Decoding identities in 'Francophone' African postcolonial spaces:
local novels, global narratives

by

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Abstract

My research bridges the gap between Anglophone postcolonial studies and Francophone literary studies by looking at Francophone literature from West and Equatorial Africa, which remains under-studied in France.

This work answers key questions: how can this literature be interpreted beyond its current confines? How does it rethink local and global identities? What theoretical configurations can be applied to these writers to bring them into greater academic and public prominence? I propose a comprehensive analysis of this literature's significance in the world through a comparative reading of five contemporary regional novels in their political, social and historical context. This multidirectional reading allows me to evoke what Dominic Thomas calls an 'intercultural dynamics' in which colonialism 'finds itself relocated as a mechanism that proceeds from globalization', and integrates various spatial zones in which thinking is produced. It brings forward key writers situated 'outside of the parameters of Frenchness' inscribed in cosmopolitan decolonizing and cultural reconstruction trends, such as Léonora Miano, a young Cameroonian author and winner of six French literary prizes; Fatou Diome, a Senegalese best-selling writer; Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou from Togo, 63 and in political exile; one contemporary writer, Kangni Alem (Togo), and one more established intellectual, Boubacar Boris Diop (Senegal).

For my children, Yaëlle Sibi May and Anoucka Anoko Mia

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Abbreviations

BBD = Boubacar Boris Diop

CJV = Contours du Jour qui Vient

LGSP = La Gazelle s'Agenouille Pour Pleurer

LM = Le Médicament

LTT = Le Temps de Tamango

LVA = Le Ventre de l'Atlantique

<u>Contents</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

'We should think […] of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'.[1]

Stuart Hall

France's banning of the text, on which Swedish director Goran Hugo Olsson based his film - only a week after publication - revealed clearly the symptomatic relationship that France holds with its colonial past. Olsson's new documentary, entitled *Concerning Violence* (2014), sheds light on the consequences of colonisation twenty years after the wave of independence movements that swept West Africa in the 1960's.[2] Its title refers to the first chapter of French Caribbean postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon's 1961 text, *Wretched of the Earth*. By creating a connection between Fanon's revolutionary ideal and Sankara's revolution on the ground,[3] Olson gives a voice to a silenced part of the common history between France and West Africa to emphasise the postcolonial nature of the relationship. For this purpose it uses archival footage of Thomas Sankara, the Burkinabe president assassinated in a coup d'etat led by one of his previous allies, Blaise Compaoré, with possibly tacit support from the French government.[4]

Also eager to offer a fresh perspective on historical events of postcolonial nature, film director Matthieu Kassowitz produced *L'Ordre et la Morale* (2011) based

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[1] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 222.
[2] Elizabeth Pears, 'Colonialism Is Still In Full Swing Today', 27 November 2014, <http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/colonialism-still-full-swing-today> [accessed 30 November 2014].
[3] Ernest Harsch, *Thomas Sankara, An African Revolutionary* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), p. 52.
[4] Marco Rampazzo Bazzan, 'Le Devenir Afrique de Lumumba, Nkrumah et Sankara. Ou de l'Importance de Ressasser le Passé Contre le Discours de Dakar', *Filozofija i Drustvo*, 23.4 (2012), pp. 218-37 (p. 223).

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on the Ouvéa island hostage crisis in New Caledony[5] to highlight the acts of violence of the French military during the 1988 'Victor' operation. Better known for his production of *La Haine* in 1995, which was a critical review of French society as seen from the point of view of three young men from the *banlieues*, Kassowitz attempts to explain the source of the 1995 cultural and social conflicts in France, with a particular emphasis on the diaspora of African heritage. The ability of postcolonial criticism to give a point of view from within, rather than an external narrative dominated by a Western Universalist vision, is reflected in these films. They emphasise the importance of local accounts by postcolonial subjects who 'talk back to the centre'- to echo Rushdie - by means of visual support.[6] As denounced in these films and in scholarly criticism, the micro representation of postcolonial experiences rooted in an orientalist view of the world, as defined by Said in his pioneering book *Orientalism*,[7] has chiselled out a macro narrative of Western imperial motivation marginalising micro cultural, linguistic and historical narratives. To counter this trend, postcolonial literature in French addresses the marginalisation of postcolonial subjects. This is achieved through acknowledging diverse local cultures, languages and histories that were once perceived through the unique prism of French explorers, conquerors[8] and missionaries,[9] and later revived by French authors of exotic and colonial literature, which are two distinct yet intertwined styles.

When seeking to explore Francophone postcolonial literary texts, a 'rigorous historical contextualisation' is deemed essential for a 'nuanced reading' of these

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[5] Jean Chatain, 'Grotte d'Ouvéa, 1988, la Plaie est Toujours Ouverte', Friday 25 November 2011, <http://humanite.fr/tribunes/grotte-d'ouvea-1988-%3Fla-plaie-est-toujours-ouverte-484504#sthash.wzrqicWc.dpbs> [accessed 5 January 2012].

[6] Salman Rushdie, 'Foreword' in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures,* ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, (London: Routledge, 2002), foreword.

[7] Walter D. Mignolo, 'Preface' in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures, Continental Europe and its Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. xv.

[8] Bertrand Taithe, *The Killer Trail: A Colonial Scandal in the Heart of Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 142.

[9] Jean-Claude Ceillier, 'Histoire des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères blancs): de la Fondation par Mgr Lavigerie à la Mort du Fondateur (1868-1892)', *Histoire des Missions Chrétiennes, numéro 8* (Paris: Karthala, 2008), pp. 3-10 (p. 8).

micro narratives.[10] The confrontation of indigenous history versus Western history constitutes the specificity of the postcolonial stance that makes possible a new understanding of postcolonial identity.

Simultaneously confronting the local and the global, the regional and the national, north and south, multiple trajectories are progressively built transnationally and laterally, moving away from unidirectional vertical North-South/South-North perspectives. This thesis provides a unique platform for these multiple trajectories to develop. Thanks to the multidirectional reading of these fictional writings, I can evoke intercultural dynamics in which colonialism 'finds itself relocated as a mechanism that proceeds from globalization',[11] and integrates various spatial zones in which thinking is produced. It brings to the fore key writers situated 'outside of the parameters of Frenchness' and inscribed in cosmopolitan decolonising and cultural reconstruction trends. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of these texts supports a Saidian orientalist configuration of geographical space. The 'strategic formation', the analysis of 'the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large' unsettle the artificial construct set during colonial times and the perpetuation of the myth that cultivates a fascination and an idealisation of Europe. They challenge a post-colonial French politics of space, which relies on an imaginative geography enhancing the North/South dichotomy and uses space as an organising principle. Although co-existing with difficulty, these writings clink, clatter and clash creating multi-dimensional spaces that redefine the 'Us' vs 'Them' dilemma and open up existential questionings. It searches for alternative models of francophonie to maintain a 'healthy', or less biased, approach in other terms and tolerate what

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[10] Charles Forsdick, 'France and its Colonies: Introduction', in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures, Continental Europe and its Empire*, ed. by Prem Poddar, Rajeev Shridhar Patke, Lars Jensen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 107-198 (p. 107). See also: Robert Aldrich, *Greater France, a History of French Overseas Expansion* (London: MacMillan, 1996), Henri Brunschwig, *Le Partage de l'Afrique Noire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West-Africa* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), Robert O. Collins and James M. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[11] Dominic Thomas, *Nation-Building, Propaganda, and Literature in Francophone Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

Mireille Rosello calls 'neobarbarisms', creating new paths of understanding.[12] At the core of this thesis, the concept of identity, as analysed by Gilroy, helps to better understand the complex phenomena involved in the identity renegotiation of 'Francophone' ex-colonies. It reflects the postcolonial dimension at work within Francophone worlds[13] in order to deterritorialise what is usually called 'Francophone' literature. It has become clear that the limiting categories referring to post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa, as defined previously and used over time, have some degree of arbitrariness that maintains postcolonial stereotypes and encloses identities, which could otherwise be much more flexible and adapt to the changing realities of the continent.

Following the line of argumentation developed by Charles Forsdick, this thesis attempts to address this issue 'by defining key themes that connect across historical and geographical diversity, the existence of those whose everyday lives were (and are) affected by colonialism and its aftermath'. This highlights 'the variability of such phenomena at different chronological moments and in different geographical locales'. In light of what Forsdick calls the 'persistence of diversity'[14] of his travelling concepts, this research brings together a selection of five Francophone writers, female and male, who spent at least twenty-five years of their existence in Sub-Saharan Africa. The comparative approach chosen here embraces three generations of writers and provides a nuanced literary, cultural and historical analysis of novelistic texts from the region. I concentrate on drawing comparisons between countries of a Francophone Sub-Saharan region and the work of authors who are representative of the black diaspora. Following Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's critical model of postcolonial literatures this thesis deals in 'greater detail with two or three areas to form important bridges for the discourse of

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[12] Mireille Rosello, 'We, the Francophone Multitudes, Neobarbarisms and Microencounters', in *Empire Lost, France and its Other Worlds*, ed. by Elisabeth Mudimbe (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), pp. 47-63.

[13] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

[14] Charles Forsdick, *Travel in Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Cultures: the Persistence of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 26.

postcolonialism, which deals with all areas'.[15] The core of the analysis benefits from a process of cross-reading and overlapping histories and theories to foreground the selected fictions by Sub-Saharan writers. In line with this claim, my thesis inscribes itself within the field of postcolonial studies and contributes to the research that exists already.

The interdisciplinary nature of this research allows me to situate texts in world history in order to foreground historical and cultural aspects neglected by a cultural and literary history solely viewed from the North. A linear reading of each novel, or a review of the literary production of the area, would only lead to the literary analysis of one text in isolation, resulting in writing an anthology bound to be of a quantitative nature and organised according to national entities. Instead, I implement a methodology that enhances a comparative reading of the novels under study. It focuses on essential questions about the perception of African culture and history raised by African writers, some lesser known to the public. This simultaneously gives a voice to texts that distil macro-narratives and inscribe them on a global scale. Published between 1981 and 2003, the texts originate from three West African and equatorial countries situated on the Atlantic coast and provide insights into the reality of contemporary identity building in local spaces where French is the lingua franca. Although Cameroon, Togo and Senegal, all three objects of this study, are defined as Francophone, this adjective does not fully acknowledge local cultures from the region, but rather absorbs them into one linguistic space. Comparing the colonial histories of Cameroon and Togo, successively German and French (and partly British in Cameroon's case), to that of Senegal, which remained under the monopole of France throughout, brings out local differences. In Chapter Two I will explain in more detail the distinction I make between the first text, published in 1981, and the other four that were printed and distributed post-2000.

On the occasion of a recent fieldtrip I was able to witness first hand the diversity of Togo's capital. Lomé, and other cities I visited such as Aneho or Kpalimé, display a remarkable variety of languages, dialects, religions, and strong cultural

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[15] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 18.

customs from various families, traditional royal dynasties[16] or villages, which co-exist everyday. This evocatively captures the essence of African postcolonial identities, which require a 'diverse set of interpretations'[17] to be understood. Thinking of identity as diversity provides a starting point for my exploration to uncover the extent to which colonisation haunts postcolonial identities, and to attempt to answer a series of questions. Firstly, what do these authors bring that others cannot offer? Secondly, how do their texts convey a desire for identities to be read differently from past literary creations of the region? Thirdly, how do these authors express the need to reclaim African heritage? Fourthly, what is the role of their novels in remembrance? Fifthly, who are they writing for? Lastly, how do their narratives challenge and exceed national borders? This is why, in this thesis, I engage with questions of identity and transnational perspectives with the objective of deconstructing the current narrative about what is understood as 'Francophone'.

I am precisely interested in works of fiction from two periods, which Legum has identified as those of renaissance and of disillusion.[18] I use these to establish a rethinking of existing paradigms in relation to postcolonial studies. My analysis considers how their novels provide crucial insights into telling everyday stories of the postcolonised. Not only do they tell about life 'over there', in Francophone Africa, but equally I identify a need to assert their postcolonial identity 'over here', in France. Looking at writers situated on the periphery of French literature, and of others more acclaimed in France, I argue that Francophone African authors want to assert an identity that is able to encompass both sides of what During calls the 'post-colonised' and the 'post-coloniser'.[19] They embody a new wave of writers thirsty for a fresh start, representative of 'an ambitious […] modernising élite'[20] and distancing themselves from the 1930s *Négritude* movement: as such, they promote a different

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[16] In the coastal city of Aneho, the Zankli Lawson royal family resides and manages the local community; Diedrich Westermann, *La Vie Sociale des Guin d'Aneho et de Glidji (Sud-Togo)* (Lomé, Togo: Presses de l'UL, 2012).

[17] Fiona Barclay, *Postcolonial Haunting* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2001).

[18] Colin Legum, *Africa Since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[19] Simon During, cited in Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles, the Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 48.

[20] Colin Legum, *Africa Since Independenc*e (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 48.

intellectual agenda, which is addressed in more depth in Chapter Two. Writers from the 'period of disillusion' of the early 1970s, who saw the dream of a Golden Age with new beginnings 'evaporating', as Legum puts it, write about the dismantling of the colonised identity formed through the eyes of the nation-sate. They write about the dismantling of an identity that was meant to re-establish the balance between the South and the North, a strong African identity formed through the means of the nation-state. Achebé's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Dumont's *False Start in Africa* (1966), in which the dream of a 'great narrative' of the black community falls to pieces, and Boubacar Boris Diop's written work under study, best illustrate this. The post-2000 writers in question are preoccupied with representing a fresher perspective on postcolonial identities. As Legum suggests, they belong to the African 'period of renaissance'. Initially, French-speaking writers of African origin experienced this tension when they tried to convey their 'core' identity as black writers through their ability to manipulate their vernacular language alongside the French language. Naturally, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Gontrand-Damas have been precursors in this field. Widely remembered and expansively quoted, they are representative of the literature written in French of African origin, situated up to three decades before Francophone colonies claimed their political emancipation in the 1960s. They are part of the 'period of romanticism' that Legum refers to as spreading from 1939-1970. They themselves identified with French culture, despite simultaneously claiming to be profoundly 'nègres'. Emblematic of the Négritude movement in the 1930s, the pères fondateurs launched the publication of *Présence Africaine* in Paris and initiated a solidarity movement based on black identity in rejection of French colonialism. Yet, they were keen to conciliate the two cultures. The pères of francophonie, and Senghor in particular, claimed a French identity through French culture and language: 'la Francophonie, c'est par-delà la langue française, la civilisation française, plus précisément l'esprit de cette civilisation, c'est-à-dire la culture française que j'appellerai francité.'[21] In an attempt to conciliate the two cultures, 'francité' was a happy middle term allowing both cultures to co-exist. In Chapter Two I will clarify

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[21] Xavier Deniau, *Francophonie* (Paris: P.U.F, 1983), p. 13.

how Césaire and Senghor differed in their perception of 'francité'. My analysis confirms that there is an underlying tension experienced by Francophone writers, which can be best described as a phenomenon of attraction and repulsion. They are caught between the right to cultural difference and multiculturalism.[22] As this claim suggests, the tension is rooted in Republican universalist values, which erases local differences to incorporate them into the universalist vision traditionally above communitarianism. I draw on precisely this notion of tension to redefine these authors away from the parameters of France's secular nation-state. The French nation-state, embodied by the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, represents a collectivity of equal citizens, within which cultural, social and religious differences become paradoxically irrelevant.[23] In this research I attempt to structure my analysis of post-colonial identity building by addressing this paradox. By locating some of the historical and cultural intersections between France and the post-colonies, I highlight the chassé-croisés, the missed conversations that are knotted in a previously invisible net of local memories. The idea is to echo these local silences back to the 'Centre' and to other postcolonies, so that common factors can stand out and new dynamics 'driv[e] postcolonial societies out of their past'.[24]

As Stuart Hall has argued, thinking of 'identity as a "production"' that is 'always in process', and 'always constituted within […] representation' provides another crucial entry into my exploration of decoding postcolonial identities of African heritage.[25] Drawing from cultural studies, I examine the dynamics of contemporary postcolonial Sub-Saharan cultures and their historical foundations seeking to understand how meaning is generated and produced from the cultural, historical and literary spheres. Applying Hall's theory of 'ethnicity' signifies moving

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[22] Carmen Bernan, 'Les Identités Religieuses et Ethniques à l'Aune de l'Universalisme Républicain. A Propos de l'Exception Française', *Champ Psy*, 1 (2001), 133-150 <http://www.cairn.info/article.php?REVUE=champ-psychosomatique&ANNEE=2001&NUMERO=1&PP=133>, [accessed 2 August 2013] (p. 134).
[23] *Ibid.,* p. 134.
[24] Claire H. Griffiths, *Contesting Historical Divides in French-Speaking Africa* (Chester: University of Chester Press, 2013), p. 256.
[25] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp , (p. 222).

away from fixed concepts of racial and ethnic identities to decode postcolonial identities of African heritage. It also means resisting what Gilroy calls 'ethnic absolutism'[26] and the anti-essentialist argument, which, as Bongie says,[27] would appear to echo well with Christopher Miller's productive definition of ethnicity as: 'a sense of identity and difference among peoples, founded on a fiction of origin and descent and subject to forces of politics, commerce, language, and religious culture'.[28] By using Hall's intellectual interpretation of the representation of black and Asian artists in the media and film industry as a starting point for deconstructing France's postcolonial relationship with French-speaking authors of African heritage, this thesis 'decentres the elitist French literary scene by deterritorialising Francophone literature'.[29] For Hall, 'ethnicity as a point of entry into discourse, as an enunciation, allows representation that engages with difference rather than trying to suppress it.'[30] My research takes inspiration from Hall's interpretation of 'ethnicity' to understand the term beyond its normalised definition, which assumes that being 'white' is the default skin colour by which other shades are graded.[31] All postcolonial identities of African heritage cannot be included into the category of 'black', the same way African postcolonial literature written in French cannot be subsumed into the sole category of 'Francophone', which territorialises geographically and culturally this literature. Since discourse is the place where meaning is generated and disseminated, Hall argues there is no place to go in quest of the 'authentic' black experience.[32] In Davis' words, by judging works of fiction, or other works of art, against this criterion, we are missing the point. Hall's 'new phase'[33] of representation resonates with what Forsdick and Murphy coined as the 'postcolonial

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[26] Gilroy, p. 5.

[27] Bongie, p. 443.

[28] Christopher Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 35.

[29] Dominic Thomas, 'Intersections and Trajectories' in *Postcolonial Theory and Francophone Literary Studies,* ed. by H. Adlai Murdoch and A. Donadey (University Press of Florida, 2005), p. 238.

[30] Helen Davis, *Understanding Stuart Hall* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p. 183.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press; London: James Currey, 1994).

[33] I. Barker, M. Diawara, R. Lindeborg, ed., *Black British Cultural Studies* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), p. 164.

turn'.[34] This phase is necessary because an understanding of ethnicity brings us to the radical realisation that we all come from somewhere, but also belong to everywhere. On this point Hall argues for:

> a recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture […]. We are all, in that sense, ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are. But this is also a recognition that this is not an ethnicity, which is doomed to survive […] only by marginalising, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities. This precisely is the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity.[35]

Combined with Hall's view, Michel de Certeau's concept of signifying practices of culture, which emphasises 'the analysis of cultural trajectories', culture being 'a composition of places'[36] as opposed to one fixed space, reinforces the understanding of Hall's 'ethnicity'. Applied to 'Francophone' postcolonial identities of African heritage, a post-structuralist perception of practices of culture is best understood as a cultural composition in the process of 'production', to use Halls' term, rather than as a fixed entity. 'Ethnicity' can then be defined best as a 'place' of origin, which evolves gradually with time and movement to become a composed 'space' made out of different places. Certeau argues that 'place' is a synonym of a distinct location, whereas 'space' is negotiated, polyvalent and the product of action and movement: it is a 'practised place'.[37] The apparent contradiction between the place of origin and travelled space can initially seem confusing; however, it makes a useful distinction between the origin of someone, where he/she was born, and

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[34] Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 17.
[35] Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth Lindeborg, *black British Cultural Studies* (London: Chicago University Press, 1996), p. 164.
[36] Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 146.
[37] Michel de Certeau, *The Practise of Everyday Life,* trans. by Stephen Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 117.

his/her existence and experience across historical and cultural space. Both are essential to decode 'Francophone' identities in postcolonial space.

This allows us to move away from a common tendency that has been seen in recent scholarship 'to posit a pattern common to pretty much all African countries', which tells us 'very little about the state of Africa'.[38] The state, Paul Nugent reminds us, is 'so impregnated by societal [and cultural] interests that it can only be studied as embedded within society'. The selected fictional writings at the core of this research are a powerful tool to embed society and culture into the study of postcolonial African identities. The novels at the centre of this study are situated at the crossroads of 'complex processes of de-territorialisation (migration, globalisation, sub-nationalisms) and re-territorialism (new regionalisms, processes of bordering)' and emerge in the context of a 'strong plea for a reconceptualization of space' needed in a new political geography of space.[39] The eclectic choice of novels addresses precisely the issue of categorisation and territorialisation. Consequently, the re-configuration of 'Francophone' identities means reinventing a space that opens up a framework capable of integrating everyday life into 'Francophone' cultural identities of African heritage. This is what Michel de Certeau refers to as 'signifying practices'.[40]

Each novel selected for this thesis is part of a cultural composition representing a view from within postcolonial identities of African heritage. They are themselves 'practised places', hybrid works of literature having crossed the boundaries of 'Francophone' novels, each of which having been published by French editors and produced by a range of authors, male and female, of African heritage and from postcolonies with eclectic colonial histories. Kangni Alem's novel, for instance, takes us to the other side of the Atlantic, whereas Zinsou's or Diome's travel to France, Germany, Northern and Southern Togo, Cameroon and Senegal: they travel inside villages, mud huts, flats, houses, through big cities, and so on. Like films, and in particularly in Alem's novel, some integrate cinematographic techniques

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[38] Paul Nugent, 'Power as Political Domination', in *Africa, Power and Powerlessness,* ed. by Hana Horakova, Paul Nugent and Peter Skalnik (Prague: Metropolitan University Prague, 2011), (pp. 22-23).

[39] Ulf Engel and Paul, ed., Nugent *Respacing Africa* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), p. 5-6.

[40] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday life*, p. 116.

with zooming and close-ups giving the reader access to the most detailed and accurate descriptions of bodies and landscapes. Others use traditional tale telling, as is the case in *LM,* whilst other novels are built like a piece of music, structured around the rhythm of jazz in Miano's *Contours du Jour qui Vient* (2006), and standing in contrast with Diop's anti-colonial style. In these texts there is also a strong presence of psychoanalysis permitting the reader to enter the characters' minds. When reading these novels, the reader gets a unique experience of penetrating the minds of protagonists who are predominantly of African heritage, and accesses a view from within local culture and everyday preoccupations, which constitute the realities of the postcolonial experience. The discursive practise always aims at denouncing the gaze from the ex-coloniser. Fanon's[41] anti-colonial theory, and Memmi's[42] less radical view of the relationship between coloniser and colonised, help us to comprehend how the gaze is placed and the impact it has on postcolonial identities of African heritage, which have developed, and are still developing, in a permanent underlying tension negotiating the complex relationship between what During calls the 'post-colonised' and the 'post-coloniser'.

The term 'créolisation', borrowed from Edouard Glissant and elaborated in *Le Discours Antillais* (1981) and in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990)*,* insists on an endless dynamic process allowing for the deconstruction of 'pure' or authentic identities and 'avoids the temptations of essentialist or exclusivist thought' McCusker argues. The novels and their authors have followed different cultural trajectories, crossed boundaries and are 'creolising' French literature and 'world literature'.[43] The central theoretical point of reference in Bongie's study of French Caribbean literature, which valorises 'creolisation', illustrates perfectly the new set of relations that have developed across 'formerly isolated peoples' now interconnected 'under the sign of

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[41] Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays,* trans. by Haakon Chevalier, (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1964]), pp. 172-173.

[42] Albert Memmi, *Portrait du Colonisé, Portrait du Colonisateur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985 [1957]), p. 20.

[43] Maeve McCusker, 'Creolisation and Creoleness', in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures, Continental Europe and its Empires*, ed. by Prem Poddar, Rajeev Patke and Lars Jensen, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 125-127 (p. 125).

our ever more interdependent world economy'.[44] In this new set of relations Glisssant's 'opacity' of identity 'permits each and every one of us to be both here and elsewhere, rooted and exposed […], harmoniously at rest and restlessly wandering'.[45] The theme of 'opaque and blind mobility'[46] has been explored by Certeau about the 'urban text'[47] the city walkers write when he walks across the 'bustling city'.[48] Certeau presents a theory of the city against the theory of urban planners and managers, in which the walker individuates and makes ambiguous the 'legible' order given to cities by planners. When exploring Francophone African postcolonial novels, hybridity, diaspora and globalisation are three symbols of 'wandering' and displacement that are characteristic of Gilroy's diasporic cultures.

Both physical and psychological, the displacement of identity and of the body are omnipresent features of Francophone African postcolonial literature, which create what Bhabha calls the 'third space' of cultural hybridity.[49] Displacement manifests itself in a variety of ways and is experienced either psychologically, when protagonists attempt to negotiate two cultures in their native land, or physically, when they set up on a new journey to Europe or across the Atlantic. Migrancy, travel, and exile are best approached as arteries of displacement and hybridity: all involve a process of inner questioning and transformation to adapt and emerge with a new position, as Bhabha claims, and a new identity that has shifted from its initial position. From this perspective, this brings us to the global nature of Francophone postcolonial literary creation situated at the crossroads of local and global narratives.

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[44] Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Standord, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 48.

[45] Odette Casamayor and Thierry Clermont, 'Entretien avec Edouard Glissant', 1 January 1998, <http://www.regards.fr/acces-payant/archives-web/edouard-glissant>, [accessed 9 November 2014].

[46] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life (*trans. by Stephen Rendall (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1984), p. 93.

[47] *Ibid.,*, p. 93.

[48] *Ibid.,*, p. 93.

[49] Homi Bhabha, 'The Third Space', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-221 (p. 211).

I argue that a reciprocal 'creolisation' has taken place between France and Francophone postcolonies that challenges Noiriel's concept of 'creuset francais'.[50] It has created an internal, identity turmoil in French society. Due to the 1995 and 2005 mediatic upheavals caused by the French *banlieues* crisis, the French Republic was forced to engage in a process that would attempt to redefine its identity and its golden reputation of 'creuset français'.[51] Although these events are not directly addressed in this thesis, they bear a symbolic significance in the explosive alchemy that for a long time kept immigrants unheard and gathered in neglected urban zones. They raised important broader questions about identity in French society. Chapter Five refers indirectly to these problems to explore further issues arising as a result of immigration from Africa to Europe. The French melting pot inherited from nineteenth-century European immigration, which was mostly Catholic, had been, until then, a reflection of the successful assimilation and integration of immigrants into French society. The riots in the French *banlieues*, mainly populated by a diaspora of African heritage coming from the colonies and postcolonies, challenged the French integration model that Noiriel supports. Partially in response to the identity crisis symbolised by the civil riots, the presence of the long awaited *Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* in Paris shows an effort to make sense of France's colonial past, whilst acknowledging the diversity of the country's ethnic makeup. Formerly known as the *Musée des Colonies,* and 'still surrounded by half a dozen streets bearing the names of noted nineteenth-century empire builders',[52] it was built to increase understanding of the history of immigration that has chiselled out Francophone identities of African heritage. It intends to develop a more accurate memory of France's colonial past in order to understand the multiple factors that influence postcolonial Francophone identity building. With the fairly recent emergence of postcolonial trends in French academia keen to re-visit colonial history from a different perspective, France has been pushed to initiate a process of

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[50] Gérard Noiriel, *Le Creuset Francais: Histoire de l'Immigration, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), pp. 13-67.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 1.

remembrance.[53] This can be seen as an effort to better integrate the unheard postcolonised in relation to its national colonial history.[54] Whilst these efforts are promising, they have at times been more celebratory of colonisation, as it appeared in Sarkozy's 2007, Dakar speech for example, underplaying the detrimental effects of colonisation. Chapter One investigates more closely the complexities of this relationship.

The relative absence of postcolonial studies in French academia, highlighted in the Introduction to Forsdick's and Murphy's 2003 edited volume, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies,* is symptomatic of this identity struggle: 'French scholars sometimes think that postcolonialism is just a vague, liberal, 'politically correct' field of studies that is uncritically in favour of multiculturalism'.[55] In France, postcolonial studies is a discipline that is still developing and sometimes slowed down by intellectual resistance that claims to have dealt with postcolonial issues a while back, and which can be perceived as a one-size-fits-all area of study. In 2005, Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire identified the reasons that were at the heart of the tensions that pervaded, and still pervade, French society. They put forward, in contrast, the persistence of the Republican denial towards France's colonial past: 'Francophone studies - the label used to refer to non-metropolitan French-language writing or indeed non-White French-language writing in France - have remained a marginalised field of activity in French literary departments'.[56] Perceived as running against the dominant models of literary studies and their canons, postcolonial theories have been ignored for many years in favour of traditional text analysis in the line of more 'universal practices of textual analysis'.[57] The recent 'political studies versus études postcoloniales' clash, spearheaded by the French political scientist and Africanist

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[53] Margaret Majumbar, *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension* (Lexington, U.S.A: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 179.

[54] *La Fracture Coloniale: La Société Française au Prisme de l'Héritage* Colonial, ed. by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), p. 105. See also Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Françoise Vergès, *La République Coloniale: Essai sur une Utopie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2010); *Ruptures Postcoloniales: Les Nouveaux Visages de la Société Française*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel and others (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

[55] Jean-Marc Moura, 'The Evolving Context of Postcolonial Studies in France: New Horizons or New Limits?', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing,* 44 (2008), (p. 263).

[56] Moura, p. 263.

[57] *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical* Introduction, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 8.

Jean-François Bayart, has also shaped the nature of French études postcoloniales. Accused of guarding French national identity as the new Republican 'Darwin', Bayart counters those to whom he refers to as the 'très fâchés', the very angry ones, of postcolonial studies,[58] namely Bancel, Blanchard and Bernault.[59] Less politicised, other initiatives in France have made possible the reading and analysis of Francophone texts. By going beyond the already institutionalised tools developed in the Anglo-Saxon postcolonial academic world, they celebrate the disparity and tensions that exist between anglophone and Francophone postcolonial studies.[60] Indeed, the 2013 publication *Postcolonial Studies, Mode d'Emploi* challenges the unfair label ('unreadable') that is attributed to postcolonial studies in France. This thesis intends to contribute to bridging the gap between postcolonial studies and *études postcoloniales à la francaise*.

The perception of such works of fiction in the present-day French literary sphere is still very much influenced by what Papa Samba Diop has described as the 'reversal of perspective with respect to the place of composition, the subject matter, and the authenticity of African writing'[61] that has taken place over time. He goes on explaining that the 'Africanness of texts no longer serves as a measure of their value' as France is no longer an unknown distant place for the postcolonised.

Due to an ever-increasing South-North immigration, Francophone authors of African origin have acquired a far wider diasporic dimension. Within the borders of the French Republic, the space dedicated to this literature depends mostly on the author's connections with Parisian publishing houses, their personal relationship with France and how they relate to the metropolis, but also, on a larger scale, to the implication of French political figures with the author's country of origin. I suggest

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[58] Jean-François Bayart, 'Les très fâché(s) des études postcoloniales', Sociétés Politiques Comparées, Revue d'Analyses des Sociétés Politiques, 23 (2010) <www.fasopo.org> [accessed January 2013].

[59] Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Florence Bernault, eds., *Ruptures Postcoloniales. Les Nouveaux Visages de la Société Française*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

[60] Laboratoire Jeunes Chercheurs, Littératures et études postcoloniales. Les outils à l'épreuve des textes, http://malfini.ens-lyon.fr/document.php?id=130, [accessed 25 July 2013], & the Collectif Write Back, *Etudes Postcoloniales: Mode d'Emploi* (Lyon: Presses Univesitaires de Lyon, 2013).

[61] Papa Samba Diop, 'The Francophone Sub-Saharan African Novel: What World Are We In?' in *Francophone Sub-Saharan African Literature in Global Contexts*, (Yale University Press: Yale French Studies, 2011), (p. 17).

that this has an impact on the identity that they project and how they are perceived, either as marginalised or integrated. As is the case with the five Francophone authors under study, the publishing houses involved are all based in Paris at the heart of the metropolis. As a consequence, it can be argued that the monopoly of Parisian publishing houses, and the scarcity of African publishing houses in West Africa, currently maintains the inherited dependence on the metropolis. This can explain the difficulties faced by Sub-Saharan Francophone authors to find a potential African audience, which are mainly caused by language barriers and political boundaries between nations imposed during colonial times. I argue that this has engendered a configuration of African literary space that perpetuates the colonial relationship; this is something that Chapter Three addresses specifically.

This configuration is reflected in the French media. From the year 2000 until fairly recently, some Francophone African authors, such as Léonora Miano and Fatou Diome, both central authors to this thesis, have had some attention from the media and the public, but not to the extent of Calixthe Beyala, who has had a lot of attention in the literary sphere. It is striking that Beyala's omnipresence in the French media at the time, has given her a space that is not representative of black people in France. What I demonstrate is the distorted vision of Francophone African literature that corresponds to the 'period of realism' of African literary production. According to Legum, 'Africa's Period of Realism coincided with wrenching changes in the world economy' facing 'problems of post-imperialism and globalisation'.[62] I choose to refer to Beyala, as she was herself subject to the pressure of the global marketplace in France. The nature of her status as a Francophone female black writer led her to ensure that she could preserve her 'authentic' black African writer identity in order to maintain her celebrity status. However, although she tried 'to preserve a degree of otherness, to challenge the fixity of the colonial gaze, [it] only confirm[ed] its legitimacy once more'.[63] This could be one of the reasons why her novels have been awarded many prizes, including the Grand Prix Littéraire of black Africa in 1993 and - amongst others - the Grand Prix du Roman by the French

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[62] Colin Legum, *Africa Since Independence* (Bloomingon: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 50.

[63] Nicky Hitchcott, *Calixthe Beyala: Performances of Migration* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2006), p. 38.

Academy in 1996. Paradoxically, in that same year she was also found guilty of plagiarism by the High Court in Paris for the same novel entitled *Le Petit Prince de Belleville* (1992). Indeed Beyala's controversial notoriety as a black African female writer in France is quite unique. Symptomatic of the 'postcolonial exotic' take of publishing houses on writers said to be of African origin living in France, a lot of writers are caught in France's politics of integration that has generated, according to Blanchard and Bancel, two models of identity for immigrants from the postcolony: the assimilated and the rebel.[64] As pointed out by Hitchcott, the difficulty for French-speaking writers lies in their positionality towards the ex-French colonial empire, and their role, as Said refers to, as oppositional intellectuals in order to 'break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thoughts and communication'.[65] Beyond the publishing issues faced by Francophone African authors, their objective is to convey through the French language a message about contemporary issues in West Africa. Yet, the limited readership of these writings confines them to be perceived through the prism of the French language, stifled by their own Francophone nature. Struggling to come to terms with the continuous presence of the coloniser even long gone, writers such as N'gugi Wa'Thiongo made the decision to write only in vernacular languages to counter postcolonialism and come to terms with postcolonial identity dilemmas.[66] This greatly limited his readership to local and diasporic people able to understand his language, and left the door open to the complex issues associated with translating African vernacular languages into European languages.

Finally, what distinguishes the central authors in this thesis, Diome, Miano, Alem and Diop from Beyala, is how they are perceived on the French literary stage. Although they are also caught up in the pressures of a global market, I argue that they are building a new great narrative that is wary of being caught either in the postcolonial exotic, or in a neo-colonial fear. It becomes evident then, that these writers have produced a literary output reflecting on newer local cultural issues.

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[64] Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel et Sandrine Lemaire, eds., *La fracture coloniale - La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005).
[65] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. xi.
[66] N'gugi Wa' Thiongo, *Decolonising the Mind, the Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Currey, 1986).

What reinforces their global dimension is the diasporic nature of the African Francophone community. This thesis brings to light Francophone writers such as Diome, Miano and Alem who all warn against the dangers of migrating to Europe in search for an Eldorado. Crossing the Mediterranean in search of a fictitious Eldorado has become a hallmark of twenty-first century migratory patterns, which are widely reported in news bulletins, especially in Southern European countries. Yet, these often tragic stories are only the tip of a much larger iceberg, which sees identities constantly reshaped and renegotiated in a context of heightened awareness of Europe's colonial past and growing post-colonial identities. For many Francophone Africans, living the French dream equals social ascension, a theme explored in Chapter Four.

Furthermore, this thesis explores the extent to which postcolonial identity building has been framed by the Francophone African process of state creation and consolidation. As individuals were initially reduced to the status of commodities during slavery and colonisation, they were classified as objects belonging to the French Empire. This categorisation was developed alongside the elaboration of national boundaries that were arbitrarily constituted, regardless of local populations. Simultaneously, alongside the establishment of artificial borders, the nomadic populations of many African countries who were frequently on the move and herding their cattle across great distances did not have much regard for the positioning of international borders.[67] The increased tension between the national state's artificial nature, elaborated by the colonisers and the local population's sense of belonging, has developed since the wave of emancipation of French colonies in the 1960s.[68]

I am precisely interested in the special theoretical, political and cultural implications of this artificial construct in Francophone Africa. I argue that postcolonial identity building must be placed within African political geography for it

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[67]Labelle Prussin, 'Africa revised, nouveaux regards sur l'Afrique' < http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-442-1.pdf>, [accessed 28 July 2013], pp. 21-23.

[68] It is important to bear in mind that the drawing of borders has also given opportunities for local communities to grow stronger. See A.I Asiwaju and Paul Nugent, *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London and New York: Cassell, 1996), p. 9.

poses unique challenges that are completely different to the set of political and cultural challenges faced by European 'state-builders'.[69] Although postcolonies went through similar stages of nation-states' creation as are encountered worldwide, postcolonial identities are connected, above all, to the linguistic identities set within the artificial construct of colonial national boundaries. Before colonisation, mobility and transhumance used to define space and identities on the continent. However, they were seen by some as obstructing the development of emerging nations to support nation building in favour of some élites.[70] Although the whole thesis explores the key issues of identity building, Chapter Two deals precisely with the constraints of identity building within the nation-state. In her work on gender development in the postcolony, Claire Griffiths points out that 'the concept of an indigenous unifying culture became an instrument in the hands of the first generation of the African political elite to forge a new identity for the postcolonial State' in which 'culture conveyed a postcolonial identity in its own image' and became a central part of the narrative on development in postcolonial Francophone Africa marginalising some strata of the population and 'reinforcing the political hegemony of an elite'.[71] Referring to Pieterse, Griffiths highlights the extent to which nationalism has been a 'profoundly masculinist discourse', and a 'profoundly gendered process'.[72] Gender negotiations, as pointed out by Griffiths, occupy an important part of this thesis in the analysis of the novel by Diome in particular, which will also refer to Butler, Cixous and Kristeva.[73]

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[69] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa, Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, New-Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 3. Herbst examines state creation in Africa and the fundamental problem confronting leaders of the majority of African states: how to broadcast power over hardly settled land.

[70] Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence* (Baskingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 62-63.

[71] Claire H. Griffiths, *Globalizing the Postcolony, Contesting Discourse of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 18.

[72] Nederven Pieterse cited in Claire H. Griffiths, *Globalizing the Postcolony* (p. 18).

[73] See e.g. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006); Hélène Cixous, *La* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); Claire H. Griffiths, *Globalising the Postcolony, Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington books, 2011) and Catherine Clément and Julia Kristeva, *Le Féminin et le Sacré* (Paris: Stock, 1998).

My analysis is also informed by the omnipresence of the memory of colonial rule on the African continent[74] and the new dynamics that can emerge from postcolonial studies and work on collective memory and remembrance.[75] Memory is reinforced by the indelible traces from the past, such as colonial buildings and effigies of the time of independence in the 1960s, which cohabit with the vernacular architecture. Alongside the Atlantic coast, landmarks of colonial history scatter everyday space: from Saint-Louis Island, Senegal's ex-capital and ex-French colonial settlement in the seventeenth century, passing through the Boulevard de la République in Lomé, heading forty-five kilometres east to the Royal Palace of Mlapa[76] in Aného, Togo. Colonial architecture and postcolonial modern constructions co-exist in everyday space as emblems of the colonial enterprise because most colonial buildings are still used in the same way as they were before the 1960s. For example, the majority of streets furrowing local towns and their suburbs bear French names. Togo and Cameroon, under German protectorates-between 1884 and 1914, offer an even more diverse colonial landscape with different influences from various European cultures. Beyond simple architectural testimonies of time passing, part of a social and cultural transformation, these places have become the central components of the way in which memory is defined. Subjects of the transformation of local identities, they are not just objects.[77]

In line with Sinou, I argue that inhabitants from ex-colonial spaces need to conceptualise the notion of History and distance themselves from some moments to own the present time. In other words, the willingness of locals to build their own identity in the present time is a prerequisite to claiming heritage. Yet, some populations reject some moments and forms of their history. The difficult integration of traces from colonial rule, or even from the slave trade, although older

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[74] See Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel, *De l'Indigène à l'Immigré* (Paris: La Découverte: 1998).

[75] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006); Alec G.Hargreaves, *Memory, Empire, and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005); Fiona Barclay *France's Colonial Legacies Memory, Identity and Narrative* and Margaret Majumbar, *Postcoloniality: the French Dimen*sion (U.S.A: Berghahn Books, 2007).

[76] A UNESCO building representative of the nineteenth century colonial period.

[77] Alain Sinou, *Enjeux Culturels et Politiques de la Mise en Patrimoine des Espaces Coloniaux* (Paris: Autrepart, 2005), p. 27.

than a century, is still an issue. The events in Ivory Coast in 2011 justify this claim since French representatives and buildings were attacked. Rothberg's multidirectional memory provides other alternatives to deal with the past by connecting postcolonial studies and Holocaust studies, thus creating'transdisciplinary' solidarity between two extraordinary historical events.[78]

As Sinou explains *'ce difficile travail de distanciation'* takes time.[79] The colonial space questions identity building and the necessary temporalities to the symbolical appropriation of colonial heritage. This heritage of becoming engenders a complex, and sometimes painful, relationship with the past when it reminds everyone of their place. Turning these traces into a heritage would help to better grasp the process of collective identity building and of the notion of culture. These cannot only be defined in relation to nineteenth-century European ideology in the context of state building. Although colonial heritage is nationally restricted by the borders that resulted from the 'Scramble for Africa',[80] they have become part of local, national and global identity building. Globality and diaspora are examined closer in Chapter Six. Keen to challenge 'universal' Western paradigms that deny texts and societies of African heritage any historical and cultural depth, and that define them as radically other, as all the West is not, Achille Mbembe's postcolonial theory positing the omnipresence of colonisation's heritage in the construction of identity within the nation state offers diverse local interpretations of the literature under study. It moves beyond the rhetoric of belonging and identity ('Us' and 'Them'), for it highlights the 'false dichotomy between the objectivity of structures and the subjectivity of representations'.[81] Mbembe's Cameroonian origin situates him within the cultural and literary space under study bringing an essential insight into West African postcolonies to look at representation 'within', as Hall would argue, not 'outside'.

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[78] Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism, the Demands of Holocaust Representation*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2000), p. 7. See also Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[79] *Ibid.,* p. 29.

[80] Henri Brunschwig, *Le Partage de l'Afrique Noir*e (Paris: Flammarion, 1971).

[81] Achille Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, L.A: University of California Press, 2001), p. 174.

Thesis Overview

This thesis begins by contextualising the unique postcolonial dimension of Franco-African relations, and analysing the transformation of local cultures. Firstly, Chapter One re-assesses the impact of the French colonial past in relation to Francophone West and Equatorial Africa. It challenges the dominant nature of the colonial narrative and evaluates its impact on Sub-Saharan Africa across a century (1870-1958). Furthermore, in this chapter, I examine the driving force behind French colonisation: the mission to civilise. Alongside a re-examination of this 'civilising mission', I also contest the role of Christian missions. I suggest that their perception of 'liberating' Africans from 'savagery', rooted paradoxically in the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen,* has influenced the narrative about Africans. I also study the strategic orientation of French cooperation during what is commonly referred to as decolonisation. Chapter One observes how the strong Euro-centric influences over African cultures were exerted via well-established networks and institutions. Finally, the chapter looks into the new realities of post-1995 Franco-African relations, and their intrinsic processes of denial, acceptance and repentance on the French side.

Aspects of the (de-)construction of national identity in Sub-Saharan Africa, and more particularly in Senegal, provide the basis for Chapter Two. Drawing on the Senegalese example, I demonstrate the ways in which the edification of the national state on the African continent affected the development of a socio-cultural landscape peculiar to the postcolonial condition. Boubacar Boris Diop's *Le Temps de Tamango* (*LTT*) gives insight into the Senegalese rebellion by students, trade unions and workers against Senghor's government, which lasted until 1980. It dramatizes nation building and imagines African intellectuals in the twenty first century scrutinising the ten years that followed independence, to contrast with the novels published post-2000, whose content is explored in the remaining four chapters. Diop's novel surprises us by desacralizing one of the rare heads of state to step down willingly in 1980. Although perceived as a charismatic figure and an acclaimed leader, co-founder of the Afro-Parisian political and literary freedom movement, *Négritude*, Diop takes us backstage of Léopold Sédar Senghor' presidency. This

chapter reflects on Christopher Miller's distinction between the pre-independence 'generalised nationalism-without-a-state' and the postcolonial 'armature of a more familiar state-nationalism at the service of the new élites'.[82] I seek to re-evaluate the impact of colonisation; in other words, I attempt to find out to what extent colonisation contributes to annihilating what Senghor' referred to as his 'âme nègre'.

The third chapter is concerned with challenging the classification of what is referred to as Francophone African literature. I argue that such classification reduces the literature written in French and produced in West Africa to a linguistic identity formed on the basis of a colonial mapping of the region. I re-situate the discourse on African literature in the larger context of other local and regional discourses.[83] Drawing on the findings of Chapter One, and going beyond the establishment of Francophonie, Chapter Three reassesses the impact of francophonie. The detailed reading of Léonora Miano's *Contours du Jour Qui Vient* (2006) demonstrates how colonisation affected local identities, and how the inherited concept of national identity has shaped local space. Complemented by an analysis of the tradition and modernity concepts in Miano's novel, the chapter not only rethinks local cultures beyond the usual tradition versus modernity dichotomy, but also looks into the cultural gap created in African societies. I reconsider the place of decolonisation in the minds of the native populations, and whether it is a foreseeable path to be freed from a traumatic past. Drawing from various sources, Chapter Three looks into a different conceptualisation of space within the postcolony to move away from the original Francophone space that is depicted in Chapter One. Finally, my analysis confirms that it is possible to integrate local lived spaces and places into a further-reaching view of national space. The postcolony can simultaneously be regional and global, as can its literature.

Keen to reconsider postcolonial space as a fixed identity, Chapter Four delves into Francophone Senegalese Muslim local traditions. Firstly, I focus on how traditions affect the life of the main character in Fatou Diome's novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), and also draw attention to the factors that pre-determine her

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[82] Christopher Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads, Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 120-121.
[83] Valentin M. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 1994), p. 177.

destiny as a young girl issued from this society. Secondly, this chapter integrates various theorists from anglophone and Francophone backgrounds to the reading of *LVA* and re-examines Sallie's journey through the notion of cultural identity. It investigates in what ways Sallie's twenty-first century ambiguous adventure as an exile is different from the anti-hero adventures typical of the writers from the time of independence, fifty years earlier. I explore in what ways the particular colonial relationship between France and Senegal affects the postcolony. Finally, one key element of the argument is based on the various processes involved in cultural identity building, which is a process of constant change and identity renegotiation, as opposed to a fixed entity. Applied to the life of the exiled, this process allows the incorporation of Sallie's travelling experiences and encounters with others and herself to the definition of her cultural identity. This generates a deeper understanding of a new postcolonial spatial awareness, one that is neither anchored to one place, nor stuck in time.

Chapter Five deals with the very contemporary issues of the immigrants from post-colonial countries and replaces them within a global analytical framework. It starts off with an individual and local perspective specific to Francophone Sub-Saharan immigration. The core of Chapter Five is centred on Agbota Zinsou's novel *Le Médicament* (2003). At its epicentre is an asylum seekers' centre that allows a multitude of characters, mostly victims of oppression, to interact. Seeking to demonstrate to what extent the work of fiction over-exceeds its original function of storytelling, it goes on to reveal how it becomes a powerful interactive discursive space, less restricted by linguistic and cultural barriers. Alongside the reading of Zinsou's novel, Chapter Five debates national identity and re-evaluates the notion of transit within a postcolonial framework. French republican integration processes of an assimilative nature are inherited from colonial nativist policies. They bear a heavy weight on today's immigration policy towards Europe, and on the perception of the foreigner. This is why renegotiations of identity, as experienced by immigrants from the postcolonies, are constantly shifting border spaces. In these migration narratives, painful memories of native land resurface and supersede everyday living. They construct memory and are best understood in comparison with histories of

victimisation. Not only do they share a universal dimension, but they also preserve cultural specificities, if we adopt Rothberg's 'multidirectional memory'.

