition of guerilla and conventional warfare tactics can be compared in some respects to the literary skirmishes in the early twentieth century. The loss of textual security and centeredness tied to conventional narrative forms come under covert attack by the rise in alternative voices and challenges to inbred conceptions of authority. The reaction to this blurring of lines of demarcation can perhaps be compared in some respects to the reaction to guerrilla tactics in warfare as opposed to conventional forms. In both sorts of confrontations, the means by which perceptual determinations are made are cast into doubt, and the accepted strategies of containment and management are undermined. The other, as opponent in this scenario, is evasive and his assumed location obscured. The containment of the other through exotic imaging thus loses its effectiveness as a strategy of containment. In the latter parts of the novel, this is apparent in the diminished centrality of the core of "we," and the ambiguity of who or what is "other." The more pronounced use of "on" in the last chapters might be seen as one indication of this loss of focus. Though the author of this text sets himself and his text up as proponents of a realist aesthetic and is read in such a context by the critics of his time, the narrative shows the friction created by the confrontation of forms. This text, tagged by some critics, such as Lebel and Revov, as overly ironic, perhaps, hides its own discomfiture under the guise of irony.

The character Fierce is the central character around whom the battle scenes are constructed. What occurs between the battle on the indigenous front and the battle with the English alters the narrator's portrayal of this character in the two situations.

Because of an incident in which Fierce, Mévil, and Torral are observed in a morally compromising situation by Sélysette and her family, Fierce abandons all hope of assuming the life he had envisioned with the young Frenchwoman. Afterward he describes himself as a counterfeiter as opposed to just being simply guilty: " . . . on pardonne un coupable, on a pitié d'un malheureux; mais on n'épouse pas un faussaire qui a pris le nom et le masque d'un honnête homme, jadis aimé. Fierce était ce faussaire, et Sélysette avait constaté le faux de ses yeux" (Farrère 269). The image of the counterfeiter in this text seems appropriate given the circulation of the currency of potential truth through the hands of many. After a lengthy discussion about the nature of life and truth with Torral who strongly advocates a life of self-preservation and satisfaction at any cost, Fierce rejects that stance saying, " . . . Je n'en veux plus, de cette vérité, qui n'a rien de meilleur à m'offrir: j'aime mieux le mensonge, j'aime mieux ses duperies, ses trahisons et ses larmes!" (Farrère 285). The lies, betrayals, and tears though a few paragraphs earlier were the truths of an "honest" man. The stripping away of artifice, so to speak, which occurs in the last several chapters constitutes as well a stripping away of the exotic or in some respects a recasting of the exotic.

The "truth" of the text cannot apparently be uncovered through textual upheaval. As a realist or "truthful" text, there is the implication that there must be a vector of "truth" extending through some portion of the text. The vector of truth in this amalgam of truths seems to extend to the authorial position of the narrative voice. The implied truth of that position is based on the narrator's objectivity, that is, his ability to see and represent what he perceives as reality. And part of that reality which he creates is a reality in which the other, the different, the exotic, is safely

contained in a space which does not infiltrate or skew the matrix of truth the text
ostensibly tries to preserve.

Notes

¹¹ Along with Leblonds own novel, one of Louis Bertrand and one of Robert Randau, Les Immémoriaux of Max Anéy/ Victor Segalen is cited as being exemplary of this style and goal. This is an example of Segalen's acceptance within the canon despite his ambivalence toward the politicized alignment of colonial literature.

¹² This alignment of the novel and essay with a colonial realist aesthetic is interesting in light of Victor Segalen's consideration of the novel as a prostitution of sorts of exoticism. Poetry, in his view, was a far more suitable medium for exotic expression.

¹³ Even as he sets himself away from the colonial fray, colonial critics tend either to class him as an exemplary case or to excuse him from consideration because of his stated distance from the enterprise.

¹⁴ Bongie's own "exotic" text is an interesting example of a text stretching the bounds of the literal page. He incorporates every conceivable "typesettable" mark of difference to set off or set away his words and his text from the realm of the ordinary. Brackets, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, slashes, letter cases all serve to imbue this text with an appearance of the exotic which "reflects" its own exotic "origin"?

¹⁵ Bongie focuses on "colonial" authors whose works are more avowedly aligned with exoticism as their primary valence. Victor Segalen and Pierre Loti are the French authors he chooses to exemplify a sort of exotic writing particular to the turn of the century.

¹⁶ I refer here specifically to Barquissau, Lebel, the Leblonds, Lalou, and Jourda.

¹⁷ Ironically, Maxime Revon, in his book about Farrère's work refers to the author's appeal to a feminine audience. For all of Farrère's masculine textual security, Revon perceives the texts in terms of popular fiction, which seems by definition directed toward the female reader.

¹⁸ A passage such as this one is hauntingly repeated through the twentieth century in the war literature recounting the French conflict and the the American one in Vietman. The enemy as a faceless, nameless, invisible opponent is a frequent image in such texts.

CHAPTER 6
TRANSLATION: STRATEGIES OF MEDIATION--
LE KILOMETRE 83, HENRY DAGUERCHES

While in Sur la Route Mandarine, the other is dealt with primarily in terms of assimilationist techniques and in Les Civilisés in terms of exoticism, the central accommodating strategy for the representation of the other in Le Kilomètre 83 by Henry Daguerches is translation. Unlike Les Civilisés, where the other is contained and controlled through exotic imaging and thus removed from the realm of desire, Daguerches' novel exhibits moments which at least suggest the desire for unmediated experience or the pleasure of the unwritten. The moment of desire though is most often repressed as soon as it is expressed. The other is immediately reinscripted into the terms where s/he is absolute other. In some cases it entails calling the indigene a child and tagging him with the notions of naivety and lack of reason. In such instances, the other can then be amassed under the umbrella of the possessive pronoun "nos coolies" and can fade back into an indistinguishable mass.

In Daguerches' novel, the translating process is revealed in a number of ways. One of the most visible indicators of this process is the placement of glosses within the text to define or explain the use of indigenous terms. The gradual incorporation of the most common glosses is evidence of the effective work of translating the indigene into the flow of an "appropriately" managed discourse. Ideas and descriptions which would be difficult to confine to a footnote are translated at length into terms which are discursively appropriate for the colonial bounds of the novel. Also, the frequent use of simile as opposed to metaphor belies the translative mode which dominates this novel. If we can imagine assimilationist strategy as presupposing the ideal of ultimate

merging of self and other and exoticist strategy as maintaining the polarity of self and other, translation may be envisioned as working from an assumption of the parallel nature of the relation of self and other. That is, the other occupies a zone of being similar to, but not coeval or coterminous with the self, in this case, this colonial actant. The translation process as a textual strategy effected in colonial texts is predominantly uni-directional, that is the colonial actant's matrix of understanding is always posited as the standard against which and through which any translatable act must be processed.

In all of these strategies mentioned, the ultimate outcome is the collapse back or perhaps forward into the prioritizing of the context of the colonial actant. This prioritizing though does not by any means preclude alternatives which belie challenge. Whatever strategies of accommodation and challenges to those strategies are operant, the common premise and outcome is the maintenance and protection of the dominant ideology of the text and the modes of expression which support it, as well as the presumed perpetrators of that ideology. Johannes Fabian remarks in his book Time and the Other that the "we" who are taken as perpetrators of such systems, the "we, the subject of history, cannot be presupposed or left implicit" (x). In the processing of history, in this case colonial history, it is the assumed transparency of the "we" surrounding the authorial narrative voice which must come under scrutiny as well as the manner in which that voice positions itself in the flow of history. The strategies of accommodation which are the focus of this study are one way of examining the positioning of the narrative voice in texts which ostensibly administer the systemic interfaces of colonial ideology.

