Re-reading Race, Identity and Color from the Nineteenth-Century Naturalists to
Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Migrant Narrative

Holly L. Collins

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (French).

Chapel Hill
2011

Approved by,

Dominique Fisher

Martine Antle

Hassan Melehy

Donald Reid

Ellen Welch

Abstract

Holly L. Collins
Re-reading Race, Identity and Color from the Nineteenth-Century Naturalists to
Twentieth- and Twenty-First Century Migrant Narrative
(Under the direction of Dominique Fisher)

This dissertation traces the emergence and evolution of ideas on race in

nineteenth-century French literature, especially in naturalism, and in twentieth- and

twenty-first century Francophone postcolonial literature. My study centers around the

functions of memory, myth and the gaze as they play an important role in the

development of one's sense of identity and also contribute to essentialist views on race.

The internalization of racial myths continues to affect racial dynamics in the Francophone

world due to the persistence of nineteenth-century views on "race" and color. In my

dissertation I focus on the still very important biological roots of modern racial

constructions that associated the color difference of the indigenous peoples in the

colonies with inherent difference. Key nineteenth-century authors such as Emile Zola,

Guy de Maupassant and Claire de Duras played an important role in shaping the

racialized gaze that constructed the otherness of the indigenous subject. These

perceptions developed into various racial and racist myths, so often repeated that they

began to seem natural. Through the study of the use of race and color in the postcolonial

writings of Maryse Condé and Dany Laferrière I examine the influence of these

nineteenth-century constructions of the idea of race in contemporary post-colonial

identity. The way in which these authors take on and subsequently disassemble latent

mythology on race and color is key in the adoption and devotion to a creolized notion of identity as suggested by Edouard Glissant. This way of looking at identity dismisses the idea of pure origins and races as they were conceived in the nineteenth-century Western imaginary and privileges a hybridized, transcultural identity, a certain *métissage*, where of central importance is the idea that none of the components holds more valor than the others. By re-reading race as a problematic construction in important works where it has been ignored, I highlight many of the racial perceptions that continue to exert influence in the post-colonial French speaking world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I heartily acknowledge Dominique Fisher, my dissertation director, for continuing to encourage me through the years of writing and rewriting these chapters. Her guidance and professional style will remain with me as I continue my career.

I also thank my committee members Martine Antle, Hassan Melehy, Don Reid and Ellen Welch for their valuable recommendations pertaining to this study and assistance in my professional development.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends who have been there for me through the long hours of researching, writing, rewriting, editing and formatting. And, of course, I wish to thank my family for their undying support and encouragement from day one.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

– Chapter 1 –

INTRODUCTION

The remnants of nineteenth-century essentialist perceptions of race remain ever

present in the post-colonial world. In this study I trace the emergence and continued

resurgence of ideas on race in French and Francophone literature since the nineteenth

century, a time that in many ways was a perfect storm for modern racial constructions, by

exploring the functions of memory, myth and the gaze as they relate to identity and

perpetuate essentialist views on race. By tracing the nineteenth-century origins of

racisms[1] that stem from the colonial exploits as they pass through various evolutions, and

by listening to the voices of those who have lived these experiences, one can unveil the

masks at work in racism. These masks have ranged from biologically based racisms in

the evolutionary paradigm to socioeconomic factors in the wake of rural-urban migration

to cultural elements in recent and current post-colonial Francophone societies. I will

examine how biological roots, albeit pseudo-scientific cultural constructions, associate

Blackness, ethnic and cultural identities with inherent difference. I discuss the roots of

racism in the context of French and Francophone literatures; however, sociological,

political, historical and cultural studies play an important role as they all exert significant

---

[1] Balibar and Wallerstein explain that the relativity of racism and racist acts in history show that "il n'existe pas *un* racisme invariant, mais *des* racismes formant tout un spectre ouvert de situations, et à cette mise en garde qui peut être intellectuellement et politiquement indispensable : une configuration raciste déterminée n'a pas de frontières fixes" (58).

influence in various ways on the author, either as observer or as autobiographer. By re-reading race as a problematic or ambiguous construction, I am able to bring to the forefront many of the often overlooked, but important, racial perceptions in not only current post-colonial literature and nineteenth century literature, but also in post-colonial francophone societies.

This work re-examines racial discourse in literature especially where Blackness, ethnic and cultural identity are concerned. While many previous and current writers on race, such as Paul Gilroy, Pierre-Andre Taguieff, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, are right to recognize that racial perceptions and discourses have evolved significantly since early ideas of biological racism, the decreased emphasis on color[2] implies that the construction of race no longer reflects or takes root in nineteenth century racial ideology. While these authors follow the history of race and racism from the biological to the nationalist, the sociopolitical and the cultural, I trace the continued Western, white construction of color as the outward and visible sign of an inner truth that defines those living in formerly colonized areas or whose heritage includes these areas in terms of race. Though racisms have indeed changed and evolved, I do not aim to re-write another history of race/racisms, but rather to examine the functions of the memory and myths about "races" and physical difference, whether real or constructed, and the role of

---

[2]Though physical difference in general is important in the creation of racist myth, I wish to emphasize color above others as "la couleur est le signe extérieur le mieux visible de la race, elle est devenue le critère sous l'angle duquel on juge les hommes…" (Fanon *Peau* 95). Levi-Strauss in *Race et histoire* uses the expression "populations de couleur" to refer to people in places that the West has colonized, subjugated or to which they have sent missionaries. In American English "colored people" is an expression that was in the past used to refer to African-Americans, and is now considered offensive. The phrase "people of color" is used to indicate non-caucasians. In South Africa, as is observable in Conde's *Histoire de la femme cannibale*, the adjective "coloured" refers to people considered to be of "mixed race."

the racialized gaze, usually the Western, white gaze, in the development of post-colonial identity.

I will first introduce the socio-political, economic, historical and theoretical contexts in which I examine racial discourse. Within the framework established by this introduction, I will re-read race in the nineteenth-century works of Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and Claire de Duras' *Ourika*, Duras coming after Maupassant because my study of race does not necessarily follow a chronological order, but approaches the question of race from the more to the less essentialist. I then examine the use of race and color in twentieth and twenty-first century novels of Maryse Condé and Dany Laferrière, because of the way they approach race, informed by the fact that they are Caribbean authors writing in migrant situations. The important connections that exist between the nineteenth-century continental literature and contemporary Francophone literatures examined in relation to memory, myth and the gaze will take us through the construction of race and myth, their deconstruction and the hopes of replacing the myth of racialized identity with a creolizing notion of identity.

Emile Zola's Thérèse Raquin and L'Argent

In chapter two I examine how the idea of race is presented by Zola in his novels and how his conception and presentation of race was a strong influence in informing the nineteenth-century white gaze along with shaping racial myths that inform today's racism and views on race. Zola is usually studied as the *écrivain engagé dreyfusard* [a committed writer and a dreyfusard] or as the "father" of naturalism. While the idea of race is tangential to both of these approaches to reading Zola, neither appreciates fully the

important place race takes in his work. In fact, the idea of "race" is almost completely ignored in studies on Zola with the exception of its place in the naturalist theoretical triad of *race*, *milieu* and *moment*, where, in this case, race is presented as nothing more than a grouping of hereditary factors no more or less important than the milieu and the time period. This presentation of race is not necessarily linked to color, ethnicity, religion, nationality, etc., but rather only suggests a group of characteristics, physical and psychological, with which a person is born. I argue, however, that the ideas of Tainian race and physical difference begin to merge in Zola's oeuvre. His use of race evolves from a reference to "types," such as alcoholics or peasants, and begins to lean in the direction of a definition of race that groups people together based on outward difference, namely color, that supposedly represents an essential, racial difference: a different type or species of human. While Zola's "race" was based on heredity and type rather than color, the Europeans, who were already beginning to think about a form of genetics, were confronted *en masse* with the very "different" populations of Africa, East Asia and the Caribbean, leading them down this road to a new racism based on a pseudoscientific biology of the time. Zola uses the term race in a way that mirrors his society's emerging views on the colonial Other, and, due to the popularity of his novels, his ideas were highly influential on the public at large. I also address in this chapter the relationship between Zola's views on race, their transformations and postcolonial racism.[3]

The use of the term race can be found throughout Zola's corpus of fiction as well as in his notes and correspondences. For this study I have chosen two novels that very explicitly represent two key aspects of the nineteenth-century development of racial

---

[3]Racism based on the "Us" versus "Them" mentality of colonialism where the colonizer sees the colonized as being racially and essentially different and thus inferior.

4

discourse: biological "race" and colonial enterprise. Colonial exploitation provided a fertile ground for the birth of a nationalistic racism[4] that used color and physical difference, real or fantastic, as the main factors in classifying the other. The first novel, *Thérèse Raquin*, was Zola's first major novel and it garnered rather extensive public criticism. I chose this novel because Thérèse, the protagonist for whom the novel is named, embodies many of the beliefs, anxieties and fears held by nineteenth-century French people concerning race and the colonial Other. From his physical descriptions of Thérèse to his characterization of her personality and psyche, Zola argues that the African blood coursing through her veins, her "race," determines her being: she is animal-like, savage, violent, impulse-driven and shadowy. In addition to racial difference, Thérèse also represents the perceived danger of racial mixing--her father was French but her mother Algerian--the product of which was supposed to be degenerate and ugly.

The second novel I analyze in this study, *L'Argent,* demonstrates Zola's insistence on race. *L'Argent* is an important novel because it thoroughly describes the capitalist enterprise that was nineteenth-century imperial competition and colonialism. Zola paints a clear picture of the French nation's mentality of superiority, divine/Christian right and financial motivation in the colonial enterprise. All of these ideas serve as justification for the exploitation of the colonial natives and their lands, and all are based on the presupposition that they are of a different, inferior race. In addition to the colonial Other, Zola also presents a racialized portrayal of the Jew.[5] As in *Thérèse Raquin*, Zola once

---

[4]Nationalistic racism is based on the use of nationality as a racial characteristic, and during the nineteenth century nationality and race were almost interchangeable as terms. The importance of the nation is in the nationalist myth around which a people unite themselves, namely that they have a common, linear destiny as a people (Balibar and Wallerstein 119).

[5]Zola himself refers to the Jews using the term race, for example when Saccard refers to them as "cette race maudite" (*L'Argent* 136).

again provides physical and psychological evidence as the basis for their being grouped together as a single race, despite national, familial or any other background. Whether Zola himself was a racist or believed in these racial groupings are not as important issues as the fact that his popular influence, and that of writers like him, played a large part in creating an enduring racial and racist myth.

Guy de Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* and Claire de Duras' *Ourika*

In addition to Zola, there were many authors throughout the nineteenth century that exerted significant influence on public perceptions about the colonial Other. Guy de Maupassant and Claire de Duras are two such authors, each important for different reasons. Guy de Maupassant, like Zola, was considered a naturalist writer and was quite popular during his time, making him one of those who played a part in developing, shaping and perpetuating racial myth. The use of race in Maupassant has also been overlooked, perhaps even more so than with Zola. While he is generally associated with the naturalists, Maupassant did not adhere to Zola's naturalist theories, more specifically the Tainian use of *race*, *milieu* and *moment*, and saw himself more as a disciple of Flaubert. In fact, Maupassant is better known for his short stories and magical realism. His actual distance from Zola and the lack of attention given to the use of race in his novels makes a study of his deployment of race significant as it shows the diversity of sources that fed the imaginary of Second Empire and Third Republic France. I have chosen to examine his novel *Bel-Ami*, an especially important novel in this respect because it lies at the intersection of colonialism, race and nineteenth-century media and propaganda. In *Bel-Ami* Maupassant outlines the inner workings of the news media and

6

the extent to which the media fed sensationalism about the colonial Other. In this novel we see that higher priority was given to the artistic representation of life in the colonies and encounters with native peoples in order to increase sales and readership. The truth remained insignificant in this type of writing and reporting, and colonial natives were thus homogenized, washed into the background as scenery or entertainment, and dehumanized.

Contrarily, Claire de Duras does the opposite in her best known work, *Ourika*. While chronologically Duras' novella appears significantly earlier than the works of both Zola and Maupassant, *Ourika* first appeared in 1823, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* in 1867, *L'argent* in serial in 1890 and *Bel-ami* in 1885, her ideas are extremely more progressive, complex and diversified than other nineteenth-century writers. Though *Ourika* initially enjoyed great success with several reprints and new editions by the end of 1824 (DeJean viii), it was all but forgotten until the late twentieth century with the rise of francophone studies. Because *Ourika* has been studied more recently and Duras' progressive ideas dialogue well with the post-colonial context, I situate my study of this work after that of the naturalists in order to better demonstrate the progression of ideas through the nineteenth century and into post-colonial times. This will also highlight the extent to which Duras' *Ourika* shares the themes of perception and sensationalism with Maupassant all the while contrasting nineteenth-century essentialist racial discourse.

While most popular writing, media and propaganda of the nineteenth century grouped colonial peoples together based on the belief that they were all essentially different, Duras brings the individuality of a young, black, former slave girl to the

forefront of her novella,[6] and in so doing she demonstrates the girl's humanity while exposing the white, French society's projections of difference on to people of color. This novella is important to my study firstly because of the glaring contrast between Duras' work and those of her nineteenth-century contemporaries. Secondly, in *Ourika* we see the beginning of an effort to undo the damage done by the colonial construction of the myth of racial essentialisms and identity. Through an interesting juxtaposition of race and discourse, Duras challenges her early nineteenth-century reader to examine their thoughts on difference, as Ourika was no different from those around her in any other way besides her color. She had been raised and educated amongst the white aristocracy and was only inferiorized when the question of her coming-of-age arose.

Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière...*

The work begun by Duras in questioning racial myth eventually became less of a rarity. Maryse Condé, a native of Guadeloupe, has in many ways in her prolific career challenged prevalent assumptions about race and postcolonial peoples. Condé very literally revisits versions of Western history by rewriting canonized Western works: her early novel *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* is a rewriting of Arthur Miller's *Crucible* from the point of view of the slave woman accused of witchcraft. It is a very important work that reexamines versions of Western history on slavery and colonial times, thus challenging

---

[6]The choice of the novella form over that of a novel is significant in many ways, especially in that there is more freedom afforded to this genre in the Western tradition in comparison to the conventions of the novel as a genre. In non-Western traditions the novel does not follow the accepted conventions of a Western (French) novel. Gerald Gillespie suggests that the novella genre, which became a distinct form and a midpoint between a *conte* or *récit* (short story) and the *roman* during the nineteenth century, has greater flexibility, and because of its concise presentation the reader is not lost in an immense gathering of details, especially in comparison to the realism and naturalism of the nineteenth century (125).

Western conceptions of "blacks" and "non-whites." The colonial framing of this novel makes it an excellent fit within the larger body of my project because it ties together colonial novels with postcolonial writing. In *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* I examine the way in which Condé deconstructs certain dualisms highly characteristic of Western thought and racial perceptions, principally the Christian conception of Good vs. Evil and white vs. black. What is significant about Condé's process is that she does not attempt to replace one construction with another that is equally as contrived. Rather, Condé focuses on the reality that lies outside of dualistic thinking. While Condé is an important writer, there are no studies on her use of color symbolism in this novel. Key to her criticism of Christian dualism is her exploitation of a traditional color symbolism that associates white with Good, clean, pure, etc. and black with Bad, dirty, and so on, first turning it upside down in carnavalesque fashion to expose the tenuous nature of such associations, then eliminating black and white completely, both figuratively and literally, in favor of what lies outside of the dichotomy. In a figurative sense, when Condé shows the hypocrisy and evils of the Puritans and the goodness of Tituba, she erases their respective whiteness and blackness. Tituba's being does not come from within the Christian paradigm and is not Good or Evil; her knowledge of natural healing is not of god or of the devil and thus is not witchcraft as it is conceived by her society. Additionally, Tituba's second lover, Benjamin the Jew, is also considered to be evil because he is not Christian. Condé exploits racial stereotypes concerning the Jews in her descriptions of Benjamin both physically and in his actions in a way that mirrors the descriptions used by Zola in *L'Argent*, Zola's being a naturalist representation and Condé's a caricature. Benjamin defies the white vs. black racial dichotomy because as a Jew he is not

considered to be white, but one cannot label him as black either. In a more literal since, Condé eludes a black vs. white representation of race and color by insisting through Tituba that people be represented by the color red, the color of blood that all humans have in common despite a perceived race. The literal colors of black and white do not exist in human pigmentation, nor do the races associated with these colors. Rather, Condé shows that the question of "color", really identity, lies outside of a scale between black and white, indefinable and thus excluding essentialisms.

Maryse Condé's "Trois femmes à Manhattan" and *Traversée de la mangrove* and Dany Laferrière's *Pays sans chapeau* and *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*

It is not enough to simply dismantle the old system or way of thinking; it must be replaced with a new way of thinking and a new system, or the acceptance of no system. Maryse Condé and Dany Laferrière both continue the fight against racial myth and present a new vision of identity, that of a creolized identity that rejects singular roots in favor of a rhizomic notion. Condé shows in *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* that much of reality lies outside of the Western, Christian, white paradigm. I have chosen her short story "Trois femmes à Manhattan" and her novel *Traversée de la mangrove* because they focus more than any other novel on the notion of creolized identity through the use of polyphonic narration and rhizomic imagery. Though "Trois femmes à Manhattan" has a single narrator, the thread is difficult to follow because it is woven around and through the lives of three women whose lives, though very different, are intertwined by their various relationships. Condé shows how lives can play out in a diverse way based solely on encounters, circumstance and exterior forces. This idea is at the heart of creolization

as it is defined by Edouard Glissant in *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*: an unpredictable and at times explosive outcome of cross-cultural encounters.

In *Traversée de la mangrove* Condé gives both a figurative and literal image of rhizomic or creolized identity through polyphonic narration and the reference to the mangrove. Nearly each of the more than twenty chapters is narrated by a different person, and each person has a different relationship and impression of the dead protagonist Francis Sancher. In being viewed from so many different perspectives, Francis' identity remains indefinable: his nationality is uncertain, his origins nebulous and his identity suppositional and suspect. It is the image of the intertwining and outward-spreading arms of the rhizome, all interdependent and inseparable. Likewise, the mangrove itself is a similar representation of entanglement, though with this image Condé expresses the violence and danger that are also a part of creolization in contrast to Glissant's more utopic vision.

Dany Laferrière also combats hegemony and racist myth, especially myths about the Black man, in much of his writing. I first examine Laferrière's criticism of the cultural dominance implied by globalization in *Pays sans chapeau* where he underscores the threat and danger that atavistic and (neo)colonial societies pose to those whom they decide to dominate. Through this novel Laferrière challenges myth by addressing the discrepancies that lie between the *pays réel* and *pays rêvé*. The persistent colonial myth of the Westernized (white) nation aiding the deprived (black) nation is addressed in this novel through the presence of American troops and Americanized culture on Laferrière's native island of Haiti. Through the use of zombies, Laferrière shows the damage that can be done to a people in the face of cultural domination, be it from exterior or interior

11

forces. His insistence, however, is not for a return to a so-called pure Haitian identity; rather, Laferrière dismisses this idea citing the Nazis as the example of how dangerous clinging to the mythology of pureness can be.

Laferrière's first novel, *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, also deals extensively with myth, especially those cultural myths resulting from colonial exploitation and more specifically the myth of the Black man. I read Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour...* as a contemporary version of Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* with a very comic and ironic twist. Laferrière deals with, exploits and takes apart the many myths and stereotypes that he finds in Montreal, a mostly white society with a strong European ancestry and achieves his goal of peeling back the many layers of myth that go into identity development and the gazes that reinforce those myths. Like Tituba, Laferrière's narrator rips off the masks of black and white in order to expose the underlying commonalities of the human being: flesh, blood, muscles and piss. Neither Condé nor Laferrière work to dismantle racist myth in order to replace it with another racialized version that privileges black or colored over white. Instead, they present a vision of identity that is outside of racial classifications, promoting the idea of creolized identity that cannot be defined in terms of pure race or origins.

Memory, Myth and the Gaze

The specter of nineteenth-century French essentialist perceptions of race continues to haunt the francophone post-colonial world, a phantom continuing to manifest itself in three principal ways. Firstly, we see the resurgence of an antiquated racism still living and breathing in the collective memory of the former colonizers and

formerly colonized. Secondly, this memory leads to the formation of myths that are prevalent in both societies: myths that continue to impose an identity on the cultural Other, myths that reinforce the superiority of the "Western," "White" former colonizers, and myths that serve to reinforce the limits of paradigmatic thinking, whiteness and Christianism. Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his essay on *Race et histoire* for UNESCO, underscores the ethnocentric tendency towards a self-centered mythology. This mythology labels one's own people as "man," even "good," "excellent" or "complete," in turn implying that the others are less human, "bad" or "evil," and possibly even apes (16). It seems to be part of human nature to view others in such a way, at least to a certain extent. Roland Barthes points out that people generally have a certain resistance to believing or recognizing the past except for in the form of myth, the History that we ourselves write and create (*La chambre claire* 136). This can be seen in many of the current myths that are pervasive in Western societies, who often ignore the violence of their own Christian and colonial heritage in favor of rewriting an exclusively violent history of Arabs and/or Muslims. As Benjamin Stora points out, in France there is a continuing resistance towards the acceptance of a melting-pot type of society in favor of their long-standing universalist and assimilationist attitude. Stora explains that the memory of the perceptions of Algerians in Algeria has moved north, has been transferred from the South to the North, and now resurfaces in the myths about Arabs and Islam policies (*Le transfert* 13). Colonization was in many ways a fertile source for today's racism[7], due largely in part to the myths that were created about the indigenous[8] peoples

---

[7]Contemporary racism is no longer a legislatively sanctioned racism and with the exclusion of extremists it has been mostly removed from public discourse, unless disguised. However, racist ideologies or impulses remain pervasive throughout all levels of society whether explicit or implicit.

in order to justify imperial exploitation. With this legacy, anti-immigrant sentiment in France remains high due to persistent associations in the French imaginary of Arab with "barbarian" and myths about the violent, bloodthirsty even, nature of the Maghrebis.

The participation of a society in the ethnocentric myth can be and is in many ways all-encompassing. Nineteenth-century European media played no small role in the reinforcement of the idea that the indigenous peoples from the colonies were less human, one major example being the colonial postcards that were at the time very popular. As Barthes suggests, photography transforms the subject into an object (*La chambre claire* 29), and in the eyes of the colonizers and the people of the French nation these colonial postcards transformed the colonial subject in to a colonial object. The third way in which the specter of nineteenth century perceptions on race continues to menace the francophone world is in the resurfacing of an antiquated racism in the gaze. The gaze and myth are closely linked as it is in the process of translation between the gaze, what one sees mediated by his or her preconceived ideas about the object seen, and knowledge, the supposed objective explanation of what was observed, that myths take root and grow. Identity[9] is developed based on what one sees in the mirror of the other and the gazes to which one is subjected. In the West and its former colonies this is especially true of the

---

[8]The term *indigène*, especially in colonial times, refers to more than just one who is originally from the country in which he lives. Even the Larousse dictionary notes the difference between a current definition and a colonial definition explaining that an *indigène* is one who had been "implanted" in a country before colonization, as opposed to populations of "European origin."

[9] By identity I mean the way in which one sees or defines one's self, especially in relation to those around them, culturally, nationalistically, racially, etc. Though the notion of identity is one that emerged mostly in the twentieth century, there are examples of black writers that dealt with this notion during the late nineteenth century. Ross Posnock discusses, for example, W. E. B. Du Bois' simultaneous rejection of the "racial particular and the unraced universal" (325), instead "deriving identity from action" (325). Posnock posits that Du Bois, at the end of the nineteenth century, was already providing an anti-essentialist push to the notion of identity, a move that he likens to Fanon's argument: a "plea that anticolonial nationalism move rapidly from national consciousness (preoccupied with people who are) to political and social consciousness (focused on people acting in relation to others)"(326).

gaze of the white to which the non-white Other is subjected. Frantz Fanon discusses this "expérience vécu du Noir" in Chapter 5 of *Peau noire, masques blanc* (88-114), a chapter which I will later treat in detail due to its significant parallels with many contemporary francophone writings. Color, race and ideas on race become important because, according to racial myth, the color of one's skin is a marker that signifies many things about that person and their essential being; in the eyes of many, race is "la figure extérieure d'une âme déterminée" (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 56).

The disparity between myths and reality becomes a shocking realization that can lead to alienation and identity crises. The internalization of the myths that have been perpetuated and passed down from generation to generation in the collective memory continues to affect the construction of identity as well as the definition of beauty and self-worth due to the persistence of nineteenth-century views on "race" and color that set whiteness as the ideal. This internalized denial of self and one's own culture, what Pierre Bourdieu calls symbolic violence, remains powerful in that the subject is not aware of it.[10]

---

[10] Bourdieu's *Domination masculine* published in 1998 examines sex roles and the constructed structures of power and dominance that pervade society. His ideas on symbolic violence are applicable not only in the relations between the sexes, but also in colonial/post-colonial relations. He explains that constructed meanings are assigned to things that in reality have no meaning, for example, sexual positions or genitalia, the hard and erect penis in contrast to the soft and concave vagina, arbitrarily become symbolic of dominance (19). Moreover, Bourdieu explains that "les structures de domination sont […] *le produit d'un travail incessant (donc historique) de reproduction* auquel contribuent des agents singuliers (dont les hommes, avec des armes comme la violence physique et la violence symbolique) et des institutions, familles, Eglise, Ecole, Etat" (55). Bourdieu illustrates his discussion of *violence symbolique* with the example of French women preferring older, taller men, often to the complete exclusion of short, younger men, because of this physical marker providing *la dignité* (*Domination* 57). The same can be said in the colonial system with the outward physical marker of "race" and physical difference, namely color as "signes extérieurs d'une position dominée" (*Domination* 57). Likewise, Fanon offers Mayotte Capecia, a martiniquaise woman who marries a white man, as an example of the colonial native who wishes to whiten him or herself. His point of view on this, however, has been highly criticized due to the fact that he himself married a white woman. If it was acceptable for him, why not for Mayotte Capecia?

The notions of memory, myth and the gaze are deeply intertwined. Myths prevail in the cultural and collective memories of entire societies, and the gaze of the other that one uses to define one's own identity is mediated by cultural memory and prevalent myths. Similarly to Lacan's anamorphosis,[11] the reflection is filtered by the shape, or context, of that mirror. In my re-reading of Zola, Maupassant, Duras, Condé and Laferrière I examine how memory, myth and the gaze relate to the development of the notion of identity and the definition of self where race and color are concerned.

Historical perspective: Nineteenth-Century France as the "Center" of Change

The nineteenth century in France was a highly influential time in the "Western" world. France in many ways was at the center of a large number of changes that were taking place. As the cradle of the scientific and industrial revolutions, the turbulent nature of the events of the nineteenth century took its toll on the French and left them desperately seeking to soothe an anxiety brought on by threats to universalism, that is the increased presence of the inassimilable Other, that were left in the wake of a tumultuous time.[12] The ways in which the French nation defined itself, especially in the nineteenth century with the Third Republic marking the "apex of French colonialism" and the "golden age of French universalism" (Schor "Crisis" 47), and all that the French society

---

[11] In *Le Séminaire livre XI : Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (a text gathered from seminars given by Lacan), Jacques Lacan proposes that the gaze, *le regard*, disorganizes the field of vision; there is the eye as a geometrical location, but there is also the eye of the gaze, which is drawn to the distorted, desired object (103). He explains that the gaze is informed, colored and shaped by a person's own experiences, that it is symbolic of one's own reality and that one's relationship with the surrounding objects and people is mediated by vision and the influences of the unconscious on the gaze (85).

[12] The tradition of French universalism in the constitution and in the Rousseauist ideology that sustains it, the erasure or ignoring of difference and strong tendency towards assimilation, was challenged by the changing horizons of French society, especially the increased visibility of difference from colonial natives and also an increased contact between the upper and lower classes.

took for granted as being identifying were challenged by the changing horizons of their own society, scientifically, socio-economically and also by the perceived threat of the Other from the colonies. Modern thinking did not allow for the possibility of challenge or questioning of the things that French society took for granted, i.e. their superiority over those that were perceived as Other or different. Jacques Beauchemin explains that "la modernité repose axiologiquement sur la certitude qu'il n'y a qu'une seule réponse à toute question. Ce qui suppose aussi qu'il n'y a qu'un seul mode de représentation de la réalité (rationnel, objectif et universalisable)" (143). It was this *certitude* that was challenged by the nineteenth-century *bouleversements*. Beauchemin explains further that, "Déjà dès 1848, le modernisme en art avec Baudelaire et Manet remet en cause cette unicité de la représentation de la réalité" (143-4), and indeed the symbolist movement as well.[13]

The nineteenth century in France witnessed the beginning of globalization,[14] or *mondialisation* in French. It was during this period that the world began its process of shrinking: due to advances in technology, people were travelling further and faster and were being exposed to "new" and "different" cultures in a way they never before had

---

[13] For example, Rimbaud's poem *Le Bateau ivre* is a poem that has been read as a condemnation of capitalist imperialism and colonization. See Kristen Ross' "Rimbaud and Spacial History" (49, 53). A more direct criticism cautioning against colonization and its cultural homogenization can be found in Rimbaud's "Soir historique" in *Illuminations*, where he refers to "nos horreurs économiques" (Ross 57-8). According to Hédi Abdel-Jaouad, Rimbaud in his poem *Jugurtha* "est parmi les rares écrivains à avoir mis aussi radicalement le contrepied du mythe néo-latin" (14).

[14] Dominque Wolton reminds us that there are significant differences between what is in French two different terms: *globalisation* and *mondialisation*. *Mondialisation* refers specifically to the expansion of communication and travel abilities making the world smaller in a sense and bringing peoples from around the world more easily in contact with one another (Wolton 81). *Globalisation*, however, is a more recent term and concerns the global economy comprised of a possible 6.5 billion consumers; *globalisation* thus belongs in the realm of a capitalist dream (Wolton 81). The colonial exploits that were tied to nineteenth-century capitalism was made possible through *mondialisation*, but it was not until the late twentieth century that *globalisation* came about.

been exposed. With the development of steam-powered ships and railroads in the late

nineteenth century international commerce and exchanges "dramatically expanded"

(French 4). The expanding capitalism sought to take advantage of these new

opportunities. Africa in many ways was considered to be a blank slate upon which

Western European capitalists were to write: i.e. build, develop and exploit. According to

Christopher Miller, this blank slate was seen as a place that could be made into anything

to fulfill one's own desires (*Blank Darkness* 248).

In the late twentieth century, the globalizing world led to a shift in French and

Francophone cultures towards cultural diversity and *transculturalité* ["transculturality"].

Transculturality, as it is defined by Clément Moisan and Renate Hilderbrand in *Ces

Etrangers du dedans*, "est la traversée des cultures en présence, les deux à la fois, une

altérité culturelle vécue comme un passage dans et à travers l'autre" (17).[15] Moreover, in

postmodern times, the universal was abandoned in favor of the plural and the eclectic. It

was subsequently this challenge to the perceived universalism that led many others to

such a violent and powerful reaction against difference.

Challenges to French universalism were strongly resisted, and the sciences, one of

the most dominant domains to have a large effect on the public, were used to bolster this

resistance. Because most of these perceived threats came from the peoples from the

colonies, who had many visible ethnic and racial differences, these differences, provided

that they were able to be explained by science as being signs of inferiority, became a

---

[15] Though Quebecois and not French, Moisan and Hilderbrand are nonetheless important critics in the study of francophone literatures. The two francophone societies, France and Quebec, are opposite models of the way a society evolves and adapts to increasing influence from outside cultures and forces, France tending strongly towards the universal, Frenchness before all, and Quebec a very transcultural society that in many ways embraces the lack of a One, Universal quebecois identity. Moisan and Hilderbrand are thus able to offer a point of view outside the model of French universalism.

means of reinforcing French universalistic identity. As Eric Savarèse points out in *Histoire coloniale et immigration*, nineteenth-century discourse was dominated by science and more specifically by the evolutionary paradigm. A fascination with science and the mass vulgarization of scientific ideas allowed this paradigm to gain far-reaching strength. Scientific undertones can be found in many of the literary and historical accounts from this time period, and as Etienne Balibar contends, nineteenth-century racial discourse attempted to mime scientific discursivity and was based heavily on visual evidence, "scientific observation" (29).

The scientific world celebrated discoveries and innovations which followed one after another by people such as Galois in mathematics, Niepce, Ampère, Carnot and Curie in physics, Lavoisier and Gay-Lussac in chemistry, and of course Lamarck, Darwin, Bernard and Pasteur in biology and medicine. During this time scientists were asking new questions and finding new answers in all domains of science.[16] The nineteenth century served as an important period in scientific research and furthermore it served as the cradle of new scientific domains that would have an immense influence in several aspects of the sciences. Amongst all of the famous scientists of the nineteenth century, special attention is given to those such as Louis Pasteur, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Gregor Mendel and Charles Darwin for their great influence in biology. Even though the scientific developments in general that were made during this time contributed to the popularity of the sciences, it was the progress and the new ideas in biology that were so

---

[16] Taylor points out that the years in the beginning of the century were the most significant in the history of science: new facts and theories transformed the majority of the sciences and the application of these transformations in the domain of industry changed life for the people of this time (109). See René Taton's *History of Science: Science in the Nineteenth Century* and F. Sherwood Taylor's "Scientific Developments of the Early Nineteenth Century."

fascinating and influential because of the new encounters that came along with the colonial exploits.[17]

In addition to scientific revolution there was also significant transformation in the socio-economic structure of Western European society from agrarian to more and more industrial. This shift led quickly to a mass exodus towards the large commercial and industrial centers. A new, massive class of workers emerged and greatly disrupted the comfort of many in the city scene. The popularity of the sciences led to their broad application in many generalizing and indiscriminate ways. As capitalism led to growing lower classes, supposed scientific knowledge was used to justify a separation between the bourgeois and aristocracy on one hand and on the other a proletariat that was deemed to be of a degenerate, inferior genetic quality. Capitalism was booming and things were changing faster than most could keep up with. In their book *Zoos humains*, Nicolas Bancel et al. discuss the large impact that these nineteenth century *bouleversements* had on society: *bouleversements spatiaux—*from the *campagne* to the *villes—bouleversements temporels*—the newfound *vitesse* in traffic, the establishment of highly organized *chemins de fer—* and *bouleversements sociaux*—the creation of a large, "dangerous" proletariat (8-9). The mass exodus of workers throughout the nineteenth century from the countryside towards the commercial centers led to a rapid emergence of suburban neighborhoods. It was in this way that a center/periphery dichotomy was

---

[17] In 1809, Lamarck published his *Philosophie Zoologique* which presented his ideas on the evolution of man. Fifty years later in 1859 came the publication of the famous *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. Although controversial, it nurtured a sensitivity and a large interest in the study of the biological link between a man and his ancestors. Further, during the 1860s, another today well known scientist, Gregor Mendel, was doing his famous experiments with peas that definitively showed the existence of a biological heritage. With this heavy emphasis on biology and evolution, the evolutionary paradigm was continuously taking a stronger hold of Western European society, and fitting all of the newly "discovered" peoples within this paradigm was yet another way that Westerners soothed their identity crises.

established, along with an increasing bourgeois fear of the lower classes.[18] As society

was shifting from agrarian to industrial, rising capitalism, faster travel and rapidly

expanding lower classes, Western European populations felt a huge need to define, or

redefine, their white and Eurocentric identity in order to reclaim their comfort and

stability. However, the question of "how?" lingered and left an unsettling feeling.

The Other and the Gaze

To be sure, the imperialism of the nineteenth century, which led to colonization of

foreign lands and provided valuable resources for the industrialization of the motherland,

was not the first time an exoticism revealed itself amongst the Western Europeans: there

were Montaigne and his cannibals, Montesquieu and his Persians,[19] etcetera, but the

world was rapidly changing with the many inventions, discoveries and a drive to conquer

all and to profit from all under the influence of the nineteenth-century expansion of

mondialisation. The nineteenth century being the first confrontation en masse with

populations from foreign territories, the initial impulse of the Western Europeans was to

define themselves in terms of what they were not: Black, African, Asian, "Oriental", etc.

Edward Said's book on "Orientalism" is key in the understanding of Western

ethnocentrism and perceptions on the East. He illustrates how so ingrained in the Western

---

[18] John M. Merriman describes many of the fears based on the hierarchical relationships between the center and periphery, where the periphery became symbolic of all sorts of depravity and a location of a threatening social cohesion: for example, the *quartiers rouges* that would become the future *ceinture rouge* of Paris. These neighborhoods were early locations of communist activity and organization that later came to stand for the dangerous proletariat in general that occupied these *banlieues* (Merriman 32, 38).

[19] It is only with postcolonial studies that we re-read texts such as Montaigne's "des Cannibales" and Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* as providing insight into perceptions of the Other. See Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage's *Penser la créolité*, a work in which they seek to define *créolité* in terms of reviewing and rewriting History.

mind is and has been a view of the "Oriental" as being anything that is not "Occidental" (or Western) that it continues to dictate Western ethnocentric perspective. Said explains that there exists the practice of "designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs,'" and it is in this way that "To a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem thus to derive a sense of their identities negatively" (54). The codification of "White," "Western" and "French" were all based on dichotomies constructed out of fears and unsettledness: Said asserts that "All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside of one's own" (54). In order to protect themselves from the unfamiliarity of the new populations that were under the thumb of the colonizers, Western Europeans of the nineteenth century created a space between themselves and the "Other." This space was delineated based on pseudo-scientific constructions.

The nineteenth-century understanding of the "Other" being derived from an ethnocentric point of reference relies wholly on a single directional gaze. The importance of the gaze and the construction of the Other makes Foucault's work on the clinical gaze highly relevant to postcolonial studies. That which Foucault demonstrates about the physician and the patient, more specifically that the patient is transformed in to a homogenized object equal to all other patients, is pertinent to the study of the racialized gaze. A scientific gaze, creates the sick and/or the Other. In a similar vein, Fanon writes, "*c'est le raciste qui crée l'infériorisé*" (*Peau* 75). In *Naissance de la clinique*, Foucault explains how the medical gaze plays a significant role in the objectification of the Other. Just as the doctor's diagnostic approach objectifies the patient and puts him or her in a subordinate position in relation to knowledge and power, the dynamic of the European

and the African takes on these same qualities. In the clinical experience, Foucault explains that the doctor and the patient, or the scientist and his subject, find themselves in a common situation, but the relationship is far from reciprocal. A simple interaction between the doctor and his patient, that of "un regard et d'un visage, d'un coup d'oeil et d'un corps muet" becomes something much more: the "« lit » du malade" becomes a "champ d'investigation" (Foucault *Naissance* xi). The patient as an object of the medical investigation loses his own agency with the doctor. Likewise, the African, made an object of fascination under colonization, becomes the object of the European gaze, and the black the object of the white gaze. The Black man, according to Frantz Fanon, is trapped in a world where he is defined by his exterior in the eyes of the whites. Foucault cites the eye as a source of discrimination : "Le regard n'est plus réducteur, mais fondateur de l'individu dans sa qualité irréductible" (*Naissance* x). From the silence of observation eventually comes the voice of commentary. Foucault further explains how, due to the distance between signifiers and the signified, the commentary based on the information collected during the observatory period, the clinical experience, serves to invent rather than explain, despite the fact that its intention is that of reporting objectively:

> Commenter, c'est admettre par définition un excès du signifié sur le signifiant, un reste nécessairement non formulé de la pensée que le langage à laissé dans l'ombre, résidu qui en est l'essence elle-même, poussée hors de son secret ; mais commenter suppose aussi que ce non-parlé dort dans la parole, et que, par une surabondance propre au signifiant, on peut en l'interrogeant faire parler un contenue qui n'était pas explicitement signifiée. (Foucault *Naissance* xii)

The process of translation between gaze and knowledge is the fertile ground where myths develop. From the observer's gaze to his/her own explanation of what he/she has seen, the original site has already been distorted. If one adds further relaying of the information, in addition to the sensationalism that went along with much of the travel

journaling and writing of the nineteenth century, the object of the story has truly become

an invention of the gaze: "il s'agit, en énonçant ce qui a été dit, de redire ce qui n'a

jamais été prononcé" (Foucault *Naissance* xii). It is in a similar way that the Black

subject is transformed into an object of myth, or as Fanon explains, is enslaved by the

Negro myth.

In Foucault's sense, the medical gaze, that is, the scientific gaze, homogenizes

and objectifies its subject. Rather than being an objective observation, the scientific

practice in observation objectifies the subject of study: the observer "a dû envelopper le

malade dans un espace collectif et homogène" (*Naissance* 200), and "l'être de l'homme"

is seen "comme objet de savoir positif" (*Naissance* 201). Thus, the scientific gaze

constructs the Other. In a similar vein, echoing his own stance "*c'est le raciste qui crée

l'infériorisé*" (75), Fanon cites Sartre: "C'est l'antisémite qui *fait* le Juif" (*Peau* 75).

Further, this discourse on the Other altered and institutionalized the Western viewpoint.

In reference to Foucault, Said writes:

> texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to
> describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel
> Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality
> of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. (94)

Naturalizing "Race" and Hierarchy

During the *expositions universelles* people from the colonies were brought to

Paris and subjected to the Western gaze. The human zoos[20] and *jardins d'acclimation*

---

[20] Bancel *et al.* indicate that "A partir du milieu du XIXe siècle, c'est entre girafes, autruches, éléphants, crocodiles, singes et autres « merveilles » de la nature réinventée que les visiteurs vont découvrir en Europe et en Amérique des « hommes » aux mœurs bizarres et aux rites quelque peu effrayants. Les « zoos humains » viennent de naître" (5). The phenomena of human zoos could be found around the world in World's Fairs and big cities from Hamburg, Paris, Chicago, London, Milan and Warsaw.

described by Bancel et al. reinforced a perverted evolutionary theory that dominated nineteenth-century discourse. Human zoos with the help of science sanctified the racist vision of nineteenth-century Western European society. The "zoo" with an orderly and organized inventory of animals (in this case people) overemphasized the animality of the indigenous peoples from the colonies: it allowed zoological genealogies, hierarchies, diffusions, declensions and perspectives to be cast upon the colonized (Bancel et al. 6). Identified as animals and exoticized, "creatures" brought from Africa to Europe, colonized peoples, provided "scientific evidence" to support an *Us* versus *Them* mentality. The human zoos served as a basis for a construction of savagery of the African as other and thus reinforced the equation: civilized = "us."

The nineteenth-century racial discourse attempted to mime scientific discursivity and was based heavily on so-called visual evidence, or "scientific observation" (Balibar 29). Eugenics and racist myths born of these supposed scientific observations attempted to naturalize racist and racializing behaviors. V.Y. Mudimbe explains that much of what was "known" about Africa was actually a process of invention by writers such as travel journalists and missionaries who imposed their own ideas onto their descriptions of the Africans. Similarly, Savarèse describes the "invention de l'Homme noir" as a process of depiction by the scholars, columnists and other colonial chroniclers who were all convinced that there was a group of characteristics common to all black men (73-4). It was this process of observation relying on a so-called "scientific gaze" that codified the black African as Other and psychologically inferior:

> Un tout premier survol relatif aux communautés humaines d'Afrique noire conduit donc les observateurs à un inventaire des différences qui les séparent de leur propre société. Et puisque, en bonne logique évolutionniste, tout écart par rapport à celui qui observe est assimilé à un retard, ces différences sont

rapidement insérées à un vaste catalogue des « tares » qui maintiendrait les hommes noirs à l'aube de l'histoire. [...] L'usage du concept de race est capital, parce qu'il témoigne du passage de l'explication historique ou anthropologique à l'analyse biologique. Et, dès lors que le retard imaginé est fondé sur un critère biologique – celui da la race noire –, il peut être constaté et non expliqué parce qu'il est supposé *naturel*. (Savarèse 75)

Otherness thus became sanctified by scientific discourse and established itself as natural. Savarèse points to this aspect of racism as being "l'un des vecteurs les plus puissants de la construction coloniale de l'Autre" (75).

The reference to a slanted evolutionary theory coupled with the booming capitalism of the time provided fertile ground for the exploitation of the Other. In his *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Aimé Césaire points out that this fascination and curiosity about the Other led to a deep desire to explore and discover, all of which passed through the exploitation of the Other. He also underscores the fact that "Tout le monde y gagne : grandes compagnies, colons, gouvernement, sauf le Bantou [indigène], naturellement" (Césaire *Discours* 45). Further, suggests Césaire, the coloniser, in order to clear his own conscience, "s'habitue à voir dans l'autre *la bête*, s'entraîne à le traiter en bête" (*Discours* 21). At the end of it all, explains Césaire, "*colonization = chosification*" (*Discours* 23). Colonized peoples were not seen as "people" at all; rather, they were seen as objects or animals much lower on the biological hierarchy.

The attitude of superiority with which the French nation expanded colonization was the start of not only physical violence and suppression of the colonized, but concomitantly the beginning of *violence symbolique*. I have already discussed how racial discourse moved from an explanation of historical and anthropological differences to a naturalizing biological analysis, that is, the ideas that one used to explain difference were sanctioned by scientific discourse and in turn were seen as natural law--originating from

nature not from man. Likewise, the interiorization of the structures of power and dominance infiltrated the psyche of the colonized, "les faisant ainsi apparaître comme naturelles" (Bourdieu *Domination* 55). In his *Portrait du colonisé* Albert Memmi also demonstrates that the colonized were so encroached by the colonizers' values that they adopted them and in so doing adopted their own condemnation (124).

These structures of domination would prove to be the most resilient because they lay in the unconscious of their victims: "un système de structures durablement inscrites dans les choses et dans les corps" (Bourdieu *Domination* 63); "L'effet de la domination symbolique (qu'elle soit d'ethnie, de genre, de culture, de langue, etc.) s'exerce non dans la logique pure des consciences connaissantes, mais à travers les schèmes de perception" (59). In fact, it is this very aspect of shadowy quietness that makes *violence symbolique* all the more powerful and enduring. Symbolic violence is: "d'autant plus puissante qu'elle s'exerce, pour l'essentiel, de manière invisible et insidieuse, au travers de la familiarisation insensible avec un monde physique symboliquement structuré et de l'expérience précoce et prolongée d'interactions habitées par les structures de domination" (Bourdieu *Domination* 60). Because the forces of symbolic violence remain unnoticed on a conscious level, their effect is not easily or readily visible. Thus, the structures of domination amongst the colonized will remain in place for centuries: "Les passions de l'habitus dominé [...], relation sociale somatisée, loi sociale convertie en loi incorporée, ne sont pas de celles que l'on peut suspendre par un simple effort de la volonté, fondé sur une prise de conscience libératrice" (Bourdieu *Domination* 60). Though the physical presence of the French in the colonies was eventually rebelled against and forced out, the nineteenth-century evolutionary hierarchy had, by this time,

already done its damage. *Violence symbolique* had already taken its victims for generations and centuries to come because the values of the colonizers had been internalized.

One of the main ideas that becomes internalized by the colonial natives is that they are in some way inferior to the white and to the French. They have internalized the supposed primitivity of their own condition and race. The idea that the white French were the dominant and fully evolved humans is underlined by the view of Africans, the Arabs and the Berbers, but especially the black Africans, as being less evolved.[21] The dark color of their skin being the furthest from that of the white French was used as evidence of their primitive nature. Both Césaire and Savarèse discuss the idea of primitivism as it pertains to the French colonies. Césaire attacks the "psychologues, sociologues, etc." for "leurs vues sur le « primitivisme »" (Césaire *Discours* 40), because it was these views that persevered and supported a "« Les-Nègres-sont-de-grands-Enfants »" mentality (48).

With the scientific "proof" that heredity exists, i.e. Lamarck and Darwin's theories of evolution, Mendel's famous experiments with peas, the next "logical" step was to consider certain lineages: As some people were perceived to be more intelligent and faring better in life, they were also perceived as having a superior heredity, or race.

The Mission civilisatrice

Colonized people were seen as less evolved humans than the Western Europeans and it was their so-called child-like nature that was exploited in order to convince the

---

[21] During the nineteenth century the definition of race was quite different than now. Nationality was often used synonymously with race. In the chapter on Zola I define in detail his use, common use and other terms associated with race both in the nineteenth century and in current usage.

citizens of France that the colonial endeavors were, in fact, beneficial to the colonized populations. The idea behind the *mission civilisatrice* was that France would be providing a humanitarian service to the colonies by giving them Western religion, education, government, healthcare, etcetera. In the propaganda the endeavor was portrayed as an altruistic one in order to win the support of the public. The images created by such texts and actual images used in advertizing solidified developing myths about the colonial territories and their peoples that would continue to resurface for decades to come.[22]

The idea of the *mission civilisatrice* and the progress that could be attained through science are the principal justifications that were used to give the French nation the support she needed from her citizens to embark upon colonial enterprise.[23] Within the realm of the evolutionary paradigm so dominant during the nineteenth century, these ideas served to create a gap between *nous* (the French) and *eux* (the colonized) that was then widened through constant reinforcement of superiority based on the new science of genetics that had quickly been perverted into eugenics. Color became centrally important because it is the outward and visible sign of an inner "truth."[24]

---

[22] The idea that the French nation had not only the right but also the responsibility to colonize, "educate" and evangelize those in the foreign territories continues to be used today as a justification for colonization. Dany Laferrière jocularly and sarcastically exclaims, "un Nègre qui lit, c'est le triomphe de la civilisation judéo-chrétienne ! La preuve que les sanglantes croisades ont eu, finalement, un sens. C'est vrai, l'Occident a pillé l'Afrique, mais ce NEGRE EST EN TRAIN DE LIRE" (*Comment* 42).

[23] The ideas of Henri Saint-Simon were often also used to promote the relationship between "science and the progress of the human mind" and colonization as well (Taylor 165). This idea can be seen in Zola's *L'Argent*, specifically in the plans of Saccard who belieived that "L'argent, aidant la science, faisait le progrès" in the colonies (120).

