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VISIONS OF RACE AND GENDER: PRESS COVERAGE OF THE FRENCH COLONIAL
EXPOSITIONS OF 1922 AND 1931

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

During the interwar period, France attempted to reinvigorate interest in the empire amongst the public via elaborate colonial expositions. The colonial expositions of Marseille (1922) and Paris (1931) served as a means to celebrate the empire and to educate the French about the benefits of living within Greater France, an entity that included the metropole and the colonies. This thesis examines how press coverage of both expositions worked alongside these events to counteract anxieties regarding France's economic recovery after the war, continuing world presence, demographic losses, and most importantly the relationship between France and its colonies. It explores how the press attempted to mitigate these fears by creating, reinforcing, and reproducing an economically positive, dynamic, vibrant and ultimately sanitized vision of the colonies. This thesis argues that the press actively supported the goals of the expositions and championed the success of the civilizing mission, and demonstrates the media's role in perpetuating visions of French universalism. Their vision reveals contradictions found within French universalism that helps form a basis for analysis. This study scrutinizes the dominant discourses regarding the colonies during the interwar period and how the press used contemporary concepts of race and gender in their coverage of the expositions. This thesis argues that the press used the figure of the colonial soldier/worker and the erotic and patriarchal relationship between France and its colonies to reinforce colonial hierarchies regarding race and gender. The press attempted to shape the public's view of the empire through reconstructions of the imperial project and its people that idealized France's mission. Only the communist press sought to highlight the ferocity of French colonization.

For my parents and for Temor, who saw me through this process from beginning to end.

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INTRODUCTION

The interwar period in France witnessed renewed attempts to inspire interest in the empire amongst the metropolitan public. As Gary Wilder argues, “following World War I, the persistence of the empire served as one of the few sure signs that France itself had survived the war in a recognizable form.”¹ The colonial expositions of 1922 in Marseille and later in 1931 in Paris, represented attempts by the metropolitan government and pro-empire groups to display “the colonies as an essential part of Greater France (*la plus grande France*).”² This concept of Greater France, first articulated before World War I, received further impetus in response to the near defeat of the war and the burden of the Great Depression. The interwar period revealed “the depth of renewed anxieties in France concerning national decline, depopulation, and loss of international stature.”³ The French government undertook these expositions as a way to ease anxiety regarding the nation’s changing place in the world.⁴

By constructing two large colonial expositions, the organizers hoped to inform the French public of the importance of the empire by presenting the colonies and the colonized peoples in an idealized form that made them viewable and consumable by the French public. These organizers represented “government administrators, members of the *parti colonial*, and French businessmen with colonial interests,” that wanted to “emphasize the growing importance of the empire near

¹ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4.

² Ellen Furlough, “Une leçon des choses: Tourism, Empire, and the Nation in Interwar France” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 441.

³ Janet Horne, “In Pursuit of Greater France: Visions of Empire Among Musée Social Reformers” in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, eds. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

the beginning of the twentieth century.”⁵ In particular the Marseille business community, as Dana Hale argues, sought to promote the 1922 exposition and the empire in their town as a means to forge new trade relations and boost the French economy.⁶ The organizers of the expositions hoped to assuage anxieties over the perceived cost of the colonies and the presence of a large colonial working class within the metropole. As Odile Goerg argues, these expositions meant to foster pride in the people of the metropole through the concrete information they provided.⁷ While the organizers of the expositions maintained this loftier goal for their events, Elizabeth Ezra argues that simply put these expositions represented “efforts to promote colonialism to the French public and to the world.”⁸ Both expositions served not only to reassure the French public about the nation’s importance and strength but also to educate the public by demonstrating that, “[the colonies] were the source of vital resources contributing to the health of the French economy.”⁹ The colonies helped to boost the French economy during World War I by providing a “reservoir of labor and military goods,” and soldiers.¹⁰

This thesis concentrates on how press coverage of the 1922 and 1931 colonial expositions portrayed the relationship between the metropole and the colonies, and attempted to send a strong message to the public. This study argues, via a representative sampling, that newspapers actively supported the goals of both expositions and delivered the official message that the

⁵ Dana S. Hale, *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized People, 1886-1940*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 167.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷ Odile Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France’,” in *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, eds. Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 86.

⁸ Elizabeth Ezra, “The Colonial Look: Exhibiting Empire in the 1930s,” *Contemporary French Civilization* 19, no. 1 (1995): 33.

⁹ Arthur Chandler, “Empire of the Republic: The Exposition Coloniale Internationale De Paris, 1931” *Contemporary French Civilization* 14, no. 1 (1990): 92.

¹⁰ Furlough, “Une leçon des choses: Tourism, Empire, and the Nation in Interwar France,” 441-442.

empire was an essential part of Greater France. It examines how coverage in the leading newspapers including, *Le Figaro*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *La Croix*, *Le Petit Marseillais* supported the colonial project and printed pro-colonial messages. Only the new communist daily *L'Humanité* acted as a foil against the others by taking an anti-colonial stance. These newspapers are then studied in conjunction with the official writings of the expositions to determine to what degree the press supported the expositions' messages.

Further more, this study examines how coverage utilized gendered and racialized images, vocabulary, and stereotypes, that were central to the dominate discourses of the era, to frame larger arguments and to shape French understanding of empire and the image presented to the public.¹¹ As Benedict Anderson argues, historically the press has filled a specific role in the construction of national conscious and “provided the means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation.”¹² The expositions represented imaginary communities, presenting a sanitized image of the colonies for the French to incorporate into their own imagined community of Greater France, a concept the press supported. This imaginary community presented by the press reflected an idealized view of the colonial relationship and ignored or hid the violence and exploitation of colonization. This sanitized representation, as Herman Lebovics argues, served as a means to “educate” the population on what it meant to be

¹¹ For work by scholars on the issues of race and gender in the France see: Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1915* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Press, 1996), Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa, 1895-1960* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Verso, 1983), 25.

French.¹³ More recently, Lebovics has argued, “the [1931] Exposition provided the French public, on both an existential and symbolic level, with the feeling that they had rights of ownership over all these marvels.”¹⁴ These expositions thus served as a means for the French pro-colonial lobby to reinforce and create a particular understanding of the colonies and of France’s superior position in the world.

Building upon the work of colonial scholars, my analysis highlights how common stereotypes about gender roles and racial hierarchies as well as the intersections between the two played out in this public debate. The French, like other Europeans, distinguished themselves from colonial subjects through a complex and fluid combination of what Ann Laura Stoler describes as, “middle-class morality, nationalist sentiments, bourgeois sensibilities, normalized sexuality, and a carefully circumscribed ‘milieu’ in school and home.”¹⁵ The press worked to construct a sense of group cohesion and solidarity by defining who belonged in France and who needed to remain at a distance.¹⁶ As Stoler argues, “racial discourse reverberated between metropole and colony to secure the tenuous distinctions of bourgeois rule.”¹⁷ The colonial populations served as a foil against which the French could build their own identity, and therefore the French identity became more fluid against the purportedly unchanging nature of the colonial populations.

¹³ Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 53.

¹⁴ Herman Lebovics, “The Zoos and the Exposition Coloniale Internationale” in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, eds. Blanchard et. al. (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press), 371.

¹⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 105.

¹⁶ Tyler Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers: Whiteness and the Exclusion of Colonial Labor After World War I,” *Representations* 84, no. 1 (November 2003): 52.

¹⁷ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 97.

Recent historical studies also explore the French people's growing anxieties over the future of what was known as the French 'race.' Elisa Camiscioli argues that "discussions of the nation and its citizenry persistently returned to the body: its color and gender, its expenditure of labor power, its reproductive capacity, and its experience of desire."¹⁸ Concerns over the health of the nation coupled with the rise of natalism and eugenics in the 1920s and 1930s led the French government, as Jennifer Boittin argues, to "encourage men to bring their wives with them overseas, in the hope that this would stem the tide of interracial relationships while allowing women to fulfill their natural role as civilizers."¹⁹ By studying press coverage of these expositions, my thesis examines how the nature of the colonial relationship shaped coverage of the expositions, as a series of dichotomies: us vs. them, civilized vs. savage, teacher vs. student, parent vs. child, universal vs. particular, male vs. female, and dominate vs. submissive.

The dominant discourses of the time understood the metropole and the colonies as part of a natural hierarchy with European racial superiority contrasted with the assumed inferiority of the colonial subjects. As William Cohen argues, since the eighteenth century European scholars used the notion of "primitive" societies as a foil through which to contrast the image of European racial superiority.²⁰ In his seminal work, *The French Encounter with Africans*, detailing over 300 years of French/African relationships, he argues that myths such as that of the noble savage heightened European curiosity regarding the outside world, particularly in the Americas and

¹⁸ Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 6.

¹⁹ Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 173.

²⁰ William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Responses to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 73.

Africa.²¹ This curiosity evolved over time into forms of popularized racism supported by scientific claims. By the beginning of the twentieth century the press and various expositions popularized racialized ideas of the “savage” for the consuming public.²² The creation and display of this popularized racism influenced the goals of the civilizing mission and the colonial expositions.

Metropolitan gender normativity influenced both colonial policy and rhetorical depictions of power in the colonial experiment. Alice Conklin addresses the role of European women in colonization and by doing so joined scholars of the British Empire who started analyzing colonial histories through the lens of gender in the early 1990s.²³ Regarding the role of women in the colonial structure, Conklin argues that the task of constructing the nation through domesticity fell to women in the colonies and the metropole.²⁴ In this manner colonialism became a joint venture with specific gendered roles defined by the state and society. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda’s edited collection, *Domesticating the Empire*, explored issues of race and gender in colonial France and the Netherlands. Clancy-Smith, like Conklin before her, argues that the French state saw metropolitan women as serving a key role in the colonies as cultural mediators

²¹ Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, 73.

²² Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 30.

²³ For works by scholars of the British Empire see: Laura Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire Building* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire (Gender and History)* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Philippa Levine, ed. *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), and Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds. *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²⁴ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 105.

and house-to-house activists, that could bring France into the household of the colonized peoples.²⁵

Colonial discourses presented the relationship between the metropole and the colonies in terms of the “relationship between man and woman, in which the woman and the foreign country both allow themselves to be desired, governed, and abandoned.”²⁶ The press perpetuated the belief in the inferiority of the colonial subjects by utilizing the concept of *La mère patrie* (the mother country) which translated the “relationship between rulers and ruled into a language expressing maternal bonds between mother and child.”²⁷ Bourgeois metropolitan identity thus relied on the idea of gendered notions of superiority to maintain societal standing.

Using newspaper articles and the expositions’ guide books, I argue that the press actively supported the goals of the expositions and worked within existing stereotypes and idealized images of the colonies to present a specific view of the empire to the public. Just as during previous expositions of the early twentieth century, the press simplified the message to make that message more accessible to the public and by doing so transformed into official propaganda mouthpieces rather than in-depth news coverage.²⁸ As Wilder argues, the empire stood as a symbol of the “durability of the self-contained French nation,” during a time of “sociopolitical transformations,” an argument that is applied to why the press supported the empire.²⁹ This push

²⁵ Julia Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities,” in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, eds. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 158.

²⁶ James R. Lehning, *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 147.

²⁷ Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities in the Making of French Algeria, 1830-1962,” 158.

²⁸ Sandrine Lemaire and Pascal Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies (1870-1914)” in *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* eds. Pascal Blanchard, et. al., trans. Alexis Pernsteiner, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 95.

²⁹ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 4.

also came in response to the new geopolitical order of the interwar years in which both the United States and the U.S.S.R. supported the “rights of colonial peoples to national self-determination.”³⁰ To champion the empire became a nationalist charge which the press eagerly took up as its own.

The first chapter contextualizes the anxieties facing France during the 1920s and 1930s and the environment in which the expositions took place. It analyzes how press coverage of the expositions attempted to assuage these anxieties by focusing on how the colonies ensured France’s continued status as a world power and its economic recovery. The press worked to sell papers and to inspire pride amongst the metropolitan population by focusing on the perceived mutual benefits of the empire.

The second chapter focuses on the press’ portrayal of colonial soldiers and workers brought by the organizers of both expositions to animate the events. Following the end of World War I, both expositions promoted the theme of the *tirailleurs* (soldiers from the colonies) and their indispensability to the protection of the French nation.³¹ It examines how the press presented these colonial subjects as products of France’s civilizing mission, and a testament to the work France achieved within its empire. Colonial expositions displayed to metropolitan citizens non-threatening colonial populations, in comparison to the perceived threatening nature of colonial men in particular, and the newspapers recognized the significance of this influx of colonial subjects and attempted to present an idealized image of the civilizing mission.

The third chapter examines the relation between metropole and empire itself and how this relationship was portrayed with contradictory images, sometimes as erotic and sexual and at

³⁰ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 51.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

others times as paternal and disciplinary. The press presented the image of the virile colonizer and France as the head of the family as two roles the country embodied within the colonial relationship. At the same time organizers presented the colonies as either virginal or barren, and above all in need of guidance. This relationship placed the colonies in the position of needing France to protect it, educate it, and to make it productive.

An analysis of the coverage by the press demonstrates the extent to which it participated in selling empire to the French public alongside the work of the expositions and the state. The press attempted to influence the image of the colonies presented to the public, and by doing so reinforced an idealized and sterilized vision of colonization. It also raises more questions, such as the effectiveness of the press' efforts to influence awareness of the empire amongst the metropolitan public, and whether other forms of mass media attempted the same effect, which are beyond the scope of this study, but offer new avenues for research.

CHAPTER 1: OWNING THE EMPIRE

The *Exposition nationale coloniale* (National Colonial Exposition of 1922) and the *Exposition coloniale internationale* (International Colonial Exposition of 1931) represented concerted efforts by their organizers to reassure the French public of the nation's political and economic power. Along with the powerful business community of Marseille, which held much influence in the staging of the 1922 exposition, local and national politicians made up the majority of the organizers for both expositions. Adrien Artaud, who championed the staging of a colonial exposition in Marseille as early as 1913 and who portrayed Marseille as the foundation of the empire's administration and development, received the title of general commissioner for the 1922 exposition.¹ For the 1931 exposition, the government named Marshall Lyautey, a prominent military leader and former colonial governor of Morocco, to the position of general commissioner along with Marcel Olivier former colonial governor of Madagascar.²

The interwar period represented a time of interest in the colonies amid growing anxieties regarding the state of the French nation. The expositions and press coverage of them sought to assuage these anxieties while also instilling in the public a sense of pride and ownership in the empire. This chapter scrutinizes how the expositions and coverage of them worked to affirm a particular vision of the empire disconnected from the reality of the colonial enterprise and the troubles average citizens faced in France.

¹ Yaël Simpson Fletcher, "Capital of the Colonies': Real and Imagined Boundaries between Metropole and Empire in 1920s Marseilles," in *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display, and Identity (Studies in Imperialism)*, eds. Driver and David Gilbert (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), 139.

² Patricia A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 180.

The organizers of both expositions and the press attempted to communicate why the general population should be invested in the empire in numerous ways. In order to better understand the motivation of organizers and the press, this chapter examines three key themes of the effort to sell the empire to the public. They include France's status as a world power following the war and whether it continued to command such power, the worth of monetary investment in the colonies during a time of economic hardship and the creation of or reinforcement of the average French citizen's pride and claim to a vast colonial empire. Together these three themes influenced one another and the image of the empire provided to the public, resulting in a sanitized vision of the colonies neatly packaged for metropolitan consumption.

France's Status as a World Power

In the 1920s France experienced threats, real and imagined, to its status as a world power, including demographic loss, a large immigrant population living in the metropole, the devastation wrought by World War I, the perceived decline of the west, and the loss of status on the world stage. Politicians on both the right and the left feared a national decline that would prevent France's ability to defend itself against both external and internal dangers.³ The 1920s represented a time of upheaval around the world, in part due to the retribution of former German colonies to France and Britain after the Treaty of Versailles, the ongoing troubles associated with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire following the Treaty of Sèvres that remade the map of the Middle East, President Wilson's crusade for the "rights of people to rule over themselves,"

³ Pascal Blanchard, "National Unity: The Right and Left "Meet" around the Colonial Exposition (1931)," in *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* eds. Blanchard, et. al., 217.

and the Soviet Union's vocal condemnation of the colonial system.⁴ During this period the French government also faced unrest within the colonies resulting in part from frustration over broken promises of equality given to colonial soldiers for their service during the war and also including Abd el-Krim's Rif War in the early 1920s and the Yên Bái mutiny of 1930.⁵ The rise of the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (North African Star), an Algerian nationalist organization, in the mid-1920s along with other nationalist groups in the metropole also signaled a nearing colonial crisis at a time when France relied heavily on the empire as an important economic and military support system.⁶

The apparent decline of western civilization, as a result of the horrors of World War I, seized the attention of the nationalist and conservative right during the interwar period. The expositions thus represented a means by which French leaders on the right sought to "avert the specter of national decline by embarking on a quest to secure Greater France."⁷ This concept of Greater France (*la plus grande France*) represented the desire to rhetorically fuse metropolitan France with its empire. As the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais* noted, the 1922 colonial exposition served as an early "superb representation of national power" within the understanding of Greater France.⁸ As Patricia Morton argues in regards to the 1931 exposition, an argument equally applied to the 1922 exposition, "the exposition signaled the power and maturity of the French

⁴ Blanchard, "National Unity", 217.

⁵ For further reading on the Rif War please see: C.R. Pennell, *A Country with a Government and a Flag, The Rif War in Morocco 1921-1926* (Wisbech, UK: Menas Press, 1986), David H. Slavin, "The French Left and the Rif War, 1924-25: Racism and the Limits of Internationalism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991): 5-32, and Jennifer Dueck, "The Middle East and North Africa in the Imperial and Post-Colonial Historiography of France," *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 4 (2007): 935-949. For further reading on the Yên Bái Munity please see: Tobias Rettig, "French Military Policies in the Aftermath of the Yen Bay Mutiny, 1930: Old Security Dilemmas Return to the Surface," *South East Asia Research* 10 (2002): 309-31, and Huynh Kim Khanh, "The Vietnamese August Revolution Revisited," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 4 (Aug., 1971): 761-782.

⁶ Blanchard, "National Unity," 217.

⁷ Horne, "In Pursuit of Greater France," 21.

