

LECLÉZIEN HYBRIDITY:  
*RELATIONS ACROSS GENRES, HISTORIES AND CULTURES*  
IN SELECTED WORKS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Martha van der Drift: Leclézien Hybridity: *Relations Across Genres, Histories and Cultures in Selected Works*  
(Under the direction of Dominique Fisher)

This dissertation explores the representation of hybridity in selected works of Nobel Laureate JMG Le Clézio. More particularly, I define hybridity as the intersection of literary and artistic generic diversity, fictional and historic discourses and heterogeneous world cultures. I propose to consider the generic diversity that characterizes the author's work as a means to mirror the cultural and historical heterogeneity of our world today. Until now, leclézien scholars have separately examined historiographical elements, representations of regional cultures and generic diversity within the boundaries of French literary theory. Indeed, these studies provide valuable stylistic, thematic and historical insights. However, by investigating these elements in concert and in the context of current discussions of hybridity in Francophone studies, my dissertation sheds a new light on the relationships between multiple genres, diverse fictive and historical discourses and geographical spaces that distinguish Le Clézio's works.

In my first chapter, I discuss the key concepts of hybridity in Francophone literary and cultural studies while also considering the ongoing debate concerning a regional or transcultural approach to Le Clézio's works within the context of French and Francophone studies. Having established this methodological basis, in chapters two through four, I examine the intersections of genres, histories and cultures in two recent literary works,

*Révolutions* (2003) and *Cœur brûle et autres romances* (2000) and the author's recent exhibit at the Louvre from November 2011-February 2012, *Le Musée Monde*.

I contend that by privileging transversal encounters between genres, histories and cultures, Le Clézio incites an engaged reader, or viewer, response to construct new, *Relational* histories and identities, an affective response of *Relation* to embrace the *Tout-monde* as suggested by Martiniquais writer and philosopher, Edouard Glissant.

Through my research, it is my intention to underline the socio-cultural value of Le Clézio's work in promoting intercultural understanding. What is more, my aim is to shine light on potential transversal methods for Francophone scholars who approach literary, performing and visual arts in our twenty-first century globalizing world.

It is with much love and gratitude that I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Howard C. Broom, whose faith, love and support continue to inspire me to believe in Life, Humanity and my dreams.

“Être un individu, faire et laisser faire cet individu, c'est peut-être là le vrai chemin vers les autres [...] Chaque vie doit s'achever et se résoudre indépendante, et dépendante de tous, jusqu'à l'ultime fermeture qui l'accomplit et lui donne un *sens*.”  
(JMG Le Clézio, *L'Extase matérielle* 257-258)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- RC* Bessière, Jean. *Le Roman contemporain ou la problématique du monde*. Rennes : Presses Universitaires de France, 2010. Print.
- PR* Glissant, Edouard. *Poétique de la Relation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990. Print
- IPD* Glissant, Edouard. Introduction à une poétique du divers. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1995. Print.
- ME* Glissant, Edouard. *Mémoires des esclavages*. Paris: Gallimard, 2007. Print.
- EM* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *L'Extase matérielle*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Paris : Gallimard Folio, 2008 (1967). Print.
- ICT* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *L'Inconnu sur la terre: essai*. Paris: Gallimard, 1978. Print.
- RM* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *Relation de Michoacan*. (Presentation and Adaptation) Paris : Gallimard, 1984. Print.
- DF* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *Diego et Frida*. Paris : Stock, 1997. Print.
- FC* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *La Fête chantée*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard Le Promeneur, 1997. Print.
- CB* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *Cœur brûle et autres romances*. Paris : Gallimard Folio, 2003. Print.
- R* Le Clézio, Jean-Marie Gustave. *Révolutions*. Paris : Gallimard, 2003. Print.
- LMSM* Le Clézio, J.-M.G. and Marie-Laure Bernadac. *Les Musées sont des mondes: [exposition, Paris, Musée Du Louvre, 5 Novembre 2011-6 Février 2012]*. Paris: Gallimard, 2011. Print.
- LMM* this abbreviation will be used for the JMG Le Clézio's exhibit at the Louvre *Le Musée monde*.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the publication of his first novel, *The Interrogation*, in 1963, JMG Le Clézio's writing has demonstrated a hybrid treatment of genres while unveiling a new perspective of the world through the liberation of histories often silenced, forgotten, or marginalized by modern society. Already in 2008, the Nobel Academy acknowledged JMG Le Clézio as an "author of new departures [towards the discovery of unknown cultures and geographies], poetic adventure and sensual ecstasy, explorer of humanity beyond and below the reigning civilization." Ultimately, the Nobel Academy recognized the aesthetic and cultural hybridity that characterize JMG Le Clézio's works, which question the boundaries that separate and divide our modern world.<sup>1</sup>

This is the first study that examines selected works of JMG Le Clézio in light of recent transdisciplinary Francophone studies on hybridity within the context of transgeneric

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<sup>1</sup> I wholeheartedly endorse Bruno Thibault's observation regarding the Nobel Academy's evaluation criteria for selecting candidates. Thibault points out that Horace Engdahl, the secretary for the Swedish Academy, "looks for a certain 'herterogeneity' that reflects the plurality of viewpoints on the world and that he favorizes, by fidelity to the idealist principles that define the prize, a humanism open towards the world." "Avant Propos", *J.-M.G. Le Clézio: dans la fôret des paradoxes*. Ed. Bruno Thibault and Keith Moser, Paris: L'Harmattan (2012): 27 [my translation]).

and transcultural encounters in order to situate Le Clézio's work beyond the realm of Hexagonal literature and structuralist theory. Notably, I build upon Raymond Mbassi Atéba's argument that Le Clézio goes beyond the Western tradition of comparison to create bridges across cultures and literary traditions (*Identité et fluidité dans l'œuvre de Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio: une poétique de la mondialité* 28-29).

For the first consideration, the transgeneric, I will emphasize the crossing, not the mixing or the assimilation, of literary and extra-literary genres that constitute Le Clézio's work, i.e., his novel, tales, short stories, essays, art exhibits, as well as his activism in promoting transcultural relations through hybrid arts and community programs. Regarding the transcultural, I refer to Alfonso de Toro's work on Khatibi in *Epistémologies: Le Maghreb*, where the transcultural is the result of world cultures that cross and interact:

Ainsi culture, langue et identité n'appartiennent plus à des constructions hégémoniques transfigurées, mais à des actes subjectifs, c'est-à-dire individuels, qui sont le résultat d'un perpétuel processus de traduction et qui permettent d'écouter l'autre en tant qu'autre dans la différence et de le comprendre. (60)

For de Toro, the ongoing state of negotiating the meaning and identity that characterize transculturality is the basis for hybridity.

With this fact in mind, I will define hybridity as the set of intersections of literary and artistic generic diversity, fictional and historic discourses from heterogeneous world cultures that exist within a single work. By examining each work separately, I will ultimately underscore the literary distinctiveness of the author's work within the realm of Poststructuralist French and Postcolonial Francophone studies. Furthermore, we will see how

the interactions among genres, histories, and cultures create a *Tout-monde*<sup>2</sup> experience for the reader.

Thus, the effects of such a hybrid work are two-fold.<sup>3</sup> First, a hybrid work provides the arena for a concert of distinct voices wherein each voice shares personal and collective histories through the means of multiple historical and narrative genres such as fictive narration, journals, letters, historical archives, references to newspaper headlines and films. Secondly, hybridity removes the traditional alienating barriers of official and fictional discourses, modern and contemporary history, and cultural divisions separating North, South, East and West.

Through the lens of hybridity, I argue that Le Clézio's work mirrors the cultural and historical heterogeneity that characterize our transcultural world. By privileging transversal encounters among genres, histories, and cultures, Le Clézio incites an engaged reader to participate in constructing new histories and identities, a response that echoes Edouard Glissant's philosophical concept of *Relation*,<sup>4</sup> i.e., the interactions among literary and extra-

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<sup>2</sup> Edouard Glissant defines the *Tout-monde* as a means by which each culture lives in the existence of other cultures and with the knowledge and understanding of these cultures. Within this context, cultures no longer rely on binary thought of alterity, i.e., “us vs. them”: “Une infinité d'archipels qu'il nous fait habiter, non pas des chapelets d'îles … mais des lieux qui se joignent par mille bords, se connaissent sans codes, s'émeuvent par delà les anciens impossibles. Des imaginaires qui font dérive, et s'entrecroisent par-dessus les océans, au-dessus des frontières, dans le silence ou dans l'émoi des dieux, en plein travers des continents, dans les semaines d'îles, levant une géographie que nul ne dessinera sans la perdre aussitôt. Le Tout-monde est à vivre dans sa structure archipélique: seul moyen de s'en saisir sans pour autant le prendre” (*L'Intraitable Beauté du monde: adresse à Barack Obama*, Paris: Galaade (2009): 48-49).

<sup>3</sup> In the context of my research, this term will refer to both literary texts and art exhibits. Thus, the term “reader” is also used to refer to “viewers” in museums.

<sup>4</sup> To define “transversal,” I refer to the explanation given by Alfonso de Toro that emphasizes

literary genres mirror cultural encounters between once-marginalized histories and, in turn, provoke an active reader's mediation on transcultural *Relations*.

Due to the transversal nature of Le Clézio's writing, I will situate his work within the context of Francophone literature rather than that of French literature; his work's treatment of world cultures and histories, in essence, integrate the hybridity of his literary and personal experiences with diverse cultures.<sup>5</sup> However, until now, research by leclézien scholars generally attests to a series of cycles that constitute the author's work. Those unfamiliar with Le Clézio's work will find Bruno Thibault's classifications of of Le Clézio's cycles as follows:<sup>6</sup> 1) the anti-conformist cycle that questions modernity and society and that can be

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transdisciplinary perspectives, where transversality is the result of a dialogue between disciplines, at the intersections between disciplines (*Épistemologies* 20). Thus, I emphasize the exchanges that take place at the intersections of cultures, histories, and genres. It is important to note that I do not propose a "fusion," "mixing," or "blending, which would imply the loss of identity for a dominant ideal. Rather, transversality suggests an interaction between autonomous, heterogeneous entities where each entity affirms the existence of the self and the other without hierarchies, ethnocentrism, or binary thought.

The glissantien concept of *Relation* consists of reaching outward toward other cultures, and acknowledging differences. Consequently, *Relation* transforms one's perception of the world and promotes continued reflection and interaction. While reaching out to other cultures is indicative of *Relation*, it does not signify the loss of distinctiveness in transcultural exchanges. With regards to the reader experience, Glissant underlines the transcultural nature of *Relation* in the transmission of world histories and its role of offering a heightened reader understanding of the complexities of heterogeneous identities. See *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, and *Poétique de la relation*.

<sup>5</sup> These experiences include living with the Aroussyrian nomads of Southern Morocco (*Gens des nuages*) and with natives and non-natives in Twentieth-century Nigeria (*Onitsha, L'Africain*); the testimonies of inhabitants of Vanuatu (*Raga*) and the cultural and spiritual lessons learned while living with Emberas and Wounaan Amerindians in Panama (*Hai, La Fête chantée* and *Le Rêve mexicain*); the fictive historical slave narrations in Kilwa and Mauritius (*Révolutions*) and the fictionalized histories regarding numerous immigrants in Northern Africa, Israel and Palestine, France, England, Mexico and the United States that are scattered through numerous novels and short stories, such as *Mondo, Printemps et autres saisons*, *Cœur brûle et autre romances*, *Ritournelle de la faim* and *Histoire du pied et autres fantaisies*.

<sup>6</sup> Bruno Thibault, *J.M.G. Le Clézio ou la métaphore exotique*, Amsterdam: Rodopi (2009): 11-12. It is

predominantly found in his works from the 1960s and 1970s and beyond;<sup>7</sup> 2) the Pre-Columbian cultures and shamanism cycle of the 1970s and beyond;<sup>8</sup> 3) the Moroccan and Northern African cycle of the 1980s and beyond; and finally, 4) the Mauritian cycle. Such classifications have been extremely valuable for highlighting the spectrum of cultures present in the author's works. Moreover, the aforementioned cycles allow scholars to group works together according to geographical and thematic criterion. Nevertheless, in light of my study on hybridity in the works of Le Clézio, I propose to approach the author's works from a transversal perspective that examines the interactions among numerous genres and multiple histories and cultures within a single work.

In a similar vein, leclézien scholars have separately examined historiographical elements, representations of regional cultures, and generic diversity. Leading scholars representing this tendency are Claude Cavallero, Keith Moser, Isabelle Roussel-Gillet, Marina Salles, and Bruno Thibault.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, these scholars' studies provide valuable stylistic, thematic, and historical insights into Le Clézio's work. However, by investigating these elements in concert and in the context of current discussions of hybridity in Francophone studies, my intention is to shine a new light on the relationships among the multiple genres,

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important to note that themes and cultures from these distinct cycles appear beyond such a limited scope and suggest to consider these works through the lens of hybridity.

<sup>7</sup> *Le Procès-verbal* (1963), *La Fièvre* (1965), *Le Déluge* (1966), *L'Extase matérielle* (1967) *Terra amata* (1967), *La Guerre* (1970), *Les Géants* (1973).

<sup>8</sup> *Haï* (1971), *Les Prophéties du Chilan Balam* (1976), *Trois Villes saintes* (1980), *Relation de Michoacan* (1984), *Le Rêve mexicain ou la pensée interrompue* (1988), *Diego et Frida* (1993), *La Fête chantée* (1997).

<sup>9</sup> I will address the insightful approaches of each of these scholars throughout my dissertation.

diverse fictive and historical discourses, and geographical spaces that distinguish Le Clézio's works.<sup>10</sup>

The works that I have chosen for my dissertation each represent a distinct genre: the novel *Révolutions* (2003); the collection of short stories *Cœur brûle et autres romances* (2000); and the author's international exhibit at the Louvre 2011-2012, *Le Musée monde*. Yet, despite these works' differing generic labels, the genre of each work is essentially transformed by the incorporation of multiple literary and artistic styles within that single work, i.e. tales and myths, the written and the oral, the poetic and the theatrical, the spectacular and the real, aesthetics and the role of the arts.

By limiting my choice to these two literary works and one art exhibit, I wish to emphasize the turning point that these works represent within Le Clézio's corpus. The aforementioned literary works distinguish themselves from preceding novels and short story collections through their hybridity across genres, cultures, and histories. *Le Musée monde*, Le Clézio's international exhibit at the Louvre, is the first art exhibit in which the author participates. The exhibit was the first exhibition of such diverse artistic genres and cultures inside the Louvre, and its museographical design mirrored its hybrid nature.

Due to the transdisciplinary and hybrid nature of these works, I center my methodology on contemporary Francophone and French scholars, critics, and writers such as Jean Bessière, Alfonso de Toro, Edouard Glissant, Françoise Lionnet, and Alain Mabanckou, as well as the research of leclézien scholars and the comments of the author himself. I have

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<sup>10</sup> Underlining is added for emphasis to underscore the *Relational* nature of histories, cultures and genres that distinguish *Révolutions*, *Cœur brûle et autres romances* and *Le Musée monde*.

chosen to consider these scholars and writers who examine contemporary literature,<sup>11</sup> both French and Francophone, outside of the realms of the traditional structuralist and postmodernist theory of the Twentieth century that was originally developed for the purpose of analyzing Western literature, and notably that of the Hexagon. Furthermore, the aforementioned scholars underline the proportional relationship between the transcultural nature of our world and the need for hybrid genres that give voice to transcultural encounters.

Consequently, I will explore the aforementioned scholars' works later in the Introduction with the goal of underlining the innate hybridity of Francophone genres, histories, and cultures that go beyond the scope of Hexagonal theory. My objective is to provide the historical and scholarly context for building my methodology for hybridity and the relevance for developing a hybrid approach for scholarly analyses. As a result, we will recognize the relevance, if not the urgency, of a hybrid theoretical approach that explores the multiple genres that are necessary for the transmission of complex histories and cultures that characterize our postcolonial world. From this methodological foundation, I will separately examine the manifestations of hybridity in the three selected works in Chapters Two through Four.

In Chapter Two, I will explore the generic, historic, and cultural hybridity that typify the 2003 novel *Révolutions*. Within the corpus of the author's novels until 2003, *Révolutions*

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<sup>11</sup> It is Alfonso de Toro (2006, 2009) who argues for a transdisciplinary approach for studying the manifestations of hybridity that are not reserved only for literary theory and works. Keeping in mind that I will extend my considerations of hybridity beyond the realms of literature, it is paramount to include transdisciplinary approaches. To this end, my fourth chapter on the exhibit *Le Musée monde* will include insights from renowned, international scholars in the field of museology, i.e., Serge Chaumier, Nélia Dias, Andrew McClellan and Daniel W. Sherman.

marks a turning point in the treatment of hybridity due to its intersection of multiple genres, narrative discourses and voices, histories and world cultures.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, I wish to mention that three of Le Clézio's novels can be seen as precursors for the hybridity found in *Révolutions: Désert* (1980) *Étoile errante* (1992) and *Poisson d'or* (1997). In the first two polyphonic novels, Le Clézio weaves narrative voices that shine light on opposing histories and cultures. With *Désert*, Le Clézio transforms the historical novel by incorporating the orality of tales as shared by the Tuaregs in early Twentieth-century Morocco as they fought against the French Protectorate; the novel has a third person narrator who traces the path of a young girl, Lalla, living in a present-day Moroccan shantytown, who immigrates to Marseilles before finally returning to Morocco. In the novel *Étoile errante*, Le Clézio exposes a fictionalized story set off by historical markers of the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> The reader traces the path of Esther, a French Jewish teenager who, while taking refuge in Israel, meets Nejma, a Palestinian teenage refugee, who is forced to flee her homeland. Finally, with *Poisson d'or*, Le Clézio transforms the novel through the use of modern Moroccan tale that depicts Laila's quest for identity across the deserts and cities of Morocco to the cities of France and the United States before returning to her southern Moroccan homeland.

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<sup>12</sup> The author's novels before *Révolutions* include: *Le Procès verbal* (1963), *Le Déluge* (1966), *Terra amata* (1967), *Le Livre des fuites* (1969), *La Guerre* (1970), *Les Géants* (1973), *Désert* (1980), *Le Chercheur d'or* (1985), *Voyage à Rodrigues* (1986), *Onitsha* (1991), *Etoile érrante* (1992), *Pawana* (1992), *La Quarantaine* (1995), *Poisson d'or* (1996), *Hasard suivi de Angoli mala* (1999), *L'Enfant de sous le pont* (2000).

<sup>13</sup> These historical markers are noted in the text as follows: Saint-Martin-Vésubie, été 1943; Festiona, 1944; Port d'Alon, décembre 1947; Camp de Nour Chams, été 1948; Ramat Yohanan, 1950; Montréal, rue Notre-Dame, hiver 1966; Nice, été 1982, Hôtel de la Solitude.

Each of these texts signals varying degrees of hybrid histories and cultures in Le Clézio's works since the 1980s within our considerations of hybridity; however, as my study will show, *Révolutions* heightens this complexity to a degree not yet before seen in his work due to its overlapping narrative voices that crisscross geographical and temporal spaces, history and fiction and diverse genres, i.e., official documents, personal journals, letters and oral testimonies.

Next, in Chapter Three, I will underline the hybrid nature of the short story collection *Cœur brûle et autres romances*, as well as the distinctive hybridity of each of the first five short stories. As was astutely noted by Sabrinella Bedrane, *Cœur brûle et autres romances* marks a “revolution” in the author’s writing just before the novel *Révolutions* that was published three years later in 2003.<sup>14</sup> While I will come back to this statement in the subsequent chapters, Bedrane’s insightful research provides a valuable context for Le Clézio’s short stories within contemporary French criticism on the short story genre. Yet, as I will further elaborate, I wish to build upon Bedrane’s research in order to consider the function of a hybrid genre as discussed in current Francophone studies, i.e., how heterogeneous genres serve as carriers for distinctive, unique, personal and collective histories and cultures. More specifically, my analysis will examine the use of orality, visual writing, history, and tragedy as means of articulating the affective complexities that characterize the daily life of women at the dawn of the Twenty-first century.

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<sup>14</sup> Sabrinella Bedrane, “Les romances leclézeiennes: une poétique du renouvellement générique”, *Ailleurs et origines: parcours poétiques J.M.G. Le Clézio actes du colloque*. Ed. Bernadette Rey-Mimoso-Ruiz, Toulouse: Éditions universitaires du Sud (2006): 177.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I will identify the manifestations of hybridity in Le Clézio's 2011-2012 exhibit at the Louvre, *Le Musée monde*.<sup>15</sup> Due to the transdisciplinary nature of my research for this chapter, I will consider ongoing debates in the field of museology that concern exhibiting cultures. From there, I consider France's, and more particularly Paris', role in creating hierarchies of cultures through art and ethnographic museum design. As we shall see, the relationship between the arts and the State influenced the rise of elitism and hegemony, particularly at the Louvre. After establishing this socio-historical context, I explore the role of *Le Musée monde*'s design in subverting Parisian cultural hierarchies and promoting a visitor experience of what Edouard Glissant has termed *Tout-monde*. It is precisely the experimental narrative structure of the exhibit's diverse art pieces that facilitated a reflective space for the visitor to consider the *Relations* of disparity and similarities across time, cultures, and space.

Within this context, I consider the art forms, histories, and cultures of three distinct pieces, attending to their placement in the exhibit's narrative and the great diversity of their forms, cultures, and histories: the lowriders of Duke's car club in Southern California; the Guadeloupian artist Guillaume Guillon Lethière's painting in honor of the Haitian revolution, *Le Serment des ancêtres*; and the mats of the ni-Vanuatu.

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to differentiate between the name of the exhibit at the Louvre, *Le Musée monde*, and the title of the catalog for the exhibit, *Les Musées sont des mondes*. The catalog contains a text written by the author (and also spoken at his opening address), as well as texts by other museologists and curators and pictures of the works included in the exhibit. Appendix 2 contains excerpts of these texts and a selection of the events and art pieces from the exhibit that were included in the press release.

## Hybridity

It is often said that hybridity is an integral part of society. It was and is "always inherent to culture, to identity and nations" (Heidemann and de Toro, *New Hybridities* 20) because "cultures never were or are monolithic, but are always products of their own complex histories" (10). In a sense, we can define hybridity as a characteristic of a form that contains two or more elements that both distinctively interact in order to achieve a result that could otherwise not be achieved (Hybrid).<sup>16</sup>

While hybridity is an underlying reality of humanity, the concept of hybridity has received particular attention by Latin American, North American, and German scholars across disciplines since the late nineties. These scholars' particular objective is to examine the consequences of *mondialisation* on social structures,<sup>17</sup> cultures, arts, and academic disciplines.

Keeping in mind the array of disciplines engaged in the study of hybridity, it is important to understand that my dissertation will not address hybridity within an economic, political, or sociological context as posited by the Latin American scholars Fernando Ortiz and Néstor García Canclini, nor will it explore the psychological dimensions of hybridity proposed by Homi Bhabha.<sup>18</sup> While these scholars' brilliant works laid the foundation for

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<sup>16</sup> I will not address biological or racial hybridity in my research. Rather, I will examine hybridity as the transversal nature between heterogeneous genres, divergent narrative voices, multiple histories and cultures that have been forgotten, silenced or marginalized in contemporary society.

<sup>17</sup> I insist upon the French term *mondialisation*, which emphasizes the cultural encounters that accompany our contemporary society, rather than the English term "globalization," which underlines economic and political powers.

<sup>18</sup> I do not wish to dismiss the complexities of these scholars' insights and the important contributions

subsequent studies on hybridity, I will concentrate my examination of hybridity in the realms of artistic and literary genres and the histories and cultures that they convey.

In the fields of literary and cultural studies, hybridity has been defined as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 20). Indeed, this definition underlines the importance of transcultural forms. Nevertheless, I raise objections to limiting our concept of hybridity to zones of colonization. First, limiting the geographical and cultural space can lead to overgeneralizations regarding the effects of colonization. Second, these limitations can lend themselves to a nationalistic bias that would not apply to the transcultural and geographical scope of Le Clézio’s works. Rather, I wish to extend our consideration of hybridity to observe the contact of histories and cultures beyond the colonial experience.

### **Hybridity and Francophone Literature**

In the context of Francophone and world literature, I fully endorse de Toro’s research on hybridity, which warns against limiting the study of hybridity to distinct and postcolonial cultures based on their colonial experience; this would, in turn, perpetuate division and separation. What is more, de Toro further underlines the need for scholars to contemplate the distinctiveness that results from the intersections of histories, cultures, and literary forms that have resulted in the postcolonial era, which he terms “postcoloniality”: “la postcolonialité est

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of their works. Nevertheless, my considerations of hybridity avoid the political and economic specificities that their theories suggest, notably the opposing forces between dominator and dominated. While I do not deny that these forces may be present in a transnational and transcultural context, of which hybridity is a factor, I have chosen to avoid binary oppositions that can, in essence, reduce hybridity to another form of essentialism based on national and political hierarchies (see Trigo for more on this paradox).

un phénomène discursif où les discours prennent leurs sources dans les interfaces ou les intersections, dans l’entre-deux des cultures” (*Épistemologies: Le Maghreb* 49). Ultimately, these considerations have important consequences for Francophone studies because they encourage an interdisciplinary and transcultural approach that considers the intersection of multiple cultures, histories, discourses, and genres.

While I will further elaborate on these concepts, I propose to consider hybridity as a model for contemporary society that exemplifies the free exchange of diverse ideas, histories, and cultures despite the rigid boundaries of time, space, and nations. Furthermore, if hybridity shines light on the encounters of cultures and discourses, should such encounters within the Francophone world be limited to Francophone cultures? Indeed, we will observe the scope of Le Clézio’s works that goes above and beyond the limits of the French and the Francophone world.

When considering the term “Francophone,” Alfonso de Toro (2009), Lise Gauvin, (2010) and Michel Le Bris (2007) remind us of its associations with French colonial imagery and power struggles. To this end, de Toro recognizes the inherent and limiting divisions of “us” and “them” that are often associated with the term “Francophone.” Such divisions jeopardize hybrid studies by designating a hierarchical struggle between France and countries and peoples who speak French or live in French-speaking countries (*Épistemologies: Le Maghreb* 54-55). By extension, it is essential that we reconsider the term “Francophone” in a context outside of linguistic, cultural, or geographical hierarchies.

To take a case in point, Gauvin highlights the proportionate relationship between the emergence of national literatures and the development of geographical divisions in Francophone studies, for example, Sub-Saharan literature, Caribbean literature, Maghreb

literature, Belgian and Swiss literature, or Québec literature (*Littératures de langues française à l'heure de la mondialisation* 22). By affirming alterity, national literatures reclaim memory and histories and cultural identity, and they subvert dominant colonial discourses. Yet, as pointed out by Dominique Fisher, “the construction of a cultural heritage is built in the negation of cultural and linguistic plurality” (*Écrire l’urgence* 8 [my translation]). Thus, I highlight the potential limitations of regional studies as they can reinforce distinctions between “us” and “them” and prevent examination of the experiences of intersecting cultures and languages.

In the same vein, postcolonial scholars and writers began questioning the associations and roles of Francophone literature in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> Notably, Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, as well as the writers of the *Littérature-monde* manifesto and the subsequent book *Pour Une Littérature-monde*, posit the need to question the term “Francophone” as well as the role of the writer.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the concept of *Francophonie* died as a geographical place or as the term to designate “Francophone” writers:

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<sup>19</sup> The nineteen-nineties corresponds to the increased cultural encounters resulting from mondialisation.

<sup>20</sup> Of the forty-four writers who signed the manifesto, JMG Le Clézio was one of them. This activism speaks to his position as a Francophone writer, rather than a “French” writer, as well as his solidarity with the other French language writers of the world in their commitment to remove hierarchies that separate cultures and the arts. Michel Lebris et al, “Pour une ‘Littérature-monde’ en français”, *Le Monde* (19 March 2007): web.

Soyons clairs: l'émergence d'une littérature-monde en langue française consciemment affirmée, ouverte sur le monde, transnationale, signe l'acte de décès de la francophonie. Personne ne parle le francophone, ni n'écrit en francophone ... Littérature-monde parce qu'à l'évidence multiples, diverses, sont aujourd'hui les littératures de langue française de par le monde, formant un vaste ensemble dont les ramifications enlacent plusieurs continents. Mais littérature-monde, aussi, parce que partout celles-ci nous disent le monde qui devant nous émerge. (Le Bris et al)

Aside from the desire to push the geographical limits of the term “Francophone” to include world cultures, the writers admonish the term “Francophone” for tying them to a colonial past and to a position of subordination to France.<sup>21</sup>

In turn, the writers advocate the liberty that enables the writer to represent a world of multiple encounters across cultures and histories. Furthermore, Michel Le Bris argues the need for writers to move away from the rigid schools of thought inherited by the postcolonial world in order to embrace a writing style that communicates the “multiples hybridations” of our contemporary, postcolonial world (*Pour Une Littérature-monde* 41).<sup>22</sup>

In response to the manifesto and the concept of a *Littérature-monde*, numerous scholars considered the concept’s potential effects on French and Francophone literature, studies, and theories. One example of a scholarly reaction to the *Littérature-monde* manifesto can be seen in the publication of Hargreaves, Forsdick, and Murphy entitled *Transnational*

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<sup>21</sup> “Pour juger ces ‘auteurs venus d’ailleurs’, on se réfère aux canons de la littérature française ... De tels propos installent un lien de subordination: les lettres francophones ne sont vues que sous l’angle de leur utilité, de ce qu’elles apportent à la langue française”. Alain Mabanckou, *Écrivain et oiseau migrateur*, Bruxelles: A. Versaille (2011): 106.

<sup>22</sup> Also see Jean Rouaud’s “*Mort d’une certaine idée*” in the same work (16-19). He argues that one cannot continue to use the same methods today that were used, e.g., for analyzing Balzac, because of the way in which society has expanded, changed, or become disconnected from reality or social contexts as with the movements of Surrealism and the New Novel.

*French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde*. In this collection, Typhaine Leservot argues that a balance must exist in a Littérature-monde, affirming regional realities without being confined by them:

The need to encourage transnational and transregional research is indeed to be found in the manifesto ... we must be careful not to generalize the process of globalization ... [while] not mak[ing] the mistake of restricting Francophone studies to relatively fixed geographical regions or to traditional postcolonial migratory routes (Leservot, “From *Weltliteratur* to World Literature to Littérature-monde” 44-5).

Leservot’s observations are extremely useful because they shed light on the difficult challenge in Francophone studies of avoiding the isolation of regional boundaries while guarding against overgeneralizing transcultural literature at the expense of overlooking regional distinctions.

To this end, Alain Mabanckou underscores the role of Francophone literature in *Pour Une Littérature-monde* with his article, “Le Chant de l’oiseau migrateur.” Rather than a dilution of national distinctiveness, Mabanckou contends that the manifesto seeks to publicly recognize the value of Francophone writers and literature beyond: “il s’agit en fait non pas d’une naissance mais d’un constat d’une réalité à laquelle nous n’avions pas prêté attention” (58).

Given these criticisms, we can observe that there was a tendency to assess Francophone literature, arts, and film within the context of French theory<sup>23</sup>. Consequently, writers of the manifesto demanded a decolonization of writing and thought, again underlined

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<sup>23</sup> This tendency can still exist today.

by Mabanckou in the aforementioned article: “Les littératures ‘péripériques’ d’expression française devaient graviter autour de ce noyau [celui de la tradition des lettres françaises]. Dans ces conditions … Paris demeurait plus que jamais le centre, l’unité de mesure” (56-57).

Moreover, Mabanckou elaborates his ideas on the significance of littérature-monde in his book *Écrivain et oiseau migrateur* where he underlines the responsibility of French language writers to contribute to the understanding of our transcultural world by giving voice to their knowledge and experience of cultural diversities:

Il s’agit de rappeler que le monde bouge, que les cultures se croisent, que l’heure est à l’inventaire de nos propres connaissances, et surtout à l’inévitable interrogation qui ne cessera de nous hanter, de nous obnubiler tant que nous ne nous serons pas prononcés: qu’apportons-nous au monde, ou que devrions-nous apporter au monde, nous autres écrivains qui avons en partage la langue française? (108-109).

It follows, then, that the cultural reach of Francophone literary works is not limited to the regional or national boundaries. Indeed Francophone literature can be regional; however, it can also be transcultural.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, I propose to consider Francophone literature beyond defined topographies to include literary works written in French that depict the intersections of multiple histories and cultures.<sup>25</sup> In essence, my research on hybridity will shine light on future considerations of Francophone literature within the realm of transcultural literatures. Having established the

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<sup>24</sup> As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *transcultural* refers to the encounters between individual cultures at their points of intersections.

<sup>25</sup> The use of French does not exclude using phrases or words in other languages, as is the case with Le Clézio’s works where the author uses Breton, Creole and Spanish words and sayings.

background to the term “hybridity” in the Francophone world, I will now proceed to examine key research on hybridity within the context of Francophone studies.

### **Hybridity in French and Francophone Literary Studies**

As Jean Bessière argues in his recent book *Le Roman contemporain ou la problématique du monde*, the challenge for writers today is to represent the heterogeneity of the world, or as he describes it, “la problématique du monde.” He highlights the difficulty for writers of mirroring the infinite cultural contacts that typify our present-day world without diluting human diversity: “To represent a universe of several worlds and of several periods of time enables to more clearly shine light on the figuration of the diversity of humans, the call for a metarepresentation and the questioning that results from such a call” (*RC* 71 [my translation]).<sup>26</sup> In the end, Bessière posits that a literary and artistic reform will provide the reader new perspectives to witness and to reflect upon the traditions of diverse cultures and times (*RC* 228).

Indeed, Bessière posits that the form of literature should reflect the diversity of today’s world in order to “present the diversity and the dissemination of humans (*RC* 10-11 [my translation]).<sup>27</sup> Bessière distinguishes the contemporary novel from the Western-tradition novel that is built upon binary relationships between continuity and discontinuity and individuality rather than transindividuality (*RC* 215). In other words, by emphasizing

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<sup>26</sup> “Représenter un univers de plusieurs mondes et de plusieurs temps, permet d’exposer plus nettement la figuration de la diversité des êtres humains, l’appel à une métareprésentation et, le questionnement que porte cet appel” (*RC* 71).

<sup>27</sup> “le roman contemporain présente la diversité et la dissemination des personnes humaines, et fait de cette diversité et de cette dissemination les moyens de proposer une figuration de l’humain” (*RC* 10-11).

transindividuality, the contemporary novel, or in our case literary and artistic hybridity, does not seek to promote continuity at the expense of diversity:

La fonction du roman, au regard de la tradition moderne, du modernisme et du postmoderne, s'est déplacée : il ne s'agit plus de faire lire l'universel dans l'individuel, ni d'user de la dualité du singulier et du paradigmique, mais de marquer que tous les individus participant d'un même monde qui est moins à définir qu'à figurer selon son propre potentiel. (*RC* 305)

By extension, hybridity becomes the study of how the genres of literature and art, with their narrative discourses, represent the intersections of human histories and cultures in a world where globality and diversity are not mutually exclusive.

Furthermore, Bessière's arguments shed light on the importance of transgeneric and transcultural literature.<sup>28</sup> While Bessière's study focuses primarily on literature, and in particular the novel,<sup>29</sup> his respected voice in the French literary field only underscores the importance of hybridity in Twenty-first century-studies in literature, culture, cinema, and the arts.

Within the field of Francophone studies, Alfonso de Toro suggests the need to reconsider Francophone approaches beyond the traditional center-periphery dynamic that has dominated Francophone studies and restrained literary analysis with a French-centered literary culture and history.<sup>30</sup> De Toro proposes that transculturality is an integral component

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<sup>28</sup> As mentioned on page one, “transgeneric” refers to the crossings and intersections of multiple genres, narrative structures, and discourses.

<sup>29</sup> While Bessière limits his argument to the novel, I extend his arguments to the broader context of hybrid genres and art exhibit design.

<sup>30</sup> By center-periphery, I mean the power dynamics that once dominated colonial thought, with France as the center of reference for Francophone countries. This dynamic has continued in postcolonial

of hybrid studies. In *Épistémologies: Le Maghreb*, he contends that transculturality promotes a nonhierarchical examination of cultures, histories, and genres wherein distinction refuses marginalization and equality defies assimilation.

By shifting our attention to the intersections among and the crossings of cultures, de Toro argues that scholars may challenge the familiar trajectory of comparison in Francophone studies between a center and its periphery, i.e., between the dictates and labels established by hierarchies:

Le concept théorico-culturel de l’hybridité … surmonte le concept hégémonique … une sorte de source originale, de dualisme, ayant pour base d’un côté l’idée d’une culture pure ou originelle, et de l’autre celle d’une culture mimétique, bâtarde ou épigonale. L’hybridité signifie toujours une négociation, une tension et une irritation dans les marges des différentes cultures, une permanente recodification nomades où il n’existe ni original ni copie. Il s’agit toujours d’un processus ouvert et sans fin. Mais il est aussi très important de souligner qu’il ne s’agit pas d’un simple mélange ou d’une adaptation/assimilation des concepts culturels ou des identités. (*Épistémologies: Le Maghreb* 32)

This passage shines light on the value of the concept of hybridity, which offers an end to Manichean classifications based upon Western standards and measure. Hybridity, like *Relation*, becomes a “site for enunciation and a strategy for thinking about the World … as a nomadic and rhizomatic structure … a strategy of dehierarchization” (Heidemann and de Toro, *New Hybridities* 10-11).<sup>31</sup>

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literary studies where Francophone literature has been recognized for its difference yet considered as “Other” in comparison to French literature using French literary analyses and historical models.

<sup>31</sup> “Rhizomatic” refers to Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s concept of the rhizome: Deleuze and Gattari, *Rhizome*, Paris: Éditions de minuit (1976). I posit that a major distinction between the deleuzien concept of the rhizome and glissantien *Relation* lies in the importance that Glissant

De Toro's studies, along with those of Françoise Lionnet, urge scholars to develop hybrid transdisciplinary approaches, or a “*Creolization of Theory*,”<sup>32</sup> as Lionnet has suggested (Françoise Lionnet and Shumei Shi *The Creolization of Theory*). As de Toro's and Lionnet's studies suggest, the term “hybridity” is applicable to the works of Edouard Glissant. While Glissant's works are principally examined within the context of Caribbean studies, I argue the value of examining the glissantien concept of *Relation* beyond the realms of the Caribbean heritage and within the context of hybridity.

*Relation*, like hybridity, entails a movement of “reaching out” to experience world cultures and histories.<sup>33</sup> In an interview with Emmanuel Khérard following Glissant's death in

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attributes to cultural histories and their ties to one's identity and perception of others. Glissant argues the right for each culture to transmit the complex, entangled histories that have been overshadowed from dominant European discourse. To this end, Glissant underlines the transcultural nature of *Relation* in the transmission of world histories and its role in offering a heightened reader understanding of the complexities of heterogeneous identities: “one of the full-senses of modernity is provided henceforth by the action of human cultures’ identifying one another for their mutual transformation” (*Poetics of Relation* 24). Furthermore, Glissant's concept of *Relation* does not prescribe a “line” as the form of *Relational* movement. In other words, Glissant's *Relation* does not restrict *Relations* to a linear rhizomatic movement but rather allows it an archipelago-like fluidity. Consequently, I propose to consider Glissant's *Relation* as a continued elaboration of Deleuze's concept of the rhizome within the context of transcultural Francophone literature and cultural studies where forms, histories, and cultures spontaneously interact. It is for this reason that I will use the terms “*Relational narratives*” and “*Relational texts*” from this point forward.

<sup>32</sup> Here, I wish to underline Lionnet's use of creolization as a means for scholars to approach cultural, social, political, and historical research in a transdisciplinary fashion. As elaborated by JMG Le Clézio during an interview with *La Librairie francophone* following Edouard Glissant's death, creolization is a phenomenon that concerns those who lived the colonial experience linked with the slave trade (Khérard).

<sup>33</sup> This is contrary to the atavistic rigidity of *la pensée de la racine* that is characterized by an inward and downward movement of establishing set roots. Edouard Glissant, *IPD*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard (1996) : 59-61.

2011, Le Clézio publically recognized his shared values with Glissant concerning *Relation* and *Tout-Monde* and points out the role of *Relation* in transcultural relations:

La *Relation*, c'est-à-dire ce savoir vivre ensemble, cette nécessité de communiquer et d'échanger. C'est primordial si on veut que sur cette planète qu'il n'y ait plus la faim, plus la guerre, plus l'incompréhension ... son idée du *Tout-Monde* parce que c'est une idée merveilleuse. Ça veut dire qu'on dépasse le clivage, on dépasse les frontières, on dépasse même ce sentiment national ... sans oublier d'où on vient. (Khérad)

Here, Le Clézio underlines the value of *Relation* of enabling individuals to live peacefully amidst the diversity of the world without losing one's distinctiveness. In essence, the author supports Glissant's concept of *Tout-Monde*, which involves the embracing of human diversity in a globalizing world.<sup>34</sup> Thus, I suggest that we consider hybridity as generic, cultural, and historical crossings that invite the reader to participate in and live in what Glissant has termed the *Tout-monde*.

In Le Clézio's works, the interaction across cultures and genres enables the transmission of hybrid cultural experiences, as in the words of de Toro: "Il s'agit donc d'un modus operandi construisant des relations entre des systèmes différents" (*Épistémologies* 20). One implication of de Toro's argument for a genre "modus operandi" is its ability to build relations among different systems. Although de Toro does not say so directly, I suggest that we consider genres to be a means of giving voice to cultures and histories that interact in a *Relational* manner.

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<sup>34</sup> As we have discussed, Edouard Glissant defines the *Tout-monde* as a means of living in the existence of other cultures with an enhanced knowledge and understanding of these cultures. Within this context, cultures no longer rely on a binary concept of alterity, i.e., an "us vs. them" mentality.

Thus, I will establish a parallel between Le Clézio's argument and the concept of *Relation* as proposed by Edouard Glissant. In essence, the text becomes a space of *Relation* between and across heterogeneous genres, cultures, and histories that represent the glissantien concept of *Tout-monde*. Thus, heterogeneous genres become the means for “human cultures’ [to] identif[y] one another for their mutual transformation” (*PR* 24).

At the same time, *Relation* also signals an active state of mind or perception that Glissant describes as imaginary and that results from being in *Relation* with others:<sup>35</sup> “It seems to me that it is only through a poetic of Relation, i.e., an imaginary, that will allow us to understand these phases and implications that affect people around the world today, that will enable us to rid ourselves of the imprisonment to which we have been reduced” (*IPD* 24 [my translation]).<sup>36</sup> In short, the catalyst for *Relation* is the hybrid text, film, or art piece that is both transgeneric and transcultural.

### **Hybridity: Transgeneric Relations and Le Clézio**

It is understood that the artistically diverse forms that distinguish Le Clézio’s activities speak to the need for an approach that will consider the role of generic hybridity in

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<sup>35</sup> In the English version of *Poetics of Relation*, the following definition is given for “imaginary”: “Glissant’s sense differs from the common sense English usage of a conception that is a conscious mental image... For Glissant the imaginary is all the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving the world” (xxii). Thus, a direct relationship is established between the practical interaction of reaching out toward others and the consequential altered perception and understanding of others.

<sup>36</sup> “Et il me semble que c'est seulement une poétique de la Relation, c'est-à-dire un imaginaire, qui nous permettra de ‘comprendre’ ces phases et ces implications des situations des peuples dans le monde d'aujourd’hui, qui nous autorisera s'il se trouve à essayer de sortir de l'enfermement auquel nous sommes réduits” (*IPD* 24).

the author's works. As Le Clézio elaborates in *L'Inconnu sur la terre*,<sup>37</sup> writing is a tool for recreating the beauty, the reality of the world in which we live: “Écrire pour lier ensemble, pour rassembler les morceaux de la beauté, en ensuite recomposer, reconstruire cette beauté” (*ICT* 12). For Le Clézio, beauty exists in diversity, a diversity whose discontinuity and even disintegration can impede people's recognition of beauty. Writing is a means of recombining the fragments of reality; it offers new perspectives from which one can see and experience the transversal beauty of the world. Not only does each genre and stylistic element serve an aesthetic function of poetic beauty; the interaction of these elements also transmits an experience of the beauty of the world's diversity.

During my 2011 interview with Le Clézio, he expressed recognition of the literary world's genre classifications, but he also pointed out the irrelevance of genre theory to any attempt to classify his literature. He sees his work as resisting the notion of structured, distinct genres; explaining that he writes in order to pass on the world he encounters. He does not seek to defy French movements or schools of thought, but his objective is to communicate the cultural diversity that constitutes his daily reality:

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<sup>37</sup> On the back cover of *L'Inconnu sur la terre*, Le Clézio explains the genre of his book in this way: “Ceci n'est pas tout à fait un essai, pas tout à fait une tentative pour comprendre quelques mystères, ou pour forger quelques mythes. Ceci est une histoire ... qui pourrait être celle d'un oiseau, d'un poisson et celle d'un arbre, car elle parle beaucoup du ciel, de la mer et de la terre où avancent les racines ... Ceci est peut-être aussi, tout simplement, l'histoire d'un petit garçon inconnu qui se promène au hasard sur la terre, pas loin de la mer, un peu perdu dans les nuages – et qui aime la lumière extrême du jour.”

Au début, quand j'ai commencé à écrire, je ne voulais pas être classifié dans les genres ou les écoles qui existaient. Je ne cherchais pas à rentrer dans un genre plutôt qu'un autre. Mais depuis, je pense que je préfère ce qu'on peut appeler la nouvelle ou le roman, si on peut appeler ça des genres, parce qu'on peut tout y mettre ... J'aime ces deux formes parce qu'elles permettent de mettre ensemble des morceaux de vies différents: des conversations entendues, des choses vues ou lues. On a besoin de plus de liberté afin de transmettre la complexité de ces histoires. (van der Drift, "Les Chemins de l'interculturel" 166-167)

Indeed, Le Clézio resists classification and advocates the importance of generic freedom and diversity in order to convey the complexity of his characters and histories.

The numerous genres of photographs, drawings, and legal documents, combined with sensorial descriptions, provide multiple contact points that enable the reader or viewer not only to observe and imagine histories of numerous world cultures within the space of a single work, but also to experience them directly in an impactful, multi-dimensional manner. In *Révolutions*, *Cœur brûle et autres romances* and *Le Musée monde*, this translates into a generic hybridity that results from the intersection of French and local expressions and the generic hybridity of historical fiction,<sup>38</sup> archives, tragedy, oral testimonies, pictorial writing, polyphonic discourses, and narrative structures whose movements crisscross time and space.

In the same way that Le Clézio speaks to the importance of generic hybridity, Francophone scholars have also discussed the inextricable relationship between hybridity and literature. More than serving an aesthetic function, artistic genres in their various forms can be seen as carriers of cultures. According to Abdallah Memmes, transculturality implies

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<sup>38</sup> Notably, Breton in *R*, Maurician Creole and Spanish in *CB*, and art pieces from world cultures in *LMM*, along with symbols and words on the art pieces that originate from more than 200 different cultures. I will elaborate on these works' significance in subsequent chapters.

transversal genres and cultures: “la pratique signifiante aboutit à un processus où le contenu constitue une mise en fiction de la forme … la forme fonctionne, elle-même, comme une mise en fiction d’une problématique socio-culturelle donnée” (Memmes, *Littérature maghrébine de la langue française* 16). Indeed, a diverse generic palette provides an aesthetic in relief and transmits the richness of transcultural diversity.

While Memmes underlines the power of generic hybridity in communicating transculturality, Edouard Glissant underscores the necessity for writers and artists to break free of ethnocentric categories that impede creativity: “Ce n’est plus l’enveloppe du tout-puissant Récit, mais la dimension changeante et perdurable de tout changement et de tout échange” (IPD 25). Consequently, he encourages writers and artists alike to write “outside of the genres,” in a transversal manner, in order to interact with the “imaginaire of the reader/observer:

C’est la volonté de défaire les genres, cette partition qui a été si profitable, si fructueuse dans le cas des littératures occidentales … Je crois que nous pouvons écrire des poèmes qui sont des essais, des essais qui sont des romans, des romans qui sont des poèmes, Je veux dire que nous essayons de défaire les genres précisément parce que nous sentons que le rôles qui ont été impartis à ces genres dans la littérature occidentale ne conviennent plus … (IPD 124).

Essentially, Glissant encourages writers to step outside of Hexagonal literary dictates in order to create a *Relation* of genres that will give voice to the richness and subtleties of their creative and philosophical thought.

With this charge in mind, I propose the following definition for transgeneric hybridity: multiple genres, narrative voices, and registers that each retain their distinct

uniqueness, and that have the purpose of enabling the expression of the world's cultural and historic diversity and of inviting the reader to mediate on the issues revealed.<sup>39</sup> I will consider the interaction of heterogeneous genres, registers, and voices with the objective of shining light on the necessity of hybridity for transmitting histories and cultures and "embodying" the process of Glissant's concept of *Relation*:

Every expression of the humanities opens onto the fluctuating complexity of the world. Here poetic thought safeguards the particular, since only the totality of truly secure particulars guarantees the energy of Diversity. But in every instance this particular sets about Relation in a completely intransitive manner, relating, that is, with the finally realized totality of all possible particulars (*PR* 32).

By identifying "every expression of the humanities," i.e., transgeneric elements, I will seek to explore their *Relations* of interaction across each work's multiple cultures and histories.

### **Hybridity: *Relations* of Transcultural Histories and Le Clézio**

The complexity of Le Clézio's work lies in its generic hybridity and also in its depiction of transcultural histories. Le Clézio's treatment of histories incorporates official archives, family journals, letters and documents, newspaper headlines, dates, and places with alternating first-person and third-person fictional accounts of memories.

The function of these histories is two-fold. First, they rectify History's dominant discourse, which intentionally omits or unintentionally forgets to include these individual histories in public memory. Secondly, these histories transmit the imagined or actual daily lives of individuals whom the author encountered during his prolonged stays around the

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<sup>39</sup> By mediation, I refer to Jean Bessière's argument in *RC* for the involvement of the reader to negotiate meaning of the realities encountered in the text (60, 77).

world in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, and South and North America. As the author explained during our interview in November 2011, he claims that his fictive histories are anchored in empirical details:

MVD : On voit dans votre œuvre que vous donnez voix à ceux qui ne sont pas entendus dans la société. En leur donnant une voix, les percevez-vous de l'extérieur ou, comme vous l'écrivez dans “À peu près apologue” placez-vous à l'intérieur de leurs vies, de leurs pensées ?

JMGLC : Je crois qu'il s'agit des deux : d'être témoin et d'observer, de raconter tout ce qui concerne leur vie avec objectivité, et en même temps, de parler de leur vie depuis leur point de vue, de leurs yeux et de ce qu'ils vivent.

(van der Drift, “Les Chemins de l'interculturel” 170)

This discussion underlines Le Clézio's commitment to act as a witness to what he sees in the world and to transcribe these experiences. The overlapping narratives that alternate the observations of the third person with the first person's affective experiences place the reader in a transversal experience of observing History and also experiencing the human histories.

By displacing the emphasis from History to human histories, Le Clézio transforms historical writing where the fictive or actual human experience gives meaning to historical events rather than placing individuals as figurants for the *mise-en-scène* of History's events. In a filmed interview, the author explains the elements that differentiate the official Historical discourse from the histories that are revealed through oral and written histories:

Il y a deux histoires. Il y a la grande histoire avec un grand H, l'histoire officielle et il y a les petites histoires, les histoires locales. Il me semble que l'écrivain est plus proche de la petite que de la grande. La grande histoire a finalement aveuglé. Elle n'a pas donné de leçon et la petite histoire, celle que peut raconter un conteur ou un écrivain ... cette petite histoire sert à faire voir, rendre visible ce qui a été caché justement . . . (Caillat)

It follows, then that leclézien works to restore human dignity to those who have been denied visibility by Eurocentric discourse. Through the use of multiple genres that emphasize

orality, story-telling, myths, tales, letters, and journals, Le Clézio's writing breaks with Eurocentric hierarchies between genres such as the opposition between the novel and the tale or between oral and written discourses.

Clearly, as an “author of new departures, poetic adventure and sensual ecstasy, explorer of humanity beyond and below the reigning civilization,”<sup>40</sup> Le Clezio transcribes his imagination, which is nourished from his stays in countries around the world. As readers, we become listeners who experience histories and all the magical wonder that characterizes such an exchange.<sup>41</sup> According to Glissant, the power of histories is their ability to establish transindividual connections across cultures and time:<sup>42</sup>

Nous vivons le monde avec désormais l’envie et l’intuition d’un savoir nouveau, celui de la connivence irruée de tant d’histoires collectives, toutes particulières, un si long temps renfermées dans les certitudes de leurs géographies, et dont les plus hardies et les plus agressives, leurs tenants s’étant acharnés à conquérir et à dominer la plupart de notre planète, n’ont pour autant pas conduit à développer cette passion de rencontre, cette complicité des rapports, qui aujourd’hui nous sollicitent, nous paraissant évidentes. (ME 21)

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<sup>40</sup> The announcement of the Nobel Prize in 2008: “The Nobel Prize in Literature 2008 was awarded to Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio ‘author of new departures, poetic adventure and sensual ecstasy, explorer of humanity beyond and below the reigning civilization.’” Nobel Academy, “The Nobel Prize in Literature 2008: Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio.” *Nobelprize.org* [Stockholm], 9 October 2008. Web. 15 August 2008.

<sup>41</sup> Le Clézio references his experiences of listening to storytellers in his Nobel Speech “*In the Forest of Paradoxes*.”

<sup>42</sup> Edouard Glissant’s essay *Mémoires des esclavages* was written upon the creation of a French National Center for the Memory of Slaveries and their Abolitions. While this book shines light on the political importance of France’s recognition of their involvement in slavery, I will limit our consideration of Glissant’s arguments for the necessity of histories in the plural form. While the pretext for the essay is linked to the notion of memories of slaveries, Glissant extends his argument to the importance of multiple histories in enriching our understanding of human diversity.

Thus, in the context of hybridity, the text or art piece gives voice to unknown histories that have the power to connect people across cultures and time.

With this in mind, let us consider J. Michael Dash's preface to his translation of Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse*:

... what History attempts to do is to fix reality in terms of a rigid, hierarchical discourse. In order to keep the unintelligible realm of historical diversity at bay, History as system attempts to systematize the world through ethnocultural hierarchy and chronological progression. Consequently, a predictable narrative is established, with a beginning, middle, and end. ("Preface", *Caribbean Discourse* xxix)

Dash's observations underline the controlled and predictable narration that characterizes Eurocentric discourse. By selectively establishing ordered hierarchies, History justifies power. Thus, the diversities of individual histories are silenced in order to ensure that hierarchies remain in place.