[24] Many people have expressed this idea in various ways: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in *Le mythe nazi* writes that race is seen as "la figure extérieure d'une âme determine" (56), Frantz Fanon in *Peau noire, masques blancs* explains that color is "le signe extérieur le mieux visible de la race, elle est devenue le critère sous l'angle duquel on juge les hommes" (95), and Etienne Balibar suggests that race/racism "rend visible la cause invisible du destin" (79).

The ensuing myths associated with color and race were born of the collective, colonial memory. Myths and memory have constructed the *imaginaire* of societies throughout history, both on the sides of the colonizer and the colonized.

– Chapter 2 –

RE-READING RACE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATURALISM: EMILE ZOLA'S *THÉRÈSE RAQUIN* AND *L'ARGENT*

The works of the late nineteenth-century naturalist Emile Zola are in many ways products of their time, often imbued with the racial hierarchy created in an evolutionary paradigm that was deeply ingrained. According to this evolutionary paradigm, all the people colonized by imperial France had a well defined place: from the blackest as the least evolved and thus the most savage, to the white, citizen of the "French nation" as the most highly evolved. In Zola's novels one can see the reflections of a society at the intersection between an essentialist definition of race and a mass effort at colonization that brought the two together, forever changing ideas on race and breeding a racism that would depend heavily on what is identified as visible, physical differences. In this chapter, I will rely on two novels by Zola to show the importance of the nineteenth-century construction of racial myth. Firstly, in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* I will examine the significant role of the new science of biology and how it was seen as determining a person's characteristics, often attributed to race. Secondly, in *L'Argent*, I will study the important role of capitalism and the colonial exploits, and the way in which these forces affect the representation of the *indigène* at home and abroad. Though I have separated the two entities of biology and capitalism to more easily model them by their use in each novel, it is important to note that the reason for choosing the naturalist novels is that they

all participate in many ways in the construction of racial myth through their repetition of both of these elements. In this chapter I will demonstrate how, even before constructivist ideas of race came into play in the twentieth century, conceptions of race in Zola were not simply essentialist but were constructed by the scientific gaze, racial myths and capitalism.

Defining the nebulous concept of "race"

Before embarking on a discussion of race in Zola, we must first acknowledge and examine the nebulous nature of the term and its uses throughout the last few hundred years. The word "race" is one that has in many ways meant different things in different times to different societies. Notably, notions of race have tended to differ significantly between those in France and in the United States, two nations with intricate histories dealing with "racial" issues, but in largely dissimilar ways. The French conception of race involves elements of ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism and a biological interpretation of race. The word "race" came to French around the end of the fifteenth century from the Italian *razza* which meant a "type" or "species" ("Race," *Dictionnaire du moyen français*). Early dictionaries from the period of Middle French[25] keep this definition when referring to vegetables, but for humans the definitions are expanded to include family, lineage, ancestry and, significantly, nation ("Race," *Dictionnaire du*

---

[25] Middle French, *le moyen français*, successor to *l'ancien français*, or Old French, is generally considered to be modern French's predecessor, approximately covering the period from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century.

moyen français).[26] The notions of race and nation remain closely linked in French

through subsequent centuries, and the idea of nation continued to dominate the popular

definition of race until ideas of science became popular in the nineteenth century. With

the emerging influence of science in the nineteenth century, along with the colonial

exploits of the French nation, the ideas of national identity, ethnic identity and biological

identity began to merge. In Pierre Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe*

siècle we see three significant differences from the older definition of "race": firstly, in

addition to the ancestry and descendants of the same family, Larousse adds that "race"

also refers to a same "people."[27]

    The idea of a coalesced "people" plays an important role in the way the past is

interpreted by many nations. Balibar and Wallerstein explain that most people consider

the past to be written in stone and thus irreversible. Though they acquiesce that there is a

"real" past that is in fact written in stone and unchangeable, Balibar and Wallerstein add

that the "social" past, or how we understand and interpret the "real" past, is at best

written in clay. Indeed, according to Balibar and Wallerstein, the notion of a "people" is

constructed and the past is written/re-written based on the triaxial foundation of *race*, a

continuous genetic group, *nation*, a historical, socio-political group and *ethnicity*, a

cultural group. Thus, the past is defined in these three terms, according to convenience,

but in the end, the three terms exist where there could and should be only one, "people,"

---

[26] The full entry for "race" in the *Dictionnaire du moyen français* includes four definitions: "**1.** Sorte, espèce (en parlant des végétaux). – **2.** Famille, lignée, ascendance. – **3.** *Vilain de quatre races,* vilain descendu de vilains. – **4.** Nation."

[27] Amongst the long explanation of "race" in Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, four principle definitions relate to this study: 1) "ascendants et descendants originaires d'une même famille ou d'un même peuple" ; 2) "variété de l'espèce humaine, qui se perpétue par la génération" ; 3) "variété d'une espèce d'animaux, qui se maintient par la génération" and 4) "catégorie des personnes" such as lawyers, financiers, pedantics, moneylenders, thieves, etc.

not a social reality, but rather a complex and easily adaptable product of a historicized version of a nation or group's past.

The second important difference between the Middle French and nineteenth-century definitions of race is the inclusion of humans in the "scientific" part of the definition of race. The Middle French only included plants when referring to "type" and "species." In Larousse's nineteenth-century definition of race, the "variété d'une espèce" includes humans as well as animals and is perpetuated specifically by generation, that is, there must be a connection in bloodlines ("Race"). Finally, the nineteenth-century definition of race is expanded to also include "types" of people, such as lawyers, thieves, pedantics, etcetera. The idea of the "type" is very important in the works of Zola, and one often sees in his novels references to types as being of a particular "race." Though the definitions and ideas about race evolved from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, it is important to keep in mind the tradition of the significance of nation and ethnicity or culture within the definition of race. Centrally important to this study is the constructed nature of race, which relies heavily on national identity, ethnicity and physical difference. This confusion between a notion "purement biologique" of race and sociological and psychological productions of the human cultures is what Claude Levi-Strauss refers to as the original sin of anthropology (*Race et histoire* 8) and stems from the *faux évolutionnisme* of the nineteenth century. As a result, he explains, ideas of race and culture remain in the public mind "étroitement lié[s]" (*Race et histoire* 10). Thus, race can be used to categorize people in a number of ways based on their physical appearance, culture, nationality, ethnicity, etcetera; most often whichever method(s) of categorization prove most convenient to a particular context are the ones chosen.

Construction of Myth

Myth and the construction of myth also play a large part in this study, especially their relation to the notion of "nature" as an ideological construction.[28] Racial myth is based on a set of supposed natural characteristics assigned to the different "races," white, black, "yellow," North African, etcetera. These attributes go from being meaningless physical differences to symbolically loaded and supposed natural grounds for hierarchization within the established order of society. In *La domination masculine*, Bourdieu explains that the dominant institutions in a society, such as the Church, the State, family, schools and the media, present certain relations and ideals as being natural and eternal until in the collective mind of the public they are believed as such. He mostly discusses the relations between the sexes but insists that the logic behind the naturalization of sexual and racial differences is the same. The seemingly "natural" established order of the world is merely a construction through a continual process of transforming history into "nature" and the cultural arbitrary into "natural" (Bourdieu *Domination* 11, 12). The idea that races are fundamentally and essentially different is a product of the socialization of some biological facts, for example creating a relation between skin color and ethnicity or economic position, and, in turn, the naturalization of

---

[28] Etienne Balibar explains that classification and hierarchization are the operations of naturalization *par excellence* (81). It is here that historical and social differences are projected onto what is considered to be "nature" when in reality this is merely "une nature imaginaire" (Balibar and Wallerstein 8). Much of this is constructed based on Western societies' needs for legitimacy in the patriarchal and filial systems. Balibar explains that "En particulier elle incorpore nécessairement des schèmes sexuels, à la fois du côte des « effets » ou des symptômes (les « caractères raciaux », qu'ils soient psychologiques ou somatiques, sont toujours des métaphores de la différence des sexes) et du côté des « causes » (métissage, hérédité). D'où l'importance centrale du critère de la *généalogie*, qui est tout sauf une catégorie de la « pure » nature : c'est une catégorie symbolique articulée sur des notions juridiques relatives, avant tout, à la légitimité de la filiation" (81).

these social constructions. These constructed ideas often remain invisible because collective consciousness remains within a circle of domination, and Bourdieu points out that, especially in medical texts, it often becomes difficult to distinguish between authoritative knowledge from reliable sources and that which the author himself has invented.

It is by this process of naturalization that racial myth becomes so deeply ingrained in society. Bourdieu calls this process a "consécration symbolique des processus objectifs" (*Domination* 27). It is in this way that the supposed opposition between black and white become symbolic of many things. Variances in pigmentation are associated with light and dark, day and night, enlightened and ignorant, civilized and savage, etcetera. The nineteenth-century naturalist writers participate in such construction of certain racial myths that would become ingrained in their society and remain prevalent for decades.

Race and Myth

Both Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss theorized significantly on the idea of myth as it relates to language. Barthes is "accused of stretching the definition of 'myth'" (Edelstein 400) in order to focus on the significance of the sign and its connotations or double meanings, making his theories on myth in the eyes of many "incompatible, even contradictory" (Edelstein 407) with those of Levi-Strauss, who keeps a more traditional definition of myth and examines its structures in relation to time in addition to content. There is, however, some important common ground between the two, as Edelstein further suggests, "In the case of myth, one could argue that the truly valuable

insights of Lévi-Strauss and Barthes lie not in the relations between myth and language, but in those between myth and history" (413). Colonial "history" during the nineteenth century was heavily colored by the emerging myths[29] about the indigenous peoples of the colonies, namely that they were in some way essentially different. We see during the nineteenth century the convergence of two ideas, race as a type or heritage and color as a biological marker, until they become one racial and racist myth: a myth that suggests that there are different races of people, people who are biologically and essentially different, with different capabilities and are marked by their physical appearance, usually reduced to a color that becomes the outward signal of their biological and internal race.

The power of myth, like "race," lies mostly in its ability to seem natural and eternal. In "The Structural Study of Myth"[30] Lévi-Strauss posits that "what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future" (430). Myth takes on a characteristic of being larger than merely a story or an idea that has originated in some place or time. In this way myth transcends time and space and evolves into something that is taken for granted by the people; it appears to *be* and no longer just to seem. As Barthes explains, the fact that the myth was ever constructed is lost in favor of the myth existing as a truth: "les choses perdent en lui le souvenir de leur fabrication" (*Mythologies* 251). It is in this way that

---

[29] Most myths about the indigenous peoples of the colonies centered on the evolutional hierarchy that made everyone inferior to the white Europeans. These myths included the naïve or child-like nature of the black African and the bellicose nature of the North African. Bourdieu explains that the social world constructs the body and physical difference becomes a "natural" justification for socially constructed difference (*Domination* 23-25).

[30] I have chosen to use this version of Lévi-Strauss' essay because it was published as a stand-alone article and gives a concise version of his large corpus of writings about myth. It appeared in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1955. The later version in French appeared as a chapter in his *Anthropologie structurale* published in 1958.

myth becomes naturalized and unconsciously accepted by a people, nation or any

particular group:

> Le mythe ne nie pas les choses, sa fonction est au contraire d'en parler ;
> simplement, il les purifie, les innocente, les fonde en nature et en éternité, il leur
> donne une clarté qui n'est pas celle de l'explication, mais celle du constat : si je
> *constate* l'impérialité française sans l'expliquer, il s'en faut de bien peu que je ne
> la trouve naturelle, *allant de soi.*" (Barthes *Mythologies* 252)

The convergence of the ideas of race that already existed before the nineteenth

century with the political environment of nineteenth-century colonialism and

imperialism[31] provided a fertile breeding ground for the development of a racist myth that

inferiorized the non-European peoples based on what were perceived to be physical and

essential differences. As Lévi-Strauss points out, the way the various ideas and

components of myth come together is the principal factor in myth formation, not simply

the different parts on their own: "If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, this

cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but

only in the way those elements are combined" ("Structural Study" 431). The repetition of

a racist myth that insists upon different and hierarchized races and the ideas on the

differences that exist amongst the indigenous peoples in the colonies, in most all forms of

media and public education was not seen as being a novel idea but was proclaimed by the

authors, or more appropriately, *constaté*, as Barthes described it referring to the way in

which ideas on race were accepted without challenge or even question. Repetition and

constant reinforcement lead to the internalization of myth and it thus becomes the

adhered-to reality. Edelstein points out, however, that there is a "clear distinction

---

[31] The colonial exploits of the nineteenth century brought many new ideas into the public mind in Western
Europe mostly because of the experience of large groups of "new" people and the extensive propaganda
that was used to convince the public of certain ideas, namely that these "other" people were inferior for
various reasons, all of which justified the French presence in and exploitation of colonial lands.

between myth and history" and that even if one believes in a myth, "such a belief does not in any way make the myth true" (406).

Based on the works of Barthes, Edelstein explains that there are three conditions for identifying a myth and that "The first condition for recognizing [myths] is their *repetition*" (410). The significance of the repetition of certain ideas and phrases in the formation of myth gives much more power to writers like Zola and the historians and journalists at large. The exoticism, or a fascination with these "foreign" peoples and cultures, led to an increase in demand for writing about the foreign lands and peoples,[32] which further sensationalized the public interest and opinion, in turn further mystifying their existence. It was an endless cycle of repetition. Though cultural and temporal contexts may vary, Edelstein points out that there is always "some essential aspect that does *not* change, something that is repeated. For the myth, what recurs is the *concept*" (Edelstein 411). The concepts that are repeated in myths, in this case, are the supposed essential nature of the *indigène*, the Jew, or any of the various other racialized characters in these novels. As seen in Zola, though the territory or nationality differs, along with differing physical aspects and perhaps even supposed inherent characteristics, the "concept" that the African, Algerian and Middle-eastern Other is racially and essentially different and ultimately inferior to the white Frenchman does not change, this calling to mind the hierarchy that places the white European on the top. Finally, affirms Edelstein, "For the concept to form part of a myth, however, rather than simply be connoted, it must figure in an ideological network" (411). The racist myth, though ballooning from nineteenth-century Europe where it was very biologically based to span across the globe

---

[32] There is a significant link between exoticism and racism in that the fascination and eroticization of the exoticized object is dependant upon racist stereotypes and myths in order to feed the interest of the gazer.

spatially and temporally evolving into twenty-first-century racism, which is expressed more in cultural terms, is not universally accepted. This myth belongs mostly to the white, European ideological network, though often internalized by the indigenous peoples subjected to the rule of the French nation.

One of the most important elements of myth is that it makes constructed ideas seem natural or eternal. For Barthes, the "principe même du mythe" is that "il transforme l'histoire en nature" (*Mythologies* 237). So the characteristics, psychological as well as physiological, that Savarèse wrote were "supposé *naturel*"[33] got this way by the transformational power of myth. The development of a racist myth was necessary to alleviate anxieties surrounding the slave trade and the exploitation of the peoples in the colonies. That the slaves or indigenous peoples of the colonies were equal humans to the French but yet somehow it was acceptable for the French nation to colonize and exploit them was a contradiction that needed resolution. Lévi-Strauss posits that "the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction" ("Structural Study" 443). Imperial France was able to justify its actions by inferiorizing the Others: the French nation saw itself as having a whiteman's burden to civilize, educate and evangelize the natives. Through the repeated use of imagery and descriptions that made the *indigène* seem closer to animals in the evolutionary hierarchy than the white European, racial myths were constructed and slipped into the consciousness of French society:

> En passant de l'histoire à la nature, le mythe fait une économie : il abolit la
> complexité des actes humains, leur donne la simplicité des essences, il

---

[33] As I discussed in the previous chapter, Savarese explains that the inferiority of races other than white was seen as being a natural truth, it could be said without explanation because of its factuality, it was assumed to be natural—"supposé *naturel*" (75).

supprime toute dialectique, toute remontée au delà du visible immédiat, il organise un monde sans contradictions parce que sans profondeur, un monde étalé dans l'évidence, il fonde une clarté heureuse : les choses ont l'air de signifier toutes seules. (Barthes *Mythologies* 252)

The identity and cultural diversity of the colonized peoples were erased and in their place was substituted a largely homogenized essentiality that was signaled by their physical difference, their color and finally by a race that had been constructed based on an arbitrarily symbolic consecration of objective processes and characteristics.

Myth and Stereotype

There is a narrow relationship between the stereotypes created and repeated throughout a particular societal grouping and the prevalent myths that govern that group's consciousness. Stereotypes are always motivated by racism, thus linking racism, myth and stereotype. Richard Dyer explains that a stereotype's most important function is to maintain clear lines and sharp boundaries between particular groups: they reinforce the separation between the center and the periphery and decide who is allowed to be on the inside and who must remain outside the center circle (16). These boundaries that are "notoriously" hard to construct become a necessity to societies in order to protect themselves from the Others; according to Dyer, the stereotypes are constructed and imagined but serve to make the invisible visible and eliminate the danger posed by imposing difference (16). For the imperial powers, saying that all Africans were inferior allowed the them to separate themselves from the *indigènes* and label the Others as savage.

Dyer explains that what makes stereotypes largely effective is their ability to invoke consensus among a group of people thus giving them a sort of protective cohesion

41

because they supposedly express a general agreement or matter of fact that is itself outside of construction or stereotyping. The French nation of the nineteenth century was struggling with issues of security because of the many changes that were occurring at the time in their social, economic and political horizons. Being able to gather around certain ideas that would make them feel more secure about their own identity made the process and perpetuation of stereotyping much more prominent. However, explains Dyer, stereotypes themselves are strongly related to the structures of dominance in a particular society and are not natural but, rather, are created and express a specific ordering, tendency of evaluation, definition of reality and power structure within that society. Thus, it is by this process of ordering that societies are able to make sense of themselves, but the problem exists in the relativity of the vision of reality: one group believes in the absoluteness of their system, however, *their* system has been altered by *their* history and by *their* power relations.

Stereotypes begin to transform from a system of statements, conjectures and "observations" to a larger network of beliefs and accepted "reality" which form the many layers of myth that dominate a society. Dyer underscores the idea that stereotypes take complex social structures and simplify them into simple phrases or statements; they project onto the world a particular image and, in reality, the source of knowledge and ideas can be the stereotype itself. The result is that people become somewhat arbitrarily grouped together based on "the organization of perception" (Dyer 2) that is assumed to be "inevitable categories pre-existing human consciousness" (3) and are treated based on how they are seen in the various representations of their grouping. These arbitrary groupings serve to reinforce the hierarchy created under the evolutionary paradigm that

42

not only separates the white Europeans from everyone else but creates a mythology and stereotypes about the supposed inferior populations.

While Dyer discusses the ideological aspects of the stereotype, I find that it is also important to examine the use of language in the deployment of stereotypes, especially as this study focuses on their appearance and influence in literature. Mireille Rosello takes an in depth look at the actual syntactical construction of the stereotype stressing that stereotypes gain much of their strength because of the grammatical structure of the phrases used to express them. She reiterates several times that stereotypes are memorable and because of this they are repeated time after time until their source is no longer in sight: they were memorized so long ago their origin cannot be remembered. Thus the elements of the stereotypes that become part of the larger societal mythology rely heavily on their persuasiveness, circulation and memorization. The nineteenth-century stereotypes about the indigenous peoples of the various colonial territories were widely circulated in many forms of media, to include the press, educational textbooks, and postcards. Rosello explains that large parts of history and collective memory are constructed by stereotypes: the stereotypes that define who "we" are as a people (which already assumes that there is a collective "we" with a common heritage), the textbooks that are designed for a specific group of people (which underscores the relative nature of what we call "history") and the violently exclusive construction of communities including the media of dissemination of particular images and stereotypes are all ways in which stereotypes, even those that may be outdated, are made an integral part of prevalent myth.[34]

---

[34] See Rosello 29, 150-5.

Naturalism and the "slices of life" representation/exaggeration

Literature is a significant force in the reinforcement of stereotypes. Rosello suggests that "literature is all too often harnessed to institutionalized canons to be safe from the stereotyping effects of monumentalization" and that it cannot be thought of as independent or free from the "influence of institutionalized power and from the intrusion of stereotypical thought" (129). This is especially true of the nineteenth-century realists and naturalists as it was their goal to faithfully reflect society in their literature.

Zola spent many years developing his theories on naturalism. He saw himself as an observer and experimenter, and compared his art to a scientific experiment in his *Roman expérimental*, an essay that was modeled after the scientist and doctor Claude Bernard's *L'Introduction à l'étude de la médicine expérimentale*.[35] Zola wished to remain as scientific as possible and relied heavily on Bernard's text in writing his own. David Baguley describes the *Roman expérimental* as "une série de citations et de paraphrases récemment tirées du livre de Claude Bernard sur la méthode expérimentale" (*Naturalisme* 38). In this essay, Zola sketched out his literary theories that were based on scientific observation and method, though, as we will see, they are not exempt from stereotype and racism. The experimental novel, according to Zola, is one in which the structure and content is intended to mirror scientific method and experimentation. The principal characters in novels are put into particular situations and the task of the author is to, as objectively as possible, observe and record what happens to them as they live out their

---

[35] Claude Bernard's *Introduction à l'étude de la médicine expérimentale* was considered to be the authoritative instructional text on the scientific method in medicine thus making its instructional methods key to Zola in his quest to apply the scientific method to literature.

lives during a particular place and time under the influence of certain hereditary characteristics.

There are, of course, limits to this process as the experiment is mediated by the author's gaze, what Foucault calls the *régime de vérité* ("Regimes of Truth") of that time and the myths and stereotypes that support them.[36] According to Baguley, Zola saw his role as a naturalist *romancier* not merely as a calling to report and describe "slices of life" but also to decide *how* or from what perspective he should write and describe. Zola took part in shaping the *regime de vérité*, the scientific discourse and gaze, of his time. Baguley, in explaining that the naturalists were not merely passive observers, insists on the active and not passive aspect of naturalism. He emphasizes the importance of the active and performative aspects of naturalism, what he calls the act of *how* the naturalists slice the "tranches de vie" over the mere representation and description of the slices of life (Baguley *Naturalisme* 8). By examining the author's role in these novels, we can more clearly see how they participate in shaping the various myths and racist perspectives of their time.

Zola saw his role as one of active participation in the setting up of the experiments that were his novels. In his correspondences, Zola borrowed the metaphor of various filters proposed by Emile Deschanel to express his ideas on the novelist's role. He was impressed by what Deschanel wrote in his *Physiologie des écrivains et des artistes ou, Essai de critique naturelle*, especially by his remark that "Un trop beau style est comme une vitre colorée qui change l'aspect vrai des objets. Cette vitre, sans doute,

---

[36] In *Dits et écrits*, Foucault defines *régime de vérité*, explaining that every society has its *régime de vérité*, its general politics of truth, more precisely, the types of discourse that are accepted and made to function as truth rather than abstract or constructed ideas (158).

est d'une couleur splendide ; mais, en donnant sa couleur aux objets, elle en altère l'aspect réel, la physionomie, la vérité, et me force de penser aussi à elle" (77). Although Zola did not agree completely with Deschanel, he examined through his own filters the influence that the artist has on his art. In a correspondence from 1864 in Valabrègue, Zola outlines his own filter theory.[37] With regard to his own preference, Zola was not satisfied with any one style in particular:

> Je ne saurais en accepter un exclusivement et entièrement […] L'œuvre d'art, ce me semble, doit embrasser l'horizon entier. – Tout en comprenant l'Ecran qui arrondit et développe les lignes, qui éteint les couleurs et celui qui avive les couleurs, qui brise les lignes, je préfère l'Ecran qui, serrant de plus près la réalité, se contente de mentir juste assez pour me faire sentir un homme dans l'image de la création. (*Correspondance Tome I* 379-80)

The way in which Zola made his presence felt in his novels, was in the role of the *expérimentateur*.[38] The variables in his naturalist conception, *race*, *moment* and *milieu*,

---

[37] In this correspondence Zola describes the effect of the various literary "filters." While this *théorie des écrans* is known in english as his "filter theory," "screen" or "screening" theory may be a more accurate translation because it highlights the interesting nature of a theory that indicates the limits of the representation of the real and *vraisemblance*. Zola's screens include classicism, romanticism and realism before arriving at the description of his own preference: "L'Ecran classique est une belle feuille de talc très pure et d'un grain fin et solide, d'une blancheur laiteuse […] La création, dans ce cristal froid et peu translucide, perd toutes ses brusqueries, toutes ses énergies vivantes et lumineuses […] L'Ecran classique est, en un mot, un verre grandissant qui développe les lignes et arrête les couleurs au passage.

L'Ecran romantique est une glace sans tain, claire, bien qu'un peu trouble en certains endroits, et colorée des sept nuances de l'arc-en-ciel. Non seulement elle laisse passer les couleurs, mais elle leur donne encore plus de force […] La création que nous donne cet Ecran est une création tumultueuse et agissante. L'Ecran romantique est, en somme, un prisme, à la réfraction puissante, qui brise tout rayon lumineux et le décompose en un spectre solaire éblouissant.

L'Ecran réaliste est un simple verre à vitre, très mince, très clair, et qui a la prétention d'être si parfaitement transparent que les images le traversent et se reproduisent ensuite dans toute leur réalité […] une reproduction exacte, franche et naïve." (*Correspondance Tome I* 378-9)

[38] According to Zola, "L'expérimentateur paraît et institue l'expérience, je veux dire fait mouvoir les personnages dans une histoire particulière, pour y montrer que la succession des faits sera telle que l'exige le déterminisme des phénomènes mis à l'étude. C'est presque toujours ici une expérience 'pour voir', comme l'appelle Claude Bernard. Le romancier part à la recherche d'une vérité" (*Roman Expérimental* 63-4).

were an idea that he borrowed from Hippolyte Taine, of whom he considered himself a disciple. David Baguley sees Zola's method as being one that collects an ever expanding accumulation of observable details, but also one that is meticulously restricted and controlled by the author's initial design ("Event" 823). Through an intense note taking process, Zola sought to collect the "data" belonging to the categories of *race, moment* and *milieu* and employ them in his novels, which he outlined thoroughly before beginning.

In his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, Taine outlines his ideas on these three primordial human forces. According to Taine, there is a general disposition of mind and spirit that is either innate and naturally attached to race, or acquired and produced by circumstance (xxii). *La race*, *le milieu* and *le moment* are the three sources that contribute to the production of one's moral state. Race is comprised of the innate and hereditary dispositions with which people are born, and these characteristics are most often connected to marked differences in temperament or physicality, making them empirically observable (Taine xxiii). Taine further suggests that animals, humans included, develop over the course of generations "un système d'aptitudes et d'instincts différents" stemming from the environment and the needs that have surrounded them during these generations (xxiv). In Zola's novels one can clearly see the influence that the milieu and the moment have on his characters. It is impossible to deny that the poverty represented in *L'Assommoir* or the working conditions in *Germinal*, for example, exert an enormous effect on the protagonists; the grandeur and decadence of the Second Empire made it a highly influential time and place, however, heredity, *la race*, takes center stage for Zola and his oeuvre. Even though this idea of race does not coincide exactly with "race" as we

know it today,[39] we are witness to Zola's gaze, a gaze subject to the same limits as the scientific gaze, or similarly, the medical gaze as Foucault describes it. It is in this manner that one can see in the nineteenth-century naturalist racial discourse the beginnings of an idea of race and racism that persists, leading nineteenth-century Western-European society to serve as the cradle of postcolonial racism.

In his literary naturalism, Zola is very interested in behavioral determinants and he attributes a large part of behavior to race. Whether it be in the black or "métis" African, such as Thérèse Raquin or the Jews such as Busch or Gundermann in *L'Argent*, Zola reinforces the idea of the type, a person who is intrinsically X, Y or Z, and the stereotypes and prejudices about them. Countless examples of such a representation of race can be found in the entire oeuvre of Zola. From the Rougon family who are the more successful and legitimate children of the Matriarch, Adelaïde Fouque, to the Macquarts, the illegitimate descendants from her love affair with the wanderer Macquart, and Therese Raquin who carries the Algerian and African blood of her mother, Zola carefully places all within a certain race: alcoholic, nymphomaniac, Jew, African, etc.

Thérèse Raquin and Biological Essentialism & Racism

Though Zola had already published a considerable number of articles, essays and a few works of fiction, his main goal was to live by his pen and to this point, he was not yet very proud of what he had written. However, in 1867 Zola wrote *Thérèse Raquin*, and this would prove to be his first real attempt at applying the naturalist theories he had

---

[39] Current science recognizes that there are no biological "races" in the sense of certain distinct aptitudes linked to anatomic and physiological constitution, rather that differences usually considered to be determinant of a "race" are due to variances in geographic, historic and sociological circumstances (Levi-Strauss *Race et histoire* 8).

spent so much time developing to his works of fiction. In his correspondences with his critics, Zola insists that in *Thérèse Raquin* he obeyed "uniquement à la logique des faits" and that he was "un simple analyste" (104). *Thérèse Raquin* takes us very quickly into the racial dynamic of imperial France as the main character for whom the novel is named is a *métisse*, her father a Frenchman and her mother an Algerian woman.[40] Zola's ideas on race are brought to the forefront by his vision of difference in Thérèse's race. Zola, who used *race* in the Tainien sense to refer to the innate and hereditary characteristics that a person possessed, allowed for different races to exist amongst people of the same "color," a marker that is not until later more popularly considered a racial descriptive. However, Thérèse's African and Algerian heritage become a significant marker of her race, especially during this time when the Westerners (white, Christian, Europeans) were more staunchly grouping themselves together as one race and physical difference, namely color, rather than a wide range of hereditary characteristics, was becoming a more prominent racial divider.

Thérèse's not being fully French nor fully white gave her a lower position in the evolutionary hierarchy. To be sure, though, she was not a black African who was considered to be the least evolved and most childlike, even naïve, of the indigenous African peoples. Thérèse's *africanité* is important to who she is, but not quite as significant as her *algérianité*.[41] While the black African was the most infantilized, seen as

---

[40] The Larousse defines *métis* as being a product of the union of two people of different colors. Though not a term employed by Zola, it is appropriate in describing Thérèse because her father was French and white and her mother was Algerian and, according to the nineteenth century evolutionary hierarchy, of a darker color, though not as dark as the black Africans further south.

[41] The Algerians, as North Africans and not black, were seen as being of a cunning, bellicose and violent nature while the black African was more often described as being naïve and childlike. In the novel, Thérèse's character is in no way described by Zola as being naïve and her passionate character, especially

being of a primitive mentality, the Maghrebi[42] had a very different place on the spectrum. In *Histoire coloniale et immigration*, Eric Savarèse refers to the "exception maghrébine" explaining that the North Africans, though the Maghreb is a place of great cultural diversity, were nonetheless grouped together and seen in a very different light than those from *l'Afrique noire*.

Once again, there were many different ways of classifying the North Africans, just as the different "blacks" around the world and the various Asian cultures all had distinctive divisions. The tendency, however, was to homogenize them into one group when giving an overall description. Zola does not use the terms North African or Maghrebi to describe Thérèse, only writing that her mother was an Algerian woman. However, the aforementioned homogenization of those from North Africa can be seen in Zola's descriptions of Thérèse. North Africans were often likened to a rebellious child, one who was ungrateful and uncontrollable. Though no more or less offensive than the

---

in her violence, reflects the common belief that the North Africans were to be feared. See Gilbert Grandguillaume's *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb*.

[42] The term "Maghreb" and all of its derivatives (Maghrebi, *magrébin, maghrébine*) refer to the North African countries of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. The word in this form came into common use in the French language during the middle of the nineteenth century as a noun and adjective to describe the ethnicity and peoples of the Maghreb, or North Africa, originally from the Arab word meaning "the west," "the occident," "the place where the sun sets" relative to the Arabian Peninsula (*Trésor de la langue française*). It is based solely on the geographical location and does not take into account the variances in the populations of this area, specifically the Arab and Berber populations. Jean-François Guilhaume explains that the Berbers are the indigenous peoples of North Africa that are believed to be left over from the Libyans, the Getules (the nomadic peoples of North Africa several hundred years B.C.), and the Carthaginians (308). They are composed of many tribes and are spread out over the Atlas mountains (Guilhaume 308). The word "Berber" comes from the Roman appellation of *barbarus*, referring to anything not Roman (Stora *Algeria* 2). The origins of the Arabs are taken from the Asiatic conquerors from the Arabian Peninsula who seized Mauritania and eventually the rest of Barbary, to include Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Tripoli (Guilhaume 308). In their earliest attacks, the Berbers were able to resist the Arabs, whose only lasting effect was to convert the Barbary leaders to Islam (Stora 2). Eventually, however, the Arabs would win out and conquer North Africa; Benjamin Stora affirms that the Berbers were gradually Arabized during the Ottoman presence from 1555-1830, following which the entirety of the Maghreb would remain under French control for at least a century (3).

descriptions of the black Africans or the Asians, their characteristics were painted in a very dangerous light:

> les Maghrébins sont presque systématiquement décrits comme des guerriers, des adversaires dangereux, des hommes fourbes et cruels ; non seulement leur penchant pour les armes et leur goût prononcé pour le combat ne fait aucun doute chez les observateurs, experts ou amateurs, mais le risque de conflit est pensé comme permanent parce que les Maghrébins sont, en outre, supposés traîtres, lâches et menteurs. (Savarèse 90)

Not only were they seen as rebellious children, but their supposed penchant towards war and violence led the Maghrebis to be feared and believed to be dangerous. Savarèse maintains that "les Maghrébins sont supposés redoutables et manifestant en permanences des intentions belliqueuses, en raison d'une cruauté jugée sans bornes" (90-91). Their so-called terrifying nature and limitless cruelty made the Maghrebis not only a threat of violence towards individuals, but also a threat to France herself. In the French imaginary, as fanatical, intolerant and hypocritical war-mongers, they represented a persistent threat to colonial order (Savarèse 91). For Zola, Thérèse was a woman to be feared; there was something inside of her, inherited from her mother that crept just beneath the surface, always on the prowl, looking for the perfect opportunity to attack. Thérèse is said to possess "ce sang africain qui brulait ses veines;" it was "le sang de sa mère" waiting to "[éclater] avec une violence inouïe" (Zola *Thérèse* 93). She, like all other Maghrebis, "inspirent la crainte et font l'objet de peurs" (Savarèse 92).

Before beginning his discussion specifically about Thérèse, in the preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin*[43] Zola explains his goals and methods for this novel: "étudier les tempéraments" and, amongst other things, he sought to "suivre pas à pas [...]

---

[43] There was no preface to the first edition, something that Zola makes very clear was done on purpose as he did not feel it necessary to "[allumer] une lantern en plein jour" (*Thérèse* 64).

les poussés de l'instinct" (*Thérèse* 60). Zola insists further on his scientific pretentions in an effort to make his critics understand that he was not merely writing a sensational work of moral depravity: "chaque chapitre est l'étude d'un cas curieux de physiologie" and that he wished merely to "[faire] sur deux corps vivants le travail analytique que les chirurgiens font sur des cadavres" (*Thérèse* 60). Zola claims to have written this novel, "chaque scène, même les plus fiévrieuses, avec la seule curiosité du savant" (*Thérèse* 61). To the critics that would call *Thérèse Raquin* a work of pornography[44] and its author a "misérable hystérique," Zola rebuts, "Tant que j'ai écrit *Thérèse Raquin*, j'ai oublié le monde, je me suis perdu dans la copie exacte et minutieuse de la vie, me donnant tout entier à l'analyse du mécanisme humain, et je vous assure que les amours cruelles de Thérèse et Laurent n'avaient pour moi rien d'immoral, rien qui puisse pousser aux passions mauvaises" (*Thérèse* 61).

In keeping with his naturalist approach, the novel *Thérèse Raquin* is, according to Zola, an experiment where these two particular characters, Thérèse and Laurent, are thrown into the Erlenmeyer and mixed with variables; they are "sous la pression des milieux et des circonstances" (*Thérèse* 63). Zola even references the high interest in the sciences of his time when explaining that his novel is the product of a literary experiment and that he is merely the observer: "A coup sûr, l'analyse scientifique que j'ai tenté d'appliquer dans *Thérèse Raquin* ne les surprendrait pas ; ils y retrouveraient la méthode moderne, l'outil d'enquête universelle dont le siècle se sert avec tant de fièvre pour trouer

---

[44] Zola decries the the fact that there was no one to defend his writing amongst the crowd of voices screaming that he "se plait à étaler de pornographies" (*Thérèse* 61), likely a reference to the open and detailed manner in which he treated sexuality in this and future novels, especially *Nana*, a novel that examines specifically the theme of prostitution--"pornography" being a term used in the nineteenth century to describe studies or treatises on prostitutes.

l'avenir" (62-63). This experiment, writes Zola, consisted of, "En un mot, [...] un désir : étant donné un homme puissant et une femme inassouvie, chercher en eux la bête, ne voir même que la bête, les jeter dans un drame violent, et noter scrupuleusement les sensations et les actes de ces êtres" (*Thérèse* 61).

It is important to notice that Zola is referring to both Thérèse and Laurent as animals, human animals. Zola is not using the term "animal" to refer only to Thérèse, the half-Algerian; he does however describe them as being of a different race. There is no dichotomy here between a white race, Laurent, and an African or Algerian nationality influencing Thérèse's race. Rather, Laurent is "d'une nature sanguine" and Thérèse "d'une nature nerveuse" (Zola *Thérèse* 60), a nature which corresponds to the stereotypes of Arabs described by Savarèse. With these two different temperaments, Zola attempts to "expliquer l'union étrange" and "[montrer] les troubles profonds d'une nature sanguine en contact d'une nature nerveuse" (*Thérèse* 60), his idea of race tending closer to that of a hereditary line or a type and not quite yet to a color differentiation.

This disctinction between the two principal characters becomes significant when examining what Thérèse's particular temperament is and more importantly, from where Thérèse's temperament comes. In the foreword, Zola explains to the reader that he chose "des personnages souverainement dominés par leurs nerfs et leur sang, dépourvus de libre arbitre, entraînés à chaque acte de leur vie par les fatalités de leur chair" (*Thérèse* 60). The characters are not acting based on their own free will, rather they are acting from their instincts which are nothing other than the innate characteristics and drives that they possess from birth, from their blood and from their ancestry. It is a case here where that which reigns and decides the actions of the protagonists is the animalistic nature of the

human; Zola calls them "des brutes humaines" driven by these "poussées de l'instinct" (*Thérèse* 60). More specifically, if Thérèse is deprived of free will, one must conclude that that which directs her is something beyond her control. She is ruled by that which she inherits from the other animals of her kind: her "race," the instincts that she possesses innately.

Her father was French, but her mother was Algerian: "Un jour, seize années auparavant, lorsque Mme Raquin était encore mercière, son frère, le capitaine Degans, lui apporta une petite fille dans ses bras. Il arrivait d'Algérie" (*Thérèse* 71). Not only is Thérèse's mother dead but further, Zola here underlines the savage nature, the danger really, of Thérèse's native land by explaining how the father "partit, et on ne le revit plus ; quelques annees plus tard, il se fit tuer en Afrique" (*Thérèse* 72).

Traditionally, Africa has long since been perceived as a place of danger and the unknown. Christopher Miller affirms that many presumptions about Africa and Africans date back to Antiquity when Africa was seen as a place that produced monsters (*Blank* 4). Though Miller mostly refers to Sub-Saharan Africa, his ideas are applicable also to North Africa, as we see in Thérèse Raquin's descriptions. The many authors that wrote about such a place served to create what he calls an Africanist discourse: a European perception of Africa that was a construct based on past centuries of writings as well as contemporary writings in which "Africa has been made to bear a double burden, of monstrousness *and* nobility, all imposed by a deeper condition of difference and instability (Pliny's "newness")" (*Blank* Miller 5). This blank-slate view of Africa allowed it to become completely defined by the popular discourse surrounding it in nineteenth-century France. Both the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa were subject to the Europeans' projections.

Popular discourse was largely defined by travel journals, novels purporting to be

autobiographical or at least well researched and a sensationalist press, as I will later

explore in Guy de Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*. Miller, commenting on this, finds that most

discourses on Africa tended to be all nuance and rumor, a collection of sensationalized

stories instead of realistic or factual accounts (*Blank* 6).

No small significance should be given to nineteenth-century literature about

Africa. It is this very literature that perpetuated the fearsome views of Africa as well as

evolved the Europeans' perceptions bringing them in line with the nineteenth-century

evolutionary paradigm and scientific obsessions:

> Besides the actual and official presence of Europeans in Africa there was
> the imagined and the unofficial presence. Unhampered by the reality the
> fantasies and the tales of adventure reveal with stark clarity the logic of
> European patterns of expectation. In the adventure stories stereotypes are
> elaborated into scenarios. Among recurring themes are the fantasy of fear:
> the European as prisoner of the savages, and the fantasy of power: the
> European as king over the savages, with secondary roles of the savages
> themselves, either threatening or servile. (Pieterse 108)

As Miller points out, the fantasy was both "dream [and] nightmare" (*Blank* 249), but

reality itself was outside of Western European, white fantasy and imaginary. The reader,

however, remains inside the paradigm, and Miller explains that:

> Reading must take place in the ambivalent space between the two, in the
> midst of an ambivalent irony: it is there that the Africanist author tries to
> produce his object. But not being sure what he wants, he will neither
> produce its presences nor prove its absence. The author's inability to
> describe an object congruent with his language is thus related to his
> ambivalence: for his nightmare is 'the nightmare of his choice.' (*Blank*
> 249)

Though Zola may not necessarily be considered an "Africanist author," Thérèse is

African and he also writes about the Eastern Mediterranean lands, as we will see in

L'Argent, in a comparable fashion to the Africanists. The nightmare that Zola creates in

Thérèse Raquin is heavily tainted by the frightening perceptions of North Africa and in the evolutionary paradigm that situates the North African, or more specifically the Algerian, still below the French and dangerous due to their supposed cunning intellect and bellicose nature. Everything about Thérèse, from her physical appearance that Zola describes as "presque laide" (72), a product of racial mixing, to her physique and the physiological description that Zola gives her, to the fact that she is dominated by her nerves and her temperament and is uncontrollably attracted to Laurent's "nature sanguine" (Zola *Thérèse* 60), is a product of an Africanist-type discourse in France during the nineteenth century as well as racial/racializing/racist[45] discourse, to which Zola himself contributes a large part.

Zola writes that he wants to "chercher en eux la bête, ne voir même que la bête" (*Thérèse* 60), and in reading one sees more and more clearly the bestial aspect of Thérèse. The question of Thérèse's race is brought to the forefront by the manner in which he describes her, he himself employing the term race quite freely in his correspondences, notes, essays and novels.[46] Thérèse is a product of the interbreeding that at the time was seen as threatening the future of humanity. The nineteenth century in France, especially during the later part of the century, was haunted by the great fear of

---

[45] I use the term racial to refer to a discourse about races, the term racializing to refer to the discourse that participates in the construction of racial divides and definitions, and racist for a discourse that involves preconceived notions and prejudices against those perceived as being of a different race.

[46] Zola's mentions of race can be found nearly in each volume of his oeuvre as well as in his notes and correspondences. One particular example that sets the stage for his greatest collection of volumes can be found in his preface to *La fortune des Rougon*, the first of the Rougon-Macquart series. Zola explains, "Physiologiquement, ils sont la lente succession des accidents nerveux et sanguins qui se déclarent dans une race, à la suite d'une première lésion organique, et qui déterminent, selon les milieux, chez chacun des individus de cette race, les sentiments, les désirs, les passions, toutes les manifestations humaines, naturelles et instinctives, dont les produits prennent les noms convenus de vertus et de vices. (15)

degeneration and decadence. According to Schneider the developing pseudo-science of

eugenics also found a welcome home in France due to this general fear of decline and

degeneration (269). For various reasons, amongst them a strong sense of nationalism, the

French held more closely to a Lamarckian view of heredity which includes the

inheritability of acquired characteristics making the French fear of degeneration more

acute than in other countries where eugenics was becoming more and more popular;

however, while a Lamarckian view of heredity increased the fear of decline, there was

also the promise of a quicker path to reversal making the urge to act in order to protect

the population all the more intense (Schneider 270-4). The eugenicists in France sought

to solve their birthrate and infant mortality problems by ameliorating the quality of the

population; a subsequent and perhaps more important consequence of this would be the

improvement in the qualities that were inherited leading to an improved version of

humanity (Schneider 271). On the other hand, however, the negative implications of this

same belief were the constant threat to the population posed by the possibility of

degeneration from the inheritability of the negative influences, and eugenicists were also

very concerned about and discussed at their societal meetings the subject of

"degeneration and race mixing" (Schneider 271, 276).

One of the best known eugenicists of the nineteenth century was Joseph Arthur,

better known as the Compte de Gobineau. In his four volumes *Essai sur l'inégalité des

races humaines*, Gobineau highlighted his particular views on race and racial purity, and,

additionally, this *essai* serves as a great witness to racial discourse and to prevalent

thought on race in the nineteenth century. Pieterse maintains that as early as 1815 race

was being talked about heavily and by the middle of the century it had become a

commonplace idea; people began to see it more and more as a way to explain the history

of peoples and of the world, somewhat of a "master key" (49). Still, the idea of race as

we see it today is very different than it was during this time period in Europe where it

was often closely associated with a certain national identity or a certain people.

The various ideas about race during the nineteenth century, though they will

eventually synthesize to become more directed to color and race as we know it today,

started out as something much different:

> What all these notions [of race] have in common, beyond their grounding
> in biology or skin colour, is a *pathos of inequality* – articulated variously
> through a scriptural curse, in terms of the classical distinction between
> civilization and barbarism, or through evolutionist discourse and the
> distinction between 'backward' and 'advanced' peoples. The key notion
> underlying these discourses is not so much that of race as of *hierarchy*
> based on differences in religion, ethnicity, geography, nationality, culture
> or a combination of these. (Pieterse 51)

Zola also applies the term race in a very different fashion, not only referring to

specific peoples or nationalities, but also to different types of people, such as the

alcoholic and mentally unstable Macquarts or the simple, peasant-like people like

Laurent. Even the Rougons and the Macquarts belong to different "races" as is used by

Zola. So, though Thérèse is half-Algerian, it is not specifically being Algerian that makes

her of a different race, though this does put her in a lower place in the evolutionary

hierarchy. Rather, it is the perceived dangerous combination of the genetic material that

she carries from her Algerian heritage and the racial inheritance she receives from her

father. Similar perceptions of racial divides can be found between the aristocracy and the

bourgeoisie, as is similar to the case of Zola's Rougons and Macquarts: the Rougons

being the descendants of a legitimate relationship, many of whom become successful

doctors, government officials in Napoleon's Empire, journalists, etc.; the Macquarts, on

the other hand, are illegitimate descendants of a love affair between the matriarch to both lines, Adelaïde, and a wanderer. The Macquarts, and one Rougon who is forced to change his name and chooses the name Saccard, ironically a name that phonetically only differs from Macquart by the initial consonant sound, all end up in a horrible condition, in all cases the last of the line dying young and sickly. Marie-Ange Voisin-Fougère points out in a note in *Nana* that in all of the *Rougon-Macquart* novels, the fourth generation is always the last generation, struck by serious degeneration; for example, Jeanne the daughter of Hélène Grandjean in *Une page d'amour*, Louiset, Nana's son and Jacques, the son of Claude Lantier in *L'Oeuvre* (Voisin-Fougère 294).

The fear of degeneration was largely based on the belief that in any type of population mixing, whether it be aristocratic blood with proletariat blood, or French blood with African blood, the lowest common denominator would inevitably be the result. Pieterse explains that, according to Gobineau, purity was of the utmost importance when considering the condition of civilization; decadence and the decline of civilization would inevitably result from mixing races because the characteristics of the 'lesser' race would triumph (49).

Thérèse Raquin is the reflection of this fear of degeneration. Zola describes Thérèse's mother in a very positive and beautiful light, although nonetheless exoticized. He asserts that she was "une femme indigène d'une grande beauté" (72). An exoticized and eroticized beauty of the Oriental woman was a common part of nineteenth century Orientalist myth. Said explains that "sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, [and] intense energy" (118) were common representations that found their way into visual expression on the Orient and that women were frequently described as

"irresistibly attractive and dangerous" possessing a "luxuriant and seemingly unbounded sexuality" (186-7). Colonial postcards of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries serve as a great witness to the exotic fascination with the native woman, and as Malek Alloula points out, the A*lgérienne* was a privileged theme in these images (5). In the colonial perception of the native there was a fixation and eroticization of the woman's body, and Algerian women were "the figures of a phantasm" (Alloula 5). As part of the Orientalist myth, the native woman was surrounded by an air of mystery and all aspects of the imagery were centered around the attraction and fantasy of her beauty and mystery. Alloula emphasizes that "the physical beauty of the model, her dress, her ornaments, as well as the languorous but regal pose—all in the middle ground of the shot—contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of mystery that is sufficiently attractive in itself" (78).

The exotic beauty of the indigenous woman, here Thérèse's mother, is a striking contrast to Thérèse's own lack of beauty. Thérèse, a product of the ever frightening mixture of races, is by no means an attractive woman, and Zola describes Thérèse in pejorative terms that underscore ugliness as a product of racial hybridization. Thérèse is a *métisse* and upon seeing her for the first time, the reader is abruptly confronted with her ugliness:

> Au front bas et sec s'attachait un nez long, étroit, effilé ; les lèvres étaient deux minces traits d'un rose pâle, et le menton, court et nerveux, tenait au cou par une ligne souple et grasse. On ne voyait pas le corps, qui se perdait dans l'ombre ; le profil seul apparaissait, d'une blancheur mate, troué d'un œil noir largement ouvert, et comme écrasé sous une épaisse chevelure sombre." (Zola *Thérèse* 67)

The dark and mysterious descriptions of Thérèse have much in common with Orientalist paintings of the nineteenth century that were meant to underscore the Oriental woman's mystique. Her dark eyes are reminiscent of the attention drawn by many artists to the *kohl*

used to "impart sparkle and mystery" (Thornton 82). Zola adds that "sa face prit [...] des teintes pâles, légèrement jaunâtres, et elle devint presque laide à l'ombre" (*Thérèse* 72).