⁸ "A L'Exposition Coloniale, la journee de la victoire," *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) November 11, 1922.

empire to contemporary observers.”⁹ French leaders hoped to convey to the public the concept that the colonies, while still foreign, represented a part of France. That to view the French nation, the colonies needed to be a part of this image particularly in light of the success of France in World War I by using colonial troops. The editors of *Le Petit Parisien* captured this notion succinctly when arguing that the French nation, and its colonial empire, served as a prime example of a world power on which the “sun never sets,”¹⁰ a moniker typically applied to the British Empire. The editors of *Le Figaro* echoed this sentiment claiming “the most beneficial effect of the Exposition has been attracting the attention of the world to our infinitely vast empire.”¹¹ The vastness of the French domain represented a tangible figure for the organizers of the exposition and the media jumped at the chance to present France’s power on the world stage to the metropolitan public.

While a sense of colonial grandeur had been important for much of the nineteenth century, by the start of World War I, republican advocates within the government identified colonialism with “patriotism, thereby linking imperial expansion to the national project,” despite public indifference and political hostility against overseas expansion.¹² The interwar saw a continuation of this push for the colonies to take on a more significant role in French understanding. Even after the nation regained Alsace and Lorraine following the end of World War I, the subject of the size of the French empire, along with the demographic advantages of a large empire including more population, labor, and cannon fodder, continued to play a prominent role in the discussion of the expositions and in various newspapers.

⁹ Patricia Morton, “A Study in Hybridity: Madagascar and Morocco at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-), 52, no. 2 (1998): 76.

¹⁰ “L’Exposition coloniale est ouverte,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

¹¹ “A l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) November 8, 1931.

¹² Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation State*, 29.

As early as 1913 the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais* called for the city to hold a colonial exposition every ten years both affirming Marseille's importance as the largest port in France but also as the gateway to this large colonial empire.¹³ The start of World War I delayed the start of the Marseille exposition until after the end of hostilities. Following the start of the Exposition of 1922, these editors rejoiced in the success of the event and the consequences that would be "happily felt in all the country and in our vast colonial empire."¹⁴ The anticipation of a "considerable crowd" drawn to Marseille appeared to bolster, in the eyes of the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais*, the claim that the exposition would exceed, "in radiance and beauties of all kinds everything that we've seen so far."¹⁵ The exposition of 1922 and later the larger exposition of 1931 served as a "national event for 'Greater France'," and examples of the "famous French colonial work," to the editors of *La Croix*.¹⁶ Both expositions and the press coverage of them built upon the expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that served as "veritable sites of propaganda" working to justify imperial activity and inspire notions of "national grandeur among the public."¹⁷ The colonies took on a foundational role upon which France could build a stronger nation. The focus on the vast amount of land under France's control came at a time of heightened efforts to represent the colonies as a key component of Greater France.¹⁸

¹³ Isabelle Richefort, "L'Exposition coloniale de 1922," in *Désirs d'ailleurs: Les expositions coloniales de Marseille 1906 et 1922* (Marseille: Éditions Alors Hors Du Temps, 2006), 107.

¹⁴ "L'agriculture et l'horticulture à l'exposition coloniale," *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 15, 1922.

¹⁵ "L'Ouverture de l'Exposition Coloniale aura lieu Dimance 16 Avril," *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 9, 1922.

¹⁶ "L'Exposition coloniale," *La Croix* (Paris) May 9, 1922.

¹⁷ Lemaire and Blanchard, "Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies," 92.

¹⁸ Furlough, "Une leçon des choses," 441.

Following the inauguration of the exposition of 1931 the editors of *Le Figaro* stressed the importance of the empire's size, informing their readership via a speech given by Paul Reynaud, the Minister of the Overseas France (1931-1932) on May 15, 1931, that in 1871 France's "foreign territory was not double the territory of the metropole. Today it is twenty-two times as large. Its population was 5 million. It is now 60 million."¹⁹ Presenting the public with such impressive figures reinforced the relationship between world power and the empire both in terms of population and geographical size. This important relationship between size and power even worked its way into advertisements for the exposition of 1931. One such advertisement in *Le Figaro* called on the French public to question their own knowledge of their empire by asking them, "Did you know France was so great? 1,542,000 km², three times the size of France. That is what represents our area in North Africa alone."²⁰ [Figure 1] A passage within the official guidebook of the General Government of Indochina claimed the colony represented an "essential part" of the colonial Empire and that it boasted a considerable land size of 737,000 square kilometers, comparing it to the size of France at 550,000 square kilometers.²¹

Attempts to equate the size of the empire with France's status as a world power extended beyond simply a discussion of the large colonial holdings under French authority. The size of the French metropole remained important and in a speech given by the Minister of Overseas France Reynaud on May 7, 1931, he encouraged the metropolitan public to feel pride that "Metropolitan France has the largest territory of Europe, after Russia."²² This comparison between the size of France and Russia echoes the close relationship the two countries shared prior to and during

¹⁹ "Inauguration du monument de l'expansion coloniale," *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 15, 1931.

²⁰ *Le Figaro*, (Paris) May 6, 1931. See figure 1 in Appendix.

²¹ *L'Indochine française* (Hanoi: Gouvernement Général de L'Indochine, 1931), 7.

²² "L'Auguration de l'exposition coloniale," *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

World War I both politically and economically.²³ The editors also sought to remind the public that France also maintained a sizeable presence on the European continent in comparison to Germany, an enemy that while diminished following the war, had beaten the French in 1871 and almost won again during World War I. The interwar period was a time of increasing competition with the rise of the United States and Soviet Union and the fracturing of European unity. The French government and by extension the press needed to convince the public, and themselves, by any means necessary that France still commanded a presence in the world.²⁴ Maintaining the idea that the power of France directly correlated to land mass, as a way to assuage worries related to the huge loss of life during World War I and the loss of status as a world power, remained a constant theme in the coverage of the 1931 exposition by the editors of *Le Figaro* in particular.

The celebration of the empire and of France as a major power served as a launching point for attacks by the Communist paper *L'Humanité*, which took a hardline approach against such revelry. In response to the exposition of 1931, the editors accused French capitalism of “killing and extorting in the five parts of the world the weaker peoples. That’s the real spectacle!”²⁵ For the editors of *L'Humanité*, the expositions represented the exploitation of the colonial worker and the general hardship experienced by the colonial people under French rule. The paper used the expositions as a “reference point” to build off from during a time in which a “consolidated vision, the notion of ‘Greater France’ emerged in popular culture.”²⁶ Writers for

²³ For further reading on Franco-Russian relations please see: D.W. Spring, “Russia and the Franco-Russian Alliance, 1905-14: Dependence or Interdependence?” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 66, no. 4 (Oct., 1988): 564-592.

²⁴ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 97.

²⁵ “L’Exhibition impérialiste de Vincennes est terminée,” *L'Humanité* (Paris) November 16, 1931.

²⁶ Martin Evans, “Culture and Empire, 1830-1962: An Overview,” in *Empire and Culture: The French Experience, 1830-1940*, ed. Martin Evans (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.

the paper sarcastically praised the glories of imperialism and detailed the importance of the 1931 exposition to the government.

Shortly after the inauguration of the exposition of 1931 the editors of *L'Humanité* posed the question, "why the exhibition?" The paper's response: "to demonstrate to you, sir, and to demonstrate to the hereditary enemy- one still exists!- that France has a colonial empire on which the sun never sets. That a country with such colonies is a power which cannot, with impunity, lack respect."²⁷ Just as the editors of *Le Petit Parisien* drew a comparison between France and Great Britain with the description of an empire on which the "sun never sets," the editors of *L'Humanité* chose the same description to mock the competition over colonial land holdings between France and Great Britain. The intense desire by the French government to instill in the metropolitan public this idea of "Greater France," became fodder for the editors of *L'Humanité* who called into question why France should garner respect on the basis of an empire alone.

Another focus of both the expositions and the press dealt with France's success during World War I and the role the colonial empire played in achieving this arduous victory. Much of the fighting during the war occurred on French soil and the nation lost roughly 1.3 million men or 3.4 percent of the total population.²⁸ With such a huge loss of life, concern rose regarding the future of France. While the nation regained Alsace and Lorraine, the specter of a weakened France continued to plague the interwar period. As Geoff Read argues, the republican right in France remained fixated after the war on the memory of the "dark days when France's manhood

²⁷ "L'Exposition coloniale," *L'Humanité* (Paris) May 10, 1931.

²⁸ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* trans. Catherine Temerson (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2002), 212.

had nearly proven unequal to the task of protecting *la Patrie* and worried incessantly that, without a sufficient number of racially pure French soldiers to serve in its defense, France would fall the next time around.”²⁹ Who should fill this role of protecting *la Patrie* proved difficult to define as the government longed for French men to take up the defense while press coverage of both expositions praised the role of colonial soldiers in helping France to emerge victorious. Chapter two addresses the role of colonial soldiers in the war and how the press celebrated their efforts. With the threat of future German aggression on the minds of the French populace, France once again turned to its colonial empire as a source of tangible and intangible power.

As Wilder succinctly argues, the war “accelerated socioeconomic interdependence between metropolitan and overseas France.”³⁰ The expositions and press coverage reinforced this interdependence by demonstrating for the metropolitan population all the ways in which the colonies and France interacted and appeared to benefit one another. The war “demonstrated the strength and charitable ties that bind France to its colonies,” to the editors of in the eyes of the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais*.³¹ With the 1922 Exposition, the official guidebook from the General Government of Algeria stressed that the colony was a “natural extension of the motherland.”³² The expositions took place during a time in which the French public, according to Ezra, “were bombarded with images of the colonies in books, films, advertising and exhibitions,” which reinforced the “military prowess of France and its status as a world power.”³³ The colonial empire played a key role in this “military prowess” by providing a large reserve of raw material

²⁹ Geoff Read, “Des hommes et des citoyens: Paternalism and Masculinity on the Republican Right in Interwar France, 1919-1939,” *Historical Reflections* 34, No. 2 (Summer 2008): 97.

³⁰ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation State*, 19.

³¹ “L’exposition coloniale vue de Paris,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 10, 1922.

³² *L’Algérie à l’Exposition coloniale de Marseille* (Algiers: Gouvernement Général de l’Algérie, 1922), 4.

³³ Elizabeth Ezra, *Colonial Unconscious: Race and Culture in Interwar France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 1-2.

and human capital to the metropole. With fears over international security and domestic concerns, the colonies took on a “more centralized role in ‘national self-understanding’.”³⁴ Multiple propagandist outlets including the press and the expositions worked to engrain in the minds of the public this connection between metropole and colonies as a way to reinforce the idea of Western superiority during this time of uncertainty.³⁵ By focusing of the role of the colonies, the editors of newspapers such as *La Croix* hoped to reinforce the general message that the “west is not in decline.”³⁶ This connection also supported the larger notion of Greater France, and through this discourse during the interwar period a “large sector of public opinion regarded a revitalized empire as the guarantor of international prestige and economic prosperity.”³⁷

The press attempted to highlight the union between the colonies and the metropole as a benefit of achieving Greater France. Both expositions and the press sought to “promote colonialism to the French public and to the world.”³⁸ This promotion of Greater France came at a time of alarm over the demographic losses in France. Before the start of World War I, concerned citizens and politicians worried about the demographic losses amongst the French population dating back to the end of the eighteenth century. This led to a large pronatalist movement within France that began around the turn of the twentieth century and received a boost after the losses of World War I. One of the most active groups, the *Alliance nationale pour l'accroissement de la population française* (established in 1896) boasted as members prominent politicians such as Georges Clemenceau and Paul Reynaud. After France suffered the highest casualty percentages among the male population mobilized for the war, the *Alliance* and its members took their

³⁴ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 29.

³⁵ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 96.

³⁶ “L’Occident n’est point à son déclin,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 7, 1931

³⁷ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 4.

³⁸ Ezra, “The Colonial Look: Exhibiting Empire in the 1930s,” 33.

pronatalist agenda to the national stage helping to pass a series of laws meant to curb the demographic loss in France.³⁹ The fear over demographic loss proved so pressing; it led Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau in 1919 to reiterate the imperative need for the French to increase their birthrate and to produce large families.⁴⁰ This declining birthrate directly correlated to the concern over the lack of French soldiers to defend the metropole. In an attempt to alleviate some fear over this declining birthrate, but by no means to diminish the pressing concern over the survival of the French race, the press once again turned to the colonies. While the press looked to the colonies, Clemenceau and his government worked to send colonial workers home, which inspired early anti-colonial groups like the North African Star. The editors of *Le Figaro* boasted of an empire of “a hundred million souls.”⁴¹ In the same issue, the editors praised “patriotic solidarity” and “fraternal union” which brought people to Paris to observe the “true image of whole France.”⁴² To view Greater France in this context meant viewing a nation comprised of many different peoples, even if racial hierarchies kept them separated, and above all a nation that sought to maintain the strength of the French race.

³⁹ For further reading on demographic concerns in early twentieth century France please see: Andrés Horacio Reggiani, “Procreating France: The Politics of Demography, 1919-1945,” *French Historical Studies* 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1996): 725-754, Joshua Cole, “‘There Are Only Good Mothers’: The Ideological Work of Women’s Fertility in France before World War I,” *French Historical Studies* 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1996): 639-672, Cheryl A. Koos, “Gender, Anti-Individualism, and Nationalism: The Alliance Nationale and the Pronatalist Backlash against the Femme Moderne, 1933-1940,” *French Historical Studies* 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1996): 699-723, Jean Elisabeth Pederson, “Regulating Abortion and Birth Control: Gender, Medicine, and Republican Politics in France, 1870-1920,” *French Historical Studies* 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1996): 673-698, Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Masculinity and Morality in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), Anthony Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France’s Bid for Power in Europe, 1914-1940* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 1995), Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics, and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), and Christopher E. Forth *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ *Journal officiel de la République Française*, Débates parlementaires, Senate, (October 11, 1919): 1625-1626.

⁴¹ “Le président de la République a inauguré l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 7, 1931

⁴² “L’Auguration de l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

This union remained the focus throughout the coverage of the expositions, with praise given to France, by the editors of *Le Petit Parisien*, as a “greater figure,” since “no nation has partnered with continuity in its colonial enterprise,” in the way that the France managed.⁴³ France represented the ideal empire above all other colonial powers that ever existed. The press hoped to “impress upon the French people the importance of the colonies to the health of France.”⁴⁴ This need of the colonies to sustain a healthy France reflects interesting tension in the colonial relationship, whereas racial diversity often appeared as a weakness for France in this context it became a strength on which to draw. The expositions therefore worked to demonstrate to the public that only through unity was France able to maintain a significant global standing. After the end of the 1931 Exposition, the editors of *Le Petit Parisien*, reminisced on the effects of the exposition and declared that not only did the exposition serve as a “brilliant demonstration of achievements,” it was also a “great demonstration of unity.”⁴⁵ In many ways this call for unity reflected the earlier *union sacrée* that brought together both the left and the right at the start of World War I in order to combat the threat of German aggression.⁴⁶ This same search for unity could also be found in the 1922 Exposition, as the organizers of the exposition attempted to convince the population that in order to

rebuild one of the grandest nations in the world, there must be a union of its children from every color. To realize this union, the French of Gaullist origin and the French from the new overseas provinces must know each other and appreciate each other... This

⁴³ “Au seuil de l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 29, 1931.

⁴⁴ Chandler, “Empire of the Republic,” 96.

⁴⁵ “M. Doumer preside la proclamation des récompenses de l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) November 11, 1931.

⁴⁶ For further reading on the *union sacrée* please see: Jean-Jacques Becker, “L’Union sacrée: L’exception qui confirme la règle?” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, No. 5 (Jan-Mar. 1985): 111-122, Jean-Jacques Becker, “Union sacrée et idéologie bourgeoise,” *Revue Historique*, T. 264, Fasc. 1 (Juillet-Sept. 1980): 65-74 and Jessica Wardhaugh, “Sacred Unions: Religion and Reconciliation in French Society, 1919-1945,” *French Politics, Culture and Society* 27, no. 3 (2009): 116-128.

spectacle, under the luminous sun of Provence, will show that an injured France will be healed and saved by its colonies.⁴⁷

The union of colonies and metropole saved France during the war and the government held to the belief that it would continue to do so as France worked to reaffirm its position in world affairs.

Coverage of the expositions praised the work of the Third Republic in not only maintaining the colonial empire but also expanding the empire into new territories. As Wilder argues, the Third Republic was responsible for changing “imperialism from a political inheritance into a state project,” out of which came events such as the colonial expositions.⁴⁸ The editors of *La Croix*, who stood as ardent defenders of colonial expansion, particularly involving the work of missionaries, stated proudly “in the history of the colonial expansion of France, the Third Republic occupies a glorious place.”⁴⁹ Others emphasized that only the Third Republic proved capable of ensuring “a colonial empire of unprecedented scale and reach.”⁵⁰ The expositions reflected the campaign to unite domestic reform with colonial expansion as part of the larger goal of national renewal.⁵¹

Following the opening of the 1922 Exposition, the Minister of Overseas France, Albert Sarraut (1920-1924), gave a speech, in which he celebrated the work of French colonialism as an illustration of the “wisdom of its statesmen, the heroism of its warriors, its daring explorers, the foresight of its diplomats, the dedication of its staff, the fearlessness of its settlers.”⁵² Sarraut, a

⁴⁷ Pierre-Louis Mallen, “L’Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille en 1922,” *Mondes et cultures* 57, no. 2/4/1 (1997): 205.

⁴⁸ Gary Wilder, “Framing Greater France Between the Wars,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, no. 2 (June 2001): 199.

⁴⁹ “Petit courrier de l’Exposition coloniale,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 16, 1931.

⁵⁰ “Inauguration du monument de l’expansion coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 15, 1931.

⁵¹ Horne, “In Pursuit of Greater France,” 21.

⁵² “L’Auguration de l’exposition coloniale de Marseille, M. Albert Sarraut expose l’œuvre de la France,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

member of the Radical Party, served as resident general of Indochina before the war and afterwards led the ministry of colonies and ministry of interior repeatedly. As Clifford Rosenberg argues, Sarraut more than anyone else “exerted more influence over French immigration, especially non-European immigration... in the interwar years.”⁵³ During the 1931 Exposition the editors of *Le Petit Parisien* repeated this sentiment, praising the work of the “successive regimes that have ruled,” which allowed for the French Empire to expand and serve as a bulwark for the metropole during times of hardship and strife.⁵⁴ The colonial empire, the editors hoped, would serve as a natural buffer against any hardships that may fall upon France and represented a source of opportunity for the expansion and exploitation of Greater France.

