

A QUEST FOR *MĀ'OHĪ* LITERATURE AND *MĀ'OHĪ* IDENTITY IN TITUAU PEU'S
REPRESENTATIONS OF FRANCE IN *MUTISMES* AND *PINA*

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Abstract

In the wake of centuries of Euroamerican literature, fundamentally rooted in Western-centered visions of Polynesia, potent alternative perspectives have now become visible in the emerging literary practices of Tahitian and other Polynesian authors over the last decades. This thesis specifically seeks to illuminate Tahitian representations of Metropolitan France and particularly in Titaua Peu's works. It argues that recent Tahitian fiction can be very useful in understanding the complicated relationship between French Polynesia and Metropolitan France and how this relationship has changed or not over time. This thesis concentrates on Titaua Peu's *Mutismes* (2003) and *Pina* (2017) to examine how a Tahitian author is reframing Polynesia, and in this case Tahiti, and its people's visions of Metropolitan France, to stand in contrast to familiar tropes of Pacific personhood from Bougainville to Loti to Gauguin into the twentieth or even twenty-first century. After centuries of French literature dealing with Tahiti, *Mā'ohi* writers are offering their own vision, in stark contrast to prior colonial perspectives. These authors problematize past representations, and foreground highly contemporary political issues. This thesis will analyze Peu's works, through the lenses of language, expression and representations. Through textual analysis, this thesis will show how Metropolitan France is represented. In three chapters, it shows how Peu's work can be classified as a *Mā'ohi* voice, how her representations of Metropolitan France are important to understand the Tahitian perspective and how her epilogues highlight questions on history and the French Polynesian political status and relationship with Metropolitan France.

Table of Contents

<u>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</u>	3
<u>ABSTRACT</u>	4
<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	5
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	7
<u>CHAPTER 1 A REVIEW OF <i>MĀ’OHI</i> LITERATURE: FROM FRENCH COLONIAL AND LITERARY OPPRESSION TO A PERSONAL <i>MĀ’OHI</i> POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE</u> 15	
FROM FRENCH COLONIAL TO TAHITIAN POST-COLONIAL DEPICTION OF FRENCH POLYNESIA	15
A FROM COLONIZATION TO RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS: LITERATURE AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL ..	15
1 ANCESTORS’ LITERATURE: SAVING MEMORIES AND HISTORY	16
2 FRENCH LITERATURE ON TAHITI: WHEN EXOTICISM CONFIRMS COLONIZATION	17
3 THE EVOLUTION OF TAHITIAN LITERATURE	21
4 THE SHIFT IN TAHITIAN LITERATURE: FROM COLONIAL AND OPPRESSIVE FRENCH LITERATURE TO TAHITIAN POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE	21
5 HENRI HIRO: A PIVOTAL FIGURE OF THE SHIFT	22
6 POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE	23
B COLONIZATION OF FRENCH POLYNESIA: HISTORY OF A RELATIONSHIP	24
1 SETTLEMENT: THE COLONIZATION OF FRENCH POLYNESIA BY FRANCE	24
2 CONTEMPORARY HISTORY: THE PATH TO A SHARED HISTORY	25
3 NUCLEAR NUCLEAR TEST: WHEN FRANCE USED POLYNESIA AS A MILITARY SITE	27
4 LANGUAGE AND POPULATION: THE SHARED HISTORY TAINTED BY <i>REO MĀ’OHI</i> AND TODAY’S STATUS.....	29
<u>CHAPTER 2 ANALYSIS OF PEU’S VISION OF METROPOLITAN FRANCE THROUGH HER NOVELS <i>MUTISMES</i> AND <i>PINA</i></u>	33
A BLAMING FRANCE FOR TAHITIANS’ EVERYDAY STRUGGLES.....	33
1 <i>PINA</i> : STRUGGLES OPPOSED TO EXAMPLES OF METROPOLITAN FRENCH ACCEPTANCE	33
2 <i>MUTISMES</i> : DISCRIMINATION AS A CENTRAL THEME.....	41
B METROPOLITAN FRANCE AS UNABLE TO HANDLE TAHITIAN ISSUES, CREATED BY FRANCE’S DECISIONS	43
1 <i>PINA</i> : EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION AND MISUNDERSTANDING IN BEHAVIORS AND NUCLEAR CONSEQUENCES	43
2 <i>MUTISMES</i> : THE NUCLEAR TESTS AS OPPOSED TO TAHITIAN PRACTICES	45
C METROPOLITAN FRANCE AS UNABLE TO END TAHITIAN ISSUES.....	50
1 <i>PINA</i> : AUGUSTE’S OWN JUSTICE: WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL WANTS TO AVENGE HIS ANCESTORS	50
D METROPOLITAN FRANCE AND FRENCH POLYNESIA: COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO DISTANT IDENTITIES	53
1 LANGUAGE: AN EVERYDAY OPPRESSION, A DIFFERENCE AND A COMPARISON.....	53

2 SOCIAL LIFE IN *MUTISMES*: WHEN TWO COMMUNITIES REFUSE TO SOCIALIZE WITH ONE ANOTHER.. 55

CHAPTER 3 THE TWO EPILOGUES: HOW THE OPENINGS OF THE NOVELS DIRECT THE READING 57

A *MUTISMES*' MULTIPLE FACES..... 57

1 NARRATING THE 1995 EVENTS 58

2 THE SHIFT: THE ADVOCACY FOR A TAHITIAN WORLD 61

3 THE HYPOCRITICAL RELATIONSHIP: WHEN THE COMMUNITY FIGHTS OTHER NATIONS 62

4 THE ROLE OF MEDIA: INTERESTS AT STAKE..... 64

B *PINA*'S EPILOGUE'S DUALITY: TWO LINKED VISIONS 65

1 THE DIFFERENT VOICES OF *PINA*'S 'EPILOGUE' 66

2 THE ARTICLE: RECOLLECTION OF *PINA*'S ELLIPSE AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON IT..... 67

3 POLITICS: THE IMPACT OF A POSSIBLE SELF-DETERMINATION VOTE..... 68

4 MEDIA COVERAGE: ECHOES TO *MUTISMES*' CRITICISM 69

5 2018 NEW CALEDONIAN REFERENDUM AND BREXIT VOTE: PEU'S FICTION AS INSPIRED BY REALITY

..... 69

6 THE AFTERMATH OF A POSSIBLE SELF-DETERMINATION STATUS..... 70

CONCLUSION..... 73

BIBLIOGRAPHY 75

Introduction

Tahiti is still advertised as a paradisiac land for many people, and tourism is inspired by this idea of longing for an earthly paradise draws crowds of tourists every year. The tourism industry uses cultural practices to attract people from all over the world, and especially from France. It is not unusual to hear people say that they saw “traditional” dances, that they were able to use *monoi* like Tahitian women during their holidays in Bora Bora. As Kareva Mateata-Allain recalls the French government uses these behaviors and beliefs as ways to “promote the tourist economy and perpetuate the myth of Tahiti” but it also highlights the fact that French Polynesia is still seen as a French “possession”, that France still has a big influence over the territory (Tourism industry being private and public, France benefits from it) (Mateata-Allain 2003). We can imagine that this status allows France to reduce French Polynesia to a mere ‘touristic attraction’. According to Miriam Kahn this status is “an ongoing struggle about how place is understood, sensed, used, abused, respected, and represented” (Kahn 61). Tahitians have a special relation with their land and France’s acts over it goes against it. Since the 1980s, French Polynesia experienced an evolution in terms of identity. More French Polynesians started to identify as *Mā’ohi*: a *Mā’ohi* person is defined as an “ordinary person, not a stranger [...] from French Polynesia” (Picard 17). As a *Mā’ohi*, French Polynesians differentiate themselves from locals and Metropolitan French residents.

After two centuries of colonial literature being imposed onto the *Mā’ohi* people, Francophone Pacific literature has emerged and been infused with activism and discourse examining contemporary issues towards Western expectations of Tahiti. Where French national history books typically recall the glory of the nineteenth century French Empire, contemporary Francophone Pacific literature reminds us of the consequences of the colonial enterprise and of lasting French occupation. While *Le Mariage de Loti* (1878), Gauguin’s paintings or Stevenson’s poems appear as a colonial representation of French Polynesia, contemporary

works such as Ray Chaze's *Vai la Rivière au Ciel sans Nuages* (1990) or Titaua Peu's *Pina* (2017) portray a key testimony of *La Métropole* and French people in general and offer a critique of established tropes. As authors often depict a crude image and the sometimes-adverse precarious social realities also giving a specific representation of metropolitan France, it is important to recall that Peu is part of this literary movement. The elements of "paradise" as testified by the Tahitian literary voices deviate from conventional Western and especially French narratives. In many works, written from a colonizer's perspective, the image typically depicted resembles paradise, inhabited by "uncivilised/uneducated savages". Francophone authors from the Pacific are increasingly engaged in literature with a multi-toned political repertoire: going from independentist visions to a better understanding of the political status. These writers withdraw from the classical Western literature's themes, to gain independence, in style, and ideas. This withdrawal appears as an incomplete rejection (use of French to write), and as a reformative engagement (producing literature with Tahitian characters and perspectives). This innovative literature must be studied, not only because of its richness, but to also understand the struggle in which most of these populations are still entrenched. Goenda Turiano-Reea explains that Tahitian literature has always existed but there is a need of another point of view on it: the new perspectives are useful to understand the Tahitian culture, as opposed to the one linked to France, but now these perspectives appear as a tool to reaffirm the Tahitian identity. Indeed, the *puta tupuna* (native writings) and contemporary Tahitian literature are a new representation of the Other,¹ the Tahitian perspective is now from the inside, in literature, highlighting the desire of being distinguished from the Other. The preservation of the *tupuna* writings was also essential to remember the past. Since the 1970s, Tahitian and Polynesian literature has taken a political turn insofar as it is engaged into resistance toward

¹ The Other is used to describe anyone who is not from a place: a Metropolitan French will be the other of a Tahitian person. I use the general form to signify the idea of this other: a global image of those who are not Tahitian.

Metropolitan France and is described as “un accompagnement de l’affranchissement des sociétés du Pacifique”². As Goenda Turiano-Reea recalls, the very first Tahitian point of view, written in French was given by Salmon in 1919 in *L’île Parfumée*. Thus, inside this literary testimony, it is obvious that the thing to do is not to get rid of France, but to live alongside, as a powerful ally through a sort of pact: “pacte précieux qui nous lie à la France, immortelle patrie”³. *Mā’ohi* literature involves an internal vision of the World and of the Other, from wherever it comes but not from Tahiti, but also it highlights the issues specific to French Polynesia. This is what the reader can find in Peu’s *Mutismes*, an open critique of France’s interference and a highlighted *omerta* (law of silence, while facing authorities or governments) on violence and poverty in Tahiti, written in French. The particular use of Tahitian language in literature is also an important feature as it is part of the so-called *Mā’ohi* cultural revival. It has been defined as a renewal in social, political and cultural lives in Tahiti. It is said to have started in the late 1970s, mainly when Henri Hiro was the first author to write and publish entirely in *reo Mā’ohi* (Tahitian native language). Added to these movements, Tahitian people started to re-use their ancestors’ traditions: by wearing the *pareu*, by having Tahitian tattoos and by using Tahitian language. Many Tahitian people started to reappropriate their *Mā’ohi* identity through this movement (Saura 4).

According to Robert Nicole, the rules imposed by France since its colonization of the land, are still dominant now: for example, by being an obstacle to the literary freedom of a *Mā’ohi* writer, denying their publications to exportation (Nicole 15). The reluctance in recognition of *Mā’ohi* literature also shows a form of racism. Colonial literature consists of a literature published during a period of colonization. In opposition to this, post-colonial literature is a literature published in countries which were once colonies (for example, Achebe’s 1959

² TURIANO-REEA, Goenda. “Etat des lieux de la littérature autochtone », talk given at the University of Hawaii, March 1st, 2019. “a gesture that help the emancipation of Pacific societies”

³ *Ibid.* “invaluable pact that binds us to France, the immortal motherland”

Things Fall Apart). Tahitian postcolonial literature is a literature that does not belong to its “colonizer’s country”. As Keown recalls, postcolonial literature also implies the need to “explore or resolve personal or collective conflict attendant upon the experience of colonization, racial prejudice or social marginalisation” (Keown 18). Post-colonial literature uses “new experience of political freedom, new ideologies [...] and new agendas” (Nayar 8). All the changes implemented by the process of decolonization bring new sets of ideas. Added to Bhabha’s idea, Nayar adds that postcolonial literature represents a possibility to set a common cultural background to those who experienced colonization (Nayar 10). As Kareva Mateata-Allain explains: “*Mā’ohi* literary production is symbolically post(-)colonial” because French Polynesia is still ruled by metropolitan France (Mateata-Allain 2003). But *Mā’ohi* literature has tended to escape these rules since the cultural revival and fight implemented during the 1980s, which creates a new form and that questions *Mā’ohi* identity, *Mā’ohi* ideas and that differs from an influenced literature. It can be useful to grasp *Mā’ohi* literature as (post)-colonial in order to see the hidden messages, such as the denunciation of unfair laws and behaviours, but also to see the moves made by authors to change the representations of their culture and community. Also, contemporary *Mā’ohi* authors are creating a new way of creating literature by using Tahitian characters, features or ideas. Titaua Peu is one of these major contemporary *Mā’ohi* authors. She writes on contemporary issues and struggles.

Titaua Peu is a French Polynesian journalist, who was born in New Caledonia and studied philosophy in France. Peu offers a form of Tahitian literature that is new, but also on the message on Tahiti she conveys: she creates a new range of ideas on how to understand the political atmosphere for example. I study these by analyzing the different visions she gives of Metropolitan France, but also her literary style. Peu also uses *Mā’ohi* literary figures, such as Henri Hiro, as witnesses of her works by including them in her texts. She published two novels,

Mutismes (2003) and *Pina*⁴(2017). I decided to use parts and quotations from these novels to highlight Peu's vision of French Polynesia and the features evolving around it, such as politics and everyday life.

Mutismes (2003) is the story of Tahiti through her main character, the narrator, in the late 1980s. This character is first a girl and then a woman, the reader follows her evolution through different important moments of her life until the day that changed her life: the day she left French Polynesia to go to Metropolitan France. When she turns sixteen, a girl in her school dies and she experiences smoking *bison* (tobacco) and weed. She wants to fit in a social group. She meets Rori, an opponent to the nuclear test and French settlement in Tahiti. With him, she discovers love: against her mother's will, she is sent to Raiatea in a religious school. On her flight, she experiences racism for the first time but also meets Terii, who is coming back from France. She finally joins her father who was waiting for her, to take her to Tahaa. She enters the religious high school and sees Terii again. She starts to learn more about independence and French oppression, felt by Tahitian independentists in terms of everyday life and rights, and her sense of Tahitianness grows at the same time. As explained by Saura, Tahitianness is linked to the West and especially to France. Following this idea, it is opposed to the idea of a *Mā'ohi* identity, which is fully belonging to native Tahitian people. She joins independent movements and groups with Terii: he comes to pick her up at night from her high school and drives her to political meetings. During one of these, she sees Rori again. During the elections of April 1994, Rori becomes the leader of the independentist movement. In 1995, France decided to start nuclear bombings on Moruroa is announced. Rori, at the head of the independentist party, leads the people to act and demonstrate against the nuclear bombings. They block roads, but a group of extremists join the movement and decide to go to the airport, where the head of the Tahitian government was about to leave. The airport is destroyed, the

⁴ All the translations from French to English are mine and verified by a native English speaker.

people are hurt and the crowd leaves to go to the city. Destruction and violence follow. After the event, the narrator's mother puts her on a plane: her destination is Paris. Rori is arrested. *Mutismes* mixes real events and fiction: reality becomes the base for fiction.