Directly stemming from the previous chapter, Chapter Six expands on the global vision of black diasporas and repositions identity questionings. It seeks to develop an alternative to postcolonial discourse by looking into the nature of diasporic networks across the globe, their resonance and their identities away from the restriction of borders and boundaries. Through a detailed analysis of Kangni Alem's novel *La Gazelle s'Agenouille pour Pleurer* (2003), Chapter Six challenges Francophone West and Equatorial Africa, as a coherent entity, to offer an alternative view informed by its historic cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity. Chapter Six highlights how the black body and the postcolony are trapped into a violent objectification. The distortion process by which Alem consistently dismantles body objectification is a particular feature of his novel. Seeking to inscribe himself within a *'transformative praxis',*[84] Alem's novel constitutes a good example of the various possibilities that arise from displacing the postcolonial gaze and opening up a new understanding of 'Francophone' identities. Finally, Chapter Six offers new alternatives to cultures and identities partially fixed in time and immobilised by national borders. Mainly drawing from Bhabha's 'migrant metaphor' and Anderson's 'imagined communities', it redefines diasporas as an indefinite number of tangents, reinventing themselves 'anew'[85] through difference.

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[84] Cornel West, 'The Dilemna of the black Intellectual', *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education,* 2 (Winter, 1993-1994), 59-67.

[85] Homi Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 139-70; Anderson, *Imagined Community*; Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, p. 235.

Chapter 1
The relationship between France and Sub-Saharan Africa and post-colonial quests for identity:
Examples from Francophone Cameroon, Senegal and Togo

Introduction

Generally speaking, any investigation into the nature of postcolonialism in Africa is likely to uncover complex problems. Indeed, the continent is still attempting to come to terms with the past, present and future legacy of colonialism. In existing scholarship, for Bhabha, Fanon or Memmi, the postcolony is highlighted as a hybrid entity. For Bhabha, the postcolony can no longer envisage a present 'as a break or a bonding with the past and the future'[1] and for Claire Griffiths it also has to negotiate a future within the context of an ever-changing globalisation.[2] On the one hand, I argue that the greatest difficulties for the African postcolony today lie in the continent's ability to manage the legacy of colonialism alongside its own traditions. On the other hand, I also claim its greatest strength lies in its capacity to cope with its multi-layered cultural heritage. As formulated by Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, it attempts to negotiate its 'hybridisation' of cultural identities.[3] I argue here that cultural 'in-betweenness', often seen as an impossible entanglement of various identities, is the key to dealing with Africa's past, present and future. By contrast, I propose reading hybridity productively in the novels as a site of creation. To echo Bhabha, 'it is in the emergence of the interstices - the overlap and displacement of domains of difference - that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated'.[4] For me, works of fiction represent ideal interstices from which erupts the specific nature of postcolonial identities. It is the construction of Francophone postcolonial African

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[1] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 6.
[2] Claire H. Griffiths, *Globalizing the Postcolony: Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington books, 2011), p. 44.
[3] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).
[4] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* pp. 1-2.

identity, and identity that is globalised and diasporic at the centre of Hall's process of identity 'production',[5] which is the focus of this study.

This chapter explores the relationship between Africa and France from a historical and cultural point of view. It looks behind the diplomatic and military histories that are well-known to Europeans, to emphasise the integral history of 'black' people reduced to subjects of 'Whites', the transformation of the 'black' world into a 'White' man's tool.[6] It also posits the role of Sub-Saharan literature in the deconstruction of a postcolonial hegemonic narrative before each subsequent chapter provides an in-depth reading of the selected novels. This chapter examines the struggle that postcolonies face to be accepted as independent and autonomous entities. Here, I provide a platform for a new cross-Channel and cross-Atlantic narrative of colonisation and post-colonisation facilitated by works of fiction integrating and confronting two perspectives: one from Europe and one from Africa, using anglophone and Francophone scholarship. It establishes the grounds for a reclamation of African heritage both in and out of Africa.

I focus initially on the 'dis'-ruption of Sub-Saharan cultures by the French; then I explore the false 'dis'-junction between Francophone colonial empires at the time of independence; finally, I examine the 'dis'-enchantment of the postcolonial era. I take each aspect chronologically in this chapter. The chronological layout of Chapter One emphasises the digression that has taken place over time from the pinnacle of the French Empire to the lows of the lost empire, a phenomenon highlighted by the prefix 'dis' used as a symbolical marker. It serves a dual purpose for it emphasises the development of African identities alongside European identity. This chapter sets the analytical framework that will be used throughout this thesis: it confronts past and present narratives to create a new space that allows for the reclaiming of African heritage, with which historical and cultural misunderstandings and uncomfortable silences re-surface, to allow future narratives to value local and

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[5] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 222.
[6] Henry Brunschwig, *L'Avènement de l'Afrique Noire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1963), p. 177.

global[7] African identities, within and beyond borders, in the interest of community cohesion.

'Dis'-ruption: the impact of French colonisation on Sub-Saharan cultures (1870-1958)

'There was not a single French Empire. Not for the millions of people […] whose lives were implicated in, and affected by French imperial expansion, were there unified, monolithic experiences of Empire.'[8]

Dominant colonial narratives

The mission to civilise, central to French colonial propaganda, shaped minds beyond the *métropole* and directly affected identity building with repercussions in the postcolonial era.[9] Coquery-Vidrovitch rightly reminds us that each colony faced several phases and upheavals in their colonial administration:[10] I argue along these lines that the clear-cut historical periods of time, commonly referred to as colonisation, decolonisation and independence, contribute to building a narrative that is blind to local differences. These headings, although useful to break down African colonial history, are more a reflection of the European view generated by imperial expansionist politics. Indeed, I suggest that they tend to dissociate historical narratives from cultural narratives by streaming down a series of events into what Robert Aldrich refers to as a universalist homogeneous narrative,[11] providing a biased understanding of Francophone African identities and confining them to a

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[7] Claire H. Griffiths, *Globalising the Postcolony: Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Lanham, Md. ; Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 120-122.

[8] Prem Poddar, Rajeev Patke and Lars Jensen, eds., *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures Continental Europe and its Empires*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 107.

[9] Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (London: James Currey, 1994), p. 149.

[10] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *L'Afrique Occidentale au Temps des Français. Colonisateurs et Colonisés* (vers 1860-1960) (Paris: La Découverte, 1992).

[11] Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1996).

space artificially constructed by the coloniser and restricting them to fit in a limiting temporal framework.

Brunschwig's argument as to why France from 1830, like England and Germany, was actively promoting an overseas expansionist politics of prestige, especially in Africa, is fundamental to support this point. France needed to reassert its position as world power, despite the interest of its population in peace, social progress and political democratisation, at least up until 1870. The Sedan defeat of 1870 became the landmark event in the process that witnessed a drastic change in public opinion, seeing in colonial expansion an opportunity to reaffirm France's place as the cradle of the *Droits de l'Homme.*[12]

In France the colonial narrative was not so homogeneous. It is vital not to forget that French public opinion was against colonisation for financial reasons, due to the lack of national investments and economic stability. In the 1880s, Georges Clemenceau's theory on a 'nationalisme de rétraction continentale' to preserve the country, stood in stark contrast with Jules Ferry's focus on world expansion, which incurred huge expenses that strained national finances. Clemenceau accused Ferry of being lost in his colonial dream whilst the French were awaiting a stable government.[13] Initially, the intentions of Jules Ferry as Prime Minister rested upon the idea of progress and modernisation of the population of foreign territories. They were, however, disguised under a liberal ideology to promote universal rights based on the 1793 *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*.[14] This idea grew slowly until the turn of the century when colonialism became almost universally supported[15]; it was not criticised until much later, when the ideas of Francophone anti-colonialist thinkers such as Césaire and Fanon gained ground.

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[12] Brunschwig, p. 163, pp. 171-2.

[13] Georges Clemenceau, Débats Parlementaires, 31 Juillet 1885, in *Exhibiting La Plus Grande France, 'Un Patriotisme 'Continental',* Tanya Delphine Shashko (Stanford : Stanford University Press), p. 110.

[14] Gilles Manceron, *Marianne et les Colonies: Une Introduction à l'Histoire Coloniale Française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003), p. 119.

[15] Berny Sèbe, 'Exalting Imperial Grandeur: the French Empire and its Metropolitan Public', in *European Empires and the people: popular responses to imperialism in France, Britain, the*

Revisiting this historical moment in relation to postcolonial Francophone literature brings to the fore territorial conquests, which led to a 'gigantic clash of cultures' and impact on today's relationship between the *métropole* and its postcolonies.[16] The clash disrupted many traditions of civilisation made out of religion, ideology and science, and a wide range of activities passed on by ancestors to form 'a widely shared cultural legacy, which was the product of a millennia-long history of development'.[17] Postcolonial authors bring back to life, directly or indirectly, the clash that operated at the level of cultural transmission. When the French encountered civilisations based on oral traditions in tropical Africa, where intensive teaching and initiation rituals were part of everyday activities, they could not see any apparent distinction between religion, education, science and ideology.[18] For instance, authors create indirect historical connections with Christian missionaries such as Mgr Lavigerie. He was a firm believer in the project to evangelise and convert populations in equatorial Africa, who thought Sub-Saharan Africans needed the input from European Christians to 'evolve' according to the Hegelian conception of human kind.[19] As local customs were based on oral tradition, it was easier for Christian missions to influence local populations.[20] However, Africans were not powerless in the face of European infiltrations. As Aldrich explains, they were in a position to respond and they did so with various types of resistance during the conquests, throughout the colonial period and by reviving the nationalism that greatly contributed to decolonisation. However, some of the colonised population collaborated with the French administration, business and missionaries.[21] In essence, resistance and collaboration form recurring themes of colonisation.

Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy, ed. by J. M. Mac Kenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 27-31.

[16] Philip Curtin and others, *African History, From Earliest Times to Independence*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Longman, 1995), p. 469.

[17] Ibid., p. 469.

[18] Ibid., p. 489.

[19] Mudimbe, p. 106.

[20] Jean-Claude Ceillier, 'Histoire des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères blancs): de la Fondation par Mgr Lavigerie à la Mort du Fondateur (1868-1892)' in *Histoire des Missions Chrétiennes,* (Paris: Karthala, 2008).

[21] Aldrich, p. 200.

The obsession with freeing Africans, which stemmed from the feudal system and aristocracy, reveals that the French colonial doctrine was inspired from the ideals that arose from the French revolution.[22] All in all, the conquests had to ensure that agreements set on paper were applied in reality, so as to gain as much territory as possible, and to prevent other European powers from seizing unclaimed land.[23] Locals were either moved around, when 'recruited' by conquering missions after losing battles against the French, or they abandoned their villages when they knew about the violent nature of some missions.[24] The degree of barbarity and brutality displayed during the conquest, which involved burnt villages, random executions, decapitations and raids executed by the mission, was, firstly, in full contradiction with the humanitarian dimension supposedly shaping the civilising mission, and secondly, played down in official records to shed light onto France's good intention to bring progress to the 'savages'. Migrating routes of pastoral populations, such as the Touaregs, became truncated. This suggests that local cultures were forced to 'adapt' to a new geography of their land.[25] For Aldrich, the French had a huge impact on the natural and man-made environments. They transformed natural resources with 'economic developments and public works projects' clearing land for roadways, railways, housing, schools and churches.[26] Yet, 'environmental degradation' was not only the settlers' fault, nor was it unique to the colonised areas. [27]

In Africa, the French mission led by the young captains Voulet and Chanoine, as analysed by Taithe, is a very good, albeit somewhat extreme, example of the impact of early conquests on African culture, seen at the time as the epitome of the 'savage' and 'uncivilised'. The troubling nature of this mission, which turned into a public scandal in the summer of 1899, reveals the paradox between violence displayed on foreign land to be conquered and the French 'civilising' philosophy that

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[22] Margartet A. Majumdar, *Postcoloniality, The French Dimension* (New York and Oxford: Berghan Books, 2007), p. 216.

[23] Coquery-Vidrovitch, pp. 58-60.

[24] See Manceron, *Marianne et les Colonies*, Bertrand Taithe, *The Killer Trail: a Colonial Scandal in the Heart of Africa (*Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[25] Tony Chafer*, The End of Empire in French West-Africa, France's Successful Decolonisation?* (Oxfor and New-York: Berg, 2002), p. 27.

[26] Aldrich, p. 231.

[27] Ibid.,., p. 231.

was the founding reason of the 'imperial dream'.[28] Although of anecdotal interest, the mission provides insight into European perceptions of colonial encounters in Africa and about the nature of warfare in Sub-Saharan Africa at a time when anti-slavery philanthropists preached for human rights. It offers an unsettling background to the contradictions and inequalities that have survived up until today in postcolonial France.[29] For instance, the Voulet-Chanoine mission is either not included in all official accounts, or it has been subtly merged into its successor's.[30] I choose to bring these omissions forward, as they contribute to shaping a portrayal of colonisation leading to a biased historical narrative.

In the background, it is important to bear in mind that the predominant pseudoscientific discourse on progress justified the conquests. For instance, eugenic theories justified the inferiority of Africans.[31] The extent to which they shaped an image that was solely based on accounts from the few conquerors who had been to Africa, and whose popularity relied on the surface of land they had managed to secure, participated strongly in empire making. Sèbe has shown how such biased narratives emphasized and contributed to the developlement of heroic reputations.[32] In parallel, the invention of the *sauvage*, the uncivilised, also became part of discourses on African conquests.[33] For instance 'explorers returned with stories of barbarism, accounts of cannibalism and human sacrifice - practices travellers grossly exaggerated, misunderstood and ripped from their socio-cultural contexts -'.[34] To sum up, the conceptual justification for lending Western notions of civilisation to

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[28] Taithe, p. xi.

[29] It is worth noting that Voulet-Chanoine became a national embarrassment as both were held accountable for a series of atrocities perpetrated en route towards the territories near Lake Chad, in Central Africa, where the African slave trade was prospering (Taithe: 2009), p. 171.

[30] Bertrand Taithe indicates two military volumes that ignore the mission: Colonel Baratier's *Épopées Africaines* (1913) and Lieutenant Gatelet's *Histoire de la conquête du Soudan, 1878-1899* (1901), in Taithe, p. 44.

[31] Daniel J. Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Use of Human Heredity* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 132-134.

[32] Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

[33] The exhibition *L'Invention du Sauvage*, which was held at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris until 3rd June 2012, deconstructs the scientific myths about the superiority of the white race.

[34] Aldrich, p. 201.

African people was, at best, a cloak to disguise imperial and territorial ambition and to prevent inroads being made by competing Western powers.[35]

In conclusion, French colonial expansion accelerated rapidly in Africa and generated cultural clashes amongst different African ethnic groups and within communities, which affected social cohesion. The disruption of local narratives in Togo, Cameroon and Senegal, initiated via a process of creolisation and insidious space partitioning, is a major preoccupation of post-2000 Francophone African authors, whose novels under study in this thesis generate a new narrative that reopens colonial discursive practice from an African perspective in order to revalue African heritage. As argued by Wesseling, the space partitioning that resulted from political agreements needs reassessing for they set artificial and virtual cultural boundaries.[36] This theme will be explored specifically in Chapter Three.

Assimilation

The colonial process that engendered a *mise en tombeau de l'originalité culturelle locale*, a sealing off cultural originality, and which was immensely influenced by the assimilation process, had started well before the 1880s. French assimilationist politics was the stepping-stone for a form of creolisation[37] and normalisation of African cultures that was violent in its modality; what is more, as pointed out by prolific colonial and postcolonial theorists such as Fanon, Mbembe, Bhabha and Mudimbe, it still shapes the parameters of post-colonial identity quests today. The nature of French colonial style, which was denounced by the abovementioned authors and theorists for its assimilation of local populations to French culture, left Francophone Africa in a marginalised position. As Majumdar's

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[35] Eager for a successful military career and well supported by the Ministry of Colonies and President Félix Faure himself, Voulet and Chanoine were trusted to embark on a conquest that would secure the prestige of France in West Africa. Part of a triangular mission, the wider purpose of the mission was to unite West and East African territories north of the areas under British and German control, and to conquer uncharted land. The plan quickly came to an end as the British army was travelling to the South of the river Nile, and slowed down due to the arid weather, the unknown conditions of the terrain, and unpredictable supplies.

[36] Henri Wesseling, *Le Partage de l'Afrique, 1880-1914* (Paris: Denoël, 2002), p. 686.

[37] Maeve McCusker, *'Creolisation and Creoleness'* in *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures,* pp. 125-127 (pp. 125-126).

comments allude to, the French dimension of postcolonialism revolves around the concept of 'otherness' or 'alterity' in a context that denies difference but nonetheless uses it as a marker.[38] Challenging the tendency to homogenise and essentialise African identity, like Majumdar, Diome, Miano, Zinsou, Diop and Alem all contest single-minded narratives.

Indeed, linguistic and cultural barriers led to the demonisation and dehumanisation of local populations considered too primitive to be treated as human because their social life was, in appearance, in complete opposition to Western segmentation of knowledge. In order to re-format local cultures to French standards, the French decided to 'mould' locals into a docile contingent, thereby progressively destroying social order by injecting alien governance into local life and importing external values.[39] In the colony, internal cultural clashes created a scission amongst people originally from the same background: as Curtin explains, '[today's] cultural disunity stemmed from the contrasts between a heavily Westernised elite and the bulk of the urban and rural populations alike which was much less affected'.[40] This led, as Fatou Diome highlights,[41] to a fracture between the rich and powerful French educated elite and the rest of the population, who had limited access to resources.

Alongside the distinction between Westernised locals and the rest, the question of ethnicity became more prevalent. An artificial hierarchy within local societies, based on Western standards, started to oppose the elected dialect promoted to the rank of official language in favour of other local idioms. Explaining the double-alienation faced by locals, Fanon writes 'parler c'est être à même d'employer une certaine syntaxe, posséder la morphologie de telle ou telle langue, mais c'est surtout assumer une culture, supporter le poids d'une civilisation'.[42] The construction of an identity built on the Third Republic's model of free, compulsory

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[38] Majumdar, pp. 207 and 216.
[39] Albert Memmi, *Portrait du Colonisé, Portrait du Colonisateur* (Paris: Gallimard, [1957] 1985), pp. 117-120.
[40] Curtin and others, p. 470.
[41] Chapter Four is dedicated to Fatou Diome's novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003) and explores these contemporary issues.
[42] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre* (Paris : La Découverte, 2002 [1961]), p. 13.

and 'ostensibly secular' schooling, 'designed to supersede […] Buddhism or Islam head on',[43] constituted a major factor in shaping the native population's minds and souls, and French children's minds.[44] Once Christian missionaries had overcome language barriers, they could translate the Holy Scriptures and preach relentlessly by converting and fast-tracking native speakers of the elected vernacular to employment in the missions or in the administration. In fact, the act of conversion is of great signicance because it affects the individual's consciousness, manifesting itself through different phases that Mudimbe describes as follows: 1). The referential symbol, a person speaking in the name of both political power and absolute truth. 2). The edifying and seducing style of the speech, its spirituality referring itself to an absolute truth whose efficacy might be political and Catholic (which makes it credible and convincing). 3). The alienation process where the convert, individually a 'child', assumes the identity of a style imposed upon him or her to the point of displaying it as his or her nature', thus making the 'child' an ideal candidate for assimilation.[45] The only language of instruction and preaching in Cameroon, Togo and Senegal, where the first government school was established in 1818, was French. There, the *école des otages* in Saint-Louis, Senegal (1854), and the William Ponty administrative school in Dakar, Senegal, trained an élite to develop a sense of pride and interest for France. To counterbalance such cultural and religious infiltrations and reclaim Togolese traditional oral culture, Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou uses techniques from oral tales to address the readers directly and invite them to identify themselves with his characters.[46]

Girardet's study of the civilising mission shows that Jules Ferry's 'impérialisme conquérant', saw colonisation as beneficial to modernise the 'indigenous' population,[47] as demonstrated in his 1885 parliamentary speech.[48] What is

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[43] Claire Griffiths, 'Colonial Education (France and its Colonies)', in *Postcolonial Literatures Continental Europe and its Empires*, ed. by Prem Poddar, Rajeev Patke and Lars Jensen (Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 124-125 (p. 124).
[44] Coquery-Vidrovitch, p. 53.
[45] Mudimbe, p. 109.
[46] Chapter Five reflects on this aspect by looking closely into Zinsou's novel *Le Médicament* (2003).
[47] Raoul Girardet, *Le Nationalisme Français, Anthologie 1871-1914, 'La mission coloniale de la France selon Jules Ferry* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1983 [1966]), p. 97.
[48] Ibid.,., pp. 103-104.

particularly interesting is the comparison between Ferry's speech and Léonora Miano's writing. The interconnection becomes explicit when Miano mentions textbooks' imagery that encapsulates a backdated vision of the indigenous population:

> Dans les livres, des images naïves représentaient les anciens chefs de la côte du Mboasu (…). On les voyait vêtus de jupes de raphia, les yeux exorbités devant les colliers aux perles de verre, ou se mirant ébahis dans une glace au bord de faux argent.[49]

Not only does this expose contemporary postcolonial issues, but it utters also questions of memory and remembrance:

> […] Je n'ai pas appartenu à cette première promotion d'enfants scolarisés en maternelle et instruits à l'époque par des maîtresses venues d'en France.[50]

Language, as remembered by Achille Mbembe, played a huge role in assimilating colonies. Comparing the act of colonising to an act of coitus, Mbembe reflects back on the ambiguity of the relationship between colonial vocabulary and what it seeks to designate: 'its referent'. Based on 'the exercise of language, […] a series of acts, gestures, noises, and sounds, [also participated] in the phallic gestures'.[51] It is a fact that colonial practice surreptitiously devoured culture and local traditions due to its roots in racial violence, paired with the logics of profit making, power accumulation and corruption.[52] For Mbembe, the Western 'discours raisonnable' about the 'continent de l'étrangeté', from which rationality was excluded,[53] has shaped Africa according to Western obsessions that originate from European exotic discourses about unknown lands - savagery, witchcraft, nakedness, and lawlessness -. As Mbembe explains further, 'verbal economy' was constructed through rumours and 'anecdotes' of the 'real world,' removing any connection with time or 'local

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[49] Léonora Miano, *Contours du Jour Qui Vient* (Paris: Plon, 2006), p. 145.
[50] Ibid.,., p. 145.
[51] Achille Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, L.A: University of California Press, 2001), p. 174.
[52] Ibid.,., p. 98.
[53] Ibid.,., pp. 91-95.

reference'. Besides, at a political level, the 'false dichotomy between the objectivity of structures and the subjectivity of representations',[54] made it impossible to produce an 'intelligible reading of the forms of social and political imagination' as they denied African societies any historical depth. Reflecting on Raymond Bett's *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (1961), which highlights the importance of the association doctrine, Alice Conklin remarked that the 'rhetoric and policy of association had an important civilising dimension from the outset' and differentiated French colonial style from its European neighbours'.[55] By the turn of the twentieth century, this idea of assimilation had given way to the theory of association, which held that France's new empire could be better served by a more flexible policy in which the colonised become partners with France in the colonial project. This represents a pivotal shift in colonial beliefs within the *métropole*.

By exploring the processes that stemmed from assimilation, it has become clear that colonisation was made up of an intricate series of episodes with complex implications that still involve Europe today. This paved the way for what is often perceived as a normalised decolonisation, which actually took place unevenly in various geographical areas; it developed alongside the relationship established during colonisation, and on the vested economic and political interests up until then.[56]

False disjunction? Decolonisation or the way to neo-colonisation (1958-1995)?

> '[…] la politique de coopération est la suite de la politique d'expansion de l'Europe du XIXe siècle, qui s'est marquée par la création ou l'expansion de vastes empires coloniaux', Georges Pompidou[57]

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[54] *Ibid.,*, p. 6.

[55] Alice L., Conklin, *A Mission to Civilise, the Republican Idea of Empire in France and West-Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 1-10.

[56] Tony Chafer, 'Colonial Administration (France and its Colonies)', in *Postcolonial Literatures*, (pp. 121-123).

[57] M. Amandji, *Félix Houphouët-Boigny et la Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1984), cited in *Economie et Politique*, 214 (mai 1972), p. 222

<u>Decolonising?</u>

The cultural baggage inherited from colonisation is a significant preoccupation of Francophone postcolonial authors who are keen to demonstrate the extent to which every day space is still affected. [58] All argue that the interrelation with the metropole did not end when the colonies claimed their independence. So, can we really talk about decolonisation in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa? Firstly, what is commonly referred to as decolonisation does not necessarily reflect the reality at the time. Indeed, Paul Nugent, Achille Mbembe, Mudimbe and Asiwaju,[59] amongst other academics, have argued that the heterogeneous nature of territorial conquests, due to the vastness of conquered land, cultural diversity and disagreement about colonial politics, complicated the task. Besides, as Mbembe observes, the desire of some colonies to become independent was not made easy due to the strong cultural and political imbrications that had been in place for up to three centuries.[60] For Todd Shepard, decolonisation is a much wider concept than 'the mere winning of independence or transfer of power'.[61] But whilst many Western historical references describe decolonisation as the 'break point between empire and after, with some analyses focusing on a shift from new imperialism to neo-colonialism', Shepard argues that the history of imperialism and anti-imperialism was rewritten by French politicians, bureaucracy and journalists, so that decolonisation was the predetermined end point.[62]

Indeed, on the French side, key decisions mainly geopolitical in nature, paved the way towards decolonisation. Fearing to lose its imperial grandeur, France made a last attempt to unite colonised land within the framework of the French Union. For example, sixty years after Ferry's intervention and ten years after Général De Gaulle's 1944 Brazzaville Conférence, which used images of the civilising mission to justify the

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[58] The term is derived from Certeau's theory of everyday life and is explored in Chapter Three in relation to Léonora Miano's novel *Contours du Jour qui Vient*.

[59] This issue is explored in *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*, ed. by Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju (London: Pinter, 1996) and by Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence: A Comparative History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[60] Mbembe, p. 6.

[61] Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonisation, the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (New York: Cornell University, 2006), p. 4.

[62] Ibid.,., p. 4.

need for the French Union between France and African countries, Roger Frey's utopian discourse echoed Ferry's speech, with an added dimension about a futuristic vision of Congo's Brazzaville where opulence and industrialisation were to unite Whites and Blacks.[63] In July 1954, Pierre Mendès-France admitted apologetically to the failure of the French government in his 'Discours de Carthage' and for not holding their promises of progress,[64] which Lamine Guèye confirmed with regards to the colonies' lack of parliamentary representation.[65] Essentially, the omnipotence of the French administration was too overwhelming not to be denounced, together with issues linked to bilateral rights that led to contradictions between the principles established in the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen,* and the use of force and authority to apply French colonial law in the colonies.

A wave of discontent spread across France's colonies and territories as the discrepancy between an idealised assimilationist ideology and French practice created many tensions that led to a general lack of cohesion. The desire to 'become one', strongly expressed by Général Charles de Gaulle at the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, where 'no African leader was present',[66] was renewed in 1958 in the 'Discours du Forum d'Alger', when de Gaulle came back to power.[67] The idea of a *Communauté française* was a last attempt to maintain closely tied Franco-African relations, at which point De Gaulle decided to offer a choice between independence

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[63] Roger Frey, '*Brazzaville Encyclopédie Nouvelle d'Outre-Mer', Chapitre IV : Demain*, (Septembre 1954), p. 101.

[64] Pierre Mendès-France, *Gouverner c'est Choisir*, vol.3 (Paris: Julliard, 1955), p. 162.

[65] Lamine Guèye*, Etapes et Perspectives de l'Union Française* (Paris: 1955), p. 119*.* Guèye's suggestion to create a specialised parliament with a majority of elected non-metropolitans and financial automomy was ignored alongside Mendès-France's offer for a friendship based on equal rights.

[66] Stephen Tyre, 'Decolonisation (France and its Colonies)' in *Postcolonial Literatures Continental Europe and its Empires,* ed. by Prem Poddar, Rajeev S. Patke and lars Jensen (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 127-128 (p. 127).

[67] Still in line with his politics to transform the French Empire into a French Community, shortly after he came back to power De Gaulle expressed his desire for Algeria, after years of conflict, to remain entirely French. This vision was inscribed within an international context situated after World War Two, which had established the basis of a stronger relation of dependence for France through a common fight against Nazism; it had reinforced alliances between France and its colonies where soldiers were recruited. In parallel the right to self-government and the fight against oppression, both undermining colonial order, were spreading.

and the Communauté,[68] inviting African leaders to remain united and strongly tied to France via the Communauté.[69]

In order to avoid new developments similar to those which led to the Algerian conflict, De Gaulle decided to grant independence to all its colonies with the option to be part of the Communauté, implicitly admitting to the limits of Western Universalism and the impossibility for all colonial subjects to be French.[70] African colonies were not unanimous in favour of the idea of 'making one' with the métropole as part of the Communauté. On the one hand, in the 1958 Constitution of the Fifth Republic of France Léopold Sédar Senghor saw a future for the Communauté, which was to be governed by the French president. Although keen not to sacrifice his 'dignité négro-africaine', Senghor vested high hopes in the Communauté, and saw a better future for his country, Senegal and the existing Francophone federations: the AOF and AEF.[71] In *Le Temps de Tamango* (1981), Boubacar Boris Diop reflects back on a time that was meant to be the golden age of democracy the African way, only to be disillusioned by their African leader. He depicts the failing of Senegalese society during its build up towards democracy and shows another, somewhat darker, side of an acclaimed Senghor, symbol of a Westernised élite. The elites' nationalist ideas were especially formulated in terms of 'négritude' for the Francophones since anglophone Africans, on the contrary, insisted on the universality of humanity and rejected the concept about which Wole Soyinka ironised: 'Un tigre ne se vante pas de sa tigritude'.[72] On the other hand, Sékou Touré, president of Guinea, alongside the independent leader of Ghana, Nkrumah, felt that the inherited colonial economic and political structures were not in line with African values,[73] and tried to avoid the 'piège assimilationiste'.[74] As soon

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[68] Charles de Gaulle, 'Discours de Dakar, Sénégal', 26 aout 1958, <Ibid.degaulle/ina.fr> [accessed 5 November 2013].

[69] Charles de Gaulle, 'Discours de Saint-Louis du Sénégal', 12 décembre 1959, Ibid.degaulle/ina.fr [accessed 5 November 2013].

[70] Ibid.,., p. 9.

[71] Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Nation et Voie Africaine du Socialisme* (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1961), p. 35.

[72] Coquery-Vidrovitch, p. 28.

[73] El Hadj Saloum Diakité, *Sékou Touré Face au Général de Gaulle* (Dakar, 2007), p. 203.

as Guinea requested their independence, France announced that Guinea had chosen 'secession and all its consequences'.[75]

In the 1960s two fundamental issues divided African states: 'the ongoing quest for Africa's total liberation and 'the territorial partition of the continent'.[76] Despite divisions, a continental consensus became possible in 1963, leading to the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which decreed borders inherited from colonial times to be intangible. Borders have remained markers of postcolonial nations to this day.[77]

Impossible divorce

After World War II, shifts in the perception and attitude of the French towards the former colonies were perceived. As Margaret Majumdar remarks 'it is well known that the French themselves do not on the whole fully identify themselves as part of the Francophone world'.[78] The divide between France and the Francophone world, perpetuating the us/them distinction between coloniser/colonised, had been the cause of some considerable frustration to key figures in the Francophone movement. For instance, Senghor urged the French to sign up more wholeheartedly to the ideal: 'Negritude, Arabism, it is also you, French people of the Hexagon'.[79] However, as we have seen, the French state did not follow this route and instead of fighting West African colonies to remain French, France opted for an official 'decolonisation' that was organised in a way that would guarantee French influence for some time.

What I explore here is the extent to which the strategic orientation of French cooperation consisted of valorising democracy, reinforcing the organisation's social and educational aspects, and promoting cultural diversity and francophonie. Guided by the motto 'Egalité, Complémentarité, Solidarité', the Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (A.C.C.T.), a major institution within La Francophonie,

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[74] Aimé Césaire, 'Préface' in Sékou Touré, *Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine* (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1959), p. 5.
[75] Chaffer*, The End of Empire,* p. 174.
[76] Nugent, *Africa Since Independence,* pp.101-102.
[77] Borders and their contradictions are dealt with in Chapter Three in relation to Léonora Miano's novel *Contours du Jour qui Vient*.
[78] Majumbar, p. 175.
[79] *Esprit*, 1962 in Majumbar, p. 175.

reunited Francophone African countries in the Niamey Convention on 20th March 1970, simultaneously guaranteeing France's key membership within the UN, which Fatou Diome condemns indirectly:

> [...] en concoctant la francophonie, Senghor aurait dû se rappeler que le Français est plus riche que la plupart des Francophones et négocier afin de nous éviter le racket sur la communication.[80]

Here, I bring to the fore Diome's critical view of the lack of insight from African leaders in securing a privileged relationship with France's successive presidents to little benefit of the majority of the French population.

This is a recurring theme in Boubacar Boris Diop's novel *Le Temps de Tamango*, which gives an insight into what is referred to as the Senegalese 'passive revolution' (1975-1985) of students and workers against Senghor's government, in place since 1960. This is pivotal to understanding the extent to which the proclamation of Senegal's independence from its French coloniser was an illusion. Ultimately, it examines the circumstances that led to the failure of what was thought to be African democracy. By doing so, I argue that this fiction revisits a forgotten past, simultaneously providing space for the expression of the political aspiration for masses.

Kangni Alem's novel, *La Gazelle s'agenouille pour pleurer*, gives an insight into the activities of Togo's white elephants who spoilt opportunities for true independence because of the explosive combination of poor management from political leaders and cupidity from Western industrial interests.[81] For example, when General Eyadéma decided to invest in heavy industry -steel and oil- in the late 70s, steelworks and refineries were ready to be used with no qualified firm associated with the project and no serious market or financial studies:

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[80] Fatou Diome, *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (Paris: Anne Carrière, 2003), p. 38.
[81] Gilles Labarthe, *Le Togo, de l'Esclavage au Libéralisme Mafieux* (Marseille: Agone, 2005), p. 80.

> [...] l'opposant togolais Claude Améganvi rentre dans le détail de ces projets
> avortés [...] : 14 milliards de francs CFA pour la raffinerie, alors que le pays ne
> produit pas de pétrole [...] ; 13 milliards pour la Société togolaise de
> sidérurgie, un fiasco total.[82]

Thanks to a strong French representation via the Agence Française de
Développement (AFD), the Conseiller du Commerce Extérieurs de la France and the
Mission Economique, all attached to local French embassies, defend French interests
in Africa.[83]

With the number of French expatriates, which has more than doubled over
the 30-year period since 1960, the French presence cultivated an exotic image of
France in the minds of local population:

> Presque partout où les Européens ont fondé des colonies [...] on peut dire
> qu'ils étaient attendus, et même désirés dans l'inconscient de leurs sujets. Des
> légendes, partout, les préfiguraient sous la forme d'étrangers venus de la mer
> et destinés à apporter des bienfaits.[84]

Between 1960 and 1990, as France maintained administrative support in the
postcolonies, almost half a million French citizens worked for cooperation purposes.
In the mid-1980s, 1/8th of the teaching profession from the Hexagon worked in
Francophone Africa, prolonging the myth of the French Eldorado. In reference to
Mannoni's study of the Malagasy, Fanon explains how colonised societies went
through 'destructuration' due to the colonisers' irruption, thus creating a 'blessure
absolue' of psychological dimension: Albert Memmi also analyses this subject in
depth.[85] This phenomenon is strongly denounced in postcolonial works of fiction,
which contribute to deconstructing 'subaltern' myths.[86] Autochthonous populations

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[82] Ibid.,., p. 80.
[83] <http://Ibid.missioneco.org/me> [accessed 12 April 2009].
[84] Fanon, *Les Damnés de la Terre,* p. 79.
[85] Memmi, pp. 117-120.
[86] I refer here to the works of the Subaltern Studies Group, the South-Asian group of writers
who explored the social and political role of men and women as colonised subjects in South
Asia in the 1980s. I refer in particular to Gayatri Spivak's famous work 'Can the Subaltern
Speak?', which raises issues with Eurocentric subject's representation.

affected by this double-trauma deny themselves the right to value their culture, they hope to become 'whiter' by immigrating to the Eldorado, whilst simultaneously dismissing their 'foreign' roots once in France; this results in a double-edged experience of exile for Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou's characters in *Le Médicament* and Sallie in Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de L'Atlantique*.[87]

From the 1960s until the 1990s, Africa remained France's *pré-carré* privileged backyard for unchallenged political influence. In order to keep connections with newly established nations, the *Françafrique* networks,[88] developed by the French Government and African presidents at the time of decolonisation and in place until the mid 2000s, maintained a zone of privileged influence in Africa. Through *Françafrique*, France was able to pursue its interests during the phase commonly referred to as 'decolonisation', through a process described by François-Xavier Verschave as a form of 'néocolonialisme' and perceived as 'une politique extrêmement nocive'.[89] In the background of the following chapters lies the close links between the Franco-African community and the Elysée, which allowed the metropolis to keep a vast influence on African leaders by restricting their ability to manoeuvre. Crucial to understanding the dimension of postcolonial fiction, French political networks named after Jacques Foccart,[90] preserved, alongside French secret services,[91] the personal relationship between French heads of state and African presidents. The networks facilitated French actions in Africa, supported by mercenaries among other military who had deserted:

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[87] Chapter Five focuses specifically on life in exile.

[88] Neologism is a term coined by Félix Houphouët Boigny, President of Ivory-Coast from 1960 until his death in 1993 and founding father of *Françafrique*, as mentioned in *La Fracture Coloniale* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), p. 159. Boigny spoke of 'France-Afrique' in an attempt to refer to mutually beneficial links between the two entities. It later evolved into the 'mot-valise' *Françafrique,* widely publicised by Verschave through his 1998 eponymous book.

[89] Francois-Xavier Verschave, *De la Francafrique à la Mafiafrique* (Bruxelles: Tribord, 2004). See also *La Françafrique. Le Plus Long Scandale de la République* (Paris: Les Arènes, 1998).

[90] Foccart was general secretary of the Franco-African community, general secretary of the Elysée under Charles de Gaulle's presidential mandates, adviser for Africa for President Pompidou, and again for Jacques Chirac at Matignon in 1986 and at the Elysée from 1995 until his death in 1997.

[91] French secret and special services are the DGSS, Direction Générale des Services Spéciaux, and SDECE, Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage.

La période post-guerre froide a vu une recrudescence du mercenariat partout dans le monde. Si elle a toujours existé, cette activité a connu une mutation stratégique. Les 'soldats de fortune' et autres 'chiens de guerre' se sont effacés au profit de compagnies qui vendent du conseil militaire et de la 'sécurité'. Composées d'anciens militaires et d'hommes des services de renseignement ayant conservé des relations avec leurs structures d'origine, ces firmes agissent souvent en sous-main pour le compte d'Etats qui les utilisent afin d'éviter les coûts politiques en cas de pertes ou d'échec.[92]

They include the murder of Cameroonian nationalist leaders Ruben Um Nyobé, Félix Moumié, Ernest Ouandié respectively in 1958, 1960 and 1970;[93] the French army's intervention in 1962 in Dakar to delay the republican guards commanded by Prime Minister Mamadou Dia, and to warn president Senghor in order to avert a coup.[94] In 1994, France sent troops to defend officially, under a mutual defence treaty, the 3,000 French nationals who resided in Togo, as well as the democratic process.[95] In 2006, ACTUS, Action du Tchad pour l'Unité et le Socialisme, strongly condemned the French Army's intervention to support the Cameroonian dictatorial regime of 16 years in order to fight the military opposition forces SCUD and RPJ. The online newspaper Libération Afrique commented:

cette énième intervention des troupes coloniales françaises pour soutenir les dictateurs en Afrique et au Tchad jette de l'opprobre sur un pays qui prétend défendre la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme dans le Monde.[96]

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[92] Djimadoum LEY- NGARDIGAL, 'ACTUS Condamne l'Intervention Militaire Française qui Sauve le Régime Dictatorial du Président I. Déby', *Liberation Afrique*, 1 April 2006 < http://Ibid.liberationafrique.org/spip.php?article1202> [accessed 15 November 2011].
[93] Victor T. Le Vine, 'Rulers and Leaders' in *Politics in Francophone Africa* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), pp. 271-336.
[94] Antoine Glaser and Stephen Smith, *Comment la France a Perdu l'Afrique* (Paris: Autrement, 2005), pp. 65-81.
[95] As he was surrounded by rebel soldiers Prime Minister Mr. Koffigoh, had requested French military cooperation between Togo and its colonial masters.
[96] Djimadoum LEY- NGARDIGAL, 'Tchad: L'ACTUS condamne l'intervention militaire française au Tchad', 28 March 2006 < http://Ibid.indymedia.be/index.html%3Fq=node%252F1872.html> [accessed 16 November 2011].

Today, France is still Cameroon's main ally despite a high defence budget proportionally to other governmental sectors. Cameroonian President Biya's clash with the Nigerian government over the Bakassi peninsula, and over personal rivalries with President Bongo, represents minor threats to national security. However, civil war is a more tangible source of conflict, as religious divergence and mutual hostility between anglophones and Francophones are high. Elsewhere in Africa, France is still keen to play the role of protecting power. According to the French embassy in Dakar, the current Franco-Senegalese military cooperation is meant to maintain the stability of the country. It does so by supporting Senegal in improving its defense system, encouraging staff training and instating logistical support. It also supports the development of Senegalese military forces, with regards to international peace keeping operations,[97] and the application of the African-European concept RECAMP - Renforcement de Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix -, for instance in the recent Serval and Barkhane anti-terrorist operations,[98] respectively in Mali and in Sahel.

At another level, with a yearly budget of about 3 million euros, consular services for the local French community, such as the Centre Culturel Français, the Lycée français, the Union des Français de l'Etranger (U.F.E) and the Association Démocratique des Français de l'Étranger (A.D.F.E.), the Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle (SCAC), secure the politics of cooperation and cultural action of the French foreign Ministry in Sub-Saharan Africa, in consultation with the AFD (l'Agence Française de Développement).[99]

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[97] Capitaine Francisco MOLINA, 'Coopération militaire et de défense', 18 October 2013 <http://Ibid.ambafrance-sn.org/spip.php?article299> [accessed 2 April 2009].

[98] Geneviève Gosselin-Fleury and Philippe Vitel, 'Rapport d'Information sur le Contrôle de l'Exécution des Crédits de la Défense pour l'Exercice 2013', Assemblée Nationale 2249, 7 October 2014, pp. 13 and 44 <https://books.google.co.uk/ books?id=X9vKBAAAQBAJ&pg=PA44&dq=serval+and+barkhane&hl=en&sa=X&ei=mIkVVaPp GabV7gaAl4HICQ&redir_esc=Ibid#v=onepage&q=serval%20and%20barkhane&f=false> [accessed 13 March 2015]. See also 'Map: France Revamps Military Operations in Africa's Sahel', Operation Serval, French Military, Africa, France 24, 9 May 2014 <http://Ibid.france24.com/en/20140508-infographic-france-military-in-africa-sahel-le-drian-mali-chad/> [accessed 14 March 2015].

[99] It is in charge of managing its actions together with local associations and NGOs, and decentralised cooperation, for example, twinnings; it also coordinates its interventions with those of the European Union.

All in all, decolonisation, as argued by Shepard, is part of a narrative of progress with a Euro-centric perception of African culture that served primarily to justify colonisation.[100] It led to the evolution of the colony into a national entity, self-determined and independent but modelled on European nations' democratic frameworks,[101] which has not allowed African colonies to dis-unite effectively from the *métropole*. By deconstructing this narrative, post-colonial literature brings to a more conscious level the existence of silenced cultures.

Disenchantment: re-thinking postcolonial realities in the Franco-African relation (post-1995)

<u>Denial</u>

In 1995, just after the commemoration of the Federation of West Africa attended by the French Minister of Cooperation, the newly elected French president, Jacques Chirac, visited Francophone Africa for his first official trip abroad. In the same year, the devaluation of the Franc CFA changed the economic landscape, and led to a series of external interventions to economically support the continent, so as to preserve African nations and to avoid huge-scale disasters. As pointed out by Tony Chafer, Chirac's trip was symbolic of France's desire to maintain close links with its former colonies, and of the importance of these connections for 'French grandeur and the maintenance of France's world power status'.[102] Such an event, Chafer reminds us, 'would have been unimaginable' in Anglophone Africa, even less so in Algeria or Indochina where French decolonisation had been much more 'traumatic' than in Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, the non-commemoration, or official forgetting, of the colonial past in France, as mentioned by Margaret Majumdar, is particularly interesting in the light of the multiplicity of commemorations that have taken place more recently. The silenced events are symptomatic of a 'general reluctance' to

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[100] Tom, Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonisation, the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (New-York: Cornell University, 2006), p. 6.
[101] Ibid.,., p. 6.
[102] Tony Chafer, *The end of an empire in French WestvAfrica* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), p. 1.

'recall events connected to France's colonial past',[103] and, as demonstrated in this thesis, in contradiction with postcolonial African Francophone literary developments. I argue that successive French governments have denied Africa the opportunity to develop an autonomous post-colonial identity for as long as it could, whilst struggling to come to terms with the past.

A good illustration of this denial can be found in Nicolas Sarkozy's Dakar speech in July 2007. Famous historians, such as Achille Mbembe, criticised Henri Guaino[104] for rephrasing or almost copying passages from Hegel's chapter on Africa in *La Raison dans l'Histoire*. Mbembe explains the patronising dimension of his speech:

> Le discours […] offre un excellent éclairage sur le pouvoir de nuisance – conscient ou inconscient, passif ou actif- qui, dans les dix prochaines années, pourrait découler du regard paternaliste et éculé que continuent de porter certaines des « nouvelles élites françaises » (de gauche comme de droite) sur un continent qui n'a cessé de faire l'expérience de radicales mutations au cours de la dernière moitié du XXe notamment.[105]

Sarkozy came to talk to the 'élite de la jeunesse africaine' with 'franchise et sincérité about Africa's responsibility in its own 'malheur', reminding Africans how similar they are to Europeans, advising them to look back to their 'contes, proverbes, mythologies, rites,' to be able to find the imagination and the strength to invent their own future. He told them not to be ashamed of the values embedded in African civilisation, and that the cause of many of Africa's ills is that the African man is not quite part of history:

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[103] Margaret A. Majumdar, *Postcoloniality : the French dimension* (New York ; Oxford : Berghahn Books , 2007), p. 179.
[104] Henri Guaino was a special adviser to French president Nicolas Sarkozy from 2007 to 2012 and he is known to have written many of Sarkozy's speeches during his presidential election and after, often of nationalistic nature.
[105] Achille Mbembe, 'Nicolas Sarkozy's Africa', 8 August 2007, <http://Ibid.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=6816> [accessed 15 October 2008].

le paysan africain, qui depuis des millénaires, vit avec les saisons, dont l'idéal de vie est d'être en harmonie avec la nature, ne connait que l'éternel recommencement du temps rythmée par la répétition sans fin des mêmes gestes et des mêmes paroles.[106]

Sarkozy's tone echoed Jules Ferry's nineteenth-century paternalistic tone in his discourse on Africa, and De Gaulle's Dakar's speech in August 1958 and his Saint-Louis' speech a year later. Sarkozy's vision of Africans generated much debate. In reaction to these clichés about Africans, the Senegalese historian, Ibrahima Thioub, warns against the 'légende noire' that denies all Africans any ability to initiate history.[107] Whilst it was less commented upon, this 'black legend' was also underlying Barack Obama's speech in the Accra International Conference Centre in Ghana on 11 July 2009. Although he acknowledged the sufferings experienced during colonisation in anglophone countries, through personal references to his grandfather's life in Kenya and to the birth of new African nations and the progress made, some aspects were reminiscent of Sarkozy's speech. Obama reminded his audience that in the year of his birth, 1961,'countries like Kenya had a per capita economy larger than South Korea's', thus implying that the post-colonial period has not allowed Kenya to develop as steadfastly as South Korea.[108]

Acceptance?

In its dealings with the contemporary issues that arise in a fast-changing globalised world, postcolonial fiction is able to provide powerful intellectual tools which allow readers to start accepting the past by critically analysing and empathising with the

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[106] Nicolas Sarkozy, 'Le discours de Dakar', 9 Novembre 2015 <http://Ibid.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2007/11/09/le-discours-de-dakar-de-nicolas-sarkozy_1774758_3212.html> [accessed 16 October 2008].

[107] Philipe Bernard, 'L'Afrique de Sarkozy. Un déni d'histoire: manichéisme africain', 29 September 2008 <http://Ibid.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2008/09/29/l-afrique-de-sarkozy-un-deni-d-histoire_1100798_3260.html#TEMmPrtuFQ1UGW6h.99 [accessed 3 March 2009].