Economic Worth of the Colonies

One way in which both the expositions and the press attempted to reinforce the importance of the colonies to the metropolitan public was through a focus on the apparent economic benefits the empire bestowed upon France. The economic concerns plaguing France during the interwar period brought into question whether the colonies represented a good economic investment. Attempting to assuage this fear, the organizers of the expositions and the press hoped to emphasize the colonies as a “source of vital resources contributing to the health of the French economy.”⁵⁵ These vital resources included labor needed in the immediate postwar years to help rebuild France, and the trading partners needed in the early 1930s. As Wilder argues, the colonial markets became increasingly important for aging sectors of the French

⁵³ Clifford Rosenberg, "Albert Sarraut and Republican Racial Thought," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 98.

⁵⁴ “L’Exposition coloniale est ouverte,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

⁵⁵ Chandler, “Empire of the Republic,” 96.

economy such as textile and metallurgy. At the start of World War I the empire represented France's third largest trading partner and by 1928 the empire secured the top spot. This transition occurred in part due to the economic interdependence that developed during and after the war as financial losses on investments in the Russian and the Ottoman Empires caused France to redirect capital towards the colonies.⁵⁶ Investment in the colonies received support before the war and after due in part to the influential *Union coloniale française*, a small group of powerful businessmen and statesmen and the *Fédération Intercoloniale*, both of which acted "principally as lobbying groups for companies, banks, and various capital operations in the colonies."⁵⁷ The colonies became a foundation on which the French economy could be rebuilt during the interwar period and took on increasing importance as the Great Depression took hold in the years just prior to the 1931 exposition.

While economic interdependence increased in the interwar period, the close economic ties between the metropole and the colonies stretched back well into the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Investing in the production of goods and resources from the colonies facilitated "rational economic development," or *mise en valeur*.⁵⁹ By investing in the colonies and providing them with the benefits of French civilization, the belief stood that the colonies would provide material goods in return to the metropole.⁶⁰ Press coverage of both expositions stressed the importance of *mise en valeur* in the colonies, with the editors of *Le Figaro* declaring the colonies "admirable

⁵⁶ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 26.

⁵⁷ Stuart Michael Persell, "The Role of the Union Coloniale Française and the Fédération Intercoloniale in Colonial Tariff Reform, 1893-1925," *Réflexions Historiques* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 78. Also see: Stuart Michael Persell, *The French Colonial Lobby, 1889-1938* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

⁵⁸ Jacque Marseille, *Empire coloniale et Capitalisme français: histoire d'un divorce*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984), quoted in Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Vendre: Le Mythe économique colonial," in *Culture coloniale: La France conquise par son empire, 1871-1931*, eds. Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: Autrement, 2003), 169.

⁵⁹ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 22-3.

⁶⁰ Chandler, "Empire of the Republic," 96.

centers of production and work.”⁶¹ The expositions embodied the economic prowess of the colonies, which led Lucien Dior, Minister of Commerce in 1922, to call for the organization of more frequent colonial expositions as “these expositions are one of the best builders of economic activity, they stimulate production, promote exchanges, and are no less useful from the standpoint of national trade than international relations.”⁶² In particular the decision to hold the 1922 exposition in Marseille centered on the belief that it provided a “better environment for promoting new trade deals to build the economy.”⁶³ The expositions thus served multiple symbiotic roles, as the education of the public could generate business for France. In order to best counter any anxieties regarding the strength of the French economy, the abilities of the colonies to consume and produce for the metropole took center stage. During the 1931 exposition in particular, commercial pavilions erected for the event illustrated the “collaboration between commerce and the Empire.”⁶⁴

Despite the economic resources and markets the colonies provided, the majority of the metropolitan population remained largely indifferent to the empire.⁶⁵ While the organizers and press could tout the magnitude of the French Empire and the size of its populace, the economic worth of the colonies proved more difficult to convey. In part this reflected the general lack of public interest in “exploits abroad” and “unenthusiastic at the prospect of uncontrolled expenditures.”⁶⁶ In order to justify the costs of the empire, the expositions needed to impress the

⁶¹ “L’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 16, 1922.

⁶² “L’Auguration de l’exposition coloniale de Marseille,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

⁶³ Hale, *Races on Display*, 88.

⁶⁴ Steven Ungar, “The Colonial Exposition (1931)” in *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* eds. Blanchard, et al., 210.

⁶⁵ C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, “The French ‘Colonial Party’: Its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914,” *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (March 1971): 101.

⁶⁶ Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France’,” 82.

public with strong economic figures demonstrating the benefits of the continued colonial investment. In 1922, the editors of *Le Figaro* discussed the pavilion for West Africa and marveled at the tables that showed the increase in exports from the region growing from 71 to 589 million between 1906 and 1922, while imports from France to West African swelled from 92 million to 654 million in the same period.⁶⁷ Figures such as these helped to break down the economic importance of the empire and the press then bombarded the public with this data.

The 1922 exposition promoted the economic benefits of the colonies in publications created to accompany the various pavilions. In the guide written by the General Government of Algeria, the reader was taken on a virtual tour of the pavilion. The agricultural potential and production of the colony took center stage within the first room of the pavilion highlighting the importance of these aspects to the French economy.⁶⁸ This interest in the agricultural potential dates to before the 1830 conquest and represented one driving factor to colonization.⁶⁹ Similar agricultural pursuits influenced how the French government approached Morocco during the protectorate period (1912-1956).⁷⁰ The layout of the pavilion is significant as the colonies represented “essential suppliers of raw materials for domestic key industries,” and the layout forced the readers and the visitors to the pavilion to confront this immediately.⁷¹ The guidebook continued this focus detailing how the exportation of wine and wheat from Algeria constituted

⁶⁷ “L’œuvre coloniale de la France, L’Exposition de Marseille,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

⁶⁸ *L’Algérie à l’Exposition coloniale de Marseille*, 5.

⁶⁹ For more on the conquest of Algeria please see: Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁷⁰ Will D. Swearingen, “In Pursuit of the Granary of Rome: France’s Wheat Policy in Morocco, 1915-1931,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 3 (Aug., 1985): 347.

⁷¹ Jean-Pierre Dormois and François Crouzet, “The Significance of the French Colonial Empire for French Economic Development,” *Revista de Historia Economica* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 333.

two of its most important commodities.⁷² Algerian farms, mostly owned by white colonists and worked by indigenous landless peasants, often forced to relinquish common land commandeered by the French, provided production of those products that the metropole lacked, allowing French industry to grow more rapidly.⁷³ In this depiction, the colony is presented as an unending source of products for metropolitan France.

During the 1931 exposition the editors of *Le Figaro* repeated this same formula. The newspaper presented economic facts to the public in an attempt to impress upon readers the importance of the colonies. The newspaper informed readers that overall trade in 1871 only amounted to “600 million [francs]” and that currently trade within the Empire “reached 14 billion [francs].”⁷⁴ Once again these figures attempted to persuade the public that investment in the Empire yielded substantial returns for the nation and also highlighted the increased importance of trade within the empire. Unfortunately these numbers leave out the suffering that made such economic returns possible, thus presenting the public with a sanitized version of the colonies and the products produced. Particularly, the brutality of the colonization of Algeria, which witnessed aggressive and brutal warfare and massive land sequestrations that left the indigenous population, “with few defenses against the disease and famine that followed,” which led to millions of deaths.⁷⁵ The French government and military also carried out massacres of the Algerian population resulting in the death of 800,000 Algerians.⁷⁶ Despite the indifference from the general public, the organizers of the expositions and the press recognized the “strategic,

⁷² *L'Algérie à l'Exposition coloniale de Marseille*, 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁴ “Inauguration du monument de l'expansion coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 15, 1931.

⁷⁵ Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 164-165 & 319.

⁷⁶ For further reading on the massacres that occurred in Algeria please see: Kamel Kateb, *Européens, “indigènes,” et juifs en Algérie, 1830-1962: Représentations et réalités des populations* (Paris, France: INED, 2001)

political, and economic value of the colonies, underscored by the 1914-1918 war and the financial crisis of 1929.”⁷⁷ The wartime experience “reinforced the long-held colonial practice of exploiting indigenous labor,” and the press embraced this concept of *mise en valeur* triumphed during the 1920s and 1930s by men such as Albert Sarraut.⁷⁸ The editors of the various newspapers conveniently overlooked exploitation and violence, instead focused on the perceived mutual benefits of economic interdependence.

The press also utilized the 1931 Exposition to discuss the interdependence between metropolitan and colonial markets. The colonial empire represented to the editors of *Le Figaro* a “burgeoning economic power” and the “biggest consumer...and the first of [France’s] suppliers” allowing for a “quarter of the total production of our cotton fabrics [to be] absorbed by outer France.”⁷⁹ By consuming the products produced by the metropole, the colonies allowed the French economy to expand following the war. The markets of Africa, Indochina and Madagascar in particular greatly benefitted the metropolitan textile industry.⁸⁰ In many ways this market interdependence reflected the relationship between India and Britain.⁸¹ The official guide for the pavilion of French Indochina boasted the economic power of the colonies with its population of 20,000,000, which assured the colony “considerable economic activity.”⁸² The guide went on to detail the various sections of the Indochinese economy from agricultural production⁸³ to its

⁷⁷ Jody Blake, “The Truth About the Colonies, 1931: Art indigène in Service of the Revolution,” *Oxford Art Journal* 25, no. 1 (2002): 38.

⁷⁸ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 65.

⁷⁹ “L’Auguration de l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

⁸⁰ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “Vendre: Le Mythe économique colonial,” in *Culture coloniale*, eds. Pascal Blanchard et al., 163.

⁸¹ For further reading on the economic relationship between Britain and India please see: Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905*, (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1966)

⁸² *L’Indochine française*, 7.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 24-39.

industrial production and mining.⁸⁴ All of these details attempted to convince the public not only that the empire produced for France, but also that the colonies remained sites of untapped potential and ready for the policies of *mise en valeur*.

The press also attempted to influence the public to purchase items produced with resources from the colonies. In one such instance *Le Figaro* championed the purchase of French made straw hats, as the material to create them originated in the colonies before making its way to industries in the metropole. Buying this product promoted “both our colonial commerce and our national workforce.”⁸⁵ Investing in the production of goods and resources from the colonies facilitated *mise en valeur*. The exposition of 1931 demonstrated, for *Le Petit Parisien*, the “untold riches of [the] colonies, it puts more value in everything the metropole has done and can do for them.”⁸⁶ This cycle of investment in the colonies, which in turn benefitted the metropole, which then invested more heavily in the colonies, represents one aspect of *mise en valeur*. The expositions and press thought they needed to endorse this economic cycle in order to sell it to the general public.

As the 1922 Exposition closed its doors, the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais* scolded the French public for not appreciating the economic benefits the colonies provided for the metropole.

The paper asserted that,

The time has come to show the huge role it [the colonial empire] has played in the economic development of our country and the knowledge of this vast colonial domain that the public ignored despite the billions of francs in raw materials that our fellow citizens overseas have provided during the five years of war and 800,000 men who fought or served under our flag that became theirs.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-45.

⁸⁵ “A l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 19, 1931.

⁸⁶ “Après l’inauguration de l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 8, 1931.

⁸⁷ “Une Page Coloniale hebdomadaire dans le “Petit Marseillais” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) November 17, 1922.

This passage not only reiterated the theme that the colonies provided a huge economic benefit to the metropole, but also touched upon the impact of the colonies on the war effort bringing the press in line with the goals of the exposition. This message once again hides the exploitive nature of *mise en valeur* and does not acknowledge the hardships experienced by the colonial subjects during the war and after. The newspaper instead presented the colonial subjects bravely serving the “flag that became theirs.” Nevertheless the economic bulwark the colonies provided after the war supported the idea of Greater France by presenting the colonies as a “reservoir of labor and military goods.”⁸⁸ While French policymakers preferred filling labor shortages with French workers, the devastation of the war and the need to rebuild in its aftermath convinced leaders of the pressing need to satisfy these shortages by any means necessary. As Stovall argues, “if the French economy was to recover and prosper in the 1920s, someone would have to replace these lost Frenchmen in the nation’s workplace.”⁸⁹ Reminding the public of this reservoir could help to alleviate the anxiety over the perceived economic weakness of France. With such a large reserve of labor power and raw materials the empire could help to sustain the French economy during the Great Depression, when France “turned to its colonies for funds, rather than the other way around.”⁹⁰

Pride in the Empire

With a focus on the political and economic might of the French Empire, the expositions and subsequent press coverage attempted above all to instill a sense of pride and ownership in

⁸⁸ Furlough, “Une leçon des choses,” 441.

⁸⁹ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 57.

⁹⁰ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 217.

the empire via these elaborate physical reproductions. The French government during the interwar period “sought to inform public opinion about her vast colonial domain and to instill a certain image of the empire and its inhabitants.”⁹¹ One impetus for inspiring pride in the metropolitan population came in reaction to the general apathy the public held for the empire as mentioned before.⁹² The expositions sought to create a contrived depiction of the colonies from reproducing buildings such as Angkor Wat to bringing merchants and performers from the colonies to work the expositions in an attempt to shake the public from their indifferent attitude toward the empire. To inspire the public, the expositions created an idealized and sanitized colonial world. The press took up the mantle of instilling pride and ownership in readers who, as the editors of *Le Figaro* noted, had a “right to be proud of the progress of our colonies...the assistance they have given us during the war and the help we can ask them for our common defense.”⁹³

As Lemaire and Blanchard point out, these “colonial representations brought every individual imaginary world to life, and the French were thus able to ‘domesticate’ their Empire.”⁹⁴ This domestication of the empire worked in tandem with similar state projects to “integrate the nation, assimilate provinces, and constitute republican citizens.”⁹⁵ Instilling pride amongst the French public in their empire meant presenting them with a rose-tinted view of the colonies and their inhabitants. Building support for the empire represented, as Lebovics argues, one of the “most sustained domestic efforts of contemporary national leaders... second only to

⁹¹ Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France,’” 82.

⁹² Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, 281.

⁹³ “A propos de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 21, 1922.

⁹⁴ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 95.

⁹⁵ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 25.

the cultivation of xenophobic nationalism.”⁹⁶ Time, energy and money poured into these expositions and coverage of them as a means to create a sense of ownership of the colonies and pride in both France and the empire.

The expositions and the press sought to shape how the public perceived the colonies, so it could be celebrated. Persuading the metropolitan public to claim ownership over the colonies proved a long-standing difficulty for the state, as even during the height of colonial expansion in the 1880s and 1890s the enterprise did not receive “popular acclaim.”⁹⁷ Not only should the public feel pride, the expositions and the press made it their right to feel this pride. Representations of the empire through these imaginary communities of the expositions provided the means by which the “imagined community” of the *outré-mer* and nation could be presented to the public.⁹⁸ The imagined community presented to the public relied upon these contrived reproductions that presented an imaginary colonial world far removed from the reality of the empire. The work undertaken by the French government and people during the expansion of colonial empire manifested itself in these expositions, as testaments to the perceived greatness of the French civilization.

While the exposition of 1922 focused on the French Empire exclusively, the 1931 exposition featured other colonial powers in addition to the pavilions for French colonies in a show of solidarity amongst colonial powers. The pavilions for the metropole and French colonies took center stage as indicated in the layout for the exposition as seen in figure 2.⁹⁹ [Figure 2] The layout of the pavilions for the French colonies and metropole signaled the power and maturity of

⁹⁶ Lebovics, *True France*, 54.

⁹⁷ Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans*, 281.

⁹⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25.

⁹⁹ “L’Exposition Coloniale de Paris,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 10, 1931. See figure 2 in Appendix.

the French empire to visitors.¹⁰⁰ Organizers for both expositions marketed them as a way to see the world in a day.¹⁰¹ These representations of the colonies served as a window for the metropolitan population to glimpse the vast empire, even if this view failed to portray the nature of colonization. The expositions worked to transform the understanding of the empires from an abstract concept to a more tangible one. As Marshal Lyautey proclaimed during the opening of the 1931 exposition, “colonial conquest is an organization that works.”¹⁰² While these expositions supported a certain image it denied the reality of the colonization.

Coverage of the expositions stressed the greatness of France as a civilizing nation, one of the few great colonial powers left during the interwar period. As Bancel and Blanchard argue, an ideological attribute of French colonialism was “the sense that France, thanks to the ideology of a ‘civilizing mission’ was uniquely qualified in achieving it.”¹⁰³ The press declared the colonial enterprise a “common fact in all great civilized peoples,” that resulted as a “consequence of the very development of modern civilization. It tends, by a natural movement, to constantly widen the reach of the activities and ideas of the people who are richest of work or thought.”¹⁰⁴ The press endeavored to convince the public that their colonial enterprise was an unavoidable consequence of their greatness. Using the colonies as an example, the press worked with the general movement of the French government and the organizers of the expositions to “foster in the people of metropolitan France a feeling of legitimate pride, pride that was nourished by

¹⁰⁰ Morton, “A Study in Hybridity, 76.

¹⁰¹ David Bate, “Surrealism, Colonialism and Photography,” in *Empire and Culture: The French Experience, 1830-1940*, ed. Martin Evans (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.

¹⁰² Marshal Lyautey, “L’inauguration de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

¹⁰³ Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard, “To Civilize: The Invention of the Native (1918-1940), in *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* eds. Pascal Blanchard, et al., 176.

¹⁰⁴ Lucien Romier, “Au seuil de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 29, 1931.

concrete info.”¹⁰⁵ Discussion of economic figures and the size of the French empire represented examples of the concrete info the expositions and the press attempted to convey to the general populace.

The details of the spread of French civilization and rule throughout the world frequently appeared in the press in an attempt to stir pride amongst the public. During the 1922 exposition this sentiment appeared in both *Le Figaro* and *Le Petit Parisien*. The editors marveled at the representations of the colonies where “France has expanded, not its brutal rule, but the influence of its civilization, its genius, its productive energies.”¹⁰⁶ This view avoided placing any wrongdoing on behalf of the French during their colonial expansion. It supported an “image of peaceful colonization, fully accepted and understood by the vast majority of colonized people,” leading to the entrenchment of the ideology of a “civilizing mission within the French.”¹⁰⁷ The press chose to present a sanitized view of colonialism to the public to bolster support and to disassociate French rule from the atrocities occurring in French colonies.

This focus on the supposed peaceful spread of colonialism came at a time of intensifying pressure from independence movements within the colonies and anti-colonial groups within the metropole.¹⁰⁸ The events of World War I greatly influenced the beginning of the anti-colonial movement in France. Colonial soldiers that fought for France came away from the experience with a new relationship to the state providing them with new avenues to challenge colonial rule and with frustration over broken promises.¹⁰⁹ Many colonial soldiers and workers who refused to return home following the war became involved in the anti-colonial movement in Paris, and

¹⁰⁵ Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France,’” 86.