In the case of former colonized countries, Benjamin Stora posits that the act of deflecting histories jeopardize the established civilizing images associated with colonial countries and undermine the roots for cultural identity (*La Gangrène et l'oubli* 7-9). Stora's insightful observations on Algeria apply to other nations and regions of the world whose histories are ignored by Eurocentric discourses.

As Le Clézio's works demonstrate, this phenomenon is not only specific to Algeria or the Maghreb; it applies to all regions of the world that were affected by colonization due to the post-independence regime's denial of original cultural diversity. According to Stora, those who were silenced cannot have the hope of knowing their identity without the acknowledgement of the diverse histories of our world: "Aucun peuple, aucune société, aucun individu ne saurait exister et définir son identité en état d'amnésie" (*La Gangrène et l'oubli* 319). Here, Stora emphasizes the proportionate relationship between the articulation

of histories and the affirmation of identity. At the same time, Stora underlines the inherent cultural diversity in the Maghreb that was occulted with colonization. He rightly contends that identity cannot be reduced to the colonial tradition of one defining the other.

Specifically, Edouard Glissant posits that a vital component of transcultural *Relations* is the exchange of what constitutes a human's daily life, i.e., histories, arts, and sensory experiences:

With us history and literature, their capitalization removed and told in our gestures, come together once again to establish, beyond some historical ideal, the novel of the relationship of individual to collectivity, of individual to the Other, of We to Us. The cross-cultural imagination is the framework for this new episode.  
(*Caribbean Discourse* 87)

Indeed, history and literature enable transcultural encounters by removing the imposed *devoir* of forgetting and by providing new spaces for individuals to recognize the identity and histories once otherwise unknown.

The intricate relationship between history and fiction is explored in Françoise Lionnet's work *Autobiographical Voices*, in which she echoes Glissant's cry for the articulation of once-silenced histories. Lionnet splendidly argues that the narration of histories is vital for the elimination of hierarchies and the encouragement of equal recognition:

To establish nonhierarchical connections is to encourage lateral relations: instead of living within the bounds created by a linear view of history or society, we become free to interact on an equal footing with all the traditions that determine our present predicament. (7)

Thus, by revealing “nonhierarchical connections” between transcultural histories of various origins, Le Clézio provides numerous insights into the lives, legends, cultures, and socio-cultural realities of a postcolonial world.

To this end, Marina Salles insightfully articulates in her book *Le Clézio: notre contemporain* that this symphony of perspectives places the reader in a privileged position to observe and extract meaning that is relevant to their own lives:

La pluralité des voix narratives, qui met en résonance divers récits de vie à des époques et en des lieux différents, plonge ainsi le lecteur dans l'épaisseur du temps de l'histoire ... La polyphonie représente donc plus qu'un procédé: une perception du monde et une poétique. Elle accomplit, dans une forme non pas simplifiée mais très exigeante, ce qui était assigné comme fin à la littérature dès les premiers livres: s'emparer de la vie dans sa richesse et sa diversité, embrasser la matière la plus ample, faire éclater les limites spatio-temporelles de l'existence individuelle, se soustraire aux conditionnements culturels, donner à entendre la parole de l'autre, le bruissement des voix extérieures et intérieures, les dissonances, les accords, les échos. (248-249)

Hence, the polyphonic text disrupts an individual's perception of the world or nation that is an imaginary community.<sup>43</sup> The interaction between multiple histories releases a multitude of distinct voices that offer a manifold perspective on the human meaning behind the histories lived.

When considered in opposition to one-dimensional authoritative voices, multiple histories promise enhanced insights into the complexities of humanity across time. Bessière refers to the multi-faceted nature of identity in time and space as one of *transindividualité*. He contends that through the transmission of transcultural histories, identities are not homogenized; rather, they are enriched by the encounters that are made:

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<sup>43</sup> The relationship between the concept of nation and the concept of hybridity lies outside the scope of my dissertation, but Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* explores the imaginary constructs of the nation that affect territorialization, community ties, and capitalism.

Cette transindividualité se dessine au sein d'un monde, donné à la fois comme global – cette globalisation est figurée comme global ... et comme divers ... [elle] ne fait pas lire la concordance des identités multiples et de ce vaste habitat, que constitue ou qu'illustre le monde global, mais la disjonction au sein de ce monde global : celle de l'individu aux identités multiples et mutuellement disjonctives, qu'il convient de caractériser comme les figures de l'intersection et comme celles des formes intermédiaires de la différence. (RC 350)

As may be apparent, this interaction among histories and cultures follows the *Relational* dynamic of the aspect of hybridity as discussed in first pages of this chapter. Like Bessière, Glissant underscores the limits of a nation-based conception of history and literature in his essay *Mémoires des esclavages*, which he wrote for the opening of the French National Center for the Memory of Slaveries and their Abolitions. In this essay, Glissant expands upon the discussion of history that he began in *Caribbean Discourse* and situates his concept of *Relation* in the context of histories.

In the introduction of *Mémoires des esclavages*, Glissant underlines the world's desire for new knowledge, knowledge of once repressed collective and individual histories that had been silenced under the weight of a dominant Historical narrative. Furthermore, he contends that transmitting multiple histories can enable the world to move toward a heightened transcultural understanding.

In his book, Glissant designates three categories of memories that I will classify as histories in order to avoid any ambiguities as to the intention of Le Clézio's writing as a device of memory:<sup>44</sup> personal histories, collective histories, and transversal histories.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> It is essential to underline here the distinction between memory and history. As brilliantly explored by Paul Ricœur in *Memory, History and Forgetting*, memory can traditionally be considered to be a literary device that traces the mental process of remembering. On the other hand, histories consist of

Glissant suggests that personal histories are inwardly focused on individual memories that are melancholic or unhappy and that are linked with regrets or suffering (*ME* 27). These histories represent the perceptions that individuals have of the world based solely on their own experiences that are isolated from the histories of others: “la mémoire personnelle, qu’elle soit automatique (acquise) ou inconsciente (refoulée), est difficilement améliorable par le moyen d’un enseignement: on apprend à se souvenir, mais on n’apprend pas à se souvenir autrement ...” (*ME* 162).

However, collective histories include those of a community. While these histories create a shared sense of community, these histories may be built on uncertain facts and events (*ME* 27). Furthermore, the transmission of collective histories preserves a collective sense of identity, the focus remains isolated in the past:

Ce que nous appellerions la mémoire de la tribu cristallise autour du passé, seulement du passé, elle ne garde pas volontiers en réserve les éléments positifs qui entrent dans sa composition, car elle renvoie les moments heureux de tout passé à la seule jouissance des individus. Nous supposons aussi que les refoulés de cette mémoire concernent avant tout l’étranger, l’insolite, le dérangeant, l’obscur. (*ME* 164-5)

Here, Glissant underlines the fact that collective histories can lead to isolation, to divisions between “us” and “them,” and to the promotion of nationalism and cultural divisions (*ME* 33).

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the *stories* of memories that are told through literature, oral expression, and the arts. Through the use of heterogeneous literary and extra-literary genres, histories become extensions of memory that, in fact, go beyond the texts themselves to readers’ imaginations. Thus, histories involve the reader in the process of remembering individual and collective realities that are subsequently incorporated into the reader’s daily life.

<sup>45</sup> Glissant refers to these as la mémoire personnelle, la mémoire de la tribu and la mémoire de la collectivité Terre (*ME* 163-167).

Through the use of transversal histories, dominant discourses are no longer contained within the boundaries of a defined group, collectivity, or nation that once focused on a linear trajectory of continuity for the sake of justifying hierarchies of cultures, nations, and individuals. Here, individual histories offer a myriad of perspectives that deviate from the dominant Historical discourse. Hence, transversal histories can encourage dialogue across cultures and once immobile hierarchical structures, and they can transform an individual's imagined perceptions of others:

La mémoire de la collectivité Terre rassemble tout ce qui rapproche les membres d'une collectivité ou d'une nation dans leur commun rapport à l'autre, considéré à son tour non pas comme communauté ou nation, mais comme élément de la globalité Terre. Cette mémoire est tout entière tournée vers l'avenir ... à partir de nous, de notre présent (*ME* 165).

Ultimately, Glissant underscores the power of transversal histories to enhance transcultural understanding and suggests that such transversal histories are superior to any pledged allegiance to a collective or national ideal.

Of these three personal, collective and transversal histories, Glissant asserts that transversal histories best represent his concept of *Relation* due to their composite nature, their weaving together of personal and tribal histories in a transversal fashion: “[l]a mise en commun d'une autre manière de mémoire et d'une autre donnée des imaginaires . . . Elle ne relève pas d'un principe moral, mais d'une Poétique de la Relation” (*ME* 134). In the context of histories, *Relation* becomes an active quest for transcultural understanding and dialogue. As a result, transversal histories recognize the influence of both History and histories in one's present state whose *Relations* promise renewed dialogue and understanding.

In my own discussion of hybridity, I will demonstrate how hybrid genres and narrative structures facilitate the weaving together of transversal histories in JMG Le

Clézio's work. The resulting dynamic erases Western-devised hierarchies and invites the reader to acquire knowledge of silenced or unknown realities. In this dissertation, I propose that the interactions among multiple histories within a single literary text is representative of transversality, the spontaneous nature of *Relation*. Heidemann and de Toro point out that multiple histories and diverging viewpoints disrupt a Eurocentric construction of History and offer opportunities to witness an individual's histories within a privileged hybrid space:

The passages between cultures perform a dynamic space where cultural contact becomes a source of creativity, a space of contact that changes both cultures. This happens without hierarchic dependence, as cultural transferences is a gain for both cultures. (*New Hybridities* 59)

By weaving together transversal histories and cultures across genres, Le Clézio's work provides a contact point for the reader to interact with the histories, both participating in and witnessing multiple pasts while contemplating their meaning and relevance.

Such interactions across cultures should not be be mistaken for a utopian philosophy. As eloquently proposed by Roussel-Gillet in her recent book *J.M.G Le Clézio. L'écrivain de l'intercertitude*, the author's depictions of world cultures can be seen as a form of activism to encourage readers to engage with others who suffer from cultural oppression:

Son œuvre fait résonner la rencontre de cultures différentes: entre classes, entre pays, entre imaginaires et entre langues. Il ne promet pas un monde meilleur et utopique mais écrit l'urgence de se préoccuper des plus démunis, déclassés ou délaissés, immigrés solitaires ou femmes nées d'alliance métissée vivant dans le dénuement. (53)

The diversity of Le Clézio's works mirrors the cultural heterogeneity of the world, and in so doing, his works invite readers to contemplate socio-cultural issues that plague our contemporary world.

Le Clézio's literary work bears witness to both verifiable, historical facts as well as to the personal stories that accompany the historical facts. Together, these histories add a

human dimension to both time and place. Indeed, the transmission of transcultural histories will make possible the affirmation of identities and the recognition of realities that have existed in the invisible shadows of dominant culture and History.

### **Hybridity: Toward an Engaged<sup>46</sup> Reader Response**

At this point, I would like to emphasize that I do not propose to consider the implied reader that suggests “prestructuring [a] role to be assumed” for all readers and viewers (Iser 145). My reason for this is two-fold. First, as I hope to have made clear, it would be contradictory to the philosophy of *Relation* to anticipate readers’ expectations based on stereotypical labels. Second, as underlined by the author during our interview, Le Clézio believes that each reader interacts with the text in a way that is meaningful in his or her daily life:

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<sup>46</sup> By using the term “engaged,” I do not mean to connote engaged literature, *littérature engagée*, which is associated with French writers such as Sartre who, in the 1950s and 1960s, wrote texts that were seen as expressing political or social stances. While it is agreed that literature influences people’s perceptions of others, I do not assume that readers will become politically engaged in revolutionary causes. Rather, I suggest that particular narrative devices *engage* the reader to *traverser* the *Relations* across histories, cultures, and narrative forms and experience the globality of humankind.

MvdD : Et si on parlait de la réception de votre travail littéraire, que souhaiteriez-vous de votre lecteur?

JMGLC : Je ne veux pas guider le lecteur dans une pensée ou une vision. Je veux donner des éléments pour que le lecteur construise un récit des éléments donnés mais c'est le lecteur qui décide du sens à donner.

MvdD : Alors, pensez-vous que c'est à nous, ensuite d'intégrer ce récit dans notre vie quotidienne et notre interaction avec autrui ? Par exemple, dans le texte intitulé "À Peu Près Apologue", qui sert d'épilogue dans *Histoire du pied*, vous parlez de la capacité d'entrer dans le corps et les pensées des gens, de vous glisser dans leur peau et d'imaginer leurs vies ... ?

JMGLC : Oui, je pense que c'est ça. Si on reconstruit le récit, et ce récit commence à faire partie de nous, parce que c'est nous qui l'avons créé, notre interaction dans la vie quotidienne sera forcément influencée ... (van der Drift, "Les Chemins de l'interculturel" 168)

While it is often a given that the reader engages in some sort of extra-textual reflection during his or her reading experience, Bessière points out the importance of this readerly practice for comprehending a text's relevance to his or her transcultural world:

Premier questionnement [concernant la problématique liée à un roman contemporain] le lecteur lit le roman comme cela qui transcende ses propres conditions, qu'il expose – la stratification des temps, la superposition des lieux ... comme cela qui interroge ces conditions. Second questionnement: le roman et la lecture qui en est faite, entraînent que le lecteur, à l'occasion de sa lecture, se situe dans un contexte élargi – celui qui permet de rendre compte de ce roman, de ces stratifications, de ces superpositions ... (RC 14-15).

Therefore, the text or art exhibit can be seen as a vehicle for the reader and visitor mediation.

Yet, one may ask what exactly is meant by the term "mediation"? To mediate is, denotatively, to act as an intermediate agent in a negotiation of meaning and agreement. While the text may serve as a mediator between the world of the reader and the world within the text, the reader will in turn contemplate this meaning from a new cognitive perspective. According to Françoise Lionnet, literature and the arts can promise an understanding of

others as well as oneself because of the new cognitive perspectives that art and literature can offer:

New ways of seeing can indeed emancipate us. Literature, like all art, can show us new means of constructing the world, for it is by changing the images and structures through which we encode meaning that we can begin to develop new scripts and assign new roles to the heroines [and heros] of the stories we recount in order to explain and understand our lives. (*Autobiographical Voices* 91)

I concur with Lionnet's argument that literature and art can be seen as catalysts for bringing about paradigm shifts where *Relation* can be experienced as well as practiced.

Obviously, it is beyond the scope of my dissertation to engage in a qualification and quantification of such mediation and activism. Yet I must emphasize the importance of undertaking such a challenge in the leclézien field, as has also been suggested by Marina Salles (*Le Clézio, notre contemporain* 206, 286-287, 296-299). Conducting a study that would jointly consider readerly mediation and activism would open up a transdisciplinary dialogue of the author's work beyond the realm of literary studies to explore the potential transitivity of acting as a witness, as Le Clézio mentioned in his Nobel speech, "La Forêt des Paradoxes."

In this light, I will consider the generic elements and narrative discourses used in Le Clézio's works that shine light on the act of "bearing witness" to transcultural histories, i.e., the interrogative form; affective experiences by the implication of sensations; and senses that are visual, aural and at times mystical experiences of exchange.<sup>47</sup> If we are to consider

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<sup>47</sup> By the term "mystical," I mean descriptions of states of being, occurrences, or observations that resemble instances that Le Clézio has termed "l'extase matérielle": "Être présent dans sa pensée, comme il l'est dans sa vie, c'est-à-dire coordonner les actes journaliers, les expériences familières, les

literature as a thread that weaves its histories with the imagination of the reader, literature, then, becomes the first step to meeting other cultures and histories. As stated by Edouard Glissant in *IPD*, the *imaginaire* is the starting point for experiencing human diversity without the loss of individual identity that is associated with assimilation (30-31).

I propose that these instances of mediation consist of personal, intellectual and spiritual contemplation that may perpetuate a “revolution” of thought, as underlined by Bessière:

Il [l’effet de la médiation] n’indique ou n’oblige à aucune reconnaissance d’une position de vérité ou de fausseté, qui soit attachée au roman. Il implique que le roman soit une représentation certaine et une promesse également certaine, celles de “l’agentivité” humaine: le roman est le résultat d’une action; il sera l’occasion d’autres actions – les lectures, elles-mêmes rapportables à une “agentivité”. (*RC* 60)

As we can see, both Bessière and Glissant underscore the potential for literature and the arts to open minds to an open dialogue with the world: “l’idée de l’ouverture au monde, et enfin l’idée que tout ceci n’est pas contradictoire de la singularité … nous ne changerons rien à la situation des peuples du monde si nous ne changeons pas cet imaginaire” (Edouard Glissant, *IPD* 66).

As a result, the reader or viewer may align actions with new mental representations and engage in what Glissant has defined as *Relation*, or what Le Clézio outlined as an “enlightened movement” [my translation] in *L’Extase matérielle*:

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repas, le sommeil, les fatigues, tous les encombrements, toutes les attaques, toutes les jouissances avec sa conception du monde. Jamais la pensée ne se détache du corps” (*EM* 200). Note that Keith Moser (2008) has brilliantly explored this concept, which he calls “privileged moments,” in selected leclézien short stories and novels.

Du mouvement de la connaissance, il ne reste plus que l'acte, l'acte seul, fou à force d'être lucide, l'acte qui n'est plus qu'un moteur dont l'énergie n'est plus freinée. La communication est la vérité vivante de tout ce que nous sommes, Le monde, la réalité, les pensées, les mots sont des transferts (*EM* 215).

Opposite an atavic culture that seeks to dominate others, *Relation* is a manner of thinking and a state of being. As a way of thinking, the reader engages with others in all of their diversity without measure. Such a conscious effort transforms the *imaginaire*. Thus, by affirming a personal transformation of thinking and interacting in the world, the reader becomes engaged in a *Relational* way of living.

By examining the stylistic elements that invite an active readerly mediation, I will explore the dialogical relation that is established between the work and the reader that underscores the value of hybridity in heightening understanding across cultures. Ultimately, I posit that leclézien hybridity is illustrative of Edouard Glissant's concept of *Relation* by its unending crossings of histories and cultures that invite an active reader to reflect on his or her participation in the world's heterogeneity.

Through this study, my aim is to explicate the socio-cultural value of Le Clézio's work in promoting intercultural understanding. What is more, I wish to shine light on potential transversal methods for Francophone scholars who approach literary, performing, and visual arts in the globalizing world of the Twenty-first century.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RELATIONS OF HYBRIDITY IN *RÉVOLUTIONS*

As outlined in Chapter One, *Révolutions* is by far the most hybrid work under the designation “roman” in Le Clézio’s corpus. It earns this designation through its use of multiple genres; narrative discourses; and voices, histories, and world cultures. More specifically, the generic hybridity of *Révolutions* can be seen in its overlapping narrative voices that crisscross diverse geographical and temporal spaces, that combine history and fiction and genres as diverse as official documents, personal journals, letters, and oral testimonies.

While leclézien scholars such as Marina Salles (2006, 2009), Bronwen Martin, and Claude Cavallero have discussed the polyphonic nature of *Révolutions*, I argue that their studies have separately explored either narrative and generic elements or historical and cultural elements.

In Salles’ article “Formes du métissage et métissage des formes dans *Révolutions* de J.-M.G. Le Clézio”, she rightly proposes to consider *Révolutions* as a text of cultural *métissage*. Salles refers to *métissage* within the context of a refusal of binary thought as proposed by François Laplatine and Alexi Nouss in their work *Métissages d’Arcimboldo à Zombi*:

... Le métissage contredit précisément la polarité homogène/hétérogène. Il s'offre comme une troisième voie entre la fusion totalisante de l'homogène et la fragmentation de l'hétérogène. Le métissage est une composition dont les composantes gardent leur intégrité. (8-9)

Here, one can clearly see that Laplatine and Nouss' definition of *métissage* echoes Glissant's concept of *Relation*,<sup>48</sup> where distinct elements interact without losing their uniqueness. Salles posits that the *métissage* of *Révolutions* resides in its depiction of the ineluctable future of *métisse* societies (81). Salles's discussion of *métissage* in a postcolonial context underlines the process of deterritorialization that occurs through the presence of numerous geographies and histories and a polyphonic narrative.

Rather than positing an occurrence of deterritorialization in the deleuzien sense, which would involve a taking away or a destruction of power, I instead posit that the transversal nature of geographies, histories, and cultures through numerous genres highlights the aversive nature of binary power struggles. While clashes between cultures can exist, Le Clézio's writing reinstates the identities of heterogeneous territories, cultures, and languages that have always characterized our world and that suggest a rapport of Glissant's *Tout-monde*. Furthermore, I contend that it is essential to consider *Révolutions* in light of recent studies on hybridity that underline the *Relational* interaction between each literary and extra-

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<sup>48</sup> We have established that *Relation* consists of reaching outwards toward other cultures and acknowledging differences. *Relation* transforms one's perception of the world and promotes continued reflection and interaction. While reaching out to other cultures is indicative of *Relation*, it does not signify the loss of distinctiveness in transcultural exchanges. With regard to the reader experience, Glissant underlines the transcultural nature of *Relation* in the transmission of world histories and its role of offering a heightened readerly understanding of the complexities of heterogeneous identities.

literary genre whose unpredictability acts as a carrier of once-marginalized histories and cultures.

Ultimately, what is at stake here is the role of genres beyond an aesthetic function. Genres, and their subsequent *Relation*, act as cultural passers offering varying perspectives on heterogeneous forms of cultural diversity. In other words, a wide palette of generic elements not only enables the expression of diversity, but it also makes possible the distinct representation of transcultural richness.

While Salles's work highlights the anticolonialist position of JMG Le Clézio's works, the recent book of honorary research fellow Brownen Martin, *The Fiction of J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Postcolonial Reading*, analyzes the author's anticolonial position. In her consideration of *Révolutions*, Martin argues that by using both autobiographical sources and fiction in *Révolutions*, Le Clézio launches an "unmitigated attack on French colonialism and slavery" (*The Fiction of J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Postcolonial Reading* 54). She focuses on two threads of narrative, those of Jean Eudes and of Jean Marro, which can be interpreted as being loosely based on the life of Le Clézio's Breton ancestor, François Alexis Le Clézio: "a fictionalized rendering of the author's own experiences during the 1950s and 1960s" (53). Martin contends that the "historical intertext will play a central role in the production and enrichment of meaning" (56).

Although I concede the importance of the historical intertext in *Révolutions*, I will insist on the importance of Le Clézio's use of interspersed fictional and historical genres, which creates a *Relational* text that connects otherwise disparate histories and cultures while engaging the reader in this process.

At this point, I wish to emphasize the valuable work of Claude Cavallero, *J.M.G. Le Clézio ou les marges du roman*. As Cavallero argues in his meticulous structural analysis of Le Clézio's works throughout the early 1990s, the originality of the author's work lies in its generic "between-ness."<sup>49</sup> Le Clézio's work's uniqueness indeed lies in its undefinable character. Yet, the term "between-ness" suggests a "mixing" or "blending" that entails a dilution<sup>50</sup> of generic distinctiveness. For this reason, I reiterate my underlying recommendation to consider the interaction of the generic elements that create a literary hybridity whose heterogeneity serves as a means to reveal the disparity and the diversity of hidden or unknown voices that have been silenced by dominant Western discourse.

By the criterion of generic diversity and narrative structures, *Révolutions* can, indeed, be considered Le Clézio's masterpiece. To this end, Martin argues that *Révolutions* should be "regarded by many as Le Clézio's masterpiece and as the richest and most powerfully subversive of his texts to date" (*The Fiction of J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Postcolonial Reading*, 1). In making this argument, it is necessary to consider why *Révolutions* should be considered a masterpiece. Specifically, I assert that the text's uniquely masterpiece-like quality its nonlinear, *Relational* narrative structure, complete with a myriad of first-person discourses, multiple genres, and settings that span seven countries and three centuries over five hundred

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<sup>49</sup> In comparison to other French writers labeled as French by the French literary establishment before the Twenty-First century.

<sup>50</sup> Underlining is added for emphasis.

and seventeen pages, settings that seem unrelated to one another due to their geographical and historical distance.<sup>51</sup>

In an effort to build upon Martin's, Salles', and Cavallero's observations concerning the polyphonic nature and geographical reach of *Révolutions*, I will explore the hybrid interaction of multiple narrative discourses with heterogeneous genres, geographies, time periods and histories that, together, exemplify the *Relational* cultural dialogues that transcend barriers of time, space and cultures. With the objective of underlining the dynamics of hybridity present in this work, I will first explore the text's hybrid formal elements by examining the significance of the paratext, the narrative structure of the text, and the overall distribution of narrative discourses across time, space and genres. Second, I will examine the relationship between a hybrid narrative structure and the transmission of personal and collective histories throughout the work.

As we shall see, rather than anchoring the narrative in Historical references where the human experience is hidden behind the shadows of official Historical discourse, Le Clézio places the emphasis on the human experience with references that enable the reader to situate the history within a given period of time. With the emphasis on the personal, the author underlines the intimate perspective of sharing histories and the passing of cultures between the text and the reader that can result from a hybrid text. Finally, I will underscore the function of *Relations* across these generic and cultural aspects of the text that engage the

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<sup>51</sup> The page numbers correspond to the Gallimard white edition. These countries are Algeria, England, France, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico and Tanzania. While there are references to the Aztec civilization and writings, *Révolutions* narrates events from the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries.

reader to reflect more closely on the importance and impact of revolutions in our interconnected world.

### ***Relations across Genres***

#### **The “Novel” and a Hybrid Narrative Structure**

I will begin this section by underlining the function of the paratext in announcing the concept of hybridity. The title and the epigraph jointly shine light on the importance of multiplicity, movement, and change. As argued by Gérard Genette in his well-known work *Paratexts*, “identification is the most important function of the title” (80). Thus, we must ask: Why is this book entitled *Révolutions*? First, the omission of a definite or indefinite article signals an ambiguity concerning the content of the book. The author does not situate the text within a particular context by the use of the definite article “les”, nor does he imply nonspecificity by the indefinite article “des.” Rather, the absence of an article announces a multiplicity of revolutions of which the reader must discover their meaning. Second, the definition of the word “revolution” underscores the theme of multiplicity. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, “revolution” denotes a trajectory of a complete circle, a sudden change in social and moral order. It is important to underline the use of the plural, indicating multiplicity. Hence, hybridity is announced at the onset of the paratext within an historical and socio-cultural context.

Furthermore, the notion of hybridity is further emphasized with the book’s anonymous epigraph, “*Avel aveliou oll avel / Vent, vents, tout est vent*” (R 9).<sup>52</sup> Here, the use of Breton signals the importance of regional cultures, which is a predominant element of Le

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<sup>52</sup> The English translation would read “Wind, winds, all is wind” (my translation).

Clézio's work. In addition, the use of Breton at the opening of a French text signals the importance of original languages that existed before the creation of nations and that have since been forgotten. In essence, Le Clézio reinstates an original language and moves beyond the "historical error" that lies in the foundation of the nation that forgets or denies linguistic and cultural diversity:

Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation and it is for this reason that the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality. Historical inquiry, in effect, throws light on the violent acts that have taken place at the origin of every political formation, even those that have been the most benevolent in the consequences. Unity is always brutally established. (Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?")

By placing this saying in French as an epigraph, Le Clézio shines light on, in the words of Renan, "the violent acts that have taken place at the origin of every political formation ... Unity is always brutally established," violent acts that have facilitated the forgetting of "other" languages and cultures (Renan, "What is a Nation?").

While Genette points out that the anonymity of an epigraph could lead a reader to a "state of uncertainty" (*Paraxtexts* 153), the translation in French clarifies its meaning for the French reader while underscoring the importance of the Breton language in French culture. Furthermore, Genette elaborates that due to its proximity to the text, the epigraph's function adds further commentary to the title (156, 159), a title that also implies the author's Breton ancestry. By choosing a Breton epigraph, Le Clézio highlights the geographical context for the work while underlining the importance of orality, translation, and the written text in the transmission of histories and cultures.

In addition, Le Clézio reinforces the polysemic meaning of the title "*Révolutions*," i.e., a rotating spatial movement and a quest for a new moral or social order. The Breton

saying emphasizes the vastness of the world through the principal element of air that circulates through the four cardinal winds of North, South, East, and West. What is more, the use of wind in the singular, the plural, and then finally in the universal shines light on the distinctive identity of each wind on its own, with another and in its totality when they are joined together, *mise en Relation*: “tout est vent.” Thus, the initial “revolution” as a quest for moral change originates in Jean Eudes and Marie Anne Naour, the protagonist Jean Marro’s Breton ancestors who moved from Bretagne to Mauritius. From here, the revolution is then passed on to Jean Marro who, through his travels across the globe, discovers his own and other social and moral *revolutions*.

As we shall later see, a close analysis of the hybrid narrative structure underlines a *Relational* construction where the main discourses of Jean Eudes and Jean Marro are interspersed with narrative discourses from multiple cultures and histories that disappear and reappear at various moments throughout the text. This is to say that despite the fragmented narrative structure, the plurality of voices, histories, and voices, each culture, voice, and history reaches out to the other in a *Relational* movement. Thus, the book is framed under the sign of plurality and movement across time and space that departs from a “monolingual” discourse in order to move towards one of plurality where disparate narrative discourses,<sup>53</sup> histories, cultures, times, and spaces intersect each other and, by consequence, establish reciprocal *Relations*.

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<sup>53</sup> Here I refer to Jacques Derrida’s book *Monolingualism of the Other*. More particularly, I refer to Derrida’s rejection of simplifying one’s identity to one voice, particularly in considering leclézien hybridity as a reflection of the diversity of the world. As the reader progresses through the text, the narrative structure becomes more complex, with diverse discourses, cultures, and histories.

I wish to point out the traditional conception of the over-arching genre attributed to this text, i.e., *roman* or novel. The *roman*, by tradition in the history of Western literature, has been considered to be a melting pot of generic elements. As proposed by Daniel Mortier, the novel has always been the gold standard for melting together the most disparate aesthetic elements originating from multiple genres:<sup>54</sup>

Le terme *roman* apparaît au long des siècles comme une appellation générique sous la bannière de laquelle se rangent des récits fort différents, représentatifs des esthétiques les plus variés, et poursuivant les finalités les plus disparates. Le genre ... peut être considéré comme une sorte de creuset permanent dans lequel sont venus se fondre à tour des éléments empruntés à d'autres genres.

(Mortier, *Les Grands Genres littéraires* 121)

Rather than a melting or mixing together of heterogeneous generic elements in *Révolutions*, wherein each element's distinctiveness would be lost, I argue that every generic element plays a distinct role of mirroring the complexity of the cultures and time periods portrayed in the text. In other words, they reflect the concept of Glissant's *Relation* where genres maintain their disctinctiveness while also entering in dialogue with diversity.

If we consider, as suggested by Todorov in *Genres in Discourse*, that genres are defined by society and exemplify or express a culture's ideology in relation to time and space,<sup>55</sup> the task of restricting genre definitions becomes problematic in view of the world's current state of ongoing cultural and historical encounters that constantly modify the barriers of time and space. Thus, by considering *Révolutions* within the context of hybridity, I

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<sup>54</sup> Underlining has been added for emphasis.

<sup>55</sup> *Genres in Discourse* 12.

underline the intersections of numerous world cultures and histories regardless of the overarching genre.<sup>56</sup> Again, my purpose is to shine light on the encounters of multiple cultures and histories within the same text, a heterogeneous world that can only be reflected in a hybrid narrative structure.

I posit that the hybrid architecture of Le Clézio's text represents a universe of several worlds and times that, in turn, underlines the coexistence of human diversity<sup>57</sup> amidst universality. Hence, the very structure of the text transcends the fixed states of narrative time as described by Paul Ricœur: "Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of a temporal existence" (*Time and Narrative* 3). In other words, the zigzagging across time and space collapses the dividing barriers of time and space, thus allowing for each story to be lived individually and separately and also in *Relation* to the histories whose interaction is contained within the text itself.

The interaction among narrative voices, as well as across genres, geographies, and time periods, constitutes a dynamic, *Relational* structure, rather than a linear, chronological structure or an analeptic-metaleptic memorial framework. Each distinct generic element, discourse, history, and culture interacts with the others in an unpredictable fashion and adds to the notion of what Glissant refers to as a *Relational* history, where no single story is closed

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<sup>56</sup> The referenced cultures are as follows: Algerian, English, French, Malagasy, Mauritian, Mexican, Mesoamerican and Tanzanian. The time periods span the Fifteenth through the Twentieth centuries.

<sup>57</sup> "Représenter un univers de plusieurs mondes et de plusieurs temps, permet d'exposer plus nettement la figuration de la diversité des êtres humains ..." (RC 71). Furthermore, Le Clézio emphasizes the numerous cultures, histories and diversity have been forgotten (R 51-52).

off within the confines of its own territory or in a single logic regarding its collective thought<sup>58</sup>. Thus, the text's structure facilitates the spiraling, continued movement of a revolution from its starting point in time and space, even while amplifying the narrative by grafting first person micro-narratives that provide the reader with historical reference points from which to trace the multiple narrative discourses and their revolutionary stories.

On the surface, the book traces two principal narratives of the Eudes-Marro family. The first is the first-person narrative of Jean Eudes,<sup>59</sup> who emigrated to Mauritius from France in the late Eighteenth century. The second is a two-fold, first-person and third-person narrative of Jean Marro, whose travels crisscross from France, to England, back to France, then to Mexico, France again, and finally Mauritius. As indicated by the repetition of characters' first names and the alternation between first- and third-person narrative voices, *Révolutions* announces the theme of plurality and circular movement and the crisscrossing nature of the relationships between time and space and among histories, cultures, and genres.

At a first glance, *Révolutions* does not contain a traditional table of contents with distinctly divided chapters. Rather, to one who reads or glances through the book, the overarching structure becomes clear with seven chapters that are designated by a dividing page with a thematic title: 1) *Une enfance rêvée*, 2) *Rumeurs de guerre*, 3) *Le Bout du Monde*, 4) *Mariage des âmes*, 5) *Jamaica*, 6) *Une frontière* and 7) *Retour à Ébène*. While

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<sup>58</sup> Translation is my own: “[a]ucune histoire particulière … n'est renfermée dans le seul enclos de son territoire ni dans la seule logique de sa pensée collective” (*PR* 211-212).

<sup>59</sup> This character, as argued by Bronwen Martin, is “loosely based on the life of Le Clézio’s Breton ancestor, François Alexis Le Clézio, who after fighting in the Revolutionary Wars, emigrated in 1798 to the French colony of Mauritius” (*The Fiction of J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Postcolonial Reading* 53).

seven distinct chapters give the appearance of a narration that advances in a linear fashion from the starting point of a story to its closure, each chapter reveals a myriad of geographically and temporally disjointed histories that are woven throughout the entire text. Yet, despite this fragmentation, the final phrase of each chapter reaches out to the first phrase of the following chapter with a recurring image or a continuing thought that announces an undercurrent of *Relations* between each history and across temporal and geographical spaces, narrative voices, and genres.

***Relations of Histories and Cultures Across Genres:  
Mauritius, France and the Distant Algerian war,  
Jean Eudes, Catherine and Jean Marro***

The first half of the book, chapters one through four with their two hundred and seventy pages, presents Jean Marro's adolescence in Nice and his aunt Catherine Marro's remembrances of her Mauritian youth through an extradiegetic narrator, and Jean Eudes' first- person narrative through his journal entries wherein he recounts his young adulthood in Northern France during the French Revolution and his departure for Mauritius. Over the span of two centuries, Le Clézio reveals the elements that influence the two Jeans' respective revolutionary quests for personal meaning and social understanding.

Meanwhile, the juxtaposition of the three histories underlines the interrelatedness that characterizes a “revolution” as a spiraling movement or, rather, as a domino effect: Jean Eudes’ initiatives can be seen to set into motion those of Jean Marro, where Catherine serves as a memorial bridge between the two. While relating her personal and family memories, Catherine provides a means for connection between the two histories of Jean Eudes and Jean Marro.

In the first chapter, *Une enfance rêvée*, the presence of the extradiegetic narrator serves as a witness describing Jean's physical sensations experienced when learning of Catherine's and her family's past in Mauritius: "Jean venait à la Katativa pour partager cela, ce doute, ce frisson, pour connaître le secret dont Cathy Marro était la dernière gardienne" (R 52). Alongside the narrator, the reader becomes the witness to the physical and emotional relations that are created between personal and collective memories that are transferred to Jean from Catherine, "la gardienne de mémoire."

This transformation corresponds to Paul Ricœur's concept of reliving the past in the present where the individual inherits all images and feelings of past thoughts and consequently erases the barrier between the past and the present by reliving the past.<sup>60</sup> As Catherine and Jean Marro relive the past in the present, the ritual is not only reserved for the person reliving the past, for remembering affects all witnesses who are transformed by the reverberations of memory:

... d'un seul coup Catherine pénètre dans son monde. Ça se voit parce qu'il y a, comment dire ? un changement dans la lumière. On est toujours là, au dernier étage de l'immeuble et, en même temps, on est là-bas, dans le grand jardin d'Ébène ... (R 165)

The physiological splitting described in the above quote indicates the power of histories, of memory, to transcend time and space, and also to weave distinct narrative structures and diverse genres.

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<sup>60</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, Trans. Kathleen Blamely and David Pellauer, Chicago: Chicago University Press (1984): 227-231.

One example of bridging physiological distances through overlapping narratives can be found at the end of a section in the first chapter when Jean leaves a remembrance session at his aunt's feeling transformed yet alone: "Jean sentait tout cela qui tournait, se mélangeait dans sa tête, lui donnait le frisson. Il marchait le long de la rue Reine-Jeanne, dans une extraordinaire solitude " (58). In response to such solitude and the power of remembrance, the next section entitled *Juillet 1792* acts as an oral "response" to Jean Marro's desperation with the surprising, first-person narration of his distant ancestor Jean Eudes.

The overlapping of the narrative voices, the orality and fiction and history, introduce proximity or a *Relation* between the histories and the human desire for revolution that transcends time and space. Moreover, this phenomenon will continue to bridge memories, cultures, and time periods throughout the text, with each chapter adding a new thread of generic hybridity and a new dimension of cultural and historical complexity.

While the first chapter establishes the reverberating histories shared between Jean Eudes, Catherine and Jean Marro, the second chapter, *Le bout du monde*, sustains this *Relation* while introducing a philosophical dimension to the signifier "revolutions." This philosophical dimension is achieved with the first person journal entries of Jean Eudes and the third person narrative of Jean's contemplations regarding war and the meaning of life. These genres and narrative voices depict each character's individual quests for a personal and communal new social and moral order.

On the one hand, Chapter Two relates the first-hand accounts of Jean Eudes' experiences during the French Revolutionary war where he shares his sincere conviction in establishing a new social and moral order for his country and his disheartening decision to leave his Breton homeland. Although Jean Eudes is a fictional character, the basis of his

identity is built upon the journal entries of JMG Le Clézio's grandfather, Alexis-François Le Clézio.

The juxtaposition of the intimate genre of Alexis-François' journal entries with Jean Eudes' narrative discourse is an example of the hybridity that typifies *Révolutions*, i.e., fictional narrative and the journal as an historical document.<sup>61</sup> As posited by Dominique Fisher, the emergence of historical references in Francophone literature since the 1980s represents a “mise en mémoire historique et la réémergence de genres littéraires qui concèdent une place croissante à l’expérience, au vécu” (Fisher, “L’Esthétique” 59). Thus, historical references underline the urgency of addressing historical amnesia, or even intentionally disregarding the existence or relevance of histories. Furthermore, as Fisher suggests, this tendency to include historical references underscores the importance of individual and collective *vécu*. The consequence of hybridity in this respect can be seen as the inclusion of the voices of individuals who had been hidden, or even forgotten, behind the dominant Historical discourse.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Since the 1980s, the journal as a genre has been considered an historical document along with other documents such as photographs when historical, official discourses were called into question, particularly in the work of Benjamin Stora, *Imaginaires de guerre: les images dans les guerres d’Algérie et du Viêtnam*, Paris: Éd. La Découverte (2005): 16-19.

<sup>62</sup> In his book *La Gangrène et l’oubli*, Benjamin Stora compares the danger of forgetting history to that of gangrene in that it impedes the development of an identity and increases the risks of nationalism and the rise of extremism: “Aucun peuple, aucune société, aucun individu ne saurait exister et définir son identité en état d’amnésie; une mémoire parallèle, individuelle, trouve toujours des refuges lorsque les pouvoirs veulent la rendre captive, ou l’abolir” (319). He urges historians to embrace a new historical project “en relativisant l’histoire épopee et les mémoires des ‘grands’, en scrutant les modifications qui influent sur les conditions des hommes dans toutes ses manifestations ... ” (320). While Stora’s research is considered within the context of Algeria, his findings apply to other regions of the world as well.

Through the hybridization of fictional narratives with historic journals, Le Clézio transforms the historical novel and allows the reader to witness the tragic experience of human suffering, extreme poverty, and violence that typified France in 1798, such dire conditions that give insight into Jean Eudes' decision to sail for Mauritius with his wife, Marie Anne Naour, in search of a new social and moral order that is both personal and communal and that is synonymous with the Republican values of freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

Alternating with Jean Eudes' testimonial discourse, the third-person narrative interrupts Eudes' personal accounts with an objective viewpoint bearing witness to the painful reality for Jean Marro and his generation in the 1950s during the colonial wars. On the one hand, the fictionalized account of Jean Marro's friend Santos, killed during the Algerian war, in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, *Mariage des âmes*, provides a more human dimension to the effects of the Algerian war; while on the other hand, the scattered third-person and first-person narration of this experience in the two chapters provides a rational and emotional understanding of Jean Marro's decision to leave Nice, "ville bourgeoise and xénophobe" (R 133) to start a new life away from the violent realities of the postcolonial years in France.

Above all, Chapter Two juxtaposes the objective narration with Jean Marro's only first person narrative, his *carnet noir* where he reveals his first-hand account of newspaper headlines concerning the mounting violence during the Algerian war over the first six months of 1956 and the rising tension in France toward the Algerian population. By weaving the intimacy of Jean Marro's personal journal entries with the third-person narrative relating newspaper reports of attacks, arrests, torture, and deaths, Le Clézio humanizes this

problematic era of French history with an unofficial yet verifiable account of historical events.<sup>63</sup>

In essence, the hybridity of genres and the alternating presence of narrative voices highlight Jean Marro's and Jean Eudes' similar quests to understand the revolution paradox, i.e., the fight for freedom that imposes its own annihilation: "La Révolution, qui avait œuvré pour libérer tous les peuples de la terre, s'acharnait à présent à restreindre cette liberté, refusant à chacun le droit de pratiquer selon ses croyances et sa tradition" (*R* 183).<sup>64</sup>

By leaving France in search of a personal revolution of his own, Jean Marro also pursues an understanding of the Greek philosophers' concepts of cosmic unity and multiplicity, i.e., Parmenides, Anaxagoras and Heraclites. The intertextual references to Greek philosophers and the later mention of prophetic Aztec texts underline the universal quest to unite social and personal ethics, the multiplicity of these endeavors, and the need for narrative ruptures that will allow the reader to better make *Relations* among the various constituents:

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<sup>63</sup> It is important to note that Le Clézio's historical references within a fictional narrative converge with the historical research of events and dates as noted by Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2001): 30-68, 87-89.

<sup>64</sup> The quote is the first-person narrative of Jean Eudes as he contemplates the failure of the French Revolution during the summer of 1794.

... chaque culture particulière, n'étant pas uniment composée d'éléments premiers – indivisibles –, ne peut être considérée à son tour comme un élément premier dans la Relation. Nous revenons de la sorte à nos propositions de départ, accomplissant le cercle – la ronde – de notre espace-temps. Par paradoxe, toute percée vers la définition de ce rapport externe (entre cultures) nous permet de mieux approcher les constituantes de chacune des cultures particulières considérées.  
(Edouard Glissant, *PR* 183-184).

Indeed, *Révolutions'* hybridity will enable the weaving together of the multitude of heterogeneous histories that disrupt a traditional or national vision of History as presented in schools. As a result, the reader may observe the circular nature of histories that takes into account numerous and sometimes simultaneous histories from cultures around the world. By exploiting “revolutions” as a structure, Le Clézio emphasizes the intersections of forgotten histories and human diversity and enables a transcultural viewpoint, or a cross-cultural viewpoint according to Glissant, from which to view the identity and histories of each other:

With us history and literature, their capitalization removed and told in our gestures, come together once again to establish, beyond some historical ideal, the novel of the relationship of individual to collectivity, of individual to the Other, of We to Us. The cross-cultural imagination is the framework for this new episode. (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 87)

While keeping in mind the setting in motion of this *Relational* dynamic, I will proceed to explore the second half of the text.

***Relations of Histories and Cultures Across Genres:  
France, England, Mauritius and Mexico,  
Jean Marro, Jean Eudes, Kiambé and Nezahualcoyotl***

The second half of *Révolutions* mirrors a heightened dynamic of alternating and interspersed narrative voices, histories, and cultures. Within the multiple contexts associated with the signifier “revolutions,” the text traces Jean Marro’s physical movement across

England, Mexico, and Mauritius alongside Jean Eudes' life in Mauritius as they seek a new social justice. At the same time, the text pursues a *Relational* weaving of multiple micro-narratives of personal and collective histories of emigration, war, slavery, and oppression in England, France, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Mexico.

In Chapter Five, “Jamaica,” one of the text’s longest chapters with one hundred and thirty-one pages, Le Clézio expands the hybridity of the narrative structure through the use of interspersed genres and narrative discourses. By means of an extradiegetic narrator and journal entries, Chapter Five traces Jean’s adult life in London, Nice, and Mexico City as he searches for his place in a career, in love, in family, and in the human fight for freedom and dignity. At the same time, Chapter Five reveals the continuation of Jean’s journalistic notes from Chapters Two and Three concerning the Algerian war. Whilst Jean Marro’s journal entries provide a personal view of the Algerian tragedy, Jean Eudes’ “Nauscopie” journal entries give insights into the state of Mauritius upon and after his arrival in Mauritius.

Once again, this unofficial yet personal discourse gives priority to the human perspective of historical events while also shining light on the existence of slavery on the island of Mauritius and some colonists, in particular Jean Eudes and Marie Anne Naour, who did not support such a practice:

... beaucoup de gens d’ici sont indifférents au sort des malheureux, car aucun ne s’est soucié d’affranchir les esclaves malgré le décret de pluviose l’an II, bien au contraire, ils ont expulsé loin de la colonie les envoyés de la Convention venus proclamer l’abolition du servage. Et certains me considèrent comme un fou, ou comme un dangereux utopiste pour avoir affranchi mes esclaves. (R 231)

Despite living in Mauritius under French and then British colonial rule, Jean Eudes’ testimonies disrupt the stereotypical myth of the colonizer and provide not only an alternate

view of history but also a personal, eyewitness testimony emphasizing the human experience behind the Historical discourse.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to Eudes's and Marro's main narrative discourses, the chapter ends with the first in a series of three, first person narratives of Kiambé, a Tanzanian slave, that are entitled "Kilwa."<sup>66</sup> While Kiambé's first narrative discourse does not include a specific date, the inclusion of her testimony occurs between two "Nauscopie" entries, thus contextualizing her testimony with the British seize of Mauritius in 1810. Moreover, establishing her narrative discourse within the folds of another discourse graphically illustrates the commonalities that characterize histories when approached from a non-linear perspective. At the same time that the narrative orality of Kiambé's voice humanizes the fictionalized and unknown voice of the early Nineteenth-century slave, it also extends a dimension of immediacy to her history's unexpected inclusion in the text, thus suggesting a potential *Relation* between her first person narrative and that of Jean Eudes.

Further support for the immediacy of Kiambé's narrative discourse and its *Relations* with the main discourses of Jean Eudes can be seen in Chapter Six, "*Une frontière*," that

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<sup>65</sup> See *Portrait du colonisé; (précédé de) Portrait du colonisateur* and the documentary *La France est un Empire*.

<sup>66</sup> In his book, *Identité et fluidité dans l'œuvre de Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio*, Raymond Mbassi Atéba provides historical insights into this name that is applied to three different sites: the island Kilwa Kisiwani, the markets in the continental administrative center of Kilwa Masoko, and the port Kilwa Kivinje. Furthermore, he underlines the collective historical aspect associated with this name: "Kilwa Kisiwani, une île au large de Kilwa Masoko, ancien port de Tanzanie fondé vers 1200, est un espace-temps memoriel qui rappelle l'embarquement des esclaves pour l'île Maurice pendant la traite des Noirs" (163-164).

represents the climactic point of the text in terms of heterogeneous narrative discourses, genres, histories, and cultures.

Transitioning from the immediacy characterizing the end of Chapter Five, Chapter Six opens in Mexico City in the mid-1960s with the objective distance of the third-person narration. On one hand, the reader observes Jean Marro's thoughts and actions through the viewpoint of the extradiegetic narrator as he contemplates the Mexican 1968 revolution. On the other hand, the inclusion of epistolary elements humanizes Jean's experiences that he shares with Myriam, his Algerian-French fiancé, who lives in France. Thus, the reader gains direct access to Jean's daily life. Furthermore, the absence of Myriam's letters underlines the climax of Jean's inner revolution, which coincides with the Mexican revolution that characterizes his social and historical context.

Adding to this alternation between a subjective and objective perspective, the author weaves multiple generic forms such as the lyric poetry of Nezahualcoyotl,<sup>67</sup> the Fifteenth-century Aztec poet, philosopher, warrior, and architect, alongside Jean's letters to Myriam in the late 1960s. In particular, the graphic proximity of the interspersed discourses mirrors the culmination of tragedy that is shared by the Mexican 1968 revolution and the Tlatelolco massacre that, as Salles has underlined,<sup>68</sup> appeared in Le Clézio's 1988 essay *Le Rêve mexicain*. While the following is a long passage, I include it to illustrate how the

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<sup>67</sup> Nezahualcoyotl's poetry appears in italics.

<sup>68</sup> See *Le Clézio, notre contemporain* (110).

juxtaposition of the two narratives facilitates an identification of parallels that are shared across these two *revolutionary* periods of Mexican history:

Moi, à moins d'un kilomètre de là, je ne savais rien, je n'ai rien entendu. À six heures, l'hélicoptère est arrivé, et là j'ai entendu les battements de l'hélice, il a tourné au-dessus de la Plaza de Los Ángeles avant d'aller à Tlatelolco. Il volait assez haut à cause des immeubles. Je me souviens de la pluie qui tombait, fine, farineuse, c'était la même pluie qui tombait sur Tlatelolco.

*Ceux qui étaient en train de chanter et de danser étaient désarmés. Tout ce qu'ils avaient sur eux était le manteau orné, les turquoises, les bijoux de lèvre, les colliers, les panaches en plumes de héron, les amulettes en pattes de cerf. Et ceux qui jouaient du tambour, les vieux, portaient leurs calebasses de tabac à priser, leurs grelots ...*

À six heures, l'hélicoptère de l'armée a lancé une fusée verte qui a éclairé la place. À cet instant précis, mille parachutistes sont entrés, venant de San Juan de Letran, ils ont chargé la foule baïonnettes au clair ... Les coups de feu sont devenus plus précis, et les soldats ont commencé à tirer à la mitrailleuse. Toutes les issues de la place étaient bloquées par les militaires, et les parachutistes continuaient d'avancer, frappant à coups de bâton, à coups de baïonnette. La fumée flottait sur la place, et les mitrailles continuaient à tirer ...

*Ce furent ceux-là qu'ils commencèrent à frapper d'abord. Ils les bousculent, ils frappèrent leurs mains, ils leur donnèrent des soufflets, et ensuite ils les tuèrent, et ceux qui regardaient moururent aussi.*

... Les femmes, les enfants s'étaient recroquevillés dans les fossés. Sur le pavé de la place, un jeune garçon, l'âge de Joaquín, avait eu la main clouée par un coup de baïonnette, le sang coulait. D'autres avaient été pris dans le barrage des parachutistes, à côté de l'immeuble de Relaciones exteriores, ils étaient frappés à coups de bâton, à coups de pied, déshabillés, jetés dans les cars bleus de la police.

*Mais le roi Motecuhzoma, accompagné du Tlaccochcalcatl de Thatelolco, Itzcohuatzin, qui pourvoyait les Espagnols en vivres, s'écrirait 'Ô Seigneurs ! Assez ! Que faites-vous ? Pauvres gens de ce peuple ! Est-ce qu'ils ont des boucliers ? Est-ce qu'ils ont des masques ? Ils sont entièrement désarmés. (R 489-490)*

As this passage shows, the hybridity resulting from the juxtaposition of these two narratives permits not only a temporal proximity but also a space for thematic comparison. The juxtaposition of Nezahualcoyotl's Fifteenth-century poetry written in italics and Jean's first-

person epistolary testimony acts as a mechanism of immediacy. In other words, the proximity of the two discourses create a bridge across the four centuries that separate the tragic fall of the Aztec people and the violent suffering during the Mexico 1968 student movement.

Here, I echo Salles' insightful observations that the juxtaposition of these narrations confer the tragic nature of the Aztec conquest to the Mexican student revolt in 1968 and suggest the universal quest for social and moral justice (*Le Clézio, notre contemporain* 110). Furthermore, I concur with Martin,<sup>69</sup> who points out that Le Clézio equates the brutality of the Mesoamerican War with the violence used by the government on the population in 1968. I will add that the proximity of generic forms of Nezahualcoyotl's poem, which is in fact a historical testimony in a fictional form, extends its tone of epic lyricism to the eyewitness, fictionalized account of a modern-day, urban revolt, thus underscoring the recurring tragic nature of revolution and dehumanization. In a parallel fashion, the author replicates the mounting tension of the text's personal and social "revolutions" with an increased number and frequency of alternating genres and discourses.

At the same time, the interspersing and proximity of the disparate discourses creates a fragmented effect that underlines their linguistic, philosophical, and historical uniqueness while disrupting an "ethnocultural hierarchy and chronological progression" as proposed by Michael Dash in his introduction to the English translation of *Caribbean Discourse* (xxix).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See Bronwen Martin's Chapter 5, section "The Historic Context" for her in-depth research on Mexico in 1968 (*The Fiction of J.M.G Le Clézio: A Postcolonial Reading* 160-174).

<sup>70</sup> While this quotation by Michael Dash refers to Glissant's views on history and the contributions of *Caribbean Discourse* in the field of historiography and literature, I extend the context to include the works of Le Clézio, as I elaborated in Chapter One.

Such contrasts encourage engaged reading by pulling the reader into the text to observe philosophical and historical overlappings and divergences across the centuries.