Zola also attributes an animal-like aura to Thérèse. The narration begins to zoom in on the *mercerie* owned by the Raquins and finally into the shadows from which Thérèse observes the world around her that is a "jungle," however tiny it may be from her vantage point. Exoticism and the fantasy about the faraway lands that had been and were being colonized by the French nation were popular themes during the nineteenth century. In art there were very often depictions of the jungles and images of the exoticized indigenous peoples. Henri Rousseau, for example, was particularly known for his landscape paintings of Paris and its surroundings in addition to the jungle paintings for which he was most famous. The landscapes painted by Rousseau included fantastical and exotic versions of foreign lands, but the fact that he painted such faraway places along with landscapes of the familiar territories of France in many ways represented a modern era's desire to conquer their fears of the unknown ("Henri Rousseau"). Interestingly enough, Rousseau created the distant worlds in his paintings from his imagination and from the botanical gardens, zoos, books, magazines and postcards that were popular at the time and that proliferated representations of the landscape and inhabitants of other worlds; they were "the fantasies of a city dweller" ("Henri Rousseau"). The Lumière brothers, known as the 'fathers of cinema' were also known as the fathers of the 'cinéma colonial' (Ezra 57). Their film *Baignade de nègres* was filmed at the Jardin d'Acclimation of Paris, another location intended for the exotic entertainment of the Parisiens at the expense of the "indigène" made subject.[47]

---

[47] Some of the most famous works of art from the nineteenth century and about the *indigènes* were the Orientalist paintings of the Odalisques. The narrator of Leila Sebbar's *Sherazade* expresses the ubiquitous

Just as Henri Rousseau paints his *Jungles in Paris*[48]*,* the Lumière brothers represent the far off lands on film, and the Orientalists exoticize and eroticize the Oriental woman, Zola paints the Parisian jungle and its inhabitants, the setting in which this novel takes place. Zola becomes like an artist, painting with words his metropolitan wilderness. The first time that Thérèse is seen, she is described as an animal lurking in the shadows: "Vers midi, en été, lorsque le soleil brûlait les places et les rues de rayons fauves, on distinguait, derrière les bonnets de l'autre vitrine, un profil pâle et grave de jeune femme. Ce profil sortait vaguement des ténèbres qui régnaient dans la boutique" (Zola *Thérèse* 67). Zola gives her the physique of a cat, strong and toned: "Et, lorsqu'elle levait un bras, lorsqu'elle avançait un pied, on sentait en elle des souplesses félines, des muscles courts et puissants, toute une énergie, toute une passion qui dormaient dans sa chair assoupie" (*Thérèse* 72). However, Thérèse is forced to lead her life in captivity. She is in a cage under the vigilant and controlling eyes of her captor, her aunt and mother-in-law Mme Raquin, and "Pendant des heures, elle restait accroupie devant le feu, pensive, regardant les flammes en face, sans baisser les paupières" (*Thérèse* 72).

Zola's choice to paint Thérèse as a feline-like animal underscores the wild and savage nature of her race. Lions and tigers are often used to symbolize the inhuman; felines in general are representatives of otherness, savagery and of a power that in many ways is supernatural (Makinen 10). Further, according to Terrie Waddell, "cats have been associated with women when it comes to affecting a heightened sense of mystery,

nature of the image of the dark slave/servant woman in nineteenth-century Orientalist images (78). In Delacroix, Matisse and Ingres, three of the best known Orientalists, the odalisques "suggest for Western artists the indolence, voluptuousness, the depraved allure of Oriental women" (Sebbar 203).

[48] *Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris* was an exhibit of art by Henri Rousseau at the Tate Modern, 3 November 2005-5 February 2006. Additionally, published on the occasion of the exhibition is *Henri Rousseau : Jungles in Paris*, edited by Frances Morris and Christopher Green.

suspicion, duplicity temptation, eroticism and evil" (75). The tradition and the gendering

of certain animals stretches back far into Western history; few species remain gender

neutral. Moreover, assigning genders is not at all arbitrary; a complex intertwining of

history and mythological tradition serve as a basis for "*Our* anthropomorphic *creations*"

(Waddell 75).[49]

      Zola makes of Thérèse a languishing animal, missing the jungle in which she

belongs and regarding with contempt those around her that are of a different species, or

race, that hold her captive. Zola paints Thérèse as a savage always on the verge of attack,

as if her wild nature cannot be for much longer held back:

> Quand elle était seule, dans l'herbe, au bord de l'eau, elle se couchait à
> plat ventre comme une bête, les yeux noirs et agrandis, le corps tordu, près
> de bondir. Et elle restait là, pendant des heures, ne pensant à rien, mordue
> par le soleil, heureuse d'enfoncer ses doigts dans la terre. Elle faisait des
> rêves fous ; elle regardait avec défi la rivière qui grondait, elle s'imaginait
> que l'eau allait se jeter sur elle et l'attaquer ; alors elle se roidissait, elle se
> préparait à la défense, elle se questionnait avec colère pour savoir
> comment elle pourrait vaincre les flots. (*Thérèse* 73)

In Zola's sense, Thérèse's life is predetermined by her situation and her race cannot for

long be held at bay. Led by her savagery, supposedly related to her African and Algerian

origins, Thérèse cannot maintain for long her "sang froid." Mme Raquin and Camille's

small, Parisian home was all the more constrictive to Thérèse. What little bit of freedom

and space she had *au bord de la Seine* when they lived in Vernon, was completely erased

and she was now forced to live in tight quarters with her mother-in-law and her cousin

who was now her husband, the marriage between blood relations being perhaps another

element of degeneration.

---

[49] Emphasis mine. Much of what our society takes for granted as existing by nature is in reality a human
creation.

The move to Paris did afford one source of pleasure to Thérèse: Camille's friend

Laurent. When she meets Laurent for the first time her reaction is very physical,

"sanguine" in zolien terms, beyond her control: "Elle n'avait jamais vu un homme," and

she becomes very quickly fascinated with Laurent (*Thérèse* 74). Moreover, Zola

describes Laurent through Thérèse's eyes in an animalistic manner:

> Elle arrêta un instant ses regards sur son cou ; ce cou était large et court,
> gras et puissant. Puis elle s'oublia à considérer les grosses mains qu'il
> tenait étalées sur ses genoux ; les doigts en étaient carrés ; le poing fermé
> devait être énorme et aurait pu assommer un bœuf. Laurent était un vrai
> fils de paysan [...] Et Thérèse l'examinait avec curiosité, allant de ses
> poings à sa face, prouvant de petits frissons lorsque ses yeux rencontraient
> son cou de taureau. (*Thérèse* 74)

Laurent and Thérèse's relationship is that of two brutes controlled by their

sexuality and fueled by their carnal impulses. Their affair begins with a silent act while

Camille and Mme Raquin are out of the room about which Zola simply writes "L'acte fut

silencieux et brutal" (*Thérèse* 91).

Thérèse's love affair with Laurent underscores her savage and animal nature that

Zola ties back to her biological heritage: "Tous ses instincts de femme nerveuse

éclatèrent avec une violence inouïe ; le sang de sa mère, *ce sang africain* qui brûlait ses

veines, se mit à couler, à battre furieusement dans son corps maigre" (*Thérèse* 93).[50] Zola

adds that her "mère était fille d'un chef de tribu, en Afrique" and that she belongs to her

"par le sang et les instincts" (*Thérèse* 94). By his numerous references to Thérèse's

blood, ingrained desires and mother/heritage Zola aims to demonstrate the inescapability

of her racial origins. In his sense, " her race" will eventually be revealed completely

when Thérèse and Laurent kill the weak and sickly Camille, who cannot survive amongst

---

[50] Emphasis mine.

the stronger, more "savage animals." Camille reacts "avec l'instinct d'une bête qui se défend" (*Thérèse* 120) just as in a scene in the African savanna when the lions attack the gazelle. In Zola's social Darwinist logic Camille, the weakest one, has to perish.

The Capitalist, Colonial Enterprise and Otherizing the *Indigène*

While *Thérèse Raquin* exemplifies the primitivist, evolutionary and animalistic representations of the *indigène*, the colonial enterprise is treated much more stringently in Zola's *L'Argent*. The entire novel rests upon the capitalistic venture that was nineteenth-century colonialism.[51] Money and the absolute love and worship of money are central figures in this novel and the view of possible colonial territories as nothing other than loci for monetary gain is explicit. Zola associates money and the love of money with the Jews. One cannot read *L'Argent* without being struck by the racializing language employed by the narrator to describe the Jewish characters. The interesting question becomes whether one can affirm that Zola and the narrator are one, especially in light of his staunch defense of the Capitaine Dreyfus and scathing criticism of the judicial system and public opinion that condemned him.

All of these issues come together and are brought to the forefront in *L'Argent* because of the way that Zola treats nineteenth-century imperial competition between France and many of the western European countries.[52] There was a great race to colonize

---

[51] The nineteenth century, especially the latter part of the century and into the twentieth century, was a time with a "continuing centrality of territorial expansion in the form of empires and 'Lebensraum,'" according to Hannes Lacher (37). There was a nineteenth-century transition to capitalism, especially from an agrarian capitalism to an industrial capitalism, which contained "the emergence of a capitalist world market that transcended state boundaries" (33).

[52] The emerging capitalism of the nineteenth century in combination with territorial expansion led to a major sense of competition between imperial nations, especially in the later part of the century. Patrick

as much territory as possible for many reasons, amongst them national pride and to secure raw materials needed due to the thriving industrial revolution that was taking place. Many of the European countries were racing each other to not only explore the foreign lands but also to be recognized as their owners.[53] The British had succeeded in having one of the largest empires in the world and the other European countries did not want to be left out of what was seen as great opportunity for riches and raw materials to feed their own economies.[54] The European countries that participated in the scramble for territories around the world saw in the other lands very little more than people that they conceived as being uncivilized and backwards, at least not living up to the standards of the Europeans, and the vast opportunities to exploit the land and the peoples for the resources they had to offer. A strong propaganda campaign painted France as a positive influence in the colonies and all of the popular imagery supported this notion, for the representation of the colonies as pleasant places that were becoming more and more

---

Brantlinger points out that the final quarter-century was dominated by imperialist partitioning of Africa especially after the Berlin Conference of 1884 which launched what is known as the "scramble for Africa" (175). Many advocated commerce and Christianity as the best means for opening up Africa, and David Livingstone, famous British missionary and explorer, insisted that "Africa would be without hope of 'raising itself'" unless there was "contact with superior races by commerce" (Brantlinger 178).

[53] The numbers alone witness the massive overtaking of many foreign lands by the imperialistic European nations during the nineteenth century. European control over the earth's surface went from 35 percent in 1800 to 67 percent by 1878, and from 1878 to 1914 the percentage of the earth's surface under European control had jumped to 84.4 percent (Pieterse 76).

[54] The early to mid-nineteenth century was already rife with "the first rumblings of what would before long become known as the Scramble for Africa" (Hochschild 26). Adam Hochschild asserts that due to a significant increase in communications from telegraphs, lectures and daily papers, many explores achieved a sort of international celebrity, perceptions of Africa became more focused on the gains to be had there, and celebrating the explorers was in many ways a psychological prelude to a widespread feeling of entitlement when it came to Africa (27). Benjamin Stora explains that the France of the mid to late nineteenth century began to realize that "l'industrie ne peut compter uniquement sur le marché intérieure" and therefore "il lui faut des débouchés" (*Histoire* 21). Seeking new resources, opportunities and economic gains motivated much of the colonial enterprise. Further, many saw the southern colonies, Algeria for example, as a French equivalent to the American Far West, a pioneer frontier full of riches, land to master and a place of adventure (Stora *Transfert* 22).

productive was spread by many different forms of media including military, travel and exploration journals that painted the southern colonies as an Eldorado or new promised land (Stora *Transfert* 23).

As part of the invention of the indigenous Other,[55] there were many stereotypes and characteristics, all presumed natural, assigned to the indigenous peoples. One of these many invented characteristics of the native races was that of laziness, a particularly helpful notion if one is trying to make the case for a capitalistic and profitable venture.[56] The foreign lands were exoticized which led to the "image of the lazy native, indolent and without ambition in the midst of tropical plenty," because they had not capitalized on their resources as the Europeans sought to do (Pieterse 91). The perceived laziness of the indigenous peoples justified the colonists capitalistic exploitation of them. Without the pretext of economic gain, there would be very little force behind the colonial mission. Though many knew what was to gain, others may not have been so sure or so selfish without the heavy propaganda that painted the French nation as the all-knowing, civilizing force and the indigenous peoples of the various colonies as the less knowledgeable, simple, lazy and uncivilized societies. In this way, the French nation was able to put forth an image of itself as the one which was providing positive means and a

---

[55] In *The Invention of Africa*, V. Y. Mudimbe points out that the words *colonialism* and *colonization* come from the latin word *colĕre* which means to cultivate or design (1), underscoring the imposition of Western ideology, identity, etc. on the colonies and their people.

[56] Gilbert Grandguillaume explains that colonial domination sought to open the colonies to a different world, one of modernity and technology, but more importantly to to the world of "l'émancipation et de l'affranchissement moral" which were supposedly tied to "la civilization de consummation" (25). The power in symbolic structures and "aussi dans toute sa réalité : gouvernement, administration, orientations économiques, conception de la société et de la nation" (Grandguillaume 139), were intended by the colonizers, at least in public discourse, to help the *indigène* overcome his inherent laziness and inability to capitalize on the profitability of his land and to endow future generations with a French-like society.

positive influence to those who were less able to take care of themselves and their own land.

Such exploitation by French companies are central themes of *L'Argent*. The principal character in *L'Argent* is Aristide Rougon, who after moving to Paris is forced by his brother to take on the name Saccard[57] so that there be no confusion or association between the two of them. In *La Fortune des Rougon*, Saccard originally makes his fortune in speculation as Paris was undergoing the massive Haussmann renovations and growth during the mid nineteenth century.

The flagrancy of the euro- and ethnocentrism that can be seen in the novel in the attitudes of those who assume that Western, Christian and French culture are superior persists throughout and one can really see how the French companies saw themselves as a civilizing force in what were seen as savage and non-progressive foreign territories. The Eastern-Mediterranean region for the French nation was nothing but an object. In their eyes, there was no subjectivity afforded to the Orient, and nothing existed outside of what France created there. Saccard saw this land as a land of opportunity and a place where he could regain his wealth. The key here was that Saccard benefit from the exploitation of a foreign land that he saw as nothing other than a locus for his own benefit. As was often the case, Saccard continually argues that the lands of the "Orient" also stood to benefit, *grâce à la France*, along with the uncivilized peoples there. His selling point was that he was solving a problem and glorifying the French nation: "Et n'était-ce pas une manière pratique de trancher l'éternelle et encombrante question d'Orient, en intéressant l'empire

---

[57] Aristide Rougon has taken the name Saccard which is a transformation of his first wife's maiden name Sicardot. The transformation to Saccard makes it phonetically indistinguishable from Macquart but for the initial consonant. "Saccard" also has the connotation of *sac*, someone who pockets money.

de grands travaux civilisateurs, en l'amenant au progrès, pour qu'il ne fût plus cette monstrueuse borne, plantée entre l'Europe et l'Asie. Quel beau rôle patriotique joueraient là des Compagnies françaises!" (Zola *L'Argent* 121).

Saccard spoke to the nationalist, capitalist and religious sensibilities of his potential investors in order to create a vision in which everyone would want to take part. Not only was Saccard fueled by his desire to build his own fortune and glory and a certain national pride that would make France all the more powerful, he even saw himself as having a divine right to capitalize on the riches available in the Mediterranean and other parts of the "Orient." Saccard preys upon the belief in this supposed divine right in order to show how much more profitable their ventures will be because they will be helping the old holy lands become alive again: "Mais, plus encore que la science, l'antique poésie des lieux saints faisait ruisseler cet argent en une pluie miraculeuse, éblouissement divin que Saccard avait mis à la fin d'une phrase, dont il était très content" (*L'Argent* 225-6).

The importance of sciences in France during the nineteenth century also reappears time and time again in Saccard's discourse. As the French man was seen as the most evolved and the idea of progress coincided only with French progress, Saccard invisioned that his company would bring progress to the places of the Orient seen as being the most backwards. It would be the combination of Western money and Western science that would make it happen: "L'argent, aidant la science, faisait le progrès" (Zola *L'Argent* 120). Zola explains that Mme Caroline, Hamelin's sister and also an associate in Saccard's *compagnie*, was a woman who was less interested in the hope of fortune. She was also, nonetheless, excited by the prospect of bringing about change in the Middle

East that she had traveled with her brother and where she had been dismayed by the seeming waste of the vast resources available. Saccard was able to convince her, and many others, of the realization of the "rêve qu'elle avait fait parfois d'un Orient débarbouillé de sa crasse, tiré de son ignorance, jouissant du sol fertile, du ciel charmant, avec tous les raffinements de la science" (*L'Argent* 119).

Zola keenly captures in the aspirations and goals of Saccard's *compagnie* the two most central elements of nineteenth-century France: capitalism and science. The thriving scientific and industrial revolutions were on everyone's mind and remained the focus of much activity. With science and money behind him, he felt he had the power to accomplish "ce que les Croisades avaient tenté, ce que Napoléon n'avait pu accomplir, c'était cette pensée gigantesque de la conquête de l'Orient qui enflammait Saccard, mais une conquête raisonnée, réalisée par la double force de la science et de l'argent" (Zola *L'Argent* 120).

Reflections of the objectification of the colonized people are seen in the point of view taken by Hamelin, his sister Mme Caroline and Saccard in their plans for the Eastern Mediterranean. Zola explains that Mme Caroline, "Déjà, elle avait assisté au miracle;" that is, she had already seen in Port-Said the wonders that could happen in a very short amount of time thanks to Western innovation and involvement, but of course by the hands of the local labor: "de la vie et du bien-être créés avec entêtement par les fourmis humaines" (*L'Argent* 119).

Mme Caroline exemplifies the attitude of the French citizen wooed by the massive propaganda that provided image after image of the *indigène* thankful to the *mère patrie* for all that she helped him accomplish:

> Et c'était bien cela qu'elle voyait se dresser de nouveau, la marche en avant, irrésistible, la poussée sociale qui se rue au plus de bonheur possible, le besoin d'agir, d'aller devant soi, sans savoir au juste où l'on va, mais d'aller plus à l'aise, dans des conditions meilleures ; et le globe bouleversé par la fourmilière qui refait sa maison, et le continuel travail, de nouvelles jouissances conquises, le pouvoir de l'homme décuplé, la terre lui appartenant chaque jour davantage. (*L'Argent* 119-120)

In *L'Argent* the *indigène* is completely objectified and seen as little more than worker ants cultivating their own hill. In Mme Caroline's desire to see the lands of the Middle East follow the example of Port-Said, it is a constant comparison between the foreign society and the West. The progress, "marche en avant" (119), the irresistible urge toward the greatest possible happiness, "au plus bonheur possible" (119) and towards better conditions, "des conditions meilleures" (119), all necessitate a reference point, a standard. The West was considered to be the standard, and those in the French nation saw their values as the norm and all others falling into various places in a hierarchy: the Europeans as representatives of humanity and the indigenous populations as ants, as Zola refers to them in *L'Argent*, rebuilding their hill to become more like the Europeans.

The supposed backwardness of the indigenous peoples is attributed simply to the fact that they are less evolved. As Césaire points out: "Les-Nègres-sont-de-grands-Enfants" (*Discours* 48). The same rhetoric appears in nineteenth-century discourse about the Middle-Eastern "Orientals," who were seen as peoples that had at one time been civilized, in the time of Eastern-Mediterranean dominance, but were now fallen "into a savage state" (Said 170). Chateaubriand describes the Middle-Easterners as a "degenerate stupid mob of 'Musulmans'" and Lamartine expresses the sentiment that "the Arabs are a primitive people" (Said 177). Mme Caroline's feelings towards those of the "Orient" reiterates much of the popular nineteenth-century sentiments about Eastern-

Mediterranean peoples. She disdains the *paysan*, his backwards ways and his un-

Christian religion:

> Elle disait des charges qui écrasent le commerce et l'industrie, cette loi imbécile qui empêche de consacrer les capitaux à l'agriculture, au-delà d'un certain chiffre, et la routine qui laisse aux mains du paysan la charrue dont on se servait avant Jésus-Christ, et l'ignorance où croupissent encore de nos jours ces millions d'hommes, pareils à des enfants idiots, arrêtés dans leur croissance. (Zola *L'Argent* 118)

On the Jewish Question/*Sur La Question Juive/Zur Judenfrage*[58]

Eurocentrism led to a mentality which automatically assumed that any people

non-French, and by extension non-white or non-Christian, were intrinsically different and

inferior. Zola maintained a strong affinity for types, referring to his characters as "le juif"

or "le levantin,"[59] etcetera, which serves to reinforce the idea of people belonging to a

particular "race." Many examples of race as familial heritage can be found, but Zola

extends the question of race beyond this type of ancestry, especially with regards to the

Jewish characters in *L'Argent*. Zola clearly makes of the Jews a race.

Zola attributes a particular group of characteristic features to the Jews in his

novels, regardless of their specific familial heritage. They are presented as a race apart,

just as Thérèse Raquin is of a different race due to her Algerian heritage. The same

---

[58] Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller's article "Au carrefour de la négritude et du judaïsme : *Moi, Tituba sorcière...Noire de Salem*" contains an excellent and in-depth discussion on the Jewish question, anti-Semitism and various myths about the Jews that have been prevalent throughout the years. Debrauwere-Miller's article will be discussed in chapter four, "From Africa to the Americas: Color and Racism in Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière...Noire de Salem*."

[59] The Levantine is one who comes from the Levant, literally meaning the place where the sun rises or the east. According to the Larousse, it was a common term used until the 1920s to describe the geographical area of the eastern Mediterranean coast under Muslim domination and was frequented by European traders before this time. The use of this term by Zola is another example of people being categorized into certain groups based on their heritage, nationality or "race."

nineteenth-century adherence to evolutionism that created and placed Africans and

Asians on a Darwinian scale also found a place for the Jews. The inferiority of Jews was

a common theme in nineteenth century literatures:

> Many writers, following what they thought to be the line of Darwinian
> biology and anthropology, postulated that Jews represented an arrested
> development in evolution and were thus not fully human; for example,
> Theodor Fritsch placed Jews in an intermediate zone between Nordic man
> and the apes, while others designated Jews as vermin, insects, and
> parasites, categories which the Nazis would later use. (Perry and
> Schweitzer 106)

In *L'Argent*, there is a specific set of stereotypical physical attributes that Zola

emphasizes to describe his Jewish characters. The Jew has often been caricaturized as

having a long, protruding, hook-shaped nose and Zola does not hesitate to attribute this

feature to several of his Jewish characters: "Il y avait là, en un groupe tumultueux, toute

une juiverie malpropre, de grasses faces luisantes, des profils desséchés d'oiseaux

voraces, une extraordinaire réunion de nez typiques" (*L'Argent* 56). Further, Zola

describes Kolb, an associate of Saccard's, as an "homme petit, très brun, dont le nez en

bec d'aigle, sortant d'une grande barbe, décelait l'origine juive" (*L'Argent* 157).

Zola's descriptions of the Jews make it very clear that they are considered to be

non-white, unclean, very brown, having a typical nose, that being a nose in the shape of a

beak. These stereotypical references are not Zola's inventions; rather they reflect the

stereotype that the Jews, along with the blacks, were closer to apes than the whites. By

the late nineteenth century it was generally believed, as is evidenced by the academic

literature in ethnology, that Jews were black, or if not completely black, they were at least

"swarthy" (Gilman 368). The Jews were assumed to be a "mongrel" race and part black

due to a supposed intermingling with the Africans during the time of the Alexandrian

exile, thus creating a source for their supposed dark skin color and "typical" nose

(Gilman 370). Gilman explains that "The [nasal index] came to be a means of

distinguishing between the human and the other higher anthropoids" (371). The nose was

the particular quality that demarcated the Jewish face and was also closest to the African

features in the stereotypical representations that supposedly corresponded to the

physiognomic racial signs reflecting ones essential being: in the *fin-de-siècle*

anthropological writings, explains Gilman, it had become commonplace to associate the

"Jewish prognathism" with their intermixing and "close racial relationship" to the Blacks

(371-2).

In addition to the physical stereotypes portrayed in *L'Argent*, Zola also gives

extensive attention to the relationship between the Jew and money. Much of the action in

the novel takes place around the Paris Bourse, where the reader encounters a seemingly

endless string of Jewish characters. Early on we learn that the young man Nathonsohn

"arrivera, lui, car il est juif" and that "il faut être juif" (Zola *L'Argent* 64) to succeed in

the financial markets. Zola later insists that Saccard "les admirait, qu'il leur enviait leurs

prodigieuse facultés financières, cette science innée des chiffres, cette aisance naturelle

dans les opérations les plus compliquées" (*L'Argent* 136). Furthermore, "C'est le don de

la race, sa raison d'être à travers les nationalités qui se font et se défont" (*L'Argent* 136).

In the span of one paragraph, Zola uses the term *race* four times. He insists on the racial

distinction of the Jews and their innate characteristics and talents in the financial domain.

He also distinguishes here between race and nationality by saying that the nationalities of

the Jews have risen, fallen and changed over the centuries, but their "Jewishness" has

remained constant. Zola is not necessarily disjoining the two, but definitely insisting that

nationality does not, in his mind, completely define race.

Zola exploits the association of the Jewish race with financial prowess, a myth

that takes its roots as far back as the Middle Ages. Perry and Schweitzer explain that

during the Christian Middle Ages the Jews, because they were considered outsiders and

not under Christian law, made their living as peddler-merchants and money lenders. It

was this history that over the years led to the development of the myth of the Jews'

prowess in economic professions (75).[60]   The myth of the financially superior Jew

extends further than a mere talent with money. Myth also extensively proliferated a fear

of the Jew who wished to take over and rule the world, and who is associated with"Evil."

Like Zola, many writers, philosophers and scientists in the nineteenth century helped to

shape and perpetuate such myths which gave them a certain "scientific" authority.

Amongst them was Karl Marx: most of the nineteenth-century socialists typified the Jews

as being capitalists who were "aggressively dominant" in financial and trade markets as

well as being predisposed to exploitation (Perry and Schweitzer 79).[61]

Strikingly similar to Marx's comments on the Jews is Zola's description of

Busch's personal business: "Mais, outré l'usure et tout un commerce caché sur les bijoux

et les pierres précieuses, il s'occupait particulièrement de l'achat des créances" (*L'Argent*

67). Busch would become "féroce, mangeait [ses débiteurs] de frais, les vidait jusqu'au

---

[60] Perry and Schweitzer further explain that societies would then evolve and their opinion on these so-called immoral, finance-driven activities would change; thus what the Jews had been practicing for a considerable period of time and in which they had already established a literacy, education and connections to other societies made them superior to the "host" societies, which was generally in turn attributed as a racial characteristic (76-77).

[61] Perry and Schweitzer cite Marx's 1843 essay entitled "The Jewish Question" where he names Money as the Jew's worldly god and Usury/huckstering as the Jew's object of worship in this world (79).

sang" (68),[62] Zola describes him as a "loup féroce aux débiteurs, très capable de voler dix sous dans le sang d'un homme," who has "dur amour de l'argent, sa cupidité assassine qui mettait dans la conquête de l'argent l'unique raison de vivre" (*L'Argent* 77). In "The Myth of an International Jewish Conspiracy," according to Perry and Schweitzer "A fundamental belief of anti-Semites is that Jews have formed a secret government that is, at this very moment, conspiring to dominate the world" (139). This myth can be traced back to the earliest of Christian texts that saw Jews as enemies of Christian values, seeking to lure people away from Christianity with material wealth in order to destroy Christianity. The Jews thus became the scapegoats for much of the nineteenth-century upheavals and decadence (Perry and Schweitzer 138).

As with many other stereotypes about the Jews, the so-called conspiracy to take over the world finds its echoes in *L'Argent*. Zola shows that Saccard despises the Jewish race and that he "prophétisait avec emportement la conquête finale de tous les peuples par les juifs, quand ils auront accaparé la fortune totale du globe" (*L'Argent* 136-137). Frustrated with Gundermann's power, Saccard exclaims, "Nous y voila donc, vous avouez ! L'empire est vendu aux juifs, aux sales juifs. Tout notre argent est condamné à tomber entre leurs pattes crochues. L'Universelle n'a plus qu'à crouler devant leur toute-puissance" (*L'Argent* 244).[63] Saccard is extremely racist against the Jews: "Ah ! le juif ! il avait contre le juif l'antique rancune de race, qu'on trouve surtout dans le midi de la France" (135) and refers to them as "les gueux" (136) and "sales juifs" (244).

---

[62] A vampiric metaphor.

[63] Later, Saccard "reprit ses accusations contre cette race de trafiquants et d'usuriers, en marche depuis des siècles à travers les peuples, dont ils sucent le sang, comme les parasites de la teigne et de la gale, allant quand même, sous les crachats et les coups, à la conquête certaine du monde, qu'ils posséderont un jour par la force invincible de l'or" (*L'Argent* 244).

I am not insinuating that the *question juive* in *L'Argent* highlights an anti-Semitism in Zola's work, on the contrary, he is criticizing anti-Semitism. It does, however, reveal a complete acceptance of the idea that there is a Jewish race and additionally many other races. For example, he describes Alice de Beauvilliers, the last in the line of a dwindling aristocratic family, as "n'ayant plus que le charme pitoyable d'une fin de grande race" (*L'Argent* 109). Victor, the bastard son of Saccard, is said to have glistening eyes that devoured the rich houses, a supposedly hereditary condition transmitted by his race (*L'Argent* 214). Like his father, observes Zola, "de sa face d'enfant mûri trop vite, ne sortaient que les appétits exaspérés de race, une hâte, une violence à jouir" (*L'Argent* 214). Both Victor and Saccard carry these characteristics because of their common heredity and because they are inherited and not acquired characteristics, they are aggravated, exaggerated and beyond the control of these two men.

Though Zola's novels portray a reflection of the beginnings of racism in European society, one cannot assume that Zola himself held any particular prejudices against what he obviously considered to be different races, such as the Jews, the Africans and different "types" of whites. It seems more appropriate to posit that Saccard's extensive racism and hatred towards the Jews is a reflection of what Zola observed in much of the popular imaginary of late nineteenth-century France. Despite the fact that during the Revolution France was the first country in Europe to emancipate the Jews, anti-Semitism nonetheless reached a zenith in France at the end of the nineteenth century, as is witnessed by several anti-Semitic weekly papers and societies.[64] In fact, Saccard's hatred of the Jews and

---

[64] See Katz 292, 299.

extreme disdain for any one of their successes makes for a very interesting prequel to the

Dreyfus Affair in which Zola would become so vehemently involved. Saccard was

particularly suspicious of Gundermann whom he calls "un Prussien à l'intérieur, bien

qu'il fût né en France !" (Zola *L'Argent* 244). He even goes so far as to accuse him of

being a traitor: "il faisait évidemment de vœux pour la Prusse, il l'aurait volontiers

soutenue de son argent, peut-être même la soutenait-il en secret !" (Zola *L'Argent* 244).

Saccard's racism and suspicious accusations bear a striking resemblance to the events

that would unfold beginning four years later in 1894 with Captain Alfred Dreyfus'

conviction for treason. Convicted of being a spy for Germany, Dreyfus had been accused

based on false evidence and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island.

The assumption that Zola as author could himself be accused of being racist is

further complicated by his intense involvement in the Dreyfus Affair. There appears to be

a contradiction between the *écrivain engagé*[65] *dreyfusard* and the novelist from a

colonialist and racial standpoint. The answer to this question is up for debate. One must

ask if the author can be said also to be the narrator of his works, which is unclear. Though

he spent hours, days, months and even years observing and taking notes before beginning

his *Rougon-Macquart* there is no indication that Zola himself is the narrator of these

novels. Further, as his goal was to provide a scientific representation of his society, a

prevalent anti-Semitism of late nineteenth-century France would have to resurge in his

novels, in the voice of the narrator and in the characters portrayed. In his open letter in

---

[65] Though Zola's novels highlight many of the social problems facing nineteenth-century Paris, France and the imperial world, it is not until the Dreyfus Affair that he can really be considered *engagé*. Benoît Denis suggests that "du naturalisme zolien au populisme, décrire dans un roman la condition des mineurs ou des ouvriers n'est pas nécessairement synonyme d'engagement" (85). Rather, explains Denis, the author *engagé* purposely and specifically makes his engagement apparent in the literature itself and the literature becomes *partie prenante* of the sociopolitical debate (22).

L'Aurore, "J'accuse," Zola denounces this air of anti-Semitism as one of the principle

causes for Alfred Dreyfus' false accusation and imprisonment:

> Voilà donc, Monsieur le Président, les faits qui expliquent comment une erreur judiciaire a pu être commise ; et les preuves morales, la situation de fortune de Dreyfus, l'absence des motifs, son continuel cri d'innocence achèvent de le montrer comme une victime des extraordinaires imaginations du Commandant Paty du clam, du milieu clérical où il se trouvait, de la chasse au « sales juifs », qui déshonore notre époque. (1)

Though it may seem that Zola's social causes and his novel are at odds with each other, I

suggest, rather, that his novels in no way condemn him as racist or anti-Semitic. The

contradiction thus lies in the fact that he, nonetheless, aids in constructing racial

discourse and lends a supposed scientific authority to the idea of race and type. It also

cannot be ignored that in at least several accounts, drawn from Zola's correspondence,

notes and articles published in *Le Figaro*, Zola's interest in the Dreyfus Affair was also

closely linked to his interest in dramatic stories, such as the ones he created in his novels.

According to Alain Pagès, Zola was seduced by the human drama of the Dreyfus Affair.

The Dreyfus Affair seemed to have a novel-like nature that mirrored many of the popular

roman-feuilletons of the era, complete with what could appear to be the standard fictional

types: the innocent yet condemned man, the free but guilty party, and the relentless truth-

seeker, what Zola called "des personnages superbes" and "une trilogie de types" (Pagès

51).

    The seeming contradictions between Zola the novelist and Zola the committed

writer are somewhat reminiscent of the apparent contradictions that exist between Marx's

theories and his anti-Semitism or reluctance to consider the humanity of the *indigènes* of

colonial territories. Marx's writings are rife with references to the Jews that repeat

prevalent Jewish myths of avarice and relentless peddling. Edmund Silberner[66] points out that Marx amalgamates upper and lower class Jews, thus homogenizing them into one group, a race of supposed practical and egoist hucksters, regardless of socio-economic class (376, 379). Though the Jews lived and worked amongst the citizenry of Western European countries, often without any way to distinguish them or set them apart as a separate race, Marx's supposed self-hatred[67] led him to launch rather harsh attacks on the Jews, referring to Judaism as the "repugnant Israelite faith" (Silberner 371, 375). Marx, therefore, also participates in the social construction of the Jew and anti-Semitic myth. According to Sartre, it is this type of discourse itself that creates the Jew: the racial explanations and inventions about Jews and *juiverie* have invented "le Juif" (*Réflexions* 44), and the Christians and the anti-Semites have created "the Jew" (*Réflexions* 83, 84). Marx's amalgamation of upper and lower class Jews is outside of contradiction in his own mind because he sees the Jew as a Jew and not as a man, he is therefore inassimilable and excluded from the rest of society (Sartre *Réflexions* 121). The repetition of this idea that the Jew, the Black, or any Other is essentially different, shows the extent to which these are social constructions on the part of the white, European and Christian societies. Anything that is perceived as different, and possibly threatening to their way of living, receives the homogenized label of "inassimilable" and is excluded from participating and thriving within a society that sees itself as superior. This exclusion is reconciled with the "Christian" values of European society because the Other is not

---

[66] Originally published in *Historia Judaica* in 1949, Silberner's famous article "Was Marx an Anti-Semite?" is well known for being the first of what would eventually launch many studies on the question of Marx and anti-Semitism. Silberner's work was particularly interesting because, as he points out, most other essays on Marx and Jews ignore a significant amount of Marx's writings and are thus incomplete (363).

[67] Marx, though baptized as were many members of his family including his mother and father, came from a long line of rabbis.

considered as a human and thus does not fall within the realm of European humanity or humane treatment of others.

The Question of Genre

Naturalist and realist novels of nineteenth-century France, especially when published in serial in the papers, as was often the case, played a great role in shaping the collective imaginary and racist myths. Authors like Zola outlined for a popular audience their understandings of the lower classes, the colonized peoples, and so on. What made this literature so influential was the popularity that had been gained by writers such as Balzac, Sue and Flaubert. Such authors had already garnered much attention in the public and in the political arenas for their realism, and more specifically for their brand of realism that focused significant attention on the bourgeois, working and lower classes. It was seen as a sort of social romanticism that favored the average, even lower class, person as the hero.[68] Benoît Denis affirms that shortly after Zola's time, the popularity of radio and cinema would make it more difficult to reach the proletariat or the lower classes with literature (54). However, during the mid to late nineteenth century, the penny press remained a dominant form of media to a vast public and the realist/naturalist novels published in the penny press garnered a particular interest, "touch[ant] un large public et provoqu[ant] parfois le scandale chez les bien-pensants" (Denis 210).

Joseph T. Flibbert posits that what made realism particularly famous, or infamous, was its display of the "coarseness and brutality of lower-class city dwellers" (21), and

---

[68] Though Bourdieu in *Les regles de l'art* outlines a sort of liberation of the nineteenth-century artist, Flaubert in particular, from economic motives and constraints, freeing him from writing to a particular audience with the goal of achieving economic success, serial publications remained accessible to the *grand public* and thus influential, even if short of *engagé*.

81

though it has always had its limits, it nonetheless often addresses many of the social issues facing a particular society. Before the time of Zola and Maupassant, many of the early to mid nineteenth-century realist novels were criticized for their "'realistic' portrayal of common subjects" and "the tendency to describe the vulgarity and the misery of humble people" (Flibbert 19).[69] Today Zola's works are received much differently. Rather than being looked upon as base creations, Zola is now more often appreciated for the various economic, social and political currents that can be seen throughout his works.[70] Though Zola argued he did little other than scientifically observe and report what he saw in society, his critics found no end of material with which to accuse and criticize his writing. Zola's popularity, however, permitted his writing to have a significant impact on the public. Whether it was the bourgeois or upper-class audience who found themselves offended by his vulgarity[71] or the lower class, industrial worker who may have identified with the types portrayed in the novels, Zola's works were well known and his ideas became part of the public imaginary.

---

[69] Indeed, the lines between naturalism and decadent literature are indistinct, if existent. Much of what appears in Zola's novels, decline of health, family, wealth, society, the prevalence of disease, symbolic and literal darkness, humidity and a sense of claustrophobia are also characteristic of the *fin-de-siècle* decadent literature that was preoccupied with decay and decline.

[70] One prominent example is the feminist reception(s) of Zola. What may have been at the time seen as a degradation of women is now sometimes looked upon as an early liberation of the woman from society's constructed roles. Naomi Schor points out that there is a recurring "type" of female character throughout the whole of Zola's *Rougon-Macquart*, that of those "frustrated by their socially determined roles as women" (*Mother's* 13). Though Zola's "paternalistic brand of feminism" (*Mother's* 14) is by no means universally accepted as a manifestation of feminist engagement, Schor argues that Zola's women remain revolutionary because they are often hard to tell apart from his men (*Mother's* 15). Nevertheless, during his time, Zola was accused of all types of vulgarity and pornography in his writing.

[71] In the preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin* Zola addresses directly those who called his works pornography, vulgar, etc.: "La critique a accueilli ce livre d'une voix brutale et indignée. Certaines gens vertueux, dans des journaux non moins vertueux, ont fait une grimace de dégoût, en le prenant avec des pincettes pour le jeter au feu. Les petites feuilles littéraires elles-mêmes, ces petites feuilles qui donnent chaque soir la gazette des alcôves et des cabinets particuliers, se sont bouché le nez en parlant d'ordure et de puanteur" (59).

As with all forms of media, the naturalist popular novels exerted an influence on the construction of stereotype and myth, and, as they were works of fiction, many elements were certain to be an exaggeration of reality. Where realism sought to represent the real, naturalism in its self-proclaimed exaggeration of realism in many ways incorporated an element of the grotesque into its practice. Though Zola would pretend to stick purely to a mirror image of society, he was also the Creator of his fictional societies. In his novels we can see the shades of invention, the little bit of lying that he insists an author must do so that he can feel or see man in the act of creation (Zola *Correspondance Tome I* 379-80). Zola was attracted to that which made his novels interesting and widely popular, and he was obviously quite "tempted by the melodramatic *topoï* employed in the popular novel or *roman-feuilleton*" (Dousteyssier-Khoze 216). Early on the terms realism and naturalism were actually used somewhat interchangeably; however, with the appearance and gaining popularity of Zola's work the early distinction between the two genres gave a more derogatory sense to the term naturalism signaling the prevalent fear of decadence amongst the public and the literary movement that reflects the atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle* period (Flibbert 22). His penchant for melodrama shaded his naturalism with a grotesque element, most often signaled by "exaggeration, hyperbolism, [and] excessiveness" (Bakhtin 303).[72] "Specific social phenomena are berated" clearly in Zola's works, to include all sorts of depravity and venality of women as are cited by Bakhtin as being important elements of the grotesque (Bakhtin 305). Further, one of the most important elements of the grotesque is that it "exaggerates and caricatures the negative, the inappropriate" (Bakhtin 306). One need look no further than *Thérèse*

---

[72] For further discussion of the grotesque, see Mikhail Bakhtin's fifth chapter of *Rabelais and His World*, "The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources," pp. 303-367.

Raquin to see a gross exaggeration of human sexuality, animalism, barbarism and pure savagery. The grotesque element of naturalism also exoticizes the Other and reinforces the many racist stereotypes. It maintains the distinct lines between so-called races and serves also to widen the gap between racialized groups.

Naturalist novels exerted enormous influence on the expansion of racial stereotypes and myths. Authors such as Zola, because they published much of their work in serial, were seen repeatedly in the daily newspapers and penny press that had become accessible to a larger public. How the public understood the colonial territories, the *indigènes*, and the Jews as they were represented in Zola's novels and in many other media reinforced Eurocentrism and myths of superior culture. It is the internalization of the racial myths created by authors like Zola, Zola himself taking a very prominent roll in sculpting the imaginary of his time, that continues to affect racial dynamics in the francophone world due to the way in which these nineteenth-century views on color and "race" have managed to remain persistent. I have begun in this chapter to trace the nineteenth-century origins of racisms that stem from the colonial exploits and surface in the public eye and imaginary through popular literature. These beginnings of a biological racism that associated physical difference, real or perceived and often expressed through color, though they were pseudo-scientific cultural constructions, continued to be reinforced throughout the nineteenth century. It was this reinforcement that gave racial myths strength and ingrained them into the collective, cultural memory of francophone societies, in the Hexagon and beyond. Nineteenth-century racist myth and ideas on race will continue to resurface in many ways both throughout the nineteenth century and in the post-colonial context. In the next chapter I will take a closer look at the role played by the

print media in creating and proliferating images of the Other followed by the more

progressive and complex voice of Duras' protagonist Ourika that challenges her

contemporaries' ideas on race and serves as a precursor for a lot of the post-colonial

counter-discourse on "race."

– Chapter 3 –

LEAVING BEHIND THE "WHITE-ON-BLACK" MODEL OF COLONIAL WRITING: FROM PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND SENSATIONALISM IN GUY DE MAUPASSANT'S *BEL-AMI* TO CLAIRE DE DURAS' *OURIKA*

Like Zola, the writings of many authors participate heavily in the perpetuation of myth and the popularity of some of their works as well as other forms of media accounts for a large amount of the shaping of public opinion. While Zola tended to the more scientific side of the idea of race through his extensive racialized descriptions of Thérèse Raquin and the Jews in *L'Argent*, in *Bel-Ami* Guy de Maupassant illustrates the social and sensational side of the colonial enterprise and the role of journalism in the construction of racist myth. Conversely, there were very few works that contributed to an alternate viewpoint and challenged the prevailing discourses on the colonial Other. Claire de Duras' *Ourika* did just that. In Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* I will explore the construction of the public's perception of the Other by focusing on the influence exerted by media, including propaganda, journalism, novels and textbooks. As in Zola, even before constructivist ideas of race became important in the twentieth century, conceptions of race in Maupassant were constructed by the media. These constructions are what fed the imaginary and the ideas/preconceptions that are found behind the gaze, a topic I will treat extensively in the second half of this chapter by examining Claire de Duras' *Ourika,* as

Ourika addresses the question of the white gaze upon the Other from the Other's point of view.

Media, Public Perception and Sensationalism about the Other in *Bel-Ami*

The protagonist of Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Duroy, is an ex-sous-officier who has spent much time in colonial Africa. His return to France led him to Paris where he desperately fights to get his share of the wealth that is there for the taking. A fortunate twist of fate aids his efforts to advance in society and leads him to a job as a journalist where he begins by writing articles about his time in Africa. A blatant racist attitude that animalizes the people of Africa comes through in his stories. For example, Duroy writes of how they would go out on excursions of "chasse à l'Arabe" (Maupassant 175) and simply shoot the "Others" as if they were nothing but animals. Though his articles were based on his experiences in Africa, his literary license and his desire to please his audience lead him to write stories that were hardly factual, but very entertaining to the Parisian society.

Maupassant like Zola is most often associated with naturalism. In fact, he was one of the six authors who participated in the *Soirées de Médan*, a collection of short stories by the six naturalist authors while passing evenings at Zola's house in Médan, written in the fashion of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[73] More realistically, however, according to Baguley, it was simply a gathering of stories from those six authors who had in common the public face of naturalism, while their writing actually differed quite substantially.

[73] The pretext of the *Soirées de Médan* is that the six authors were gathered at Zola's house in Médan where they shared their stories, much like the storytellers in the *Decameron* who had fled the plague and told stories to pass the time.

More specifically, Baguley cites Maupassant as being the one that is the best example of the great lag between the public face of a naturalist school and personal conviction or artistic theory.[74]

Though there are certainly differences between the writings of Zola and Maupassant, mostly in Maupaussant's lesser adhesion to the strictest rules of scientific language[75] and its application in literature, the works of Maupassant, even those where the supernatural and fantasy take a more prominent place, still adhere to a certain realism in which a particular cause and effect, whether physical or psychological, is at work. In *Bel-Ami* the reflections of a society infatuated with the colonial adventures, exoticism and racial discourse are illustrated in the fame that Duroy gains as a journalist who writes of his time in Africa. On this note, Olin H. Moore posits that "Disdaining the fantastic plots of the Romanticists, the naturalists tended to make of their novels merely a series of scenes, like Le Sage, and like Marivaux. Of such naturalism, the purest representative was Guy de Maupassant" (96).

That which most strongly links Maupassant to Zola, and also to Flaubert, of whom he was more a disciple than he was of Zola, is his keen talent for description. According to Richard B. Grant, "Guy de Maupassant's novel *Bel-Ami* has long been considered a near perfect example of the objective novel, that is, one which portrays the

---

[74] See Baguley *Naturalism* 24.

[75] Zola's desire to follow scientific method and language does not eliminate the possibility of exaggeration and excess in his novels. In fact, his exaggeration of science in literature is one of the key elements of naturalism. In *Le Naturalisme et ses genres*, David Baguley further explores the idea of exaggeration and excess in Zola and naturalism explaining that everything in the realm of naturalism tends towards a "répétition dégradée" which inevitably takes it into the domain of satire and parody (112). Further, naturalism was a literature that sought to shock and had a tendency towards excess, referred to by Baguley as its "vision entropique," an idea that in itself suggests an exaggeration of degradation and decay (*Naturalisme* 151, 169).

characters through their words and deeds, with no direct psychological analysis on the part of the author" (748). Though this type of writing may have been held by some as "inutile" or "fatiguant," Baguley affirms that the naturalists were criticized "left and right" for their excess in description (*Naturalisme* 153), Zola argues that one cannot separate a man from his milieu. He explains that a man is completed, or topped off, by his clothes, his home, his town and region and justifies the lengthy descriptions claiming that "dès lors, nous ne noterons pas un seul phénomène de son cerveau ou de son cœur, sans en chercher les causes ou le contrecoup dans le milieu. De là ce qu'on appelle nos éternelles descriptions" (Baguley *Naturalisme* 154).

This particular attention to detail and to the milieu lends *Bel-Ami* to an excellent examination of the social milieu in Paris during the late nineteenth century. The reader is afforded a two-fold examination: firstly in Maupassant's recording of Parisian society, and secondly in his or her own observation of Maupassant's terminology. In the way that Maupassant uses the word "race" in his writing one can see how nineteenth-century ideologies surrounding race find their way, explicitly or implicitly, into his novel *Bel-Ami*. In examining the detailed character descriptions in Maupassant, one is once again struck by the prevalence of racial discourse even if he did not so strictly adhere to the experimental model of literature set forth by Zola. For Zola, race was an integral part, along with *milieu* and *moment*, in determining the motivations for his protagonists. Since we do not see a similar adherence to Tainian theory in the works of Maupassant, the common appearance of the idea of race serves as an important witness to the nineteenth-century fascination with the pseudo-science of race.