¹⁰⁶ “L’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 16, 1922.

¹⁰⁷ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 95.

¹⁰⁸ Ezra, “The Colonial Look: Exhibiting Empire in the 1930s,” 33.

¹⁰⁹ Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, 80.

formed new organizations including the *Union Intercoloniale* (Intercolonial Union) 1921, the *Ligue universelle pour la defense de la race noire* (Universal League for the Defense of the Black Race) 1924, the *Comité de défense de la race nègre* (CDRN) 1926, the *Ligue de defense de la race nègre* (LDRN) 1927, and the *Étoile nord-africaine* (North African Star) 1929.¹¹⁰ The editors of *Le Petit Parisien* marveled at the “considerable work” undertaken to give insight in the “colonial endeavor painstakingly pursued and that has created the overseas empire, not enslaving people.”¹¹¹ The editors ignored many aspects of colonization and instead sought to inspire pride amongst the French as peaceful rulers of a grateful overseas empire to sell a particular view of the empire that avoided any negative image of French rule.

Organizers of both expositions relied on the construction of idealized colonial lands as a means to both draw in the public and to instill a sense of pride in the lands they controlled. As Lebovics argues, the 1931 exposition “provided the French public, on both an existential and symbolic level, with the feeling that they had rights of ownership over all these marvels.”¹¹² Coverage of these expositions reinforced this sense of ownership by detailing the layout of the expositions and the various pavilions and people inhabiting the space. For those that could not attend the expositions, newspapers took the reader on a meticulous journey through each pavilion informing them of the many wonders of the French colonial empire.

Multiple newspapers praised both expositions for their reproduction of the colonial empire for the enjoyment of the metropolitan public. In 1922, the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais* boasted “nothing has been spared to give this illusion... where the whole of France wants to

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80-83.

¹¹¹ “L’Exposition coloniale s’ouvre demain a Marseille,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 15, 1922.

¹¹² Lebovics, “The Zoos and the Exposition Coloniale Internationale,” 371.

admire the splendor of our colonies.”¹¹³ The editors presented the exposition as extremely popular with the crowds that were “very interested in the attractive and picturesque side of the great colonial manifestation.”¹¹⁴ The press attempted to persuade readers to attend and take part in the celebration of the empire by proclaiming the enjoyment of the crowds that already attended. By portraying the exposition as a success, the newspaper could convince readers not to miss out on this limited time event.

In a telegram published in *Le Petit Marseillais* from Albert Sarraut Minister of Overseas France to Adrien Artaud General Commissioner of the exposition, Sarraut praised the work of the exposition and claimed to be “very moved by this beautiful glorification of our colonial work and I cannot wait to find myself among you.”¹¹⁵ By including this telegram, the paper supported the work of Sarraut as Minister of Overseas France and used his approval and enjoyment as a means to bolster the public’s support and pride in the exposition.

The exposition of 1931 followed a similar strategy by reproducing the colonies in an idealized manner for public consumption. Organizers of the exposition created the event as a way to “bring the empire home to the metropole.”¹¹⁶ The exposition itself proved successful; 33 million visitors passed through its gates.¹¹⁷ The sheer magnitude of the 1931 exposition astounded the press. In one political cartoon, the artist parodied the scope of the exposition by having a man and his son ask for directions to Greenland only to be told by an older gentlemen dressed in a military uniform, “nothing easier: cross Western Africa, turn behind Guadalupe,

¹¹³ “Le Grande Etat-Major de l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 15, 1922.

¹¹⁴ “A l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 20, 1922.

¹¹⁵ Albert Sarraut, “Un Télégramme de Félicitations du Ministre des Colonies à M. Artaud,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 18, 1922.

¹¹⁶ Furlough, “Une leçon des choses, 441.

¹¹⁷ Morton, “A Study in Hybridity, 76.

pass Indochina on your right, cut by Oceania to your left... and you will land in Greenland.”¹¹⁸

[Figure 3] This cartoon demonstrated the vastness of the empire and the exposition by listing all the lands controlled by France, represented by buildings in the background of the cartoon. The cartoon also sold the idea of seeing the empire in a day by listing all the different colonies visitors could experience as they made their way through the exposition.

The press supported the goal of making “imperialism an integral part of the French consciousness,” by laying out the “overseas domains for popular consumption.”¹¹⁹ The newspapers enticed their readers to attend the expositions by showing them various photographs of the pavilions and workers. One example, in *La Croix*, featured a photograph a street scene.

The caption read,

Are we at the Colonial Exposition or the heart of mysterious and formidable Africa? We are, in fact, in Vincennes, but we believe ourselves transported to French West Africa, as Mr. Oliver and Mr. Lambert were able to recreate the local color and atmosphere of this colony.¹²⁰

The caption blurred the line between metropole and colony, demonstrating that the exposition could transport the visitor to the far-flung corners of the empire while keeping them safely within the confines of Paris.

The interwar period in France represented a time of renewed interest in the colonies and concern over domestic and international affairs including national decline, demographic losses, and France’s status in the world. The expositions and press coverage of them worked to sell an

¹¹⁸ Political Cartoon, *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 10, 1931. See figure 3 in Appendix.

¹¹⁹ Evans, “Culture and Empire,” 1.

¹²⁰ “Une rue qui donne le frisson,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 2, 1931.

idealized image of the empire to the public in an attempt to assuage their fears and to instill in them a sense of pride in the empire. The expositions focused on how the empire benefitted France economically and gave the nation an important position in world affairs. The economic benefits of the colonies as trading partners bolstered the French economy during the interwar while also helping the country maintain its status on the world stage. The press readily supported the positive aspects of the empire and colonization and remained disconnected from the reality of the colonial enterprise. The imaginary community of colonies presented by the expositions and the press attempted to connect the French public to the colonies and thus expand their own imagined community beyond the metropole to include a sanitized vision of the empire.

CHAPTER 2: DISPLAYING THE CIVILIZING MISSION

Displaying the successes of the civilizing mission, and by extension French universalism, to the metropolitan public represented a primary goal for the officials of both expositions. The idea of French universalism centers on the belief the nation's republican traditions and culture could, and should, apply to all peoples.¹ This universalism represents the "opposite of particularism, ethnic, religious, national, or otherwise."² The colonized people represented one example of this particularism against which French Universalism could be defined. The Third Republic in particular elevated the civilizing mission and the spread of universalism to the level of official imperial doctrine.³ Given this lofty position of the civilizing mission, the press took care to highlight the ways in which both expositions demonstrated the spread of French civilization throughout the empire. During the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century some French colonial policy makers genuinely believed that France "could and should exert her powerful civilizing influence on the under-developed nations of the world. After all, was not Paris the major civilizing city in Western civilization?"⁴ While there were policy makers who truly believed and those that understood this call to civilize as window dressing, this assumption that France needed to raise up the "under-developed" nations drove the civilizing mission.

¹ Jennifer Anne Boittin and Tyler Stovall, "Who is French?" *French Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 349.

² Naomi Schor, "The Crisis of French Universalism," *Yale French Studies* no. 100, France/USA: The Cultural Wars (2001): 43.

³ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 1.

⁴ Chandler, "Empire of the Republic," 95.

To demonstrate the successes of the civilizing mission, the expositions and the press turned to colonial workers and soldiers as representative of the ideal and safe colonial subject.⁵ The press and expositions portrayed these colonial subjects as non-threatening and therefore different from their counterparts in the colonies. The depiction of these colonial workers and soldiers developed in part out of the concept of the model “native”. As Bancel and Blanchard argue, the model “native” represented the idealized colonial subject that stood at the “heart of colonial culture” and made his contributions to the “construction of his own destiny, a destiny that was ultimately being decided by the colonizer,” and represented an essential “role in the French colonial imaginary.”⁶ This chapter examines the ways in which the press displayed and celebrated the civilizing mission during both expositions, and how the colonial soldiers and workers at these events came to represent the success of the civilizing mission and the model “native”.

Displaying and Celebrating the Civilizing Mission

In order to properly display and celebrate the civilizing mission, the expositions and the press needed to demonstrate the viability of the mission and the work still to accomplish. Focus on the civilizing mission though brought to light a glaring contradiction. As Patricia Morton argues,

The colonized peoples had to be proved barbarous to justify their colonization, but the *mission civilisatrice* required that they be raised above this savagery. If the colonized peoples acquired too much civilization and became truly assimilated to *la mère-patrie*, colonization could no longer be defended, having fulfilled its mission.⁷

⁵ Furlough, “Une leçon des choses,” 442.

⁶ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 177

⁷ Morton, “A Study in Hybridity,” 78.

This contradiction exemplifies a larger tension, as Amelia Lyons argues, between the universal and the particular in France, as the two are “at once incompatible and inextricably linked.”⁸ In order to maintain the civilizing mission and by extension French universalism, the Other needed to be defined and kept separate.⁹ The expositions and press needed to demonstrate to the public that the mission succeeded in bringing French civilization to the far-flung empire, but at the same time that the colonial populations could not truly transcend their perceived savagery. Morton explains that in the 1931 exposition, the organizers of the event attempted to circumvent this contradiction by constructing pavilions that represented the colonies on the outside as still savage and uncivilized, while on the inside displaying the achievements of the French in civilizing the colonial population.¹⁰ The officials of the 1931 exposition sought to “reflect the beneficial progress of *la mission civilisatrice* by means of scientific, authentic exhibitions, rather than vulgar, exotic entertainments.”¹¹ Coverage of the 1931 exposition, by *Le Figaro*, discussed the display of “statistics, dioramas and bas-reliefs relating to the development of medical and social assistance to the colonial populations and the uninterrupted increase in the production of these colonies.”¹² Similar goals drove the 1922 exposition, which utilized displays, pamphlets and

⁸ Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 9.

⁹ For further reading on French universalism and its limits please see: Etienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2004), Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism, 1918-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), and Patrick Weil, *How to be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Morton, “A Study in Hybridity,” 78.

¹¹ Patricia A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 74.

¹² “Afrique occidentale française,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

colonial peoples brought from their homeland to work the exposition as proof of the constructive outcome of the civilizing mission in each country.

At the start of the 1922 exposition, the press focused on the union between the colonies and the metropole and the benefits and mutual gains both enjoyed from the civilizing mission. In a speech given by Albert Sarraut he spoke of the creation of a “brotherhood of man,” and the work France undertook through its “civilizing genius” resulting in the “riches of distant continents.”¹³ Here again, we see the *mise en valeur* that France brought with colonization. This brotherhood of man reflected a larger movement during the 1920s to ignore existing tensions within the empire and promote the image of a colonial population that “submitted willingly to French civilization and the benefits of the ‘civilizing mission’.”¹⁴ Sarraut’s expression of gratitude to the colonial subjects in not only protecting the French homeland, but in wanting to “continue the great enterprise [France] started,” supported this image of the grateful colonial subject.¹⁵ The press argued that World War I gave “new impetus to the development of our colonies and the civilizing work pursued by France among our protected colonial populations.”¹⁶ As Bancel and Blanchard argue, the war demonstrated the importance of the colonial populations and how these populations, like other resources from the colonies, represented a source of wealth and could be utilized for war efforts and labor. These populations, Bancel and Blanchard continue, needed protection from sickness and subversive ideas and benefits from French

¹³ “M. Albert Sarraut expose l’œuvre coloniale de la France,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

¹⁴ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 95.

¹⁵ “M. Albert Sarraut expose l’œuvre coloniale de la France,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

education, and above all needed to be molded and reproduced for a stronger empire and metropole.¹⁷

Media coverage of the expositions worked to downplay any negative consequences of colonial expansion in order to support the idea of the civilizing mission. Janet Horne argues that officials entrusted the 1931 exposition with the goal of “reviving the colonial ideal in the service of national renewal,” a goal pursued by the organizers of the 1922 exposition as well in order to revive the idea of the civilizing mission and its assumed beneficial effects as a positive force.¹⁸ For *La Croix*, the 1931 exposition represented not an “exhibition of trophies or a slave market,” but rather argued for an understanding of “colonization as exercising a higher mission [spreading] human brotherhood.”¹⁹ This description of the 1931 exposition reveals another contradiction within the civilizing mission. While the civilizing mission represented an aspect of French colonial culture that relied upon racial hierarchies and prejudice, official colonial propaganda promoted universalistic ideals.²⁰ As Tyler Stovall argues, French universalism stressed the “color-blind nature of national identity” and that to be French was a matter of “culture and adherence to Republican values.”²¹

The press appeared to celebrate “respect for the peoples of the overseas territories,” when in reality the underlying message of both expositions and the coverage of them worked instead to produce pride in the French and their “empire of subject races that provided labor for their civilized tutors.”²² The editors of the newspapers portrayed people of the empire as enamored

¹⁷ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 172.

¹⁸ Horne, “In Pursuit of Greater France,” 41.

¹⁹ “L’invitation aux touristes américains,” *La Croix* (Paris) April 28, 1931.

²⁰ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 174.

²¹ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 53.

²² Hale, *Races on Display*, 103.

with the capital and the metropole, at the same time French authorities worked tirelessly to deport North African colonial subjects from France following the end of the war.²³ French police forces also set up elaborate surveillance operations to watch over colonial migrants in the metropole during the interwar period.²⁴ Depictions during the 1920s and 1930s of the colonial empire stressed both difference and domestication among the colonial subjects.²⁵ As Tyler Stovall argues, “French colonialism...not only relied upon racial privilege in the maintenance of the civilizing mission; it also articulated the distinction between the French and the natives in terms of racial identity.”²⁶ This difference and domestication of the colonial subjects in part influenced the development of the concept of the model “native”.²⁷ In this way the workers and soldiers brought from the colonies served as living trophies of the model native and the civilizing mission.

Celebration of the civilizing mission appeared in coverage of both expositions. In 1922 the press focused on the benefits France bestowed on its colonial subjects and the gratitude the colonials felt towards France in return. The colonial subjects received praise as part of a larger shift in the understanding of the colonies following the war. Massive waves of conscripted infantrymen and workers from the colonies led to the creation of a new colonial character, this character evolved from “savage” into the “adopted child of ‘Greater France’,” leading to a shift

²³ Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control Between the Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 109.

²⁴ For further reading on French policing of colonial migrants during the interwar period please see: Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*, Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic*, and Mary Dewhurst Lewis, “The Strangeness of Foreigners: Policing Migration and Nation in Interwar Marseille,” *French Politics, Culture and Society* 20, no.3 (Fall 2002): 65-96.

²⁵ Ezra, *Colonial Unconscious*, 2.

²⁶ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 55.

²⁷ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 176.

in one of the major themes of French colonial culture.²⁸ *Le Figaro* portrayed France as a friend of the colonies who “brought to the indigenous the beneficial lights of science and law.”²⁹ This depiction placed the colonial people in the role of grateful beneficiary of French civilization. Coverage of the 1931 exposition by *La Croix* stressed the belief that “the indigenous policy” was “a policy of respect.”³⁰ The press also stressed that the interaction between the French and their colonial subjects benefitted both those overseas and the metropolitan French at home. The editors of *Le Petit Parisien* presented the 1931 exposition as proof of an “interpenetration of races and civilizations,” bringing together the Western world and the colonies. The assumption continued that whenever “there is contact between the white and the other, between Western civilization and the other, a kind of osmosis occurs for the benefit of all.”³¹ To support this claim of mutual osmosis, the editors presented the renovation of indigenous art from North Africa, West Africa and Madagascar as prime examples. This belief in the mutually beneficial nature of the civilizing mission represented merely an invention of the French government. Events such as the expositions and subsequent media coverage perpetuated this invention and worked to present the colonies in an idealized form.³²

The assumed gratitude of the colonial subjects and success of the civilizing mission served as a foundation upon which both expositions endeavored to build a “communal feeling of solidarity” among the French colonies. The hope remained that those colonial subjects brought to work at the expositions or those who visited would “feel a surge of pride in belonging to such a

²⁸ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 96.

²⁹ “L’Exposition de Marseille,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

³⁰ “La politique indigène est une politique d’égards,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

³¹ “La journée de cloture de l’exposition fut une journée d’apothéose,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) November 16, 1931.

³² Evans, “Culture and Empire,” 2.

glorious enterprise.”³³ The editors of *Le Figaro* wrote of large crowds of people from the colonies and the metropole visiting the 1922 exposition, “whose destiny around the world, was entrusted to the tutelary hands of France.”³⁴ In this way colonial subjects from across France’s vast empire remained connected to one another through the goal of the French civilizing mission. During the 1931 exposition, press coverage of the event presented the crowds of enthusiastic visitors as proud of the empire and this expression of its power. The exposition allowed for a mixing of different peoples, for various individuals to “rub shoulders” with one another. Visitors it appeared to the editors *Le Petit Parisien*, “whatever the color of his skin, the extent of his knowledge or conditions of life, never felt homesick there.”³⁵ The press presented visitors as wanting to stay and celebrate the empire’s achievements both in the metropole and abroad. Both the organizers of the exposition and the press supported this idea that those colonial subjects visiting the events would experience pride in belonging to such a great endeavor.

To further exemplify the work of the civilizing mission, *Le Petit Parisien* featured a speech given by Blaise Diagne, at the time the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies and the first Sub-Saharan African elected to the French Chamber of Deputies. In this speech, Diagne spoke of the villages “lost in the remote bush, huddled in paddy fields or framed to the shore of ocean, awakening to new thoughts,” brought about by the effect of the French civilizing mission. He continued on, praising the “feeling of close solidarity in all domains, bringing together in an unflinching way colonizer and colonized.”³⁶ Diagne closed his speech by greeting the head of state on behalf of colonial men from around the empire. By featuring Diagne’s speech, the paper

³³ Chandler, “Empire of the Republic,” 92.

³⁴ “L’Exposition de Marseille,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

³⁵ “L’Exposition coloniale est close,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) November 16, 1931.

