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Interculturality and *Les arbres en parlent encore*

by Calixthe Beyala

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nature of interculturality as it relates to *Les arbres en parlent encore*, a post-colonial intercultural narrative by controversial Cameroonian author, Calixthe Beyala, whose writing has attracted as much praise as criticism. Unlike the majority of her other works, the novel does not feature themes of African immigrants and their displacement. Instead, it addresses the profoundly destructive effects of colonisation, a matter of great relevance for readers in terms of modern Franco-African relations, thrown into sharp relief by Chirac's contentious repatriation law of February 23rd 2005. It is the aim of this thesis to demonstrate how an author who positions herself as essentially African, and who addresses for the most part (though not exclusively) a metropolitan French audience, might potentially offer an alternative model for intercultural understanding than that proffered by the processes of colonisation in the diegesis. It will be seen that the book warrants greater attention than that received to date precisely because of the pertinence of its theme of intercultural misunderstanding (particularly between France and Africa), and the construction of itself as a work of intercultural communication by an author positioned as both African and French who targets non-African metropolitan readers through the commonality of storytelling.

It is evident that the notion of authority is crucial to the theme of intercultural communication, occurring in the forms of the imposed authority of colonisation in the diegesis embedded within the negotiated authority of the narrative pact between the narrator, narratee and implied reader. Michel de Certeau's definitions of strategies and tactics are used to explore failed intercultural communication through the imposition of authority in the diegesis. This thesis conjectures that, in contrast to the antimodels portrayed in the book, storytelling itself presents a more successful exemplar for intercultural interaction through its enlightened understanding of how authority functions. Ross Chambers' literary theory provides the basis for investigating how authority is mediated in storytelling and the application of this to an intercultural narrative such as *Les arbres en parlent encore*. However, in order for the contemporary intercultural narrative to be seductive to today's readership, paratextual as well as textual elements must be taken into consideration. An exploration of intercultural fraud demonstrates that the audience of a modern intercultural narrative, with easy access to factual paratextual information, is likely to be more demanding about matters of intercultural authenticity than previously. Furthermore, it is shown that in order for claims to such authenticity to be substantiated, additional considerations of author integrity and intercultural authenticity must be taken into account, and that these concepts are heavily dependant on the factual paratext and how closely it links with the context of the intercultural

narrative. This thesis contends that an abundance of paratextual support exists for Beyala's revalidation as an interculturally authentic writer, situating her as qualified to speak on behalf of Africans about Africa.

It is further argued that in *Les arbres en parlent encore*, Beyala skillfully uses the conventions of African storytelling coupled with the literary device of *oralité feinte* (written simulation in French of African oral tradition) to create an interculturally authentic context for the novel that appeals to a readership of Africans and non-Africans. Through the character of Édène, the narrator-*griotte*, Beyala employs the concept of double addressees (indigenous narratees and French-speaking implied readers) to reach out to her audience, making every attempt to win over the non-African reader in particular who is invited to take the first steps towards intercultural understanding by setting aside their Cartesian mindset in favour of that of indigenous Africa. This thesis establishes that it is explicitly the invitation to a dual readership that renders the novel a truly intercultural act of communication, leaving its Western readers, in particular, with complex questions and choices as to how they might respond. Therefore the thesis concludes that the novel offers no concrete solutions to the great divide between ethnicities, but places the responsibility on non-African Francophone readers to begin an intercultural dialogue that might contribute to healing the cultural devastation caused by colonisation in Africa.

DECLARATION BY AUTHOR

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Publications during candidature

No publications.

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None.

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KEYWORDS

Calixthe Beyala, intercultural narrative, authority, intercultural authenticity, credibility, integrity, paratext, *oralité feinte*, narrative pact, factual paratext.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

LAEPE *Les arbres en parlent encore*

N° 1, 2, 3 Numbering convention used by the author in *Les arbres en parlent encore* to designate a series of people, for example Kommandant n° 2 is the second German Commander.

V1 Version 1 of *Les arbres en parlent encore* used for this research, published by Éditions Albin Michel, Paris (Livre de Poche) in 2002.

V2 Version 2 of *Les arbres en parlent encore* published by Éditions Albin Michel, Paris in 2002.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT OF *Les arbres en parlent encore*

Ils n'étaient pas des hommes, pas des hommes.

Ils avaient laissé d'autres tout leur prendre: leur terre, leur corps, leur sous-sol, leurs rivières, leurs poissons, leur brousse, leurs montagnes.

Ils n'étaient pas des hommes, pas des hommes.

Ils se laissaient manipuler jusque dans leurs pensées.