In 2017, Peu published *Pina*, her second novel, which takes place not only in Tahiti, but also in Paris, reads almost like a sequel to *Mutismes*. She describes the everyday life of a family living in Papeete's suburbs. The novel opens with the description of the family, until the day Auguste, the father, has a car accident while drunk driving. This event determines the entire plot: Auguste kills Nora, a Metropolitan French woman. He lies for months in a coma. Ma, his wife, tries to forgive him. Auguste finds redemption in religion and decides to continue what his ancestors started: the fight against the French colonizers. He decides to "save" his daughter Rosa, from prostitution and especially from her pimp, a Metropolitan French, George. He murders him and continue his "mission". Meanwhile, Pina, his other daughter grows up: she goes to school, experiences life, and spends time with her brother Pauro. She is sent to her aunt with her younger siblings while Auguste is in hospital. Pauro is homosexual and in a relationship with François, a Metropolitan French archeologist. At the same time, Hannah, one of the oldest children of the family is in Metropolitan France, in Paris. Her mother, Ma, calls her and Hannah decides to go back to Papeete to help her family, with her friend Michel. While the local police are not able to arrest Auguste, Maui, a Tahitian police officer, trained in Metropolitan France, lands in Tahiti. He is Auguste's first son: born from an incestual relationship, between Auguste and a cousin, his mother left Polynesia with a man from the French military and lived in France. While the police are still unable to identify Auguste as the murderer, Maui and Hannah start to investigate. While they go to the family house to confront Auguste, he assaults Pauro and Pina, who previously had decided to leave, and Pina tries commit suicide. When Ma, Hannah and Maui arrive, Pauro is fighting his father and Auguste dies. The family saves Pina and an ellipse brings the reader twenty years later, in Paris. Pina

left Papeete with Pauro and François and lived with them. The political climate became less and less stable and a referendum is held to decide on the islands' fate. French Polynesia voted in favor of independence and Hannah stayed there to work hand in hand with independentist movements. The story is created alongside another one: both are influencing each other.

Peu gives several different visions of Metropolitan France, which question the responsibility on Tahitian struggles and issues, the implication of Metropolitan France in Tahitian affairs. Through her novels, Peu shows these visions as ruling over the country, blocking it to fully detach itself from Metropolitan France. Following Peu's literary creation, we can recognize real events, glimpse of reality and facts that reflect the same struggles as those exposed in the fictions. She reuses miscellaneous stories to build her fiction (murders, domestic violence cases). I demonstrate that Peu uses these visions to express the notions of Tahitianness, to highlight the different feelings toward Metropolitan France and to use literature as a political tool to send messages. Also, the heritage of *Mā'ohi* literature is important in contemporary literature, especially in Peu's because she goes further than Hiro or Chaze for example, in terms of themes, language and stories.

I examine the forced-sharing history of Tahiti with France. France colonized Tahiti and imposed its laws over the archipelago, most of the time ignoring the local population's ideas and needs. For this thesis, it is necessary to go back in time and History to confront the different issues implemented in *Mā'ohi* literature expansion. In the first chapter of this thesis, I am going to review *Mā'ohi* literature, describe how it emancipated itself from its original form. To do so, my first chapter goes back to both the historical and literary histories. I recount how Tahitian literature started and how it influenced the *Mā'ohi* cultural revival. I also go over French literature on Tahiti to oppose their tropes and features, to contemporary practices. My second chapter relies on the analysis of the examples that I have studied. To highlight the different visions of Metropolitan France. I organized them into four categories. This organization was

Romy MM Courat

important to understand Peu's perspective on history through her fictions. The third and final chapter is a repetition of the second chapter, I analyzed the epilogues of each novels to highlight the different perspectives and the duality offered by Peu.

Chapter 1 A review of *Mā'ohi* literature: from French colonial and literary oppression to a personal *Mā'ohi* post-colonial literature
From French colonial to Tahitian post-colonial depiction of French Polynesia

“The contemporary struggle of *Mā'ohi* writers to re-empower language in the service of truth and dignity has been fraught with obstacles” (*Varua Tupu XII*)

A From colonization to resistance movements: literature as an important tool

In this first chapter, I will provide an overview of the relationship between Metropolitan France and French Polynesia. To do so, I will describe the different historical moments, from an exclusively Metropolitan literature on Tahiti to a Tahitian post-colonial literature. I demonstrate how the literary evolution goes hand in hand with the history of this relationship (from a colony to an autonomous territory). The reclaiming of *Mā'ohi* power starts through literature and its rules, focusing on its language. The *Mā'ohi* powers would imply independence from France but also to recover any aspects of the *Mā'ohi* culture. While French literature has been through various movements, its evolution took time and Tahitian literature developed faster. Tahitian social evolution is also a fast movement. Traditional French literature originated centuries ago, responding to literary codes or currents: for example, the naturalist or romantic movements during the nineteenth century. The opposition to French literature comes mainly from a form of political status that evolves around French Polynesia and Tahitian writers. Tahitian literature is said to be suppressed in Pacific literature studies because of its lack of translations to English (Lyons 383). The association of French and English-speaking scholars could be a solution to give a better access to *Mā'ohi* literature (Lyons 383). It shows that there is a misunderstanding in terms of *Francophonie*. The notion of *Francophonie* does not just link French-speaking nations, it also provides a culture that evolves: Francophone literature conveys this idea. As Metropolitan French students are not commonly taught Francophone literature, they miss an important part of French literature and cannot understand the Francophone world.

But this is changing, more programs offer Francophone literature classes, notably in the US. Still, Tahitian literature is less exported away from French Polynesia, mainly because the main French publishers in France are not publishing their work. According to Robert Nicole's statement, it is easier to understand the struggle that *Mā'ohi* writers are facing: culturally, the French domination is still a contemporary issue for *Mā'ohi* writers, and also over the literary world (Nicole 15). Entering the literary world can be a way to challenge hegemonic ideas and it could end the biased representations of French Polynesia: "it has been difficult to find in literature the emotions, intelligence and daily lives of the Islands' indigenous people" (*Varua Tupu* XI). In order to be as accurate as possible, *Mā'ohi* writers had to create their own literature, with their own features, their own subjects and their own way of looking at the world. The creation of a "*littéraMā'ohi*" (which is also an organization for publications) was necessary to help in the spread of *Mā'ohi* literature (Lyons 385). Also, the rediscovery of History, from the Tahitian point of view, that has been denied by France for decades can take place thanks to the expansion of Tahitian literature.

1 Ancestors' literature: saving memories and history

To understand the evolution in Tahitian literature, it is necessary to go back in time. Since the 1810s, Tahitian literature has been used in order to keep the memory of the *tupuna*, the ancestors⁵. This form of literature can be seen as a path from orality to written form. Indeed, the *puta tupuna*, native writings, was a way to collect and keep the native stories that told the history of the Tahitian people. Before the introduction of the written a form, orality was the way to spread knowledge, genealogy, history and power. It solely relied on people, to remember and transmit these stories. In the 1980s, authors have begun to publish as a challenge, which was different from the *Mā'ohi* oral tradition, but which could also preserve the orality, and this

⁵ TURIANO-REEA, Goenda. « Etat des lieux de la littérature autochtone », talk given at the University of Hawaii, March 1st, 2019.

was still an important feature (Lyons 385). With the increased use of writing, one would assume that this oral knowledge could be kept easily but the spread of literacy was limited in native cultures. As Robert Nicole recalls, writing was not part of the cultural and oral tradition in Tahiti (Nicole 15). This literature, sometimes written by foreign explorers and researchers, was meant to protect a heritage and gave an insider's perspective of this specific world. Later on, this heritage had to be known by the new generations of *Mā'ohi*, to not forget their History and genealogies. Studying Tahitian literature is also meeting ancestors and their history: "this genealogy is important because it connects Western conceptions of Tahiti to those of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the rest of Oceania" (Nicole 15). At the same time, cultural and historical heritage connects all the peoples that were misunderstood by the West (misunderstanding of traditions, wrong statements on culture and practices for example). Paradoxically, foreign explorers were interesting in transcribing Polynesian stories but at the same time, politics and settlement destroyed this cultural heritage.

2 French literature on Tahiti: when exoticism confirms colonization

As a starting point, the production of literature dealing with Tahiti and French Polynesia appeared as soon as French landed in Tahiti in 1768: with Bougainville's writings as well as his crew's writing. Indeed, the first explorers, their crews and later writers started to publish works, fictional or not, using these lands as the main setting for their stories and the natives to fulfill the plot. As Ridley recalls, many French writers were the heirs of the Realist novel movement of the nineteenth century (Ridley 1). As a matter of fact, these writers were supposed to describe their ordinary lives away from France or "the typical day-to-day experiences of the many rather than only the exceptional lives of the few" (Ridley 1). By doing so, the writers became exceptional with their way of life on the other side of the world, depicting landscapes and experiences that their readers would not live. However, French literature was linked to a biased representation of Tahiti: the author would depict an exotic and desirable place,

incorporating a way of looking at the Other and his/her environment, in this case Tahitian natives. But at the same time, the Other, Tahitian people, who was a stranger became familiar (Ridley 15). This opposition Other/natives can be misused or even misunderstood. In fact, the barrier between Frenchmen and Tahitians became thinner by assimilation: “at times ‘primitive’ societies were invested with metropolitan ideas, attitudes and language- so that the ‘Noble Savage’ was shown to be identical to Frenchmen and at other times presented as utterly different to metropolitan France” (Ridley 16). The notion of ‘Noble Savage’ appeared with Rousseau in *Le Discours sur l’Origine des Inégalités Parmi les Hommes* in 1755. He developed the idea that human is born as potentially good but modern society corrupts. He did not create the notion but developed it. The idea has been spread through centuries, for example in Montaigne, Bougainville or Diderot. The notion changed through time and was mainly criticized. Also, the power of the literary canon and established ideals had a huge influence on writings. Indeed, if we follow Rousseau and his doctrine, we can find many of its features in the first published texts on Tahiti, in Bougainville’s *Voyage Autour du Monde* (1771) or later, Melville’s *Omoo: a Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas* (1847). This is also why writers referred to Tahiti as the new Cythera, “as a South Sea Eden inhabited by free-loving neo-Grecian ‘noble savages’” (Keown 4). By writing from a foreigner’s standpoint, the image resembles a depiction of a paradise, inhabited by “uncivilised/uneducated savages”. When Loti spoke Tahitian language, he was wearing traditional outfits, he tried to assimilate to the natives, but he also highlighted the differences between Europeans and natives. Indeed, as he tried to assimilate, his “new” customs showed differences on several levels (languages, habits). More importantly, Loti leaves Tahiti and abandons Rarahu. Loti defends in his book a strong colonialist and imperialistic model in which he finds pride and glory. French writers of fictions of the time followed the literary rules and the colonial clichés to contrast with what was published on the continent: they were giving their readers beautiful landscapes and “confirmed” their superiority

whereas continental writers were depicting the Industrial Revolution as responsible for the sad fate of the European working class and its tribulations.

The major work published by Loti is *Le Mariage de Loti* (1878). Through this story, the reader meets an exotic, mystical place, different from France and Europe following different beliefs but nevertheless very attractive. This exotic perspective is still nowadays at the forefront of the tourism industry advertisement's plan⁶, such as it was at the end of the nineteenth century: such as Spitz's photography which staged the former 'cross-cultural encounters' to promote "tourism" (Childs 16). In his writing, Loti describes his (probable) fictional everyday life on the other side of the world but implicitly: it is described with an outsider's vision of French Polynesia (Hargreaves 68). According to Ridley, Loti's works follow this outsider's vision: the narrator falls in love with a native of the place he is visiting. *Le Mariage de Loti* does not really break far from this mechanics (Ridley 80). Whereas Zola was depicting the "repulsive" realistic image of France, or Flaubert was writing about the sad everyday life of bored provincial women, Loti published his exotic, dreamy novel. The depiction of Tahiti given by Loti resembled the colonial literature of the time: dealing with "savages", beautiful *vahine*, and his superficial "integration" into Tahitian life and culture. He played a role that fitted perfectly the ideas and canons of the time. These canons are defined by exotic landscapes, "shallow lagoons animated with sea life and dense tropical foliage" (Childs 1). As other eighteenth century authors did before him, he set his story on this "inaccessible place as an island utopia and prelapsarian" (Childs 2). To do so, he followed the "mainstay of Enlightenment and romantic conceptions of the Pacific as sexual and environmental paradise" (Keown 4). These conceptions will later be used by Tahitian authors, such as Peu. By trying to explain how he "assimilated" to the population, he represented what postcolonial studies describe as imperialistic,

⁶ With the example of the website <https://tahititourisme.fr/fr-fr/> (last retrieved February 29th 2020), the mix of cultural practices and tourism's possibilities. The promotional video entitled 'pick your paradise' shows this idea.

paternalistic and racist (Nicole 131). This recalls what Loti tried to explain when he described the symbolic death of Rarahu to symbolize the possible disappearance of the Tahitian culture.

Another major work was Segalen's *Les Immémoriaux* (1921): Segalen visited Tahiti at the beginning of the twentieth century. He wrote to criticize the negative consequences of colonization on Tahiti, following Loti's ideas. In this piece, the author departs from the traditional way of writing of other authors. The reader discovers Térîi, a Tahitian character telling his story. Nicole argues that Segalen was confronted to other works and books already published on Tahiti, such as Loti's *Le Mariage de Loti* (Nicole 132). Segalen tried to escape the clichés but, in fact, he actually followed the clichés by trying to give a "pure native" perspective in giving Térîi the narrator's role (trying to 'save' the traditions). There, Segalen still uses a "paternalistic discourse of restitution that seeks to resurrect the lost 'noble savage'" (Nicole 131). In a postcolonial perspective, we can imagine Segalen as fulfilling the colonial literary tradition even if there were efforts to reverse it. At first, his novel can be seen as a tribute to *Mā'ohi* culture, but, soon, the contemporary context reappears, with the reality of colonialism and ethnographic discourses, and it is hard to focus on a different perspective. In fact, Doumet insists on this idea: Segalen seemed to have developed an ethnographical discourse rather than an inspired fiction (Doumet 95). Segalen's novel appears like a dilemma: on the one hand, the novel seems to be a fiction attempting to rescue a culture but on the other, the fiction seems to sometimes mock or exaggerate the differences between the French author and the Tahitian characters. At the same time, Doumet highlights the fact that *Les Immémoriaux* is also an "exotic" writing in the sense that it refers to a distant place (Doumet 103).