³⁶ “Le banquet de clôture de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) November 15, 1931.

presented a model colonial subject, an *evolvé* serving as proof of the system's validity, that the most brilliant of the colonial subjects could be integrated into the metropole.³⁷ As Wilder explains, Diagne “embodied the establishment politics of an earlier group of West African elites committed to cultural assimilation and political equality,” and appeared to serve as proof of the success of French universalism.³⁸ Diagne earned his place by embracing French universal culture, however this culture kept him from assimilating completely into French society. At most he could only hope to achieve association, for as Stovall argues, “the natives could not become French precisely because France was defined as white.”³⁹

Coverage of the 1931 exposition focused on the association of the colonial subject with French society through the civilizing mission. In particular, the editors of *Le Figaro* discussed how the civilizing mission attempted to “correct its [the colonial populations] traditional institutions without upsetting them,” in order to create an ideal, if unachievable, colonial subject and to prepare them for a “gradual emancipation that makes them the subjects of yesterday, today a partner, and a citizen of tomorrow.”⁴⁰ Creating citizens of tomorrow from the colonial subjects of the day reflected yet another contradictory element of the press coverage and expositions. Organizers needed to both “present the colonized Other as a future (adopted) citizen of ‘Greater France’ and to recognize and perpetuate racial difference.”⁴¹ Nevertheless the press presented the civilizing mission as leading to the eventual granting of full citizenship on evolved colonial subjects such as Diagne and others that embraced French tutelage. These individuals

³⁷ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize: The Invention of the Native,” 175.

³⁸ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 161.

³⁹ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 65.

⁴⁰ “Inauguration du monument de l’expansion coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 15, 1931.

⁴¹ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 96.

while accepting French universalism continued to represent the tension between universalism and particularism as even their “evolved” status did not divorce them from their Otherness.

Press coverage attempted to convince the public that the colonial populations embraced French civilization and that the interaction between France and those deemed lesser races ultimately proved unavoidable. *Le Petit Parisien* argued that a “savage” people sooner or later came into contact with a highly civilized population, such as the French, resulting in the “barbarian” acquiring the “material and moral progress of the civilized.”⁴² The achievements of the civilizing mission thus came from this inevitable interaction between colonizers and colonized, in this way the French could not avoid nor turn back from this burden to uplift their colonial subjects. The editors of *Le Figaro* acknowledged this unavoidable duty, evoking the idea of the white man’s burden, by claiming the French “are delighted to walk in unknown and mysterious lands.” The colonial subjects, on the other hand, would never have initiated the process; they “do not venture far from their hut or palace.”⁴³ The press positioned the French as ideally suited to carry out a civilizing mission and had to by virtue of their more civilized nature to go into these exotic lands in order to spread the French way of life. By supporting the goals of the civilizing mission, the press supported the larger goals of the Third Republic. As Hale argues, the Third Republic sought to “uplift the other ‘races’, [proclaim] the cultural supremacy of France, and push for modernization.”⁴⁴

While the civilizing mission received praise across most of the press, the editors of *L’Humanité* stood as the staunch opponent to its spread and mocked the perceived positive

⁴² “Au seuil de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 29, 1931.

⁴³ “Après M. Doumergue, la foule inaugure...” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 8, 1931.

⁴⁴ Hale, *Races on Display*, 3.

results for the colonial subjects. During the 1931 exposition, the editors mocked the “exotic masquerade” occurring in Vincennes, arguing that the exposition only served to “develop the ‘imperial consciousness’ in the masses.”⁴⁵ The exposition provided a false image of life in the colonies, and instead presented a façade in the hopes of convincing visitors that the French civilizing mission brought only benefits to the metropole and the colonies, while ignoring the hardship and reality of life for countless colonial subjects.

Mockery of the exposition also took on the form of political cartoons, one of which presented French officials as the objects of fascination in a reproduction of an African village. [Figure 4] A sign over the village proclaimed “Safely come and see real cannibals!” to which one of the men remarks “Hey! So Lyautey and Pasquier are in a cage?”⁴⁶ Pierre Pasquier was the governor-general of Vietnam (1928-1934), while Marshall Lyautey served as general commissioner of the exposition. This cartoon turned the image of the stereotyped cannibal on its head, on one level making the French officials fill that role, on another it mocked the erroneous beliefs about Africans. While it mocked the idea of African cannibals, it also perpetuated the notion of the savage. While the communist editors remained steadily anti-imperialist, this cartoon demonstrated that even those in the anti-colonial camp often shared some of the pro-colonial movements “most fundamental cultural assumptions,” one of which being the “primitive” nature of colonial culture.⁴⁷ Portraying French colonial leaders as savages ensured that someone filled the role of savage in order for the relationship between colonizers and colonized to work.

⁴⁵ “Un effort sans précédent,” *L’Humanité* (Paris) May 18, 1931.

⁴⁶ “Confusion,” *L’Humanité* (Paris) April 22, 1931. See Figure 4 in Appendix.

⁴⁷ Edward Berenson, “Making a Colonial Culture? Empire and the French Public, 1880-1940.” *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 2 (2004): 146.

The image of the savage, the particular against which French universalism stood juxtaposed, remained an important element of many political cartoons involving the 1931 exposition. Images of the cannibalistic savage from the nineteenth century did not disappear during the interwar period but instead formed a foundational element in the burgeoning national identity, as an “inversed effigy of the civilized, white and Catholic Man.”⁴⁸ In one cartoon an African woman performed a dance while dressed in the popular attire of contemporary European women. [Figure 5] Two men looking on ask her, “Where did you learn this dance of the savage?” to which she replied, “At the Colonial Exposition in Paris.”⁴⁹ The woman embodied the civilizing mission, picking up the latest fashion and learning an invented unauthentic dance at the exposition, which causes her to appear as strange in the eyes of her compatriots. The editors of *L’Humanité* use this woman and her strange dance to critique the image of the expositions as a good representation of the colonies. At the same time though the editors make use of the image of the savage and thus utilize the colonial language they attempted to reject.⁵⁰ Around the same time a similar cartoon appeared in *Le Petit Parisien* in which a group of sub-Saharan Africans remark about a group dancing by them, “What a bore! They do not stop dancing... since they learned the rumba.... In Paris!”⁵¹ [Figure 6] Both cartoons presented similar events, however, in *L’Humanité* the display of French dances among the colonial population is alarming while in *Le Petit Parisien* the dance, while annoying to the natives, appeared as a harmless consequence of the exposition.

⁴⁸ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 171.

⁴⁹ “Incredule,” *L’Humanité* (Paris), November 21, 1931. See Figure 5 in Appendix.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Derrick, “The Dissenters: Anti-Colonialism in France, c. 1900-40,” in *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, eds. Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (New York: Palgrave, 2002.), 53.

⁵¹ “Danses Exotiques (Ceux qui reivent de l’Exposition) *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) November 15, 1931. See Figure 6 in Appendix.

While the editors in *L'Humanité* remained critical of the exposition, they also focused on daily life in the colonies as way to highlight how colonial subjects endured colonization. Prior to the start of the exposition, the editors highlighted tales of whole villages looted and in flames, the “terrible massacres of the conquest of Tonkin, Madagascar, Dahomey, Senegal, Indochina and Morocco.”⁵² While the 1931 exposition presented a sterilized version of the colonies, the editors of *L'Humanité* ensured the reality of life in the colonies received attention. As the exposition came to a close, the editors once again lamented the “tragic Vietnamese murdered in his paddy field by the legionnaire,” and “the ‘Arabs’ of Algeria that shoot against the looting settlers who steal their land.”⁵³ Despite their best efforts to bring the plight of colonial subjects to the attention of metropolitan French, the editors of *L'Humanité* remained a small but vocal minority.

The Colonial Soldier

As part of the press’ effort to highlight the success of the civilizing mission, the majority of the newspapers wrote at great length about the presence of colonial soldiers during the celebration of both expositions. The press presented these soldiers as proud national heroes, as a non-threatening version of the colonial man. The colonial soldier also represented another contradiction at the heart of both the expositions and the press. As Richard Fogarty argues, the use of colonial soldiers raised a great paradox,

if France was such a powerful nation, if its moral and military superiority were such that it had every right to rule over distant lands and peoples in its colonial empire, why then did it need these peoples to save it from defeat at the hands of the Germans? This apparent need for help from the subject peoples, as well as the site of large parts of

⁵² “L’apothéose du crime,” *L’Humanité* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

⁵³ “L’Exposition impérialiste de Vincennes est terminée,” *L’Humanité* (Paris), November 16, 1931.

France devastated and prostrate before the invading German army, was subtly, but deeply, destabilizing to the colonial order.⁵⁴

This paradox was not lost on the press or the organizers of the expositions, and both worked to present the colonial soldier as a symbol of “the close and mutually beneficial relationship between France and its overseas possessions.”⁵⁵ The use of colonial soldiers represented a destabilization in racial and colonial hierarchies. To help counteract this destabilization the press used the popular image of the colonial soldier as the symbol of French unity and a product of the civilizing mission overseas.

World War I represented a major shift in the image of the colonial subject, who became an ardent defender of the French homeland. Three important figures appeared during the conflict: the *tirailleur*, the name given to light infantry recruited from the colonies whose “savage” nature provided a countermeasure to German savagery, the North African cavalier who perpetuated the idea of the “Arab” warrior who strikes fear in others, and lastly the figure of the “Indochinese man” who could not serve as a reliable combatant and was instead relegated to the role of industrial laborer.⁵⁶ These three images dominated the display of these groups during the expositions and media coverage of them. The participation of colonial soldiers in World War I represented in the minds of many French citizens a payment for a “blood tax” (*impôt du sang*) the colonial subjects incurred by enjoying the “privilege of living under enlightened French rule.”⁵⁷ The war allowed for new types of contact between metropolitan French and colonial peoples, either between fellow “soldiers” or “in the villages where colonial regiments were

⁵⁴ Richard Fogarty, “Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War,” *Historical Reflections* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 60.

⁵⁵ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 292.

⁵⁶ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 171.

⁵⁷ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 15-16.

stationed” and helped to “reorient the image of those colonized, by relegating their reputation for ‘savagery’ to the background and praising their good-natured side.”⁵⁸

During the 1922 exposition, many articles stressed the importance of the colonies during the war effort. The press celebrated the apparent pride with which the colonial subjects rushed to the aid of France during the war. Over the course of the war roughly 800,000 colonial “volunteers, black and yellow, rushed from the colonies to the motherland in danger.”⁵⁹ These “volunteers” refer to colonial subjects conscripted by France to serve either on the front lines or in factories. This forced recruitment of a large segment of the male population to fight for France damaged African societies, and helped to spark further resistance to colonial rule.⁶⁰ Colonial soldiers that fought for France interacted with French citizens in new ways, particularly with women, something that did not occur in the more rigid hierarchies established in the colonies.⁶¹ These 800,000 “volunteers” represented roughly 597,000 combatants and 198,000 workers.⁶² Popular belief prior to and during the war advanced the idea that serving France in the military represented a privilege for colonial subjects allowing them to open new doors of association with the metropole and perhaps even obtaining citizenship.⁶³

Throughout the 1922 exposition the press worked to further emphasize the positive impact of the “native soldier and his indispensability to France,” and to highlight the colonial soldier as an integral part of French military prowess and as a harmless threat to the metropolitan

⁵⁸ Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France,’” 90.

⁵⁹ “Albert Sarraut expose l’œuvre de la France,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April, 17 1922.

⁶⁰ Gregory Mann, “Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa,” *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 414.

⁶¹ Fogarty, “Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War,” 53.

⁶² *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 11, 1922.

⁶³ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 284.

population.⁶⁴ The soldiers represented the success of the civilizing mission as he transcended part of his nature in order to protect France. As Gregory Mann argues, colonial soldiers' contributions earned them a "limited place in the body politic, perched between citizen and subject. French ideas about the nation's debt to veterans intersected with ideas about patron/clientage that was extremely strong in post-slavery West Africa."⁶⁵ To highlight this, *Le Petit Marseillais* covered how colonial soldiers took part in the celebration of the 1922 exposition serving as honor guards such as one group of "proud Moroccan infantrymen, all decorated with the cross of war."⁶⁶ The press promoted the image of the proud colonial soldier sacrificing all for France and being rewarded for doing so with high military honors.

The image of the proud colonial soldier as a product of France's civilizing mission continued in 1931 with further praise given to various groups that served as honor guards for French officials or who paraded through the exposition showing their "support" of the French empire. This push to popularize the image of the devoted colonial soldier came at a time when demobilized African soldiers returned to their villages. These *tirailleurs* "posed a chronic disciplinary problem," in the colonies.⁶⁷ As colonial officials struggled to maintain order amongst returning indigenous soldiers, in the metropole these soldiers received high praise and honor including military parades to thank them for their efforts. The treatment of these soldiers in the metropole and overseas represents yet another example of the contradiction between the reality of the colonies and the vision of the colonies presented to the metropolitan public by the

⁶⁴ Hale, *Races on Display*, 88.

⁶⁵ Gregory Mann, "Immigrants and Arguments in France and West Africa," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (April 2003): 363.

⁶⁶ "Malgré le mauvais temps, une foule innombrable a assisté hier, à l'ouverture de l'Exposition Coloniale," *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 17, 1922.

⁶⁷ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 93-94.

expositions and the press, and the complexity of French action and motivation in terms of its empire.

Prior to the opening of the 1931 exposition, the editors of *Le Figaro* praised the Vietnamese soldiers who “helped to direct the placement of lighting [on the reproduction of Angkor Wat] and examined its effects on the reproduction.”⁶⁸ In this case the editors went beyond simply celebrating the soldiers’ efforts during the war and their perceived civilized behavior, and positioned them as active participants in the production of the exposition and the French empire by helping to finish the construction. Presenting the soldiers in this way ensured that the metropolitan population could not easily question their loyalty and love of France. Prior to the inauguration of the 1931 exposition, the editors of *Le Figaro* discussed how colonial troops formed part of the honor guard that led in various French officials and the head of state.⁶⁹ On the day of inauguration these colonial troops formed part of the escort for the President of the Republic leading him on a tour through the exposition grounds.⁷⁰ Serving as the honor guard for high-ranking government officials and coverage of this helped to further emphasize the important role colonial soldiers played in demonstrating the effects of the civilizing mission and its importance to the French empire.

Throughout the opening days of the 1931 exposition, colonial soldiers took part in military parades honoring both themselves and the empire as a whole. These military parades during the exposition exemplified one of the ways by which the colonial subjects could make

⁶⁸ “L’inauguration de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

⁶⁹ “L’Exposition coloniale sera ouverte le 6 mai,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 29, 1931.

⁷⁰ “L’inauguration de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

their presence known to the metropolitan population.⁷¹ Following speeches by governmental officials at the exposition, colonial troops marched past enthusiastic crowds representing “French and Tunisian marines, Indochinese riflemen and magnificent Senegalese.”⁷² These soldiers took part in events throughout the exposition including the unveiling of a large monument named “To the Glory of the Colonies,” in which the editors of *La Croix* spoke highly of the military parade comprised of “colonial soldiers of the Exposition, colonial infantry and the marines.”⁷³ The press linked the participation of the colonial soldiers with the celebration and glorification of the empire and the civilizing mission. The “loyal service of the *troupe indigènes*” during the war appeared to justify this celebration and the success of the civilizing mission.⁷⁴ Colonial soldiers received special mention and attention by the press more so than their French counterparts that also participated in these events.

The press praised the participation of the colonial soldiers in various events throughout the exposition. The editors of *La Croix* acknowledged the involvement of Indochinese, Madagascan, North African and West African troops in the many military parades held to honor both the colonial soldiers and the 1931 exposition. In particular the editors focused on the uniforms of the soldiers, remarking that the sight of so many colonial soldiers in full uniforms was an “admirable” look.⁷⁵ By the time of the 1931 exposition the sight of colonial soldiers in military parades proved a common occurrence for the metropolitan public, especially in Paris. The use of colonial soldiers in national celebrations such as Bastille Day and Armistice Day and during visits by high-ranking government officials such as Albert Sarraut helped to familiarize

⁷¹ Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France,’” 97.

⁷² “Inauguration du monument de l’expansion coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 15, 1931.

⁷³ “A la gloire des colonies,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 15, 1931.

⁷⁴ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 292.

⁷⁵ “L’Exposition coloniale a été inaugurée mercredi après-midi,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

the French public with the men who helped sustain the nation during World War I.⁷⁶ Despite the appearance of these colonial soldiers in the metropole following the end of the war, as historian Goerg argues, their success in captivating the public stemmed primarily from their “shimmering uniforms or their exotic tones” while “genuine contact with the population remained extremely limited.”⁷⁷ These exotic tones permeated the press coverage of both expositions.

Coverage of the 1931 exposition stressed the importance of the colonial soldiers as protectors of France and the civilizing mission. To the editors of *Le Figaro* these soldiers stood resolutely against great odds never shrinking from “any sacrifice, continuing to defend and improve from year to year, ‘Greater France’.”⁷⁸ Colonial soldiers that fought in the war and participated in the staging of these expositions represented symbols of “devotion to the nation” by defending France during those “years of critical need.”⁷⁹ The press continuously reminded the metropolitan public of the sacrifices of the colonial soldiers during the war while glossing over issues of race that influenced the interaction of these colonial soldiers with their fellow French combatants and French citizens within the metropole. With the war an immediate memory in 1922 and becoming more distant by 1931, these colonial soldiers served as reminders of the war and became symbols of “nostalgia, fraternity, and integration.”⁸⁰ By participating in the war and achieving an assumed level of “fraternity and integration” with the French public, these soldiers represented the pinnacle of the civilizing mission as they transcended their nature and became an imitation of French ideas and practices.

⁷⁶ Goerg, “The French Provinces and ‘Greater France,’” 97.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁸ “A l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 20, 1931.

⁷⁹ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 292.

Colonial Workers at the Expositions

The press coverage of colonial workers brought to France to help construct and work the expositions walked a fine line, much like the focus on colonial soldiers, and attempted to convince those in the metropole that the overseas populations provided a benefit for France and therefore were not a threat. While the press attempted to convey the image of the non-threatening colonial workers at the expositions, the government under Clemenceau worked tirelessly to deport colonial subjects from France following the war, placed restrictions on immigration, and reneged on promise of citizenship to colonial soldiers.⁸¹ These individuals brought from the colonies to work at the expositions provided living proof of the supposed accomplishments of the civilizing mission and served to animate the expositions in order to create an artificial environment for French visitors.⁸² The organizers of the expositions kept these colonial workers under careful watch and ensured their segregation from the public and white French workers, whose jobs they could not threaten while working only at the expositions. This desire to animate the expositions followed a trend during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of displaying colonial subjects in exhibits and expositions. The center of these displays typically involved a reproduction of an African village complete with “straw huts, artisan products, exotic plants, and real life Africans,” and individuals engaged in non-threatening work.⁸³ Exposition officials claimed these individuals embodied a true representation of life in the colonies.

The reproduction of faraway lands staffed by indigenous workers played a central role in both expositions. These men and women embodied the latest manifestation of the human zoo,

⁸¹ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 63.