Leurs protestations mêmes venaient de l'Occident. Beyala (2006)

1.1. Intercultural Relations between France and Africa

On February 23rd, 2005, the conservative majority of Jacques Chirac's UMP government passed its contentious law on repatriation. The intention of this law was to honour the returned French military and to promote the "positive" aspects of France's processes of colonisation. The second clause of Article 4 went so far as to demand that:

[L]es programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit. (*Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005*)

Understandably this clause provoked strong negative reactions both within France itself and in its former colonies, causing a number of eminent historians headed by Claude Liauzu to launch a petition entitled "Colonisation: non à l'enseignement d'une histoire officielle" in *Le Monde* on March 25th, 2005 (Garibian, 2005). Liauzu and colleagues (cited in "La loi du 23 février 2005: texte et réactions", 2005) demanded a repeal of the second clause in Article 4 because of its imposition of "un mensonge officiel sur des crimes, sur des massacres allant parfois au génocide, sur l'esclavage, sur le racisme de ce passé." A failed attempt by French socialists to amend Article 4 (Kenzy, 2005) provoked an immediate backlash from both Algeria and Martinique (*Loi du 23 février 2005: pression en Algérie, 2005*).

Algerian politicians and former Mujahideen were adamant that, in the face of France's failure to apologise for the damage caused by colonisation, the signing of the 2005 "traité d'amitié" between Algeria and France would not proceed. Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika called on France to recognise "ses bavures perpétrées pendant la période colonial" considering that the law

represented “une cécité mentale confinant au négationnisme et au révisionnisme” (Loi du février 2005: pression). In the same article Martinican independentist Alfred Marie-Jeanne described the rejection as a denial of “des crimes, des génocides, de l’aliénation, de la soumission des peuples, de l’eurocentrisme, voire de l’esclavage et de la traite négrière, inhérents à la colonisation”. Article 4 was partially repealed on February 15th, 2006 (Décret n° 2006-160 du 15 février 2006) with the removal of the offending second clause requiring schools to highlight positive aspects of France’s colonisation in their curriculum.

The negative reaction to this law in the French Republic and its former colonies is a clear indication that deep-seated issues relating to colonisation remain unresolved, with the result that relationships between France and its former colonies continue to be fragile. The reconciliation of issues harking back to colonial days is particularly relevant to Africa, given that between two-thirds and three-quarters of the African continent was dominated by France and Britain around the time of World War I (Khapoya, 2012, p. 99). Vincent Khapoya attests that “Africans consider the impact of colonization on them to be perhaps the most important factor in understanding the present condition of the African continent and of the African people” (2012, p. 99). Little wonder then, that, as evidenced in the heated discussion around the law of February 23rd, 2005, the aftermath of colonisation and its evaluation remains a topic fiercely debated by both Africans and Europeans (Khapoya, 2012, p. 134).

The ongoing ambivalence in intercultural relationships between Africa and France is further highlighted in France’s immigration difficulties. The number of immigrants coming to France has continued to increase throughout the last century, with this trend being attributed to two principal factors, colonialism and the recruitment of foreign workers (Engler, 2007). Nicolas Sarkozy warned that the phenomenon of “une vague migratoire incontrôlée” was a threat to the French Social Model (Sarkozy dégage, 2012). North Africans form the majority of France’s immigrants (Wihtol de Wenden, 2009) with many “sans-papiers” also from Africa (O’Connell, 1996). With the wave of immigrants to France partly due to colonisation, a significant number of immigrants being African, and many unregistered immigrants identified as African, the fostering of a productive intercultural dialogue between Africa and France would seem crucial to positive outcomes for both parties. Rather than smoothing the waters, the offending law has, in fact, reopened the wounds caused by colonisation, and reignited the argument about whether colonisation was destructive or beneficial to those it was imposed upon, some of whom presumably now have descendants living in France.

France is not the only country now facing critical global and internal issues relating to intercultural disharmony that appear to have originated from its colonisation policies. However, the

extensiveness of France's past colonisation program continues to have profound and far-reaching consequences in the present both for itself and its former colonies, particularly those of Africa. Despite granting independence to the majority of its former African colonies around the 1960s, France has been obliged since then either to intervene directly in internal conflicts and civil wars, such as the Malian Tuareg insurgency (Mali profile, 2013), or set up peace-keeping measures, as in the case of the Central African Republic (Central African Republic profile, 2014). France has also intervened in Zaïre, Chad, Rwanda, the Ivory Coast and Libya (Melly, 2013). The processes of independence have not served to sever the ties that bound colonies to France to the extent for which both France and Africa might have hoped. Colonisation has undoubtedly affected some African nations more than others. For example, Cameroon, first colonised by Germany, then France and Britain, was forced to adapt to more than one European power.

The artistic sphere with its emphasis on creativity often allows suppressed frames of reference to emerge. One such example from the field of cinema is the 2006 film *Indigènes (Days of Glory)* which presents the story of a forgotten group of North African soldiers who fought valiantly for France against the Nazis without receiving the same benefits as French soldiers. According to Alasdair Sanford (2006), Chirac was so moved by this film that war pensions for foreign veterans, frozen in 1959, were immediately improved. An ongoing interest in the delicate nature of Franco-African relations and its probable connections to colonisation has prompted this exploration into representations of the impact of colonisation on Africa's indigenous people through the medium of post-colonial literature.