More recently, literatures inspired by Tahiti have been seen as testimonies, honoring the islands. The depiction of Tahiti used for decades has been rejected in favor of a new vision. Many *Mā'ohi* authors prefer to depict an everyday life, experienced by natives, instead of using French characters traveling to Tahiti.

3 The Evolution of Tahitian Literature

Tahitian literature is not a recent phenomenon: the first literary piece written in French was done in 1919, and entitled *L'Île Parfumée*, by Salmon, a collection of poems which manuscript has been published a century later. It was found in a Parisian library and thanks to the organization “*LittéraMā’ohi*”, it was finally published in 2013. This story contrasts with the literature published on Tahiti by French authors. By creating new representations, works of *Mā’ohi* writers were a way to oppose and be freed from the long-time implemented clichés, or “romanticized fantasies and inauthentic tales” (*Varua Tupu XI*) on Tahiti and French Polynesia. Furthermore, there was a need for a *Mā’ohi* literature, made of *Mā’ohi* characters with *Mā’ohi* stories, as a tool to “educate the masses and to reverse the cultural damage” (Mateata-Allain 2012). *Mā’ohi* authors protect *Mā’ohi* identity and pride, for different purposes: resist French institutions, rediscover their heritage. Mateata-Allain means that by educating the masses, Tahitian people can gain back their rights and cultural practices.

4 The shift in Tahitian literature: from colonial and oppressive French literature to Tahitian post-colonial literature

Since the 1970s, Tahitian literature has taken a political turn as it resists Metropolitan France and it is linked to the emancipation of Pacific societies. Following the movement that started in the English-speaking Pacific places, the emancipation went also through the revival of Polynesian culture (Keown 9). As it was said earlier, the absence of *Mā’ohi* writers on the French literary scene highlights sometimes the neglected cultural value of it. This recognition could help *Mā’ohi* writers to gain credibility on the literary scene, but also a recognition of their Tahitianness. Furthermore, as Mateata-Allain recalls, this helps Metropolitan France keeping Polynesia “in a position of intellectual subordination and inequality” by limiting their visibility on the literary scene (Mateata-Allain 2003). Since the very first works to be published, Tahitian literature can be understood as part of the reappropriation of the culture by giving the characters

a voice to gain literary independence. Through these voices, authors spread messages to increase consciousness around politics or social matters and federate more people, spectators and actors, to the emancipation cause. Since the 1990s, the Polynesian production has increased but it is still less represented compared to Metropolitan France's production. In the 1990s, Tahitian literature grew because Tahitian authors, such as Chaze or Aurima-Devatine, started to publish, which was a new phenomenon. The shift, which I am now going to study, also brought a new form of expression, giving more material and motives for writing. This is how Tahitian literature started to grow, by using the codes implemented by the first *Mā'ohi* writers such as Hiro. Furthermore, Tahitian authors are part of a movement that works to "re-embodiment their stories re-inscribe them within the canons of Francophone literature and history" (Ségeral 239).

5 Henri Hiro: a pivotal figure of the shift

The most important shift happened during the 1970s, with Henri Hiro, one of the very first to publish his works in Tahitian language. He started to work in the field of cinema in 1979. Later, in 1985, he published *Pehepehe I taù nunaa*, a collection of poems, mainly dedicated to Tahiti and its numerous features. Through this work, Henri Hiro created a new way of thinking and working with literature as a political device. He was the spokesman of a new generation, proud of his origins and Tahitian identity. With his first texts, he promoted Tahitian language to write his poetry in opposition to the fact that the Tahitian language had been forbidden for almost a century, to fulfil the politics of assimilation imposed by France after the annexation of 1880 (Peltzer). In 1951, the *Deixonne* law was published in France, authorizing the teaching of regional language but "ne fut étendue à la Polynésie Française qu'en 1981, soit trente ans après" ("was only implemented to French Polynesia only in 1981, that is to say thirty years later" Peltzer). By doing so, he illustrated his world with his language but as Hiro himself recalled, in an interview given to Rai A Mai, in 1990, and transcribed in *Varua Tupu* (2006), the major

point of doing so was not to oppose French representations but to complete them: “these two cultures must come together” (Hiro 79). During this interview, he also talked about one of his poems ‘*Ho Mai Na*’, that can be understood in various ways. A Tahitian person can remember a story that he was told when young, a Metropolitan French can imagine a way of understanding the land alongside Tahitian stories. By using the Tahitian language, Hiro expressed his identity but also the oral roots of his literature: poetry and stories being two oral traditions. One of his strong messages was that he encouraged Polynesian people to write, implicitly saying that it was crucial to do so (*Varua Tupu* 75).

6 Post-colonial literature

As Kareva Mateata-Allain explains: “*Mā’ohi* literary production is symbolically post(-)colonial” because French Polynesia is still ruled by Metropolitan France (Mateata-Allain 2003). But *Mā’ohi* literature has tended to escape these rules since the cultural revival and fight implemented during the 1980s. It can be useful to comprehend *Mā’ohi* literature as post-colonial in order to understand the conveyed messages but also to see what was made by authors to change the representations of their culture and community. Post-colonial literature can be a tool to turn the table: changing the representations of the Other. As a consequence, in Tahitian literature, the Other is no longer Tahitian but Metropolitan French. This reverses the role of authors and of their characters, and the discourse becomes stronger and sometimes more realistic. This is an important point in Peu’s literature: she uses Metropolitan French as the Other and gives a more realistic Tahitian perspective of her Tahitian world. The purpose of labeling Tahitian literature as post-colonial implies the idea of rejecting some parts of the literary rules, such as the creation of new characters and plots. The major issues dealt with in Tahitian literature are linked to Metropolitan France, but this literature also deals with issues that are specific to Polynesian people.

Post-colonial literature also questions the notion of independent authorship. Indeed, in the Tahitian case, the publication of *Mā'ohi* writers is still problematic. Some French publishers try to work with Polynesian authors but in general these publications are exported less outside French Polynesia than Metropolitan French literature is. *Mā'ohi* literature cannot be described as anything else but post-colonial because of this “metaphorical rupture” (Mateata-Allain 2003) from Metropolitan France. Mateata-Allain explains that the publishers do not recognize the work of *Mā'ohi* authors, making their works less accessible, even in French Polynesia and it “perpetuates the myth of Tahiti while discrediting the creative, linguistic, and intellectual capabilities of the *Mā'ohi* people” (Mateata-Allain 2003). It also goes alongside the misrepresentations of *Mā'ohi* people themselves, which is a point that I study. It is also interesting to link the use of literature to serve major issues that French Polynesia has faced and is still facing today.

B Colonization of French Polynesia: history of a relationship

In a competition-like exploration of the world, powers from Europe started their quest for land as soon as the fifteenth century. The major powers in charge of this spreading of territories were Portugal, France and Great Britain. These powers started to take over the world, mainly for commercial purposes led by the process of industrialization. By settling all over the globe, European powers could set their authority over peoples and other European powers. To do so, occasionally, these powers tried to invade the same places, such as Tahiti for example, which saw France and Great Britain fighting to settle there.

1 Settlement: the colonization of French Polynesia by France

As it was mentioned above, the colonization and settlement process did not take long. It is in 1767 that Wallis landed in Tahiti and in 1768, Bougainville arrived in Tahiti, his “*Nouvelle-Cythere*” (Juster 16). Cythera is Aphrodite’s island, a desired place: by calling Tahiti, the ‘New Cythera’, Bougainville gave it an exotic and oniric dimension. A year after, Captain

James Cook also came to Tahiti. The conflict opposing France and Britain took place in the Marquesas in 1791 (Juster 20). At the same time in Tahiti, the dynasty Pomare, with the help of France, started to take over the island and ruled over it from 1793 to the final settlement of France in 1842 (Juster 28, 45). The ruling family finally signed a Treaty with France, putting an end to the royalty on Tahiti. Indeed, as soon as 1880, France started to implement its colonial rules, and Tahiti became an official French colony (Juster 66). Many institutions and authorities were ruled by French expatriates. The settlement of another nation implied several changes and movements that were led mostly against the native population. Through the imposition of language and of lifestyle, natives had to assimilate to the settler. As a consequence, the traditional knowledge, rites and religion were forbidden, following Pomare II's conversion to Christianity in 1815. The native lifestyle changed drastically during these years. We can say that these movements were following the periods' ideas: by implementing European standards, explorers, missionaries and colonizers imposed their rules over lands that were not holding the same standards and traditions. As soon as it was possible, France claimed Polynesia as a French territory, and later as a colony in 1891, when King Pomare V died (Childs 50).

2 Contemporary history: the path to a shared history

When France annexed the Tahitian and Tuamotuan territories, it imposed its laws over it. And later, as with other French colonies, natives from French Polynesia had to join the army and some of them had to go to Europe to fight in World War I. After World War II, French Polynesia gained some autonomy by becoming an Overseas Territory (Territoires d'Outre-Mer) in 1946. This status gave Polynesian their own form of authority as an Assembly. Also, in May 2013, the United Nations (UN) decided to put French Polynesia on the "list of territories to decolonize" (Danielson 124) and has put it again in 2019 (Quatrième Commission). The UN considers that French Polynesia is not a fully autonomous territory (according to the article 73

of the UN charter)⁷. France is not ready to leave this strategic position in the Pacific Ocean. In 1984, French Polynesia gained in autonomy by becoming an autonomous territory inside the French Republic (Juster 111). With this new status, an Assembly was created in order to take care of issues and concerns that only took place in French Polynesia. France's government had less power over territorial decisions and the Assembly was able to treat issues that were specific to the islands. The process of remapping France, that took place in Metropolitan France in 2015, did not involve changes in French Polynesia: however, by remapping all the regions, *La Métropole* showed that it still has power and duties over its overseas territories, as in (La) Réunion or (La) Martinique.

Since 1996 and the last law confirming French Polynesia's autonomous status, no real changes have had taken place. French Polynesia is able to rule over more domains and institutions: the *Assemblée de la Polynésie Française* (Assembly of French Polynesia) votes laws for French Polynesia but in general French government still rules over the territory through the *Haut-commissariat de la République* (High Commission of the Republic). In 2004, there were demonstrations against the dissolution of the Assembly leading to a revision of the law (Juster 123). Since then, it has had a free and democratic government, led by local representatives⁸. More recently, the French Polynesian status has been addressed, leading to debates around the status and the recognition of nuclear victims. A reform is being discussed to answer these questions: to do so, France will have to recognize the consequences of its nuclear testing. This reform will also help French Polynesia to enter into a new era in terms of new developments on the archipelago, such as a better communication between the collectivities, a

⁷ "Chapter XI – Declaration regarding non-self-governing territories". <https://legal.un.org/repertory/art73.shtml>. Last retrieved, February 29th, 2020

⁸ Law n°2004-192, February 27 2004 on the status of French Polynesia, consolidated on April 17, 2019. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000435515> (last accessed, April, 16 2019).

tax reform or law votes⁹. The situation in New Caledonia could have been a motive to make things change in French Polynesia, especially regarding the UN's decision. If New Caledonia became independent, French Polynesia's independentist leaders could use it as an example to gain supporters. According to Annick Girardin, President Macron's minister of Overseas territories, a France-Oceania summit should be held in April 2020¹⁰.

3 Nuclear nuclear test: when France used Polynesia as a military site

Authors such as Peu and Chaze use contemporary historical and political events that changed the Tahitian landscape, such as the nuclear tests that took place in Tuamotu. This idea combines historical facts and fictional works. While the nuclear tests were led by France on Tuamotu, on Tahitian land, many movements started to oppose these tests. The very first tests were conducted in the 1960s, a decade after the United States of America performed its tests on the Marshalls (Ridgell 238). The use of Polynesia as a nuclear test site had been decided by De Gaulle's government (Danielson 5). The nuclear tests ended in 1992 after almost 193 tests had been conducted (between 1966 and 1996). Later, in 1995, the Chirac government decided to restart a nuclear campaign in Tuamotu. This decision caused a protest movement that was not only led by Tahitian opponents. Indeed, all the Pacific nations and even Australia, as a South Pacific nation, protested against this new campaign. At the heart of such a movement, there were people on both sides: on the one hand, protesters who wanted the end of the testing and on the other hand, people who wanted the testing to continue in order to receive the financial benefit from the military presence in Tahiti (Ridgell 238). The major concern was the consequences on Nature and people: no real information had been given to prove the safety of

⁹ « Le Sénat s'attelle à la réforme du statut de la Polynésie Française » by Guillaume Jacquot. Published on February 18, 2019 for publicsénat.fr. <https://www.publicsenat.fr/article/parlementaire/le-senat-s-attelle-a-la-reforme-du-statut-de-la-polynesie-francaise-138070> Last accessed April 16, 2019. And <https://www.senat.fr/questions/base/2019/qSEQ19040730G.html> last accessed February 29, 2020.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

these testing, and it is still a “secret”¹¹. On one side, the economic changes were a factor for keeping the nuclear sites running: people had jobs and their everyday lives were improved¹². But the consequences on health or environment were not clear. It is only in 2010 that a law was voted to financially compensate the direct and indirect victims of the nuclear testings¹³. Yet, few have received help and this law is also protecting the *Ministère de la Défense* (Ministry of Defense). This whole project, the 2010 law, has been done without barely any consultation from the Polynesian authorities and left French Polynesia a victim of a government that decided to test deadly weapons on the other side of the world, neglecting their own citizens: “Nuclear testing contaminated everything” (Hiro 79). Rai Chaze uses nuclear test as an important theme of her collection *Vai, La rivière au ciel sans nuages* (1990). She dedicates an entire story, “Césure” to it: “les hommes intelligents ont fermé les yeux pour ne pas regarder. Ils n’ont pas regardé le cocotier tout bête, tout vert, se tourner vers l’est en disant que vais-je respirer ? ” (“The smart men closed their eyes to not watch. They did not watch the childish green coconut tree revolve toward East saying what am I going to breath?”; Chaze 39). She is exposing history and the decisions made by France without consulting Tahitian people:

Le monsieur au grand nez parle de force et de pouvoir, de défense et de bombe. Il vient avec d’autres personnes de son pays voir la bombe exploser dans le ciel pacifique des îles de la nuit. Et les hommes, chefs de guerre, regardent le dos tourné la beauté dans l’extase de la violence. (“The man with a big nose talks about strength and power, of defense and of bombs. He comes with other people from his country to watch the bomb exploding in the peaceful sky of the dark islands. And the men, war chiefs, watch, turning their back to the beauty in the extasy of violence”, Chaze 35).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ <https://www.senat.fr/rap/109-018/109-01822.html> (accessed April, 16 2019).

The person she is talking about is Général Charles De Gaulle, France's president, who decided to use French Polynesia as a military site to test the nuclear weapons. He came with people from his country: she involves the military who worked on site. At the same time, she explains that they are not really watching, as if they did not want to see the damages and consequences they would leave on French Polynesia. They also destroy the paradise they are promoting. The accumulation of violence through nuclear bombing is a threat for the Tahitian but also to nature. Nuclear decisions gave *Mā'ohi* writers material to write about the "implications of human incursion into the Pacific, politicising the relationship between Pacific Islanders and the ocean which sustains them" (Keown 13). The consequences evoked in *Mā'ohi* literature regarding nuclear decision are destroying human health but also the future by destroying the environment.