⁸² Ezra, *Colonial Unconscious*, 2.

⁸³ Berenson, “Making a Colonial Culture?,” 133.

common in the early twentieth century. According to Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire, these human zoos placed colonial people on display for Western audiences. Visitors could gawk at their perceived exotic nature; these zoos represented an important example of how years of scientific racism entered popular venues where the public consumed it.⁸⁴ The press presented the workers on display at both expositions as eager volunteers and loyal subjects. As Ezra argues, colonial workers employed at both expositions, much like colonial workers in French factories, lived and worked in the same space “stationed in front of a moving assembly line, they remained fixed before the stream of visitors filing past them.”⁸⁵ The colonial workers at the expositions who lived and worked in their individual pavilions shared at least one element of life with other colonials living in France; both often lived segregated lives in “work battalions separated by nationality.”⁸⁶ These colonial workers could not interact freely with the metropolitan population due in part to the concern amongst governmental officials that such contact would help to destabilize colonial hierarchies that relied on a strict separation between colonial subjects and the French colonizer.⁸⁷ This separation enabled contact between colonial peoples and visitors to the exposition to occur only in specified zones that served to reinforce the coercive and racial nature of the colonial relationship and the idea of the happy colonial subject.⁸⁸ In order to maintain the illusion of the empire carefully constructed by the officials of both expositions controlled the movements and appearance of the colonial workers.

⁸⁴ Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire, “From Scientific Racism to Popular and Colonial Racism in France and the West,” in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard, et.al., trans. Teresa Brudgeman (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 104.

⁸⁵ Ezra, *Colonial Unconscious*, 35.

⁸⁶ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 56.

⁸⁷ Jennifer Anne Boittin, Christina Firpo, and Emily Musil Church, “Hierarchies of Race and Gender in the French Colonial Empire, 1914-1946,” *Historical Reflections* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 69-70.

⁸⁸ Ungar, “The Colonial Exposition (1931),” 209.

During the 1922 exposition, colonial workers received less attention from the press than colonial soldiers. The editors of *Le Petit Parisien* acknowledged that “indigenous workers mingle with French staff,” showing that some interaction did occur between colonial workers brought to the exposition and their French counterparts.⁸⁹ This interaction, however, only occurred between French staff and colonial workers, not between colonial workers and the larger French population. Colonial workers brought to construct and staff the expositions demonstrated the “tremendous need of the wartime economy heightened the demand for workers” from the colonies that remained in demand after 1919 to help reconstruct postwar France.⁹⁰ The French government attempted to restrict immigration following the end of the war but began to open up several French industries by the early 1920s to non-French workers, many of whom came from the colonies.⁹¹ The interaction between colonial workers and French staff at the 1922 exposition stood in stark contrast to events occurring outside the exposition where French politicians fearing “ethnic incompatibility,” prevented colonial workers from integrating into France and had many of them expelled from the metropole.⁹² As Stovall argues, colonial workers were “criticized for taking French jobs, consorting with French women, [and] breaking strikes,” which caused anxiety amongst the French working class.⁹³ Fear regarding a large colonial population remaining in France served as one of the many reasons the Paris police began to shift their attention to the regulation of people by national origins almost a decade before the rest of Europe.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ “L’Exposition coloniale s’ouvre demain a marseille.” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 15, 1922.

⁹⁰ Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 6.

⁹¹ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 57.

⁹² Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*, 126.

⁹³ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 57.

⁹⁴ Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*, 19.

With large numbers of colonial subjects forced to leave the metropole by Clemenceau's government following the war, the press coverage of the 1922 exposition by *Le Petit Marseillais* bolstered the view that the workers at the exposition both enjoyed and celebrated constructing and staffing the exposition. Workers from all over the empire including "two hundred Vietnamese, one hundred Moroccan, many Senegalese, Mauritians, Tunisians and Algerians," worked "feverishly night and day to arrange their sections."⁹⁵ These workers endeavored to complete their sections of the exposition, working morning and night in apparent support of the exposition's goals. The portrayal of these workers by the press highlights the contradictions in French universalism. The French public largely "rejected 'exotic' and/or colonial populations," while on the other hand the colonial edifice relied upon "melting pot ideology."⁹⁶ The press embraced this melting pot ideology by praising the colonial workers despite the hostility towards them from the French public. At the closing of the 1922 exposition, these same workers received further admiration from the press and the officials of the exposition for the work they carried out over the course of the event. In the courtyard of the pavilion for French West Africa, various French politicians presented the "indigenous of the exposition [with] a medal for their participation in this national event."⁹⁷ The awarding of a medal to the colonial workers served to recognize them for their service and to remind metropolitan French of their loyalty.

With the opening of the 1931 exposition, the press concentrated on the colonial workers brought to the metropole to help staff and construct the various pavilions. As Morton argues, these "colonial subjects brought to the exposition to work constituted a human zoo even if

⁹⁵ "A l'Exposition coloniale on ouvre dimanche," *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 12, 1922.

⁹⁶ Bancel and Blanchard, "To Civilize," 177.

⁹⁷ "La commission des colonies de la chambre des deputes," *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) November 4, 1922.

Lyautey and his officials attempted to avoid vulgar exoticism in their staging of the exposition.⁹⁸ These workers represented little more than human displays for the entertainment of the visiting public even if they walked about freely. Lyautey and his officials hoped these men and women would demonstrate the “advances of the civilizing mission,” one of the overall goals of the exposition itself.⁹⁹ The achievements of the civilizing missions allowed for, according to the organizers of the exposition, the exchange of goods and ideas with “well-off, free, and happy people.”¹⁰⁰ These workers while presented by the press and expositions as benefiting from French universalism, in fact maintained a distinct, separate, and particular sphere from their French counterparts. Many of the pavilions, including the display of colonial subjects drew upon the success of the 1922 exposition and mimicked the immersive feel that event achieved in Marseille.

The press coverage of the colonial workers highlighted how these individuals served, as Furlough argues, as “living ethnological exhibits,” and “crucial markers of exoticized and hierarchical difference within Greater France” and stood as the particular against which French universalism built itself on.¹⁰¹ The editors of *Le Petit Parisien* wrote fondly of the “blacks of French Guiana” practicing in front of their huts “the dances they will present the day of the inauguration.”¹⁰² These colonial subjects appear dedicated to the exposition and in celebrating its inauguration and exposition officials expected these workers to perform tasks and rituals while at all times wearing their “native costumes.”¹⁰³ The organizers of the exposition wanted to present

⁹⁸ Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 5.

⁹⁹ Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 74.

¹⁰⁰ Ungar, “The Colonial Exposition (1931),” 209.

¹⁰¹ Furlough, “Une leçon des choses,” 446.

¹⁰² “A l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 1, 1931.

¹⁰³ Furlough, “Une leçon des choses”, 445-446.

an authentic representation, authentic in the eyes of Europeans, of the colonies and forced the workers to perform their jobs in what the officials determined as traditional clothing.

The appeal of the colonial worker represented but one example of a larger movement during the interwar period in which “exotic cultures seemed all the rage among not only the intelligentsia but appreciable segments of the broader public as well.”¹⁰⁴ With the arrival of black American jazz musicians in 1918 and the success of the *Revue nègre* and Josephine Baker in 1925, these individuals were Orientalized, dismissing the distinctions between African and African American culture. After the horror of war, a war that questioned Europe’s claims of civilization, people embraced an imagined vision of the savage. As a result the empire and all things exotic exploded in popularity in Paris and throughout Europe.¹⁰⁵ At the exposition, the coverage of the Cambodian dancers focused on the exotic, which the editors of *Le Petit Parisien* described as emphasizing, “the taste that is in all of us for everything that comes from very far away and represents manners and customs not ours.”¹⁰⁶ The officials of the 1931 exposition presented the Cambodian dancers, forced to wear a “native costume” and barred from wearing any European style clothing, as authentic when in reality they represented merely the European vision of Cambodian culture.¹⁰⁷ This emphasis on presenting the exotic and primitive nature of the colonial peoples along with the message of the exposition and the press that the French

¹⁰⁴ Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 63.

¹⁰⁵ For further reading on French interest in jazz, the *Revue nègre* and Josephine Baker, please see: Brett A. Berliner, *Ambivalent Desire: The Exotic Black Other in Jazz-age France* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), Jody Blake, *Le tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-age Paris* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), Andy Fry, *Paris Blues: African American Music and French Popular Culture, 1920-1960* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014), Phyllis Rose, *Jazz Cleopatra: Josephine Baker in her Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), and Bettye J. Gardner and Niani Kilkenny, “In Vogue: Josephine Baker and Black Culture and Identity in the Jazz Age,” *The Journal of African American History* 93, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 88-93.

¹⁰⁶ “Au seuil de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 29, 1931.

¹⁰⁷ Chandler, “Empire of the Republic,” 94.

civilizing mission worked represented the fine line walked between displaying the colonials as uplifted but still different, another contradiction in universalism.

The press continuously reinforced the image of the proud colonial subject that willingly worked for the success of both the 1931 exposition and the French state. The editors of *Le Figaro* wrote of a strange “fever” among the colonial workers that caused them to walk around “proud of the task accomplished.”¹⁰⁸ The strangeness of this fever, in the eyes of the editors, reflected a prevailing belief in the “infinite peculiarity” and “queerness” of the orient.¹⁰⁹ These workers represented one example of the exoticism that permeated interwar France regarding the colonies. The workers, much like the exposition pavilions, occupied a specific spot in the evolutionary hierarchy, which “corresponded to their capacity for development and to their current achievements.”¹¹⁰ Their ability to construct the pavilions for the 1931 exposition and their pride in this accomplishment appeared to demonstrate their advancement under French tutelage.

Following the close of the exposition the editors of *Le Petit Parisien* featured a political cartoon that neatly summed up the overall impression the press had of the colonial workers who helped to construct and staff the 1931 exposition. The cartoon entitled “Unanimous Regrets” featured a forlorn African man walking past a group of his townsfolk. [Figure 7] They remarked upon seeing him: “I find him more black than when he left. Yes, he mourns the exposition.”¹¹¹ On the surface the cartoon assumed this individual, who represented the model native, was sad to return to his colony and leave the splendor of Paris and the metropole. This imagined experience

¹⁰⁸ “L’inauguration de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

¹⁰⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1978), 103.

¹¹⁰ Morton, “A Study in Hybridity,” 80.

¹¹¹ “Regrets unanimes,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris), November 17, 1931. See Figure 7 in Appendix.

of one solemn individual returning from the exposition contrasted with the argument put forth by French officials during the interwar period that the experience of colonial workers in France “had been an unhappy one and that most were only too glad to return home.”¹¹² The sadness of this man though could stem from a wide range of sources, including the realization that colonial racism was rampant in the metropole too, that the end of the exposition meant the end of a job and possible unemployment, and on a deeper level his own disillusionment with French universalist claims.

To point to some of the hypocrisies, the editors of *L'Humanité* launched attacks on the system of colonialism and the use of colonial subjects to “animate” the exposition of 1931.¹¹³ They focused on the plight of the colonial worker before the start of the exposition and how the sight of the “naturally poor [people] of West Africa,” recruited for the “Imperialist Exposition of Vincennes” shivered in their thin clothing pending the “sumptuous inauguration.”¹¹⁴ These individuals brought to staff the exposition served as a reminder of the true plight of these colonial subjects. The thin clothing worn by these West Africans highlighted the absurdity of forcing colonial workers to wear “authentic” clothing, some of which did not conform to the climate of metropolitan France. The lavishness of the exposition and its celebration of French civilization contrasted with the poor conditions in which the workers at the exposition found themselves. For the editors of *L'Humanité* the exposition gave the “schematic evocation of all these people demonstrating their enslavement.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Stovall, “National Identity and Shifting Imperial Frontiers,” 58.

¹¹³ Ezra, *Colonial Unconscious*, 28.

¹¹⁴ “L’apothéose du crime,” *L'Humanité* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

¹¹⁵ “La grande parade impérialiste s’est ouverte hier à Vincennes,” *L'Humanité* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

Throughout the course of the 1931 exposition the editors of *L'Humanité* remained critical of the forced participation of colonial subjects in the event. The paper lamented the Cambodian and Vietnamese flag-bearers, greeting the “leader of the colonial robbers, who once again, just kills their brothers.”¹¹⁶ These colonial workers, while presented as happily greeting the head of state, did so while their fellow countrymen suffered under the weight of French rule. This passage highlights the precarious position the colonial workers of the exposition occupied, on the one hand presented as model natives and the product of the civilizing mission, while on the other conscripted to work the event and confined to their individual pavilions.

Over the course of both expositions the press worked tirelessly to promote the image of a successful civilizing mission, a triumph of French universalism abroad. Through this civilizing mission, the press argued, France produced loyal and involved colonial subjects working towards the greater good of the empire. These loyal subjects in turn translated into the colonial workers and soldiers that assisted France during and after the war. The promotion of these individuals as grateful subjects reflected the balancing act undertaken by the press and the French government to tout the successes of French universalism while ensuring the colonial populations remained as the Other, the particular. The press ignored the large deportations of colonial subjects that began in 1919 under Clemenceau’s government that feared of destabilizing colonial hierarchies. The same workers that the civilizing mission had uplifted remained a threat within the metropole regardless of their wartime contributions. Instead the press presented the image of the model

¹¹⁶ “La grande parade impérialiste s’est ouverte hier à Vincennes,” *L'Humanité* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

“native” working with France towards a common goal. An image disconnected from the realities
life in the colonies and the metropole.

CHAPTER 3: CONTAINING THE EXOTIC

Press coverage of the expositions reinforced a certain image of colonization. On the one hand, colonization and conquest was commonly depicted in sexualized terms, on the other France embodied a parental figure for the colonies. As Stoler argues, the colonial relationship rested upon an “intimate set of exploitive sexual and service relations between European men and native women, between European women and native men, shaped by the sexual politics of class and race.”¹ The displays at the expositions perpetuated a view of the colonies as strange and exotic, which invited the use of well-known and accepted “metaphor[s] about gender and sexuality to describe the relationship between France and its colonies and the power that France held over its colonial subjects.” This image both infantilized the colonized and made them the object of seduction, while France took on the position of the father or husband who knew best for his family.² The sexual overtones of this relationship guided France’s mission to help and improve the colonies, and carried with it the image of seduction and rape. The power France maintained over the colonies manifested, in both the press and the expositions, in the form of the virile colonizer and head of the family.

As Bancel and Blanchard argue, the image of the colonial subject often varied between stigmatization and desire.³ French travel writing of the time often presented the colonies as feminine in order to promote this desire. Writers described Algiers as “beautiful, white, sun-

¹ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 111.

² Lehning, *To Be a Citizen*, 129.

³ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 171.

drenched: voluptuous in her charm,” while portraying France as a “powerful masculine figure.”⁴ Representations of sub-Saharan African populations, on the other hand, frequently depicted them as animalistic. The public viewed these individuals with “mixed feelings of disgust and fascination for their supposed sexual prowess,” which resulted in the display of sub-Saharan Africans at the expositions that focused on the “eroticization of masculine and feminine forms in almost all forms of representation.”⁵ European writers of interwar period remained fascinated with the sexualized nature of the colonial relationship and often “feminized African landscape” in an attempt to create the “imagery of renewal and rebirth” which “depicted France as the virile partner who inseminated and gave life.”⁶ This mindset presented the colonies as vessels, even wombs, in which French universal culture and civilization could reproduce and *mise en valeur* could flourish.

The colonial relationship embraced and reinforced by the press helped to maintain an image of the colonial subjects as “desired and repugnant, forbidden and subservient.”⁷ The colonies remained exotic lands home to strange cultures and populations, viewed as minors who supposedly prospered under the light of French civilization. The desire to improve the colonies and the seduction of them overlapped, creating a convoluted image of the colonial relationship. This chapter examines the ways in which the press simultaneously represented France as the virile colonizer and the head of the colonial family while portraying the colonial population as either objects of sexual desire or as helpless children/women in need of correction.

⁴ Yaël Simpson Fletcher, “Irresistible Seductions: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria around 1930,” in *Domesticating the Empire*, eds. Clancy-Smith and Gouda, 193.

⁵ Bancel and Blanchard, “To Civilize,” 173.

⁶ Fletcher, “Irresistible Seductions,” 196.

⁷ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 192-193.

France as Virile Colonizer

As part of both expositions' larger goals, organizers attempted to project the vision of a strong masculine France dominating the colonies for the benefit of both. Following near defeat in World War I and the threat of a revived Germany during the interwar period, the Republican right "articulated a distinctive and coherent masculine ideal," that required men to be, "determined, principled to the point of inflexibility, respectable, hard-working, selfless, paternal, paterfamilial, and (predictably) French by race."⁸ This construction of masculinity in part came out of the image of the ideal soldier prior to World War I, which Christopher Forth argues embodied "heroic self-control and sacrifice that assured that he would risk his life for his country, thus evincing a style of self-discipline that was repeatedly contrasted to the moral laxity of civilian life."⁹ Even though the war highlighted the strength of colonial soldiers, colonization literally and figuratively stripped colonized men of their roles in society.¹⁰

By the 1920s and 1930s the well-known image of the "virile colonizer" symbolized, in the context of post war concerns, a "man of action whose energy would revitalize the nation by building a new France overseas."¹¹ The virile colonizer contrasted with the reality of the disfigured and emotionally scarred men returning from the front lines. These men returned blind, as amputees, with burned lungs or missing parts of their faces, never truly escaping the horrors of

⁸ Read, "Des homes et des citoyens," 89.

⁹ Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood*, 43.

¹⁰ Boittin, Firpo, and Church, "Hierarchies of Race and Gender in the French Colonial Empire," 61. For further reading on the co-opting of traditional colonial societal structures and the impact of the indigenous code please see: Martin Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars: Imperialism, politics and society* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), Weil, *How to be French*, and Oliver Le Cour Grandmaison, *De l'indigénat. Anatomie d'un 'monstre' juridique : le droit colonial en Algérie et dans l'empire français* (Paris, France: Zones/La Découverte, 2010).