[108] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President to the Ghanaian Parliament', Accra International Conference Centre, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 11 July 2009 < https://Ibid.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-ghanaian-parliament> [accessed 28 January 2014].

novel's characters - men, women and children - giving them a voice. First of all, in view of the trauma caused in colonial times, I posit postcolonial fiction as an act of remembrance that serves to reconnect past and present. It is able to revisit history to challenge modes of representation that marginalise the momentality of history. It adopts a critical stance towards nineteenth-century nationalistic and pseudoscientific racial theories, and deconstructs what Rudyard Kipling once called the 'White Man's burden' (1899) in this poem. I also argue that fiction can project itself into the future, looking globally at other options to inscribe postcolonies onto the global stage. The Togolese writer Kangni Alem looks to the other side of the Atlantic to find other ways of dealing with an unpromising future. Finally, I suggest that postcolonial fiction is aware of the dangers of the 'fixity'[109] of identity that entraps the black body, female and male, into a singular homogenising perception and perpetrates gender stereotypes. Postcolonial fiction challenges the takes on the other within; it challenges perceptions of diasporic immigrant communities seen as the visible minorities, of the black body perceived as an exotic object, as explored by Fanon, and of gender division, as discussed by Griffiths. It deconstructs fixed identity paradigms that also encapsulate and perpetrate the usual dichotomies between the sacred and the profane, tradition and modernity, North and South, male and female, by seeking to re-connect narratives from the past and the present and by raising awareness of the role of men and women in these communities. Léonora Miano gives hope to her community in *Contour du Jour Qui Vient*, and shows women how to recover from the trauma of civil war, by looking into the possibilities of an African renaissance. Alongside identity questionings, gender issues in Francophone Africa have been the focus of Griffiths' work; here she refers to a delayed 'birth of a [feminine] literary voice' due to women's exclusion from education in the colonial era.[110]

Alongside works of fiction, academic research supports the remembrance movement. Indeed, a need to redefine Franco-African relations, in light of

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[109] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London : Routledge , 1994), p. 13.
[110] Griffiths, Claire Ibid., *Globalizing the Postcolony : Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Lanham, Md. ; Plymouth: Lexington Books , 2011), p. 251.

postcolonial theories imported from the Anglophone world, has emerged in the current research undertaken in France over the past fifteen years.[111] Simultaneously, developments in the study of culture in the UK have influenced the study of African cultures and colonial legacy, and have provided new angles of analysis to better integrate the African heritage in French and world history.[112] As Stuart Hall defines it, culture is also 'the critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled'.[113] Applied to French colonisation in Sub-Saharan cultures, Hall's theory provides strong grounds to incorporate power relations into the making of Cameroon, Togo and Senegal, all three of which are the focus of this thesis. Besides, Griffiths brings forward issues of gender in the unique cultural context of Francophone Africa and of globalisation, with the rise of China threatening 'to push social development and gender equality even further down the international agenda for Africa'.[114] Complementing such studies, works of fiction are able to tell the story from within, as they look inside the characters' minds. Even if they are written in the language of the coloniser, they participate in perpetuating African cultures both in and out of Africa, within or without nations. Essentially, Achillle Mbembe reminds us that it is crucial to escape the old paradigm based on the belief that 'to mention Senghor stops the primitive subconscious of French politics to move away from the primitive psychology on civilisation inherited from the nineteenth century'.[115]

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[111] Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire, *La Fracture Coloniale* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005); Françoise Vergès, *La mémoire enchaînée* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2006). See also *Ruptures Postcoloniales: les nouveaux visages de la société francaise*, ed. by Nicolas Bancel (Paris: Découverte, 2010).

[112] The major work of the CCCS, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies created in 1964 by Richard Hoggarth, Professor of English at the University of Birmingham, and then under the directorship of Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson, focused on areas of popular culture as opposed to 'high' culture, which was against conventional academic practice at the time.

[113] James Procter, *Stuart Hall, Routledge Critical Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.

[114] Griffiths, Claire Ibid., *Globalizing the Postcolony : Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Lanham, Md. ; Plymouth: Lexington Books , 2011), p. 251.

[115] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London : University of California Press, 2001), p. 98.

Due to globalisation, France has had to re-position its political strategies. As stated on the French Senate's website, after the parliamentary session on 30 June 2006, France was forced to accept its diminished sphere of influence in Africa and realised that it needed to move forward:

> la gestion de crises africaines ne peut être que plus compliquée dans un contexte profondément nouveau, et ses objectifs, après la disparition du 'pré carré' sont à la fois plus difficiles à définir et à mettre en oeuvre. L'enjeu est désormais de construire un partenariat sécuritaire qui soit à la fois légitime et efficace.[116]

Aware of these changing geostrategic dynamics in Africa, Sarkozy attempted to rectify his past errors in his 2008 Cape Town speech; however, it had far less impact than the infamous Dakar speech in 2007. Facing huge criticism, Sarkozy has had to make an effort not only to celebrate France's colonial past, but also to re-think his foreign politics with Africa. France needed to update its foreign military politics in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to respond to a globalised geopolitical situation challenging the intimate relationship of a 'Françafrique', which progressively vanished at the end of the Cold War. Other powers such as China, India and the USA have expressed newer interests in Africa. In 2009, Obama renewed his desire to remain Ghana's partner in the fields of health, peace keeping and good governance. According to Obama, 'America will be with [Ghana] every step of the way'.[117] Although Sarkozy's Dakar speech acknowledged France's responsibility towards slavery as a 'crime against humanity', the tone of Sarkozy's 2009 Brazzaville speech somehow echoes Obama's patronising offer.

Indeed, in March 2009, Togo became the first African country to sign a defence agreement with France after President Sarkozy made public his intention to

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[116] For more details see André Dulait, Robert Hue,
Yves Pozzo di Borgo, Didier Boulaud, <http://Ibid.senat.fr/rap/r05-450/r05-4500.html> 'La France et la gestion des crises africaines: quels changements possibles?', session ordinaire 2005-2006, procès-verbal 30 juin 2006.
[117] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President to the Ghanaian Parliament', Accra International Conference Centre, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 11 July 2009 < https://Ibid.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-ghanaian-parliament> [accessed 28 January 2014].

revise the military agreements with France's African partners. The objective was to adapt to a new international context invalidating the five pre-existing bilateral treaties.[118] This treaty, based on what is defined as a true partnership by the French authorities, is founded on transparency, reciprocity and mutual respect, collective security and consultation. This already very active cooperation was meant to modernise the existing military collaboration with preference for the UN peace-keeping operations. Although President Sarkozy made clear his wish to break with the 'Françafrique' tradition, by instating a partnership between Sub-Sahara Africa and France, his new politics is criticized by the Left, for its neo-colonial dimension, and also by the Right, who believe that France should not become involved in the internal home affairs of its former colonies.[119]

Despite France's efforts to distance itself, a clear break away from African nations has been difficult to achieve since 12,000 French troops are engaged in peacekeeping around the world, half of which are in Africa. France has three main bases in Africa with the objective to guarantee regional security. The largest base is located in Djibouti, which also allows the French to maintain military influence in the Middle East, and smaller forces are deployed in Gabon and Senegal. France's main military commitment in Chad, in CAR (Central African Republic) and Ivory Coast involves the cooperation of neighbouring countries. As explained by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFL), although a new multilateral military politics involving 'African regional bodies' has emerged, due to 'budgetary concerns' and after French actions in Rwanda in 1994, the 1996-1997 crisis in Zaire and the 2004 Licorne operation in the Ivory Coast, French actions described as 'Europeanised' by Brigadier General Dominique Trinquand have tried to be supportive of African development. However, on some occasions it went beyond this remit and became involved in local conflicts. According to the CFL, France has publicly insisted its support is simply logistical, but Western reports from Chad indicate French Special Forces may have directly engaged

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[118] There are five pre-existing bilateral treaties between France and Togo that were agreed in 1958, 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1976.

[119] Benoit Deshayes, 'Les militaires francais en Afrique, En Savoir Plus', March 2008 <http://Ibid.linternaute.com/savoir/magazine/dossier/france-afrique/en-savoir-plus.shtml> [accessed 2 April 2009].

rebel forces. Besides this has raised concerns about the neutrality of EU forces, to which France is expected to contribute about 1,800 troops: 'if the EU force deploys under these circumstances, with France as a belligerent, it can't seriously be considered neutral', says Alex de Waal, an expert on Chad and Sudan at the New York-based Social Science Research Council.[120]

In terms of remembrance, the effort to commemorate colonisation has been fairly recent in France. The number of governmental initiatives in the cultural and artistic domains could be seen as amounting to a 'repentance' movement. The rising interest in the colonial past can be seen in the creation of *La Cité Nationale de l'Immigration*, or exhibitions such as *Africa Remix* at the *Centre Pompidou* and in public places such as the *Musée du Quai Branly*, whose initial polemical name, *Musée des Arts Primitifs,* led to its renaming: *Le Musée des Arts Premiers*. The 2011 exhibition *'L'Exposition du Sauvage'* at the Quai Branly museum in Paris extended the debate about France's colonial past to a larger audience. In Nantes, for instance, France's largest ex-slave port, the memorial to the abolition of slavery is a testimony of historical connections between the two continents. However, the element of cultural politics involved in these organisations offers a particular perception of African civilisation leading to stereotypical representations.[121] New questions arise as a result: is remembering enough? Would reparation support a true reclaimation of African heritage? It is yet to be noted that newer scholarly initiatives have transformed the cultural postcolonial landscape,[122] and have allowed for postcolonial works of fiction to be better valued.[123] In a context of heightened tensions between communities of 'second-generation migrants' and *'français de souche'*, of European borders and religious extremism, postcolonial renegotiations

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[120] Andrew Hansen, 'The French Military in Africa', 8 Februrary 2008 <http://Ibid.cfr.org/publication/12578/> [accessed 2 April 2009].
[121] For more details see *La Fracture Coloniale, la Société Française au Prisme de l'Héritage Coloniale*, ed. by Blanchard and others (Paris : Edts La Découverte, 2005).
[122] Collectif Write Back, *Postcolonial Studies: Modes d'Emploi* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2013).
[123] Saint-Malo's yearly *Festival des Etonnants Voyageurs* promotes Francophone literature; although it has been argued that the festival itself maintains a distinctive boundary between Francophone literature and maintsream French literature, 'Le Festival des Etonnants Voyageurs' <http://Ibid.etonnants-voyageurs.com> [accessed 3 June 2012].

are becoming an increasingly useful tool to make sense of complex and entangled identity issues. They have been finding their place in the French cultural landscape, as they provide new critical paths and tools to better comprehend French society and its colonial legacy.

Finally, I suggest that the role played by works of fiction in building national collective memory is crucial, for they denounce the gap that exists in French postcolonial memory. Against this backdrop of continued cultural interference, postcolonial literature engages with the combined issues of acculturation and subalternity, two aspects that have been at the heart of the relationship between France and its African postcolonies. Yet, the difficulties faced by people of African descent often stem simply from the stigmatisation of their physical features.

Conclusion

It has become clear that, as a result of the violent cultural clashes that occurred during colonisation and of the complex post-colonial issues that have arisen in the construction of African identities, the ex-French colonies in Africa are still undergoing a process of creolisation that has resulted in the acculturation and subalternity of Africans. The period of Francophone African independence in the 1960s did not equate to the end of the relationship between France and Africa. The cultural imbrications that have linked the two continents still generate a huge amount of on-going debate, on both sides of the Mediterranean and all over the world. In an effort to make sense of what happened, Francophone literary production from Africa has been giving a voice to postcolonies by representing the Other, but unfortunately it has not always been heard. While French Sub-Saharan postcolonies are still dealing with identity questions, France is re-defining its national identity because of cultural and social clashes engendered by a forced marriage with Africa, which led to an unstable relationship. Likewise, France is also undergoing a creolisation process that it felt it could control, until the time of the first urban riots, in 1995. To conclude, it is not an exaggeration to say that a bilateral creolisation process is part of postcolonialism and the works under study in the present thesis reflect this dual process.

Chapter 2

National state making in postcolonial Senegal in Boubacar Boris Diop's _Le Temps de Tamango,_ or the struggle for national-identity building.

'Jusqu'à quels insondables abîmes la domination française a-t-elle réussi à se frayer la voie au tréfonds de nos âmes ? Jusqu'à quel point nous a-t-elle détraqués en tentant de nous remodeler à sa guise ? Ne nous a-t-elle pas livrés à une démence durable, sinon irréversible ? N'a-t-elle pas brisé en nous le ressort de toute survie dans la dignité, de toute ambition d'un statut collectif ?'[1]

Boubacar Boris Diop

Introduction

In his _Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture_ (1998), Miller reviews two key moments of nationalism.[2] He identifies two distinctive types of African nationalisms that are both characterised paradoxically by the notion of 'resistance'.[3] As Miller argues, the pre-independence movement suggests a Pan-African resistance against any form of colonialism, whereas after the independence of Francophone West African colonies, Africans faced a postcolonial nationalism with the reassertion of arbitrary borders between African states. Although these had been forgotten and rejected by the Pan-African theory, they became ironically 'the armatures of a more familiar _state_ nationalism at the service of the new elites'.[4]

Initially published in 1981, Diops' _Le Temps de Tamango_ reflects precisely on the effects that this shift implies for Senegal. Diop imagines African intellectuals in 2063 commenting on the time of independence of African Francophone colonies: 'LES NOTES DU NARRATEUR que voici ont été rassemblées au mois de juillet de l'an 2063' (p. 49), 'au lendemain de ce qu'on appelait les Indépendances' (p. 51), over one hundred years after Senegal's declaration of independence. Diop assesses the

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[1] Boubacar Boris Diop, _Le Temps de Tamango_, foreword by Mongo Beti, (Paris: Groupe Privat/Le Rocher, 2006; first edition, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981), p. 13.
[2] Christopher Miller, _Nationalists and Nomads, Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture_ (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 121.
[3] Ibid.,., p. 120
[4] Ibid.,., p. 120

ten years that followed Senegalese independence, between 1960 and 1970, 'les faits relatés ici se situant entre 1960 et 1970' (p. 46), before Senghor's third presidential re-election in 1973.[5]

The fiction's outstanding feature is its three-fold narrative made out of six sub-sections. Each of the three parts has a series of chapters and ends with a series of about ten page-long notes in italics, which are set apart from the titles: NOTES SUR LA PREMIÈRE PARTIE, NOTES SUR LA DEUXIÈME PARTIE, and NOTES SUR LA TROISIÈME PARTIE. Their purpose is to interrupt the narration, calling on the reader to explain the choices made by the author and giving historical details - fake and real - as well as literary references. The notes are said to be the narrator's notes in order to create another dimension to the narrative, keeping the author further apart and disempowering him: 'je connais parfaitement le Narrateur et je sais que des questions de ce genre le mettent hors de lui' (p. 50). This way, several degrees of separation are built in, to the extent that even the author derides his own text by criticising and appraising the narrator: '[le Narrateur] n'a même pas essayé de romancer des événements historiques réels' (p. 50) and 'je dois dire que je trouve un peu extravagant d'exiger du Narrateur qu'il 'explique' des personnages comme N'Dongo et Léna' (p. 51).

The superposition of narratives is a particular trait of Diop's style, which he exploits by creating a turmoil of emotions. The different textual layers confuse the reader. The constant coming in and out of several characters, with no apparent order, creates an impression of chaos. Within this three-part work, Diop invents different temporal dimensions that are conducive to disharmony and disorientation, and which he sees, I would argue, as a reflection of the experience of the Senegalese people under Senghor's regime. By referring to Tamango, Diop intentionally plunges back into the transatlantic slave trade for he feels the need to recall the past and reconstruct historical memory. Although I explore Rothberg's multi-directional memory in relation to Alem's *La Gazelle s'Agenouille Pour Pleurer* (2003) in Chapter Six of this research, here I examine the omnipresence of the theme of memory in *Le Temps de Tamango*. It is through remembering the past that Diop deconstructs

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[5] David Lea, ed., *A Political Chronology of Africa*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2001), p. 360.

history and evaluates the impact of the slave trade and colonisation on Senegal's construction as a nation. The reader's memory is disturbed by Tamango's multiple adventures. They leave the reader unsettled and stirred by the forward and backwards movements in time and space, between 1970 and 2063, between Senegal and Europe, and between different narratives. Added to this dimension, the stylistic contrast between regular chapters and notes reinforces an emotional discomfort. Finally, I see in this uneasiness Diop's willingness to make his fiction a metaphorical experiment of the *tiraillement* between two cultures, between the past and the present.

Out of the five works of fiction that are the focus of this thesis, this piece is the only one that was not initially published post-2000. It is a key component of this study to situate the other four works of fiction. Although all five pieces were published after the 1960s - after the time of independence for most Francophone African colonies - I argue that the comparison between the two periods of time - the 1960s-1970s, and post-2000 - validates a second shift in Francophone writings. I distinguish Miller's post-independence 'nationalism-with-borders' from newer post-2000 concerns, over more individual, local and specific issues in a globalised world, with a particular emphasis on voices from within.

In this chapter, the first section gives a critical account of the role played by Senghor in the edification of the national state by comparing historical facts to Diop's narrative. It seeks to find out to what extent the proclamation of Senegal's independence from the French coloniser took place in a complex set of circumstances with national and international influences. It also emphasizes the ways in which it affected the local population and subdivided it into clashing socio-ethnic groups to serve political purposes. Furthermore, it assesses the circumstances that led to (the successes and) failures of what was thought to be democracy, the African way. Part Two scrutinizes Diop's representation of the neo-colonialist dimension of Senegalese political and socio-cultural landscape with the omnipresence of inherited colonial violence in the background. In Part Three, I examine what picture Diop wishes to portray of the nature of the opposition against the government in place. I study the sources of this resistance movement. To

conclude, I examine the circumstances that led to a failed revolution against colonial heritage, which was made impossible by the hybrid nature Senghor's identity.

The method employed to deconstruct national state making in postcolonial Senegal uses narratives from historians (Davidson, Chafer, Crawford, Fatton, Young) and memory narratives (Radstone, Svhwarz) and confront them with postcolonial theorists (Fanon, Griffiths, Mbembe, Miller) with a literary analysis of *Le Temps de Tamango* in the background and a study of Senghor's political writings.

National politics

<u>Léopold Sédar Senghor and democracy</u>

Senghor's character, partially embodied by Tamango in the fiction, is simultaneously developed throughout as a symbol for the birth of the nation, and as a symbol of authority and destruction. We find out later in the account that Tamango himself is a hybrid protagonist who concurrently embodies three characters: Senghor, the head of state, N'Dongo, the communist militantist, and General François Navarro's servant (p. 160). This illustrates the plurality of Senghor, negotiating his double cultural belonging and torn between two roles seen often as incompatible: a man of letters and a political figure.

At the time when Senegal was in a position to claim its independence from France, Senghor's vision of nation building was founded on his belief that a partnership with France would be the ideal way forward. Combining the best of both worlds - the skills he had learned as a state secretary who took part in the drafting of the French Constitution with his close friend George Pompidou,[6] to his local knowledge and Serer roots - Senghor envisioned a promising future ahead of the Senegalese nation. Having strongly contributed to uniting all African colonies with the Pan-African movement, Senghor became the ideal candidate for presidency. Equipped with his higher education and political career in France, together with the agility to navigate between two cultures, in 1960, Senghor was in a strong position to found the Republic of Senegal. Senghor's role was to establish and maintain a strong

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[6] Hervé Bourges, *Léoplod Sédar Senghor, Lumière Noire* (Paris: Mengès, Collection Destin, 2006), p. 56.

prominent state figure as a ruler. Not as extravagant as Mobutu in Congo or Eyadéma in Togo, Senghor's political persona played a decisive part in his power assertion.

Négritude lays at the heart of Senghor's vision for nation building, as illustrated sarcastically by the following statements in *Le Temps de Tamango* 'Nous sommes des Négro-Africains' (p. 22) and 'une savane limpide et precise, exactement adéquate à l'aune spécifique des valeurs négro-africaines!' (p. 23). Part One of *LTT* deals primarily with these aspects. The president, described ironically, is torn between nostalgia for the past and his nation-building project. BBD deconstructs the myth around Senghor's two presidential decades in Senegal. As a result, Diop's postcolonial satirical style goes beyond the project undertaken in Francophone African nationalist protest literature beginning in the 1940s and 1950s by acknowledging the vanishing hopes for full independence. *LTT* dismantles Senghor's nationalist project from the early 1960s not inscribed into a struggle against the coloniser.

Thanks to a literary subterfuge, Diop dramatises two periods of time 'qui symbolisent le jour et la nuit' (p. 15) to enhance the 'interplay between the cultural and the political' in dealing with the French colonial legacy.[7] This political dramatisation, 'la politique-fiction' (p. 15), criticises the ambivalence of Senghor's position towards French colonial heritage. Since the 1930s, Senghor's efforts to regain African 'authenticity' were focused on dissociating a black African way of life from European philosophy. Embodied by the notion of *Négritude* - a term initially coined by Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas - this perception of the black 'specificity', often criticised for its essentialist view of the human race, is ambiguously situated between French egalitarian universalist philosophy and anti-colonialist nationalism. Although often referred to as Senghor's *Négritude*, and considered as the origin of Francophone African literature, for Kesteloot, this movement emerged prior to Senghor's 1930s political activities in Paris.[8] This pivotal aspect of Senghor's cultural and political life, which places him halfway between his African roots and his political

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[7] Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire French West-Africa, France's Successful Decolonisation?* (Oxford and New-York: Berg, 2002), p. 21.
[8] Lilyan Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 7.

and literary career in France, has led the Father of Senegalese nationhood to be condemned by Diop and others such as Soyinka and Mudimbe. However, as Kesteloot points out, Senghor himself considered René Maran, a writer of Caribbean origin, to be 'the precursor of negritude, thus honouring him and subordinating him at the same time'.[9] Using *Négritude* as a fundamental principle of nation building, Senghor hoped to shape a strong African cultural identity not necessarily in opposition to European philosophy. Chafer argues that nation-state building had to have an extra dimension to 'a purely socio-economic discourse' to establish a 'real sense of common, shared identity between French and African postcolonial governing elites'.[10] *Négritude* became nation-building's ideal. Beti and Diop reflect specifically on the issue of 'statut collectif', of nation as an entity that has been difficult to achieve: 'réussirons-nous jamais?' (p. 15). They query the place of the perversity of colonisation, 'un virus inoculé jadis de l'extérieur' (p. 15) specific to the French colonialist enterprise and its aftermaths. After the discussions in 1960 at the first roundtable in Rome on black African and Western cultures, there was a temporary abandonment of *Négritude* in favour of *Eurafricanité*, a term that describes the developing relationship between the two continents.[11] For Senghor, the key to his underlying principle for a successful nation-state was to maintain an 'economic bond with Europe 'by belonging to the [European] Common Market'. He saw this as a necessity to 'solving the problems of hunger, malnutrition and poverty facing Senegal and developing countries as a whole'.[12]

Yet, for Wallerstein, as for Diop, 'the concept of *Négritude* [is] the emotional if not the logical antithesis of that insult which the white man flung at humanity [...] this historical obligation which has brought the men of African culture to racialise their claims [...] will tend to lead them up a blind alley'.[13] Fanon is very critical of any

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[9] Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'René Maran, Précurseur de la Négritude', *Liberté*, vol. 1, *Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 407-II, cited in Miller, p. 11.

[10] Tony Chafer, *The end of an empire in French West-Africa* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), p. 13.

[11] Nancy Jachec, 'Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Cultures de l'Afrique Noire et de l'Occident', *Eurafricanism, Negritude and the Civilisation of the Universal*, 24:2 (2010), pp. 195-204, (p. 200).

[12] Ibid.,., p. 200.

[13] Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Reading Fanon in the 21st Century', *The New Left Review,* 57 (May-June 2009), 117-125.

attempt to assert cultural identity that is not located within the political struggle for national liberation.[14]

The colonised intellectual, and in this case Senghor, never proclaims the existence of a culture in the name of Angola or Dahomey. It is not specifically a national struggle. The struggle against the colonialist clichés - the primitive *'negro'* - is likewise the struggle of a continent. For the colonialists, the *'negro'* is not Nigerian or Togolese; it is a *'negro'* regardless of its national identity. The colonised intellectual who has immersed himself in Western culture, and who is determined to proclaim the existence of a culture, is not doing so in the name of Nigeria or Togo. For Fanon 'le nègre n'a jamais été aussi nègre que depuis qu'il est dominé par le Blanc'.[15]

Local divisions

Added to the ideal that would secure the vision for nation-building, African leaders were confronted with real issues of power distribution by local politics. Although initially genuine products of African diversity, tribalism, chieftaincies, and brotherhoods, that were beginning to flourish in the 1940s, participated in opening the route to nationalism. Their nature pushed them to become divisive of national unities. After independence they were systematically opposed to the nation and became powerful political unities.[16]

Stavenhagen gives a moderated view of the use of ethnical division in Senegal.[17] In comparison to other territories in Africa, Stavenhagen argues that Senegal has been wiser and less obsessed with nation-statism due its long history of communal tradition; however, it has not been as wise as anglophone nations such as Ghana**.**

Indeed, according to Mokhtar Diouf's study of colonial and postcolonial in Senegal's ethnic groups, the country's harmorny is maintained by the following

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[14] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 2001; first published in France by François Maspéro as *Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961), p. 130.

[15] Ibid.,., p. 202.

[16] David Davidson, *The black Man's Burden, Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 101

[17] Rodolpho Stavenhagen, *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation State* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996), p. 265.

factors: the national use of Wolof language, a tradition of inter-ethnic marriages and social relations, the impact of monotheistic religions and the behaviour of the population, the key role of the country's capital, Dakar, as a melting pot, the existence of non-ethnic social contradictions with the problems linked to the caste system, a tradition of political democracy and militancy, the early involvement of Senegal in the Pan-African movement, and the careful management of ethnicity after independence.[18] This is why '[…] dans le Royaume du Waloo ou dand l'Empire de Ghana. Il y avait, en ce temps-là, une espèce de démocratie naturelle' (p. 21).

Stavenhagen argues that the apparition of a separatist movement in Lower Casamance in the 1980s is mainly due to some issues in the process of national integration, and more particularly to 'a decline of democratic politics since Senegal's independence and inadequate management of ethnicity due to excessive administrative centralization'.[19] At the time, the conflict between the Joola ethny and the country's other ethnies did not result in interpersonal hostilities, but reflected a desire rooted in the Senegalese tradition of popular struggles to fight against the abuse of central power, whether in colonial or postcolonial times. The entrenchment of territorial nationalism in both the celebration of colonial boundaries and the sovereignty of the African state has generated separatist movements. The short life of the Senegambia Federation, from 1981 till 1989, and the Mauritanian-Senegal border war in 1989 have been sources of national division. As argued by Crawford Young, 'the heated struggles that accompanied the competition to achieve power politicized ethnic difference.'[20] The reasons for the lack of national unity and the paradox of African nationalism have always impaired Senegal, as they have for the rest of Africa.

After years of perseverance, Senghor achieved a democratic status quo, at least in appearance. Indeed, as Markovitz questions, the following section will attempt to find out whether 'ideology in Senegal is really an important instrument

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[18] Ibid.,., p. 265.
[19] Ibid.,., p. 265.
[20] Crawford Young, 'Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Africa' in *Understanding Nationalism* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2001), pp. INSERT PAGE RANGE (p. 169).

for greater national unity and economic development, or [whether] it is primarily a mask for the existing 'establishment'.[21]

Fake independence or the salvatory illusion: a neo-colonialist tale

Roots to neo-colonialism

As seen previously, the desire to retain a close relationship with the French nation at the time of independence has strongly influenced the way in which Senegal became a Republic. Indeed, 'Senghor's view on nationalism differed radically from those English-speaking African leaders who sought immediate independence and freedom'.[22] By exploring the roots of this unique bond with France, this section highlights the deep-seated historical foundations of this relationship and the extent to which it influenced Senegalese nation building.

Symbolically, the comparison between Ayché, Tamango's wife, sold to a French slave trader, and *la Très-Blanche-Hilda* (p. 179), is anecdotal of the master-slave relationship perpetrated since the beginning of the slave-trade in Saint-Louis of Senegal, the ex-slave-trade harbour that became the first capital of Senegal in 1638.[23] It is worth noting the a-posteriori intertextuality between NDiaye's play, *Hilda,* published in 1999, and *LTT*'s reprint in 2002. NDiaye gives an insight into 'le difficile et pervers rapport entre maître et serviteur'[24] by portraying Hilda, the servant, trapped in her employer's narrative. Madame Lemarchand ranking Hilda *La-Très-Blanche* as being superior to her previous servants from Africa,[25] is strangely fascinated by her: 'on dit qu'Hilda est assez belle Franck. [...] Est-elle belle? [...] Comment sont ses yeux, ses cheveux, sa silhouette? Est-ce qu'elle n'est pas un peu

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[21] Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Négritude* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 8.

[22] Ibid.,., p. 102.

[23] Jean-Michel Djian, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, Genèse d'un Imaginaire Francophone* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 25.

[24] Michèle Gazier, '*Hilda* Marie NDiaye', 12 February 2013 <http://Ibid.telerama.fr/livres/hilda,93542.php> [accessed 3 February 2014].

[25] Marie NDiaye, *Hilda* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1999), p. 10.

trop grosse ou maladivement maigre?'[26] Ironically, she destroys Hilda's life by never allowing her to speak. The two fictions, in which dramatization and digression are common factors, challenge temporal and spatial conformity. More importantly, they bring back to the twentieth century memories of the transatlantic slave trade and colonisation.

Looking back at the past from year 2063, the narrator sees history repeating itself. The textual echo between Chapter Two of Part One and the Notes to Part Three illustrates the cyclic nature of slave-trading and colonial history. The reader is thrown back in Franco-Senegalese history to Saint-Louis in the seventeenth century. By comparing Captain Navarro's Marseille-Dakar boat trip, Diop refers implicitly to Mérimée's allegory at the beginning of Part One in Chapter Two (p. 34). Sent by the French state to restore civil peace in May 1968, and recurrent symbol of neocoloniaslism, Navarro represents French neo-colonial influence in Senegal with Jean Colling appointed as Home Secretary by Senghor and as the Chief of the Police. He remained one of Senghor's most faithful allies in the first decade after the independence, along with the general Jean-Alfred Diallo, another strong symbol of authority.[27]

By remembering some aspects of Senegalese history that have been either diminished or forgotten in French historiography, Diop wishes to fill the gaps in retelling Senegalese history from another perspective. It is through remembrance in the French language that a reconstruction of history begins to be possible. I argue that memory is awakened and challenged, leaving his readers troubled by a narrative full of historical references. This way, Diop allows for a 'reconciliation between 'history' and 'memory' to break up the 'normalised code of white male 'national history' that W. E. B. Du Bois once bitterly denounced as a form of 'propaganda''.[28] Although 'remembrance cannot turn back the clock by inserting lost times into the present, memory is active, forging its pasts to serve present interests' and requires

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[26] *Ibid.,*, p. 11.
[27] Hervé Bourges, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, Lumière Noire* (Paris: Mengès, Collection Destin 2006), p. 134.
[28] Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz, ed., 'Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memoralization' in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2010), p. 363.

'critical engagement,' for 'identities, individual and collective, are formed and re-formed through narrative'.[29]

Playing a great part in maintaining strong cultural and political links between Europe and Africa, language has allowed many bridges to be formed. Senghor, founding father of francophonie, has played an important role in supporting the development of French language. Known for his passion and mastery of French language, besides being particularly demanding of the quality of his speeches and texts of law, Senghor saw in francophonie more than just the languages, but also 'une culture, [le] fondement d'un humanisme'.[30]

Back in the eighteenth century, the roots of what was to become neo-colonisation less than two centuries later were already growing. The 1789 French Revolution, which 'granted full French citizenship to all the people of Senegal and offered active representation in the metropolitan institutions',[31] increased the number of opportunities for political participation and fostered a sense of cultural closeness. Indeed, from the middle of the nineteenth century, Senegalese deputies were present in the 'general and municipal councils'.[32] In addition to this, more local autonomy was granted in 1879 to the first Territorial General Council in Senegal, and the four communes of Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar and Rufisque became municipalities of their own.[33]

At the outbreak of World War One, Blaise Diagne, who was the first full African deputy to be elected in the French government, recruited Senegalese men to fight for France. Known as the *tirailleurs sénégalais,* they became part of French and Senegalese colonial history for two paradoxical reasons: firstly, because of their contribution to the French army, secondly, for being massacred by French soldiers in in December 1944 at the military camp situated in Thiaroye-sur-Mer (p. 76) where 'le

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[29] Ibid.,., p. 3.

[30] Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté III, Négritude et Civilisation de l'Universel, 'La Francophonie Comme Culture'* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), p. 548.

[31] Markovitz, pp. 8-9.

[32] Ibid.,., p. 10.

[33] Robert Ibid. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought: Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2004). This is a reprint of the original edition by Frederik A. Praeger (New York, 1967), p. 238; see also Bourges, p. 103.

colonialisme a assassiné tant de tirailleurs' (p. 81). The massacre, compared to the 'quatre-vingt mille morts de Madagascar', is part of 'la logique d'yn système (p. 81), part of a colonial system that continued to influence post-independent Senegal.

The cultural *tiraillements* experienced by the colonised in his path towards assimilation are also part of the system. They are emphasized in the first three chapters of Part Two, when N'Dongo leaves for Germany and returns after a long time. Following his prolonged absence, the narrator comments that 'N'Dongo a bien changé' (p. 75). Looking more like 'un Noir occidentalisé',[34] Senghor shared a similar journey to N'Dongo's. Hoping to reverse the effects of his Middle Passage, Senghor returned home to forge his nation and impose his vision of nation building on Senegal.

Marginalisation strategies of postcolonial authorities: the race to class shift
The strategies of marginalisation established during colonial times, as described by BBD, consist of the isolation and violent repression of lower social categories, and the centralisation and monopoly of power by a pseudo-bourgeoisie. Indeed Diop's vision of Senegal's economic and political development during 1960-1980 is filled with negative anecdotes. Depicted as a king in his palace surrounded by his courtiers, Senghor rules with authority:

> LE PRÉSIDENT NE PRIT MÊME PAS la peine de saluer ses ministres. L'heure était grave. [...] C'était justement ce que ces messieurs pensaient. [...] Ils avaient entrepris , avec une hardiesse inaccoutumée, de le faire comprendre au Président. Mais le Président se contentait de les rassurer en hochant la tête. Vraiment, c'était admirable: il n'avait rien perdu, le Président, ni son sens de l'humour, ni la hautaine radeur attachée à ses fonctions (p. 19).

In *LTT*, BBD describes the processes that led decolonisation to shift from race to class as a factor of social organisation. BBD's view of the ruling élite is no different

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[34] Djian, Jean-Michel, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, genèse d'un imaginaire Francophone* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 35.

to Fanon's national bourgeoisie, who are in many ways a 'comprador bourgeoisie,'[35] 'agents of foreign interests primarily engaged in intermediary type activities rather than national production',[36] whose aim consists in replacing the settlers.[37]

Despite its democratic tradition, like many other African states, Senegal has struggled to dissociate nation-state building from the ruling class' race to power, which was already in place in the main colonial state agencies. Dominated by an educated minority *à la française*, Diop depicts a ruling élite who seek their own interests, lacking the long-term commitment and vision to establish a durable statist project. Senghor is portrayed as a self-centered autocrat leading a government of uneducated rascals, 'une bande de galopins mal éduqués' (p. 21).

By its very nature, as Fatton argues[38], 'the existence of a ruling class implies necessarily a state whose role is to preserve the social, political and economic structures of the ruling class' dominance'. For Fatton, the ruling élite lacks hegemony and a cohesive political agenda to represent a sustainable enterprise, which is not fragmented by personal interests. To get a comprehensible vision of the nation-building process is to analyse the relations of class power and class formation.[39]

Indeed, the Senegalese state 'in becoming', lacks the autonomy that would make it a liberal democracy. Instead, it is an authoritarian state that has failed to become the foundation of the state to be. It is state without authority, which lacks control of other classes and relies on compliance to rule rather than on a general consensus. This, Fanon argues, incites popular resistance thirsty for a revolution. On this point, Markovitz exposes a paradox in Senghor's doctrine of community and class conflict.[40] Senghor's ideology of socialism ultimately assumes that there is no need for mass involvement in political processes.[41] BBD ironically shows the internal conflicts of the politics Senghor was following at the time of independence. In

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[35] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*,
[36] John Charles Crawley, *The Postcolonial Crescent: Islam's Impact on Contemporary Literature* (Peter Lang, 1998), PAGE?
[37] Georg M. Gugelberger, *Marxism and African literature* (London: Currey, 1985), p. 67.
[38] Robert Fatton Jr., 'Bringing the Ruling Class Back' *In* in Tom Young, *Readings in African politics* (London: The International African Institute, 2003), p. 33. I CAN'T TELL IF THIS IS A BOOK CHAPTER, THIS NEEDS CLARIFYING AND THE FOOTNOTE AMMENDED ACCORDINGLY.
[39] Ibid.,., p. 33.
[40] Markovitz, p. 150.
[41] Ibid.,., p. 150.

Chapter One, the president, angry at the challenging anti-nationalists on strike, overreacts:

> C'est le monde à l'envers, le comble, messieurs! Prenons garde qu'ils ne nous prennent ce qui faisait le force de nos Empires: le monopole du coeur… Quoi qu'il arrive, je ne peux pas accepter qu'on m'impose une discussion rythmée de cris hostiles et dans les rumeurs confuses de l'émeute! Les grands principes de la démocratie sont en jeu […] Il faut que force reste à la loi. Les manifestants ne doivent pas dépasser l'avenue Maginot (p. 24).

The contradiction of his propos, simultaneously showing passion for his nation and autocratic excessiveness, shows Senghor's incapability to represent the population he claims to be so fond of. Indeed, 'negritude in Senegal has been neither an ideology of, nor for, the masses. The audiences to which it spoke were either the members of various French establishments, or black intellectuals'.[42] This is unlike Burkina Faso's president, who, in the short time he spent in office (1983-1987),[43] managed to put in place a strong programme for social and economic change by initiating a popular revolution alienating groups with more power and economic resources. Similarly to Senghor, Sankara exerted progressively more authoritarian control over the nation to accomplish a profound transformation of society, but favoured lower classes. 'His personal and political integrity put him at odds with the leadership of successive military governments that came to power'[44] and led to his assassination in 1987.[45]

      Although Fatton offers an in-depth analysis of the relationship between class and state in the African context, his exclusively political study gives limited scope for a cultural and historical understanding of local spaces in Africa; rather, it overgeneralises the issues. In contrast, Markowitz refers to the ruling class as an

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[42] Ibid.,., p. 75.
[43] *A Political Chronology of Africa,* p. 46.
[44] Antonio de Figueiredo, 'The True Visionary Thomas Sankara', SOURCE?, Wednesday 27 February 2008
<http://Ibid.thomassankara.net/spip.php?page=imprimir_articulo&id_article=527&lang=fr> [accessed 13 March 2015].
[45] Ibid.,., p. 46.

'organisational bourgeoisie who have successfully managed to integrate the public and private spheres into their own corporate domain' and are 'located at pivotal points of control in those overarching systems of political, social and economic power.'[46]

In opposition to Senghor's Eurafricanité, Fanon's opinion on class is critical of an *embourgeoisement* of the African élites. It historicises African politics and inscribes it into the battle against colonialism. For Fanon, national consciousness fails to be born. He inscribes nationalism in a process of retrogression. The educated classes are unprepared and the lack of connections between them and the masses leads to failure. Fanon accuses the national middle-class of *'intellectual laziness'* and *'cowardice'*. The mutilation of the colonised people by the colonial regime is partly responsible for the weakened sense of national unity. The national middle-class inherits from a system that gives them no economic power. Its embryonic state reflects its absence of economic power: it is under-developed. Convinced it would replace the bourgeoisie of the mother country, the national middle class is frozen into a system of embargoes put in place by colonialism. Fanon argues that 'the national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalised into activities of the intermediary type'.[47] Under colonialism, the national bourgeoisie will never be authentic since it has no access to capital. Its attempts to rise to the national bourgeoisie standards of the mother country are aborted. It has also very limited knowledge of the economic resources of their own country, and the nationalist economic programme chauvinistically focuses on local productions, with no planning for development, no new initiatives and no reinvestment. It is anchored in its historic role of intermediary.

Repression

In Chapter Three of *On the Postcolony*, Mbembe rejoins Fanon's thesis about the categorisation of cultures, and examines the banality of power, in what Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as the obscene and the grotesque that are located in 'non-official'

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[46] Irving Leonard Markowitz, cited in Fatton Jr, 'Bringing the Ruling Class In', p. 34.

[47] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre (Paris:* La Découverte *(1961) 2002),* p. 120.

cultures'.[48] Mbembe examines power in its most subtle form: when it becomes banal, unnoticed and routine. Contrary to Bakhtin, Mbembe claims that power is intrinsic to a system of domination and to the means of this system. The characteristics of the postcolony, Mbembe further explains, lie in 'the distinctive style of political improvisation' made out of the 'corporate institutions' and a 'political machinery' that 'constitute a distinctive regime of violence'.[49] Keen to move away from the common binary classifications that are used to interpret domination - resistance versus passivity, or autonomy versus subjection, for example - the élite in power, or the *commandement*, forces their way through to become the legitimate institution ruling the nation. It seeks to achieve hegemony, Mbembe tells us, in the form of a fetish. The new concept of the nation, its symbols, its signs, and its ideas, are not to be challenged. They are forced on to the population with the intention of becoming second nature.

The major shift in perspective suggested by Mbembe goes beyond Bakhtin's interpretation of the obscene and the grotesque, which claims that they are parodies that allow ordinary people to resist and undermine officialdom. In celebrating its officialdom, the state power's use of the obscene and the grotesque makes a 'convivial relationship' fraught, due to the ruling élite and its subjects having to share the same living space.[50] By celebrating, Mbembe refers to the timing and location of the occasions organised to magnify and dramatize the state power, to the materials used in ceremonies to demonstrate the majesty of state power, and finally to the particular way the ceremonies are held as shows for the subjects of the state power. The familiarity and domesticity present in the relationship generate an underground discourse resulting in the 'mutual zombification of both the dominant and those apparently dominated'.[51] The dominated does not resist officially and is locked into a silent rebellion, which Diop illustrates by silencing women in order to denounce Senghor's lack of concrete effort to engage women in the country's liberation. Left impotent, both forces share several public spaces and negotiate

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[48] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 102.
[49] Ibid.,., p. 102.
[50] Ibid.,., p. 104.
[51] Ibid.,., p. 104.

several identities. In *LTT*, the narrator embodies different characters and switches from one perspective to another, thus purposefully creating chaos in the narrative. It is in the practice of celebrating the state power in these ceremonial occasions that the postcolonial subjects publicly exist.

Achille Mbembe's reflection on the phenomenology of violence, in Chapter Five of one of his major pieces, provides an essential understanding of the deeply rooted issues that trigger violence on so many levels in the postcolony. He gives insight into the violence of death in Africa and why it is considered to be 'non-actuality'. Although he refers to what was at the time, for him, present-day Africa, his discourse provides a deeper understanding of *LTT*, as the manifestations of violence in the 'nation-in-construction' are common in *LTT*. The particular focus on self-destruction, which Mbembe combines with the other issue of being decreed to be nothing, is interesting. Going back to colonisation, Mbembe, referring to Fanon, looks at the sources of violence that appear in the geographical layout imposed by colonisation, and at the presence of barracks and police stations.[52] Mbembe also looks at the implementation of violence into structures and institutions by the people who embody it: the soldier, the French commandant, the police officer, and the native chief. Violence, Mbembe says:

> insinuates itself into the economy, domestic life, language, consciousness. It does more than penetrate every space; it pursues the colonized even in sleep and dream. It produces a culture; it is a cultural praxis (p. 175).

Once infected, the colony, and later on the postcolony, cannot go back: it is contaminated. To some extent, Mbembe finds Heidegger's Dasein useful to illustrate this phenomenon. For Mbembe, 'to live in the postcolony means constantly using the Dasein's possibility of being delegated to represent another' (p. 202). It is the constant negotiations between the several beings in a single body that creates the inner violence the coloniser suffers from. The particular confusion between the different 'I's is metaphorically illustrated in LLT. The two styles of narratives, both

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[52] Ibid.,., p. 174.

the novel style and the non-fiction narrative that follows each of the main three parts of the book, look at the characters from different angles. They give the characters an existence that is later on denied or transformed in these factual conclusive notes.

Violence towards women is an ambivalent theme in *LTT*. Quite often, women are repressed or frustrated characters in uncomfortable situations. Almost muted, like Léna who can spend 'une journée entière sans prononcer un seul mot' (p. 84), women are either portrayed as mysterious and silent, or as prostitutes. The reader finds out, ultimately, that Léna's character does not exist. Retrospectively, Léna becomes an imaginary character and a metaphor for an authentic Africa. Sold by Tamango to the coloniser, she is a lost soul and haunts N'Dongo day and night: 'Léna lui vient brusquement à l'esprit: 'Le mythe de la pureté.' (p. 84), the myth of the return to an African authenticity, to a negritude, as Senghor hoped. But this is only a disillusion, Diop concludes: 'partout traqué par le même rêve, N'Dongo, tes bras autour de ce mirage, Léna' (p. 87). Slowly, the fiction's deeper meaning is revealed, to understand the rapprochement with Mérimée's allegory and Diop's satire of Senghor. Synonymous of a devilish character, the narrator associates Léna with a feeling of oppression and uneasiness. She is present too, although she may be unreal 'peut'-être n'existe-t-elle même pas' (p. 77), in gloomy passages that evoke the assassination of Kaba Diané, a member of the opposition, and the murder of General François Navarro by peer opponents to avenge his death. Emblematic of the destruction of colonial power, the general's killing is accomplished to bring the tension down within mass population.

Although a key character of the *LTT*, Léna is referred to mostly at the end of Part Two, in the notes section. Her first appearance, in Section One of *LTT*, is very brief, just an evocation, 'N'Dongo murmure: 'Léna…Léna' (p. 44); she is associated with the dead corpse of the old Mamba who has just been shot. Not given much intellectual dimension, women are often reduced to either sexual objects, or submissive, useless roles. In Part One, Captain Navarro's wife is portrayed as libertine: 'l'équipage était trop occupé à se relayer auprès de Fabienne' (p. 34). In Part Two, when N'Dongo and his friends Mahécor, Kaba, and Mireille, a European girl, arrive at the Tirailleurs' cemetery, N'Dongo describes Mireille as 'une fille

particulièrement idiote' (p. 80) and observes her 'formes bien moulées dans son pantalon rouge' (p. 84). A postcolonial reading of the portraiture of women finds its source in a dual process of exotisation, a concept developed by Fanon; the body, and particularly the white female body, is hypersexualised through the eyes of the black male, and the black body is exoticised through the eyes of the white female: 'Mme Navarro s'en sentait de plus en plus pour le docteur. Elle aimait les types forts. Elle affirma n'avoir jamais couché avec un nègre' (p. 149). The deletarious representation of woman is clarified in NOTES SUR LA DEUXIÈME PARTIE, where Diops states that 'on n'accordait aucune considération aux femmes dont la seule vocation était de rester désirables pour faire des enfants, et belles ou mystérieuses pour inspirer les poètes réactionnaires' (p. 129). Only Jeanne, N'Dongo's lover, is treated respectfully in the scene when N'Dongo leaves for Germany (pp. 65-66): a scene that Tamango's wife would have liked to live. It is a possibility that Diop brings to light the lack of integration into economic planning, a fact backed up back Griffiths who states that 'there is no mention of the role of women in the economy in the five-year economic plans from independence in 1960 to the 5th economic plan of 1977', despite 'the Senegalese State's rhetoric on integrating women into the development process.'[53]

This, once more, distinguishes Senghor's politics from Sankara's, which puts women at the centre of social revolution in Burkina Faso.[54]

Rebellion

Resistance

This section will look at various aspects of the representation of resistance from different perspectives. Firstly, I argue that the crowd is used as a common

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[53] Claire Ibid. Griffiths, *Globalizing the Postcolony, Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 170-171.
[54] Federico Bastiani, 'Thomas Sankara, 'I have a dream…', Thomossankara website, 13 July 2006 <http://Ibid.thomassankara.net/spip.php?page=imprimir_articulo&id_article=202&lang=fr> [accessed 13 March 2015].

denominator to refer to strikers, students, and trade unionists with no distinction of categories. They first appear in Chapter Three of Part One, when the representatives of each group are about to meet to prepare for a general strike and other demonstrations (p. 38). Resistance stems from a series of political events that led to the Senegalese internal crisis in 1968 and 1969.[55] Following the 1962 Constitutional Crisis, due to the fall out between Senghor and Mamadou Dia, the one legal party rule in 1965, the 1968 unopposed election of Senghor, and the creation of the *Union Progressiste Sénégalaise* unique political party at the general elections, all generated a vast discontent amongst the population.

By using the crowd as a symbol for mass population, Diop enhances the anonymity and lack of consideration from the government, describing it in a patronising way: 'La foule restait cependant nonchalante: aucune exubérance, nulle précipation chez les passants, pas le moindre éclat de voix' (p. 38). Later on, in Chapter Four of Part One, the general strike has reached the streets. Confused, 'la foule ne semble pas savoir où aller', 'la foule ne sait pas où elle va' (p. 42). The high rate of unemployment, which had also attracted field workers - equipped with hatchets - in search of work in town, worsens the situation. The threatening crowd, who are tired of feeling left out, chants 'à bas les profiteurs!', 'respectez les franchises universitaires!', 'augmentez immédiatement les salaires!' (p. 41). Diop depicts the situation in Senegal from the perspectives of students, trade unionists and political activists, and, we could possibly imagine, from the point of view of Dia, imprisoned by Senghor after attempting a coup d'état:[56]

> La colère contre le régime emportait tout sur son passage, illusions, craintes
> et espérances, soufflant chaque jour plus profond et s'enflant chaque jour.
> Les tracts, devenus innombrables parlaient de salaires de misère, d'un statut
> plus avantageux que les patrons refusaient d'étudier, de privilèges
> mirobolants dont jouissaient, à l'ombre des cocotiers, d'inutiles assistants
> techniques. Les étudiants s'en donnaient à cœur joie. Le campus était devenu

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[55] Momar-Coumba Diop, 'Le Sénégal à la Croisée des Chemins' in Mamadou Gazibo, ed., *Politique Africaine* (Paris: Karthala, 2006), p. 105.