4 Language and population: the shared history tainted by *reo Mā'ohi* and today's status

The solidarity that was seen during the 1995 protests highlights an important feature, a form of brotherhood in Polynesia. People of the Pacific share history, culture and some forms of language. But as a colonial tool, French has been imposed as the official, to follow the unification of territories through French, and nobody was supposed to use *reo Mā'ohi* (Tahitian language) as a language, children at school were told to speak only French. The fact that *reo Mā'ohi* has been reintroduced is important in the act of resistance. During the 1980s, the use of Tahitian language became official and people were able to use it again. The use of an indigenous language can be seen as a passive form of resistance, but it also holds the notion of identity that is crucial in terms of resistance. At the same time, as Mateata-Allain recalls, the French settlers and their government started to encourage the holding of cultural practices and language but mainly to promote tourism, by showing parts of culture that are different from those in Metropolitan France (language, tattooing, cooking). Language, used by *Mā'ohi* writers, is

revealing dimensions of the Tahitian identity: “utiliser la langue française comme une revanche selon Chantal Spitz” (“using French language as an instrument of revenge according to Chantal Spitz”; Mateata-Allain 2003). This hybrid language in Tahitian literature is linked to the “commitment to language and culture” (Lyons 386). The use of French language can appear as a form of submission to the colonial ideas, but *Mā’ohi* authors are in fact fighting against this by adding their own language as a rupture from the colonizer’s authority, even if they mostly have to add a glossary, as in Chaze’s *Vai la Rivière au Ciel sans Nuages* (1990). This glossary is useful for readers who are not familiar with Tahitian. It could be seen as symbolic because Chaze is writing in French, mixed with Tahitian terms, but in this way she teaches her readers parts of her culture. As Mirose Paia argues that French Polynesia counts at least twelve different languages, of which seven are native languages¹⁴. On top of these native languages, Tahitian is more commonly used but it is still less used than the dominant French. As a consequence, these two dominant languages have been mixed over time and this is the result of an adaptation to and of the Other. It can also be seen as a desire of integration but not of assimilation. Integration, in this case, is to mix two groups of people, of different cultures and consider them as one. On the contrary, assimilation is asking a group, here French Polynesians, to fit in French culture and take every aspect of it for themselves, forgetting their culture. Metropolitan France’s ideals were historically “assimilationists” as an ideological tool to unify the French population and its various cultures and languages. This idea can be illustrated by banning the Tahitian language. Paia also insisted on the idea of preservation of identity through this integration: “identity mixture is necessary”¹⁵. As long as “language is a social act”¹⁶ it is a crucial tool to transmit an idea or to say something, to make it happen and of course, it is an identity holder. It allows

¹⁴ PAIA, Mirose. “E hoera Brad, c’est quoi ton gag là ? The Tahitian-French-English ‘mixture’: an example of language contact and appropriation”, February 28th, 2019. On language, history of it and use of it.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* “le mélange identitaire est nécessaire”.

¹⁶ TURIANO-REEA, Goenda. “E hoera Brad, c’est quoi ton gag là ? The Tahitian-French-English ‘mixture’: an example of language contact and appropriation”, February 28th, 2019. On language, humor and use of language in humoristic forms. “le langage est une action sociale”.

speakers to express anything: this way *Mā'ohi* writers can also send messages through the tool of language. Furthermore, Goenda Turiano-Reea added that many feelings cannot be expressed in Tahitian, “mainly due to Tahitian prudishness.”¹⁷, but if mixed with French, these feelings can be expressed. So, mixing French and Tahitian would be a very powerful tool for expression and to create a new form of identity.

The political status of French Polynesia is always changing, from one government status to another. Since 1946, it has been a TOM (*Territoire d'Outre Mer* – Abroad Territory) but this status changed in 2003, and French Polynesia became a COM (*Collectivités d'Outre Mer* – Overseas Collectivity), giving French Polynesia an almost full autonomy, with its own government. Since January 2019, the status has been again questioned. There is a need for differentiation from *La Métropole* and the political status is the main obstacle for this. I believe that as long as French Polynesia constitutes an “extension” of France, *Mā'ohi* authors, such as Chaze or Peu, tend to criticize this through their fictions: being a native of French Polynesia does not mean “completely French”.

However, Metropolitan French, as a group who live in French Polynesia, only represent four percent of the population total (Ridgell 234). This small proportion of ‘settlers’ have more power over the land than the 78% of Polynesian people (Ridgell 234). This population rate is one of the highest in the Pacific. But as the long-term settlement of French Polynesia had a great influence on population, the social gap is inevitable. This is another example of the great influence that Metropolitan France has over French Polynesia. The minority of people originally from Metropolitan France governs, even if the assemblies and some institutions are governed by native Polynesians.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* “Les sentiments vont passer par le français pour les dire, en contrant la pudeur tahitienne”.

It is still difficult to find Polynesian literature in Metropolitan France because production is different and requires different features: “Leur situation (géographique, linguistique, politique, culturelle, éditoriales...) les contraint de manière récurrente à se définir, à donner toujours davantage d’explications pour rendre lisible ou plus accessible, voire pour justifier, leur projet artistique” (Sultan 2009). *Mā’ohi* authors give their own vision of their world, and this world is almost completely different from the one usually described by outsiders. It implies a difference between locals, natives and Metropolitan French. Usually, this difference if highlighted in literature, depicts a social gap, which could be political and economic, between the different protagonists. A reader does not expect to face violence or issues in a depiction of French Polynesia. *Mā’ohi* writers are aware of this unexpected aspect and this is what they talk about. They try to make people react to their fictional works as possible everyday life’s testimonies. People from Metropolitan France are not always familiar with the socio-political struggles that take place in Tahiti and in French Polynesia in general. Through the work of *Mā’ohi* authors, there is an access to another perspective and its reality.

All these historical features and the evolution of Tahitian literature gives context to the reader on *Mā’ohi* authors’ way of representing their Tahitian experience, their land and their lives. In light of these facts, I underscore the different features that have to be understood in terms of *Mā’ohi* literature and *Mā’ohi* authors’ hidden messages.

Chapter 2

Analysis of Peu's vision of Metropolitan France through her novels *Mutismes* and *Pina*

“Tahiti, laboratoire de cons en quête d'exotisme” (“Tahiti, a lab full of jerks seeking for exoticism”, Peu, *Pina* 291)

This quote is a leitmotif in Peu's literature because it sums up an important idea: the rejection of Metropolitan French and their behaviors away from the mainland. This idea is recurrent in Peu's literature and it helps her to explain and illustrate her perspectives. Literature becomes a political tool. Peu is part of the *Mā'ohi* oral tradition: orality can be seen through her fictions. She writes as she speaks: she uses an oral vocabulary, with simple sentences (Lyons 385). Through fictions, Tahitian author Peu uses struggles and issues that are realistic in that many Tahitian and Polynesian readers can relate to it. By using certain expressions and words, she shares her own perspective of her “fictional reality” through different visions of Metropolitan France. *Mā'ohi* authors use several features to highlight their perspectives on Metropolitan France and to fight against it in their literature. Peu's literature is described as crude but it recounts facts and actions that are close to Tahitian reality. The realism of her work can shock. Through this chapter, I highlight the different visions of Metropolitan France and Metropolitan French developed by Peu in *Mutismes* (2003) and *Pina* (2017). These quotations will be studied to show what is implied. Added to this study, the quotations from one book will be linked to the other one if possible. This way, this thesis can follow a chronological evolution in the author's creation and reflection. These are different visions I study, and this thesis analyzes six of them, on different levels, using both *Mutismes* (2003) and *Pina* (2017).

A Blaming France for Tahitians' everyday struggles

1 *Pina*: struggles opposed to examples of Metropolitan French acceptance

Titaua Peu's first depiction of Metropolitan France is a general one: France as responsible for Tahitian everyday struggles. In other words, she brings out native discrimination from a Tahitian perspective.

Auguste, Pina's father, embodies a Tahitian against France's occupation and against the colonization of the land by Metropolitan France. He directs all his hate towards French and foreigners, and he blames them for all the issues and misfortunes of Tahitians and Polynesians in general: "il disait aussi que le mal venait de l'extérieur, de l'étranger en général, des Français en particulier." ("He would say that evil came from the outside, from abroad in general, from the French more precisely", Peu, *Pina* 187). Peu uses gradation to emphasize Auguste's hate. He hates not only the world outside Tahiti, but more specifically French people. By using this "hierarchy of hatred", Peu depicts the growing resentment of a Tahitian population. As Peu describes it, Auguste's "mission" is to murder Metropolitan French, and to end France's colonization. This mission started when he killed Nora by accident. The car accident appears as the trigger of all his hatred, bringing back his memories. Auguste's "mission" resembles the personal justice or an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This moment also represents the beginning of Auguste's insanity, which will gradually grow throughout the novel (nourished by his hate). Evil in Auguste's mind comes from abroad, not from Metropolitan France but rather from Metropolitan French people: he concentrates his hate on people and not on systems such as justice.

The sadness of Nora's funeral is put aside by Peu and Nora's parents' attitude that hides the emotion. Here, the idea of Metropolitan France as responsible for Tahitian struggles goes through their attitude towards Nora's friends: "des colons aux habitudes raffinées, au sourire plein de distance, condescendant" ("colonizers with refined customs, and an aloof, condescending smile", Peu, *Pina* 67). Nora's parents are Metropolitan French and have this condescending behavior, the one that is clearly opposed to the sense of community and social

solidarity. Peu uses the smile, as a litotes, to signify their condescendence toward people: a smile is supposed to signify joy and good emotions in Tahitian culture, but here, it is the embodiment of superiority. She tries to signify that this behavior is still happening in French Polynesia and that the difference is consolidated by Metropolitan French who decide to settle there. They are the ones who are creating this difference and who are making it strong. The lifestyle imposed by these Metropolitan French has a huge impact on native Tahitian lives. It sounds like a reminiscence of colonial times. Nora's parents are not natives, but they live on the island. According to Peu's Tahitian perspective, their behavior tends to show a highly distant and cold attitude toward locals and natives. Titaua Peu decides to describe them like this because they represent these "rich French" who are settling in Tahiti, thinking they are superior. It appears, then, that they can act however they want and there will be no consequences and locals/natives have no choice but to support this behavior. Peu emphasizes Nora's parents' behaviors because Nora embodies a Metropolitan French who died in French Polynesia and Auguste survived the accident.

On a different level, school is an institution of the French Republic that is supposed to provide education to everybody. In *Pina*, Peu reminds the reader that nobody is equal in terms of education, which is the major issue in Tahitian society. At school, the teacher makes a difference between his students:

Notre maître est un Chinois. On dit à l'école qu'il est sévère et impartial. Il ne fait aucune différence. Mais enfin, c'est quand même bizarre. Le tout premier jour des classes, il nous a lui-même installés. Alors, la salle de classe elle ressemble à ça devant il y a des élèves qui ont des cheveux blonds. Au milieu, on trouve des cheveux noirs mais ce sont ceux des petits Chinois. Puis, au fond, d'ailleurs ça m'arrange, il y a nous, les 'petits' d'ici. ("Our teacher is a Chinese man. At school, they say he is hard and fair. He does not make any difference. But at any rate, this is still strange. The very first day of school, he organized the classroom himself.

So, the classroom looks like this: in the front there are students with blond hair. In the middle, there is black hair, but that of Chinese children. Then, in the back, which suited me, there is us, the young ‘kids’ from here”, Peu, *Pina* 167).

This second example is a perfect one to illustrate the stratified society. By using enumeration, Peu uses the context of the classroom to highlight the differences made on every level of the Tahitian society. On Tahitian soil, in *Pina*, the classroom is divided into three distinct levels: one, blond students; two, Chinese students; and, three, native students. This hierarchy could highlight the unfair system in which native children are raised. They fully understand this situation and likely know that their entire life will be like this, always being behind the Whites and the Chinese. On a local level, their social development is marked by this excluding hierarchy. The educational system discriminates against Tahitian children by separating everybody. It appears to reproduce the colonial system’s order. The French educational system holds the natives behind as a reminiscence of colonial times. The enumeration also echoes the stratified society in which these children will live later. Inside its own republic, France is diminishing the possible power of an entire people by holding back children from a fair education. The same idea can be found in *Mutismes* when the narrator experiences an injustice at school. With irony, she explains the situation: “Manifestement, je devais avoir triché, c’était même certain. Au fond, cette note devait lui revenir. C’était un Métropolitain, pas moi. Je n’oublierai jamais la réaction de notre enseignante, un formidable exemple d’intégrité, de probité...” (“Obviously, I must have cheated, it was even certain. Deep down, this grade must have come back to him. He was a Metropolitan, not me. I will never forget our professor’s reaction, a great example of integrity, of probity...”, Peu, *Mutismes* 78). Peu uses here an antiphrasis to highlight her critic. The character compares herself with the Metropolitan student, which is illustrated by Peu’s irony. The major issue here is that as a native student, the character has no chance in comparison to her Metropolitan classmates. Injustice

here takes the form of grading and accusations. This idea goes hand in hand with the colonial stereotypes of “uneducated savages”. She is first considered as a cheater which is obviously unfair but her memory focuses on the teacher, who is supposed to teach everybody on the same level. But here, the teacher demonstrates discrimination and follows stereotypes instead of giving a chance to her students equally.

Discrimination can be found on both sides: one embodied by Metropolitan French and on Tahitian side. Indeed, in *Pina*, Auguste’s grand-father Matahi, fought against the French colonization and through this personal history, Auguste follows his ancestor’s hate for French colonizers. He experienced a form of trauma, that can be described as being transferred from generation to generation. According to François Giraud, being part of a community, here from French Polynesia, implies the sharing of history and its trauma (Giraud 2010). The colonization of French Polynesia by France left issues on the community and this is how the trauma is transmitted from the generation that experienced it to the next ones. Furthermore, for Altounian, there is a “strategy” among the people who experienced a collective trauma, such as colonization. This strategy is shared with the descendants to try to rebuild the community, the society that has been lost while experiencing the future trauma (Altounian 1). This is what Auguste is doing, he tries to “punish” to get revenge for his ancestors. By this, he recalls his history, his victories but also his death: “Dans sa langue, il a maudit, à jamais, les Blancs, leur monde, leurs lignées” (“In his own language, he forever cursed, the Whites, their world, their lineage”, Peu, *Pina* 103). Through this short excerpt, Peu gives Auguste a purpose to fight for, to finish what his ancestors started, taking back their lands and lives from the French. Through Auguste, she uses gradation again because it is important to Peu to show the growing hate of Auguste. This is a form of reminiscence of the cultural revival experienced by Tahiti: he uses history and ancestors to express his Tahitianness and to justify his vendetta against Metropolitan French.