Post-colonial literary narratives often facilitate a more sophisticated debate than is possible through political discussion or the application of statistics, allowing the reader access to personal nuances and insights. Such storytelling permits readers to observe how the trauma of colonisation might play out through the individual and collective experiences of characters caught up in the imposition of another culture on their own. Through the narrator's skill, readers are invited to inhabit the minds and emotions of the protagonists, to become co-participants in the tale, and, in doing so, to arrive at a more profound understanding of the events that transpired and a heightened appreciation of the implications of clashes of differing cultural perspective. Such literature also permits the perspective of women writers to be foregrounded, a point of view that, as we shall see in section 1.2, has only recently begun to gain prominence in African writing.

1.2. Sub-Saharan African Francophone Authors

With increased access by modern Africans to higher education and sophisticated publishing processes, the literary works of influential male African authors have been readily available to global readers for some time. Names such as Léopold Senghor and Ousmane Sembène (Senegal);

Djibril Tamsir Niane (Guinea); Abdourahman Waberi (Djibouti); Alain Mabanckou (Congo Brazzaville); Amadou Kouroma (Ivory Coast); Augustin-Sondé Coulibaly (Burkina Faso); Williams Sassine (Guinea) and Mongo Beti (Cameroon), are amongst the many celebrated sub-Saharan African male writers whose works have been translated into other languages. However, just as in the days of colonisation when the odds were unfairly stacked against indigenous populations, so it has arguably been with the disparity between opportunities available to male and female African authors until quite recently. The publication of African Francophone literature from female writers is a relatively new phenomenon due to the ongoing lower social status of women and deliberate marginalisation, as will be seen below. The emergence of African Francophone female writers of fiction has allowed a feminine point of view on colonisation and intercultural relationships to balance the perspective of male writers.

The under-representation and marginalisation of African women writers have been noted by a number of academics such as Carolyn Kumah (2000), Béatrice Rangira (2001, p. 79) and Adeola James (1990, pp. 1-2). Laïla Ibnifassi and Nicki Hitchcott (1996, p. 7) comment that when African women do write, due to “censorship, and social, religious and familial constraints, women’s writing is impregnated with silences, omissions and gaps”. A logical extension to this incomplete patchwork of women’s perspectives is that, due to the lack of published materials available for study, review and critique of African women’s literature have also suffered. However, African female Francophone authors are steadily gaining ground (Volet, 1993, p. 309) as the study of sub-Saharan literatures in particular becomes more important and is beginning to attract attention from established literary critics. The focus to date in African literature on the work of African Francophone male authors has doubtless presented a biased perspective of African society, including the themes of colonisation and intercultural relationships. Therefore, it is my contention that the choice to analyse *Les arbres en parlent encore* by Cameroonian author Calixthe Beyala (published in 2002 by Albin Michel, Paris) in this thesis will afford the opportunity for a close examination of depictions of interculturality in the context of colonisation from the perspective of an influential African female author.

1.3. The Writings of Calixthe Beyala

Calixthe Beyala, a female Cameroonian author now residing in Paris, is a prolific Francophone writer whose novels generally focus on the plight of African women in patriarchal societies and the experiences of African immigrants in France. For the purposes of this thesis, “Francophone author” will be used to designate those who write in French but who are not born in Metropolitan France. The term “Francophone author” raises a number of interesting questions about how such writers position themselves with respect to their audience(s). In the case of Beyala and *LAEPE*, we will be

concerned with how Beyala situates herself with respect to both Africa and France, and what stance she adopts in her writing as an author with an intimate knowledge of both. This status is described as “cette étrange disparité [...] variante exotique tout juste tolérée” by eminent Francophone writers in their manifesto (Pour une “littérature-monde” en français, 2007) and is indicative of the marginalisation of Francophone authors hovering on the fringe of what is known as “French literature”. For *LAEPE* it will be argued that the book itself is intercultural and therefore, how Beyala places herself across the gulf dividing African and non-African French speaking readers will be the focus of this thesis.

Beyala has a considerable number of prestigious literary prizes and awards to her credit, including those of *Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur*, and *Chevalier* and *Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres* (see Appendix 1). Her work has attracted much attention due to its controversial intercultural themes, the overt treatment of taboo subjects (such as sexuality), her innovative and confrontational writing style, and allegations of plagiarism. In 1996, two accusations of plagiarism were levelled against Beyala with reference to *Le Petit prince de Belleville*, and *Les honneurs perdus*, the novel for which she was awarded the Grand Prix du roman de l’Académie Française and there are suggestions of a possible third incident (Hitchcott, 2006b, pp. 100-103). The matter of Beyala’s credibility as an author is paramount to the argument in the thesis and therefore the whole of Chapter 4 is devoted to this discussion. Meanwhile, in the political arena, Beyala has maintained her high public profile, particularly in the area of African human rights. In her current position as founder and President of M.A.F (*Le Mouvement des Africain-français*), Beyala would seem eminently qualified to speak and write from the perspective of an African woman about Franco-African relationships. Beyala’s dual citizenship also arguably endows her with the right to comment, not only on behalf of Africans living in France, but also on behalf of her compatriots in Cameroon.