[56] Laurent Correau, 'Mamadou Dia, l'Homme du Refus', RFI, 26 January, 2009 <http://www1.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/109/article_77746.asp> [accessed 12 March 2015].

un bastion d'où partaient les attaques les plus incendiaires contre le pouvoir (p. 39-40).

Also fuelled by the difference of treatment between the French Government's expatriates and the locals, the strikers' anger becomes unmanageable. The strikes turn into a 'massacre sauvage' (p. 44) when policemen start firing at the crowd, chasing and hunting strikers like wild animals in the narrowest streets. Rising against Senghor's autocratic government, the crowd is repressed by the army.[57]

Secondly, I examine resistance through the character of N'Dongo Thiam. The major protagonist in *LTT*, N'Dongo is a symbol of the opposition to Senghor's unique party regime. A member of the clandestine political organisation named M.A.R.S, Mars being also the Greek war god, N'Dongo is also known as Tamango, his war name (p. 53-54). N'Dongo strives to write his own novel, ironically entitled *Tamango*, which desperately attempts to transform Tamango's story. Whereas in Mérimée's original story Tamango finally manages to unchain himself, in order to free his wife, Ayché, and the slaves, and kill the seamen, but he then fails to navigate the ship, ironically, in N'Dongo's imaginary novel, Tamango fights back and takes his compatriots back to their homeland.

Thirdly, reflecting on the particular historical aspect of Thyaroye's massacre evoked in *LTT*, and Senghor's interpretation of it, highlights Diop's own *tiraillement* between his admiration and dislike of Senghor. In *Hosties noires*, Senghor also remembers the tragedy:

Sang sang ô sang noir de mes frères, vous tachez
l'innoncence de mes draps
Vous êtes la sueur où baigne mon angoisse, vous êtes
la soufffrance qui enroue ma voie…
Non vous n'êtes pas morts gratuits ô Morts! Ce sang n'est
pas de l'eau trépide.
Il arrose épais notre espoir, qui fleurira au créspuscule.

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[57] Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Négritude* (London: Heinemann, 1969), pp. 220-222.

Il est notre soif notre faim d'honneur, ces grandes reines

Absolues

Non vous n'êtes pas morts gratuits. Vous êtes les témoins

de l'Afrique immortelle

Vous êtes les témoins du monde nouveau qui sera demain.[58]

Extracted from Senghor's poetry collection, this poem entitled 'Tyaroye', among others, 'subtly set[s] up the *tirailleurs sénégalais* as figures of the Resistance in order to insert them into the collective memory of the French people'.[59] Indeed, Senghor can also be portrayed as a figure of resistance himself. He focuses on the topic of sacrifice, making French citizens aware of the fact that African soldiers fought along with the French in order to protect French territory.[60] Certainly, his experience as a war prisoner in Nazi camps in 1940 was a profound inspiration to his poetry writing.[61] Although Diop does not refer to *Hosties noires*, the collection has a symbolic signification in Senghor's intellectual life. As pointed out by Michel, it is a 'transitory book', for 'the period spent in writing the collection corresponds to Senghor's own transition from his intellectual period, embodied by the concept of Negritude […] to more pragmatic and concrete approach to taking action in the world' with 'adopting a political career in 1945'.[62]

Finally, resistance is also evoked in *LTT* as resistance against neo-colonialism, with the explicit reference to *Procés du Néocolonialisme* (p. 53) and the Senegalese historian Professor Mohammed Sonko, who 'exhorte les nouvelles generations à approfondir les leçons de ces intrépides révolutionnaires' (p. 54).

Failed revolution

In this section I look at alternatives to Senghor's discourse on *Négritude* and *Civilisation de l'Universel* to illustrate better Diops' position. In the NOTES SUR LA

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[58] Léoplod Sédar Senghor, 'Tyaroye' in *Oeuvre Poétique, Hosties Noires*, (Paris: Seuil, 1990), pp. 90-91.
[59] Sabrina Parent, *Cultural Representations of Massacre: Reinterpretations of the Mutiny of Senegal* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 33.
[60] Ibid.,., p. 34.
[61] Bourges, p. 86.
[62] Ibid.,., p. 33.

TROISIÈME PARTIE, BBD directly refers to the Haitian poet and writer Jacques Roumain's 'magistral roman', published in 1950 in Paris, *Gouverneurs de la Pensée.* He acclaims Roumain for his exemplary communist militantism against the United States' occupation of Haiti, who, unlike Senghor, fought against the colonisers without fear of forced exile and arrest. On the contrary to Haiti, Senegal has not lost its once charismatic hero to a death that could have been salvatory. Instead, it has fallen into a neocolonial phase, misled by Senghor's personal political pursuit; as a consequence, the country has not been able to confront petrification, the state of temporary paralysis initialised by colonisation. Senghor becomes symbolical of the death of revolution.

BBD's analysis of Senghor's once heroic figure is different from Cilas Kemedjo's (2004).[63] Kemedjo analyses the paradigm of the Haitian revolution, where Jean-Jacques Dessalines' physical and symbolic death could be served as a collective remobilisation. This remobilisation is built around his charismatic figure who emerges from the stage of heroic lamentation to enter into the phase where the reference to Dessalines's death serves to confront the petrification of the country. Dessalines' death is associated with Haiti's Declaration of Independence on 1st January, 1804, for his relentless struggles against the colonisers, and in particular against the French, who he defeated in the 1803 Bataille de Vertières. In Kemedjo's terms on the Haitian revolution, 'the movement for cultural and political emancipation that led to the independence grew out of a charismatic scenario' and, more precisely, 'out of a charismatic figure'. In Senegal, the charismatic Senghor, who took part in the Afro-Parisian political and literary freedom movement leading to the creation of *Présence Africaine*, was the country's hero.

In his fiction, Diop criticises the attempt by Senghor to implement a socialist liberal democratic regime in Senegal, the obvious failure of parachuting Western European political ideologies into Africa, for how it has asphyxiated Africa. The fiction's anecdotal title refers to Prosper Mérimée's Tamango who, in a wild attempt to liberate his brothers and sisters from slavery, foolishly finds himself having to leave the *Espérance* drifting along aimlessly due to his lack of navigating skills - he

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[63] Cilas Kemedjo, 'Postcolonial Mythologies: Jean Metellus and the Writing of Charismatic Memory'*, Research in African Literatures,* 35.2 (2004), 91-113 (100).

does not know how to read a compass -[64] and his lack of insight: an initial act of bravery that suddenly turns into a human massacre. In my analysis of LLT, Diop's fiction reflects on the triple irony of Mérimée's allegory: firstly, Tamango sells his own people to the French slave-trader and even gives his wife away; secondly, he finds himself enchained on the ship where his wife has gained a higher status by securing a privileged place with the master; and thirdly, his attempt to negotiate, rebel and resist is doomed to fail from the beginning as he has no navigating skills.

In my opinion, the tension that has developed between Diop (1946-) and Senghor (1906-2001) is best described as a conflict of an Oedipal nature. It is possibile that Diop has written this fiction to imagine the relationship that developed over time between Senghor and Dia. Both the generational gap and a form of jealousy have also triggered such hostility from Diop. By examining more closely the final few pages of the text, I emphasize Diop's assertion of authority in his role of 'Maître de son Jeu', embodied by 'Kuntha, le Dieu Créateur' (p .181). On the contrary, Senghor is depicted as an anti-hero who has let the country down by bringing sixteeen years of a unique party system and 'a bogus multiparty system where Senghor chose himself names and ideologies for the opposition parties'.[65] Senghor's party, the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise, today known as the Parti Socialiste Sénégalais, was the only authorised party until 1973.

The reader discovers that N'Dongo happens to be the same person referred to as Tamango le domestique (p. 144), and immersed into N'Dongo's interior monologue, he is confronted with a revelation: 'd'ailleurs je ne m'appelle pas N'Dongo Thiam' (p. 159). N'Dongo comes out of his role and starts a discussion with the narrator. He refers to Kader's latest work of fiction entitled *Le Temps de Tamang*o: 'Kader s'amuse à bourrer ses tiroirs des pièces de théâtre, poèmes, romans dont le dernier *Le Temps de Tamango* - un titre qui ne veut rien dire-prétend raconter ma vie du dedans' (p. 158). Then he addresses Kader directly, blaming him for not being 'l'immense Gabriel Garcia Marquez': BDD refers here to the inability of Marquez's magical realist touch to give the full picture and for

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[64] Prosper Mérimée, *Tamango* <http://Ibid.clg-chantemerle-corbeil.ac-versailles.fr/IMG/pdf/Merimee__P-Tamango-6752.pdf> [*accessed 14 July 2009].*
[65] Charles Sugnet, 'Dances with Wolofs, a Conversation with Boubacar Boris Diop', *Transition,* 10.3 (2001), 138-159.

sticking too much to reality. The third shift in the narrative takes place when, following the talk to Kader, the narrative goes back to its initial mode where N'Dongo is referred to as a third-person character. Many references throughout *LTT*, implicit and explicit, lead to the belief that N'Dongo has lost his mind. The narrative slips back into a novel-style, is less factual and more descriptive. The following passage, situated in the last chapter, demonstrates how N'Dongo and the activists failed in their attempts to revolutionise the country. Halfway through the book, the narrative turns to traditional story-telling form, like a *conte à l'africaine*. N'Dongo walks through Saint-Louis, the Senegalese island, and hears voices where he imagines himself dying - during a delirium tremens crisis, it can be assumed - wounded and exhausted after the riots:

> Soudain le tam-tam du griot, qui lui pendait au flanc gauche, se mit à battre tout seul pour N'Dongo, une longue mélodie mélancolique, la foule scandait le lent chant funèbre, on aurait dit minuit au bord de la mer et les vagues abreuvant à petites gorges d'écume les roches trouées et tristes (p. 166).

The metaphorical presence of water adds to the *conte à l'africaine* style, where Mami Watta -water goddess in West African mythology-, or Mame Kumba Baang in Senegal, has magnetic powers capable of attracting lost and desperate souls. The explicit reference to Henry-Jay quay in Saint-Louis Island, situated in the North of Dakar, on the Atlantic coast at the border with Mauritania, places the fiction into a real geographical spot and refocuses the fiction's plot. Water, an unpredictable liquid, sometimes limpid, stagnant and dormant, or agitated, angry and thundery, symbolises the underground bipolar forces that colonialism has left in the postcolonies. Here, the references to the Atlantic create historical and spatial connections between the past and the present, between Miller's re-exploration of the transatlantic slave trade[66] and Gilroy's transatlantic ambivalent immigration.[67] I see in Diops' metaphorical references to water tides, the illustration of the incessant

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[66] Christopher Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[67] Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles, the Creole Identities of Postcolonial Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), p. 269.

back-and-forth movement of colonial and neo-colonial domination, and the unlimited connections between the 'triangle from below', as referred to by Miller in his analysis of the Carribean vision of the idea of 'return' to a lost homeland, inspired by Césaire's *Cahiers d'un Retour au Pays Natal*.[68] As explored in the first part of this chapter, Senghor's fear of assimilation led him to paradoxically romanticize his black culture, in the hope of a return to the Africa he had left at the age of seventeen. Unlike Cheickh Hamidou Kane's Diallo, whose ambiguous adventure leads him to take his own life, Senghor returns home and attempts to build a nation inspired by *négritude*. Ultimately, the notes on the third part reveal to the audience that Tamango is only 'un mythe litéraire' (p. 178), thus admitting the impossibility of a true revolution. Indeed, 'negritude may have been rebellion but not revolution', Markovitz confirms.[69]

Conclusion

To conclude, I argue that the struggle for national identity building is summed up by the existence of Senghor. Inoculated at a young age by the colonial 'virus' (p. 15), to use Diop's words, Senghor attempted to both accept and resist French cultural influences.

'Praised for his ideas and damned for this politics'[70], Senghor gained his reputation for his caution and moderation in dealing with his country's challenges, wanting 'unity, stability and economic development'.[71] Even if the causes for his departure are officially attributed to his opposition to lifetime presidency and his age (74), it is very likely that the immense task facing him, in other words to rectify the social and economic situation, accelerated his desire to retire from power.[72] Senghor's spontaneous departure can be seen as an effective way to bypass the

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[68] Christopher Miller, 'The Triangle from 'below'', in *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 325-363, p. 325.
[69] Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Négritude* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 42.
[70] Ibid.,., p. 3.
[71] Ibid.,., p. 5.
[72] Momar-Coumba Diop and Mamadou Diouf, ed., *Les Figures du Politique en Afrique, des Pouvoirs Hérités aux Pouvoirs Élus*, (Paris: Codesria, 1999), p. 145.

wave of political and labour discontentment that affected Senegal at the end of the 1970s.[73]

Therefore, it can be argued that the enmeshment of various narratives, illustrated by 'la divagation systématique en technique d'écriture' (p. 179), and Diop's technical audacities (p. 15), are symbolic of the different facets of Senghor: the difficulties he faced as a politician to build a strong national identity, and as man of letters, to form a strong *nègre* identity. As pointed out by Meredith, 'Senghor preferred to be remembered as a poet'.[74] Despite his French education and his devotion to French language, as a co-founder of Francophonie and member of the prestigious French Academy, neither the French president, nor the prime minister travelled to Dakar in 2001 to celebrate the dead poet.[75]

Senghor's French exile aroused an enthusiasm for his lost land that he tried to find again through *negritude,* hoping to 'assimiler, non être assimilé',[76] as he declared himself in 1937, in front of the French colonial administration at a conference in Dakar. Although different from *négritude* as interpreted by Francophone Caribbean authors such as Césaire and Glissant, 'negritude has been blown by interpretations beyond what he originally meant it to be'.[77] For Césaire, negritude is not 'biological, it's cultural and historical' as he thinks 'there is always a certain danger in basing something on the black blood in our veins, the three drops of black blood.'[78] Against the backdrop of a fading memory of Africa, his idealised vision of national identity became an obsession for an idealised vision of Africa. Mérimée's triple irony about Tamango's life reveals that his *aventure ambigüe*

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[73] Ibid.,., p. 146.

[74] Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa, a History of the Continent Since Independence* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), p. 268.

[75] Erik Orsenna, 'J'ai honte', *Le Monde*, 5 January 2002, cited in Djian, pp. 150-151.

[76] Léopold Sédar Senghor, 'Le Problème Culturel en AOF', *Négritude et Humanisme: Liberté I* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), p. 11, in Jean-Michel Djian, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, genèse d'un imaginaire Francophone* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 37.

[77] D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press), p. 14.

[78] R. Depestre, *Bonjour et Adieu à la Négritude* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1980), pp. 144-145, cited in Masolo, p. 15.

irrevocably affected Senghor's *âme nègre*, which is, I argue, more *créole* than *nègre*,

or, as Bongie might argue, more *creolised*.[79]

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[79] Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles, the Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 48.

Chapter 3

Contested identities in a postcolonial and globalised world: towards a reconceptualization of Francophone African literature in Léonora Miano's *Contours du Jour qui Vient*

Introduction

Back in 1994, in one of his most well known works, Mudimbe writes that 'African literature as a commodity is an invention'.[1] He argues that African literature is not recognised for what it really is, as a discourse, or for its significance in relation to other local and regional discourses by critics and specialists in the field, but rather for 'its significance as a mirror of something else, for instance of Africa's political struggle, of processes of acculturation, of human rights objectives.'[2] Indeed, many African authors have produced a literature from the area that reflects on everyday life issues and on cultural aspects of a specific area. However, it is true that the legitimacy of some post-2000 writers of African origin is sometimes contested. When considering Léonora Miano as a representative agent of such literature, one can consider the extent to which a thirty year-old writer born in Cameroon but living in France, published by a Parisian publishing house and writing in French can make a 'true' and realistic account of African society. The issue lies in the fact that her cultural identity is articulated, by default, around the analytical axis of her national identity. Furthermore, this means that African literature is articulated in opposition to French literature. Although it inevitably falls under the linguistic classification of postcolonial literature written by Francophone African writers, this categorising only partially solves the problem. It offers a compromise between too strict a category, French literature, and too broad a label, African literature. However, as suggested by Mudimbe, the need to inscribe African literature within an existing literary criticism

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[1] Valentin M. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press; James Currey, 1994), p. 177
[2] Ibid.,., p. 177.

probably grew as 'a consequence of a process of inventing and organising something else'.[3] Yet, the essence of the body of texts produced by writers of African origin lies in the African experience of the authors, in their life experiences in Africa or in the diaspora, and more importantly in their cultural background. They give an insight into pluralistic experiences of postcolonial spaces that can be 'engineered'[4] into a 'polyvocal'[5] framework, opening the possibility for 'agents' of national and/or diasporic literary production to be heard.

In 2009, at the annual conference organised by the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies, Dominic Thomas specifically raised this issue of identifying authors of African origin according to their country of origin.[6] The classification of the literature written in French by writers originating from West and Equatorial Africa as Francophone African literature has been engendered by the persistence of a colonial discourse after the independences of the early 1960s. This has restricted this literature to an arbitrary, pre-defined geographical area that forces local cultures to fit in to a rigid political and geographical space. This chapter focuses on the artificial creation of an African gnosis, a mythical idea of Africa created originally by European ethnologists, and explores the extent to which such discourse limits the resonance of this literature on the local and global stage. Indeed, Thomas argues, 'the construction of cultural and national identities has often been inseparable from the discourse of nationalism in the African context',[7] which also formats today's literary production from the continent. Inherited from colonial foreign intervention invested in creating a manageable sense of common identity for each nation, facilitating land administration and regulating national space inspired by the European model, nationalism, as explored in Chapter Two, has formed local identities. Attempting to counter this trend, some Pan Africanist theories, such as Senghor's in particular, have claimed to represent truly African experiences by emphasizing a form of black consciousness; however, they have restricted it to a

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[3] Ibid.,.
[4] Dominic Thomas**,** *Nation-Building, Propaganda, and Literature in Francophone Africa* (Bloomington, Ind.: Chesham: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 2.
[5] Ibid.,.
[6] Ibid.,.
[7] Ibid.,.

self-centred theoretical framework, excluding a pluridimensional interpretation of the question of blackness.[8] As Mudimbe argues, *négritude* is together 'the triumph of Narcissus and Narcissus' suicide'.[9]

I have also chosen to focus on the Atlantic coastal region of West and Equatorial Africa, with a particular interest in the many cultural and identity cross-border overlaps. Through an exemplar reading of one contemporary novel from the region, entitled *Contours du Jour qui Vient* (*CJV*) by Léonora Miano, a female author originally from Cameroon, I intend to explore the tradition-modernity dichotomy. In parallel, referring to Nugent and Asiwaju's work, I explore how the ambiguous features of spatial boundaries frequently show that borders tend to be 'a zone of interaction rather than represent a genuine partition'.[10] I argue that 'villagization' and ethnicization policies have partitioned local cultural communities and juxtaposed antagonistic groups to finally conclude that, paradoxically, borders also offer new opportunities to communities involved in cross-border movements by developing multiple spatial and mental identities that are inevitably influenced by geographical factors, whether imposed by humans or nature. Although I acknowledge the limitations of examining one piece of literary work 'selected according to authorial nationality',[11] I make a point of situating this cultural product according the historical, literary, and political framework in which it is inscribed.[12] In line with Thomas, I attempt to:

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[8] See Hervé Bourges, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, Lumière Noire* (Paris: Mengès, Collection Destin, 2006); Lilyan Kesteloot, *black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 7 and II, cited in Christopher Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads, Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Nancy Jachec, 'Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Cultures de l'Afrique Noire et de l'Occident', *Eurafricanism, Negritude and the Civilisation of the Universal*, 24:2 (2010), 195-204; Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté III, Négritude et Civilisation de l'Universel, 'La Francophonie Comme Culture'* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Négritude*, (Heinemann: London, 1969).

[9] Valentin M. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 84.

[10] A. I. Asiwaju and Paul Nugent, *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London: Pinter, 1996), p. 2.

[11] Thomas**,** p. 12.

[12] Ibid.,.

formulate [a] responsible discursive mod[e] that adequately addresses the writer[s] situatedness outside of imperializing, colonizing narratives and discourses, in order to recognize that there continue to be blind spots that will remain incomprehensible if mediated or appropriated through exclusively Western or ethnocentrist critical paradigms that fail to consider the sociological circumstances from which these narratives have emerged.[13]

For this purpose this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part I will look at ways of rethinking culture beyond the tradition versus modernity dichotomy that often narrows the debate about Africa, and move away from the binary arguments that do not provide alternative critical thinking for understanding West and Equatorial African literature. In the second part I will look at the issues of origin and identity that are constantly raised in current academic debate and how consider malleable they are. I will explore how the two entities conflict and are reconciled at an individual level, at community level and national level. In the third part I will argue that artificial colonial border constructs have both affected and created new opportunities for local communities; as a consequence, the literature produced in this region of Africa has also been exiled and displaced from its own region of production to the metropolitan centre of interaction for writers in the French language, namely Paris.

The following pages consider both the importance of postcolonial literary theorists - anglophone and Francophone - (Cororan, Fraiture, Forsdick) in challenging dominant exogenous narratives on postcolonial African literature, and historical narratives (Asiwaju, Davidson, Nugent) in an attempt to determine whether literary work (Miano) can help understand better the cultural reality of Africa pulling in this analysis postcolonial theorists (Fanon, Mabanckou, Memmi, Mudimbe, N'gugi).

Culture: tradition and modernity

<u>Postcolonial hope</u>

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[13] Ibid.,., p. 15.

In order to situate the debate, I wish to explain how Léonora Miano's novel *Contours du Jour Qui Vient* reveals her Equatorial African cultural origin. She tells the story of the young Musango who, after being thrown out of her home, wanders for three years. Her chaotic and harrowing journey is motivated by obsessive thoughts to find her mother. Miano examines Musango's life in the city of Sombé, Mboasu, an imaginary country with a strong resemblance to Cameroon emerging slowly from the civil war.

In *Contours du Jour Qui Vient*, the third novel of a trilogy entitled *Suite Africaine*, Miano reflects on the dramatic changes that Cameroonian society has suffered. She articulates her piece around the issues linked, on the one hand, to a forced return to the sources in her native village, and on the other hand, to a quest for an impossible return to an original society, defined as 'traditional' - in opposition to modern - and by others as a pre-war society, free of civil and political unrests. With no specific reference to time, *CJV* displays a contemporary resonance to the late 1990s civil unrest[14] and the *ville morte*[15] trade-unionist movement in Cameroon, still under the leadership of Paul Biya. With the ongoing theme of nationalist attempts in the background, Miano evokes a torn country in quest for reconstruction.

Similarly to Mudimbe, Miano has little faith in retrieving a 'true' Cameroonian society delivered from the perversion of war, but rather argues for a rebirth. Whereas 1960s-1970s West African anglophone and Francophone literature was highly critical of colonial life, praised the domestication of political power that was emblematic of the eternal quest for a paradise lost and grieved over the death of Africa, *CJV* symbolises an act of rebirth. It positively encourages the future generation to mourn the past and to recreate their existence. Whilst Miano's main protagonist has to reinvent herself to get out of the victim-aggressor relationship, and liberate herself from the trauma her mother has inflicted on her, Miano's Africa needs to unload her burden to envisage a future free from the chains of the *mère-patrie*.

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[14] *A Political Chronology of Africa*, ed. by David Lea (London: Taylor & Francis, 2001), p. 62.
[15] Gérard Fonteneau, Noël Madounga, André Linard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme en Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 2004), p. 97.

In the last chapter an insight into Musango's internal monologue allows us to see through Miano's reflection on the position of Africa today : 'Si je ne m'étais pas mise au monde, je serais comme elle, qui ne peut accepter d'avoir à vivre. C'est en y consentant que je peux voir le jour' (p. 204). Musango's rebirth is an allegory for the necessary rebirth of Africa. The omnipresent shadow that follows Musango, and that keeps her in the dark, finally disappears at the beginning of Part VI Coda: Licence (p. 211) when Musango is strong enough to face her past: 'j'accepte tout du passé, ses heurts et sa noirceur' (p. 178). Very critical of the rigid traditions endangering the nation, Miano allows Musango to attain freedom : 'J'ai mûri dans une gangue de rage, pour créer une identité qui soit mienne, pour être un individu dans un monde où ce mot seul est une transgression, un blasphème' (p. 178). In search for her mother she returns to her native town, Sombé. Her serene state during her reunion with the visionary, Sésé, reflects the internal peace she had longed for. Finally, her first encounter with her maternal grandmother, Mbambé, in the town's outskirts, is emblematic of the return to the sources theme sustained throughout.

Musango's rebirth is finally allowed by reclaiming her birth-tree under which her placenta and umbilical cord are buried. This journey follows an African traditional custom particularly common in West and Equatorial Africa, which symbolizes the circle of life: birth, death, and rebirth.[16] The banana tree's first fruits have grown for the first time in twelve years coinciding with Musango's twelfth birthday. Although a necessary step to go through, the return-to-the-source stage does not constitute an end in itself, Musango has to reach beyond and seek for the complete replacement of her identity: 'ce que vous devez faire c'est épouser les contours du jour qui vient, c'est vous souvenir de ce que vous êtes, le célébrer et l'inscrire dans la durée. Ce que vous êtes, ce n'est pas seulement ce qui s'est passé, mais ce que vous ferez' (p. 236). It is through the acceptance of the past, and by connecting past, present and future, that Musango can live delivered from her past.

The metaphor of death that spreads across the novel is associated with the metaphor of the mother. Although symbolically diametrically opposed in European values, the mother giving life through birth and death being the end of life are

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[16] Clémentine Faïk-Nzuji Madiya, *Arts Africains: Signes et Symbols* (Brussels: De Boeck, 2000), p. 41.

reconciled in *CJV* when Musango findsthe tree where her umbilical cord and placenta were buried. The mother, depicted as a savage, is used as the metaphorical criticism of colonisation referring back to Africa being seen as the land of the noble savage. The necessary rebirth of the individual, as argued by Miano, would 'kill' the ill mother and give birth to the liberated individual. The mother is both death and birth. On one level, it rejects the two notions and pushes them apart from one another, on another level it accepts them and pulls them together to allow for purification and symbiosis, giving space to Musango's new identity.

Clash within

Although, as Adèle King has it, the narrative could sound unrealistic at times due to Musango's young age,[17] the duality of Musango's role in the novel, both main character and narrator, purposefully conveys two viewpoints. The two contrasting voices of consciousness contained in the allegorical dimension of the novel - from Musango's interior monologue to the narrator's viewpoint - are exploited by the author. The main protagonist, although a nine-year-old girl, has lost her innocence by being exposed to traumatic scenes of violence and perversion inflicted on her and on other young girls. The strong feminist theme, and the fight against the weight of traditions, echoes the metaphor of rape often associated with colonisation. In an attempt to describe the degree of violence evoked throughout the novel, women are always treated as second-class citizens: they are used, abused, exploited, sold for prostitution, and sent to Europe. For female characters, the body is always depicted as an instrument and is not valued. Rather, it is violated, objectified and devalorised.

Social divisions, as described by Miano in *CJV*, often based on the dichotomy of the sacred vs profane, have blurred moral boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not. The perversion of religion, turning traditional customs into extremist and primitive beliefs, leads to superstition. Sects from the United States have invaded the country, associating religion with belief in devils, witchcraft, voodoo practices, and abusing people's despair in a desperate attempt to conquer their souls. Musango has just been brought back from Sombé and is taken to a

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[17] Adèle King, *'Contours du Jour Qui Vient'*, *World Literature Today*, 81, 5 (2007), (p. 65).

religious gathering at the temple, where she discovers one of the leaders, Colonne du Temple, is about to read a passage from the Book:

> l'origine de tout homme c'est le Christ ; l'origine de la femme, c'est l'homme ; et l'origine du Christ, c'est Dieu…Ce n'est pas l'homme en effet qui a été tiré de la femme, mais la femme de l'homme ; et ce n'est pas l'homme qui a été créé pour la femme, mais la femme pour l'homme. Il se tait et referme le Livre. […] Parce que la gloire de l'homme telle que professée en ces lieux réclame leur totale soumission, et que cette dernière passe par une mort qui ne dit pas son nom. C'est pour cela qu'elles ont été créées, pour être des cadavres vivants (pp. 100-01).

The terrible scene Miano describes, which consists of young men deflowering girls on the floor in the back room of the temple as part of a purifying ritual is common practice in the temple : 'ils vont travailler sur elle jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit enceinte, ce qui la purifiera et lui accordera la protection du Très-Haut pendant le voyage. Il dit que les files portent un enfant lors de la traverse arrivent toujours à destination' (p. 86). The gender issues generated by such behaviour do reflect the extent to which society is led by men. As pointed out by Griffiths, the gender gap left by colonisation in Francophone Africa is difficult to bridge due to a variety of factors based on women's access to knowledge, political representation and standard of living.[18] On this point, the author and scholar, Alain Mabanckou comments on the place of women in society, and in particular in Africa, where he could see some hope for change with the election of women presidents in countries such as Liberia creating opportunities for a fairer representation of both genders.[19] Yet, it is important to bear in mind, as Griffiths argues, that 'efforts to reconfigure concepts of gender come into conflict with powerful forces in society as they attempt to protect custom and tradition in the name of social and political stability'.[20]

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[18] Claire Ibid. Griffiths, *Globalizing the Postcolony: Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington books, 2011), pp. 99-111.
[19] France Inter, *Le grand entretien*, Alain Mabanckou, Thursday 25 November 2010, 17h00 < http://Ibid.franceinter.fr/archives-diffusions/434655/2010-11> [accessed 14 June 2010].
[20] Ibid.,., pp. 157-58.

Searching for an African reconstruction and for the edification of a strong sense of identity and individuality, Musango condemns ancestral practices that reduce people to act like followers rather than leaders:

> nous sommes ce people d'oralité qui ne dit jamais rien d'essentiel, qui ne sait faire que des bruits pour tenter d'étouffer la douleur. Nous sommes des adorateurs de la parole futile ou prosaïque. Taire l'intime nous demande tant d'efforts qu'il n'est pas surprenant que nous soyons à présent à la fois fous et exsangues. La plupart d'entre nous (p. 177).

Systematically criticising traditions as a means of downgrading women and oppressing some categories of the population, Miano emphasises that although traditions safeguard centuries of African history, the blinded perpetuation of ancestral practises refuses to evolve with time. It confines its own people into a static spatial and temporal dimension creating a clash within the local community. As frequently demonstrated in postcolonial studies, the incestuous relationship developed through time during colonisation is one the main factors that generate such behaviour. Indeed, as Griffiths explains, as 'Islamic and European knowledge systems were integrated into indigenous systems as part of the process of colonisation [...] new discursive norms were introduced to sustain' new understandings of the roles of men and women in society.'[21] In *CJV*, the power of old traditions influenced by colonisation restricts both individual space, and the gendered positions of women and men in society.

Addressing her mother in her interior monologue and seeking to resolve the dilemnas of her own identity, Musango describes the long three-year rejection by her family:

> depuis trois jours que tu ne m'avais pas nourrie. Tu avais eu ce regard un peu fou qui précédait tes crises de violence, avant de déclarer qu'il n'y avait pas assez à manger pour nous deux. Tu n'avais pas d'argent. Tu n'avais pas de

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[21] Ibid.,., pp. 157-158.

métier. Tu dépendais totalement de papa. A sa mort, sa famille avait fait

main basse sur tous ses biens. Les terrains, les villas, les comptes bancaires.

Ils t'avaient laissé quelques semaines pour débarrasser le plancher, et

retourner chez les tiens. Tu n'avais pas de relations. Ils en avaient. Tu n'avais

aucun droit. Ils les avaient tous. Papa ne t'avait pas épousée. Sa femme

devant la loi et devant Dieu, c'était celle d'avant, la mère de mes frères. Celle

qui avait quitté son mari pour suivre un artiste guyanais dans son pays (p.

21).

The narrator tells us how Musango perceives her mother's life and her frivolous

relationships with men. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*

(1981) illustrates in a similar way the life of a village embedded in secular traditions.

Although the period of time referred to is different, both novels share similar

narrative techniques and a postcolonial dimension. Marquez is, of course, well-

known for experimenting with less traditional ways of dealing with reality, adding an

extra supernatural dimension to his characters, such as being elevated to heaven,

when doing common everyday life acts. Brenda Cooper's examination of magical

realism in a selection of three West African texts, focuses on Syl Cheney-Coker

(Sierra Leone), Ben Okri (Nigeria) and Kojo Laing (Ghana), and argues that their

books are characterised by the powerful, restless reincarnations of myth into magic

and history into the universal. They are writers on the margins, inhabiting borders;

this is a definition that Miano fully embraces, 'j'ai plutôt tendance à fuir cette

appartenance au centre. Je suis quelqu'un de périphérique et de marginal'.[22]

However, the complexities of the debate cannot be reduced to this aspect

only. In *Postcolonial Thought*, Pierre-Philippe Fraiture's analysis of Mudimbe's

articulation of African discourse, and in extenso of Cameroonian society, condemns

'the classificatory grid in which Africans are invariably associated with nakedness,

paganism or cannibalism'.[23] This perception imprisons Africans in an evolutionary

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[22] Video interview of Léonora Miano, 22 January 2008 <Ibid.auteurs.tv.com> [accessed 2 August 2010].

[23] Pierre-Philippe Fraiture, 'V. Ibid. Mudimbe's 'Long Nineteenth Century' in *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 136-146 (p. 139).

discourse based on Western intellectual paradigms. Fraiture explains that in *The Invention of Africa*, Mudimbe's Foucauldian approach to reconceptualising anthropological discourses justifies an epistemological break. Indeed, 'anthropology as a discipline - with its array of scientific networks and legitimizing institutions (museums, universities) - is the product of a reordering of knowledge that coincided with and echoed a remapping of national and racial perceptions'; this movement coincided throughout the nineteenth century in Europe with nation building and the construction of racial theories. The development of the discipline appears to follow that of European modernity and to reflect Europe's rise to prominence. As argued by Mbembe, Western discourse, mainly constructed on 'primitiveness' and 'elementariness', reduces Africa to a discourse of 'the strange and the monstrous'.[24] It interprets its reality through a discourse of intimacy, which reduces Africa to an 'object of experimentation'. Mbembe explains in greater depth how West Africa suffers from epistemic violence as it is almost always referred to as an element of a 'metatext about the animal and the beast'. Instead, Mbembe argues, Africa needs to be 'understood for what it is'.

Identity: individual and collective

Nomadic identities

During the week that celebrated *Francophonie* in Lyon in 2010, *La Maison de la Francophonie*[25] offered the public a show entitled *Identités Nomades*. It was inspired by *Nouvelles Odyssées*, an anthology of the immigration literature edited by *La Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* in Paris. In this paradigm of otherness, which

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[24] Achille Mbembe, *On The Postcolony* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 2.

[25] La Maison de la Francophonie in Lyon is dependent on the Mairie de Lyon, which is subsidised by French governmental funds through decentralisation, the Organisation Nationale de la Francophonie, the Ministère des Affaires Etrangéres et Européennes, and the Ministère à la Coopération Décentralisée et à la Francophonie. It is important to note that the prime focus of the French Government through the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie has been to ensure an imperialistic linguistic politics to secure economic interests in Francophone Africa to the detriment of local populations. Chapter Six deals with this in greater depth.

embraces nomadic identities, the fluidity of identities and their multiple dimensions were enlightened.

Back in 1957, five years after the publication of Frantz Fanon's *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, Albert Memmi explored the two possible explanation for the colonised to understand identity formation during colonisation: 'devenir autre' or 'reconquérir toutes ses dimensions dont l'a amputé la colonisation'.[26] In the same way that Musango goes through different psychological states of mind before freeing herself from the traumatic relationship with her mother and their separation, Memmi argues that, for a colonised person, a liberating reconquest of yourself only takes place after going through six phases: the 'amour du colon-haine de soi' scenario, the 'impossibilité d'assimilation' stage, the 'révolte', the 'refus du colonisateur'; the 'affirmation de soi', and finally the 'décalage avec soi'. The transformation of your inner self, Memmi argues, to accept your individuality, will convert the oppressed into a man/woman who is set free from the dialectics of mystifying colonial categories that cling to the Saidian East-West dichotomy.

Memmi deconstructs the coloniser's gnosis to establish a new theoretical framework that allows the colonised to find a constructive way to exist, free from epistemic and systemic violence. Miano goes beyond the 'décalage de soi' by freeing herself fully from her mother's cruelty, which haunts her for years, and alienates her. By finally confronting her mother, having traced her back to her native village, Musango faces death and loops the loop. We also quickly discover that in *CJV* the metaphorical narrative alternates between the nine-year-old Musango, who experiences life as she tries to find her mother, and Musango the narrator, a thirty-year-old young lady who is presumably writing a semi-autobiographical novel. Musango is also the name given to an old lady who saves her from perishing whilst returning to her origins. The young girl, Musango, searches for a renaissance to deliver herself from a past that is tormented by illness, her mother's cruel treatment, and the loss of her family. The different stages that Musango goes through represent a process of identification that she has had to embody since her birth and during her three-year harrowing journey motivated by one reason: finding her mother. This

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[26] Albert Memmi, *Portrait du Colonisé, Portrait du Colonisateur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985 [1957]), pp. 117-20.

obsession is illustrated in the narrative by the omnipresence of Musango's thoughts and internal dialogue, which stand out from the main text with the use of an italic font. Miano's metaphorical discourse about day and night echoes Musango's quest for the beginning of her existence on this earth.

The presence of mud throughout the novel metaphorically represents how difficult and complex her liberation is. Whereas Mbembe focuses on the relation of power inherited from the colonial framework as a source of brutal relationships in contemporary West and Equatorial Africa, Memmi dismantles every psychological state that the individual goes through before hoping to envisage a new life and a new identity. Indeed, the contributing factor to destroying individual identities originates in colonisation, its dehumanising and abnegating mechanisms that have created beings with deficiencies and negated identities. In *CJV,* Miano describes a lost generation that suffers from postcolonial trauma. Desperate to find alternatives, Miano, like Memmi, vindicates the need for a true liberation for every individual; a liberation that does not define itself by categories created by colonisation, but allows individuals to choose with freedom of speech. For the nation to be perceived outside of a statist framework, Léonora Miano reminds us that 'un groupe ethnique [...] ne suffit pas à former une nation. Si d'aventure le pays atteint à une manière de cohésion, c'est à la force des choses qu'il le devra. Depuis, le soleil s'est couché. Il n'est plus qu'un disque lumineux qui vient indiquer aux humains qu'il est l'heure de faire semblant de vivre' (p. 184). Although in Part Five of *CJV* Miano finally comes to the conclusion that it is possible to foresee a better future, there is a long process to go through, which involves acknowledging individual rights beyond traditions within communities, and on a smaller scale within families. Indeed, Miano is very critical of the rigid structure of traditions that endanger the nation, and only allows Musango to attain a true state of freedom when she transcends herself: 'j'ai mûri dans une gangue de rage, pour créer une identité qui soit mienne, pour être un individu dans un monde où ce mot seul est une transgression, un blasphème' (p. 178).

CJV echoes in many ways Fanon's discourse about national liberation and renaissance. For Frantz Fanon, revolution is an essential step to freedom and full liberation from a colonised identity. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he explains that 'decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon' (2001, p. 27) as it involves the

'absolute substitution' for what he qualifies as a 'species of men by another species of men'. Musango has to surpass herself to become a different person and finally attain this longed for inner peace, symbolised in the novel by the rising sun: 'Tel est donc le jour qui se lève. Il durera le temps qu'il me reste à vivre' (p. 246).

In 1971, in the novel entitled *This Earth My Brother,* the Ghanaian author Kofi Awoonor uses the crysalid-caterpillar-butterfly metaphor to illustrate the hope for a metamorphosis of Amamu, the main protagonist; Amamu is a lawyer who has studied in Europe, and return to his country but the reader discovers that he is doomed to failure. Out of despair Amamu throws himself in to the dangerous Atlantic waves and disappears. This process clearly illustrates what is commonly found in the 1960s-1970s literature from West and Equatorial Africa: the point of no return and the impossibility to go back to the past, to a pre-colonial era. Léonora Miano breaks away from such trends and reflects a more contemporary, more optimistic, literary trend embracing the need for a violent awakening. The liberation process that Musango goes through, which metaphorically illustrates the need for Cameroonian society and Africa as a continent to free themselves from their past, is as violent as decolonisation should be. Decolonisation has not yet taken place in Cameroon and neo-colonial powers such as China and America have reformed the chains of dependence.[27]

Identity is not, Kadiatu Kanneh argues, essentially defined by race. Indeed, in his reading of *L'Aventure Ambigüe*, a literary creation typical of the time of the independences in Francophone Africa, Samba Diallo's intense physical suffering is comparable to Musango's torturous past. However, Musango, still in her country, does not despair and finds the strength to rebuild herself. Unlike Amamu or Samba Diallo, she has not migrated to Europe. Identity, initially defined by localized traditional values, finally becomes a borderless and nomadic identity, independent from a superimposed statist model as Musango is liberated from her suffering. For Samba Diallo the only escape is suicide. Throughout the novel, the absence of

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[27] This particular link with an interactive map entitled 'Les Chinois en Afrique' illustrates with a strong visual impact the extent to which China has overtaken Africa in many industries: <http://Ibid.rfi.fr/afrique/20101026-chinois-afrique> [accessed 23 November 2010].

dialogues between Musango and her mother is a blank in the narrative, and symbolizes the gap that colonisation has left in African societies. This non-communication comes to an end when she finally finds her mother back in the cemetery on a very dark night: 'Maman, c'est moi, Musango' (p. 242). Symbolic of Musango's longed for inner peace, the very last few pages of the novel emphasise traditional story-telling and show children peacefully sitting around a fire, away from danger. The children form a circle around the fire and, like it used to be, listen to grand-mother Ewanlé's story-telling: 'enfin, elle lance: Enguinguilayé! Nous répondons vivement: Ewésé! La réponse doit être aussi vive que l'appel du contour, afin de témoigner de la qualité d'écoute de l'assistance' (p. 233). Here, the use of Douala in the French narrative can be portrayed not only as reconciliation between tradition and modernity, but also as a decomplexed co-habitation between French and Douala.

Language and identity

In reference to the 1974 conference 'The Teaching of African Literature in Kenyan Schools', Wa Thiong'o reminds us that every language has its own social and cultural basis and is instrumental in the formation of mental processes and value judgements,[28] ; as a consequence, for Wa Thiong'o, 'all black literature embodies our struggle or a cultural identity'.[29] In 1986, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's addressed issues of writing in the coloniser's language.[30] Arguably, Wa Thiong'o ensures that writings by writers of African origin cannot be accessed by the mass 'the working class and the peasantry', thus falsifiying the true spreading of literature and, as a consequence, preventing revolution from taking place, as Fanon would argue.

As always, writers who originate from West and Equatorial Africa, like Miano, whether they are anglophone, lusophone or Francophone, face the problem of the accessibility of their writings for an African readership. As Ngugi Wa Thiong'o explains, 'European languages became so important to the Africans that they

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[28] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, 'The Teaching of African Literature in Kenyan Schools', 1974 conference in Kenya, in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African literature* (Oxford: Currey, 1986), p. 99.
[29] Ibid.,., p. 98.
[30] Ibid.,., p. 98.

defined their own identities partly by reference to those languages. Africans began to describe each other in terms of being either Francophone or English-speaking Africans.'[31] Indeed the borders drawn during colonial times transpire somehow in the literature that is produced from within these borders and resonates back to the past. Paradoxically, beyond the label Francophone, and if we embrace, as Mabanckou suggests, a dual identity such as his 'franco-congolaise' or 'congolo-française', the equation allows for a two-way interpretation.

The danger to such approach is to essentialise African languages. For Mabanckou, however, 'nous sommes tout comptables de la langue française'.[32] Indeed, as Mabanckou argues, there is no such thing as the language of the coloniser because a language evolves with the 'apports de chacun'.[33] On the contrary, for Wa Thiong'o, there is no difference between 'a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages'.[34] Using non-dialectical languages, or non-African languages, participates in the act of excluding 'the peasantry and the working class in the debate'. Wa Thiong'o differentiates himself from what he calls the 'Afro-European literature', that is 'another hybrid tradition, a minority tradition in transition', which comprises of great minds such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Kofi Awoonor. This brings light to the statement Wa Thiong'o makes at the start of his book, which he considers to be a 'farewell to English for any of his writings', and decides to rely on translation to disseminate his work. All in all, Wa Thiong'o advises African writers to return to their roots, to 'return to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and speech and languages of the African masses'.[35] One would assume that it is an interesting strategy to use when already known and internationally acclaimed, as Wa Thiong'o is.

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[31] Ibid.,., p. 30.

[32] François Busnel, 'Le Grand Entretien, Alain Mabanckou', 25 November 2010, France Inter <http://sites.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/em/grand-entretien/index.php?id=97095> [accessed 30 December 2011].

[33] Ibid.,.

[34] Wa' Thiong'o N'gugi, *Decolonising the Mind, the politics of language in African literature* (London: Currey, 1986), p. 26.

[35] Ibid.,., p. 72.

Readership and publication networks, which allow *CJV* to be read and spread in Europe and around the world, cannot be neglected. For this purpose, the label World Literature provides an alternative that accepts writings in local dialects and in European languages. Arguing for the possibility of a reconnection with the mainstream of all African people, Wa Thiong'o believes in 'the struggle against imperialism and its rooting itself in the rich oral traditions of the peasantry',[36] in order to resolve the problemof accessing and spreading such writings, since local dialects are cross-border elements not contained in the political geography of postcolonial Africa, but rather travelling agents.[37]

Miano, like other Cameroonian writers, have a dual European linguistic heritage with French and English, which puts them in a prevalent position of accessing a wider readership anway. Miano raises a strong point against Wa Thiong'o's vision. She argues that there is no such thing as the Bantus any longer, time has passed and the Bantus have travelled across Africa. For Miano, defining some populations as being Bantus has no real meaning. She prefers to emphasise anglo-Francophone identity with jazz dimensions in *CJV*. Punctuated by jazz autobiographical pieces from Dianne Reeves, Abbey Lincoln and Duke Ellington, remind Musango of the time spent with her dad (p. 175). Carefully orchestrated like a musical piece, the five parts are named after various musical movements. From this dual anglo-Francophone identity, the borderless dimension of music resonates from Africa to America and from Cameroon to France. The musical structure of this fiction gives a dynamic rhythm to the pace of the story and creates a theatrical dimension. In the last part entitled *Coda*, Miano evokes hope and announces the possible end of the tragedy. This contrasts with the tone of the first novel in this trilogy, *L'aube écarlate,* which is much more pessimistic and told by an older narrator, instead of a diegesic narrator in *CJV*, who witnesses atrocious scenes of destruction with the spread of the civil war.

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[36] Ibid.,., p. 85.
[37] On page 88 of the 1986 edition - the one I refer to in this chapter – N'Gugi backs up this view in the following statement: 'the base need not be physical but could also be philosophical, class or national'. Although I explore the limitations of national identities in Chapter Two, I agree with N'Gugi's view on the static physicality of borders, which limits the study of the literature originating from African writers.

As Mabanckou points out, the situation of African writers within their communal identity is a challenge that they all face. Indeed, by openly challenging traditional beliefs and exposing such issues to a wide readership, Miano puts herself in a marginalised position. For example, Cheick Amidou Kane has suffered greatly from the pressures of the Senegalese community, who has blamed him for entering a solitary act. Literature can be seen as a transgression from traditionally embedded orature, which comprises of a 'local' audience and a 'local' style of story-telling. In order to avoid falling into the dichotomy of local versus global, and excluding African writers from their communities, it is important to reconsider cultural identity and its spatial belonging. This is a point I will attempt to address in the following section.

Space: the local and the global

New trajectories

In Part Two, having tried to understand the extent to which cultural origin is determined by identity in a country that has been artificially mapped during colonial times, in Part Three I shall situate these prevalent socio-political and cultural issues within a spatial problematic.

Despite her geographical origins being in Cameroon, Miano faces the challenge of writing about a country she has left. From the child's perspective, Musango witnesses national conflicts of a postcolonial nature. These are issues created by the artificial political borders generated by the 1994 and 1996 conflicts over oil in the Bakassa peninsula between Cameroon and Nigeria. Camerroon finally withdrew their troops from the area in 2006 in line with an international court ruling awarding sovereignty to Cameroon. Despite this, in November 2007, the Nigerian senate passed a motion declaring the Nigeria-Cameroon agreement for the Bakassa Peninsula to be illegal. Simultaneously, there are still internal tensions over the two mainly English-speaking southern provinces. A secessionist movement, the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), which emerged in the 1990s, is still declared as a rebellion movement. Such conflicts of postcolonial dimension are highlighted implicitly in *CJV*.