The first explicit use of the term "race" that one comes across in *Bel-Ami* bears resemblance to Zola's *L'Argent* in that it constructs the Jews into a particular race and thus assigns them a specific set of characteristics. Duroy, while having a drink with a co-worker, becomes audience to Saint-Potin's[76] long rant about their boss, who is a Jew. Saint-Potin exclaims, "Le patron ? Un vrai juif ! Et vous savez, les juifs on ne les changera jamais. Quelle race !" (Maupassant 77). He falls into the same myths about Jews, that of the stingy, financially obsessed and talented, cutthroat moneylender, that are cited by Perry and Schweitzer in their *Antisemetic Myths* that I discussed previously with Zola: his boss has "traits étonnants d'avarice, de cette avarice particulières aux fils d'Israël, des économies de dix centimes, des marchandages de cuisinières, des rabais honteux demandés et obtenus, toute une manière d'être usurier, de prêteur à gages" (Maupassant 77).

Saint-Potin, whose real name is Thomas, does not fail to live up to the nickname and continues past his rant about the Jews and takes on next the Asians, treating them all as if they belong to one, specific race. Duroy's first assignment is to observe Saint-Potin. They have been given the task of interviewing a Chinese general and an Indian rajah and finding out what is the public opinion in China and India on Great Britain's affairs in the Far East, "leurs idées sur son système de colonisation et de domination, leurs espérances relatives à l'intervention de l'Europe, et de la France en particulier, dans leurs affaires" (Maupassant 76). According to Pieterse, "In the literature of exploration Africans are mentioned mainly as part of the landscape, or as obstacles to the exploration" (67). The

---

[76] The word "potin" in French can mean both a noisy disturbance or a gossip, and Saint-Potin's character embodies both of these meanings in his continual *bavardage* lacking social tact and his perpetuation of gossip and stories that are spread around the newspaper business and about the social elite in Paris who are often the topic of conversation. He received his nickname from colleagues at the paper.

same type of homogenization of the Asian appears in Saint-Potin's response to Duroy's

inquiry about it getting late and them needing to get to work:

> Alors, vous croyez comme ça que je vais aller demander à ce Chinois et à cet Indien ce qu'ils pensent de l'Angleterre ? [...] J'en ai déjà interviewé cinq cents de ces Chinois, Persans, Hindous, Chiliens, Japonais et autres. Ils répondent tous la même chose, d'après moi. Je n'ai qu'à reprendre mon article sur le dernier venu et à le copier mot pour mot. Ce qui change, par exemple, c'est leur tête, leur nom, leurs titres, leur âge, leur suite. (Maupassant 79-80)

Saint-Potin then adds, "Comme si je ne le savais mieux qu'eux ce qu'ils doivent penser

pour les lecteurs de *La Vie française*" (Maupassant 79). Through Saint-Potin, who seems

to be the voice of the public, Maupassant implies that Asians are viewed as being all the

same, they are a single race, an indistinct group of Others rather than individuals.

In addition to the racializing discourse around the cultural Other, such as the Jew

or the Asian, Maupassant also uses the term "race" to describe a person, a type that shares

essential characteristics with others of his or her type, as we saw in Zola. Paying a visit to

Mme de Marelle, whom he met at a dinner with his boss and his wife, Duroy very

quickly settles in to a familiar and intimate relationship with this woman: "ils se mirent à

bavarder tout de suite, comme s'ils eussent été d'anciennes connaissances, sentant naître

entre eux une familiarité instantanée, sentant s'établir un de ces courants de confiance,

d'intimité et d'affection qui font amis, en cinq minutes, deux êtres de même caractère et

de même race" (90). The notion of race does not simply refer to two similar people, but

rather to something more deeply rooted in their being. Maupassant also uses the term

"race" to compare Duroy with another woman: "Il sentait peut-être vaguement qu'il y

avait quelque chose de commun entre eux, un lien de nature, qu'ils étaient de même race,

de même âme" (161). When coupled with this "lien de nature" the use of race to refer to

the cultural Other begins to take on new meaning. Though both Zola and Maupassant refer to race in a polysemic manner, they also make very clear distinctions between *us* (the Westerners) and *them* (everyone else): there are characters in their novels they both explicitly describe as being of a certain race, such as Thérèse, an Algerian, the Jew in both Zola and Maupassant, or the aforementioned connection between Duroy and Mme de Marelle. While the *them* is not the only other race, it is *an* other race and the use of race to refer to a particular group of Others opens the door for the development of myths about ethnic and cultural Others and prejudices against them based on racial myths.

One of the most significant forces in the construction of the Other and racist myth during the nineteenth century was the far-reaching propaganda campaign in support of the colonial empire. There were many reasons to promote the colonial enterprise amongst the public of the Second Empire and subsequently the Third Republic, some geared towards the public in France and also some intended for the colonial audience in order to paint a positive picture of the *mère patrie* and foster support for the *métropole*. Of great importance amongst the reasons for heavy propaganda in the latter part of the nineteenth century was a need for some sort of victory or comeback after the losses sustained in the Franco-Prussian war. A looming sense of diminished power and importance pervaded the Third Republic, and thus, in France at that time, the questions concerning identity took a more prominent place.[77] It seemed as if loyalty to the greater ideals of the Republic was waning for lack of anything significant to garnish the attention of the public. The public's enthusiasm for the "second most important empire in Europe" was minimal, and the French citizens were "little inclined to exploits abroad and unenthusiastic at the prospect

---

[77] See Chafer and Sackur 5.

of uncontrolled expenditure" (Goerg 82). Consequently, the empire and the education of the public about the empire were used to cultivate feelings of belonging and pride for the French nation and her achievements, which would in turn link the French citizens together around such ideologies as "social Darwinism, racism and the cult of military victory which lay behind enthusiasm for empire" (Chafer and Sackur 6) and help erase from their collective memory the shame and disappointment of defeat in Europe. The colonial propaganda campaign had the very large mission of convincing the average French citizen that it was worth the investment, financially and in manpower, to engage their resources in the establishment and maintenance of colonial territories. Propagandist images were in nearly all types of media, all the way down to postcards and postage stamps and targeted both adults and children. Propaganda was used as a way of reassuring the French nation of its superior place in the world as an imperial nation of sophisticated and advanced civilized peoples.

The use of propaganda in schools and textbooks also ensured that the public would be "educated" on the subject of the empire from an early age. It became part of the imaginary of the Third Republic as much as the ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. From the stages of early childhood education through adult, the propagandist imagery and action served the interests of the imperialists in promoting the civilizing mission. The French were shown as being the possessors of a superior knowledge and way of life and thus bore the burden of civilizing the uncivilized societies of the empire. There were no available means of media that were not taken advantage of to disseminate the ideas that the leaders of the Republic wanted to be in the public mind, including textbooks, postcards, advertisements, newspapers, stamps, etc.

The very particular imagery of the Other that was disseminated in France continually reinforced two things: firstly, it reinforced difference, both the French from the *indigène* and the *indigène* from the French, and, thus colonial imagery reinforced the superiority of white, European, French ways. Chafer and Sackur emphasize the idea that "French civilization was both superior and attainable [for the colonized...] reinforced the images and attitudes current in France, bolstering French faith in their superiority" (8). Colonial propaganda had a "relentless nature" and was centered around "creating stereotyped images of race and fostering a sense of French identity which depended in part on opposition to the subordinated – and inferior – subjects of the colonies" (Chafer and Sackur 8).

Just as the role of journalists and the newspaper press of the nineteenth century in France takes center stage in Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, the press also played a central role in the diffusion of colonial propaganda and imagery. Unlike the exhibitions that sought to put colonial savagery and backwardness on display the press was able to diffuse a "particular vision of non-European peoples through the images used daily in advertising" (Goerg 94) in a manner that was not expensive or risky to the organizer and, additionally, was able to easily reach a much wider audience over a sustained period of time. The *Dernières Nouvelles de Strasbourg*, in which the number of advertisements without any illustration is absolutely dwarfed by those with illustration from 1878 to 1930, is an example of the prevalence of the use of imagery in advertisements.[78] For example, from 1878 to 1881 the total number of advertisements in the *Dernières Nouvelles de*

---

[78] The *Dernières Nouvelles de Strasbourg* was a major regional daily paper during the nineteenth century.

Strasbourg was approximately 320, while those without any illustration totaled only approximately 40.[79] In these advertisements:

> Implicit clichés were also exploited, such as the servility of the blacks, suggested by the famous figure of the groom, their childishness or their capacity for good-natured pranks. A mental link was frequently made with wild animals, leading to images which may be either positive or contemptuous. Thus lions or elephants symbolize strength, monkeys cunning and so on. (Goerg 95)

Such association between the indigenous peoples of French colonies and animals is a reflection of the evolutionary paradigm that was prevalent at the time. Constantly reinforced by this imagery, the public imaginary continued to see the other races as being closer to animals than to those belonging to the French nation. Zola's association of Thérèse Raquin with a cat is an excellent example of this.

The press truly became a significant force in the nineteenth-century France, especially with the aid of the "penny press." [80] It was these changes in the press, and in education, which made the news media a prime location for colonial propaganda. As is witnessed by the success of Zola's novels, many of which were published in series in the newspaper before being published as books, by the end of the nineteenth century, the press had a large influence on an increasingly large segment of the French public. Duroy's character in *Bel-Ami* gives us an important glimpse into the inner workings of the press. Displayed in his own articles is a certain popular imagery of the colonial Other as well as the drive to please the public more so than merely an interest in reporting the facts.

---

[79] See Goerg 94.

[80] Certain early nineteenth-century innovations in marketing and printing allowed newer papers to be sold for half the cost of the established newspapers, and the Guizot Law of 1833 that guaranteed access to elementary education to French males considerably raised literacy rates (Motte 340).

M Walter, Duroy's editor and director of the *Vie française*, has given him the task of writing a series of articles about his experiences in Africa; however, that which Walter demands, because he knows it is what the public craves, is "une petite série fantaisiste sur l'Algérie" whose principal goal is "[plaire] beaucoup à nos lecteurs" (Maupassant 43). Walter ensured that his paper served the interests of a public fascinated with the colonial exploits: "Vous raconterez vos souvenirs, et vous mêlerez à ça la question de la colonisation comme tout à l'heure […] C'est d'actualité, tout à fait d'actualité" (Maupassant 43). Journalism in Maupassant's novel exploits racist and colonial propaganda by showing Duroy's unwitting participation in reinforcing the racial and ethnic stereotypes the public has and was fed about those in the colonial territories.

Though Duroy has much difficulty writing, he desires to find a way to "bien raconter la physionomie étrange et charmante d'Alger" (Maupassant 52). The fascination with his story and the sensational aspect behind it prevent him from writing simply a factual account of his experiences. Rather, it is a more intriguing and exotic story that he is about to lay out:

> l'Afrique des Arabes vagabonds et des nègres inconnus, l'Afrique inexplorée et tentante, dont on nous montre parfois, dans les jardins publics, les bêtes invraisemblables qui semblent créées pour des contes de fées, les autruches, ces poules extravagantes, les gazelles, ces chèvres divines, les girafes surprenantes et grotesques, les chameaux graves, les hippopotames monstrueux, les rhinocéros informes, et les gorilles, ces frères effrayants de l'homme. (Maupassant 52)

The insertion of Duroy's article is a very important and interesting scene in the novel. It quickly becomes an exercise in imagination and invention on the part of Mme Forestier, whom, at the recommendation of his friend, he has enlisted to help him because she had been "dressée à cette besogne-là" (Maupassant 56). The inventive nature of

Duroy's articles underscores the propagandist aspect of newspaper writing in that it serves to reinforce the ethnocentric vision of the colonists. Madame, who finds it "charmant de collaborer comme ça," says that she is "ravie de [son] idée" and plans to together "tourner un article, mais là, un article à succès" (Maupassant 59).

Having in mind before beginning the story the goal of success automatically predisposes the writer to color his or her article in a certain manner. It is in this way that Duroy and Forestier participate in the formation and perpetuation of the sensationalized and exoticized perceptions of Africa and the colonies. Though Duroy mostly intends his descriptions to be factual, he is overtaken by the words of his ghostwriter, Mme Forestier, who tells him to recount to her in detail everything, "sans rien oublier" and that she will choose "ce qu'il faut prendre;" in other words, she says, "Je ferai la sauce" (Maupassant 59).

The creative liberties taken by Mme Forestier as she undertakes her task to help Duroy write about his adventures in Algeria were not an uncommon practice amongst nineteenth-century colonial writers. Much of the colonial writing dovetails perfectly with the massive propaganda of the time to form a complete, but mostly imaginative and exotic, picture of the Other. In *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction* Alec Hargreaves points out that lyricism and being imaginative above all were the most important goals of many writers.[81] Whether for self-promotion or entertainment value, the truth was stretched until broken, all for the sake of catering to the mostly Parisian and

---

[81] Hargreaves' definition of lyricism, "the evocation of the author-narrator's intensely personal manner of perceiving and responding to the lands he visits," and the idea that Pierre Loti, for example, made his lyrically descriptive passages more important than plot or other typical novel development tools is also quite fitting in describing Mme Forestier and Duroy's writing process on his adventures in Algeria (Hargreaves *Colonial* 21).

metropolitan French audience's exotic tastes. In his discussion on Pierre Loti and lyricism, Hargreaves emphasizes that often "the travel sketches are in many ways imaginative rather than documentary works, concentrating on the evocation of subjective impressions rather than on the exact description of external scenes" (*Colonial* 21).

Forestier embellishes Duroy's account of his time in Algeria with fantastical details and intriguing stories of love and passion. Maupassant explains that Mme Forestier "imagined" the adventures of her own "invented" travelers (62). She ignores much of Duroy's descriptions in favor of her own fantasies. Similarly to Hargreaves' description of lyrical colonial literature of the nineteenth century, Duroy's "first-person narratives together constitute a kind of running autobiography, though one of a distinctly imaginative nature, in which matters of biographical fact are subordinate to more poetic processes" (Hargreaves *Colonial* 22). While Hargreaves' study focuses on writers like Pierre Loti, Ernest Psichari, and Pierre Mille, who "gave imaginative expression to the colonial experience of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Hargreaves *Colonial* 1), we may see in Duroy a fictionalized account by Maupassant of a writer that seems to represent a large majority of colonial writing of the time. Duroy's goals of attaining stature and money were primary, and the product of his writing, or shared writing with Mme Forestier, was bent towards helping him accomplish his goal. After their first session together, a very educational experience for Duroy, Mme Forestier "prononça d'une voix joyeuse : « La suite à demain! » Puis, se relevant : « C'est comme ça qu'on écrit un article, mon cher monsieur. Signez, s'il vous plaît »" (62), and with this statement the business transaction of what was to be Duroy's first journalistic assignment was over.

Like Pierre Loti who was "celebrated during his lifetime as the most popular exoticist writer in France" (Hargreaves *Colonial* 1) and who wrote "the most imported group of works devoted to the overseas world between 1880 and 1914, the most original and most varied contribution to [French] exotic literature" (*Colonial* 2), Duroy also became quite famous due to his stories. He makes his move upwards in society and eventually takes Mme Forestier as his wife, a move that increases his fortune and stature. Just as she participates in the fabrication of myths about the Algerian natives, Mme Forestier, now Mme Duroy, also seeks to embellish Duroy's, and her own, mythical aura and insists that he leave behind his old name Georges Duroy and adopt the new name of Georges du Roy de Cantel. By beginning to sign some of his articles in this new name, it becomes fact in the eyes of his public, analogously to how fictionalized accounts about Africa became fact in public perception. Even Duroy, the inventor of this myth, himself begins to believe in the fabrication.

Writers, journalists and historians play no small part in the formation of myth. As Duroy projects the colonial image of the Algerian *indigène*, into the minds of his readership, history and public education legitimize and establish into fact the various myths about the indigenous peoples of the different colonies. There is a very intricate relationship between myth and collective memory as they are each constantly playing on each other: current myth influencing the interpretation and remembering of certain events, while collective memory aids in the formation, the recycling and the perpetuation of myths, leaving any attempt at historical writing incapable of relating real events. Rather, as Dan Edelstein suggests, the historian, or in the case of Duroy, the journalist falls "into the myth-making, and not the myth-interpreting category" (407). Thus, "Every

element in nature acquired for the historian a positive or negative moral value, which itself determined the values of individuals and nations, and, by extension, of history" (Edelstein 409). The aforementioned technological and educational developments from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries not only led to an increased supply in the media, specifically the newspapers and the press, but also, as Pierre Sorlin points out, there was a large increase in the public's curiosity because of the social changes taking place (145). The public was transformed into news consumers and the press became a big business. Due to the fact that many of the popular authors of the time, like Zola and Maupassant, were published in serial in the papers, popular literature of nineteenth-century France developed in symbiosis with the press.[82] Indeed, as Sorlin explains, the media offer a particular pattern or vantage point for observing the universe and by force of repetition certain messages are accepted as natural making news stories "crucial in the shaping of public attitude" (103).

As an important part of nineteenth-century mass media, popular literature such as Maupassant's novels were not exempt from making a great impression upon the public mind and creating myths. Marc Angenot posits that the popular novel of the nineteenth century constituted a literature from which flowed a series of myths and shapeless reveries (18). With the increased production of the daily paper, more space was given to fiction. *Feuilletons* had a large, almost universal, appeal amongst the public of nineteenth-century France leading the popular novel to become a sort of modern mythology heavily invested in promulgating social myths.[83]

---

[82] On the media in the nineteenth century, see Angenot 17.

[83] For further development on media, pop culture and literature see Angenot *Le roman populaire : recherches en paralittérature* 10-13.

From "White-on-Black" to Privileging the Black Voice

As an early nineteenth-century novella, Claire de Duras' *Ourika* also gained a significant amount of popularity during its time. According to Miller, Duras' salon was one of the most famous of Paris, entertaining guests such as Mme de Stael and Sainte-Beuve (*French* 162). After having told the story of *Ourika* to those in her salon, she soon after wrote it down. It was first published anonymously and became a quick success, supposedly garnering critical acclaim from writers as famous as Goethe (Miller *French* 162). Though the popularity of this novella seems to have faded quickly, the story of Ourika for a while fascinated a fairly widespread group of readers and provides for us the flip side of the coin in relation to nineteenth-century white, Eurocentric perceptions about Blacks.[84]

Claire de Duras' novella *Ourika* provides an excellent example of the problematic fallout that ensues from the construction of identity and race. While most narratives of the time that had a black man or woman as their main character were geared towards abolitionist motives, *Ourika* is probably the first attempt at having a black woman not only as the heroine but also as the narrator. Though *Ourika*, a woman who was bought out of slavery by a French aristocrat when she was a young girl, is often associated with

---

[84] According to Joan DeJean though *Ourika* was originally published anonymously and privately printed, "The book did not remain a virtual secret for long, however. At least four new editions and reprints appeared in 1824 alone. The second edition was released in three printings of one thousand copies each. It sold out so quickly that, scarcely a month later, two thousand additional copies were printed. Two other editions that same year--the first a pirated one, the second an edition published in French in saint Petersburg--confirm that, in a few months, *Ourika* had gone from being a story told privately in Duras's salon to being on of the most widely circulated novels of the day, a true best-seller" (viii). Nonetheless, *Ourika*, unlike Zola and Maupassant's works, remained outside of canonic literature. Poor reception of her radical ideas amongst some could be to blame for this as Margaret Waller suggests that "rhymed verse mocking Duras's literary pretensions began making the rounds in Restoration social circles" (xiv). Further, Waller contends that public criticism and scandal created by male writers such as Henri de Latouche and Stendhal may have stunted Duras' popularity and desire to publish anything after her second novel *Edouard* (xiv).

abolitionism by the critics, Christopher Miller points out that Duras' real-life exploits

raise contradictory questions about Duras and abolitionist motives (Miller *French* 165).[85]

These questions make the fact that Ourika's voice is mediated by a white woman, who

may have herself been a slave owner, problematic. On the one hand, Duras' work

provides a "pioneering psychological portrait of racism" (Miller *French* 164). However,

as Christopher Miller suggests, Duras' personal slave holdings, the representation of

slavery as a force of positive production and profitability and Ourika's own idealized

perception of life as a slave (a passage I will discuss later in this chapter) perpetuate

comforting myths about slavery (*French* 171).

By taking into account these problematic areas and by not seeking to

disambiguate or simplify Duras' position into abolitionism, I will examine Ourika's

psychological disintegration, the role played by memory, myth and the gaze in the text

and the importance and influence of the novella on its contemporary readers, similarly to

that of Zola and Maupassant. Duras writes this novella from Ourika's point of view,

granting her black heroine subjecthood. In this way, Duras challenges her readers, fellow

white, French citizens, to look beyond the typical objectifying codifications of black and

woman to find someone who is not defined by her race *en soi* but rather is defined by the

gaze and the perceptions that society has about her skin color.

Ourika had been saved from the slave trade by a French aristocrat, freeing her

from slavery but not from all objectification. The novella, published in 1823, takes place

during the time period where the tradition of the Code noir, if not the code itself, was still

---

[85] Claire de Duras inherited from her mother a large estate in Martinique, which she either still held at the end of her life or sold in order to live off of the money gained in the sale; she was in either case "a slave trader: she had owned and had likely sold human beings as chattel (or had them sold by others)" (Miller *French* 162).

in effect. The Code noir was originally signed by Louis XIV in 1685 and revised in 1724.

Though it would be slowly abandoned throughout the early 1800s, its tradition and

influence would continue mark the perceptions of race that were developing during the

nineteenth century in France, especially in the perception of black people as inferior or

even sub-human. According to Article 44 of the Code noir:

> Déclarons les esclaves être meubles, et comme tels entrer en la communauté,
> n'avoir point de suite par hypothèque, se partager également entre les cohéritiers
> sans préciput ni droit d'aînesse, ni être sujets au douaire coutumier, au retrait
> féodal et lignager, aux droits féodaux et seigneuriaux, aux formalités de décrets,
> ni aux retranchements de quatre quints, en cas de disposition à cause de mort ou
> testamentaire. (*Code noir* 32-3)

Slaves were considered to be objects of possession, portable property, just like furniture,

and as such their emotions, goals, desires and points of view were never considered if it

was even thought that the black slaves were capable of these expressions of humanity.

Further, during the nineteenth century as slavery was fading, there continued to be the

importation of indigenous peoples and tribes from the colonies to be put on display in the

Jardins d'acclimation, the veritable human zoos about which I wrote in the previous

chapters.

As a tradition that had been law since 1685, treating the blacks as objects was an

unconscious undercurrent of French society in the early part of the nineteenth century. It

is this very myth that Claire de Duras challenges in *Ourika*. Duras urges her readers to

reexamine their own thoughts and perceptions on the idea of race. Ourika was raised in

the midst of a white society, sharing the same education and ideals that she learned from

their example. Everything about Ourika, her education, religion, family, manners,

etcetera, was "white;" that is, nothing about her differed from those that surrounded her

except her skin color. Duras' novella demonstrates that Ourika's blackness is a

construction of her society by showing throughout the novella how Ourika is in every way other than physically no different than her family and society.[86] The things that make Ourika "white" are the tastes that she develops, she herself says that, "je prenais un grand dédain pour tout ce qui n'était pas ce monde où je passais ma vie" (Duras 8) and her education, scholastic as well as societal, "de mon côté, j'apprenais, pour plaire à Mme de B., tout ce qui devait former une éducation parfaite" (9). Just as her whiteness is constructed by her education and upbringing, her blackness is also a construction of her society's perceptions about blacks, mostly developed from colonial propaganda and myth.

While the other blacks under French control were often slaves, and, at times such as the slave rebellion in Santo Domingo,[87] were seen as rebellious, ignorant, unchristian and possibly violent, Ourika's character shows that what was perceived to be an inherent characteristic of "blackness" or the "black race" is instead a question of the environment in which one is raised and lives. However, Ourika is grouped together indiscriminately with all black people regardless of existent diversity. Ourika is "black" not only because of her skin color, but because her aristocratic society reads her skin color as a marker for an essential, internal and biological fact of racial difference. Race and class articulate

---

[86] The term "blackness" has been used in many ways over the centuries. I use it here to refer only to Ourika's color; it is, nonetheless, a term that is heavy laden with connoted meaning. As Ivor Chipkin points out, the historical referents of this term include "notions of oppression, alienation and exploitation" (569). To this I would also add notions of a primitive, subhuman and/or animal-like nature as discussed in the previous chapters. In more recent years, especially in the latter part of the twentieth century with the Negritude movement, blackness has been reappropriated and has been used to refer to a "*sublime* object" that "endures all torments and survives with is beauty immaculate" (Chipkin 569).

[87] The island of Hispaniola that now is made up of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, known as the "First Black Republic," has a long history of violence, uprisings, powerful tyrants and occupations. Its independence was gained after a movement started by Toussaint L'Ouverture and continued by Jean-Jacques Dessalines who would become Emperor for life after the famous slave rebellions of the 1790s and the first years of the 1800s.

awkwardly in the character of Ourika in that according to her society's beliefs her blackness should be mutually exclusive with her aristocratic standing. However, the seeming contradictions embodied by Ourika highlight Duras' efforts to reveal the constructed nature of her society's racial myths, and Ourika remains in an in-between position of being neither slave, nor servant, nor truly free because she does not fit into any of her society's neatly contrived racial roles.

Duras gives Ourika agency and challenges prevailing notions in her society about blacks in general. By showing the very human side, the psychological trauma experienced by Ourika, Duras makes her readers aware of Ourika's human nature despite her black skin and challenges the myths about the of the colonized peoples that reduce them to objects and "movable property." Those that were traditionally considered to be merely *des meubles* were seen as unequal, and they were thus treated unequally but always with an underlying assumption that it was for their own good. The *mission civilisatrice* that served as a justification for the treatment of the indigenous peoples in the colonies was extended to the blacks that were brought into France by wealthy colonists. Evangelization was one of the principal pretenses for colonization and enslavement. The first eight articles of the Code Noir all concern the enforcement of the Christian religion and demand that all slaves be "baptisés et instruits dans la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine" to the exclusion of all other possibilities whether protestant or indigenous "religions," and Article 1 stipulates that even the Jews be expelled from colonial territories (*Code noir* 18-21). When the wealthy colonists needed a way to bring slaves back to France, early eighteenth-century legislation was written

stating that slaves could be brought into France without becoming free either for religious instruction or for training in a particular trade.[88]

In addition to an influx of blacks into France, the nineteenth century stood as a witness to many large changes that truly revolutionized the French way of life and thinking. Governmental unrest was a key theme, for in addition to the Revolution of 1789 there would also be two republics and two empires with a series of coups and revolts between each power change. Further, the time of Claire de Duras was the beginning of an era that would pose a significant challenge to French lifestyle and tradition due to the rapidly changing landscape of the metropolitan areas. Alec Hargreaves points out that "The foundling myths of the French state were created over many hundreds of years under the centralizing monarchial system which prevailed until the end of the eighteenth century, when they were recast by the French Revolution in to the modern forms associated with the ideal of a unified nation-state" (*Immigration* 4). The idea of a national identity soothed a post-Revolutionary tumult and served as a basis for French nationalism that set white, Christian and European ideals as the norm.[89] According to Balibar and Wallerstein, "De fait, le nationalisme est uniformisateur, rationalisateur, et il cultive les fétiches d'une identité nationale venant des origines, qui devrait être conservée contre toute dissémination" (78). Throughout the century France would see two major

---

[88] See Sue Peabody's article "Race, Slavery and the law in Early Modern France." *The Historian* 56.3 (1994):501-10.

[89] Samir Amin points out that the developing capitalistic Eurocentrism of the nineteenth century set the European way as the model (124). In the mythological reconstruction of European history and world history, the West was seen as the best of all worlds, an invariable culture that the imitation of which was the only way to surmount the various challenges that appeared around the globe (Amin 6-9).

demographical shifts due to industrial revolution that would quickly provoke a reflexive

reaction towards a perceived overwhelming difference.[90]

Ourika's position as a black girl/woman in France was further complicated by her

in-between status: she was neither slave, nor servant, nor truly free. Though throughout

the nineteenth century there was a significant number of immigrants of European descent

moving to France, as a result of France's colonial exploits dating back into the

seventeenth century, there was also quite a large number of blacks coming into France.

Sue Peabody explains that "By the mid eighteenth century thousands of blacks, free and

slave, had migrated to France" (501), many of them as domestic servants for the colonial

masters who had gained extensive wealth in the colonies. Ourika was in an interesting

position as a foreigner and former slave in France: Mme de B. had been chosen as her

bienfaitrice, a word that implies both ownership and sponsorship and was charged with

the responsibility of raising and educating Ourika in the dominant culture, assimilating

her as a foreigner would need to be. On the other hand, however, Ourika had been

purchased from a slave boat that was soon to leave. "M. de B. m'acheta" (Duras 7), she

explains to the doctor, and was given to Mme de B's charge, almost as a piece of

property would be bought and given to another. It wasn't uncommon, in fact, that French

---

[90] Great advancements in the industries brought a significant number of people from the rural areas to the cities. A large working class was rapidly developing as a result of this rural exodus. Agriculture, on which they had previously depended for their living, was becoming more and more industrialized and needed less and less a large number of workers to run it. Even though the industrial revolution was a bit slower taking hold in France than in the other European countries like England and Germany, the work force in France grew from two million to 4.6 million between 1800 and 1876 (Magraw 65-6). The influx of people to industrial centers had started slowly, but remained constant and thus gave strength to the slow but sure industrialization that was developing in France (Magraw 66). The Second Empire of Louis-Napoléon provided a political stability that encouraged industrial expansion. The completion of his network of railways quadrupled the number of workers in the rail industry to 138,000 which in turn stimulated the carbon and metal industries (Magraw 83). The growing poorer classes were seen as suspect at best and were themselves being excluded from a more bourgeois defined version of what the "French race" should be.

aristocratic women would keep African children as pets (Jenson and Miller 13), and, as we will see, Ourika is often treated as one might expect a pet to be: a dressed, trained performer for company. Ourika's inbetweenness is thus not only cultural, between Senegal and France, but also in her statute of personhood: purchased, but no longer a slave, Ourika is inbetween an immigrant and a pet.

Though Ourika was raised as an equal to her adopted brother, in the end, there was no question as to her belonging. Not only was she marginalized, but she was also seen as going against nature. Mme de B.'s friend exclaims, "Ourika n'a pas rempli sa destinée : elle s'est placée dans la société sans sa permission" (Duras 13). Amongst the many elements at play in the relationship between Ourika and her society, being seen in part as an immigrant plays a very important role in her identity.[91] As immigrants often are, Ourika is seen as an outsider forcing her way in. Even though she did not choose to be there, she is in a position akin to that of an immigrant because, as Mme de B.'s friend has told us, Ourika has put herself in this aristocratic, white society without its permission. The term immigrant allows for an institutionalization of racism claiming that

---

[91] Additionally, myth takes on further significance when the question of immigration is considered, especially where it is a consequence of the colonial epoch. Unifying and differentiating aspects of a categorization as immigrant are evoked by Claire de Duras in her novel *Ourika*, yet in the context of slavery, which was a more blatant and violent differentiation of the immigrant Other. In *Race, nation, classe : Les identités ambiguës*, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein postulate that "Les catégories mêmes d'immigré et d'immigration recouvrent un deuxième paradoxe. Ce sont des catégories *à la fois unifiantes et différenciantes* " (294). The codification of people as immigrants is a first step towards an institutional racism in that it lets an accepted hierarchization subtly leak into political and public discourse, such as the denial of healthcare , other public services, or the right to vote for immigrants. Balibar notes that Westerners are "le plus souvent incapable de désigner et de désigner différemment un Chinois, un Japonais ou un Vietnamien, voire un Philippin (tous sont des *slants*), ou bien un Portoricain et un Mexicain (tous sont des *chicanos*) de même un Français est le plus souvent incapable de désigner différemment un Algérien, un Tunisien, un Marocain , un Turc (tous sont des « Arabes »)" (294). Balibar tells us that there are always "critères de hiérarchisation ("religieux", "nationaux", "culturels", "psychologiques", "biologiques")" (295) and that, for example "un ouvrier espagnol, *a fortiori* un ouvrier marocain seront « immigrés », mais un capitaliste espagnol, voire un capitaliste algérien, ne le seront pas" (294). In *Hospitalité française* Ben Jelloun suggests that there are "des étrangers moins étrangers que d'autres," which he calls "une perversité" (131).

certain legislative differences in how they are to be treated are based on their immigration status as opposed to their race. The tradition of excluding foreigners in France based on physical difference takes root in the laws concerning slaves in France. Dating back to the sixteenth century, there was an idea that a slave who came to France would be free based on an ordinance by Louis X in July of 1315 that insisted those in servitude should be allowed freedom upon arriving in France.[92] Because there were, according to legal discourse, no slaves in France, there needed to be a way to separate the blacks from the whites while still maintaining there be no slave in the *métropole* itself. One's status as an immigrant puts them in a different category that is subject to an institutionalized racism, a racism that is legislatively supported, which in turn slips into the public subconscious as not only justified, but natural. Due to her ambiguous position as a former slave educated as a white, Ourika is subjected to several different classifications that, as Balibar and Wallerstein point out, are paradoxical: "Les catégories mêmes d'immigré et d'immigration recouvrent un deuxième paradoxe. Ce sont des catégories *à la fois unifiantes et différenciantes*" (294). She is simultaneously the same as all other blacks and differenciated from all other blacks.

Though she does not realize it in the beginning of the novella, because of her blackness Ourika is seen as being the equal and the same as all blacks: this makes her less human, less evolved and easily treated as an object by her society. The heterogeneity of

---

[92] Though no specific laws were in the books to this regard, the tradition remained in place until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when increasing numbers of black slaves were being brought to France as domestic servants (Peabody 502). With this shift, colonial masters began to seek and urge the government to protect their "property" and in October of 1716 the mayor of Nantes succeeded in having the king publish an edict that established certain conditions under which blacks could be brought to France and kept as slaves (Peabody 502). Though according to Louis X's abovementioned ordinance "following natural law, all men are born free" and no Frenchman or white could ever be conceived as being a slave in France herself, the slaves' classifications as outsider immigrants, "*esclaves nègres,*" "*esclaves*" or even "*nègres*" allowed them to be considered outside of humanity according to French law (Peabody 502-3).

various black cultures is thus erased and there is little difference afforded to the different black Africans, Caribbeans or North Americans. After overhearing the conversation between Mme de B. and the Marquise, Ourika internalizes this homogenization and begins to see herself as part of a race that is inferior to the whites that surround her. She feels shame for her own race, for their behavior and what seems to be an innate violent and animalistic nature. Ourika explains that she was deceived and disappointed by the rebellions in Saint Domingue. Before the massacres she felt that she "du moins, [avait] des semblables : comme ils étaient malheureux," and she explains, "je les croyais bons, et je m'intéressais à leur sort" (Duras 20). However upon hearing of the slave rebellions she exclaims: "Les massacres de Saint-Domingue me causèrent une douleur nouvelle et déchirante : jusqu'ici je m'étais affligée d'appartenir à une race proscrite ; maintenant j'avais honte d'appartenir à une race de barbares et d'assassins" (Duras 20). That she has internalized shame for her own "race" is yet another example of Bourdieu's symbolique violence. Ourika is unified with and inserted into an imaginary community of blacks by her society and, in turn, in her own mind. Balibar and Wallerstein add that the *catégories unifiantes* "assimilent à une situation ou à un type unique des « populations » dont la provenance géographique, les histoires propres (et par conséquent les cultures et les modes de vie), les conditions d'entrée dans l'espace national et les statuts juridiques sont complètement hétérogènes" (294). Though there existed many different black cultures around the world, all over Africa, in the Caribbean and in North America, for example, all black people were nonetheless considered to be of the same culture or type.

While the Other is homogenized into one group, Balibar and Wallerstein insist that there remain still certain criteria that allow a hierarchy to be established amongst

them. These "critères de hiérarchisation" are " « religieux », « nationaux », « culturels », « psychologiques », « biologiques »" and betray the arbitrary nature of the classification of immigrant (Balibar and Wallerstein 295). Though there was often some tension in the working classes between the French and the various European, but white, immigrants who the French felt were threatening to take their jobs, the "immigrant" status of the white Europeans was less on display than the marginalization of the blacks. Balibar and Wallerstein explain that "Plus généralement « immigré » est une catégorie d'amalgame, combinant des critères ethniques et des critères de classe, dans laquelle sont déversés pêle-mêle des étrangers, mais non pas *tous* les étrangers ni *rien que* des étrangers" (294). Ourika's place in her society puts her in a convoluted position. Ourika is in-between black and white and is out of place in the white, aristocratic society. As Madame de B's friend says, she had "brisé l'ordre de la nature" (Duras 13). This supposed "nature" is, however, only a construction of society that has been accepted, repeated and internalized by the colonized. That which is institutionalized as "nature" is actually culture, and the internalization of these institutions and structures of domination are symbolic violence as Bourdieu describes it. Ourika is black and there is no escaping that fact, however, Ourika is also far from being on the same footing with most other blacks. She was raised in a white, aristocratic society, with their education and surrounded by their tastes and desires. She is ultimately rendered different from the other blacks and realizes that she would never be "la soeur, la femme, la mère de personne !" (Duras 17). Like Fanon who writes, "pour le Noir, il n'y a qu'un destin. Et il est blanc" (*Peau* 8), Ourika is forced to seek whiteness, which she will never be allowed to achieve, while at the same time she is forever separated from sharing any culture or being with her native compatriots of

111

Senegal. With a remark similar to that which one might hear from an immigrant, she

laments, "J'eus un moment l'idée de demander à Mme de B. de me renvoyer dans mon

pays ; mais là encore j'aurais été isolée : qui m'aurait entendue, qui m'aurait comprise ?"

(Duras 15). Dominique de Villepin remarks that the slave trade constituted a process of

déracinement, a negation of origins and culture for those who were uprooted and shipped

away (12). Ourika has experienced this uprooting and is now outside of both cultures in

which she has relations, but yet still categorized as black. She exclaims, "Hélas ! je

n'appartenais plus à personne; j'étais étrangère à la race humaine tout entière!" (Duras

15) and "j'étais isolée sur la terre" (Duras 15). While according to her society Ourika is

clearly labeled as black and excluded from the realm of the whites, she is in reality

relegated to the realm of the *entre-deux*. What we know as cultures, a construction of

society, is understood by Ourika's society as her race, part of her nature.

Feeling outside and isolated was how Ourika viewed her fate. However, as the

Revolution began to take hold, she was given some hope of a brighter future:

> Croiriez-vous, jeune comme j'étais, étrangère à tous les intérêts de la société,
> nourrissant à part ma plaie secrète, la Révolution apporta un changement dans
> mes idées, fit naître dans mon cœur quelques espérances, et suspendit un moment
> mes maux ? tant on cherche vite ce qui peut consoler ! J'entrevis donc que, dans
> ce grand désordre, je pourrais trouver ma place ; que toutes les fortunes
> renversées, tous les rangs confondus, tous les préjugés évanouis, amèneraient
> peut-être un état de choses où je serais moins étrangère ; et que si j'avais quelque
> supériorité d'âme, quelque qualité cachée, on l'apprécierait lorsque ma couleur ne
> m'isolerait plus au milieu du monde, comme elle avait fait jusqu'alors. (Duras 18-
> 9)

As Ozouf would put it, the hope that Ourika, and many others, carried in the Revolution

was principally in the ideals of *liberté* and *égalité*, with *fraternité* to join the other two a

little later. In stark contrast with her shame for the slave rebellions in Sainte Dominque

and the Haitian Revolution, Ourika's hopes were bolstered by the French Revolution's

institution of Human Rights, supposedly universal, into universalism that should have put her on a more equal footing with her adopted brother that she loved and the rest of her family and society.[93] Ourika's fixation on revolution is interesting in that she identifies with the white revolution in France and wishes to be separated from the revolution in Haiti. However, though the French Revolutionary myth of freedom and equality was implied to be for all men, in reality these ideals were to be extended to the whites of France while leaving out the blacks.[94] Not only were the blacks excluded, but in order to maintain the appearance of the Revolutionary myth, at least legislatively, what had been an institutional governance of slave and free became an institutionalized version of racism. According to Peabody, the terms slave and free were not allowed to appear in the text of the law, rather terms such as "blacks," "mulattoes," and "other people of color" (509) were used when rights were legally restricted. Sue Peabody gives several examples of these color-based racial exclusions: in 1762 all "negroes and mulattoes" in France were ordered to register with the Admirality; another ordinance issued in 1778 "required 'blacks, mulattoes and other people of color' to carry identification papers;" also, marriages between "whites, blacks, mulattoes and other people of color" were prohibited, and "all priests, notaries, land surveyors and other public officials [were prohibited] from giving any people of color the title of sir or dame" (Peabody 509). Laws written as such supported the cultural mythology of racial differences and hierarchies and further, even gave them a legitimacy supported by the government.

---

[93] See Schor's article "The Crisis of French Universalism," p. 46, on the ideals of Human Rights and Universalism in the French Revolution.

[94] According to Naomi Schor, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789 "excluded or at any rate did not explicitly include several important segment of the population notably, women and slaves" (47).

As the fight for freedom and equal rights wore on, a certain racism towards the

blacks was encouraged by this shift in discourse from slave and object to efforts at

portraying them as plausibly equal. Duras' *Ourika* stands out as being quite the opposite

of most texts of the time[95] in that, while many of the engaged writers of the nineteenth

century focused on a stereotyped version of the black hero in order to deal with social

issues, Duras wrote Ourika without stereotypical behaviors in order to explore "what a

social evil does to an individual [rather] than with the nature of the social evil itself"

(O'Connell 50). David O'Connell is suggesting here that Duras' *Ourika* focuses on the

person or the individual victim of the social evil: rather than just being another

philosophical or sociological study on racism, Duras gives the perspective of the object of

racism and makes her story a personal story. Other literature from the mid-eighteenth

century through the early nineteenth century contained a "stereotype of the handsome,

intelligent, aristocratic black male who, in so far as he naturally possesses all the qualities

is the exception to the rule among his people" and "were composed extolling the virtues

of the black hero" (O'Connell 51). The major problem with this typification of the black

hero, as O'Connell points out, is that "in order to convince his skeptical middle-class

audience that all men deserve compete freedom and equality, as reason dictates, [the

author] seems to have felt that he had to create a black hero equal to the very best of

white men" (O'Connell 51). However, this manner of idealizing the black hero continued

to ignore the average black men and women. Making his hero an atypical example left

---

[95] Though in comparison with the texts of Isabelle Eberhardt, Duras' texts do tend to lean much more towards the supporting of the white, aristocratic system of the nineteenth century French nation. Eberhardt, who wrote much later in the century, and unlike Duras, actually traveled extensively through the colonies of North Africa, wrote scathing criticisms against colonialism (See Michelle Chilcoat's "Anticolonialism and Misogyny in the Writings of Isabelle Eberhard." *The French Review*. 77.5 (Apr. 2004): 949-57.)

room in the mind of the public for the assumption that the good or intelligent black man was indeed an anomaly, the exception rather than the norm. Secondary characters often fulfilled the stereotypical role assigned to black people, "slow-witted, slothful and superstitious" (O'Connell 51), further making the hero a rarity amongst the rest of his "race." As a result, "The reader was thus exhorted to affirm a theoretical adherence to the notion of black equality without being forced to posit it as a right for all blacks" (O'Connell 51), rendering the ideals of the Revolution a myth that was really in conflict with the reality of the situation for non-whites and often proletariat whites that were also considered to be of an inferior race.[96]

Though Ourika was not brought to France as a slave, as a "pet" she was nonetheless forced to take part of the various governmental, religious and familial institutions of France at the expense of leaving behind all traces of her native culture. The heavy amount of propaganda supporting the *mission civilisatrice* gave the public the impression that the French colonial endeavors were good. Duras, however, provides a first person point of view of the toll a forced new language, religion and culture take on the recipient. Ourika on multiple occasions questions the idea that she is better off in this new and different French life than she would have been had she been left in Senegal, or even if she had been left to be sold as a slave. Her rescue from her fate as a black woman in the colony of Senegal was a double edged sword: on the one hand, she was saved from a life of the horrors of slavery in which it was more likely to be the rule rather than the exception to be raped repeatedly, ill treated, starved, beaten, and all of this only if one

---

[96] As we have already seen in the chapter on Zola, the lower class masses were also considered to be of a degenerate race of human that should not be mixed with the better *sang* of the upper classes, lest there be the possibility of further decadence and degeneration.

were to survive the trip across the Atlantic, in itself a harrowing experience.[97] However,

it is not a certainty that life being forced to live as a pariah in French society is by

definition, just because it is "French," a good life. Ourika ponders this question stating,

"Me sauver de l'esclavage, me choisir pour bienfaitrice Mme de B., c'était me donner

deux fois la vie : je fus ingrate envers la Providence en n'étant point heureuse ; et

cependant le bonheur résulte-t-il toujours de ces dons de l'intelligence ?" (Duras 7).

Ourika's self-perceived ingratitude towards "Providence" or Christianity shows the point

to which she has internalized the religion of those around her. Further, a supposedly

"intelligent" and rational choice of giving Ourika as a gift to Mme de B. should have

been, according to the myth of the civilizing mission, accepted by Ourika with great

thanksgiving; nonetheless, she continues to question the veracity of this myth in

questioning whether happiness is always the result. Though the myth lauding white,

French society as superior would have the answer to her question be "yes," Ourika

continues to reflect, even lament over her current situation versus the fate that previously

awaited her:

> Qu'avais-je fait à ceux qui crurent me sauver en m'amenant sur cette terre d'exil ?
> Pourquoi ne me laissait-on pas suivre mon sort ? Eh bien ! je serais la négresse
> esclave de quelque riche colon ; brûlée par le soleil, je cultiverais la terre d'un
> autre : mais j'aurais mon humble cabane pour me retirer le soir ; j'aurais un
> compagnon de ma vie, et des enfants de ma couleur, qui m'appelleraient : Ma
> mère ! ils appuieraient sans dégoût leur petite bouche sur mon front ; ils
> reposeraient leur tête sur mon cou, et s'endormiraient dans mes bras ! Qu'ai-je fait
> pour être condamnée à n'éprouver jamais les affections pour lesquelles seules
> mon cœur est créé ! O mon Dieu ! ôtez-moi de ce monde ; je sens que je ne puis
> plus supporter la vie. (Duras 38)

---

[97] In the next chapter I will discuss Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière…*, a novel that exposes the
inhumane and extremely violent treatment of black slave women. Maryse Condé also discusses the
enormous role played by the West in the degradation of the African woman from the pre-colonial period
and through the introduction of European education, as well as the continued cruelty inflicted by slave
masters (*Parole* 3, 70).

Though Ourika has an idealized vision of life as a slave, Duras' emphasis on the positive aspects of the other side of the situation forces her reader to reconsider their absolute belief in the *mission civilisatrice* and look at the situation from an Other's point of view. By allowing Ourika to question the supposed positive nature and outcomes of the civilizing mission, Duras gives Ourika agency unlike any other black hero or heroine of the time because the reader hears her voice speaking out, albeit ambiguously, against the absolutes that had been put forth by the French imperial government.

Duras also underscores the psychological processes that take place in a subject such as Ourika under the pressures of the symbolic violence that the Western world exerted on their colonial territories. Ourika was forced into a society of which she would never be allowed to be truly a part; however, despite her questioning of this society, she often also expresses remorse for an ingratitude that she feels towards her "benefactors." The fact that Ourika feels guilt for not being wholly positive, thankful and indebted towards the French citizens that "saved" her is evidence of the symbolic violence that has her apply to herself the values of white, French society. Ourika has internalized the myth of the *mission civilisatrice* and tortures herself over what she sees as ungratefulness towards Mme de B. She explains, "J'aurais dû [être heureuse]; je me le disais souvent; je m'accusais d'ingratitude ou de folie" (Duras 26) and "Je me fis honte de mon ingratitude" (Duras 36). Ourika feels shame because, though the internalized ideals of her surrounding tell her she should be eternally grateful for her life in France, she does not in fact feel this way; she does not feel towards the whites what she "should."

Bourdieu's structures of domination, institutions, families, the Church, Education and the State, all work together to form what seems to be a coalesced and comprehensive

117

force that naturalizes the structures of domination. The symbolic violence to which Ourika is subjected, that of the loss of her native language and culture in addition to the inferiorization because of her blackness, is reinforced at every turn by the structures of domination present, somewhat silently, in her society.[98] Yet since those subjected to symbolic violence are not aware of it, Ourika begins to see herself as the dominated object of the white society in which she lives. Duras underscores the arbitrary nature of the essentialism placed on Ourika's color by the very fact that Ourika was shocked, dismayed and eventually devastated by the revelation that she was not, in fact, welcome or fully integrated into the white aristocracy. Until the moment she overhears the conversation between Madame de B. and la marquise that "ouvrit [ses] yeux et finit [sa] jeunesse" (Duras 11), Ourika has no indication that her physical difference made her essentially different in the eyes of the Western-European whites. It is at this moment, however, that Ourika herself adopts the Western gaze and turns it against herself. Bourdieu explains that it is a consciousness of the various schemata that define domination that creates one's view of self: "lorsque les schèmes qu'il [le dominé] met en œuvre pour se percevoir et s'apprécier, ou pour percevoir et apprécier les dominants (élevé/bas, masculin/féminin, blanc/noir, etc.) sont le produit de l'incorporation des classements, ainsi naturalisés, dont son être social est le produit" (Bourdieu *Domination* 56). Ourika internalizes the schemas of dominance that are created, yet made to seem natural, by her society, and in turn uses them to judge herself and create perceptions about herself. Her social being in this way becomes that which her society has already

___

[98] These structures of domination, other than in the overheard conversation between Mme de B. and the Marquise, rule quietly over Ourika in her upbringing, education and religion. It is never discussed or questioned whether she, or anyone else in the aristocratic society, should follow these conventions, it is simply assumed because the structures in place are seen as the right and best ones.

condemned her to be. The power of perception is significant because it is the perception of things, the adherence to myth, and not in logic or even knowledge that symbolic, and subsequently real, domination occurs. Societies and individuals experience a sort of willful amnesia in order to forget that the structures of power have been constructed. In the gaze the perception of the way things are, having forgotten or repressed reality, becomes the new, adhered to reality. The effect that this has on Ourika, in the end, is that of objectifying her based on her perceived color, literally and figuratively. Ourika is stretched between two identities: firstly, she is the "daughter" of a white, aristocratic French family, and secondly, she is the black, adopted Senegalese girl, a pet even, who has "infiltrated" white society. The overheard conversation that ended her childhood also marked a confusing of Ourika's identity.