As an author, Peu gives a chance to her characters to express another perspective, through the character of François. She describes him as a rational character: “Oui, il a fait des études, oui il aime ce pays, ces gens, mais il veut rester un étranger [...] ce peuple restera à jamais incompris. C’est mieux ainsi” (“Yes, he studied, yes he loves this country, its people, but he wants to remain a foreigner [...] this people will forever stay poorly understood. It is better like this”, Peu, *Pina* 142). Tahitian society is here described as stratified through François’s perception of his own position. He is a Metropolitan French who knows his social status there. Peu needed to make a clear point here, because even if François is studying Tahitian history, he will never fully understand it. Nobody is spared from this difference inside the community, François will forever be a Metropolitan French and he will always be an outsider, and people will never forget where he comes from. But at the same time, he accepts this social status and he does not want to be perceived differently. Peu is giving him a role that is more accepted into Tahitian society: a Metropolitan French who does not try to impose himself. He is a good person, but too good: she accumulates his qualities which, at the end, become pejorative. At the same time, when Peu describes François, she adds a form of irony.

Peu also created Michel, Hannah’s friend who followed her, who resembles François on several levels. This idea is implied because she gives him and François a particular knowledge: they know their social status and their place toward local Tahitians. They are both described as smart and this plays an important role in the treatment of these characters. Indeed, as a French Metropolitan, Michel joined Hannah on her trip to Tahiti but left as she concentrated more on her political actions. Michel is conscious of his relationship with French Polynesia: “Tahiti, n’a pas été tellement une terre d’accueil pour moi. D’ailleurs je m’y attendais un peu. J’ai voulu la découvrir. Je n’y suis pas arrivé. Tant mieux.” (“Tahiti was not really a home away from home for me. As it happens, I expected to somewhat. I wanted to discover it. I failed. Fine.”, Peu, *Pina* 291). When he leaves, he realizes that he is not able to fit in there but he tried and accepted

his failure. He actually accepts the fact that Tahiti does not adopt him and he was fully aware of it even before he went there.

To oppose this idea and lean on Titaua Peu's argument, she repeats twice: "Tahiti, laboratoire de cons en quête d'exotisme" ("A lab full of jerks is search of exoticism", Peu, *Pina* 291 and *Pina* 297). This metaphor is used to describe Metropolitan French and their behaviors in Tahiti. For Peu, Tahiti resembles a laboratory in the sense that people who would probably behave differently elsewhere would change completely as soon as they land in Tahiti such as the "Golden Boys" she describes later. Tourism is made of this idea: if one travels to Tahiti, it is to discover and explore a place that is completely different from one's usual environment, but in Tahiti, tourists behave as if they were home, disrespecting in the process Tahitians.

It is also through Michel that Titaua Peu speaks directly to her readers. He seems to write a letter to Hannah:

A l'idée en fait que je tente, par amour, de reconstruire une histoire, des histoires de personnes [...] Ne serait-ce que pour replacer certaines choses dans leur contexte, ne serait-ce que pour vous dire qu'il existe dans un coin reculé de la France, dans les mers du Sud plus exactement [...] des gens qui sont comme vous et moi, encore unis à la République et dont la vie, les pensées et les mœurs sont en total décalage avec ce que nous pouvons vivre ici, ressentir et penser ici. ("I think in fact that I am trying, in the name of love, to rebuild a story, people's stories [...] even if only to replace things in their context, if only to tell you that in a corner far away from France, in the Southern seas more precisely [...] people who are just like you and me, still united to the Republic and whose lives, thoughts and customs are totally out of step with what we experienced, feel and think here", Peu, *Pina* 293).

She wants her readers to remember that there is supposed to be no differences between any French citizens because they are all part of France, they make up what is called France. She

uses Michel to say that to criticize the fact that he tried to find answers and in following Hannah but failed. We can see that he did not know enough and was not prepared to understand Hannah's choice. Through this statement, Peu encourages her readers to educate themselves on what happens everywhere in France and its territories. French Polynesia is part of France and there are still shortcomings. Peu creates awareness to make people think and not just rely on former colonizers' ideas. Also, she repeats twice the word "here", which widens the gap between the two cultures.

She also criticizes the "Golden Boys"'s attitude towards natives. The notion of Golden boys describes the successful admired young graduate, who experiences only good things. First, she explains that they do not care about local girls. Peu described them several times, "Golden Boys" date Metropolitan girls, as a way to "remember" Paris. This allegory illustrates the successful Metropolitans who live in Tahiti but are "too good" to be in a relation with the local girls. They do not socialize with locals but they try to fit in by resorting to the practice of tattooing: "Ils tentent à leur façon de s'intégrer par exemple, ils se font des tatouages aux motifs polynésiens aux chevilles et juste au-dessus des reins, parfois sur tout le corps." ("I think in fact that I am trying, in the name of love, to rebuild a story, people's stories [...] even if only to replace things in their context, if only to tell you that in a corner far away from France, in the Southern seas more precisely [...] people who are just like you and me, still united to the Republic and whose lives, thoughts and customs are totally out of step with what we experienced, feel and think here", Peu, *Pina* 296). But this act just summarizes the cultural appropriation, which is the use of another culture symbols or practices by an outsider. They do not try to learn from natives, they just pretend to fit in with their fresh tattoos which is an insensitive action: they do not learn about the practice of tattooing, its history and its significance. They just apply a motif to follow a trend, to resemble Tahitians. If we go further,

we can see this as a discriminative act because “they are stealing” a part of a culture that was forbidden for decades to its true heirs.

With the attitude of Nora’s parents and her statement on “Golden Boys” in *Pina*, we can look for similar attitude of Metropolitan French in *Mutismes*. Indeed, after colonization and settlement, France forbade most cultural and religious practices in French Polynesia and tried to impose its own history and culture. To exemplify this idea, Peu turns the character of the ‘big brother’ into the symbol of Metropolitan France: “Le grand frère plein de compassion pour un peuple, si ‘pauvre’ en Histoire. Là, les idées, les fantasmes naissent, nourris par une condescendance tout occidentale.” (“The big brother full of compassion for a people: so ‘poor’ in History. Here, ideas, fantasies are born, fed by a completely Western condescendance”, Peu, *Mutismes* 29). This hyperbolic parallel gives Peu a means to transcript her bitterness. She recalls former colonial statements to emphasize the gap between Tahitian and French people.

2 *Mutismes*: Discrimination as a central theme

Mutismes, also revolves around issued of discrimination. Peu highlights it by using prostitution as a context. She explains that local prostitutes would only have Metropolitan French clients, mainly because they try to escape poverty:

Pas avec leurs concitoyens, juste avec des Français (militaires la plupart du temps), qu’on appelle *Farani* ; sans doute dans l’espoir de pouvoir partir un jour, de quitter ce trou pour revenir de temps en temps et, si possible, riches (“Not with their fellow citizens, just with the French (members of the military for the most), called *Farani*; probably in the hope of leaving one day, leaving this hole to come back from time to time and, if possible, rich”, Peu, *Mutismes* 22).

Discrimination here occurs mainly with the use of *Farani* to describe Metropolitan French. Peu uses a hyperbole to talk about the hypocrisy that takes place: discrimination toward Metropolitan French, but they also represent a possible way to escape Tahiti, for a possible better way of life. To follow this idea, Peu shows that these girls were also following Metropolitan French's behaviors towards locals and natives: "Ce que je n'appréciais pas non plus, c'était le mépris qu'elles affichaient pour les gars de chez nous" ("Something I did not like either, it was the contempt they displayed for the local guys", Peu, *Mutismes* 23). Local girls are reproducing this prejudiced behavior, and this is a repulsive idea for the author: it is even more unbearable to witness locals and natives behaving that way. It appears as repulsive because in dating Metropolitan Frenchmen, they try to escape from Tahiti, to leave their lives behind. She uses reproaches to highlight her statement. Tahitian girls in Peu's novel, seem to believe that there is no hope, no possible future in Tahiti and their only hope for a better future is away from French Polynesia.

These examples highlight the prejudiced take on Tahiti by Metropolitan France, Peu considers it as the main culprit for Tahitian struggles. This idea is recalled by Peu: "et puisque jamais la France n'en a reparlé, jamais les instituteurs n'ont voulu se le rappeler" ("and since France never talked again about it, teachers never wanted to be reminded of it", Peu, *Pina* 103). History and the past are not taught, they are silenced even at school. This way, the natives cannot have access to their history in the French system, they have to learn it by themselves. It seems that France, in this context, is working as a censor. Tahitian people also censored themselves by adopting what Titaua Peu calls "French names", "un prénom français pour qu'on leur foute la paix, même si c'était là une déchirure" ("A French name so that they would be left alone, even if it was a heartbreaking act?", Peu, *Pina* 104).

B Metropolitan France as unable to handle Tahitian issues, created by France's decisions

1 *Pina*: Examples of discrimination and misunderstanding in behaviors and nuclear consequences

Another vision that is strongly represented is the one depicting France as unable to handle Tahitian issues: issues such as discrimination, inequality, or diseases for example. Issues mostly created by France's decisions. The first idea will be linked to colonization itself as the starting point. Another point is the habits or behaviors brought by settlers and Metropolitan French, which represent a key point for social division. The other important point is the historical use of French Polynesia for nuclear testing. By choosing Moruroa, France imposed nuclear consequences on the Tahitian environment and its inhabitants. This latter is mainly illustrated with Teanuanua's cancer, in *Pina*, and through Jacques Chirac's decision in 1995 in *Mutismes*.

In *Pina*, Auguste blames France and Metropolitan French for every problem that exists in Tahiti. He stands for the ancestors' fight against colonization. Since the 1880s, French Polynesia had to follow the rules and laws imposed by France and the numerous waves of settlers. Like Hawaii, French Polynesia had to figure out how to adapt to colonization and settlement. French Polynesia had to face the arbitrary decisions made by a far away government. The major example for this is the nuclear testing on the Tuamotu Archipelago by President Jacques Chirac in 1995.

Peu addresses the reader through Auguste as a means to highlight the hatred otherness:

Exclusion de l'Autre, qui n'était plus seulement colon, fossoyeur de passé, voleur d'histoire, l'Autre qui était devenu à ses yeux le mal absolu, l'engeance. Par la culture qu'il avait 'imposée', par les habitudes qu'il avait importées, le Français, ce n'était rien de plus qu'une tumeur puis un cancer, parce qu'il avait détruit une vie autrefois saine. ("Exclusion of

the Other, who was no longer just a colonizer, a gravedigger of the past, a robber of history, the Other who became the ultimate evil to them, the spawn of Satan. Because of the culture they imposed, the customs they imported, the French, were nothing more than a tumor, then a cancer; because it had destroyed a once-healthy life”, Peu, *Pina* 188).

She compares France to a cancer that just settled and slowly took over the entire land. By imposing a way of life, and behaviors, Metropolitan France destroyed *Mā'ohi*. This taking over led to discrimination and exclusion. Cancer is not a simple disease, it is one that is really hard to heal from: French Polynesia still tries to heal from France's oppression and decisions. At first, cohabitation was sometimes useful but as time went on, the settlement became occupation and the “cancer” started to develop. For Auguste, Metropolitan France is this Other that took over, stole the past and became the main and only problem Polynesia has to face. Like Teanuanua's cancer, the French cancer is winning over Tahiti but is denied.

Peu used the metaphor of cancer to qualify France's influence on Tahitian culture. This echoes one of the major issues faced by many native Tahitians who worked for France on the nuclear tests. Teanuanua embodies this one significant Metropolitan France failure, and his health represents the gap between what was promised and the current situation. As a result of working on nuclear sites, he has cancer. France denied the consequences and is still denying them nowadays leaving numerous people without a real health care to treat their cancers. This idea also appears as an instance of discriminative justice: “Injuste que l'Etat, malgré ses promesses, n'ait pas reconnu, dans sa putain de maladie, les putains de conséquences de 30 ans de labeur à Moruroa.” (“It is unjust that the State, despite its promises, did not recognize, in his fucking madness, the fucking consequences of 30 years of labor on Moruroa”, Peu, *Pina* 306). The repetition of the slur underlines the bitterness and anger felt by the character: cancer is the result of Teanuanua having worked in the name of France's security. Peu is talking about the fact that France is supposed to support, but does not, people who worked for the nuclear

tests in case of disease. Peu does not focus on this part of the forced shared history but she mentions it. France denied the risks for the population and workers. These tests were to be kept secret, as Titaua Peu recalls:

Quand l'Etat a décidé qu'il était suffisamment riche de savoirs pour arrêter pour de bon les essais nucléaires, Teanuanua a pris sa retraite. Trente ans sur l'atoll du grand secret, c'était bien suffisant. ("When the Government decided that it had gained enough knowledge to put an end to the nuclear testing, Teanuanua retired. Thirty years of this weighty secret on the atoll, that was more than enough", Peu, *Pina* 51).

And as Teanuanua is sick, the government and authorities ignore his disease as if there was no link between his work and his cancer. This metaphor can be used to describe France's attitude. Indeed, Teanuanua's cancer is denied by authorities and he does not receive treatment as he should: France does not recognize all its mistakes toward French Polynesia, trying to lower its responsibilities in every level of French Polynesia's everyday life.

2 *Mutismes*: the nuclear tests as opposed to Tahitian practices

The nuclear theme is at the heart of *Mutismes*, but Peu also used the 1994 French city councils election and later Chirac's decision to restart the nuclear testing, to build her plot. In *Pina*, the nuclear issue is introduced as an indirect consequence on the characters' lives. Indeed, the mother has a boyfriend who works at Moruroa. The nuclear testing represents a wound which is still open and when Chirac decided to do it again, many countries tried to stop it in close association with Tahitians.

Peu uses several characters to embody the French occupation of (French) Polynesia. This idea is a strong one held by independentist movements and is supported by the UN. According to Peu's characters, France is ruling over French Polynesia without respecting its

supposedly autonomous status which has been granted to French Polynesia. Peu's characters mainly refuse France's presence and authority and this vision of France as occupying French Polynesia is an important one in Titaua Peu's works.

The remembrance of history is important to show the rejection of France in *Pina*: "C'était dans les années 1880, ou un peu avant. Tahiti avait signé et était devenue française. Raiatea, l'île où Auguste et ses ancêtres étaient nés, Raiatea comme quelques autres, ne voulait pas de ça, de la France" ("It was during the 1800s, or a bit earlier. Tahiti approved and became French. Raiatea, the island where Auguste and his ancestors were born, Raiatea like some others, did not want that, France", Peu, *Pina* 100). The use of "that" (*ça*) to qualify France implies a feeling of repulsion. Peu reduces France to almost nothing by using "that", but also illustrates an abstract idea that was unknown. With this example, Peu expresses a feeling that is still held by independentist movements: Tahiti should not be associated with France. She mixes history and fiction to illustrate France's illegal occupation of French, which was confirmed by the UN in 2013 when they placed French Polynesia on the list of territories to be decolonized¹⁸. Furthermore, Peu's narratives foreshadow this political and historical development, especially *Pina*'s epilogue. For that matter, Peu stated: "Même si l'Etat ne reconnaissait pas sa défaite, l'Organisation des Nations Unies allait intervenir tôt ou tard." ("Even if the state did not recognize its defeat, the United Nations intervene sooner or later", Peu, *Pina* 328). In the epilogue, which will be analyzed in the last chapter, she mentions the inscription of French Polynesia on the UN list: "Trois ans auparavant, en mai 2013, la Polynésie avait été réinscrite sur la liste onusienne des pays à décoloniser." ("Three years earlier, in May 2013, French Polynesia was re-enrolled on the UN list of countries to be decolonized", Peu, *Pina* 360).