Membe's analysis[38] of the origin of such internal conflicts is particularly insightful when combined to Fanon's psychoanalytical perspectives. As is rightly phrased in *Postcolonial Thought,* 'Achille Mbembe denounces the bond of a certain co-dependence in a shared living space, such that even the most extreme acts of aesthetics subversion are not only tolerated but also actively encouraged'.[39] The first part of *CJV* perfectly illustrates this point as it opens up on a poignant and very emotionless description of a scene involving the nine-year-old Musango being abused by her mother, Ewenji. Accused of her father's death by the seer, Sésé, Ewenji attacks her daughter as a demon that she needs to kill:

> tous, ils t'avaient vue me garnir les oreilles, les narines et le sexe de papier journal, afin que le feu prenne plus vite. Mes bras étaient attachés à la tête du lit. Tu m'avais sanglé les jambes après les avoir écartées. J'étais nue et ma peau portait encore les marques laissées par les bambous (p. 19).

On the bed of torture, Musango's body is dehumanised and reduced to this confined space. The restriction of her movements echoes the chained slaves.

The exploration of space in *CJV* is a multi-dimensional element that pervades the novel. Movement from one place another is constant and unsettling until the very last few pages where Musango is filled with a sense of relief at being settled in her grandmother's house. Space is narrowed down to her mother's native village with two focal points: the banana tree, which has its first fruits in twelve years and coincides with Musango's twelfth birthday, and the cemetery where Musango reunites with her mother. Paired with different lighting effects, space is used as a means of exploring Musango's life trajectories; it is sometimes open, airy and enlightened, and sometimes claustrophobic, muddy and dark. The many allusions to day and night constantly refer back to the title and paces the novel as a theatrical play held together by the progression throughout the many acts and scenes, as if one day only goes by. More orchestrated like a piece of music, *CJV* is also the stage for a

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[38] Achille Mbembe, 'The Aesthetics of Vulgarity' in *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London : University of California Press, 2001), pp. 102-141.

[39] Charles Forsdick, David Murphy, *Postcolonial thought in the French-speaking world* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 225.

tragicomedy of life with philosophical and world resonance. Alhtough claiming to be a writer of a world dimension, Miano says of herself 'je suis une hybride culturelle, totalement transversale, c'est-à-dire que je suis un auteur d'expression française mais absolument pas de culture française. Ce qu'il y a de français chez moi c'est la langue [...] donc j'écris pour le monde entier s'il faut parler d'espace.'[40] She inevitably tells the story of her people and her roots, of past generations entrapped in schizophrenic memories of the inflexible and intangible nature of borders.

The superficial aspect of political borders does not reflect the reality of West and Equatorial Africa, a space in permanent mutation, which did not used to be divided into such big entities, as countries. Asiwaju explores how borders have cut through existing entities:

the boundaries have been drawn across well-established lines of communication including, in every case, a dormant or active sense of community based on traditions concerning common ancestry, usually very strong kinship ties, shared socio-political institutions and economic resources, common customs and practices, and sometimes acceptance of a common political control.[41]

It is indeed the rupture formulated by Mbembe that generates many local clashes and forces local population to rearticulate their own lifes, their own culture. Space has been a major critical preoccupation in this arena. Through her project Tn mundi, which focuses on transnational networks, Professor Ulrike Meinhof[42] offers a different approach to understanding culture by going beyond national parameters. She suggests, as an alternative, to study migrants' expressions of culture, rather than nation-based cultural phenomenon. Her research of artists in migration allows her to

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[40] Video interview, 22 January 2008, <Ibid.auteurs.tv.com> [accessed August 2010].
[41] A. I. Asiwaju and Paul Nugent, *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London: Pinter, 1996).
[42] Ulrike Hanna Meinhof is Professor of German and Cultural Studies and a specialist in discourse analysis. Her main areas of research currently involve ethnographic research on transnational networks of migrants, especially musicians from African countries, in multicultural neighbourhoods across European border communities, in provincial regions and in metropolitan spaces across Europe.

explore the dynamics of contemporary migration and transnational fields; to complement and challenge highly theorised globalisation concepts by empirical research, and also provide an alternative vision of migrants who are usually perceived as trouble – makers or victims. Her previous work consists of changing city spaces as a challenge to nation-state models of migration through the concept of the metropolitan city, challenging uni-directional paradigms and immobile spaces, such as the banlieues in France or the nation in Cameroon.[43] The danger of such an approach, as pointed out by Professor Meinhof herself, is to neglect localities within host countries, and to neglect the significance of social networks and the agents in civil society within a migrant community.

Also eager to surpass static and fixed definitions of post-colonial Africa, Charles Forsdick examines the processes linked to 'syncretism, relation, hybridity, creolisation, transculturation' for their travelling 'within and between cultures'.[44] Forsdick's travel theory fully embraces all the challenges faced by Francophone West and Equatorial Africa. The theoretical flexibility he provides allows the integration of notions of multiplicity and diversity. Indeed, Forsdick acknowledges different trajectories with a departure point and an arrival point, whilst allowing for different routes to be taken. Its limitations are comparable to the ones described above in relation to Meinhof's transnational studies, but instead of focusing on the subjects of migration, Forsdick puts the emphasis on texts. Both theories, Mbembe would argue, typical of postcolonial and modernist trends, do not attend 'sufficiently to the lived, existential experience of the African subject, or the economic conditions underlying the various symbolic and discursive theories they might bring to bear upon the analysis of contemporary Africa.'[45] However, rather than just passing-by various cultural spaces, Forsdick strives to explore these issues within their specific historical contexts. Indeed, his mention of Jan Pieterse, and lengthy quotations in

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[43] Professor Meinhof presented her work at the Bath 'Negotiating Modernity' Postgraduate Conference on in July 2010.

[44] In the following publication on behalf of the Society for French Studies, Patrick Corcoran comments on Charles Forsdick's *Travel in Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Cultures: The Persistence of Diversity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[45] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London : University of California Press, 2001), p. 229.

the introduction on the role of global cultural synchronisation, as space is travelled faster due to modern means of transport and cultural connections are maintained more easily with modern technological media, stresses the reciprocity of cultural exchanges between Western and non-Western cultures. Furthermore, the reference to Mary Louise Pratt's use of transculturation in her travel writing accentuates the positive effects of meetings with other cultures creating a 'contact zone'. Forsdick explains in more details how 'Pratt's contact zone is linked in spatial terms to Mann's concept of interstitial emergence, which gives room to the diasporic sites created by migrants, exiled and nomads that are sources of social and cultural renewal'.[46] From that point of view, Forsdick's travel theory complements Asiwaju's study of boundaries.

Thanks to a rigorous study of everyday life, its common, everyday, personal and 'plural' practices, Michel de Certeau articulates his notion of culture as the result of the transgression of boundaries imposed by all totalising systems. As Certeau explains in *Culture in the Plural*, 'the analysis of cultural trajectories must allow to be grasped at once a composition of places and the innovation that modifies it by dint of moving across them'. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau makes a fundamental distinction between 'place', *le lieu*, and 'space', *l'espace*.[47] Place is synonym of property, it is a distinct location and equals stability, whereas space is negotiated, polyvalent, and is the product of the result of operations of action and movement, it is a 'practised place'.[48] In *CJV*, the traditional versus modernity dilemma is characterised by the city-to-countryside movement. Musango crosses through a variety of spaces without settling down. She is rejected first from her home place and is then found constantly migrating against her will when captured by her rapters (SEE PREVIOUS NOTE); she finally escapes and moves towards a place proper to her grand-mother where she finds peace. Similarly, Cameroon goes through phases where geographical space encounters foreign presence and dismantles all pre-established social and cultural networks due to the slave trade

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[46] Charles Forsdick's *Travel in Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Cultures: The Persistence of Diversity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 5.
[47] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Stephen Rendall (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 115-130.
[48] Ibid.,., p. 117.

dating back to 1520, the year of the Portuguese invasion successively followed by the Dutch, the Germans and finally the British and the French who divide the land between two mandates.[49] Certeau's conception of space as a practised place allows for a renegotiation and reappropriation of postcolonial space to go beyond the geographical borders established artificially by the colonisers.

Certeau problematises his distinction between place and space with the study of cartography. He writes that 'the map has currently disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility.' Certeau compares the map as it used to be before the apparition of a modern scientific discourse in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; here, the map was not 'a geographical map' but 'a history book' outlining the experiences not the route, and the geographical map, being the result of historical operations, for example, 'the sailing ship painted on the sea indicates the maritime expedition that made it possible to represent the coastlines'. However, according to Certeau, 'the map gradually wins out over these figures; it colonises space; it eliminates little by little the pictural figurations of the practices that produce it',[50] which corroborates the idea we are trying to develop in this chapter that borders, fixed and rigid on paper, crystallises ex-colonies into a backdated and obsolete space, but which are also practised places in constant evolution.

Across borders

To illustrate the duality of borders' function, Asiwaju[51] explains that 'while the purpose of borders is to corral sets of people, creating either citizens or subjects, and to enforce colonial policy, the reality is that borders artificially divide land and

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[49] John Middleton, ed. *Encyclopedia of Africa, South of the Sahara*, Vol.1 (New York: MacMillan, 1997).

[50] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Stephen Rendall (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 12-121.

[51] Professor A. I Asiwaju is Professor of History at the University of Lagos in Nigeria,a has been Commissioner (International Boundaries) at the National Boundary Commission in Lagos, and is one of the leading Nigerian historians, whose writings on African boundaries are widely known but who has also written on many other aspects of colonial rule in West Africa with a comparative approach.

distribute local population erratically'.[52] Asiwaju's work on African boundaries emphasises that although much of the literature on borders focuses on a common sense of identity, in the face of international borders, interestingly:

> boundaries have tended to create vested interests, but also to foster a sense of difference between communities across the line. Family connections have forged more durable ties than those which have rested on a share ethnicity or even a putatively shared history.[53]

Asiwaju accentuates the need to move away from 'statist and sovereignty-referenced frameworks' and insists that African scholars emphasise the 'integrative' characteristics of borders, rather than 'conflictual processes, on the problem of borders people instead of those of the national states, and finally concern for border regional and local authorities rather than for national governments.'[54] In *CJV*, the country ravaged by war has allowed small groups to create new spaces of interaction, but most of the time they are found to be spoilt by the vicissitudes and traumas generated by civil war. We witness the perversions of a society anchored in dubious practices.

Wole Soyinka believes that there is only one possible response to the question of durability of African inter-states' frontiers: 'the only genuine solution is to 'unpick' the quilt that the colonialists have stitched together and to replace it with something more general.'[55] As argued by Asiwaju, although the global dimension of 'the partitioned African's experience' - as national boundaries were negotiated with hardly any reference to local communities - is comparable to West and Eastern

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[52] Asiwaju, A. I. and Nugent, Paul, eds., *African boundaries : barriers, conduits and opportunities* (London and New York: Pinter, 1996).

[53] A. I Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984* (London and Lagos: University of Lagos Press , 1985), p. 9.
[54] Ibid.,., p. 260. See PICA = Programme on International Cooperation in Africa, Sept 1989, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, which consist in conceptualizing boundaries as bridges, not barriers, between the nations.
[55] Wole Soyinka, '*Bloodsoaked Quilt of Africa [interview with Wole Soyinka]*', *Guardian*, 17 May 1994, cited in African *Boundaries,* p. 267.

Europe, Asia and the two Americas,[56] Africa's reconsideration of its local identities needs to maximize the focus on frontier communities and to transform national place. The black man's burden resides in to the nation-statist panacea, for which Basil Davidson offers an antidote: 'the introduction of participatory structures within a wide regionalist framework'.[57] This framework re-appropriates space to regional places by reinforcing ownership and accountability of local space. It involves local populations in decision-making processes in local and national elections to counter corruption. The dismantlement of local customs and chiefdoms has affected local traditional customs. The necessary refocusing on local entities echoes Miano's recentering on the fundamental notion of individual identity.

The concept of African nation, whose artificial outlining does not acknowledge the presence of a variety of local communities, seems to be a fixed and rigid concept not embracing diversity:

> However artificial they might once have been, there is a sense in which
> many African boundaries do now demarcate mental space. But even
> more striking is the manner in which wholly new kinds of communities
> have been created at the margins of national territory.[58]

Nevertheless, although Fanon encourages national struggle and confines struggle within the nation space, he stretches beyond the limits of the nation as for him, 'the responsibility of the native man of culture is not a responsibility vis-à-vis his national culture, but a global responsibility with regard to the totality of the nation, whose culture merely, after all, represents one aspect of that nation.'[59] Similarly, Miano throws herself into the act of creating a literature inspired by her own experience in Cameroon, by personal facts; as a 'native intellectual', her desire to create an

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[56] A. I. Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans, Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*, (London and Lagos: University of Lagos Press1985), pp. 238-40.
[57] David Davidson, *The black Man's Burden, Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (London: Villiers, 1992), p. 322.
[58] Asiwaju, p. 9.
[59] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 187.

'authentic work of art' necessarily uses the realities of a nation until she, ultimately, finds 'the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge' (p. 187).

In an effort to eradicate the self-perpetrating colonial clichés obsessed with authenticising the population, and the destructive nationalist attempts to re-Africanise the country,[60] *CJV* disintegrates the myths created around the tribal and ethnic dimension of Cameroon. The artificial appellation of Bantou, to which Miano refers to as now being a meaningless category, originally encompassed the people originating from a zone located between the south of the Benoué in Nigeria and the actual Cameroon. The term created by the linguist W.C Bleck, in the middle of the XIXth century, has little significance in the history and culture of Africa due to the numerous migratory fluxes, which took place right from -2,000 B.C. H. Brunschwig describes in *Le Partage de l'Afrique Noire* (Paris, 1971) the artificial categorising of ethnic groups torn between the metropolises' land division. For example, the Gudes, the Higis and the Matakam, who were on the Cameroonian side of the common border in the area of the ancient state of Mandara, came to be called, respectively, the 'Djimi', the 'Kapsiki' and the 'Wula'. The absurdity of the colonial situation resides in the fact that people within the newly partitioned countries could not communicate due to the disparate nature of the local dialects, which Miano refers to as:

> l'Histoire ne se réécrit pas. Le français est la langue officielle du Mboasu. De toutes les manières, les frontières ont associé en leur sein des tribus si disparates et si jalouses de leur langue, que l'usage du parler colonial semble le plus sûr moyen de préserver une forme de paix identitaire. Les habitants du Mboasu, qui ont pourtant une souche linguistique commune, ne se comprennent pas d'une région à l'autre d'un bout de terrain à l'autre. Ce sont tous des Bantous, mais cela ne signifie plus grand-chose (p. 184).

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[60] Léonora Miano, *Contours du Jour Qui Vient* (Paris: Collection Pocket, 2006), p. 198: 'cette robe ample en tissue pagne qui est le costume traditionnel des femmes de la côte du Mboasu depuis que l'épouse d'un missionnaire britannique se mit en tête de recouvrir leur nudité'; 'depuis nous sommes un pays civilisé, même si le président Mawusé a imposé au pays une révolution culturelle, interdisant le port des prénoms chrétiens qui attestait de notre adieu à la sauvagerie. La révolution d'ailleurs n'a eu que peu d'effets. Le nom du pays a été africanisé. Les rues portant le nom de grands civilisateurs ont été rebaptisées, mais on n'est pas allé bien loin. On s'est vite essouflé.' (p. 183).

By raising awareness of the historical background of the region, Miano redefines Mboasu's historical past and space. The bantou languages altogether represent about 400 languages; this includes, as its more well-know vernacular languages, Swahili languages, kinirwanda-kirundi, lingala, chichewa, zoulou, and douala - spoken by about 1 million people in Cameroon - or fang beti - spoken by about 5 million people across Cameroon, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea[61]. The paradox that lies in the linguistic choice that the writer of African origin makes can be compared to that faced by the eclectic communities whose common language is French in Francophone nations, English in anglophone nations and Portuguese in lusophone nations. Entrapped within the label, they find themselves imprisoned within their own dilemma, as all national administrative services directly inherited from colonial times are run in French and in English.[62] There seems to be a double-clash within national space due to an unsuited administrative structure of space that misrepresents localities and local inhabitants.

The local and the global are two interdependent entities with many interactions. Reducing West and Equatorial African literature to its local identity does not acknowledge Africa's place in the universe, but rather considers it a world apart: a Third-World, *mis en abyme* by other literatures of more economically prevalent parts of the world. The 2007 French initiative of the *Manifeste pour une Littérature Monde en Français*[63] seems to reiterate identical issues. By accepting into the sphere of French literature the authors of the periphery, it does not decentre, but rather creates another network based on linguistic similarity, which can be interpreted as reductive. The focus on postcolonial studies in anglophone academia has strived to tackle the issue of borders. It is, however, criticised at times. Back in 2004, Bénita Parry, concerned with the limitations of postcolonial studies, commented on the limitations of ambiguous strategic exchanges in the dialogue

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[61] John Middleton, ed., *Encyclopedia of Africa, South of the Sahara* (New-York: MacMillan, 1997), I.

[62] Ibid.,.

[63] The manifest is an initiative launched by fourty-four writers and supported by *Le Monde* in favour of a French language freed from its pact with the nation, announcing the death of francophonie. For more details see <http://Ibid.etonnants-voyageurs.net/spip.php?article1574> [accessed October 2009].

between the coloniser and the colonised and pushed for the exploration of the 'possibility of an interactive and mutually transformative relationship'.[64] In the era of a post-neocolonial relationship between the North and the South of the world, it looks like there is still a lot to do to achieve such mutual rapport.

Conclusion

What is today referred to as Francophone African literature has become a debatable classification since it reduces the literature written in French and produced in West and Equatorial Africa to its linguistic identity, an identity formed on the basis of a colonial mapping of the region. However, borders also offer new opportunities to communities involved in cross-border movements by developing multiple spatial and mental identities.

As demonstrated in this chapter, there are many justifications that are valid to envisaging Francophone African literature as world literature. Indeed, Francophone African literature should not be side tracked, or considered as second class French literature. However, the danger of classifying Francophone African literature as World literature is to erase its multitude of localities and identities behind a globalised label. Paradoxically, the label Francophone is often rejected by scholars or authors of the French language for its narrowing definition. As Alain Mabanckou explains, he prefers to refer to his origin too and likes to be called an author franco-congolais, or equally congolo-français (French Congolese or Congolese French), but not as a *écrivain du monde*. *CJV* is a good example of the limitations of such classifications since the narrative is made out of a combination of themes generated from a specific local situation in Equatorial Africa, which also resonate across Eastern Europe and South America, unsettled by militarized power and slow economic development. The enslavement and prostitution of young village girls from families affected by misery and embedded in local traditions; traditions transformed by the American Evangelical Church based on the beliefs of bad spirits, witch doctors

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[64] Bénita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004).

and protection rituals, such as deflowering and impregnating young girls before sending them to Europe. Indeed, the gender divide in Francophone Africa that Miano denounces in her novel is enhanced by Griffith's work on the topic, which analyses by replacing particular social features with statistical support into their cultural context. This chapter has tried 'to decentre the elitist French literary scene by deterritorialising Francophone literature.'[65] I believe that Francophone West and Equatorial African literature is simultaneously French literature and literature in French.

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[65] Dominic Thomas, *Nation-Building, Propaganda and Literature in Francophone Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

Chapter 4

Postcolonial renegotiations of identity and gender in Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*

> Cultural identity [...] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as it belongs to the past. It is something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.[1]
>
> Stuart Hall

Introduction

This chapter deals with the causes of exile and the identity thresholds implicated in the postcolonial notion of displacement. It studies these two issues in the context of Fatou Diome's novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, published in 2003, and aims to challenge the essentialising identity myths that are centred on *en-/déracinement* or *'étrangeté'*, not taking into account the specificity of the notion of identity and gender in a postcolonial context.

Although not classified as an autobiographical novel, *LVA* shares many similarities between the narrator and the author: both were born on the island of Niodor and are living in Strasbourg, both have a common birthplace and many other existential dilemnas. Salie, *LVA*'s main character, lives in France and her younger brother dreams of immigrating to the Promised Land. He relies fully on his older sister to make it happen. This novel shows the malaise between the disproportionate expectations of those who have remained at home, and the unbearable pressures put on the 'venus de France', condemned to be the other everywhere they go. Following the tides' movement, the Atlantic Ocean is an emblematic element that simultaneously represents physical displacements and identity fluctuations with a strong gender divide in the background.

In this chapter, I shall look first at the reasons that push the young Salie to leave Senegal, her native country, to join a land of exile, France. Through this

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[1] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1990), p. 225.

analysis, I will define the cultural and social context of the Francophone postcolony that she comes from, and the extent to which it pre-determines Salie as a gendered subject of the society she was born in. Secondly, I will investigate the notion of ambiguity, which progressively invades Salie during her metaphysical journey. The aim is to observe the metamorphic identity states she goes through and to compare them to both the accounts of the revenus de France, and to the tragic stories of ex-immigrants, which seem to have no discouraging effect on Salie's brother and his friends who idealise France. The centre-periphery dilemma inevitably comes up. However, the place of Madincké's TV set also becomes crucial and acts as a trompe l'oeil, a *miroir aux alouettes*, of the West. Finally, I will look at the universal identity dimension the that exiled has to accept to live in peace with him/herself, but also at the notion hybridity and the constant identity renegotiations dictated by time and space in the life of the exiled.

The exploration of the meaning of postcolonial identities in a cultural product from Francophone Africa (Diome) provides an opportunity to rally feminisit theories (Clement, Cixous, Butler, Kristeva) and historical narratives of gender crossed over with social and educational policies (Griffiths) in the context of world and African history, and specifically Senegalese history (Devey, Gellar, Klein, Triaud) still with postcolonial theorist in the background (Clifford, Hall, Irele, Miller).

The egg: society, tradition, gender stereotypes

<u>The impact of Islam in a transforming society</u>

Directly echoing the ground-breaking novel by the first Senegalese female novelist, *Une Si Longue Lettre* (1979) by Mariama Bâ, *LVA* is a novel that can be qualified as feminist for what it reveals about the condition of women in Senegal. *Une Si Longue Lettre* is the story of two Western-educated Senegalese women who are both confronted with their husbands' second marriage. Whereas Aissatou rejects polygamy and decides to leave her husband, Ramatoulaye, the narrator, accepts a compromise, hoping her husband will follow Islamic law that entitles her to equal attention and sharing of the husband with the new wife. Unfortunately, her husband fails to do so and eventually dies of a heart attack. Ramatoulaye, in her 'long letter',

explains that she is nevertheless full of hope and ready to start a new life.[2] Similarly trapped in a stifling patriarchal society, despite the fifty year gap between the two novels, Salie seems doomed by a low birth that prevents her from aspiring to a 'normal' life within the community on the island of Niodor. The island is situated in the Sine-Saloum Delta, about 180 km south of Dakar on the Atlantic coast. The geographical situation of Niodor, at the crossroads of Africa and Europe and crucial for its strategic location, was exploited during the slave trade, and represents an ideal escape route for those who want to emigrate to Europe. Through different embedded narratives and the metaphor of the belly of the Atlantic, particularly through Salie's story, the movement of tides seems to accompany the pace of life on the island. Diome explores the reasons for such a desperate wish to escape from the impact of Islam on her as a young girl in a transforming society.

Fatou Diome's native island of Niodor, also a central location of *LVA*'s plot, is a region where the strong presence of Islam and local practices determines Salie's life. The Sine-Saloum is a Serer region, a region originally populated by animists who left the North of Senegal in the eleventh century to escape the Jihadists' holy war by the Almoravids, the warriors who brought Islam from the Sahara.[3] In fact, despite the arrival of Christianity with colonisation, 94% of Senegalese are Muslims and, at the time of the novel, the region is strongly dominated by two Muslim brotherhoods: the Tidjanes, an order founded in 1737, and the more recent Mourides. The Nidorois, being a sub-group of the Serers, are exclusively Muslims. The Mouride Brotherhood is particularly present in the region of Kaolack on the coast just above the Northern border with Gambia.[4] Surprisingly, amongst the Kuranic schools in the *daaras* - villages - a French school is present on the island and is Salie's only outlet. Despite Senghor's policy to *revaloriser la femme* in the early 1960s, 'the implication being that Senghor's government would restore to women

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[2] For more details on the topic of marriage and woman, see *Ngambika, Studies of Women in African Literature*, ed. by Carol Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves (Africa World Press: 1986), p. 272.

[3] Muriel Devey, *Le Sénégal* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), pp. 60-65.

[4] Sheldon Gellar, *Senegal, An African Nation Between Islam and the West* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 165-71.

the place they occupied in society prior to the arrival of the French',[5] Senegal did not succeed in 'putting right the socio-economic disadvantages the female population inherited from colonisation'.[6]

Thanks to an initially reluctant Monsieur Ndétare, the French primary school's headmaster, Salie learns to master the French language, which will be her passport for her later escape to France. Fighting against a long established tradition of Mourides values, and against gender bias established during colonisation, Salie seems to embody the failings of a religious society paradoxically strongly opposed to colonialism, traditionally against the feudal system, against slavery, and social discriminations. In fact, in the Mourides brotherhood, religious hierarchy dominates over the cast system.[7] In *LVA,* Diome shares her worries about the island's future. Indeed, Islamic radicalisation, 'obscurantisme religieux' (p. 188) and gender divide corrupt the new generations. Back on holiday on the island, Salie listens to Ndétare remembering his CM1 class. Sadly, twenty years on, boys and girls still consider a future mission, or vocation, to be the forming of a polygamous family to produce as many muslims as possible: one of Salie's classmates used to say 'je veux faire maman' (p. 186), 'j'obéirai à mon mari pour aller au paradis, c'est ça qu'il a dit, mon père' (p. 187). Diome warns of a growing population with a limited knowledge of the Koran, and at the mercy of fake devouts who open institutes under the cover of humanitarian action. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Griffiths' work specifically highlights these gendered social development issues.[8] Diome warns also against the marabouts, guardians of moral and religious values, are trusted fully by the community who see in them a source of wisdom.[9] Their role evolved during the

[5] Claire Ibid. Griffiths, 'Shifting centres and static peripheries: geographies of power in Francophone African Gender and Development', in *Constesting Historical Divides in Francophone Africa* (Chester: University of Chester Press, 2013), pp. 145-175, p. 148.

[6] Ibid.,., p. 171. See Claire Griffiths' notes, p 171: 'On average across Francophone West Africa less than 10% of school places were occupied by girls in the two decades before independence.'

[7] Ibid.,., p. 169.

[8] See Claire Ibid. Griffiths, 'Mapping Gender and Development', and 'Senegal, a Monitoring Model for Francophone Africa', in *Globalizing the Postcolony: Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington books, 2011), pp. 75-86, pp. 85-98.

[9] See Devey, p. 62 for the origin of the marabout word; Gellar, p. 8; Martin A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal Sine-Saloum*, 1847-1914 (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

period of conversion to Islam at the end of the nineteenth century, when they were becoming central figures to villages in local leadership positions, combining teaching their talibés and land cultivation.[10] Nowadays, the roles some embody take advantage of the locals' lack of Koranic knowledge. As a matter of fact, in Chapter Eight, Sallie has to visit the *marabout*s to be cured (p. 139). The *marabout* was no more than 'un jeune homme qui empestait l'eau de Cologne et dont l'allure révélait un séducteur patenté' (p. 149). Gnarelle, the divorced mother, needs curing too. Unfortunately the ritual acts result in her third pregnancy. In a very sarcastic manner but with good humour, Diome criticises the belief in ancestral practices that transform women into social objects.[11] As argued by Griffiths the evolution of the gender dimension in society has been marked particularly by the arbitrary exercise of political power during colonisation.[12]

With the Islamisation of the Senegambian region and later on with colonisation, Senegal saw a transformation of its matrilineal rules, which were replaced by patrilineality and a strict codification of women's condition.[13] In precolonial Senegal, the status of women was different depending on the region; highly stratified societies were in place and caste lines distinguished between individuals rather than gender. In the Casamance region, women's status tended to be higher as men and women shared agricultural duties.[14] The application of the political structure of an Islamic state of Sudanic nature has influenced everyday life and family law, encompassing marriage, children, and the roles of women in a

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1968), p. 220; *Le Temps des Marabouts: Itinéraires et Stratégies Islamiques en Afrique*, ed. by David Robinson, Jean-Louis Triaud (Paris: Karthala, 1997).

[10] Klein, pp. 219-220.

[11] See quote in full in Catherine Clément and Julia Kristeva, *Le Féminin et le Sacré* (Paris: Stock, 1998), p. 32 : 'la polygamie progresse chez les jeunes, toutes origines sociales confondues. Il faut Ibid ajouter l'autorisation qu'ont certains marabouts à pratiquer une polygamie illimitée, trente, quarante épouses, un harem quoi. Les prescriptions de Mahomet ont volé en éclats, et ces marabouts, aussi entreprenants en affaires capitalistes qu'en capitalisation d'épouses légitimes, retrouvent sans coup férir les traditions pré-islamiques.'

[12] See Claire Ibid. Griffiths, 'Mapping Gender and Development', and 'Senegal, a Monitoring Model for Francophone Africa', in *Globalizing the Postcolony: Contesting Discourses of Gender and Development in Francophone Africa* (Plymouth: Lexington books, 2011), pp. 75-86, pp. 85-98.

[13] Devey, p. 66.

[14] Gellar, p. 5.

Muslim society. Fatou Diome's novel reflects on the issues linked to Islamic practice, on the effects of a patrilineal society she knows too well, and on the detrimental effects of colonisation on women's development.

Outcast

The reality of Mariama Ba's *Une Si Longue Lettre* (1981) is still true at the time of the *LVA*'s publication in 2003. Conceived outside legal marital union, Salie is forced to be abandoned by her mother who is not in line with the traditional moral codes: 'cette femme, au lieu de regarder près d'elle, de se contenter d'un fils de bonne famille du village, était allée choisir ailleurs un prince charmant, qui l'avait gratifiée d'une bâtarde' (p. 77).

In a complete break with local traditions, which would have suffocated her and declared her stillborn, Salie's grandmother names Salie after her biological father's name, instead of her step-father' s name: a decision which will affect Salie's life forever. She marries her mother to a cousin giving him a second wife for free by saving him from gathering a dowry, which teenage-mothers are not entitled to (p. 74). By breaking traditional marriage customs, which pre-determine men and women's future before they are born, the grandmother opens up a new destiny for Salie. Whereas Madické, her step-brother, gets full attention from his parents, 'ma mère venait d'avoir un fils qu'elle considéra comme son premier enfant' (p. 75), Salie is rejected by her step-father who throws her out and leaves her uncared for in the yard, in the rain, hoping to get rid of the 'fille du diable' (p. 75). Brought up by her 'mamie-maman' (p. 76), her maternal grand-mother, her 'guelwaar guerrière' (p. 76), her 'madre, mother, mamma mia, yaye boye, némam, nakony, maman chérie [...]' her 'mère pour de bon!' (p. 75), Salie is massaged and breastfed until she is three years old, and given all the love and care she needs. Acording to Diome herself, what motivates her is 'l'abandon' et 'l'illégitimité'. Her personal history resonates with Salie's, whose name she has chosen from the French *sale*, as in dirty, not clean.[15]

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[15] 'Dialogue avec Fatou Diome Partie 2', 29 October 2008, <http://Ibid.youtube.com/watch?v=ODu68kdtnhk&feature=relmfu> [accessed 11 August 2011], from 10'05 onwards.

The motivation that drives Diome to keep on writing transpires throughout the rest of her writings; she never sees one piece as a finished work.[16] Indeed, there is a resonance with *Kétala* (2006), another novel by Diome, in which the objects that are part of Mémoria's house speak and count the story of this young woman forced to immigrate to France - like Salie - due to a failed marriage with a homosexual man of a higher caste in hiding. Deceased, all of her possessions are redistributed to the family according to Koranic succession law, a process called Kétala. In the case of a deceased husband, the wife is left with nothing and has no other alternative but to become someone else's spouse. In *Celles qui l'Attendent* (2010), Diome keeps investigating the role and place attributed to women and gives them a voice. Indeed discriminatory pratices, particularly in the domain of family and inheritance persist, although Senegal has succeeded in putting in place a legal framework that does much to protect women's bodily integrity. While in urban areas laws protecting women are generally respected, rural areas are still dominated by customary and religious practices.[17]

Salie's existence challenges the reproduction of human groupings of the 'homogenised woman', regardless of the multiplicity of female expressions and preoccupations to use Julia Kristeva's words. The validity of Kristeva's 'symbolic common denominator' defined as the cultural and religious memory forged by the interweaving of history and geography is very valid in this novel.[18] In *LVA*, the reader witnesses the desperate escape of the narrator from this homogenised conception of women by the majority.

Almost ten years later, in *Le féminin et le Sacré,* Catherine Clément and Julia Kristeva also reflect on the place attributed to women in religion and traditions. Clément writes to Kristeva about her trip in Sénégal to a village next to Dakar, and reflects on the role played by women in ceremonies. During her stay Clément takes

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[16] 'Dialogue avec Fatou Diome Partie 2', 29 October 2008, <http://Ibid.youtube.com/watch?v=ODu68kdtnhk&feature=relmfu> [accessed 11 August 2011], from 13'30 onwards.

[17] Social Institutions and Gender Index, 'Senegal', 2015 < http://genderindex.org/country/Senegal#_ftn6> [accessed 27 August 2015].

[18] Julia Kristeva, '*Le Temps des Femmes', 34/44 Cahiers de Recherche de Science de Textes et Documents 5*, Winter 1979, trans by Alice Jardin and Harry Blake, 'Women's Time', in N.O. Keohane et al., *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, (Chicago, 1981), PAGE RANGE?

part in a seven-hour ritual. She refers to the Lébous fishermen, a small people scattered on the outskirts of Dakar city, which follows, amongst others, an ancient tradition. Upon his return to the dock, the fisherman gives the fish to his wife, the only one allowed to sell it; she takes her share, her money, which is called 'sacré'. Clément further describes another ritual, 'destinée à faire sortir un génie vengeur du corps où il est 'descendu', cette cérémonie dure sept jours et sept nuits'. On y passe par des rituels infiniment sophistiqués de mesures du corps, par des séances de possession publique dans les rues [...] la thérapie N'Doeup est réservée aux femmes, réunies villages par villages en collèges de guérisseuses officielles. Il existe aujourd'hui un seul homme guérisseur: mais, pour officier, il doit s'habiller avec des vêtements féminins.' (p. 33) As Judith Butler argues, 'before culture',[19] that is to say nature is just an 'appearance', which is later submitted to cultural processes that reinvent bodies through 'materialization'.[20] In other words, traditional rituals have got the extensive power to limit women to a certain role in the community, by materialising and essentialising their gender through practical activities only performed by women.

Like Ousmane Sembene's *Xala* (1973) and Mariama Ba's *Une Si Longue Lettre* (1979), *LVA* criticises the exacerbated role of the father in a society funded on patriarchal values, which limits the rights of children and women, whose bodies are predefined by a society encouraging polygamy and forced marriages. Salie is doomed to failure from the moment she is conceived. The cultural processes undergone by the character of Salie, emblematic of all women, materialise her body.

Diome's fascinating take on Salie's doomed condition lies in the double-sidedness of Salie's illegitimate status, not forced to commit to social obligations and gender-stereotypes in the Senegalese society. Her 'death' as a woman will not take place since she is not fully determined by her culture.[21] Brought up by her grand-mother and educated by Ndétare, the young Salie finds herself in a position that transcends the boundaries set by the culture of her native land: she is on her own, she is not promised to any man, and she has no fear. The fear of separating from a

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[19] Vicky Kirby, *Judith Butler: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 49.
[20] Ibid.,., p. 49.
[21] See Hélène Cixous, *La* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

man, the fear of loneliness or of her 'mort de femme'[22] will never take place, as she is not a subject predefined by her culture. These fears and feelings, as Hélène Cixous explains in depth in *La*, are the cultural products of texts such as Genesis - or in this context, the Koran - which stop women from being able to 'se donner la vie'.[23] Paradoxically, her illegitimate birth gives her access to freedom. Marginalised and not expected to be part of her society, Salie escapes a system that attempted to predefine her. She is simultaneously killed before she is even born, as she has no status.

Ndétare's and Salie's destinies could only come across one another. Both are outcasts and living in marginalisation of the local community who find alternative ways to exist. Ndétare is seen as a foreigner since his return from France: 'il n'était que l'étranger' (p. 63), and Ndétare's impossible love for Sankèle, his 'amour d'antan' (p. 79), a young guelwaar of a noble cast,[24] was 'la seule histoire d'amour à Niodor' (p. 79). The young guelwaar is faced with the expectations of her father's authority. Indeed within the Family Code of 1972 inherited from colonisation, discriminatory practices against women are still in effect with the father and husband acting a legal authority.[25] Still in love with Ndétare and bearer of her child, Sankèle sees her newborn baby taken away from her in the name of traditions and social rank. To avoid familial dishonour, Sankèle is kept hidden during her pregnancy, and her newborn baby stifled to death and thrown in the Atlantic. The strong metaphorical presence of the Atlantic resonates from the title as the ocean swallows the outcast.

LVA is, after all, a critique of Islam, of rigid casts and of social immobility exacerbated by the confinement of the island, of the egg, to use the metaphorical comparison with the butterfly life cycle. The following lengthy quotation from Chapter Four perfectly illustrates the anchored ancestral traditions that are particular to the small, isolated communities:

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[22] Ibid.,.
[23] Ibid.,.
[24] See Devey, p. 71 for background history on the Guelowar aristocracy.
[25] African for Women's Rights, 'Senegal' < http://Ibid.africa4womensrights.org/public/Dossier_of_Claims/SenegalENG.pdf> [accessed 9 September 2015].

Cette société insulaire, même lorsqu'elle se laisse approcher, reste une structure monolithique impénétrable qui ne digère jamais les corps étrangers. Ici, tout le monde se ressemble. Depuis des siècles, les mêmes gènes parcourent le village, se retrouvent à chaque union, s'enchaînent pour dessiner le relief de l'île, produisent les différentes générations qui, les unes après les autres, se partagent les mêmes terres selon des règles immuables. (p. 77)

Salie is forced to position herself in opposition to the cultural practices that surround her. The local culture that rejects her simultaneously defines her:

If culture is really going to exist, it is not enough to be the author of social practices; these social practices need to have meaning for those who effectuate them [for culture] consists not in receiving, but in positing the act by which each individual marks what others furnish for the needs of living and thinking.[26]

Fatou Diome, like Michel de Certeau, explores the routes defined by culture. Salie has no option but to find an alternative itinerary necessarily outside her culture by creating an existence outside the prefigured communal routes. The risk to *faire fausse route* is high, a risk particularly well illustrated through the various paths undertaken by the 'venus de France'. Salie witnesses the limits of her community. The ignorance of certain women, the lack of education of little girls and the fear to speak up are typical of a society in denial of the necessity to adapt to the real needs of the individuals:

La communauté traditionnelle est sans doute rassurante mais elle vous happe et vous asphyxie [...] Les liens tissés pour rattacher l'individu au groupe sont si étouffants qu'on ne peut songer qu'à les rompre (p. 172).

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[26] Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. XI.

Fausse route

Samuel Zadi opens up an interesting debate by revisiting *LVA* through the lens of an oppressive African solidarity.[27] He argues that local communities need to embrace the opportunities created by the postcolonial world, to send individuals to the métropole to allow them to create more global socio-economic dynamics that are not geographically confined. By counter-arguing Odile Cazenave on a 'devenir de l'Afrique', which would preoccupy only writers based on the continent,[28] Zadi believes that Fatou Diome deals with the 'devenir de l'Afrique' in all its aspects, whether social, cultural or economic. For Zadi, the 'solidarité africaine' needs to modernise itself and to give more space to the individual. Opposing 'l'entraide' as a traditional value, to 'l'individualisme' as a modern entity, Zadi suggests a 'solidarité modérée'. In order to establish his theory of 'solidarité africaine', he attempts to define the values of the African society.

The generalising communautarist principle, on which his argument is based, seems to have left aside what actually defines Niodor as a community, taking into account its history and external influences across what is now known today as Senegal. For Zadi, the duty of 'réciprocité d'assistance' and the 'négation de l'individu' are the causes of Africa's impossibility to progress and find its place in the postcolonial globalised world, since the preindustrial modes of production of traditional African societies are the foundation of the 'solidarité africaine'. Perhaps misled by the following quotation:

> Ayant choisi un chemin complètement étranger aux miens, je m'acharnais à tenter de leur en prouver la validité. Il me fallait réussir afin d'assumer la fonction assignée à tout enfant de chez nous : servir de sécurité sociale aux siens. Cette obligation d'assistance est le plus gros fardeau que trainent les émigrés (pp. 44-45)

[27] Samuel Zadi, 'La 'Solidarité Africaine' dans Le Ventre de l'Atlantique de Fatou Diome', in *Nouvelles Etudes Francophones*, 25 (1) (Spring 2010), 171-188.
[28] Odile Cazenave, *Afrique Sur Seine: A New Generation of African writers in Paris* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), p. 103.

Zadi essentially argues that Africa is incompatible with the modern world.

However, it is important to remember the extent to which the many religious influences that coexist today have transformed local communities and affected the empires and chiefdoms that composed precolonial Senegal at the end of the nineteenth century. The variety of ethnic groups in 1850 - the Wolof, Fulbe, Serer, Lebu, Tukulor, Bambara, Sarakollé, Mandinka and Diola - have evolved through the complexities of history, and the nuances between each ethnic group have been diminished by Islamisation, itself reinforced by colonisation in the creation of smaller political entities. The place of Islam and imperialism in Senegal Sine-Saloum, where Niodor island lies, during pre-colonial and colonial times cannot be underestimated since it accelerated the decline of the traditional state amongst the Wolofs. The Saloum's Serer state, which had been pagan until 1887, underwent a rapidly spreading conversion with the most striking victory for Islam in the region.[29] For all these reasons, it seems difficult to give credit to Zadi's perception of Africa's impossibility to modernise itself. Furthermore, Zadi's Marxist analysis does not integrate Achille Mbembe's view, which relativises the extent to which infrastructures determine superstructures. In rethinking Africa's representation or misrepresentation, Mbembe deconstructs the superimposition of Western economics on to Africa's current economic situation by dismantling the interlocking dynamics of economic interests, the violent exercise of power and structures. He opposes the 'objectivity of structures' to the 'subjectivity of reality' in a powerful statement originating from *On The Postcolony*. The phenomenology of violence applied to Africa during colonisation has left a burden of arbitrariness that abnegates what had previously been decided to be nothing, the negated subject being deprived

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[29] Martin A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal Sine-Saloum, 1847-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 219-20.

of power and pushed out of the world.[30] This echoes, to a certain extent, what Mahmood Mamdani states in *Citizen and Subject*.[31]

The colonial print in Senegal shares a common history with the Islamisation of the country, and a status apart that made Senegal the only black African colony in which France applied assimilationist ideals.[32] For these reasons, what Zadi likes to call 'la solidarité africaine' seems to stereotype the African continent and refer to one African culture, which does not account for local diversities. Senegal, in comparison to other West African nations, is a stable country, which is able to rely on its strategic location and dual vocation as a Sahelian and Atlantic nation, and also on its long established commercial ties with Europe. Situated at the crossroads where black African, Islamic and European civilisations have met, clashed and blended, Senegal is a bridge between Africa, the West and the Muslim world.[33] Indeed, as seen in Chapter One of this thesis, space, boundaries and agency have played a crucial role in the redefinition of individual and collective identities. The politics of regionalism installed during colonial times have unquestionably redefined collectivities influencing power and governance. Therefore, arguing that the postcolony cannot overcome its confined space unless it sends its subjects away to the métropole, denies local cultures the existence of the processes that constructed the postcolony in the first place. Not all Francophone African nations benefit from the privileged relationships with the métropole established under Senghor.

The conclusion that Zadi draws from his Marxist analysis of *LVA* is necessarily limited by the binary argument that does not encompass the difficulties linked to the inner struggle of the immigrant, stuck between two cultures but also limited in his evolution in French society by his colour and his status as the *étranger*. The modernity/traditions argument does not pay enough attention to the phenomenon of postcolonial identity issues that arise within individuals who are forced to emigrate, which is at the core of Diome's novel. On the one hand, Diome criticises

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[30] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001), p. 173.

[31] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1996).

[32] Sheldon Gellar, Senegal, an African Nation Between Islam and the West (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), p. 9.

[33] Muriel Devey, *Le Sénégal* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), p. 1.

the lack of space attributed to the individual, on the other hand she clearly explains the drifts of a 'socialist' system, as Senghor had himself pointed out:

> Bien de chacun, bien de tous. J'avais beau savoir que cette règle sociale d'une grande humanité, lorsqu'elle est détournée, profite surtout aux fainéants tout en les maintenant dans une dépendance chronique (p. 167).

To refer to the Marxist-capitalist dimension of Niodor's transforming society is reductive, for Diome herself provides a far more complex insight into the history, politics and socio-economic landscape of Niodor Island, which seems to have been frozen in the past due to its isolated geographical location. Despite the references to Homi Bhabha and the attempts to exploit Bhabha's third space concept, which Zadi applies to Niodor community only, he offers a rather limited vision of Diome's philanthropic tale about Salie's postcolonial ambiguous adventure. The references to the text also seem to be scarce and the selection of embedded narratives referred to do not seem to fully illustrate Diome's literary and ideological purposes.

A successful immigration process cannot be taken for granted, as is illustrated in many ways by Diome. Ultimately, Diome writes about sacrifices. Torn between two societies that reject her, Salie finally finds a way to exist. Economically successful in France, but still rejected by her community, Salie tries to find a new identity. The journey is long and painful. Salie shares with the reader the constant turmoil and the dilemmas she faces in the search for her new identity.

The caterpillar and the chrysalis: the search for the other, the quest for oneself

<u>An ongoing birth</u>
Having successfully managed to blossom, Salie slowly shaped her identity. Like a caterpillar, Salie grows as she studies French at primary school under the reassuring presence of Monsieur Ndétare, and putting up with the playground's fights, 'la cour se transformait souvent en champ de bataille' (p. 78), against the stereotypes other children label her with. The most fascinating aspect of her character is her

determination to learn. Of course, this determination is omnipresent in *LVA* as a symbol of an unbreakable force, of the fight against women's submission.

At a very young age Salie realises that one day she will have to leave to be the one she wants to be, to escape from her destiny of being 'une étrangère dans ce village' (p. 78). She is left with no choice but to disappear, to escape from 'ce panier de crabes' (p. 78) as recommended by Monsieur Ndétare. She has always known that going away would be a salvatory exit, and chooses to exile to France: 'petite déjà, incapable de tout calcul et ignorant les attraits de l'émigration, j'avais compris que partir serait le corollaire de mon existence' (p. 225).

Her strong desire to 'become invisible' (p. 225) and 'respirer sans déranger' (p. 226) pushes Salie to find her new destiny. So desperate to be free, she decides to go abroad. She considers her exile as an act of freedom emblematic of her self-determination (p. 227). Diome uses very strong images to explain the depth of Salie's uneasiness to the point that she considers exile as her 'suicide géographique' (p. 226) for it is 'vierge de [son] histoire' (p. 226). It is the process of relocating to a different place that allows Sallie to exist.

Having realised her only way out is to leave her native land, and live her life as a newly born woman, Salie pursues her wish and allows herself to be born but for real on this occasion: 'partir, c'est avoir tous les courages pour aller accoucher de soi-même, naître de soi étant la plus légitime des naissances' (p. 226).

Her crossing of the Atlantic is a forced passage to France, but also a rite of passage to Niodor. The resonance with the *traversée des esclaves*, the slaves' middle passage, represents for Salie not only an attempt to escape from her community's cultural practices, but also a forced route undertaken by many 'venus de France' across the Atlantic, and by traders and their slaves during the *traite des noirs* in the seventeenth century. As Christopher Miller reminds us, the powerful sweep of forces created by the Atlantic through historical epistemology have a great impact on today's migration fluxes to and from Africa, with an 'internalised cultural logic'.[34]

Furthermore, the metaphors casting Europe and Africa in the history of colonialism, particularly with regards to the Oedipus complex, which suggests a

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[34] Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic, Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 5.

logical link in the relation between Europe in the role of the father and Africa in the role of the mother, are at heart of *LVA*. *LVA* reflects on the inherited displaced Oedipus complex from colonial times.

Chistopher Miller's reflection on the near-silence of the captives during the *traite négrière* perfectly illustrates Salie's impossibility to talk.[35] For Spivak the subaltern has no voice, for Diome the outcast has no voice either. Diome rises to the challenge of breaking the epistemological silence that exists in written historical records of immigration. However, the eternal question of readership crops up again and challenges further the success of such writing as to how far it geographically reaches the African audience. Issues of alphabetisation amongst women in particular and linguistic barriers create yet another gap between Europe and Africa.