Translation, of the three strategies examined, appears on the surface to be the least intrusive and perhaps the least threatening to the culture of the other. In this

chapter, I will deal with the strategy of translation not as exclusively an interlingual process, but rather, broadly speaking, as a management policy, particularly in literary terms. Unlike assimilation and exoticism, considered in the same terms of management practice, translation does not seem to have effected the same sorts of contemporary debate during the period in question. Assimilation, as previously, mentioned gradually gave way to association as a prevailing colonial policy, but lingered on in literary texts even after its demise as a socio-political policy. Exoticism, as a literary practice, seems to have been frequently portrayed in an ambivalent or defensive manner as revealed in the many critiques of that literary mode. The translation of the other in colonial terms, though, seems not to be fraught with the same sorts of negative connotations potentially surrounding assimilation and exoticism, at least within the body of French colonial literature about Indochina. In recent critical works, the act of translation is coming under scrutiny as the allegations of objective and non-biased translative acts are challenged. Tejaswini Naranjana, with Siting Translation, is one of the authors who does challenge the accepted practices of translations and looks beyond the simple act of literary translation to the broader complex of the philosophy of translation as it applies to the colonial relationship. She examines closely the underpinnings of translation as it is practiced in Western culture and brings the process of translation into question. The process of translation is not without its own share of cultural baggage and problems. She deals very pointedly with the questionable deployment of translation strategies in India by the English. Naranjana explains her interpretation of the process of translation in the colonial context:

Translation, as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism. What is at stake here is the representation of the colonized, who need to be

produced in such a manner as to justify colonial domination
Conventionally, translation depends on the Western philosophical notions of reality, representation, and knowledge. Reality is seen as something unproblematic, "out there"; knowledge involves a representation of this reality; and representation provides direct, unmediated access to a transparent reality. (2)

This process of translation provides a space for the other in colonial discourse by "the fixing of colonized cultures, making them seem static and unchanging rather than historically constructed" (Niranjana 3). In this sense, we might say that translation is a bracketing of the other which removes him from the terms of consideration provided for the narrating colonizer.

Of the three novels of primary consideration, Le Kilomètre 83 falls most indisputably (from the perspective of colonial critics) within the critical confines of the proposed colonial canon.¹⁹ Henry Daguerches was chosen as the first recipient of the prize awarded by the Français d'Asie in 1930. While both Dorgelès and Farrère were both recognized with literary awards, Daguerches' award was specifically given in light of his alignment with a particular sort of work--colonial writing. The credibility of his writing was boosted in the eyes of colonial critics because he was a "permanent" resident of Indochina, not just someone passing through, like Dorgelès or a temporarily stationed military officer like Farrère. Barquissau remarks on Daguerches' commitment and involvement in Indochina, saying that he could not readjust to life in France after his retirement to Toulon in 1930 (Barquissau 142). Lebel's comment on Daguerches' colonial career reinforces the idea of credibility which Daguerches' station lends to his work: "Voilà un beau roman, riche de pensée coloniale, et qui n'est pas l'oeuvre d'un passant" (Lebel 170). Intimate working knowledge of the colony on the part of the author thus seems to raise the status of the novel as capable of conveying colonial truth. The infusion of a geopolitical tone in the

novel is not seen as a fault, but rather a positive point in Lebel's opinion. From his comment, we can surmise the importance that colonial critics in general attributed to the integration of one's art and one's politics.

From the opening pages of Le Kilomètre 83, we are confronted with the perceived necessity of translating that which is not within the parameters of the colonial actant. The narrative is conducted in the first person, which alleviates one avenue of potential ambiguity, the third person narrative. The narrator immediately assumes the position of narrative authority by identifying himself as an engineer for the Compagnie de Railways du Siam-Haut-Cambodge in the very first clause of the first sentence. He is inscribed as the voice of colonial activity within the text. His position is thus unambiguous in the second part of the sentence where he speaks of meeting An-hoan. The translation is immediate, "An-hoan, dit Antoine" (Daguerches 1). The binary opposition of the two names is marked from the outset by the parallel positing in the first paragraph. The narrator continues to describe the life of this man in terms of the then and the now, the untranslated and the translated. The narrative security of this text is locked within the necessity of translation. The aberrant, the different, the other, is not allowed to remain in the text untranslated. Throughout the text, the glosses and explanations of indigenous expressions and the frequent use of similes are indicative of the narrator's drive to translate the colony, the other, for himself as well as the reader. The special ability to read and translate the other can be attributed to what Lebel's statement implies--the special vision of the colonizer who lives and works the colonial enterprise.

The initial description of An-hoan/Antoine's lives is a good example of the type of translation which goes on throughout the text. It is indicative of the translating act, not only on the linguistic level, but on the cultural level as well:

Antoine était tombé au rang de coolie; mais An-hoan avait été un artiste que les marchands de riz de la congrégation de Cholon firent venir de Canton sur un pont d'or, à l'occasion de l'agrandissement de leur pagode. Il savait sculpter la pierre et la peindre, avec des couleurs dont il gardait le secret et qu'il composait lui-même . . . Il avait dû accepter, à Siam-Cambodge, ce modeste emploi de "coolie l'herbe", lequel lui donnait charge de couper et mettre en bottes, par tels moyens et sur tels terrains qu'il jugerait à propos, la nourriture quotidienne de dix poneys. . . . Un de nos camarades, ému par le récit de son passé glorieux, l'avait arraché à cette basse besogne et rétabli dans sa dignité d'artiste. . . . L'oeuvre, le grand oeuvre d'Antoine fut, à partir de ce moment, la confection des pierres milliaires, destinées à marquer chacun des kilomètres gagnés de la voie du Siam-Cambodge. (Daguerches 1-2)

At the risk of seeming to read too allegorically this tale of translation, the passage does offer some interesting perspectives in colonial translation. The short, four-page chapter from which this passage is taken is, in a sense, a distillation, a translation perhaps, of what is to come in the novel. The story of the novel is the building of the Siam-Cambodia railway, and this first short section focuses on the making, literally and figuratively, of the eighty-third kilometer marker which is the goal in sight for the narrator. We see a sort of map of what we will see played out in the movement toward the eighty-third marker. The short introductory chapter maps allusions to lost glory, present decadence, the righting of the way through colonial intervention, and the nostalgia on the part of the colonizer to feel or sense that mystery, that secret of the Oriental which is now as good as lost. We see much of the exotic catalogue called upon to recapture the nostalgia of a lost glorious past which is beyond revival. Niranjana sees this sort of representation of the colonized as "the fixing of colonized cultures, making them seem static and unchanging rather than historically constructed." She goes on to say that "Translation functions as a transparent presentation of something that already exists, although the 'original' is actually

brought into being through translation" (3). This sort of translation practice she sees as reinforcing the versions of history which validate colonial domination.

In Le Kilomètre 83, the present moment of the indigene is one weighted with decay and decadence--in An-hoan's case the vice of opium and gaming claimed his identity from his past glory as creator, artist, and site of mystery. He is pulled from his state of loss thanks to the colonizer and given the menial task of feeding animals. His former sculpting and painting is translated to cutting hay instead of stone and guarding animals in their daily habits instead of guarding the secret mysteries of color. He is rescued from this tedium, this world of non-referentiality and given his dignity by being assigned the task of sculpting and painting the kilometer markers of the Siam-Cambodia road. The very graphic grounding of his artistry in the world of the colonizer is written in his appropriation of the task of decorating and inscribing the literal markers of the colonizer's advance into the world of the other.