These examples demonstrate Le Clézio's treatment of the historical and fictional challenges of chronological historiography as defined by Michel de Certeau. In *The Writing of History*, de Certeau argues that the writing of history must move from a defined point of time in the past and move towards its ending in the present (87-88). Yet, Le Clézio begins *Révolutions* at an imprecise point in time in the past and continually navigates between temporal and geographical spaces, a navigation that does not follow a historiographical order. Furthermore, Le Clézio disrupts the historical novel genre by crossing numerous fictive discourses in the first and third person with historical references and discourses from journals and letters.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, Le Clézio includes both fictionalized and historical persons in an unpredictable narrative space that refuses the diametrically opposed labels of “history” or “fiction.”

By juxtaposing oral discourse with historical discourse while also sporadically alternating across geographical and temporal spaces, Le Clézio’s hybrid text establishes a dialogical *Relation* wherein each distinctive genre, character, history, and culture enriches the reader’s understanding of the others.

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<sup>71</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2010) examines the transformation of the separate universes of fictional and referential. He contends that contamination occurs when referential elements (historical, geographical, etc.) are introduced into the invented universe, which he calls realist fiction. On the other hand, invented elements can be introduced to a referential universe with the use of proper names of historical persons or descriptions of paintings, references to historical events, etc. Schaeffer explains that the historical novel can be defined by the “fictionalization of historical persons” (118).

**Relations of Histories and Cultures Across Genres:  
Mauritius and France,  
Jean and Catherine Marro, Kiambé, Marie Anne Naour**

From Fifteenth- and Twentieth-century Mexico, the narrative discourse relays across the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean region of Mauritius, Tanzania, and Madagascar in the Nineteenth century and back again to the Twentieth century. The constant yet disrupted narrative rotates among geographies, voices, and time periods, thus providing a privileged distance for the reader to observe parallel histories that are often opposed, such as the common dream for freedom amongst colonizers and the colonized.

Interspersed with Jean Marro's first- and third-person narrative discourses are the first person micro-narratives that repose upon historical documents and invented, fictive narratives. On the one hand, the historical documents of Le Clézio's grandmother as portrayed through the fictionalized character Marie Anne Naour and an English officer, William Stone, underline the opposing viewpoints of the “colonizer,” i.e., the first-person accounts of Marie Anne, who denounced slavery and the violation of the Republican values and the first person official documents written by William Stone, who participated in slave executions. On the other hand, Le Clézio attributes an identical level of first-person narrative to a fictive, female slave by the use of the fictional genre of an imagined oral testimony of Kiambé, who recounts her personal history shared with the legendary and historical Nineteenth-century character in the Mascarene islands, Ratsitatane – also known as Ratsitatania and Rassitatane.

Through the voice of a Tanzanian slave, Kiambé, Le Clézio presents Ratsitatane as a noble, “un fils de grand chef de la Grande-Terre” (*R* 453), who was hunted and captured by the indigenous hunters (*les chasseurs de marrons*) on Mauritius between 1821 and 1822.

Historical research underlines varying theories and uncertainties concerning diverse episodes of his life and his fight against slavery. According to Mauritian historian Issa Asgarally, these uncertainties are inevitable due to the lack of conclusive archival documents (“Vécu d’aujourd’hui et ‘lieux de mémoire’” 37). Such gaps leave the author with the latitudes of imagination to give another vision of the historical character and nourish his legend.

By offering a fictive transposition of his story in the sections of *Révolutions* entitled “Kilwa,” Le Clézio gives the reader access to the official documents of William Stone and to a more intimate and human perspective by the first person narrative of the young Kiambé, whom Ratsitatane protected and who became his wife.<sup>72</sup>

Before exploring the narrative structure associated with this histories regarding Ratsitatane, I will first provide a brief historical overview. Historical research on the life of Ratsitatane underline his nobility.<sup>73</sup> Ratsitatane was a Malagasy prince, the nephew of Radama I, King of Madagascar and son of Andriamambavola, the Minister of Radama. He was exiled to Mauritius in 1821 for having attempted to kill James Hastie, the British agent to Radama. According to Asgarally, Ratsitatane’s motive for this murder was loyalty to his uncle as Ratsitatane believed Hastie to be the cause of Radama’s men during a combat (“Vécu d’aujourd’hui et ‘lieux de mémoire’” 33). Nevertheless, as underlined by Pier Larson, several hypotheses exist concerning Ratsitatane’s exile (“The Vernacular Life of the Street: Ratsitatanina and Indian Ocean Creolity” 329-330).

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<sup>72</sup> William Stone was the principal clerk under the command of Captain F. Rossi in 1882 on Mauritius Island (R 459).

<sup>73</sup> I consider the research of Pier Larson, Issa Asgarally and JMG Le Clézio.

Initially, Radama I ordered the death of Ratsitatane at Tananarive, to then only abandon this plan due to his fear of a revolt by his people. He chose to send his nephew into exile in Mauritius that was, as mentioned by Larson, the penal center of British India. On December 24th, 1821, Ratsitatane was accompanied by Hastie by boat and was incarcerated in the Port-Louis prison on January 3rd, 1822 while waiting to be further deported to Rodrigues.

Once in prison, Ratsitatane, despite his status as a “black Malagasy” and a noble military commandant, was placed under the same treatment as the other slaves held in the prison. Once he understood that he would soon be shipped to an unknown destination, he decided to escape from prison and return to Madagascar. Asgarally points out that his evasion was probably during the night of February 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> 1822 (*De L'Esclavage* 32). After escaping from prison, Ratsitatane took refuge in the woods of “Le Pouce” mountain with other Malagasy and slaves who followed him. After being captured, Ratsitatane and forty slaves were imprisoned during a deliberation period of two months. Finally, Ratsitatane and five of his peers were found guilty for having planned a revolt in Port Louis. Three were executed (La Tulipe, Kotolovo, Ratsitatane) according to the order of Governor Farquhar. Ratsitatane was executed April 15<sup>th</sup> on the Green Plain, *la Plaine Verte*, in Port Louis. In Pier Larson’s article, he references the archived testimony of the Police Chief, Edward Byam regarding Ratsitatane’s execution:

Rassitatane (purposely reserved for the last) looked on with a firm & undaunted countenance. Next approached Latulippe but the executioner miserably mangling his head which made the unhappy abject turn & give a scowl after the first blow which rendered the executioner further tremulous in the performance of his duty which it required three or four blows to carry into complete effect.

Rassitatane's fortitude whilst viewing the mangled body of his countryman for a moment forsook him & his limbs shook under his robust & vigorous body and his teeth gnashed, but coming to his own turn, he recovered himself and advanced with a firm & unshaken step to the block on which with the greatest composure placing his head, he suffered the last ignominious act of his sentence, persisting in his not having committed the offence for which he suffered to the last.

(Larson 333-334)

While recognized as an official, historical discourse, Bynam's account depicts Ratsitatane as a criminal deserving of an inhumane death and distances the reader from learning more about the human dimensions of Ratsitatane.

With this in mind, it is important to note that it is the first-person narrative of Kiambé that reveals the humanity of Ratsitatane in a narrative structure where details on Ratsitatane's personal life are interspersed with historical references. The attribution of first-person narratives for both Kiambé, a slave, and for the eyewitness army official, William Stone, underlines the equal footing for both points of view while highlighting the complementarity of the fictive narrative and historical testimony.

Before his death, Ratsitatane is described as a double legendary hero, that of a warrior and of a liberator: “ ... j'ai su qu'il était le fils du grand chef de la Grand-Terre, celui qu'on appelait Ratsitatane et qui avait dit qu'il libérerait tous les Noirs et nous ramènerait dans notre pays ” (*R* 454-55). Also, Kiambé shines light on his role as an invincible leader and as a legendary figure of freedom from oppression:

... ce nom résonnait comme un tambour de guerre. Avec lui il a une armée, les esclaves de Villebague, de Grande Rosalie, Belle Vue, de l'Embarras à Crève-Cœur, ils sont là-haut dans la montagne, ils vont descendre et libérer tous les Noirs ... Violette me répétait ce que Ratsitatane avait dit quand il s'était échappé de la prison: Venez avec moi, et je vous libérerai. (*R* 453)

Yet, at the same time, Kiambé's testimony portrays Ratsitatane as a generous pacifist and a wise man: "Mais Ratsitatane ne voulait pas lancer l'attaque. Il restait à l'écart, il semblait réfléchir" (*R* 456). Christelle Soy underlines that Kiambé's first-person narrative underscores the charisma of a "mythical character" ("La Représentation de l'esclavage dans *Révolutions* 205). Indeed, his gestures are like those of a holy man who transmits his warmth by placing his hands on Kiambé's head (*R* 456-458). Consequently, the voice of Kiambé opposes the violent terms used in the official discourses to describe a gentle, wise leader full of humanity.

Although I have demonstrated the importance of the inclusion of this first-person narrative that is characterized by orality and immediacy, I must also underline the complementary fashion by which the official report of William Stone adds to Kiambé's testimony regarding Ratsitatane's character.<sup>74</sup> Stone describes Ratsitatane as a man whose moral force enables him to transcend suffering and imprisonment and to preserve his freedom and human dignity: "Je reconnus Ratsitatane sans peine car malgré les épreuves des jours passés à fuir dans la montagne, il ne se tenait pas dans la posture humiliée des esclaves fugitifs, mais il était debout fièrement et son visage portait l'expression orgueilleuse d'un homme qui n'a jamais cessé d'être libre" (*R* 461). Here, the legitimacy of historical discourse

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<sup>74</sup> *R* (459-462, 501-503).

is reinforced by fiction, and the credibility of the fiction is fortified by the official, historical discourse.

Stone's last report of April 15, 1822 includes emotional elements that were absent in Police Chief Edward Byam's testimony as mentioned on page 24 in *Révolutions*:

Le premier qui monta sur l'échafaud fut le chef Ratsitatane qui montra un grand courage et sans prononcer une parole posa lui-même la tête sur le billot. Le soldat de la garde noire nommé André Bamba, qui s'était porté volontaire, trancha la tête avec sa hache, mais soit par maladresse, soit à cause de la crainte que lui inspirait le prisonnier, il dut s'y reprendre à trois fois avant que la tête de Ratsitatane ne roule sur le plancher. (R 502)

Hence, *Révolutions* offers a complement to historiography in order to access the legendary and human dimensions of Ratsitatane. He provides a *Relational* history that intertwines both personal and collective histories.

Through a narrative structure that includes the orality of a first-person fictive character and the official archives containing first-person testimonies, Le Clézio breaks the chains that traditionally separate personal and official, collective histories and underlines the need to have access to both if we want to live and understand our heterogeneous world as expressed by Edouard Glissant:

Le signe commun est alors de la mémoire délivrée des interdits et des séductions et des indifférences et des provocations . . . Nous considérons ces masses d'histoires où tant de peuples se sont égarés et perdus, ces temps d'effacement où la trace des humanités s'est érodée sur les rochers devenus sables . . . leur connaissance manque à nos rassemblements éventuels. Nous vivons le monde, nous avons besoin de toutes les mémoires (ME 176-177).

At the close of the chapter, Le Clézio adds the first-person narrative of Marie Anne Naour that is characterized by both orality and an official documented testimony. Throughout the five hundred preceding pages of *Révolutions*, Marie Anne Naour's thoughts and feelings

were recorded through the journal entries of her husband, Jean Eudes. The inclusion of her voice at the close of this section confirms the testimonies shared by her husband on the state of the Europeans and slavery while emphasizing the importance of women's narratives and testimonies in the transmission of histories and cultures. It is through the inclusion of this narrative that Le Clézio underlines the existing parallels across histories that are hidden behind the shadows of a Western-dominant discourse: those of Ratsitatane, Kiambé, the Eudes and Marro families and, by extension, the fights for freedom in Mexico, France, and Algeria.

While considering the concept of hybridity and the weaving of these parallel histories, one should keep in mind the dates of February and spring 1822 that situate Kiambé's and William Stone's accounts of Ratsitatane and the accounts of Marie Anne Naour that trace events in Port Louis two years later in 1824. Marie Anne's first-person narrative underlines the devastation that typified life after the hurricane of February 1824 that has also been documented in such newspapers as *The New York Times* via their London office.<sup>75</sup>

In the same way that Kiambé's narrative complements English military discourses with insights into the human qualities of Ratsitatane, Marie Anne's narrative provides a human perspective to journalistic reports pertaining to the number of deaths and destruction in 1824:

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<sup>75</sup> See "Twelve Hundred Killed; The Hurricane's Destructive Work at Mauritius. Nearly All the Fatalities Were Among the Laboring Classes -- One-third of Port Louis in Ruins."

Mais partout ailleurs, et surtout dans les quartiers de l'ouest habités par les créoles, il y eut beaucoup de dégâts et même des victimes. Je reçus cette tempête comme un signal divin d'avoir à quitter cette ville. Je détestais ce Port dont nous avions tant attendu, et qui était devenu, au fil des ans, le symbole de la cruauté et de l'égoïsme de la plupart de nos concitoyens ... Malgré les ordres du gouverneur Farquhar, nous croisions sur notre route les colonnes d'esclaves chargés de lourdes chaînes, ou entravés par des fourches. Même les femmes étaient enchaînées de la sorte. Les châtiments publics n'avaient pas été abolis comme l'avait exigé la loi, et j'ai vu des femmes fouettées sur la place ... d'autres condamnés à être exposés des jours entiers au soleil ... des hommes réduits à l'état de bêtes, nus couverts de plaies et d'immondices, attelés à des charrettes comme du bétail. Et quand je m'indignais de cela, je suscitaient les railleries des femmes de la bonne société, qui me disaient: quoi? Appelez-vous nos semblables ces godrons, âmes et peaux noires? Jean aussi s'en indignait: est-ce pour cela, disait-il, que je me suis battu aux frontières contre la tyrannie, au nom de la république? Est-ce pour que le tyran Bonaparte annule d'un trait de plume le décret de la Convention qui avait aboli l'esclavage sur toute l'étendue des territoires français? (R 512-13)

By placing an emphasis on the first-person narrative, *Le Clézio* complements the official discourse with powerful eyewitness testimony and reveals the human suffering behind the reports on the storm's aftermath. Marie Anne's account underlines the existence of slavery and the terrible conditions of the slaves as well as the divide between the Eudes family and other European colonists.

To this end, the remaining three pages of Mary Anne's testimony stress the Eudes family's commitment to live away from slavery, in harmony with their consciences (R 514). She concludes her account with the family's decision to draw up an official family document that outlines each member's commitment to equality and freedom that was written by Marie Anne's and Jean's son, Jean-Paul, on April 25, 1825. In particular, they outline their dedication to strengthen the existing ebony forest (by contrast to the colonial exploiters of the forest) and to prohibit slavery or any type of forced labor (R 516).

The last thirty-four pages of the seventh chapter, “Retour à Ebène,” align the generic, geographical, historical, and cultural elements that had been interposed throughout the text while offering a new “framework” from which to consider histories, others, and the self. The chapter consists of three narrative discourses: the extradiegetic narration of Jean Marro’s life upon his return to France from Mexico and his subsequent journeys to Bretagne and to Mauritius; the first-person narrative of Catherine Marro through her last journal entries before leaving Mauritius; and the first-person narrative of Balkis, Kiambé’s granddaughter. Due to the brevity of this chapter in comparison to the other six, the narrative discourses follow a more simplified, circular movement turning from Jean Marro to Catherine Marro, from Jean Marro to Balkis and back to Jean.

Despite the brevity that characterizes the alternating order of the narratives in the book’s final pages, the narrative discourses can be seen as bridging temporal and geographical barriers similar to Bhabha’s concept of the “past-present.” In these last pages, the paths of Jean Eudes, Marie-Anne Naour, Catherine Marro, Ratsitatane, Jean Marro Kiambé, and her descendants reunite in Port Louis and Rose Hill, Mauritius, a gathering of histories, cultures and genres that “renew[s] the past, refiguring it as a contingent in-between space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 7).

### ***Relation and Engaging Reflection: The Interconnectedness of Histories and Cultures***

As these examples have shown, the hybrid *Relations* of historical discourse and fiction serve as enablers for transcultural encounters due to their ability to erase artificial boundaries and to allow individuals to recognize the identities and histories of each other. I

echo Glissant's argument that historical discourse and fiction are both vital components in promoting transcultural *Relations*:

With us history and literature, their capitalization removed and told in our gestures, come together once again to establish, beyond some historical ideal, the novel of the relationship of individual to collectivity, of individual to the Other, of We to Us. The cross-cultural imagination is the framework for this new episode.”  
(*Caribbean Discourse* 87)

Thus, Le Clézio provides a new framework from which to consider others and the self through his hybrid treatment of historiographical and fictive genres.

Hybridity in *Révolutions* is more than just a term to confine a genre to a meaningless definition. Rather, the heterogeneous *Relations* across the narrative structure, generic elements, disparate histories, and cultures are a means of giving voice to universal diversity. The “revolutionary” structure of *Révolutions* can be seen as archipelago-like,<sup>76</sup> where the interspersed, individual genres, geographies, histories, and cultures refuse fixity and encourage exchange and transformation. That is to say that Le Clézio transforms the genre of the novel with *Relational* interaction among the genres of journals, official historical documents, transcribed oral testimonies, and the diverse narrative discourses. Each of these generic elements remains identifiable, yet the interactions among them transform the overarching genre. As a result, this “revolutionary” movement engages the reader to experience

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<sup>76</sup> Geographically speaking, an archipelago is a sea that contains a network of islands that are separated from each other by water but are also grouped together by water. I refer to Edouard Glissant’s “archipelago-like” thinking that emphasizes the continual and unrestricted exchange among fragmented histories, geographies, and languages. For more on this concept, see *Traité du Tout-monde* 31.

varying perspectives of historical and cultural diversity and the universality that is, and has long been, shared across the centuries.

Through the voices of Catherine and Jean Marro, Jean Eudes, Marie Anne Naour, Kiambé and William Stone, Le Clézio engages the reader to reflect on the need to understand the *Relational* nature of histories in order to better comprehend the diversity of the world and the humanity people share as argued by Bessière (*RC* 71).<sup>77</sup>

The juxtaposition of narrative discourses transmit both official, historical discourses and individual and collective memories in *Révolutions*. The third-person narration offers a distance between the reader and the ritual remembrance sessions, while the first-person narration mimics the narration of histories that is experienced by the reader first-hand. Such a space goes beyond abstract understanding in that it becomes a concrete and multi-sensorial experience of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste through the description of the sounds of birds' chirping, the smell of vanilla and flowers, the textures of furniture and fabric and the vivid visual descriptions of light, interior décor, and urban and rural spaces.<sup>78</sup> As Jean Marro testifies, memory connects us to experiencing a moment in time:

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<sup>77</sup> I underline the importance of this concept that was introduced in Chapter One : “Représenter un univers de plusieurs mondes et de plusieurs temps, permet d'exposer plus nettement la figuration de la diversité des êtres humains, l'appel à une métareprésentation et, le questionnement que porte cet appel” (Bessière, *RC* 71).

<sup>78</sup> One may compare the poetic writing of the sensorial experience to Marcel Proust's famous madeleine in *Du Côté De Chez Swann*. For an insightful analysis on the poetics of Le Clézio and Proust, see Adina Balint's *Poétique de la Crédit: Proust et Le Clézio: Littérature moderne et contemporaine*. Balint examines the creative process of the two writers with a three-fold approach combining psychoanalytical, philosophical, and stylistic analyses.

La mémoire n'est pas une abstraction, pensait Jean. C'est une substance, une sorte de longue fibre qui s'enroule autour du réel et l'attache aux images lointaines, allonge ses vibrations, transmet son courant jusqu'aux ramifications du corps (*R* 112).

What is more, the transmission of Catherine and Jean Marro's, Jean Eudes' and Marie Anne Naour's, Kiambé's, and William Stone's histories, as well as the collective histories that they represent, become the center of a turning, continual, revolutionary movement, a *Relational* movement, between the individual and the communities of the world.

As a result, the reader crosses the barriers of time and space and becomes involved as though he or she were an eyewitness of the histories shared.<sup>79</sup> In turn, the reader creates his or her personal memory of the moments experienced in the text that, in turn, become a "history" to never be erased. In the words of Paul Ricœur, "Recognition authorizes us to believe it [a memory]: what we have once seen, heard, experienced, or learned is not definitively lost, but survives since we can recall it and recognize it. It survives" (*Memory, History and Forgetting* 434).

Through hybridity, Le Clézio creates a space in which readers can reach out and discover unheard histories and extract their own personal meanings. In other words, by becoming an eyewitness of the oral histories shared and described, the reader engages in an experience of the histories from Fifteenth-century and Twentieth-century Mexico; from Eighteenth-, Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century Mauritius; Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Tanzania and Madagascar; and Twentieth-century France, Algeria and England.

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<sup>79</sup> The reader is not directly addressed in this work. This will be an element of my discussion in Chapter Three.

Within the space of one text, hybridity offers the means for accessing the multiple realities of the revolutions across the span of three continents and three centuries that characterized such disparate individuals. Consequently, the reader engages in negotiating the histories' meanings across cultures.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate the double meaning of the signifier *Révolutions*, i.e., as both a trajectory of a complete circle and as a sudden change in social and moral order. As we have seen, the title's dual denotation announced by the plural form reflects the text's movement from an individual revolution to plural revolutions across the text and beyond to the readers. In Le Clézio's "revolutionary" structure for writing history, it is not a question of deterritorialization or fragmented, traumatic memory. Rather, the resulting "mise en *Relation*" of these histories, cultures, and times replicates a revolutionary movement. It is, in fact, the reader who continues the *Relations* of hybridity in *Révolutions*, making it an unending cycle. Like a spinning top, each revolution reaches out to another, thus creating a spiraling, continued movement from a starting point in time and space with each added narrative discourse and historical reference.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RELATIONS OF HYBRIDITY IN *CŒUR BRÛLE ET AUTRES ROMANCES*

In the same way that *Révolutions* is the most hybridized of Le Clézio's novels until the turn of the century, *Cœur brûle et autres romances* is by far the most hybridized collection of short stories. In *Les Cahiers Le Clézio Numéro 2* (2009), Bruno Thibault and Claude Cavallero coordinated this issue's exploration of *contes*, *nouvelles*, and *romances*. As the two scholars remind us in their preface, the five collections of short stories published before 2009 are significant despite their exogenous appearance with regard to the author's fifty works that primarily consist of novels.<sup>80</sup> Due to the hybrid nature of these short stories, I enthusiastically support Cavallero's and Thibault's arguments for scholars to pursue further research in this domain. Furthermore, the thematic unity and complexity, particularly with *Cœur brûle et autres romances*, provide opportunities for cultural and global issues discussions amongst readers.

As leclézien specialists Cavallero and Thibault point out, there is a decade between the publications of each short story collection. This space in time could reflect changes in the author's writing that characterize his novels and essays and that are expressed in the leclézien

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<sup>80</sup> *La Fièvre* (1965), *Mondo et autres histoires* (1978), *La Ronde et autres faits divers* (1982), *Cœur brûle et autres romances* (2000). *Histoire du pied et autres fantaisies* was published in 2011, two years after the publication of *Les Cahiers Le Clézio Numéro 2*. See the author's bibliography on the website of the Association des lecteurs de JMG Le Clézio:  
<<http://associationleclezio.com/ressources/bibliographie.html>>.

cycles that I previously mentioned. *La Fièvre* (1965) corresponds to the anti-conformist cycle that can be seen in the absence of unity and its focus on the senses. Moving away from this period of experimental writing, the author's literary focus in the 1970s maintains themes of anti-conformity while underlining a quest for understanding of life. Such a quest is brought to life in *Mondo et autres histoires* (1978) in its eight short stories, where each text traces disparate histories, all offering wisdom in the journey to discover meaning in life. In the 1980s, also recognized as the beginning of the North African cycle, *La Ronde et autres faits divers* (1982) builds upon newspaper *faits divers* and shines light on the social realities of young adolescents who are raised in suburbs that are dominated by boredom, violence, and poverty. At the end of the 1980s, *Printemps et autres saisons* offers longer texts than his previous collections that give voice to the struggles of immigrant women.

It is with *Cœur brûle et autres romances* (2000) that Le Clézio achieves the height of generic, historical, and cultural hybridity with his seven short stories that underline the universal call for adventure across multiple histories and immense cultural diversities. Finally, the ten short stories of *Histoire du pied et autres fantaisies* (2011) accentuate the treatment of hybridity.<sup>81</sup>

While leclézien scholar Sabrinella Bedrane underlines the hybrid generic nature genre of the Twentieth-century French short story,<sup>82</sup> including Le Clézio's collection *Cœur brûle et autres romances*, I propose to expand our consideration of hybridity beyond the accepted

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<sup>81</sup> I will briefly examine this collection in the conclusion.

<sup>82</sup> See Bedrane, "Les Romances lecléziennes, une poétique du renouvellement générique" (177-187).

generic terms. Rather than isolating hybridity to a critical analysis based on the history of French literary theories, I will consider how the interaction among five short stories' diverse genres, multiple histories, and world cultures engage the reader to experience the divorce between the human desire for personal fulfillment and the realities that typify our modern world.

In Bedrane's article "Les romances lecléziennes," she rightly proposes to consider *CB* as an example of hybridity and *métissage*. She situates *CB* within the context of a generic *métissage* in that it contains various generic forms (Bedrane, "Les Romances lecléziennes, une poétique du renouvellement générique" 179). As Bruno Thibault and Isabelle Roussel-Gillet point out in their article "Migrations et métissages," the term *métissage* has evolved from the racial connotations associated with the term *métisse* from the colonial period to the considerations of the narrative's formal structure. For the sake of clarity, I prefer to avoid the signifier *métissage* in order avoid all "center-peripheral" associations that imply colonial cultural hierarchies.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, Bedrane's use of *métissage* is significant in that she is the first to consider the generic richness of the author's short stories: "Les genres sont par conséquent moins des 'carcans' ou des 'camisoles' chez cet auteur que des formes qu'il croise, plie, et travaille à sa guise pour donner des écritures mixtes" (181). Yet, I believe that her consideration for the genre lacks the exploration of the numerous genres that constitute hybridity in *CB* such as tragedy, lyric and epic poetry, historiography, and the *Relational*

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<sup>83</sup> I elaborate the history of this tendency in Chapter One of this study.

interaction among histories and cultures across the collection as a whole. Furthermore, I argue that the classification of “*écritures mixtes*” places an emphasis on stylistic elements without considering their role in the transmission of complex histories and cultures.

Indeed, I support Bedrane’s arguments regarding the need for scholarly attention to Le Clézio’s short stories and in particular to the distinctive nature of these texts; however, I contend that it is essential to avoid isolating such formal studies from the text’s hybrid cultural and historical aspects. By exploring the interactions among the various literary and extra-literary genres, leclézien scholars may determine that their unpredictable encounters disengage once-marginalized histories and cultures that, in turn, provoke active readerly mediation on the prominence of transcultural *Relations* that characterize our world and the socio-cultural issues that can be distinct but also shared. To put it another way, genres can be seen as a means to carry and connect varying perspectives on cultural and historical diversity. Thus, a wide palette of generic elements not only enables the expression of diversity; it is also necessary for the transmission of various forms of transcultural richness.

With the objective of underlining the dynamics of hybridity present in *CB*, I will advance with a three-step approach. First, I will examine the significance of the collection’s paratext in light of French short stories’ generic considerations of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Next, I will examine genres, stylistic elements, and themes that distinguish, and yet also connect, the first four short stories. Third, I will shine light on the apex of hybridity in “*Kalima*,” a short story that has not yet been examined by scholars. More specifically, I will examine the elements of hybridity that underscore the tragedy of the eponymous anti-heroine and prostitute of the short story “*Kalima*” and how the text provokes an engaged reader response.

## **Relations across Genres : The Short Story and the Collection**

While the purpose of my dissertation is to not draw attention to an overarching genre but rather to the elements that constitute a work's distinctiveness, it is important to take into consideration recent studies of the short story, particularly Michel Viegenes's *L'esthétique de la nouvelle française au vingtième siècle* and Daniel Grojnowski's *Lire La Nouvelle*. When considering the short story as a genre, several accepted definitions do not apply to the diverse writing styles of Le Clézio. Grojnowski, a specialist of the short story genre, proposes several definitions of the short story that locate the genre's distinctiveness in its unity of events, the speed of its action, the fixed nature of the characters, and an economy of references and details (*Lire La Nouvelle* 11). While this claim rests upon an attempt to differentiate the short story from the novel in terms of complexity and length, it assigns specific measures that overlook the triple axis of hybridity of the genre that I propose to consider. In other words, how do the generic elements used in the short story engage the multiple cultures and histories of the characters? Here, I agree with Grojnowski's observation that scholars could simply consider the short story as a “*genre omnigenre*” due to its numerous variations (14-15).<sup>84</sup> As I have already argued in Chapter One, such distinctions restrict our ability to recognize the generic hybridity of a text as an expression of cultural and historic hybridity, which I claim to be the distinctiveness of Le Clézio's works.

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel Grojnowski mentions the following variations: “les nouvelles realistes ou fantastiques, policières ou de science fiction [...] nouvelles humoristiques, nouvelles du terroir, nouvelles sentimentales.” *Lire La Nouvelle*, Paris: Nathan Université (2000): 14.

Viegnes provides the following definition of a short story, also listing six categories that further restrict the consideration of stylistic and generic elements, historiography, multiple temporal and geographical spaces, and differing cultures:

Voici la définition compréhensive que nous pourrions proposer pour la nouvelle. Celle-ci est : 1) Un texte en prose, nécessairement bref, narratif ou descriptif, dont la finalité est avant tout littéraire, c'est-à-dire esthétique. 2) Un texte qui, lorsqu'il narre une histoire, est nécessairement simple, monothématique, d'une ligne narrative assez pure, d'une densité qui exclut les temps morts, et qui procède par induction plutôt que par synthèse. 3) Un texte qui, lorsqu'il narre une histoire, présente des personnages particularisés, dotés d'une certaine épaisseur, à moins que l'intérêt porte exclusivement sur les circonstances ou sur l'événement lui-même. 4) Un texte qui comporte des références spatiales et temporelles à la réalité extérieure, et qui s'inspire d'une conception linéaire du temps. 5) Un texte qui présente empiriquement le monde phénoménal sans supposer *à priori* une réalité organisatrice transcendante et omniprésente. 6) Un texte qui, lorsqu'il comporte du surnaturel, ne le présente pas comme allant de soi, mais au contraire comme la négation abrupte d'un ordre rationnel qui constitue le véritable arrière-plan philosophique du texte.

(Viegnes, *L'esthétique de la nouvelle française au vingtième siècle* 39)

These six classifications are rather schematic and omit the treatment of historiography and various cultures, as well as the existence of multiple genres. While Viegnes argues that these categories illustrate the development of the short story in the Twentieth century, his methodology considers formal, cultural, and historic elements in a separate and isolated manner.<sup>85</sup>

Undeniably, such proposals do not take into consideration the integral nature of genres, histories, and cultures. In essence, such methodologies stifle the short story genre

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<sup>85</sup> The eight categories of short stories are as follows: 1) La nouvelle-histoire, 2) La nouvelle-portrait, 3) La nouvelle biographique, 4) La nouvelle instant, 5) La nouvelle descriptive, 6) La nouvelle-symbole, 7) La nouvelle-dialogue, 8) La nouvelle épistolaire (57-73).

according to Western codes and standards, for they do not go beyond the form of a short story to consider its generic elements as a reflection of the diversity of human histories and cultures. By focusing on such a restrictive analysis of short stories according to their adherence to predefined categories, I contend that Viegnes' definitions thwart the possibility of observing hybridity between the novel, the *fait divers*, the tale, and the short story, as well as recognizing the heterogeneous historical and cultural dimensions of JMG Le Clézio's works.

On the other hand, I propose to examine Bruno Thibault's consideration of short stories in his book *J.M.G. Le Clézio et la métaphore exotique*, which diverts a structuralist emphasis in order to examine the meaning that is woven into the structure of events. Thibault proposes to consider Gilles Deleuze's consideration of the short story that is “orientée[s] vers un événement ou une situation qui a précédé le récit et qui lui donne un sens sens particulier … un rapport avec le secret” (Thibault, *J.M.G. Le Clézio et la métaphore exotique* 188).<sup>86</sup> Thibault's proposal underscores the importance of the reader's attention on an event or a situation that preceded the narrative discourse, which bestows a particular meaning and secretivity.

I agree that a tension between events that are seen and emotions that are hidden characterize each of the short stories in *Cœur brûle et autres romances*. Le Clézio acknowledges this tension in an interview about the collection *CB* with Tirthankar Chandra: “le rôle de la nouvelle est de mettre en scène ce dérapage constant entre les courants

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<sup>86</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, *Mille Plateaux*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit (1976): 235-237.

sentimentaux et le monde social, le monde réel.” One implication of Thibault’s observation of Le Clézio’s interview is that the title, *Cœur brûle et autres romances*, signals the characteristic friction between society and an individual’s inner sensitivity. What is more, the contact of numerous cultures can result in conflict, as proposed by Edouard Glissant in his concept of *chaos-monde*.<sup>87</sup> In other words, the hybridity that characterizes *CB* consists of various genres as a way of reflecting on the multiple, conflicting feelings that dominate histories and cultures from around the world and as a way of inviting an engaged reader response.

Although I concur with Thibault’s proposal, I still insist that approaching the work through the lens of hybridity will provide the reader with insights into the *Relations* between the multiple genres and the disparate cultures and histories where each generic, historical, and cultural element weaves the tension of conflicting dreams and realities, a tension that conveys the powerful human experience.

Yet, the sentimental connotations surrounding the title and genre have led to a debate, which Salles examines in her article “Romance en mode mineur. Vieillesse et solitude dans des nouvelles.” Readers who focus on the generic term *romance* associate the book with sentimental connotations and overlook the irony of the title. In an interview, the author explains his choice to underline the irony between the word *romance* and the tragic content of the book: “C’était un mot un peu ironique pour décrire des situations qui sont tragiques”

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<sup>87</sup> See IPD 81-95.

(Chandra). In this comment, Le Clézio urges the reader to consider the tragic voices that his stories document.

It is precisely the oral tradition of romances as discussed in *La Fête chantée* (1997) that highlights the tradition of tragedy in oral histories, a tradition that has influenced the writer since his extended stay in the Darién in the 1970s.<sup>88</sup> In this essay, Le Clézio describes the greatness of Mesoamerican cultures, explaining that *romance* was a term for Mexican hymns that sung about the conflict between the Mesoamerican world and Christianity and the consequent sacrifices of pure victims.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the choice of the signifier *romance* frames the text with the isotopy of tragedy and sacrifice and emphasizes the importance of the spoken, or sung, word.

Orality in story-telling and singing is yet another generic characteristic that is situated, for Le Clézio, on a spiritual and metaphysical plane. He explains in *Haï*, 1971, that “singing isn’t a conquest for harmony, a domination of sound: it is a painful cry, tortured, by which the Indian escapes the world and him self” (*Haï* 74 [my translation]). Le Clézio goes on to say that “singing isn’t making music. It is about entering into communication with an invisible world, by means of an unintelligible language” (82 [my translation]). Thus, the oral

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<sup>88</sup> Le Clézio references his experiences of listening to storytellers in his Nobel Speech “In the Forest of Paradoxes.” In particular, one ritual of storytelling affected him greatly: the stories of Elvira, who lived in the Embera forest, where he himself lived in the early 1970. Elvira is also a character in *Angoli Mala* (1999) whose voice, as Bruno Thibault comments, “is immaterial when she sings the ancestral myths of the Waunanas” (Thibault, *J.M.G. Le Clézio et la métaphore exotique* 70 [my translation]).

<sup>89</sup> “L’enthousiasme pour la renaissance du monde amérindien inspire des œuvres parfois excessives, comme *Nezahualpilli ou le catéchisme mexicain*, poème en vingt-quatre chants écrit par Juan Luis Tercero en 1875, où la rencontre entre le monde préhispanique et la grâce chrétienne est évoquée sous la forme d’une romance …” (FC 166).

nature of *romance* signals not only the sacrifice of innocence and an escape from conquest; it also signals the attainment of a metaphysical plane of being. It follows, then that the juxtaposition of the title, *Cœur brûle*, with its subtitle, *romance*, signals the *mise en abyme* of the human tragedy that ironically characterizes daily human life. The title also announces the importance of orality, or the question of voice and words: a recurring generic form and theme in the collection. My discussion of orality in fact addresses the larger matter of established literary hierarchies, which have tended to rank the Eurocentric written word above the spoken word that, in world cultures, has since ancient times been a form of transmitting knowledge and histories across generations. However, for Eurocentric cultures, the importance of oral tales is often overlooked or even forgotten.

These conclusions are significant when considering the diverse cultures whose histories are transmitted in Le Clézio's works. First, as I have previously mentioned, Le Clézio expounds on the importance of orality in Mesoamerican cultures in *Haï* and *La Fête chantée*. In order to gain a better understanding of the importance of orality in Maghreb culture, I refer to Rabmouna Mebadji's article "Le Conte populaire dans ses pratiques en Algérie." In this article, Mebadji shines light on the role of the word, of orality, and in particular, of the role of women in "revealing the main problems in society, emphasizing, at times, the imbalances that affect both individuals and the entire group" (Mebadji, "Le Conte populaire dans ses pratiques en Algérie" 442 [my translation]).

When considering orality in Creole cultures, Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant underscore the notion of forgetting that has hidden this important genre and cultural aspect. They suggest that orality is a "privileged mode":

It is our reading of this world, the experimentation, still blind, of our complexity. Creole orality, even repressed in its aesthetic expression, contains a whole system of countervalues, a counterculture; it witnesses ordinary genius applied to resisted, devoted to survival. After the failure of the plantation system ... orality began then to be buried in our collective unconscious (as if in some subterranean transhumance) ... (*Eloge à la Créolité* 95)

Thus, through orality, Le Clézio subverts Eurocentric hierarchies in order to *faire entendre* voices and histories that have been hidden between the folds of forgetting: the human voice replaces silence, and memory and recognition replace forgetting.

To take a case in point, the theme of silence and forgetting is further accentuated by the epigraph, “Ler lamontagn brilé tou dimoun koné, lerla ker brilé ki koné?”<sup>90</sup> in Mauritian Creole without a French translation. As we saw with the use of Breton in the epigraph for *Révolutions*, Le Clézio chooses a local saying unfamiliar to Western cultures. In so doing, the author positions the text under the sign of linguistic and cultural hybridity. According to Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, “The absence of interest in the Creole language was not a mere mouth silence but a cultural amputation” (104).

Le Clézio begins the process of remembering and challenges the tradition of forgetting by choosing a local saying that is specific to Mauritian culture. In fact, the use of the interrogative form in the epigraph further emphasizes the elements of hiding and anonymity that result from forgetting: “Who knows whether a heart is burning?” [I am summarizing Bedrane’s translation]. Anatomically, the heart is hidden within the body;

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<sup>90</sup> Bedrane translates this as “Quand le cœur brûle, qui le sait?” Sabrinella Bedrane, “À L’Ombre du roman: les nouvelles lecléziennes”, *Les Cahiers J.-M.G. Le Clézio Numéro 2*, Paris: Complicités (2009): 189.

therefore, it would be logical that no one could know whether a heart is burning. Yet, as Creole orality is dominated by a sense of word plays,<sup>91</sup> the epigraph can be considered a sort of riddle that engages the reader on a quest for meaning.

Again, I reiterate the importance of each distinctive generic element that plays a role in mirroring the complexity of the cultures and time periods portrayed in a given literary text. If we consider, as suggested by Todorov in *Genres in Discourse* (12), that genres are defined by society and that they exemplify or express a culture's ideology, the task of defining genres becomes problematic in view of the world's current state of ongoing cultural and historical encounters, which collapses barriers of time and space. As I will further elaborate in this chapter, *CB* is a literary representation of the friction that arises from the myriad of human desires that remain unknown and unfulfilled within an impassive society. Thus, as outlined in my introduction, I propose to consider the hybrid text as a means of giving voice to numerous world cultures, a heterogeneous world that can only be reflected by a hybrid narrative structure.

At a first glance, the reader will notice that the short story collection consists of seven stories that crisscross geographies and centuries and establish new relationships among cultures, time periods, and spaces: 1) "Cœur brûlé", 2) "Chercher L'Aventure", 3) "Hôtel de la Solitude", 4) "Trois aventuriers", 5) "Kalima", 6) "Vent du sud" and 7) "Trésor." Each of these short stories traces the imagined paths of actual immigrants or world travellers through

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<sup>91</sup> Most notably, *Sirandanes* exists in Creole cultures in the Mascarene Islands and the Caribbean islands. In his collection of *Sirandanes*, Le Clézio points out that riddles exist in all cultures and that "they are a true test of words that link man to the secret of creation" and are a "cultural possession of its people" J.M.G. and Jemia Le Clézio, *Sirandanes*, Paris: Éditions Seghers (1990): 12 [my translation]).

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and across geographically diverse landscapes: France, French Polynesia, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Spain, and the United States. Within the two hundred pages of the short story collection, the reader encounters the immensely diverse variety of cultures that extend to the four corners of the earth.

While some critics may seek to trace a linear progression from one text to another, I maintain that the collection can be seen as a polyphonic work whose narrative discourses cross histories, geographies, and time periods, as we have witnessed in *Révolutions*. Individually, each short story highlights the diversity of cultures and histories that characterize the conflict between desires and reality in the daily life of the character(s).

At the same time, each short story's narrative discourses, cultural and historical diversity can be seen as a rhizome extending out to the other stories in the collection. These observations have important consequences for the broader domain of hybridity with regard to Le Clézio's short stories and novels. Building upon the following quote by Edouard Glissant, I propose to consider the collection that is diversified by the heterogeneity of each short story: "L'universel a basculé dans la diversité, qui le bouscule. Ce qui veut dire que la question de l'être ne suppose plus d'elle-même sa légitimité, détournée qu'elle est par les assauts des diversités concourantes de notre monde" (*IPD* 67-68). Ultimately, what is at stake here is the recognition of *CB* as a literary mirror of humanity's heterogeneity and universality where one is not mutually exclusive of the other.

## **The Collection's Frame: Visual Writing, Cultural Crossings and the Arabesque in “Cœur brûle”**

Needless to say, the collection is presented under the sign of the *mise en abyme* of tragedy.<sup>92</sup> With this in mind, “Cœur brûle” opens the collection with a novel-like narrative structure with seven chapters. This structure emulates the collection’s structure itself with its seven short stories. These observations underline the use of structural elements belonging to the novel. In other words, the graphic and structural divisions of the first short story already announce the notion of hybrid *Relations* across genres and across the collection.

By extension, the alternating viewpoints provided by the narrator reveal the thoughts, actions, and memories of two sisters and their mother, who return to France after living in Mexico and choosing opposing life paths. These focalizations underline the narrative complexity, which surpasses the unities of time and space suggested in the earlier quotation by Viegnes. At the incipit, the author introduces the conflict between reality and sentimental desire through the eyes of Clemence, the older sister, who as an adult is a judge of juveniles:

Ce qu’elle voudrait voir, c’est Pervenche, seulement Pervenche, telle qu’elle apparaît sur la photo de l’été 82, âgée d’à peu près trois ans, un petit bout de femme vêtue d’un caleçon blanc et d’un T-shirt ornée d’un Tweety jaune canari, devant la maison de la rue des Tulipanes et le morceau de jardin envahit par les mauvaises herbes, avec toute la bande des enfants … (CB 11)

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<sup>92</sup> I define tragedy, with Oxford, as “an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime or natural catastrophe” (Oxford). At the same time, the word “tragedy” also denotes a “play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending” (Oxford). While these short stories are not written as plays with the intention of becoming spectacles, they all show scenes of tragedy that occur on the stage of daily life with actors and stories who remain unknown by the masses.

In this passage, the text takes the form of a photograph. Unlike Duras' *The Lover*, we are not dealing with a memory of a photograph, but we are viewing an actual image from the past.

The economy of this text that is dedicated to the literary depiction of the photograph and of the memories it triggers underline Clemence's obsession with lost time, as well as the reader's mental engulfment in the visual and written descriptions of a time lost.<sup>93</sup> The description also signals a certain distress for the reader concerning the lives of Pervenche, her younger sister, and her mother Hélène. By focusing the reader's attention on this fixed moment described in the photograph, which precedes the evolution of the narrative discourse, this passage draws the reader into a greater emotional connection with the story's characters; the reader wishes to discover what has happened between the time of the picture and the narrative present.

Over the short story's seventy-five pages, the narrative trace the histories of Pervenche, Clemence, and Hélène from Mexico to Southern France by rotating between an external and an internal focalization. The narrative structure shifts focalizations across different times, geographies, and languages,<sup>94</sup> and the reader is engaged in the task of piecing together the mystery behind Pervenche's fall into prostitution and slavery and the distance that has developed between the sisters and their mother.

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<sup>93</sup> As I have previously mentioned, we are reminded of the involuntary memory between multi-sensorial experiences and memories of the past that are so typical of Marcel Proust's writing. See Balint's insightful book, *Poétique de la Création: Proust et Le Clézio: Littérature moderne et contemporaine*.

<sup>94</sup> The author chooses not to translate Spanish into French for the reader, as the narrator shares Clemence's memories from her life in Mexico.

I argue that the first story of the collection can be seen as a novel's incipit that underlines the friction between desires and realities that dominates each story and the collection as a whole. Alone, each short story constructs a hybrid identity, like a single mosaïc piece; however, when placed with the other stories in the collection, each story extends outward toward the others in a movement of *Relation*. The stories' shared and disparate histories, cultures, genres and languages carve an arabesque whose intricate complexity, reliefs, depths, and curves can be seen as a visual image of the language of the human heart, a language that comes to life through Le Clézio's treatment of hybridity.

### **Orality, Translation, and Metamorphosis in “Chercher L'Aventure”**

As “Cœur brûle” closes with the return of Clemence to Mexico, the epigraph for “Chercher L'Aventure” on the opposite page establishes a geographical continuity between the two short stories.<sup>95</sup> Once again, Le Clézio's use of epigraphs underlines the multiplicity of cultures, histories, and languages and the absence of this knowledge in today's history. Here, Le Clézio translates the text from the Sixteenth-century Spanish friar Bernardino de Sahgún's *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*:

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<sup>95</sup> Mexico and Panama are predominant cultures in the author's works: *Haï* (1971), *Mydriase* (1973), *Trois Villes saintes* (1976), *Les Prophéties du Chilam Bilam* (1976), *La Relation du Michoacan* (1984), *Le Rêve mexicain ou la pensée interrompue* (1988), *Diego et Frida* (1993), *La Fête chantée* (1997), *Angoli Mala* (1999), *Cœur brûle et autres romances* (2000) and *Ourania* (2006). While living in Mexico for over four years during the 1970s, he completed his military service at the Institute of Latin America in Mexico City and lived with the Embera-Wounaan tribes of the Darién forests. Aside from living with the Embera-Wounaan tribes over four years, Le Clézio immersed himself in the local culture and history by studying the Michoacan sacred texts and by reflecting on Antonin Artaud's writings on Mexico. Bruno Thibault, “Biographie de J.M.G. Le Clézio”, *J.M.G. Le Clézio et la métaphore exotique*, Amsterdam: Rodopi (2009): 45-46, 66-73.

Durant la fête qu'ils appelaient *Ixnextiua*, ce qui veut dire chercher l'aventure, ils disaient que tous les dieux dansaient, et ainsi tous ceux qui dansaient se déguisaient en divers personnages, les uns en oiseaux, d'autres en animaux, et ainsi certains se métamorphosaient en colibris, d'autres en papillons, d'autres en abeilles, d'autres en mouches, d'autres en scarabées. D'autres encore portaient sur leur dos un homme endormi, et ils disaient que c'était le rêve. (CB 85)

In this passage, the verbs *dire* and *appeler* in the imperfect tense suggest the role of orality in the preservation of histories and cultures, which are transmitted from generation to generation. What is more, the repetition and rhythm underline the musicality, theatrality, and grandeur of the Porhépechan people's culture.<sup>96</sup> Sahgun's attempts to transcribe the myths and legends of the Porhépecha ensured the continuity in the transmission of their cultural and spiritual heritage.

It follows, then, that hybridity can be seen in the juxtaposition of the genre of orality with writing, where the written text becomes the means of transmitting oral histories. In fact, the author underscores the heterogeneity of the oral tradition in his presentation and translation of *Relation de Michoacan*: "La parole est au cœur même des fêtes de Pohépecha. Mais parfois, elles conduisent à l'action, en une sorte d'ivresse où le mythe et le réel se confondent" (RM 35). Although the opaque nature of orality may seem like a trivial matter, it

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<sup>96</sup> As Le Clézio mentions in *FC*, Amerindian culture is isolated in its own country, and its language, arts, and culture have become objects to be studied by scientists or tourists (169). However, the author writes of the new man of Mexico, as described by Antonin Artaud, who "can't exist without his part of identity that is indigenous, that opposes dehumanization of technology and the permanent urban catastrophe" (FC 169-170 [my translation]). This spirit of resistance against oppression dominates this scene that can be likened to Antonin Artaud's conception of Balinese Theater, where the stage gives "the sense of a new physical language, based upon signs and no longer upon words [...] these spiritual signs have a precise meaning which strikes us only intuitively but with enough violence to make useless any translation into logical discursive language" Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, Trans. Mary Carolina Richards, New York: Grove Press (1958): 54.

is in fact crucial to our understanding of the hybridization of Le Clézio's written text. That is, the leclézien text reproduces the act of story-telling, wherein multiple genres coexist and engage the reader in the transmission of the feelings and significance associated with the history's origin.

What is more, the epigraph touches on the importance of translation in the transmission of cultures and histories by its *mise en abyme* of languages.<sup>97</sup> Le Clézio presents a French translation of Bernardino de Sahgun's work, a Spanish translation of the Nahuatl text and the transcriptions of the Petamuti priests who provided oral testimonies of their people's heritage.<sup>98</sup> Thus, it is through the translated, written text that Le Clézio ensures the preservation of oral histories. In other words, the transformation of orality and language speak to the presence of hybridity and the relationships among genres, histories, and cultures.

Although it is true that Sahgun's work can be viewed as an ethnographic text in that it is, as proposed by the *Nouveau Petit Robert*, a descriptive study of diverse groups of humans,<sup>99</sup> I argue that the very extraction of this passage transforms the ethnographic genre by disrupting its position as the dominator, the West, *vis-à-vis* the dominated, the Mesoamerican people, or a scientific rapport of observer over the observed. Rather, the inclusion of Sahgun's work eliminates the characteristic distance between the reader and the

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<sup>97</sup> Again, I refer to Genette's analysis of epigraphs in his book *Paratexts* (153-159).

<sup>98</sup> JMG Le Clézio's essay *Relation de Michoacan* expounds on this series of translations (11-43).

<sup>99</sup> See Buford Norman, "Étude descriptive des divers groupes humains", *Ethnography in French Literature*, Amsterdam: Rodopi (1996): ix.

culture portrayed in ethnographic literature.<sup>100</sup> By eliminating the distance that has been created through a rational and scientific objectivity, Le Clézio shines light on the complexity of the Pohépecha culture and people, as he describes in *Relation de Michoacan*.

Ultimately, the epigraph suggests the profoundly spiritual nature of the Porhépecha people and highlights their belief in spiritual transformation and metamorphosis. The author removes the constructs of cultural hierarchies and characterizes the myths and legends of the past as the keys to comprehending the present. The hybridity of genres, histories, and cultures constitutes an attempt to reverse the ethnocentric efforts of the West to dominate and erase the “uncivilized.”<sup>101</sup> In other words, generic hybridity serves as a means to graft histories and fiction and to ensure their continuous flow across generations and cultures.

Building upon the notion that the epigraph serves as a bridge between cultures of the past and the present and as a key to thematic understanding, I propose to consider the epigraph as a passage of thematic continuity between the first and second short stories of the collection. This narrative device extends Clemence’s search for her past in Mexico to the second short story, “Chercher L’Aventure,” which is also set in Mexico. Furthermore, this continuity underlines the value of history and the transformative potential of adventure, magic, and hybridity.

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<sup>100</sup> Ethnology, as a discipline, began in the Sixteenth century with the discovery of the Americas. Peoples and cultures were depicted as exotic, barbaric savages ignorant of the Christian religion (“Folklore” 313).

<sup>101</sup> Robert J.C. Young describes the “decivilizing” phenomenon of the Nineteenth-century colonial machine in his renowned book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*, New York: Routledge (1995): 175.

While the bridge between these short stories ensures a fluid transition, the narrative discourse and character typology change. Contrary to the extradiegetic narrator of “Cœur brûle,” who offers both an external and internal focalization for the female characters, the narrator of “Chercher L’Aventure” alternates between a lyrical, storytelling discourse and the discourse of an extradiegetic narrator who speculates upon the motivations and actions of the main character.

The lyrical tone of the opening paragraph of this ten-page story weaves the orality of a storyteller into the written text: “La nuit tombe et avec elle vient le souvenir des peuples nomades, les peuples du désert et les peuples de la mer. C’est ce souvenir qui hante l’adolescence au moment d’entrer dans la vie, qui est son génie” (*CB* 87). The poetic lyricism of this incipit prolongs the legendary mystery that is announced by the epigraph and orients the reader to a tale of wisdom and initiation. In addition, anonymity of the nameless main character, *la jeune fille de quinze ans*, lends itself to the universality of tales and cultural hybridity that typify contemporary society.

Along with the story’s mythical tone, the setting of the story is also mythical, manifesting the divide between good and evil as represented by the contrasting images of the city and nature. Here, as in many of Le Clézio’s works, the modern city takes over the countryside and is characterized by animalistic qualities. The main character, a fifteen-year-old girl, experiences what Keith Moser has termed “privileged moments,” that is, “moments of enigmatic ecstasy resulting from direct contact by means of one or more of the senses” (Moser, *Privileged Moments in the Novels and Short Stories of J.M.G. Le Clézio* ix). These moments are “experienced as a direct result of a close communion with nature” (Moser ix). In this case, the fifteen-year-old girl communes with the night, the stars, and the wind.

She also experiences a connection with an “involuntary memory” (ix) of Rimbaud, Kerouac, Jack London, Jean Genet, Moll Flanders, and Nadja.<sup>102</sup> While such literary names evoke modern-day European and American archetypes of adept adventure-seekers, they underline the importance of literature in providing adventure to readers. In Le Clézio’s text, these references extend the young girl’s experience to a familiar frame of reference for the reader. What is more, Thibault emphasizes that these writers inspire a model of a *récit de voyage initiatique*:

Ce n’est donc pas le dépaysement qui l’intéresse au premier chef mais un certain décentrement (ou dédoublement) de la personnalité. D’une part Le Clézio s’inspire du modèle du récit de voyage initiatique et d’auteurs comme Herman Melville, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London, Joseph Conrad, Richard Henry Dana, William Golding, qu’il cite fréquemment. Pour lui, ces récits d’aventure tournent autour d’une même question : comment passe-t-on de l’être cébral à l’être physique. (Thibault, “Avant Propos” 13-14)

Despite the hypnotic nature of the narrator’s description of these privileged moments, the narrator’s direct questions to the reader disrupt the fluidity of the narrative. The narrator uses rhetorical devices with a modern and familiar register to speculate and analyze the character’s behavior and potential motivations: *ou bien* (or rather), the interrogative form, *peut-être* (93-94). Although these pauses may first appear disruptive, they mimic the hesitations and diversions that characterize an oral discussion, hence maximizing the proximity between the reader and the history.