¹¹ Penny Edwards, "Womanizing Indochina: Fiction, Nation, and Cohabitation in Colonial Cambodia, 1890-1930," in *Domesticating the Empire* eds. Clancy-Smith and Gouda, 109.

the war or being able to rejoin society.¹² The image of the male colonizer represented the “virility of colonial life,” which constructed “an exotic Wild East in opposition to the flabby degeneracy of the metropole.”¹³ This degeneracy reflected larger concerns regarding masculinity and a push for a “renewed emphasis on bodily strength and vigor at the dawn of the twentieth century.”¹⁴ The colonizer represented an alternative to this degeneracy, a man whose virility and masculinity could not be called into question. As Stoler argues, the colonies “provided the fertile terrain on which bourgeois notions of manliness and virility could be honed and put to the patriotic test.”¹⁵

In contrast to the French male colonizer, the colonial populations assumed a submissive role. The colonies and their populations became objects of desire, a notion the press eagerly promoted in their coverage of the expositions. As James Lehning argues, “the sense of exotic difference that the expansion of colonialism created in France often acquired an erotic dimension as sexual metaphors were used to describe the colonial relationship.”¹⁶ These sexual metaphors allowed for control of the colonial populations while also satisfying the desire amongst certain French citizens to claim the colonies represented a place of sexual deviance that required French assistance in order to adopt more civilized gender norms. Lehning continues that the exotic nature of the colonial relationship allowed for the “colonial subjects to be described in the same ways that women were described in France.”¹⁷ The interwar period in particular represented an era in which male European elites increasingly concerned themselves with “power over people’s

¹² Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker. *14-18: Understanding the Great War*, 167.

¹³ Edwards, “Womanizing Indochina,” 109.

¹⁴ Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair*, 178.

¹⁵ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 129.

¹⁶ Lehning, *To Be a Citizen*, 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

bodies,” and for the press coverage this meant power over the colonial body.¹⁸ Interest in the control over citizens’/subjects’ bodies stemmed from a multitude of concerns during the early twentieth century including fears of racial mixing, low birthrate, spread of diseases such as syphilis, maintaining a strong male population, and interest in the colonial body’s labor potential.¹⁹ This treatment of the colonial populations as women reinforced the masculine domination of the colonies.

As the press began to cover the 1922 exposition in Marseille, the erotic nature projected onto the colonies appeared frequently in writers’ picturesque visions of the exposition.²⁰ Morton argues a similar attitude pervaded the 1931 exposition, which “generated a contrast between colonies as the Orient- the site of rampant sensuality, irrationality and decadence- and colonies as the laboratory of Western rationality.”²¹ Press coverage by *Le Figaro* in 1922 also presented the colonial lands as “new expanses among the silence and darkness of virgin lands,” which French expansion allowed for the “happy tumult of wealth creation and human fraternity. New crops raised on lands once infertile and abandoned.”²²

Here we have a few important images: the virgin, and the idea that these lands are uninhabited and the barren woman, in which the indigenous people did not deserve the land because they did not exploit it properly. These views at once deny the existence of the colonized peoples while also arguing they lost the right to the land by not exploiting fully. The colonial lands required protection and improvement, something *mise en valeur* attempted to achieve, by

¹⁸ Fogarty, “Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War,” 52.

¹⁹ For further reading on the control of the body please see: Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood*, Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen* and Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*.

²⁰ “A l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 20, 1922.

²¹ Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 5.

²² “L’Exposition de Marseille,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) April 17, 1922.

impregnating the lands via the virile colonizer to make them produce. The colonies fully embodied the traditional role of woman according to historian James Lebling; they allowed “themselves to be desired, governed and abandoned,” by French colonial officials.²³ The idea of the erotic native reflected a much larger push within Western literature that used a “wide range of sexual and gendered metaphors in which the feminized colonies and the women in it, were to be penetrated, raped, silenced and (dis)possessed,” leading to the “foundational imagery of imperial domination.”²⁴ Press coverage of the 1922 exposition served to continue this construction of the colonies as a land which could be conquered (with all the sexual undertones that accompany the act of conquest) and that the French had the right to take the colonial lands because only the French knew how to properly exploit and enjoy the fruits of the colonies via *mise en valeur*. Above all else the erotic and exotic nature of the colonial relationship came down to control and maintaining this control over the colonies for the benefit of France.

The press feminized the colonies and presented them as available for conquest. Articles describing the arrival of metropolitan officials to the expositions often depicted these officials as dominating the exposition grounds and pavilions. In doing so, the press used language commonly utilized when describing the colonial relationship.²⁵ The relationship between the metropole and the colonies reflected larger “fantasies about sexual power and exploration,” and

²³ Lebling, *To Be a Citizen*, 147.

²⁴ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 174.

²⁵ For examples of this domination, please see: “Le Grand Etat-Major de l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 15, 1922, “Malgré le mauvais temps, une foule innombrable a assisté, hier, à l’ouverture de l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 17, 1922, “L’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 3, 1931 and “Ce que sera la cérémonie d’inauguration pour l’exposition coloniale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 3, 1931, and “L’Exposition coloniale a été inaugurée mercredi après-midi,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

both the expositions and the press worked to reinforce these fantasies.²⁶ As metropolitan officials explored the 1931 exposition, the editors of *Le Figaro* wrote on how these officials walked between “walls glittering with swords,” climbing up a flight of stairs to “penetrate the room” which in all its splendor worked to “seduce the eye.”²⁷ These French officials explored this colonial space and the colonial relationship within the walls of exposition. The sword, a phallic symbol, reinforced the masculine French domination of the colonies. The officials become the virile colonizer, entering the colonial space and claiming it as their own. The editors of *La Croix* spoke highly of “colonizing penetration” which worked to not “evict or assimilate the indigenous, but to associate,”²⁸ the “indigenous” with France. This association between colonizer and colonized reinforced the dominating role France took in this relationship, with the colonial populations never obtaining assimilation within French culture. The act of colonial expansion itself, in the words of *Le Figaro*, reflected an “action of political penetration” that worked to reinforce French power in the world.²⁹

According to the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais*, large crowds came to experience the beauty of the colonies and reveled in the “attractive and picturesque side of the great colonial manifestation.”³⁰ This description of the exposition presented the colonies as objects of desire and of beauty in much the same way descriptions of women touched upon their looks and attractiveness to men. This gaze of desire applied not just to the physical buildings of the exposition but to the colonial subjects brought to staff the event. As Morton argues, by the 1920s the recreation of exotic environments had “become an essential part of any successful

²⁶ *To Be a Citizen*, 129.

²⁷ “La visite de l’Exposition,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

²⁸ “L’Exposition coloniale a été inaugurée mercredi après-midi,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

²⁹ “A l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris) November 1, 1931.

³⁰ “A L’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 20, 1922.

exposition.”³¹ Just as with previous expositions, those colonial subjects brought to Marseille in 1922 served as “living ethnological exhibits... crucial markers of exoticized and hierarchical difference within Greater France.”³² The colonies while presented as different, continued to serve as objects of desire.

For the opening of the 1931 exposition on 6 May, the press wrote new articles aimed at describing the events, places, and people involved in the exposition in order to stimulate interest amongst the paper’s readers and encourage them to go. One journalist for *Le Figaro* painted a seductive picture of the inauguration of the exposition. He described the watchmen holding the “beautiful green pamphlets” of the exposition and how they appeared “green like the oasis-and golden- as if by a tropical reflection.”³³ This initial image of the exposition reflected the goals of Marshall Lyautey who, while wanting to thrill the imagination of the visitors, kept the idea of a “seductive spectacle” uppermost in his mind.³⁴ An advertisement within *Le Petit Parisien* described the event as “life in its exotic setting,” and beckoned the French public to attend and experience this exoticness.³⁵[Figure 8] The press told readers that only by attending the exposition could they truly grasp the colonial relationship.

During the 1931 exposition, the press focused on specific examples of the exotic nature of the colonies in the displays. With the opening of the Citroën Pavilion, honoring the automotive company’s participation in African expeditions, the editors of *Le Figaro* included a description of diorama and pictures, house within the pavilion, featuring Africans in their

³¹ Morton, “A Study in Hybridity,” 76.

³² Furlough, “Une leçon des choses,” 446.

³³ “L’inauguration de l’Exposition coloniale,” *Le Figaro* (Paris), May 6, 1931.

³⁴ Martin Evans and Amanda Sackur, eds. *Empire and Culture: The French Experience, 1830-1940* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2004), 17.

³⁵ “Exposition Coloniale Internationale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 27, 1931.

homelands. In particular, the writers appeared fascinated by the Mangbetu women with their “elongated skulls and picturesque hair.”³⁶ The description served to reinforce both the Otherness of the Mangbetu women and their femininity. These women served as a bridge between colonies and metropole with their picturesque hair highlighting contemporary ideas of femininity while their elongated skulls ensured they remained in the realm of the exotic and bizarre.

Advertising for the exposition also utilized the image of the veiled Arab woman, one of the tools of the pro-colonial camp and of domestic social reform movements. As Frantz Fanon argued in his indictment of colonialism, “For the tourist and the foreigner, the veil demarcates both Algerian society and its feminine components.”³⁷ Social reform movements directed their energies toward Arab women who were seen as inherently degenerate, and thus available to conquer and seduce.³⁸ On the other hand, the interest in the Arab woman dated back to at least the conquest of Algeria itself in 1830. A woman depicted as chaste and unavailable, an image that reflected larger colonial issues regarding France attempting to uncover and claim ownership to the colonies. As Joan Wallach Scott argues, Arab women fell victim to “screen associations,” that “...as Freud taught us, substitutes one image (the female body) for another (imperial conquest). In this way the imperial project acquired its deeply erotic overtones.”³⁹ These deeply erotic overtones made themselves apparent throughout the coverage of the 1931. The “lower orders,” in particular colonial women, were seen as the sources of “sexual arousal, moral deviance, misguided reason, and the objects of control.”⁴⁰ The Arab women thus came to represent colonialism itself, by opening up her image and her body for inquiry so did the state

³⁶ “L’inauguration du pavillon Citroën,” *Le Figaro* (Paris), May 5, 1931.

³⁷ Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1967), 35-36.

³⁸ Clancy-Smith, “Islam, Gender, and Identities,” 157.

³⁹ Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 55.

⁴⁰ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 149.

open up the colonies for the curiosity and the perceived positive exploitation by the French population in the form of *mise en valeur*. However, this reflected an ideal vision of colonialism, something France never truly obtained and in part explains their obsession with the veil/colonial relationship.

The veil served an important function within ideas of French imperialism, by fulfilling ideas of a forbidden treasure waiting to be uncovered, in the same way that the North African colonies stood shrouded in their own mystery. Hale examines the role of the veiled woman in advertising, arguing, “French entrepreneurs and their designers depicted Africans and Asians in ways that not only corresponded to how they perceived them visually, but also corresponded to the roles they *wanted* them to fill in the empire.”⁴¹ The veiled woman thus stood as a representation of the exotic nature of the colonies themselves, and as a perfect example of the subordinate colonial subject who supposedly accepted and supported the colonial project.

One advertisement [Figure 1], in which a veiled woman peered out from behind a hayek, highlighted the imagined mysterious nature of France’s Muslim colonies while at the same time inviting the reader along to catch a glimpse of what was behind the veil. This same imagery appeared in countless trademarks for beauty products featuring North African women hiding their sexuality.⁴² The veil represented intrigue, something the male colonizer wished to remove, and while sometimes succeeding, the majority of colonial women were not accessible to colonizers. While a main goal of the French mission in the colonies involved colonizing the indigenous women in order to access the indigenous home, they often failed to do so. In these

⁴¹ Dana S. Hale, “French Images of Race on Product Trademarks during the Third Republic,” in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, ed. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 131. (Italics in original)

⁴² *Ibid.*, 135.

images the veiled woman remained both chaste and available via colonial conquest. Like the idea of *mise en valeur*, the women, like the land was virgin territory that awaited the virile colonizer before it blossomed.

The veil also symbolized, for the French, the backwardness and oppression of Algerian society. As Elisa Camiscioli argues, during the interwar period, “discussions of the nation and its citizenry persistently returned to the body: its color and gender, its expenditure of labor power, its reproductive capacity, and its experience of desire.”⁴³ The colonial woman, and particularly the Muslim woman, stood at the center of this experience of desire.

The post-war fascination with the exotic translated into the press with the coverage of the Cambodian dancers that performed throughout the run of both expositions. The Cambodian dancers appealed to the editors of *Le Petit Parisien* by further emphasizing “the taste that is in all of us for everything that comes from very far away and represents manners and customs that are not ours.”⁴⁴ These dancers served as popular Cambodian ambassadors at expositions and events both within the French Empire and around the world.⁴⁵ The editors of *Le Petit Marseillais* in 1922 and *La Croix* in 1931 devoted articles to the description of the dancers’ outfits and performances.⁴⁶ This attraction to the dancers reflected the display of Cambodia in museums and other expositions as an “apsara, a celestial dancer who embodies ‘purity of spirit and eternal beauty’,” and thus the dancers became an “intermediary between the French pantheon and the

⁴³ Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 6.

⁴⁴ “Cent vingt danseuses cambodgiennes sont arrivées a paris,” *Le Petit Paris* (Paris) April 29, 1931.

⁴⁵ Edwards, “Womanizing Indochina,” 116.

⁴⁶ “Les adieux des danseuses cambodgiennes,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) November 3, 1922 and “Les intellectuels et les autres,” *La Croix* (Paris) May 1, 1931.

Cambodian people.”⁴⁷ The dancers came to represent an ideal image of Cambodia in press coverage of the exposition.

The fascination with the Cambodian dancers reflected a larger interest in Indochina as a feminized people willing to serve France. As Penny Edwards argues, the depiction of the colonies as “feminized, sexualized spaces” served not only to underscore colonizer’s masculinity, but *la Cambodigienne* (the Cambodian woman) herself “represented a Rousseau-like ideal whose atavistic calling to serve man was still intact.”⁴⁸ For Rousseau, the ideal woman worked:

To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet—these are the duties of women.⁴⁹

Rousseau’s ideal self-sacrificing women, which French men feared French women no longer embodied, as Mary Louise Roberts reminds us, could be recaptured in these Cambodian women.⁵⁰ The perceived submissive nature of Cambodian woman, as a symbol of the entire population, appeared to represent an unadulterated way of life in contrast to the complexity of French civilization. The press thus uplifted the Cambodian dancers as an example of the ideal colonial subject, retaining both their “primitive” nature while embracing and supporting French conquest and control.

⁴⁷ Edwards, “Womanizing Indochina,” 116.

⁴⁸ Edwards, “Womanizing Indochina,” 109.

⁴⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile: Or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1979), 365.

⁵⁰ Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 45.

France as Head of the Family

Alongside the image of the virile colonizer stood the paternal figure caring for, correcting, protecting, and sometimes beating his colonial family. The personification of France as the head of family in national mythology started in the eighteenth century and resulted in the “mother figure of the metropole, iconized as *La France* or Marianne.”⁵¹ Horne explains even the use of the term *la mère patrie* reflected gendered discussions of the early twentieth century which operated as “a common metaphor of territorial possession...wherein France and its colonial empire are discursively linked in a naturalized mother and child relationship.”⁵² As Wilder argues, the “dominant interwar figures for colonial relationships were those of parent-child or teacher-student.”⁵³ According to this view, France appeared less as a controlling force within the colonies and more as a kind parent with only the best intentions for its children.

As Stoler argues the parent-child relationship “provided a moral justification for imperial policies of tutelage, discipline and specific paternalistic and maternalistic strategies of custodial control.”⁵⁴ This relationship between colonizer and colonized, discussed in terms of a family unit, provided the state with moral grounds upon which to build and sustain the empire. The use of the family metaphor signified the “benevolent paternalism that French colonialism idealized,” counting the colonial populations among the “new national family of 100 million Frenchmen, but with a structure of paternity, not fraternity.”⁵⁵ The colonial propaganda communicated by the expositions and the press worked to “communicate to the French populace that the empire

⁵¹ Edwards, “Womanizing Indochina,” 108.

⁵² Horne, “In Pursuit of Greater France,” 22.

⁵³ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 125.

⁵⁴ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 150.

⁵⁵ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 33.

extended naturally from France, just as children were the natural outcome of marital bonds.”⁵⁶ This metaphor therefore represented the idealized colonial relationship between France and its colonies. As such, official state policy concerned itself with the care of, teaching and discipline of the colonial populations.

Within this relationship, the colonial populations needed French guidance and discipline in order to better themselves. As Martial Merlin, governor general of French West Africa (1919-1923) stated, “our first concern is to snatch the indigenous populations from the physiological misery which decimates them and provide them with the education they hunger for.”⁵⁷ For Merlin, the French had a duty as head of the family, and as part of the civilizing mission, to provide the colonial populations the knowledge they needed to advance. France, as the stern father, could bring these colonial children under its control and teach them wrong from right. *La Croix* took pride in “the children of savages [having] received French education and are [now] represented in the colonial exposition.”⁵⁸ As Hale argues, exposition displays of North Africans, sub-Saharan Africans, and Indochinese highlighted their perceived weaknesses. They needed to be “encouraged” in their “strengths by the disciplinary hand of [their] colonial ‘father’ and the caring hand of [their] colonial ‘mother’.”⁵⁹ Without the French as a stern and loving parent, the pro-colonial French lobby believed their colonial subjects could never become civilized.

In an attempt to highlight the benevolent paternal role France had within the colonies, press coverage in 1922 celebrated the achievements of women as nurses within the colonies. These nurses received attention from the press at a time when “bourgeois women” in both the

⁵⁶ Hale, *Races on Display*, 161.

⁵⁷ *L'Exposition nationale coloniale de marseille décrite par ses auteurs* (Marseilles: Commissariat général de l'exposition, 1922), 288.

⁵⁸ “La mission de la France,” *La Croix* (Paris) June 6, 1931.

⁵⁹ Hale, *Races on Display*, 172.

colonies and the metropole “were cast as the custodians of morality, of their vulnerable men, and of national character. Parenting, and motherhood specifically, was a class obligation and a duty of empire.”⁶⁰ While nurses within the colonies received praise, during World War I these women represented possible agents of dissent, at least to male politicians, since they could more readily interact with colonial soldiers and form relationships.

With the opening of the exposition, the press offered praise to the work of women in the colonies and the metropole. The editors of *Le Petit Marseillais* commended these women, claiming “one cannot pay too much tribute to these devoted women, both from a medical and moral point of view.”⁶¹ Nurses maintained close contact with the colonial populations and were, as Horne argues, “potential vectors of influence.”⁶² These women occupied the position of “reformer par excellence,” entrusted with the “mission of moral and cultural betterment... in France as well as in the colonies.”⁶³ Nurses could directly affect the households of colonial families by instructing mothers and wives in French notions of hygiene and health. Conklin argues that the French government encouraged women to move to the colonies as agents of the civilizing mission to both promote domesticity and to prevent French men from going “native.”⁶⁴ French women therefore served multiple roles, not only as tutors and caregivers to the colonial populations but also to provide a sexual outlet for French men to prevent them from seeking out colonial women.