¹⁸[https://www.un.org/es/decolonization/pdf/Statement%20of%20French%20Polynesia%20\(long%20version\).pdf](https://www.un.org/es/decolonization/pdf/Statement%20of%20French%20Polynesia%20(long%20version).pdf)
Last retrieved on August, 31, 2019.

The idea of contemporary colonization is omnipresent and emphasized when the author states: “Il faut croire qu’on a tort de penser que l’époque coloniale, c’est du passé.” (“We have to believe that we are wrong to think that colonial times are over”, Peu, *Pina* 296). Indeed, in Peu’s fictions, Metropolitan French are acting as superior towards local and natives, take everything for granted and governments and authorities are ruling as colonial authorities were. She also uses the strong term of “apartheid”¹⁹ to describe how her characters feel (Peu *Pina* 295). She decides to use apartheid to highlight the difference that appear more obvious from the Tahitian perspective. This literary use of the notion of “apartheid” appears as a metaphor and a hyperbole. By doing so, she places French Polynesia in a global context, comparing it to South Africa. This is a very strong term, coined by Afrikaners in 1929, implying racism, segregation and coercive violence. It recalls South Africa’s apartheid, which took place during forty-six years. Peu uses this term as a means to illustrate the feeling of discrimination and separation that can be experienced. It is illustrated as holding the Tahitians as ‘inferior’ to the Metropolitan French, restraining their political voices and powers over their own territory. Such comparison is controversial because of the way South Africa used repression over its citizens. The separation of the population was part of the apartheid. Finally, it echoes colonization.

In *Mutismes*, Peu expresses the vision of colonization through irony: mainly by using the fact that Metropolitan France was asking French Polynesia to use culture, and in this case ancestral culture, as a way to attract tourism. As a consequence, France’s occupation takes the form of a reversal because after decades of forbidding language, tattooing, cultural and religious practices, authorities started to use these features to make a profit. In *Mutismes*, Rori was trying to save these practices through his program and authorities used it for their own purposes. This idea is supported by another statement:

¹⁹ A policy that advocating the separation of different ethnics in a society.

Ces croyances avaient été accompagnées d'un dédain. Les étrangers, des Métropolitains surtout, n'avaient que faire des élucubrations d'une 'communauté sans plus aucun repère'... Mais il fallait bien trouver une raison. Même l'ignoble pouvait être expliqué. ("These beliefs had been accompanied by disdain. Foreigners, especially Metropolitan, had little use for the flights of fancy of a community without landmarks... but a reason had to be found. Even the ignoble could be explained", Peu, *Mutismes* 59).

If the community really had no point of reference, Metropolitan France would still appear as a "model", recalling colonizers' ideas. Yet, Peu explains that a vile practice needs a reason, which here is profit. And again, this is the main reason why French Polynesia is hostile to France's occupation: "J'étais chez moi, et que je sache, l'Apartheid n'existe pas. Ou alors, il vivait dans l'esprit de 'nostalgiques' d'un temps totalement étranger au nôtre." ("I was home, and as far as I know, Apartheid does not exist. Or well, away from our perspective, it lived in the minds of those who were nostalgic for a time completely foreign to ours", Peu, *Mutismes* 70). She uses the term "apartheid", which she reuses later in *Pina*: the force brought by the term evokes a strong sense of discrimination. She transposes it to French Polynesia. This experience appears as a very violent emotion to the narrator. The Apartheid implied the separation of the population in several places: in this case, the narrator shares the beach with Metropolitan French. She says that they ceased to be Metropolitan French, implying that they assimilate, which is the contrary to the notion of Apartheid. But at the same time, the narrator experiences the pressure from the Metropolitan French and their only presence makes her feel bad. The narrator felt attacked, but she ironically responded by saying that it was an old tradition to think and feel superior or inferior to another ethnicity. The "time" she describes is the time of the Apartheid, and she describes it as not theirs: it did not happen in French Polynesia, her home. She compares the situation she experienced to the one of those who were oppressed. And after

this episode, it was the first time her narrator was experiencing racism as the one throwing hate to another person:

C'était la première fois que le racisme avait revêtu son véritable habit. Avant, lorsque certains Métropolitains étaient un peu plus désagréables que d'habitude on mettait ça sur le compte de la lassitude ("It was the first time that racism had dawned its true colors. Before, when some Metropolitans were a bit more unbearable than usual, we would chalk it up to laziness", Peu, *Mutismes* 71).

By this she means that this behavior appears as normal, but this time, this behavior was experienced differently and she felt personally attacked, she is unable to understand it. The metaphor here evokes a weary habit, to which Tahitians are used to.

Titaua Peu highlights Tahitians' fight against France's occupation through the fact that this latter started to reimplement cultural and religious practices to attract tourism. French authorities were using *Mā'ohi* culture to approach natives and locals to lay hands on possible benefits (Peu *Mutismes* 47). This acceptance of culture coincides with the first *Mā'ohi* movement as Peu recalls: "Tout ça c'était vers la fin des années 80. Tahiti connaissait là le début d'une expansion incroyable" ("This was around the late 80s. Tahiti was experiencing the beginning of an unbelievable expansion", Peu, *Mutismes* 32). This was not a good thing because it was made to the detriment of locals and natives: "Ça construisait à tout va et nous observions, avec dépit, grandir (toujours trop rapidement) les quartiers alentour" ("They were building left and right and we observed with disappointment the growth of surrounding neighborhoods", Peu, *Mutismes* 32). Tahitians inhabitants feel powerless against this development and they are again deprived off any political decisions.

When on the one hand, Tahitians try to take their history and culture back, on the other, Metropolitan French take Tahitian symbols over, by using tattooing and wearing a *pareu*

(*Mā'ohi* clothing). The cultural appropriation here is a sign of hypocrisy which is thwarted by independentist movements claiming their rights on their history and asking for “*Farani* dehors” (“Farani out!”, Peu, *Mutismes* 120).

C Metropolitan France as unable to end Tahitian issues

1 *Pina*: Auguste’s own justice: when an individual wants to avenge his ancestors

Along these visions, France is represented as unable to put an end to a purely Tahitian issue, in this case a Tahitian murderer. Indeed, in *Pina*, Auguste’s ‘mission’ is a Tahitian issue in the sense that he is Tahitian, and he is a murderer. Yet, the French police is unable to find out who is the killer.

When Auguste wants to have his daughter back from Georges, her pimp, he loses his mind when the Metropolitan French says: “T’es chez moi ici” (“You’re in my house now”, Peu, *Pina* 181). He was saying that to tell Auguste that he was in his bar and that he should be nice to him but the author adds “On voudrait savoir qui de l’un se trouve chez l’autre [...] que de l’un ou de l’autre mérite plus d’être chassé”. (“We would like to know which one lives in the other’s home [...] which one most deserves to be dismissed”, Peu, *Pina* 181). The idea of *chez-moi* is important as it involves the idea of ‘legitimate’ home. George uses it to talk about his bar, his propriety. But this property is in Tahiti, where Auguste has his home and does not accept the Metropolitan French using his home as theirs. Here, she is appealing her readers’ judgement, what do they think about it as a rhetorical question. Indeed, she knows the answer, her character Georges is a Metropolitan French who came to French Polynesia to own a bar and who is prostituting native girls: he embodies the problem with Metropolitan French, abusing native people on their own land and making profit out of this. Basically, Georges is a representation of a contemporary colonizer, and Auguste is fighting it: “Il était là pour punir le Français” (“He was there to punish the Frenchman”, Peu, *Pina* 253). There is no real deep

explanation breaking from the words, but it is an author's choice. Indeed, Auguste is not only attacking someone who takes advantage of his daughter, he wants to punish him mainly because he is a Metropolitan French. Georges represents the poison Titaua Peu tries to end using Auguste as an avenging hand. Georges does not even want to be a Metropolitan French because he describes himself as coming from Corsica: "il disait qu'il était corse, mais les Corses de Papeete en doutaient eux-mêmes" ("He said he was Corsican, but Papeete's Corsicans doubted it themselves", Peu, *Pina* 93). According to Auguste's "mission", Georges' first crime is to come from the place that causes French Polynesia all its struggles. He uses the local native girls to build his business, ruining their lives. He takes advantage of Tahitian girls and he embodies France which, according to Peu, did and still does the same. *Le Français* in general here embodies Metropolitan French who settled in French Polynesia. At the same time, Auguste's hate toward what George represents in the hate he resents to the Metropolitan French in general. This "double hate" is Auguste's motive for murder.

As Tahiti is suffering from this, Tahitians feel left on the sidelines:

Putain de vie sans intérêt. De celle qu'on mène, comme on peut. Et puis il fallait bien se l'avouer, il y avait surtout cette espèce d'épée de Damoclès au-dessus de milliers de crânes. Cette chose diffuse, qu'on ne sait pas dire, cet hybride entre gouvernement qui asphyxie et qui vous fait croire que sans lui vous n'êtes rien, et cet état, à 20 000 km, que vous n'avez pas désiré, omniprésent, tentaculaire et pourtant impotent. ("Fucking pointless life. The one we live as we can. And then one must admit it, there was still this Damocles sword above thousands of heads. It spreads, like you don't even know, this hybrid between a government that stifles you and make you think without it, you're nothing, and this State, 20 000 km away, that you did not desire, omnipresent, sprawling and yet impotent", Peu, *Pina* 230).

The author gives another vision of France as too far away, geographically and ideologically, from Polynesia. She also adds the fact that the French hegemony is total despite

the fact that it gave Polynesia a semblance of autonomous status. This quotation foreshadows a later quotation: “Français moyen, tu viens parler de nous sans même nous connaître.” (“average Frenchman, you talk about us without even knowing us”, Peu, *Pina* 289). Metropolitan France is ruling over French Polynesia, from a far away position, threatening it with misery and decline if independence is decided but at the same time, French authorities show no real interest in helping this geographical position. No potential political candidate travels to French Polynesia, La Réunion or Guadeloupe or even Martinique. Politicians promise changes without knowing the everyday struggles or needs. Peu uses the metaphor of the octopus, having its tentacles around a prey: this latter is French Polynesia, caught by France. French Polynesia is blocked by France’s decisions and laws which is a problem because as Peu recalls in her metaphor, French Polynesia never accepted this situation. France is using and abusing its power over French Polynesia.

When Peu tells the story of Auguste and his family, she recounts the moment in his youth when his mother killed his father. She adds that the entire village helped the family to get rid of the body and burn the house without telling the police: “Pas de gendarme, pas de justice des Blancs.” (“No police officer, no White justice”, Peu, *Pina* 116). With this statement, the village shows solidarity with Auguste’s mother, they do not want her to be judged by the White justice. Here, we can imagine that this justice will judge her as insane and will maybe put aside the violence she was experiencing with him. In other words, they will judge her mainly on the fact that she is a Tahitian woman who killed her husband, and they imprison her without asking further questions. They would not have let her explain the circumstances of her act, they would not have checked the background because she never said a word about her domestic situation. She would have no chance in front of the French justice. Peu does not offer a black and white vision, she explains how her fictional Tahitian saw the situation. At the same time, she does not argue that this is a ‘normal’ act. The sense of community is stronger here as the villagers decided

to make the decision of hiding the crime. Here, the fiction covers a form of grey area, while on one hand a murder happened under specific circumstances, on the other hand a community who helps a member. With this episode, the vision developed by Peu is that France would have been unable to deal with a Tahitian domestic problem or would have judged her only based on the fact that she is Tahitian.

Later on, the same pattern repeats with Auguste. He is committing murders and the only group of people able to end his macabre quest were members of his family, his Tahitian family. Police is an extension of the state, supposed to protect and help everyone, but in *Pina*, the police embodies a failure: “Une police qui comprenait de moins en moins ce pays qu’elle était censée protéger ?” (“A police that understood less and less this country that it was supposed to protect?”, Peu, *Pina* 277). Metropolitan France, through its police, is powerless over a Tahitian issue. Peu draws a portrait of an impotent police, or at least, powerless facing this issue. This quotation goes hand in hand with Titaua Peu fiction’s main plot: French authorities and police are unable to put an end to Auguste’s murders, which at the same time echoes the fact that Metropolitan France and its representatives are too far removed from reality. As a consequence, Peu twists her plot: only Maui and his family were able to put an end to Auguste’s acts. Furthermore, Maui’s decision to resign is rejected by his hierarchy. We can imagine here that only Tahitians could resolve this case. Even if Maui became a police officer in France, when he arrives to French Polynesia, he understands faster the situation: his roots are more important than his Metropolitan French education.

D Metropolitan France and French Polynesia: comparison between two distant identities

1 Language: an everyday oppression, a difference and a comparison

Comparison is a tool used by Peu in her literary works. Indeed, she builds parallels between France and Tahiti, mainly to highlight differences but also to worsen the gap between the two.

In *Mutismes*, Peu gives different examples that use comparison: mainly on education. Indeed, she compares Metropolitan French students and Tahitian ones first on the notion of language. Peu's comparison relies on discrimination that children demonstrate:

Comment des enfants peuvent-ils faire preuve d'autant de cruauté ? Ont-ils seulement imité les adultes ? Quelle grosse connerie, ne pas accepter l'autre parce qu'il râcle les 'r' comme les Parisiens. A Tahiti, les 'r' on les roule, et avec fierté encore ("How could children demonstrate that much cruelty? Did they simply imitate adults? What a stupid thing, to not accept the other simply because he says his 'r's like Parisians. In Tahiti, we roll 'r', and proudly", Peu, *Mutismes* 7).

On the one hand, it is important to mention that even the children discriminate and on the other hand, she adds that Polynesian children are proudly rolling their r's, which can give them strength in terms of identity. By using repetition, Peu shows a form of gradation to show the evolution in Tahitian children's acceptance of their identity. *Reo Mā'ohi* is now used as a way to express identity, even if parts of the Tahitian population do not speak it fluently. While mixed with French, *reo Mā'ohi* becomes a powerful tool to express fierceness and culture. She draws a parallel between the children who are from Metropolitan France, those who were born in Tahiti and Tahitians children. It appears necessary to recall this difference because it shows that every strata of the society are suffering from a system that denies parts of its population. The idea of fierceness is linked to the cultural revival that implies the importance of the use of *reo Mā'ohi*.

2 Social life in *Mutismes*: when two communities refuse to socialize with one another

On the Polynesian soil, there is a perpetual comparison that divides locals, natives from Metropolitan French. To emphasize this idea, Titaua Peu takes the example of bars. These are meant as place of socialization, where people meet but in Tahiti's case it is the complete opposite:

Je m'interrogeais aussi sur cette espèce de 'déférence', toute polynésienne et teintée de crainte, qui faisait que nous ne fréquentions jamais ou presque certains lieux, parce qu'il s'y trouvait des 'Métros'. Les restaurants, les bars par exemple... Nos deux mondes n'avaient pas appris à se rapprocher. Malgré les amitiés et les amours parfois, il semblait subsister des différences, puis des fossés. L'intelligence, l'instruction et l'argent se trouvaient là-bas chez l'autre, rarement 'chez nous' ("I would wonder about this kind of 'deference', fully Polynesia and tainted by fear, which made it so that we almost never frequented certain places, because there were 'Métros'. Restaurants, bars for example... Our two worlds never learned to get along. Despite friendships and relationships sometimes, it seemed to feed differences, then gaps. Intelligence, education and money were there, for them, rarely, for 'us'", Peu, *Mutismes* 80).