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<sup>102</sup> As explained in the introduction to his book, *Privileged Moments in the Novels and Short Stories of J.M.G. Le Clézio*, Moser says that involuntary memory results from a privileged state of being. He also points out that it may also entail the result of multi-sensorial experiences that spontaneously trigger memories of well-known individuals who are recognized for sharing the same experience as the character, or the reader (ix-xii).

### **Fictionalized realism: Reading Memories of Aging in “Hôtel de la Solitude”**

In her article “Romance en mode mineur. Vieillesse et solitude dans les nouvelles,” Salles posits that “Hôtel de la Solitude” can be seen as a fatal epilogue to the story of the young fifteen-year-old girl in “Chercher L’Aventure.” I wish to question this argument, as it suggests a linear progression from a beginning to an end that is not characteristic of the collection’s *Relational* structure. Rather than considering this short story as a “fatal epilogue” to the preceding short story, I consider it as a random and spontaneous snapshot of the histories, geographies, relationships, and cultures that constitute the memories of the main character, Eva.

In considering this small short story as a literary photograph of Eva’s life, I wholeheartedly agree with Jacqueline Dougherty, who asserts that “the fusion of writerly and cinematic devices prevents further permutation of human memory” (5). At an age when memory can be unreliable for the main character, Le Clézio’s visual writing anchored in verifiable facts preserves Eva’s memories, which constitute her unique story, and prevents her history from being forgotten.

Once again, Le Clézio situates the reader within a specific space. Here, as Salles astutely remarks, we are indeed at an existing hotel of the same name in the Andalusian village of Almuñecar (“Romance en mode mineur. Vieillesse et solitude dans les nouvelles” 108). Anchoring the brief five-page short story within an existing milieu combines fictional and factual discourses. The realism of the fiction lends specificity and recognizability to the place for the reader and for Eva, the main character, who reflects on her youthful days that were filled with animation, excursions, and lovers. While Eva’s age is not specified, the repeated use of the more-than-perfect tense suggests a certain distance in time between the

literary present and her memories. Yet, the visual depictions of these memories bring them into the present, where the reader becomes an eyewitness to these key moments in Eva's life.

Contrasting with the past of Eva's memories, the narrative discourse in the literary present lends itself to a photographic style that freezes the reader's eye on the specificity of each article in Eva's room. This literary device provides yet another reality-marker for the reader, where the specificity of each object that is described is clearly imaginable to the reader. The proximity between reader and character is enhanced, thus establishing a relationship of empathy despite differences such as culture and age.

In the space of five pages, the empathetic relationship solidifies as the narrator engages the reader with questions about what might have been Eva's life, feelings, and motivations. However, in the last seven phrases in the story, the use of the pronoun "on" involves the reader in Eva's story and draws attention to the universal nature of death:

Eva ne possédait plus rien, même plus assez d'argent pour continuer à vivre. Rien que ces souvenirs heureux, l'illusion de l'éternel retour, et la certitude à peine voilée de la nécessité de s'en aller bientôt, pour toujours. On ne choisit rien. C'est seulement ainsi, quelque coups légers frappés à la porte de la chambre, le silence, puis un corps froid, déjà raidi, qu'on emporte vers l'oubli, et dans l'escalier, l'ange vêtu de blanc qui regarde de ses yeux langoureux et cruels. Et, sur quelque guéridon oublié, un thé inutile (*CB* 103).

The tone of tragic impassivity that characterizes this brief story's ending suggests the tragedy and absurdity of human mortality more broadly. Yet, as I previously stated, Eva's story is yet one snapshot of a life that points to the coexistence of disparate yet parallel journeys across cultures and time periods. Specifically, the author grafts "Hôtel de la Solitude"'s tragic sense of abandonment onto the fourth short story, which depicts the lives of three women of differing ages, "Trois aventurières."

## **Fragments of daily life in the United States, Mexico, and Mauritius** “Trois Aventurières”

The brevity of this nine-page short story establishes a mise-en-abyme of tragedy through a fragmented snapshot of three women’s lives from diverse cultures and backgrounds: the United States, Mexico, and Mauritius.

As argued by Dougherty, the use of visual writing, combined with the anonymity of the characters, focalize the reader’s eye to observe in detail the snapshots of past events (Dougherty 1). Each detail in these brief short stories becomes a piece in a puzzle, like a Polaroid developing before the reader’s eyes. Such a literary device engages the reader in the work of discovering the identities of these three women from opposite ends of the world, the attempt to attribute an identity to what is anonymous. This situation could apply to the everyday life of the reader.

The first, “Sue,” is sixteen, like the character of “Chercher L’Aventure;”; however, her name and the detailed description of her life in the northeastern United States provide her with a distinct cultural identity. The detailed visual descriptions of the town’s disposition and landmarks add a visual, almost photographic dimension to Sue’s desperation at living in small-town America:

Elle habitait une petite ville du nord-est des États-Unis, mettons Moline, juste une rue centrale avec le drugstore, les magasins de pêche et un restaurant café-bar, le City Hall, le collège, et à chaque bout de la rue une station-service, d’un côté Chevron, de l’autre Shamrock, l’une spécialisée dans les réparations de pneus, l’autre dans la mécanique agricole John Deer (CB 107).

This literary portrayal of the landmarks that dominate mid-American landscape in television shows and movies juxtaposes the distinct realms of visual and poetic representation.

When considering the use of photographic images in literature, we are reminded of Jacques Rancière's essay "The Emancipated Spectator," wherein he posits that images create an "aesthetic rupture" that enables the reader to turn his gaze to the "lived reality" of the characters.<sup>103</sup> Within a literary context, Le Clézio's text reduces the distance between the reader and the character by eliciting a visual recognition. In addition, the proximity of the reader to the text is further enhanced by the oral nature of the narrator's direct discourse, which testifies to Sue's existence with snippets of conversations. Thus, the juxtaposition of a photographic cultural description and an eyewitness account of her history liberate the reader's imagination to recollect a visual memory of having one day encountered a similar "Sue."

One explanation of the vague ending of "Sue"'s three-page snapshot is that this ending positions the reader on the flat, Chicago horizon with a heightened empathy for Sue's solitude; and yet, this ending also opens the horizon of the text to the story of "Rosa" that follows. The reader moves from the plains of the Midwest to Mexico to learn of the story of "Rosa" from Zamora in the Mexican state of Michoacán. As I asserted in the case of *Révolutions*, these instances of overlapping texts signal *Relational* dialogues across narratives, space, and time periods. In this particular case, Rosa's story contrasts the solitude of children and the impassivity of society with human generosity:

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<sup>103</sup> In his essay, Rancière examines the power of images to connect the spectator's lived realities with the worlds in theater and film. By connecting the spectator to the vivid scenes of reality that the images represent, he contends, the spectator's gaze is liberated of social codes (Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Specator*. London: Verso [2009]: 70-72). While I acknowledge that Rancière's arguments are specific to the context of cinema, I propose to consider Le Clézio's visual writing in light of Rancière's theory regarding the lived reality through aesthetic rupture.

Elle [Rosa] n'aurait pas des enfants de propriétaires et de notaires, elle n'aurait pas de futurs docteurs, pharmaciens ou marchands de fraises. Non, ce seraient eux ses enfants, ces petits maraudeurs au visage noirci, hirsutes et malades comme des chats perdus, eux qui ne savaient que les gros mots et les blasphèmes, qui étaient capables de mentir, de voler, de tuer même. À l'âge où on est jeune fille et où on cherche un mari, Rosa cherchait les enfants perdus. (*CB* 111-112).

Upon reading this description and noticing the narrator's repeated mention of Rosa's last name, Verduzco, I researched the potential existence of a real-life Rosa Verduzco. Despite the absence of scholarly research on this person, two documents lead me to believe in Rosa's existence.<sup>104</sup>

Once again, Le Clézio's narrative weaves together fact and fiction. The verifiability of Rosa's story points to the number of unheard histories that lie submerged beneath daily life and reinforces the legendary aspect of Rosa's character as transmitted by the extradiegetic narrator. These observations support my argument that, through his hybrid texts, Le Clézio breaks the chains that traditionally separate the personal from official, collective histories. In so doing, the author provides access to histories that can enable the reader to live and understand our heterogeneous world, as argued by Edouard Glissant in *Memoires des esclavages* (176-177).

The final story, "Alice," echoes the history presented in "Rosa." However, this likeness is disrupted by its early Twentieth-century Mauritian setting. The extradiegetic narrator's account in the past tense underlines the legendary nature of "Alice" that is

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<sup>104</sup> The first document is a family blog on the history of the Verduzco family of Zamora (Verduzco). The second is a video piece on Rosa Verduzco in which she is interviewed ("Mamá Rosa yo te Quiero").

attributed to her solitude, her progressive abandonment by her family, and her unconditional generosity in the face of children's misery, abandoned women, and dogs dying of hunger or cancer. At the same time, by including Alice's direct discourse in the literary present, Le Clézio introduces an oral element to the text that suggests the story's realism and invites the reader to be an eyewitness.

The fifth short story, "Kalima," will be the focus of the next section of this chapter. The motivation for an elaborate analysis of this short story about a young, lifeless Moroccan prostitute is the previous lack of scholarly attention and the distinctiveness of the story, with its combination of hybridity and tragedy, from the other stories in the collection.

### **Metaphysical Language, Tragedy and the Spectator: "Kalima"**

In this fifth short story, Le Clézio emphasizes the tragic anonymity of foreigners in France by opening the text with an immediate and powerful *mise-en-abyme* of tragedy. I wish to clarify the double nature of tragedy that shines light on both suffering and theater. In its first sense, tragedy is "an event causing great suffering, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime or natural catastrophe" (Oxford). However, its second meaning is theatrical: a "play dealing with tragic events and having an unhappy ending" (Oxford). A text in the genre of tragedy establishes an emotional connection between the reader, who becomes a spectator, and the character in the text. In "Kalima," Le Clézio recycles the genre of tragedy by enfolding it within another genre, the short story, and within a postcolonial context.

In discussing the suffering and the theatricality that are associated with tragedy, it is crucial to consider the role of orality, the spoken word. One automatically recognizes the role of the spectator, the witness to the words that are spoken and to the sights that are seen.

While this short story is not written as a play that is intended to become a spectacle, the hybridity of visual writing and orality, combined with diverse cultural and historical elements from Morocco and France, transform the text into an arabesque pattern that testifies to the beauty and also the tragedy of transcultural identities that are silenced into nonexistence in Western societies.

We first notice a relationship between the numeric placement of this text and the overall theme of tragedy. Consider the placement of “Kalima” in the position of fifth short story in the collection, corresponding to the final act in a tragedy, the fatal culmination. A second layer of tragedy can be observed in the story’s reversed chronological progression. Rather than moving from exposition to denouement, the opening scene immediately destabilizes the reader with a vivid description of Kalima’s dead body that would appear in the final scene. By reversing the logical order of progression, Le Clézio’s text can be seen as a representation of what Antonin Artaud refers to as Oriental theater,<sup>105</sup> or the Theater of Cruelty, where the rational psychological nature of the play is replaced with violence and powerful emotions. Such an opening, as I will later elaborate, immediately provokes an engaged and powerful reader response.

In addition, we can observe the presence of tragedy and theatricality in the oral, poetic, and visual nature of the text. These qualities provoke the reader’s physical sensations, which Artaud refers to as the metaphysics of language:

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<sup>105</sup> See Artaud 44-47.

To make metaphysics out of a spoken language is to make the language express what it does not ordinarily express: to make use of it in a new, exceptional, and unaccustomed fashion; to reveal its possibilities for producing physical shock; to divide and distribute it actively in space; to deal with intonations in an absolutely concrete manner, restoring their power to shatter as well as really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one could say alimentary, sources, against its trapped-beast origins; and finally, to consider language as the form of *Incantation*. (Artaud 46)

The use of language and its rhythm throughout the text replicates the orality associated with theater and the ritual of incantation. Words become a means of lamenting Kalima's dead body and invoking her spirit.

Underlining the importance of words as well as the multiplicity of cultures is the short story's eponymous character, Kalima. In the Arabic language, the name "Kalima" means "word."<sup>106</sup> Linguistically, Le Clézio stresses the importance of the original language, as we have seen in the epigraph of *Révolutions* and "Chercher L'Aventure" in *CB*. As with these two examples, the title and eponymous character underscore the importance of words, and more specifically, of the spoken word.

In the context of Muslim culture, *Kalima* also signifies "word," but it also is the essence of Islam. As a profession of faith, Muslims pronounce six Kalimas,<sup>107</sup> each of which has a different meaning; together they signify one's faith and devotion to Islam and to the Islamic community. In this sense, *Kalima* is not only "word"; it also connotes a certain

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<sup>106</sup> According to a discussion with Mariya Chakir, a Moroccan living in the US who is of the Muslim culture. All subsequent insights into the significance of "Kalima" in Islam, and in Muslim and popular Moroccan culture, grow out of our phone conversation of February 5, 2014.

<sup>107</sup> The six Kalimas are as follows: 1) Tayyabah – purity; 2) Shahaadat – witness and testimony; 3) Tumjeed – glorification; 4) Tauhid – unity; 5) Astaghfar – penitence; 6) Rud-A-Kuffer – rejecting disbelief.

sacredness: the sacred miracle of life that is embodied in a word. In modern Moroccan culture, *Kalima* implies “promise/word,” as when someone pledges his or her fidelity to another person with a handshake, saying “You have my *Kalima* (word).” Thus, the cultural, religious, and linguistic associations with *Kalima*, as a word, title, and name, underline their inextricable relationship in *Kalima*’s hybrid identity.

Indeed, we are close to Artaud’s notion of the “metaphysics of language.” Le Clézio’s use of language, in essence, restores words, restores *Kalima*. The arabesque nature of the text “divide[s] and distribute[s] it [the word] actively in space … with intonations in an absolutely concrete manner, restoring their power to shatter as well as really to manifest something … to consider language as the form of *Incantation*” (Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* 46).<sup>108</sup>

Hence, we can see the incipit of the text as the initiation of an incantation that places the reader before a visually disruptive and violent scene that is accentuated by the emotionally charged oral lyricism and the use of commas with powerful visual, narrative descriptions:

Ô Kalima, quel chemin as-tu suivi jusqu’à cette journée du mois de janvier 1986, où tu gis étendue nue sur le marbre froid de la morgue, recouverte d’un drap blanc qui suit les volumes et les creux de ton corps, et cache ton visage jusqu’au front, ne laissant apparaître que tes cheveux d’un noir de jais, épais, ondulés, vivants encore, et tes pieds réguliers, aux ongles peints en vermillon, avec, attachée à ta cheville gauche par un bracelet de fil de fer, une étiquette plastifiée qui porte ton nom, ton âge, ton origine, et la date de ta mort, ce peu de mots et de chiffres que les hommes ont su de toi ? (CB 119)

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<sup>108</sup> Although I included the entire citation earlier, I repeat parts of it here to emphasize the relevance of Artaud’s concept in the context of our discussion of Le Clézio’s use of language in this short story.

In this passage, several literary and visual genres create a powerful rapport between the reader and the text. First, the use of the familiar, second-person pronoun *tu* serves a dual function of establishing a relationship of both familiarity and disruption among the reader, the narrator, and the eponymous character Kalima. While the *tu* suggests familiarity between the narrator and Kalima, the nature of this familiarity remains unknown. Such a familiarity reverses the traditional distance between the observer and the text and establishes a proximity between Kalima and the reader.

In essence, Le Clézio transforms the text into a “direct communication” through the use of familiarity as described by Antonin Artaud in his “The Theater of Cruelty (First Manifesto)”:

We abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theater of the action. A direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it. This envelopment results, in part, from the very configuration of the room itself.  
(Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* 96)

Actually, the use of the *tu*, along with the oral and visual nature of the text, transforms the position of the reader and places him “in the middle of the action [where he] is engulfed and physically affected by it” (96). Is the reader the observed or the observer? If, in fact, the reader is in the position of observation, does this not imply that the reader is responsible for Kalima’s death?

It follows, then, that the use of the *tu*, and the “ô” associated with lyric poetry and the interrogative form, strengthen the oral dimension of the narrator’s discourse that address both Kalima and the reader. The text becomes the incantation of Kalima, or the word. It is through the orality of the spoken word and the visual reading that Le Clézio engages the reader not

only to discover the identity of Kalima, the word, but also to discern that of the narrator and the implications of being an aural- and eyewitness.

Secondly, Le Clézio's writing becomes a visual depiction of an intolerable reality that corresponds to "the agitation and unrest characteristic of our epoch" (Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* 122).<sup>109</sup> The depiction of Kalima's body can be seen as charged with symbols of classic, tragic theater. Described as a sacrificial victim draped in a white sheet on a cold and sterile altar, the opening scene calls to mind the female model of Antigone,<sup>110</sup> the dark-haired nomad whose journey from her home led her to the tragic doom of death. This association with a tragic figure echoes Bessière's notion that "la tragédie actualise la reconnaissance" (Bessière, *Principes* 31). In other words, the recognizability of the scene and character reinforces a bond of familiarity between the reader and Kalima.

In this light, Le Clézio transposes the modern context to the classical reference by juxtaposing "Kalima" with the genre of tragedy and a familiar female tragic heroine who is a symbol of martyrdom. Furthermore, Kalima represents the profession of prostitution and an immigrant class that remains invisible, if not intentionally ignored, in the margins of society. Yet, as we have observed with the six *Kalimas*, the sacredness of the girl's name shines light on her purity of heart, in contrast with the world of prostitution to which she has become prey.

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<sup>109</sup> Here, I refer to Rancière's examination of "intolerable" images in his essay "The Emancipated Spectator" (83-105).

<sup>110</sup> I consider Sophocles' Antigone due to her role as a martyr. While Antigone willingly marches to her death for her religious beliefs, Kalima is doomed to death because of her role of a martyr, or prey, in a host country where she has no rights or protection.

By consigning a tragic, notorious, noble heroine to fate as an anonymous social outcast, Le Clézio rewrites tragedy in modern fiction and involves the reader in the restoration of human dignity in the face of tragedy. Thus, in the case of the leclézien text, the writing of visual images simultaneously offers an attempt to confer an identity to the intolerable while also creating an engaged reader response in the identification of the intolerable and, ultimately, in the commitment to avoid the repetition of tragedy.

When considering the length of the incipit's long, lamenting question, we notice the accumulation of commas, which force the reader to pause to observe each detail of Kalima's body. The accumulation of generic elements of tragedy, lyrical poetry, and incantatory rhythms underscore the dehumanization of modern society to which Kalima has fallen prey.

I propose to read the incipit of this short story as the opening frame in a text that exemplifies what Camus called the modern tragedy in his 1955 conference “Sur l'avenir de la tragédie.” In this address, Camus describes the inevitable development of the tragedy in terms of a parallel to world violence:

... l'âge tragique semble coïncider chaque fois avec une évolution où l'homme, consciemment ou non, se détache d'une forme ancienne de civilisation et se trouve devant elle en état de rupture sans, pour autant, avoir trouvé une nouvelle forme qui le satisfasse.  
(Camus, “Sur l'avenir de la tragédie” 1113)

In other words, with the escalation of tension and emotional suffering, indignation will increase: “La tragédie naît entre l'ombre et la lumière” (Camus 1116). Likewise, Kalima's history represents the pinnacle of the friction between human desire and the reality that is originally announced by the collection's title, “Burning Heart,” and its subtitle, “and Other Romances.”

With this fact in mind, the tragic incipit frames the text with a sense of revolt against the impassibility and silence of death, an indignation that is further emphasized by the interrogation at the end of the incipit. Actually, the interrogative form is used thirteen times throughout the text. The repetition of this form, as well as the eleven appearances of the speculative term *peut-être*, further involve the reader as a witness who seeks to find meaning and reason in such a tragic death.

Along the same lines, the repetition underscores the incantatory tone of the text that is further enhanced by the lyrical ô. The rhythm of these tones punctuate the text like the cords of the Greek lyre that “conjoi[gnent] l’amour et la mort dans l’espace réservé d’une incantation mélodieuse” (Lyrisme). The lyrical ô underscores the notion of tragedy with its association with death while also placing an emphasis on orality. The aural and visual nature of the text creates a space of intimacy and proximity between the reader and Kalima’s body, a closeness that is reinforced by the use of the pronoun “tu.”<sup>111</sup> Yet, the identity of the narrator is not revealed in the text.

My discussion of the interrogative form, proximity, and the unknown is in fact addressing the larger matter of the engaged reader as witness.<sup>112</sup> “Do I know the answers to these questions? Why isn’t anyone answering these cries? Do I know the person who lies underneath this sheet? Could someone have done something to prevent this death?” As

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<sup>111</sup> As I previously elaborated, orality and the use of the *tu* pronoun remove the distance of objectivity and create a rapprochement between the reader, the narrator, and the characters.

<sup>112</sup> “Witness” is the second Kalima.

proposed by Artaud, the spectator “placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it” (Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* 96).

Engulfed as a reader myself, I asked the author in 2011 to explain his rationale for choosing the story’s particular narrative voice. In response, Le Clézio explained that Kalima’s body is the narrator who leads the reader on a journey to understand her story (van der Drift, “Les Chemins de l’interculturel” 169). By situating Kalima’s body as the narrator, the reader is invited to listen to her “word,” to witness her life and contemplate the numerous stories of those who have been silenced and who still remain to be heard.

The orality of the text becomes the incantation of Kalima’s humanity hidden from society and silenced by death. Undeniably, only a hybrid narrative structure can give voice to such a complex identity that society attempts to reduce to a name and a wire bracelet. In other words, the writer cannot rely on a single genre to give voice to the multiple cultures and histories that construct each identity. In the case of “Kalima,” multiple histories appear as possible responses to the cause of her tragic death. In fact, these histories underline the hidden face of human feelings beneath daily encounters.

First, the narrative structure highlights the alternation between dominating descriptions of the cold, sterile, and harsh reality in Marseille and the fleeting, personal memories of Kalima’s life in Morocco that radiate splendor, warmth, aromas, and sounds. The narrator describes France with a lexicon of dark colors, cold weather, aggressive cars, and empty balconies and windows, thus underlining Kalima’s solitude and the mechanical nature of her daily life:

à la lumière des néons de l'hiver ... ces éclats qui jaillissaient des autos, le grondement des moteurs et le froissement des roues sur l'asphalte ... cette grande route au bord de la mer, cette muraille d'immeubles impénétrables, baies vides, balcons déserts ... ces voitures, sans nom, sans nombre ... (CB 122-3).

Conversely, a lexicon of innocence, warmth, human relations, and the senses to describe memories of her Moroccan past emphasizes the plenitude of her home:

Cette grande ville blanche, au bord de la mer, avec le bruit des rues, le mouvement de la foule, les marchés en plein air où errent les enfants et les chèvres, les carrefours encombrés de camions, de charrettes, de taxis, l'odeur de la mangeaille, de l'huile chaude du poisson frit, l'odeur des fruits qui pourrissent (CB 120).

The contrasting lexicons play both a formal and a thematic role in the text by recreating a sensorial description of the scene for the reader while also depicting the contrast between the warmth of the human heart and the cold impassiveness of modern society.

Furthermore, this short story addresses exile in France by depicting the erosion and negation of her Moroccan identity.<sup>113</sup> Such a plural identity stands out in Twenty-First century France, where there is a rising distrust of foreigners and a growing concern with preserving a national identity.<sup>114</sup> With each passing paragraph, the descriptions of Morocco

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<sup>113</sup> In de Toro's analysis of Khatibi, he points out that Khatibi considers the Moroccan identity as a plural identity, one of "hybridité et l'entrecroisement des cultures juives et arabes ... un réseau de cultures: arabe, musulmane, berbère, française, juive, portugaise." Alfonso de Toro, *Épistémologies du Maghreb*, Paris: L'Harmattan (2009): 117.

<sup>114</sup> This trend was particularly strong in the South of France, where Kalima's story takes place. In the 1990s, the right-wing political party, Front National or FN, built their campaign around fear of unemployment and immigrants. This led to a rise of racism, particularly towards the Maghrébin. Charles Sowerwine points out that Maghrébins, because of their visible cultural hybridity (skin, clothing and language), stood out as the immigrants to be feared. Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870: Culture, Society and the Making of the Republic*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2009) : 417-424.

become briefer and increasingly overshadowed by the prominently cold, grey descriptions of France.

An example of the depriving nature of France on her Moroccan identity can be seen in the following paragraph, which emphasizes the widening gap that distances Kalima's past from her present:

Les années s'éloignent, se défont. Ce n'est plus toi qui t'en vas sur ce bateau... C'est ta ville natale, ton quartier, tes amies, tes frères, ta mère qui sont sur le pont d'un immense navire blanc et poussiéreux, qui passe de l'autre côté du monde. Ils s'en vont, ils emportent ta naissance, ton nom et ton enfance, les secrets, les rires ... tu n'avais plus de ville ni de pays, juste des papiers, des permis de séjour ... Peut-être que c'était comme si tu n'étais jamais née (*CB* 126-127).

In this passage, Kalima's passage from Morocco to France is recreated in the literary present, placing the reader on the ship to witness the stakes of immigration: the gradual loss of identity to the point of dehumanization and nonexistence. Each distinct element of Kalima's culture and history disappears into invisibility.

It is important to note the repetition of this passage, with alterations, two other times in the text.<sup>115</sup> Each of the three variations signals a change in movement. The first appearance, in the second paragraph of the text, recreates the memory of Kalima's departure from Morocco by her movement away from Morocco toward France. The second appearance of the passage underlines an opposite movement, depicting the distancing of her identity as she assimilates into her French life of prostitution and abuse. Rather than being a subject, she

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<sup>115</sup> *CB* 119-120, 132.

is in a powerless position of watching her identity slip away from her to a point of nonexistence.

The third and final repetition in the past tense closes the text and signals the point of no return. As it is commonly known, repetition is a common literary device for underlining emotions and feelings, and particularly traumas. Hence, in the context of Artaud's consideration of "language as the form of *Incantation*" (46), the recycling of the passage highlights transformations that can be seen as a visual representation of the loss of memory and identity. Like a palimpsest, the moment marking her migration is written and rewritten in layers that eventually erase her identity.

I contend that the devouring nature of Kalima's assimilation in France is symbolized by the description of her body and the progressive layers of sweaters she wears to hide her body and protect herself from the cold: "L'hiver, c'était dur pour toi. Tu mettais deux chandails, l'un par-dessus l'autre, quelquefois trois, épais, de la vraie laine, avec des cols montants" (120). Here, the thickness of the wool and the degree of coverage to her face with layers of sweaters can be seen as a type of armor necessary for the protection of her purity, which is the first signification of the word *Kalima* in Arabic.

It is nevertheless clear that Kalima's efforts are warped and corrupted, as is evident in the following passage: "Il faisait froid, et les cinq pull-overs que tu avais mis les uns par-dessus les autres faisaient paraître ta poitrine énorme, invraisemblable" (CB 128). Kalima's efforts to erase her femininity and her identity only betray her even more. Rather than masking, Kalima's attempts to protect herself and camouflage her identity only further accentuate her identity, her gender, and her displaced status to the point of perversion, "ta poitrine énorme, invraisemblable".

Le Clézio's treatment of clothing serves as a means of emphasizing the grotesque, unnatural nature of exile and cultural assimilation that eventually leads to tragedy. The inevitable unwinding of the machine of tragedy can be seen in the cruel violence that dominates her life of prostitution:

Il t'a frappée de bas en haut, d'un coup violent, et à cause des épaisseurs de laine des cinq pull-overs, le couteau n'est pas entré profondément dans ta poitrine, et tu as crié ... Encore, et encore, l'homme t'a frappée, avec tellement de force que ton corps s'est plié en deux, et la troisième fois le couteau a traversé les cinq pull-overs et a cloué ton cœur. (*CB* 131-132)

Here, the repetition of “*encore, et encore,*” is punctuated by commas, forcing the reader to feel and witness the impact of such violence on her body. Despite Kalima’s efforts to distance herself from violence, her predator finally traps her with his knife. It is important to note the choice of the word *cloué*. The killer did not *percer* (pierce, penetrate, or touch profoundly). Rather he “nailed down” her heart, like an animal. The animality of this act contrasts dramatically with the first *Kalima* in Islam, which signifies purity.

This contrast emphasizes how Kalima has been dehumanized within French society: she is looked upon as an animal to devour. In familiar French language, *cloquer la bec* is an expression that means to silence someone. As an animal, she is without a voice, without words, robbed of her identity. In the end, her *Kalima*, the word, is erased, forgotten, without anyone knowing of her passing, or even that she had ever existed. This closure hearkens back to the epigraph at the beginning of the collection: “When the heart burns, who knows?” Le Clézio's treatment of tragedy exemplifies the contrasting forces that characterize Western society and ultimately lead to the sacrifice of one's humanity. However, as my analysis has demonstrated, the hybridity of the leclézien text restores a sense of identity to the prostitutes who are destined to live in the silenced margins of society.

Over the space of twelve pages, Le Clézio traces the tragic, gradual erasure of Kalima's humanity, which remains unnoticed or unknown to the world around her. Thus, the hybrid treatment of genres, histories, and cultures in this short story invite the engaged reader to piece together Kalima's identity, her humanity, in a way that cannot be reduced to a plastic label attached to a wire bracelet: "attachée à ta cheville gauche par un bracelet de fil de fer, une étiquette plastifiée qui porte ton nom, ton âge, ton origine, et la date de ta mort, ce peu de mots et de chiffres que les hommes ont su de toi?" (CB 119). Le Clézio's text engages the reader to restore the "words" to Kalima's identity by attributing to her a story, by searching to uncover the layers of forgetting that have led her to a state of nonexistence.

### ***Relation and Engaging Reflection: Modern Tragedy***

The hybridity of narrative discourses, histories, and cultures suggests the tension that characterizes the clash between the impassiveness of society and the burning emotional desires of the characters. However, at the same time, I insist that hybridity underscores the *Relations* of humanity across cultures and classes. Le Clézio's treatment of tragedy in *Cœur brûle et autres romances* involves the reader in the restoration of human dignity in the face of such tragedy. The writing of visual images and orality alongside the elements of tragedy invites the reader to confer an identity to the unidentified and to avoid the repetition of these histories. With such a pathos that characterizes Le Clézio's writing in contrast to Twentieth- and Twenty-First-century French novels, Le Clézio's writing can be seen as a new type of littérature "engagée" that removes the distance that has separated "us" and "them" and invites a space of *Relation*.

Undeniably, the hybridity of the short stories in *CB* engages the reader to experience *transindividuality* and to reflect on the world's disparity and heterogeneity. I argue that the

use of multiple genres in *CB* creates a space of proximity between the reader and the text that is intensified by interrogative formulations and by repeated yet modified passages.

Furthermore, I claim that this proximity helps the reader to imagine and experience the possible *Relations* across a myriad of histories and cultures. For instance, as a reader, do we see others as a label as described in Kalima: “un bracelet de fil de fer, une étiquette plastifiée qui porte ton nom, ton âge, ton origine, et la date de ta mort, ce peu de mots et de chiffres que les hommes ont su de toi ?” (119). With this question, the reader reconsiders the foundations of identity in today’s society and the role of ethnocentric cultures in the silencing and forgetting of hybrid, original cultures.

I suggest that the contact among histories, genres, and cultures creates a space for reflection on global issues and one’s interactions with others. In other words, I propose that hybridity, then, is a propitious space for *Relation*, as argued by Edouard Glissant, where the reader can enter a state of symbiosis with the realities of the world:

... Il me semble qu’on n’est pas en symbiose, en relation avec la situation réelle du monde, la situation réelle de ce qui se passe dans le monde. Et il me semble que c’est seulement une poétique de la Relation, c’est-à-dire un imaginaire, qui nous permettra à ‘comprendre’ ces phrases et ces implications des situations des peuples dans le monde d’aujourd’hui, qui nous autorisera s’il se trouve à essayer de sortir de l’enfermement auquel nous sommes réduits. (*IPD* 24).

Indeed, Le Clézio’s writing aids the reader to be in contact with the real situation of the world. In *CB*, the reader experiences unknown realities through hybrid writing that marries original histories and cultures with the generic elements of tragedy, theater, visual writing, and references to verifiable places and people. Undeniably, this hybridity engages the reader to hear and “understand” the heterogeneity of our world and to participate in building relations of hybrid identities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ***RELATIONS OF HYBRIDITY IN LE MUSÉE MONDE***

In the previous chapters, I have examined representations of hybridity in two of Le Clézio's literary works. I will now consider hybridity in the realm of the visual arts by examining the author's exhibit at the Louvre, *Le Musée monde*. I have chosen to focus our attention on the exhibit's overall design, as well as on three major pieces selected because of their cultural diversity, their mediums, and their location in the exhibit. As we will see, I will explore the transcultural and transgeneric relations of *LMM* that illustrate how leclézien hybridity extends beyond the literary world into the public realm of art and socio-cultural dialogue. Thus, it is through transgeneric and transcultural hybridity that Le Clézio's works *Relate* the limitless diversity of the world that cannot be homogenized or contained.

Under the direction of the Louvre President, Henri Loyrette,<sup>116</sup> each fall the Louvre invites a respected individual outside of the museum field to be the author of a new perspective on art:<sup>117</sup> “nous avons formulé puis dévoloppé l'idée d'inviter chaque année, une personnalité extérieure au monde des musées de travailler avec quelqu'un qui proposerait à

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<sup>116</sup> Henri Loyrette was the president-director of the Louvre from 2001 – 2013. In this chapter, I will discuss his initiatives to diversify the Louvre's approach to art and culture.

<sup>117</sup> Robert Badinter in 2005; Toni Morrison in 2006; Anselm Kiefer in 2007; Pierre Boulez in 2008; Umberto Eco in 2009; Patrice Chéreau in 2010.

nos visiteurs un regard transversal et différent sur nos collections” (7).<sup>118</sup> In November 2011, the Louvre invited JMG Le Clézio to be their seventh guest. Unlike former invited guests, Le Clézio expanded the consideration of transversality to include cultures and pieces of art that had never before been inside the Louvre because of the Franco-centric hierarchies of culture that had excluded these artworks. In light of Loyrette’s aforementioned challenge, this chapter will consider Le Clézio’s transversal perspective on viewing the role of the Museum as a mirror of society in all of its diversity.

However, it is first important to discuss the role of the museum as a social institution. According to Daniel J. Sherman, the museum’s potential role is to help the public to “understand difference” (*Museums and Difference* 1). Sherman reminds us that museums are privileged spaces for understanding cultures “because of the their role to provide spaces for artistic expressions of identity and the contemplation of the world’s heterogeneous identities” (1). Nevertheless, their potential role of promoting transcultural dialogues is influenced by a long history of “decisive acts of inclusion and exclusion based on criteria that are culturally and historically specific”, as underlined by Andrew McClellan (“Art Museums and Commonality” 26). It follows, then, that we must first understand the cultural and historic factors that have shaped the world of museology, its “inclusions and exclusions,” in order to

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<sup>118</sup> As explained on pages 2-3, transversality is the result of a dialogue among disciplines, at the intersections between disciplines (*Épistemologies* 20). Each writer or performer has approached the Louvre’s collections with their own questions that underpin the Louvre’s works, an experience that the Louvre has embraced in order to open discussions on the problematic nature of exhibiting cultures and approaching the other.

contextualize the museum's role as a social institution and, thus to understand the importance of Le Clézio's exhibit.

As I will elaborate in this chapter, the heritage of exhibiting cultures in France, particularly in Paris, is rooted in defining the mutual relationship between "high" and "low" art and France. It is this heritage that has led France to be recognized as the center for designating "other cultures" in the peripheries of the world. Consequently, my intention will be to shine light on the "decisive acts of inclusion and exclusion" that have formed a Western-centric view of culture, art, and history and that have guided the design of Le Clézio's exhibit as, in the words of Loyrette, a "transversal perspective" on cultures of the world,<sup>119</sup> their histories, and their arts while also manifesting a defiant response to the Louvre's heritage of cultural hierarchies.

Later in this chapter, we will see the major role that the Louvre played in defining art and cultures since the Eighteenth century and in modeling Nineteenth-century Parisian ethnographic museums. Since the divisions of "high art" and "primitive art" in the late Nineteenth century, pieces from Haiti, Oceania, Africa, Latin America, or the United States were only seen in private galleries or ethnographic museums: never had such diverse cultures

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<sup>119</sup> As mentioned on the two preceding pages, Le Clézio's exhibit is the first one to challenge the Louvre's history of excluding specific cultures and types of art. Robert Badinter's exhibit in 2005 gathered paintings and photographs, conferences and films on the theme of prisons. In 2006, Toni Morrison was the invited guest with her exhibit *The Foreigner's Home / Étranger chez soi* where she selected works of art in the Louvre that illustrated the duality the title with "home" signifying memories and "foreigner" as the representation of belonging, or not belonging. In 2007, the Louvre commissioned German artist Anselm Kiefer to create a piece entitled *Mésopotamie* for the museum in the stairway of the Egyptian antiques. His series of conferences focused on the theme of borders, particularly in the context of postwar Germany but also as expressed in texts, dance, and music. The composer Pierre Boulez, in 2008, gave a series ten concerts underneath the Pyramid that explored the process of artistic creation in music of the Twentieth century.

been represented under one roof or been jointly been presented in the Louvre, the reference for culture in art *par excellence*. Le Clézio's exhibit marked a turning point in the Louvre's history in that it publically recognized that all forms of art across world cultures have a voice in art's history. Furthermore, his exhibit undermined the Western-centric heritage that had dominated the Louvre and Parisian ethnographic museums.

It is important to keep in mind that museums have since the 1990s attempted new exhibit design strategies that took into consideration artworks' provenance, providing cultural and historical context for the visitor. As underlined by André Gob and Raymond Montpetit in their 2010 collection *Culture et Musées, no. 16*, the process of the museum revolution is a slow one, but it continues to be discussed and developed:<sup>120</sup>

la mise en exposition de l'art est bien l'objet de mutations, de réflexions et d'expérimentations nouvelles, sur ses marges, mais aussi au cœur des musées des beaux-arts. Les dynamiques par lesquelles sont liés les œuvres, le travail des commissaires et les publics se repensent dans toute leur complexité. Cette 'révolution' lente, et sans doute aussi profonde est bien en cours. (18)

With this in mind, I contend that Le Clézio proposed a hybrid exhibit design that reconciled the historic divisions between ethnography and art museums by including "arts premiers"

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<sup>120</sup> In the sixteenth volume of this highly respected museological journal, scholars examine the changes in museological practices at the dawn of the Twenty-First century. Gob and Montpetit point out the contributing factors behind this "revolution" and the consequences for a more involved visitor experience: "Plus récemment, les muséographies adoptées pour l'exposition des œuvres d'art ont évolué, non seulement à cause de la nature même des œuvres et des technologies utilisées pour les créations contemporaines, mais aussi en raison des changements dans les principes qui régissent la conception muséologique: l'accent mis sur le visiteur et la diversification des publics ont conduit conservateurs et muséographes à s'interroger sur la question de savoir comment il convient de donner à voir ces créations aux visiteurs des musées". André Gob and Raymond Montpetit. *La (r)évolution Des Musées D'art*, Arles: Actes sud (2010): 15.

pieces alongside ancient and modern art from across the world in one of the most highly regarded art museums in the world, The Louvre.

In her book *Paris Primitive*, Sally Price expounds on the problematic nature of these terms and their use in the museum world. These terms came into the spotlight during Jacques Chirac's presidency in the 1990s while planning to create a new "museum of civilizations and *arts premiers*" that later became the *Quai Branly Museum* in 2006 (Price 45).<sup>121</sup>

According to Price, Chirac and his friend Jacques Kerchache sought to bring about "reshufflings in the Paris museum world and changes in the delicate relationship between traditional Euro-based art history and the works it once so unquestionably excluded" (3). However, as Price rightly underlines, the project in essence further emphasized the distinctions or even hierarchies made between Eurocentric art and art from cultures outside Europe (3). Price points out that the same notion of hierarchies is abundant in the term "primitive," a term that emphasizes the judgemental Western gaze that defines others and influences attitudes in the world of art (Price viii). It is these hierarchies that Le Clézio challenges with his exhibit by including "primitive" and European art, once considered high art.

As Le Clézio stated in his interview with Crom, his exhibit represents a meeting, a dialogue between ideas where one is not mutually exclusive of the other: "une rencontre ... le rapprochement entre deux attitudes esthétiques qui se compléteraient, l'une n'excluant pas

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<sup>121</sup> I will elaborate on the Quai Branly museum later in this chapter.

l'autres, alors que c'est généralement le cas... Il s'agit aussi de remettre en question la notion d'art telle qu'on la conçoit aujourd'hui" (Crom).

This exercise, as confirmed by Jean-Marc Terrasse, the director of the Auditorium cultural events at the Louvre, was a challenging one: "Exercice délicat qui consiste à mettre face à face ou côté à côté des œuvres de nature différente, d'inspiration disparate et d'origine multiple sans que ces rapprochements ne leur soient nuisibles" (134). In other words, the main challenge was to ensure that the exhibition of disparate pieces would not lessen the impact of each individual piece.

Through the sporadic placement of numerous registers of art, classified by some as "primitive" or "premier," as well as paintings and modern sculptures, cultural diversity was maintained without falling into primitivism or the exotic. What is more, I propose to consider *Le Musée monde* as a tangible representation of what Edouard Glissant perceived to be the greatest challenge for modern society: "comment être soi sans se fermer à l'autre et comment consentir à l'autre, à tous les autres sans renoncer à soi?" (IPD 37).

Our discussion of *Relation* in the context of Le Clézio's *Musée-monde* can bring to mind Edouard Glissant's concept of *Tout-monde*, as highlighted by Roussel-Gillet: "Nous sommes bien loin du Le Clézio indien qui écrivait dans *Haï* (Skira, 1971) sa 'haine de la peinture.' Et Marie-Laure Bernadac le sait en interprétant le texte de Le Clézio *Le musée-monde* à la lumière du *Tout-monde* de Glissant" (Roussel-Gillet, "Petite Salle de la chapelle" 142). I agree wholeheartedly with Roussel-Gillet's observation that Glissant's concept of *Tout-monde* applies to Le Clézio's exhibit in that the art, the cultures, and the histories that they convey provide a microscopic model of the hybridity that exists in our world without the alienating barriers of cultural, national, and racial hierarchies.

By extension, I propose to examine Le Clézio's narrative of *Le Musée monde* that provides a model of *Tout-monde* as suggested by Edouard Glissant in his book *L'Intraitable Beauté du Monde: adresse à Barack Obama*:

Une infinité d'archipels qu'il nous faut habiter, non pas des chapelets d'îles ... mais des lieux qui se joignent par mille bords, se connaissent sans codes, s'émeuvent par delà les anciens impossibles. Des imaginaires qui font dérive, et s'entrecroisent par-dessus les océans, au-dessus des frontières, dans le silence ou dans l'émoi des dieux, en plein travers des continents, dans les semaines d'îles, levant une géographie que nul ne dessinera sans la perdre aussitôt. Le Tout-monde est à vivre dans sa structure archipelique : seul moyen de s'en saisir sans pour autant le prendre (48-49).

Undeniably, we shall see that the exhibit design of *Le Musée Monde* can be seen as what Glissant refers to an archipelago-like structure that permitted the visitor to “live in” a transcultural experience of the *Tout-monde*.<sup>122</sup>

In the field of museology, Serge Chaumier underscores the value of the “ilôt” structure of exhibits in that they group artworks together in an island-like fashion that invites the visitor to decide upon the *parcours* of his visit and to determine a personal significance of the exhibit narrative (37). However, the exhibit did not focus singly on an ilôt design. The archipelago-like structure intersected with conflicting narratives on direct-facing walls. The absence of a predefined, “logical” sequence further underscored the involvement of the visitor in attributing meaning to the exhibit itself and to each piece, culture, and history.

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<sup>122</sup> The term “archipelago” has great significance in the work of Edouard Glissant, as mentioned in Chapter One. The term signifies separate identities (or in our case art pieces) that can be viewed separately while remaining connected in space. Within the context of *Le musée monde*, we can consider the exhibit as this archipelago, as a connecting space for living *Le Tout monde*. Yet, we can also consider it to be the transversal space where art, histories, and cultures intersect in the mind of the visitor, who creates the connecting space in his mind, thus transforming his perception of others and the world.

Consequently, the visitor of *Le Musée monde* is immersed in a sort of *Tout-monde* experience, wherein the visitor may contemplate the meaning of multiple *Relations* among the works of arts, cultures, and histories without the imposed guidance of an outside authority.

With this in mind, let us consider Loyrette's challenge for the Louvre's guests to propose a transversal perspective on the world of art. This will be interpreted by how the visitor experiences transdisciplinary perspectives. For example, the heterogeneous visual genres of sculptures, paintings, street art, and baskets stimulate the visitor's mind to contemplate such diversity. In other words, the transdisciplinary perspectives surround the visitor like an archipelago, and it is the visitor who makes the connections among the arts, cultures, and histories.

It follows, then, that I will examine the exhibit design from three angles: 1) its archipelago narrative that weaves traditions from art and ethnography; 2) a selection of the exhibit's pieces, whose mediums vary from street art to paintings and whose cultures and histories span centuries around the world; and 3) the resulting engaged visitor response. When it comes to the topic of narrative, it is clearly understood that all museums and exhibits create narratives to exhibit pieces and to provoke visitors' reflection.<sup>123</sup> As brilliantly argued by Serge Chaumier, the *discourse* can be seen in the design of the exhibit, while the *récit* is the mental construction created by the visitor:

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<sup>123</sup> Serge Chaumier examines the question of exhibit narrative in *Traité d'expologie: les écritures de l'exposition*, Paris: La Documentation française (2012): 19-38.

Chacun se compose son récit à partir des propos entendus. Par conséquent, on envisagera la conception de l'exposition comme une proposition de discours que chaque visiteur capte et reformule au cours de sa propre interprétation, se constituant ainsi un récit qui lui est propre à partir de son expérience. Il y a donc plusieurs récits possibles, nécessaires, inévitables et obligés, à partir du même discours.

(*Traité d'expologie: les écritures de l'exposition* 31)

Indeed, the unpredictability of the visitor's experience is due to the transversal nature of hybridity. In other words, art, histories and cultures intersect in the mind of the visitor who creates the connecting space in his mind as he moves around the exhibit in the direction of his choice.<sup>124</sup>

Chaumier's thoughts bring to mind Le Clézio's ideas on reader involvement: "Je ne veux pas guider le lecteur [ici, le visiteur] dans une pensée ou une vision. Je veux donner des éléments pour que le lecteur construise un récit des éléments donnés mais c'est le lecteur qui décide du sens à donner" (van der Drift, "Les Chemins de l'interculturel" 168).

In light of our three-dimensional study of hybridity,<sup>125</sup> I underline the distinction between the *discours* that consists of narrative structures and various genres that transmit heterogeneous cultures and histories, and the *récit* or the engaged visitor response that consists of attributing meaning to the *discours* and altering one's perceptions of the world.

The argument of this chapter will unfold as follows. I will first underline the importance of artworks as integral elements of individual and cultural expression in Le

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<sup>124</sup> See Figures 1 and 2.

<sup>125</sup> These three dimensions are as follows: 1) multiple genres and *Relational* narrative structures, 2) heterogeneous cultures and histories, and 3) an engaged reader or visitor response where the reader/visitor contemplates the *Relations* between genres, narratives, histories and cultures.

Clézio's works. I will then provide a museological historical context in which we must situate Le Clézio's exhibit, particularly with regard to exhibit design at the Louvre and at ethnographic museums. Third, I will examine three paramount works from the exhibit whose placement in the Louvre, their mediums and cultural histories that all underline the hybridity that characterized *Le Musée monde* and highlight its innovative model of *Relational* dialogue across cultures and histories. Through the Chicano street art of lowriders and their placement at the Louvre's entrance to the painting of *Le Serment des ancêtres* by the Guadeloupean painter Guillaume Guillon Lethière to the mats of Vanuatu women, I posit that the exhibit design of *Le Musée monde* challenged traditional exhibit models in the realms of art and ethnography, particularly in the Parisian museological landscape. Finally, this chapter will shine light on the exhibit's "reflective" design, which provokes an engaged visitor's reflection on the diversity of human identities and the human connectedness across diverse histories and cultures.<sup>126</sup>

### **Le Clézio and the Arts: Literary Expressions**

While *Le Musée monde* publically recognized Le Clézio's affinity with the arts, an element that distinguishes Le Clézio's literature is the presence and importance of a diverse array of arts that are presented as an integral part of daily life. When asked why art holds such an important place in his work, the author emphasized the role of art as a catalyst for cultural dialogue: "L'art est intrinsèquement lié à l'échange entre cultures et c'est pourquoi il

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<sup>126</sup> Here, I refer to Chaumier's *Traité d'expologie: les écritures de l'exposition* (56-58). I will further elaborate on his considerations of "langage associatif ou connotatif" of an exhibit design that engages the viewer in a reflective consideration of the object's aesthetics and history.

nous est nécessaire” (van der Drift, “Les Chemins de l’interculturel” 164). Le Clézio’s writing serves as an affective, sensorial filter through which to connect to the culture’s identity and their people’s humanity:

Si l’art a une force, s’il a une vertu, ce n’est pas parce qu’il nous donne à admirer le monde, ou qu’il nous offre les clés du mystère. Ce n’est pas non plus parce qu’il nous révèle à nous-mêmes … Non, la force de l’art, c’est de nous donner à regarder les mêmes choses ensemble.  
(*EM* 170)

In this passage, we can see that art serves as a “passeur,”<sup>127</sup> an instrument that transmits cultural experiences to be shared. In other words, experiencing art enables us to look at the same things together, a perspective that is even more pertinent when considering art within the context of a museum where several visitors from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds can observe a piece at the same time, each person with his or her own experience, yet all of them turning to the same piece for understanding.

Following the publication of *L’Extase matérielle*, JMG Le Clézio lived in Mexico City and then with the indigenous Embera and Wounaan tribes of Panama. These experiences enabled him to live as a member of their tribes and influenced his personal understanding of the world.<sup>128</sup> Several literary essays describe how these experiences influenced his thinking about Latin American cultures, histories, and arts that are absent from the Western Art world,

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<sup>127</sup> While the term “passeur” is generally used to refer to a person, here I use the term to designate art that essentially becomes a means to transmit cultures and histories. In the title of the collection by Thierry Léger, Isabelle Roussel-Gillet, and Marina Salles, *Le Clézio, passeur des arts et des cultures*, “passeur” is used to signify Le Clézio and his work as a means of sharing cultural experiences with others: “La création artistique peut nous apprendre à ‘percevoir’ les mondes autrement qu’au travers de nos grilles de lecture culturelles. Dans ce contexte, être un passeur au seuil est une position paradoxale des plus respectueuses et de moins fantasmées” (10).

<sup>128</sup> Ezine’s interview with the author.

i.e., *Haï*, *Mydriase*, *Trois Villes saintes*, *Le Rêve mexicain*, *La Fête chantée*, *Diégo et Frida*, as well as several translations of sacred Amerindian texts: *Prophéties du Chilam Balam* and *Relation de Michoacán*. Since the 1980s, Le Clézio's works differentiate from other French and Francophone writers due to their inclusion of histories and cultures of Africa, Mauritius, Europe, the United States, and Vanuatu. Having lived in each of these cultures, Le Clézio acts as a “passeur” to share the stories he had been told, the myths and legends of various cultures, his historical research, and his direct experiences.

Furthermore, Le Clézio's literary descriptions highlight the endangered arts of these cultures—such as masks, sculptures, and mats from Nigeria, Oceania, and extinct Mesoamerican communities—that had in the past been disparaged by European cultural authorities. These arts, once seen as “primitive” art and now as “*art premier*,” were destined for ethnographic museums because of their representation of daily lives in distant cultures. Yet, Le Clézio's references to these arts endow a more tangible, human dimension to once invisible identities while giving voice to the artistic distinctiveness of their noteworthy cultures and histories, i.e., *Haï*, *La Fête chantée*, *Onitsha*, *Diego et Frida*, *L'Africain*, and *Raga*.

In the essay *Haï*, Le Clézio lyrically shares his thoughts about his experience with the Embera-Wounaan in Panama, as he explained in his interview with Nathalie Crom:

Des gens qui pratiquaient des arts sans les appeler ainsi. Ils faisaient notamment des bâtons de sorcellerie, qui étaient des représentations humaines extrêmement travaillées, symboliques et réalistes à la fois. Ils étaient capables aussi de créer des opéras, des variations chantées improvisées à partir d'un livret. Toutes ces pratiques artistiques étaient liées à la jouissance immédiate et à une vraie générosité, un partage.  
(Crom)

Here, Le Clézio challenges the Western perception that “*arts premiers*” have secondary status. In this description, he emphasizes the artists’ and art’s refinement, complexity, and cultural richness. Throughout his essay, the random placement of photographs of local arts and Western advertising creates a contrast that underlines the beauty of Embera-Wounaan art pieces and the mediocrity of Western advertising. By interspersing these images with his philosophical writing, Le Clézio underlines the artistic culture of the Panama civilization whose “art” is a living expression of the individual’s and the community’s daily life and generosity.<sup>129</sup>

Aside from *La Fête chantée* and *Hai*, another literary text, *Diego et Frida*, explores the artistic spirit of the Mexican revolutionaries Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. He reflects on their artistic creations, their love for pre-Columbian culture,<sup>130</sup> their passionate relationship, and their activism in the Mexican Revolution. Le Clézio’s essay on this couple demonstrates that art and activism, as brilliantly underlined by Isabelle Constant in her article “Portrait de Le Clézio en Diego et Frida,” do not require the approval of a political party or canon but rather a dedication to reveal the human spirit, a cultural identity that borders between dream and reality: “Cet engagement-là ne demande l’approbation daucun parti ni

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<sup>129</sup> In an interview with Béatrice Vallaeys, the author explains, “J’ai écrit ça [Hai] après mai 68. Mon mai 68 à moi était chez les Indiens dans la forêt, des gens qui ignoraient complètement le monde marchand de l’art. Des gens très généreux: vous leur faisiez un compliment sur une sculpture en bois qu’ils venaient de réaliser, ils vous l’offraient … Du coup, le musée qui est une théaurisation, une mise en valeur avec une hiérarchisation des œuvres … ça, je n’aimais pas trop”. Béatrice Vallaeys, “Émission spéciale le Louvre/Le Clézio en partenariat avec *Libération*”, franceculture (9 November 2011).