This oscillation between the artistic and the rational is an interface which surfaces frequently in the text. An-hoan covers these markers of civilization, the kilometer markers, with the stories of the past painted in brilliant colors. In contrast, the numerical coefficient of the linear progress of civilization is inscribed amid the swirl of color. The narrator relates An-hoan's translation of this quantitative coding of the markers, "la borne 72, dite du Tigre, la borne 73, dite des Eléphants, la borne 78, dite du Mois-des-Mangués-Mûres" (Daguerches 3). The exactitude of the numerical identification and the authority derived from that precision and measure is undercut by the re-translation of those coefficients back into a non-quantifiable code. This slippage to an imagistic rather than a positive coding of colonial progress is one of the few moments in the text where the coding by the indigene is allowed to remain in the imagistic coding initiated by the colonized.

A few chapters later, we see an incident where the reverse occurs. The mathematical certainty of the colonial code wins out over the imagistic (in this case imagistic refers to the indigenous language). The narrator remarks on the disregard of the name of a river in the language of the indigenes, translating it rather into a numerical code as the third river. They, the colonizers, do not have time, he comments, to decipher “des essais de transcription graphique des sons qui écartèlent, à son propos, les lèvres mendiantes du bonze A-ka-thor et de ses frères” (Daguerches 26). In this passage, among others, the language of the colonized is described in terms which denigrate its status as language. The implication here is that Western language is not imagistically constructed and that it does not lie, as opposed to the language of the colonized other. The veracity of the language of the West as opposed to the mendacity of the language of the East is a thematic thread which runs through much of the so-called “pensée coloniale.” Throughout the novel, the river will be referred to as only the third river and no attempt is made to translate it again or excuse the incorporation of that landscape into the positive code of the colonizer.

The mystery and the secret of the Orient are imagistically inscribed in the kilometer markers as in the graphic transcriptions associated with the river, implying here, as elsewhere, that the mystery, the secret of the Orient is outside of language, outside of reason, that is, in the realm of the non-translatable. Niranjana refers to Ronald Inden's work which describes this bringing into known terms the mystery of the colonized: “The colonial subject is constituted through a process of ‘othering’ that involves a teleological notion of history, which views the knowledge and ways of life in the colony as a distorted or immature version of what can be found in ‘normal’ or Western society” (Niranjana 11). To be understood, the other must be translated into terms meaningful within a rational, quantifiable system. The

appropriation of the other must then be enacted by a translation or at least the effort of translation to rational, quantifiable terms as illustrated in the marking of distance through the kilometer markers as the railway progress is measured.

The secret which the narrator believes that An-hoan holds is figuratively lost as the holder of the secret dies just as he is finishing the eighty-second mile marker. The hope of ascertaining the meaning of what An-hoan has done dies with him according to the narrator's comment: "maintenant que le vieil Asiatique n'est plus là pour dégager le signe essentiel" (Daguerches 4). An-hoan dies victim, in a sense, of translation. The narrator remarks that his death is due in part to the fact that he has assumed the vice of preference of the Occident, alcohol, "En repentir de ses anciens désordres et par reconnaissance envers son protecteur occidental, il avait renié l'opium et adopté le wihsky (sic) comme divinité inspiratrice" (Daguerches 3). Even the very common vice of opium, one associated typically with exotic transcendence, becomes translated into the vice of the Occident.

The synoptic map of the text which the opening chapter provides is the only place in the narrative where An-hoan is translated into Antoine. Thus translated and circumscribed, he is allowed to circulate in the novel under his original name. When he is mentioned elsewhere he is always An-hoan. Here, as elsewhere in the novel, Oriental names and references survive only in the text when they have been sufficiently defined and explained within the Western matrix of understanding. In the closing passage of the novel, it is An-hoan that Tourange, the narrator recalls in a moment of nostalgic longing for the secret that is forever lost to him. An-hoan in the text functions as sort of a shorthand recall for the art/reason dialogue that the narrator starts in the beginning of the text. From the outset of the narrative, the indigene is associated with art or artistic endeavors, and the colonizers are aligned

with practical or intellectual endeavors. European women occupy a sort of middle ground, oscillating between the creative and the practical. Tourange tells of an experience that one of the other engineers has trying to recapture the artistry of a Chinese musician. The men are struck by the haunting beauty of the music produced from the make-shift stringed instrument that a Chinese man is playing and attempt to recapture the magic:

Le vieux jouait avec une mine étonnamment expressive pour un être de sa race . . . Sans dire gare, Vigel bondit dans sa barque, luijeta une piastre et remonta avec l'instrument. Celui-ci était une sorte de banjo de clown, sorti d'une noix de coco et d'une tige de canne à sucre. Un coquillage faisait office de chevalet, et l'archet pendait aux cordes, engagé sous elles, à la mode du pays (Daguerches 82).

Vigel, another engineer for the French railway project, tried for days to recapture the melody, but could not. The irresolution of the situation is written not in the fact that he must have stopped trying, but in the fact that after five days the current picked up and the river carried the men on. The search for melody is superseded by the natural progress of the river. In a subtle way the progress of the colonial project is aligned with the natural current of the river, and by extension that project too becomes "natural."

Tourange notes the reaction of the old Chinese man to Vigel's attempts, saying that he looked at them "avec une grimace aussi intranscriptible que sa musique" (Daguerches 83). Like An-hoan's secret, the secret of the old man's music is also beyond capture. These incidents, among other similar recountings, indicate Tourange's desire for vision or understanding of artistic and feminine mysteries, and more broadly, of his own ontological moorings. The desire for the unknown and unknowable trouble only momentarily the placid surface of Tourange's drive toward self-definition. The unresolved nature of these desires is not calculated as irreconcilable

loss for the narrator, despite the preponderance of ellipsis and breaks which imply a degree of irresoluteness. Rather the textual gaps are indicative of a sort of acceptance that the world is an always, already translated one and that, in fact, it is only through translation or representation that meaning is generated. In other words, times of unmediated experience or being are part of what he categorizes as the lost or hidden secret of the other. That sort of being does not fall within the realm of the translatable and thus must be accounted for or dismissed as excess. The representation of the other in this sense must be controlled and regulated. Under the control and calculation of the colonizer, then, the other and his context become only a function of the colonizer's own self-definition. The colonial experience is necessarily a mediated one and one fraught with all the baggage that that representation involves.

Tourange's nonfulfillment, or inability to translate the non-scriptible, is conveyed in a number of ways. As just mentioned, the ongoing physical nature of the pursuit of accomplishment, in this novel, couched in terms of the completion of a section of railway, overshadows tendencies of artistic pursuits. Occasionally, as opposed to frequently in Sur la Route Mandarine, irresolvability is written in ellipsis. More frequent than ellipsis in Le Kilomètre 83 are the dotted lines which provide a physical space of indecipherability at moments which cannot be translated or accommodated. One such passage is one which follows by several paragraphs an encounter with a woman who calls into question the notions of love, calculated reason, and power for the narrator. The search for a return to the stasis of surety is seen in Tourange's movement to a group of "rational" men. This unsatisfactory return to reason is followed by the movement of the narrative into the figurative obscurity of the night and then the evasiveness of the ellipsis, and finally the full dotted line break which serves to distance the irresolvable dialogue.

The irresolvability of irony as paradox is relegated to the ellipsis as well. One group of Asian workers that is brought to the site is under the supervision of a priest. The fact that they are Christian according to the priest will make them easier to control.²⁰ The elaborate crosses that they wear seem an odd contrast to Tourange with the lowliness of their station. Even the priest who is in charge of the group, although European, is not quite decipherable. Tourange remarks: "Il m'a remercié et souri, d'un sourire qui n'était pas tout à fait d'un Européen, un sourire d'Asiatique où l'oeil n'accompagne pas les lèvres, et où l'on est tenté, malgré tous les avertissements, de voir l'ironie . . ." (Daguerches 138). The narrator openly acknowledges here the irony, that is, the paradox of translation. The translated element must necessarily be held in sort of an altered state of incompleteness, which is in this passage illustrated by ellipsis. Ironically, in the final chapter in the novel, Tourange turns to a priest as a possible resolution for his dilemma.