Titaua Peu's character becomes more aware of the situation and feels more Tahitian than ever. The two worlds she describes never met, and never learnt how to know the other. One is occupying the other's land without trying to know or understand the other. Metropolitan French are frightening French Polynesians simply by being there. The long forced shared history is responsible for this fear: France settled sometimes by force and denied the indigenous people. Peu uses quotation marks around "chez nous" to emphasize the idea of not being at home but also to mark a difference between "at home" and "them".

Mutismes and *Pina* are working together: chronologically and then ideologically. Indeed, while *Mutismes* presents a more communitarian vision, *Pina* narrows the focus on a smaller environment that is a family circle. France will be the main culprit: “C’est pas nous qui avons inventé le paradis sur terre.” (“We were not the one who created Heaven on Earth”, Peu, *Mutismes* 33). She plays with stereotypes, clichés and colonizers’ ideas from both sides to highlight the differences. She defends French Polynesia against the concept of paradise that recalls Loti and Gauguin’s depictions. Decades later, she uses it as a metaphor for Tahitian struggles: this quotation echoes the Tahitian hell described by Auguste and Michel.

Peu produced a first novel that gives a vision that pits an entire people against an invading power, in this case against France and its nuclear policies. *Mutismes* was inspired by real events that had international impact. In *Pina*, the vision is mostly concentrated on domestic issues. The focus is placed on the notion of domestic and Tahitian solidarity but excluding Metropolitan France from it. I think that Peu’s writing can be seen as a *Mā’ohi* production through its features and how she uses language. Indeed, as Hiro or Chaze did, she creates her own language to deliver her messages. This is, I believe, a central feature in *Mā’ohi* literature: the creation of a new language, a new space in which the author can create a new reality. It gives a different perspective and new potential outcomes. In the next chapter, I focus on the analyze of *Mutismes* and *Pina*’s epilogues.

Chapter 3 The two epilogues: how the openings of the novels direct the reading

“Face au silence d’un seul, nous allions opposer notre résistance” (“Against the silence of one, we were going to put up our resistance”, Peu, *Mutismes* 128).

In Peu’s work, the best way to face oppression is to resist. This is the Tahitian fight against French oppression. After describing Metropolitan France under different viewpoints, Peu offers French Polynesia two epilogues to show Tahitian perspectives. By doing so, she gives her characters the possibility to express their perspectives. French Polynesia becomes the main character in these epilogues. She puts aside her characters to explain how things went for French Polynesia. By doing so, she gives a general vision. In *Mutismes*, she develops the rebellion and the consequences of it and in *Pina*, she gives a sort of science-fiction vision of the possible consequences of a referendum. The main objective here is to understand the Tahitian experience and to have a complete image: of Metropolitan France and of French Polynesia. These epilogues show another way of looking at the facts and at the story. Both are connected and *Pina*’s epilogue follows *Mutismes*. The noteworthy characters in these epilogues are Rori and the narrator in *Mutismes*, Pina and Michel in *Pina*.

A Mutismes’ multiple faces

In *Mutismes*, there are no chapters, only parts. Titaua Peu did not write a ‘proper’ epilogue but closes on two parts which can both be considered as epilogues. Without a “clear” epilogue, Peu’s story is still open. The first section contains major information needed to understand how the 1995 events were perceived by Tahitians. The fate of *Mutismes*’s characters is decided through the events. These represent the trigger that will shape the opening of *Mutismes*’ epilogue.

The first part of *Mutismes*’s epilogue tells and describes the event of 1995, starting with the handover of power between Mitterrand and Chirac in May. Soon after, Rori and the narrator

learn that the new President has decided to start the nuclear testing on the Moruroa. The epilogue of *Mutismes* continues after the night during which the narrator, Rori, and independentists hold a barricade, confronting the police and losing support from their earlier supporters. This barricade was built to protest against the nuclear tests. The police left and at the same time a group of men arrived, full of rage. Rori tried to persuade the group not to be violent. The chief of this group told them that the Polynesian head of government would soon leave to join Paris, that their fight was useless because no negotiations were scheduled. They all decided to go to the airport: there, the mob lost patience and the police arrived. The group which joined Rori and the independentists destroyed the airport, facing and fighting the police forces. Then, they left the airport to go to Papeete, where the city was destroyed and plundered by independentists and rebels. The police forces could not contain the violent mass. The morning after, the city is still burning but Rori is arrested because of his position as a leader. The epilogue ends as the narrator tells us that two days after this violent event, her mother put her on a plane for Paris.

1 Narrating the 1995 events

With this decision, the French government assured that: “Ça n’allait pas être grand-chose, huit essais tout au plus mais cela était nécessaire pour la défense d’un si grand pays. Ça n’allait vraiment pas être grand-chose.” (“It was not going to be a big deal, eight nuclear tests at the most but it was necessary for the defense of such a big country. It really wasn’t going to be a big deal”, Peu, *Mutismes* 127). The narrator gives her thoughts: first, she designates the nuclear testing with the noun “it”, giving an impression of contempt, then she uses “not a big deal” which minimizes what nuclear testing is. She insists twice on it, as if she was trying to comfort herself, to believe in it. These two expressions are obviously ironic but highlight the notions of disappointment and misunderstanding. Eight bombs is a lot, especially after decades

of testing on the Moruroa Atolls. It is only a “little thing” for the mainland because the nuclear test took place far away from it: the consequences will not affect it. Furthermore, this Metropolitan “little thing” will benefit it directly but not French Polynesia. This entire quote gives an ironic take on the situation. She ironically minimizes a big issue that has consequences. But as she adds, politics justified these tests in the name of defense. She insists on the idea of defense of a “great country” with her ironic tone, because she knows that these defense weapons would be tested on French Polynesia but would probably not serve to defend it. Also, in history, French governments never decided to test these same weapons on the Metropolitan soil, only French Polynesia, Algeria as well, suffered from it: a distant territory. This minimization could have been made by a Metropolitan French person, as long as they do not feel concerned about it. The journalistic tone gives an impression of distance and adds a form of possible reality to the fiction. Now, she counterbalances this by adding: “Ce ‘pas grand-chose’ allait bouleverser nos vies, ma vie.” (“this ‘no-big-deal’ would upend our lives, my life”, Peu, *Mutismes* 127). What seems to be a ‘little thing’ for Metropolitan France will soon become a life-changing event in many lives. The irony resides in France’s decision to test the bomb in Tahiti, which is part of its territory but far away from *La Métropole*. The situation questions France’s consideration for French Polynesia. It was and is changing Polynesian lives: the major impact would be on health, but also on nature. Peu uses the term “havoc” to imply an impossible turn back. This change will impact almost only the French Polynesian inhabitants. She uses her childhood memories to emphasize the trauma caused by the first wave of nuclear testing. The pictures left by her father-in-law represented the nuclear mushroom created by the nuclear test. She compares them to a remembrance of a wound that brought the country to silence. The silence evokes on the one hand the silence of Metropolitan France when French Polynesia asked to put an end to the testing and on the other, the silence as an embodiment of death. Nuclear testing brought death to French Polynesia. Later in the epilogue, Titaua Peu adds that they are

going to fight, going out in the streets to protest against France: “Face au silence d’un seul, nous allions opposer notre résistance” (“Against the silence of one, we were going to put up our resistance”, Peu, *Mutismes* 128). As she recalls the notion of silence, she creates a metaphor by embodying Metropolitan France under the form of “only one” character. They were all fighting together against one figure. But Peu’s character faces an aporia, a rhetorical void. How can one resist silence? This happens because Metropolitan France made a decision without consulting Polynesian authorities and when they expressed their concerns, France denied this decision. Metropolitan France did not cancel its decision but remained silent about it. According to Peu, the French government acted carelessly.

Her narrator is completely against nuclear science: “Maman connaissait ma haine du nucléaire, mais elle me répondait toujours que, grâce à lui, grâce au travail qu’il fournissait, nous avons vécu, survécu” (“Mom knew my hate for the nuclear, but she always answered that, thanks to this, to the jobs it provided, we had lived, we had survived”, Peu, *Mutismes* 127)²⁰. The narrator’s mother is asking her daughter to think about the economic benefits of the testing. Through this mother, Titaua Peu creates a metatext that also questions the reader. She wants everybody to think about the situation: on the one hand, nuclear is dangerous, for health and nature but, on the other hand, it brings jobs for locals, it brings people to work and as a consequence makes the local economy work. The question here remains the same: favor the economy or try to save nature. The mother points out the fact that with the nuclear, they could “live, survived”: her husband was working there and was able to provide money to the family which helped. Without it, they would have been struggling every day, but at the same time, with it, they barely “survived” because of the consequences on health. Peu uses irony here as well: they could survive in terms of money but at the same time, the nuclear tests are responsible for

²⁰ A second translation could be given by replacing ‘survived’ by ‘get by’ to include the idea of surviving an event, such as the nuclear tests here.

Teanuanua's death and to a certain extent, these are the reasons why French Polynesia will not survive. France is destroying French Polynesia but bombing the archipelago. He did not survive while some could financially survive 'thanks to' the tests. The gradation used by Peu here helps in understanding the emergency and the need for economy. A universal paradox is thus posed: can one accept an overwhelming change in one's environment and life to financially survive?

2 The shift: the advocacy for a Tahitian world

A shift happens: "Notre monde connaissait là les premières heures d'une drôle de "guerre" » ("Our world was now experiencing the first hours of a phony 'war'", Peu, *Mutismes* 127). The use of the pronoun "our" emphasizes the fact that she could be joining those who are against nuclear testing, those who are fighting for independence. They are all fighting against the same figure, France. She is talking about the hours from the moment they knew the tests were approved until the very first test which would take place a few months later. The expression "phony war" reminds us of the month preceding World War II between Germany and France: a fight that nobody saw coming and surprisingly destroyed the French army in a very short period of time. Later, a fight occurred during which Polynesians were sent to France to fight and helped. This metaphor illustrates the new "phony war" that opposes French Polynesia to Metropolitan France. A war during which no one is really fighting directly against the other but the war has been declared. Anger grew in Polynesia while Metropolitan France remained silent.

The different uses of Henri Hiro in Peu's work give a symbolic but strong image of the fight, especially here in the case of the nuclear testing. He fought to stop the first waves of testing. In her epilogue, Hiro appears in a photograph in the independentists' office. The narrator describes the picture:

Il avait été poète, un indépendantiste de la première heure et un opposant aux essais. Sur cette photo, il défilait, seul, dans les rues de Papeete. Il disait NON ! C'était il y a vingt ans, c'était aujourd'hui encore. ("He was a poet, an independentist from the outset and a nuclear tests opponent. In this picture, he was marching, alone, in the streets of Papeete. He was saying NO! That was twenty years ago, it was today still yet", Peu, *Mutismes* 128).

Henri Hiro was protesting alone, years ago, but in 1995 and in *Mutismes*, more and more people wanted to fight and protest. He appears as a model and "a prophet" for the new generation of independentist, especially for Rori and the narrator. Titaua Peu also includes herself because she specifies that he was a poet, an author, like her. She draws a parallel between what happened twenty years earlier and what was about to happen: the same fight was about the same issue. At that time, he was fighting alone against a group, a government. This picture echoes the one Peu gave earlier, the resistance of a high number against one. And this is maybe why the narrator believes that there will be a change because, in 1995, everybody would be together against one. This allegory works as a leitmotiv because it gives strength and inspiration to independentists.

3 The hypocritical relationship: when the community fights other nations

While the narrator was feeling the growing sense of unity and the revival of the Polynesian identity, she strongly stepped back right away. She knew what was about to happen:

Très vite la Polynésie française se retrouva divisée en deux. Il s'en trouvait des "oui". Un oui économique, car la France, c'était sûr, pour se dédouaner, allait injecter des milliards dans les caisses du 'pays'. Il s'en trouvait des non pour toutes les bonnes raisons du monde. Je disais non, parce qu'on n'a pas le droit de prendre des décisions sans même nous consulter ("Soon French Polynesia found itself divided into two. There was a 'yes' side. An economical yes, because France, for sure, to make up for it, would have injected billions in the country's

coffers. There was a ‘no’ side for all the good reasons in the world. I was saying no, because one cannot make decisions without consulting us.”, Peu, *Mutismes* 128).

We find an echo between this general opinion on the economical “yes” and what the narrator’s mother was telling her. At the same time, ironically, Peu brings forward a major argument, money. In this case, she implies that Metropolitan France will only give money to be “forgiven” for its actions: this way, France’s actions could be “forgotten”. Such a political move can help in the acceptance of nuclear testing. This is why a division among the people happened. Money, according to Peu, is an argument mostly used by Metropolitan France to “seduce” French Polynesia and to stifle independentist movements. Many supporters of “no” will use the argument of nature and land, but most importantly, Metropolitan France made decisions without consulting Polynesia. French Polynesia is supposed to have an autonomous status with its own local government and representatives. This is an idea used to highlight the irony of the situation: “Nous étions ‘autonomes’ et cette autonomie suffisait à dire toutes les différences qui nous séparaient réellement, définitivement.” (“We were ‘autonomous’ and this autonomy was enough to tell all the differences that were really and definitely separated us”, Peu, *Mutismes* 128). Peu uses quotation marks to emphasize the idea that the autonomous status can be discussed. As French Polynesia was supposed to be autonomous and have its local government, this latter should be consulted in case of important decisions. History and Peu told us that France did not consult in the case of nuclear testing: “Aujourd’hui, on ne lui demande pas son avis sur la reprise des essais” (“Nowadays no one asks their opinion on the resumption of tests”, Peu, *Mutismes* 128). This decision without any form of consultation, which will completely change the Polynesian lives, has been made by only one person, President Jacques Chirac. Peu plays with irony to create questions.

A sense of solidarity and unity grew, through Polynesia after France made the decision without consulting the local authorities:

La Nouvelle-Zélande, l'Australie se trouvaient assez puissantes pour protester. Les essais ne devaient pas se passer dans le Pacifique. On a sommé la France, puisque cela ne semblait pas dangereux, de procéder à ses essais sur son propre territoire. Où elle le désirait, mais pas ici, pas dans le Pacifique (“New Zealand, Australia were powerful enough to protest. Nuclear tests must not have taken place in the Pacific. France was ordered, since it did not seem dangerous, to carry out its tests on its own territory. Where it wanted to, but not here, not in the Pacific”, Peu, *Mutismes* 129).