A significant number of Beyala’s works have already been the subject of literary review and critique. These are: *C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlée* (1987); *Tu t’appelleras Tanga* (1988); *Le Petit prince de Belleville* (1992); *Maman a un amant* (1993); *Assèze l’Africaine* (1994) ; *Lettre d’une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales* (1995) ; *Les honneurs perdus* (1996); *La petite fille du reverbère* (1998) ; *Comment cuisiner son mari à l’africaine* (2000); *Femme nue, femme noire* (2003); *La plantation* (2005); *L’Homme qui m’offrait le ciel* (2007); *Le roman de Pauline* (2009). Studies have examined Beyala’s different approach compared to previous generations of African Francophone women writers (Cazenave, 2000, pp. 119-127; Kalisa, 1997, p. 1); aggressive, functional and journalistic Parisian style of writing (Jules-Rosette, 1998, pp. 189, 191-193); overt depictions of female sexuality leading to condemnations for writing pornographic rather than erotic literature

(Hitchcott, 2006a, p. 29); focus on marginalised social groups (Mongo-Mboussa, 1997; Nfah-Abbenyi, 1998, p. 76); women's rights (*féminitude*) and patriarchal societies (Gervais, 1995); globalisation and transculturation in French societies (Cazenave, 2000, pp. 119-127); literary urbanisation (Fulton, 2009, pp. 176-187); madness (Brown, 2008, pp. 93-108); home and space (Coly, 2002, pp. 34-45; Mortimer, 1999, pp. 467-474); post-colonial orphan narratives (Everett, 2009, pp. 45-65); religion (Mainimo, 2002, pp. 117-133); negative generalisations about African men and women (Larrier, 2000, p.89); persona and reasons for success in France (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1998, p. 76; Volet, 1993, pp. 309-310, 314); alleged plagiarism (Hitchcott, 2006b, pp. 100-109).

Beyala's Parisian novels have attracted attention, as have her earlier works set in African shantytowns. However, *LAEPE*, which foregrounds a female perspective on colonisation and intercultural interaction, has not received any significant consideration. Notable omissions from the list of critiques in the context of this thesis are discussions around the intercultural narrative and a detailed analysis of *LAEPE*. The novel appears to have escaped critique except for publications by Nicki Hitchcott (2004) and Emily Pederson Carson (2008) to be discussed in the next section of the thesis. There are several possible reasons for this neglect. First, *LAEPE* exhibits a noticeably different writing style from the *parisianism* of many of Beyala's other novels, and perhaps a reading public accustomed to her characteristic mode of writing did not welcome the change. Second, the novel was published after the accusations of plagiarism in 1996, which may have caused readers to become disenchanted with Beyala as an author. Third, due to its heavily indigenous African content, *LAEPE* may not be easy for Western readers in particular to comprehend. Stéphane Tchakam (2004) suggests in an interview with Beyala "[c]ertains de vos lecteurs ont eu un peu de mal à comprendre *Les arbres en parlent encore*". Furthermore there is no evidence in the available research literature to suggest that critics have explored the book at length, or that the intercultural narrative has been adopted as the research paradigm for the novel. *LAEPE* is precisely the kind of book that promises to give readers a sophisticated perspective in terms of Franco-African relations from a prominent female author who spans both cultures. This thesis proposes an investigation of the text of *LAEPE* with respect to the complexity of its themes of intercultural relationships embedded in the context of the German and French colonisations of Cameroon.

1.4. Beyala's View of Colonisation

The starting point for this thesis was France's contentious law of February 23rd, 2005 and its problematic glorification of colonisation. Beyala showed her concern about this legislation in an interview when she comments "[l]a droite a commis une erreur monumentale avec cet article 4 de la loi du 23 février 2005 sur le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer. Cet article a troublé et

choqué les minorités” (Colonisation: Le crédo, 2007). In the same interview, Beyala states that coming to terms with colonisation is an integral part of the history of both France and Africa and both countries must take joint responsibility. Africans who are French citizens have a critical part to play in acknowledging their troublesome past as the first step in moving forward into the future.

La colonisation fait aussi partie de l'histoire de France et doit être étudiée comme telle. Ce n'est pas une histoire de Blancs ou de Noirs. C'est une mémoire collective. [...] En devenant français, on choisit la France dans sa totalité, et pas simplement la partie qui nous arrange.