<sup>130</sup> In her article “Portrait de Le Clézio en Diégo et Frida,” Isabelle Constant lists these traits shared among Le Clézio, Diégo, and Frida. Isabelle Constant, “Portrait de Le Clézio en Diégo et Frida,” *Le Clézio, passeur des arts et des cultures*, Rennes: PUR (2010): 129.

d'aucune bourgeoisie" (132). Unlike the Surrealist and Dada movements, which sought to define what it meant to be an artist, an intellectual, or an *engage*,<sup>131</sup> Diego, and especially Frida, distanced themselves from such stratification in order to focus on their art and the Mexican Revolution.<sup>132</sup>

Lastly, *Raga* traces the histories, legends, daily life, and artistic skills of the women who create the Vanuatu mats and underscores the importance of this artistic tradition in the Vanuatu culture as a means of resisting colonial forces. In this text, Le Clézio transforms the travel journal by juxtaposing first-person interview narratives with recounted myths and legends alongside his historical research and contemplations. Through this hybrid genre, *Raga* testifies of the centuries-long ni-Vanuatu revolt against their colonial oppressors, the role of women in leading and preserving its continuation, and the value of this culture within the histories of art.

Again in Oceania and Africa, Le Clézio's literary works reveal the presence and importance of the African and Mauritian arts of storytelling, riddles, myths, legends, maps,

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<sup>131</sup> It is important to consider *engagement* in the context of a reaction against the war while recognizing the intellectual ideas that drove these artists to create an artistic movement dedicated to multiply the number of angles from which to perceive life. Furthermore, many of the Surrealist artists such as Breton and Picasso sought to introduce artists such as Frida Kahlo, Hector Hippolyte, Wilfredo Lam, Malcolm de Chazal and Baya, whose arts are precisely considered "primitive" or "*arts premiers*."

<sup>132</sup> In his essay *Diégo et Frida*, Le Clézio expounds on the exchanges among the Surrealists, notably Breton, Diego, and Frida. Particularly, Le Clézio underlines the disconnection between the couple and the Surrealist movement around the gap between surrealist intellectualism and the revolution needed in daily life: "La réalité, de fait, ne leur guère le temps de s'interroger sur le sens de la nouvelle poésie réaliste" (*DF* 172). Frida in particular disliked the Surrealists because of their pretentious, intellectual attitudes, with which she cannot identify (168-169). Furthermore, during Breton's trip to Mexico in 1940, the couple no longer had time to worry about Surrealist poetry and art because of their growing concern for their country.

watercolors, photography, and masks in hybrid texts that border between biographical novels/essays/travel essays and folk essays, i.e., *Le Chercheur d'Or* (1985), *Voyage à Rodrigues* (1986), *Sirandanes* (1990), *Onitsha* (1991), *La Quarantaine* (1995), *Les Gens des Nuages* co-written with Jemia Le Clézio (1999), *Maroc* texts written with Jémia Le Clézio to accompany photographs by Bruno Barbey (2003) and *L'Africain* (2005).

The use of photographs in these books adds to the reader's experience of hybridity; the text can be imagined, while the photograph is tangibly encountered and witnessed. As explained by Isabelle Roussel-Gillet in her insightful article "Les Paradoxes de la photographie chez Ernaux et Le Clézio," the photographs in Le Clézio's works are always situated in relationship to the culture that is being narrated: "Le Clézio investit, par sa culture et sa conscience, le stadium, une façon d'envelopper la photographie dans des repères géographiques et historiques, qui renvoient au contexte et à la culture de façon globale" (284). Photographs, along with the text, offer an additional experience of the culture at hand. Beyond merely experiencing an imagined encounter with the culture, the reader can actually experience the culture in more directly.

By weaving together transcultural histories and cultures across genres, Le Clézio's work provides a contact point for the reader to interact with histories and to participate in witnessing multiple pasts from which to extract meaning and relevance. As Heidemann and de Toro point out,

The passages between cultures perform a dynamic space where cultural contact becomes a source of creativity, a space of contact that changes both cultures. This happens without hierarchic dependence, as cultural transferences is a gain for both cultures ... (*New Hybridities* 59).

Thus, the reader is positioned in such a way that he or she is not only exposed to, but also is able to experience the histories and cultures at hand and extract multiple meanings.

While the previous examples highlight the role of arts in each culture's daily life, Le Clézio dedicated an “essay-autobiography,”<sup>133</sup> *Ballaciner* (2007), to the art and experience of world cinema. In this book, prefaced by Gilles Jacob, *Ballaciner* underlines the power of the seventh art for enabling viewers to discover the world and experience a dream or a reality from a different place and time.

Le Clézio achieves this reader experience by juxtaposing an historical essay with autobiographical events from his life. That is, the author traces cinematographic history across world cultures such as Japan,<sup>134</sup> Korea, India, Italy, and Russia and includes his own movie-going experiences. By grafting his personal experiences onto the historical accounts of the films, Le Clézio challenges the Western view of cinematographic history with France at its center while also underlining the composite nature of world cinema. Thus, the author invites the reader to discover these films, which constitute an alternative “must-see” list that is outside the canon established by Cinema Academies in France.<sup>135</sup>

As suggested by Alphonse Cugier, *Ballaciner* extends a kaleidoscopic, or “kalézioscope,” view of world cinema that recognizes the diversity of each culture’s

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<sup>133</sup> I use this term to describe *Ballaciner* that is an essay on Le Clézio’s thoughts on the world “history” of cinema. At the same time, the text is autobiographic because the author includes his own experiences with films.

<sup>134</sup> Notably Dreyer and Vigo from 1920s and 1930s France, Ozu from Japan, Bergman from Italy, and Park Chan-wook and Lee Chang-dong from Korea.

<sup>135</sup> In France, this is the CNC: The National Center of Cinematography and the moving image.

cinematographic art while also showing cinema's artistic development around the world at similar moments in time:

Le Clézio invente un néologisme, image pour la fusion entre le cinéma et la vie: la ballade, poème dont chaque partie se termine par un regain (déclaration d'amour au cinéma) que le lecteur peut reprendre ... Films d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, japonais, italiens, français, américains, iraniens, coréens... ces espace-temps variés se fondent le temps de la lecture. Une Histoire du cinéma en forme de puzzle, un kaléclézioscope, une somme composite, une mémoire de travers, un cheminement étoilé à travers le 7<sup>e</sup> Art. (Cugier 116)

Each culture dialogues with another, thus enacting, once again, the dialogic nature of the arts when viewed outside the realm of linear Western chronology. Indeed, by integrating films referenced in *Ballaciner* during the Louvre's opening events for *Le Musée monde*,<sup>136</sup> Le Clézio underlines the multiplicity of world films and their disparate genres, thereby offering a transversal perspective of the world of film that has been popularly conceived as a Western art.

In sum, this section has discussed the omnipresence of the arts in Le Clézio's thought and literary works, which transmit world cultures and histories and serve as a catalyst for cultural dialogue. His works expose the ethnocentric cultural dominance of the Colonialists and their role in these arts' extinction or invisibility. By weaving together transcultural

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<sup>136</sup> The films shown in the Louvre auditorium build upon the theme of cultures in dialogue through multiple artistic means. By offering films, conferences, and events, Le Clézio's invitation by the Louvre enabled the visitor to be an interpreter of meaning. The significance of this will be discussed later in this chapter. The films that were shown during the opening month of the exhibit were the following: *Dersou Ouzala*, Japan/USSR, 1975; *Le Salon de Musique*, India, 1958; *Yeelen*, Mali/Burkina Faso/France, 1987; *Coeur de Feu*, Germany/Austria, 2008; *Zoot Suit*, USA, 1981; *Les films Pathé-Baby*, France (preserved films that belonged to a friend of Le Clézio's grand-mother and that Le Clézio saw projected onto a white sheet when he was a young boy in Nice); *Les Hommes-Livres*, France 1988; *L'Intemporel. Le Dernier Voyage: Saint-Soleil en Haïti. Journal de Voyage avec André Malraux*, France, 1996.

histories and cultures across genres, Le Clézio's work provides a contact point for the reader to interact with the histories where they may participate in witnessing multiple pasts and extracting meaning and relevance.

Still, one may question the establishment of such hierarchies, particularly in the Parisian world of museology. While my dissertation cannot begin to reach beyond the tip of the iceberg of museology scholars' research over the past two centuries, I will point out key moments in French museological history and the emerging French ethnographic and artistic trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that have affected the Louvre and exhibit design in Paris. Based on this analysis, I argue that Le Clézio challenged the very origin of cultural and artistic hierarchies that originated within the walls of the Louvre in the Seventeenth century.

### **The Louvre: A History of Defining and Propagating Culture**

Since the Seventeenth century, the Louvre has come to be seen as the embodiment of cultural authority and French power. Over the centuries, the Louvre fed the perception of the French government as a cultural authority by projecting an image of the French as the guardians and promoters of culture, beauty, and national pride. The French Revolution marks the turning point when the Louvre became a powerful means by which to affirm France's cultural authority and to promote the French government officials as supporters of the Republican values of freedom and equality. With the Revolutionary rise to power in 1793 and the acquisition of confiscated art during France's territorial expansion, the Louvre became a symbol of triumph over the old regime. When the Revolutionary government gained control of the Louvre, suggests Andrew McClellan, the Louvre became a "sign of

popular sovereignty and the triumph over despotism ... the museum shaped the Republican identity" (*Inventing the Louvre* 7).

Although the Revolutionary government severed the ties between the monarchs and the edifice by transforming the Louvre into the public Museum of the French Republic in 1793, the association between culture and government was maintained. Culture was to be, in the words of Jean Caune, a uniting force: "La stratégie jacobine a consisté, en France, à rassembler par la culture" (Caune, *Pour Une Éthique de la médiation* 70). Furthermore, as Carol Duncan states in her article "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," museums became a platform from which the government conveyed a message of dedication to their people (93). In other words, public art museums were regarded as evidence of political virtue, as indicators of a government that provided the right things for its people. The decision to transform the Louvre into a public, state-supported museum reinforced the integral relationship between governmental power and cultural authority that has, in the art world, long influenced the perception of France as a world authority. The Louvre museum was indirectly associated with the birth of the French Republic, the embodiment of the Republican principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

The codependent relationship between the Louvre and the French State was strengthened by the Academy of Art, *L'Académie des beaux-arts*, which was formerly known as *L'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*. While the Academy's guidelines have evolved over the decades, they traditionally sought to define the required education of an artist, the subject matter to be depicted, and the artistic style to be followed (according to Classic models). The emphasis, obviously, was placed on the birthplace of Western History,

of past ideals and genres. Questioning the guidelines of the Academy was tantamount to questioning the State's authority.

During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, the Louvre directors established practices that were soon internationally considered to be universal guidelines for museums and “art history.” Grounded in a Western-centric view of civilization, the Louvre sought to classify works by period, geographical area, school, and important masters: “The history of art has become no less than the history of the highest achievements of Western Civilization itself: its origins in Egypt and Greece, its reawakening in the Renaissance, and its flowering in Nineteenth-century France” (Duncan 96).

In her recent dissertation,<sup>137</sup> Ariane Lemieux reminds us that the classifications defined by the Academy and the Louvre guided the training of young artists who sought to learn from the great Masters (Lemieux 21). However, it is worth noting that the artists were only exposed to selected works promoted by the Louvre, works that were of European origin and Masters, i.e., males who had been trained in the Classical schools of thought and art.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, one can see that the Academy’s rules influenced the development of the Louvre into a vitrine from which to view the world as divided by hierarchies of higher and lower cultures and forms of art. Furthermore, the Louvre portrayed an organized and rational

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<sup>137</sup> Ariane Lemieux and Dominique Poulot. *L'Artiste et l'art contemporain au musée du louvre des origines à nos jours: une histoire d'expositions, de décors et de programmation culturelles*, Lille: Atelier national de Reproduction des Thèses (2012).

<sup>138</sup> Women were not allowed to enter the *L'École des beaux arts* until 1917. Madeline Fessard was the first woman to enter *L'École*. Even in 1917, restrictions remained for women. For more information, see Musées Haute Normandie.

view of art history in a chronological fashion that grouped together works by geographical area that Duncan argues to be a “programmed sequence of collections that maintains the Nineteenth century bias for the great epochs of Civilization” (96).

Established as a center for rigorous artistic training, Lemieux underlines the pivotal point of the Nineteenth century with the Louvre’s role in educating a curious public.<sup>139</sup> Following the French Revolution, the Louvre became open to the public as a means to affirm the Republican value of equality for the people. Furthermore, following the acquisition of numerous works of art from wars and colonial expeditions during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries, the Louvre opened galleries to exhibit the Republic’s treasures and further enhanced a sense of national pride.

An additional task of the Louvre became the education of the public on the subject of ancient civilizations. The Louvre filled walls and rooms with pieces that would illustrate the breadth of their power and artistic knowledge while creating a narrative of art history and a perception of human civilization: “il s’agissait désormais de développer les collections du musée et d’assurer la connaissance, non seulement des beaux-arts mais aussi de l’histoire culturelle des civilisations anciennes” (Lemieux 31). The scientific, even encyclopedic, fashion in which the Louvre exhibited its pieces further solidified its proven authoritative position in defining civilizations and art history for the public. In turn, the Nineteenth century solidified the perception of the Louvre as the cultural and historical authority from which to

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<sup>139</sup> See Ariane Lemieux 29-33.

interpret art and history. It is at this point in that I will examine the influence of the field of ethnology on exhibiting cultures in museums the Nineteenth century.

Before concluding this section on the Louvre's influence in establishing hierarchies of cultures and art, I would like to refer to my introduction to this chapter and reiterate Le Clézio's adamant call for a change to these established perceptions, classifications, and hierarchies, which are embedded in the very heart of the Louvre museum and the French identity:

L'Occident a inventé l'histoire de l'art comme une ligne droite qui irait du symbolisme primitif à l'idéal naturaliste des classiques. Ainsi fut inventé l'idée de la Renaissance, comme si certaines civilisations, plongées dans la barbarie du Moyen Âge, sortaient de la nuit pour retrouver la vérité antique. C'était justifier la hiérarchie des cultures, idée malsaine et dangereuse qui justifia la colonisation et affirma la suprématie d'une culture sur toutes les autres. Nous savons aujourd'hui ce qu'il en coûte de céder à cette illusion. (*LMSM* 38)

While French museums developed ethnographical exhibits of “other” cultures, i.e., former colonies, over the course of the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries, art pieces that were representative of former colonized cultures were exempt from the galleries of the Louvre that were dedicated to European masters. These pieces were housed in other museums that had been created specifically to showcase the conquests of the French State and to provide a space in which to study and observe other cultures as scientific objects.

Rather than create a separate space for these cultures’ art, Le Clézio asks the public and the museum world to reconsider such separations that led to the destructive colonial period.

### **The Rise of Scientific Authority and Cultural Elitism**

Essentially, exhibitions represent identity, either through direct assertion or indirect implication. Karp posits that when cultural “others” are implicated, exhibitions tell us who

we are and, perhaps more significantly, who we are not (Karp, “Culture and Representation” 15). Indeed, exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and ‘other.’

It was during the Nineteenth century that Parisian museums turned its gaze to an encyclopedic and scientific manner for classifying non-European others. Classifications were based on Western-initiated scientific studies of other cultures and races according to economic, social, and religious characteristics. While the discipline of art reposed upon the Academy’s criteria, the defined categorizations of cultures and others would be fortified by the scientific foundation provided by the field of ethnology.

Two specific formats for exhibitions developed in the Nineteenth century: cabinets of curiosity and ethnography museums. In this section, I will first distinguish the particularities of the cabinets of curiosity before discussing the emerging field of ethnography in the Nineteenth century. From there, I will discuss the rise of cultural elitism that dominated the Twentieth century with the movements of surrealism and primitivism and with renovation of the Grand Louvre and the recently created Quai Branly museum.

### **Cabinets of Curiosity and Ethnography Museums**

Cabinets of curiosity date back to the Renaissance and are believed to be the forerunner of ethnography museums. Mauzé and Rostkowski argue that cabinets of curiosity reconstituted worlds that contained pieces of art and natural artifacts: “Ceux-ci [les cabinets de curiosités] sont nés de l’idée que l’on peut reconstituer le monde autour de soi en rassemblant une collection variée d’objets dans un lieu qui serait un point de rencontre entre les arts et les sciences” (Mauzé and Rostkowski, “La fin des musées d’ethnographie?” 81). Hence, the cabinets brought together science and art into enclosed spaces and offered the viewer a perspective onto the unknown.

I wish to argue that the very word “curiosity” implies the subaltern position of the objects exhibited due to the distance that it suggested between the viewer and the objects. In other words, cabinets and their arts were exoticized as sources of curiosity and fascination for the Western viewer. Given that the cabinets served as showcases for the exotic, I would like to refer to Christine Davenne’s insightful book, *Modernité du Cabinet de Curiosités*. Davenne provides a thorough analysis of the cabinets of curiosity up to the Twentieth century and underlines the correspondence between the rise in popularity of cabinets of curiosity and of the public’s (particularly the elite’s) fascination with the exotic. The visitor’s eye fluctuated between incredible and admirable man-made objects to natural objects, fossils, and scientific instruments. Yet at the same time, the objects’ unclassified status and lack of contextualization enhanced the association of other cultures with the unknown and a sentiment of fear mixed with fascination. Thus, the dominating emotions associated with other cultures were fear and curiosity.

As brilliantly argued by Daniel J. Sherman in his book *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire 1945-1975*, the emergence of the science of ethnography in the late Nineteenth century originated “out of two intersecting traditions: a philosophical inquiry into the nature of human behavior, and, predominantly, an attempt to construct a natural history of man” (Sherman, *Primitivism* 26). It was with the expansion of colonialism that ethnography became inseparable from the arts: “As several decades of scholarship have shown, science and colonialism have had relationships so close as to affect their very constitution as fields of knowledge and power” (23).

With the expansion of the French empire and of colonialism, France acquired art pieces that served as testimonies of their expanding power and the variety of world cultures

that were absorbed into the French civilizing mission. Coupled with the expansion of the French Empire and the consequent acquisitions from other cultures, ethnography emerged as a discipline that provided scientific classifications of, and rational explanations of the differences among, other cultures' artistic pieces and European paintings, antique sculptures, and objects. To this end, Roland Schaer underlines the rise of ethnography in his book *L'Invention des musées*. He posits the role of ethnography in providing a sound and rational history of the evolution of arts and cultures, wherein each race would be judged by its degree of so-called civilization.

Before examining the rise of ethnography and its influence on museums and exhibiting cultures, I would first like to highlight the modern-day perception of the cabinet as explained by Davenne in order to distinguish it from Le Clézio's exhibit.

Il [le musée d'art contemporain] est le lieu légitime des productions artistiques et occupe la place laissée vide par le cabinet de curiosités, tant par la fréquentation restreinte des concitoyens que par les hybrides qui y sont montrés, les cheminements dans l'hétérogène qu'il propose et la mémoire qu'il exalte. (Davenne, *Modernité du Cabinet de Curiosités* 256)

Although Davenne recognizes the recent interest in experiencing plural perspectives within a single space, she contends that it is the contemporary museum of art that can best renew the tradition of the cabinet of curiosity. We can conclude that cabinets of curiosity remain a distinct space in the modern art world due to their hybrid and eclectic nature.

While cabinets of curiosity were one exhibition trend in the Nineteenth century, another was ethnography. A close examination of this then-developing field highlights the scientific impact on museum development that would create separate exhibit spaces based on the art's cultural origin.

One renowned scholar in the field of museology, Nélia Dias, examines the history of ethnography in France in her article “Le Musée du Quai Branly: une généalogie.” In Dias’s meticulous analysis, she traces the dependent relationship between the French State and the emergence of new ethnography museums. Since the creation of the *Musée Naval* in 1827, a new museum dedicated to the “Other” was created approximately every fifty years.<sup>140</sup> With each consecutive museum, the State reevaluated its position regarding the exhibit of cultures that had been subjected to French colonization.

From the *Musée Naval* in 1827, which displayed the wealth of the French Empire, the *Musée d’ethnographie* in 1878 provided an encyclopedic view of cultures and their arts. However, in 1938 the *Musée de l’Homme* was established to provide a universalist view of world cultures, structured according to a Western-centric gaze that sought to provide a unified view on humanity. Finally, the 2006 inauguration of the *Musée du Quai Branly* further reinforced the distinction of “other” cultures by housing art pieces from countries outside Europe while claiming to eliminate artistic and cultural hierarchies.

Throughout the Nineteenth century, the Louvre’s mission was to compare various past civilizations and the genius of their arts, while the mission of ethnographic museums was an encyclopedic comparison, an approach that ended up reinforcing cultural differences (Dias, “Le Musée du Quai Branly: une généalogie” 71). Each culture’s objects were considered to be a testimony to their stage in a Western-defined evolution. With this overarching perspective, Dias stresses that the Louvre served as a model for ethnographic

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<sup>140</sup> 1827 - Le Musée naval ; 1878 – Le Musée d’ethnographie du Trocadéro ; 1938 – Le Musée de l’homme ; 2006 – Le Musée du Quai Branly.

museums due to the Louvre's status as the authority in classifying art and cultures. Thus, by separating cultures based on their degree of evolution, the field of ethnography provided the scientific evidence that was used to support the Louvre's cultural and artistic hierarchies.

### **Surrealism and Primitivism**

As interest in ethnographic museums rose during the Nineteenth century, new schools of thought in art, literature, and philosophy sprung up in the early Twentieth century that encouraged breaking from the dictates of French cultural and political authority. For example, Surrealism first emerged as a literary movement in the 1910s and 1920s. In her article "Surrealism and Outsider Art," Conley explains the creative technique at the heart of literary Surrealism: a process of automatic writing where one's imagination was released from the subconscious and freed from society's teachings and limitations: "a psychic automatism in its pure state based on the actual functioning of thought ... in the absence of any control exercised by reason" (130). What constituted a pure state of thought was an open question.

During the evolution of Surrealism throughout the 1950s, the period of colonial wars, the "pure state" of thought came to be seen as a state of mind that was untouched by the modern world, a state that has since been termed primitivism. Daniel J. Sherman defines primitivism "as a tendency in art and ideas [that] can be traced back to antiquity but ... denotes, more broadly, an expressed affinity for people or peoples believed to be living simpler, more natural lives than those people of the modern West" (3). The Surrealists' fascination with other cultures was motivated by a desire for purity (as a source of inspiration) but not necessarily for cultural dialogue and equality.

In her book *Cultures du surréalisme: les représentations de l'autre*, Martine Antle underlines the problematic nature of the relationship between Surrealists and other cultures. While Surrealists such as André Breton and Antonin Artaud exhibited their appreciation for other cultures, particularly Haiti and Mexico, Antle points out that primitivism was the motivating force behind Surrealists' relations with other cultures: "Chez les surrealistes, le primitivisme a certes été un facteur décisif dans les rapports à l'Autre" (162).

What is more, Antle questions whether the Surrealists participated in a shared dialogue with cultures or whether they "fell into the trap of exoticism" (165 [*my translation*]). As she argues, primitivism did not promote cultural exchanges based on a mutual dialogue: "le primitivisme a rarement établi des échanges culturels basés sur un dialogue et n'a jamais concedé à l'Autre la place du sujet" (Antle, *Cultures du surréalisme* 164). Other cultures were dependent on a hierarchical relationship of power where the French Surrealists could determine their existence and identity. Antle shines light on the elitism that typified the Surrealist movement in that they became ambassadors of French culture who could define cultures' arts from a Eurocentric viewpoint: "les autres cultures sont souvent idéalisées et n'existent que par rapport à des référents européens" (167).

André Malraux dedicated his efforts to the promotion of arts. In his efforts to increase visibility of art originating from other cultures, Malraux viewed art as a sacred expression of numerous cultures that sought to express the human condition. In his efforts to create a world atlas of art, Malraux created the concept and volumes entitled *Le Musée imaginaire*. Georges Didi-Huberman emphasizes the power and authority associated with André Malraux as the creator of the imaginary museum in his conference recording on *Frieze Talks*. In his conference, Didi-Huberman points out the limitations of *Le Musée imaginaire* as a one-

dimensional experience in the medium of photography. While *Le Musée imaginaire* illustrates Malraux's attempt to open up the horizons of art history in order to create encounters that crossed cultures and time periods, one must note that Malraux's attempt was reserved for the elite. Didi-Huberman underlines that the distinctiveness of Malraux's project lies in two elements: his role as the sole authority to create the encounters and that the encounter could only take place through photography along with his didactic text. As he points out, *Le Musée imaginaire* was a tool of revelation that created a filmic movement of objects that underscored styles and classifications.

Keeping in mind the museum as a tool for underlying styles and classifications, Jean Caune's article "La Politique culturelle initiée par Malraux" proposes that incorporating a work of art into a museum, or into the *musée imaginaire*, entailed the removal of the art piece from its cultural and historical context:

Dans son œuvre, Malraux délivre l'art de l'histoire et du temps des hommes pour en reconnaître l'éénigme dans l'intemporel. L'art se présente comme une réponse à la mort, élément du vivre ensemble et condition de la communauté humaine ... L'œuvre d'art se détache de ses origines pour venir prendre place dans le Musée Imaginaire".  
(Caune, "La Politique culturelle initiée par Malraux")

Only a "purification" of the objects from cultural and individual histories and practices could ensure equal aesthetic consideration. In other words, the cultural and historical distinctiveness of each piece was removed in order to exalt its artistic qualities as determined by Malraux.

While these findings illustrate the deculturalization of art, it is important to keep in mind the historical context of the Surrealists and of Malraux. Martine Antle reminds us that

the efforts of the Surrealists, and also those of Malraux, can be seen as first steps toward other cultures that, in fact, mark a significant turning point.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, this turning point will further guide the Louvre Museum through presidency changes, its inclusion of contemporary art, the creation of the Quai Branly museum in 2006, and Le Clézio's exhibit in 2011.

### The Grand Louvre

In Ariane Lemieux's illuminating dissertation, she underlines the history of museographical changes that have taken place at the Louvre. What I wish to particularly consider from her work is her analysis of the evolution of exhibit design and hanging strategies within the Louvre from the 1980s to the present. Lemieux's research points out the trend during the 1970s of placing together contemporary and ancient pieces as a means to create a confrontation between the old and new in order to foster a new understanding of art among viewers:

Ce nouvel usage [l'usage des œuvres d'art] ... s'oppose à l'idée de chronologie et à la discipline historique héritée du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il engage les mises en vis-à-vis d'œuvres anciennes et d'œuvres contemporaines pour traduire des problématiques artistiques des questionnements formels et des inspirations communes au-delà des notions d'école et de temps. (6)

Such an approach in the Louvre disrupted traditional, scientific methods for permanent exhibits that had previously focused on studying works according to movements, periods, and geographies. The Louvre sought to revolutionize its tradition of displaying a chronological sequence of civilizations and art history and disturbed a traditional scientific

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<sup>141</sup> The surrealists “marquent le premier pas d'une ouverture vers l'Autre” (Antle, *Les surréalistes* 169).

approach to categorizing the Louvre's permanent collections: "Ce tumulte [l'intégration des œuvres contemporaines and les parcours de l'exposition permanente] est naturellement porteur d'incompréhension et surtout des critiques, car il modifie le programme et le projet scientifique contenu dans l'exposition permanente" (330).

Following this undertaking, the Louvre continued to evolve in the 1980s by transitioning from being a technically focused institution to being a space in which the visitor could reflect on the meaning of art, as well as a space in which both the artist and the visitor could receive creative inspiration. Lemieux notes that the *Grand Louvre* project under François Mitterrand between 1981 and 1989 sought to make art more accessible to the public and provide opportunities to learn and reflect about art: "Le Grand Louvre, terme utilisé pour signifier l'extension du musée sur l'ensemble du Palais, se voulait un ensemble culturel dans lequel le public pouvait assister à des conférences, des productions audiovisuelles et interactives" (116).

The creation of a more mediatized environment offered the opportunity to use a didactic approach through multi-media sources. At the same time, however, this approach underscored the Louvre's authority. While the visitor's experience became a central focus for the museum curators, the Louvre reiterated its authoritative role of mediation between the public and the work of art: "La création de l'établissement public du *Grand Louvre* s'est également accompagnée de celle d'un service culturel dont le rôle est encore aujourd'hui d'aider les visiteurs à mieux comprendre les collections" (Lemieux 117). The development of a cultural service in the Louvre provided new opportunities for visitors to enhance their understanding of the Louvre's collections. However, the Louvre continued to take seriously its place of cultural authority as the mediator for the people's understanding of art history.

Since 2001, the director of the Louvre, Henri Loyrette, has continued the mandate of the *Grand Louvre*, i.e. of increasing the number of visitors and opportunities for dialogue and mediation on diverse forms of arts:

Aujourd’hui, on consacre une grande énergie à la médiation avec le public. Un lieu comme l’Auditorium, où l’on propose des concerts ou des films, mais aussi la présence de l’art contemporain, les nocturnes pour les jeunes ou encore les ateliers pour enfants sont tout à fait inscrits dans cette logique. Nous donnons à voir et à comprendre. Le Louvre est à tout le monde ... Et s’il y a bien quelque chose qui me révolte, c’est l’idée du musée ‘où l’on est si bien entre nous’. Un musée réservé à une élite. Un musée est dans la vie, dans toutes ses composantes. Avec toutes les sortes de gens. (Loyrette *Lepoint*)

Here, Loyrette acknowledges the need for a paradigm shift in the perception of museums by the public and in the elitist attitudes often associated with museums, the Louvre in particular.

As I will elaborate, Jean-Marc Terrasse underscores the importance of extending the invitation to JMG Le Clézio in that his perspective would question the feasibility of the Louvre to include cultures that it has ignored in the past due to its roots in Western thought:

Les musées sont-ils nocifs par essence, parce qu’ils sont l’expression d’une pensée occidentale explicitement ou implicitement colonialiste? ... Ou bien encore: s’ils [les musées] savent s’ouvrir aux mondes et aux cultures qu’ils ignorant, les musées sont-ils récupérables?  
(Terrasse, “Le Clézio, un Écrivain au Louvre ou pousser les murs du musée” 134)

Although these questions have come to fruition at the Louvre between 2005 and the present day, I will first address the parallel development of ethnography museums in Paris, particularly the Quai Branly Museum.

### **The Quai Branly Museum: Eliminating or Reiterating Cultural Hierarchies?**

Not long after these questions emerged at the Louvre in the dawn of the Twenty-First century, former President Jacques Chirac and Jacques Kerchache inaugurated The Quai Branly Museum on June 20, 2006. Since their meeting in Mauritius in 1992, the two men had

elaborated a shared idea “to create a museum that would accord minority cultures a place in the museums of France” (Raizon [my translation]). After his election as President of France, Jacques Chirac created a committee to create the museum, which would be dedicated to primitive arts from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas that had been ignored by the Louvre: “the Louvre cannot remain a ‘grand’ museum if it ignores arts from 70% of the world’s population” (Raizon [my translation]). Yet, since the initial project, as Nélia Dias points out in her article article, “*Esquisse Ethnographique d’un Projet: Le Musée du Quai Branly*,” the Quai Branly Museum has been at the heart of a heated debate among anthropologists, art historians, natural history researchers, museum curators, museologists, and other professionals.

Why has the museum sparked such a debate when Chirac claimed that he sought to continue the mission of “passing the dream of André Derain, André Breton, Claude Lévi-Strauss, André Malraux and Picasso to recognize forgotten civilizations of Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Oceania and the Americas” (Raizon [my translation])? Chirac expressed a strong belief in the need to create a museum that would restore dignity to the people who had suffered from colonial violence. Perhaps one reason could be that Chirac failed to name the cause of this violence, i.e., colonialism, that remains a subject to be fully and publicly addressed:

Il s’agissait pour la France de rendre hommage qui leur est dû à des peuples auxquels, au fil des âges l’histoire a trop souvent fait violence. Peuples brutalisés, exterminés par des conquérants avides et brutaux. Peuples humiliés et méprisés, auxquels on allait jusqu’à dénier qu’ils eussent une histoire. Peuples aujourd’hui encore souvent marginalisés, fragilisés, menacés par l’avance inexorable de la modernité. Peuples qui veulent néanmoins voir leur dignité restaurée et reconnue. (Chirac)

In this speech, Chirac uses the colonial undertones of the paternal, civilizing mission of historical France. While he recognizes the debt owed to former colonies, the obligation to bring dignity to formerly oppressed people, he does not publicly recognize the role of France colonizers in the loss of the colonized's dignity the silencing of their histories.

To take a case in point, Daniel J. Sherman underlines that the creation of the Quai Branly Museum “prompted criticism for its lack of sufficient attention to the country’s—and its collections’—colonial past” (2011 200). While Chirac argues for France to distance itself from ethnocentrism, he officially recognizes the museum as a place “dedicated to other cultures,” thus reiterating the hierarchies of European cultures and the “Others” rather than ensuring their elimination. However, Chirac also refuses the ethnocentric attitude that regards other cultures as primitive:

Au cœur de notre démarche, il y a le refus de l’ethnocentrisme, de cette prétention déraisonnable et inacceptable de l’Occident à porter en lui seul, le destin de l’humanité. Il y a le rejet de ce faux évolutionnisme qui prétend que certains peuples seraient comme figés à un stade antérieur de l’évolution humaine, que leurs cultures dites “primitives” ne vaudraient que comme objets d’étude pour l’ethnologue ou, au mieux, sources d’inspiration pour l’artiste occidental. (Chirac)

The contradictions in Chirac’s inauguration speech lie at the heart of the ongoing controversies regarding the museum and its museological approach. First, if the Quai Branly museum were to be a space where cultures could hold dialogues, *là où les cultures dialoguent*,<sup>142</sup> it would be inclusive of all global arts and art forms. By dedicating a museum

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<sup>142</sup> The tag line for the Quai Branly Museum can be seen on their website.

to other cultures, the emphasis is placed on each culture's singularity, an idea that is anchored in Eurocentric hierarchies.

Rather than eliminating cultural and artistic hierarchies, the Quai Branly "enables the erasure of the colonial past" (Sherman, *French Primitivism* 203). It is through the erasure of the colonial past that Parisian museums maintain a culturally dominant position that justifies their dictations regarding cultural hierarchies. France only further widens the divide between cultures by separating "other" cultures' arts from "Western-centric" arts.

While the Louvre's website proposed that Le Clézio's exhibit was a renewal of the cabinet de curiosité due to its heterogeneous collection of cultures and art pieces,<sup>143</sup> I contend that Le Clézio's exhibit actually distances itself from the *cabinet of curiosité* in that it refuses to enclose a world to satisfy a Western curiosity and fascination with the exotic. Furthermore, the museum's attendees, hailing from numerous countries around the world,<sup>144</sup> override the argument of exclusivity and elitism that, as I will later point out, became an argument of Twentieth century museographers who contested primitivism and the Surrealists' and Malraux's efforts to engage with foreign artists. Rather, Le Clézio includes modern art and installations, sculptures and paintings, daily functional art, and sacred objects from numerous spiritual traditions that span many different artistic movements.

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<sup>143</sup> See <<http://www.louvre.fr/expositions/le-louvre-invite-j-m-g-le-clezio-%E2%80%93-le-musee-monde>>

<sup>144</sup> In 2011, the Louvre reported 8.8 million visitors. 36% of all visitors were French with 64% of foreign visitors in the following order: United States, Brazil, Italy, Australia, China, Spain, Germany, and Russia. See "2011: Fréquentation record du Louvre".

Finally, as suggested by Jean-Marc Terrasse, Le Clézio pushes the walls of the Louvre<sup>145</sup> for the Louvre's international visitors to view the distinctiveness of each art piece and its origin while also witnessing the infinite dialogues among distinct cultures, with their histories and art.

### **Visitor Mediation and Interpretation**

Les centres d'interprétation constituent un souffle nouveau, une ouverture sur l'extérieur au sens propre et éloignent par ricochet le musée d'un simple lieu d'exposition ... le musée a parfois un ton qui assigne le visiteur à son ignorance et qui le tient à distance, tandis que le public a envie de participer et de vivre une expérience de découverte, d'expérimentation ... (Aurélie Linxe 91)

The final element of current museological/museographical discussions is visitor mediation. As I begin this discussion, I would like to refer to Serge Chaumier's and Daniel Jacobi's work on visitor mediation in terms of centers of interpretation, *Exposer des idées: du musée au centre d'interprétation*. In this brilliant collection, various scholars explore the museums' objectives and the public's desire to engage in interpretational experiences in which they, not the museums, become the determiners of meaning.

The term "Center of Interpretation" originates from the 1970s with Freeman Tilden's book *Interpreting Our Heritage*. In his article "De l'Interprétation au centre d'interprétation," Serge Chaumier underlines the distinctive function of a center of interpretation to provoke the visitor to further contemplate its meaning beyond the walls of a museum:

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<sup>145</sup> Jean-Marc Terasse states that Le Clézio "pushes the museum walls" in his article "Le Clézio, un Écrivain au Louvre ou pousser les murs du musée".

Ce qui nous paraît plus crucial à maintenir comme distinction, et qui prend véritablement sens à notre point de vue c'est caractériser le Centre d'interprétation comme un lieu qui ne suffit pas à lui-même, mais qui ouvre sur autre chose ... Le Centre d'interprétation donne des clés de lecture pour comprendre autre chose, située ailleurs ...  
(Chaumier, "De l'Interprétation au centre d'interprétation" 56-57)

In the case of Le Clézio's exhibit, I will underline how the exhibit design enabled each culture to open onto another whose intersections offered a hybrid space for interpretation and individual mediation.

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter on hybrid methodology, Jean Bessière argues for the need for mediative spaces wherein readers (and visitors in the case of museums) are faced with realities that destabilize their preconceived notions of a singular view of the world and unveil the vast multiplicity of histories and cultures:

Il [le roman, mais aussi le musée] doit dessiner de nouvelles perspectives cognitives, de nouvelles perspectives anthropologiques. Il le fait en constatant qu'il n'y a plus de visions du mondes stables disponibles ... Cette réorientation est la plus large possible : elle doit répondre de la multiplicité des histoires et des mondes, sans prêter aux agents humains et aux figurations de l'humain, une propriété de pertinence générale, abstraite ou universelle, que contredirait le contexte qu'exposent les romans [les musées] (RC 167)

I propose to consider Bessière's argument in the realm of art: the necessity to remove dominant discourses in order to reveal the heterogeneity of world cultures and histories. By engaging the visitor in an encounter with multiple histories, mediation is shifted to the visitor to interpret significance and meaning.

Along the same lines, Serge Chaumier posits that the field of museology should consider a fusion of approaches that would allow for association and dissociation in order to provide the visitor with opportunities of reflection:

Il ne faut pas réduire les médiations sur les œuvres à des visées informatives, car information ne vaut pas réflexion. Le rôle du musée n'est pas seulement d'informer et d'instruire, il est même vraisemblable que cela ne soit pas son rôle du tout et qu'il ne le fasse qu'à la marge. En revanche, il est de provoquer des éveils, sensibles, émotionnels, intellectuels... Ainsi faire réfléchir, produire des prises de conscience, amener à de nouvelles perceptions ...  
(Chaumier, "La Muséographie de l'art" 35)

Rather than instruct, the museum's role is to provide a space for reflection that can, by extension, transform the visitor's vision of cultures and of the arts. Thus, with the viewer as mediator, the power of interpretation shifts from cultural, political, or scientific authorities, to the individual viewer.

### **Relations of Hybridity: *Le Musée monde***

With the viewer as the interpreter of meaning, exhibit design must provide opportunities for comparison and reflection on the arts of all genres across time and space. In such a hybrid space, each culture opens onto another, and the viewer extracts the meaning of the intersections and *Relations*. Le Clézio's exhibit subverts the colonial tradition of defining the other and refusing the subaltern position. In his exhibit, Le Clézio achieves this by including art pieces that had never been seen at the Louvre or in any other space where cultural and artistic comparisons and observations could be observed.

As I have previously stated, Le Clézio accepted the Louvre's invitation under the condition that the Louvre would include works and artists that had previously been absent from Western art collections; these once-marginalized works would be presented without implied hierarchies. Le Clézio's objective was to create an opportunity for dialogue outside the constraints of traditional hierarchies that originate from Western classifications of time, cultures, and the field of "Art History," a field that, as we have seen, began within the very walls of the Louvre itself:

Mais ce qui importe, c'est l'existence, au même moment, dans des lieux proches, de techniques et de concepts totalement différents, mettant côté à côté le réalisme le plus accompli et l'expression de la magie et de l'imaginaire. L'Occident a inventé l'histoire de l'art comme une ligne droite qui irait du symbolisme primitif à l'idéal naturaliste des classiques. Ainsi fut inventé l'idée de la Renaissance, comme si certaines civilisations, plongées dans la barbarie du Moyen Âge, sortaient de la nuit pour retrouver la vérité antique.

(Le Clézio, *LMSM* 38)

In this opening address at the Louvre,<sup>146</sup> Le Clézio publicly recognized the West's responsibility for colonization and the resulting relations of hierarchies that prohibited an equal cultural and artistic footing and visibility. This formal recognition marked a first in the Parisian museum world, even with the 2006 opening of the Quai Branly museum, where Jacques Chirac had alluded to France's involvement in colonization in his opening address.<sup>147</sup> Chirac had perpetuated the ongoing division of cultures by referring to all cultures outside of Europe as "others."

While this declaration might appear to be controversial and provocative, the Louvre recognized and understood Le Clézio's objective for inviting transcultural dialogue. In her interview with France Culture, the Commissioner for the exhibit, Marie-Laure Bernadac,

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<sup>146</sup> In Appendix 2. You may also find an online press kit. See Le Louvre, "Dossier de presse: Le Musée Monde", *Lelouvre* (n.d.).

<sup>147</sup> "Cette nouvelle institution dédiée aux cultures autres sera, pour celles et ceux qui la visiteront, une incomparable expérience esthétique en même temps qu'une leçon d'humanité indispensable à notre temps. Alors que le monde voit se mêler les nations, comme jamais dans l'histoire, il était nécessaire d'imaginer un lieu original qui rende justice à l'infinie diversités des cultures, un lieu qui manifeste un autre regard sur le génie des peuples et des civilisations d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Océanie et des Amériques." (Chirac)

described Le Clézio's perception of museums as being guardians of cultures' memories in that their art stands as a testimony to human greatness and the magic of humans' creativity.<sup>148</sup>

What is more, Henri Loyrette, president of the Louvre, publically recognizes that the Louvre, and the museum world at large, has an important role in promoting dialogues across world cultures that have not been previously recognized:

À notre époque de globalisation, il s'agit de rappeler que le musée, fondé philosophiquement et éthiquement sur les notions d'art et de collection, joue un rôle pédagogique et démocratique pour la compréhension réciproque des peuples et leur rapprochement ... Si des voix ont moins d'écho que d'autres sur la planète Terre, elles existent pourtant, témoignages de la pluralité des vies et de la singularité des êtres ... il [Le Clézio] suggère que les barrières plus ou moins visibles entre les disciplines artistiques n'ont pas de fondement esthétique ... J.M.G. Le Clézio bouscule les genres, les époques et les lieux d'origine. (LMSM 15-16)

Undeniably, Loyrette reminds the public that the silence of a culture does not indicate its inexistence. In essence, Le Clézio's challenge to the Louvre signifies an end to cultural silencing. Consequently, the exhibit *Le Musée monde* signals the maturation of the “revolution” that was spoken of by André Gob and Raymond Montpetit.

At the same time, I wish to point out that contrary to the Louvre's press release, Le Clézio's exhibit was more than a “step aside” from the traditional Louvre tradition or even that of the Cabinets of Curiosity known for their “pêle-mêle,” archaic collections.<sup>149</sup> As we have seen in the section on the cabinets of curiosity, Le Clézio's exhibit distances itself from the cabinet tradition in that it refuses to enclose a world for the Western elite viewer to

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<sup>148</sup> To listen to the interview, see Florian Delorme.

<sup>149</sup> See “Le Louvre Invite J.M.G. Le Clézio – Le Musée Monde”

observe with an exotic fascination and a fear of the unknown. In addition, the Louvre's statistics testify to the museum's culturally diverse public and override the Twentieth century- argument of exclusivity and elitism. Le Clézio's exhibit design invited visitors to view the distinctiveness of each art piece and its origin while witnessing the infinite dialogues between distinct cultures, their histories and art—in the heart of one of the most highly visited cultural institutions of the world, the Louvre.

### **Toward a Hybrid Museology Relations Across Heritages of Art and Science**

*Le Musée monde* brought together 145 art pieces spanning a time period of eight thousand years, from six thousand B.C. to the Twenty-First century.<sup>150</sup> The collection included car models, books and clippings, busts, paintings, engravings, figurines, masks, mats, sculptures, low-riders, statuettes, and videos from twenty-six geographical areas or countries that spanned the globe, e.g., Syria, Peru, Vanuatu, Egypt, France, Spain, Turkey, and Cameroon. The presence of these marginally known pieces from various regions of the world confirms Le Clézio's commitment to promote dialogue across cultures and histories beyond the hierarchies that have separated “Western art” from other cultures’ arts.<sup>151</sup>

Yet, Le Clézio admits that making the final selection for the exhibit and events was not an easy task. Above all, he sought to avoid an intellectualization of art associated with André Breton and Surrealism as well as a pure ethnographical demonstration that categorizes

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<sup>150</sup> Based on the index provided by the Louvre at the end of *LMSM* catalog, I have created a list of countries and works that can be found in Appendix 1.

<sup>151</sup> See Nathalie Crom.

world art as primitive, as with the Quai Branly. Rather, as his interview with Crom reveals, Le Clézio's intention was to highlight complementary ways of thinking and thus underline our shared humanity:

Ces différents volets de l'exposition, je ne dirais pas qu'ils sont là pour représenter des cultures différentes, mais plutôt des façons de penser complémentaires et qui toutes participent de cet ensemble qu'est l'humanité. Il y a, évidemment, un double écueil à éviter dans cette démarche : d'une part l'inventaire surréaliste, d'autres par la démonstration ethnologique, à laquelle je suis vraiment très hostile.  
(Crom)

Contrary to the underlying concept that artistic pieces become the stereotypical face of a culture's identity, Le Clézio's exhibit is designed in such a way that the physical proximity of disparate works provokes an inevitable dialogue between the visitor and the pieces and, consequently, manifests the physical dimension of the *Tout-monde*.

If we return to our first chapter dedicated to the concept of hybridity, Alfonso de Toro reminds us that the consideration of hybridity in the context of transculturality implies that individuals act outside of hegemonic constructions in a continual process of listening and negotiating meaning:

Ainsi culture, langue et identité n'appartiennent plus à des constructions hégémoniques transfigurées, mais à des actes subjectifs, c'est-à-dire individuels, qui sont le résultat d'un perpétuel processus de traduction et qui permettent d'écouter l'autre en tant qu'autre dans la différence et de le comprendre. (*Epistémologies* 60)

Therefore, we can conclude that art acts as a central point for transcultural dialogue towards which one can seek cultural understanding.

Moreover, Le Clézio stated in his opening speech that he sees art as the incarnation of histories and human voices, cultures that are ignored, invisible, or extinct.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, the power of art lies in the visitor's experience of these histories, voices, and cultures:

Si l'art a une force, s'il a une vertu, ce n'est pas parce qu'il nous donne à admirer le monde, ou qu'il nous offre les clés du mystère. Ce n'est pas non plus par qu'il nous révèle à nous-mêmes. A quoi servirait d'être révélé dans un univers sourd, aveugle et muet? Non, la force de l'art, c'est de nous donner à regarder les mêmes choses ensemble ... L'artiste est celui qui nous montre du doigt une parcelle du monde. Il nous invite à suivre son regard, à participer à son aventure. Et c'est uniquement lorsque nos yeux se portent vers l'objet que nous sommes soulagés d'une partie de notre nuit. Jamais l'œuvre d'art ne dépassera les hommes, Elle n'est qu'un moyen d'accéder à eux, un moyen parmi tant d'autres. (*EM* 170).

This passage underlines Le Clézio's vision of art as a space of *Relation* wherein all cultures and visitors become participants in our diverse histories, both acknowledging and experiencing them. *Le Musée monde* invites the visitor into a space of *Relation* that, as I proposed in my introduction, reflects what Glissant has termed *Tout-monde*. Thus, the position of the viewer with the art piece and the position of the art pieces are of critical importance. Each participant interacts across barriers of time and space where the viewer, not the museum, assumes the responsibility of mediation and interpretation of meaning.

Renowned scholar Stephen Greenblatt builds upon his critical framework of New Historicism and underlines the power of exhibits today to "reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces

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<sup>152</sup> The text in the book *Les Musées sont des mondes* are the same as the speeches pronounced by Henri Loyrette and JMG Le Clézio at the Exhibit's grand opening on November 3, 2011.

from which it [the art piece] has emerged” (42).<sup>153</sup> In his powerful article “Resonance and Wonder,” Greenblatt describes this new interaction with the reader as a mediation of “resonance and wonder,” an “awakening in the viewer a sense of the cultural and historically contingent construction of art objects, the negotiations, exchanges, swerves, and exclusion by which certain representational practices come to be” (45).

With this in mind, I suggest that we consider Greenblatt’s observations in light of our consideration of museums. Ultimately, Greenblatt’s “resonance and wonder” can be seen in the viewer’s engagement across histories, cultures, and genres, a concept that echoes with Glissant’s concept of *Relation*. Through a design that removed the walls separating genres, geographies, and time periods, Le Clézio’s exhibit disrupted the traditional, chronological heritage of the Louvre and ethnographic museums and enabled the visitor to view arts and cultures through a hybrid lens. Art pieces that were not usually exhibited together due to chronological or geographical divisions were positioned next to each other, thus allowing for similarities and differences to be observed outside of traditional historical or aesthetic discourses.

Rather than drawing attention to pure aesthetic distinctiveness that is achieved by isolating pieces with dramatic emplacements,<sup>154</sup> the *Musée monde* exhibit positions the

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<sup>153</sup> A movement that originated in the 1980s following his publication of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, where he underlined the importance of scholars considering the historical and socio-cultural context and relationship with a given text. Stephen J. Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press (1991) 42-56.

<sup>154</sup> Nélia Dias, “Culture Difference and Cultural Diversity: The Case of the Musée du Quai Branly”, *Museums and Difference*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (2008): 65-79.

viewer at eye level with the pieces and facilitates a spontaneous and closer interaction.

Hence, *LMM* invited each viewer to testify of the similarities and differences between works based on their own perceptions.

I propose to briefly explore the exhibit's design that can be seen as a physical representation of Glissant's concept of *Tout-monde*, i.e., the distribution of works in space facilitates the viewer to participate in relating the transversal hybridity of intersecting histories, images, and forms across centuries and to experience the resulting hybridity, or *Tout-monde*, first-hand. I will examine the reflective dialogue achieved through the exhibit's layout and hybrid *îlot* design by tracing the exhibit's course, beginning with the entrance at the Rue de Rivoli and followed by the disposition of works in the gallery of *La Petite Salle de la Chapelle*. In a parallel fashion, I will identify the transcultural and transgeneric hybridity of three pieces<sup>155</sup> in order to draw attention to their position and their historical, cultural, and thematic dialogues, which were perpetuated through the exhibit's continuation: The lowriders of Duke's Car Club of Los Angeles, *Le Serment des ancêtres* by Guillaume Guillon-Lethière, and the mats of the ni-Vanuatu.

### **An Archipelago-like Exhibit Design Lowriders, *Le Serment aux ancêtres*, Vanuatu mats**

When entering the Louvre palace from *La Porte de Rivoli*, one normally leaves the busy streets with its noisy cars into a quiet alleyway of austere Seventeenth-century

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<sup>155</sup> I have selected three pieces that represent three different art mediums, or genres: street art, a painting, and mats. Each of these pieces originates from cultures that were involved in resisting colonization or racism. The placement of these selected pieces at entryways or exits from the exhibit is important when considering the visitor experience. I will come back to this point later in this chapter.

cobblestones and shiny mirrors before entering the main square for which the Louvre is famous.<sup>156</sup> Yet, Le Clézio's exhibit disrupted the familiar entranceway with art traditionally associated with a low register of street culture from North America, specifically Chicano lowriders. These shiny and elaborately crafted lowriders from Duke's Car Club struck a provocative tone by their contrast with the austere, royal architecture. The placement of the lowriders at the public passage of the Louvre at *La Porte de Rivoli* brought the street into the distinguished court area of the Louvre and erased the invisible boundaries between the street and the prestigious Louvre. Due to the lowriders' location, any passerby was able to access one of the central pieces of the exhibit.

What is more, I propose to consider the placement of the lowriders as a form of an epigraph that framed the exhibit under the sign of disruption and change that announced cultural code subversion and cultural, artistic, and linguistic hybridity.<sup>157</sup> As we have seen in preceding chapters, the use of an original language can subvert cultural and linguistic hierarchies. While there is not a spoken or written language of hybridity per se, there is a visual language that represents the hybridity of American, Native American, and Mexican cultures through the cars' origin, transformed design, decoration, and color schemes.

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<sup>156</sup> See the Louvre's history on its website: <<http://www.louvre.fr/en/history-louvre>>.

<sup>157</sup> In using the term "epigraph," I refer to earlier references to Genette.



**Photographs 1 and 2<sup>158</sup>**

The contrast between the Louvre's austere heritage and the colorful playfulness of the cars highlights the subversion of hierarchies and the surprising confrontation with visitors' expectations, as if the two cars provoke the viewer to reconsider cultural hierarchies. Must the Louvre remain an elitist institution associated with political power and exclusive cultural authority? Is the Mexican-American, or Chicano, culture only one of delinquency and destructive rebellion that is associated with the lowrider? How can art disrupt hierarchies and transform paradigms?

More importantly, this confrontation of periods and styles can be seen as a form of cultural *créolisation* that Glissant has described as “les éléments hétérogènes les plus éloignés [qui] sont mis en présence et produisent un résultat imprévisible” (*IPD* 26). Through the stark contrast of these heterogeneous elements, Le Clézio's exhibit aims to destabilize the divisions between cultural boundaries and hierarchies.

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<sup>158</sup> Photos: Martha van der Drift.