The international coverage of the events made a difference. The paternalistic pattern can be found here, embodied by Australia and New Zealand, which are ironically described as more powerful than French Polynesia to protest and so to fight Metropolitan France in the name of Tahitian people. She also thinks that these nations were only serving their own interests: « “Plus rien ne nous appartenait. Nos “grands frères” du Pacifique semblaient parler en notre nom ; ils ne pensaient qu’à leur propre bien-être.” (“Nothing was ours anymore. Our ‘big brothers’ from the Pacific seemed to be speaking in our name; they were only thinking about their own well-being”, Peu, *Mutismes* 129). The litotes actually create a form of irony: Peu uses the term “brother” to embody Australia and New Zealand, which can imply protection but also signify a form of paternalism. Also, it reduces French Polynesia to the status of a weak country which cannot fight, protest or defend itself against Metropolitan France. This help was more dedicated to the notion of land instead of people. She uses the metaphor of “big brothers” to emphasize this point: “On oublia de parler de ceux qui portaient ces blessures.” (“We forgot to talk about those who bore wounds”, Peu, *Mutismes* 129). Australia and New Zealand forgot the victims they were ‘defending’: Tahitian people had wounds from the first testing.

4 The role of media: interests at stake

The notion of media coverage is important because these events were spread worldwide. The issue here is that medias are usually considered associated with governments, the narrator explains it here:

Localement, la presse crut bon de soutenir la Métropole. Cela paraissait presque évident, puisque cette même presse appartenait à tous, sauf au Tahitien [...] Ces journaux se préoccupaient-ils du sort du Tahitien, alors même que les mœurs de ce dernier, parfois ignobles, avaient réussi à les engraisser ? (“Locally, the Press thought it right to support the mainland. It was almost too obvious, because this very same Press belonged to everyone, except to Tahitians [...] did these newspapers really care about the fate of the Tahitian, even though the latter’s behavior, sometimes horrible, succeeded in making them rich”, Peu, *Mutismes* 130)

In this quote, Peu recalls the colonialist patterns, when clichés and stereotypes were common to describe Tahitian people as “savages”. These stereotypes were spread to “justify” colonization. Later, these newspapers make their money on news, on what they called the ‘Tahitian behaviors’. Then, Peu underlines how Tahitian people are being rejected, which echoes the French government’s disrespect towards Tahitian authorities. Media made profit over Tahitian people by sharing sensational news. Parallelism works here to echo the French government abuse of power over the making of a decision. In *Mutismes*, local newspapers are on the side of the government because this was where the money was. They could spread ideas faster than independentists and could help in the diminishing the support for independence.

This first part gives information on *Mutismes*’ take on the events of September 1995. The second part of this epilogue gives a closer vision of the personal Tahitian perspective of the events and especially through the narrator’s experience.

B *Pina*’s epilogue’s duality: two linked visions

Pina's epilogue is different in many ways but most importantly because it is mainly built around a fictional event. Indeed, this epilogue gives a brief viewpoint on what could happen in case of a referendum. The fictional ending of *Pina* gives a blurry image of the possible consequences of a self-determination status for French Polynesia.

The epilogue takes place after an ellipse of twenty years. *Pina* is reading the article relating the fictional events of 2016. During the presidential campaign, the extreme right arose and new candidates appeared. The article recalls that May 2013 saw French Polynesia back on the list of "territories to be decolonized". A referendum has been set up by the new French president, letting French Polynesia decide for its own independence. Everybody was surprised because self-determination won the ballot. If the 'no' had won, France would have had the possibility to sign agreements with China for ores but as the 'yes' won, France lost French Polynesia and its benefits. We learn that the situation has not really changed since the 'yes'. *Pina* goes to Pont Mirabeau to throw Michel's ashes over the bridge. When he died, he left a lot, including a four-page letter he wrote about Hannah. He said he wanted to write stories about the family but he changed his mind. *Pina* had a child, with Romeo who has stayed with her since Auguste assaulted her. The epilogue ends while everybody's life is told briefly: *Pina* left French Polynesia, lived with Pauro and François in Paris, Maui became a police lieutenant and Junior stayed to work in Teanuanua's fields.

Pina's ending can be divided into two distinct parts: the fictional reality and what 'really' happened to Titaua Peu's characters. These parts are linked but they are given to the reader under two different tones and voices.

1 The different voices of *Pina*'s 'epilogue'

She starts by giving her author's voice to another writer, a journalist. By doing so, she gives up her author's status as if she was not the one who created this fiction. She built the mise

en abyme to detach from the last event and set up the ellipse. The distance provided by the journalist's voice gives the reader a moment to process and concentrate on the main information given by the article. The second voice of this epilogue is the narrator's because the entire book takes alternatively the voices of Peu's characters, using 'I' to tell their story, but this part does not use the 'I'. The reader has a general understanding of the story: we now know what happened to most of the characters and during the last 20 years.

2 The article: recollection of *Pina*'s ellipse and different perspectives on it

The journalistic article is written in an ironic tone, politically oriented. There are no "neutral" comments. The fictional journalist does not just relate the fact, he/she gives a testimony that takes into account the Tahitian experience. With this article, Titaua Peu takes the opportunity to mix reality and fiction: as said in the previous chapter, she mentions the 2013 UN's decisions to place French Polynesia on the list to be decolonized. French Polynesia appears :

De 'caillou' dans la chaussure de la France, cette réinscription allait devenir une aubaine. Au mépris de la résolution priant 'le Gouvernement français d'intensifier son dialogue avec la Polynésie Française afin de faciliter et d'accélérer la mise en place d'un processus équitable et effectif d'autodétermination', aucun processus n'avait été entamé, aucun accord, comme en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Rien d'équitable évidemment (. "From a throne in French's side, this reregistration would become a godsend. Regardless of the resolution asking "the French government to intensify its dialogue with French Polynesia in order to facilitate and accelerate the establishment of an equal and effective process of self-determination", no process was begun, no agreement, as in New Caledonia. Nothing fair of course", Peu, *Pina* 360).

The place on the list gave independentist movements a reason to start more actions against France's occupation. As a consequence, Titaua Peu uses the expression "throne in French's side" to describe Polynesia embarrassed Metropolitan France. No discussion was engaged between Paris and Papeete, and as nothing changed, and nobody talked about it, independentist movements could grow. The most obvious example of the non-objective opinion is when the journalist's article states: "Oui à l'autodétermination. Oui à la liberté." ("Yes to self-determination. Yes to freedom", Peu, *Pina* 361). Peu uses a repetition of "oui" to create a gradation. Indeed, there is an evolution because self-determination represents more than independence, it represents a new beginning without France governing.

3 Politics: the impact of a possible self-determination vote

With the presidential campaign, people knew that the growth of the extreme right party would imply big changes especially abroad: "Les collectivités allaient être les premières touchées. Surtout celles, lointaines, qui sans doute apportaient plus de tracas que de devises." ("Collectivities would be the first impacted. Especially the remote ones, which doubtless brought more troubles than cash", Peu, *Pina* 359). In case of a surprising result in a presidential election, such as the one in *Pina*, the very first victims would be the collectivities abroad and as she points out, the far away ones. According to Peu, the major reason for a French failure would be money: with the independentist movements, Metropolitan France is embarrassed and is losing money. As she sets up the growth of the far-right movement, the notion of "nationalism" could develop and the abandonment of territories abroad would be a logical next step. The same notion can be found on the Tahitian side. The consequences appeared quickly after the election and the referendum: "La France n'avait plus aucune dette envers la Polynésie, si tant est qu'elle n'en eût jamais." ("France had no more debts toward Polynesia, supposing that it ever had", Peu, *Pina* 359). Here, the author plays with words: France is symbolically and

literally indebted towards French Polynesia, since the very first days of colonization. The irony here implies all these debts that will never be paid.

4 Media coverage: echoes to *Mutismes*' criticism

While the main media were not covering the news in French Polynesia, the impact of the presidential campaign and of the referendum had so many consequences on Metropolitan France that media could not remain silent. Local media only covered Auguste's case during the novel but now that the Republic is attacked, the press is on it. This situation recalls *Mutismes*' part in which the media were on the government's side, despite the fact that usually they were making money on Tahitian stories. In this case, the "Tahitian behaviors", she was accusing the media of profiting off, are now left aside to cover the government's decisions.

5 2018 New Caledonian referendum and Brexit vote: Peu's fiction as inspired by reality

If we look at *Pina*'s epilogue, the referendum's episode echoes the one that took place in November 2018 in New Caledonia²¹, which ended with the victory of the "no". As she draws a parallel between the two territories, we can consider that she tried imagine the consequences of such a vote in French Polynesia. The two share some features, socially and politically, which lead to similar struggles. The necessity of a referendum on independence is felt on the Polynesian side but as the epilogue states, if a President decides to set one up, the risk will be too high for France. The referendum has been recommended by what Peu calls: "Un obscur

²¹ A referendum of self-determination was supposed to take place in 1998, but the 1998 Nouméa agreements stated for a referendum taking place between 2014 and 2018. It is in November 2018 that the referendum took place, voters voted against self-determination with almost 57% of voters. <https://www.elections-nc.fr/> and "Nouvelle-Calédonie ; le referendum sur l'indépendance aura lieu le 4 novembre », published on March, 3rd, 2018, accessed online on September 22, 2019 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2018/03/19/97001-20180319FILWWW00039-nouvelle-caledonie-le-referendum-sur-l-independance-aura-lieu-le-411.php> and « La Nouvelle-Calédonie choisit la France, Macron exprime sa 'fierté' », published on November, 5, 2018, accessed online on September, 22 2019 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2018/11/04/01016-20181104ARTFIG00023-nouvelle-caledonie-forte-participation-au-referendum-sur-l-independance.php>

“spécialiste des questions de l’Outre-Mer”.” (“An obscure ‘specialist on overseas’ issues”, *Peu, Pina* 360). By using the adjective “obscure” and then the quotation marks, she expresses her opinion on the question. We can find irony there because the person’s political status is questionable. She seems to question the legitimacy of the so-called “specialist” on such a complex topic. She does not mention a name, anybody could have been entitled the “specialist on overseas issues”. The same idea applies to the President: when *Pina* was first published in 2016, a year before the real French presidential elections. But here again, *Peu* quotes no name and anybody could have been elected even in her fiction, the result would have been the same. It gives the reader the possibility to reflect on the situation. With no name, she recalls that she writes fiction. In any case, *Peu* is only able to create hypotheses: “L’imbroglio juridique et politique dure depuis vingt ans maintenant.” (“the legal and political imbroglio has gone on for twenty years now”, *Peu, Pina* 362).

6 The aftermath of a possible self-determination status

In *Pina*’s epilogue, the situation led to chaos as France lost its power over French Polynesia and to an extent to the benefits of the victory of the “no” will have provided. Government would have threatened Polynesia of decline if they voted in favor of independence. *Peu* continues her chaotic fiction by ironically adding that the mediatic coverage referred to these hypothetical events as “l’épisode polynésien” and “le cauchemar tahitien” (“the Polynesia episode” and “the Tahitian nightmare”, *Peu, Pina* 362). These two titles refer to the fact that the consequences of the referendum started the demonstrations but also “a précipité la chute de l’ancien président de la République.” (“accelerated the fall of the former president of the Republic”, *Peu, Pina* 362). This idea shows that even if France is not taking care of French Polynesia as it should, a potential independence could lead to consequences even in Metropolitan France. An entire country could decline if a faraway territory decides to be an independent nation. The entire

result of the vote is clearly linked to first the way Metropolitan France treated French Polynesia, but added to this, in *Pina*, the fact that the potential agreement between France and China was maybe hidden from Polynesia. In the fictional article, the journalist explains that a leak happened and the independentists got the secret agreement in their hands and this helped for the referendum's result. Also, the article evokes the fact that the entire archipelago has been shut down, and Papeete destroyed after the government's decision to cancel the results: "arguant de quelques irrégularités constatées." ("arguing of some recorded irregularities", Peu, *Pina* 362). This last statement is hyperbolic. This epilogue shows Peu's hybrid literary work. Indeed, she mixes journalism with political pamphleteering. By doing so, she highlights parts of reality. She creates her epilogue with a science fiction tool, the ellipse.

These two epilogues, placed together, work chronologically. The ending of *Mutismes* opens to *Pina* and both epilogues have to be understood together. Drawing a parallel between these epilogues and the history of Tahitian literature in general is an easy task as Titaua Peu falls within the tradition of *Mā'ohi* writers. She uses the same features to create a political literary voice. It adds a new dimension to the fight for independence and recognition. Furthermore, as Ségeral explains: "Peu's characters have to move to Metropolitan France to survive" (Ségeral 246). *Mutismes'* narrator leaves Papeete for France the next day of the 1995 events and *Pina* is living in Paris, twenty years later after leaving French Polynesia. Going to France could appear as an escape from French Polynesia: avoiding struggles and issues. As Hannah in the beginning of *Pina*, being in France represents hopes for the family but also a way to escape Tahiti's reality. Leaving Tahiti for France could be of the same idea, *Mutismes'* narrator being forced to leave as an answer to her rebellious acts, and *Pina* living in Paris as a way to take distance from all the events that almost led to her death. It could also appear as 'leaving the motherland for an adoptive one': which could change the perspectives and visions

Romy MM Courat

on Metropolitan France. For some, Tahiti is the adoptive land, but in this case, Tahitian characters could find an adoptive land in Metropolitan France.

Conclusion

Peu uses historical events and incorporates it to her hybrid fictions. By creating her hybrid literature, she is mixing reality and fiction to construct a key testimony and to question reality through fiction. Fiction helps to reveal information and emotions linked to history: indeed, when an event happens and is used in literature, the authors gives an unique perspective on it, a different one from the media for example. The main examples we can think of in Tahitian literature would be independence or the nuclear case (found in Chaze, Peu, Spitz). The literary perspective also helps in expressing “creative tactics of decolonization, settler-colonial refusal” (Wilson 60). The status of post-colonial literature gives *Mā’ohi* authors a possibility to question against former ideas, “against taken-for-granted hegemonic frameworks” (Wilson 61). By doing so, *Mā’ohi* authors could also create a new form of literature, away from French ideas by “reshaping space, time, self, language, and world” (Wilson 67).

Pina and *Mutismes* appear as important literary pieces because they represent key works in the understanding contemporary *Mā’ohi* literary culture but also contemporary history. Through her characters, Peu depicts a Tahiti that is the opposite of the traditional images about Tahiti most people have in mind. She builds an entire microcosm that mixes Tahitian reality in conflict with Metropolitan France. The different visions she gives help to understand the global situation. She shares an important message and gives a political dimension to her fictions. Her crude language is necessary to convey more meanings, more messages and to shock the reader to remember these messages. There is a need for shock to draw attention on the topics Peu invokes. The forced shared history between French Polynesia and Metropolitan France is not over yet and still holds many *Mutismes*.

The different visions of Metropolitan France are not new ones but Peu offers new perspectives on them. These visions do not give a beautiful image of France but at the same

time, the perspectives show the Tahitian struggles that France generated through time, and their impacts on Tahitian populations. She creates characters to embody the Tahitian struggles and force France to recognize its responsibilities. Peu does not only offer a black and white perspective, she gives different visions, questioning both sides.

For these reasons, Peu's works need more recognition and should be advertised and shared on a global scale. Metropolitan French readers should be aware of a situation which needs to be studied. She offers a new way of looking at *Mā'ohi* literature and gives it a new dimension: a contemporary illustrated testimony. She adds pieces of reality to her fiction to raise awareness and to perhaps prompt changes. She is also creating a new aesthetic by mixing facts and fiction to create a new perspective.

To conclude, I would like to quote Paul Lyons on Tahitian literature which, according to him "enriches the conversation about Oceanian literary production" (386).

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