The lapse into poetic language is another sort of avoidance strategy that Tourange uses to address the non-translatable. A number of times in the novel the narrator has recourse to poetically structured utterances and many more times to poetic imagery. One instance again calls upon the image of the obscurity of the night: "O nuit cochinchinoise! Incomparable songe d'amant excédée! Tout est fièvre, torpeur, amollissement. Tout, et le coeur humain, participe au refus de vibrer, il n'est que cordes détendues . . ." (Daguerches 128). The other example sets up women as the indecipherable other: "Mais ô femme, ô énigme, ô aiguillon, ô buveuse d'illogisme, ô fille d'or des vents capricieux" (Daguerches 273). Tourange, though does not lose himself in these moments where the poetic holds sway over the prosaic. Whatever nostalgia or longing for the experience of the non-translatable troubles the

narrator, the logic and the reason which underwrite his position support his re-entry into the realm of logical and rational justification for his place and his being.

The novel is divided into two parts with separately numbered chapters. The first half is far more involved with translating the exotic setting than the second half where the focus is rather on the colonizer's accommodation through translation of his situation and the work at hand. As in many colonial novels, the Oriental landscape is an object of desire and an object of fear. In this novel, it is the landscape which holds the most exotic allure and resists translation. Such common points of interest as opium and the indigenous women are not brought into consideration. Thematically, the landscape is frequently treated as the locus of the secret mystery. One reason for this is that perhaps the cities of the East, in this case Indochina, are already mapped or translated by the colonizer. Saigon, for example, is referred to in this novel as "la ville la plus romaine du monde" (Daguerches 169). In Sur la Route Mandarine, it is referred to as the second port of France. The city is portrayed as one easily accessible by the European inhabitant. The exotic elements such as the "boys" and the "congais" are subsumed as practical elements of everyday living in the colony and are presented as easily procurable. Though the city houses many exotic images, the forest and the rivers frequently become the figurative dwellings for that which is not circumscribed by European mapping. So for Daguerches, as well as other colonial writers, these unmapped regions are still open to translation. And Daguerches does translate specifically the forest and the river for the reader.

Chapter 6 of the first section is devoted to the narrator's ambivalent attraction to the Indochinese forest. The forest, he says, "ne s'ordonne pas comme les nôtres, en groupements d'essences" (Daguerches 31). As opposed to the forest as he knows it, the "confusion des formes étourdit d'abord comme une vapeur verte" (Daguerches

31).²¹ The narrator goes on at length to describe the impenetrable, unreadable nature of the forest. The transformation of the forest at evening is described as "le plus grand chuchotement de l'inconnu" (Daguerches 33). In the paragraph which follows, the narrator describes the force of the "inconnu". The untranslatable force though is disempowered by the move into ellipsis and a dotted line break. The forest resists translation, we might say, given the heavy use of ellipsis within the chapter and dotted line breaks. The narrator's loss of control in the mysterious quagmire of the forest is quickly recaptured as the narrator returns to the ostensible realm of understanding and circumscription. The camp of the engineers is located on the edge of the forest, so re-entry into a mapped or translated zone is not too far out reach. The narrator's ability to negotiate meaning from this mystery might be read in the passage where he states, "j'ai compris l'âme secrète de ceux qu'on appelle là-bas, dans les ville peuplées de scribes, les 'broussailleux'" (Daguerches 33). His point of contact, so to speak, with the non-translatable mystery of the forest and the other is the contact with the other as writer of his own culture. The unscriptable other is thus allowed an entry into the text, but only through the voice, the translation of an intermediary who occupies a representational space of the writable, and thus translatable. An imaginary dialogue is set up between the translatable and the non-translatable other. The narrator and the other are bound at this point by the ambiguity of the "on dit" which prefaces the comments about the nature of the "broussailleux." The pronoun "on" can potentially include or exclude either party. The reply to the comments of the ambiguous "on" are preceded by the third person "ils," which sets that group decidedly apart from the ambiguous "on" of the translators and the translatable. The non-translatable idea of pure presence or the nostalgic return to origin is described as "la vie nue" or in similar terminology. "La vie nue," the thematic kernel of the

response, is cordoned off by a dotted line break in the text. The “myth of the eternal return” remains a nostalgic ideal for those who are bound by time and history (Eliade vii) and the act of translation.

The difficulty of accepting the foreign nature of the forest, which we might read as the non-translatable, is in part revealed in the following passage:

Quelquefois j'ai peur et haine de la forêt, de cette forêt dont j'ignore les loi et les caprices, dont le rythme des sèves m'échappe, dont le vert perpétuel se corrompt ou s'exalte pour des causes que je ne sais préciser, de cette forêt qui amalgame les fleurs et les graines, qui n'a pas de saisons, pas de sommeil hivernal, pas d'éveil tendre et printanier . . . rien qu'une poussée barbare de vie, rien que ce soulèvement gonflé de corps d'esclave sous la caresse du sultan solaire! (Daguerches 35)

Following the passage the narrator translates this metaphoric description of the forest of the “other” into a dream of a French forest where the terms still cannot be adequately captured. The translation ends in ellipsis. The final one-sentence paragraph which refers to the noise of an unknown beast in the distance acts as a post scriptum reminding the reader that the task is ultimately impossible. Unlike the element of difference for Segalen which ideally would remain untranslated, for Daguerches, at least, an attempt must be made to translate, and what remains after translation must be discarded or burned as were the beastly statues and drawing of Lully. In this instance, the beast, though in the distance, is the figurative recipient of discarded difference.

Despite the resistance to translation, the forest, the river, the indigenous landscape are an ineffable presence in the novel. A few chapters after the chapter devoted to the forest, the narrator again refers to the effect of that landscape on him: “Une mélancolie entrain en moi, une mélancolie dont je ne peux appliquer l'analyse à des choses d'Europe . . . C'est la rétraction imperceptible, que j'ai notée dans la forêt Tout est lourd laissant tout venir s'écraser” (Daguerches 79). The

river which the narrator has codified as the "third river" is described in this passage in similarly elusive terms: "Ceci existe seulement: ce qui n'a pas de nom, ce qui n'a pas de forme et qui s'écoule Et moi n'irai-je pas me résorber dans la fluidité torrentielle, ne saurai-je participer, dans la dilution de moi-même, à l'interminable fluxion" (Daguerches 84). The narrator finds himself in the representational paradox of having no "other" against which to define himself. In the flow of the nameless, the formless, how can he format a self-image which requires the solidity of other to construct the authority of the "civilisés"? These landscape features and what they represent to the narrator--a non-translatable presence--intimate moments of colonial doubt. The melancholy which the narrator feels here, as well as at other points in the text, is perhaps indicative of a slippage in the security of the colonial veneer and a momentary falling away of the colonial mask and concomitant authorial power.