The on-going repercussions of colonisation and robust reactions to the law have led to an acute awareness of the complexity of intercultural interaction and intercultural communication in the setting of modern Franco-African relations. Beyala, as President of M.A.F., is a passionate advocate for African rights with strong views about colonisation and its impact on Africa. In her interview with Emmanuel Matateyou (1996, p. 611), Beyala shows her concern for Africa's future: “[q]ue l’Afrique ne se leurre pas. Elle est obligée d’entrer dans le monde moderne si elle veut survivre”. Beyala considers modern Africa to be a conundrum, commenting “[c]’est un continent qui m’interroge et que j’interroge [...] le but de l’écriture est de trouver la réponse” (Matateyou, 1996, p.612), indicating her continual search for answers to Africa's problems through her writing.

Beyala's opening address at a 2006 conference on the theme of *Où va l’Afrique?* focussed on Africa's current dilemma with comments such as “Où va l’Afrique? Nulle part pour l’instant” (Beyala, 2006). According to Beyala, Africa seems unable to move forward as, despite some progress since its countries gained independence, the continent lacks historical continuity, common goals, visionary leaders, and no longer has a sense of cultural identity. As noted in the previous quote from Khapoya (2012, p. 99), the aftermath of colonisation is the determining factor in comprehending Africa's situation, and therefore, modern Africa's lack of direction, purpose and identity could be attributed directly to colonisation. An African now residing in France, Beyala is keenly aware of the complexity of Franco-African relationships and the consequences of colonisation, and it is against this background that she has written *LAEPE*. The author's intimate knowledge of the issues facing modern Africa provides further justification for the choice of this novel as the ideal setting within which to investigate representations of intercultural interaction and intercultural communication.

1.5. The Colonisation of Cameroon and *LAEPE*

In keeping with the debate surrounding the impact of colonisation, and the resultant intercultural concerns for Africa and France, *LAEPE* is set against the turbulent background of the

German and French occupations of Cameroon from 1914 to the late 1940s. As an intercultural, post-colonial narrative, the novel foregrounds the effect of the two European powers on the indigenous African way of life and the nature of the intercultural relationships that result. Framed by the conventions of traditional African storytelling, *LAEPE* uses the literary artifice of *oralité feinte*, a written simulation in French of African oral tradition. Édène, an indigenous chief's daughter in the role of narrator-*griotte* (African chronicler, historian and genealogist) and protagonist-observer, gives an "eyewitness" account of the ramifications of Cameroon's colonisation for indigenous Africa from her perspective and that of her cultural group, the Issogo. In addition the reader is invited to appreciate the situation of indigenous African women in traditional patriarchal society. Given the historical and physical contexts of the diegesis of *LAEPE*, the novel provides ample opportunity for the exploration of literary representations of intercultural interactions between coloniser and colonised, and the consequences of these interactions for the relevant cultures. The power relationships that form the basis of interactions between coloniser and colonised are investigated in Chapter 2.

In contrast to Beyala's earlier work on displaced migrants or dwellers in shantytowns, *LAEPE* differs in that its protagonists are positioned temporarily or permanently across the various cultural groups of Cameroon and are not long-term or second-generation migrants. African characters move from the village to more urban settings or are subjected to differing cultural norms as they age. Colonial characters are deployed temporarily to Cameroon and then return to Europe. Thus, *LAEPE* does not depict migrants faced with an identity crisis, but Africans and Europeans who change status within African culture, and who are temporarily displaced from one culture to another, or clash with a different, dominant culture. For the Europeans, the personal consequences of their stay in Africa are often devastating, at least in the short-term. However, there is no doubt that the destructive effects of colonisation are profound and lasting for the indigenous Cameroonians and permanently undermine their traditional way of life.

Many discussions on the intercultural narrative stop at the point of examining how such a narrative functions within the diegesis or paratextual elements that may enhance an understanding of the story or provide a context. As the narrative of *LAEPE* is written in French primarily for a metropolitan Francophone audience, the novel also presents readers with the possibility of engaging in an act of intercultural communication. Therefore this thesis will extend beyond a mere analysis of the text and paratext to a deliberation of how the novel itself might be seen to be constructed as intercultural interaction.

1.6. Nicki Hitchcott's and Emily Pederson Carson's Perspectives on *LAEPE*

LAEPE appears to have largely escaped critical review, except in two publications by Hitchcott (2004) and Pederson Carson (2008). Hitchcott approaches the novel from the perspective of post-colonial resistance writing whereas Pederson Carson's interest is in connections between geographical location and gender. In her discussion, Hitchcott refers to the allegations of plagiarism against Beyala as "literary cheating" and a tendency to "tell other people's tales" (p. 17), linking this later on with the concept of authenticity. She notes the difference in physical location between *LAEPE* and Beyala's other works, the cultural connection to the "arbre à palabres" (traditional African discussion tree), the significance of the female storyteller, the division of the story into sixteen *veillées*, and the incorporation of specific African oral techniques (call and response) into the novel's structure (p. 17). Hitchcott briefly addresses the destabilising effect of the differing levels of narrative (pp. 18-19) and the notion of truth through references to faulty recall (p. 18) and varying versions of events (pp. 18-20, 22). Contrasts between Cartesian and African thinking in *LAEPE* (pp. 19-20) are foregrounded together with the use of *oralité feinte*, which, according to Hitchcott, "challenges the authenticity of both stories and storytellers" (p. 20). Stories constantly change and, for Hitchcott, in *LAEPE* the act of storytelling is "one of collective resistance" (p. 22), which, as the product of imagination, cannot be contained by external forces (p. 23). Hitchcott contends that storytelling "allows people to come to terms with themselves" and "to escape themselves temporarily in the realm of the imaginary" (p. 23). For Hitchcott:

Beyala's storytellers use their stories as a form of resistance [*sic*]: against colonial invasion, against the fear of the supernatural, against misogyny and racism. But more importantly, stories in *Les arbres en parlent encore* offer a means of survival, a way of coping with past and present and of preparing for the future. (p. 24)

In contrast to Hitchcott, Pederson Carson (2008) approaches *LAEPE* from the juxtaposition of Beyala as a post-colonial female writer with a Cameroonian legacy (p. 155). She is interested in Beyala's complicated situation as a female author from the Third World and the fact that she caters to different readers by taking on various roles (p.19). She concurs that Beyala's more recent works may have suffered as a result of preconceived ideas about her writing and her plagiarism (p. 15). She considers that Édène in *LAEPE* rewrites African history "according to what her own cultural, gendered and personal perspective deems worthy of memorialising" (p. 17). Pederson Carson focusses on connections between geography and gender, on how Beyala "engages imaginative geography as a means of establishing authority as an African, woman writer" (p. 155), and how

“Beyala’s self-conscious narration harnesses the duality of humour” (p. 166) through comparisons of naivety in African and Western thought (p. 166).

Neither Hitchcott nor Pederson Carson offers a detailed exploration of the text of *LAEPE* and its surroundings. Hitchcott’s interest is in the concept of storytelling as resistance while Pederson Carson’s lies with relationships between place and gender. This thesis, on the other hand, will explore *LAEPE* as an example of a complex, post-colonial, intercultural narrative, rich in portrayals of interculturality, and as a possible act of interculturality itself. It will therefore deal with the convoluted nature of interactions between colonised and coloniser, and their implications for intercultural understanding and cultural identity. In addition, it is possible that the novel might be seen to position itself as intercultural communication given that it is written for a Francophone audience of Africans and non-Africans.

1.7. Definitions of Culture and the Intercultural Narrative

Before proceeding to discuss the concept of the intercultural narrative, it is useful to define culture itself, as this concept can be interpreted in many different ways depending on the context. For the purposes of this thesis, Adam Kuper’s definition of culture as cited by Banks (2010, p.8) will be used: “the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies: it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies”. This definition fits well with *LAEPE* in that it addresses the fundamental issues that determine the nature of intercultural interactions in the novel (values, interpretations and perspectives). The narrative focuses on the impact of colonisation on indigenous cultural norms and values. While tangible indicators of Issogo culture (housing, clothing, food and social structures) are referenced, they are not influential in determining the nature of intercultural interactions between European and African to the same extent as the underlying belief systems, values and norms. However, the material aspects of Issogo culture and traditions are important in that they establish the cultural framework for the story.

An intercultural narrative is quite simply one in which cultures and the interactions between cultures are foregrounded through collective “values, symbols, interpretations and perspective”. Such narratives are described succinctly by Barbara Hanna and Juliana de Nooy (2006, p. 2) as “stories of encounters with the cultural other”. Intercultural narratives may take the form of travel diaries, autobiographies, migrant stories, diaspora tales, personal anecdotes, memoirs: in short, any stories in which cultures, cultural interaction and its effects are the focus of the narrative. According to Robert Crawshaw and Alice Tomic (2004, pp. 1-9), the intercultural narrative is currently attracting great interest as an important site for studying cultures and interactions between them. Olabode Ibrinke (2004, p. 60) emphasises the mutuality of the intercultural narrative which

“is not another theory of culture and narrativity but an elaboration of the broadest ramifications of the prefix, ‘inter’. In other words, the ‘inter’ in intercultural underscores the essential connectivity of cultures.” Ibironke describes this as “an ‘inter’ which is at once a *between* and a *beyond*” (italics in text).

The intercultural narrative, therefore, creates opportunities to study portrayals of cultural exchange, of how characters behave in straddling different cultures, the manner in which they change and adapt to deal with conflicting cultural concepts, and the construction of cultural identity. The text of *LAEPE* produces cultural oppositions (African-European, colonialist-colonised, white-black, male-female), which provide a basis for comparisons of cultural perspective, and also force characters to adapt and change in response to cultural confrontation. *LAEPE* has many characters, African and European, who fit Margaret Parry’s description of “a *being in becoming*, one which is brought to a fuller recognition of itself through confrontation with difference and, simultaneously, to the sense of its own limitations” (2003, p. 102, italics in text). Concerning the depiction of the colonisation of Cameroon in *LAEPE*, the discussion of interculturality and the intercultural narrative naturally involves power relations and notions of authority. In Chapter 2 these are examined in the context of the nature of intercultural interactions in the diegesis itself, and again in Chapter 3, with reference to Chambers’ narrative authority and the intercultural narrative.