An *aventure ambiguë*

In the hope to exist as a free woman and to escape the construct men have tried to impose on her*,* Salie escapes with a French man. Like her protagonist, not quite free from the beginning of her exile, Diome went through a failed marriage with a French man she had met in Senegal. Trapped into colonial stereotypes, her black skin prevents her from being accepted by his family; 'ma peau ombragea l'idylle' (p. 43), Salie tells us. Now single and back to her studies, Salie is free from the tight ropes refraining her from living fully as a person and more importantly as a woman, away from Hélène Cixous' metaphorical definition of women in her 1975 ground-breaking essay '*Sorties'*, *'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays'* in English. Described as 'eternal-natural', Salie attempts to find her new self by starting her ambiguous adventure. Cixous' feminist theory complements the postcolonial take on *LVA* as she examines alternatives for the understanding of the self/other relations and explores 'the ways in which thinking has become dependent on a differentiating process that entails opposition to and appropriation of whatever is thereby designated as other'.[36] The construct of man in her society, and of the coloniser in the metropole, Salie, the black woman, has to formulate an alternative to her non-existence to

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[35] Ibid.,., p. 53.

[36] *Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. by Susan Sellers (London: Routledge, 1996, first published 1994), p. 37.

challenge and replace the masculine order and the postcolonial eye. This is why novels written by local authors of Francophone African origin highlight issues specific to the black woman that are not necessarily reflected by dominant exogenous gender narratives. It is the combination of Western feminist theories and postcolonial studies that bring to the fore the difference between culturally-embedded narratives by male and female authors.

Similarly to Cheick Hamidou Kane's Samba Diallo, who 'ne retrouve plus le chemin de ce monde', who wants to 'plonger, plonger en [soi], au plus profond de [soi], sans pudeur', who wants to know if '[il a] seulement rêvé de tout ce bonheur dont [il se] souvient, ou s'il a existé',[37] Salie pursues her quest for her new identity. As he cannot reconcile his life in Senegal and his Western life, Samba Diallo is totally disorientated; he feels a desperate need to hold on to his childhood memories. The tone of the description is very nostalgic and he becomes progressively more anxious to the point that he commits suicide. Salie's 2003 ambiguous adventure is of a different dimension. In the process of forming her chrysalis, she goes through similar questioning moments where a terrible feeling of solitude takes her back to Senegal.

Totally freed from any ties, Salie is now completely free. Nevertheless, the absolute state of her long dreamed of liberty is solitude. Desperate for her brother to understand the struggles of the exile, she whines, 'comment aurais-je pu lui faire comprendre la solitude de l'exil?' (p. 44). Although 'disponible and libéré de tout, l'étranger n'a rien, n'est rien'.[38] No one but the *étranger*, the foreigner, Kristeva further explains, knows the passion of solitude better than he does. The paradox of the *étranger* is that he wishes to be alone but with accomplices. Unfortunately no accomplice is ready to be part of his unicity. Despite the solitude, living in France gives Salie the necessary freedom to write about the dangers inherent in immigration to the métropole that is solely based on the desire to achieve dreams that are unrealistic of the socio-economic circumstances of the African immigrant's status.

LVA includes the tragic story of the young Moussa who is selected by a football recruitor, sent to France and then rejected for his underperformance;

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[37] Cheickh Hamidou Kane, *L'Aventure Ambigüe* (Paris: Julliard, 1961), p. 157.

[38] Julie Kristeva, *Étrangers À Nous-Mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), p. 23.

stripped of his dignity, he decides to throw himself in the Atlantic for having failed to economically succeed in France, and for dishonouring his family. Abandoned by his coach, he faces the heavy responsibility of having to pay back the cost of his flight and living costs. Unsupported emotionally and economically, the cultural transition is too difficult for him to remain focused on his game and football practices. The unavoidable dilemma Moussa and other immigrants face are often fatal to them. Very few immigrants manage to succeed economically and those who do pay a high price, the one of wandering and isolation. The limitations of Zadi's Marxist-capitalist argument come up again here. Diome also warns against the fake tales of immigrants returning home, such as l'homme de Barbès, who unconsciously carries the masks of colonisation, Fanon's white mask. Passing on false illusions about France, they encourage younger generations to follow the wrong path, and to go to their own perdition.

In the form of a poem, Fatou Diome summarises in *LVA*'s antepenultimate chapter what is to be expected from African immigrants on arrival in France:

> Passeports, certificats d'hébergement, visas
> Et le reste qu'ils ne nous disent pas
> Sont les nouvelles chaînes de l'esclavage
> Relevé d'identité bancaire
> Critères de l'apartheid moderne
> L'Afrique, mère rhizocarpée, nous donne le sein
> L'Occident nourrit nos envies
> Et ignore les cris de notre faim
> Génération africaine de la mondialisation
> Attirée, puis filtrée, parquée, rejetée, désolée
> Nous sommes les Malgré-nous du voyage (p. 216)

Diome provides the reader with a deep insight into the flux of emotions that surrounds the black immigrant. In her accounts of the perception of the *étranger* in France, Julia Kristeva challenges France's hospitality. Through a historical inventory of foreigners' juridical status, Kristeva comes to the conclusion that, simultaneously,

'nulle part on est plus étranger qu'en France',[39] and 'nulle part on est mieux étranger qu'en France'.[40] Assimilation or isolation are the two choices left to the *étranger* in France. 'Comment suis-je avec l'autre?', 'de quel droit êtes-vous étrangers?' are two key questions raised by Kristeva.[41] Torn between the two perceptions of *étrangeté*, the *étranger* in France does not come across 'la tolérance des protestants anglo-saxons, ni l'insouciance poreuse des Latins du Sud, ni la curiosité rejetante autant qu'assimilatrice des Allemands ou des Slaves',[42] and is faced by the fact that l'étranger is 'irrémédiablement différent et inacceptable, [...] l'objet de fascination: on vous remarque, on parle de vous, on vous hait ou on vous admire, ou les deux à la fois'.[43] Not omitting to comment on the cultural exception that defines the *étranger* if he happens to be 'un grand savant ou un grand artiste',[44] Kristeva adds meaning to Fatou Diome's own experience as a famous writer in France, and her account of the tragic stories of many talented African football players who do not make it, and who become contemporary slaves. The particularity of this relationship with France, as Diome describes it, is likely to be unsuccessful for the immigrant unless he decides to become like French native people, to the point of mimicking them, to be accepted.

The various travelling experiences counted by Diome, including her own, cannot be homogenised: 'étrangère partout, je porte en moi un théâtre invisible, grouillant de fantômes. [...] Partir, c'est devenir un tombeau ambulant rempli d'ombres, où les vivants et les morts ont l'absence en partage' (p. 227). Despite her isolation, Diome herself finds the distance beneficial to her.[45] In *Travel in 20th Century French and Francophone Cultures, the Persistence of Diversity*, Forsdick rethinks the exotic, and offers a new vision of travel, which can be redefined as a contact between cultures emerging from the practices of travel.

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[39] Ibid.,., p. 57.
[40] Ibid.,., p. 58.
[41] Ibid.,., p. 59.
[42] Ibid.,., pp. 57-58.
[43] Ibid.,., p. 59.
[44] Ibid.,., p. 60.
[45] 'Dialogue avec Fatou Diome Partie 2', 29 October 2008,
<http://Ibid.youtube.com/watch?v=ODu68kdtnhk&feature=relmfu> [accessed 11 August 2011], from 13'30 onwards.,

From an anthropological perspective, in *Writing Culture*[46] and *Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century*,[47] Clifford, in stark contrast with Amselle, does not often include fieldwork or extensive research at a single-field site. Rather, he argues that culture is 'nowadays less a site of origins and rooting than of translation and transplanting',[48] and *'*probes the late-twentieth-century predicament of living simultaneously within, between, and after culture'.[49] Not attempting to fix the novel to a place, but allowing it to fluctuate between places, proves more beneficial to the reading of *LVA* as a contemporary novel. Indeed, Clifford states that twentieth-century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions; he further argues that individuals and groups everywhere improvise local performance from (re)-collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols and languages. Aimé Césaire argues, too, that culture and identity are inventive and mobile.[50] This way Salie does not need to feel she belongs to one narrative, but rather to a global cultural historiography composed of sub-narratives that are all part of the same mosaic. Escaping from binaries, Salie progressively finds her way to identity liberation.

The exotic trap

The place of the television screen in the novel is central, for it reveals a postcolonial divide between West African and French societies. Through his TV set, Madické sees an exoticised France and an exoticised vision of Africans having economically succeeded in France in the football industry. 'Il court, tacle, dribble, frappe, tombe, se rélève et court encore. Plus vite!' (p. 11): the novel opens up with football game's comments that are rarely mentioned in the many literary reviews about *LVA*.[51] The

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[46] *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography,* ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1986).

[47] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[48] James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 386*.*

[49] Ibid.,., back cover.

[50] Ibid.,., pp. 14-15.

[51] See for example Kacou Parfait DIANDUE 'Le Ventre de l'Atlantique, Métaphore Aquatique d'un Mirage: idéal brisé de l'ailleurs?', 1st Semester 2005, <http://ethiopiques.refer.sn/article.php3?id_article=258> [accessed 18 October 2008]; and

first dated reference to football: 'le 29 juin 2000, je regarde la Coupe d'Europe de football' that appears on page 12, at the very beginning of Chapter One, is a recurrent symbol of the novel that illustrates the malaise and discrepancy between Madické's illusionary perception of Europe, and in particular Italy, since he venerates Maldini, one its national players. Pressurised socially to get the family out of poverty, 'malgré leur jeune âge, beaucoup sont déjà à la tête de familles nombreuses et on attend d'eux ce que leurs pères n'ont pas réussi: sortir les leurs de la pauvreté' (p. 182), Salie's brother and his friends are stuck in a fixed representation of football, which he perceives as the one-way exit from Africa. They are obsessed with a deformed image of European life. Reflecting on the postcolonial North-South relationship, Diome perfectly illustrates Said's Orientalist theory, which demonstrates how power and knowledge are intrinsically linked, and in particular how the West knows the Orient and uses it as way of exerting power over it. The resulting discursive construction is a crucial aspect of Western cultural productions, in which the political realities of imperialism are present.[52]

Interestingly Salie has to report back to Madické the details of the football games that his malfunctioning television set does not allow him to watch. Her comments construct a narrative space deprived of the meaning that Salie would desperately like to put across to Madické. While Salie herself is embedded in a postcolonial discursive construction, she struggles to find the tools to convince her brother not to take for granted what he hears around him:

> Voilà donc pourquoi mon frère ne tenait plus en place. L'immigré qui lui avait rapporté ces nouvelles avait amplifié son espoir. Les stars multimillionnaires du football qu'il admire passent à la télé. Aucun doute dans son esprit: sa sœur vue à la télé surtout en France, était forcément devenue riche. (p. 184)

Virginie Brinker, 'L'Écriture Comme Cire Chaude Entre les Cloisons des Deux Bords', 4 June 2007, <http://la-plume-Francophone.over-blog.com/article-10722489.html> [accessed 18 October 2008].
[52] See Bill Aschcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Routledge Crititical Thinkers, Edward Said*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

A similar discursive process applies to the images that are representative of Senegal in France. The deformed mirror sends back an exoticised image of Senegal: M'Bour, about 80 kilometers South of Dakar, is an idyllic paradise for 'des hordes de névrosés amateurs de chair fraîche' (p. 201). Angry and annoyed at the sight of the proliferating hotels financed by foreign investments, Diome draws a very dark picture of swarming tourists 'libidineux' who come to visit 'des paysages de fesses noires' (p. 198). Such as the *miroir aux allouettes*, the television entraps Madické into an exotic vision of Europe, and forces him to fit in a postcolonial narrative.

In France and in Senegal, Salie suffers from the image that is being projected of her. As seen before in Part One, the expectations of the Senegalese societies are unrealistically feasible for Salie as the outcast; only her economic success on the literary stage in France allows her some form of recognition. After saving up, she is able to support her brother Madické to open a shop on the island who, in turn, is able to offer a service to the local community. Similarly, in France, her status as an African immigrant entraps her into a series of binary representations polarising her identity and her body. As Stuart Hall argues in his theoretical work, *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Salie exists through 'the spectacle of the other'.[53] She is represented through 'sharply binary extremes' such as 'good/bad', civilised/primitive', 'ugly/excessively attractive', often required to be both things as the same time.[54] Salie suffers from the reductive and essentialising discourse that fixes difference in stereotypes. Although stereotyping usefully splits the normal and acceptable from the abnormal and the unacceptable, it also excludes everything that does not fit. In defining the place of stereotyping in social construction, Hall argues that it facilitates 'the binding or bonding together of Us, who are normal, into on imagined community, and it sends into exile all of Them, 'the Others'.[55] Kristeva, he reminds us, labels such rejected groups as the 'abjected',

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[53] Stuart Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', in *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), pp. 223-290.
[54] Ibid., p. 229.
[55] Ibid., p. 258.

from the Latin meaning 'thrown out'.[56] As stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power, it is even more interesting to note that Salie manages to reverse the power relation as she becomes part of the élite; she appears on television programmes and becomes a well-known writer:

> Un gars du village revenu de France dit que tu réussis très bien là-bas, que t'y as publié un bouquin. Il jure même qu'il t'a vue à la télé. Des gens disent ici qu'un journal de chez nous a aussi écrit des choses à propos de ton livre (p. 159).

Sallie's writing activity allows her to finally be in a position to support her brother and the local community by saving enough money to allow him to open a local shop. She decides to send him her savings, 'lassé d'attendre sa réponse à ma proposition, je lui avais, d'autorité, envoyé la cagnotte.' (p. 227). Her writing generates money and embodies a North/South power reversal. (p. 159). Salie's success in France reminds us of Fatou Diome's literary achievement in the Hexagon, illustrated by prizes and television appearances. In *LVA* amongst her other novels, Diome explores the 'potential of […] literature […] to explore the social position of women […] and giving voice to women who have found themselves otherwise marginalised'.[57]

By saving up and convincing her brother to set up a business on the island, he abandons his 'European' dream. This way, Salie succeeds in reaching a consensus between her and Madické, and navigates around the 'violent hierarchy' that Derrida describes in the binary opposition that opposes it to 'a peaceful coexistence'.[58]

Jean-Loup Amselle, in *Logiques Métisses,* also highlights the dangers of stereotyping. Amselle tries to move away from the 'ethnological reason' to which he opposes 'mestizo logics'. For him, culture 'se dissout dans un ensemble sériel ou

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[56] Julie Kristeva*, 'Powers of Horror'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) in Stuart Hall, *Representations, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 258.

[57] Claire H. Griffiths, 'The Literary Politics of Gender and Development', in *Globalising the Postcolony* (Lanham, Md. ; Plymouth : Lexington Books 2011), pp. 233-250 (p. 234).

[58] Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago Press, 1972), in Stuart Hall, *Representations, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 258.

dans un réservoir de pratiques conflictuelles ou pacifiques dont les acteurs sociaux se servent pour renégocier en permanence leur identité'.[59] He attempts to move away from 'la posture culturaliste qui implique donc l'enjambement sans transition et la dislocation des 'chaînes de sociétés' […] la sélection de traits culturels décontextualisés'.[60] From a postcolonial stand, *Logiques Métisses* opens new thinking paths by challenging certain rigid, specialist anthropological trends. However, the absence of references to British cultural studies, and of Michel de Certeau's influence in this area, limits Amselle's theory, which seems to be stuck in a binary model of argumentation, opposing singularity to universalism. *LVA* illustrates Amselle's theoretical paradox, which also argues that culture is a reservoir of practices internal and external to a given social arena.[61] Salie is both an 'internal' and 'external' cultural actress of this social arena, although not located in a geographically fixed point, precisely Niodor Island. Rather, she is a single element in constant displacement and part of a universal whole. Although he adopts a comparative approach in *L'Occident Décroché, enquête sur les postcolonialismes*,[62] the limitations of Amselle's theory are revealed in his perception of postcolonialism, which he sees as a possible essentialist trend. This analytical arbitrariness originates presumably from focusing solely on Indian, African and South-American theorists. This conception of cultural identity, defined in terms of one shared and collective culture, although a very powerful force to reach marginalised peoples and a critical element of postcolonial struggles, as Stuart Hall argues, it does not encompass some critical points of difference, which are needed to acknowledge the other side of the 'what we really are' or the 'what we have become'.[63]

Now part of the Senegalese diaspora, Salie attempts to accept her displaced status, and has to go through another stage of acceptance in her identity quest.

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[59] Jean-Loup Amselle, *Mestizo logics, Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere,* trans. by Claudia Royal (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 10.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p. 4.

[62] Jean-Loup Amselle, *L'Occident Décroché, Enquête sur les Postcolonialismes* (Paris: Fayard, 2011).

[63] Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1990), p. 225.

Having undergone the second transformational phase, Salie is about to blossom again.

The nymphosis and the butterfly: identity in the plural

Kaleidoscope of identities: *altérité* and *autretés*

In the last stage of her identity construction Salie reaches a state of double-consciousness. She soon realises she is estranged at various levels. As she becomes another, she realises she has to live in a state of permanent hybridity and carry different strata of identity: 'partir, c'est mourir d'absence. On revient, certes, mais on revient autre. Au retour, on cherche, mais on ne retrouve jamais ceux qu'on a quittés' (p. 227).

During her ambiguous adventure Salie realises quickly, like Samba Diallo, that she has not 'cessé de […] se métamorphoser, et que […] la voilà devenu(s) autre(s). Quelquefois la métamorphose ne s'achève pas, elle nous installe dans l'hybride et nous y laisse.'[64] Her impossible return to the one she was before, leaving her native island signifies the beginning of a never-ending identity wandering.

Indeed, cultural identities come from somewhere and have histories but they undergo constant transformation.[65] Salie's impossibility to be fixed is summed up in this sentence: 'Ma mémoire est mon identité' (p. 227). Indeed, Salie cannot be eternally fixed in some essentialising past: she is subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Hall develops his argument and explains that the traumatic character of colonial experience can properly be understood thanks to a culturalist posture that allows for differences as well as similarities to be recognised. Kristeva clarifies this view in *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, when she says 'nous sommes tous en train de devenir *étranger* dans un univers plus que jamais élargi, plus que jamais hétéroclite.'[66]

Stuart Hall's emphasis on the crucial place of 'difference' and otherness in cultural studies, and in 'trans-coding' negative images with new meanings

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[64] Cheickh Hamidou Kane, *Aventure Ambiguë* (Paris, Julliard, 1971 [1961]), p. 125.
[65] Ibid., p. 225.
[66] Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, ((Paris: Fayard, 1988), p. 153.

constitutes the essence of his representation theory, which gives space for Salie to be represented in a variety of ways by depolarising otherness.[67]

The dangerous obsession with otherness and difference defines the other's identity by what it is not, by its negative aspect, as Hall further explains.[68] Although necessary, difference is dangerous too. The various theories, whether linguistic, cultural, anthropological or psychological, cannot be considered in isolation to allow for a fair representation of the postcolonial and a full understanding of the issues of ex-colonial subjects. Until Salie finds a salvatory compromise, she is mutually excluded from both cultural systems, from her native and exiled lands. The key point in Hall's theory is that difference is ambivalent. It is necessary for the production of meaning. This creates a path for Salie to navigate in between.

Hall argues, too, that at different places and times, boundaries are re-sited. Salie's metamorphic experiences displaces Salie's identity, which becomes a floating point rather than a fixed one, even more so when boundaries 'become not only what they have been - mutually excluding categories - but what they sometimes are - differential points along a sliding scale -'.[69] To grasp this sense of difference, which is not 'pure' and authentic, this sense of pure *altérité* or maybe *autreté*, Jacques Derrida uses *differance* as a distinction between *différer* et *différencier*; *différer* implies that meaning is always deferred, postponed, but also plural as it travels - or wanders as in *errance* - through various meanings.[70]

Salie's double-consciousness in *errance* can also be explained by Homi Bhabha's phenomenon of hybridity, which he conceives in the opposition between cultural difference and cultural diversity. On the one hand, Bhabha sees some positive aspects in democratic societies' enterprise that is willing to promote and accommodate cultural diversity, on the other hand he argues that Western views understand and locate cultures in a universal time-frame that acknowledges their various historical and social contexts only eventually to transcend them and render them transparent. This generates an issue with multiculturalism as located within a

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[67] Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', p. 229.
[68] Ibid., p. 238.
[69] Ibid., p. 228.
[70] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London & New York: Routledge, 1978; first published Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), pp. xvii-xviii.

Western cultural grid.[71] Despite her literary success in France, Salie never feels part of the French cultural matrix, for, in the process of creating cultural diversity, the containment of cultural difference is articulated in a 'dynamic process that administers a consensus based on a norm that propagates cultural diversity' and freezes cultural difference.[72] Bhabha's position on the notion of cultural difference aims at acknowledging a productive space of cultural construction as difference in the spirit of alterity and otherness. Salie's attempt to produce her space in the spirit of otherness as a singular entity is also an effort to acknowledge her *autretés*, her several *autres* as a plural whole.

Bhabha's uses of the term 'cultural translation' to suggest all forms of culture are in some way related to each other, because he sees culture as a signifying or symbolic activity, supports Salie in accepting her ambivalence. There are similarities with Stuart Hall's representations. However, Bhabha takes an interesting tangent about cultural practices in arguing that the acts of signification through which we live culture, have within them a 'self-alienating' limit. For Bhabha, 'there is no 'in itself' and 'for itself' within cultures because they are always subject to intrinsic forms of translation'.[73] Nevertheless, Bhabha's notion of translation resounds with Hall's theory of representation as both agree that 'identifications are never fully and finally made'.[74] In her process of identification, Salie is in a search of a space that would tolerate her *autretés*.

Espace tiers

Salie's life consists of a 'valse entre les deux continents' (p. 227); she tells us that she belongs nowhere. However, she cannot escape the representations that are made of her as a writer, acknowledged by the French and international audiences - Diome was awarded the Prix des Hémisphères Chantal Lapicque for *LVA* in 2003 and in October 2005, the LiBeraturpreis in parallel with the Francfort's Foire du Livre for

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[71] Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference, Cultural Identity and Diaspora by Stuart Hall*, 'The Third Space, interview with Homi Bhabha' (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1990), p. 208.
[72] Ibid., p. 208.
[73] Ibid., p. 210.
[74] Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), p. 16.

LVA -, which opens up once more the debate over representation and material reality in postcolonial studies. It questions the material experiences of colonised people, as they are to be understood outside the processes of representation. Salie tries to find a yet unrepresented space.

Understanding Homi Bhabha's notion of translation allows the comprehension of the origins and authenticity of culture as being always open to translation, so there cannot be an essence to it. In other words, cultures are only found in relation to otherness, as Bhabha explains; in relation to *autretés*, I would argue, further enhancing Bhabha's notions of alterity and difference by acknowledging the possibility for one cultural object to be several 'others' in one. However, it seems difficult to forget the 'originary', particularly with Salie, whose pre-determining birth she tries to escape desperately. Precisely, it is her *autretés* that reminds her of her 'originary' existence: her black skin, her exiled status, her *naissance usurpatrice*. In defining hybridity, Bhabha does not attempt 'to trace back the two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. It is a third space, which displaces the histories that constitute it'.[75] Indeed, Bhabha's hybridity encompasses well Salie's cultural metamorphosis.

This third space, Bhabha further explains, 'is not an identity in itself but an identification process' - not a fixed point to recall Hall - 'at which point the subject is itself always ambivalent because of the intervention of that otherness'. However, the key point to hybridity is that it 'bear[s] the traces of those feelings and practices which informs it, just like a translation'.[76] This is an important aspect which complements De Certeau's everyday practice in interpreting cultural identification processes.[77] Hybridity, for Bhabha, thus gives birth to a new space of 'negotiations of meaning and representation', as in Diome's novel.

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[75] Jonathan Rutherford, ed, *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference, Cultural Identity and Diaspora by Stuart Hall*, *The Third Space, interview with Homi Bhabha* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1990), p. 211. SEE PREVIOUS NOTE ON THIS REF.
[76] Ibid., p. 211.
[77] Michel de Certeau, *Arts de Faire, l'Invention du Quotidien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990 [1980]).

For Edward Said, however, that reality is a feature of textuality itself, of the text's worldliness, and the issue not so much a dominant representation hiding reality but a struggle between different and contesting representations. The issue about Said's orientalism, as James Clifford argues, is the 'essentialising resultant 'other', as it dichotomises the human continuum'.[78] Reflecting on Raymond Williams' interrogation as to what is given off by individual histories when mixing with immigrants, Clifford wonders whether immigrants should be considered as marginals who come in to a space that has been defined by Western imagination, and merge with a local crowd associated with modernity. He questions whether immigrants are emblematic of a local cultural breakdown, or whether they represent a threat for local communities, which raises questionss on individual identity spaces formation. In *The Predicament of Culture*, Clifford proposes a different historical vision that 'makes space for specific paths through modernity'.[79] In the first stage of her exile, Salie encounters issues linked to unrootedness, but finally succeed in reinventing her future and creatively uses her *imposteur* status to become a hybrid.

As she travels and 'walks in the city', to borrow Certeau's words, in Strasbourg or back in her home country, wherever she is, Salie constructs and reconstructs her identity.[80] As she walks and travels through space, she makes ambiguous the postcolonial order imposed by an ex-imperialist France, challenges the pre-determined role she was assigned to as a little girl, and challenges simultaneously her 'étrangeté' to French culture and *déracinement* from Senegalese culture. Rather, she embodies the 'signifying practices' that invent space. She represents that the 'stories about places are makeshift things. They are composed of world's debris. […] These heterogeneous and even contrary elements fill the homogeneous form of the story. Things extra and other insert themselves into the accepted framework.'[81]

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[78] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture,* p. 258.
[79] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture,* p. 5.
[80] Michel de Certeau, '*Walking in the City' in The Practice of Everyday Life, Part II Spatial Practices,* trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley, London: University of California Press), pp. 92-110.
[81] Ibid., p. 107.

Paul Gilroy's black Atlantic - yet another possible counter-argument to Amselle's *Logiques Métisses* - enlarges the debate as he focuses even more so on the diasporic nature of the immigrants. The quotation from Ralph Ellison at the start of Chapter Four formulates an interesting vision of exile and immigration:

> It is not culture, which binds the peoples who are of partially African origin now scattered throughout the world, but an identity of passions. We are bound by our common suffering more than by our pigmentation. (p. 111)

Gilroy's proposes *un espace tiers*, the black Atlantic, as an alternative to a fixed and exclusive definition of culture. He provides an alternative to what he calls the 'curse of homelessness', a way of repossessing enforced exile to the ex-colonial métropole. With his reformulation of Richard Wright's 'double-consciousness', Gilroy responds to successive displacements, migrations and journeys - forced and otherwise, as he points out - which constitute for him the black cultures' special conditions of existence. Gilroy's politics of the black Atlantic reads as the beginning of a process rather than an ending: 'it offers an image of hybridity and intermixture that is especially valuable because it gives no ground to the suggestion that cultural fusion involves betrayal, loss, corruption or dilution'.[82] Gilroy's reading of Richard Wright's travel writing[83] particularly informs the study of *LVA*, for 'it overflows from the confining structure of the nation state and comprehensively queries the priority routinely attached to those structures in historical and sociological explanation of social and cultural change.'[84]

Conclusion

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[82] Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 144.

[83] Catherine Hall's study on the relation between the métropole and Jamaica offers an interesting comparative perspective. See Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects, Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

[84] Ibid. p. 151.

After her successive metamorphosis, Salie realises that her brother's wish to see her returning 'home': 'tu devrais rentrer […] revenir pour de bon, ici chez toi: tes racines doivent chanter en toi.' (pp. 252-253), will never become true.

Salie wonders, 'Chez moi? Chez l'Autre ?'. She knows her existence consists of being hybrid: 'L'Afrique et l'Europe se demandent, perplexes, quel bout de moi leur appartient. […] Exilée en permanence, je passe mes nuits à souder les rails qui mènent à l'identité' (p. 254).

Having travelled through Salie's different states of consciousness, the reader remains uneasy, as the novel does not offer a solution to her dilemma. In a turmoil of memories, her levels of consciousness sends her back to different layers of her past and forces her to be part of a bigger ensemble. Salie travels between the one she was with her mother, her father, her grandmother, her brother, with her teacher, and with her ex-husband's family.

Irele argues that this constitutes the particularity of the African experience at the present time, as that experience presents itself to the discerning mind of the writer and touches the deepest reaches of his human conscience.[85] As she searches for a country 'où on apprécie l'être-additionné, sans dissocier ses multiples strates. […] où s'estompe la fragmentation identitaire' (p. 254), Diome becomes part of a black diaspora by sharing her quest. Although it may be argued that such novels have hardly any significance other than for the writer – and possibly for his/her local community of origin - the novel is not representational of reality, but a form of action expressed in a fiction that signifies a movement of consciousness within the larger society to which the writer's creative impulse is responsive, and of which it provides an active reformulation.[86] Permanently exiled, Salie's lived space erases geographical borders, overcomes the suffocating tightness of national boundaries and expands multidirectionally to embrace and accept a cultural reformulation of the 'I', the community and the nation. The novel offers the possibility for Diome to inscribe herself consciously as a writer and as an African woman within a community, that of the black Diaspora. It embraces the challenges of living in a

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[85] F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination, Literature in Africa and The black Diaspora*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 244-245.
[86] Ibid., pp. 244-245.

postcolonial space by negotiating an alternative way of living, not necessarily anchored in one place, but belonging to several places at once. The work of fiction, representing the reality of different places, reconfigures individual and national space by acknowledging the need to be liberated of the chains of the past. It overlooks formulaeic definitions of Africa. Finally, Salie's metaphysical tale leads her to 'partir, vivre libre et mourir, comme une algue de l'Atlantique' (p. 255) and leaves her free from anchors. In her hybrid space, Diome gives a voice to isolated women confined by masculinist discourses.

Chapter 5

Tormented souls and ghost life in the European Eldorado, or the desperate quest for *atiké*, the antidote, in Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou's *Le Médicament*

[...] l'histoire métropolitaine et l'histoire des colonies ne cessent de s'influencer mutuellement, au point que le traitement des communautés à l'intérieur du territoire national emprunte aujourd'hui beaucoup à des précédents coloniaux.[1]

Jean-Loup Amselle

Aujourd'hui l'ex-colonisé devenu immigré est d'autant plus étranger qu'il a été un Français de condition inférieure.[2]

Christian Bruschi

Introduction

The necessity for African writers to respond to the demands of the modern experience of Africans is revealed in the novel under study in this chapter. As opposed to the distinct form of Romantic imagination specific to a certain period of colonial history, the development in African fiction that Abiola Irele calls 'new realism' suggests 'a process by which African writers have begun to modify their

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[1] Jean-Loup Amselle, *Affirmative Exclusion, Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (London: Cornell University,, 2003), p. 2.

[2] Christian Bruschi, *La Nationalité dans le Droit Colonial*, Procès, Cahiers d'Analyse Politique et juridique n° 18, 1987/88, <http://www.uniset.ca/naty/bruschi.htm> [accessed 26 March 2012]. 'L'immigré originaire de pays anciennement colonisés par la France est devenu la figure principale de l'étranger [...] Longtemps l'étranger et le colonisé ont constitué deux catégories clairement distinctes en droit français, qui se sont définies de façon antagonique, le colonisé ne pouvait être un étranger, seulement un Français de condition inférieure. Aujourd'hui l'ex-colonisé devenu immigré est d'autant plus étranger qu'il a été un Français de condition inférieure. Des immigrés et des jeunes issus de l'immigration revendiquent l'égalité des droits dans tous les domaines, reprenant un combat mûri durant la colonisation et qui n'a toujours pas perdu sa raison d'être' (p. 29)

stance and to adjust their angle of perception in the wake of African independence.'[3] The new realism of the African writer, which stands in contrast to the earlier Romanticism, 'reflects the mood of disillusionment that has invaded African minds as the hopes and expectations inspired by the general euphoria of political independence, taken as the signal for a new and positive phase of African development, began to fade'.[4]

What could be referred to as an ultra-realist type of writing, more in line with the challenging socio-economic struggles caused by globalisation, indeed describes the postcolonial novels of African writers such as *Le Médicament* (*LM*) by Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou. Written in 2003, it focuses on human migration and acknowledges the direct links between the socio-economic conditions that younger generations are faced with in West-Africa and how they impact on migration fluxes to Europe, more particularly France and Germany in this case. Written in French, the novel justifies its presence in this thesis. Although its protagonists' migratory process takes them to Germany, they share a similar goal: seeking refuge on the European continent in the hope for a more settled life.

As opposed to the novels that came out in the decades that followed the time of the independences of West-African Francophone countries, and that depicted the life of an antihero who fails to come to terms with Western life and finally commits suicide, such as in Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother…'* (1971), or in Cheick Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure Ambiguë* (1961), *Le Médicament* portrays the lives of several characters in transit in refugees' centres in Europe, with or without tragic endings.[5]

Published in 2003, in the collection *Monde Noir* by Hatier International, a famous French publishing house who so far has published seventeen books about

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[3] F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination, Literature in Africa and the black Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 213-214.

[4] Ibid., pp. 213-214.

[5] Surprisingly in his study of *This Earth, My Brother*, as a new-realistic novel, Irele does not mention Amamu's, the novel's hero, tribulations to Europe, which are the cause of a break-down on his return from his travels to his native village, which results in suicide. Instead, Irele choses to focus solely on social questions and issues linked to the emergence of an educated élite as a new social class specific to postcolonial Africa. See Irele, p.216.

African literature including *La Mort et l'Ecuyer du Roi* by Wole Soyinka, *Le Médicament* is Zinsou's second piece to be published by Hatier. Despite a few typographic errors, no re-edition has been published since its original edition.

Zinsou, 57 at the time of publication, was born in Lomé, capital of Togo on the African Gold Coast and studied both in his home country and in France before being forced to immigrate to Germany; he directed the Théâtre National du Togo and his plays are still present on the African scene. To date, there have been limited reviews of this book, and the literary scene in France has showed hardly any attention. This novel is the testimony of at least two generations of political refugees and other immigrants. It raises contemporary issues concerning the developed European societies, whose vision of immigration is usually derogatory and negative.

In this chapter, I wish to enlighten the reader with the reality of political immigrants in Europe, and draws from the analysis of texts of law (Bruschi, Poza-Lazarro), from historical narratives of different continents (Asiwaju, Meredith, Noiriel, Young), and from anglophone and francophone postcolonial narratives (Bancel, Blanchard, Hall, Hitchcott, Lemaire, Vergès) with an international perspective (United Nations). I attempt to demonstrate who these immigrants really are, but also primarily to bring to light a French-speaking African writer such as Sénouvo Abgota Zinsou, who has received little attention despite his attempt to enlighten so many dark areas on the hot topic of immigration. Both dealing with questions of identity and memory construction (Hall, Rothberg), what mainly distinguishes Chapter Five from the previous one is its dealing with the question of immigration for asylum seekers on European grounds, hence the references to French anthropology or sociology (Amselle, Bertheleu). Whereas Chapter Four focuses on Salie's torments between her life in France and her brother's distorted vision of Europe, Chapter Five deals with emergency-immigration.

The first part will look into the reasons that pushed asylum seekers such as Justine, Clara and others to Western European grounds, and how the international community manage the situation. It will then look at the ambiguous pre- and postcolonial historical and political construction of the figure of the clandestine in France and Germany over time. Secondly, this chapter will investigate the issues linked to the integration of Zinsou's migrating characters under the umbrella notion

of citizenship. It will look at the concept of 'ghost life' in France as the difficulties of cope with accessing national identity leave the immigrants in a no-man's land. Lastly, Chapter Five focuses on what could constitute Justine and Clara's ultimate cure: their *médicament*, or antidote to a life of fear and despair, and into the ways immigrants find to live with their new status.

Tormented souls in transhumance; in search of a remedy

Reasons for immigration explored

As we read through the four hundred and ninety three pages of *Le Médicament*, we are faced with life tragedies that originate either from Africa or from Eastern Europe. The narrative landscape mostly puts forward Justine and Clara's lives. The two main protagonists, who befriend each other in Block 21 at Bayerrode's refugees' centre in Germany, happen to be sharing the same room. Political activist in Dugan, Justine was considered an opponent to the government in place. As for Clara, she escaped on her own from Rwanda during the genocide, forced to leave everything behind, including her husband and her daughter, not knowing whether she will ever see them again.

Justine's active part in the resistance movement, which cost her dearly, led her to voice her political views at the local radio station where she used to work. For this reason, her partner, Ayivi, was captured and tortured to death. Justine recounts 'le cauchemar d'un homme qui, surpris par les miliciens, tentait de s'enfuir, appelait en vain au secours des voisins pétrifiés par la terreur […]' (p. 214). As Ayivi kneels down demanding to be kept alive, the militia tie him up and beat him to death. Common practice in dictatorial regimes, brutality and repression became established practice after the independence.

The similitudes between Zinsou's fictional country, Dugan, and his native land, Togo, are too strong not to be corollary. Zinsou allows the reader to travel back in time in Togolese history through Justine's character. Despite the period of time that followed independence, when the military regime ruled effectively and rooted out corruption at any cost, Martin Meredith reminds us that, Togo, like most of

Africa, became renowned for its Big Men.[6] In Togo, General Eyadéma, the former French army sergeant who had taken part in the assassination of President Olympio in 1963 and who seized power four years later, achieved a degree of stability rare in West-Africa.[7] However, the Togolese military ruler turned out to be no more competent, no more immune to the temptation of corruption, and no more willing to give up power than the regime he had overthrown. By the end of the 1980s, Eyadéma had been in power for twenty-one years. As Eyadéma was part of the second generation of political leaders, his sole ambition was to maintain in place the one-party dictatorship he had set up. What characterised dictatorial power in Meredith's words was 'rigging elections, emasculating the courts, cowing the press, stifling the universities, demanding abject servility and making [the dictators] exceedingly rich.'[8] The extent of oppression, according to Meredith, was such that by the end of the 1980s, 'not a single African head of state in three decades had allowed himself to be voted out of office'.[9]

Due to the large scale in the growing infiltration of corruption in civil services - the police and the media - Justine becomes *LM*'s symbol of the oppressed mass of Togo, forced into a life of blind submission or forced out of the national territory. In the narrative, the clever combination of thoughts and historical facts perceived through Justine's eyes gives us insight into Togolese history and the feelings people might have experienced at the time. Introspection as a narrative technique is used profusely throughout *LM* and allows the reader to reach a deep understanding of complex psychological issues associated with exile. As Zinsou refers to the 1990s general strike, the overall lethargy and an escape to a next door neighbour's 'Kotika's - possibly Burkina Faso - in the North of Togo, the narrator shares her thoughts with the readers: 'Un sentiment me traverse, semblable à celui que j'avais éprouvé lors de mon exil au Kotika, après les trois premiers mois de la grève générale: celui de l'échec prochain du mouvement' (p. 214). At the time, after

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[6] Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa, A History Of The Continent Since Independence* (London: The Free Press,, 2011), p. 176: 'in 1963 Togo's president, Sylvanus Olympio, was shot dead by a group of ex-servicemen led by a twenty-five year old sergeant, Etienne Eyadéma, in revenge for refusing to employ them in the Togolose army.'
[7] Ibid., p. 222.
[8] Ibid., p. 378.
[9] Ibid., p. 378.

months of protest and violence, Justine fears her political actions have been worthless. Unfortunately, the regime's stubbornness, the weariness of an inactive life and the exhaustion of resources incite Togolese refugees to return to Lomé and go back to their everyday activities.

In April 1991, after Eyadéma finally agreed to allow opposition parties to operate, he yielded to demands for a national conference. Opposition activists who suddenly became free to speak out openly, denounced years of brutality and repression. The conference delegates decided to defy Eyadéma's authority by appointing a High Council of the Republic, led by a Catholic bishop, to draft a new constitution. Unfortunately, during the summer of 1991, Eyadéma denounced a 'civilian coup' against the government and refused to recognise the new dispensation.[10] Impossible to destabilise, Eyadéma relied heavily on an army, three quarters of which consisted of handpicked wrestlers from his village, residence of the Kabré tribe. Naturally, ethnic solidarity was a key factor in the underlying struggle for power. Similarly, Ewe-speaking southern delegates at the national conference were disproportionately represented and very keen to take over governmental power. Justine, Ayivi and many others became easy targets for the government, and had no choice but to leave the country to remain alive.

When ethnicity became a weapon of war, Rwanda was torn between the main two ethnic groups that artificially divided the Rwandan population. The result was dreadful: the country was literally 'emptied of its population' during the genocide. The photos in the media at the time were poignant.[11] Also forced into exile, Justine's roommate, Clara, attempts to start another life in Germany. As Justine contemplates a photo of Ayivi that she keeps dearly in her Bible (p. 19), Clara advises her not to take part in a death cult that would only lead her to a psychological decent into Hell. Despite the loss of her husband and daughter, Marie-Yvonne, Clara advises Justine to look forward and forget about the past.

Originally based on a pre-colonial myth that grew from accounts of European travellers in the nineteenth century, Meredith further explains, that the ideology that emanated from these opposed to the indigenous Hutus, namely the aristocratic

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[10] Ibid., p. 398.
[11] Ibid., pp. 546-547.

Tutsis, considered as invaders, and claiming they had migrated from the highlands of Ethiopia or the Horn of Africa into Rwanda.[12] The myth fit in with the fashionable nineteenth-century European concept of 'historic race', in Meredith's words, a concept denounced by postcolonial academics, such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon or Valentin Mudimbe amongst others, for its destructive and formatting stance of Africa's history. Once more, the artificial implementation of borders to establish nations across the continent, accentuated the Hutu-Tutsi divide to the point that Hutu politicians utilised it for their own political propaganda.[13] In 1959-1960, at the time of the Hutu uprising, their leader Grégoire Kayibanda referred to Rwanda as 'two nations in a single state.'[14] The series of events that followed destroyed the country's strong economic reserves: built on coffee, banana, and eucalyptus production, the GDP had steadily increased between 1965 and 1989. Despite a report denouncing human rights abuses[15] such as 'massacres, torture, arbitrary detention and other abuses against Tutsi and members of the opposition',[16] little international intervention was made to acknowledge the genocide. Caught up in this logic of violent killings, Clara was left with two choices: either live in hiding and fear, or leave for Europe. The Belgians pulled out of the conflict: the French decided to intervene following the intermittent action from the United Nations, and offered to put *Opération Turquoise* at the disposal of the UN. Protective of the Hutu government in place, and having provided secret arms to the genocide killers, it would allow the French better control of the area, including fostering its strategic Francophone links with Mobutu's Zaire. Despite having atrocious memories, Clara finds the strength to start another life in Germany with Justine's boyfriend's brother, Stefan.

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[12] Ibid., p. 486: 'the ruling Tutsi aristocracy as being descendants of a 'Hamitic' people, with a culture clearly superior to that of the indigenous Hutu'; 'the same 'Hamitic hypothesis' was applied to other kingdoms in the Great Lakes region, such as Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro in modern Uganda'.

[13] For more details on the impact of frontiers making in Africa, see A. I. Asiwaju, *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984* (London and Lagos; University of Lagos Press, 1985); and also *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*, ed. by A. I. Asiwaju and Paul Nugent (London: Pinter, 1996).

[14] Meredith, p. 486.

[15] Meredith mentions a report done by a group of international human rights experts from ten countries, p. 499.

[16] Ibid., p. 499.

For Carlos, the Angolan refugee, the fear of being sent back culminates in Chapter Sixteen when the tribunal decides to expel him out from Germany. In the traditional story-telling formula, Zinsou brings us back into the story the same way he started it: 'j'étais témoin' (p. 207). Zinsou's comparative approach between Angola and Bosnia-Herzegovina brings together local histories from two different continents. If sent back 'home', he will either be a victim of mines, bombarding, will be massacred with his family by rebels, forced to enrol in the army or be arrested for desertion, thrown in jail, and perhaps shot (p. 210). The desperate situation refugees are confined to reveal confusion, sadness and hopelessness. A feeling of depression and despair overwhelms the narrative. Over pages 208 and 209, for instance, the lexicological trends pivot around conflict and sadness: 'bouleversé', 'il souffre', 'stress', 'accuser', 'trouble', 'massacre', 'triste', 'pensive', 'interrogatoire', 'amputes', 'oblige', 'nouvelles' 'terribles', 'terroristes', 'arme blanche', 'larmes', 'guerres', 'asiles', 'expulsions', 'manque', 'ennuie', which emphasises the arising tension between a tragic life in exile and feelings of hope: 'cadeaux', 'distraire', 'guérir', 'liberté', 'heureuse', 'tendrement', 'caressant', 'mon amour', 'bise', 'embrasse', 'soulagée'. Carlos' lover, the Bosniac married woman he met in Bayerrode, throws herself into an impossible love in order to cure the post-traumatic effects of exile and war. Troubled by the latest news about a Serbian family massacred by a group of Muslims, Miranda's husband, Viktor, shares the news with his wife who has one obsession in mind: finding a source of evasion: '[elle] se replonge de nouveau dans le sort présent et à venir de l'homme qu'elle aime: elle vit la tragédie imaginaire' (p. 210). Forced to flee from the civil war in Sarajevo with their three children, Miranda seems to be depressed: 'C'est terrible! Tout est terrible...dans le monde entier. Les guerres, l'asile, les expulsions...Je ne me sens pas heureuse' (p. 209).The change of territory engenders a double-trauma with interlaying sufferings originating from war, abandonment, separation, exile, coping with a new language and a new culture.

As Justine recalls her life of exile in Kotika (p. 118) under the protection of the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), it is interesting to note that, according to their latest figures, there were 44 million refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people in the world at the end of 2010, of whom 80% are

situated in developing countries.[17] Now aiming at more local action, the UNHCR's 2012-2013 global strategic priorities for Sub-Saharan Africa will focus on promoting access to regional protection, to asylum seeking procedures for refugees, asylum seekers and apatrids, to movements due to armed conflict, political repression, droughts and floods - causing internal displacements -, and due to poverty, and sexual and sexist violence. The complexities associated with the continent's division into many national entities and with local conflicts do not facilitate the reintegration of certain population such as the Angolans, the Liberians and the Rwandans into their homeland at an official level.

Following the 2009 Convention de l'Union Africaine, a new international legal framework was put into place in 2012, to ensure better protection and assistance to all displaced people in Africa. Aiming at facilitating sustainable and long-term solutions, the UNHCR target resettlement to unblock prolonged exile situations in one region. Unfortunately, the issues at hand are becoming similar to those affecting immigrants in Western Europe. As the UNHCR point out, the lassitude linked to asylum, considered to be characteristic of industrialised countries, is increasingly more perceptible in Sub-Saharan Africa. The tightening up of frontiers and the worries linked to security contribute to hardening politics and weakening support for refugees and asylum seekers. The absurdity of the situation sometimes leads to newborn children with 'unknown' citizenship.[18]

Zinsou points out that coming to Europe in search of 'blue gold' is the ultimate goal for survival of most Africans. Obtaining the blue UN passport opens the door to economic and social existence in Europe, of which money allowance, free movement, education and medical care, all constitute a tempting 'first-aid' offer.

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[17] HCR Appel global 2015, 'Aperçu opérationnel régional 2015 – Afrique' <http://www.unhcr.fr/pages/4aae621d43f.html> [accessed 17 February 2012]. RFI radio offers a useful cartography of the refugees in the world: Latifa Mouaoued, 20 June 2011, '44 millions de réfugiés dans le monde' <http://www.rfi.fr/general/20110620-infographie-44-millions-refugies-le-monde-HCR-ONU, > [accessed 25 November 2011]; it is useful to note though that countries of less than 5,000 refugees do not appear on the map.
[18] Eva Hegedus, 3 January 2012, 'Legal Catch-22 leaves newborn child with citizenship "unknown"', <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/news-and-views/news-list/news-detail/article/legal-catch-22-leaves-newborn-child-with-citizenship-unknown.html> [accessed 23 February 2012].

<u>The figure of the clandestine: leurre and effet placebo</u>

In order to situate the novel's own politics, it is essential to understand the importance of the figure of the clandestine immigrant in Europe. As seen previously, the complex issues that lead to immigration on the African continent have direct repercussions on the type of immigration issued from it and aiming for Europe. Faced with immense challenges, some immigrants decide to attempt to resettle on European grounds, hoping for stability away from arbitrary politics. The long road that possibly leads to the acquisition of the blue UN passport is treacherous. Trapped in transit centres such as Offenberg, Rheinsfelsen, or Bayerrode (p. 23) in Germany, Zinsou's asylum seekers hardly exist. They are denied an identity. Limited displacements and controlled movements in and out of their 'hospital' punctuate their life. Clandestinity, then, becomes one way out of the transit centre, or the only way to bypass expulsion. European laws consider Justine a 'sans-papière' and limit her to two yearly-authorised journeys throughout Europe (p. 95). Following a series of illegal trips, Clara is arrested and sent to Bamberg prison. The accumulation of 800 Deutschmark in fines forces Clara to be legally responsible for these by completing a forty-day period in prison. The irony is such that before the genocide, with Jules and Marie-Yvonne, Clara used to travel freely in France, Belgium and the USA: 'je vois encore Clara, dans cette veste de lin gris, sur ce pantalon noir, en compagnie de son mari et de Marie-Yvonne, marchant sur le tapis rouge du hall d'un hôtel de luxe parisien' (p. 169). Offended by Justine's words, La Cityoenne's voice springs up: 'Allez foutre le désordre chez vous si ça vous arrange. Ici, c'est la rigueur' (p. 188). Guardian of 'traditional' German values and society, La Citoyenne, symbol of the tightening of national identity in *LM*, represents Germany's voice of consciousness. Her appearance is systematically inserted into the narrative with an italic font. She intervenes on behalf of German nation, defending German identity. When Marion decides to marry Alassani six days before his due eviction, La Citoyenne strongly reacts:

> Opinions politiques? Quelles opinions politiques? Je vous ai déjà dit que ces gens-là n'en ont pas. Je vous ai déjà dit que ces gens-là sont tous des Menteurs et qu'il n'y a pas un seul Vrai parmi eux (p. 211).