Physical appearance is subject as well to translation. One would expect that in a novel such as this one, read by the critics as colonial, that the translation would be uni-directional, that the effort would be in terms of rescribing the indigene in the terms deemed as authoritative from the outset of the text. The reversals or rather attempts at reversal are written as already thwarted undertakings. They are, in other words, not decodable. The inability to decode An-hoan's signs is one example. Another example is at the end of the second chapter of part one where the character Fagui is described. As mentioned previously, women occupy a sort of ambiguous space, partaking both of the rational and irrational aspects of being. Fagui is the only female of the group of male engineers in charge of the completion of a particular section of railway. Her very presence in the group is a matter of translation. She was the "wife" of an officer, but could not be legally scripted as widow upon his death. To

mitigate her non-translatable status, one of the men takes her into the group as his companion. The narrator describes Fagui in terms of her typical Occidental features: "Prunelles d'azur et chevelure blonde, pauvres bijoux des visages blancs, qui reprennent ici, au voisinage de tous ces galets noirs, roulés dans des peaux limoneuses, leur taux primordial, imprescriptible!" (Daguerches 10). The mysterious intensity of the nameless indigenous women's appearance is in sharp contrast to the very readable appearance of the European woman. The moment of flight into the non-translatable is quickly neutralized by a return to a very mathematical description of the placement of the European males at the table in relation to Fagui.

Fagui, among the five (and the narrator does count her among the group of engineers), is the most adept at reading or translating what the men view as indecipherable. The first incident where we are apprised of her being placed in the position of translator is in regard to her smoothing out discord among the men--a discord, the narrator notes, which is hardly perceptible to the men. The second incident which follows closely within the same chapter is a case where the narrator notes Fagui's keener sense of linguistic acuity: Fagui is, "en effet, de nous cinq, la plus familiarisée avec le parler local, mélange bâtard de siamois et de cambodgien, altéré de maintes étrangetés phonétiques des tribus chams de la forêt" (Daguerches 20). The language of the other, which in this passage is not given the prestige of an actual language because it is a mixture of various linguistic oddities, can only be understood by one who is not locked within the rational bounds which the colonizer has set up for himself. This same sort of cacophonous blending of languages is referred to later in the novel in a response by Vigil to the narrator. The woman, positioned in the ambiguous space between rational and non-rational, is portrayed as having better access to the creative coding of indigenous speech. In the case of Vigil, his feminine

side is documented in various instances, so his slippage into the cacophonous mystery of language does not seem out of character. Although granted a higher status in this novel than in Farrère's work, the European woman still is in the position of being in closer proximity to the indigene than the European man and better able to bridge the gap of translation. Fagui's efforts to translate, like Lully's, are unrewarded within the text. Lully's "madness" is discovered only after his death and is covered over for all but the "wisest" of the colonizers. Fagui's gradual slippage into madness is more observable but, given her female status, more acceptable. When the decision is finally made to send Fagui back to a hospital in France, it is again the core of "wise" ones who take responsibility for containing that which is irresolvably different. The wise ones (and this is not a term used within the text) are those who are able to accept a "translated" conception of being, all the while knowing that there is an element of ambiguity and ambivalence in translation, or, to borrow Derrida's term, a "supplement." As it bears on the translative process, the notion of the "supplement" fits well with this text, as it is the surplus, the uncontainable which haunts the narrator's colonial security, both in the cultural and individual sense.

Translation takes place both figuratively and literally in Le Kilomètre 83. The incorporation of indigenous expressions within the text is done sporadically. Some words whose meaning could probably be ascertained from the context are glossed-- words which refer to things like dwellings, people, or food. In a few instances indigenous words are used unglossed or undefined, but for the most part, they are glossed or defined within the text. One example of the narrator's mainstreaming of indigenous words is the use of the word "sala" which refers to a particular type of dwelling, a semi-permanent dwelling it appears. Initially, the word is glossed and italicized. Then it is only italicized. In the second half of the novel it is neither glossed

nor italicized, but used as any other French word. It is interesting that this word which refers to a dwelling place falls so easily into the "natural" flow of narrative. Perhaps, in a small way, this usage illustrates the widely-held French assumption that the colony for the colonizer was as home--the colony being an integral part of France and not a totally unreckoned space of an indecipherable other. This processing of the indigenous language is an indication of the narrator's ability, in one respect, to subsume smoothly the elements of difference which those occasional Oriental words suggest. The difference in language, so to speak, is confined to one or two word utterances. There is never any quotation of indigenous language much beyond one word. This tendency is observable in other colonial novels as well. It is as if only fragments and only concrete fragments, at that, are subject to translation, while ideas and abstractions appear more impenetrable.

There is the footnoted acknowledgement that the language of Annam as it comes into French is already translated in a sense. The language was rescripted, the narrator notes, by Portuguese missionaries who put the language into "écriture phonétique" which they referred to as "quoc-ngù" (Daguerches 93). The subject of language arises in the context of bringing Christian "coolies" to work on the railroad and a priest to oversee them. Vigil considers this development a humorous and just irony for the priest, successor of the early Portuguese missionaries who set themselves up as bridgers of the linguistic gulf between East and West.

The language of Indochina is not the only language that the narrator "illustrates" in his text. The cosmopolitan nature of the colonial enterprise is highlighted by the variety of nationalities involved in this particular project, the building of the railway. The Germans and the English figure most prominently in the colonial circle, textually, and of course, more broadly speaking, as well. European

languages, unlike Oriental languages, circulate in the text untranslated. Latin and Greek are similarly left untouched. English, by far, figures more prominently in the text. Astier-Loutfi suggests that this is perhaps indicative of the author's admiration for the English colonial practices (89), although the point where English engineers come to figure more importantly in the railway project is the point at which the narrator decides to return to France. There is the subtle implication that the English are too rational and that even the best, unlike the best of the French colonizers, cannot navigate the ambiguity and complexity of the colonial situation. The potential for linguistic and cultural acumen on the part of the French is suggested in a passage where the chief engineer is the subject of a conversation between Moutier and Vigil:

--. . . D'abord il ne parle même pas leur langue . . .
 --Vous la parlez?
 --Cela va de soi. J'apprends les langues très facilement.
 Je ne fais aucune réflexion sur le "ça va de soi" de ce polyglottisme.
 (Daguerches 58)

Vigil, is in fact, one of the colonizers who is successful in terms of the novel. He is one of the survivors. We also see Vigil's translation ability called upon in his relation with Elsa de Faulwitz, the daughter of the financier of the railway project. Vigil has a sporadic, but intense relationship with her apparently over a number of years. Her marriage to a German count, also involved in the railway project, occasionally interferes, but it seems the two, Elsa and Vigil, are always able to re-translate their relationship even after intervals of separation. Vigil re-enters the relationship each time knowing that to a great extent, it will remain unresolved and problematic, yet he goes back repeatedly despite his ambivalence toward Elsa.

Vigil's ability to negotiate both sexual and cultural ambivalence may be in part attributable to the manner in which the narrator describes his background. Vigil's national origin is not definitively stated, and he lives apart from the other engineers

who view him as a little different. He is one of the few colonizers in the novel who on occasion resorts to escape through drugs. In one instance, Tourange refers to this escape as being like a woman (Daguerches 63). Another incident when the feminine side of Vigil's character is intimated is when Tourange decides to share a house and expenses with Vigil while they are on leave, and the feminine nature of Vigil's furnishings is noted: "je salue l'élégante féminité des aises de Vigil" (Daguerches 99). These references do not put into question Vigil's sexual preferences, but rather align him subtly with the feminine acuity of translation. This hint of the feminine or non-rational side of Vigil's character may in part explain his keener ability to negotiate the translated life of the colony.