The way Ourika is perceived by her society has thus played an important role in the way she sees and defines, or is unable to define, herself. The gaze of the dominant other, or their collective gaze as a society, has a large role in identity development, and it is the gaze that endows racial myths with such power. Because Ourika is believed to be of an inferior race, she becomes the subject of a gaze that reinforces such a position. She comments on her shame over belonging to a "race de barbares et d'assassins" (Duras 20) and speaks of her "patrie barbare, au milieu des sauvages qui l'habitent" (Duras 28). The society in which she lives feels that Ourika is out of place, that she does not know the role she is supposed to take. La marquise contemptuously yells at her, "si, vous n'étiez pas folle d'amour pour Charles, vous prendriez fort bien votre parti d'être négresse" (Duras 41). Ourika as a person of inferior position takes the blame for all of the negatives she and those around her are forced to endure. However, as she points out, "cette société

119

cruelle qui [la] rendait responsable du mal qu'elle seule avait fait" (Duras 28). The power

of the Western gaze upon her remains strong and self-assured in its ability to project

identity and blame upon the Other. Ourika is the scapegoat for the discomfort created by

her presence. Her society created the situation in which she lived, she was bought and

brought to France against her own cries, but yet, in the eyes of the marquise, Ourika still

remains the responsible one for causing the troubles because she has broken the natural

order and brought her blackness into a white society.

The Eurocentrism of Ourika's society is reflected heavily in their gaze upon her.

Similarly to how Foucault cites the eye as a source because it subjugates and then defines

the object according to its own point of view,[99] Frantz Fanon's discussion on the gaze

goes further in its application to discuss the *regard blanc* and the white world as the

center of the universe. Not only is everyone the object of a gaze, but certain people are

made object of a particular inferiorizing gaze. The blacks in France, according to Fanon,

have a certain "experience vécue du Noir"[100] which is defined in many ways by the

Western, white gaze that is thrust upon them. Though this is not quite the experience of

Duras, it does, nonetheless, reflect Ourika's experience of living in white Parisian

society.

Fanon also considers the particularities of the colonial and post-colonial situation

in his essay. Beyond being a person-object, Ourika is also a person-object that is black

and is so inside of a white society. Fanon explains that due to colonization the black

person is no longer in the position to just be, or just be a black person. He or she must

---

[99] See Chapter 1 for the discussion on Foucault and the medical gaze.

[100] Chapter 5 of *Peau noir, masques blancs*

now be black in front of, or in the gaze of, the whites. He describes the white gaze as being an oppressive heaviness to which he and all blacks are unaccustomed. The overheard comments such as "Sale nègre" or "Maman, regarde le nègre, j'ai peur !", even those as simple as "Tiens, un nègre!" all turn the human into an object. It is the white gaze, merciless and relentless, that imprisons the Black man, "[le] consituant objet" (Fanon *Peau* 91).

Not only does the white gaze objectify its black subject, it also creates a distance between the two. The white world refuses the Black man any participation or belonging (Fanon *Peau* 92). Though as a "pet" and a woman her experience is somewhat different than that of Fanon, Ourika experiences similar exclusion once she becomes old enough to be introduced into society as a woman. She calls her society and France "cette terre d'exil" (Duras 38) and expresses repeatedly sentiments of isolation and foreignness.

The space created between the white gazer[101] and the black object goes further than separating them into two sets of human beings, but as Fanon demonstrates, it separates them into two different types or genus of human. He states that the *regards blancs* dissect him; he is fixed by the Western gaze and he feels that "dans ces regards blancs que ce n'est pas un nouvel homme qui entre, mais un nouveau type d'homme, un nouveau genre. Un nègre, quoi !" (Fanon *Peau* 93). It is this separation, one that puts the black man or woman in an entirely different category of human that justifies their inferiorization. Racial myth creates a set of characteristics by which the black man or woman is defined, regardless of any specificities he or she possesses, and the gaze homogenizes them all into this one set of characteristics; it subjugates them and encloses

---

[101] The white person who lives ethnocentrically and carries from his or her perspective all of the cultural memory and myths of the white, Western tradition.

them into an constructed space of blackness rather than liberating them into the openness of humanity. What is simply a difference in pigmentation comes to stand for an entire definition of their "type" of humanity: "Comme la couleur est le signe extérieur le mieux visible de la race, elle est devenue le critère sous l'angle duquel on juge les hommes sans tenir compte de leurs acquis éducatifs et sociaux" (Fanon *Peau* 95). Though Fanon was a doctor, a psychiatrist, was highly educated, intelligent and made it his life's goal to help others, he was seen as little more than a black object. Similarly, though Ourika was educated socially and intellectually the same as those around here, she was still seen by them as being the adopted black girl from Senegal, a colonial and thus subjugated territory, rather than as Mme de B.'s daughter or Charles' sister. In fact, it was an impossibility that she be seen as truly belonging to anyone or truly being a part of her society. By being a black woman that was neither slave nor servant in an aristocratic, white society, she had "brisé l'ordre de la nature" and had placed herself "dans la société sans sa permission" (Duras 13). Ourika was thus condemned to society's vengeance and would never, as she laments, be the sister, the wife or the mother of anyone, a demonstration of how the perceptions and consequences of racism in the public sphere, to which Fanon refers, force their way into the private sphere and lead to a disintegrated subject.

In the white, upper-class society of imperial France, Ourika became keenly aware of the Western gaze, or the white gaze that sees the world from an ethnocentric point of reference, upon her. Though she was not aware of it before overhearing the marquise's conversation with Mme de B, in retrospect she was able to see how she had been made an object: "j'y passais ma vie, aimée d'elle, caressée, gâtée par tous ses amis, accablée de

présents, vantée, exaltée comme l'enfant le plus spirituel et le plus aimable" (Duras 7).

Ourika now realizes that she was the exotic "jouet, un amusement" (Duras 12) of Mme de B and her society friends. Like her little doll, Mme de B dressed Ourika "à l'orientale" (Duras 10) and had her dance the *Comba*, a traditional Senegalese dance, at balls. This kind of fetishization[102] of Ourika was in many ways a manner of alleviating certain fears and suspicions of the Other. Making Ourika an object of the gaze and of the colonial fantasies of the white, aristocratic, French society allowed the whites to subjugate and control the unknown. It bears a striking similarity to the human zoos that were prevalent in the public gardens of Paris. It was a way to make the colonized seem at the same time more and less frightening. Putting the African who had been transported to a *jardin d'acclimation* into a zoo underscored the savage and animalistic, dangerous, nature he was said to have but also relieved public fears by seeing him or her contained and controlled. Colonial myth and fantasy were reinforced by animalizing the slaves and colonized peoples, not just on their own soil, but even in the public spaces of Paris. The human zoos were a way for the French to create a space between themselves and those that they were exploiting. Presenting them as animals and controlling the space in which the colonized lived reinforced ideas of French superiority, civilization, divine right and responsibility.

Though Ourika was not subjected to the same type of objectification, she was, nonetheless, subjugated by the Western gaze in such a way that she could feel and

---

[102] Laura Mulvey explains that the fetish "attracts the gaze" and holds "the fetishist's eyes fixed on the seduction of belief to guard against the encroachment of knowledge. This investment in surface appearance enhances the phantasmatic space of the fetish" (12). Colonial fantasies are created, and Ourika is the object upon which the whites in French society cast their gaze; in their gaze Ourika reinforces myth and expels images of violence and exploitation that were the reality of colonialism.

eventually internalize her so-called inferiority. With each new visitor to Mme de B's house Ourika "éprouvai[t] un nouveau torment" (Duras 27). She could feel the stares, the questions and the curiosity that filled the eyes of Mme de B's visitors: "j'étais sure d'être bientôt l'objet d'un aparté dans l'embrasure de la fenêtre, ou d'une conversation à voix basse: car il fallait bien se faire expliquer comment une négresse était admise dans la société intime de Mme de B" (Duras 27-8). Referring to herself as a *négresse*, a term that implies servitude, shows that Ourika knew the expectations upon her, and she could read in the faces of those around her that she was not welcome in their society: when meeting Charles' fiancé for the first time Ourika says that she could not bear "ce coup d'oeil dédaigneux et scrutateur qui [la] faisait toujours tant de mal" (Duras 30).

The looks of disgust and disdain directed towards Ourika quickly begin to take their toll on her self-esteem and damage her psychologically. Ourika begins to feel shame for what she calls her "physiognomie dédaigneuse" (Duras 28) and tries to avoid the *regard* of those around her; she wishes to avoid having her blackness seen by covering up with hats, veils, long gloves and often isolates herself. Ourika is clearly aware of the significance of the gazes upon her and Duras makes clear the power the gaze has to effect change and influence on a person. Ourika wishes to escape the white gaze, not just to be outside of society, but to avoid being seen. Duras illustrates the idea that a person is what they are because someone sees them as such. At the beginning she does not yet notice, and before being told that she was different, Ourika did not realize that, unlike the other girls, the white girls, who wore a veil to symbolize blackness, she needed no black veil to perform her role as an African in the dance, but explains "je ne fis pas alors cette réflexion" (Duras 10). However, after overhearing the marquise say that she does not

124

belong and that "Elle ne peut vouloir que de ceux qui ne voudront pas d'elle" (Duras 13),

all because of her color, Ourika begins to feel shame and starts in a downward spiral from

which she will never recover. It is at this moment that Ourika realizes how she is looked

at by the others. She realizes how she has been "seen" and becomes in her own mind that

which the white society sees her as. It is for this reason and for Ourika's understanding of

the power of the gaze, the power of the perception of the gazer, that Ourika wishes to

avoid being seen. She exclaims, "Hélas ! je me trompais ainsi moi-même : comme les

enfants, je fermais les yeux, et je croyais qu'on ne me voyait pas" (Duras 27). By

avoiding the stares of those around her, Ourika is able to return to the peace and

innocence of not being seen only as an object and as a *négresse* but as being a subject and

a human.

　　While Ourika wishes to avoid the white gaze, the society around her constantly

seeks to keep her as the object of their gaze. In doing so, the society is able to subjugate

their own fears of difference and savagery that they perceive is amongst them.

Additionally, the society's own definition of self is shaken by the threat of the changing

face of French society, which may be the source of their greatest fears and that which

prompts them to fear the Other. According to Kevin C. O'Neill, the "owner-spectator"

uses the gaze in an effort to "reduce the mystery of the other to the level of banality" and

that "Such banality is necessary to combat the undercurrent of fear, brought on by her

mystery" (48-9).[103] If Ourika can be subjugated by the gaze of her society and made into

---

[103] O'Neill bases his argument on John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. Berger proposes that *seeing* the other naked is an instance of total disclosure that provokes in the "spectator-owner" a strong sense of relief: "at the moment of nakedness first perceived, an element of banality enters […] Up to that instant the other was more or less mysterious" (Berger 59). There is, thus, a loss of mystery when subjugating the other, especially the naked other, to the gaze.

what they wish her to be, according to their own myths and fantasies, then she is no longer an object to be feared, but rather one to be observed. The looker thus relieves his fears by subjugating the Other to his gaze and subsequently defining the Other according to his own desires. Ourika is reduced figuratively to nakedness[104] by the white gaze, and her black skin, that which defines her in the eyes of white, European, imperial society, is exposed.

Ourika's blackness would seem to take on an essentialism that defines her in terms of what she is, or must be. By defining her only as Black, the whites that surround her create in their own imaginary a place of superiority that allows them to soothe their own fears of the Other. Lévi-Strauss in *Race et histoire* notes that Western civilization has not failed to continue a misguided tradition of labeling everything that is not Western barbaric, using the word "savage" to describe all others that did not participate in their own version of Western culture (20). As such, Ourika is immediately seen as savage because she is from outside of Western culture. Further, she is marked so by her skin color that is an inescapable sign of her assumed savagery. For Lévi-Strauss, "l'évidence immédiate de ses sens quand il aperçoit ensemble un Africain, un Européen, un Asiatique et un Indien américain" (*Race* 18) plays an important role in the judging of others. Observable evidence that seems to confirm the existence of race is hard to overcome for the average "man in the streets" (Lévi-Strauss *Race* 18). Further, race and culture are very closely linked together in the mind of the public, making such value judgments as those placed on Ourika because of her color a question of defining her essentially based on her blackness.

---

[104] See previous note on Berger and nakedness.

It is, however, a matter of perspective and not one of essentialisms. Lévi-Strauss demonstrated that one always places himself in an ethnocentric perspective when evaluating different cultures. What may seem normal to one person from one culture may seem barbaric or savage to another. There is a large amount of relativity based on the position of the observer who possesses a system of reference ingrained from birth which he uses to make judgments of value and worth.[105] It is from this perspective that Ourika's society judges her. They see and define themselves as man, good, excellent, completed and, as Lévi-Strauss argued, humanity ends thus at the borders of one's own tribe, which implies that those of the other tribes, groups or villages do not participate in human virtue, or even human nature. Rather, they are "tout au plus composés de « mauvais », de « méchants », de « singes de terre » ou d'« œufs de pou »" (*Race* 21).

Lévi-Strauss points out that the West has intervened in many ethnic groups, crumbled and destroyed their way of doing things, either by imposing Western ways or simply by destroying the established structures and leaving nothingness in their place. This physical violence along with the many facets of symbolic violence make the Westerner see himself as the dominant, powerful and advanced one relative to the foreigner. However, it is Western values and standards that make the Asian or the African "primitive" (Lévi-Strauss *Race* 36); he is so only according to the relative point of view of the Westerner himself.

---

[105] See Lévi-Strauss *Race et histoire* p. 34: "Car, dès notre naissance, l'entourage fait pénétrer en nous, par mille démarches conscientes et inconscientes, un système complexe de référénce consistant en jugements de valeur, motivations, centres d'intérêt, y compris la vue réflexive que l'éducation nous impose du devenir historique de notre civilisation […] Nous nous déplaçons littéralement avec ce système de références, et les réalités culturelles du dehors ne sont observables qu'à travers les déformations qu'il leur impose."

Ourika's society takes on this position in relation to Ourika. While for the white, aristocratic society it is ingrained, as Lévi-Strauss would put it, in their system of judgment from early on and continuously reinforced through the ideological apparatuses in their society, Ourika, on the other hand, must overhear the conversation between Mme de B and her friend the marquise in order to begin to understand her inferiority. From this point, Ourika begins to be hypersensitive to the perceptions of those around her. She quickly begins to internalize their definitions of blackness and is alienated from the self she had known. Ourika can no longer accept her blackness as being innocuous, it has now become the sign of her inferiority and Otherness.

Ourika expresses her "honte d'appartenir à une race de barbares et d'assassins" (Duras 20). Though she herself has never displayed any characteristics that would qualify her as barbaric, she is guilty by association in the eyes of the white Westerners and in turn sees herself homogenized into the perceived barbarism of all blacks, despite the fact that the slave rebellion in Santo Domingo was an isolated and justified event. Ourika further accuses herself of ingratitude towards her benefactors because she is not completely happy. She knows that her color holds her back in her current situation and refers to it as "ce mal sans remède de ma couleur" (Duras 26). Ourika is often criticized by those around her for having forced her way into their society and for not taking what is seen to be her "parti d'être négresse" (Duras 41). She is well aware of the role her color plays in defining her and internalizes the value judgments of her society that make blackness a sign of inferiority and ugliness: "ma position et ma couleur sont tout mon mal" (Duras 40).

Ourika's color has no inherent, biological significance that makes it an evil from which she constantly suffers. Rather, it is the degradation of her color from the white gaze that she has internalized. Society insists that she is different because of her blackness. The whites being the predominant and powerful ones in society become a point of reference for Ourika's judgments of self-worth. Duras here underscores the importance and problematic nature of the Black subject comparing themselves to the white "ideal" in her protagonist. "Que faut-il d'autre?" than being black to be *laid* asks Fanon (*Peau* 64). The difference that she finds between her self-image and the image of those around her lead her to judge herself as inferior: the debasing white gazes make what she sees in the mirror of the other ugly and shameful.

The Other is subject to the gaze; it gives him or her a faulty impression of him or herself, especially when coupled with the authority and superiority transmitted through myth. As an object of a gaze, the subject is also seeing a reflection of him or herself in the eyes and judgments of the gazer, like the disdain and distaste that Ourika sees in the expressions of the new guests to Mme de B's house. The idea of the mirror is highly significant because it is this gaze upon the self that gives the gaze of the other its power. Ourika's blackness is not a simple characteristic of biological diversity and pigmentation; rather, it is what those who see her connote it to be.

Ourika is subjected to a twofold objectification, firstly as a black African and secondly as a woman. In her awareness of those gazes upon her and of being "a sight," she partakes in looking at herself in this way. Duras very clearly illustrates the role of the mirror and its influence on Ourika. The gazes directed at her by her society are like the distortions made by the carnival mirror, curved and defected by prevalent cultural

myth.[106] The person observing herself in this mirror sees a grotesque reflection because the mirror itself is distorted; however, the need for the mirror image leaves the self-observer saddened, even disgusted, by what she believes to be a true representation of herself. After her first look in this distorted mirror, Ourika's overhearing of the conversation between Mme de B and the marquise, Ourika internalizes these impressions and sees them reflected at her when she literally looks at herself in the mirror: "J'épuisais ma pitié sur moi-même ; ma figure me faisait horreur" and says that she no longer dared look at herself in the mirror because, "lorsque mes yeux se portaient sur mes mains noires, je croyais voir celles d'un singe ; je m'exagérais ma laideur, et cette couleur me paraissait comme le signe de ma réprobation" (Duras 15). Julia Kristeva states that the foreigner, freed of all affiliations and having nothing, becomes herself nothing and experiences extreme solitude.[107] Ourika, as a foreigner, longs for affiliation but unable to

---

[106] It is in the reflection of the perceptions of her society that Ourika develops her identity. When they look at her and subjugate her to their gaze, their view of her is not a true point-for-point representation or repetition of her image, but rather it is distorted, the society seeing and reflecting back to Ourika an image of her that is shaped by their own preconceptions and prejudices. Just as the subject looks at him or herself in the carnival mirror and sees a distorted image, so does Ourika see herself differently based on the "mirror" of those in her society.

In his essay, "Le Stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," Jacques Lacan stresses the importance of the other in the development of identity. He affirms that there is an "insuffisance organique de [la] réalité naturelle" and that the child who sees himself in the mirror, from this stage of development forward, develops his "self" based on a misunderstanding: that which sees the other, the mother or nanny in this case, as omnipotent because of her large and stable stature. It is in this way, from this moment on, by comparing oneself to the other in the mirror that one reaches the symbolic stage.
It is important to note, however, that this type of separation between two groups, the perceived stable or superior and the inferiorized, can be criticized because it is a notion of alterity that perpetuates constructed separation. Daniel Borrillo and Pierre Lascoumes describe the problematic nature of this separation in their book *Amours égales?* where the opponents of the PACS in France referred to the Other in a heterosexist sense to ban adoption for gays and to discredit homosexuality. This same type of otherization is used in racist discourse with the idea of separate but equal. The problem rests in the fact that separate cannot be equal. Institutionalized separation is sanctioned discrimination and such categorization inevitably leads to some sort of hierarchization.

[107] See Julia Kristeva *Strangers to Ourselves* p. 12. Kristeva also embarks upon a discussion of Freud's *Unheimliche*, the Uncanny (strangeness), in relation to the other and the foreigner (pp. 182-92), evoking the discomfort felt in the face of the foreign stranger: "Confronting the foreigner whom I reject and with whom at the same time I identify, I lose my boundaries, I no longer have a container, the memory of experiences

find it is sent back to a state of distress. As Ourika continues her deterioration into extreme depression and self-loathing she no longer just avoids the mirrors, but cannot even bear to have them around. The symbolic violence has caused Ourika to internalize her society's distaste for blackness to the point that she refuses to look at herself: "j'avais ôté de ma chambre tous les miroirs, je portais toujours des gants; mes vêtements cachaient mon cou et mes bras, et j'avais adopté, pour sortir, un grand chapeau avec un voile, que souvent même je gardais dans la maison" (Duras 27). The "fascinated rejection" (Kristeva *Strangers* 191) aroused by Ourika as a foreigner has made her hypersensitive about her appearance. The piercing gazes of her society are constantly making her aware of her exclusion from the society she has been forced into. Kristeva explains that the foreigner is without a home, and thus is in a never-ending process of masking their true self until they reach a point that they no longer have a self (*Strangers* 8). Like Kristeva's foreigner, Ourika now sees herself as valueless, constantly other, and void of confidence; she lives according to others' wishes and circumstances, she does "what *they* want *me* to do" and questions "does *me* exist?" (Kristeva *Strangers* 8). Ourika as the spectator looking at herself in the mirror and simultaneously as the "sight" now, like the white aristocratic society, sees her blackness as the supposed marker of all that she is perceived to be by the Whites. Looking in the mirror makes her the possessor of the white gaze; therefore by avoiding the mirror, she avoids having to face her inability to define herself.

---

when I had been abandoned overwhelm me, I lose my composure. I feel "lost," "indistinct," "hazy." The uncanny strangeness allows for many variations: they all repeat the difficulty I have in situating myself with respect to the other and keep going over the course of identification-projection that lies at the foundation of my reaching autonomy" (*Strangers* 187).

Ourika's tragedy extends from the beginning of her life straight through to early death amidst depression and seclusion in a convent where she sought to escape her unrequited love for Charles and the prospect of eternal loneliness and isolation. Ourika was a victim of a racial myth that condemned her to be defined by society's views on blackness; she was defined solely by this despite the fact that she had been raised and educated the same as those around her. Ourika displayed no lag in intelligence; rather, the opposite was true. She excelled in her education and behaved as the best of children do. However, there was the barrier of her blackness that stood between her and *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*. Fanon writes: "Je suis sur-déterminé de l'extérieur. Je ne suis pas l'esclave de « l'idée » que les autres ont de moi, mais de mon apparaître" (*Peau* 93). Ourika experiences this same Otherness. The fact that everything about her is determined, wrongly, from the exterior excludes her from the Revolutionary ideals. Ourika's exclusion underscores the mythical aspect of the Revolutionary ideals.

In the story of Ourika, we can see a challenge to the myth of the absolute goodness of the *mission civilisatrice*, racial myth and Revolutionary myth. Ourika's plight makes it clear that, while life as a slave as miserable as it is, seems appealing to her because of the situation in which she finds herself as a result of the supposed generosity of the French. Just as Fanon felt as though he was enslaved by his physical appearance in the white gaze, Ourika describes her experience as a black woman subjected to the white gaze. "Cette couleur me paraissait comme le signe de ma réprobation" (Duras 15), "ce mal sans remède de ma couleur" (Duras 26), and "ma position et ma couleur sont tout mon mal" (Duras 40) are all ways in which she describes her color and blackness and equates them to the source of her pain and suffering. Fanon also points out that the black

person as an object becomes a string of judgments and loses his humanity in the eyes of the white gazer: "Mon corps me revenait étalé, disjoint, rétamé, tout endeuillé dans ce jour blanc d'hiver. Le nègre est une bête, le nègre est mauvais, le nègre est méchant, le nègre est laid" (*Peau* 91-2). Ourika is no longer Ourika, she is only *une négresse*.

Ourika finally reaches a state of complete psychological disintegration of which John O'Connell claims one of Fanon's major conclusions coincides "point for point" with Duras' analysis: "In attempting to sum up for his reader the stages through which a disturbed black mind usually passes on its way to being destroyed by an image of itself that it learns from, and comes to accept at the prompting of, white society" (O'Connell 52-3). He thus refers to an evolution that goes from inferiority to insecurity and humiliation, to self-hatred and lastly despair (O'Connell 52-3). We have seen each of the first three of these feelings in Ourika who, from the time she overhears the conversation between Mme de B and the marquise, begins to notice more and more the damning aspect of her color. Ourika first begins to question Mme de B's motivation in her "love" for Ourika, realizing that she has been a mere pet and amusement for her adoptive mother. Next Ourika finds herself progressively ugly and begins to be disgusted by her color.

As the final stage in her imminent disintegration, Ourika begins to deny her own worth as a human being. This self-denial as her last step on the way to death by grief is clearly a gut-wrenching and painful experience for Ourika. She blames a significant amount of her pain on her "passion criminelle" and her "amour coupable" (Duras 41) for Charles. However, her love for Charles is only criminal and culpable because he is white and she is black. She laments that her passion for Charles was devouring her but admits that the root of her desire was to "tenir ma place dans la chaîne des êtres" (Duras 41).

Ourika has been excluded from society and essentially from life as those around her defined it and the only way that she knew it. Ourika laments, "c'est le bonheur lui-même qui était l'objet de mes vœux impies" (Duras 41). Through an impossible relationship with Charles, Ourika was seeking merely to acquire a place in aristocratic society and the happiness that comes with a fulfilled life according to this society's values.

However, without being able to fulfill this (white) destiny,[108] Ourika sees herself as being worthless as a human being. She addresses God with her cries, ironically addressing the white, Christian god and eventually ending up in a convent being further examples of the extent to which she has internalized the values of white, aristocratic, French society:

> mais pourquoi avez-vous donné la vie à la pauvre Ourika ? pourquoi n'est-elle pas morte sur ce bâtiment négrier d'où elle fut arrachée, ou sur le sein de sa mère ? Un peu de sable d'Afrique eût recouvert son corps, et ce fardeau eût été bien léger ! Qu'importait au monde qu'Ourika vécût ? Pourquoi était-elle condamnée à la vie ? (Duras 32)

Ourika even wishes to be taken from the earth claiming that "Personne n'a besoin d'elle" and further that she felt she would even die from the pain she was in. Ourika has been destroyed by symbolic violence, applying to herself the feelings of contempt and disdain that her society holds for her. The isolation from all societies becomes too much for her to bear and the only place that she sees the possibility for peace is in death. Ourika once again descends into complete despair:

> Ourika n'avait qu'eux dans la vie; mais eux n'avaient besoin d'Ourika: personne n'avait besoin d'elle! Cet affreux sentiment de l'inutilité de l'existence, est celui qui déchire le plus profondément le cœur: il me donna un tel dégoût de la vie, que je souhaitai sincèrement mourir de la maladie dont j'étais attaquée. Je ne parlais pas, je ne donnais presque aucun signe de connaissance, et cette seule pensée était bien distincte en moi : *je voudrais mourir*. (Duras 35)

---

[108] Fanon writes that "pour le Noir, il n'y a qu'un destin. Et il est blanc" (8).

134

The use of the third person mixed in with the first person in this passage betrays a divided sense of self in Ourika. She has arrived at a point of complete denial of her own worth and existence because she has become an ultimate victim of racial myth as well as a victim of a fatal disenchantment by her exclusion from the Revolutionary myth.

As the nineteenth century wore on, racial myth would take a stronger hold in French society. The example of Ourika is from the early part of the century, before the ultimate freeing of slaves in the French empire in 1848.[109] However, though slavery was abolished, it seemed as though racism and racial myths became stronger, ironically even as a result of abolition. Linda Marie Rouillard reminds us that there is a "short distance between freedom and enslavement" (209), a fine line that in Ourika is demonstrated by Duras' writing of the dynamics between creator and created, the white society and Ourika. While it still remained legal for the blacks to be enslaved, there was an institutional and legislative assurance of white superiority. The need for some sort of justification to maintain this part of their identity, or subjectivity in the case of Ourika, and protect themselves from this perceived threat of the Other are two of the many driving forces that, in combination with increasing importance placed on science and evolutionary theory, led the later part of the nineteenth century to serve as the cradle for a new type of racism. The idea of race went from being an abstract idea based around "types" of people to something much more supposedly scientific and based on heredity. Developing ideas on blackness and the media's proliferation of associated imagery made the experience of Ourika all too common, in France, in the colonies and, many decades down the road, in many of the post-colonial societies. Rouillard suggests that *Ourika* is a

---

[109] Slavery had also been abolished in 1794 only to later be reinstated.

black Galatea[110], having been created by the white society and identifying with the

created object. According to Rouillard, "Claire de Duras rewrites the ovidian story

privileging a different voice" (208). This type of rewriting of traditionally Western stories

and/or History in order to give a voice to the previously silenced will become an

important tool for twentieth- and twenty-first-century postcolonial writers. In the next

chapter I will discuss Maryse Condé's rewriting of Arthur Miller's *Crucible*, giving a

voice to the black slave woman, Tituba, who remained accused but silent in Miller's play.

---

[110] The name eventually given to Pygmalion's statue that he created and with which he subsequently fell in love.

– Chapter 4 –

MEMORY AND MYTH FROM AFRICA TO THE AMERICAS: COLOR AND RACISM IN MARYSE CONDÉ'S *MOI, TITUBA SORCIÈRE…*

The collective memory of the colonial era that is portrayed in the novels of Zola,

Maupassant and Duras' story of *Ourika* continues to exert a pervasive influence upon the

societies who now find themselves in the "post-colonial" era. In the collective memory

that has been passed down from generation to generation, the years of physical violence

and symbolic violence have rooted themselves so strongly that, while they may not be as

outwardly visible as 100 years ago, they are no less violent in their insidious attempts to

continually situate the formerly colonized in an inferior position. During the French

occupation and after their withdrawal from the former colonies, the native populations

were then faced increasingly with a *violence symbolique*, the forced new language,

culture and structure from the métropole along with the denigration of their native

establishments. Bourdieu explains that "les structures de domination […] sont *le produit*

d'un travail incessant (donc historique) de reproduction auquel contribuent […] des

institutions, familles, Eglise, Ecole, Etat" (*Domination* 55).

These established institutions have become over centuries the standard for

Westerners, and according to Fanon, even after colonization had begun its decline, it

remains "un fait : des Blancs s'estiment supérieurs aux noirs" (Fanon *Peau* 7). It has been

this perceived superiority that has perpetuated and motivated much of the Western, white

colonization since the sixteenth century. Seeing themselves as superior human beings, they strove to exert their influence and power throughout the world. Basing colonial exploitation of other lands and peoples on an arbitrary marker of identification, Westerners have for centuries continued to assume their ways are the better ways and further, perhaps the more damaging, that they have a God-given right to rule over everyone. Entering what would become their colonies, the French nation maintained this attitude and impressed it upon the locals. Just as we saw in *L'Argent*, the Europeans saw the "other" worlds as backwards due to difference and imperialist powers did not hesitate to turn upside down these "foreign" societies in order to forcefully rebuild them in a manner that would mirror the *mère patrie*. Ideals of French universalism became a heavy weight in the colonies as locals were prohibited from keeping their languages and cultures.

Childhood and the education that one receives as a child play a very significant role in the recycling and passing on of cultural memory. Under colonial domination a non-locally developed education is created in order to serve the purposes, not of the people, but rather of the motherland. As Condé points out, the institution of education that was "élaboré sous d'autres cieux" did a good job of reinforcing the systems that were set in place by the French, but, as she also explains, the education of a child extends far beyond the walls of a school house:

> On peut élargir cette définition et considérer l'éducation comme l'influence globale qu'exerce une société sur ceux qu'elle cherche à intégrer. Il s'agirait donc moins d'une relation de personne à personne que du rapport d'un individu à la culture dominante de sa société dont il assimile de plus les impératifs. Au fur et à mesure que l'individu grandit, les interventions se font plus explicites. (*Parole* 8)

It is by this overwhelming integration of a person into their own society that cultural memory and myths, like the racializing or nationalistic myths I discussed in previous chapters, continue to be passed from generation to generation: there remains always a great "poids du passé" (Condé *Parole* 10). Condé's ideas on education articulate well with Bourdieu's discussion of symbolic violence. The structures of domination have been deeply ingrained in the unconscious, into the body, through the various powerful institutions like education systems.

Though the colonized peoples were "educated" in the ways of the *mére patrie* and the colonized territories were made to look like the *métropole*, a *métropole* presented as *the* model, like Ourika the colonized people could not be made to look like the French. They were forced to speak French, dress French, act French and dream French, but the divide would always exist because they could never look "French" – they could never become white. Lawrence Kritzman points out the ambiguity of eighteenth century, post-Revolution values that essentially created the idea of universalism due to the "distinctly French concept of *fraternité*" (6). He explains that these values and Revolutionary traditions made the nation into somewhat of a civic religion; there was supposedly a common mission of joining freedom and equality and forming a community of citizens (6). The problem, however, lies in the essential trait of this nation being based on a desire for total assimilation; this "text" of French universalism and Republican valor has been composed and an idealized history has been established by ignoring "dissonance" and forgetting violence (Kritzman 7).

Race aside, as it would not become one of the mainstream issues until the nineteenth century, the simultaneous push towards and exclusion from assimilation is one

of the great contradictions of the Revolutionary myth. Robbed of their own language and culture, the colonized peoples were also in a way robbed of their own versions of destiny. They were repeatedly forced to want to be French and deprived of having their own goals and models. The perpetual violence that separated them from their own wants and desires gradually began to implant itself in the minds and hearts of the people until all of the wants and desires of entire societies became synonymous with those of the colonizer. This was the key cause for Ourika's final disintegration. Not only was the superiority of the white man internalized, but an entire system of aesthetics was unconsciously adopted, which is symbolic violence par excellence. Beauty became defined by the French who certainly would not consider the physical appearance of the colonized peoples, though often seen as fascinating or exotic, as being the example of beauty.[111] After repeatedly being told they were inferior in every way, the internalization of judgments of self worth and beauty was complete and would prove to be a most difficult enemy to defeat.

The physical presence of colonizing forces and people can be easily perceived and though not easily eliminated, when they are gone or defeated, there is no confusion about their existence. Likewise, the civil, governmental and language systems maintain a physical presence against which, if one chooses, one can fight to eliminate. It is, however, the invisible enemy that maintains the most pervasive control due to its elusive nature. The internalization of the white, Western models of self worth and beauty continues to haunt the collective memory of formally colonized societies.

---

[111] In advertisements, such as the very familiar face of the smiling, happy Black man on the Banania tins and posters, or the colonial postcards of native women exposed in various ways, the native peoples of the colonies were exoticized, eroticized and made to fit into colonial fantasies while never being considered equally as beautiful as the whites. This type of orientalism that simultaneously differentiates and heirarchizes pervaded the colonial era and remains part of contemporary cultural memory in France and former colonies.

The self-proclaimed superiority of Western societies gave them an excuse for the horrifying and terrible things they did in the far off lands. The governments and speculators who sought to benefit tremendously from the colonial exploits were convinced that they had a right to do what they were doing. They would further convince themselves and the people of the Republic that they not only had a right to colonize but also the responsibility to do so. Because of their blessed superiority they had the responsibility to impart their better ways on the colonies; the *mission civilisatrice* was thus undertaken. France would civilize the savage peoples of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. They would be brought Western education, healthcare, culture and religion. This is an issue that goes unresolved as there continues to be a belief in the benefits of colonization in the French national imaginary. Benjamin Stora suggests that "La France a du mal à repenser un nationalisme sans l'empire" (Stora "Benjamin Stora"), a statement that is underscored by the 2005 French law bringing "reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français repatriés," especially Article 4 which gives *reconnaissance* "en particulier du rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer" (senat.fr). Article 4 was later fought against and repealed by Chirac in early 2006, though, nonetheless, the fact that it was ever written betrays the continued belief in the colonial myth of the civilizing mission.

Though the financial and political benefits of colonization were obvious in the political and business realms, it was no less a large undertaking to convince the people of Third Republic France that the adventures in imperialism were a good and necessary endeavor. Colonial exploits were heavily propagandized painting France's efforts as being altruistic and seeking [to] "améliorer le sort des populations vers un état de

civilization plus élévé" (Savarese 62). A plethora of texts and images were published that illustrated the superiority of Western culture while painting the colonized as savage, indistinct masses, closer to animals than to people.[112]

As we have seen and as Eric Savarèse underscores, the indigenous peoples in the colonies were seen as having the mentality of children which gave the colonizer the role of the parent. Political authority, which had been gained by force and violence, was translated into parental authority. This defined the relations of power: the colonizer had the ability and the responsibility to help the child who remained a prisoner to the pleasure principle, a very primitive state of being, according to Freud, where the child acts only motivated in order to avoid pain or seek pleasure (Savarèse 69). Though the indigenous populations were biologically accepted as adults, they were seen as children psychologically[113]: impure, subject to temptations and perversions, ignorant and incapable of distinguishing between good and bad (Savarèse 70). It was the thus up to the sovereign father, the colonizer, to help the subject-child, the colonized, escape the Freudian enslavement to the pleasure principle, its role mimicking very closely that of the adult-child relationship in the *métropole* where the adults' responsibilities consisted of "aimer, surveiller, éduquer, guider, punir" (Savarèse 71).

The predominant place that the sciences held in late nineteenth-century thought and society very easily allowed a scientific interpretation of the difference experienced in the indigenous peoples of the colonized territories. The evolutionary paradigm that

---

[112] See Forsdick and Murphy 55-66. For example the Lumière Brothers' film on the "Baignade des nègres" in 1896 that depicted Africans who had been brought to a *Jardin d'acclimation* in Paris, portraying them as simple, even animal-like creatures, always in indistinct groups, splashing about in the water.

[113] The *petit nègre* with which one spoke to the colonized provides an excellent example of this perception of the indigenous populations as childlike.

inserted the various "races" of the colonial territories was predominant in thought. The white, French, Western European along with all of his values and his culture sat atop the hierarchy in a position of dominance and represented the most highly evolved human – the pinnacle of creation. The rest, so to speak, fell in line, differentiated and ordered by color – the visible, physical marker of one's place along the evolutionary line. Those whose color most closely resembled the Western-European white were considered to be the more evolved. The black man was considered to be the last in the hierarchy and all "black" people were homogenized regardless of where in Africa they lived or even whether they were African or Caribbean.[114] The indigenous peoples of Asia were considered to be of a more complex intelligence. Though they were not homogenized to the same extent as the black African, all Asian societies were, nonetheless, evaluated based on the *retard* they possessed in comparison to the French. Savarèse gives as an example the Annamites who were considered less savage than the Cambodians due to the perception that their social organization appeared to more closely resemble the Western model.[115] The Maghrebis also seemed to be closer to the French model and demonstrated a rather cunning intellect. The French remained fascinated with North African societies all the while remaining astutely aware and cautious of their rebellious nature. Being much less naïve than the black African, the Maghrebis were seen as a threat to colonial order and as rebellious child (Savarèse 91).

Through and beyond the nineteenth century, the visible sign of color became more and more associated over the decades with a certain idea of what one essentially

---

[114] For a more complete description of the "Black" man, see Savarèse's discussion in *Histoire Coloniale et immigration*, pp. 73-83, "L'invention de l'Homme noir."

[115] Savarèse's discussion of the indigenous Asians is found on pp. 82-86.

was or was not. The collective, colonial memory was being formed with myths associated with color and race taking shape in the imaginary. As an opening to his *Poétique de la relation*, Edouard Glissant shares some thoughts on the *imaginaire*. He writes: "La pensée dessine l'imaginaire du passé : un savoir en devenir. On ne saurait l'arrêter pour l'estimer, ni l'isoler pour l'émettre. Elle est partage, dont nul ne peut se départir ni, s'arrêtant, se prévaloir" (13). The *imaginaire* plays a very important role in the construction of memory and in the writing of history. In *Imaginaires de guerre*, Benjamin Stora discusses at length the pervasive influence the imaginary has on a society. Stora explains that societies are disguised, smothered in make-up, ribbons and other pretensions where appearance prevails over all else (*Imaginaires* 13). But there exists a discrepancy between these images and the reality of what is. The various methods of public communication have transformed history as time has passed and what one sees and believes about their past is constantly mediated by the images that, whether photographed, written in books, archived or documented, all come together to fabricate the imaginary; "L'ensemble se succède en modifiant nos imaginaires" (Stora *Imaginaires* 16-17, 19). The *imaginaire*, which Bourdieu points out is also part of symbolic capital in the economy of symbolic goods, guides post-colonial societies, and those who are raised in a particular society have inherited a particular memory from their ancestors, both on the sides of the colonizer and the colonized.

Propaganda and media, as we saw in Maupassant, that was used to convince the people of France that the colonial endeavors were a positive, even humanitarian, mission or the propaganda used in the colonies that painted the French as a loving, caring parental figure, all served to alter the imaginary of the peoples involved. The myths that

developed as a result of such modification of reality remain as a part of the collective memory of societies. The formerly colonized inherit the inferiority complex of their parentage; even those who do not see themselves as inferior still strive to prove themselves as equal to the once dominating societies.[116] The peoples of former empires continue to look at the former colonies as somehow still subordinate to the *mère patrie* and at the peoples of those former colonies as still desiring to be French, or at least more French than of their own nation.

Independence was a hard fought and bloody battle for all of those involved, but it was far from the end of the story. Once independence was declared in many of the former colonies, the fight against the Western dominance evolved into a fight against a more intangible enemy. Life had been turned upside down for the indigenous peoples during the colonial period. Everything was rearranged and made to function as it did in Europe. The systems of power lauding Western superiority remained in place after independence in the state structure, the dominance of French as the official language, the educational system and all of the French culture that had permeated the colonies. Continually surrounded by reminders of Western dominance, the colonized remained, though not physically under the thumb of the French, unconsciously reminded at all times of what had taken place. Even as some of these structures were overturned, a lasting impression had been written into the memory of the former colonies as well as into the memory of the former imperial states. The West continued to see the former colonies as Other according to the Orientalist tradition explained by Said. Even many of the efforts to "give a voice" to the formerly colonized perpetuated the cycle of Europe being the center or

---

[116] Fanon discusses this idea in detail in *Les damnés de la terre*.

145

Self to the former colonies' peripheral Otherness. Spivak asserts that this epistemic violence is one of the clearest examples of symbolic violence, explaining that "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other […] is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other" (280-1). Though physical decolonization has taken place, the "violence of imperialist epistemic, social, and disciplinary inscription" (Spivak 285) persists, and there continues to be the invocation of "the Other of Europe as Self" (281).

As time passes and the collective memory of all parties involved continues to recycle itself in the minds of the people, the myths about the perceived mysterious or exotic Others that were found in the far off lands of the colonies also continue to reveal themselves in various ways. From the outdated pseudoscientific myths to myths that have a more urban legend-like feel, myths about the Other continue to persist, especially those about black people. Throughout history, for various reasons, many different myths have been created about blacks. Due to the evolutionary paradigm of the nineteenth century, they have been believed to be savage and animal-like, as was the case of the supposedly less-evolved Black Africans.[117] Though the pseudoscientific basis for this myth is no longer upheld, there is still in many places a fear of Black men who are often labeled as violent in the media. Fanon writes that "La France est un pays raciste, car le mythe du nègre-mauvais fait partie de l'inconscient de la collectivité" (*Peau* 74).

Another widespread myth that remains prevalent in many Western societies concerns the sexual prowess of the black man as well as the size of his penis. In *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, Dany Laferrière attributes the sexual myths

---

[117] This can also be seen in popular imagery, in movies such as Tarzan and comics like Tintin, and was also a theme at worlds fairs.

to the hierarchy of pleasure that had been established: the white man atop the hierarchy was pleasured by the white woman, who, higher up in the hierarchy than the Black man, expected in turn to be pleasured by him (48). Fanon writes, "souvent ce qu'on appelle l'âme noire est une construction du Blanc" and that the black man remains an "esclave du mythe nègre" (*Peau noire* 11).

The "invention de l'homme noir" (Savarèse 73) did not end with the colonial period but remains a continuing influence in the postcolonial memory and myths. The application of these myths about the Other takes very little into account other than physical appearance. Physical appearance, usually color, is the most superficial basis for judgment, but is also the most readily available and often the most exploited. In *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Fanon explains that: "Comme la couleur est le signe extérieur le mieux visible de la race, elle est devenue le critère sous l'angle duquel on juge les hommes sans tenir compte de leurs acquis éducatifs et sociaux" (95). For no other reason than color, Frantz Fanon experienced this abrupt judgment upon his arrival in France. He became immediately and acutely aware that he was now subject to the white gaze (*le regard du blanc*). Rather than seeing him as the highly intelligent doctor that he was who had come to help what he had been taught his entire life was his own motherland, they saw no further than his black appearance. He writes, "Je suis sur-determiné de l'extérieur. Je ne suis pas l'esclave de « l'idée » que les autres ont de moi, mais de mon apparaître" (Fanon *Peau* 93). Based solely on his color, Fanon automatically became the subject of all myths about the black man.

The superiority of the whites was instilled with their initial invasion and dominance and was maintained through systematic reinforcement for centuries. Fanon

explains that any inferiority complex that exists exists due to a double process, the first being economic and the second, "par intériorisation ou, mieux, épidermisation de cette infériorité, ensuite" (*Peau* 8). Though it was under the pretext that Western whites were essentially superior to the non-whites of the colonial territories that the entire imperial system was established, any perceived superiority or inferiority are obviously constructions of the white, Western world. However, according to the system established by the colonizers, and felt by many of the colonized, explains Fanon, "Pour le Noir, il n'y a qu'un destin. Et il est blanc" (*Peau* 8). Fanon uses a very interesting choice of words here by calling the "only destiny" *blanc*, making this predetermined path on which the black man is trapped not only white, but also blank or empty. Though white is considered often to be superior, Fanon subverts the white – superior / black – inferior dichotomy by underlining and playing with the dual meaning of the word *blanc*, saying at once that the white, violently imposed, destiny is also the blank, empty and ultimately inferior one. It is these myths that Fanon knows to be false, and against which he fights: "Il y avait un mythe du nègre qu'il fallait démolir coûte que coûte" (*Peau* 94).

Fanon further takes on a deconstruction of certain dichotomies by attacking the perceived superiority of the center, or France, perhaps even Paris, as the *métropole*, in relation to the periphery or outside of Paris/outside of France, i.e. the colonies. He compares France to the Tabernacle, writing that because it is from here that came Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire along with "les médecins, les chefs de service, les innombrables petits potentats – depuis le sergent-chef « quinze ans de service » jusqu'au gendarme originaire de Panissières," it is seen as the place from where all the masters, figuratively and literally, come (*Peau* 18). If France is the tabernacle, it is implied also to

148

be good, holy, pure and perfect and by extension so too are those who originate there; thus the whites see themselves to be the good, holy, pure and perfect ones.[118]

In contrast to this supposed Good center, there is the other side of this constructed dichotomy that is the periphery. The periphery, or the colonies, is portrayed as the opposite of everything that is "white" about the center. The periphery is seen as the dark place, literally and physically. The dichotomies of center/periphery and light/dark go beyond simply a reference to places; they extend to imply that people of these colors and places are also subject to be good or bad according to their appearance. The indigenous peoples of the colonies were all assumed to be darker skinned than the French, especially in the non-northern African colonies. The myths about the savagery of black people stem from their color being the furthest from white and thus making them the least evolved. Even further, not only were black people seen as less evolved, the association between black and bad or evil extended to them. Fanon mockingly writes, "'Nous sommes le peuple élu, regarde la teinte de nos peaux, d'autres sont noirs ou jaunes, c'est à cause de leurs péchés'" (*Peau* 24).

Though reality dictates that there is no such thing as pure races, the myth supports a white versus black dichotomy. Fanon's metaphor that compares the *métropole* with the tabernacle is a very interesting choice for two reasons. Firstly, evangelization was a pretext for colonization. As part of the *mission civilisatrice*, the French were to bring Christianity to what was seen as the heathens of Africa. Secondly, his use of the Christian metaphor calls to mind the traditional color symbolism that associates white with Good

---

[118] Interestingly, according to the anticlerical tradition that was particularly strong in France through the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century, the tabernacle can also be seen as corrupt to the core due to corruption in the Church and the clergy. Writers such as Voltaire and Zola have both been well known for their staunch criticism of the Catholic Church in France.

and black with Evil. Along with white are associated beauty and virtue, "qui n'ont jamais été noires" (Fanon *Peau* 36); it is the color of day and is associated with God and all good things: "Non, vraiment, le Dieu bon et miséricordieux ne peut pas être noir, c'est un Blanc qui a des joues bien roses: Du noir au blanc, telle est la ligne de mutation. On est blanc comme on est riche, comme on est beau, comme on est intelligent" (Fanon *Peau* 41).

It is precisely this myth of a white/black dichotomy that Maryse Condé deconstructs in her novel *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* Condé is a post-colonial writer of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, by giving a voice to the black slave woman and insisting on the violence of the slave trade, *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* rewrites the Western versions of the Salem witch hunts and trials as well as the Western history on the Caribbean from a racial and colonial standpoint.[119] Though this novel was published in 1986, its historical context makes it ripe for comparison with colonial literature. The historical contexts of colonialism, the Caribbean and slavery also provide a great link between colonial literatures and contemporary, francophone literatures.[120]

The novel begins in the seventeenth century in Barbados with the story of how Tituba's mother was taken into the slave trade and impregnated by a sailor who raped

---

[119] As History is always written by the victors, the fact that Condé makes Tituba's voice the primary voice gives the reader a new version of the history of the Salem witch trials. The reader is able to see to what extent witchcraft and black magic were created by the white, Christian myth and hysteria. Further, Western history on the Caribbean is rewritten as Tituba shows how far from reality Ourika's idealized slave reverie and Duras' portrayal of slavery as productive and positive, for example, really are.