Even colonial women recently arriving from the colonies to Marseille were “subjects marked by concern and token sympathy on the part of their French sisters, who these days,

⁶⁰ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 135.

⁶¹ “A l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 23, 1922.

⁶² Horne, “In Pursuit of Greater France,” 38.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶⁴ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 105, 170.

accompanied Indochinese women to the bath and offered them tea and cakes,” according to the editors of *Le Petit Marseillais*.⁶⁵ This perceived helplessness and apparent cultural ignorance of the colonial women in the eyes of the French led to this concern from their French “sisters” and helped to reinforce the relationship between the metropole (head of the family) the colonies and women (minors). The editors placed French women in the role of protecting and uplifting their colonial counterparts, while portraying the colonial women as unable to care for themselves in the foreign landscape of the metropole. In the eyes of the press these Indochinese women, like the rest of the colonial populations, were merely big children, “different but improving,” and “destined to become autonomous individuals,” as some point in the distant future.⁶⁶ The press actively reinforced the position of mother for French women when interacting with colonial populations.

Coverage of the 1931 exposition maintained the image of parental France caring for and teaching its colonial children. *La Croix* praised the “glorious, although often obscure work” of the missionaries who, like nurses and French women in the colonies, worked closely with colonial populations.⁶⁷ These men worked within the domestic sphere of the colonies, an area in which masculinity, class and race could be “dangerously undone or securely made.”⁶⁸ These missionaries could be seen a surrogate French fathers and tutors to the colonial subjects, even if only to aid in converting them to Catholicism. While spreading French civilization and culture as they travelled throughout the empire, as J. P. Daughton argues, they did not see themselves as “agents of imperial expansion,” but instead viewed the extension of French colonialism as the

⁶⁵ “A l’Exposition Coloniale,” *Le Petit Marseillais* (Marseille) April 23, 1922.

⁶⁶ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 126.

⁶⁷ “L’Exposition coloniale,” *La Croix* (Paris) April 22, 1931.

⁶⁸ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 108

“end of evangelizing.”⁶⁹ Through their work, these missionaries received accolades by the press, which raised them up as examples of tireless colonizers.

While parental France received praise from the majority of the press, the editors and writers of *L'Humanité* opposed and mocked the image of a caring France. The paper even ridiculed the image of Marianne when the writers transformed her from a motherly figure to a bloodthirsty tyrant. In one such example, Marianne appeared atop a guillotine calling out to the crowd below to “Enter, enter! Come and see real savages!”⁷⁰ [Figure 9] The artist refashioned the image of Marianne as a ringmaster at a circus. Marianne stands on the guillotine, an instrument used heavily throughout the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution.⁷¹ In this instance the artist presented Marianne as anything but domestic and parental, and instead appears to be presenting her “children” as spectacles in a show and serves also as an indictment of France not upholding the republican principles of the Revolution. Imperialism equates to savagery in this political cartoon and sends a strong message from the anti-colonial camp.

The editors of *L'Humanité* also critiqued the work of French missionaries and nuns throughout the colonies. The French maintained an active missionary presence throughout the empire, including the White Sisters and White Fathers both founded in Algeria in the 1860s before expanding to other parts of the empire.⁷² While discussing the current displays of propaganda at the 1931 exposition and reminiscing on past expositions the editors of *L'Humanité* wrote of the “white sisters in front of the broad masses of red mud fortifications, reminiscent of

⁶⁹ J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52.

⁷⁰ “Attraction,” *L'Humanité* (Paris) May 6, 1931. See figure 9 in Appendix.

⁷¹ For more on the Terror and the image of Marianne please see: François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984)

⁷² For further reading on the church’s involvement in colonization, please see: Daughton, *An Empire Divided*

distant cities of the Sudan and French West Africa.”⁷³ While not explicitly ridiculed, these nuns appear out of place both within the exposition and by association in the distance lands they worked. The presence of all French women in the colonies remained a contentious matter during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as French colonial politicians argued that “white women” in the colonies “upset race relations and led to increase racism” within the colonies.⁷⁴ By presenting French nuns as out of place within the colonial setting and portraying Marianne as a tyrant rather than mother, *L’Humanité* derided the role of women within the colonies.

The press worked tirelessly to present to the public the image of France as virile colonizer and head of its colonial family. The press and expositions sought to reinforce and revitalize gendered notions of the colonial relationship and positioned the French in the position of power over a submissive colonial population. The colonizer became an idealized embodiment of French masculinity, capable of conquering and exposing the colonies to exploitation. The press presented the colonies as needing guidance and protection, appearing as children alongside the parental figure of France. The empire represented a family, bound together and working towards a common goal. If the French needed to punish the colonies or use force it did so as a parent disciplining a child, all in the name of the civilizing mission. The relationships embraced by the press reinforced gender and hierarchical roles within the empire.

⁷³ “Réclame et publicité,” *L’Humanité* (Paris) May 7, 1931.

⁷⁴ Alice L. Conklin, “Redefining ‘Frenchness’: Citizenship, Race Regeneration, and Imperial Motherhood in France and West Africa, 1914-40,” in *Domesticating the Empire*, eds. Clancy-Smith and Gouda, 70.

CONCLUSION

The idea of “Greater France” much like the expositions “reflected the confidence of a strong state possessing an organized empire at the height of its power. But this was also an imaginary figure of political desire,” which revealed the “anxiety of an imperial nation-state confronting crises of republican and colonial legitimacy.”¹ As this thesis has tried to show, the press worked in tandem with the colonial expositions of 1922 and 1931 to construct a strong image of the empire. The expositions presented an “imaginary community” of colonies, in full grandeur, in order to sell the public on the idea of Greater France and the importance of the empire. The press worked tirelessly to create and reinforce an image of the empire that embraced the concept of Greater France and the efforts of *mise en valeur*. The concept of the “world as exposition” influenced the efforts to “promote colonial expansion to the general public.”² Having survived the horrors of World War I, French leaders looked to the empire as a means to display Greater France and alleviate any fears regarding the future of the nation. To do so, the state constructed expositions to display not only the success of the civilizing mission and through French universalism but to demonstrate the intricate role the colonies should play in national understanding. This study also contributes to existing historiography by illustrating the didactic role of the press, especially for those who couldn’t attend the expositions, by bringing the message to the public.

By the start of World War I, France represented an “imperial nation-state,” in which “parliamentary republican and authoritarian colonial elements were structurally interrelated and

¹ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 29.

² Blanchard, “National Unity,” 218.

not simply added to one another.”³ The contradictions within press coverage of the expositions, and within the events themselves, formed out of this understanding of France as a nation of “unity and diversity, interiority and exteriority, membership and inequality.”⁴ The colonial soldiers and workers brought to work and perform in the expositions represented to the press as the triumph of the civilizing mission, while at the same time these individuals remained outside of French republican rights and highlighted the inherent contradictions of universalism. The bourgeois French public defined their identity by the Other, in this instance the colonial subjects, a group “at once desired and repugnant, forbidden and subservient, cast as wholly different but also the same.”⁵ The press perpetuated these contradictions, and despite them presented the image of a fully unified France working together to recover in the interwar period.

The expositions represented the “only events capable of bringing together such a large swath of the population for purposes of edification and diversion,” and played a key role in the “indoctrination and unification of the public, by both glorifying and domesticating imperial space.”⁶ In particular, the 1931 exposition represented a “last-gasp effort to revive the colonial ideal in the service of national renewal.”⁷ By bringing the public through the door or to the expositions via the pictures the press painted, the expositions hoped to inspire pride within the French in their empire and to control the image of the colonies the French took home. The press happily served as intermediaries between the exposition and the public, working to influence the idealized image of the expositions and to popularize the empire.⁸ Convincing the public to attend

³ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 25.

⁴ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 39.

⁵ Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 192-193.

⁶ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 92

⁷ Horne, “In Pursuit of Greater France,” 41

⁸ Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies,” 91 & 94.

these events and to educate themselves regarding the empire became a number one concern for the press during both expositions. The success of the expositions and the press in popularizing the empire or creating a specific image of the colonies in the minds of the metropolitan public lies beyond the scope of this study and cannot accurately be determined.

Nevertheless, the press championed the success of French universalism and its effects on the colonies via the civilizing mission. It presented the French as a caring parent to its colonial children, providing guidance and discipline when necessary. This relationship also sometimes had an erotic tone, as France became a masculine dominator that subdued and exploited the colonies, as part of its concept of *mise en valeur*. The press embraced these visions in order to construct a view of the empire in which France maintained control and the colonial populations needed the French. All of this came at a time when France relied heavily on the colonies for support, including a significant labor force in France during the postwar years to help reconstruct the nation.⁹ The press navigated these tensions of the 1920s and 1930s when France needed colonial subjects to rebuild the metropole while at the same time the fear of a large colonial population living in France led to mass deportations.

The press embraced the 1922 exposition as a way to celebrate the empire and the success of France during the war. It praised the colonial troops and workers that enabled this victory while ignoring the treatment of these individuals during the war. By the time of the 1931 exposition the press worked itself into a fervor over colonialism and covered the event in great detail. As Blanchard argues, the media “had a new infatuation, and was preparing the French

⁹ Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 6.

populace for [such] an event.”¹⁰ The interwar period witnessed a renewed interest in the exotic and strange, a focus on the Other, and the press embraced this trend.

The narrow scope of this thesis did not allow for it to consider the reception of the metropolitan public to the efforts of the expositions and the press, yet it opens possibilities for research which include the ways in which other forms of mass media embraced or distanced itself from such events. For example, how did the cinema or popular magazines of the time portray the empire and comment on the expositions, and did this match up with the enthusiasm displayed by the press? In particular, the examination of women’s magazines and the publications of various colonial groups headquartered in the metropole could allow for a broader understanding of the effect the colonial expositions had on the public. Were the publications of these disenfranchised groups more critical of celebrations of the empire or did they too embrace the dominant discourses of the time? Future studies could also examine letters sent in to the press and reader response to more gain a glimpse into the thoughts of metropolitan French during these events. Another future project could examine other colonial expositions held within France in the years before the World War I including the 1906 Marseille exposition or 1894 Lyon exposition or the 1937 international exposition held in Paris before the start of World War II. Comparing how the press and mass media covered these other expositions could help to establish continuities or breaks in support for the empire during the height of French colonialism.

¹⁰ Blanchard, “National Unity,” 217.

APPENDIX: FIGURES



Figure 1: Advertisement for the 1931 International Colonial Exposition

“Did you know France was so great? 1,542,000 km², or three times the size of France, that is what represents our area in North Africa alone.

Credit: *Le Figaro*, (Paris) May 6, 1931

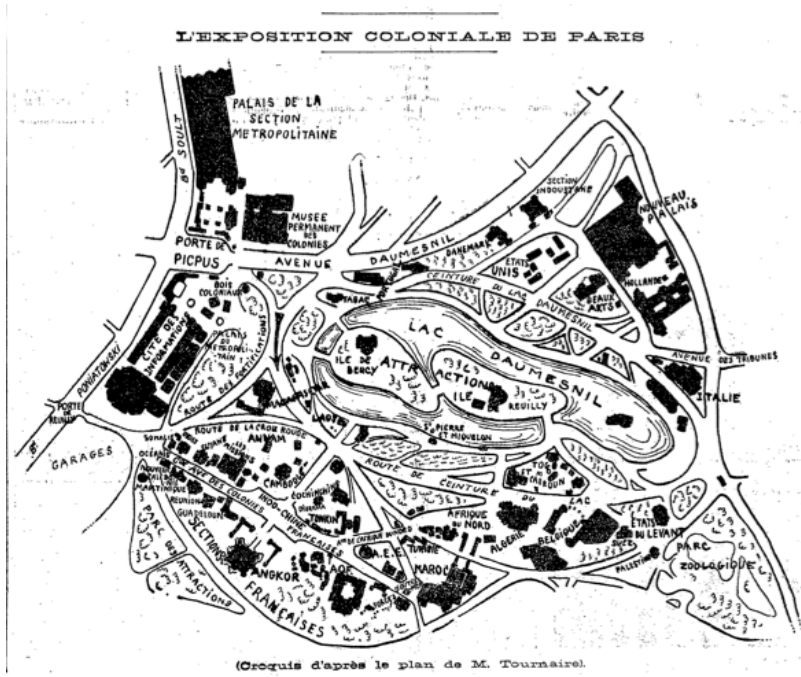


Figure 2: Map of the 1931 International Colonial Exposition

Credit- *Le Figaro*, (Paris) May 10, 1931



Figure 3: Political Cartoon

Caption: "Pardon sir, Greenland please?"

"Nothing easier: cross Western Africa, turn behind Guadelupe, pass Indochina on your right, cut by Oceania to your left... and you will land in Greenland."

Credit- *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) May 10, 1931

CONFUSION

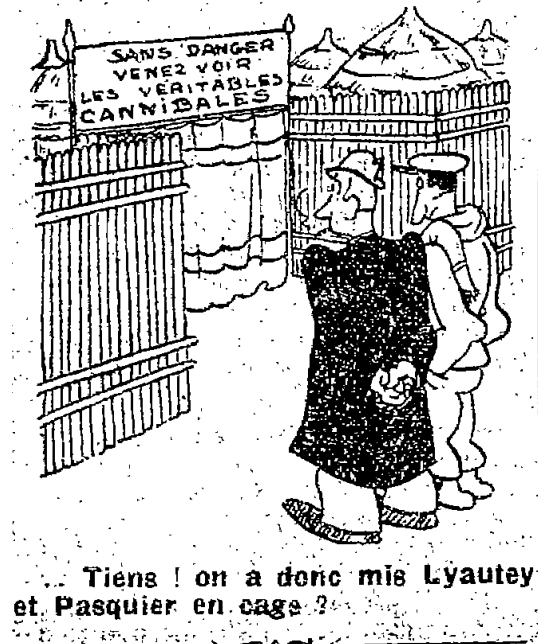


Figure 4: "Confusion"

Sign- "Safely come and see real cannibals!"

Caption: "Hey! So Lyautey and Pasquier are in a cage?"

Credit- *L'Humanité* (Paris) April 22, 1931



Figure 5: "Incredulous"

Caption: "Where did you learn this dance of the savage?"

"At the Colonial Exposition in Paris."

Credit- *L'Humanité* (Paris), November 21, 1931



Figure 6: "Exotic Dances- those returning from the exposition"

Caption: "What a bore! They do not stop dancing... since they learned the rumba.... In Paris!"

Credit- *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) November 15, 1931

REGRETS UNANIMES

— Je le trouve encore plus noir que quand il est parti.
— Oui, il porte le deuil de l'Exposition.

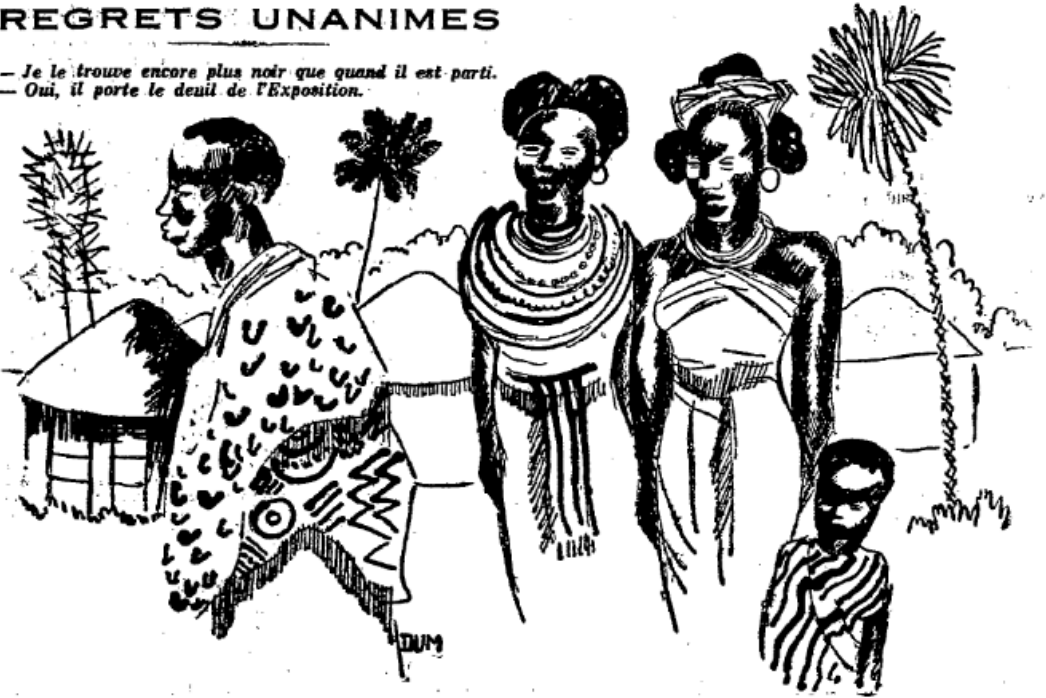


Figure 7: “Unanimous Regrets”

Caption: “I find him more black than when he left. Yes, he mourns the exposition.”

Credit- *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris), November 17, 1931

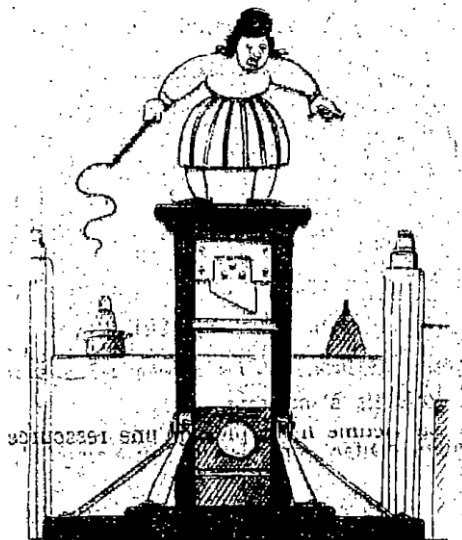


Figure 8: Advertisement for the 1931 International Colonial Exposition

Caption: “The fauna and flora, the art, the industry, life in its exotic setting. International Colonial Exposition. The best trip around the world. Paris. May-November 1931.”

Credit- “Exposition Coloniale Internationale,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris) April 27, 1931.

ATTRACTION



— Entrez, entrez ! Venez voir les sauvages !

Figure 9: "Attraction"

Caption: "Enter, enter! Come and see the savages!"

Credit- "*L'Humanité* (Paris) May 6, 1931.

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