Vigil's adaptability is apparent in other instances as well. For example, on another occasion, when Tourange is talking to Vigil, Vigil openly discards the use of the possessive pronoun when describing his feelings about their friendship. He says, "Vous êtes bon camarade, vous n'êtes pas 'mon' camarade. Etes-vous au-dessus ou au loin, ou à côté?" (Daguerches 94). The question posed is left unanswered. Vigil's comment, obviously intended in a positive way, alludes to the equal positions which the two men occupy in the colonial scheme, and at the same time emphasizes their equal "value" in personal terms. It also reflects the importance of the validation of the individuality of the colonizer. The use of possessive pronouns, so often apparent in colonial discourse to articulate the subordinate position of the other, is, in this case, consciously rejected in favor of a qualifying adjective to establish the relationship of equality between two colonial actants. There is no apparent need for the closure of the relationship through the binding possessive pronoun as there is in recounting the colonizer/colonized relationship. The question of mastery does not arise in the relation of perceived equals.

The hierarchy of authority is unambiguous in this novel, both in the colonizer/colonized relationship and the established hierarchy of colonial administration. The narrator apparently subscribes to the ideal of natural authority in both instances, though the comparison must be qualified. Authority established among potential equals does not translate precisely into the terms presupposed in colonial imposition, although the sense of hierarchy on the part of the Oriental is perceived as raising his status in the eyes of the Europeans. For example, a very successful merchant from Singapore established in Saigon is described as having "un sens très fin des hiérarchies" (Daguerches 135). Despite the very readable aspects of his business acumen, the merchant M. A-phat presents a number of faces indecipherable to the narrator. Toward the end of the novel, we see evidence of a certain cruelty, a lack of human sympathy on the part of A-phat. These elements are figuratively enclosed in the mysterious parts of A-phat's home which are impenetrable to the Occidental. The passerby can only catch glimpses or vague hints of what might occur within the closed space. Among the Orientals in the text, A-phat occupies a higher status than the typical indigene. Other points in the text also illustrate this hierarchism in the world of the other--in, for example, descriptions of the indigenous rulers and also in descriptions of those indigenes who work at the lower levels of colonial bureaucracy. These nods to relative authority must be considered as contrapuntal, though, that is, as functioning similarly, but in a different range as far as "real" power is concerned. The power of the Oriental hierarchy is portrayed as only a hollow or decadent power and not a "real" power in the sense of the power and authority of the West.

Tourange's respect for authority or the accepted mode of authorial control is apparent early on in the novel. After an incident where Moutier, the chief engineer has

delegated an unpleasant task of bearing unwelcome news to Vigel, Tourange

acknowledges his acceptance of this task:

Brave Moutier! Voilà rendue moins amère la coupe où l'on a fait dissoudre quelques menus grains de cette substance merveilleuse; l'autorité! Au demeurant, je suis heureux de la féliciter. Car, c'est le meilleur homme de notre équipe. (Daguerches 37)

The authority of the chief engineer is easily accepted given that he is perceived as the most competent, the best man of the team. There is the implied acquiescence to a “natural” authority. It is this sort of implied “natural” authority which must be validated in order for the translation process within the text to be validated as well. In the same chapter from which this passage was taken, there are descriptions of two men who occupy marginal positions of authority in the colonial scheme--Vigel and another colonizer “gone native.”

The narrator first describes a “contremaître” who has aligned himself with the colonized to an extent. He still functions within the colonial context, but not in the position of authority that the other colonizers in the novel occupy. His position as a translated being undermines his status in the text. The description of this man and the narrator's encounter with him is preceded and followed by dotted line breaks as if to separate the unique nature of the translated individual. The narrator feels certain of the “contremaître's” greater identification with the indigene. He has an Indochinese wife and children with her. The narrator classifies the children not as “enfants,” but rather as “gnôns,” which he glosses as “petite enfant annamite.” It is interesting that the children, the visible product of the translated French colonizer, appear not as his, that is, French children, but as the children of the country from which they were born. In the following passage the narrator notes the contremaître's loss of identity: “Il a totalement oublié, j'en ai la conviction, l'ardoise fine de son clocher natal, quelque part

là-bas, en Touraine ou en Picardie, et les filles aux yeux clairs penchées sur les javelles" (Daguerches 39). He goes on to say that when it comes time for the contremaître to die, he will die as the indigenes die, "doucement." This is the only incident in the novel where the colonizer is portrayed as having left the colonial fold, so to speak, yet he does not abandon it entirely, as he still functions in a sort of intermediary position between the indigenous workers and the French engineers. Although the narrator speaks of the contremaître's having completely forgotten his native land, by his continued alignment with the engineers it seems there is an important part of his heritage that he has not forgotten. The relative position of domination in the colonial scheme continues to structure his place in the colonial project, despite his personal choice of lifestyle. The implication is that there is an inherent position of "natural" authority that the contremaître will occupy whatever else he chooses to do.

Vigil is another example of one of the colonizers who holds a place of authority based on his "natural" place in the colonial scheme. His nationality is uncertain. He is not Oriental, though, but European, one of the "civilisés." Like the contremaître, he has adopted certain habits of the land where he is working. For example, he dresses not in the ordinary Western style, but in an adapted native style. The furnishings of his home, in the midst of the railway construction project, though, are markedly French: "Des théières, des jattes de véritable argenterie, bravant sur le buffet la cupidité des indigènes, attestent la salutaire terreur qui doit inspirer ici l'oeil du maître" (Daguerches 41). We are assured of his personal conception of his colonial place by his alignment with Defoe's work, calling himself "le Robinson de la forêt" and calling the indigenous workers "mes Vendredis" (Daguerches 42). From these passages we can surmise that the narrator perceives authority to be a rather natural position for

the European to assume. Based on the examples of the *contremaître* and Vigil, the variances of lifestyle choice seemingly do not alter the “natural” order of things, but appear only as adaptations to the peculiar climate of the work.

The importance of maintaining the face of authority in this particular instance of colonial work is evidenced by the frequent reference to the quantitative difference between the group of engineers and indigenous laborers. The at times narrow margin of control is illustrated in a section where progress is threatened by the desertion of the workers. Two factors influence this desertion. First, pay day is at hand and the workers tend to leave when they are paid. More difficult is the reluctance on the part of the workers to penetrate areas deemed sacred. The illusive mystery of sacred lands is far more difficult for the colonizers to contend with than the desertion on account of full pockets. The child-like people of those hidden lands who, Vigil notes, ignore the power of those who set themselves up as authority are what appear to be the real threat to the colonial project. The “authenticity” of the remnants of ancient civilization--the people, the temples, the lifestyle--surface as subtle challenges to the insular security of the position of authority--the colonizers, “*les civilisés*,” as Vigil calls them. The fragility of the authorial veneer is suggested in passages like this one where the place of authority is undermined by hints of a more authentic societal construct.

The first section ends with the revelation of corruption on the part of some of the initiators of the railway project through a letter Vigil has published in a newspaper detailing the irregularities and the people involved, one of whom happens to be the husband of his occasional lover Elsa. Tourange's calm acceptance of the corruption is indication of his ability to rationalize the whole of the colonial scheme, whatever inconsistencies might mar the surface. For the narrator, the colonial project

at large is far more important than the faults of individuals supporting the project. He responds to Vigil saying,

Mais comprenez ce que j'entends par: "Cela ne m'intéresse pas!", Je ne suis pas un naïf. Quand vous me dites: "Toute la Cochinchine est à fond de boue", je réponds: "Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est que dans cette boue, on ait pu tout de même couler des piliers assez durs pour porter des ponts!" Quand vous me dites: "Les Vanelli et consorts sont des forbans et des fourbes", je réponds: "J'admire, moi que ce ne soient pas seulement la cupidité, l'orgueil, la luxure, mais encore l'intelligence, la hardiesse, la domination, qui fassent glu pour prendre ces rapaces à leurs propres oeuvres! (182-83)

This imaginary dialogue which the narrator recounts to Vigil is probably the key to why Daguerches' work was viewed as a successful colonial novel. The ability of the colonial narrator to navigate the colonial project and translate the problems and wrongs into the production of a greater good illustrates what was perhaps perceived by colonial critics as the most effective way among a variety of strategies to accommodate and manage the undeniable inconsistencies which grew out of colonial policy. Although there are other points in the novel when this philosophy is implied, it is in this passage that the statement is most direct. The containment of this philosophy within a hypothetical dialogue generated by the main character and narrator Tourange is an interesting framing device for the revelation of his philosophy of colonialism. By setting apart the passage in this way--a hypothetical dialogue with all of the incumbent punctuation--the narrator, in effect, removes the dialogue from the realm of the personal, thus reinforcing the overriding structuring nature of colonial philosophy as a whole. Normal dialogue within the text is only marked by the punctuation of the dash preceding the change of speakers as opposed to the containment with quotation marks of the remarks of the two posited voices in Tourange's imaginary dialogue. Part One of the novel is thus opened and closed with the unambiguous

alignment with colonial policy. Whatever doubts or questionings may have arisen in this first section are thus figuratively contained by the framing at the beginning and the end of the section.