To appreciate the historical and cultural contexts in question, it is important to consider the evolution of lowriders as an art and as a movement. During the late 1930s and 50s, lowriders became a trend in Southern California and in the Sacramento area as a reaction against hotrods that were customized for speed. In this area, with the largest concentration of Americans of Mexican origin, members of the Chicano culture sought to affirm their Mexican-Amerindian heritage and to distinguish their identity through art and design in a functional and visible form. Tatum defines the lowrider in the Twenty-First century as follows:

Today, lowrider vehicles are customized cars, bicycles, tricycles, motorcycles, trucks, and vans that have been altered in the lowrider style, which may include the following elements: the lowering of the vehicle; the addition of accessories; the refurbishing of a vehicle's interior including its upholstery, and the addition of decorative art on the exterior of the vehicles. (Tatum, *Lowriders in Chicano Culture: From Low to Slow to Show* 13)

Following their loss of land and power in the Los Angeles area upon the arrival of Anglo-Americans in the mid-Nineteenth century, Mexican and Chinese immigrants were forced to move to the slums outside of downtown. Isolated in the slums, the Mexican Amerindian people developed a cultural consciousness.

By 1959, their population had grown to 600,000 (Tatum 6). At the same time that the city's population grew, the predominance of gangs rose while returning veterans from World War II sought work, suburban housing, and transportation. With the twenty-dollar weekly benefit for veterans (Tatum 8), Mexican-Amerindians were able to afford to buy used cars that they then customized thanks to the mechanical, welding, upholstery, or painting skills that they had learned during their service in military repair yards.

The lowrider incorporated sophisticated, hydraulic design inspired by the B-52 bomber that soon became readily accessible in the area (Tatum 11-12). As the number of lowriders increased, so the culture's trappings became more recognizable. Because of the lowriders' proximity to the road, law enforcement officers contended that the cars caused damage to paved streets, and the media suggested that gang members were among the lowrider crowd. At the same time, the Chicano movement sought to affirm pride in their Mexican-Indian origins, while a larger number of Mexican-Americans joined lowrider clubs as a statement of cultural pride and to demonstrate their resistance to the dominant culture where their voices could not be heard.

As Alice and JMG Le Clézio point out in their article "Bas et lent," these two cars are works of art that affirm and convey the Chicano culture's hybrid Mexican and Native American identity.<sup>159</sup> According to Alice and JMG Le Clézio, the two cars, a Buick from the first generation of the low-rider movement and a Chevrolet Monte Carlo from today, embody the histories of the Chicano experience in the United States that were characterized by negative stereotypes linked with delinquency and gangs. By their technical and artistic *savoir-faire*, rooted in their heritage of aviation mechanics from the Second World War and their derisive sense of humor, as seen in the cars' short stature and provocative colors, which played off of the wealthy, dominant culture's perception of them as smaller and lower-class, the lowrider artist reversed negative stereotypes portrayed in the media and retaliated peaceably against harassment from public officials and law enforcement agents.

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<sup>159</sup> See Charles Tatum 1-27. The lowrider becomes an extension of the driver's home, an expression of his art, and a form of revolt against the dominant white culture.

The lowriders translated their daily histories and cultural identities into a creative yet practical art form that has been called the “cathedral on wheels” for the way it unites the artistic talents of a variety of artists, from upholsterers to mechanics to custom painters. Since the 1990s, lowriders have been exhibited at a number of U.S. museums, including the Smithsonian, but the Louvre’s inclusion of these pieces takes the lowrider and the Chicano culture to an international arena.

In a similar vein, Haitian art was also brought to the Louvre for the first time with *Le Musée monde*, with paintings from artists such as Hector Hippolyte, Saint Brice, Philomé and Séneque Obin, and Frantz Zéphirin. While Haitian artists, in particular Hector Hippolyte, was recognized by André Breton and the Surrealists and later by André Malraux during his visit to Saint Soleil shortly before his death in 1976, Haitian art had yet to be hung on the walls of the Louvre. By including these works in the exhibit, Le Clézio steps outside of the bounds of the elitism and primitivism that had prevented Haitian art from being equally considered as art alongside European masters. The resistant spirit of the Haitian people as voiced through their art had yet to be told outside of the museological world’s rigid hierarchies.

In the catalogue *Les Musées sont des Mondes*, Le Clézio underlines the fact that the official memory linked with the French Revolution and the promotion of the new French Republic overshadowed histories linked to the Haitian Revolution (32). Furthermore, the images that had been associated with the Haitian revolt depicted the Haitian people as bloody and violent. It is only through their art that Haitians can tell their own histories of enslavement and exploitation by the French.

If we come back to our consideration of the exhibit design, a language of disruption is maintained from the Louvre’s Rivoli main door and pyramid entrance to the doorway into the

*Petite Salle de la Chapelle* gallery that housed the exhibit *Le Musée monde* from November 2011 to February 2012. Rather than the provocative and humorous tone of the lowriders, the entrance to the gallery framed the exhibit itself with a reverent yet forceful tone and introduced the theme of resistance. Upon entering the exhibit, the single door that served as the entrance and the exit underscored a circular space that is typical of an archipelago. From here, the visitor was free to choose which direction to go for his or her visit.<sup>160</sup>

The visitor was confronted with the impressive and breathtaking three-by-four meter painting by the Guadeloupean painter Guillaume Guillon-Léthière, *Le Serment des ancêtres*.<sup>161</sup> The framing of the inside exhibit with this painting set the tone for the importance and power of transcultural dialogue that has spanned the centuries. By placing the painting just behind the glass door to the exhibit, all Louvre visitors could admire this beautiful painting rescued from the aftermath of the 2010 Haitian earthquake. By providing access to this historical painting from the Caribbean, *Le Musée monde* disrupted the cultural hierarchies that had, until this exhibit, closed its doors to Haitian art.

Painted in 1822, *Le Serment des ancêtres* represents the union of the Mullato culture with the Black culture; together, they fought for Haiti's independence against the domination of Napoleon's troops in November 1802 after Napoleon had been sent to calm the revolt against the reestablishment of slavery. The union of these two cultures is illustrated by the

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<sup>160</sup> This is illustrated by the two-way arrows in Figure 1.

<sup>161</sup> See Pierre Bardin, "Un Peintre guadeloupéen au Louvre", *Généalogie et histoire de la Caraïbe* 103, ghcaraipe: Web (1998). The painting as shown in the press release can be seen in Appendix 2 on page 224.

head of the Mullatos of Saint-Domingue, Alexandre Pétion, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a lieutenant of Toussaint Louverture.<sup>162</sup> What is crucial to note is the defiance of traditional images of blacks and mulattos who were traditionally depicted as bloody or violent. In this painting, the two men are depicted as equal by their similar military attire shining with silk and gold. Despite their separate paths, they unite their hands under the blessing of a godlike figure. The importance of this triangle of associations becomes clearer when we consider the unknown history of Lethière.

The history behind the painting itself consists of the histories that defined the painter, Guillaume Lethière. Lethière was born in Guadeloupe in 1760 into a family of two cultures: a colonist father, Pierre Guillon of Martinique, and a slave mother, Marie-Françoise, aka Pepyé.<sup>163</sup> Lethière spent his youth in Guadeloupe, yet often traveled with his father to France, where he continued to practice the drawing and painting that he had learned while in Caribbean. Lethière had the opportunity to practice art in two different cultural environments: in Guadeloupe, outside the ever-growing rules of the Academy, and in France, where the Academy's influence prevailed. In 1779 he won *le prix extraordinaire de dessin* after two years of art studies in Rouen. He continued to win several awards in Europe and was officially recognized by his father before French authorities in France in 1799, and then became a professor at the French Academy of Arts in 1819.

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<sup>162</sup> Marcel Dourigny, “Le Serment des ancêtres”, *LMSM*, Paris: Gallimard (2011): 63. He affirms that Mullatos were considered “free” but “colored,” “libre de couleur,” during slavery.

<sup>163</sup> Marcellin Lubeth and Lucien Parize, *Le Serment des ancêtres de Guillaume Guillon-Lethière*, Paris : Suisse Imprimérie (1998): 7.

It is only a few years after this that Lethière painted *Le Serment* and offered it as a gift to Haiti in memory of its fight for freedom at a time when France would not acknowledge the nation's independence. Aside from this provocative gesture, analyzing the painting in light of the Academy context in Paris underlines the strong spirit of resistance that characterized this painter as well as the Haitian people. This painting could be classified as the highest genre that had been designated by the Academy, an historical painting; however, the subjects were black and mulatto, which did not follow the Classical model. Also, as I previously mentioned, the men are not depicted as violent, but rather as military heroes. Finally, the highly regarded painter in Paris affirmed his Guadeloupian and Mulatto origins by signing the painting with his name and cultural origin: "G. Guillon Le Thièr né à Guadeloupe" (Lubeth 12).

According to the Louvre, the painting disappeared around the end of the Nineteenth century and was rediscovered in a Port-au-Prince cathedral in 1991. After being restored in France, the painting returned to Haiti to only be unburied by French Security from the rubble of the earthquake of January 12, 2010 and sent back to France for further restoration.

Indeed, these varying perspectives of Haiti's history and perserverence deviate from dominant Historical discourse that had denied the importance of the Haitian Revolution and Haitian culture. What is more, they shine light on the power of art to encourage dialogue and *Relations* across once-static hierarchical structures. By sporadically spacing these pieces at pivotal points in the Louvre's passageways and at the entrance to the exhibit, I suggest that these pieces surprise the visitor, a disruption that engages the visitor to create a *Relational* narrative where he may connect multiple communal and individual pasts across spatial

boundaries as in Glissant's concept of transversal histories, "La mémoire de la collectivité terre" :

La mémoire de la collectivité Terre rassemble tout ce qui rapproche les membres d'une collectivité ou d'une nation dans leur commun rapport à l'autre, considéré à son tour non pas comme communauté ou nation, mais comme élément de la globalité Terre. Cette mémoire est tout entière tournée vers l'avenir ... à partir de nous, de notre présent (ME 165).

Thus, placing *Le Serment des ancêtres* at the entrance of the gallery La Chapelle maintains a thematic continuity of *Relating* hybridity that was initiated with the lowriders but in a different cultural, historical, and generic context.

From this entranceway, the visitor could choose to go to the right or to the left<sup>164</sup> to view the exhibit. I chose to pursue my visit to the left to see Haitian contemporary and period paintings that vibrantly displayed their revolutionary history. Within this historical context, the exhibit surpassed an interest for artistic definitions or hierarchies with *arts premiers* and placed an emphasis on the interaction between the paintings through their colors, historical narratives, and aesthetic uniqueness.

Yet, the *ilôt*-type structure that grouped paintings by theme on opposite walls placed the visitor in a reflective space for deriving meaning.<sup>165</sup> Contrasting from such vivacity, yet paralleling the spirit of resistance and revolution, was the opposite-facing wall that displayed

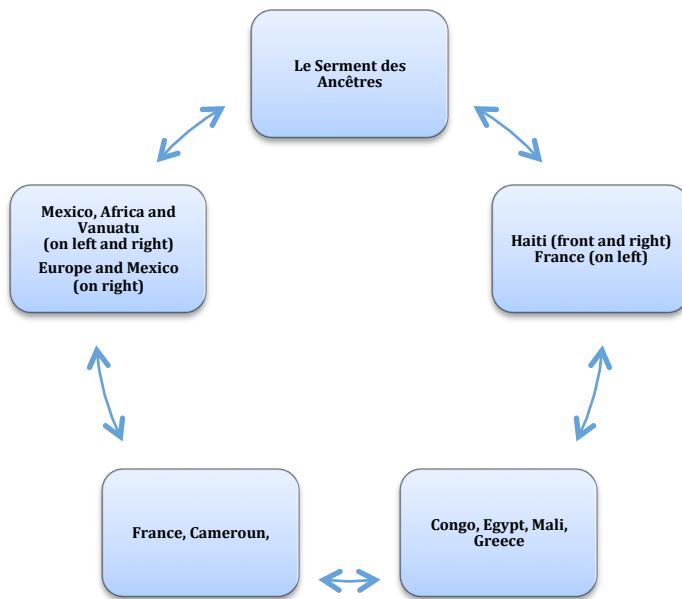
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<sup>164</sup> See Figures 1 and 2

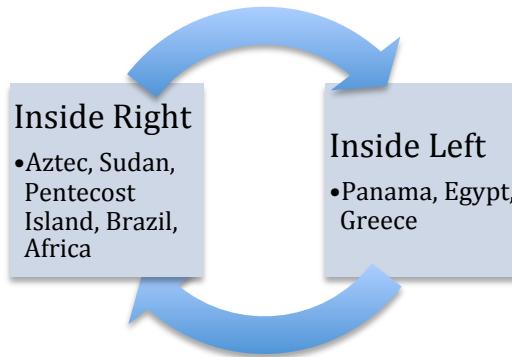
<sup>165</sup> I refer to Serge Chaumier's *ilôt* model that was previously mentioned in this chapter. The *ilôt* structure of exhibits that group art works together in an island-like fashion invites the visitor to determine a personal significance of the exhibit narrative. Indeed, we shall see that the exhibit design replicated an archipelago structure that permitted the visitor to "live in" the *Tout-monde*.

French engravings and paintings depicting a series of French revolutions: the French Revolution of 1789, the reign of The Terror, the beheading of Louis XVI and the capturing of Santo Domingo. Placing the Haitian and French revolutions across from each other created a mirror effect that magnified the works' shared spirit of resistance and revolution while highlighting the destruction inflicted by colonization or the abuse of republican ideals. As I have pointed out, the distance between the groupings of art places the visitor at the intersections of cultures and histories in a reflective position of what Edouard Glissant refers to as *Relation*.

Indeed, nothing can be more inimical to creativity than having to follow an order and fit within a hierarchical structure. The disposition of each artistic expression across from, or next to, the others shines light on historical intersections across geographies and time that were once forgotten or unknown. As underlined in our consideration of Benjamin Stora's concepts of forgetting and identity, the exhibit *Le Musée-monde* brings the forgotten cultures and histories to the forefront to be considered in *Relation* with multiple historical and cultural references, thus undermining the cultural dominance while maintaining the visitor's continued engaged thought. Hence, the design of the exhibit played a central role in depicting the transversal hybridity of world art and in engaging the visitor to connect relayed themes and forms in a meaningful way. This was true for the remainder of the visit, which that continued in as archipelago-like fashion.



**Figure 1:** *ilot*-type grouping in the exhibit *Le Musée monde*



**Figure 2:** The inner *ilot* at the back of the exhibit *Le Musée monde*

As we can see, the *îlot*-type groupings reproduce a *Relational* movement of extension across geographical and temporal spaces. Works ranging from sculptures, ceramic tiles, baskets, painting, installations, and video were placed in close vicinity with distant cultures. This proximity visually facilitated visitors' observations of differences among cultures, periods, and artistic genres while taking note of the common quest of humanity for spirituality, dignity, and eternal life that is expressed in similar yet distinct forms: Haitian voodoo pieces next to ancient African and Greek statuettes; Aztec statuettes next to those from Easter Island, Mali and Nigeria and across from modern art sculptures and installations from Cameroun and France; Mexican paintings from Frida Kahlo and Alfredo Vilchis Roque testify to the vibrancy of Mexican legends, beliefs and magical reality,<sup>166</sup> across from religious pieces and relics of Christianity, and toward the Pacific region of Oceania. Had these pieces been exposed in isolation, islands in complete exile from one another, the visitor would not have participated in establishing a transcultural dialogue. The focus would have been on the art piece itself or the period represented rather than on the individual and collective human histories to which the art gives voice.

The final works of art that I will examine are the mats from Vanuatu. During my interview with the author, he expressed his original intention to dispose the mats as they are used in Vanuatu daily life, a decision that would have placed on emphasis on the seamless relation between humans and art rather than portraying them outside of daily human life as objects: “J’aurais voulu que les nattes de Vanuatu ne soient pas disposées sous verre mais par

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<sup>166</sup> See Pierre Schwartz, “¡ Que viva Mexico, cabrones !”, *LMSM* 118-125.

terre comme elles doivent l'être dans la vie de tous les jours. Quand j'ai posé la question, on m'a dit que c'était parce qu'il n'ont pas pu le faire par manque de place" (van der Drift, "Le Chemin de L'Interculturel" 163).

The Louvre's decision to place the mats behind a glass panel, which went against Le Clézio's wishes, situated these pieces as ethnographic objects to be studied and observed in a museum. Paradoxically, Ivan Karp suggests that such a strategy can prevent exoticizing cultures in exhibits:

In fine art museums that exhibit so-called primitive art, the isolation of the object in a vitrine with minimal information is done to emphasize similarities between the aesthetic that is involved in appreciating the object in a museum and the aesthetic assumed to have been involved in its making. (Karp. *Cultures in Museum Perspective* 376)

Karp recognizes that the art piece's aesthetic value is underlined by its placement behind glass. As a result, the visitor could still approach the mats and study their details at eye-level and contemplate these works' meaning in dialogue with the cultures and histories on opposite and similar walls that all underlined the ritual of integrating the spiritual nature of creativity with its practicality in daily life.

In his book *Raga* (2006), Le Clézio underscores the importance of mats in the ni-Vanuatu culture.<sup>167</sup> While writing *Raga*, Le Clézio met the mat-maker, Charlotte Wèi Matansuè, who also taught him about the island's histories. Through Charlotte's storytelling,

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<sup>167</sup> *Raga: Approche du continent invisible* is a text that marries the author's first-person narrative of his experiences in Raga situated in the Vanuatu archipelago and the first-person testimonies of the ni-Vanuatu myths, cultures, and traditions as told by Charlotte Wèi and other men and women of the island. These islands in Oceania are "invisible" islands in that their small size does not often situate them on a map. Consequently, these cultures are not forgotten because their existence is not even recognized; they are invisible and without a recognized identity.

Le Clézio experienced the rich and tragic histories of the Vanuatu people. What is more, Le Clézio not only witnessed the strong feminine spirit, an integral element in the richness of the Vanuatu heritage, but he also experienced the magical art of mat-making:

L’art de tresser les nattes est lié à la culture de Raga, il est son identité, sa fierté, et sa monnaie d’échange. Cet art est exclusivement réservé aux femmes. Charlotte Wèi est à l’origine du renouveau de cet art.  
(*Raga* 39)

By extending an invitation to Wèi to participate in the events at the Louvre, Le Clézio provided visibility to the ni-Vanuatu and also gave them an equal role in the transcultural dialogues on art and its role in humanity and the promotion of transcultural understanding.<sup>168</sup>

Wèi brings her own personal history as well as the collective histories of the ni-Vanuatu women and the Vanuatu culture itself. By positioning world artists, performers, and intellectuals from around the world on the same footing and recognizing their cultural contributions, the exhibit avoids displaying these people and their works of art in a Western-dominated perspective, or in what Said would call an “Orientalist” context.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, Le Clézio and the Louvre publically recognized her as an artist, a contributor to the worlds of art and oral history:

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<sup>168</sup> With visibility and a participatory role, the exhibit transforms the exhibition of the *arts premiers* with dim lighting set behind glass, e.g., at the Quai Branly Museum.

<sup>169</sup> I realize that this could be debated. However, in Said’s final chapter in *Orientalism*, “Orientalism Now,” he reiterates that Orientalism “is a school of interpretation” (203), and that “The Orient existed for the West” as a means of giving credit to the West. Thus the exhibit can shine a favorable light on the Louvre and Le Clézio for initiating such initiatives, it could be argued that such efforts were done to give credit to the West. However, I contest such assumptions on the basis of Le Clézio’s freedom to design an exhibit to include art from around the world in order to make their presence known. Furthermore, their *îlot*-like disposition avoided isolation. Rather, the visitor engaged in a mental process of *Relation* from which to consider the interconnectedness and differences of each art piece, culture and history without a filter of an authoritative “interpretation.”

... Charlotte Wèi Matansue, une femme de l'archipel Vanuatu qui tisse des nattes et des tapis et, à cette occasion, va sortir pour la première fois d'Océanie. C'est aussi une conteuse, que j'ai rencontrée là-bas, et j'ai trouvé qu'il serait intéressant qu'elle raconte des histoires en même temps qu'elle montre ses œuvres - qui d'ailleurs ne sont pas seulement les siennes, mais celles de la communauté des femmes du Vanuatu. (Crom)

Wèi's presence as a storyteller and mat-maker underlines the hybridity of oral and artistic genres in the transcultural *Relations* of art and histories. Each fiber of the mat, each individual story, is woven together to create a representation of collective memories that reflect the Vanuatu heritage.

When considering the ni-Vanuatu tradition of mat-making, it is important to note the reversal of the traditional hierarchies of men as masters in the world of art. Entrusted to be made solely by women, Joel Bonnemaison sees these mats as expressions of the place of women in society who are guardians of the resistant cultural heritage: "They are works of art, and an object of pride to these women [of Vanuatu]. They are also symbolic objects representing the feminine principle and embody the soul of the people" (Bonnemaison 100).

For Le Clézio, the mats are a tangible representation of the undying and daily resistance of the ni-Vanuatu against the forces of colonialism that dominated their history from 1606 until 1980: "Mais, dans ces nattes, il faut voir un témoignage et une représentation de la résistance aux forces d'oppression dans la vie de tous les jours et au colonialisme" (van der Drift, "Le Chemin de l'interculturel" 163). Including the mats in the exhibit along with the visit of mat artist Charlotte Wèi Matansuè, the main figure in *Raga*, is a manifestation of Le Clézio's commitment to eliminate hierarchies between "art" and "crafts," men and women, East and West, and his support of and admiration for cultures that seek to resist forces of oppression and domination.

It is through the process of mat-making that women weave the hybrid elements of their culture: histories and nature.<sup>170</sup> The composition of the mats consists of pandanus leaves, natural dyes, ocean salt, and heat from the sun. Bonnemaison points out in his book *Arts of Vanuatu* that men on the island of Ambae are allowed to participate in the process only after going through an initiation led by women (104-105). The men must drink a substance that will ensure an immediate transmission of traditions and will seal a pact between the men and the spirits of the forest. Following this initiation, the men may participate in mat-making by sculpting banana bark that is used for the impressions used during the dye stage. While men are involved, women manage the process. They may learn the art under the supervision of the women as in an apprentice-master relationship.

Each woman has her own trees that produce the principal raw material, the pandanus leaves. This ownership signals her direct control over the supply and quality of the raw materials that differentiate her mats from others', her financial independence, and her daily relationship with nature. Mat-making was a route to financial freedom that promised to maintain their independence in trade, education, and culture:

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<sup>170</sup> In his recent book *J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Concerned Citizen of the Global Village*, Keith Moser explores the representation of globalization in the author's works and the influence of consumerism and technology on marginalized individuals, which are often the main characters of Le Clézio's works. As I have previously stated, I have not chosen to explore the economic or political implications of hybridity in my dissertation. However, I do wish to underline here the importance of nature in Le Clézio's works, ideas that the author shared with Moser in an interview that appears at the end of his book: "Personally, I have always been interested in this type of literature that not only deals with human beings, literature which gives a role to what we call nature ... This is the real world, the world for dogs, the world for trees, how do they live? We are sharing the same world but sometimes literature does not express this" (85). Thus, nature is an important element to be considered in all cultures and should not be seen as a sign of "primitivism."

Cette fabrication est un art très traditionnel – certains diraient que c'est un artisanat –, lié à l'activité économique locale, un peu comme l'était la peinture en Europe il y a des siècles. En effet, les tisserandes qui font ces nattes s'en servent comme monnaie. Elles n'ont pas d'argent mais, avec ces œuvres, elles paient l'éducation de leurs enfants, les frais de la vie quotidienne, etc. On peut estimer que cela ressemble à une production artisanale, notamment parce que, depuis la production de la fibre et de la couleur jusqu'au moment où l'œuvre est réalisée, tout est produit par la même personne. Mais de la même façon, autrefois, les peintres européens faisaient leurs pigments eux-mêmes, et passaient eux-mêmes le blanc de zinc sur la toile. (Crom)

In addition to being caretakers of a cultural heritage and knowledge, women ensure solidarity and cultivate social skills in the community. The women share knowledge and discuss art-making techniques while weaving in a public space where mothers pass down patterns, designs, and insights to future generations. Equality and respect dominate the relationships among the women and contribute to their mastery of an art that is inextricably connected to the Vanuatu cultural heritage.

As a physical trace, each mat's fiber and pattern stands as a testimony to the ni-Vanuatus' resistance to the oppression and cultural threats of colonization for more than three hundred fifty years. Despite numerous expeditions, explorers, missionaries, and resource exploiters, English and French rule, the art of mat-making survived by being shared with women and being passed down from generation to generation.<sup>171</sup>

Women were at last publically recognized for their participation in resisting the colonial forces and western concepts of trade when they were included in those who had promoted *Kastrom*. In English, Bolton points out that this word signifies “custom,” a word

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<sup>171</sup> For more on this, see Lissant Bolton, *Unfolding the Moon: Enacting Women's Kastrom in Vanuatu*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2003).

once used by the English to establish the superiority of their culture in comparison to that of the ni-Vanuatu. Bolton goes on to explain that *Kastrom* distinguished local practices from what colonists identified as their own, morally and practically, superior practice (*Unfolding the Moon* 51). Subsequently, the ni-Vanuatu adopted the use of the word, yet they reversed the word's connotation "to signify the knowledge and practice that they either valued and wished to maintain or they rejected" (51).

In 1991, the first women's program from the Vanuatu Cultural Center (VCC), which Lissant Bolton and Jean Tarisesei helped to lead, sought to promote women's pride and knowledge of textile art. One of the first initiatives was to communicate to the women that they had *Kastrom*. With this term, women were acknowledged as equal contributors to the Vanuatu culture through a valuable art and an unbreakable spirit (Bolton 1998). As Bolton points out, this word from the local language is used to designate their identity. It embodies the resistance that distinguishes the men and women of this archipelago: "a word that the people of Vanuatu use to characterize their own knowledge and practice in distinction to everything they identify as having come from outside their place" (XII). For the ni-Vanuatu, the term has come to communicate the relationship between affirmation of cultural pride and the wisdom to share their cultural knowledge. Undeniably, such an approach of empowering the ni-Vanuatu to take pride in their language, culture, and history transforms the traditional ethnographic context of viewing or studying others as primitive.

Undeniably, Wèi's contribution at the closing night at the Louvre initiated a dialogue between the present and the past, the artist and the participant, the East and the West. She offered to share her culture with the audience, thereby illustrating that art, histories, and cultures are intertwined with generosity: they are received and exchanged.

## ***Le Musée monde* and Engaging Reflection The Visitor Experience of *Relation* and *Tout-monde***

Le Clézio's exhibit *Le Musée monde* extends our consideration of hybridity to the world of art. Through its innovative exhibit design, *Le Musée monde* introduced the public to transcultural histories, cultures, and arts in a space that displayed a notion of hybridity akin to Glissant's *Tout-monde*. Transmitting histories and cultures by means of fiction and the arts opens the door towards a fuller understanding of our current reality and to engage in a promising dialogue for humanity's future.<sup>172</sup>

Through my analysis, I have underlined how *Le Musée monde*'s exhibit design exploits hybridity by integrating the *îlot* model with a reflective dialogue space that, in turn, sharpens the perception of each culture's uniqueness and well as their shared similarities. The alternation from contrasts to similarities heightens the visitor's affective experience not only of the art form but also of the histories that each piece holds.

Le Clézio and Marie-Laure Bernadac transformed the Louvre's manner of exhibiting cultures by integrating a reflective space that was conducive to the observation of a transgeneric dynamic among art genres (literary genres, art forms, cinematographic or musical elements, and schools of theory) and transcultural histories that in turn mirror the

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<sup>172</sup> Glissant's proposal for "transversal histories" (*mémoire de la collectivité Terre*) that embraces present, communal and individual pasts. These histories takes into account the plurality of memories: "La *mémoire de la collectivité Terre* rassemble tout ce qui rapproche les membres d'une collectivité ou d'une nation dans leur commun rapport à l'autre, considéré à son tour non pas comme communauté ou nation, mais comme élément de la globalité Terre. Cette mémoire est tout entière tournée vers l'avenir ... à partir de nous, de notre présent" (ME 165).

transversal nature of our world. Placed side by side, the arts are on an equal footing, and thus a dialogue of *Relation* and a physical model of transculturality are facilitated.

Works including street art, sculptures, ceramic tiles, baskets, paintings, installations, and videos were placed in close vicinity to distant cultures such as those of Haiti, France, Egypt, Mexico, Vanuatu, Spain, and Nigeria. The spatial congruity among such diverse art mediums and cultures provided visitors a new perspective for observing differences among cultures, periods and artistic genres even while taking note of the common quest of humanity for spirituality, dignity, and eternal life that is expressed in similar yet distinct forms. The alternating contrasts and similarities heightened the visitor's affective experience of the art form's aesthetics and of their histories. Yet, at the same time, the position of the visitor in between the art pieces provided the visitor with a space of *Relation*, a space in which to connect multiple communal and individual pasts across spatial boundaries. This was facilitated by the archipelago structure, which spaced diverse art forms and cultures throughout the Louvre. In this light, the exhibit can be seen as an artistic model of the transcultural nature of our heterogeneous world.

As has been shown, *Le Musée monde* became a privileged moment and space of *Relation*, a physical representation of Glissant's concept of *Tout-monde* on a microcosmic-level that provided a visitor experience to live the cultures of the world by witnessing the uniqueness of each culture and their resulting interaction, an affective experience that transforms one's perception of others without sacrificing one's distinctiveness:

Tant qu'on n'aura pas accepté l'idée, pas seulement en son concept mais par l'imaginaire des humanités, que la totalité-monde est un rhizome dans lequel tous ont besoin de tous, il est évident qu'il y aura des cultures qui seront menacées. Ce que je dis c'est que ce n'est ni par la force, ni par le concept qu'on protégera ces cultures, mais par l'imaginaire de la totalité-monde, c'est-à-dire par la nécessité vécue de ce fait: que toutes les cultures ont besoin de toutes les cultures.  
(*IPD* 133)

Undeniably, Le Clézio's exhibit provides a contact point where the reader can interact with the histories and participate in witnessing multiple pasts and extracting meaning and relevance.

Finally, I suggest that *Le Musée monde* provided a public event at which Le Clézio could reinforce his commitment to giving voice to the diversity of individuals, cultures, and histories that are forgotten, invisible, or misrepresented by the media and pages of History: a commitment recognized by the Nobel Foundation as an “explorer of humanity beyond and below the reigning civilization.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See Nobel Academy, "The Nobel Prize in Literature 2008 - Prize Announcement."

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION:

### HYBRIDITY AND SHIFTING PARADIGMS

Ultimately, the work of Le Clézio advocates a shift beyond the scope of transculturality as considered within Maghreb and Québec studies, and a consideration of transdisciplinary approaches to literature, arts, poetics, and historiography that surpass the boundaries of essentialism and regional studies.

One of the most fundamental assumptions associated with hybridity is that it refuses essentialism: “l’hybridité prend sa source dans les marges, dans les points d’intersection, les interstices ou les croisements des cultures” (De Toro *Le Maghreb writes back* 80). Without question, hybridity in JMG Le Clézio’s works emerges at the intersections of genres, histories, and cultures that, in turn, give voice not only to the composite nature of identities in a transcultural world, but also to the original diversity of cultures. Through the means of multiple historical and narrative genres such as fictive narration, journals, letters, historical archives, tragedies, visual writing, and popular culture references, we have seen that leclézien hybridity provides a literary, artistic, and contemplative space of *Relation* for the reader or, in the case of *LMM*, the visitor. In other words, the distinctiveness of each genre is maintained and yet transformed, rather than being assimilated through a mixing of genres.

At the same time, the distinctiveness of generic interaction does not impede intermediality or even literary transformation. Admittedly, generic distinctiveness and

transformation in literature and the arts are not mutually exclusive. Intermediality does not necessitate the erasure of distinctive, heterogeneous genres; but at the same time, the particularity of each genre does not hinder intermediality and transformation.

The function of literary and artistic genres is thus two-fold. First, more than a stylistic category defined by formal characteristics, genres' distinctiveness can be seen as an incarnation of diverse identities. Second, genres can be seen as vessels of the histories and cultures for which they communicate. The interactions among numerous genres defies binary thought and transforms the overarching literary genre, presenting a transcultural perspective of world cultures and histories where diversity and hybridity are neither diluted nor erased. Hence, our study of leclézien hybridity can be seen as a mirror of the cultural and historical heterogeneity that characterizes our transcultural world.

I agree with Bessière's proposal that hybridity (which he specifies as typical for the *Roman contemporain*), "present[s] the diversity and the dissemination of humans, and proposes a new figuration of humans through the use of diversity and dissemination" (RC 10-11 [my translation]). In the context of the present study, Le Clézio's writing becomes a transversal means of offering new, transcultural perspectives from which to see and experience the diversity of the world. Each genre and stylistic element not only serves an aesthetic function of poetic beauty; but also, their composition transmits an experience of beauty that results from the world's diversity.

To summarize, hybridity in literature and the arts can be defined as follows:

1. Hybridity refuses essentialism and binary thought.
2. Hybridity finds its source in the margins, in intersecting points, in interstices, or in the crossings of cultures.

3. Hybridity consists of distinct literary and artistic genres, discourses, histories, and cultures that interact with one another in an unpredictable, transversal fashion, wherein each genre's singularity becomes a means by which to transmit numerous histories and cultural identities.
4. Hybridity affirms distinctive histories, languages, cultures, and genres at unforeseen intersections that escape notions of borders and hierarchies.
5. Hybridity consists of a transversal network of circulating narratives that disrupt barriers of official and narrative discourses, ancient and contemporary history, and diametric cultures.
6. Hybridity mirrors the cultural and historical heterogeneity that, indeed, characterizes our transcultural world.
7. Hybridity provides a literary, artistic, and contemplative space like what Edouard Glissant has referred to as *Relation* and *Tout-Monde*.
8. Hybridity invites an engaged reader/spectator to reflect on our transcultural world, in which no single history, culture, or identity is closed off within the confines of its own territory or in a single logic regarding its collective thought.

These findings challenge the Eurocentric binary thought that influenced boundaries between languages, the former colonized or colonizer, cultures, and histories. What is more, “Leclézien hybridity” defies a coloniality that denies original cultural hybridity through the establishment of binary thought that would justify cultural subjugation, the inherent and limiting divisions of “us” and “them” that are often associated with the term “Francophone.”

While scholars may share transdisciplinary and transcultural methods for approaching contemporary French and Francophone literature, it is essential to guard against the tendency toward homogenization as well as the theoretical elitism that could isolate studies within the confines of newly constructed theories and resist the very principles of transversal dynamics. As postulated by Gafaïti, I agree that the challenge for French and Francophone scholars today is to avoid the isolation of regional boundaries while guarding against overgeneralizing transcultural literature at the expense of overlooking regional distinctions:

Aujourd’hui les littératures postcoloniales appartiennent et s’inscrivent plus que jamais dans des sphères culturelles et se distinguent par une vision et une esthétique qui dépassent les régionalismes et les ethnicités, qui vont au-delà des lectorats nationaux et transcendent les espaces culturels postcoloniaux et français déterminés par le dualisme et les rapports de dépendance hérités de l’Histoire auxquels elles étaient limitées. (150).

Our role as scholars in the realm of Twenty-First-century Francophone literature is to acknowledge the histories that constitute regionalisms and their mutations and to identify new cultural spaces that continually redefine transculturality, identity, and literary and artistic expressions.

These cautionary stances notwithstanding, my research aims to encourage scholars to examine Le Clézio’s works and other Francophone works from an interdisciplinary perspective and to challenge traditional approaches to literature and questions of identity, culture, and history.

Within a Francophone perspective, one must ask: what is the significance of hybridity within the fields of French and Francophone studies? If hybridity seeks to integrate diverse analytical approaches in a transcultural and transdisciplinary fashion, then it goes without saying that hybridity will favor mutual valorization. In order to shine light on the

transcultural dynamics present in literature and the arts, scholars should consider transdisciplinary and transcultural theoretical perspectives.

As I have discussed, it is essential that scholars move beyond the tendency to oppose French and Francophone against one another, or to privilege one region over another. I agree with Bonn, who underscores the urgency to leave behind such binary thought that opposes the Hexagon and the “Francophone” world:

Pensée binaire de pays récemment décolonisés n’assumant pas totalement leur souveraineté discursive, qui n’a d’égale cependant que l’exclusion encore pratiquée par l’institution universitaire française, en utilisant ce concept de francophonie comme dessinant les contours de ce qui serait une littérature de seconde zone, restant entachée par une sorte d’infériorité coloniale inscrite dans la nature même de son étrangeté, de la surprise même que ces textes apportent dans le champs consacré des littératures du ‘Centre’. (Bonn 11)

Indeed, Bonn acknowledges that the remnants of binary thought still influence those universities, notably in Europe, that disregard the value and prominence of Francophone authors. One implication of this reality is the defense of Twentieth-century Eurocentric theoretical approaches that no longer apply to Twenty-First-century Francophone literature and impede transdisciplinary collaboration and thought.

Such approaches will require reconsideration of the meaning of “Francophone” beyond the attempt of a *Littérature-monde*.<sup>174</sup> While the arguments associated with a *Littérature-monde* underline the need for Francophone writers (those outside of France) to give voice to their cultures and histories, the hybridity of Le Clézio’s work highlights the need to reconsider this term.

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<sup>174</sup> I examined the arguments of the supporters for a *Littérature-monde* in my first chapter.

Thus, one implication of considering hybridity in Le Clézio's work is the transcultural space of his works that go beyond the boundaries not only of the Hexagon, but also of various former French colonies. In fact, Le Clézio focuses on cultures from around the world while French and Francophone writers did not begin to explore multiple world cultures until the Twenty-First century. In this light, Le Clézio's works communicate the "multiples hybridations" of our contemporary, postcolonial world that, ultimately, challenge "the symmetric categories of the Same and the Other, or the definition of other-ness from a self-referential perspective" (Bonn 11 [my translation]). As a result, the author undermines the binary, center-periphery relationship that has characterized Francophone, postcolonial studies and underscores the problematic nature of the term "Francophone."

Within the scope of this dissertation, we have considered hybridity in three works, each of which represents a distinct genre: the novel *Révolutions*, the collection of short stories *Cœur brûle et autres romances*, and his international art exhibit at The Louvre, *Le Musée monde*. These works represent a turning point in Le Clézio's corpus. They distinguish themselves from preceding novels and short stories through their generic, cultural, and historical hybridity. What is more, *Le Musée Monde* marks the first exhibit for Le Clézio, and one of such diverse artistic genres and cultures inside the Louvre with a museographical design that mirrors its hybrid nature. These selected works establish a transversal network of circulating narratives that disrupt barriers of official and narrative discourses, ancient and contemporary history, and diametric cultures.

Specifically, the *Relational* narrative structure in *Révolutions* overlaps multiple first-person and third-person narrative voices, which crisscross seven geographical spaces over three centuries and many distinct genres, including official historical documents and journals,

as well as fictive oral testimonies and letters. Le Clézio's use of interspersed fictional and historical genres creates a *Relational* text that connects otherwise disparate histories and cultures from France, Algeria, Mauritius, Tanzania, and Mexico across three centuries while engaging the reader in this process. The intersections of history and literature enable a transcultural viewpoint that mirrors a heightened dynamic of alternating and interspersed narrative voices, histories, and cultures.

Through the multiple contexts associated with the signifier “revolutions,” the text traces Jean Marro, Jean Eudes, his wife Marie Anne Naour, and Kiambé as they seek a new social justice. The proximity of interspersed yet disparate discourses creates a fragmented effect and underlines the discourses’ linguistic, philosophical, and historical uniqueness; however, the fragmentation undermines the chronological progression associated with ethnocentrism. The reader is engaged to attribute meaning and *Relations* to the overlapping yet diverging philosophical and historical themes across time. The resulting “mise en *Relation*” of these histories, cultures, and times replicates a revolutionary movement wherein the reader continues the *Relations* of hybridity, making *Révolutions* an unending cycle.

In the same way, the cyclical nature of hybridity and its *Relations* is manifest in the seven short stories of *Cœur brûle et autres romances*. The numerous genres of tragedy, lyric and epic poetry, historiography, and the narratives and histories that overlap among the short stories underline the tension that characterizes the clash between the impassiveness of society and the burning emotional desires of the characters. What is more, the use of these genres within each short story and across the short stories challenge the reader to experience the divorce between the human desire for personal fulfillment and the realities that typify the modern world. This engagement involves the reader in the restoration of human dignity in

the face of such a modern tragedy. The author's writing not only gives voice to multiple cultures and histories; it also provides a path out of a quarantine of solitude toward a space of dialogue and understanding. The writing of visual images and orality and the recycling of tragedy invite the reader to confer an identity to the unidentified and to avoid the repetition of these histories.

Finally, with *Le Musée monde*, Le Clézio proposes a hybrid approach to exhibiting that reconciled the historic divisions between ethnography and art museums by including *art premier* pieces alongside ancient and modern art from across the world in one of the most highly regarded art museums in the world, the Louvre. While these contrasts could evoke accusations of nostalgia and Orientalism, concerns that currently preoccupy museologists,<sup>175</sup> Le Clézio, as suggested by Said in his 1994 chapter to *Orientalism* entitled "Orientalism Now," intends to demonstrate that "there is now at least a general acceptance that these [his views regarding Orientalism] represent not an eternal order but a historical experience whose end, or at least partial abatement, may be at hand" (352). If we consider that hybridity exists at the intersections and refuses binary thought, we must not be afraid of "displaying" historical, cultural, or generic distinctiveness. Avoiding these efforts would prevent any chance of transcultural dialogue. In other words, refraining from the problematic nature of

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<sup>175</sup> In his article "Other Cultures in Museum Perspective," Ivan Karp examines the problematic nature of exhibiting primitive art in fine art museums. Specifically, he underlines exhibiting techniques (exoticizing and assimilating) that both have their weaknesses of either emphasizing difference in a fixed time and stereotypical fashion or minimizing difference but at the expense of silencing history and distinctiveness.

the realities of History will only maintain diametric stances that uphold borders and silence diversity.

By utilizing an archipelago-like exhibit design, *Le Musée monde* disrupted the Parisian traditions in art and ethnography museology. Due to the placement at the street entrance of *La Porte de Rivoli* and under the pyramid, the visitor encountered the unexpected pieces of street art that, in turn, served as reference points from which to navigate throughout the museum to the exhibit in *La Petite Salle de la Chapelle*.

In light of the exhibit's scale and the immediate visitor experience, I suggest that *Le Musée monde* not only provided a mental space for contemplating the transversal relations of cultures and histories, but it also enabled the visitor to become a participant in *Relation*. Through the means of art, the visitor engages in a dialogue with the unique histories and experiences of world cultures and with humanity as a whole. What is more, *Le Musée monde* becomes a privileged moment and space of *Relation*, a microcosm of Glissant's concept of *Tout-monde* where one can live the cultures of the world by witnessing and affectively experiencing the uniqueness of each culture and their resulting interactions.

By extension, I will conclude by underscoring the hybridity of two works that have been mentioned in this study: *Raga* and *Histoire du Pied et autres*. Through these examples, it is my intention to underscore the value of Le Clézio's work as a space of *Relation*, an arena for the concert of distinct voices whose interaction mirrors the glissantien dynamic of *Relation* and engages the reader's/visitor's interaction with humanity's diversity:

Penser que sa propre valeur entre dans un entrecroisement de valeurs de la totalité du monde ... Il nous faut concevoir la totalité-monde comme totalité, c'est-à-dire comme quantité réalisée et non pas comme valeur sublimée à partir de valeurs particulières (Glissant, *IPD* 136).

Written during a commissioned project by Edouard Glissant with the support of the *Encyclopédie Universalis*,<sup>176</sup> *Raga* transforms the travel journal genre and the essay in several ways. First, the author includes an array of literary, artistic, and historiographical genres: drawings, maps, first-person philosophical prose, oral testimonies of the ni-Vanuatu, fictive accounts of orally transmitted legends and myths, and descriptions of the Vanuatu arts and their transversal histories, which combine historical references and eyewitness testimonies of the ni-Vanuatu. At the intersections of each of these genres, a new hybrid genre emerges of the human experience, i.e., the voice, the nature, the myths and the daily activities, the philosophical and intimate thoughts, of the people. The invisible continent becomes an experience that can neither be forgotten nor rendered invisible again.

Second, Le Clézio places the first-person narratives on an equal footing and, thus, removes hierarchies of voice distribution. The juxtaposition of these genres, voices, and histories transform the ethnographic travel journal that sought to document world cultures from an objective outsider perspective.<sup>177</sup> Together, these heterogeneous genres express the hybridity of the diverse histories and cultures of the ni-Vanuatu, a people and place that were not simply forgotten, but that had been made invisible,<sup>178</sup> or as the author claims “who were

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<sup>176</sup> Le Clézio explains Glissant’s project in our interview (van der Drift, “Les chemins de l’interculturel” 164).

<sup>177</sup> Robert Young elaborates on this “new ethnology” of the late Nineteenth century: “The new ethnology, the science of races, was usually polygenist, and thus not only described physical and linguistic differences between different races, but investigated their intellectual and cultural differences so as to provide the political principles of social and national life. It was, in short, a practice of social politics” (*Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* 66).

<sup>178</sup> “On dit de l’Afrique qu’elle est le continent oublié. L’Océanie, c’est le continent invisible. Invisible, parce que les voyageurs qui s’y sont aventurés la première fois ne l’ont pas aperçue, et

only invisible because of our blindness” (*Raga* 133 [my translation]). In this text, the author removes all cultural hierarchies and binary perspectives by including both the inhabitant’s voice and his own through heterogeneous genres and transversal histories. Once again, Le Clézio challenges the binary thought that had been used to deny original cultural hybridity and justify cultural subjugation.

As we have seen in *Coeur brûle et autres romances*, the use of diverse genres engages the reader in the restoration of human dignity in the face of the modern tragedy that typifies the daily life of the collection’s disenfranchised women from diverse cultures. In his most recent work to date, *Histoire du pied et autres fantaisies*, Le Clézio’s treatment of hybridity further transforms the short story genre through its recycling of genres such as legends, oral stories, journals, and essays in the collection’s ten texts.<sup>179</sup> The interactions among these numerous genres underline the physical and emotional fragility that are linked with the experience of movement across and within cities, borders, wars, prisons, and diverse world cultures and landscapes while revealing the unique fictive and factual personal histories that accompany the individual’s motions.<sup>180</sup>

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parce que aujourd’hui elle reste un lieu sans reconnaissance internationale, un passage, une absence en quelque sorte” (*Raga* 9).

<sup>179</sup> The ten texts are “Histoire du Pied” that consists of three chapters and an epilogue, “Barsa, ou Barsaq”, “L’Arbre Yama”, “L.E.L. derniers jours”, “Nos vies d’araignées”, “Amour secret”, “Bonheur”, “Yo”, “Personne”, “À Peu Près Apologue.”

<sup>180</sup> The cultures and geographies represented in *HDP* consist of : Japan, Sierra Leone, Gorée, Spain, Lebanon, Ghana, Mauritius, Latin America, Libya and France.

While movement can refer to the experience of migration,<sup>181</sup> Le Clézio only treats this topic in *HDP* with one of his short stories, “Barsa, ou Barsaq,” whose narrative structure recycles the orality of legends and passes down the story of two lovers, one of whom comes near death after fleeing modern-day Gorée on a battered boat to Barcelona but who is saved by his partner’s undying love and determination.

In addition to the importance of movement, orality proves to be an underlying trait shared by three other short stories in the collection: “L’Arbre Yama,” “Nos Vies d’araignées,” and “Amour secret.” In “L’Arbre Yama,” Le Clézio chooses a legend-like orality to open the piece with a memory of a *berceuse*. The “oral, lullaby-like” narrative structure traces the movement of Mari and Esmée back and forth across the terrifying borders of Sierra Leone, Lebanon, and the United Nations.

From such a sweeping perspective on war amongst humans in Africa and the Middle East, the author expands the use of orality and animism to observe the minute details of nature in “Nos Vies d’araignées.” In this text, the author underlines the interconnectedness between nature and humans with a fairytale-like prose that provides a new perspective on the fragile, poetic, and human-like characteristics of these creatures.

Moving from a microscopic view of nature, Le Clézio weaves the genres of prose, orality, and his Aunt Alice’s journals in “Amour secret” to relate the Mauritian heroine’s, Andréa,<sup>182</sup> dedication to help young imprisoned women by reading them stories every day.

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<sup>181</sup> The treatment of the migration has been predominant in Francophone literature since the 1980s.

<sup>182</sup> Andrea is a fictional character based upon the author’s aunt’s journals.

The author alternates among the future, past, and present tense with a mythic oral writing style, almost like that of a griot or sage, to shine light on the mistreatment of children in Latin America who remain invisible or misrepresented by modern-day journalism.

In the remaining six texts,<sup>183</sup> the author demonstrates an experimental writing style that intertwines fiction, stream of consciousness, novel-like structures,<sup>184</sup> journals, poems, essays and epigraphs from England,<sup>185</sup> India,<sup>186</sup> and from an unidentified author.<sup>187</sup> The first text, “Histoire du pied,” follows a novel-like structure in an anonymous, ethnically diverse city,<sup>188</sup> possibly in Japan; the text follows the movement of a woman through her daily life.

While “Histoire du pied” uses a novel-like structure to depict urban movement and ethnic diversity, “L.E.L., derniers jours” recycles the historic novel to trace the life of Letitia Elizabeth Landon by combining a fictive account of a little-known British poet. Here, Le Clézio uses a polyphonic discourse reminiscent of *Révolutions*,<sup>189</sup> while reversing the traditional colonized subjugation by attributing the first-person discourse to the colonized

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<sup>183</sup> “Histoire du pied,” “L.E.L., derniers jours,” “Bonheur,” “Yo,” “Personne,” “À Peu Près Apologue.”

<sup>184</sup> “L.E.L., derniers jours”

<sup>185</sup> Letitia Elizabeth Landon: “I like the perpetual dash on the rocks; one wave comes up after another, and is forever dashed to pieces, like human hopes that only swell to be disappointed” (*HDP* 155).

<sup>186</sup> “Bonheur,” Rabindranath Tagore: “The child ever dwells in the mystery of ageless time, unobscured by the dust of history” (*HDP* 235).

<sup>187</sup> “Barsa, ou Barsaq”: “Regarde l’océan, rêve de partir, / Attends le retour de ton amant!” (*HDP* 75).

<sup>188</sup> The description of the landscape is given from the perspective of the feet of the main character, Ujine.

<sup>189</sup> Particularly I refer to the voice of Kiambé mentioned in Chapter 2.

and the third-person extra-diegetic narrator. This fictional history shows what could have been the life of the British poet while living in deep solitude and suffering as the Governor's wife in Ghana.

While the graphical differentiation of “L.E.L” signals changes in voice,<sup>190</sup> “Yo”<sup>191</sup> traces a boy’s account of his memories through a first-person stream of consciousness-oral text. Here, the absence of paragraph breaks over twenty pages emphasizes the flowing structure of orality told by an anonymous first-person narrator who shares his or her thoughts on Yo’s life, the possible identity of this homeless boy. Like a written testimony, “Yo” confirms the existence of the homeless that modern society chooses to ignore.

In the complex philosophical essay-war portrait, “Personne,” Le Clézio reiterates the theme of anonymity and the importance of language with the subtitle “*sur une pensée de Ludwig Wittgenstein.*”<sup>192</sup> One again, Le Clézio uses the voice of an anonymous first-person narrator, probably the author himself, who observes the minute details of people’s lives in Tripoli in the early 1990s while also meditating on the differences and similarities of

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<sup>190</sup> Italics signal the voice of the governor’s lover, a slave, while traditional typeface designate the narration in the third person.

<sup>191</sup> While the location of this piece is not defined, the oral sound of the name “Yo” is English slang for “you” or “your.”

<sup>192</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, Twentieth-century Austrian-British philosopher. While I do not wish to oversimplify the complexity of his life work in philosophical concepts, we can consider Wittgenstein to be a philosopher interested in understanding how logical boundaries can influence our perceptions of reality and how language can be used to explain our perceptions of the world. Furthermore, Wittgenstein was interested in how we can manipulate language and sentences to describe the world as it is but also as it could be. While we do not know which of Wittgenstein’s thoughts is the basis of this philosophical essay and portrait of a woman who is faced with the loss of loved ones in war, the text “Personne” shines light on the human quest to understand others and the mysteries of life through language while underlining the importance of language in removing solitude and anonymity.

numerous languages amongst diverse cultures to speak of God and spirituality of numerous cultures of the world.<sup>193</sup>

It is clear that the role of language is called into question in the essay-like short story “Bonheur.” Le Clézio directly involves himself, the reader, and society as a whole in a reflection on the meaning of happiness across numerous cultures through his use of the first-person and second-person pronouns. The author underscores the movement of crisscrossing geographical and temporal spaces with a fragmented text, i.e., from the present to the past, from visual and aural descriptions to abstract contemplations, from an unknown city near a port to Latin America. While the text’s fragmentation shines light on these different spaces of thought, cultures, and time periods, the fictive account of the sole character, Viam, provides an underlying thread that weaves together these disparate genres, cultures, and reflections. Furthermore, by including this character who is reminiscent of Adam Pollo in *Le Procès verbal*, Le Clézio depicts the uselessness and emptiness of language in a society where humanity remains invisible, hidden, or fearful.

In the final piece, “À peu près apologue,” the author joins the essay, the autobiography, and the novel-like portrait of Parisian society to relate his experience of witnessing an intercultural world in a modern-day context: a Parisian subway ride. Here, Le Clézio intricately describes an almost metaphysical experience of imagining the lives of the

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<sup>193</sup> The Soufis, Astrology from Antiquity with L’Empyrée du ciel, *Cielo empireo*. “Le Ciel, comme d’autres diraient Dieu. En Ouzbékistan, l’on dit Tangri Allah, Ciel-Dieu ou Dieu du Ciel. Pour les Amériindiens, Athapascans, Mohawks, Innus, le ciel est supreme, le monde animal, végétale et les hommes sont liés au ciel comme à leur père . . .” (“Bonheur” 313).

diverse people he sees.<sup>194</sup> It is a piece that testifies to his commitment as a writer, as he shared in his 2008 Nobel Speech. As a writer, his role is to be a witness to human experience in all of its diversity, repulsiveness, and beauty.

Studies of hybridity in Le Clézio's work can reveal the relationship between a person's exposure to the arts and the heightening of one's empathy toward others and understanding of the issues that affect humanity. With this in mind, let us consider the following from an interview with the author in 2012 where he underscores the essence of literature: “... while literature is not an ideal, it is a reflection of the complexity of the human soul, and this is what gives literature its truth. If it were only words of scripture, literature would no longer have a role: it would apply to reality” (van der Drift, “Why Interculturality”).<sup>195</sup>

Ultimately, we may consider leclézien hybridity to be a means of placing the human at the center of scholarly studies. Leclézien scholars may collaborate with one another and other with scholars across the humanities, arts, and sciences, pursuing a field of “hybrid studies” that would examine the complexity of the “human soul.” In essence, hybridity invites scholars to align their research in light of the “*problématicité du monde.*”

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<sup>194</sup> In using the term “metaphysical,” I am referring to Keith Moser’s study of “privileged moments” that I discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>195</sup> This reference is from a forthcoming publication in *Contemporary French Studies* Spring 2015.