Protagonists in such narratives search for identity as a result of cultural difference and are often positioned as narrator-observers:

The narrators or principal characters who figure in intercultural narratives are defined by their ontological disturbance in that their quest for identity casts them in the role of observer – of self and others – and ends by their achieving or failing to achieve transcendence through epiphany. (Crawshaw & Tomic, 2004, p. 3)

Édène, in *LAEPE*, fits the description of the narrator-observer perfectly, and in her role as principal protagonist, reflects, both as an individual and a member of the Issogo collective, on the intercultural encounters that transpire between Africans and Europeans and the outcomes. She eventually reaches a tenuous transcendence through her exit from the village when she realises that male societal norms will never change. Whether indigenous or European, within the structure of the intercultural narrative, the principal characters of *LAEPE* are forced to re-examine their own realities in the context of profound cultural upheaval and to develop strategies in order to survive.

1.8. *LAEPE* as a Post-Colonial Narrative

For Ibrionke, the intercultural narrative “coincides with postcolonial theory” (2004, p. 61). Ibrionke’s linking of intercultural narrative with post-colonial theory is very relevant to *LAEPE* which depicts fictional intercultural encounters between Africans (the Issogo) and Europeans (Germans and French) and was written following the colonial period in Cameroon. Post-colonialism is such an important ingredient of *LAEPE* that the connection between intercultural and post-colonial narrative warrants greater attention.

Elleke Boehmer (2010, p. 9) defines post-colonial writing as “dealing in one or other way, obliquely or directly, with the experience of being colonized,” which suggests that post-colonial narratives are a subset of the set of the intercultural narrative. Intercultural narratives might not deal with post-colonial themes but post-colonial narratives are intercultural by virtue of their content relating to the colonisation of one culture by another. Indra Mohan (2006, p. 1) notes the limiting definition of the term *post-colonial* which:

is also often misunderstood as a temporal concept meaning the time after colonization has ceased, or the time following the politically determined independence day [...]. The very power of ‘Post-Colonial’ writing is a contestation of colonialism discourses and power structures.

The distinction between the two definitions of post-colonial is further emphasised by Nfah-Abbenyi (1998, p. 76). In Beyala’s writings “[t]he oppressor is no longer white but the black brother who lives next door”. Hence, Beyala’s works are both intercultural and post-colonial in terms of their content, but without the latter’s focus on the ‘white oppressor’, given that many of her novels, including *LAEPE*, portray African oppression of Africans, for example the domination of the Issogo women by their men. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, *post-colonial* will be used in the broader sense of a discourse about the theme of colonisation not limited to a specific timeframe. Mohan’s quote supports the argument for *LAEPE* as post-colonial writing, not in the narrow sense of having been produced following colonisation, but because of its theme of colonisation. *LAEPE* explores the power structures the Europeans use to gain control in Cameroon, the reactions of the Issogo to colonisation, the long-term effects of this on indigenous Cameroon, and contests assumptions that might be made about the positive impact of European influence on Africa.

1. 9. *LAEPE* as an Intercultural, Post-Colonial Narrative

The framework of the intercultural, post-colonial narrative enables a reading of *LAEPE* which offers insights into both the traumatic effects of colonisation on Cameroon and the tenuous

situation of its indigenous women. The narrator, Édène, tells of her experiences growing up in the fictional Issogo village in Cameroon during the German and French colonisations. The story is focalised through her eyewitness account in such a manner as to invite the reader to empathise with her perspective and that of the Issogo. The clash of cultures is intensified by the power strategies of the colonial forces against which the normally peaceful Issogo are forced to develop various survival tactics. This relationship is paralleled within the indigenous culture, where abusive patriarchal practices imposed by the Issogo men severely disadvantage the women who respond with submission or rebellion in order to survive. *LAEPE* affords the reader opportunities to explore representations of intercultural interactions across and within the indigenous-European divide as the protagonists work through confrontations created by differences in cultural and gender norms. Through mostly negative interactions and conflict, the characters in *LAEPE* are continually placed in situations where they have cause to reflect, redefine their cultural identity, and adjust in order to survive. In the cases of indigenous women such as Édène, the character may outgrow the restrictions of the mother culture and cross boundaries, seeking a more liberating alternative. Other characters, for example Zoa, clan leader of the descendants of the panther women, straddle European and African cultures, adopting aspects of colonial culture while preserving certain features of the indigenous culture (sorcery) for their own purposes. Through the experiences of the *Kommandants* and Michel Ange de Montparnasse, the French deserter who lives for a time with the tribe before abandoning it, the complexity of being a European in Africa during colonisation is portrayed. As expected, Germany and France prove far too powerful for the Issogo as do the Issogo men for their women. Europeans and Issogo alike are “ontologically disturbed”, must examine the relativity of their own belief systems, and develop strategies to establish power or tactics to survive. Either way, no single character or cultural group remains unaffected by contact with the other.