In Part Two the focus is even more directed toward the actual completion of the proposed section of railway. The first chapter of the section opens with a description of a swampy area through which the railway is supposed to be laid. The transformation of the area into usable land is made easier by the fact that a section of the way is to be laid over an ancient Khmer road. Thus, the swath of civilization that the engineers are ostensibly cutting is in reality only a translation of the path of civilization which has been marked previously. Tourange and Moutier remark on the facility of retracing the roadbed as opposed to creating a new one. Tourange comments, "On va vite . . . quand on marche dans les pas d'un précurseur" (Daguerches 189). It seems here, as in other places in the novel, such as in the on-going debate between art and reason, that colonial work can be more accurately described as an act of translation than as an act of creation. Artistry or creativity, and even the picturesque in the novel, are portrayed as the absence of control or rational faculty. The reestablishment of order or control is attempted through the translation of aberrant or ambiguous elements into terms which fit the colonial matrix. In the case of non-translatability, the aberrant elements are best destroyed or at least covered over. The narrator, it seems, accepts that there will be no perfect translation and that there will be gaps and fissures in the colonial translation, so to speak.

One vivid enactment of the covering over of aberrant behavior among the group of colonial actants is an incident that takes place after the sudden, accidental death of one of the engineers. In the process of going through Lully's personal effects, Tourange discovers a hidden trove of strange statues. He subsequently destroys the

statuary in question in order to protect the reputation of his friend. Then he and the doctor bag it and throw it into the swamp. Tourange finds the doctor strangely understanding in accepting the hidden madness and aberration which the art work seems to represent. Later, Tourange and the chief engineer, Moutier, together burn the drawings of the man who created the statuary and agree to keep the secret of Lully's artistic, that is, non-rational, bent. Lully's memory then will remain untarnished and within the realm of the rational and, as the men see it, within the realm of colonial work, which allows no deviance or place for the irrational. The monstrous sorts of representations that Tourange finds hidden after his friend's death can perhaps be read as Lully's means of translating the inexpressible.²² And the destruction or containment of that element of difference in this colonial context is inevitable. The security of the colonial project is assured by the encapsulation of the element of madness in Lully's case, symbolized in the casting of the statuary into the darkness of the swamp and the burning of the paper traces of that statuary.

Although the colonial work, that is the construction project, continues according to plan through the second half of the novel, the narrator is plagued with moments of self/colonial doubt. At the ceremony celebrating the completion of the section, Tourange is stuck by the feeling of incertitude as he listens to the governor's comments: "Le Gouverneur général prononça des paroles. Je trouvai qu'elles ne correspondaient pas exactement . . . à quoi? je n'aurai su le dire . . . mais elles ne correspondaient pas . . ." (Daguerches 336). The halting uncertainty of the narrator is apparent both in the content and the form of this passage. The difficulty of translation or representation of the colonial project is confronted when the narrator appears to lose sight of what he has heretofore taken as the given matrix of representation. The loss of centeredness and control is apparent in the loss of

syntactic control in this passage. The fragmentary and fluid appearance of the phrases in this section seems to illustrate the type of loss of control the narrator has sought to avoid throughout the novel. The lack of capitalization within the section, the lack of spacing between the question mark and the next phrase and the intersentential breaks of ellipsis all contribute to the illusion of loss of control. The narrator after this point never seems to reestablish the surety of mission he has exhibited through the novel. Soon after, he tells Vallery that he is leaving, "Pour ma sala, ce soir; pour Saïgon demain; pour la France dans huit jours" (Daguerches 338). The work for him is finished, he tells Vallery, and there is nothing to do but return home since his job is done. What we are left with then at the end of the novel is a product, a translation of the colonial dream. The process, with all of its loose ends, is justified by the product.

The last chapter of the novel is as contained in a sense as the first chapter. The colonial story has ended in the previous chapter. The last chapter is set apart from the text as a sort of postscript with the heading of Saigon at the top of the initial page and then later in the chapter with the heading of "at sea." In this last chapter, the focus turns to the self-questioning and self-definition of the narrator. The finality of the finished colonial project stands in sharp contrast to the unfinished state in which the narrator ends his story. The sealing of the story with a written closure fails to satisfy the narrator. He then turns to his memory of An-hoan:

Et maintenant? . . .

Maintenant que mon vieil An-hoan n'est plus là, pour dégager le
signe essentiel! . . . (Daguerches 357)

"Le signe essential" as the non-scriptible, the non-translatable, was of course always lost to the narrator and, from the outset of the novel, is posited as something unavailable to him. The nostalgic longing for that elusive absence though is an

interesting contrast with the efforts to write over it through colonial work. Since the secret of An-hoan is indecipherable with pen and ink, the narrator turns to the translated counterpart of the holder of secret mystery, a Catholic priest. He writes at length questioning being, meaning, and purpose. The pen falls from his hand, though, signalling his lack of confidence in this translated keeper of mystery: "Je m'arrête. Je regarde par le sabord l'éclat d'une constellation inconnue La plume tombe de mes mains. A quoi bon? Je sais bien d'avance ce que me répondra le Père, et que cela ne me satisfera point" (Daguerches 359). For him the already translated will no longer suffice. He turns literally and figuratively toward the "constellation inconnue."

In the next to last paragraph the image of a black square and a white square are held up for judgement.

Ma main hésite, rature, froisse. Mon regard s'hypnotise sur le carré noir, fulgurant d'étoiles, et puis, sur le tout petit carré blanc qui porte une adresse . . . J'hésite Un "fluit" léger, à peine comme d'une aile de mouette effleurant l'eau, et, sans doute quelques bulles de phosphorescence qui ont rejailli
Comme la nuit est belle! (360)

The word held prisoner on the white paper is thus set free into the liquid darkness, and the narrator takes comfort in the acceptance of loss, of absence, of the untranslatable. This incident recalls an earlier incident where the pieces of grotesque statuary are thrown into the watery swamp and are absorbed in that darkness. In another incident, the same sort of one-sentence closure ends a chapter, except the image of an unknown beast is the image which is the recipient of the discarded difference. In the final sentence of the novel, the darkness is portrayed as beautiful.

The image of water against the night sky is a fitting image for the narrator's surrender. Water is an ambivalent presence throughout the text. It both facilitates and prevents transportation. It is both reflective and absorbing. It is both solid and

amorphous. It is attractive and repulsive. Thus, the narrator's figurative surrender to the darkness between sky and water might be read as his submission to an ambiguous space of untranslatable difference.