These immigrants, fake citizens of Germany she implies, are not true citizens; they lie about their life, their origins and cannot be trusted, for no one can really ever find out where they belong.

In Chapter Fifteen, during an escapade by bike the Swiss police at the German-Swiss border stop Edouard. Struggling to identify Djaman-Yovo (Blanc Allemand in Ewe), officially Edouard Langmüller, the police are confused: he is called Edouard, he does not speak very good German, is black, carries German Deutschemarks, French francs, and CFA francs. After long investigations - including a body search - and the confirmation by the German police that an asylum seeker of Dugan nationality is registered under the name of Edouard Langmüller, Djaman-Yovo is finally released, without his European money:

> On vous a bien rendu l'argent que vous avez emporté de chez vous. Ça ne nous intéresse pas, ça ne nous regarde pas. Mais vous devrez justifier l'origine de chaque Deutschemark, de chaque franc français, de chaque franc suisse, de chaque franc belge… que vous détenez. C'est ça l'Europe (p. 93).

'Chez vous' emphasises the 'us vs them' Saidian opposition between Europe and Africa. Justine ironises that his Langmüller ancestors have not quite helped him on this occasion. Claiming his German origin, Edouard Langmüller is involved in a tribunal case to determine his dual nationality.

The obsession with identifying and keeping under control illegal or clandestine immigrants, or 'undocumented' individuals (*les sans papiers*), reflects a particular historical moment in which France's understanding of its component cultures, Vinay Swamy points out, radically changed and has marked several significant shifts in France's self-conception.[19] As Swamy reminds us 'the rise and visibility of new articulations of Frenchness' are partly due to a post-World War II immigration, especially between 1945 and 1974, mostly from her ex-colonies in North-Africa, which made France more visibly multicultural than ever before. From

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[19] Vinay Swamy, *Interpreting the Republic, Marginalization and Belonging in Contemporary French novels and Films* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011).

this moment on, imagined as an homogenous society, France's national identity had been consolidated in the long years of the Third Republic (1870-1974), which traced its genealogy back to a previous 'glorious' revolution, from which it inherited its famous tripartite motto: Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.

However, contemporary France has had to confront a very different 'pluricultural post-war reality', especially with the coming age of the descendants of newer immigrants from the 1980s onwards. The larger context of the growing political and economic importance of the European Union, with the signing of the Schengen agreements (1984), and Maastricht (1994) and Amsterdam (1997) treaties, successively opened France's borders to other European Union members, and strengthened common European law.

As a consequence, European nations have had to re-evaluate their relation with the nation-state model that had been dominant for at least one hundred and fifty years. Swamy further explains the dismantling of European borders, which were initiated by a push towards the free movement of labour and capital in keeping with market capitalism, and which was facilitated by a single currency: the Euro. As a result, the pressure on the sense of nation felt by the opening of the borders resulted in the construction of a Fortress Europe:

> It is in the framework of these tensions of an eroding sense of nation that France has fought to strengthen its national identity not only by closing its borders to those not of European Union origin but also through a renewed investment in foregrounding its 'homegrown' culture.[20]

For these reasons, the widening gap between Europe and Africa seems to get bigger.

The notion of jus solis vs sanguinis is a topic that Daniel Poza-Lazarro has given particular attention to.[21] The historical dimension that Poza-Lazarro adds to this dilemma puts French law into a specific European context, situated both before and after the creation of the European community. Nevertheless - and this is

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[20] Ibid., p. 131.
[21] Daniel Poza-Lazarro, 'Jus Sanguinis, le droit du sang', from Le sang-Archives, < http://en.quetes.free.fr/archives/le_sang/articles/daniel_sang.htm> [accessed 26 March 2012].

particularly useful in our understanding of *LM* - Poza-Lazarro uses a comparative

approach between France and Germany. After a series of reversals, the French code

of nationality has evolved over the past two centuries, according to national

conceptions and social demographic and military imperatives. For these reasons, it is

essential to bear in mind the complexities associated with the fact that France is one

of the jus solis homelands. In reality, if France has constituted a European model in

the nineteenth century, it is for its introduction of jus sanguinis into the Code Civil.

The attachment to jus solis only took place in 1889, and mainly motivated by

demographic and military preoccupations. The idea that France is a 'patrie du droit

du sol' can be explained by the desire to rival her German neighbour. The issue that

arose during decolonisation, when the new nations - ex French colonies - attempted

to build themselves, made clear that they could not exist separately from the

metropolis, due to the imposition of a French institutional authority[22] through

schools, administrations and the military, as opposed to Germany, a community that

has founded its identity on an organic mass culture, putting the state before the

nation, quite the opposite to France.

      Looking more closely at the history of colonial laws, Christian Bruschi

highlights the origins of the contemporary underlying divide that firmly separate

nationals from foreigners brought forward in *LM*.[23] The distinction in colonial times

between two types of foreigners, and the colonisers' wish to carefully allocate

populations not according to their nationality but according to a demarcating line

between the coloniser and the colonised, points out a hierarchisation of 'étrangers

de droits communs' and 'étrangers assimilés aux indigènes'.[24] Even if scrutinising

French colonial law to de-dramatize the passionate debate about nationality and

colonisation is a fairly successful approach, I would, once more, argue that this type

of analysis would need to be embedded within the postcolonial debate to be

worthwhile. Bruschi's crucial point about the nearly accidental attribution of French

citizenship to all is very valuable.[25]

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[22] For further information on this topic see Achille Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (California, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
[23] Bruschi, p. 29.
[24] Ibid., p. 19.
[25] Ibid., p. 15.

Bruschi reminds us that the law on nationality that was applied to colonies developed temporally; it should be inscribed in an ideological context characterised by a double content: France produced by the 1789 revolution, strongly impregnated by equality amongst men, and France of the 'mythe national', which would root itself in a secular history of a superior civilisation. For these reasons, it would be wrong, Bruschi argues, to deal with colonial nationality law separately from common nationality French law.

The result greatly differs depending on whether the emphasis is placed on political society, that is today's citizenship, or whether one looks for the criteria allowed to determine the 'ressortissants', on which the State exercises it sovereignty. 'La césure fondamentale' between the initial phase of colonisation by the French colonial Empire, which gives no space for the indigenous population but emphasises rather the workforce imported from Africa during the slave trade, and the final phase, decolonisation, in which nationality is at the centre of the decolonising process, forcing indigenous populations to switch from the colonial Empire's nationality to their own.

At the time of the 1960s' independence, when the new nationals lost their French nationality, the new law introduced the criteria of origin.[26] The switch from jus solis to jus sanguinis marks a clear break in French nationality law. Nonetheless, ten years later, keen to maintain strategic links with its ex-colonies, the 9th January, 1973, law reintegrates its 'ressortissants' from the DOM-TOM - overseas territories - residing in France. As a consequence, a child born in France from a parent born in an ex-colony or a DOM-TOM is now considered French. The acknowledgement of a double jus solis is even more surprising since it did not exist during colonial times. The obvious contradiction lies within the fact that what used to be considered as foreign land is now tied back to the metropolis, whereas the immigrant population, originating from lands colonised by the French, is now considered to be foreign. From *étranger* to *étrangeté*, the immigrant symbolises *bizarrerie* or weirdness.

In the past, the foreigner and the colonised have constituted two distinctive categories in French law, which were antagonistically defined. Indeed, the colonised

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[26] Ibid., p. 28.

could not be foreign, only a French of inferior condition. Nowadays, the ex-colonised, sometimes immigrant, is even more foreign than he was as a French of inferior condition.

Achille Mbembé, Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi have written at length about the traumatic effects of colonisation and decolonisation, integrating the violence of power into the postcolonial debate to allow for a balanced analysis reversing, according to the Saidian formulae, the North-South logics into a South-North deconstruct of the Empirical narrative and historiography. Zinsou successfully contributes to vulgarise these postcolonial theories in his piece of fiction, making them accessible to a wider audience, although only a Francophone one.

The national fear provoked by major historical, political and economic shifts has crystallised around the figure of the clandestine. Bearing in mind the socio-political and economic geneses of these anxieties allows us to comprehend their imbrications within the debates surrounding alternative kinship structures at the end of the last millennium.[27]

As illustrated in *LM*, similar debates have taken place about the immigrant who conveniently becomes the scapegoat of many national anxieties. Fictional space allows for the burgeoning of new bridges between nationalities and identities, all blurred together in a sometimes painful, but mostly therapeutic, turmoil. Symbolical of what postcolonial studies achieve by blending different approaches, the novel succeeds in jostling together different cultures and histories, local and national.

Ghost life in the Eldorado

Double-je and identity questioning

The principle of republican integration dictates that foreigners and colonised people are, as Jean-Loup Amselle reminds us, supposed to become fully-fledged citizens over time. Even if that integration rests on a fiction, there is no category under which to classify these entities, which forms the blind spot of the system. This grey zone

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[27] Vinay Swamy contextualises his argument in his analysis of the film *Chouchou* (March 2003) in which Gad El Maleh is an illegal immigrant who has just arrived on the French territory by boat having left his home country - Algeria - to live his transgender dream life in Paris. Swamy, pp. 132-133.

finds its origins in the contradiction that lies at the root of the French Republic, between natural law and the rights of man on one hand, and the management of cultural differences on the other.[28]

For Amselle, the issue lies in what he refers to as 'affirmative *exclusion'*, a principle that - hoping to compensate for dysfunction in our social system - reinforces the differences between communities and opposes those of 'French stock' and the different ethnic minorities or communities. This contradiction that lies in French immigration history originates in the republican assimilative process founded on the basis of the assimilation of citizens as individuals.

French multiculturalism, Amselle further explains, is founded on an initial opposition that is central to French historiography between the Franks and the Gallo-Romans, and which has more recently culminated in 'the division of the population into 'minority 'communities' on one hand, and the majority 'French ethnic group' on the other.'[29] It goes without saying, that this fundamental republican dilemma cannot be solely examined within the limits of the hexagon. Indeed, 'l'exportation [du schème de la guerre des deux races] dans les colonies'[30] has had a direct influence on the treatment of minorities within the hexagon.

What Amselle characterises as 'le mythe celtique' - perpetrated by Napoleon I and revived by Napoleon III -[31] compares the Celts with the Gauls, forming the basis for two types of racism, Amselle argues: one of purity - supported by the traditional right, and the far right and its Nazi affinities -, one of fusion or *métissage* of the races - supported by the left and the 'republican' right -.[32] According to Amselle, the

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[28] Jean-Loup Amselle, *Affirmative Exclusion, Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (London: Cornell University, 2003), pp. XII-XIII.
[29] Ibid., p. XII.
[30] Ibid., p. 12.
[31] Jean-Loup Amselle further explains that : 'si, pendant une longue durée, la thématique de la guerre des deux races a subi une éclipse, un schème intellectual connexe a pris la relève depuis la Révolution française, celui du mythe celtique. Popularisé par Napoléon Ier qui fonda l'Académie celtique en 1805 et repris par Napoléon III, ce mythe destine à justifier les conquêtes imperials n'a cessé depuis lors de se développer dans deux directions différente : l'une axée sur la réunion des différentes nations celtiques (Bretagne, Irlande, pays de Galles), l'autre faisant des Gaulois une entité coextensive à l'espace national français qui retiendra notre attention.' In, *Vers un Multiculturalisme Français: L'Empire de la Coutume,* (Paris*:* Aubier, 1996), p. 16.
[32] Ibid., p. 5.

appearance of multi-ethnic republicanFrance, enriched by its differences, is said to be of a polygenic nature and, therefore, based on racial identification.

By constantly celebrating its 'composite' French population through 'affirmative action',[33] France stands out as a nation that assumes responsibility for its colonial past. Simultaneously, pointing out 'target groups' highlights the paradox contained in French republicanism that is struggling to maintain its secular motto, based on the principle of citizenship, and attempting to 'neutralise' cultural difference.

The limitations of Amselle's argument lie in its circularity. Although it acknowledges the restrictions set by a discourse resting solely on biological terms, Amselle admits that the current difficulty to countering the underlying racism of the theory of métissage 'is in great part the result of our incapacity to conceive of cultural phenomenon in anything but biological terms.'[34] Hélène Bertheleu rightly points out that Amselle adopts a definition that could be seen as 'interprété', for it ignores the use of the notion of multiculturalism in North America and in Australia. She underlines, then, the fact that Amselle's theory might lie on a 'concept protéiforme', which is a term coined by the German sociologist Frank-Olaf Radtke: 'dont la définition est profondément déterminée par le contexte national où elle s'élabore.'[35]

The great asset of postcolonial theories, such as Fanon or Said's, supplements Amselle's theory and attests to a need to perceive the other as someone else, rather than a diametrically opposed being. As explored in Chapter Three, the essentialising myth that lies in the nativist policy in place during colonisation need not be separated from the analysis of the contemporary issues faced by France and its ex-colonies, for they are essential in the understanding of cultural implications that

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[33] Specific examples are being given by Amselle: 'the engagement of the Senegalese infantry beside French soldiers in the trenches of Verdun, the occupation of the Ruhr by black troops after World War I, the presence of numerous West-Indians, Maghrebians, and Africans on French sports team, and even the proliferation of music festivals or fashion.[…] the parade Jean-Paul Goude held on the Champs-Elysées on 17 July 1989 commemorating the bicentennial of the French Revolution.' (Affirmative Exclusion, p. 6).

[34] Ibid., p. XV

[35] Hélène Bertheleu, 'De l'Unité Républicaine à la Fragmentation Multiculturelle le Débat Français en Matière d'Intégration', L'Homme et la Société, 3, 125 (1997), 27-38.

shape today's immigration and the integration of immigrants in Europe, and in France specifically, but also because it shapes the landscape in West African human fluxes.

Consequently, the perception of immigrants as collectivities, as opposed to individuals, and their integration into society, is affected even more so by the hardening of identities and the rise of ethnic and religious fundamentalism. Initially perceived as social outsiders in Europe, the newcomers have to prove their origin to be attached to a specific community. Only then will they be able to start the process that will allow them to initially benefit from asylum seeker's protection, before being considered for political refuge.

So desperate to be settled, Enuglo would do anything to obtain his Duldung status, his 'statut d'étranger toléré' (p. 309). Once they reach the Promised Land, the asylum seekers are faced with a reality they had sometimes embellished. The clashes between integrating to the nation and sticking up for your own compatriots are revealed even more so in the refugee centre. Justine's is disillusioned with the behaviour of some of her Duganais fellow citizens and in particular Enuglo, who selfishly only thinks about making money out of his hairdressing services to the community in the asylum seekers' centre. Following Brother Jacob's police arrestat, Kwesi comes to Justine to express his concerns. Hoping she will manage to reason him empowered by patriotism, Justine tries to explain that 'ici, à l'étranger, la solidarité est l'une des bases de notre survie et du respect que les autres pourraient nous témoigner' (p. 116). Sent on a mission on behalf of Bayerrode's African community, Justine ought to convince Enuglo that his 'faux frère' attitude lets them all down; Justine reminds him that 'Tu n'es qu'un pauvre asylant. Pire, un pauvre nègre!' (p. 118). His familiarity with the Hausmeister and the authorities easily leads to the belief that he is a police informant. With Enuglo's character, Justine condemns the *double-jeu* of ressortissants she sees as traitors of the democratisation process in Dugan:

> […] quand nous vivions en exil au Kotika et n'avions d'autres moyens de survie que la débrouillardise et les vivres servis par le Haut-Commissariat aux Réfugiés, alors que les plus pauvres parmi les plus pauvres, acceptant le

sacrifice, avaient abandonné leur gagne-pain quotidien, des fonctionnaires

relativement mieux logés se cachaient pour se rendre quotidiennement au

travail afin de ne pas perdre leur poste, et revenaient nous trouver le soir au

Kotika…Enuglo ressemblait trop à tous ces partisans du double jeu et de

'l'intérêt gouverne le monde', qui ont contribué à briser le mouvement de

grève (p. 119).

Enuglo retorts :

quelle solidarité ? ce ne sont pas les Africains qui se sont cotisés pour

m'acheter mon billet d'avion. […] chacun est venu prendre son 'médicament'

selon sa propre maladie (p. 116).

Desperate to blend into a new culture, Enuglo tries to escape from the constructed

label of 'foreigner'. Trapped in a *double-je* game, Enuglo is doubled: one with the

refugees, and one with the German authorities.

Gérard Noiriel's socio-historical analysis of the national representation of

France's social categories[36] gives a clear insight into what nowadays constitutes the

'assignation identitaire' of the foreigner, since the interwar years. The Geneva

Convention, having left it open to nation states to decide what administrative

procedures are involved in the identification of refugees, has led to the

universalisation of the category 'refugee'.

While the interwar period saw refugee status granted to groups rather than

individuals, French laws have adapted to preserve individual liberties. In response to

the democratic principle of 'état souverain'[37], which bureaucratically imposed

nationalities on the Ukrainians or the Jews when seeking refuge respectively from

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[36] Gérard Noiriel*, Etat, Nation et Immigration* (Paris: Editions Belin/Gallimard, 2001), p. 411.
[37] Gérard Noiriel further explains: 'Sous la monarchie de Juillet et jusqu'au début de la IIIe
République, l'administration avait établi sa nomenclature des 'nationalités' essentiellement
en se fiant aux déclarations des individus eux-mêmes. […] A partir du recensement de 1876,
l'administration française refuse de se fier au dire des individus concernés en matière de
nationalité. […] En vertu du principe démocratique de l'identité gouvernants/gouvernés,
chaque individu peut être considéré comme le 'représentant' de son peuple souverain' (pp.
411-412).

the USSR and Germany, in 1948, the International Organisation for Refugees decided to grant the status to individuals, rather than specific groups. Consequently, the attribution of the refugee's status was, and still is now, subordinated to administrative identification procedures that aim to insure asylum seekers fear persecution for good reasons.

Directly inspired from this law, the Geneva Convention's definition is far more generic - 'persecution' or 'threat' are not explicitly defined - leaving full autonomy to European states to interpret the Convention in their best interests. As a consequence, Noiriel argues, the more abstract and universal the category, the more important the administrative procedures become as they provide social content to this category.

For instance, in 1952, the French Government created a national institution, the Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et des Apatrides (OFPRA). To the best of their ability, the civil servants were left to decide who belonged to the refugee category, on the basis of their understanding of the nature of the political regime in place in the asylum seeker's country of origin. For instance, in *LM*, unable to say that the Duganais opposition party boycotted the latest presidential elections, Brother Jacob ironically fails the identity test. In connivance with German authorities, Enuglo betrays Brother Jacob, who is immediately sent back home:

> Vers trois heures du matin, la voix de Jacob Kalu retentit dans le bâtiment: 'Fuck you! German polizei, fuck you! Scheisse! Scheisse Deutschland!'[38] Tout le monde comprend déjà que le boxeur […] va, selon l'expression inventée par les Duganais, être 'balancé' (p. 109).

As Justine describes the scene, the time line gets progressively lost. Forced back into her memories, Chapter Eight starts off with a time indication; however, as we read on and the narrative becomes more tragic, Justine's reflections become more empirical. Brother Jacob's multiple identities are illustrated via his different names:

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[38] 'Shit! Shit Germany!'

his nickname within the centre, his fake asylum seeker's name, and his name as it would appear on the official identity paper.

Kwesi now fears to be the next one on the list. His 'au noir' activities are not compatible with Enuglo's mentality, which make him an easy target. Involved in the business of second-hand motor vehicles and spare parts, the dynamic Ghanaian-Sudanese business school graduate ends up in Germany after a series of clandestine journeys. 'Aventurier professionnel', as Justine amicably calls him, and well accustomed to the 'système D' techniques, Kwesi was first a Ghanaian immigrant in Nigeria, hoping to escape the economic crisis. After he was part of the first lot of foreigners sent out of Nigeria, he tried his luck in the Ivory Coast; he tried to make plans to go to the United States, whilst living on nothing in Senegal, and was then involved in a series of European journies from Sweden, Switzerland and to England. Whereas Enuglo refuses to show solidarity, Georges le Bel, caught up in a *logique de solidarité*, is condemned to live a life of prostitution and to on demand *ménage à trios*, to satisfy Rénate and her husband's search for exoticism.

Whilst Georges was happily making good money with his 'maquis', a small restaurant employing ten people and serving cheap local dishes for important people, he is seduced by the idea of economic immigration. Talked out of his successful business, Georges decides to sell up and join his 'brother' - a man from the same village as him - in Frankfurt. Full of hopes and up for investing all his savings into a profitable business, Georges, easily tempted, arrives in Germany with a three month visa. The exotic restaurant for the true European gourmands would work without the shadow of a doubt and guarantee good revenues. Living on Georges' savings, the pair of them soon sees the end of the nest egg, and slowly sink into economic despair. As Georges' patience runs out, the African brotherhood collapses. Going back home is out of the question: 'Georges, malade de cette idée du retour pour 'bouffer la honte' (p. 222), seeks advice : 'un autre frére lui conseille d'aller bouffer le médicament' (p. 222). Stuck within European borders, now he needs to swallow the increasingly bitter pills.

Urban transactions

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Awaiting their transfer to a refugee centre, the notions of transit, transhumance, and transaction pervade the entire narrative, creating an on-going feeling of unsettledness, constant mobility and agitation. Time and space are intertwined and distorted by the immigrants' movements.

On their way to the administrative building, Justine and Akuyo are about to find out that their names appear on the list. They are leaving, maybe, for 'un début de paradis' (p. 63): 'l'idée de transfert est toujours un sujet de joie pour ceux qui en bénéficient, leur donne des ailes' (p. 63). The transfer means better living conditions, more independence, a small money allowance and, later on, social help - 400 German marks per month, about 200 Euros -, and more rights. Unfortunately, due to poor maintenance of the building's sanitary block, the transfer is postponed: 'Kein Transfer! Kein Transfer für Haus 21!' (p. 70).

Due to territorial chance, and as their cultural life is rerouted through Bayerrode, unexpected encounters take place. Whereas migration offers the possibility to perform their identities differently, to speak with another voice, Zinsou's protagonists are confronted with emotional turmoil. Justine and Stefan's encounter is emblematic of that 'constant need for renegotiations of identity across what emerges as the constantly shifting borderspace'[39] between Africa and Germany. Although the immigrants are supposedly relocated from one home to another, as the immigrants put it, Stuart Hall explains that 'places are so equivocally as really belonging somewhere else', as belonging to some other home to which the immigrant eventually returns. Hitchcott explains further that migration generates anxieties about national identity, forcing the migrant to re-evaluate his or her relationship with 'home' and often generates feelings of homelessness. This ambivalence is reflected in *LM* in the way the protagonists fear and idealise an encounter with a German native. Justine and Clara very much doubt Jürgen's good intentions to meet up just for a drink. On the other hand, Justine accepts the invitation and will come in the company of her friend Clara.

It would be misleading to attempt to define migrants solely in reference to their geographic mobility, without paying close attention to the social dimension of

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[39] Nicki Hitchcott and Calixte Beyala, *Performances of Migration* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 68.

this mobility. One must ask how mobility is constructed and 'discursively articulated by people and communities'.[40] Cecile Vigouroux's study helps us understand why it would be misleading to only label the migrants from *LM* according to their country of origin. The reader has to resist this temptation since the narrative is constructed around the centre of Bayerrode, in Germany, first port of call for Justine and Clara, and the other migrants awaiting to be 'digested' by the European bureaucracy and laws. The transit centre is the core of the novel since the migrants' lives rotate around one geographical space that constantly sucks them back in, at least until they receive their refugees' passport. To be fully accepted as citizens and benefit from health and social advantages, they either need to marry a German national or request German nationality. Justine, on her arrival to Germany, remembers: 'retrait du passeport national qui m'enlevait mon identité' (p. 58).

When Stefan asks Justine to marry her, initially she is concerned that Stefan's family will refuse this union. Zinsou gives us insight into the challenges that immigrants are constantly exposed to. Is it possible to be fully granted citizenship and accepted as a citizen? I would agree, once more, with Vigouroux, who reminds us that Western governments appear to have reduced sociocultural integration to language competence.[41] It is common practice for civic-integration tests or ceremonies to be held in the Netherlands, in Great Britain, and more recently in France. Indeed, Germany's Einbürgerungstest is compulsory a year after arriving in German territory,[42] and it constitutes Principle Four of Germany's integration strategy: 'Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration'.[43] Since 2005, when language and civic courses became part of the official integration policy, an estimated 237,000 of the 360,000

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[40] Cécile Vigouroux and Salikoko S. Mufwene, 'Globalization and Language Vitality, Perspectives from Africa' *in From Africa to Africa: Globalization, Migration and Language Vitality* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), (p.234).

[41] Ibid., p231.

[42] JTW, 'Guttenberg Blues: Embattled Seehofer Calls for Immigrants to Learn German', 10 March 2011 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,750131,00.html> [accessed 11 March 2012].

[43] Eric Leise, 'Germany Strives to Integrate Immigrants with New Policies', 9 July 2007 <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=610> [accessed 23 March 2012].

immigrants required to take the courses enrolled. As of March 2007, over 100,000 participants had successfully completed the courses.

Trapped by the weight of administrative procedures, Zinsou's characters have little geographical mobility at this stage in the novel until their transfer gets accepted. This stage of their 'médicament' makes them feel very nauseous, as their identification is still ongoing.

Atiké: the antidote

> La question […] est de savoir si l'homme peut choisir de vivre partout où il trouve son
>
> bonheur dans le monde.[44]
>
> Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou

<u>Emergence of a third space</u>

As common themes emerge from both novels, cross-referencing with Chapter Three of this thesis is essential to fully understand the global dimension of the postcolonial South-North immigration.

Justine and Clara, and Salie - main protagonist of Miano's *Contours du Jour qui Vient* - share a similar destiny; a destiny made up of the recomposition and rearticulation of their identities in order to move forward and leave the past behind. So what really is the 'médicament' for them and what is their antidote? 'La force de rêver', 'l'évasion'? (p. 108) is probably not enough to cope with the trauma of exile. In search of a remedy that would help them to forget their disturbing past, Justine, Clara, Carlos and the others, all attempt to find in their dreams the miracle pill that would erase from their memories the unbearable atrocities of the past:

> […] la force de rêver! C'était mon refuge, à moi aussi, à la mort d'Ayivi: faire revenir à la mémoire les images des moments de bonheur partagés ensemble […] Ce qu'il nous faut, ce n'est pas seulement un refuge, mais aussi l'évasion (p. 108).

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[44] Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou, *Le Médicament* (Paris: Hatier 2003), p. 98.

Not solely looking for a safe place to live away from death threats and life in reclusion, Clara wishes to render justice by avenging her dead (p. 488).

The colonisation of Western Africa by the French, together with decolonisation and its aftermath, have often been side-tracked from main-stream literature, or twisted to look only at the prosperity it brought to the ex-European Empires, due to a long-lasting occurrence dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, and a distant location from the European continent. However, the common themes shared between the Holocaust and French colonisation with slavery in the background, allow for the bringing forward of extreme historical events and to explore an adequate form of narrating and understanding an extraordinary series of events, to borrow Rothberg's words.[45]

Despite their uniqueness, both events share a universal dimension. Similarly, the multidisciplinary nature of Holocaust studies and postcolonial studies refute an arbitrarily rigid approach confined to post-modernism, or modernism, gender studies, race studies, feminist theories, post-structuralism, realism or antirealism, for they do not provide sufficient answers to comprehend these two extraordinary events. In 2000, Rothberg argued that 'the lack of a transdisciplinary space of dialogue has contributed to the strange double vision with which the Nazi genocide is today viewed: trapped between Jewish particularity and universalism.'[46] This has also characterised the narratives about French colonisation, previously kept to the periphery and treated as foreign, until the fairly recent emergence of postcolonial debate in France, thanks to the contributions of Vergès, Bancel, Blanchard, Lemaire and Stephen Smith.[47]

Fictional novels, such as Zinsou's, fruitfully participate in the multidisciplinary postcolonial cultural debate by bringing to the fore a literature classified in the past as foreign, and by contributing to the effort to demarginalise and redynamise their

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[45] Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism, the Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p.7.
[46] Ibid., p. 6.
[47] See Nicolas Blancel and Françoise Vergès, *La République Coloniale* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003; Nicolas Blancel, Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, *La Fracture coloniale, la Société Française au Prisme de l'Héritage Colonial* (Paris : La Découverte, 2005); Françoise Vergès, *Mémoire Enchaînée, Questions Sur l'Esclavage* (Paris : Albin Michel, 2006); Antoine Glaser and Stephen Smith, *Comment la France Perdu l'Afrique* (Paris : Autrement, 2005).

status initially fixed by an imperial egocentrism. Beyond the French jus solis and jus sanguinis national codes, literature incorporated into postcolonial studies transcends a 'sterile' narrative and historiography, resisting contamination by foreign narratives. Quite the opposite, the successful germination of various approaches gives birth to a new space of thinking, a third space in construction and constant evolution, not geographically fixed, but in motion. Malleable, this new dimension is both unique and universal. Also self-sufficient, its capacity to regenerate into a new entity participates in its multi-faceted composition.

Similarly, the interaction of different social discourses and practices that inform the notion of self for Justine, Clara, Carlos and all the others, focus on the processes of becoming, rather than on a state of being. Indeed, Hall prefers the term 'identification' over 'identity' for it allows malleability in the construction of the self.[48] It takes into account the shifting nature of the articulation of the various facets that constitute an individual. Not tempted by the lazy categorising and excessive labelling of a central discourse pretending to preserve a utopic authentic identity, *LM* reshuffles the dynamics between relationships, social and political status, cultures and languages.

The underlying choreographical aspect of the novel, which is almost operatic, sees bodies and souls jostling together, bouncing back in various directions on stage. The multidirectional essence of the narrative is revealed in the South-North, East-West centrifugal migrating process to Bayerrode's transit centre, which, in return, throws back out its characters in to unexpected directions. We soon find out Mir has left Viktor and lives in a different city with Carlos and her youngest child; Viktor is left on his own to care for the other two children; Clara goes back to Rwanda to pursue her quest and find her daughter, she is later joined by Jürgen - her German lover - and by Justine, bearing Stefan's child, symbol of regeneration. Clara and Justine's ex-roommate, Dorothée, also finds stability in Rwanda. Keen to bring to light new beginnings Zinsou sets the scene in an ex-land of genocide.

In his contribution to the *Une Société Fragmentée*, Michel Wieviorka that regrets multiculturalism is perceived negatively in France, as the brutal affirmation

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[48] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding' in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Part 1, ed. by Simon During (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

of particular identities that Hélène Bertheleupoints out.[49] Often wrongly reduced to communitarism, to integrism or terrorism, it could be perceived as a means to integrate cultural difference to democracy. Defending the idea that individualism is one key to multiculturalism, Wieviorka wonders how it is possible to respond to the multiple demands of acknowledgement in public space. Firstly, he suggests it is crucial not to limit us to a unique definition of the Republic, in an abstract universalism. For him, the Republic is not only about assimilation, it is also the tolerance of differences, as long they remain private. Thirty or forty years ago, Wieviorka explains further, our societies were industrial and organised in a class conflict. Today, in the post-industrial era, the nation-state is in crisis, and cultural minorities of all sorts are emerging. How do we give space to both whilst still maintaining social cohesion and citizenship? For Wieviorka, enclosing multiculturalism versus universalism in this alternative is heading in the wrong direction. He considers the French model of integration to be mythical since the institutions that used to ensure immigrant's socialisation are today in crisis. Zinsou perfectly illustrates this divide with the imaginary court trial between La Citoyenne and Mama Goalier - symbol of Africa's colonial times - that takes place during Edouard Langmuller's trial about his citizenship (p.315). By creating a third space embedded within the narrative, and giving a chance to symbolic characters of colonial times, the old ladies re-actualize the debate over colonisation and decolonisation. The metaphorical birds' fight between 'l'Oiseau-Citoyenne' and 'l'Oiseau-Mama Goalier' brings back to present times the unresolved conflicts of decolonisation (p.323).

The affirmation of multiple cultural identities is not, according to Wieviorka, the result of economic and social crisis. The economic crisis perverts and transforms the identity question, engendering reactions of exclusion or racism against populations issued from immigration. We are entering a new type of society, Wieviorka tells us, and the actual phenomenon are not transitory, they have historical precedents. The author also regrets that multiculturalism has often been

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[49] Hélène Bertheleu, 'De l'unité républicaine à la fragmentation multiculturelle : le débat français en matière d'intégration', *L'Homme et la Société*, 1997, pp. 27-38.
Bertheleu, p. 10.

used as a counter-model that is largely ideologised, caricatured and often badly documented. As an alternative, he offers to combine the two demands of the universal and the particular, on the one hand supporting the acknowledgement of identities in the public space thanks to democracy and political parties. On the other hand, Wieviorka warns against the danger of the radicalisation of identity if France continues to be so closed to the blooming of differences.

As with Stephen Castle or Charles Taylor, [50] Michel Wieviorka is interested in an enlarged conception of citizenship and wishes that 'la démocratie développe une capacité institutionnelle à assurer la reconnaissance et le traitement des particularismes culturels'. He condemns affirmative action for its rigidity and fixity of individual rights, but considers that progress can be made if applied to concrete actions debated at a political level. Differences, producing signals and marks emblematic of otherness, would probably be better understood if they were accepted as part of a whole made up of plurality defragmenting space.

The third space would be like a 'passeur', neither on one riverside or the other, but always in an in-between space, which refuses any transcendence from one pole to the other, as Ratiba Hadj-Moussa argues.[51] The notion of hybridity is then useful to go 'beyond' essentialisms,[52] which usually focus on the genealogy of cultural origins. All cultures go through a continuous process of hybridation; for this reason, there is no point trying to trace back the two original moments, which have produced the third one. The notion of hybridity allows, to a certain extent, to show the emergence of new positions and encompasses *LM*'s characters into a new system that does not reject them for their differences, but rather integrates them. The forms of identification, which are born from displacements, are not necessarily synonymous of double-belonging. Moussa reminds us that it is difficult not only to distinguish in everyday practice what belongs to one or the other culture, but it is

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[50] Hélène Bertheleu suggests the following two resources: Stephen Castles, 'Democracy and multicultural citizenship. Australian debates and their relevance for Western Europe', in *From Aliens to Citizens* ed. by Rainer Baubock (Adelshot, Avesbury, 1994); and Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalisme. Différence et Démocratie* (Paris: Aubier, 1994).

[51] Ratiba Hadj-Moussa, 'Indétermination, Appartenance et Identification: Penser l'Identité', <http://www.erudit.org/livre/CEFAN/2000-1/000588co.pdf> [accessed 11 February 2019], p.231.

[52] Homi K. Bhabhah, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

also impossible to talk about an origin, unless it is a reconstructed origin. The country Clara left and goes back to has changed since the genocide. The notion of double belonging conceives of cultures as recognisable units and presupposes fixed cultural entities. Amin Malouf, the Lebanese writer, challenges double-belonging and refers to a horizontal belonging, for he feels closer to a Korean from Seoul, than his late grand-father; in other words, he has more in common with this 'étranger' than with his ancestor. The antidote, for *LM*'s characters, consists of removing from their past the weight that defines them as the only bearings of their individual history. Robert Young says that the third space is not really one, for it 'exhausts the differences' between the two supposedly original spaces; exhausting the differences does not necessarily mean losing their specificities but redefining a third space.[53] A third space also implies there are two other distinctive spaces that exclude one another to the point they cannot co-exist. It is a discursive positionality that encourages an antagonistic rapport between two spaces pre-conceived as opposed. However, they are complementary but not necessarily hybrid, as in equally mixing traits from each space. They are not fixed entities that belonged to the past once they encounter each other. Rather, as Certeau would describe it, they are permeable spaces allowing for a fluctuating identity, an interstitial identity constantly travelling between the two previous spaces, which allows for the creation of an indefinite number of autretés, I would argue. The interstitial space does not abnegate, nor oppose, nor antagonise the two pre-existing spaces. This differs from Bhabha's 'otherness', which is constructed in opposition to the other, in the differences from the other. Autretés acknowledges the possibility that an infinite number of 'others' can exist, as opposed to one unique indivisible and fixed entity.

Although stuck between the dilemmas of other vs same, inside vs outside, Moussa unveils the issues that emprison the notion of difference. Michel Wieviorka and Stuart Hall offer an alternative by suggesting that the state of 'being different' allows the individual to control his/her destiny and transforms him/her agent, actor

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[53] Robert Young, *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 23.

of his/her difference and subjectivity in the presence of the other.[54] Laurence

Grossberg wonders if the decentring of identity is particular to the displaced.[55] Is it

not, actually, one of the traits of the postmodern subject, known for its multiple 'I's?

First of all, we need to question the concept of a 'decentring identity'. Does it imply

the presence of a core in the first place? And if so, which one? How can it be

defined?

Postcolonial studies become crucial in understanding the complexities linked

to physical movement, migration and identification. Migration issued from

postcolonies is only the result of a first enforcement of colonial policies. Identity

displacement, or decentring, has taken place before the necessity to immigrate, I

would argue. It has infiltrated itself into the minds of the indigenous populations of

Africa during colonisation and decolonisation resulting in a double-trauma.

The concept of a third space, as elaborated above, at least avoids easy

binarisms, but it needs nuancing when dealing with immigration from ex-colonies,

for it fails to take into account the specificity of colonisation in Africa, and to

acknowledge the importance of memory in the identification process.

Beyond le 'tiers-état'

The debate on displacement, identity and memory often lies around a binary vision

of identity construction, for it only gives attention to a movement from A to B, the

'entre-deux' according to Daniel Sibony[56], which represents the movement between

two places, the memory of places and the replacement of memory. The biggest

challenge consists of coping with the constructed image of the place of origin, what

is associated with it and remembered of it, with the perceived image of the place of

origin, often being imagined and essentialised.

Despite the absence of a common language between Bayerrode's asylum

seekers, all share a common emotional social public space that becomes a vehicle of

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[54] Stuart Hall, 'Introduction Who Needs 'Identity'?' in *Questions of Cultural Identity* ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, [n.d.]), pp. 1-17.
[55] Laurence Grossberg, 'Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?', in *Question of Cultural Identity*, pp. 87-107.
[56] Daniel Sibony, *Entre Deux, l'Origine en Ppartage* (Paris: Point, 1991), p. 14, cited in Hadj-Moussa, p. 221.

cultural memory, where multidirectional memory erases borders between differences. In his study of the Holocaust in the age of decolonisation, Michael Rothberg refers to the American literary critic Walter Ben Michaels, who considers the seemingly incompatible legacies of slavery and the Nazi genocide in the USA.[57] He recalls the comments by the notorious black racist, Khalid Muhammad, during his visit to the U.S Holocaust Memorial Museum: 'the black holocaust was 100 times worse than the so-called Jew Holocaust. You say you lost 6 million. We question that, but…we lost 600 million.' Michael clarifies that it was, in fact, another kind of Holocaust denial.

Rothberg wonders: 'how to think about the relationship between different social groups' histories of victimization?' This problem fundamentally concerns collective memory, in other words, the relationship that such groups establish between their past and their present circumstances. Rothberg raises another crucial point: what happens when different histories confront each other in the public sphere?

In his study, Rothberg challenges the conceptual framework that has addressed the relationship between memory, identity and violence, for it understands collective memory as competitive memory. Instead, Rothberg suggests that we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing. It illustrates an intercultural dynamic that he calls 'multidirectional memory'.

Relying on the definition of memory as a 'symbolic representation of the past embedded in social action, as a set of practices and interventions', Rothberg further explains how social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post-World-War II present. Concerned simultaneously with individual and collective memory, Rothberg's study focuses on both agents and sites of memory. Bayerrode's transit centres symbolises this interaction.

Memory is closely aligned with identity, Rothberg reminds us. Rejecting Muhammad's competitive memory, which stakes out a militant black identity, and

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[57] Michael Rothberg, 'Introduction' in *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Michael's view, which sees all claims of memory or identity as necessarily tainted, Rothberg refutes both views, for they assume that 'a straight line runs from memory to identity and that the only kinds of memories and identities that are possible are the ones that exclude elements of alterity and forms of commonality with others'. Rothberg's powerful multidirectional memory has the potential to create new forms of solidarity. Furthermore, he challenges the notion of the public sphere as 'a malleable discursive space in which groups come into being through their dialogical interactions with others'. As multidirectional memory reconsiders both subjects and spaces of the public sphere, it further enchances Michel de Certeau's signifying practices that invent space as the walker travels through the city, and Stuart Hall's diaspora identities, which are 'constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.'[58]

Brought together by Rothberg's multidirectional memory, Gilroy's black Atlantic, Certeau's walking city, Derrida's differance, Hall's identification and articulation, and Thomas' transnationalism, *LM* acts as a powerful diasporic creuset allowing for the antidotic potion to be generated out of the alchemy between fiction and reality.

As a sign of Justine's last few thoughts come up confused, hâchés between painful memories of Ayivi and the words on the poster in Bayerrode's centre: 'Alle Menschen…Mesdames, Messieurs…Ausländer…partout…chez vous…dans le monde…voulez-vous…votre pays…nearly everywhere.'
The multidirectional approach transcends epicentric formalised representations of immigrants in twenty-first century society by rehumanising the immigrants in an effort to link the present to the past, the self to the other, and different histories of oppression to one another.

Beyond facts and theories, *LM*, for what it represents as a piece of literary creation, reveals lived experiences from within. Its tone is very didactic and, although Zinsou is undoubtedly healing his own soul through the writing process, its main purpose is to inform the Western and Eastern worlds of the human tragedy of forced migration from postcolonial Africa to Europe.

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[58] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference* ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-37.

The narrative technique used by the author to distance himself from the story appears on the very first page of the novel. Zinsou creates a distance between himself as a writer and Justine our storyteller. In the first introductory paragraph of the novel he justifies this choice; he will tell us his story in the way oral tales are told in Dugan and in most West African countries by starting with a 'magic formula', 'J'étais témoin', which invites anyone in the audience to identify him/herself with the characters of the story:

> Si je racontais cette histoire dans mon pays, le Dugan, je commencerais par prévenir mon auditoire avec cette formule consacrée : « J'étais témoin ». Il n'y a pas meilleure formule pour dire que je laisse mon imagination, ainsi que parfois, celle des autres personnages de l'histoire, divaguer librement, comme si elle cherchait à se libérer d'une réalité. Je crois que les conteurs de chez nous ont inventé la formule, parce que le plus souvent, parmi les personnages qui, comme eux-mêmes, sont impliqués dans leur histoire, il y en a qui font en même temps partie de leur auditoire. Ainsi, en affirmant que j'étais témoin, je voudrais simplement dire que je vous transforme, je nous transforme à la fois en personnages et auditeurs du conte (p. 5).

The silent and implicit drama of the author appears to us somehow disguised by different rhetorical figures such as metaphors. These metaphors are to be seen as a means of distancing, by which the author lays claims to his detachment from the events of these stories and creates an opportunity for a dialogue between his characters and the readers; it is a powerful interactive discursive space.

Conclusion

The participating and internalised issues that lie at the heart of the construction of identity in the individuals from ex-French colonies have a double-tie with the history of colonisation. Their reciprocal influence shapes today's immigration landscape

within Africa and Europe. 'Loin de constituer deux sphères étanches'[59] metropolitan

history and West African history permeate through one another.

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[59] Jean-Loup Amselle, *Affirmative Exclusion, Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (London: Cornell University, 2003), p. 12.

Chapter 6

Diasporic identities in unison in Kangni Alem's *La Gazelle s'Agenouille Pour Pleurer*, an alternative to cacophonic postcolonial discourses

'The aim is to dare to recast, redefine, and revise the very notions of 'modernity', 'mainstream', 'margins', 'difference', 'otherness'.[1]

Cornel West

Introduction

Four days prior to the 2012 Francophonie Summit in Kinshasa, François Hollande's visit to the African continent stands out from Nicolas Sarkozy's attempt at African diplomacy. His latest address in Kinshasa, Démocratic Républic of Congo, emphasised a clear wish to distance himself from Sarkozy. So, he refused to clap at the end of Joseph Kabila's speech not to support a *'régime illégitime en matière de démocratie et de respect des droits de l'homme'*. Finally the French president decided to go but promised to meet representatives from all sides : 'l'opposition politique, les militants associatifs, la société civile' and to *'tout dire, partout'*.[2]

Primarily, the purpose of this chapter is to challenge West Africa as a coherent sociological or political entity. Instead, it offers an alternative view of the region, its historic cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity, which reveals a multifaceted and complex region composed of multiple identities. To think of West Africa as an essential, anti-modern force on the continent, rather than something shaped by specific historical-economic processes is, I would argue, a mistake.

To prove this point, this chapter also aims to situate the role of the African diaspora on the global stage and examine to what extent it is capable of influencing and deconstructing postcolonial discourse. The globally broadcast and fixed vision of

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[1] Cornell West, *'The New Cultural Politics of Difference'* in *Out There: Marginalisation and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. by Russell Fergusson and others (New York and Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 93-109.
[2] Radio France Internationale, 'Afrique, RDC: Regain de Tension entre Paris et Kinshasa avant le sommet de la Francophonie', Ursula Soares, Tuesday 9 October 2012.

Africa, or of West Africa more specifically, has imprinted a discourse of postcolonial nature that feeds itself with whatever resembles the original colonial stamp.

It will examine the various issues raised in Alem's short stories. The sometimes inaccessible eclectic mix of stories that constitute *La Gazelle s'Agenouille Pour Pleurer* (*LGSP*) reveals a complex multiple whole made out of different layers.

A playwright and filmmaker born in Togo, Alem wisely puts his skills to composing a series of short stories in *LGSP* that reveals the most tragic scenes of violence, mostly in Togo and West-Africa, in a political landscape darkened by corruption and dictatorship, but also in ghettos on other continents. The combination of a novelistic genre and a short-story style first appear to confuse the reader, but it quickly helps them to understand the complexities of life faced by postcolonial subjects, wherever they are. The reading process, first entangling and frustrating, then becomes chaotically healing. Despite its cacophonic nature, its contemporary and intertextual nature resonates and speaks to either a surprised but admirative audience, or a frustrated and torn public in search of a mainstream discourse.

A threefold line of argument will shape this chapter. Part One will look first at Alem's strategy for coping with the issues created by colonisation and its violent impact on the postcolony, and more specifically how he handles the stigma attached to black people. Part Two focuses on where Alem's writing is situated in the bigger enterprise, with a duty to deconstruct cultural authenticity. It also re-evaluates the conception of space as a fixed and unmalleable entity. Finally, Part Three examines what gives *LGSP* an international dimension and to what extent diasporic networks participate in the postcolonial debate and impact on postcoloniality.

Postcolonial instrumentation, a cacophony

'Prenez un cercle, caressez-le, il deviendra vicieux!'[3]

Eugène Ionesco

Objectification of black subjects

Ahead of the African Union's tenth anniversary festivities, one of Africa's great literary icons, Ngugi wa Thiongo, in an address given on Africa Day, 25th May, 2012,

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[3] Eugène Ionesco, *La Cantatrice Chauve*, cited in Alem Kangni, 'Le Pet de l'Araignée' in *La Gazelle S'agenouille Pour Pleurer* (Paris: Le Serpent à Plumes, 2003), pp. 121-136 (p. 121).

at the University of Free State in South Africa, urged the continent to review the origins of the existing inequality of power, which started with the colonisation of the black body.[4] The worthlessness and vapidity of the black condition omnipresent in *LGSP* is also at the centre of N'gugi Wa Thiongo's preoccupations.

Perceiving the colonised body as the 'site of production' of its own colonisation and the 'site of knowledge',[5] illustrates this point clearly. Indeed, Thiongo refers to the ways that the body was estranged from itself during the process of colonisation, with an aim to reformat it through ridiculing and brutalising it, stripping it of its humanity. For Thiongo, the only way forward to redefine black identity is to unstrip it of its multi-layered negativity: 'Africa has to reclaim the black body with all its blackness as the starting point in our plunge into and negotiations with the world.'[6] As European supremacy expanded the social and physical geography of spaces - 'nos frontières sont nées à Berlin et Berlin n'a plus de frontières' (p. 200) - and people were reshaped and renamed, the very body of the African was defined by the European identity of being and, as Thiongo further explains, normalised to European standards. Renamed with European Christian names, if named at all, Africans internalised a European identity notably portrayed as 'peau noire' and 'masques blancs' in Fanon's 1952's revolutionary work. 'Sealed into that crushing objecthood', as 'the Negro' is made to say by Fanon, the black body is 'fixed' by the white gaze, 'overdetermined' by the idea the others have of him[7]. Achille Mbembe expands on this topic by explaining, in depth, how black slaves had no human value. The objectification of the enslaved subjects turned black people and bodies into insignificant and void creatures in which the vulgar prevailed.[8]

Beyond the nothingness of the trauma of enslaved blacks, and as a way out of objectification, Buddhism offers an interesting alternative, namely that of the

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[4] Wa Thiongo N'gugi, 'Time for Africa to Reclaim the black Body', New African Magazine, July 2012, pp. 36-41.