## APPENDIX 1: ART PIECES IN THE EXHIBIT *LE MUSÉE MONDE*<sup>196</sup>

Europe	34
Belgium	1
England	1
France	25
Germany	1
Greece	4
Italy	1
Americas	73
Antilles	1
Brazil	3
Guyana	1
Haiti	23
Mexico	41
Peru	1
USA	3
Middle East-Africa	31
Africa, undefined	7
Cameroon	8
Congo	1
Egypt	11
Mali	1
Nigeria	1
Syria, Lebanon, Turkey	3
Oceania	6
Easter Island	1
Melanesia	1
Micronesia	1
Pentecost Island	3
Total	145

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<sup>196</sup> This chart is based on the works listed in the catalogue *Les Musées sont des mondes* 149-155.

**APPENDIX 2: LOUVRE PRESS RELEASE FOR *LE MUSEE MONDE***

(Le Louvre copyright © 2011)

<[http://www.louvre.fr/sites/default/files/medias/medias\\_fichiers/fichiers/pdf/louvre-dossier-presse-clezio.pdf](http://www.louvre.fr/sites/default/files/medias/medias_fichiers/fichiers/pdf/louvre-dossier-presse-clezio.pdf)>



Dossier de presse

du 3 novembre 2011  
au 6 février 2012

# Le Louvre invite J.M.G. Le Clézio

## Les musées sont des mondes

Contact presse  
Coralie James  
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Tél. 01 40 20.54 44

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## Communiqué de presse

**Du 3 novembre 2011  
au 6 février 2012**



Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio  
Portrait au musée du Louvre © Christian Courrèges

Le cycle *Le Louvre invite J.M.G. Le Clézio* bénéficie du soutien de

**LOUIS VUITTON**

et de l'Action culturelle de la Sofia.

Et l'exposition *Le Musée monde* bénéficie du soutien de  
SAM Art Projects



### Informations pratiques musée du Louvre

#### Horaires

Tous les jours, sauf le mardi, de 9h à 18h, les mercredi et vendredi jusqu'à 22h.

#### Tarifs

Accès avec le billet d'entrée au musée : 10 €.

Gratuit pour les moins de 18 ans, les moins de 26 ans résidents de l'U.E., les enseignants titulaires du pass éducation, les demandeurs d'emploi, les adhérents des cartes Louvre familles, Louvre jeunes, Louvre professionnels et Amis du Louvre, ainsi que le premier dimanche du mois pour tous.

#### Renseignements

Tél. 01 40 20 53 17 - [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)

### Informations pratiques Auditorium

#### Informations Auditorium

Tél. 01 40 20 55 55 - [www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)

#### Réservations Auditorium

Tél. 01 40 20 55 00 (du lundi au vendredi de 11H à 17H, et sauf le mardi).

Paris, le 26 octobre 2011

# Le Louvre invite J.M.G. Le Clézio

## Les musées sont des mondes

Après avoir reçu notamment Patrice Chéreau, Umberto Eco et Pierre Boulez, le musée du Louvre invite cette année Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio à poser un regard nouveau sur les collections du musée, avec une programmation pluridisciplinaire dans les salles du musée et à l'auditorium. Le Grand invité initie cette fois le dialogue avec ce postulat « les musées sont des mondes ».

### Exposition *Le Musée monde*

Salle de la Chapelle (aile Sully, salles 20 à 23)  
du 5 novembre 2011 au 6 février 2012

Afin de répondre à la thématique de « musée monde », de traduire en œuvres les propos et les souhaits de J.M.G. Le Clézio, et puisqu'il n'y a pas pour lui de « hiérarchie en art », voisineront dans l'exposition de la Salle de la Chapelle, des œuvres aussi diverses que les nattes du Vanuatu, les tableaux haïtiens, une tête Ifé du Nigeria, des tableaux du XVIII<sup>e</sup> sur la révolution, des ex-voto mexicains, effaçant ainsi les frontières entre les époques, les civilisations, entre art et artefact. Enraciner cet élargissement patrimonial dans l'histoire originelle du musée du Louvre qui abrita de nombreux chefs-d'œuvre ethnographiques jusqu'en 1879, anciennement rassemblés dans le musée Dauphin, puis dans le musée de la Marine, permet de mieux cerner la cohérence des œuvres sélectionnées. Cette exposition renoue avec la notion de « cabinet de curiosités » et, en lien direct avec l'univers littéraire développé par J.M.G. Le Clézio, privilégie quatre zones : Afrique, Mexique, Vanuatu et Haïti. Chacune des sections prend appui sur une base historique ou comparative, avec les collections du musée du Louvre, du Quai Branly ou des emprunts au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et se voit ponctuée de contrepoints contemporains (Camille Henrot, Bertrand Lavier, Betsabeé Romero, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Hervé Télémaque, Jean-Michel Basquiat).

#### Commissaire de l'exposition :

Marie-Laure Bernadac, conservateur général, chargée de mission pour l'art contemporain au Louvre, assistée de Pauline Guelaud et de Maïa Kantor.

#### Publications :

*Les musées sont des mondes* de J.M.G. Le Clézio.  
sous la direction de Marie-Laure Bernadac. Coédition Gallimard / musée du Louvre Éditions. Environ 152 p., 120 ill., 35 €.

*Histoire du pied et autres fantaisies* de J.M.G. Le Clézio. Editions Gallimard, collection Blanche.

*Hector Hypollite*, ouvrage collectif du musée d'art haïtien, Paris, Editions de Capri, musée du Louvre, 160 p : 35 ill, 25 €. Bénéfices de la vente reversés au musée d'art haïtien pour la restauration de sa collection.

**Direction de la communication  
du musée du Louvre**  
Anne-Laure Béatrix

Contact presse musée du Louvre: Coralie James  
[coralie.james@louvre.fr](mailto:coralie.james@louvre.fr) / Tél. : 01 40 20 54 44 / Fax : 54 52

Contact presse programmation musique, cinéma, littérature : Opus 64 / Valérie Samuel - Aurélie Mongour : [aurelie@opus64.com](mailto:aurelie@opus64.com) / Tél. : 01 40 26 77 94

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# Auditorium du musée du Louvre

« Les musées sont des chambres de chants. Tantôt murmure, tantôt orchestre éclatant. Toujours rythmée, la parole parle dans toutes les langues ; elle se mêle et se reconstruit à chaque génération. Les champs de bataille sont les lieux les plus silencieux de l'Histoire. Mais les œuvres sont bavardes, elles sont vivantes. Elles ne sont pas différentes de notre vie quotidienne, elles ressemblent aux affiches et aux couloirs du métro, à la place publique, aux alcôves. Elles disent les jours qui se succèdent, les tâches de la vie, les petites douleurs et les menus plaisirs, le bourgeonnement des naissances, la destinée, les dérisoires trahisons. »

J.M.G. Le Clézio

Avec le soutien de l'Action culturelle de la Sofia, de l'Institut du Mexique et de la Délégation générale du Québec en France.

## CONFERENCE D'OUVERTURE de J.M.G. Le Clézio

Jeudi 3 novembre à 19h

En ouverture à l'ensemble des manifestations, J.M.G. Le Clézio prononcera le texte qui présente son thème « Les musées sont des mondes ». La conférence sera suivie par un concert de Chris Watson.  
*Avec la participation de l'Ina-GRM.*

## CYCLE de CONFERENCES D'ÉCRIVAINS

Animation par Nathalie Crom du magazine *Télérama*

Quatre écrivains sont invités à entrer en résonance avec les « autres mondes » que J.M.G. Le Clézio met en valeur à la faveur de son passage au Louvre ou avec les idées qu'il exprima dans son discours de réception du prix Nobel en 2008 : « Aujourd'hui, au lendemain de la décolonisation, la littérature est un des moyens pour les hommes et les femmes de notre temps d'exprimer leur identité, de revendiquer leur droit à la parole et d'être entendus dans leur diversité » ; « la culture à l'échelle mondiale est notre affaire à tous ».

### Ananda Devi (Île Maurice, vit en Suisse)

Lundi 7 novembre à 18h30

« Dédoublements »

### Homero Aridjis (Mexique, vit à Londres)

Lundi 14 novembre à 18H30

« Survivance d'un monde magique »

### Alain Mabanckou (Congo, vit aux Etats-Unis)

Lundi 21 novembre à 18h30

« Le Clézio, écrivain de littérature-monde ? »

### Dany Laferrière (Haïti, vit à Montréal)

Lundi 28 novembre à 18h30

« Mes premiers maîtres en écriture : les peintres primitifs haïtiens »

## FACES à FACES

**Rencontre avec Pascale Marthine Tayou**, en conversation avec Thierry Raspail, directeur du musée d'Art contemporain de Lyon.

Vendredi 18 novembre à 20h

Originaire du Cameroun, Pascale Marthine Tayou se décrit volontiers comme « un faiseur nourri par la poussière africaine mais aussi par d'autres émotions, d'autres senteurs, d'autres univers ». Pour cette rencontre, il aborde la question de sa propre identité d'« africain international » et des contradictions identitaires créées par la mondialisation. Il revient aussi sur son intérêt pour l'hybridation des formes, pour leur circulation en dépit des frontières et sur sa pratique du détournement d'objets usuels et de détritus qui permet de sculpter la mémoire.

**Rencontre avec Camille Henrot, artiste, en conversation avec** Éric Wittersheim, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris et Federico Nicolao, École cantonale d'art de Lausanne et École nationale supérieure d'arts Paris Cergy.

Vendredi 2 décembre 2011 à 20h

Camille Henrot présente son film expérimental « Coupé/décalé » réalisé après un long séjour au Vanuatu à partir d'images de jeunes hommes sautant dans le vide, les pieds attachés par des lianes. Elle partage, avec l'anthropologue Éric Wittersheim et l'écrivain et philosophe Federico Nicolao, ses réflexions sur la fascination de l'ailleurs et revient sur les questions de réception et d'appropriation de toute image culturelle et sur les ambiguïtés de la mise en scène d'une culture par elle-même.

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Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Poupées Pascale*, 2010, cristal et matériaux variés, Courtoisie de Galleria Continua, San Gimignano / Beijing / Le Moulin, photo : Alicia Luxem

## Auditorium du musée du Louvre



Halil Altindere, *My Mother likes Pop Art, because Pop Art is colourful*, 1998 © Halil Altindere, Courtesy of the artist and PILOT (Istanbul)

« L'Occident a inventé l'histoire de l'art comme une ligne droite qui irait du symbolisme primitif à l'idéal naturaliste des classiques. Ainsi fut inventée l'idée de la Renaissance, comme si certaines civilisations, prolongées dans la barbarie du Moyen Age sortaient de la nuit pour retrouver la vérité antique. C'était justifier la hiérarchie des cultures, idée malsaine et dangereuse qui justifia la colonisation et affirma la suprématie d'une culture sur toutes les autres. Nous savons aujourd'hui ce qu'il en coûte de céder à cette illusion. L'apparente logique des expressions (dans l'art mais aussi dans la pensée rituelle ou la religion) est démentie à chaque instant et ce doit être là le rôle des musées. »

J.M.G. Le Clézio

### JOURNÉE-DEBAT : « Musée-musées »

#### La norme et les marges : le musée cloisonne-t-il ?

Samedi 19 novembre de 10h30 à 18h

Depuis le dernier quart du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les musées ethnographiques sont l'objet de vifs débats qui interrogent à la fois leurs raisons d'être à l'époque postcoloniale et le rôle qu'ils sont appelés à jouer dans les sociétés occidentales à l'heure de la mondialisation et de l'interculturalité. Qu'en est-il des musées d'art ? Sont-ils aujourd'hui les bastions d'une hiérarchie des cultures qui affirmerait la suprématie des cultures du Bassin Méditerranéen sur les autres ? Grand invité du Louvre, Le Clézio propose une autre conception du musée d'art, un musée-monde où se joue la « matérialisation de la mémoire » : « A l'intérieur de l'enceinte, plus de temps, plus d'ordre. Plus de savoir. Simplement des œuvres, que la volonté d'un seul, l'énergie d'une ville, d'un peuple a portées, formées, a chargées de poussière de gloire. Des œuvres qui résistent de toute la force de leur pensée ». Cette conception militante du musée comme « le no man's land ou bien la terre de tous, où se rencontrent les cultures » questionne à la fois les contours des collections (quelles sont aujourd'hui les œuvres « dignes » d'un musée d'art ?) mais aussi la façon dont ces œuvres sont présentées au public et dialoguent entre elles. Il ne s'agit pas ici de revenir, dans une perspective anthropologique, sur la qualification artistiques des artefacts non occidentaux, ni même de reprendre le thème cher à André Malraux de la « métamorphose » de l'œuvre dans le contexte muséal. Cette journée est consacrée aux enjeux auxquels les musées sont confrontés dans un monde globalisé et aux nouveaux découpages entre les catégories de collections que cela induit.

### Programme

#### 10h30 Ouverture

#### I. Quelles normes pour les musées d'art dans un monde globalisé ?

11h De la « neuromuséologie » au futur rôle du musée d'Art mondial : après le musée qui apporte des réponses, un musée qui pose des questions, par John Onians, University of East Anglia, Norwich.

11h30 Présentation du projet GAM « Global Art and the Museum », par Peter Weibel, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe.

12h Les objets extra-européens au musée : historique et enjeux actuels, par Nélia Dias, ISCTE/IUL, Lisbonne.

#### II. Décloisonner en abolissant les frontières entre les catégories de collections

14h30 Quand l'art des marginaux entre au musée, par Savine Faupin, Lille Métropole, Musée d'art moderne, d'art contemporain et d'art brut (LaM), Villeneuve-d'Ascq.

15h Créer des passerelles entre les différentes catégories de collections : le projet architectural et muséographique de l'extension du LaM à Villeneuve d'Ascq, par Renaud Piérand, architecte-muséographe, Paris.

16h Musée docile, Musée des charmes. Ouvrir le cercle fermé de l'art occidental, par Jean-Hubert Martin, directeur honoraire du musée national d'Art moderne, Paris.

16h30 Au Musée des artistes du Museum Kunstpalast de Düsseldorf, un regard contemporain sur le passé, par Bogomir Ecker, Thomas Huber, artistes et Jean-Hubert Martin.

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Vue extérieure du LaM et de son extension, Villeneuve d'Ascq, photo : M. Lerouge / LMCU  
© Manuelle Gautrand Architecture

## Auditorium du musée du Louvre



Pendentif : Crucifixion et Descente de croix, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, musée du louvre, département des Objets d'art  
© RMN / Jean-Gilles Berizzi.

« La parole aussi, la parole qui fait naître l'art. Et si l'on entend plus la parole qui porte les œuvres, que ressent-on devant les couleurs, ces bas-reliefs, ces glyphes, ces corps de pierre ? Alors il faut la réinventer, la faire surgir, se penchant tout près des travaux, l'imaginer, la deviner. Les chants anciens, les mythes, les récits fabuleux, les poèmes, mais aussi le bruit de chaque jour, les plaisanteries qui fusent, les mots grossiers, et encore les peurs ou les croyances, les romans et les romances, les miracles, les histoires (et non pas déjà l'histoire), cette trame que les humains ont tissée et qui enserre le monde depuis ses commencements. Pas un lieu du réel qui en soit exempt. Pas un individu qui ne l'ait en mémoire. Et si l'on se trompe en s'approchant de si près, si l'on imagine trop, si l'on affabule, est ce que ce n'est pas justement là que se trouve la vérité de ces œuvres .»

J.M.G. Le Clézio

## L'ŒUVRE EN SCÈNE

### Les franciscains chez les Aztèques : plumes, maïs et sculpture de dévotion

Mercredi 16 novembre à 12h30

par Philippe Malgouyres, département des Objets d'art

Pendentifs mexicains en microsculpture, scènes de la Passion, XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, Mexique (buis, cristal de roche, argent doré, plumes de colibri, perles).

Après la conquête espagnole, l'un des aspects les plus étonnantes de l'histoire des arts au Mexique fut l'implantation, au cœur d'établissements d'enseignement, d'ateliers pour former des artistes. Ces écoles ou séminaires enseignaient aux Indiens, outre les langues, la musique et les arts visuels. Les religieux y faisaient fabriquer des images de dévotion chrétienne à l'aide des techniques précolombiennes du travail de la microsculpture en pâte de maïs autrefois utilisées pour servir les dieux aztèques. Plusieurs de ces œuvres seront analysées et commentées pendant une heure sur la scène de l'auditorium.

## TABLE - RONDE

### Manuscrits en péril

Jeudi 1<sup>er</sup> décembre de 18h30 à 21h

Avec le soutien de l'action culturelle de *La Sofia*.

Il s'agit de présenter des manuscrits d'auteurs francophones en danger de disparition après la mort de leurs auteurs. Un travail important est effectué par les chercheurs de l'ITEM qui viendront présenter quatre auteurs dans cette situation : Rabearivelo (Madagascar) ; Césaire (1913-2008) (Martinique) ; Tchicaya U Tam'si (1931-1988) et Sony Labou Tansi (1947-1995) (Congo). Des lectures de ces manuscrits accompagneront la présentation/discussion.

« Le patrimoine littéraire manuscrit est physiquement très fragile ; il est vulnérable à l'eau, au feu, à l'air... Mais d'autres dangers le menacent également : comment un patrimoine manuscrit peut-il survivre à l'agression d'une guerre, à la violence brutale des déplacements forcés, ou à celle, plus insidieuse, des prédatations économiques ? »

Cette table ronde présentera les enjeux, la démarche et les premiers résultats d'une vaste opération de sauvegarde, de valorisation, d'édition de manuscrits francophones en danger de disparition. Des lectures de manuscrits en péril d'Aimé Césaire, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, Sony Labou Tansi et Tchicaya U Tam'si accompagneront la présentation et la discussion.

Avec :

P.-M.de BIASI, directeur de l'ITEM, ENS/CNRS - B.CERQUIGLINI, recteur de l'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, AUF - D. COMBE, professeur à l'ENS Ulm - D.DELAS, chercheur associé à l'ITEM, professeur émérite de l'Université de Cergy-Pontoise - N. MARTIN-GRANEL, chercheur associé à l'ITEM, enseignant en anthropologie et en littérature - C.RIFFARD, chercheuse associée à l'ITEM, enseignante à l'Université Joseph Fourier, Grenoble - H. LOPEZ, romancier, essayiste, ambassadeur du Congo en France - J.-L. RAHARIMANANA, écrivain d'origine malgache, romancier, poète, auteur pour le théâtre P. DELORE, metteur en scène, comédien.

## LECTURE

### Personne

Samedi 26 novembre à 20h

Soirée à l'auditorium consacrée à lecture d'extraits du recueil de nouvelles *Histoire du pied et autres fantaisies* de J.M.G. Le Clézio à paraître chez Gallimard.

DIRECTION ARTISTIQUE : Georges Lavaudant. - DISTRIBUTION EN COURS. 6  
Coproduction Musée du Louvre/ LG Théâtre-Georges Lavaudant.

## Auditorium du musée du Louvre



Jean-François Zygel et Mehdi Haddab  
© Alvaro Yanez 2011.



Peter Wispelwey © Benjamin Ealovega

### THEATRE : PAWANA

Vendredi 11 et samedi 12 novembre à 20h

Dimanche 13 novembre à 16h

**Texte de J-M.G. Le Clézio. Mise en scène de Georges Lavaudant.  
Avec Jérôme Derre et Philippe Morier-Genoud.**

Coproduction musée du Louvre/ LG Théâtre-Georges Lavaudant.  
Le point de départ de *Pawana* (« baleine » en langue Nattick indienne) est une épopée sanglante, celle du baleinier Charles Melville-Scammon. A la fin du XIXe siècle, ce personnage aussi fabuleux et légendaire que le capitaine Achab découvre au Mexique une lagune où se reproduisent les baleines grises. Il décide de les exterminer... Le récit entremêle sous la forme de deux monologues les souvenirs et le repentir du capitaine et de son jeune mousse. Plus de vingt ans après sa création en langue espagnole au Mexique, le metteur en scène Georges Lavaudant prend toujours autant de plaisir à revenir à ce texte qu'il avait commandé à J.M.G. Le Clézio. Pour cette recréation à l'auditorium du Louvre, il fait appel aux deux comédiens de la version française de *Pawana*, qui avait marqué les esprits au Festival d'Avignon en 1992.

### CONCERTS

Vendredi 4 novembre à 20h

**Mehdi Haddab, oud ; Jean-François Zygel, piano**

**Improvisation**

L'improvisateur Jean-François Zygel dialoguera avec le oudiste Mehdi Haddab sur des thèmes traditionnels et du répertoire classique. A la demande de J-M. G Le Clézio de confronter un instrument qu'il aime, le oud, avec un autre instrument, Mehdi Haddab et Jean-François Zygel ont répondu présent à l'appel de l'improvisation qui sera le fil conducteur de cette soirée. Instrument acoustique et électrique se partageront l'affiche de ce concert qui réunit deux des plus grands spécialistes du genre.

« Drôle d'histoire. Quand on improvise, il faut être à la fois à son affaire et ailleurs, comme dédoublé. Il faut guider, conduire construire au moment même où l'on joue ; et en même temps lâcher prise, laisser quelque chose s'établir entre le soi de la surface et le soi des profondeurs.

J'imagine toujours qu'au commencement de la musique était l'improvisation, que c'est là qu'est né le discours musical, plus tard codifié par la partition. Les musiciens de jazz en ont fait le secret de leur art. A nous, les musiciens classiques, de les rejoindre, et de nous rappeler que dans l'improvisation gît le secret de toute musique. »

Jean-François Zygel

Vendredi 25 novembre à 20h

**Pieter Wispelwey, violoncelle**

**J.-S. Bach**

Intégrale des six suites pour violoncelle seul BWV 1007 à 1012  
Concert avec deux entractes.

### MUSIQUE FILMEE

**Boléro(s)**

Dimanche 20 novembre à 15h

L'œuvre de Ravel est au centre du dernier ouvrage de J.M.G. Le Clézio, *Ritournelle de la Faim*. Cette séance s'articule autour de la lecture par un comédien d'un texte inédit sur le Boléro, accompagné par un extrait du documentaire *La Passion Boléro* réalisé par Michel Follin en 2008 et de l'interprétation intégrale du Boléro par Sergiu Celibidache dans une approche particulièrement « extatique ». <sup>7</sup>

## Auditorium du musée du Louvre



*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* de Carl Theodor Dreyer © Gaumont

Mercredi 23 novembre à 20h30

Dans le cadre du programme *Électron(s) libre(s)*, confrontant les matières sonores et visuelles pour générer des énergies nouvelles. A l'initiative de J.M.G. Le Clézio, le groupe **Bot'Ox** propose un nouveau regard sur le chef-d'œuvre du grand réalisateur danois

### *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*

De Carl Theodor Dreyer

Fr., 1928, 80 min. env., nb, muet.

Création musicale électronique de **Bot'Ox** (Cosmo Vitelli et Julien Briffaz). Commande du musée du Louvre(2011)

Pour accompagner, à l'invitation de J.M.G. Le Clézio, la projection de *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* de Carl T. Dreyer, Bot'Ox a confronté son univers mécanique aux échos industriels et la passion religieuse qui habite l'héroïne ; son imaginaire, hanté par les musiques de la fin du XXe siècle et le thème médiéval vu par 1927; ses ambiances sonores abstraits, ses collages aériens et le huis clos judiciaire muet aux gros plans ultra-expressifs.

Des rencontres qui tentent, modestement, de jeter, par la musique, une lumière neuve sur l'œuvre.

Commande du musée du Louvre (2011).

## CINEMA

« L'humanité de l'art cinématographique, ce n'est pas un chant révolutionnaire ni la promesse d'un amour éternel et sans faille. Elle est plutôt dans le chaos des idées et des images, dans toute cette rumeur, ce flux qui vient de toutes parts et nous parcourt, mêlant le passé et le présent, le vrai et l'irréalisable, le drôle, le léger et le cruel. »

J.M.G. Le Clézio, *Ballaciner*



*Yeelen* de Souleymane Cissé © Les Films Cissé

### Lumière d'ailleurs

Nice, au début des années 40. Loin du chaos du monde, dans la pénombre calme du corridor de l'appartement de sa grand-mère, un petit enfant contemple, fasciné, les images colorées que diffuse la lumière pâle et tremblante de la lanterne magique, celle qui fait « surgir les rêves et les fantômes ». Quelques années plus tard, la guerre a pris fin. Le corridor voit maintenant danser d'autres images lumineuses, celles, plus « réalistes », de films qu'avec un projecteur Pathé Baby l'enfant qui a grandi projette sur un simple drap blanc : burlesques, documentaires, dessins animés, apportés par Gaby, une cousine de sa grand-mère, qui a travaillé chez Pathé.

« C'est là, au cours de ces projections, que j'ai éprouvé pour la première fois l'émotion esthétique » confie J.M.G. Le Clézio. Ce qu'il découvre alors c'est « cette ouverture au monde qu'est le cinéma », « ce flux qui vient de toutes parts et nous parcourt, mêlant le passé et le présent, le vrai et l'irréalisable, le drôle, le léger et le cruel ». Bientôt, les projections se transforment en véritables programmes, auxquels il convie ses camarades par le biais d'affiches qu'il réalise lui-même. Puis vient le temps de l'adolescence et celui du spectacle collectif, qu'il affectionne deux ou trois fois par jour dans les salles obscures de sa ville, Nice.

Si le cinéphile devient écrivain, préférant finalement aux images la plus grande liberté qu'offrent les mots, il ne cessera de cultiver sa passion et finira par y consacrer un ouvrage, une ballade en hommage à la « machine à rêves », *Ballaciner*, paru en 2007. Il y évoque sa fascination pour le « théâtre d'ombres » et pour son premier héros, Harold Lloyd, ainsi que ses rencontres avec Dreyer, Ozu, Vigo, Pasolini, Bergman, Antonioni ou encore avec le cinéma japonais, indien, africain, iranien, coréen, toute cette humanité qui le bouleverse.

Le cinéma, tel que l'aime J.M.G. Le Clézio, est « chaos des idées et des images », incantation, rumeur du monde, comme en témoigne cette Carte blanche.

## Auditorium et salle audiovisuelle du musée du Louvre



Dersou Ouzala d'Akira Kurosawa © Arkeion Films



Le Salon de Muique de Satyajit Ray © Films Sans Frontières

### Carte blanche à J.M.G. Le Clézio

Samedi 5 novembre à 14h30  
Présentation par J.M.G. Le Clézio

**Dersou Ouzala** d'Akira Kurosawa

Japon, URSS, 1975, 141 min, coul., vostf  
Le cartographe russe Vladimir Arseniev rencontre en Sibérie le chasseur Dersou Ouzala, avec lequel il se lie d'amitié.

à 18h

**Le Salon de musique** de Satyajit Ray

Inde, 1958, 100 min, nb, vostf  
Un aristocrate indien songe à sa grandeur passée et au temps où il partageait avec son fils unique une passion immodérée pour la musique et pour la danse.

Dimanche 6 novembre à 15h

**Yeelen (La Lumière)** de Souleymane Cissé

Mali, Burkina Faso, France, 1987, 105 min, coul., vostf  
Alors qu'il va recevoir le *komo*, le savoir destiné à lui assurer la maîtrise des forces qui l'entourent, Nianankoro est éloigné par sa mère pour le protéger de son père qui supporte mal de voir son fils devenir son égal. Le voyage initiatique va permettre au jeune Bambara d'acquérir peu à peu les éléments de la connaissance ultime lui permettant d'affronter son père.

**Projection suivie d'une rencontre entre Souleymane Cissé et J.M.G. Le Clézio, animée par Antoine de Gaudemar.**

à 19h

**Cœur de feu (Feuerherz)** de Luigi Falorni

All, Autr, 2008, 92 min., coul., vostf, d'après le roman autobiographique de Senait G. Mehari.  
En Érythrée, au début des années 1980, Awet, placée dans un orphelinat, est récupérée par son père qui la confie à un groupe de l'armée érythréenne de libération. Elle devient une enfant-soldat.

Dimanche 20 novembre à 18h30

**Zoot Suit** de Luis Valdez

E.-U., 1981, 103 min, coul., vostf  
En 1942, à Los Angeles, de jeunes Chicanos luttent contre le racisme et l'injustice dont ils sont victimes.

**Projection suivie d'un échange avec J.M.G. Le Clézio.**

### Salle audiovisuelle

En novembre et décembre

#### *Memoria*

**Les films Pathé-Baby de J.M.G. Le Clézio**

Lundi, jeudi, samedi et dimanche de 10h à 13h

Mercredi et vendredi de 13h à 21h

J.M.G. Le Clézio découvrit le cinéma, enfant, en projetant des films Pathé Baby donnés par une amie de sa grand-mère sur un drap blanc. Ces films - burlesques, documentaires ou dessins animés - qu'il a miraculeusement conservés, sont projetés dans la salle audiovisuelle du musée.

## Auditorium du musée du Louvre

### Documentaires

Mercredi et vendredi de 10h à 13h  
Lundi, jeudi, samedi et dimanche de 13h à 17h

*Jean Marie Gustave Le Clézio entre les mondes* de François Cailleux et Antoine de Gaudemar, série « Empreinte », 2008, 52 min, coul.

*Jean Grosjean* de Jacques Renard, série « Les Hommes-Livres », 1988, 53 min, coul.

*L'Intemporel. Le dernier voyage: Saint-Soleil en Haïti* de Jean-Marie Drot, série « Journal de voyage avec André Malraux », 1996, 55 min, coul.

### JEUNE PUBLIC

#### Viens lire au Louvre : « Lire le monde »

Lundi 7 novembre à 14h30

Dans le cadre du projet « Viens lire au Louvre », mené depuis six ans en partenariat avec le rectorat de Paris et des établissements scolaires relevant de l'éducation prioritaire, des comédiens de l'association « Les Livreurs » lisent sur scène des textes littéraires. La mise en son et en espace, les partis pris d'interprétation nous font entendre autrement des auteurs que l'on croyait connaître ou que l'on n'aurait pas forcément osé donner à lire à de jeunes lecteurs. Le thème commun aux quatre lectures de cette saison, « Lire le monde », est un clin d'œil à la proposition de J.M.G. Le Clézio, invité du Louvre à l'automne, « Les musées sont des mondes ».

#### Public scolaire, du CM1 à la 5<sup>e</sup>

*Balaabilou* de J.M.G. Le Clézio. Nouvelle extraite de *Désert*, Editions Gallimard

Cette première lecture permettra aux élèves d'entendre le texte intégral de ce récit, dans lequel la magie du conte, de l'histoire racontée au coin du feu se mêle à la poésie des instants précieux où, tels des enfants, nous redécouvrons la simple beauté d'un reflet sur la mer, d'un feu qui crépite, d'une étoile qui apparaît... Le monde tel que nous oubliions parfois de le regarder !

Proposée par Adélaïde Bon, Hélène Francisci et Ariane Dyonisosopoulos des Livreurs en présence de J.M.G. Le Clézio, cette lecture sera suivie d'un échange avec l'auteur.

#### A la rencontre de Rita Mestokosh...

Du 14 au 18 novembre 2011

Souhaitant aller à la rencontre des élèves qui travailleront sur le thème « Lire le monde », J.M.G. Le Clézio a invité la poétesse innue Rita Mestokosh à se joindre à lui. Première « autochtone » du Québec à écrire en innu et français, elle sera présente à Paris durant une semaine au mois de novembre pour rencontrer et échanger avec élèves et enseignants. Une opportunité inédite pour eux de découvrir un art et un regard singuliers sur le monde, à la fois différents et proches de leurs interrogations quotidiennes.

Avec Soutien de la Délégation Générale du Québec à Paris.



Rita Mestokosh © Beijboom Books

## Dans les salles du musée du Louvre et à l'auditorium

### RUMEURS DU LOUVRE / RUMEURS DU MONDE

Samedi 10 décembre 2011 à partir de 20h

**Soirée de clôture : Une nuit au Louvre avec des spectacles, lectures, projections, concerts, parcours sonores...**

Le temps d'une soirée exceptionnelle, le musée du Louvre brise les frontières des rêves en faisant résonner ses galeries et ses collections. L'élément déclencheur de cette métamorphose spectaculaire est l'œuvre de J.M.G. Le Clézio, architecture mystérieuse de signes, de bruits, de mouvements, de musiques. Une dizaine d'équipes artistiques issues d'horizons très variés orchestrent cette rencontre exceptionnelle entre le Louvre et l'univers romanesque de l'auteur de *Désert, L'Africain, Terra Amata...*

Des conteurs aïnous, une artiste de l'île de Pentecôte, un acteur de la Comédie-Française, de jeunes comédiens de Strasbourg, des musiciens de Bruxelles, de la Réunion, d'Angleterre, d'Aix-la-Chapelle, de Belleville, un plasticien-chorégraphe de Chicago, un metteur en scène originaire des Alpes, un duo de dessinateurs dont l'un est né à Bagdad, l'autre à Sainte-Adresse, un écrivain nomade : autant de trajectoires qui s'entremèlent dans les salles du Louvre pour un grand dépaysement artistique.

A 20H, 21H et 22H

#### PARCOURS A TRAVERS LES SALLES DU MUSÉE

Les spectacles sont proposés sous forme de déambulation dans le musée. Au choix, quatre parcours constitués chacun de quatre propositions artistiques différentes (programmes sous réserve). Le parcours 3 est accessible aux handicapés et aux personnes à mobilité réduite.

#### Parcours 1

**Georges Lavaudant** Spectacle avec les comédiens de l'Ecole du Théâtre National de Strasbourg [Louvre médiéval]

C'est au Mexique qu'a eu lieu la première collaboration artistique entre J.M.G. Le Clézio et Georges Lavaudant. Le metteur en scène explore avec les élèves du TNS les grands textes que l'auteur de *Diego et Frida* a consacrés à la civilisation mexicaine et aux écritures mythologiques indiennes.

**Charlotte Wè Matansué** Contes de l'île de Pentecôte [Rotonde de Mars]

J.M.G. Le Clézio décrit dans *Raga. Approche du continent invisible* l'importance du tressage des nattes pour les femmes de l'île de Pentecôte ; cet art ancestral aux motifs subtils est « leur identité, leur fierté et leur monnaie d'échange ». Héroïne du livre, Charlotte Wè Matansué met en récit son quotidien et exalte les richesses de la culture du Vanuatu.

« Les musées sont des chambres de chants. Tantôt murmure, tantôt orchestre éclatant. Toujours rythmée, la parole parle dans toutes les langues, elle se mêle et se reconstruit à chaque génération. Les champs de bataille sont les lieux les plus silencieux de l'Histoire. Mais les œuvres sont bavardes, elles sont vivantes. Elles ne sont pas différentes de notre vie quotidienne, elles ressemblent aux affiches et aux couloirs du métro, à la place publique, aux alcôves. Elles disent les jours qui se succèdent, les tâches de la vie, les petites douleurs et les menus plaisirs, le bourgeonnement des naissances, la destinée, les dérisoires trahisons. »

J.M.G. Le Clézio

## Dans les salles du musée du Louvre

### Jacques Coursil Hommage musical à Edouard Glissant [Vénus de Milo]

Musicien voyageur, le trompettiste Jacques Coursil a fait ses classes à New York à l'époque des « glorious sixties » et de l'avènement du free jazz. Accompagné d'Alan Silva à la contrebasse, il distille une musique ample et lumineuse qui part à la rencontre des vers d'Edouard Glissant, grand poète et penseur de la « créolisation ».

### Chris Watson Paysage sonore 1 [Caryatides]

Magnétophone en bandoulière et micro haute-précision en main, Chris Watson arpente le monde pour enregistrer les rumeurs de la nature. Dans la salle des Caryatides, l'installation sonore de l'artiste britannique recompose les mille et uns frémissements quasi-musicaux qui parcourent une oasis au milieu du désert.

### Parcours 2



Dupuy-Berberian

### Dupuy & Berberian Performance ciné-graphique [Cour Khorsabad]

Une caméra, une planche à dessin, un vidéoprojecteur, les œuvres du Louvre et les écrits de J.M.G. Le Clézio : voici en quelques mots la matière première que va transformer sous vos yeux ébahis le duo de dessinateur Philippe Dupuy et Charles Berberian. Connus pour leurs bandes dessinées enjouées qui posent un regard doux-amé sur l'air du temps, ils livreront une performance où les crayons deviennent des outils pour redessiner le monde.

### Clément Hervieu-Léger (de la Comédie-Française) Lecture [Galerie de Scipion]

« Elle était là, partout, devant lui, immense, gonflée comme la pente d'une montagne, brillant de sa couleur bleue, profonde, toute proche, avec ses vagues hautes qui avançaient vers lui. » Rien de mieux que l'intimité d'une voix comme celle de Clément Hervieu-Léger pour se laisser submerger par la quête d'absolu de *Celui qui n'avait jamais vu la mer* de J.M.G. Le Clézio.



Chris Watson

### Chris Watson Paysage sonore 2 [Appartements Napoléon III]

Si son nom est associé à Cabaret Voltaire, groupe précurseur de musique électronique qu'il avait fondé dans les années 1970, Chris Watson est aujourd'hui un chasseur de sons tout terrain. Grâce à la magie des perceptions auditives, ses « paysages sonores » nous téléportent aux quatre coins de la planète. En pénétrant dans les appartements Napoléon III, partez à la découverte de la jungle de Madagascar sous une pluie tropicale.

### Nick Cave Performance de l'artiste afro-américain avec ses costumes sonores [Galerie Daru]

Plasticien et chorégraphe américain, Nick Cave confectionne des vêtements-sculptures en détournant des matériaux issus du quotidien avec des techniques dignes de la haute couture. Portés par des danseurs, ses costumes extravagants deviennent sonores et produisent une expérience sensorielle au croisement du carnaval, de la cérémonie rituelle et de la transe en technicolor. Cette performance exceptionnelle au Louvre est la première qu'il donne en France.<sup>12</sup>

## Dans les salles du musée du Louvre

### Parcours 3

**Danyèl Waro** Concert déambulatoire  
[Grande Galerie]

Défenseur emblématique de la culture réunionnaise, les engagements politiques de Danyèl Waro s'expriment avant tout dans sa musique qui offre une deuxième vie au maloya, un rythme hérité de l'esclavage qui est considérée comme le blues de La Réunion. Danyèl Waro, « l'insoumis », fait partie des artistes auxquels J.M.G. Le Clézio a dédié son prix Nobel de Littérature.

**J.M.G. Le Clézio** Lecture de poèmes de Jean Grosjean  
[Salle Rosa]

« Aucun homme ne donne un tel accord entre ce qu'il est et ce qu'il écrit, aucun homme ne sait regarder le monde aujourd'hui avec un tel détachement et pourtant un tel empoignement amoureux » a écrit J.M.G. Le Clézio dans l'hommage qu'il a rendu au poète Jean Grosjean (*La NRF*, 1992). Au Louvre, J.M.G. Le Clézio fera entendre des poèmes de son ami défunt avec lequel il avait fondé la collection « L'aube des peuples » chez Gallimard en 1990.

**Georges Lavavant** Spectacle avec les comédiens de l'Ecole du Théâtre National de Strasbourg [Salle des Etats]

Longtemps absente de l'œuvre romanesque de J.M.G. Le Clézio, la figure du père imprègne l'écriture de *L'Africain*. Le metteur en scène Georges Lavavant ciselle quelques extraits de ce récit auto-biographique qui se déploie comme le voyage initiatique qui a fait de J.M.G. Le Clézio, dès l'enfance, un écrivain.

**Inouïe** Concert sous casques  
[Salon Denon]

Accompagné de trois musiciens, le compositeur électroacoustique Thierry Balasse propose une immersion sonore et poétique dans la langue de J.M.G. Le Clézio à partir de son poème en prose *Vers les Icebergs*, inspiré par son admiration pour Henri Michaux. Ce dispositif de « concert sous casques » permet de véritables aventures perceptives : spatialisation mentale des sons, reliefs inattendus dans le grain des voix et vertiges musicaux.



Georges Lavavant



Chris Watson

Les paysages sonores 2 (dans la salle Napoléon III) de Chris Watson seront diffusés du 4 novembre au 9 décembre tous les mercredis et vendredis de 18h à 21h45.

Avec la participation de l'Ina-GRM.

### Parcours 4

**Chris Watson** Paysages sonores 3  
[salle des Bronzes]

Dans les cieux azurs peints par Cy Twombly au plafond de la salle des Bronzes, l'artiste sonore Chris Watson orchestre des envols de grues cendrées. Son dispositif de multidiffusion sonore restitue la symphonie de ces oiseaux habitués des migrations au long cours.

**Georges Lavavant** Spectacle avec les comédiens de l'Ecole du Théâtre National de Strasbourg [Galerie d'Apollon]

« Je vais vous dire, pendant qu'il est encore temps... Vivez chaque seconde, ne perdez rien de tout ça. (...) Jamais vous ne recommanderez ça... Faites tout... Ne perdez pas une minute, pas une seconde, dépêchez-vous, réveillez-vous... ». (*Terra Ammata*) Avec les élèves du TNS, Georges Lavavant donne corps à l'engagement humaniste et écologiste de J.M.G. Le Clézio.

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## Dans les salles du musée du Louvre et à l'auditorium



Nick Cave

**Solistes de l'ensemble Ictus** Œuvres de John Cage et Morton Feldman [Salon Carré]

Hors des sentiers battus et au croisement des cultures, l'énergie des musiciens d'Ictus est au service de la musique contemporaine et des « classiques » du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ce programme fait se répondre deux œuvres exotiquement percussives : *The King of Denmark* de Morton Feldman (pièce pour galets, pierres et morceaux de bois, tout au bord du silence) et *Music for Marcel Duchamp* de John Cage (évocation balinaise pour piano préparé).

**Yuuki Koji & Shoji Fukumoto** Contes aïnus [Cour Marly]

Minorité aborigène du nord du Japon (Hokkaido), les Aïnous ont depuis le 11<sup>e</sup> siècle été contraints d'adopter le mode de vie nippon tout en luttant pour que leur culture échappe à l'oubli. C'est à J.M.G. Le Clézio et sa collection « L'aube des peuples » que l'on doit de pouvoir lire aujourd'hui en français les chants du peuple aïnou. Deux éminents représentants de cette tradition orale ancestrale viennent nous faire découvrir leur art.

**DE 19H30 À 22H - SOUS LA PYRAMIDE DU LOUVRE**

**Clédat & Petitpierre** Sculpture à activer [Cour Marly]

Dans un aller-retour permanent entre sculpture et spectacle vivant, les deux artistes Yvan Clédat et Coco Petitpierre brouillent les frontières entre homme, animal, cosmos... autour d'un morceau d'iceberg sacré. Si leur œuvre, *Les aubes sont navrantes*, emprunte son titre à un vers de Rimbaud, elle provoque également un contrepoint fantasmagorique à l'écriture de J.M.G. Le Clézio.

**À partir de 22 h – A L'AUDITORIUM DU LOUVRE**

**Transe World Express**

Avec Joseph Ghosn aux platines ; concert de Robert Hampson.

Méditation, danse, électricité : la transe est multiple, prend selon les époques et les lieux, des directions et des sens différents, parfois opposés, parfois complémentaires. En 3h30, le programme Transe World Express organisera un tour d'horizon en images et en musiques de tous les mondes de la transe, de toutes les facettes sonores du genre. Extraits de films et mix de disques se succéderont ainsi pour évoquer la multiplicité des propositions liées à la transe, pouvant provenir tout autant de musiques du désert que de bruits urbains, d'images saisies en Afrique ou en Asie que de films expérimentaux post modernes.

Filmée par Maya Deren ou chorégraphiée par Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, captée dans un village haïtien ou sur une scène de concert, provenant de la guitare de Jimi Hendrix, du saxophone de Pharoah Sanders, des orgues de Steve Reich, des flutes de Joujouka ou des boucles de Kraftwerk, la transe se dévoile toujours comme l'histoire d'un abandon de soi, un dérèglement des sens qui s'opère comme pour mieux transcender le temps, l'espace, les conventions.

Trans World Express se conclura par un concert du légendaire Robert Hampson, musicien Anglais qui avait dans les années 1980 pratiqué le rock répétitif avec son groupe Loop avant de se consacrer dans les années 1990 et 2000 à une musique plus atmosphérique, mais extrêmement happante avec sa formation Main. Pour le Louvre, il devrait spécialement composer une pièce cyclique, mêlant guitare et électro-nique, servant d'acmé hypnotique à une soirée qui s'annonce riche en tournolements insensés, en rituels hypnotiques. 14



Exposition

**du 5 novembre 2011  
au 6 février 2012**

Aile Sully, 1er étage, salle de la Chapelle

*Le musée monde*  
**Le Louvre invite J.M.G. Le Clézio**

## Préface

par Henri Loyrette  
Président-directeur du musée du Louvre

Le très beau texte que J.M.G. Le Clézio a écrit à l'invitation du Louvre est une nouvelle occasion pour un musée de s'interroger sur son histoire et sur son rôle. « Les musées sont des mondes », en effet. Mondes à part entière, reflet ou écho du ou des mondes, les pluriels sont importants. En 2002, une vingtaine de grands musées, dont le Louvre, le British Museum, le Metropolitan Museum de New York et l'Ermitage de Saint-Pétersbourg, ont signé une « déclaration sur l'importance et les valeurs des musées universels » qui lie ces établissements les uns aux autres, nouvelle étape dans la construction de ce pluriel réclamé par J.M.G. Le Clézio. Ambition universaliste commune, à chacun – avec sa personnalité – de dépasser les clivages de chapelle et les conflits d'intérêt. À notre époque de globalisation, il s'agit de rappeler que le musée, fondé philosophiquement et éthiquement sur les notions d'art et de collection, joue un rôle pédagogique et démocratique pour la compréhension réciproque des peuples et leur rapprochement. Mettant en évidence les singularités des époques et des géographies, le musée donne à celles-ci un statut qui assume les différences et, bien souvent, les sublimes. L'on sait qu'à l'origine le Louvre fut un musée des Beaux-Arts influencé par les philosophies universalistes des Lumières, témoignant de la réunion des arts et des sciences. Le pluriel des musées rejoint ainsi le pluriel des mondes.

Pour J.M.G. Le Clézio, le monde est mondes, comme il l'a rappelé justement dans son discours de réception pour le prix Nobel le 9 octobre 2008. Si des voix ont moins d'écho que d'autres sur la planète Terre, elles existent pourtant, témoignages de la pluralité des vies et de la singularité des êtres. En invitant la peinture haïtienne, désormais bien connue mais qui n'avait jamais franchi les portes d'un grand musée, J.M.G. Le Clézio l'inscrit dans une histoire qui remonte aux liens de cette île avec la Révolution française. En invitant un peintre mexicain d'ex-voto, à se confronter à des œuvres précolombiennes, des masques indiens, mais aussi à des traditions muralistes, il suggère que les barrières plus ou moins visibles entre les disciplines artistiques n'ont pas de fondement esthétique. Même propos, quand il met face à face des têtes Ifé venues du Nigeria et des statues du II<sup>e</sup> siècle gréco-romain, ou quand une femme du Vanuatu présente ses nattes tissées « avec les récits de sa propre vie », au milieu de la rotonde de Mars du musée. Les *lowriders*, ces Chevrolet ou Buick des années 60 dont les Chicano du sud des États-Unis ont fait des œuvres décorées, métamorphosées, sortes de chapelles réincarnées et multicolores, participent de la même volonté d'abolir les échelles de valeur. J.M.G. Le Clézio bouscule les genres, les époques et les lieux d'origine. En même temps, il permet au Louvre de renouer avec un moment de sa propre histoire, quand on trouvait dans ses murs les collections américaines, asiatiques, quand il était le musée de tous les peuples. En 1825, le musée de la Marine avait ouvert au Louvre avec un fonds de sa collection, tandis qu'un musée « mexicain » était inauguré en 1850 dans une aile de la cour Carrée ; on a voulu ensuite que certaines collections aient leur propre musée. Comme l'a écrit J.M.G. Le Clézio, « un musée doit avoir l'ambition d'être universel, ou il ne sera pas ». Dans *Haï*, livre publié en 1971 dans la collection « Les sentiers de la création » chez Skira, livre très violent non seulement contre les musées mais contre l'art contemporain occidental, il dit : « Partir, nous voulons partir. Mais pour où ? Tous les chemins se ressemblent, tous sont des retours sur soi-même. » Quarante ans plus tard, J.M.G. Le Clézio revient au Louvre et choisit d'y montrer un tableau de Louis Brea, peintre né à Nice en 1450 dont il a beaucoup vu les toiles dans son enfance. Un retour sur soi-même, en quelque sorte.

## *Les Musées sont des mondes*

par J. M. G. Le Clézio

Les musées sont des mondes,

n'en doutons pas. Nés du hasard ou, si le mot effraie, forgés comme nous-mêmes dans la fantaisie. Objets flottants, réunis par la vague et poussés par le flux sur le rivage, au gré des conquêtes, des pillages, des legs et des échanges. Rien ne leur est plus étranger que la chronologie et l'ordre. C'est la rencontre sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie... De leur peu de logique, de leur fugacité, ils acquièrent une vie nouvelle, une véracité, une fertilité. Les mondes dont ils proviennent, où sont-ils ? Oubliés, effacés, revenus à la poussière, avec les mains, les yeux, les visages qui les ont créés. La vie est autre, autrement. La vie, la ville, les bruits, les odeurs, le galop d'un cheval, le fer des roues sur le pavé, le soleil sur la joue duveteuse d'une fille, le rire des enfants, la plainte des vieillards, les clamours d'une foule en colère, la souffrance des captifs, le crime des guerres, l'agonie des esclaves sous le joug, le triomphe des puissants, l'ivresse des autels, le sang et l'encens, la fumée des sacrifices. Parfois ces objets les portent encore comme un frisson. Parfois l'ombre de la vie comme un lichen. Mais eux aussi s'effaceront. A Bagdad, au milieu des bombes, les textes sacrés, les sceaux achéménides, emportés en butin. À Beyrouth, à Tyr dans l'amphithéâtre romain où ont campé les déportés de Palestine. À Pékin, au palais d'Été, les fantômes des trésors pillés par les troupes coloniales. Dans la nuit africaine, les masques rituels mis dans des sacs et emmenés en exil. À Tzintzuntzan au Mexique, les rondaches d'or et les demi-lunes d'argent fondues en barres par Nuño de Guzmán. Objets arrachés aux décombres, aux tombeaux, à la terre et au sable, aux profondeurs de la mer. Il n'y a rien qui ne retourne au silence.

Ces objets, que disent-ils du monde ? Nos enfants appartiennent au monde de demain que nous ne rencontrerons jamais, même dans nos rêves. Nos ancêtres appartiennent au monde passé que nous ne revivrons jamais, même dans notre désir. Nous ne vivrons jamais une journée de la Rome antique, de Babylone, de la Lorraine au temps de Georges de La Tour. Nous n'entrerons jamais dans la campagne de Greuze, d'Hubert Robert, dans les salons de Holbein. Le miroitement de l'Histoire, ces ombres qui passent, cette fumée du savoir, ici nous l'abandonnons entre ces murs, et les objets sont des écueils dans un océan inconnu. Ils sont lointains, mystérieux, ils nous regardent mieux que nous ne les regardons. (...)

Nécessité plutôt que choix. Dans la pratique de la guerre, les hommes ont excellé. Les nations méditerranéennes, patriarciales, ont inventé les thèmes qui illustraient leur nationalisme (aux États-Unis on parlerait de chauvinisme mâle). Les chants des aèdes sont devenus des hymnes, les cités ont dressé leurs murs pour se protéger de l'étranger, et les dieux ont été de grands guerriers (de grands séducteurs aussi mais n'est-ce pas la même chose ?). Ils inventèrent la matérialité de la culture, et nous avons hérité de cette certitude. Puisque l'homme est assez éphémère – jusqu'à des temps récents, son espérance de vie ressemblait à celle du cheval –, il a besoin de formes qui lui survivent. De tombeaux surtout, comme en Égypte, et aussi de statues, de stèles et de temples. Les peuples dont on a retenu l'histoire sont ceux qui ont laissé des traces visibles. Les habitants de Tiwi, de l'Afrique équatoriale ou de la Sibérie ne sont pas moins anciens que les Phéniciens, les Grecs ou les Chinois. Leur langage est également raffiné, capable d'abstraction, inventif, évolutif. Mais leurs réalisations sont éphémères, et nous préférons le solide. Les soufis du Sahara ne construisaient pas de mosquées ; un rocher, une oasis d'ombre, un fleuve à sec leur suffisaient pour évoquer l'absolu, pour rendre gloire à Dieu. Leur parole vit encore, leur regard est toujours aussi nécessaire. Mais pour certains plus rassurante est une cathédrale.

C'est donc à un pas de côté que je voudrais vous inviter. (...)

Il n'y a pas d'âge nous disent les musées.

Nous vivons dans le hasard des rencontres. Hier est aujourd'hui, demain est juste de l'autre côté de la connaissance.

Ces objets sortis de leur gangue, mis en lumière – les scènes figées dans leur sens premier, héros arrêtés, batailles, amours, incidents, mascarades, allégories trop évidentes ou symbolique d'un temps révolu, portraits impénétrables –, ils existent pour nous comme un merveilleux miracle. Il y a en deçà, ailleurs, tous ceux que la gloire oublie, ouvriers, artisans, polisseurs, encadreurs, et les modèles, femmes dans le triomphe de la jeunesse, ou paysanne usée par les travaux, corps alourdis par la maternité, toute cette foule de l'ombre que nous ne rencontrerons jamais.

Les leçons de l'Histoire sont vaines, le monde est un animal vivant et dangereux, généreux ou rapace, que seul l'art contrôle parfois, par la critique du regard. Mais ce regard n'est pas unique, il varie avec les époques, avec les lieux.