[120] I use this term for lack of a better one and a consensus amongst authors and scholars, fully recognizing its problematic nature, to refer to all literature written in the French language, especially those not from France itself. Also suggested has been *littérature monde en français* which includes literature from France; however, this appellation, too, has its limitations.

her. The violence with which *Moi, Tituba sorcière...*[121] begins remains a key theme

throughout the novel. Tituba and the other non-whites will continue to be victims of

white violence, both physical and symbolic. The novel is heavy laden with references to

the same system of color symbolism evoked by Fanon in *Peau noire, masques blancs* that

associates white with Good and black with bad or Evil, adding also the dimension of

sexuality, as Tituba "gets it in three ways" (Spivak 294) because, not only is she a slave

and black, but she is also a woman. As the novel progresses, following the life of Tituba,

the presence of the elephant in the room, so to speak, becomes more and more

oppressive: the contradiction that exists between the ideals of Christianity, the religion of

the whites, and the institution of slavery, also a white controlled institution. Condé

exploits throughout the antagonism and the hypocrisy of the Christian slave owners.

Tituba's husband, John Indien, gives a very telling description of the "white world" upon

his return home one evening:

> — Ma reine, si tu savais la vie qui se mène dans cette ville de Boston, à deux pas
> des censeurs d'Eglise comme notre Samuel Parris, tu n'en croirais pas tes yeux ni
> tes oreilles. Putes, marins, un anneau à l'oreille, capitaines aux cheveux gras sous
> leurs chapeaux à trois cornes et même, gentilshommes connaisseurs de la Bible
> avec femme et enfants au foyer. Tout ce monde se soûle, jure, fornique. Oh !
> Tituba, tu ne peux comprendre l'hypocrisie du monde de Blancs ! (*Tituba* 78)

From Boston, the Parris' move to Salem which turns out to be no less a

hypocritical society. Describing Salem, Tituba as narrator writes: "C'était cela, Salem !

Une communauté où l'on pillait, trichait, volait en se drapant derrière le manteau du nom

de Dieu" (Condé *Tituba* 134). It seems that all of the encounters she describes with the

whites further reveal the great tensions between their religion and their actions, especially

---

[121] The emphasis on the *moi* in title of this novel already suggests that Condé is giving a voice to Tituba, responding to Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" seemingly with a "yes."

as slave owners. A religion whose protagonist teaches love and compassion is in direct contradiction with how the whites treat their slaves, not to mention the questionable morality involved in the ownership of another human being. The slave owners convinced themselves, however, that the slaves were not to be considered human beings, and as Tituba writes, they were "plus mal traités que les animaux dont souvent ils avaient la charge" (Condé *Tituba* 108). One of the slave owners even insists that "Dieu lui a donné la charge" of the slaves (Condé *Tituba* 60).

The relationships between the whites and the slaves is none other than to be expected and the view that the whites have of themselves as superior, of which wrote Fanon, is very apparent in this novel. The irony in John Indien's statement, "— Oui, j'appartiens à maîtresse Susanna Endicott, mais la maîtresse est bonne…" (Condé *Tituba* 34) is immediately striking to Tituba who, up until this moment in her life, had lived outside of the white world in the woods of her native Barbados. She interrupts him to say, "— Comment une maîtresse peut-elle être bonne ? L'esclave peut-il chérir son maître ?" (Condé *Tituba* 34). Despite how aware she is of the evils of the white society, she follows her heart, and John Indien, and enters into the world of the whites. John Indien's owner, Susanna Endicott, whom he says is good, is the first to "welcome" Tituba into white society. At their first meeting, Tituba writes that she could "lire toute la répulsion que je lui inspirais. Elle me fixait comme un objet dégoûtant" (39). Tituba, yet unfamiliar with all of the relational requisites, dares to look Endicott in the eyes while speaking to her. She is thus very quickly reminded of her inferior place when Endicott becomes so angry that her face turns purple as she tells Tituba to lower her eyes when speaking to her. Further, it is not very long into the interview when color comes into play and Susanna

informs Tituba that "Je ferai ma cuisine moi-même, car je ne supporte pas que vous autres nègres touchiez à mes aliments avec vos mains dont l'intérieur est décoloré et cireux" (40).

Her entrance into slavery is not the first encounter she has with the whites. Tituba's life is filled with tragedy, horror and violence, all at the hands of the white, Christian people who surround her. Early in the novel she tells us, "Ma mère avait été violée par un Blanc. Elle avait été pendue à cause d'un Blanc. J'avais vu sa langue pointer hors de sa bouche, pénis turgescent et violacé. Mon père adoptif s'était suicidé à cause d'un Blanc" (Condé *Tituba* 37). Tituba is no better treated once she enters the world of the Christian whites. She finds herself bought and sold as a piece of property, mentally and physically abused, and, at a height of irony, she is violently raped with a pointed stick by three of the Christian elders in order to convince her to confess *her* evil:

> Pareils à trois grands oiseaux de proie, les hommes pénétrèrent dans ma chambre. Ils avaient enfilé des cagoules de couleur noir, percées seulement de trous pour les yeux et la buée de leurs bouches traversait le tissu. Ils firent rapidement le tour de mon lit. Deux se saisirent de mes bras pendant que le troisième ligotait mes jambes, si serré que je criai de douleur. [...] Le coup m'atteignit en travers de la bouche et elle pissa le sang. [...] L'un des hommes se mit carrément à cheval sur moi et commença de me marteler le visage de ses poings, durs commes pierres. Un autre releva ma jupe et enfonça un bâton taillé en pointe dans la partie la plus sensible de mon corps en raillant : -- Prends, prends, c'est la bite de John Indien ! (Condé *Tituba* 143-145)

The question of rape here goes beyond an act of violence against women as it also represents the violence and exploitation of the colonies by the Whites. Though Tituba tries her best to not succumb to the violence and hatred that surrounds her, when a fellow slave woman says that they are "parmi des monstres qui veulent nous détruire," she can't help but acquiesce (Condé 109). She asks herself: "En entendant cela, je me demandai si

c'était bien la petite Sarah qui parlait ainsi ou si ce n'était pas l'écho de mes pensées les plus secrètes qui résonnait dans le grand silence de la forêt" (Condé *Tituba* 109).

The starkest contrast to the white world is seen in Tituba herself. Though Tituba is not a Christian and, in fact, is accused of being in leagues with Satan, it is she who best represents the values that are supposedly Christian,[122] the values that according to Western mythology the whites should possess inherently. This black slave woman from Barbados constantly fights the human urge of revenge. Her inner struggles, a battle of conscience, reveal the extent to which compassion, caring and a desire to do good are a part of who she is, despite the fact that she is seen only as black by the white society in which she lives. She therefore fights not only against the evil of the whites but also against being prey to their negative influence: "Ah non !" she exclaims, "ils ne me rendraient pas pareille à eux ! Je ne céderai pas ! Je ne ferai pas le mal !" (Condé *Tituba* 111). She further displays a sense of caring and love for Betsey, the young daughter of her owner. When the young girl suffers from worsening illness of dizziness and fainting, no longer able to stand seeing her suffer, Tituba took it upon herself to do all that she could to help her. The cure that she prepared for her took much labor to get ready, "Il ne m'avait pas fallu moins de quatre jours, travaillant dans les difficiles conditions de l'exil, pour y parvenir" (Condé *Tituba* 102). The scene that follows, that of the curing ritual performed by Tituba on Betsey, plays out like a rebirth of the little girl as Tituba's own daughter. Unfortunately, however, it will be her love, trust and intimacy with Betsey that will betray her and send her headlong into the Salem witch trials, accused of doing and being evil. Tituba in this case serves as an example of how a misinterpretation of her

---

[122] Values associated with this religion by Christian myth, though not at all supported by historical reality, a discrepancy highlighted by Condé.

spirituality draws her into Christian mythology on "witches," the traditional description of which is full of collusion with Evil.

Though Tituba should be able to exist outside of the Christian paradigm, the cure that she employs with Betsey is immediately seen as witchcraft, and she is just as quickly seen as being in leagues with the devil. The society in which she lives is ethnocentric to the point that, for them, there is no outside of Christianity and the only sides that exist are that of Good and Evil, a binary logic typical of Christian myth. Tituba does, however, come from outside of the Christian paradigm and was only exposed to it in relation to the whites. To try and force Tituba into the Christian paradigm would be to impose or project upon here a paradigm that is completely irrelevant, but the healing methods that she practices, having learned them from her childhood in Barbados, are considered to be witchcraft, which in the Christian paradigm is associated with none other than Satan. She is warned by her lover, then husband, John Indien that "[avoir] du commerce avec Satan, [pour] les Blancs, c'est là ce que veut dire être sorcière…!" (Condé *Tituba* 48). Tituba, showing to what extent she has lived outside of the Christian paradigm protests that "Avant de mettre le pied dans cette maison, j'ignorais jusqu'à ce nom" (Condé *Tituba* 48). In *La parole des femmes*, Condé points out the dangers of superimposing the Christian religion onto the frame of Antilles' religion. In that which Tituba practices, "Il s'agit d'une religion naturelle basée sur une connaissance intime de la nature et de la vie, une complicité avec elles" (Condé *Parole* 54). Further a *sorcière* possesses none of the evil connotations of the Western definition: "La sorcière n'est pas considérée comme un

élément maléfique, mais comme l'intermédiaire naturel entre le monde visible et celui de l'invisible" (*Parole* 54).[123]

Despite Tituba's unawareness of Christianity, she nonetheless falls victim to the white Christians who apply their religion outside of its paradigm as if it were universal. Their ethnocentrism leads them to take for granted that their way is the only way and that their religion encompasses all things. The problem with this universalistic perspective is that it is an invention of the West and therefore ignorant of anything that is not Western. It sees the black as a blank slate upon which morality needs to be written: in *La parole des femmes*, Condé explains that in the West's eyes, "Le nègre n'a ni vertus ni valeurs personnelles. Il doit les acquérir, c'est-à-dire mourir à lui-même afin d'avoir accès à la « civilisation de l'universel » définie par l'Europe" (26).

Though Titbua herself understands that the Christian paradigm does not apply to her, she is not so fortunate to receive the same consideration from the whites that surround and own her. The colonial society projects the Christian paradigm upon her and she is thus forced into the realm of white, Christian myth. In Salem where she moved with her masters, the Parris family, though she had originally gotten along well with the woman owner, things quickly went down hill as a result of the perceptions of the townspeople: "Elizabeth Parris vivait depuis des mois dans l'atmosphère délétère de Salem parmi des gens qui me considéraient comme l'agent de Satan et ne se privaient pas de le dire, s'étonnant qu'avec John Indien je sois tolérée dans une maison chrétienne" (Condé *Tituba* 113).

---

[123] A similar distortion can be seen with Voodoo, the unofficial, national religion of Haiti. Christian discourse indiscriminately labels it as devil worship and versions of it are often portrayed as such or sensationalized in Hollywood, see the film *The Skeleton Key*, for example.

Condé points out the ridiculous nature of the extreme close-mindedness of the white Christians in the person of a baby that Tituba helps deliver, and whom she then watches grow. Tituba describes the little girl as "une petite fille aux yeux curieux, à la bouche résolue" (269). The young girl as soon as she is able to talk poses the question, "— Pourquoi n'y a t-il qu'un dieu? Ne devrait-il pas y en avoir un pour les esclaves? Un pour les maitres ?" (Condé *Tituba* 270). The slaves and the masters obviously live in two very different worlds, but the masters are very quick to assume that their world is the only world in existence and that all must conform to their ways, similarly to translating from one language to another. The meaning can never be expressed in exactly the same way, especially when there are not even symbols in one of the languages that express certain ideas of the other.

Tituba's spiritualism and culture, appreciated by those who also come from outside the white Christian paradigm, is translated inappropriately to sorcery and witchcraft by the others who uphold the contrived opposition between white and black, Good and Evil. Black here stands for Evil. In fact, it, and those who are colored by it, are considered to be inherently evil. Samuel Parris, the minister to whom Tituba is sold and who moves her along with his family to Salem tells Tituba and John Indien that their damnation is already marked by the color of their skin: "—Il est certain que la couleur de votre peau est le signe de votre damnation" (68). Despite the fact that he is convinced that they are already excluded from Christianity, he continues by imposing this religion on them and exclaims, "cependant tant que vous serez sous mon toit, vous vous comporterez en chrétiens !" (Condé *Tituba* 68). Further, Tituba, though she actually is not even "purely" black, is told that the possibility of her doing good does not exist. After things

157

go sour with Betsey Parris, though Tituba tries to explain to her that she was only trying to help her, Betsey screams at her, "—Vous, faire du bien? Vous êtes une négresse, Tituba ! Vous ne pouvez que faire du mal. Vous êtes le Mal !" (123).

Time and time again throughout *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* Condé paints the ridiculous nature, often using the grotesque, of the extent to which the white, Christian society saw themselves as superior and the blacks as inferior, based solely on color but affecting every facet of life. Many more times in the novel it is exclaimed by the whites of Salem that the blacks and even just the color black is Evil, inherently and inescapably. The Christian paradigm in which they live left them constantly terrified by the thought and the presence of Evil. Tituba explains: "je n'avais pas pris la pleine mesure des ravages que causait la religion de Samuel Parris ni même compris sa vraie nature avant de vivre à Salem. Imaginez une étroite communauté d'hommes et de femmes, écrasés par la présence du Malin parmi eux et cherchant à le traquer dans toutes ses manifestations" (104). Such an intense focus led them to see this Evil in many places, not the least of which was in the black color of the slaves. Tituba has been told that in their eyes, "ma couleur était signe de mon intimité avec le Malin" (104). Because her color is a part of her physiology, this implies that Evil is also a natural and essential part of who she is. Not only are the black slaves considered to be bad or even damned, they are "des émissaires visibles de Satan" (Condé *Tituba* 105).

Even though the prevalent belief is that the black slaves are somehow associated with Evil, Condé shows how the white and Christian characters are actually the ones who inflict the most pain and violence upon others, all despite being white and Christian, two supposedly inherently good qualities. She exploits the hypocrisy and the contradictions

that exist within the white society, and in so doing succeeds in dissociating white from

Good and black from Evil.[124] A key element of Condé's deconstruction of this color

symbolism is that she does not simply reverse the roles, making all of the blacks good

and the whites evil. As I previously mentioned Tituba herself experiences a difficult inner

battle and is very strongly drawn towards revenge. She writes that her secret thoughts

were of revenge: "Me venger. Nous venger. Moi, John Indien, Mary Black, Sarah et tous

les autres. Déchaîner l'incendie, la tempête. Teindre en écarlate le blanc linceul de la

neige" (Condé *Tituba* 109). Violence and colonization/decolonization are two elements

that, according to Fanon, are inseparable: "In its bare reality, decolonization reeks of red-

hot cannonballs and bloody knives. For the last can only be the first after a murderous

and decisive confrontation between the two protagonists" (*Damnés* 3). Tituba's desire to

break from the whites, a metaphor for decolonization, is an inherently violent process.

Fanon explains that "The colonized […] have been prepared for violence from time

immemorial. As soon as they are born it is obvious that their cramped world, riddled with

taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence" (*Damnés* 3). Though one could

hardly blame her for seeking revenge against those who have made her throughout her

entire life a victim of horrible abuses and tragedies, by her refusal to give into this

revenge, Tituba shows that she is not the savage beast living only by animal instincts that

the colonial society believed her to be. To stain the white snow with the scarlet blood of

her oppressors would not be the same as turning all things black; Tituba expresses herself

in terms of color but chooses the color of blood, a color that represents all of humanity

---

[124] Contradictions such as violence and abuse against blacks despite the most important commandment according to biblical, Christian tradition being to love "your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27), the neighbor being unlimited and specifically including those from other nations or tribes (Luke 10:32-37).

and not just the whites or the blacks. It is as if she wishes to cover up the white, cover up

that which, as Fanon writes, determines and enslaves them from the exterior (*Peau* 93-

95) with the blood that is the same for all humans.

The extreme obviousness of the hypocrisy that exists within the white and

Christian colonial society provides very fertile ground for the deconstruction of the color

symbolism that relegates the black slaves to the side of bad, dirty, savage or Evil.

Through the actions of the slave owners, Condé shows that the whites can also be

associated with evil. For example, Tituba describes the "accoutrement des Puritains" as

being "sinistre" (205). Further, the first time Tituba meets her new owner Samuel Parris,

she describes his very sinister presence:

> Grand, très grand, vêtu de noir de la tête aux pieds, le teint d'un blanc crayeux [...]
> C'était comme si on se trouvait en face d'un serpent ou de quelque reptile
> méchant, malfaisant. J'en fus tout de suite convaincue, ce Malin dont on nous
> rebattait les oreilles ne devait pas dévisager autrement les individus qu'il désirait
> égarer puis perdre. (58)[125]

Upon returning home, she tells John Indien, "je viens de rencontrer Satan!" (Condé

Tituba 59). Instead of being black, here, Satan is a white man and none other than a

minister.

Moi, Tituba sorcière… continues to question the automatic association of black

with Evil and white with Good by the various ways that she blurs the lines between the

colors and good and bad. Tituba is astonished at how different the same thing can be

viewed from two different cultures. While in Salem the night seemed to be a "mur noir

d'hostilité," in her homeland the night was a place where the senses were "déliés,

prompts à saisir les moindres chuchotements des êtres et des choses" (Condé *Tituba* 102).

---

[125] She returns the stereotypes of evil to the Whites.

The idea of snow being white, beautiful and peaceful is also overturned and becomes a violent paradigm. Tituba writes that she constantly struggles with it, but that despite all of her efforts, the snow "avait toujours le dernier mot" (102).[126]

While the perfect image of all things white continues to be challenged, Condé also presents the color black in a positive light. In addition to painting Tituba as the most compassionate character, despite her blackness and in contrast to the whites, Condé also shows the beauty of the color black. The first time Tituba meets Hester, a woman imprisoned for adultery, she describes her eyes as being "noirs, pas gris couleur d'eau sale, pas verts couleur de méchanceté, noirs comme l'ombre bienfaisante de la nuit" (150). Rather than black representing meanness or bad, it is here green that Tituba uses to symbolize these characteristics, and the black of Hester's eyes has positive, warm connotations for Tituba.[127] This is a complete rejection of the contrived Western dichotomy that takes for granted the white=Good/black=Evil symbolism, as well as taking for granted that white and black are opposed to each other.

Throughout the novel the reader is exposed to a wide range of violent experiences and emotions. Maryse Condé very thoughtfully constructs her novel to make sure that the violence of colonial exploitation and racism are not in any way watered down. In addition to this grim picture of violence, however, there is also a strong sense of caricature and exaggeration that is comedic, while being no less critical. Condé employs the grotesque, which "exaggerates and caricatures the negative, the inappropriate," explains Bakhtin,

---

[126] Césaire also symbolizes the violence of the Whites through snow and the color white in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. "La neige," he writes, "est un geôlier blanc qui monte la garde devant une prison" and he expresses his imprisonment by whiteness, even associating it with death: "la mort galope dans la prison comme un cheval blanc" (10).

[127] In nineteenth century literature green was used to symbolize evil, witches and *femmes fatales* like in Gautier and Merimée, for example.

making "the grotesque […] always satire" (306). This is an important tool in francophone literatures because the carnavalesque is a system in which "the king is the clown;" "It is the king's uncrowning" (Bakhtin 197). The francophone author in this way is able to subvert colonial hierarchy and domination and return the abuse to the abuser. The colonial object becomes the subject and takes on a voice and power. A particularly interesting scene in *Moi, Tituba sorcière…* takes place when the slave master on the plantation was confined to bed. Tituba, upon finding out that Susanna Endicott would not be about, cites the old proverb to describe what she knew was coming: "Quand le chat n'est pas là, les rats donnent le bal !" (55), Condé here rewriting and creolizing Western proverbs. John Indien does indeed throw a "ball" and the scene that follows is a wondrously carnivalesque party that drew slaves from as far away as a two day walk. It was a wild party of rhum, dancing and music, the *clou* of which included several of the slaves dressing up in the master's clothes and one pretending to be a pastor: "Il fit mine d'ouvrir un livre, de le feuilleter et se mit à réciter sur un ton de prières une litanie d'obscénités. Tout le monde en rit aux larmes [...]" (Condé *Tituba* 56). Truly the world here was turned upside down, the masters mocked, the Church parodied and the slaves rising, if only for one night, to be themselves in charge and joyous, subverting racisms by making the Whites the inferiors. Through very careful exploitation of white Christian hypocrisy, their caricaturization of the black "race" and also by showing the arbitrary nature of assigning inherent characteristics to color, Condé succeeds in deconstructing white, Christian myth and ridicules the implication that there may be inherent qualities based on race and color.

In addition to the white/black dichotomy, Condé also challenges white Christian myth and racism by addressing Jewish stereotypes and anti-Semitism, a very original aspect of this novel being that, in contrast to the nineteenth century, she brings together the issues of anti-Semitism and racism. Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller points out that Fanon in the fifties was one of the first intellectuals to demonstrate the analogous nature of these two forms of discrimination and racism (224). In *Peau noire, masques blancs* Fanon poses the question, "En vérité, y a-t-il donc une différence entre un racisme et un autre ? Ne retrouve-t-on pas la même chute, la même faillite de l'homme ?" (70). It is indeed the same failure of the white Christians that is apparent in the extensive racism towards the blacks and that resurfaces towards the Jews. Both consist of opposing white and Christian to a perceived non-whiteness and un-christianness. Somewhat contrarily to Balibar and Ben Jelloun's positions, Fanon responds to his question by writing that "Le racisme colonial ne diffère pas des autres racismes" (*Peau* 71), an analogy that Condé demonstrates well in *Moi, Tituba sorcière…*. He explains that, while one can compare and contrast many different aspects of these supposedly different racisms, there is a principal and fundamental issue that is always common amongst racisms: "A vouloir considérer sur le plan de l'abstraction la structure de telle exploitation ou de telle autre, on se masque le problème capital, fondamental, qui est de remettre l'homme à sa place" (Fanon *Peau* 71). Fanon, extending the definition of colonial back to the slave trade, refers everything back to the hierarchy established early on by the Europeans that placed the Whites, and thus their color, their culture, their society and everything Western, at the top. Subsequently, all others found themselves inserted into various places in this hierarchy with one thing in common: they were all inferior to the white, Christian

Europeans. Though the racisms may vary from Other to Other, one thing remains constant: the Other, despite what his or her difference may be, still falls on the *eux* side of the *nous* and *eux* dichotomy. If a person is not seen as being one of "us," his human quality is put into question. Anything that separates "them" from "us" also qualifies and thus objectifies "them." And though situations may vary, Fanon again reminds us that "Toutes les formes d'exploitation se ressemblent" (*Peau* 70). They are all identical because "elles s'appliquent toutes à un même « objet » : l'homme" (Fanon *Peau* 71).

In "Au Carrefour de la négritude et du judaïsme : *Moi, Tituba sorcière…noire de Salem*," Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller explores the interplay between anti-Semitism and negrophobia. She suggests that "Les symptomes de la négrophobie et de la judéophobie coexistent ensemble, ils travaillent de pair" (224). Debrauwere-Miller also points out that Fanon was really one of the firsts to compare analytically the two forms of racism:

> Dans son essai *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), Franz Fanon est l'un des premiers intellectuels à avoir démontré, avec la rigueur d'un psychiatre, l'analogie essentielle entre la violence dirigée contre les Juifs en Europe, et la dénigration des Noires dans les départements français d'Outre-Mer et aux États-Unis. Alors que de nos jours cette connexion entre l'antisémitisme et la négrophobie est une donnée, la conscience d'une telle similitude commençait à peine à s'élaborer dans les années cinquante. (224)

It is interesting that these two forms of inferiorizing the Other were not seen for centuries as similar. It shows the extent to which the white Christians really saw themselves as apart and fully subscribed to the codification of people by a constructed system of differences that they packaged very neatly as "race." They put themselves in the center and classified, ordered and ranked everyone else around them by arbitrarily picking out physical differences and associating them with concocted psychological differences. Often, as is especially the case with the Jews, the physical differences were imaginary

and caricaturized in order to perpetuate a myth of difference and support the idea that races were truly made up of varied strains of human. There was a need to mark the Jews as different, whether it be by invented physical characteristics or with a symbol such as the yellow star, as was done leading up to and throughout World War II. Vichy propaganda that sought to convince the French of this essential difference of the Jews disseminated, amongst others, images comparing the Jews to rats, as can be seen in Chabrol's *L'oeil de Vichy*. Having different "races" justified the self-proclaimed superiority of the Western Christians.

Further ridiculing the white Christian myth, Condé also demonstrates the similar treatment that the Jews received from the Christians, very much mirroring the violence and abuse that victimizes Tituba, as well as the prejudices the Christians held for the Jews who, like the blacks, found themselves on the wrong side of the Good vs. Bad dualism. René Girard points out that the witch hunts are exemplary of the nature of people, especially the masses, to reduce situations to simple dichotomies. He explains that the will to deny or ignore evidence favors the hunt for a *bouc-émmisaire*, a scapegoat (9). Furthermore, suggests Girard, it is the extremes that tend to draw the attention of people (31), leading them to absolutize the "univers entier" (25). After weathering the storm of the witch trials, in 1693 when a general pardon was issued for the accused of Salem, Tituba finds herself once again bought, this time by a Jew named Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo. Benjamin and his family had fled religious persecution in Portugal and now lived in New England. His wife and several of his children had died due to whooping-cough and he was now left alone with his nine remaining kids and in desperate need of

"une main féminine" (Condé *Tituba* 192). He purchased Tituba as a slave to provide this much needed help with his children.

The persecution that Tituba has endured throughout her life is matched by the persecution endured by Benjamin, the two of them even arguing over whose people have in fact had to endure the worst of the white Christians over time. Tituba resigns, "Il me battait à tout les coups" (199). Benjamin is no stranger to persecution and Tituba writes that "Les Juifs avaient tellement l'habitude des persécutions que Benjamin, flairant le vent, compta ses enfants et les fit entrer à l'intérieur, comme un troupeau docile" (205). Though according to Judeo-Christian tradition, the Christians and the Jews have the same God, Benjamin makes it clear that it is not from this god or his decree that the Christians get their authority or self-proclaimed superiority. Benjamin says of his god, "Notre Dieu ne connaît ni race ni couleur" (204). Still, the racism of the Christian Whites was equally as full of hatred for the Jews as the blacks. One man yells "— Vraiment à quoi songent ceux qui nous gouvernent ? Et est-ce pour cela que nous avons quitté l'Angleterre ? Pour voir proliférer à côté de nous des Juifs et des Nègres ?" (206).[128] The hatred for the two of them was so great that, after having been recognized as a witch of Salem, Tituba receives an onslaught of stones thrown at her and that night while they slept, Benjamin's house is set afire. Only Tituba and Benjamin would escape, all nine children perishing in the night.

The reaction of the Puritans to Benjamin, his family and his wealth, further demonstrates on what side of the Good vs. Evil dualism the Jews fall. Condé's use of

---

[128] The use of the term *nègre* differs in Condé and Fanon. Though historically the terms *nègre/négresse* implied servitude, even slavery, during Fanon's time, while not a positive term, it had become more descriptive of color and had not yet taken on the extreme negative connotation of today. In fact, it was a term reappropriated by the Negritude movement.

color symbolism continues in the person of Benjamin and his physical description. Like Tituba's blackness, Benjamin is also physically labeled by a color signaling Evil in Western, Christian myth: red.[129] The first time she sees him, Tituba writes that his face was "dévoré par de grands favoris roux qui se mêlaient à une barbe en pointe" and she describes him as being of a "laideur crasse" (188).[130] This image immediately, and somewhat comically, calls to mind the popular image of Satan with flaming red hair and a pointy, sinister goatee. Debrauwere-Miller states that Condé:

> reprend ironiquement la difformité déjà présente dans les narrations antisémites où le Juif contrefait s'apparente à la laideur satanique. La figuration du Juif s'est enrichie de nouvelles inventions de siècle en siècle, en passant par l'iconographie du Moyen Age qui assimilait le Juif au Diable, tous deux dotés de cornes, d'une barbe de bouc, d'une longue queue, et d'une odeur méphitique. [...] La rousseur de Benjamin Cohen d'Azevedo, couleur de la ruse maléfique par excellence et caractérisant le renard dans le registre animalier du Moyen Age, s'associe symboliquement à la damnation qu'incarne la peau noire de Tituba. (228)

In addition to his physical description, Benjamin is also saddled with the stereotype of the rich Jew who is highly invested in commerce, similarly to what I discussed in chapters two and three in the works of Zola and Maupassant. Debrauwere-Miller points out that this stereotype is "[relévé] d'une réalité historique: c'est par le commerce que les Juifs, fuyant les persecutions religieuses, s'intégrèrent au Nouveau Monde," but that Condé adds upon this historical fact another stereotype, that of the "Juif cossu, faisant fructifier sa fortune sans en dépenser un seul écu" (Debrauwere-Miller 228-9). Just as with the color symbolism, the financial prowess of the Jew also renders him on the wrong side of the "dualisme du Bien et du Mal" on which "l'idéologie chrétienne

---

[129] In Western pop culture and literature, the Devil, Hell and anger are most often depicted with the color red or shades/tones of red in imagery.

[130] The verb *dévorer* signaling the cannibalistic metaphor of evil devouring Good, or Satan the Innocent.

167

[est] fondée" (Debrauwere-Miller 224). Debrauwere-Miller explains that "Ce cliché, on le sait trop bien, se renforce dans l'histoire de l'antisémitisme pour donner naissance au mythe du Juif, suppôt de Satan, s'enrichissant aux dépens des chrétiens afin de mieux gouverner l'univers. Selon ce mythe, le Juif excelle dans l'art du commerce qu'il exerce, de surcroît, avec les puissances maléfiques" (229). She explains further that, as a reward for his adoration, the Devil makes the Jew the master over black magic, and he is a member of a secret Jewish society dispersed throughout the world against which he is plotting. This makes Benjamin's relationship with Tituba all the more interesting in that he purchased her, a known practitioner of black magic, and used her to conjure up his dead wife's spirit. Before the death of his children in the fire, which he eventually sees as punishment for his refusal, because of her powers, to give Tituba her freedom. When she asks he replies "— Jamais, jamais, tu m'entends, car si tu pars, je la [sa femme morte Abigail] perdrai une deuxième fois. Ne me parle jamais plus de cela" (Condé *Tituba* 199). He even tells her, "Tituba, tu es ma sorcière bien-aimée!" (204).

Placing myth upon myth and stereotype upon stereotype, Condé makes the hypocrisy and ignorance of those buying into the white Christian myth of Western society all the more apparent. Interestingly, Condé caricaturizes the person of the Jew in similar manner as is employed seriously by Zola and Maupassant to describe in their novels the Jewish "race" as it was perceived in the nineteenth century, the key difference being that Condé's descriptions are intentionally ridiculous while Zola and Maupassant's represent their society's beliefs and stereotypes about the Jews.

Several different stereotypes of the Jews are common to both Zola and Condé. The physical description that Tituba gives of Benjamin upon seeing him for the first time

mirrors somewhat eerily Zola's description of one of the Jewish bankers in *L'Argent*.

Tituba exclaims: "Mon Dieu, quel homme ! Petit, le dos déformé par une bosse qui

pointait à hauteur de son épaule gauche, le teint couleur d'aubergine et le visage dévoré

par de grands favoris roux qui se mêlaient à une barbe en pointe" (188). We will recall

that in *L'Argent* the narrator describes Kolb as "un homme petit, très brun, dont le nez en

bec d'aigle, sortant d'une grande barbe, décelait l'origine juive" (157).

Additionally, the place where Saccard meets up with Kolb recalls the similarities

between the description of Condé's Benjamin and the common caricaturization of Satan

in popular imagery sporting the red goatee. Similar imagery is called to mind by Zola

when describing the scene that surrounds Saccard's meeting with Kolb. Saccard finds

Kolb in his foundry, the description of which given by the narrator gives the reader the

feel that he is somewhere in Hell, in Satan's very own workshop. Zola describes the Jew

who:

> se trouvait en bas, à l'atelier de fonte [...] Dans le sous-sol nu, que de larges
> flammes de gaz éclairaient éternellement, les deux fondeurs vidaient à la pelle les
> caisses doublées de zinc, pleines, ce jour-là, de pièces espagnoles, qu'ils jetaient
> au creuset, sur le grand fourneau carré. La chaleur était forte, il fallait parler haut
> pour s'entendre, au milieu de cette sonnerie d'harmonica, vibrante sous la voûte
> basse. (*L'Argent* 157)

From the gloominess of an underground vault to the prevalence of fire, the gas lanterns

and especially the large furnaces, the darkness and the sweltering heat of Kolb's

basement decorated by the glow of open flame associate this Jew with the image of the

associate of Satan plotting to take over the world as described by Debrauwere-Miller.

Even Saccard "prophétisait avec emportement la conquête finale de tous les peuples par

les juifs, quand ils auront accaparé la fortune totale du globe" (*L'Argent* 136-7).

In addition to the physical stereotypes and the imagery that associates them with the Devil, Condé also exploits the stereotype of the rich Jew who is talented in commerce and finance, similarly to how in Zola's *L'Argent* many of the bankers at the Bourse are Jews and their entire "race" is depicted by Zola as being very astute with money: the Jews of the Bourse are all very successful. The narrator in no way leaves in question the reason for their success explaining that a Jew "arrivera, lui, car il est juif" (Zola *L'Argent* 64). His companion later replies, "vous avez raison de dire qu'il faut etre juif ; sans ça, inutile de chercher à comprendre, on n'y a pas la main, c'est la déveine noire…" (Zola *L'Argent* 64). We see these essentialist racial images of the Jew in Zola as a serious representation of this "type." In Condé, however, the representation of the Jew, though mimicking a mythological discourse that racializes the Jew, is meant to exploit the racial stereotype in order to ridicule it. For example, in *Moi, Tituba sorcière…* the first experience the reader has with Benjamin is a financial affair. After the general pardon of the accused of Salem, Tituba is charged with the bill of what she owes for her time in the prison. Without any way to pay, she is dependent on someone else to buy her freedom. "Un homme pressé d'argent" (Condé *Tituba* 187) takes on this financial burden. A keen ability with money is a repeating theme around Benjamin, the man who buys Tituba's freedom. The guard describes him as "un Juif, un commerçant que l'on dit très riche. Il pourrait se payer toute une cargaison de bois d'ébène et le voilà qui marchande pour du gibier de potence !" (Condé *Tituba* 188) and Tituba explains that he "gagnait amplement sa vie dans le commerce" (193), a repetition of the myth of the Jew talented and savvy in the domain of commerce.[131]

---

[131] In Chapter 2, I referred to Perry and Schweitzer's *Anti-Semetic Myths* where they describe the history of myth associating the Jews with economic professions and financial prowess. See pp. 75-77 in Perry and

Like Benjamin, all of Zola's Jews are described as displaying a keen awareness in the financial world and all are successful financiers, bankers, etcetera or, as mentioned above with Nathansohn, on their way to becoming so. Despite his hatred for them, Saccard is also said to admire and envy them because of their "prodigieuses facultés financières, cette science innée des chiffres, cette aisance naturelle dans les opérations les plus compliquées, ce flair et cette chance qui assurent le triomphe de tout ce qu'ils entreprennent" (*L'Argent* 136). The stereotypes employed by both Maryse Condé and Emile Zola are part of white Christian myth that has developed over time in Western societies and remained a significant part of the memory of Westerners and the people that they have exploited. While Zola's use of stereotype to describe races is done as a result of the influence that these myths have had on his society, Condé recycles these myths, myths about black people, about Jews and that of traditional color symbolism that opposes white and black, and associates them with Good and Evil, in order to ridicule them. In their ludicrousness, the use and the repetition of these myths in Condé's novel serves to show the extent to which they are, in fact, nonsensical, but also that they have remained in collective memory of Western societies despite the passage of time and various civil rights and independence efforts.

By exploiting the hypocrisy and the contradictions that existed in the colonial, white Christian paradigm, Condé succeeds in deconstructing the contrived dualism upon which it is built. According to Christian myth, everything within the Christian paradigm falls either on the side of Good or of Evil. The significance of the capitalized Good is that of reminding us that there is a very narrow definition of this Good. It is The Good, that

Schweitzer.

171

refers to everything on the side of the Christian God and excludes all else. The color white has long since been associated with pureness, holiness and Good while the color black symbolizes all that falls on the side of Evil, to include dirty or unclean. By challenging this traditional dichotomy, Condé blurs the constructed lines between these two colors and between what is seen as Good and Evil by the predominantly white and Christian Western myth. In *Moi, Tituba sorcière...* Condé performs a thorough exploration and vetting of Western Christian myth. She forces the reader to question his or her own place and subscription to this myth and in the end leaves the reader with a lot of gray in the place of the white and black that had so crisply remained separate before.

Moi, Tituba sorcière... is one of Condé's earlier novels and as she continues to write, she also persists in her attacks on Western myth and its tendency towards ego- and ethnocentrism. Rather than seeing the world from a singular point of view and in a homogenizing way, Condé touts the attributes of a world seen as creolized and not as a place of pure, self-centered races. In the next chapter we will explore further Maryse Condé's deconstruction of Western myth along with a similar, yet nuanced, effort by Dany Laferrière who addresses gender issues differently than Condé.

– Chapter 5 –

TOWARDS A *TOUT-MONDE*: DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH IN THE WORKS OF CONDÉ AND IN DANY LAFERRIÈRE'S *PAYS SANS CHAPEAU* AND *COMMENT FAIRE L'AMOUR AVEC UN NÈGRE SANS SE FATIGUER*

In a world where the global economy, cultures and peoples are coming ever increasingly closer to each other whether through travel, media, governmental interference or any version of the many manifestations of neo-colonialism, the precarious nature the essentialist notion of identity is being eroded and deconstructed by this increased contact. A large part of the global population has begun to feel a profound anxiety associated with identity crisis or the perceived threat to identity. Keenly aware of this internal and external conflict, in his *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, Édouard Glissant addresses the unease associated with the question of "comment être soi sans se fermer à l'autre et comment consentir à l'autre, à tous les autres sans renoncer à soi ?" (37). He insists that the uncertainty cannot be eliminated and we can therefore no longer afford to cling to our identity definitions, whether racial, national or of any other hegemonic designation because they are nothing other than a mythical creation invented by people who feel a deep-seated need to have a concrete sense of belonging. Rather than adhering to these mythical roots, we must instead begin to see ourselves as citizens of a new world, the *tout-monde*.

In this chapter, I will show how the works of Maryse Condé serve both as a metaphor for (historical) narration and also for the creolization of the world. I will examine how she deconstructs the notions of cultural and national identity and how her works take part in a world literature, rather than just a "French" or "Francophone" literature. Additionally, we will take a look at the role of migrant narrative in deconstructing Western, white contrived racial, social and national myth in two novels by Dany Laferrière. In *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*, the narrator tells his story of migration from Haiti to Montreal and all of the trials and tribulations he endures in his new land. Conversely, Laferrière's *Pays sans chapeau*, is his story of the *impossible retour* where the narrator has returned home to Haiti after twenty years living in the North American metropolis of Montreal. Laferrière's ability to put his finger on the pulse of society allows him to keenly and intellectually analyze, ridicule and debunk the prevalent myths that make up the imaginary of any society. This affords us the opportunity to examine in depth both North American myth and Caribbean myth from both sides of the issue: that of the white with European heritage and that of the islander whose history is full of violence and tumult at the hands of colonial, imperial and nationalist Europe.

Redefining the traditional "nation"

As we have already seen, the nineteenth century in France was a time of upheaval after upheaval. The shock of the new confrontation with many different world populations, combined with the turmoil of the century, left many citizens of the French nation with a certain anguish or anxiety in the face of the threat of the savage other. It

became necessary to define their own identity, especially relative and in opposition to the Other, and to reclaim a sense of fixed identity. It seemed of utmost importance to create a distance between the Others and themselves in order to assert a cultural and "actual" superiority, for if the French nation found common ground with the indigenous peoples of the colonies, the order of society would be disrupted. The scientificity of the time furnished a good basis for the creation of this distance between *nous* and *eux*. The evolutionary hierarchy was thus established and, not surprisingly, the empire saw itself at the top of the hierarchy so important within the evolutionary paradigm.

The colonialism of the time reinforced the idea of Europe, the French nation and Paris as the center of the world and racial categorizations served as the visible proof of the distance that needed to exist between the center and peripheral peoples and places. To identify oneself as French, white and Christian soothed the anxiety of the identity crisis and the nationalist sentiment went from a cloudy and insignificant idea to one of the most important aspects of identity. The traditional nation became very important during the nineteenth century because nationalist sentiments helped ease the fears and uncertainty associated with an increasingly nebulous identity. It is, however, important to remember that national identities are just as constructed as the racisms of the nineteenth century. As it develops and people begin to cling to their nationalism, nationalist myth becomes stronger and is repeated. It consequently becomes so deeply ingrained in the cultural, and now national, imaginary of a people that it is not even questioned. Nationalist myth was largely developed as a result of the colonialist activities of the nineteenth century, and interestingly, its decline would come in a strangely similar fashion when national borders

began to once again blur during the rise of twentieth and twenty-first-century globalization.

New innovations in travel, chiefly the airplane, and in the technological world, especially the Internet, have put the citizens of the world so accessible to each other that distance has become an obstacle that is easily surmounted. Borders between the nations of the world have begun to disappear figuratively and even literally in many ways as in the European Union or in North America due to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Huge changes in travel, communications and in the global community truly had great consequences on the world.[132] Just as during the nineteenth century when populations began to face great identity crises due to the confrontations with "different" new peoples as a result of colonial conquests, the modern concepts of nation and national identity are once again being shaken up by globalization. The unstable nature of identities continues to erode, which is leaving a large part of the global population with the profound anxiety in the face of the perceived threat to their identity largely based on nationalistic definitions.

The struggle against identity crisis often provokes a knee-jerk reaction amongst those who fear the dissolution of their own culture. It is reminiscent of the animalistic fight or flight response in the face of mortal danger, and to confront something so new

---

[132] Simply by looking at just a few statistics one can clearly see the ever increasing expansion of the world community. In business, for example, from 1950 to 1998, the world economy multiplied by six, from $6.7 trillion to $41.6 trillion and transnational businesses increased from 7,000 to 53,000 with 449,000 foreign subsidiaries from 1970 to 1998 (French 6). In travel, from 1950 to 1998 the number of kilometers flown internationally by passengers multiplied by nearly one hundred, from 28 million to 2.6 trillion and international tourist arrivals increased from 25 million to 635 million. Every day, two million people cross an international border, compared with only 69,000 in 1950. Finally, in communications and internet: from 1960 to 1998 the number of lines connected to the global telephone network increased from 89 million to 838 million. From 1995 to 2000, the Internet increased approximately 50 percent each year; in 1998 147 million people were connected to the Internet and from 1960 to 1990 the price per unit of computing power decreased by 99 percent (French 7).

and different produces a very strong response that is often violent and extreme. One can very easily cite as an example the current conflicts in France and in the United States over the question of immigration. The West continues to see itself as superior, in lifestyle, in ideals and in aesthetics, and continues to proliferate the *us* versus *them* mentality. This distance created between *us* and *them* is constructed on top of an ephemeral foundation that varies by time and place. During the time of slavery, the popular rhetoric insisted that blacks were subhuman, which is severely condemned today. However, while this idea is condemned a similar hierarchy is insinuated in the current political, public and accepted discourse in the debate on immigration. The assertion that immigrants are not of *us* does nothing other than reinforce the barrier between *us* and *them*. This separation, however, is no more than a construction. In creating this distance between *us* and *the Others*, the Others are reduced to a single, homogenous group. The differences between them are erased while the differences between *us* and *them* are hyperbolized, all with the goal of elevating *us* to a superior position. Once the hierarchy is created and established, it is then used to classify and thus objectify the Other. We see this separation in many ways; in literature it resurfaces often in content and in categorizations of authors as "foreign" or "minority," for example. In these works, as I will show later in my discussion of Laferrière, critics often scan them for any reference to their "Otherness" while virtually ignoring the idea that they may not be specifically treating issues of difference.

The *tout-monde*

In his *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, Édouard Glissant puts Western
anxiety in the face of the *chaos-monde*[133] center stage and poses the question of
"comment être soi sans se fermer à l'autre et comment consentir à l'autre, à tous les
autres sans renoncer à soi ?" (37). The West is obsessed with a systematic/system
centered thinking, order, identity and origins, the foundation of which goes back to the
time of Antiquity, the Mediteranean, which, as Glissant explains, is a sea that is
concentrates things around a center (*Introduction* 14).[134] Despite its focus on centrality
and purity, the West, according to Glissant, like all other cultures is, in fact, creole at its
origin with respect to language and identity. Even the traditions seen as coming from our
ancient, Western ancestors were themselves heavily borrowed from the traditions that
preceded them. There is no Beginning; one must therefore adopt the "archipelagic"
thinking, as Glissant would describe it, that is promoted by the diffracting Caribbean Sea
and archipelago (*Introduction* 43). It is necessary to embrace a creolized culture, a *chaos-
monde* and a *tout-monde*, not a *totalité-monde*; we must accept that "le monde se
créolise" (Glissant *Introduction* 15). In order to do this, Glissant proposes that we be
citizens of a new world, the *tout-monde*, a world where differences are valued in equality
and the gap between *nous et les autres* is eliminated. He calls for the end of an obsession

---

[133] Glissant explains: "J'appelle Chaos-monde le choc actuel de tant de cultures qui s'embrassent, se
repoussent, disparaissent, subsistent pourtant, s'endorment ou se transforment, lentement ou à vitesse
foudroyante : ces éclats, ces éclatements dont nous n'avons pas commencé à saisir le principe ni
l'économie et dont nous ne pouvons pas prévoir l'emportement. Le Tout-Monde, qui est totalisant, n'est
pas (pour nous) total" (*Traité* 22). His *chaos-monde* is made up of that which is "absolument imprévisible,"
and "absolument nouveau" (*Introduction* 15). He explains that "C'est la notion d'imprévisibilité de la
relation mondiale qui crée et détermine la notion de chaos-monde" (37) , and it is this sentiment, explains
Glissant, that leaves many with a sense of anxiety or discomfort in the face of mass globalization.

[134] To such a center-focused way of life and thinking Glissant opposes the Caribbean, explaining that it is a
sea which diffracts, leading its inhabitants to look out and around, rather than all towards a singular, central
focal point (*Introduction* 14).

with pure origins and the hierarchies that this type of thinking creates. The end of the pure origin opens the way for what Glissant calls rhizome identity. He explains that identity seen as:

> à racine unique et exclusive de l'autre […] s'oppose à la notion aujourd'hui « réelle », dans ces cultures composites, de l'identité comme facteur et comme résultat d'une créolisation, c'est-à-dire de l'identité comme rhizome, de l'identité non plus comme racine unique mais comme racine allant à la rencontre d'autres racines. (*Introduction* 23)

The idea of meeting, or coming together (*le rencontre*) is very important in today's world. One cannot cut oneself off or remain hidden from others because we live in a world where globalization[135] allows and encourages the free exchange of goods, ideas and cultures. The traditional borders between nations are clouding and cultures mixing; we are all surrounded by differences and these differences challenge, reject even, the single-origin mentality.

Glissant accepts the fact that this process is not necessarily easy and that to eliminate all anxiety caused by the real or imaginary loss of identity does not come without problems. Cultural conflicts between various cultures that exist together in a melting pot are often explosive and violent. However, the world *is* creolizing; this is an undeniable fact. We must, therefore, according to Glissant "c'est le plus important, c'est de faire vivre ensemble toutes ces populations […] c'est là sortir de l'identité racine unique et entrer dans la vérité de la créolisation du monde" (Glissant *Introduction* 24). By the same virtue, the systems of thought that permit only one type of thinking must be confronted by "un non-système de pensée qui ne sera ni dominateur, ni systématique, ni

---

[135] I use the term "globalization" to mean what is in French two different words. Here would be "mondialisation," referring to that which took place before 1980. "Globalisation," on the other hand, refers to the phenomenon after this date, which, as Glissant clearly points out, has a connotation that implies a certain neo-colonialism.

imposant" (Glissant *Introduction* 25). The important difference that Glissant makes between globalization and creolization is the idea of the intervalorization of cultures and ideas. Though globalization encourages the exchange of ideas between cultures that before remained distant, it is marked by the dominance of certain privileged cultures over others deemed not as good, the imposition of one way of life and thus the elimination of another. Contrarily, the creolization of the world is characterized by the intervalorization of cultures where one will never be more important than the others. The unpredictability of the creolization of the world is another important aspect of its character according to Glissant. It is not a simple case of A plus B equals C, rather, the coming together of many cultures and a resulting interaction that produces something completely new.

By living in a globalized world, everyone is to some degree thrown into this *tout-monde* where unpredictability reigns. Identity cannot be fixed because a fixed identity only belongs in the realm of myth. Glissant insists that "l'être humain commence d'accepter l'idée que lui-même est en perpétuel processus, qu'il n'est pas de l'être, mais de l'étant, et que comme tout étant, il change" (*Introduction* 28). If this proposition can be accepted, it can also be accepted that the other is not the enemy and that difference is not erosive (Glissant *Introduction* 56). In order to change our mentality we must embrace the plurality of identities and the value of ambiguity. The universal kills but the *tout-monde* promotes the thought of Relation[136], encounters and the multiplicity of identity. There where we laud pure roots must be substituted the rhizome, the *tout-monde* for the

---

[136] Glissant's Relation is "la possibilité pour chacun de s'y trouver, à tout moment, solidaire et solitaire" (*Poétique* 145), "totalité en mouvement, dont l'ordre flue sans cesse et dont le désordre est à jamais imaginable" (*Poétique* 147), "racine, mais allant à la rencontre des autres racines [...] le mode, la manière dont elle entre en contact avec d'autres racines" (*Introduction* 31), and "ouverture et relativité" (*Introduction* 107). Glissant also insists that "Pour qu'il y ait relation il faut qu'il y ait deux ou plusieurs identités ou entités maîtresses d'elles-mêmes et qui acceptent de changer en s'échangeant" (*Introduction* 42).

totalité-monde, breadth for depth and the baroque for the classical (Glissant *Introduction* 87ff).