[5] Ibid., p. 41.

[6] Ibid., p.41.

[7] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 216-222.

[8] Achille Mbembe, 'The Aesthetics of Vulgarity', *On the Poscolony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 102-142.

'transitoriness' of existence[9]. This gives scope for a move from an existence of nothingness to a state of no-thing-ness. In Mahayana Buddhism, *'sunyata'* or no-thing-ness, which represents the emptiness of things, does not mean nothingness but the conditionality or transitoriness of all phenomenal existences. Simultaneously dismantling the process of objectification and accepting culture as an unfixed entity, it draws on both to transcend the Eurocentric gaze on to the black body.

According to N'Gugi, the perversion of African cultural identities emerged from the death and burial of the *'sacred'* element of the black body. In an attempt to re-sacralise the black body he proclaims 'we have to rediscover and reclaim the sense of the sacred in the black body'[10]. The parallel drawn with Julia Kristeva's Le féminin et le sacré[11] in Chapter Four of this thesis is crucial to a better understanding of the sacred. What does Thiongo really mean by the 'sacred'? It is crucial at this stage to bear in mind Kristeva's 'sacré', for it represents the 'materialization'[12] of women's bodies through the cultural and social ritualistic processes. These are determined by a society that reinvents and homogenises women into one entity, regardless of differences. In these circumstances the 'homogenised' body fails to represent cultural difference and emphasises performance, rather than approaching the issue critically. Chapter Two of this thesis, analyses in more depth the strong feminist theme and the fight against the weight of traditions that Musango embodies in *CJV*, which echoes the metaphor of rape often associated with colonisation.

The first 12 page-long short story is presented as a film director's script that is divided in to five parts, each with a specific title: *intérieur nuit, extérieur /intérieur jour, flash-back, extérieur jour, séquences non filmées. Intérieur nuit*: The first short uncomplicated sentences of Part One, establishing the first scene of the film, progressively slip into more informative and longer sentences, as Kangni Alem describes Marie-Galante, a victim of rape. It is only in Part Four that the reader is

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[9] *Oxford English Dictionary*,'nothingness',
<http://www.oed.com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/Entry/128582?redirectedFrom=nothingn ess#eid>, [accessed 14 September 2012].
[10] Ibid., p. 41.
[11] Catherine Clément and Julia Kristeva, *Le Féminin et le Sacré* (Paris: Stock, 1998).
[12] Vicky Kirby, *Judith Butler: Live Theory* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 49.

given more explanations about the context: a black albino woman, black soldiers, their names, a refugee camp, civil war and Yamatoké, Eyadéma's look-alike who appears in Alem's most well-known novel, winner of the Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire in 2003, *Cola Cola Jazz* (2002).

The structure of this short story, set in a civil war, develops the themes of prostitution and weapons' commerce, dictatorship and the perversion of traditions, such as traditional beliefs, together with Alem's many references to jazz throughout the book, which echoes Léonora Miano's CJV, published a couple of years later. Miano's novel, part of a trilogy with *L'Aube Écarlate* (unpublished) and *L'intérieur de la Nuit*, addresses the issues of a lost generation on the black continent, forced to reinvent itself to fight pessimism through Musango's desperate quest for the tormented mother who rejected her, and the absence of a foreseeable future, which pushes parents to get rid of their children, as in *Cola Cola Jazz*.

The information required by the film scenario stratagem such as a full and detailed description of the surroundings and the characters' state of mind and actions: 'dernier militaire en train de se rhabiller', 'attraction: pagne déchiré, toison poisseuse du tapis pubien', 'l'urine, la sienne, continue de s'écouler sous elle charriant sa myriade de fragments spermatiques', 'off: rigolades se fondant dans le lointain'; the linguistic precisions 'l'expression a cours chez les adolescents du camp [...] matasser, c'est violer à plusieurs' and the presence of a third party such as the crowd peeping through the tent's zip offers a variety of angles, combined with the director's camera instructions and personal shooting notes together with Marie Galante's childhood memories - in italic in the text -, offer a dynamic and chaotic style that confuses the usual producer-receiver/writer-reader relationship. Similarly to Miano, who also believes that jazz well serves her purpose to illustrate the chaotic relationship between Africa and the rest of the world, and its hybrid identity in perpetual negotiations with the West, Alem resorts to this vibrant music to compose his narrative. The reader finds himself in a destabilising voyeurist position forced into examining with complete detachment the crudest details of Marie's raped body. Marie Galante, the island in the Guadeloupean Archipelago named after Christopher Columbus' caravelle in 1493, became at the beginning of the XVIIth century a French colony. Alem refers to the violent massacre that took place in 1653 when the locals

decided to avenge the women victims of a collective rape by the colonisers. The unexpected dialogue between Marie and one of the soldiers in Parts Four and Five introduces another narrative level, which suddenly slips into the narrator's common memories of Marie-Galante and soldier, Ingnak, under the *séquences non-filmées* category.

The voyeuristic nature of Alem's writing, vulgarising the body by extensively referring to copulation, prostitution, lust and rape is nothing but a replication of colonisation. It is painful, disgusting and revolting to experience, or read. It unsettles, upsets and disturbs. It is powerful for it is digressive, almost out of reach.

<u>Violence and absurdity: the tragi-comic</u>

The powerful use of metaphorical writing is once again used in this literary piece. The recourse to creative writing by authors issued from the postcolonies is widespread, for it opens up a discursive space with an interactive platform. Furthermore, it helps to deal with a sometimes incomprehensible postcolonial reality inherited from metropolitan and African history.

The book's title, *The Gazelle Kneels Down to Cry*, serves as a title to the first short story. The personified kneeling and distressed gazelle metaphorically embodies a weakened and lost humanity threatened by a perverted society in search for redemption in a neocolonised world. The usual symbolism of velocity, grace and feminine elegance associated with the gazelle is negated by the corrupted, dictatorial and disillusioned Africa that Kangni Alem depicts. The gazelle, present in different spiritual traditions, kneeling down next to a deity in Indian iconography, or compared to a divine husband in the Old Testament, is a sacred animal unusually described here as a wounded soul.[13] The title sets the tone of the book, offering different degrees of narration interwoven in a stylistic turmoil that is condensed in 12 short stories of variable length. Alem's rich and eclectic background, as a playwrite, director, actor and novelist reflects in his writing style.

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[13] *Dictionnaire des Symboles* (Paris : Robert Laffont, 1982), p. 72.

The disrupted and chaotic urban environments ruled by civil war and dictatorship when located in Africa, or by immigration and wanderings when set abroad, are reflected in the author's vibrant writing styles that are punctuated by voyeurism, absurdity, fiction and reality, legend and myth. As explained by Alem himself on his blog, the degree of digression and 'rocambolesque' humour create a certain comical and superficial distance to the harsh perverted reality.

Strongly influence by the absurd and fantastic theatre of Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett, Alem distorts reality to an extreme to sift out its aberrations. It is an inexplicable real that he turns into derision. Death is omnipresent in the book, as it is for many postcolonial writings; in the manner of an incurable cancer, 'Le pays semblait rongé de l'intérieur et de temps à autre, une odeur de vieux cimetière s'exhalait de ses entrailles, laissant les habitants pantois et surprise de leur capacité morbide à digérer l'impensable' (p. 105) : it grows bigger and spreads out.

In *Les Chaises* (1952), Ionesco writes about the process of accumulation and suffocation, and the néant, the nothingness of existence. The néant is possibly metaphorically best captured in very crude scenes full of very specific details that constitute (Chapter 9) *La Déchirade*. In a duel that sees father and son opposed over who will become the patriarch of the family, the son and his father make a strange pact to find out who will have to leave the house. Perhaps Alem attempts to show in Rachid's letter to his mistress, Habib, to what extent existence can lose its meaning.

Intertextuality is at the core of *LGSP*, which seems to embody a reminiscent struggle depicted in post-independence Africa. The parallel made with *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born,* a novel written by the Ghanain writer Ayi Kwei Armah, emphasises the on-going aspect of certain issues that still affect the continent. The existential fear and frustration of 'the man' - for he has no name - who struggles to remain clean when everyone else has succumbed to rot, characterises post-independence Ghana, but also *LGSP*'s contemporary setting in which the narrator evolves. Pushed out of the country in search of a better life, displacement pursues the existence of post-colonial people who cannot be reconciled to the reality of life.

The writing techniques applied to this piece are similar to Eugène Ionesco's. The overwhelming feeling of suffocation symbolises the impossibility of escaping the post-colonial circle. It also depicts the solitude of human existence in a world full of decay and corruption. The expression of disgust for the tangible world is omnipresent in the book. The phenomenon of introspection that Ionesco uses in *Les Chaises* (1951) is also present in *LGSP*. The multi-layered narrative drags his reader into burlesque and dramatic text that explores the ridiculous aspect of banal situations in order to represent the insignificance of human existence.

Borrowing from Ionesco certain aspects of his proliferation mechanism, the process symbolises a feeling of stifling, of choking over, or of losing control. Also alluding to *Jeux de Massacres* (1970), Alem expresses his fear of death, of a meaningless life when men are caught in a vicious circle, killing each other by fear: 'l'homme a lancé un coup de pied à Vanda qui s'est couchée pour toujours' (p.79), 'ses hommes qui ont entouré mon père, l'ont ficelé comme cabri et jeté' (p. 79), 'plus personne de mon village debout, tous couchés pour toujours' (p. 80), 'il avait son canif [...] il lui a enfoncé dans la gorge' (p. 80). From a post-colonial perspective, this illustrates the process by which slavery and colonisation internalised the gaze of the other. Eaten up from within, the black person enters a process of self-destruction. The same process is described about *LGSP's* postcolony, which is symbolised by a real meaningless flow of words that deny any logic. The intrusion of the irrational into the real has the effect of ironically silencing the message delivered by the narrator.

Busy with dismantling the white supremacist logic, LGSP is a piece of writing embedded within a resistance movement against the 'Phallus Socialiste' (p. 206). Yet, confronting the reader with violent death, the narrative pushes the reader to face up to the reality of prostitution and easy-sex, echoing Fanon's psychoanalysis of the relation between whites and blacks in the representations made of black people. Cornel West's dismantling of the psychosexual racist logic is useful here.[14] The psychosexual logic that arises from a European cultural emphasis on phallic

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[14] Peter L. McLaren and Michael Dantley, 'Leadership and a Critical Pedagogy of Race: Cornel West, Stuart Hall, and the Prophetic Tradition Author', *Journal of Negro Education*, 59, 1 (Winter, 1990), pp. 4-9 (p.7).

obsessions and Oedipal projections leads to a colonisation of the black body. Within this logic, men and women of African descent are associated with dirt, odious smells, and feces, that is, when they are not viewed as being endowed with extraordinary sexual prowess.

In other words *LGSP's* underlying message is that the traumatic leftovers of colonisation are too big to move forward. There is a necessity to revisit the past to re-construct a valid identity, to allow a new identity to be re-born. A healing purgatory process needs to be allowed through the global understanding and acknowledgement of a burdening past. Alem refers to memory 'quelque part dans la mémoire, une image trottine, obsédante, uniforme' (p.208), and complains about the lack of initiative to make things change: 'aucun travail de la mémoire […] tout un pays faisait usage des oublis, abondamment. Avec l'espoir, néanmoins, que survienne l'événement qui les sortira enfin de la douloureuse torpeur' (p.105). Symbol of hope 'Le chef-douanier [est] muraille et mémoire' (p.197) and is envisaged as a possible facilitator. Chapter Two of this thesis has already explored the ambiguity that lies in the existence of spatial borders in Africa. It has particularly focused on the overlap between the nature of identity and culture with respect to border communities, which come up once again in the writings of Francophone authors of West Africa.

Impossible symphony

<u>Cultural authenticity challenged</u>

Reflecting on Walter Benjamin's 'cultural translation', Homi Bhabha[15] suggests that all forms of culture are, to a certain extent, related to each other because culture is a signifying practice. Bhabha further argues that because cultures involve the formation of symbols and constitute subjects, they implicitly carry a self-alienating process. As cultures are forms of representation, they produce the symbols and metaphors through which we experience culture. Since meaning is constructed 'across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified', no culture is neither full nor plain. This is why, for Bhabha, there is no 'in itself' and

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[15] Ibid., pp. 210-211.

'for itself' within cultures because they are always subject to the process of translations.

The notion of translation becomes even more useful, for it recognises the need to displace sense and to imitate an original, to transfer meanings from one signifier to the other. In so doing, the original is always open for subjective interpretation; it does not contain an essence. In other words, cultural practices are only made out of relative understanding from the other. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is derived from this, which denies the essentialism of a prior given original culture, and from which emerges a 'third space', which in turn displaces the histories that constitute it and challenges one-sided westernised historical take on African history.

Alem successfully manages to decentre a self-alienating African culture and destabilises the reader in doing so. The writing itself is tormenting and fairly unusual, as opposed to the other novels under study in this thesis. Naturally, its genre - unnovelistic - is peculiar to the short story and allows for a lot of movement from either a spatial or a temporal perspective. The deconstruction of the mainstream discourse is implicit in *LGSP*, for Alem mainly opts for themes such as prostitution, rape, paedophilia and alcoholism to turn reality into derision. Nonetheless, a true reflection of the postcolonial society, *LGSP*'s most common themes are overemphasised to provoke and alert, but also to raise an awareness of postcolonial societies in suffering.

To think of LGSP as a 'migrant metaphor', in Bhabha's words, is probably the best way to fully grasp Alem's purpose. The language of his writing, its form and rhetoric, must be open to meanings that are 'ambivalent, doubling and dissembling'[16]. Alem has the potential to be misunderstood, for the form of his writing challenges, and to a certain extent, contains a certain degree of unreadability. This is precisely because he evokes the history of colonialism and its postcolonial heritage from an African perspective, which accentuates its twofold

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[16] Although Bhabha refers to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and it is structured around the metaphor of migrancy for it permits to see how the form of the novel has been profoundly misunderstood and has proved politically explosive –precisely because the novel is about metaphor, Bhabha further explains. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92.

dimension. The history of colonialism is not only the history of the West. As pointed out by Bhabha, it is also a 'counter-history' to the normative history of the West[17]. For this reason, the postcolonial take forces us to rethink the question of authenticity and cultural values, and by extension the question of identity.

Cornell West problematises the 'culture of difference' in a way that is aimed at helping us avoid those 'one-factor analyses' which 'lose touch' with the complexities of thought and action in the world[18]. To avoid over-simplification and to give an ethical basis to cultural workers, West turns to history, and supports Bhabha's 'counter-history'. Directly inspired from Michel Foucault's 'genealogy', West draws our attention to the decline of Eurocentrism and white supremacy, to demystify contemporary cultural-political structures.

The process of 'demystification', West argues, is a powerful theoretical tool that supports a 'culture of difference'.[19] Within this process, *LGSP* is a springboard for a critical practice that re-examines social structures and questions institutional dynamics in the history of the West and in the postcolony. By turning social reality into derision, it engages in a 'transformative praxis', producing a creative response to new conditions established at the time of the slavery and colonisation. It fulfils its central role of 'human agency' for attempting to represent social and political practices, and for establishing an engaged discourse with a profound insight. It manages to avoid reductionism, essentialism and radicalism by conveying criticism. The artist, Kangni Alem, in his quality of transformative practioner, displaces the gaze.

Exile, migration and dislocated spaces

Back in 2008, whilst President Nicolas Sarkozy, embarrassed by France's outdated relationship with its former colonies, proposed to renegotiate agreements,[20] Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees reflected on 'people on the

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[17] Ibid., p218.
[18] West, 'The New Cultural Politics of Difference', p. 203.
[19] Ibid., p.213.
[20] Richard Downden, *Africa, Altered States, Ordinary Miracles* (London: Portobello, 2008).

move'. He admitted that it is no longer possible to look at either refugees and internal displacement, or migration, according to the 1951 Convention and as separate things.[21]

Similarly to anglophone West African literature from Nigeria and Ghana, such as Kofi Awoonor's main character in *This Earth, My Brother...* (1971), who travels around Europe and goes back to Ghana in the hope of retrieving a better life, and unlike the characters of the Togolese writer, Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou, in his novel *Le Médicament* (2003), who transit through one central place, Bayerrode's asylum seekers centre in Germany, most of Alem's characters travel all over the world and are left to wander about.

Marie-Galante, the black albino woman, Ramiz, the writer, P'tit Chounet, the student, Django, the pupil, the yellow cab drivers, the Ramiz brothers, Bustos, the Mexican, fast-food manager in Chicago, Biafra l'homme-tronc, Messie Lakan and Hounon Akiti Alafia: H.A.A the guru, to enumerate but a few, are mostly African characters we encounter once or several times at different stages of their lifes. In a constant struggle to negotiate despair and hope in a life of transit, they are met half way on the road to nowhere, at the crossroad of nationalisms and globalization, haunted by loneliness, genocide, machete massacres, suicide, death, civil war, unemployment, Aids, alcoholism, child abuse, rape and prostitution. Although regularly brought back to Lomé, its laguna and city-centre, the short stories travel around the world, from Tirana to Bordeaux, from Rwanda to Togo.

In exile, Alem's *âmes en peine,* or sad souls (*LGSP*, p.203), are torn. The mythic bird, Sankofa, flying forward while looking backward with an egg in its mouth as a symbol of the future, is situated in the middle of the book; this symbolises the difficulties faced by postcolonies with regard to identity displacement and decentring. As argued in Chapter Five of this thesis, the vicious dislocation of space that has taken place in postcolonies is even more malicious, for it is invisible to the postcolonial population. Space dislocation - mental and geographical - has taken place prior to the necessity to migrate. It infiltrated the minds of the indigenous

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[21] António Guterres, 16 June 2008, 'People on the Move: The Challenges of Displacement in the 21st Century,' International Rescue Committee-UK Annual Lecture, < http://www.unhcr.org/48873def4.html> [accessed 23 March 2008].

populations of Africa at the time of the slave trade, colonisation and decolonisation, resulting in a multi-layered trauma specific to African history.

Certain passages of *LGSP* illustrate particularly well the uneasiness and in-betweeness of postcolonial life, simultaneously taking the reader and the narrator through the present and reminding him/her of the past. This passage is an extract from what would be Chapter Eleven, entitled *Frontières*, *LGSP*'s antepenultimate chapter:

> - Tu ne savais pas neveu? Les vieilles histoires n'intéressent que moi. Nos frontières sont nées à Berlin et Berlin n'a plus de frontières.
> -Je ne savais pas.
> Les eaux du fleuve sous le soleil…les eaux nourrissent nos terres, uniformes d'une géographie solaire à l'autre. Nuits. Plaines. Eclipses. Uniformes dans leurs variétés infimes. Les eaux vont leur route. Sans limites. Nos eaux, nos terres. Le mariage séduit, mais leurs peurs génèrent murailles et barricades, privilège ou malheur, à prendre ou à laisser. Je laisse. Le cœur vers l'est, le bassin vers l'ouest, nous avons enterré maman sous le soleil frontalier, à cheval sur deux malentendus, deux postes frontières qui s'observent à la dérobée. Seul regret : toute ma came achetée à l'ouest enterrée avec elle. Au retour, j'ai lavé ma chemise dans le lavabo.' (pp. 200-201)

The book is articulated around one central section, entitled *Sankofa the Bird*. The concept of Sankofa originates from the Akan people of West Africa and means going back to one's roots in order to move forward and achieve one's full potential.[22] In the original Akan language Sankofa is defined as follows: 'se wo were fin a wosan kofa a yenki' - 'it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot.' () -. Whatever has been lost, forgotten or stripped off can be reclaimed, revived, preserved and perpetuated. In contrast, the two *Oiseaux* - the birds - in *LM*, represent the West and Africa fighting for their right to jus sanguinis and jus solis.

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[22] Anthony Ephirim-Donkor, *African Spirituality: On Becoming Ancestors* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1997), p. 72.

Interestingly, Alem leaves his characters to wander in an undefined space. In this never-ending quest between an essentialised past and a better future, the impossible symbiosis between the two is further enhanced by the paradoxical use of the Sankofa bird as a symbol:

Des deux têtes de l'oiseau, l'une regarde le future, l'autre le passé. L'avenir. L'advenu. Si tu avais à choisir sans évoquer l'argument facile de la synthèse, entre les deux termes du choix, laquelle choisirais-tu? (p. 102).

A symbol stuck between the past and the future that, nevertheless, opens up the possibility for the need to regenerate, leaving the reader unsettled, puzzled. Not attempting to find solutions for these characters, Alem keeps them wandering about, disorientated, in search for a possible third space such as 'oiseaux migrateurs aux battements d'ailes lourds et légers à la fois' (p. 106).

This central section addresses the issues linked to immigration and the eternal quest for a better life in the developed world, in this instance in the United States of America. In this short story, Alem describes the *élugubrations* of T. and her idealised immigration to Chicago, which he qualifies as a 'mission impossible'. He turns her escape to the Eldorado into derision and ridicules it by the use of vulgar vocabulary - 'that shit fucking capitalistic dream'; petits dollars verts de merde'; 'leurs frères africains-américains voulaient la tignasse à l'africaine'; 'une jamaïcaine mal-baisée, sa roomate' (pp. 97-119) - and introspections into T.s' thoughts as she finds herself dreaming about the homeland she had always wanted to leave. Torn apart between the harsh reality of immigration dictated by dubious encounters, extra long working hours, naff jobs, social and economic insecurity, and home, T. Brava, named in honour of Duke Ellington's *Togo Brava Suite*, is perverted by corruption, and haunted by death, where 'le monument de la Colombe, symbole erroné de la ville, tenait parade de clown à la retraite' (p. 105).

At the crossroads of World history and African history, the African postcolonial subjects described by Alem are desperate for exile, 'la géométrie fantasque de l'âme triste en quête d'exil' (p. 203), whether hunted by rebels 'Il parlait de partir. […] il fallait partir […] il y a des massacres partout dans la région.

Des hommes-troncs un peu partout' (p. 77), or haunted by the American dream 'Cette obsession qu'elle a, l'Amérique : mettre la même langue verte dans la bouche des candidats au Rêve!' (pp. 97-98), they are looking to be on the right side of the world. Whilst in *LM* Justine, Clara and other migrants are fighting to be issued with the blue passport, in *LGSP* the difficulty resides in getting access to American citizenship and to be allowed 'ces putains de papiers' (p. 110), in other words the green card.

Bhabha argues that the modern discourses of citizenship produced as a result of major narratives of the state must be questioned, for they assign migrant and refugee populations to be situated on the other side of the law.[23] He claims that major master narratives of the state, the citizen, cultural value, art, science, the novel, the 'Enlightenment' of Western society, cultural discourses and identities came to define society and the person. As previously discussed, Bhabha draws our attention to the 'migrant metaphor' to suggest that 'Western metropolitan histories of progress cannot be conceived without mentioning the savage colonial antecedents of the ideals of civility and the mythology of 'civilisation''.[24] Reducing the postcolonial history to be located and understood within Western frameworks, Alem also challenges rigid unicentered Western vision. *LGSP* negotiates and attempts to articulate new outlines.

World Press Photo award-winning photographer, Andrew McConnell,[25] echoes both Alem and Sénouvo Agbota Zinsou, for he challenges the commonly held stereotypes on refugees, and presents a new way of viewing them in the modern

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[23] Homi Bhabha, *'The Third Space'* in *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-221, (pp. 218-219)
[24] Ibid.,
[25] Andrew McConnell began his career covering the end of the conflict in his home country Ireland, before venturing overseas to document social issues around the world. McConnell's work has been published and exhibited internationally, appearing in National Geographic Magazine, Time Magazine, The New York Times, The Guardian, FT Magazine, Vanity Fair, the Sunday Times Magazine and Der Spiegel among other publications. In 2011, he won two 1st prizes at World Press Photo Awards and two National Press Photographers Awards, including the prestigious Best of Show according to <http://www.frontlineclub.com/events/2012/09/in-the-picture-urban-refugees-with-andrew-mcconnell-1.html> [accessed 1 October 2012].

world.[26] This new phenomenon needs highlighting as half of the world's refugees live in cities and not in camps, and become the most vulnerable people in cities with no legal rights, often bribed by the authorities. As pointed out by McConnell, there is hope of resettlement for refugees but it is a lottery as to where in the world they will end up. It takes up to two years to get United Nations' refugee status and three years to be resettled.[27]

The dislocation of geographical space in the West African postcolony originates from forced displacements in the region that go back to the 1990s, where two main conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and two smaller conflicts in Senegal and Guinea Bissau, uprooted millions of people. [28] As a result, neighbouring countries hosted refugees, representing a third of refugees and displaced people in Africa. Although most people were displaced within their own countries, some crossed international borders but remained a few kilometres away from the border, which made them easy targets and contributed to worsening and spreading conflicts.

Polyphony and diasporic arrangements

'The people always exist as a multiple form of identification, waiting to be created and constructed.'[29]

Homi Bhabha

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[26] 'In the Picture: Urban Refugees with World Press Photo award winning photographer Andrew McConnell', 14 September 2012, <http://www.rescue-uk.org/international-news/picture-urban-refugees-world-press-photo-award-winning-photographer-andrew-mcconn>, [accessed 7 October 2012].

[27] <http://www.frontlineclub.com/events/2012/09/in-the-picture-urban-refugees-with-andrew-mcconnell-1.html>, [accessed 1 October 2012], from 19'43 on.

[28] 'The Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, War and displacement in West-Africa', 'Box 10.4', pp. 260-261, in United Nations, Department of Public Information, 'Mission Backgrounder', *United Nations Operation in Somalia I*, 21 March 1997. See also M. Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 1994; I. Lewis and J. Mayall, 'Somalia', in J. Mayall (ed.), *The New Interventionism 1991–1994: United Nations Experience in Cambodia, Former Yugoslavia and Somalia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 108–9.
 <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3ebf9bb60.pdf>, [accessed on 15 September 2012].

[29] Ibid.,

The third part will look at diasporic resonance and diasporic identities through the dimension of jazz music, for it resonates through the novel. Symbol of hope in Léonora Miano's *CJV*, jazz music provides a powerful platform in the postcolonial study of Kangni Alem's literary production.

A priori chaotic with its diffractions and assonances, jazz comes across as music with no apparent structure. Duke Ellington, creator of a new type of music, illustrates this new style in his *Creole Rhapsody* (1931). It is a piece that frames the improvisation of soloists through the enhancement of a simple melody with elegant arrangements made out of the sounds of saxophone, piano, clarinet, brass (trumpets), and bass voice. The audacious use of multiple themes, key changes, richly coloured textual effects and harmonies particular to jazz, is applied to the composition of LGSP: 'que d'assonances, de diffractions au sein de cette musique! Pire que le charivari des adeptes du dieu Tonnerre, là-bas à T. Brava, les jours du sacrifice lunaire !' (p. 106).

This collection, composed in the same way as a piece of jazz music, gives the reader an extraordinary place to rearrange the piece of writing, and gives freedom to interpret the content. The confusion between happy childhood memories and lugubrious images of a society in peril echoes the multiple references to jazz music, symbol of apparent chaos, and synonym of social disorder and political instability. Alem's inspiration from jazz music is omnipresent in *LGSP*, allowing his inspiration to respond in a capricious way to let his emotions transpire. As a composer, he orchestrates various writing styles with nonchalance but sophistication, which he compiles in twelve short stories offering the reader a liberal suggestive place to rearrange the pieces, re-compose. The *recueil* constitutes a framework for the improvisation of soloist-readers who can enhance a simple melody through elegant arrangement. The audacious use of multiple themes, richly coloured textural effects and harmonies echoes Duke's jungle sound: 'Le piano de Duke Ellington au milieu des applaudissements […] Et la musique a jailli, touffue, animée' (p. 113). Inevitably bitty, unpolished and unfinished, Alem's book is unsettling, vibrant and drags us in a restless momentum.

The uncertain notions of temporality and space are constantly shifting and mixed up, moving forward and backward in time, and travelling all over the globe as

a reflection of an unlinear perception of African society. The configuration of space is variable and disproportionate as at times perceived through a child's eyes. Uncertainty and unpredictability are leitmotifs, and very much part of the work produced by postcolonial African authors from an aesthetic point of view, but also in artistic and social terms. So comments the Congolese author, Sony Labou Tansi, as he reflects on the potential the theatre offers for establishing the necessary framework for the elaboration of oppositionality.

In the same way, jazz conducts a better interpretation of the unique characteristics of creative writing about the postcolony, new media cultures stand as a powerful tool to counteract the geographical boundaries that fixes postcolonial issues. In his work on Islam, Zuabaida examines the context of the cosmopolitanisms of the first half of the twentieth century, which were 'milieux of intellectuals, artists and dilettantes and flaneurs in urban centres - deracinated, transcending recently impermeable communal and religious boundaries, daring and experimenting'.[30] According to him, these kinds of networks and milieux persist, and are probably more extensively than ever before. Zubaida raises a fundamental issue: in the age of cultural globalism, they have been routinised, and have lost their special identities and charismatic images. He also points out that global means of communication such as television, the Internet and other media do not necessarily reach communal and boundaries and spaces.

In West Africa, as many other parts of the world, people receive foreign soap operas in their own homes or neighbourhood cafés.[31] They consume them in terms of their own constructions of meanings and life-worlds. Zubaida raises another crucial point: in another global context, international business creates its own uniform milieu, with its executives and personnel travelling the world and residing in diverse centres, but always in the 'same' hotel rooms. Tourism similarly creates its own milieu: at the cheaper levels, resorts, hotels entertainments and food that strive

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[30] Sami Zubaida, *Beyond Islam, a New Understanding of the Middle-East* (London: Tauris, 2011), p. 153.
[31] This issue is addressed in more details in Chapter one of this thesis, and illustrates how the young crowd is 'enchanted' by the dream of a professional football career in Europe in the context of Fatou Diome's novel, *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*.

for standardisation, from Benidorm to Bodrum. Upmarket tourists pay for a touch of exoticism and local colour: witness the construction of popular cafés and souks in the Cairo Nile Hilton, as Zubaida points out. What is intriguing is that these constructions are not just for tourists, but attract the native prosperous classes, who also like to engage in ersatz exoticism without rubbing shoulders with their poor compatriots. This is the beginning of new communities being created, re-imagined. Cosmopolitanism in West Africa continue to exist in Alem's novel and is reconstructed in particular corners of new urban spaces as a result and generate a forced interaction and promiscuity among groups that would not be prone to encounter. However, two major forces submerge these: at local level, the postcolonial order and its transformations; at global level, the forces of media and cultural globalisation. Borderless, social media also challenge the supremacist logic embedded in our societies connecting different positionalities that constitute the diaspora.

Diasporic networks, a new understanding of Africa

Interconnected with questions about the 'other' are existing ideas of a new cosmopolitanism, which come from contemporary thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben (1998; 2005); Judith Butler (2004); Leela Gandhi (2006), and Paul Gilroy (2004). In particular, many theorists are engaging with issues of new forms of cosmopolitanism (which Gilroy suggests is a planetary humanism) as a complex contemplation of the diasporic mobility of bodies, cultures and images. The new cosmopolitanism addresses specificities and particularities in complex and competing global conditions, asking and seeking out questions about oppressions and subordinations. These authors turn their attention to how we might be able to live in more just worlds, account for differences, and not have recourse to hierarchies of oppression, or the reinscription of violence, as part of resistance and solutions to existing tensions and violence.

Derrida asks for the creation of 'cities of refuge', places that should have a legitimate separation from states, which will have the possibility of offering

hospitality for the 'other'; [32] those in need; asylums seekers in the European Union at the end of twentieth century, for instance.

Whether Zinsou's immigrants are rehumanised, or the black body reclaimed, both are seen from the multidirectional approach that transcends epicentric formalised representations and overcome violent resistance.

The necessity for a plural approach has already been highlighted in this thesis. It is explored in *LGSP* from a different angle through the various characters that experience exile as a way out of postcolonial limitations. It urges the need to unsew the patchwork that colonisation has left behind, to disjoin the boundaries that it has put in place, and to finally bring together Francophone and anglophone theories in order to bridge the gap between two schools of thoughts that face similar debates of a global nature. Initially conceived by Michel de Certeau as a walking space and transitory process, rather than a fixed entity, everyday urban spaces can also be conceived of as diasporic spaces. This way the world geographical repartition of African diaspora can be seen as a way to reverse the colonial imposition of boundaries.

Acknowledging the need of many Africans born or based outside of the African continent who want to be part of, as well as contribute to, Africa's new development, the Diaspora African Forum Mission is an African Union (AU) endorsed non-governmental organisation, which was established a few years ago, on the 1st July 2007. [33] The 'return' may not necessarily be a physical return but a contribution of their time, financial resources, expertise skills and energies.
The Mission was born as a result of the recommendation of the AU's ad hoc Ministerial Committee that the AU should invite and encourage the full participation of Africans in the diaspora in the building of the AU, in its capacity as an important part of the continent. The (AU) DAF Mission is the first of its kind to be established in Africa and has its headquarters located in Accra, Ghana, on the premises of the historic W.E.B. Dubois Centre.

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[32] Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolites de Tous les Pays, Encore un Effort!* (Paris: Gallilée, 1997), p. 12.
[33] The African Union Diaspora African Forum, <www.audaf.org> [accessed 25 October 2012].

Although dating back to the 1990s, the debate revived once more by Alem about the role of the black intellectuals in influencing black communities has been analysed in length by Cornel West, currently Professor of Religion and African-American studies at Princeton University. Back in 1967 Harold Cruise had already identified the Negro intellectual, to use his words, who had to intimately deal with 'the white power structure and cultural apparatus, and the inner realities of the black world at one and the same time.'[34] More importantly, West reminds us that the black intellectual must be 'acutely aware of the nature of American social dynamic' and 'class stratification', which means the black intellectual cannot be absolutely separated neither from the black world, nor the white world'. The same applies at a global level, where the black intellectual has to negotiate between world powers and the need to assert a new identity with an international outlook.

Rightly so, Cornel West advocates the urgent need for the black intellectual to engage in a 'critical self-inventory' motivated by 'a sense of critique and resistance' that dissects the social situations, scrutinises class locations and questions cultural socialisations of black intellectuals. For West, the future of the black intellectual lies neither in a 'deferential disposition' towards the Western parent, nor in a 'nostalgic search' for the African roots. It needs to simultaneously embark on a process of transformation and a conservation of black heritage, as West urges. Committed to his powerful concept of 'third space', Bhabha also claims committed intellectuals have a twofold duty: the duty to engage in certain struggles and to reformulate the recipient within which these struggles are contained, in other words society, to avoid the polarisation of cultures.

West's insurgency model seems to be the only way forward for black intellectuals. Although originally based on a cultural exploration of Afro-American society, the model's preferred solutions and outcomes have an international validity and constitute a successful intellectual paradigm for black intellectuals that can be extended to any people of colour, it seems. Alem reminds us, 'aucun pays n'est nôtre' (p. 196). After eliminating three other options, West isolates what he calls the

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[34] Cornel West, 'The Dilemma of the black Intellectual', Cultural Critique No. 1 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 109-124.

Critical Organic Catalyst as the most desirable option to promote new culture of difference. By this, West emphasises the importance for people of colour to associate an understanding of what the mainstream has to offer with its intrisic paradigms, and a foundation in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism, which are essential to the formation of a new culture of difference.

As a consequence, it is essential that black intellectuals enunciate a new 'regime of truth' that reflects the 'uniqueness' of the black intellectual predicament. Alem, like Francophone authors of African origin, faces a similar challenge. The diaspora, through the actions and projects it undertakes, has the capacity to generate this new culture of difference. Its vocation is to recognise the different parts and histories of black people, 'to construct those points of identification, those positionalities called in retrospect cultural identities' as Stuart Hall says.[35] On the construction of the diaspora in the post-colonial era, Kobena Mercer refers to the 'syncretic dynamic' that 'disarticulate' elements from the dominant culture to 'creolise' them.[36] This is a particularly striking feature of linguistic evolution, whereby the dominant language is deconstructed and re-constructed through 'strategic inflections' and 'performative moves in semantic, syntactic lexical codes'. The metaphorical language used to describe diasporic conceptualisation at its best is always the one of crossovers, overlaps and hybridity since it gives space to dispersed and fragmented identities.

Yet, diaspora can be conceived in two ways. Firstly, it links together forgotten connections that used to exist and belong to one place, often referred to as Mother Africa, as the source of a variety of civilisations. It envisaged cultural identity as a collective entity. This lies at the heart of the *Négritude* movement, intitated by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, particularly prior to the time of the independence to rally all Africans. Still a powerful force amongst marginalised people, it acknowledges a common denominator, a common past. Secondly, diaspora, other than sharing similarities, is also an entity of collected positionalities. It is complementary for it accepts differences and situates itself in this idea of

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[35] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', p. 237
[36] Ibid., p. 236.

continuity of identities in construction. Simultaneously it acknowledges the ruptures and discontinuities, which constitute its uniqueness.

Both conceptions complement each other, rather than exclude one another. Not solely attempting to recover the past, diasporic cultural identities undergo constant transformation for they are subject to the interaction of history, culture and power. Difference matters and 'persists alongside continuity'.[37] Finally, diasporas are, to a certain extent, what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined communities'.[38]

Conclusion

To conceive of LGSP as a dynamic piece of writing embracing the shifting definition of national identity provides a platform to renegotiate fixed perceptions of colonisation and decolonisation. Refusing to be positioned solely in the postcolony, Alem challenges the fixed Eurocentric gaze. He achieves this by challenging the reader to rethink cultural identity construction. Allowing his protagonists to walk across cities around the world, and create their own geographical identity mapping, Alem fertilizes the space the walkers wish to explore.

Alem and Nganang explain that colonisation itself has had a measurable impact on the Togolose attitude and identity, at least on the ones who belong to a social and intellectual class, and have been educated in schools under Western influence.[39] As a consequence it is difficult to deny that the Togolese, Alem argues, like most Africans, have a dynamic identity, but it is a dynamics that works either in opposition or in phase with colonial education or with the fascination for an economically powerful West.

To move aways from this binarism Alem opens postcolonial identity quests to the global stage inviting diasporic audience to take part into the search for Francophone African postcolonial identities. Indeed as Hall argues 'diaspora

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[37] Ibid., p. 232.
[38] Ibid., p. 232.
[39] Birgit Pape-Thoma, 'La Colonisation de L'Afrique par l'Allemagne: Mystère, viol et dépossession', entretien avec Kangni Alem et Patrice Nganang, 11 October 2007, < http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=6980> [accessed 11/10/12].

identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a

new through transformation and difference.' (p. 235).

Conclusion

Thinking of identity as diversity has provided a starting point for my exploration to discover the extent to which colonisation haunts postcolonial identities. The novels and their authors have followed different cultural trajectories, crossed boundaries and are 'creolising' French literature and 'world literature' illustrating the new complex set of relations that have developed across 'formerly isolated peoples', now interconnected. The theme of 'opaque and blind mobility', as explored by Certeau, enlightens hybridity, diaspora and global as three symbols of 'wandering' and displacement that are characteristic of Francophone literature from West and Equatorial Africa.

In Nantes, for instance, France's largest ex-slave port, the memorial to the abolition of slavery is a testimony of historical connections between the two continents. However, the element of cultural politics involved in these organisations offers a particular perception of African civilisation leading to stereotypical representations.[40] Newer scholarly initiatives have transformed the cultural postcolonial landscape,[41] and have allowed for postcolonial works of fiction to be better valued.

Throughout this research, I have aimed initially at decoding identities in 'Francophone' postcolonial spaces; firstly, I have highlighted ways of identifying a gap in the very well researched and highly theorised postcolonial area in Anglo-Saxon academia; secondly, I have brought forward selected exemplar pieces that would bring to light the gap in the research; and thirdly, I have attempted to deconstruct current narratives in order to better renegotiate the space allocated by default to Francophone literary creation. Naturally, this thesis has been restricted to the specific geographical location of West and Equatorial Africa; this is to be considered as a starting point. I have engaged in a dialogue with the ideas of charting the ways in which they have (not) changed over the past four decades, and

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[40] For more details please see *La Fracture Coloniale,* 'La réduction à son corps de l'indigène de la République', pp. 199-208, and 'Le retour permanent de l'Afrique 'au cœur des ténèbres'', pp. 219-226.

[41] Collectif Write Back, *Postcolonial Studies: Modes d'Emploi* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2013).

it is for that reason appropriate to conclude here by citing a very recent comment of Glissant that, for me, sums up the difficulties faced even by a thinker who has been among the most eloquent and courageous advocates of the claim that 'ours is a creolising world' - 'le monde se créolise' -,[42] and who finds himself trying to argue for this doubtful knowledge and the problematic difference that it makes.

This thesis has attempted, in the first place, to redefine and rethink what is commonly referred to as 'Francophone' identities in the postcolonial era. After reviewing the current definitions held by dictionaries, it identified a gap in the understanding of French-speaking spaces situated in West and Equatorial Africa. Indeed, it has been highlighted that Africa was seen often as one singular entity with only rare attempts to remove the common pattern applied to almost all countries. When not seen under this prism, we found out that it was often defined by default in main linguistic zones: Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, which reflected the mapping of ex-colonial territories. Furthermore, it became clear, as revealed by this research, that the identity crisis that reached its peak in France during the 2005 riots -still of actuality today- mirrored, to a certain extent, the identity crisis that existed within African Francophone spaces. Although they vary according to the environment they evolved in, similarities could be found between the two phenomena. Naturally, the nature of the South-North immigration follows a set of historical phases that makes it a very complex set of relationships, with France still seen by many young generations as the Eldorado, reminiscing old memories of the *pères* de la francophonie in their idealised view of French language and culture, despite strongly standing for a *négritude*. Ignorant of the modern conflict associated with European national border preservation and overemphasised national identity safeguarding in a globalising world, the Southern immigrant originating from the postcolony finds himself in a situation in which he has to redefine constantly his position both inside and outside France.

As identified in this research, the recent literary creation, post-2000, as opposed to the literature representative of the realistic period, from the late 1980s to 2000, expresses the need to talk about the difficulties faced by the native

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[42] Chris Bongie, 'Preface' in *Islands and Exiles, the Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-24 (p. 10).

population caught between two cultures and two nations on a global scale, in other words, at a macro-level, and between local traditions and national boundaries, at a micro-level. Progressively becoming the subjects of the transformation of local identities,[43] the local protagonists are depicted in these fictional writings as actors and deciders of their future, like Musango going against ancestral traditions, like Sallie and her brother going against migratory practices that have existed for centuries, or like Justine and Clara exploring their exile as asylum seekers, regaining an identity when inventing their third space.

Firstly, to better understand these dilemmas, the research has revisited the historical and cultural background of francophonie and how it shaped the colonies and the postcolonies situated in West and Equatorial Africa. This has allowed it to establish that several meanings were to be understood by francophonie and that they were neither fixed in time, nor in space. Chapter One has revealed the nuances that are specific to Cameroon, Senegal and Togo. Secondly, the fundamental character of this research, best described by its versatility, has drawn from various disciplines to offer a new space of comprehension in scholarly research interested in Africa. Having drawn primarily from postcolonial theory, historical and anthropological research, and relevant contributions from African studies, in both English and French, it has also embraced the corpus of works produced on the notions of identity, hybridity and postcolonial metropolitan cultures, in both English and French. Finally, it has put at its centre the selected works of fiction, which have had a multi-function throughout this research piece. They have represented local spaces in their quality as artefacts and have symbolised the essence of artistic creation from these postcolonial spaces. Beyond this, they have given insight into African societies through the African eye.

Simultaneously, they have supported a better representation of local spaces often ignored in the metropole and at a global level often absorbed by macro-perspectives. They have served as theoretical tools to deconstruct a narrative about 'Francophone' identities limited to their local space, but also to enhance the

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[43] Alain Sinou, *Enjeux Culturels et Politiques de la Mise en Patrimoine des Espaces Coloniaux*, Autrepart 2005/1 (n°33) < http://www.cairn.info/auteur.php?ID_AUTEUR=61240> [accessed 2 August 2013].

particularities of local spaces. Furthermore, they have supported the writing of a greater narratives of world dimension that echs diasporic voices around the globe. Chapter Six, in particular, has enhanced the features of the diasporic dimension of new literary creation that is typical of the renaissance period in African literary production, overreaching the Atlantic to the United of States of America. It has shown how this literature participates in the making of the 'black Atlantic' overflowing the limitations of the nation-state.[44] This thesis has theorised the breaking of the essentialising Francophone dimension of the French-speaking nations of West and Equatorial Africa, and integrated them, through 'multidirectional memory',[45] into a bigger 'imagined community'[46] made out of different positionalities.

Consequently, it can be argued that these fictional writings have supported a 'respacing of Africa' situated at the crossroad of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.[47] Francophone postcolonial identity related to African matters has been experiencing a 'spatial turn' since 2000, which coincided with the new wave of writers of the renaissance period, in the same way African studies experienced it in the 1990s.[48] Similarly, in Francophone postcolonial identity making, space is no longer solely representing what is on the map, but 'the product of [cultural] and social practices and conventions' inscribed within a particular time frame 'which in themselves are the result of symbolic and discursive acts'.[49]

Space as an analytical tool has been the focus of this research in understanding identity building. As highlighted by Engel and Nugent, migrancy and the politics of belonging have become major paths of enquiry in African studies and history, and the same can be seen in postcolonial studies, cultural studies and

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[44] Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).
[45] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[46] 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' by Stuart Hall in *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference*, Jonathan Rutherford, ed. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-237 (p.232).
[47] *Respacing Africa*, ed. by Ulf Engel and Paul Nugent (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 5-6.
[48] Engel and Nugent, pp. 1-9.
[49] Ibid., p.2.

anthropology.[50] This research has followed these fresh steps to figure out a Francophone Sub-Saharan production of space. First of all, this research has exemplified a transnational reading of Francophone Sub-Saharan writers to better understand the dynamics of identity building embedded in cultural processes transnationally and sub-nationally, and secondly, it has conceptualised the cultural processes of individual choices on particular forms of territorialisation.

It has been instructive to examine, under the microscope, the movements of Miano's Musango, Diome's Sallie in her flat in Paris, Alem's first character of the novel, Marie-Galante, in her refugee tent, and Clara and Justine in the intimacy of their bedroom at the asylum seekers' centre. When seen in their private spaces, the reader - 'freely invited to enter'- sees a snapshot of the characters' life that is unique: an insight into their 'domestic space' that informs us about their everyday 'signifying practices', their lived space.[51] Beyond the place, we discover a lot more than just appearances; we see the multiple 'functions and practices of which private space is at once the effective decor and the theatre of operation'.[52] In other words, their private space becomes part of the public sphere, which makes possible the interaction of different fictions representative of local life in certain parts of West and Equatorial Africa as seen by the African eye.

Thanks to fictional writings, the reader intrudes on aspects of private life and space that would not ordinarily be accessible if one had to follow 'the rules of propriety' and 'maintain an appropriate distance'.[53] The reader is given great freedom and spatial mobility, and has to adjust his postcolonial gaze. It is the repositioning of the reader that makes possible the respacing of the postcolonial subjects into his renegotiated space. Representative of smaller entities, these glimpses of the protagonists' everyday life form some of the patterns that constitute the black African identity diaspora, a network that interconnects them through their

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[50] Ibid., p.3.
[51] Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, 'Private Spaces' in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Volume 2, Living and Cooking, ed. by Luce Giard, trans. by Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 145-150 (p. 145).
[52] Ibid., p. 145.
[53] Ibid., p. 145.

common history of victimisation, and as Francophone, through their common history with France.

These works of fiction have supported the view that the selected novels are essential exemplar pieces that needed attention when closely examining dynamic processes that are involved in identity making in French-speaking places of West and Equatorial Africa. This thesis has taken micro-identities out of globalising processes in order to reintegrate them to macro-regional narratives and vice versa.

Fundamentally, it has given a space for 'subaltern' voices of a micro dimension to be heard, and be better integrated into a macro-narrative. It has given a space for third-world subjects, to use Gayatri Spivak's terms, to be represented in Western discourse for what they are.[54] As argued by Frederik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor it is time to move away from the Western approach that favours looking at 'African regions as they actually are', and from the mainstream investigations 'inherently of Western origins', 'whereby regionalism in Africa continues to be assessed in relation to the European example'.[55] Ultimately, this thesis opens the door to new debates and research paths. It is complementary to a variety of scholarly research of historical, geographical, political and anthropological nature, both in French and English, interested in Africa due to its local and global relevance.

Further research is required to develop the study of this literary creation in order to expand the scope on the numerous fictional writings available in the area and currently out of access, but also on the already existing publications that have remained unexplored, or explored within other narratives that have neglected the multi-faceted identity of such literature. The further exploration of the field would benefit the research currently available in the United Kingdom by considering a greater sample of the continent, and in the first instance other Francophone geographical areas in West-Africa such as Benin or the Ivory Coast in the first instance, by also expanding the research to Eastern geographical zones with a known Francophone colonial history such as Ethiopia and Djibouti, and by integrating

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[54] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Culture' in *A critique of postcolonial reason: toward a history of the vanishing present*, (Cambridge, MS ; London : Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 312-422.
[55] Ulf Engel, Paul Nugent, 'State, Region And Space in Africa' by Frederik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor, in *Respacing Africa*, pp. 45-70 (p. 47).

islands such as Madagascar and the Comores to establish a contrast between the

different regions.

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