Au centre d'un petit royaume de l'ouest du Nigeria actuel, à Ifé, en pays yorouba, des fouilles récentes mirent au jour une série de masques, en terre cuite ou en bronze, qui témoignent d'un réalisme exceptionnel en Afrique. À tel point que l'archéologue allemand Leo Frobenius, qui participa à ces recherches au début du vingtième siècle, pensa y voir la preuve tangible d'une présence grecque en Afrique de l'Ouest. Plus tard, l'Anglais W. D. Jeffreys, administrateur colonial dans la même région, converti à l'anthropologie, imagina, à partir de cet art et des inscriptions rituelles des Ibos, un lien historique entre l'Afrique noire et le dernier royaume pharaonique de Méroé dans la haute Égypte. Les apparentements, on le sait, sont toujours dangereux. Mais ce qui importe, c'est l'existence, au même moment, dans des lieux proches, de techniques et de concepts totalement différents, mettant côté à côté le réalisme le plus accompli et l'expression de la magie et de l'imaginaire. L'Occident a inventé l'histoire de l'art comme une ligne droite qui irait du symbolisme primitif à l'idéal naturaliste des classiques. Ainsi fut inventée l'idée de la Renaissance, comme si certaines civilisations, plongées dans la barbarie du Moyen Âge, sortaient de la nuit pour retrouver la vérité antique. C'était justifier la hiérarchie des cultures, idée malsaine et dangereuse qui justifia la colonisation et affirma la suprématie d'une culture sur toutes les autres. Nous savons aujourd'hui ce qu'il en coûte de céder à cette illusion. L'apparente logique des expressions (dans l'art, mais aussi dans la pensée rituelle ou la religion) est démentie à chaque instant, et ce doit être là le rôle des musées. Claude Lévi-Strauss, dans la somme qu'il consacre à l'imaginaire amérindien, du nord au sud du Continent, concluait – en dépit de l'apparente cohésion des mythes et des créations artistiques – par un double scepticisme, d'une part quant au caractère accidentel de la culture, de l'autre à la limite que la nature impose à l'imagination des hommes.

En fin de compte, la grande question que posent les musées reste sans réponse. L'art existe, on n'en peut douter. Mais accompagne-t-il nécessairement l'échelle des valeurs de la société, l'élaboration des langages, ou le développement technique ? Le peuple d'Ifé n'apporte pas davantage de réponse : la technique du bronze y est loin d'être parfaite, la société y pratique l'esclavage et le sacrifice humain, et pourtant l'art des masques funéraires y a été porté au plus haut. Y a-t-il une relation de causalité entre l'art et la société qui le porte, y a-t-il une finalité ? Référence il y a, et surtout interférences, rencontres, métissages, mélanges. Les grands thèmes de l'existence humaine, la naissance, l'amour et la mort sont toujours présents, et aussi la permanence dans l'au-delà, ce que saint Augustin appelle la « révolution des âmes ». Lorsque cela n'apparaît pas dans la reproduction du réel, cela est révélé autrement, dans les fibres des tapis nuptiaux des femmes de Pentecôte, par exemple, dans les peintures rituelles des Indiens Navaho, dans les peintures sur écorces des Haïdas de la côte ouest du Canada, ou encore dans la musique du *oud*, au Soudan, en Égypte, au Maroc.

Tout se tient, forme la totalité de l'humain sur terre, un bref instant dans un ensemble incommensurable, renouvelé à chaque naissance. Chaque parcelle de cet ensemble a son importance. Ici l'on parle d'art, là on parle d'artisanat.

Mais où est la frontière ? L'on parle d'hier et d'aujourd'hui comme si cela était différent, mais c'est le même moment sur la route du temps, du néant au néant, comme cet oiseau de nuit qui entre par une fenêtre, ébloui, et retourne à la nuit, que cite Marguerite Yourcenar. Cet instant que nous vivons est précieux. C'est l'instant du jour, la main qui noue les fils, qui façonne la glaise, l'étincelle du regard, la voix qui chante un chant, qui conte un conte. Cet instant que nous vivons avec toute la vie sur la terre, avec les animaux et les pierres, et dont nous traduisons parfois la voix, comme la poétesse innoue Rita Mestokosh. L'art est la peau de notre monde, vivante et frissonnante, il se fait parfois cuirasse pour résister et conquérir le droit à l'existence. L'art résonne de rythmes et de mélodies, il est inspiré par l'amour, par la révolte, par la recherche du bonheur. Le musée est un monde, ouvert, changeant, jamais achevé. Et comme le chef Vincent Boulékone, dans sa profonde et inquiète reconnaissance du réel, faisons en sorte que le monde soit un musée.

Écrit à Albuquerque, Nouveau-Mexique, novembre 2010

## ***Le musée monde***

par Marie-Laure Bernadac

« Les musées sont des mondes », tel est le thème choisi par J.M.G. Le Clézio, grand invité du Louvre en novembre 2011. Ils sont les gardiens de la mémoire des peuples et des histoires disparues, des objets témoins de la vie quotidienne du passé, de la naissance des signes et de l'écriture, des traces de la main des artistes anonymes ou célèbres qui les ont façonnés. « Objets flottants, réunis par la vague et poussés par le flux sur le rivage, au gré des conquêtes, des pillages, des legs et des échanges [...] Objets arrachés aux décombres, aux tombeaux, à la terre, au sable, aux profondeurs de la mer. » Que nous disent-ils du monde ? De la vie, et du présent ? Cette question, qui est au cœur de la pensée de l'écrivain, nous incite à regarder autrement les œuvres du musée du Louvre. À les regarder à travers le prisme de l'univers de cet écrivain voyageur, héritier des îles, de l'Afrique et du Mexique, qui résume son credo esthétique en 1987 dans un essai intitulé *Haï* « Je suis un Indien », écrit-il, donc proche de la sensibilité des minorités, des peuples opprimés, de leur culture ancestrale, populaire, artisanale et de leur vision de l'art : « L'art pour guérir, pour sauver les hommes, pour restituer aux forces terrestres et cosmiques les seules formes émouvantes, les seules silhouettes qui soient réellement compréhensibles : celles de l'homme » ; « Art sans relâche, qui travaille, découpe, incise, écrit autour de lui les formes nécessaires en vue de l'accomplissement de la fête magique ».

Cette conception de l'art, qui n'est pas sans évoquer de façon prémonitoire l'exposition « Les Magiciens de la Terre », (Paris, Centre Georges-Pompidou, 1989), s'affirme de plus en plus dans le paysage artistique contemporain avec la mondialisation et l'effacement des limites entre art et anthropologie, entre art mineur et art majeur ; elle oblige le musée du Louvre à un questionnement sur la nature et l'origine de ses collections, et à considérer, à partir de points de vue multiples la notion d'œuvre d'art. « Haine de la peinture, écrit J.M.G. Le Clézio, ces effigies glacées sans relief, sans mouvement sans odeur, sans chaleur, ces monceaux de cadavres de femmes nues, de fruits et de fleurs, de visage, de paysages, à quoi servent-ils ? Que veulent-ils ? Ils ne sont là que pour témoigner de l'impuissance de l'individu, de son désir de dominer, et de sa peur de la mort. » Violent réquisitoire contre notre vision occidentale des Beaux-Arts, tempérée aujourd'hui par l'écrivain, qui choisit dans le département des Peintures la *Piétà* de Louis Brea ou les ruines d'Hubert Robert, et qui fait écho à d'autres voix qui se sont fait entendre depuis pour rétablir un juste dialogue des cultures, et pour consacrer, sur le même pied d'égalité, tant au Louvre qu'au Quai Branly, les chefs-d'œuvre de l'humanité.

Pour J.M.G. Le Clézio, comme pour André Malraux, « en art, il n'y a pas de hiérarchie », et les nattes tressées par les femmes du Vanuatu, la statuaire africaine, les ex-voto mexicains, les tableaux haïtiens sont à mettre sur le même plan que nos reliques et chefs-d'œuvre de l'art occidental.

Ce « pas de côté » que Le Clézio nous propose par rapport au périmètre patrimonial du musée du Louvre se justifie par sa cartographie littéraire et biographique, ses engagements - il est le fondateur de la collection « L'aube des peuples » - et sa sensibilisé personnelle.

Afin de répondre à cette thématique « altermondialiste » et de traduire en œuvres son parcours singulier, l'exposition a choisi de s'ancrer dans l'histoire ancienne du Louvre, qui fut en effet au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> le premier musée ethnographique jusqu'à la création en 1879 du musée du Trocadéro, et de présenter également en contrepoint des œuvres contemporaines, dépassant ainsi les frontières tant géographiques que temporelles. Elle est construite autour de quatre zones culturelles privilégiées et de quelques thèmes chers à l'écrivain : Haïti et la révolution, le Vaudou, l'Afrique, le Mexique et le Vanuatu qui nous racontent une autre histoire de l'art moins ethnocentrale.

Les objets du quai Branly, autrefois présentés au Louvre, dans le musée américain ou le musée ethnographique, reviennent donc dans leur lieu d'origine et dialoguent avec les statuettes anthropomorphes d'Orient, d'Egypte ou de Grèce. Les tableaux et dessins révolutionnaires évoquent la conquête de la liberté et l'abolition de l'esclavage. *Le Serment des Ancêtres* de Guillon-Lethière, tout juste rescapé du tremblement de terre à Haïti, illustre un moment clé de l'histoire de l'indépendance de la colonie française de Saint Domingue, et permet d'introduire la peinture haïtienne. « Haïti seul peuple de peintres », écrira André Malraux<sup>1</sup>, dans *l'Intemporel*. Malraux visionnaire qui prévoyait tout comme le découvreur André Breton, que la place d'Hector Hyppolite, de Sénèque Obin, de Prefette Duffaut, de Wilson Bigaud ou Louisiane Saint-Fleurant, serait un jour au Louvre. Haïti présent aussi par ses contemporains, Hervé Télémaque et Jean-Michel Basquiat.

La beauté classique d'une tête de déesse grecque voisine avec le réalisme magique d'une Tête Ifé du Nigeria. Et les artistes contemporains aussi divers que Bertrand Lavier, Pascale Marthine Tayou ou Camille Henrot, réinterprètent à leur manière, soit avec ironie, soit de façon critique et parodique, les modèles et les fonctions de la statuaire et des masques africains. Les ex-voto mexicains et la peinture populaire qui inspira Frida Kahlo, nous racontent la révolution mexicaine ou évoquent les dévotions et les rituels ; ils sont confrontés aux reliquaires et scènes religieuses du moyen-âge. L'identité mexicaine est évoquée également par les *Low Riders*, ces vieilles automobiles américaines, peintes et décorées amoureusement comme des cathédrales roulantes, par les Chicano de Los Angeles et par une artiste contemporaine, Betsabé Romero, qui se penche elle aussi sur cette esthétique du décor peint de la voiture, véhicule culturel identitaire des Amériques. Enfin, l'auteur de *Raga*, qui visita l'île de Pentecôte, a souhaité rendre compte du tissage des femmes et du rôle économique et symbolique des nattes. A la question qu'il pose à Vincent Boulékone, chef traditionnel de la nation Apma de l'île de Pentecôte : « Avez-vous construit un musée sur votre île ? », celui répond « Monsieur, pour nous c'est l'île toute entière qui est notre musée ». Espérons que cette plongée dans l'univers poétique de Le Clézio, au-delà de l'effet « cabinet de curiosités », réveille en nous la puissance de la création et réaffirme le lien primordial entre l'art et la vie.

<sup>1</sup> J. M. G. Le Clézio, *Haï*, Genève, Skira, coll. « Les sentiers de la création », 1971 ; réed. Flammarion, coll. « Champs », 1987.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

## Regard sur quelques œuvres

### Le serment des ancêtres

Guillaume Guillon Lethière, *Le serment des ancêtres*, 1822, huile sur toile, 334x227 cm, Port au Prince, Ministère de la Culture. © RMN / Gérard Blot

*Le Serment des ancêtres* fut peint en 1822 par Guillaume Guillon-Lethière (1760-1830), mulâtre né en Guadeloupe d'un père colon et d'une mère esclave. Il symbolise la rencontre historique entre le chef des mulâtres de Saint-Domingue, Alexandre Pétion, et le général noir Jean-Jacques Dessalines, lieutenant de Toussaint Louverture. Les deux officiers scellèrent en novembre 1802 une alliance pour chasser les troupes françaises. Ce "serment" solennel qui devait permettre l'indépendance d'Haïti à brève échéance intervint peu après le soulèvement général des Noirs de la colonie à l'annonce du rétablissement de l'esclavage décidé à Paris.

Ce tableau fut le seul de sa carrière où Guillon-Lethière évoqua ses origines et manifesta sa solidarité avec la jeune république noire d'Haïti, alors non encore reconnue en France. L'œuvre connut une curieuse destinée. Elle fut offerte à Haïti : transportée clandestinement par son fils, il arriva à Port-au-Prince en mars 1823.

Disparu depuis la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, il fut retrouvé dans la cathédrale de la capitale haïtienne en 1991, restauré à Paris au Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France en 1997 et présentée par le Louvre, avant de rentrer à Haïti en 1998.

C'est un tournant décisif dans la guerre qui opposait, depuis le début de 1802, le corps expéditionnaire envoyé par Bonaparte aux troupes « indigènes » formées de Noirs – anciens esclaves pour la plupart – et de « sang-mêlé » – qualifiés de « libres de couleur » à l'époque de l'esclavage.

*Le Serment des ancêtres*, don du peintre à la jeune République noire constitue, à n'en pas douter, un geste politique : Lethière, né sous le régime de l'esclavage et soulignant ses origines métisses, apportait son soutien à l'indépendance d'Haïti à un moment où la France officielle refusait encore ce geste, mais où de larges secteurs de l'opinion s'y ralliaient progressivement pour bientôt accepter l'offre qui avait été faite dès 1817 par Pétion, alors président d'Haïti, d'une indemnisation des colons en échange de la reconnaissance diplomatique du nouvel État. »

Fort heureusement transféré de la cathédrale de Port-au-Prince, où il avait été redécouvert, à la Présidence, *Le Serment des ancêtres* a pu ainsi échapper à une destruction complète, mais il a néanmoins considérablement souffert du tremblement de terre du 12 janvier 2010.

Sauvé des ruines par la Sécurité civile française, le tableau est actuellement restauré par le C2RMF en France et par la France, sur décision du ministre de la culture et de la communication, Monsieur Frédéric Mitterrand, avec l'accord des plus hautes autorités haïtiennes.

Il est aujourd'hui présenté en cours d'intervention, dans le cadre d'une opération qui a également comporté un volet de formation de restaurateurs haïtiens. Les déchirures ont été recollées fil à fil, le support textile a été consolidé et doublé par l'arrière, et la toile retendue sur un nouveau châssis. Après l'exposition *Les musées sont des mondes*, le tableau rejoindra les ateliers du C2RMF pour la restauration complète et illusionniste de la couche picturale, avant de regagner Port-au-Prince.

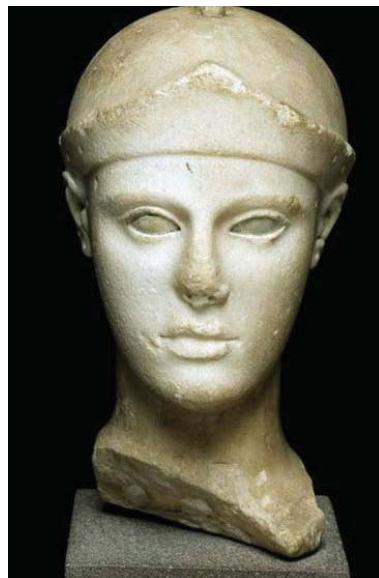
Marcel Dorigny

Coordination scientifique : Pierre Curie ; restaurateurs : Florence Delteil, Jean-François Bardez

Textes extraits du catalogue *Les musées sont des mondes*, musée du Louvre Editions / Editions Gallimard.

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« Au centre d'un petit royaume de l'ouest du Nigeria actuel, à Ifé, en pays yoruba, des fouilles récentes mirent au jour une série de masques, en terre cuite ou en bronze, qui témoignent d'un réalisme exceptionnel en Afrique. À tel point que l'archéologue allemand Leo Frobenius, qui participa à ces recherches au début du vingtième siècle, pensa y voir la preuve tangible d'une présence grecque en Afrique de l'Ouest. Plus tard, l'Anglais W. D. Jeffreys, administrateur colonial dans la même région, converti à l'anthropologie, imagina, à partir de cet art et des inscriptions rituelles des Ibos, un lien historique entre l'Afrique noire et le dernier royaume pharaonique de Méroé dans la haute Égypte. Les apparentements, on le sait, sont toujours dangereux. Mais ce qui importe, c'est l'existence, au même moment, dans des lieux proches, de techniques et de concepts totalement différents, mettant côté à côté le réalisme le plus accompli et l'expression de la magie et de l'imaginaire. » J.M.G. Le Clézio



Tête d'Athéna casquée

Tête d'Athéna casquée, marbre parien, , Vers 470 - 460 avant J.-C., H 28 cm / Ma 3109, département des Antiquités grecques, étrusques et romaines, musée du Louvre. © 2006 Musée du Louvre/ Daniel Lebée et Carine Deambrosis

L'ensemble du visage devait être rehaussé par de la peinture. Les cils sont en métal. Le cou venait s'encastrer dans le corps d'une statue. De nombreux trous de fixation signalent l'existence, à l'origine, d'éléments métalliques rapportés : des mèches de cheveux descendaient le long des tempes ; des bijoux ornaient les lobes des oreilles ; le casque était doté d'un couvre-nuque et de protège-joues relevés. Une cavité au sommet du casque servait, en outre, à la mise en place d'un cimier, en marbre probablement.

Tête féminine, royaume d'Ifé, Nigéria

Tête féminine, royaume d'Ifé, Nigéria, 14e-15e siècle, Musée Barbier-Mueller  
© Musée Barbier-Mueller / Photo Studio Ferrazzini Bouchet.



Montées au colombin, les terres cuites figuratives anciennes d'Ifé illustrent la cour autour de l'Ooni, roi d'Ife. Cette tête, presque grandeur nature, appartenait sans doute à un personnage en pieds comme l'indique la cassure au niveau du cou à l'arrière, dont le corps fait aujourd'hui défaut. Des traces plus foncées sur le front indiquent des signes de réduction pendant la cuisson. Le visage est recouvert de fines stries parallèles. Les cheveux sont figurés par un motif ondé qui converge vers le sommet jusqu'à une petite coiffe tubulaire qui semble faite en vannerie tressée.

Une mince cordelette traverse en diagonale le haut et l'arrière de la tête jusqu'à la tempe droite où s'accroche un lourd pendentif élaboré, constitué d'enfilages de perles tubulaires terminés par des cauris qui supportent quatre larges disques quadrillés.

Les traits du personnage sont individualisés, bouche naturaliste et expressive, légèrement désabusée, yeux dépourvus de pupille aux paupières lourdes.

L'abondance des perles tubulaires de la parure évoque une femme de l'entourage royal, princesse ou femme de haut rang. La beauté du visage caractérise les représentations de la tête intérieure, qui renvoient au culte de la destinée, notamment la destinée royale, conceptualisée sous forme de tête en terre cuite dans la tradition orale. La présence de perles au niveau de l'ornementation de tête et en collier à l'arrière de la nuque rappelle l'industrie importante des perles de verre à Ife, dont on faisait les regalia, entre autres la couronne royale, *ade*, qui concentre en pays yoruba la notion de pouvoir.

L'ethnologue allemand Leo Frobenius « redécouvrit » Ife en 1910 lors de son séjour motivé par une lecture orientée de la tradition yoruba : établissant un parallèle entre *orisa* yoruba et dieux grecs, il échafauda la théorie d'une origine méditerranéenne de cette production artistique naturaliste qu'il ne s'attendait pas à trouver au cœur de l'Afrique, heureusement démentie par la suite.

Hélène Joubert

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Textes extraits du catalogue *Les musées sont des mondes*, musée du Louvre Editions / Editions Gallimard.



#### Dogoneries Pascale

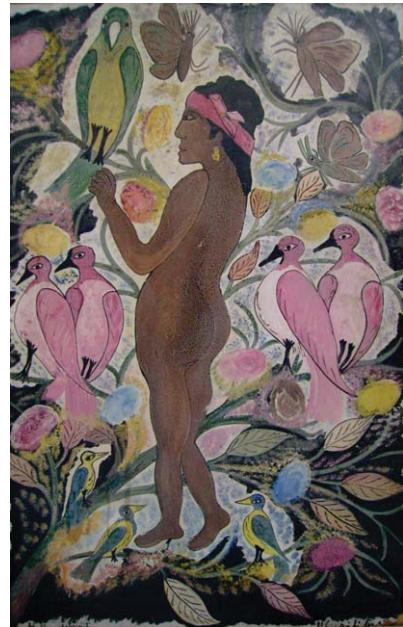
Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Dogoneries Pascale*, 2011  
Galleria Continua, San Gimignano / Beijing / Le Moulin. © Pascale Marthine Tayou

Sculpteur d'origine camerounaise, Pascale Marthine Tayou vit et travaille aujourd'hui à Gand (Belgique). Depuis le début des années 1990, ses œuvres reflètent une réflexion sociale sur la mondialisation et la ruralité, les traditions et les drames contemporains comme le sida ou la pauvreté.

Pour l'exposition *Le Musée Monde*, l'artiste a spécialement conçu quatre sculptures et une installation, qui ne concernent pas son identité « africaine » en tant que telle mais dévoilent sa vision

des échanges entre les traditions africaines et le monde occidental. Pour décrire son approche, Pascale Marthine Tayou a d'ailleurs théorisé la notion de *Taudisme*, pensé comme la manifestation artistique du « refus de l'inhumain » : « Le Taudisme est une lecture sociale, ce n'est pas une doctrine mais l'idée que l'essentiel est la rencontre de l'autre dans son dépotoir, dans son gîte le plus abject ». Placées en hauteur à l'entrée de la salle de la Chapelle, les *Dogoneries Pascale* (2011) transforment la perception du *Musée Monde*, qui devient par là même un espace universel, omrique et éclectique. Depuis plusieurs années, l'artiste travaille, de concert avec des verriers italiens, à l'élaboration de ses *Poupées Pascale*. Constituées de cristal italien, café, cauris (coquillage symbolisant une monnaie d'échanges), tissus, punaises et chocolat au lait, les statuettes détournent alors les rituels traditionnels et deviennent des totems sécularisés. L'usage récurrent de l'association de matériaux riches et pauvres, d'objets et de déchets, symbolise, comme chaque intervention de l'artiste, ce dialogue renouvelé entre les traditions africaines et le regard occidental. En effet, la tradition devient le véritable support de ces créations contemporaines et poétiques : figures de la fécondité modernisées ? Figures gardiennes de reliquaires revisitées ? Peu importe, finalement. Mélancoliques, les *Dogoneries Pascale* comme les *Poupées Pascale* révèlent, au-delà du café, du chocolat et des tissus qui parent le cristal italien, le corps informe et nostalgique mis à nu, et la déchéance magnifiée de la société.

Maia Kantor



#### Femmes aux oiseaux

Hector Hyppolite, *Femmes aux oiseaux*, Musée d'Art Haïtien du Collège Saint-Pierre, Port-au-Prince, Haïti. © Benjamin Hémar

« Je reverrai longtemps à la place qu'il occupait, au pied de l'escalier menant aux salles d'exposition, le premier tableau d'Hyppolite qu'il me fut donné de voir et qui me causa le plus vif en même temps que le plus agréable saisissement. [...] Le tableau qui m'arrêtait au passage m'arrivait comme une bouffée envahissante de printemps [...]. Il y avait là l'équivalent de ce que procurent les plus belles journées dans la campagne, les plus tendres frissons de l'herbe, les semis qui lèvent, les boutons-d'or, les diapries des ailes d'insectes, les coups de cymbales minuscules des fleurs grimpantes, la jonglerie des fruits aux mains de l'année. »

André Breton, *Écrits sur l'art et autres textes*, t. IV, Gallimard, coll. « La Pléiade », 2008, p. 720.

Le peuple, en grande partie illettré et très pauvre, n'est plus source d'inspiration, il peint lui-même, devient peuple de peintres tout entier contenu dans la figure tutélaire d'Hector Hyppolite. Grâce à ses pouvoirs médiumniques mais aussi en raison de l'extrême dépouillement de son style, ce peintre *hougan* va tracer d'emblée deux voies à la jeune peinture haïtienne : celle d'une peinture naïve et descriptive, et celle d'un art instinctif et spirituel.

Martine Lusardy

« Au Mexique l'ex-voto est né il y a cinq cents ans et c'est sans doute le pays où il a le mieux résisté au temps et gardé le plus de vigueur ; ce n'est pas seulement un objet de brocantes, mais bel et bien une pratique vivante. Alfredo est tout à la fois un peintre de miracles, un intercesseur autodidacte, un écrivain public de nos malheurs et de nos espoirs, un chroniqueur de prodiges, un travailleur sur commande de la foi et un artiste contemporain utilisant la tradition, comme peuvent le faire certains peintres africains ». Victoire et Hervé Di Rosa, in : *Rue des Miracles, ex-voto mexicains contemporains*, Paris, Seuil, 2003



Viva Mexico cabrones

Alfredo Vilchis Roque *Viva Mexico cabrones*, Alfredo Vilchis Roque & Centro de Cultura Casa Lamm, Mexico © Marco Pacheco.

Lui, le peintre des ex voto, l'un des derniers dans le genre, après avoir tellement travaillé à transmettre les remerciements des autres ne pouvait faire moins que de consacrer une peinture à cet événement qui allait sans doute bouleverser sa vie.

Sur le parvis de l'église et sous l'autorité du curé, il rejoignit le mur consacré aux ex-voto. L'accrochage y est ordonné. Chaque nouveau donateur s'ajoute aux autres, recouvrant peu à peu les murs de peintures et de messages divers .

Alfredo signa et mis la date sur le mur à l'emplacement qui lui revenait. (...)

Un mur d'ex-voto se lit comme une page de faits divers, chaque récit y est anecdotique mais l'ensemble devient l'histoire de l'humanité. La facture naïvement réaliste des images évoque par sa précision le dessin de presse avant la photographie.

Au milieu des graffitis, photos et autres dessins maladroits parfois difficiles à interpréter, la clarté du style d'Alfredo ressortait. Travailleur comme un journaliste, il n'hésite pas à l'occasion d'une commande à aller sur le lieu du drame avec son carnet de croquis, poussé par un souci d'authenticité et une grande conscience professionnelle.

C'est qu'être peintre d'ex-voto n'est pas simplement un métier, c'est une responsabilité, une médiation entre la terre et le ciel qu'il faut exercer avec d'autant plus de respect que le message à transmettre "là haut" est souvent le témoignage vécu d'un drame ou d'une souffrance. (...)

Dans ce Mexique populaire ultra catholique on reproche parfois à Alfredo la crudité de certaines histoires d'adultère, l'évocation du sida, du viagra ou de l'homosexualité ou encore sa compréhension vis à vis des prostituées. Le peintre se transforme alors en sage: « comment refuser même à la pire des personnes la possibilité de demander une faveur » ?

Placé sous la protection bienveillante d'une vierge de Guadalupe, son atelier perché dans le dernier des cubes qui constituent la maison, a parfois quelque chose d'un confessional. (...)

« La Révolution imaginée » est sans aucun doute son plus bel hommage au pays qui l'a vu naître et ce qui lui donne le plus de fierté. En associant art populaire et récit historique, Alfredo a su innover dans un genre très codé. Il a peint cette série avec passion et enthousiasme, retrouvant parfois dans ses rêves les scènes représentées. La facture naïvement réaliste des images évoque par sa précision le dessin de presse d'avant la photographie.

Inspirée par la grande fresque de Diego Rivera au Palais national de Mexico, cette suite de soixante-huit peintures fragmente l'épopée révolutionnaire de 1910 et la guerre civile qui s'ensuivit, en autant de témoignages vécus. Ici c'est le peuple qui parle par la voix de témoins jusque-là anonymes. Ainsi, l'attaque du Palais national, le 9 février 1913, est relatée par un passant qui sortait de la cathédrale voisine, la révolte d'Emiliano Zapata racontée par un de ses compagnons d'armes et l'évasion de Pancho Villa par l'un de ses complices. Ces petits récits participent à l'histoire de la Révolution mexicaine en renouvelant les discours stéréotypés.

Le caractère religieux de l'ex-voto authentifie le récit et rend légitime la cause finale : l'histoire de Magdalena déshabillée par un soldat zapatiste n'est en fait qu'un acte esthétique et la *puta Marieta* une allégorie semblable à la Liberté de Delacroix.

Quant à Alfredo, il a choisi son camp : il s'est représenté sur la locomotive du train de la Révolution en ce 20 novembre 1910. *¡ Que viva México, cabrones !*

Pierre Schwartz

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Textes extraits du catalogue *Les musées sont des mondes*, musée du Louvre Editions / Editions Gallimard.

« Les Low-riders ne suivent pas une mode éphémère. Dans les années 50 les pachucos, un groupe de jeunes gens d'origine hispanique ou mexicaine, vivant à Los Angeles s'approprie un pur objet de la production industrielle, l'automobile, pour en faire un moyen d'expression de leur revendication et de leur quête d'identité ». (...) « Les carrosseries rutilantes, les chromes, les prouesses techniques des moteurs, les suspensions surpuissantes capables de cabrer plusieurs tonnes de métal, de les faire rouler sur trois roues, de les faire danser sur place-ce ne sont plus des voitures, ce sont des cuirasses, des châteaux d'acier, des triptyques, des refuges pour les familles, des autels aux ancêtres ou aux saints... Ces voitures sont leur révolte contre la discrimination, contre le silence qui étouffe leur culture ancestrale ». J.M.G. Le Clézio



**Low Riders**

Elysian Park, Los Angeles CA, July 2005  
© mark peterson/redux pictures

« Deux objets inattendus font leur entrée sous la coupole prestigieuse du musée du Louvre. Il s'agit d'une Buick de 1937 et d'une Chevrolet Monte Carlo de 1979. On pourrait s'y méprendre, mais ces vieilles Américaines n'ont plus rien à voir avec ce qu'elles étaient à la sortie de l'usine. Ce qui attire le regard en premier : la carrosserie rutilante de l'une, la peinture extravagante de l'autre, des chromes et des dorures jusqu'à l'éblouissement. Mais le plus surprenant reste caché, jusqu'à ce que ces voitures se mettent en mouvement, *low and slow*, lentement et au ras du sol, bajito y suavecito, bas pour le style, et lent pour être vues. Ces vieilles Américaines exubérantes, extravagantes, savent aussi se comporter comme de fougueux mustangs, faisant des bonds, tanguant et roulant. Elles circulent dans toutes les villes des États-Unis, et ont même gagné d'autres régions du monde, l'Europe, le Japon, l'Amérique latine. Les deux voitures présentées au Louvre sont exceptionnelles. La Buick 1937 appartenait à Fernando Ruelas, aujourd'hui décédé, fondateur du Duke's Car Club de Los Angeles, qui l'avait achetée alors qu'il était adolescent. Quarante ans plus tard, c'est son fils Jason qui s'en occupe. The Crow est devenue un classique de l'épopée des *Lowriders*. La Chevrolet Monte Carlo, c'est Chino Vega qui l'a montée, boulon après boulon, pour en faire la fierté de son pays d'origine : Orgullo Mexicano. L'une est classique, elle est le symbole de la première phase du mouvement, cette sorte d'austérité qui imprégnait les *Lowriders* au moment de la lutte pour les droits civiques des Chicanos dans les années soixante. L'autre, fantaisiste, imaginative, pleine de cet humour et de ce sens de la dérision qui caractérisent la jeune génération des Mexicains-Américains, en proie aux tracasseries de la police et de la brigade de surveillance des frontières.

Toutes les deux sont héritières d'un combat à la fois culturel et politique. C'est en Californie, dans les quartiers pauvres séparés de la mer par la luxueuse bande côtière, que sont apparus les premiers *Lowriders* au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Le mouvement naît au sein de la communauté Mexicaine-Américaine, dans une zone de ghettos, de travailleurs manuels souvent illégaux, et de petite délinquance. Les *pachucos*, jeunes hommes hispaniques défavorisés, choisissent de se rebeller contre l'image négative que les Anglo-Américains ont construite pour stigmatiser leur communauté. Pour se différencier, ils inventent cette mode qui prend le contre-pied des hot-rods (ces voitures hautes sur roues qui arrachent l'asphalte). Ils rabaissent leurs voitures à quelques centimètres du sol en plaçant de lourdes charges dans les coffres. Puis certains d'entre eux, qui ont travaillé dans les aéroports pendant la guerre, ont l'idée géniale d'adapter des pompes hydrauliques provenant des trains d'atterrissement des avions pour pouvoir abaisser et relever les carrosseries en cas de contrôle de la police. Les *Lowriders* étaient nés.

Mais il s'agit de tout autre chose que d'une simple mode automobile. Il s'agit d'une pensée politique, d'un mode de vie et d'un art. »

Alice et J.M.G. Le Clézio

## Panneaux signalétiques

### 1<sup>er</sup> Section

Pour répondre au thème choisi par J.M.G. Le Clézio et traduire en œuvres le parcours singulier de l'écrivain voyageur, Prix Nobel de littérature en 2008, cette exposition a choisi de s'ancrer dans l'histoire ancienne du musée du Louvre qui fut, au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le premier musée ethnographique avant la création du musée du Trocadéro en 1879. Elle présente donc une sélection d'œuvres des Amériques, d'Afrique et d'Océanie, autrefois présentées au Louvre. Pour l'écrivain, il n'y a pas de hiérarchie en art ; J.M.G. Le Clézio a donc souhaité exposer au musée du Louvre des peintures d'Haïti, des nattes du Vanuatu, des sculptures africaines, des masques mexicains, des voitures Low Riders, autant de reflets de sa cartographie personnelle, littéraire et de sa sensibilité. Afin de légitimer ce « pas de côté » par rapport au périmètre patrimonial habituel des collections du musée, sont présentées également des œuvres du Louvre venant des Antiquités orientales, égyptiennes et gréco-romaines, des œuvres religieuses et des reliquaires du Moyen-Âge européen et des œuvres contemporaines (Camille Henrot, Bertrand Lavier, Betsabeé Romero, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Hervé Télémaque). Cette rencontre inédite entre art ancien et art contemporain, art populaire et art savant, qui transgresse les frontières géographiques et temporelles, se découpe en plusieurs chapitres qui correspondent aux thèmes chers à l'écrivain : la Révolution française et haïtienne, la peinture haïtienne, le vaudou, la statuaire africaine, l'art populaire du Mexique et le travail des femmes de Pentecôte.

### 2<sup>e</sup> Section

*Le Serment des ancêtres* fut peint en 1822 par Guillaume Guillon-Lethière (1760-1830), mulâtre né en Guadeloupe d'un père colon et d'une mère esclave. Il symbolise la rencontre historique entre le chef des mulâtres de Saint-Domingue, Alexandre Pétion et le général noir Jean-Jacques Dessalines, lieutenant de Toussaint-Louverture. Les deux officiers scellèrent en novembre 1802 une alliance pour chasser les troupes françaises. Ce « serment » solennel qui devait permettre l'indépendance d'Haïti à brève échéance intervint peu après le soulèvement général des Noirs de la colonie à l'annonce du rétablissement de l'esclavage décidé à Paris.

Ce tableau fut le seul de sa carrière où Guillon-Lethière évoqua ses origines et manifesta sa solidarité avec la jeune république noire d'Haïti, alors non encore reconnue en France. L'œuvre connut une curieuse destinée. Elle fut offerte à Haïti : transportée clandestinement par son fils, elle arriva à Port-au-Prince en mars 1823. Disparue depuis la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, elle fut retrouvée dans la cathédrale de la capitale haïtienne en 1991, restaurée à Paris en 1998 et présentée par le Louvre en 1998.

Le tableau a d'abord été présenté en février 1998 au musée du Louvre, puis à l'Unesco, avant d'être transféré à la Guadeloupe, terre d'origine du peintre. Il a ensuite rejoint la république d'Haïti, à laquelle Lethière en avait fait don en 1822.

### 3<sup>e</sup> Section

Le Louvre, un musée de tous les peuples.

Dès 1825, afin de mettre à l'honneur les missions de la Marine dans le Pacifique, un premier projet est proposé pour créer au Louvre, un musée des peuples d'Asie, d'Océanie, d'Afrique et d'Amérique. L'année suivante, l'acquisition de la collection de Vivant Denon, d'objets précolombiens et océaniens, consacre l'expansion géographique des collections au sein du Louvre qui se rêve, alors, musée universel.

En 1830, le musée Dauphin devient le Musée naval et expose les collections maritimes de maquettes de navires, de résultats de voyages scientifiques et des œuvres ethnographiques, essentiellement océaniennes.

Sous l'impulsion d'Adrien de Longperrier, conservateur des Antiques, le Louvre crée en 1847 un Musée américain. Pour la première fois en Europe, un musée est chargé de classer scientifiquement les collections d'antiquités mexicaines et américaines. Il ouvre ses portes le 26 mai 1850 et peu après, le 7 août, est inauguré au Louvre, sous l'impulsion du directeur du musée Philippe-Auguste Jeanron, le musée d'Ethnographie dans la grande salle de Beauvais. Les objets ethnographiques et préhispaniques rejoignent dès 1881 le musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro et en 1905 les œuvres encore au Louvre sont réparties entre le musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro et le musée des Antiquités nationales de Saint-Germain. Ces objets suivront le sort du musée du Trocadéro, puis du musée de l'Homme, noyau de l'actuel musée du quai Branly.

Pour la première fois une sélection de ces objets revient dans son lieu d'origine.

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## Liste des œuvres exposées

CLAUDE-LOUIS DESRAIS <u>Prise de Saint-Domingue</u> XVIIIe-XIXe siècle, encre noire, lavis brun, pierre noire, plume, rehauts de blancs, 21 × 45,4 cm, collection Edmond de Rothschild	<u>Registre des objets du Musée ethnographique</u> 21 × 29,7 cm, archives des musées nationaux	<u>Figurine anthropomorphe</u> Aztèque, Mexique, 1350-1521, terre cuite, 5,4 × 15 × 4,3 cm, ancienne collection du musée d'Ethnographie
ANONYME <u>Prise de la Bastille</u> 1789, eau-forte, aquarelle, 16,5 × 20,5 cm, collection Edmond de Rothschild	<u>MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY, PARIS</u>	<u>Figurine religieuse Ciuhacoatl, dit Tepictoton</u> Aztèque, Mexique, terre cuite, 5 × 12,2 × 3,6 cm, ancienne collection du musée d'Ethnographie
ANONYME <u>Matière à réflexion pour les jongleurs couronnés</u> Eau-forte, aquatinte, 21,4 × 16,6 cm, collection Edmond de Rothschild	<u>AFRIQUE</u>	<u>Figurine anthropomorphe</u> Aztèque, Mexique, terre cuite, 7 × 13,7 × 3,7 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme
ANONYME <u>Exécution de la reine Marie-Antoinette, place de la Révolution</u> 1794, eau-forte, aquarelle, 41,3 × 56,2 cm, collection Edmond de Rothschild	<u>Statue-amulette, Bari ou Chir</u> Bois, 48,5 × 10 × 8 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme	<u>Grelot anthropomorphe</u> Aztèque, Mexique, terre cuite, 19,6 × 7,7 × 3,9 cm, ancienne collection du musée d'Ethnographie
ANONYME <u>Relique de sang royal représentant un Agnus Dei</u> 1793, plume et encre brune, lavis gris et sang, diam. : 10,5 cm, collection Soulavie et collection Edmond de Rothschild	<u>Pagne d'homme</u> Nil Blanc, perles, coquillages, cauris, textile écru, 47 × 66,5 × 3, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme	<u>Figure anthropomorphe</u> Pérou, terre cuite bichrome noire et blanche, 16,8 × 12,3 × 5 cm, ancienne collection du musée d'Ethnographie
ARCHIVES <u>Photographie du musée de la Marine</u> 1939, 11,2 × 15,2 cm, archives du musée du Louvre	<u>Masque cimier zoomorphe, dit Ci Wara</u> Mali, bois, coton, 60 × 6 × 20,4 cm, ancienne collection du musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie	<u>Panier</u> Guyane française, vannerie, 16 × 23 × 15,4 cm, ancienne collection du musée de la Marine et du musée de l'Homme
Photographie du musée de la Marine 1939, 10,8 × 15,3 cm, archives du musée du Louvre	<u>Statuette magique, dit Nkisi nkondi</u> Congo, bois, métal, textile, pigments, résine, matières organiques, 63,5 × 38 × 34 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme	<u>Coiffe de plumes, dit Munduruku</u> Rio Tapajós, Brésil, coton, plumes, 12 × 23 × 27 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme
Gravure du Musée ethnographique 10,4 × 15,9 cm (plan déplié : 32,3 × 16,2 cm), Guide Joanne, <i>Paris illustré</i> , 1863	<u>AMÉRIQUES</u>	<u>Natte</u> Île de Pentecôte, Vanuatu, fibres de pandanus nattées, teinture lie de vin, 40 × 120 × 0,5 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme

<b>Figure à côtes <i>moai kavakava</i></b> Île de Pâques, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle (?), bois de Sophora toromiro sculpté, yeux incrustés d'obsidienne et d'os, 30 × 6,5 × 10 cm, ancienne collection du musée national d'Afrique et d'Océanie	<b>MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAÏTI</b>  GUILLAUME GUILLON, DIT LETHIERE <u>Le Serment des ancêtres</u> 1822, huile sur toile, 400 × 300 cm	GABRIEL BIEN-AIMÉ <u>La Grande Brijite et Baron Samedi</u> 1988, fer, tôle de fer découpée et rivetée, 90 × 80 × 35 cm
<b>ARCHIVES LIVRES</b> <i>Le Magasin pittoresque</i> Paris, 1847	<b>MUSÉE DE LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE, VIZILLE</b>  GUILLAUME GUILLON, DIT LETHIERE <u>La Patrie en danger</u> 1799, huile sur toile, 59 × 100 cm	OCÉANIE  <b>Corde</b> Micronésie, fibres végétales (phormium tenax) torsadées, 19,5 × 3,3 × 3,3 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme
<b>ERNEST-THÉODORE HAMY</b> Les origines du Musée ethnographique, histoire et documents par E. T. Hamy, Deux exemplaires brochés avec couverture d'origine imprimée, 1890, éd. E. Leroux	<b>MUSÉE D'ART HAÏTIEN DU COLLÈGE SAINT-PIERRE, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAÏTI</b>  HECTOR HYPPOLITE <u>Autoportrait</u> Non datée, huile sur masonite, 86,36 × 57,15 cm	<u>Natte, dit singo tuveqi</u> Mélanésie, fibres de pandanus, teinture, 38 × 118 × 0,3 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme
<b>ADRIEN DE LONGPÉRIER</b> Notice des monuments exposés dans la salle des Antiquités américaines <i>Mexique, Pérou, Chili, Haïti, Antilles</i> , 1850	 HECTOR HYPPOLITE <u>Vol de zombies</u> Non datée, huile sur masonite, 86,36 × 57,15 cm	<u>Natte, dit tsip</u> Île de Pentecôte, Vanuatu, fibres de pandanus, teinture végétale, plante appelée « laba », 42 × 130 × 0,3 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme
<b>MUSÉE NATIONAL D'ART MODERNE-CENTRE POMPIDOU, PARIS</b>	 <b>Lame de hache anthropomorphe</b> Antilles, 1200-1492, pierre dure gris vert à surface patinée, 24,7 × 13,5 × 4 cm, ancienne collection André Breton	<b>ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE</b> <u>Y cayo el primero (Et le premier est tombé)</u> 2010, huile sur métal, 22 × 33 cm
<b>FRIDA KHALO</b> <i>The Frame (Autoportrait)</i> 1938, huile sur aluminium, cadre en bois peint, 28,5 × 20,7 cm (dim. totales avec cadre : 32,2 × 24,4 cm)	 <b>Figurine de diable (candomblé)</b> , dit <i>Exu ou Eshu</i> Brésil, XXe siècle, fer forgé, 23,2 × 3,2 × 16 cm	<b>ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE</b> <u>Suenos truncados (Rêves tronqués)</u> 2006, huile sur métal, 27,5 × 35,7 cm
<b>BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, PARIS</b>	 <b>Figurine de diable (candomblé ou macumba)</b> Brésil, XXe siècle plâtre, 14,6 × 7 × 3,7 cm, ancienne collection du musée de l'Homme	<b>ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE</b> <u>La Deuda (La Dette)</u> 2005, huile sur métal, 22 × 30,8 cm
<b>Conjonction</b> Bulletin de l'Institut français, Port au Prince, Haïti, n°1, janvier 1946	 <b>Personnage Bizango</b> Haïti, début XXIe siècle, tissu rembourré, os, bois, miroirs, métal, 130 × 55 × 30 cm	<b>ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE</b> <u>Héroes anonimos (Héros anonymes)</u> 2002, huile sur métal, 30,5 × 45,5 cm
<b>COLLECTION DU CNAP, PARIS</b>		<b>ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE</b> <u>Como chapulines (Comme chapulines)</u> 2002, huile sur métal, 25,5 × 34,8 cm
<b>HERVÉ TÉLÉMAQUE</b> <u>Nouvelles de France</u> 1988-1989, technique mixte, 78 × 110 cm		31

ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Con bombín y sin bigotes</i></u> (Avec chapeau melon et sans moustache) 2002, huile sur métal, 30,1 × 33,3 cm	ROBERT SAINT BRICE <u><i>Loa</i></u> 1952, huile sur panneau, 81 × 61 cm	<u><b>Masque noir et argenté</b></u> Vers 1910, Veracruz, bois gravé et peint
ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Me iban a chamuscar</i></u> (Ils allaient me flamber) 2002, huile sur métal, 34 × 45 cm	PRÉFETE DUFFAUT <u><i>Scène vaudou</i></u> 1979, huile sur toile, 60,5 × 50,8 cm	<u><b>Masque Diable</b></u> Vers 1910, bois de tzompantle peint et gravé, sapolin, tronc rouge peint, 41 × 20 × 15 cm
ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Me paleron los dientes</i></u> (Ils m'ont montré les dents) 2002, huile sur métal, 30 × 32,6 cm	<b>COLLECTION BETTY ET HOMERO ARIDJIS, MEXICO</b>	<u><b>COLLECTION GALERIE L. CARRÉ, PARIS</b></u>
ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Ninos castigados</i></u> (Des enfants punis) 2002, huile sur métal, 22 × 30 cm	<u><b>Femme vassale</b></u> Tlaxcala, vers 1910, pin blanc mexicain gravé, recouvert de gesso et polychrome, peinture à l'huile, yeux de verre, cils artificiels, front protecteur à l'intérieur du masque, 19 × 18 × 12 cm	<u><b>HERVÉ TÉLÉMAQUE</b></u> <u><i>La chauve-souris</i></u> 1996, marc de café, bois, 60 × 73 × 14 cm, Galerie Louis Carré & Cie (collection particulière)
ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Cuando llos valientes lloran</i></u> (Quand les vaillants pleurent) 2005, huile sur métal, 24 × 30 cm	<u><b>Masque de femme avec grandes boucles d'oreilles</b></u> Sevina, 1930-1940, bois de Copalillo gravé et peint, peinture à l'huile, boucles d'oreilles en capsules de bouteilles en métal et aplatis, 21 × 19 × 9 cm	<u><b>GALLERIA CONTINUA, SAN GIMIGNANO / PÉKIN / LE MOULIN</b></u>
ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Mi Magdalena</i></u> (Ma Madeleine) 2002, huile sur métal, 30,6 × 25,8 cm	<u><b>Masque double visage blanc-brun</b></u> ( <u><i>Danse de Tejorones</i></u> ) Oaxaca, 1930-1940, bois tropical gravé et peint, peinture à l'huile, 18 × 17 × 9 cm	PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU <u><b>Dogoneries Pascale</b></u> 2011, matériaux divers : cristal, café, chocolat au lait, cauris, tissus, 66 × 17 × 17 cm
ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u><i>Marieta</i></u> 2002, huile sur métal, 34,5 × 45,5 cm	<u><b>Masque d'homme barbu</b></u> Michoacan, vers 1910, bois de Copalillo peint et gravé, peinture à l'huile, 23 × 14 × 12 cm	PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU <u><b>Dogoneries Pascale</b></u> 2011, matériaux divers : cristal, café, chocolat au lait, cauris, tissus, 62 × 25 × 20 cm
<b>MUSÉE BARBIER MUELLER, GENÈVE</b>	<u><b>Masque crâne</b></u> 1930-1940, bois de Tzompantle gravé et peint, peinture à l'huile, 25 × 19 × 14 cm	PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU <u><b>Dogoneries Pascale</b></u> 2011, techniques mixtes : cristal, café, chocolat au lait, cauris, tissus, 60 × 30 × 17 cm
Tête portrait féminine Royaume d'Ifé, Nigéria, XIVe-XVe siècle, terre cuite, 25 cm	<u><b>Masque tigre</b></u> Oaxaca, bois tropical peint et gravé, peinture à l'huile, 26 × 28 × 22 cm	PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU <u><i>Les Sauveteurs Gnang Gnang</i></u> ( <u><i>Mâle</i></u> ) 2011, techniques mixtes : cristal, <sup>32</sup> bois, cauris, tissus, 200 × 60 × 60 cm
<b>COLLECTION CHARLOTTEZANDER, BÖNNIGHEIM</b>		
PROSPERE PIERRE-LOUIS <u><i>Noir-blanc II</i></u> 1994, huile sur toile, 80 × 50 cm		

PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU <u>Les Sauveteurs Gnang Gnang</u> (Femelle) 2011, techniques mixtes : cristal, bois, cauris, tissus, 165 × 70 × 60 cm	<b>GALERIE YVON LAMBERT</b> BERTRAND LAVIER <i>Mamba</i> 2008, bronze nickelé, 34 × 6 × 7 cm, édition 4/4, collection Yvon Lambert	ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>Por dejarlo solo</u> (Pour l'avoir laissé seul) 2007, huile sur métal, 29,5 × 22 cm
PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU <u>Gli Spilli del sarto</u> 2011, épingle et polystyrène, dimensions variables, 2011, collection de l'artiste, Gand	<b>COLLECTION GALERIE KAMEL MENNOUR, PARIS</b> CAMILLE HENROT Coupé /Décalé 2010, film 35 mm transféré sur benatum, 23 minutes	ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>La Marranita</u> (Le Petit Cochon) 1948, huile sur métal, 18,2 × 28 cm
<b>COLLECTION AURÉLIE DIDIER, PARIS</b>	CAMILLE HENROT <i>De Tomaso Guara. 1993-1998</i> 2009, série <i>Espèces menacées</i> , éléments de moteur d'automobile, 82 × 33 × 3 cm et 62 × 32 × 3 cm	ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>Lo corno el toro</u> (Le Taureau l'a encorné) 1955, huile sur métal, 22 × 28,5 cm
CAMILLE HENROT <u>Lamborghini Espada. 1968-1978</u> Série <i>Espèces Menacées</i> , 2010, éléments de moteur d'automobile, 87 × 39 cm	<b>GALERIE MONNIN, MIAMI</b> WILSON BIGAUD <i>Cérémonie</i> 1973, huile sur masonite, 61 × 76,2 cm	ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>Se desbordo el rio</u> (La Crue du fleuve) 2007, huile sur métal, 22 × 28 cm
<b>COLLECTION ALAIN LE GAILLARD</b>	ANDRÉ PIERRE <i>Baron de mer</i> 1978, huile sur masonite, 61 × 71,1 cm	ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>Sans titre</u> Non daté, huile sur métal, 30,5 × 23 cm
JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT <u>Untitled</u> 1982, crayon gras sur papier monté sur toile avec châssis en croix, 91,4 × 91,4 cm, Courtesy Galerie Alain Le Gaillard	<b>COLLECTION CYRIL MEURANT / DESIGNETNIK</b> <u>Natte</u> 1998-1999, île de Pentecôte, Vanuatu, fibres de pandanus, teinture végétale, 30 × 140 cm	<b>COLLECTION PARTICULIÈRE</b> LOUISIANE SAINT-FLEURANT <u>Sans titre</u> 1993, peinture acrylique sur toile, 103 × 77 cm
<b>COLLECTION DOCTEUR ANTOINETTE JEAN</b>	<b>GALERIE FRÉDÉRIC MOISAN, PARIS</b> ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>Sans titre</u> Non daté, huile sur métal, 40 × 30,5 cm	ANDRÉ PIERRE <u>Voyage pour la guérison de Eurzulie qui est malade</u> 1992-1993, 75 × 105 cm
BONIFACE JORESSE <u>Ggou badagri, oriflamme vaudou</u> Non datée, tissu, 40 × 50 cm	<b>COLLECTION BETSABÉ ROMERO, MEXICO</b> GABRIEL BIEN-AIMÉ <i>Croix vaudou</i> 1992-1993, fer, 97 × 68 cm	GABRIEL BIEN-AIMÉ <i>Croix vaudou</i> 1992-1993, fer, 97 × 68 cm
<b>ARCHIVES WIFREDO LAM</b>	<b>COLLECTION CYRIL MEURANT / DESIGNETNIK</b> <u>Natte</u> 1998-1999, île de Pentecôte, Vanuatu, fibres de pandanus, teinture végétale, 30 × 140 cm	<b>COLLECTION BETSABÉ ROMERO, MEXICO</b>
<u>Mabille, Breton, Lam en Haïti en 1946</u> Photographie noir et blanc	<b>GALERIE FRÉDÉRIC MOISAN, PARIS</b> ALFREDO VILCHIS ROQUE <u>Sans titre</u> Non daté, huile sur métal, 40 × 30,5 cm	BETSABÉ ROMERO <u>Le Serpent et ses peaux</u> 2010, installation, pneu d'automobile, deux spirales en caoutchouc industriel antidérapant, 150 cm (le serpent au sol), 250 à 350 cm (spirales suspendues)
<u>Invitation/catalogue</u> Exposition <i>Wifredo Lam</i> au Centre d'Art de Port-au-Prince, 1946		

BETSABÉ ROMERO  
Maquette Piel de casa

2002, Gilman 52 couvert de mosaïques de « Talavera de Puebla», voiture miniature avec des carrelages dessinés

BETSABÉ ROMERO  
Maquette Aterciopelado

2002, Thunderbird miniature couverte de velours noir peint à l'huile, maquette en jouet couvert de velours peint,  
25 × 10 × 8,5 cm

BETSABÉ ROMERO  
Maquette Autoconstruido

2000, Volkswagen miniature, différents matériaux de construction automobile,  
13 × 6 × 5,6 cm

BETSABÉ ROMERO  
Maquette Territorio Mara ou Tatoo Car

2010, Volkswagen miniature couverte de peau de cochon avec dessins de tatouages,  
26 × 11,5 × 14,5 cm

BETSABÉ ROMERO  
Maquette Ayate Car

1997, Ford Victoria 55 miniature entoilée, roses séchées,  
21 × 8 × 6,5 cm

COLLECTION FAMILLE RUELAS,  
CALIFORNIE

JASON RUELAS  
Buick 1937 (?)  
Dukes Car Club

COLLECTION GIULIANA ET  
TOMMASO SETARI, PARIS

BETRAND LAVIER  
Black & Decker  
2008, technique mixte,  
85 × 23 × 21 cm

COLLECTION HERVÉ TÉLÉ-  
MAQUE, PARIS

Paquet Congo  
1973, tissu, fer

Asson  
1973, bois, perles, clochette

COLLECTION ALEJANDRO « CHI-  
NO » VEGA, CALIFORNIE

ALEJANDRO « CHINO » VEGA  
Orgullo Mexicano  
Chevy Monte Carlo 1979

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