Glissant explains the importance of Relation and the multiplicity of identities in his insistence that: "Parce que de même qu'on ne peut pas sauver une langue toute seule en laissant périr les autres, de même on ne peut pas sauver une nation ou une ethnie en laissant dépérir les autres" (*Introduction* 99). Relation between nations, ethnicities, cultures, etcetera is such that one culture cannot be allowed to perish without losing part of itself. Survival of self is such in Relation. It is in this way that Glissant ends his *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*: "Tout le reste est Relation : ouverture et relativité" (107). The individual must open him or herself to being a citizen of the *tout-monde* and accept a new conception of the world that does not include a militant loyalty to national or cultural borders, or to divisiveness based on an imaginary that depends on historical arbitrary groupings or belongings. It is precisely this opening of spirit, ideas and identity that we see in the works of Maryse Condé and Dany Laferrière.

The works of Maryse Condé

In Maryse Condé's novels and short stories there is a certain unpredictability throughout the narrative structure that serves as a great illustration of Glissant's *tout-monde*, especially creoleness and multiplicity of identities. Condé is herself very familiar with archipelic thought and speech about which Glissant theorizes, a diffracting rather than concentrating force. After having spent her youth in Guadeloupe, Condé then did her secondary studies in a Parisian lycée and her post-secondary studies at the Sorbonne. Next she spent twelve years in Africa, in Guinea, Ghana and Senegal, and then returned

to Paris for her doctorate degree. She is currently living in the United States.[137] Condé's

life experiences exposed her to many cultures, peoples and influences, the result being a

broad perspective and wide knowledge of the world's diversity. One can see throughout

her works the traces of a transcultural perspective and the importance of the multifaceted

nature of identity development. Her rhizomic and polyphonic narrative style moves away

from the tradition of French realism, and, indeed, Condé is closer to baroque aesthetics

and magical realism.

Rather than being nationalistically, linguistically or stylistically (vis-à-vis genre)

confined, Condé's works take part in the *littérature-monde*[138] because she treats subjects

that are applicable in many diverse cultures and nations and refuses to be subordinate to a

French language pact with France, the former (and at times, current) hegemonic claimant

to the French language. In this sense, I would argue that Condé's fictions also fall into the

chaos-monde or the *tout-monde*. Plurilingualism in all its forms (oral and written),

polyphony and textual and genre hybridity are particularly marked in her writing. In

Traversée de la Mangrove, the reader finds himself faced with constantly changing

narrators, narratives and multiple stories which converge and diverge throughout the

---

[137] Bibliographical information taken from the introduction to *Traversée de la Mangrove*. She currently teaches at CUNY.

[138] *La littérature monde* being a literature in the French language where the exclusive pact with the nation has been broken and in which various and diverse voices, those that are often ignored, express themselves and are heard. In March of 2007 forty-four French language authors published in *Le Monde* their manifesto "Pour une « littérature monde » en français" declaring their independence and the independence of the French language from the center, the Hexagone herself. They called this movement a "révolution copernicienne" for now the center, "ce point depuis lequel était supposée rayonner une littérature franco-française n'est plus le centre" (Le Bris et al.) All of the great literature prizes the preceding autumn had been awarded to authors from outside of France, thus signaling this decentralization. The manifesto proclaims: "le centre, nous disent les prix d'automne, est désormais partout, aux quatre coins du monde," and further, "que le pacte colonial se trouve brisé, que la langue délivrée devient l'affaire de tous." Soon to follow would be the collection of essays, *Pour une literature-monde*, by these same signatories in 2007 published by Gallimard.

length of the text. The same polyphony appears in the three voices of the main characters in "Trois femmes à Manhattan," Véra, Élinor and Claude, a short story found in *Pays mêlé*. This technique that can easily lose and confuse the reader is in one way a reference to her native land of Guadeloupe, but more broadly it is also a reference to a fluidity contained in and between the cultures of the world, or the *tout-monde*.

The short story, "Trois femmes à Manhattan" is the story of three women who live in New York City. Coming from very different origins, the lives and the narrative of these three women is an intricately woven web. Claude, explains Condé, is "le lien entre ces deux femmes qui ne s'étaient jamais vues" (*Pays* 189). Claude is an immigrant from Guadeloupe and both Élinor and Véra's maid. Élinor is a black writer from the U.S. South, and Véra, too, is a writer having herself immigrated from Haiti. The narrator follows Claude to Élinor's apartment, Véra's apartment and in her journeys between the two. The over-usage of pronouns renders the narrative thread difficult to follow to the point that the reader must often reread one or two paragraphs in order to be certain who is speaking and about whom the narrator is talking. It is not, though, by any accident or error on the part of the author; rather, it is a tool that Condé employs to show that three people can come from three different nationalities and cultures but at the same time find common ground for identifying with one another.

The similarities between the three women generate confusion in the reader who has trouble making the distinction between the characters. The women that Claude works for are both writers. Claude and Véra are both immigrants from the Antilles, far from their families, and far from the tragedies of their past. The narrator underscores the similarities between the women explaining that "Claude était une Élinor que le destin,

enchanteur distrait, avait oubliée de combler après l'avoir arrachée au néant" (Condé *Pays* 186). Claude could have had the comfortable life of Élinor if only fate had been slightly different. For all of the people in Élinor's life, Claude finds an equivalent in her own past. Condé writes, "C'était le même univers, grossi à l'échelle d'un continent, voilà tout" (*Pays* 186). It is, however, important to recognize and to celebrate their differences; the homogenization of the world would be a universalism in complete contradiction with Glissant's *pensée du divers* and Condé's celebration of cultural diversity. Véra and Élinor are opposites in the subjects about which they choose to write and in the way they treat their writing. Élinor who writes stories about the Old South seems to support and even feed the myths and fetishes that American society has about the American South and Southern Other, especially the black woman. On the other hand, Véra for her part is an *écrivain engagé* who directs pointed criticism and gives specific energy to denounce the evils done in her native land of Haiti, especially the violent governmental instability and the coups, like the one that destroyed her family.

The multicultural nature of New York City perfectly frames this story where the narration of the three women's lives allegorize New York City and, in a broader sense, the creolizing world. The various narratives that are intertwined can be seen as a metaphor for the *tout-monde* or for rhizomic identity, though not without questioning its limits. The greatest source of these limits may lie in the homogenizing effects of globalization. One cannot help but question the ability of Glissant's creolization to resist the often overwhelming dominance of what Typhaine Leservot classifies as being a "phénomène euro-américain aux Antilles [...] à la fois européanisation et américanisation chez Condé" (139). Condé does not, however, overlook these limitations and concerns. In

Traversée de la mangrove, the difficulty and violence inherent in creolization takes a

place that is more prominent and evident as Condé engages the reader in a meditation on

the exclusions, questions and violence that surround difference within a society.

Similar to New York City, the setting of Guadeloupe serves as a great

representation of the multiplicity of identity with "ses conflits, ses contradictions et ses

tensions."[139] The island of Guadeloupe has a long and tumultuous history. Its original

inhabitants, the Arawaks then the Caribs, saw the first European invasions in the fifteenth

century with Christopher Columbus' exploration. The island held little interest for the

Spanish explorers, however, and they moved on, mostly leaving the island as they had

found it. The French would land soon after in Guadeloupe. The indigenous people at this

time were nearly exterminated through violence and by diseases to which the indigenous

populations had no immunity. A large slave population was brought to the island to work

on the sugar plantations. During the following three hundred years, the island was made

an object of trade, bargain and armed conflicts. The French would win out in the end by

means of diplomacy and Guadeloupe became permanently French eventually taking on

the status of *département d'outre-mer*[140], though not without remaining inferiorized and

on the periphery: Typhaine Leservot reminds us that even the European constitution itself

refers to the Antilles as ultra-peripheral regions (98) and Aimé Césaire, who initially

sought departmentalization for Martinique, later admitted it was a failure, "criticizing its

paternalism and residual colonialism" (Chamoiseau et al. 129).

---

[139] Taken from the cover of *Traversée de la Mangrove*.

[140] 1946

Constantly in conflict against the European influences for an identity that is liberated from the hundreds of years of domination, physical and symbolic violence and that is their own, and also in such close proximity to continental America and its influences, the people of Guadeloupe remain subject to underlying identity confusion. This two-sided attack often seems all-encompassing. On the one hand, there is the long-standing tradition of European dominance in the islands, from questions of beauty to questions of language, government and commerce. On the other hand, a great influence is exerted by continental America due to their proximity as well as a globalization that is quite often qualified as an Americanization of the world. Leservot points out some statistics that underscore the dominance of American media in the Antilles: 76% of televised programs in Jamaica are imported, principally from the United States, and in Trinidad and Tobago, 90% of television programs are American (103). Leservot further proposes that despite the absence of statistics in the French Antilles, due to the proliferation of cable and satellite, the French Antilles remain just as affected by American media as their Anglophone counterparts (103). The dominance of American media and the exportation of American ideals pose an additional threat to the islands' struggles for independence of identity and aesthetics. Leservot asserts that exportation of American television programs to the Antilles is a principal tool in a cultural imperialism (104).

In Condé's novel *Traversée de la Mangrove*, the narration reflects these questions pertaining to the struggle for an identity free from dominating, foreign influences. There is a certain unpredictability and intertwining of identity imbedded into the narrative structure. With almost each new chapter, a new point of view is brought to the forefront.

The novel is made up of three parts: le Serein, la Nuit and le Devant-jour. Le Serein is narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator who sets the narrative framework for the novel. Next in la Nuit, the reader meets nineteen different narrators, only one of which, Mira, the pregnant lover of the dead protagonist Francis Sancher, is repeated, but in the second chapter that she narrates, it is almost in the voice of their illegitimate son rather than in her own.

The focal point of the novel is the death of Mira's lover, one Francis Sancher, famous or rather infamous amongst the inhabitants of the village. Each narrator brings to the table with him or her something different from all the others about Francis Sancher, invalidating at each turn a concrete interpretation of his story and his identity. Even though his reputation is often less than positive, it is nonetheless legendary and mythical. The first-person accounts begin with Moïse, the town's mailman[141], a pariah for the most part, but who claims to be "le premier qui ait connu son vrai nom" (Condé *Traversée* 29). We learn that their friendship in reality was not really reciprocal, but Francis needed someone to listen to his stories and Moïse needed a companion. The reader next makes the acquaintance, one after the other, of Francis' lover, brother, the village sorceress[142], other members of Mira's family, friends, enemies, elders and all sorts of village troubadours, each adding a new story and a new reading – of hate, of love or of a mixture of the two.

---

[141] Their friendship subjected to the malicous gossips is seen as suspect; they are rumored to be a homosexual couple even though they are not.

[142] Man Sonson says that she sees "défiler sur mon plancher [les gens] pour me demander de lui [Francis] faire du mal ou même carrément de soulager la terre des vivants de son poids" (Condé *Traversée* 82-3) and in recounting her experiences she shows the reader that she is clairvoyant (84-5).

The novel is narrated in such a way that the image of this Francis Sancher is impossible to paint clearly. Nevertheless, even though the perspectives of Francis Sancher are all varied, they are not independent of each other. The notion of Relation, as it is presented in Glissant's works, "racine, mais allant à la rencontre des autres racines [...] le mode, la manière dont elle entre en contact avec d'autres racines" (*Introduction* 31), is markedly at play in this network of narration: the relationships between the narrators as inhabitants of the town or members of particular families leave them all entwined, inseparable and interdependent. Francis' identity is thus a mosaic made of thousands of different pieces of thousands of different colors and even many spaces that remain blank. Francis is well-loved by some and detested by others. Those who love him represent a *tout-monde* point of view; they embrace the idea that no one person can be defined in concrete terms, historically or presently. The others remain in the anguished state in the face of the fact that "le monde se créolise." They hate him because they cannot define him; they live in the fear of the unknown, the fear of a world where the clearly defined borders of nation and identity are clouding. The spaces that remain blank in the mosaic that is Francis Sancher are the undefinable aspects of the *tout-monde* and of identity, the things that cannot be known or fixed.

Not much is known on the subject of Francis Sancher, but the one thing that is certain is that he does not come from Guadeloupe. Mira explains "qu'il venait d'<u>A</u>illeurs. D'Ailleurs. De l'autre côté de l'eau. Il n'était pas né dans notre île à ragots [...] D'Ailleurs" (Condé *Traversée* 63)[143]. Apart from this, nothing is certain. Sancher seems to have no fixed roots and the rumors attribute to him many different origins and

---

[143] Glissant writes, "Les gens de la Caraïbe étaient portés à aider les autres dans un ailleurs qui serait toujours l'ici" (*Introduction* 31).

nationalities: he has an accent that is a little different and impossible to place, he is the

representative of several territories, of a transnational geography, and the example par

excellence of transient identity in that he is oftentimes poorly received or excluded.

When Mira wonders about how the other inhabitants of the small town will

answer their son when he asks "Tu connaissais mon père ?", she imagines that they will

say to him, "On ne sait même pas si c'était un Blanc, un Nègre, un Zindien.[144] Il avait

tous les sangs dans son corps !" (Condé *Traversée* 229). Additionally, the reference here

to blood, *sang*, shows us how much an antiquated system of racial codification based on

physical difference and also nationalisms remains ingrained within the imaginary of our

world even in post-colonial and supposedly advanced times.

In the last part of the novel, the unknown narrator of the first part returns and on

the last page poses the question: "Qui était-il en réalité cet homme qui avait choisi de

mourir parmi eux ?" (Condé *Traversée* 251), a question that will remain forever

unanswered. Francis Sancher was adored by some and hated by others. The "réalité" of

his identity is that he is an amalgam of many different origins. As Glissant puts it, it is a

perpetual process of becoming, it is not that he *is*, or *was*, he is *becoming*. In a larger

sense, such is the Guadeloupian identity, and even more broadly, the identity of all

persons in the world, which makes us all citizens of the *tout-monde*, no matter from

where we come.

Literature shows us, however, that this is far from being a fait accompli.

Admittedly, like the acquaintances of Sancher, identity is always dependent on others,

---

[144] The liaison between *les* and *Indiens* is understood here as *les Zindiens* by the colonized peoples who
were forced to abandon their own language in order to adopt the French language -- another important
element of the symbolic violence unleashed on the colonies.

and all identities are interwoven intricately with those around them. The Relation between different identities, cultures and nations makes it certain that there are no singular origins or roots and no national identity that respects completely the arbitrarily constructed geographical borders; in this, we see how Condé examines the true sense of Relation.

The image of the mangrove swamp called to mind by the title of the novel is reminiscent of the image of the rhizome as described by Glissant, though in much less optimistic fashion as Condé's mangrove is dangerous and at times deadly. The branches of the mangrove tree are intertwined to the point that it becomes impossible to discern or to separate one tree from another. The whole of these trees together, the mangrove or swamp, is a place where all of the vegetation is interdependent; it is impossible to separate one tree without damaging it or even killing others. Vilma, Francis Sancher's second lover, exclaims "On ne traverse pas la mangrove. On s'empale sur les racines des palétuviers. On s'enterre et on étouffe dans la boue saumâtre" (Condé *Traversée* 192). One cannot separate him or herself from the mangrove, the network of human relations and identities in which we all live; he or she must become part of it. Condé's mangrove serves at once as a metaphor for the narration with its narrative voices that are woven together, for the creolization of the world and for the rhizome. Glissant does not hesitate to evoke the violence about which Vilma speaks in his discussion of the creolization of the world. Outbreak (*l'irruption*), attack (*la ruade*) and eruption (*l'éruption*) are the ways by which creolization takes place according to Glissant. He tells us that "Nous avons vécu la créolisation sous deux aspects : l'aspect négatif de l'esclavage et de l'asservissement et aujourd'hui un autre aspect négatif qui est l'assimilation à la culture

française" (*Introduction* 31). However, these two very violent sources of creolization that steal, violate (*v(i)olent*) and exploit the Other do not impede creolization. Glissant explains further that "à l'intérieur' de la créolisation, il s'est présenté bien des moyens d'échapper à la négativité […] c'est le positif […] qui préfigure les solidarités futures" (*Introduction* 31). Though the sources of creolization are violent and negative, the result is a world in which people will learn to live together and embrace the multifaceted aspects of identity, the differences that actually bring solidarity. Condé's presentation of cultural *métissage*, on the other hand, insists that the initial violence is not washed away in the process of creolization, which distances her from Glissant's utopic vision of creolization.

From Maryse Condé to Dany Laferrière

Just as in the nineteenth century when populations found themselves in the face of great identity crises due to the new encounters, or *encontres*, a term created by Mireille Rosello, and confrontation with "different" new peoples as a result of the colonial conquests, the modern concepts of nation and national identity are once again under attack by the inevitable participation of nations in globalization. The precarious nature of identities continues in a process of erosion, leaving a large part of the world population with a sense of anxiety in the face of identity crises, whether real or imaginary. Even though the new, mass cultural exchanges are by way of globalization, globalization is not, according to Glissant, the final word. Rather, Glissant insists on a creolization of the world where all cultures are of equal worth and are interdependent. What creolization offers that globalization does not is an infinite multitude of varieties and versions. Where

191

atavism, or even Negritude, offers an imaginary derived from a *racine unique*, *créolité*[145] offers an imaginary that "derives from diversity" (Chamoiseau et al. 142). Creolization is impossible to fix or define: "There's no one way to be Creole [...] Each creolization has its own dosage, its own materialities, which together create a distinctive, multihistorical reality" that "remains permanently in motion" (Chamoiseau et al. 142). In Condé's works, where we find Glissant's ideas allegorized, we are invited, challenged really, to reflect upon their impact and their limits. These two Caribbean authors, though in very different styles and genres, invite us to reflect upon the importance and the stakes of a "world literature" and of the *tout-monde* by challenging the prevalent notions of compartmentalized and stable identities.

While Glissant's image of a *tout-monde* may seem like an impossible utopic vision, Condé's literary creations give a real-world application to Glissant's theories. Neither author ignores the violence of the past and in Condé we clearly see the unfairness and the tendency towards the exclusion of difference in a creolizing world. The great gap that exists between reality and myth, such as the myth of the American dream or the myth of the French Republic – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – remains one of the key catalysts of alienation for many immigrants who may see themselves as citizens of a *tout-monde* only to be exiled to the periphery – *ghettoïsés* – upon their arrival in the metropolitan areas of so-called "Western" nations.

Dany Laferrière, a fierce and outspoken critic of the evils of his native land, Haiti, found himself abruptly confronted with North-American racist myth upon his arrival in

---

[145] Note the subtle difference between *créolisation* ("creolization") and *créolité* ("creoleness"). Generally, though not always, Glissant uses the term creolization, the process, while Chamoiseau et al. refer to creoleness, a result.

Montreal. His time in Montreal would give him a certain apprenticeship in racist myth amongst the white, both anglo-saxon and francophone populations. After twenty years living as a North American, however, he also becomes a stranger to Haiti. In *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* the reader gets a very brutal but honest look at racist myth in metropolitan North America. Laferrière employs many strategies in his efforts to debunk these myths, from reappropriation, to anger, to humor and sarcasm. Daniel Coleman classifies Laferrière's novel as metaparody because of the multiple ways and on multiple levels (its "indeterminancy") in which he rejects racialized discourse: "Laferrière's text is not a simple one-to-one parody […] it is a metaparody because it re-sites and ridicules not just the original discourse of racialized sexuality, but also its many responses and variation throughout its etiology, including its opponents and resisters" (65). *Pays sans chapeau*, on the other hand, is a story of the *impossible retour*, where everything at home has changed leaving the narrator with a neither-here-nor-there inbetweenness that also gives him an eventual ability to see behind the various myths that cloud the imaginary of his own people as well as the Americans.

In 2001, Dany Laferrière published his novel *Je suis fatigué*, about which he says "j'ai voulu souligné la fin de mon autobiographie américaine" (Laferrière *Comment* 172). His oeuvre to this point had included many novels, each in one way or another composing a portion of his American autobiography. From *L'odeur du café* and *Le charme des après-midi sans fin* about his childhood with his grandparents in Petit-Goâve to *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* or *Pays sans chapeau*, a large part of the Laferrière corpus contains autobiographical elements, sometimes subtle or allegorical and at other times quite explicit. From the Caribbean to Canada to Miami,

Laferrière has lived a broad American experience that has populated his novels, which can be considered autobiographical, fictional and engagés all at the same time.[146]

It is after twenty years of this exile that Laferrière began to write about his return to Haiti in *Pays sans chapeau* in 1996. The novel is made up of a dualist structure, in the beginning each chapter alternating between the *pays réel* and the *pays rêvé*. Though there is the dream land and the real world, the content of these chapters goes against logical expectations of what one might encounter in their dreams and in their reality. Laferrière's *pays réel* seems to be more like a dream. It is in these chapters where the narrator has returned to his old Haiti, and not much has seemed to change. He finds his mother there to take care of him, and he returns to the role of a son, acting like a young boy being cared for by his mother. When seeing her for the first time, he seems surprised to find that "Elle doit penser que je n'ai pas changé" (Laferrière *Pays* 16). For his part as well, though, the narrator explains that under the Haitian sky, it was all "Exactement comme dans ma mémoire" (Laferrière *Pays* 17).

The narrator describes this *pays réel* in flashes of images, a few paragraphs each following a title, an object from which the description of his location and his encounters

---

[146] Laferrière was born in Port-au-Prince in 1953, just four years before François Duvalier, known as Papa Doc, would be elected president of Haiti and several years later declare himself president for life. The year Papa Doc became president, a young Laferrière was sent to live with his grandparents in Petit-Goâve while his father, a journalist and union activist, two years later was sent to Italy as a diplomat and then to Argentina. Though it was said to be a diplomatic mission, in truth he had been exiled from Haiti never to return again. Though Papa Doc would die in 1971, the rule of a corrupt dictator would not end, as his son Jean-Claude, Baby Doc, took over as president of Haiti. Having returned to Port-au-Prince, as Dany Laferrière got older, he began to write as a journalist and take an interest in the painting and literary scenes of Port-au-Prince. As the political situation in Haiti deteriorated and became increasingly hot, with pressures from inside and outside of the country contesting the presidency for life of Baby Doc, Laferrière engaged himself in the combat against Duvalier's tyranny. Duvalier and his cohorts, however, not to be silenced or weakened continued to employ violence in their fight to remain in power. Dany Laferrière's close friend Gasner Raymond, also a journalist, was assassinated. Laferrière, in danger of enduring the same fate, secretly left Haiti for Montreal in 1976. Biographical information on Dany Laferrière taken from the "Chronologie" on pages 167-173 of *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*.

will flow. He calls himself an *écrivain primitif*, and the style in which the *pays réel* is constructed, object-description, object-description, object-description, etcetera, recalls the primitive artist who paints his surroundings as he sees them, an art of simplicity in representation with, at times, a skewed sense of perspective. The narrator's "reality" at this point remains simple, locked into the perspective he held twenty years ago of his native land. He is not yet seeing the reality of what has become of his native land. The *écrivain primitif* that begins the novel though seeing this as the *pays réel*, is really at this point still living in a dream, a mythical existence of his childhood imaginary.

The counterpart to the *pays réel* is the *pays rêvé* which to the reader feels more like the harsh reality. The dream land is only dream-like in the sense of perhaps being a nightmare. Nothing in the dream land is as pleasant as the narrator's initial reality upon arriving in Port-au-Prince. The "soleil flambant neuf en plein milieu" (Laferrière *Pays* 17) that had at first been exactly as he remembered it and that he describes warmly and nostalgically as being in "Le ciel bleu clair de Port-au-Prince" (17) becomes in the first sentence of the *pays rêvé* the source of "Cette chaleur [qui] finira par m'avoir" (36). After having spent 20 years in the "froid du nord" his return to Haiti now seems like a "plongée aux enfers. Les feux de l'enfer" (Laferrière *Pays* 36). As he sits in the shade of the mango tree, a place that in the first two chapters was full of the familiar tastes and smells of his youth, the best coffee in the world, the spices at the heart of the Caribbean, the food his mother and grandmother prepared, in addition to being confronted with the hellish heat of the island, the narrator also is disturbed by the "odeur d'une mangue trop mûr qui vient d'exploser pres de ma chaise [qui] m'étourdit presque" (Laferrière *Pays* 36). Also nearby are the rotting leaves of the tree and the dead, decomposing carcass of a dog that is

covered in flies, their buzzing incessant. All of his senses are now monopolized by the putrid death and decay that surround him. Not surprising, then, is the presence of zombies in his *pays rêvé*. His return trip home is very different and may be more than he expected or have the ability to internalize. The proverb at the beginning of the first *pays rêvé* chapter reads "Avant de grimper à un arbre, assure-toi de pouvoir en descendre" (Laferrière *Pays* 35) indicating that he has returned and is about to get involved in something much more than he ever anticipated.

The death and decay that surround the narrator will eventually play an important role in the symbolism of the novel. Many things have changed since he left twenty years ago, and he has returned to become a witness and even a victim himself of the death of the old Haiti, the old ways and the end of the Haitians and values he once knew. Through a long and tumultuous history of struggles for independence from forces exterior and interior to the country, the latest threat has become the globalization that has emerged as a familiar force around the world, and through the constant American military presence Laferrière gives specific attention in the novel to the forces of Americanization and capitalism that are bringing about a change in a home that the narrator once considered as having a very special and particular feel of its own. He sees in this new Haiti many sad pastiches of the North American cities in which he has lived over the past twenty years.

Though the narrator looks upon his past with a happy nostalgia, the current degradation that he sees is not so new. This island nation that is known as the "First Black Republic" has a long history of violence, uprisings, powerful tyrants and occupations.[147] Laferrière exploits this history, especially the American interference and

---

[147] Haiti's independence was gained after a movement started by Toussaint L'Ouverture and continued by Jean-Jacques Dessalines who would become Emperor for life after the famous slave rebellions, referred to

Duvalier violence and corruption: from its title to its content and narrator's reflections, in

Pays sans chapeau Laferrière uses the traditional symbolism and values of Haiti, notably

the Vodou religion and symbolism of death, to speak out against the destruction,

degradation and disappearance of his native land's founding values. On the dedication

page of the book, Laferrière explains that "Pays sans chapeau, c'est ainsi qu'on appelle

l'au-delà en Haïti parce que personne n'a jamais été enterré avec son chapeau"

(Laferrière *Pays* 7), and the reader, who most likely unfamiliar with the Haitian saying is

at once averted of the important place that death will play in the symbolism of the novel.

Additionally, the presence of the zombies[148], at first only in the *pays rêvé* but later

by Ourika, had won independence in 1804. The twentieth century for Haitians has been a time of more violence and threatening rule. Haiti was occupied by the U.S. Marines from 1915 to 1934; 1937 saw the "terror of Vespers" in which as many as 30,000 Haitian workers in the Dominican were executed by order of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo; a large coup-d'état took place in 1950 leading to the general Paul Magloire taking power, a man who led heavily according to the wishes of the U.S. government in order to maintain the inflow of foreign aid that almost entirely funded the country's "golden age" (Johnson 428-9). Magloire's tenure would also end at the hands of a coup. Francois Duvalier, "Papa Doc," depended heavily upon the memory of Dessalines, a popular historical figure amongst the people, in his rise to power that ultimately culminated in his election as president in 1957. In fact, "Duvalier represented himself in his discourse as being possessed of the historical spirit of the revolutionary hero" and often employed religious symbolism to gain the support of the people in his totalitarian rule (Johnson 420). Duvalier exploited the *Vodou* beliefs of the common people to make himself larger than life. Duvalier was able to maintain some international support as well. The Americans, who after their occupation ended in 1934, sought to have a leader who would be able to maintain stability in the country. Duvalier with his popular support, really a strong-handed control over the country, got the nod from the American government. Duvalier was not necessarily sympathetic to the Americans' wishes, but like Magloire, wished to maintain Haiti's revenues of foreign aid (Johnson 433). Duvalier ascended to power thanks to his "reputation as a student of Vodou" that garnered him support amongst the common people and the urban intellectuals (Johnson 430), but this religion that he used for his own glorification is also a large part of the system by which many authors now revolt against the evils done to their country by Duvalier, his cohorts, his son and the unstable, overbearing influences, including the Americans, that have been in power since. While Duvalier gained power by having much support, he maintained it through violent and self-serving means. His well known private police force, the *tonton makoutes*, were violent, un-checked in their power and a terrifying force to the people of Haiti. No one dared speak out against Duvalier for fear of assassination. Duvalier pandered to the Americans in order to increase his military power and national wealth, which never made it down to the poorer classes (Johnson 432-3). Haiti, a nation that had been founded on the values of freedom and independence from the Western hegemonic powers had become a sell-out and void of the values that the people still believed in deeply.

[148] Doris Garraway explains that in the context of the seventeenth century slave trade, "In Haiti, the zombi is a body without soul made to work for the sorcerer, or *houngan*, who induces a deathlike state and later raises the body from the grave" (178-9). This zombie then "becomes a body devoid of life, moving mechanically, without emotion or individual will" (Garraway 179). Often the image of the zombie was a

throughout the novel, is further reference to death and decay. Rafaël Lucas explains how the secretive nature and total domination of the Duvalier dictatorship strongly and negatively affected both the Haitian environment and Haitian imaginary because of its "spiral of underdevelopment and its destructive and destructuring tendencies" (54). Thus, the symbolism of Ruin became prominent in Haitian literature leading to the emergence of the Aesthetics of Decay (Lucas 54), which we clearly see in *Pays sans chapeau* from early on with the various images of rotting fruits and animal carcasses. Further, the theme of zombification also takes a prominent place in the Aesthetics of Decay and seeks to "denounce social ills in the strongest possible terms and [place] a quasi-mystical value on change" (Lucas 54).

Lucas' study on degradation in Haitian literature points out that Haitian novels from the Duvalier dictatorship through the early 2000's often contain themes of madness, possession, misery, violence, helplessness, bitterness, dispersal, interrogation of memory through dream exploration and witness of tragic years (55-6). Much of these themes reach back to the terror caused by the Duvalier regime. In the minds and memory of the Haitians, the Duvalier regime was a monstrous force, ruling by corruption and terror, who employed "terrifying and totalizing repression" in order to frighten the human being so much so that all ability to revolt disappeared, thus "zombifying" the people (Lucas 56-7). Lucas explains further that "[the theme of *zombification*], which is rooted in cultural history and in the Haitian imaginary, represents an enormous potential for the production of meaning. It permits the display of evidence of mental degradation, physical decline,

---

reference to the dispossession of the slave body in service to the slave master. In this novel Laferrière seems to redeploy the image of the zombie in a contemporary context as a metaphor for the dispossession of Haiti in service or servitude to the corrupt dictators or American influence.

and ontological collapse" (63). As a common theme in literature the zombie, who was once a human, full of dreams and light, has been deprived of these human hopes, his "vital power" and has been made into a "beast of burden" (Lucas 63) or simply one who can do nothing other than what he is told by the powers that be, whether political or cultural.

In addition to totalitarian leadership within the country, the Haitians are also subject to intense domination culturally and militarily by the continued American and United Nations presence in the country. Though there was a certain necessity for international aid, the shock of the American troops' invasion, their disruption of the natural scene in the streets of Port-au-Prince incites in the narrator a physical sense of shock and unease. In his mind, the soldier belongs in Beirut, Berlin or Panama, but not in Port-au-Prince; the intimacy of the American soldier shopping in the market in his fatigues seems too much for the narrator (*Pays* 186).

The overwhelming physical and cultural American presence in Haiti, though perhaps a political necessity, brings along with it the evils of an American culture and hegemony that are suffocating the traditional ways of the narrator's homeland. Beyond the degradation and decay that was a part of the Duvalier regime, which, while as a whole left a detrimental mark in the Haitian imaginary, still held to a Haiti for Haitians, full of tradition and honor for the native sons and religion, a newer system of degradation in the form of globalization, capitalism and Americanization is taking hold. The zombification that is a representative of the death of what the narrator sees as his homeland is hinted at very early in the novel. His mother tells him that his country has changed, and he acquiesces, but his mother further insists that he does not yet grasp the severity of the

change: "Pas comme tu crois. Ce pays a vraiment changé. Nous avons atteint le fond. Ce ne sont plus des humains. Ils en ont peut-être l'apparence, et là encore..." (Laferrière *Pays* 47). These walking dead, insists the mother, move about during the day and during the night, and eventually she explains to her son that they are surrounded by an army of zombies.

Soon after, the narrator once again becomes involved in a discussion of the zombies, this time with a shoe-shine in the streets. This conversation displays much more clearly the aesthetics of degradation present in the Laferrière novel. The shoe-shine explains that the majority of all those he sees walking and talking in the street have been dead for a long time and that Haiti, "Ce pays est devenu le plus grand cimetière du monde" (Laferrière *Pays* 56). The soldiers of the United Nations maintain a constant presence in the streets of Port-au-Prince, and their presence has in many ways robbed the Haitians of their lives. The people have become increasingly hopeless and disenchanted and less and less "Haitian" because of the globalizing influences, especially Americanization and capitalism.

This contempt for the American way becomes evident in the narrator's discussion with the renowned psychiatrist Doctor Legrand Bijou. The northern town of Bombardopolis becomes the subject of their discussion when the Doctor explains that the Americans, obsessed with the secret and the possession of "scientific" knowledge, are conducting top secret experiments on the inhabitants of the town who are said to be able to go without eating. The American capitalistic obsession with money and profit, present in Haiti through the powerful corporations, leads them to suggest the complete annihilation of this town and its people as their secret ability is a threat to the agriculture

200

and food industries (Laferrière *Pays* 97). Further, iterates the Doctor, "selon la CIA, la faim reste encore la plus puissante arme..." (97).

The narrator's subsequent interrogations in his quest to discover the meaning of the zombification of his homeland leads him to discuss the matter with the professor J.-B. Romain. The professor also underscores the American presence and their detrimental obsession with money. He displays his disgust with those in the *palais national*, the President, the military leaders and the Americans, who "croient pouvoir tout acheter avec leurs dollars. Mais l'argent ne peut pas tout résoudre. Ils ne connaissent que cette solution, eux" (Laferrière *Pays* 157).

Though the professor understands the threat that the American presence and ideals pose to his country, he knows that there is more at stake than just a question of business, commerce and money. The narrator noting that the professor "[a] l'air d'avoir beaucoup de soucis" sets the tone for the professor's biggest concern: the loss of the particularities of his country at the hands of capitalistic globalization. He questions: "Pourquoi ces Américains refusent-ils d'admettre que ce pays possède quelques dons particuliers, et qu'ils ne sont pas à vendre ? Nos rêves, nos passions, notre histoire, tout ceci n'est pas à vendre" (Laferrière *Pays* 157). The threat of atavism and neo-colonialism in Haiti is all the more menacing due to the largely insurmountable difference in two very dissimilar systems of thinking. All American involvement in Haiti points to an ethno-centric way of thinking that values the physical, the concrete and the monetary above all else. The narrator points out the influence that North American capitalism has had on him when he realizes he has just judged a man deemed by the locals, including his mother and aunt, a very powerful man by only his economic worth. He replies to his aunt, "En tout

201

cas, dis-je, il n'est pas bien riche malgré toute cette puissance..." but quickly realizes that "Ca se voit que j'ai vingt ans de capitalisme dans les veines" (Laferrière *Pays* 136).

Laferrière through his zombies shows that much of the "dons particuliers" have already been lost in the Haitian imaginary. Further, the Americanization of the country threatens to rob Haiti of her spirituality and her people's dreams. The zombies have already "had their vital power taken away" by having been deprived simultaneously of their "light and dream;" their eyes have become "without fire, without salt, without soul" (Lucas 63). Laferrière points out that the Westerners call the Haitians' "science de la nuit [...] dédaigneusement la superstition" (*Pays* 161). The Vodou that is "a religion specifically Haitian," and Haiti in turn "a nation specifically of Vodou," is the religious symbol of ethnic cohesion, the national faith[149], the "realization of national and racial awareness," and the "supreme factor of Haitian unity" (Johnson 431). Haiti stands to lose its spirituality at the hands of the Americans who, "Eux, ils sont intéressés par le voyage du corps," or simple physicality, while, explains M. Pierre to the narrator, "Nous, c'est l'espirit" (Laferrière *Pays* 114). The Western arrogance ignores and eliminates the local spirit because it sees itself as superior. Laferrière as narrator begins to understand that "les Occidentaux sont souvent très bornés. Bien sûr, ils se pensent plus intelligents, plus évolués que tout le monde" (*Pays* 114).

Though at first he repeats several times that it seems as though nothing has changed at home, the narrator is now beginning to internalize the reality of what is becoming of his country. The distinction between the *pays réel* and the *pays rêvé* that make up the dualistic structure of the novel is becoming more of a blurry line. The *pays*

---

[149] Though traditionally and officially the nation has been Catholic.

réel is now "la lutte pour la survie. Et le pays rêvé: tous les fantasmes du peuple le plus mégalomane de la planète" (Laferrière *Pays* 47). The clear-cut distinction between the dream and reality begins to change with Laferrière's shift in the structure of the novel. The alternating pattern shifts and there are two *pays rêvé* chapters in a row, with one written in the style of the *pays réel*, the "primitive" descriptive style described in the beginning (Laferrière *Pays* 84, 92). Early in the novel, the narrator and the mother treat each other as if nothing has changed, but as he becomes increasingly conscious of the changes in his home, his mother, himself and his people the gap between his imaginary and reality begins to close. Initially, the *pays réel* seemed dreamlike because that was the reality for the narrator, the reality that lived on in his memory from twenty years ago. All that has changed, the apparition of zombies and the loss of a national identity, seemed only to be a dream or a nightmare. The two are now merging together and the final three chapters of the novel, "Pays sans chapeau," "Pays reel/pays rêvé" and a return to "Un écrivain primitif," relate this mental shift on the part of the narrator.

In *Pays sans chapeau* through his nightmarish *pays rêvé*, we see Laferrière's struggles with and against domination that is the Americanization and Westernization brought on by globalization. Patrick Chamoiseau describes what he calls "three different phases of domination," from colonialist domination, to distant domination of Western countries after the independence of certain nations, to his third stage of "furtive domination" (139). He explains that "The electronic world, the Internet, and all the communication networks transmit Western values in a concentrated form, and we absorb them in the name of modernity, liberty, and progress" (140). The most damage, however, comes in the form of the silent and subversive changes that are made in the imaginary of

a people: "the battle against oppression and domination has moved into the realm of the imaginary. We're planed down, crushed, deadened by the dominant imaginary, without even realizing that we're being subjugated and transformed" (Chamoiseau et al. 140). In other words, or Laferrièrian/Haitian terms, the people have become zombified. Though early on his mother tells him, "Toi, tu n'es pas encore mort" (Laferrière *Pays* 103), by the end of the novel the narrator explains "Je suis maintenant dans le monde réel, et je ne vois aucune différence avec le monde rêvé" (264). He too has become a zombie, "Les dieux [l]'ont déçu," and he has seen the overwhelming force of Westernization crush a lot of what he and his compatriots once held dear.

Laferrière does not, however, end the novel on this note. He recognizes the threat that Americanization and globalization pose in his country, but in the way that he finishes *Pays sans chapeau* Laferrière proposes that there are alternatives to complete zombification. It is a dangerous line that his people are forced to walk because they risk losing a tradition and way of life that make them who they are. At the same time, nevertheless, the world is changing, and because of Relation it is impossible to remain impervious to the effects of these changes. The idea of creolization, as is presented by Glissant, as well as Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant and Jean Bernabé in their *Eloge de la créolité*, is a positive view point and alternative to zombification. No one denies the violence involved in the process of creolization. Glissant explains that the cultures of the world have been "mises en contact de manière foudroyante et absolument consciente aujourd'hui les unes avec les autres se changent en s'échangeant à travers des heurts irrémissibles, des guerres sans pitié" (*Introduction* 15). Chamoiseau et al. echo a similar sentiment, that "In two or three centuries, *Slap!* Three, four, five, six, or seven

different peoples, of different races, with different gods, different languages, were forced to create a future together in a contexts of extreme violence" (136). In a conversation with his dear friend Philippe, the narrator of *Pays sans chapeau* expresses how his native language is creole, but is as natural to him and those around him as any other native language is to any other people: "Déjà la langue... Là, on se parle en créole, et on ne sait même pas si on se parle en créole. On se parle tout simplement" (204). Such is créolité in the world. Everyone is creolized without realizing it. Writers like Glissant, Chamoiseau, Confiant, Bernabé, Condé and Laferrière seek to demonstrate this point both to those who already celebrate their *créolité* and to those who still cling, full of anguish, to their supposed pure roots.

Though *créolité* and diversity are important, Rafaël Confiant insists that "Diasporic discourse shouldn't override indigenous discourse. It should be a complementary vision" (Chamoiseau et al. 151). It is this type of complementary vision that Dany Laferrière is offering in *Pays sans chapeau*. He shows the severity of the threat posed by the spread of global capitalism through zombification, but also through zombification the aesthetics of degradation is put on display and includes the sort of decay that can happen through corrupt indigenous leaders like Duvalier. One must be careful to not lean too far one way or the other. Atavism and hegemony are dangerous no matter from which side they come. The neo-colonial influences from Euro-American globalization and the proliferation of their aesthetical images of the ideal are a threat, but so are the demands, whether Haitian, Martiniquais, Guadeloupian, etcetera, for a return to their own "pure roots."

The narrator's final conversation with the professor J.-B. Romain underscores the author's message of creolization above a perpetuated mythology of ethnocentrism. The narrator-admittedly disappointed by the gods of Vodou, confesses to the professor that he finds Catholicism superior to Vodou. The professor's retort recalling the horrors committed by the church in Haiti with the anti-superstition campaign of 1944 calls to mind the question of the root versus the rhizome. In the continuing threat to the Vodou and the Haitian reputation, the professor exclaims that "nous demandons à tous les fils d'Haïti de faire un effort supplémentaire pour remettre à l'honneur nos racines et nos dieux..." (Laferrière *Pays* 269). The immediate reaction of the narrator underscores the danger, no matter from which side it comes, of the insistence on *racines*, or roots, pure origins: "Je dois vous dire, professeur, que le mot *racines* d'où qu'il vienne me fait dresser les cheveux sur la tête" (Laferrière *Pays* 269). This directly begs the question: "Si on le fait pour nous, pourquoi on l'interdirait aux Allemands, alors?" (Laferrière *Pays* 269). The author is insisting here that there cannot be allowed a double standard, even for his own country despite the fact that the professor, perhaps correctly, points out that "Ce n'est pas la même chose" (Laferrière *Pays* 269).

The narrator remains insistent and retorts, "C'est la réponse classique, ça... Ce n'est jamais la même chose quand il s'agit de nous" (Laferrière *Pays* 269). The idea that one culture or *racine* should be stressed is just a way of redeploying an old idea of ethnocentric hegemony. Rather, as Helen Tiffin points out, postcolonial literatures reside in counter-discursive practices and offer strategies that go against dominant discourse. She insists that this is a dynamic and not static operation, "it does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but to […] evolve textual strategies which

continually 'consume' their '*own* biases' at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse" (Tiffin 18). Laferrière criticizes the dominant discourse without trying to replace it with an equally insufficient ideology: once again recalling the criticisms of Négritude, privileging one *racine* over another would banish "one construction of the self, the notion that the Antillean identity is constitutively European, only to usher in another, the idea that Antillean identity is essentially" something else (Chamoiseau et al. 128). Both of these approaches, or "mirages" because they are both mythical constructions of identity, "repress the mélange of Creole culture, its open-minded, 'multiple' identity: an identity imagined not as 'roots' but 'rhizomes'" (Chamoiseau et al. 128). The professor, seeking to return their roots and gods to a place of honor presumably in a manner that would be exclusive to alternatives, is ironically ignoring the tradition of welcoming and embracing diversity established in his own country by the hero of Haitian independence, Toussaint l'Ouverture.[150]

In *Pays sans chapeau*, through eliminating the borders between the *réel* and the *rêvé*, and between the living and the dead, Laferrière is deconstructing nationalist myth and eliminating the borders to which the modern world tends to cling. The insistence on a creolized type of identity eliminates the traditional borders between nations, for him the borders between the Caribbean, the United States and Québec/Canada. Further, his partially fictionalized and metaphorical "Autobiographie américaine" dissolves the imposing limitations that the West tends to place on literary genre. The seemingly contradictory nature of certain fictional elements of *Pays sans chapeau,* zombification versus the acceptance of "outside" influences, or the eventual merging of the *pays réel*

---

[150] Rafaël Confiant points out that Toussaint l'Ouverture did not make Haitian identity exlusively an identity of color and "gave Haitian citizenship to white people with blue eyes" (Chamoiseau et al. 153).

and the *pays rêvé*, for example, underscores Laferrière's insistence against a Manichean view of reality and identity. Finally, a creolized perspective of identity eliminates the possibility of racial essentialism and racial myth, a topic that Laferrière treats much more aggressively in *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*. As with many things, perspective and perception compose one's reality and worldview. Laferrière's openness of perspective is informed by his experiences as an outsider, first to North America, but also as someone who was long exiled from his country and then returned. One may question whether his insistence on diasporic discourse, or rather the critic's insistence on the diasporic discourse present in his work, overrides or discourages the indigenous discourse of Haiti, to the chagrin of the Confiants in the world. Certainly a valid question, however, it is due to the spreading out of cultures and peoples through out the world that questions of *créolité* and mosaic identity arise, and these are important questions that must be treated and answered.

 Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer is Dany Laferrière's first novel, published in 1985, nine years after he left Haiti. The time spent in Montreal before his family came to join him and before he published his first novel was an "Epoque de la drague, du vin, des repas simples, du salaire minimum et des chambres crasseuses et ensoleilées" (Laferrière *Pays* 169). For any one who has read *Comment conquérir l'Amérique en une nuit*, or seen the film, we can imagine both the young Laferrière full of dreams, or more precisely the American dream, in the character of Gégé and also the Laferrière of *Pays sans chapeau*, in the character of Fanfan. The latter, having recognized the mythological aspect of this American dream, is much more ambivalent towards his existence in North America. *Comment faire l'amour* is Laferrière's connection between

the two, the beginning of his "Autobiographie américaine." It is the story of a young Haitian man having arrived in Montreal ready to take on the metropolitan world and become a great writer.

Rather than meeting with an open and welcoming society that would afford him the opportunities to take part in the American dream and fulfill his own dreams, the young Laferrière abruptly encountered a North American racism all too prevalent in the societies with a predominantly white, European, Christian heritage and additionally the strong backlash against immigrants from countries considered less "evolved" or Western. Things can be very difficult for the immigrants to Montreal, one study pointing out that immigrants to Montreal have some of the highest poverty rates in all of Canada (Kazemipur and Halli 1142). The gaze is of central importance in how the immigrant Other, in this case the Black man, is treated in white, metropolitan areas. In *Comment faire l'amour* Laferrière describes his existence in Montreal as an immigrant who becomes the object of the gaze of those around him and who is all too often the subject of the many stereotypes and myths that target black men.

The experiences of Dany Laferrière and those of Frantz Fanon that incited him to write his essay *Peau noire, masques blancs* revolve similarly around their first encounters of metropolitan racism outside of their native Caribbean islands. Drawing from the many similarities in their experiences and in their writings, I read Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour* as a modern version of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, not homogenizing their experiences, but, rather, demonstrating the Western tendency towards imposing the framework of its imaginary on the Other, based on physical difference, and thus subjecting them to racial myths.

A young Fanon growing up in Martinique became politically engaged early on in life and fought against the Nazi forces as a member of the French army. After the war he was educated in France following a short return to Martinique. Fanon, a psychiatrist, focused on the significant role played by culture in psychiatry. Though Fanon had been raised and educated to believe himself just as French as any other, his experiences in the army and in France would prove to him how much he was viewed as an outsider, irrespective of his previous service and dedication to the *mère-patrie*. His collection of essays, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, are his reflections on this situation and the alienation caused by colonization in those who are raised to desire nothing other than to be French, but who because of their "race" are, like Ourika, excluded from the Revolutionary myth of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

Similarly to how Fanon left Martinique for the *métropole* in search of the Revolutionary myth, Laferrière, forced out of his own country, went to North America in pursuit of the "American Dream." Montreal the French-speaking metropolis of North America should have afforded him the opportunities to succeed; rather, Laferrière found himself subjected to the heavy North American racism that has plagued it for so long. Though Québec is itself a post-colonial society, coping with their own identity crises, it is also a place that has much in common with France, not necessarily because of their history, but because of their "race." Being a predominantly white society with European heritage, Québec has not had to struggle against the evolutionary paradigm that has plagued so many non-white societies forced to live in a world where white, Western countries have forcefully proliferated their aesthetics for centuries. The mid-century

France encountered by Fanon and the Montreal of the 70's and 80's into which Laferrière moved were both dominated by the *regard blanc*.

Also largely affecting the situations into which both Fanon and Laferrière immigrated is the question of colonization, both in their native lands and their chosen homes. All four places, Martinique, France, Haiti and Québec, have very different colonial histories. I have already discussed at length the colonial history of France as an imperial power and Martinique (or the Antilles as a group) as a land that has gone from colonial property to a departmentalized French island. Haiti, however, has a very different colonial history from the other French Caribbean islands. Though Haiti has been an independent nation since 1804, this independence has endured much governmental tumult, many violent coups and foreign occupations. External militarized influence and exertion of power, as we saw in *Pays sans chapeau*, has posed a continuous threat to Haiti's autonomy and has acted in many ways as a neo-colonial power. Some American corporations, for example, have indirectly, or perhaps more directly than is publicly admitted, supported much of the political and militia violence in order to secure for themselves low-cost labor.[151]

Québec, on the other hand, was a French territory until the mid eighteenth century when France ceded it over to Great Britain, though certain concessions on the part of the British allowed Québec to maintain linguistic and cultural independence despite a heavy British policy of assimilation. Like many other post-colonial francophone societies, Québec has remained in a constant struggle for cultural independence from the former

---

[151] See the film "Aristide and the Endless Revolution" directed by Nicolas Rossier, 2005. It is a documentary that exposes the American interference, based largely on capitalistic and corporate influence, in Haiti's democratic process.

colonial power, but they also remain under constant attack from anglo influences, be it Canadian or American. The Québécois are often stereotyped as French despite the fact that they have not been under French rule since the eighteenth century. This gives them a double faceted enemy against which they must fight for cultural independence. They are neither Canadian nor European or French; they are Québécois.