Le Kilomètre 83, like Sur la Route Mandarine, is, in a sense, propelled by the image of the journey. The journey, though, in Daguerches' novel is a colonial journey and a narrative of the effort to translate that experience into the level of the individual, whereas the journey in Dorgelès' novel is from the outset a personal quest in colonial space. The first and last chapters of Daguerches' novel frame the text with unanswered or, rather, untranslatable questions about the nature of scripted being. Within the text, the narrator for the most part steers the narrative along the already translated colonial road, with only occasional uncontained or unresolved diversions. The first and last chapters, particularly, direct the journey inward as the narrator questions his place in the transitive scheme of colonial practice. In terms of the expectations of colonial critics, the novel would seem to have been less problematic without the framing of the first and last chapters. Yet, despite the shadow of doubt that the ambiguous frame of the novel casts on the security of colonial discursive practice, the shadow appears not to have been dark enough to compromise its acceptance within the colonial canon.

Notes

¹⁹ Though it is viewed by critics as an example of a colonial novel, it should not necessarily be taken as the classic, textbook case of what colonial critics would consider a colonial novel.

²⁰ The reference to the use of Christianity as a control mechanism is certainly not unique to this text. The "mission civilisatrice" which I dealt with earlier relies to a certain extent on the prioritizing of Western religion in the colonial context.

²¹ Daguerres' images of the forest and the communication of its mystery recall Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances," particularly in the interweaving of linguistic imaging into the setting of nature. The forest, the other, and language merge into an indistinguishable realm of the Unknown.

²² The idea of a hidden core of madness in the colonizer recalls Joseph Conrad's treatment of the same theme in Heart of Darkness and André Malraux's treatment of a similar theme in La Voie royale.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

The place and legitimation of colonial writing in the canon of French literature will always be nebulous because of the conflicting reception of politicized literature. Controversy surrounding colonialism and its aftermath necessarily colors the perspective modern readers bring to their understanding and treatment of colonial literature. The open coding of dominant and subordinate actants in texts classed as "colonial" is disturbing to many readers. This discomfiture is, in part, the reason for the covering-over of literature associated with the colonial project. Given recent interest in post-colonial theory and practice, the reevaluation of such literature as well as the strategies and practices which undergird it can add an interesting dimension to the study of power networks and processes of self-definition which inhere not only in colonial literature, but more broadly in any literary representation where the interfaces of self and other come into question.

The practices and strategies examined in this study as components of the literature recounting the early twentieth century version of colonial imperialism in Indochina are not unique to that situation or that time. The processes involved in the representation of that project did not disappear as they became written over and challenged with the demise of colonial government. While the attitudes toward overt colonial imperialism have shifted greatly as indicated in chapter 1, the play of power which subtends that ideology continues to function in world politics and representational practice. The strategies involved in the representation of colonial ideology still are operative both from a textual and socio-political point of view in a variety of con/texts. Viewed in terms of objective realism as it relates to the genre of

colonial literature, the constructive and obscuring processes of power "politics" are processes which are potentially operative in any relationship which is governed by the coordinates of dominant and subordinate and seeks to justify or legitimize those positions. We might compare these secured systems and the challenges to those systems to what Jean-François Lyotard terms the "great narratives" or the "master-narratives of legitimation." Frederic Jameson reminds us in the foreward to The Postmodern Condition that "legitimation becomes visible as a problem and an object of study only at the point in which it is called into question" (viii). The moment of colonial literature is precisely one of those points where legitimizing myths of social practice come into question.

The colonial narrator is a paradigm of the inscribing and inscription of power in the colonial imperial enterprise. Considered as a locus of knowledge and authority, the narrator occupies a privileged place in the colonial/textual scheme. His place is assured textually by the narrative practice of the colonial author, that is, the adherence to the basic scheme of objective realism. His place is assured culturally and politically by the overarching dominance of the fixed relational modes of colonial ideology. The processes of assimilation, exoticism, and translation are strategies which attempt to mediate the interstices of those vectors of power which inform presumed objective and stable constructs such as colonialism and objective realism. As the director of the ostensibly contained system of the text, the colonial narrator relies on the appropriation of such processes to diffuse the excess of difference which threatens his authorial validation. He creates and maintains his position as locus of truth and knowledge by drawing upon the borrowed legitimacy perceived to inhere in the secured systems of colonialism and objective realism. The textual strategies of assimilation, exoticism, and translation, in this scenario become attempts to negotiate

and accommodate the other, the different, within a system which technically has no place for an/other and which does not “tolerate the incommensurable” (Lyotard xxv). These strategies of negotiation are ultimately ineffectual in the effort to contain, displace, or alter the representation of the other.

The “writing” or representation of the colonized other by the colonial actant parallels, in some respects, the actual economic relationship between the colonizer and the indigenous population. The colonized were presented as a *tabula rasa* by the colonial narrator in much the same way the geographic, political, and cultural space of the colony was deemed open for development. In both Blank Darkness and Theories of Africans, Christopher Miller examines the implications and intricacies of paradoxically viewing the colonized as a blank slate and as an already-written, that is, known entity. The exotic coding of the colonized subject is always just beneath the surface of the blank space, ready to be traced or summoned to the surface by the “real” examples of the colonized figure. The colonized were thus re-formed and de-formed by the written word. They were, in effect, authored and authorized by the colonizer. Their representation became, in effect, an objectification and it was only in the consumption of that image that they were perceived to exist at all. Aimé Césaire, in elaborating the ramifications of the relationships arising from colonialism, sets up an equation, as he calls it, of this process. For him “colonisation = chosification” (Césaire 22). He declares as well that this “chosification” of the colonized in turn necessitates the binding of the colonizer in his role of domination. Colonialism, in this sense, is predicated upon that inevitable consumption or objectification of the other and the positing of the other in language.

In the colonial novel, the aura of objectivity renders the manufactured representation of the colonized assimilable and eminently consumable as true and

transparent representations of the other. In this context, the "writing" of the other implies absolute knowledge of the other and consequently admits a totalized unified conception of the self on the part of the Western colonizer. The perceptual intrusion of language, though, alters the illusion of transparent signification. The processing of perception through language as representation can be compared to the effort to accommodate the other, the different, in a colonial text. Difference, in both arenas, is ineffable and ultimately inscrutable.

It is the illusion of completeness that is the fallacy of the colonial socio-political system as reflected in the colonial novel and the objective realist system of representation. Both systems operated under the assumption that the text/culture was subject to closure and that it could in fact be governed by the structures at hand. In addition to these assumptions, the necessary denial of authentic difference in the two systems weakens their validity as constituent functions of modern Western consciousness.

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VITA

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Jean Marie attended Mississippi State University where she received a B. A. degree in French in 1979 and an M. A. degree in French with a minor in English in 1981. She worked as a Graduate Assistant at Mississippi State from 1979-1981. She entered the doctoral program in French at Louisiana State University in 1981 where she worked as a Graduate Assistant from 1981-1983 and 1985-1987. She spent the 1983-84 school year in Paris, France teaching at the Lycée Hélène Boucher and doing research for her dissertation. She moved to Jackson, Tennessee in 1987 at which time she began teaching at Union University. Jean Marie is involved in the Tennessee Foreign Language Teachers Association, the Tennessee Philological Association, the American Association of Teachers of French, the South Central Modern Language Association, and the Society for the Study of Narrative Literature.

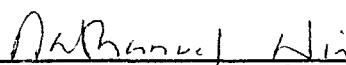
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT


Candidate: Jean Marie Turcotte Walls

Major Field: French

Title of Dissertation: Narrative and Representation in
French Colonial Literature of Indochina

Approved:

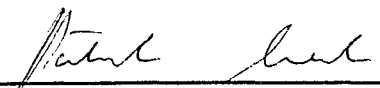

Major Professor and Chairman


Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:


John Erickson

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Date of Examination:

December 8, 1993