Comparatively, however, though much of their history is similar, especially the increased temporal distance between being a colony of France and their current state of independence, the fates of Haiti and Québec have played out very differently, which begs the question of what is the source of this difference. Why has one been able to gain symbolic independence and autonomy through Quiet Revolution and the other remains a land of foreign interference and destruction? Rather than being supported, Haiti has been occupied, exploited, disrupted and puppeted. This is not an easy question to answer, and I do not plan to attempt to do so. I wish only to point out that the Québec into which Laferrière moved had much more in common with the *métropole* of Paris than the capital city of Haiti. Because of its European heritage and perhaps the predominantly white population, the colonial/post-colonial aspect of Québec is often forgotten and it is wrapped up in an American/Canadian/European superiority that subjects many of the immigrant Others, those who by physical difference can be determined to be immigrant, to the white, post-European gaze.

Dany Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* exploits and criticizes this white gaze in a comedic and sarcastic style, all while being no less critical than Fanon. Additionally, Laferrière's novel is not organized in a traditional sense; it is a continuous stream of encounters and reflections. Both men were incited to

write based on their initial encounters with metropolitan and a somewhat colonial racism, but the principal differences that exist between their works and their style are a reflection of their own professions: Fanon the doctor and academic and Laferrière, at the time, a young journalist and would be novelist. Despite the differences in the men and in the works, the important message that both seek to get across is that of an anti-essentialist view of the Black man that debunks the mythical notions that tend to define the Other in a predominantly white society, most of which are a throwback to colonial perceptions of race and otherness. Both Fanon and Laferrière found themselves to be subjected to the white gaze of their host societies, and thus subject to all of the myths and stereotypes that pretend to define them.

How the Black man is seen in many ways determines who he is; though it may not change him, the reactions of all those around him determine his place in society and, in turn, limit his choices of action and being. As I pointed out earlier, the tradition according to the Code Noir saw the black man as a piece of moveable property. Laferrière cites this article in the Code Noir before the first chapter of *Comment faire l'amour* signaling to the reader already the important role played by tradition and perception of the Black man in the sur-determination of his being; as Fanon writes "Je suis sur-déterminé de l'extérieur," he is a slave of his appearance (Fanon 93).

As an immigrant and as a black man in Montreal, Laferrière finds himself the target of the gaze of those around him. This gaze is not by any means an innocent gaze as it is loaded with many decades of myth and stereotype that define the narrator according to their own history and experience rather than according to who he is. What seemed to him to be a simple conversation while waiting in line at the post office was seen by all of

those around him as "le Nègre en train d'agresser la Blanche" (Laferrière *Comment* 56).

When the woman, whom he describes as a "surdraguée" who "en a marre," forcefully

asks him to leave her alone, the majority of the people in line "se retournent pour *voir* le

Nègre [...]" (Laferrière *Comment* 56).[152] Because of their preconceived notions about the

black man, in their gaze the narrator becomes something outside of his control. His

actions are converted, perverted even, into a stereotyped role. This manifestation of

racialized sexuality[153] according to Coleman mythologizes the black man as a sexual

predator, a mythology that was created in order to move the focus away from the white

slave owners' transgressions with their female slaves: "the red-herring story of the black

rapist's lust for the white virgin deflects attention away from the hidden deeds of the

white master rapist" (59). Instead of being the politically engaged journalist, aspiring

writer and literary connoisseur that we know him to be, in the eyes of those around him in

the post office his skin color labels him as several different things. Firstly, he is not a

man, but a black man, a Negro. Because he is a black man, he is not a person speaking to

another person that is in line next to him. Instead he is seen as a black aggressor preying

on the white woman next to him.

We see in this situation how the eye is a source, as Foucault described it. The

notions about the author do not originate from his skin color, but rather, they originate

from the observation, via the eye, of his skin color. His skin color marks him as being of

a race that has certain qualities known commonly by the white observers in the symbolic

---

[152] Emphasis mine.

[153] On racialized sexuality see Abdul R. JanMohamed's "Sexuality on/of the Racial Border: Foucault, Wright, and the Articulation of 'Racialized Sexuality'" in *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS* (94-116).

framework of this particular Western society. We recall that Fanon points out, "la couleur est le signe extérieur le mieux visible de la race" (*Peau* 95), and because of this, it is also "le critère sous l'angle duquel on juge les hommes sans tenir compte de leurs acquis éducatifs". The important role assigned to colors, even colors that do not really exist in human pigmentation such as yellow and red, by Western, white society is highlighted by Laferrière in *Comment faire l'amour*. Each color takes its turn as the favorite of the whites depending on the fad of the day or the fancy of the moment. For a while the black men were on top of the sexual totem pole, but now they have ceded to the Japanese. He underscores the frivolous nature of the white desires by calling this the "casino de la baise [...] ROUGE, NOIR, JAUNE. NOIR, JAUNE, ROUGE. JAUNE, ROUGE, NOIR. La roue du temps occidental" (Laferrière *Comment* 20).

The idea of the power behind the gaze, whether it be white on black or otherwise, makes the narrator uncomfortable. Because he has felt the discrimination and judgment that have been thrust upon him, and also because he knows how he himself looks at some of the whites around him, Laferrière is keenly aware of all that is wrapped up in the gaze. While musing what it would be like to be white, the narrator expresses that he would know what was being thought when he saw the blacks in the streets looking at the whites and that "Je n'aimerais surtout pas que quelqu'un me regarde avec une telle convoitise dans les yeux" (Laferrière *Comment* 79). The sad fact remains, though, that he is subject to much worse on a daily basis in the unconscious gazes of those in the society that surround him. Though their looks may not contain willful thoughts of harm, they do contain a centuries old racism that otherizes and inferiorizes the blacks.

It is precisely this power that is in the gaze, the power to define and its surreptitious nature, that makes it such an enduring threat to those who find themselves the targets of this look. That which is behind the eye, physically in the actual memory and consciousness in the brain and also figuratively, such as collective memory, culture, *régimes de vérité* and all other invisible but powerful outside influences, transforms the gaze from a simple act of observing into an act of defining and judgment. Ultimately, the gaze not only makes the minority an object, but submits the minority to the myths and stereotypes that are prevalent about him. Rather than existing as an independent agent, the minority Other is inserted in to a place deemed appropriate for him, whether it be "Black," "immigrant," "Mexican," "low class," "poor," "tax-burden," "lazy," etcetera. This list can continue on indefinitely because these definitions are arbitrary, opportunistic and vary by time and place according to the needs of one dominant group. If a nation needs an excuse to keep others out, they will call them immigrants and tax-burdens, perhaps even with a propensity for homelessness, unemployment and poverty. If a family is looking for a reason to keep their children from dating or marrying someone whom they deem too different, they will tell them that they should not mix "races," that it is wrong and/or unnatural, when the truth is that we are all of a mixed biological composition. It is against such myth that Laferrière fights in *Comment faire l'amour*. He explores the various myths about the black man and shows how ridiculous and laughable they can be, though certainly not innocuous or without greater significance.

The exploration and exploitation of myth by Dany Laferrière in *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* begins with the title. Already from the cover of the book he is signaling the myth of the black man's sexual prowess. Believed to be

physically well-endowed and of sexual talents and appetites that are greater than average, one is likely to wear oneself out making love to the mythologically hyper-sexed black man. Laferrière points out, however, that behind this myth hides the perpetuating cycle of white hierarchy that places the white man above the black man, all sexual relations being unequal: "LA BLANCHE DOIT FAIRE JOUIR LE BLANC, ET LE NÈGRE, LA BLANCHE. D'où le mythe du Nègre grand baiseur" (*Comment* 48). Additionally, this signals an exoticized view of the black man, similar to what we saw in Condé's *Moi, Tituba sorcière...*

The exoticized black man is part of the myth of the primitive nature of blacks. A throwback to the evolutionary hierarchy, the myth of their supposed primitive nature places them in a lower evolutionary place making the black person primitive and sometimes even portrayed as cute, innocent and naïve, as was the case with Ourika being made to dress *à l'orientale* and dance native African dances for the friends of Mme de B. Laferrière mentions in *Comment faire l'amour...* the perception that many whites had of him as the "nègre baroque" because of his different opinions on literature. His differing point of view is seen as a bizarre novelty for a Negro rather than a valid point of view. Laferrière remarks also that the ambiance in his apartment with his roommate is baroque because it contained "Deux Nègres [...] en train de philosopher à perdre haleine à propos de la Beauté, au petit matin" (*Comment* 35). He calls this scene "le DEJEUNER DES PRIMITIFS" (*Comment* 35). The narrator is so keenly aware of this perception of him because of the constant looks and questions he receives due to his color. Often asked where he comes from, he answers this "National Geographic" question with a different country each time. His responses, whether about where he comes from or what he does,

217

are double edged sword. If he responds intelligently he is the "nègre baroque," but if he remains silent he confirms in the eyes of his interlocutor that "Bon, ce Nègre est un demeuré," which they had likely already assumed (Laferrière *Comment* 113).

Beyond the primitive Negro, we also see many examples in *Comment faire l'amour* of the supposed savage, animal nature of the Black man. Once again stemming from the evolutionary hierarchy that makes the black man closer to apes than to white men, they are supposedly of a more savage nature. While in the nineteenth century this tended to a more animalistic interpretation, in the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries this has had more of a criminal interpretation with the black man being feared as an aggressor on city streets. As we already saw with the incident in the post office, our narrator is often looked upon with a suspicious eye. He references the "mythe du Nègre animal, primitive, barbare, qui ne pense qu'à baiser" (Laferrière *Comment* 48) and the complaints that they are "*tous* des maniaques, des psychopathes et des emmerdeurs"[154] (56). The combination of these myths, the hyper-sexual, primitive and savage black man, conforms to the eroticized fantasies and fears of the white, anglo-saxon protestants encountered by the narrator. Sleeping with the black man according to the Occident is a "territoire inconnu. Attention: DANGER" (Laferrière *Comment* 83). The young, white women risk going to sleep next to a black man and waking up "sous un baobob, en pleine brousse, à discuter des affaires du clan avec les femmes du village" (Laferrière *Comment* 83).

---

[154] Emphasis mine. Hyperbolic use of the adverb *tous* is a key part in myth and stereotype because it takes a very heterogeneous group of people and homogenizes them into one group with supposed common characteristics. In *Comment faire l'amour* Laferrière writes, "On dit 'les Noirs'. C'est une espèce. Il n'y a pas d'individus" (156).

Remnants of the civilizing mission continue to affect the Judeo-Christian imaginary and play a large role in the formation of myths about the black man. In order to provide justification for slavery and colonization the pretended beneficiaries were the natives of the various colonized countries or the slaves that were transported there. As an intellectual, the narrator is constantly aware of himself being *seen* as a surprisingly intelligent black man. With seething sarcasm, Laferrière underscores the ridiculous nature of these absurd ideas that some how black humans are less capable and less likely to be educated: "un Nègre qui lit, c'est le triomphe de la civilisation judéo-chrétienne ! La preuve que les sanglantes croisades ont eu, finalement, un sens. C'est vrai, l'Occident a pillé l'Afrique, mais ce NEGRE EST EN TRAIN DE LIRE" (*Comment* 42). These justifications have allowed the West to ignore and forget the evils that they have done to other peoples. It is because of this that they can continue to proliferate the image of a bountiful and welcoming society while still seeing themselves as superior and while remaining racist, whether unconsciously or consciously.

The American dream after which so many of his young compatriots have come to North America chasing, turns out to be no more than myth itself as many return home broken, disenchanted and in despair. The Judeo-Christian propagandist myth that calls the black man primitive and "TROP NAIF POUR MENTIR," tarnishes the American dream, and, rather than allowing the minorities their promised chance at success, breaks them and sends them home. The narrator writes that he "pense à mon village au bout du monde. A tous les Nègres partis pour la richesse chez les Blancs et qui sont revenus bredouilles" (Laferrière *Comment* 48). They are not afforded the same opportunities because they continue to be seen by the white societies as being fundamentally and

essentially different because they are black. Though there is no good science to support this, many whites continue to believe in a profound difference that perpetuates racializing and racist myth. With his pseudo-girlfriend, the narrator claims that he could tell her any crazy story and that she would believe it, that her culture has taught her to believe what she is told and that about the black man he could "lui dire que je mange de la chair humaine, que quelque part dans mon code génétique se trouve inscrite ce désir de manger de la chair blanche, que mes nuits sont hantées par ses seins , ses hanches, ses cuisses, vraiment, je le jure, je peux lui dire ça et elle comprendra. D'abord, elle me croira" (Laferrière *Comment* 31).[155]

Laferrière's use of myth and stereotype allows him to combat the popular perceptions about the black man amongst those in white society. Though repetition of myths and stereotypes poses a certain amount of danger, Laferrière's form of resistance against them, whether it be repetition in order to ridicule or sarcasm, hopefully accomplishes its goal of, firstly, making those who may unconsciously perpetuate myth aware of its constructed nature and secondly, of helping to deconstruct and destroy the cycle that perpetuates myth and stereotype in society.

Of the various strategies available in the fight against the stereotypes that compose myth, reappropriation can be deployed as a very powerful tool, as we see in *Comment faire l'amour*. Instead of trying to rewrite stereotypes, Rosello suggests that reappropriation offers a better form of resistance. Trying to rewrite a stereotype creates another construction or posits an exception to the stereotype which itself reinforces the so-called rule. For Laferrière to oppose the "mythe du nègre grand baiseur" by saying

---

[155] The reference to his genetic code underscores the continued belief amongst a large part of the public that there are different races and that these races are biologically and fundamentally different.

that "les nègres ne sont pas de grands baiseurs," he would be both creating a new stereotype, that black men are not "grands baiseurs," and would also be reinforcing the grouping together of black men in a homogenizing fashion. Instead, reappropriation in humorous ways is, as Rosello describes it, adding oil to the fire (64). Putting out a fire leaves the fire still under control: it can (and will be) reignited by those who believe in its warmth and necessity. Contrarily, throwing fuel on a fire makes it burn wildly and out of the control of those who pretended to master it.

In addition to the narrator, we see several of the characters in *Comment faire l'amour...* who participate in the reappropriation of the exoticist and fetichist stereotypes about black people and culture. They too have learned to ridicule and play within the system in order to exploit it. This subversive repetition allows them to make fools of those who ignorantly indulge in the repetition and perpetuation of the "Nègre *National Geographic*" and at the same time get what they want for themselves. The narrator overhears two black men talking in a club, one telling the other that the white girls "sont ici pour voir du Nègre" and that "il faut donc leur donner du Nègre" (Laferrière *Comment* 128). The narrator then recounts what he sees on the dance floor: "Corps huilés. Bois d'ébène, 18 carats. Dents d'ivoire. Musique reggae [...] Un couple Nègre/Blanche en train de copuler, presque, sur la piste" (Laferrière *Comment* 128). Those who have been subjected to the stereotyping have learned to steal away these stereotypes in order to make them work for themselves. Knowing that they cannot be eliminated simply by fighting against them directly, they take advantage of these "BLANCHES COLONISEES" (Laferrière *Comment* 101) that have become groupies of their

sensationalized and homogenized ideas of black culture during this time of "la Grande Passe Nègre" (17).

As I have already discussed, and as Dyer explains, the role of stereotypes is to maintain boundaries and limits between those who see themselves in the center and those whom they classify as being peripheral. Their tight grip on these stereotypes that define their world and make them safe cannot be loosed by simply telling them they are wrong; myth is too deeply ingrained in their memory. Rather, suggests Rosello, those who reappropriate stereotypes and myth steal what made this old system function smoothly and use it for laughter and derision (64). The humorous aspect of Laferrière's *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* makes it no less powerful of a statement against white cultural myth about the black man. By getting to know the narrator intimately through his writing and thoughts, he is seen as a man, as a human and not as "the black man." From this point, the reader is able to see how ridiculous and inconsistent with reality myth and stereotype can be. As Rosello reiterates, it is impossible to escape the onslaught of the many stereotypes that are taught and reinforced by dominant culture and its institutions, but knowing what they are and how they work can allow for their reappropriation (64). Once Laferrière reappropriates these myths, he is able to deconstruct them and make them crumble from the inside.

As Rosello insists that "it is impossible not to be traversed by the flow of stereotypes" (64), Dany Laferrière adds that "En Amérique, on rencontre des mythes à chaque coin de rue" (Gagnon). As his first entry in his "Autobiographie américaine," *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer* examines the *décalage* between the American dream, symbolized by the tall blonde, and the reality of North American

divisions and racisms. The boundaries and delimitations that are protected by stereotypes

are scrutinized by Laferrière in his account of the white gaze upon him, as he is seen as a

black man before anything else. The narrator tells his pseudo-girlfriend that he wants to

become rich and famous as a writer, to which she replies "Donc, tu veux devinir le

meilleur écrivain nègre ?" (Laferrière *Comment* 95). The narrator cannot get away from

this categorization; even in his dreams of success and the success he actually attains at

the conclusion of the novel he is classified each time as an "écrivain noir" rather than

simply as a writer (Laferrière *Comment* 148, 153).

Just as the narrator of *Comment faire l'amour...* is never mentioned as a "writer"

but rather a "black writer," rarely is Dany Laferrière talked about without the tagline of

migrant or foreign. It is precisely against these labels, that lead to stereotyping,

homogenization and construct the framework for the prevalent cultural myths that govern

society, that Dany Laferrière fights. He explains that "Les gens veulent tellement vous

entrer dans différentes catégories [...] Dans mes livres, on scrute à la loupe tout ce qui

vient d'Haïti, et c'est ça qui est extraordinaire, tandis que le reste..." (Chouinard).This

tendency towards labeling and classifying everyone that leads to an explicit otherization

of anyone seen to be "different" by the majority culture of a society is a real battle faced

constantly by Laferrière and many of the other migrant authors of Québec. In an article

entitled "Ecrivains d'ailleurs ou écrivains tout court," Marie-Andrée Chouinard of *Le

Devoir* in Montreal questions the legitimacy of labeling a writer as being a migrant author

rather than just an author, mentioning that "Il n'est pas question ces jours derniers de [...]

Dany Laferrière [amongst others] sans que ne soit mentionné Haïti." Such scrutiny, such

quests with preconceived answers or at least particular directions, do nothing to debunk

myth. Rather, they reinforce myth and stereotype and add layers of construction to their development. The "Black man" as the North American imaginary, or the French imaginary in the time of Fanon, sees him does not exist. The "types"[156] that are described in Laferrière's novel are inventions, la Blanche as well as le Nègre. He explains "Du point de vue humain, le Nègre et la Blanche n'existent pas. D'ailleurs, Chester Himes dit que ces deux-là sont une invention de l'Amérique au même titre que le hamburger et la moutarde sèche" (*Comment* 153).[157] The narrator explains that this novel is his personal version of Chester Himes' statement. Reiterating Frantz Fanon's declaration that "l'âme noire est une construction du Blanc" (*Peau* 11), Laferrière concludes *Comment faire l'amour...* with a short chapter entitled "On ne naît pas Nègre, on le devient" (163).[158] Laferrière's many allusions within his novel and the fact that his narrator is himself a writer, creating a work of fiction is of no small importance in Laferrière's strategy of dismantling stereotype. This metafiction[159] and his many allusions draw attention to the importance of text, textuality and discourse, the tools with which much of existent stereotype and myth were built. By becoming a successful author within the novel, Laferrière "highlight[s] his role as a creator taking control of the discourses that seek to

---

[156] The use by both Laferrière and Zola of "types" in their novels makes for an interesting comparison. Both use types rather than particularized individuals to populate their novels, preferring to make social commentary or observations in this way. In Zola we see the alcoholic, the prostitute, the Jew, the proletarian, for example, and in Laferrière we see the *Blanche*, the Black man, the intellectual, the racist, and so on. However, while both authors employ the use of types, in Zola's works we see reinforcement of the types' inherent characteristics and the spaces between types, while Laferrière exploits his types in order to ridicule and subsequently dissolve these delineations.

[157] Chester Himes was a famous twentieth-century African American novelist who decided to settle in France and was very popularly received there in literature.

[158] A clear allusion to Simone de Beauvoir's statement in *Le deuxième sexe* that "On ne nait pas femme on le devient."

[159] That is, a fiction within a fiction--*Comment faire l'amour...* is a fiction written by a migrant author about a migrant author writing a fiction.

constrain him" (Ireland 73). Susan Ireland suggests that Laferrière's metafictional dimension "is used primarily to emphasize the constructed nature of stereotyping discourses" (68). Laferrière's exploitation of writing and his many references to other texts throughout the novel highlight the extent to which text and discourse have served to create the image of what one perceives the black man to be. Ireland affirms that through this emphasis on writing and text Laferrière is seeking to "draw attention to the constructed nature of black identity and to the possibility of rewriting it" (71). Our knowledge of the past, according to Ireland, is inevitably linked to textuality, and by keeping the focus on colonial discourse in its many forms Laferrière is able to remind his reader "that these 'texts' could have been written differently" (71) and that there exists "the possibility of creating a new text" (72).

Through his reappropriation of the *mythe negre* Laferrière adds his own fuel to the fire in an effort to destroy the constructed texts of the past that created and reinforced racialized and racist discourse. Sadly, there is no controlling myth, but by making the foundation of the myth rage out of control, he may just be able to make it crumble into a pile of ridiculous notions that are now recognizable as the rubble that they are. Laferrière approaches the question of racist myth with thick humor, all the while assuring that his message remains clear: "l'être humain, même noir (surtout), est fait de chair, de sang, de muscles et de pisse" (*Comment* 138). Everyone's experience is different and everyone is different, but, like Tituba, Laferrière's narrator highlights that there is also a human element that makes us all citizens of a *tout-monde*; everyone thirsts, for basic needs, for a chance to thrive, to chase one's dreams. The narrator of *Comment faire l'amour...* exclaims, "merde, j'ai soif, moi aussi, d'une vie décente. J'ai soif. Les Dieux ont soif. Les

225

Femmes ont soif. Ben, pourquoi pas les Nègres ? LES NEGRES ONT SOIF" (160). It is

on this human experience as a citizen of the world and of humanity that Laferrière wishes

to dwell, for himself and for his reader. He explains "Les chemins sont tout tracés pour

vous définir, alors que le choc culturel dont on voudrait m'entendre parler, ce n'est pas en

quittant Port-au-Prince que je l'ai vécu, c'est en sortant de l'enfance !" (Chouinard).

Laferrière addresses the question of race first by seeking to ridicule and thus dissolve

racist myth and stereotype, then by insisting on the human experience, the commonality

of what we all live. Despite how different this experience may be for each individual,

Laferrière challenges his readers to consider him and everyone else as a fellow-

countrymen and women in the *tout-monde* and not as a black man, the latter being merely

a figment of Western constructed myth and imaginary.

CONCLUSION

From the racial essentialisms of colonial times, we have moved to the creolized subject of the twenty-first century, where, ideally, the hierarchy of the gaze has dissipated and lost much of its strength. Authors like Dany Laferrière and Maryse Condé show us that there is no one "race," no pure set of roots, and Glissant claims that this is because the world is creolizing. We all hold many preconceived notions, prejudices, stereotypes and myths. Through projects like this, and the never-ending efforts of dedicated writers, however, we can bring those underlying myths to the surface and dispel them. There are no pure races or original cultures; these are constructions of Western society. Rather, all societies stand in a situation of cultural diversity to varying degrees. Some would argue, and I would agree, though it may not be as obvious or acceptable as the idea of cultural diversity, that everyone is in some way a *métis* [creolized]: an identity that was marginalized, feared and even blamed for degeneration in the nineteenth century. Embracing rather than fearing or resisting cultural diversity, and to a certain extent *métissage*, is central to Glissant's creolization. *La racine unique* would be erased, and one would be called to examine the constructions of his or her memory, to let go of myths and to unload the gaze, in short, to be citizens of the *tout-monde*.

Yet, there is no consensus on the idea of the *tout-monde*. Laferrière is open to transculturality and the *identité-monde*, but there are also socio-economical issues, the

cultural domination brought on by globalization and lingering racisms, classism, sexism, etcetera. Also, the specters of history, such as Western hegemony, colonization and dictatorship, are still powerful. This situation is not unique to Laferrière's homeland of Haiti; in *Pour une littérature-monde* Laferrière also underscores the remnants of colonialism, the pitfalls of decolonization, globalization, and ensuing violence in other places such as Tchad, independent since 1960, but still war-torn and full of "enfants de guerre," young soldiers that have grown up knowing nothing other than war (93). Though colonization is chronologically a thing of the past for many independent nations, its aftermath remains, from civil war and corruption in terms of physical manifestations to lingering internalized aesthetics and a feeling of being eternally colonized. A common point of contention is the continued use of the "colonizer's" language. However, even the word choice and construction of this sentence are worth attacking, as language belongs to no nation.

In March of 2007 forty-four French language authors published in *Le Monde* their manifesto "Pour une 'littérature-monde' en français" declaring their independence and the independence of the French language from the center, the Hexagone herself. They called this movement a "révolution copernicienne" for now the center, "ce point depuis lequel était supposée rayonner une littérature franco-française n'est plus le centre" (Le Bris et al.). All of the great literature prizes the preceding autumn had been awarded to authors from outside of France, thus signaling this decentralization. The manifesto proclaims: "le centre, nous disent les prix d'automne, est désormais partout, aux quatre coins du monde," and further, "que le pacte colonial se trouve brisé, que la langue délivrée devient l'affaire de tous" (Le Bris et al.). In the subsequent collection of essays

published under the same title Laferrière explains in his contribution that he "voyage en français" ("Je voyage" 87). Laferrière writes that he has lost too much time commenting and explaining the fact that he writes in French and debating whether it is his "native language." For Laferrière, "tout cela me paraît aujourd'hui assez théorique, et même un brin ridicule" ("Je voyage" 87). Now, he explains, the French language has infiltrated his neurons and "son chant rythme [son] sang" ("Je voyage" 87). He claims that, in the past, that is something he would have never admitted for fear of discovering a colonized man within himself. However, contends Laferrière, "le colonisé, je peux le dire, c'est celui qui ne se voit ni ne s'entend. Il se nourrit de mensonges. Sa vie est une fiction" ("Je voyage" 87). There is nothing about the language that reincorporates him into the realm of the colonized, and, more importantly, exterior forces cannot accomplish this end either. By laying claim to his own identity, Laferrière calls into question the *totalité-monde* and refuses labels imposed upon him.

So, in the end, what is Laferrière's vision of identity? He seems to approach his own sense of identity from a position of strength and security, though that is not to say he sees his identity as stable or unwavering. Laferrière's two most recent publications, *L'énigme du retour* and *Tout bouge autour de moi* present two seemingly contradictory notions of his own sense of national belonging and/or "home." As the title suggests, *L'énigme du retour* underscores the feeling of the *impossible retour*; however, it is here complicated by the death of his father who himself was an enigmatic figure throughout Laferrière's life due to his exile. While in *L'énigme du retour* Laferrière expresses a lack of belonging, his book about his experience of the 2010 earthquake, *Tout bouge autour de moi*, gives a feeling of a very concrete sense of belonging. Through a style that evokes

his *écrivain primitif* in *Pays sans chapeau* Laferrière relates his experience in images, flashes from the ground in Port-au-Prince where he, no less Haitian, lived this catastrophe with his compatriots. Does this shift in perspective signal a shift in how Laferrière would define identity in general or his identity in particular? I would argue no. The myth of an unchanging, stable identity is precisely that against which the narrator of *Comment faire l'amour...* argues. Identity is not unshakable or immune to evolution. Defining identity is not easy and will never be. It is for this reason that authors like Laferrière refuse to entertain notions of a fixed identity, whether for himself or for anyone. In *Tout bouge autour de moi* Laferrière lambastes those who would insist in the wake of the earthquake on Haiti being a cursed nation, for this does nothing other than reiterate the notion that this country whose slaves fought and won a bloody battle for independence from the European colonists deserves to forever suffer for breaking the so-called natural order of white and western superiority. It is a myth that many who use it today repeat without being aware of its historical implications, implying that, as Laferrière ironically puts it, "Pour s'attirer autant de malheurs on doit avoir commis quelque crime" (*Tout bouge* 77).

The long history of the West turning its back on Haiti, initially as punishment then continued through a sense of superiority and entitlement, finally ended according to Laferrière last year. All eyes were recently turned towards Haiti again in early 2010 with the earthquake that struck in January, at which point Laferrière claims "Haïti a enfin touché le coeur du monde occidental" (*Tout bouge* 117). While sensitive to the outpouring of emotion and desire to help, Laferrière contends that the problems of this small country to whom "L'Europe comme l'Amérique [en effet l'Occident] lui ont tourné le dos" (*Tout bouge* 110) cannot be solved in one fell swoop: "Le seul reproche

possible, c'est qu'on semble dire que si on résout ce problème, tous les autres -- le racisme, les inégalités sociales, le sexisme, les exclusions en tous genres -- tomberont d'eux-mêmes. Rien de plus faux" (118). Though fighting for and embodying in many ways a notion of a creolizing identity,[160] Laferrière remains fully aware of the reality of oppression, poverty and prejudice. Here, I would like to return for a moment to Laferrière's assertion that the colonized is one who remains ignored or erased, "celui qui ne se voit ni ne s'entend." I would argue that Laferrière would not consider the Haitians, whom he claims have been invisible to the West for over two hundred years a colonized people either. While their voices have been muffled, muted even, they have been a resilient people who have persisted through centuries of violence, *coups d'états*, hurricane after hurricane, vicious dictatorships, and now an earthquake.[161] Though the West may have ignored them, may continue to ignore them, they are not without a voice, and Laferrière pledges to be the voice for those who cannot speak. By straddling the barrier that separates Haiti from North America, he is able to bring the two closer together, and, in a certain sense, close the gap between those who would see themselves as far different: "à travers moi, on s'adresse à cette île blessée, mais de moins en moins isolée" (*Tout bouge* 159). In response to the question "why do you write?" Laferrière explains that it is "tenter de dire ce que d'autres ressentent sans pouvoir le formuler. J'écris ici pour ceux qui n'écrivent pas" (*Tout bouge* 97). Laferrière is the voice for those who cannot speak, do not speak or are not listened to.

---

[160]Here I use the adjective "creolizing" instead of "creolized" to emphasize the the continuous process rather than anything that would imply finality.

[161]Laferrière's mother excitedly exclaims "J'aurai tout vu dans ce pays" before enumerating this list of *malheurs* to afflict her country (*Tout bouge* 63).

Through his changes in writing, style, position, and evolving identity, I would argue that Laferrière shows that identity is not what you are born with or where you are born, but in many ways, it is about where you die. A place of birth can only indicate a fixed location and preconceived notions; the end of life, on the other hand, represents the entire journey: "Finalement, la mort semble avoir autant de poids que la naissance pour légitimer une certaine identité" (*Tout bouge* 135).[162] Like Condé's use of Guadeloupe as a metaphor for cultural diversity, Laferrière also offers insight through the Haitian conception of identity, not lauding it as an ultimate example, but expressing that identity does not have to be seen as concretely definable and that "l'identité en miettes" (*Tout bouge* 105) does not have to be feared, nor does the Other: for Haitians "les individus ont souvent deux ou trois noms. Quelqu'un peut être connu ici sous tel nom et ailleurs sous un autre nom. Sans compter les surnoms. Il arrive qu'un parent se manifeste subitement: je suis le fils de votre père, donc votre frère. On l'acceuille sans grand étonnement" (*Tout bouge* 105).

Likewise, Maryse Condé presents an ambiguous image of creolized identity and the creolized world. In *Histoire de la femme cannibale* the art academy, La America, and its director, one of the principal characters, Ariel, are the reflection of a creolized world. Ariel is of "Tant de sangs [qui] coulaient en lui qu'il n'aurait su s'il possédait une race" (Condé *Histoire* 195). Condé explains that it is because of his *métissage* that he is beautiful: "Avec cela, beau. D'une beauté qui n'était le propre d'aucun people en particulier comme si toutes les variétés de l'humain s'était harmonieusement combinées

---

[162]Laferrière makes this comment in reference to those who lived the experience of the earthquake in Haiti: being there (being "un 'j'étais là'") and either escaping or experiencing death in this catastrophe held more weight than having been born or spending an entire lifetime in Haiti. In one manner, I read this as a criticism of emphasis placed on one's position at birth, whether class, nationality, "race," etcetera.

pour le créer" (*Histoire* 195). Ariel's academy holds as its motto Montaigne's verse "Un honnête homme, c'est un homme mêlé" (Condé *Histoire* 196), and it is frequented by Latinos, African-Americans, Caribbeans, Asians, young, old, men and women. Ariel and La America are the realization of the utopic vision set forth by the *tout-monde*. This vision, however, remains elusive and even an impossibility in a world that is wrapped up in racial and ethnic prejudice, myth, stereotype and ultimately mistrust. Ariel's academy is attacked by all sorts of insinuations and accusations that land him in jail. By the time his freedom is gained, as no charges could be substantiated against him, the academy had lost its vigor and patronage and eventually shut down.

Condé seems to be suggesting that though there may be attempts at a real-world *tout-monde*, some glimmering rays of hope on the horizon, the fear and mistrust of the Other and the Other becoming Me, or vice versa, remains too strong and prevalent in our world to be overcome. The memory of colonial history and the myths of Western, white superiority remain strong. The symbolic violence of the colonial epoch continues to subjugate the non-white "Other," the Other to the European self. The ambiguity and tension that rest behind a *tout-monde* versus the actual post-colonial reality are where the post-colonial, "Francophone" writer lives. It is from here that one must continue to question History, reality, myth and memory and continue to interrogate what lies behind the gaze with which we all look at the external world.

WORKS CITED

Abdel-Jaouad, Hédi. *Rimbaud et l'Algérie*. Paris: Paris Méditerranée, 2004.

Alloula, Malek. *The Colonial Harem*. Trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.

Angenot, Marc. *Le roman populaire : recherches en paralittérature*. Montréal : Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1975.

Baguley, David. "Event and Structure: The Plot of Zola's *L'Assommoir*." *PMLA* 90.5 (1975): 823-33.

---. *Le naturalisme et ses genres*. Paris: Nathan, 1995.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1984.

Balibar, Etienne, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. *Race, nation, classe : Les identités ambiguës*. Paris: Découverte, 1988.

Bancel, Nicolas. *Zoos humains : Au temps des exhibitions humaines*. Paris: Découverte, 2004.

Barthes, Roland. *La chambre claire*. Paris: Editions de l'Etoile, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1980.

---. *Mythologies*. Paris: Seuil, 1957.

Beauchemin, Jacques. *La société des identités : Éthique et politique dans le monde contemporain*. Outremont, Québec: Athéna, 2004.

Ben Jelloun, Tahar. *Hospitalité française*. Paris: Seuil, 1997.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC, 1972.

Bernard, Claude. *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*. Paris: J.B. Baillière, 1865.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *La domination masculine*. Paris: Seuil, 1998.

---. *Les règles de l'art: genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Seuil, 1992.

Brantlinger, Patrick. "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent." *Critical Inquiry*. 12.1 (1985): 166-203.

Césaire, Aimé. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Paris: Présence africaine, 1971.

---. *Discours sur le colonialisme*. Paris: Réclamé, 1950.

Chafer, Tony and Amanda Sackur. Introduction. *Promoting the Colonial Idea*. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002. 1-11.

Chamoiseau, Patrick et al. "Créolité Bites." *Transition*. 74 (1997): 124-61.

Chipkin, Ivor. "The Sublime Object of Blackness." *Cahiers d'études africaines*. 42.167 (2002): 569-83.

Chouinard, Marie-Andrée. "Ecrivains d'ailleurs ou écrivains tout court." *Le Devoir*. 22 Mar. 1999: B-8.

Le Code Noir. Ed. Robert Chesnais. Paris: L'Esprit Frappeur, 1998.

Coleman, Daniel. *Masculine Migrations: reading the postcolonial male in "new Canadian" narratives*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998.

Condé, Maryse. *Moi, Tituba sorcière... Noire de Salem*. Paris: Mecure de France, 1988.

---. *La parole des femmes : Essai sur des romancières des Antilles de langue française*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979b.

---. *Pays mêlé : Nouvelles*. Paris: R. Laffont, 1997.

---. *Traversée de la mangrove*. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.

Condé, Maryse and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, Eds. *Penser la créolité*. Paris: Karthala, 1995.

Debrauwere-Miller, Nathalie. "Au carrefour de la Négritude et du Judaïsme: *Moi, Tituba Sorcière...Noire De Salem*." *The Romanic Review* 90.2 (1999): 223-33.

DeJean, Joan. Introduction. *Ourika: The Origina French Text*. By Claire de Duras. Ed. Joan DeJean. New York: MLA, 1994.

Denis, Benoît. *Littérature et engagement: de Pascal à Sartre*. Paris: Seuil, 2000.

Deschanel, Emile. *Physiologie des écrivains et des artistes ou essai de critique naturelle*. Paris: Hachette, 1864.

Dousteyssier-Khoze, Catherine. "*L'Assommoir*: From Novel to Drama to Theatrical Parody." *Novel Stages: Drama and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France*. Ed. Pratima Prasad and Susan McCready. Newark: U of Delaware Press, 2007. 214-34.

Duras, Claire de Durfort. *Ourika: The Original French Text*. Ed. Joan DeJean. New York: MLA, 1994.

Dyer, Richard. *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Edelstein, Dan. "Between Myth and History: Michelet, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and the Structural Analysis of Myth." *CLIO* 32.4 (2003): 397-414.

Ezra, Elizabeth. "Empire on Film: From Exoticism to 'Cinéma Colonial'." *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Charles Forsdick and David Murphy. London: Arnold, 2003. 56-65.

Fanon, Frantz. *Les damnées de la terre*. Paris: Découverte, 2007.

---. *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965.

Flibbert, Joseph T. "Dickens and the French Debate over Realism: 1838-1856." *Comparative Literature*. 23.1 (1971): 18-31.

Forsdick, Charles, and David Murphy. *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*. London: Arnold, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. *Dits et écrits: 1954-1988*. Eds. Daniel Defert and François Ewald. Vol. 3. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

---. *Naissance de la clinique*. Paris: PUF, 2007.

Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask. Dir. Julien, Isaac. Pref. Anonymous Normal Films, 1996.

French, Hilary. *Vanishing Borders*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.

Gagnon, Katia. "Danny [sic] Laferrière à la chasse aux mythes de l'Amérique." *La Presse*. 21 Nov. 1993: B-6.

Garraway, Doris. *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005.

Gillespie, Gerald. "Novella, Nouvelle, Novella, Short Novel? -- A Review of Terms." *Neophilologus*. 51.1 (1967): 117-27.

Gilman, Sander L. "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? Or, the History of the Nose Job." *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*. Ed. Laurence Jay Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn. New York: NYU Press, 1994. 364-401.

Girard, René. *Le bouc émissaire*. Paris: Grasset, 1982.

Glissant, Edouard. *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.

---. *Poétique de la Relation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.

---. *Traité du Tout-Monde*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997.

Goerg, Odile. "The French Provinces and 'Greater France'." *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*. Ed. Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002. 82-101.

Grandguillaume, Gilbert. *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb*. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1983.

Grant, Richard B. "The Function of the First Chapter of Maupassant's Bel-Ami." *Modern Language Notes* 76.8 (1961): 748-752.

Guilhaume, Jean-François. *Les Mythes fondateurs de l'Algérie française*. Paris: Harmattan, 1992.

Hansen, Emmanuel. "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual." *Transition*. 46 (1974): 25-36.

Hargreaves, Alec G. *The Colonial Experience in French Fiction: A Study of Pierre Loti, Ernest Psichari, and Pierre Mille*. London: Macmillan Press, 1981.

---. *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France*. London; New York: Routledge, 1995.

"Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris." *National Gallery of Art*. 8 Aug 2009. <http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/rousseauinfo.shtm>

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost : A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Ireland, Susan. "Declining the Stereotype in the Work of Stanley Lloyd Norris, Max Dorsinville, and Dany Laferrière." *Quebec Studies*. 39 (2005): 55-77.

Irigaray, Luce. *This sex which is not one*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

JanMohamed, Abdul R. "Sexuality On/Of the Racial Border: Foucault, Wright and the Articulation of "Racialized Sexuality." *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS*. Ed. Domna C. Stanton. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1995.

Jenson, Deborah and Christopher L. Miller. "Significant Events in Duras's Life, the Slave Trade, and French History." *Approaches to Teaching Duras's* Ourika. Eds. Mary Ellen Birkett and Christopher Rivers. New York: MLA, 2009.

Johnson, Paul Christopher. "Secretism and the Apotheosis of Duvalier." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 74 (June 2006): 420-45.

Jonassen, Christen T. "Some Historical and Theoretical Bases of Racism in Northwestern Europe." *Social Forces* 30.2 (1951): 155-61.

Katz, Jacob. *From prejudice to destruction: anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980.

Kazemipur, Abdolmohammed and Shiva S. Halli. "Immigrants and 'New Poverty': The Case of Canada." *International Migration Review*. 35 (Winter 2001): 1129-56.

Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.

Kritzman, Lawrence D. "Identity Crises: France, Culture and the Idea of the Nation." *SubStance*. 24.1/2 (1995): 5-20.

Lacan, Jacques. "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je." *Ecrits*. Paris: Seuil, 1966. 93-100.

---. *Le Séminaire livre XI : Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Seuil, 1973.

Lacher, Hannes. "International Transformation and the Persistence of Territoriality: Toward a New Political Geography of Capitalism." *Review of International Political Economy*. 12.1 (2005): 26-52.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe and Jean-Luc Nancy. *Le mythe nazi*. Paris: l'Aube, 2005.

Laferrière, Dany. *Comment faire l'amour avec un Nègre sans se fatiguer*. Montréal: TYPO, 2002.

---. *Pays sans chapeau*. Paris: Le Serpent à plumes, 2001.

Le Bris, Michel et al. "Pour une « littérature monde » en français." *Le Monde* 19 Mar. 2007. *Etonnants-Voyageurs*. 13 Mar. 2009 <http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article1574>

Leservot, Typhaine. *Le corps mondialisé*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Race et histoire*. Paris: Denoël, 1987.

---. "The Structural Study of Myth." *American Folklore Society*. 68.270 (1955): 428-444.

Lindsay, Jean. "Introduction." *The History of Science: Origins and Results of the Scientific Revolution*. Ed. Jean Lindsay. New York: The Humanities P, 1963.

"Loi nº2005-158 du 23 février 2005." *Legifrance.gouv.fr*. 14 May 2009. Web. 3 Feb. 2011.

Lucas, Rafaël. "The Aesthetics of Degradation in Haitian Literature," *Research in African Literatures*. Vol. 35, No. 2 Summer 2004.

"Maghrebi." *Trésor de la langue française*. 1971-1994.

Magraw, Roger. *France 1800-1914, A Social History*. London: Pearson Education, 2002.

Makinen, Merja. "Angela Carter's 'the Bloody Chamber' and the Decolonization of Feminine Sexuality." *Feminist Review* 42.Autumn (1992): 2-15.

Maupassant, Guy de. *Bel-Ami*. Paris: Pocket, 2006.

Memmi, Albert. *Portrait du colonisé*. Paris: Pauvert, 1966.

Merriman, John M. *Aux marges de la ville : Faubourgs et banlieues en France, 1815-1870*. Paris: Seuil, 1994.

Miller, Christopher L. *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986.

---. *French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008.

Moisan, Clément, and Renate Hildebrand. *Ces étrangers du dedans*. Québec: Editions Nota Bene, 2001.

Moore, Olin H. "The Romanticism of Guy De Maupassant." *PMLA*. 33.1 (1918): 96-134.

Motte, Dean de la. "Making News, Making Readers: The Creation of the Modern Newspaper Public in Nineteenth-Century France." *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*. Ed. Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein. Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000. 339-349.

Mudimbe, V. Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988.

Mulvey, Laura. "Some Thoughts on Theories of Fetishism in the Context of Contemporary Culture." *October*. 65.Summer (1993). 3-20.

O'Connell, David. "*Ourika*: Black Face, White Mask." *The French Review* 6.Spring (1974): 47-56.

O'Neill, Kevin C. "Structures of Power in Duras's 'Un barrage contre le pacifique.'" *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 45.1/2 (1991): 47-60.

Ozouf, Mona. "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." *Les lieux de mémoire.* Ed. Pierre Nora. Paris: Gallimard, 1992. 583-629.

Pagès, Alain. *Emile Zola: de J'accuse au Panthéon*. Saint-Paul: L. Souny, 2008.

Peabody, Sue. "Race, Slavery and the Law in Early Modern France." *The Historian* 56.3 (1994): 501-10.

Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer. *Antisemitic Myths: A Historical and Contemporary Anthology*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008.

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. *White on Black : Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Posnock, Ross. "How It Feels to Be a Problem: Du Bois, Fanon, and the 'Impossible Life' of the Black Intellectual." *Critical Inquiry*. 23.2 (1997). 323-49.

"Race." *Dictionnaire du moyen français*. Eds. Algirdas Julien Greimas and Teresa Mary Keane. Paris: Larousse: 1992.

"Race." *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*. Reprint of 1875 ed. 1982.

Renault, Emmanuel. "L'enjeu politique de l'identité." *L'Identité*. Ed. Aziz al- Azmeh. Paris: Découverte, 2004. 113-135.

Resnais, Alain, dir. *Mon oncle d'Amérique*. Embassy Home Entertainment, 1987.

Rosello, Mireille. *Declining the Stereotype: Ethnicity and Representation in French Cultures*. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth, 1998.

Ross, Kristen. "Rimbaud and Spatial History." *Assemblage*. 6 (1988). 48-61.

Rouillard, Linda Marie. "The Black Galatea: Claire de Duras's *Ourika*." *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*. 32.3&4 (Spring-Summer 2004): 207-22.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'être et le néant*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943.

---. *Réflexions sur la question juive*. Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

Savarèse, Eric. *Histoire coloniale et immigration : Une invention de l'étranger*. Paris: Séguier, 2000.

Schneider, William. "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France." *The Journal of Modern History* 54.2 (Sex, Science and Society in Modern France) (1982): 268-91.

Schor, Naomi. "The Crisis of French Universalism." *Yale French Studies*. 100 (2001). 43-64.

---. "Mother's Day: Zola's Women." *Diacritics*. 5.4 (Winter 1975): 11-17.

Sebbar, Leila. *Sherazade*. London: Quartet Books, 1991.

Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Silberner, Edmund. "Was Marx an Anti-Semite?" *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*. Ed. Ezra Mendelsohn. New York: New York U P, 1997.

Silverman, Maxim. *Frantz Fanon's* Black Skin, White Masks*: New Interdisciplinary Essays*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005.

Sorlin, Pierre. *Mass Media*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988. 271-313.

Stora, Benjamin. *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History*. Ithaca: Cornell U P, 2001.

---. "Benjamin Stora : 'La France a du mal à repenser un nationalisme sans l'empire.'" Interview by *Jeune Afrique*. 3 Jan. 2010. Web. 3 Feb. 2011.

---. *Histoire de l'Algérie coloniale*. Paris: Découverte, 2004.

---. *Imaginaires de guerre: Algérie, Việt-Nam, en France et aux Etats-Unis*. Paris: Découverte, 1997.

---. *Les mots de la guerre d'Algérie*. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2005.
---. *Le transfert d'une mémoire*. Paris: Découverte, 1999.

Taine, Hippolyte. *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*. 3.éd. rev. et augm. ed. Paris: L. Hachette, 1873.

Taton, René. *History of Science: Science in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1965.

Taylor, F. Sherwood. "Scientific Developments of the Early Nineteenth Century." *The History of Science: Origins and Results of the Scientific Revolution*. Ed. Jean Lindsay. New York: The Humanities P, 1963. 109-118.

Thornton, Lynne. *Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting*. Paris: ACR Edition Internationale, 1994.

Tiffin, Helen. "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse." *Kunapipi*. 9.3 (1987): 17-32.

de Villepin, Dominique. Avant-propos. *Mémoires des esclavages*. By Edouard Glissant. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.

Voisin-Fougère, Marie-Ange. "Presentation." *Nana*. By Emile Zola. Paris: Flammarion, 2000.

Waddell, Terrie. "The Female/Feline Morph: Myth, Media, Sex and the Bestial." *Cultural Expressions of Evil and Wickedness*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003. 75-96.

Waller, Margaret. Introduction. *Ourika*. By Claire de Duras. Ed. Joan DeJean. New York: MLA, 1994.

Wolton, Dominique. *L'autre mondialisation*. Paris: Flammarion, 2003.

Zola, Emile. *L'argent*. Paris: Gallimard, 1980.

---. *Correspondance Tome I 1858-1867*. Ed. B. H. Bakker and Colette Becker. Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1978.

---. *Correspondance Tome II : 1868 - Mai 1877*. Ed. B. H. Bakker and Colette Becker. Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1980.

---. *La Fortune des Rougon*. Paris: Charpentier, 1930.

---. *La Fortune des Rougon*. Préface de l'auteur. In *Les Rougon-Macquart : Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le second Empire*. Tome I. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991.
---. "J'Accuse." *L'Aurore.* jeudi 13 janvier 1898: 1.

---. *Roman expérimental*.

---. *Thérèse Raquin*. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1970.