1.10. Conclusion

Beyala’s output has been prodigious, and, as we have seen in section 1.3, the majority of her novels deal with the situation of African women as immigrants or living with patriarchal norms. Following *LAEPE*, Beyala wrote six books and directed a film documentary. Only one of these publications, *La Plantation*, also deals with the theme of colonisation, in this instance by the British. *La Plantation* is recounted from the perspective of dispossessed white farmers in Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, and therefore does not offer the unique insights into colonisation from the indigenous viewpoint of the African woman afforded to readers in *LAEPE*. *LAEPE* has been chosen for this thesis as is it a post-colonial, intercultural narrative which promises an exploration of the complexity of intercultural engagement during the turbulent period of the German and French occupations of Cameroon. As is typical of the intercultural narrative, Édène, the narrator-observer,

offers commentary on behalf of her clan and herself on the events that ensue. The eyewitness account enables readers to observe the intercultural encounters as the principal characters come into contact with the cultural other and are forced to adapt in order to survive. The novel raises questions about the nature of intercultural encounters between colonised and coloniser, the current situation of Africa, and what the future holds for her in the context of the opening debate about the impact of colonisation. From the perspective of the novel as intercultural communication in itself we will see that, from the beginning of the story, the Francophone reader is immersed in the world of African storytelling and, along with the Issogo children seated around the campfire, is exposed to indigenous Africa through Issogo culture and traditions. This sets up the possibility of intercultural dialogue from the start between narrator and reader.

With this in mind, Chapter 2 of the thesis investigates the nature of interculturality in *LAEPE*, broaching the matter of whether the interactions portrayed between European and African are conducive to the promotion of intercultural understanding, and if not, why not? We look at whether the novel as an act of storytelling might succeed in opening up the lines of communication between the narrator and Francophone readers, both African and non-African. Therefore, Chapter 3 introduces the literary theory required to understand how the narrative in *LAEPE* functions, to begin the argument for how the novel might operate as an act of intercultural communication, and to examine the importance of *author credibility* and *authenticity* in an intercultural narrative through an inquiry into intercultural frauds. In Chapter 4 we investigate the contribution that the often-overlooked paratext of a novel can make to the establishment of *intercultural authenticity* and how crucial this is for a writer like Beyala who needs to revalidate herself as an author who can speak on behalf of Africans to Francophone readers. Chapter 5 is devoted to the detailed textual analysis of an exemplary *veillée* (the tale of the West African water spirit, the mamiwater) in which intercultural misunderstanding between European and African is foregrounded. This chapter also deals with features of the narrative itself that may support the argument for *LAEPE* as an act of intercultural communication in its own right, such as the various addressees, the use of the French language, African storytelling and the literary devices of *oralité feinte*. Finally, Chapter 6 pulls together the threads of the argument to conclude whether the novel offers explanations for intercultural misunderstanding or provides solutions for the original problem: that of enhancing the intercultural dialogue between Africa and France and of improving Franco-African relations.

CHAPTER 2

INTERCULTURALITY IN THE NOVEL

2.1. Introduction

The discussion in Chapter 1 centred on the delicate relationships between France and Africa as a result of colonisation, and the reasons why these might be explored through a modern intercultural narrative. *LAEPE* has been chosen because it is such a narrative, being both intercultural and post-colonial, and one which foregrounds the impact on Cameroon of colonisation by Germany and France. *LAEPE* employs an indigenous narrator-observer who offers insights into the impact of colonisation on her people through personal and group commentary. Characters are all affected to some extent for better or for worse by the process of colonisation. This chapter will focus on interculturality within the novel itself, approached through an analysis of the principal types of representations of intercultural interactions. This analysis will raise a number of questions related to the nature of how such interactions are depicted, particularly with respect to similarities and differences between German and French colonisation, how the Issogo respond to these, and what implications these interactions have for the Issogo's future.

Because of a perceived imbalance in power and evidence from history, there is a tendency to consider interactions between indigenous populations and European colonisers to be rather one-sided. Indeed, following the first altercation between the Issogo and the Germans, Assanga warns the clan that “[...] les Blancs vont finir pas nous détruire. Un grand malheur nous guette” (p.42). However, in *veillée* three of *LAEPE* the Europeans do not have it all their own way and there is a complex interplay of power moves between the Issogo and the Germans on an administrative as well as a personal level. This is what makes *veillée* three such an interesting example with which to launch the analysis of the novel in the following section. In my selective summary of this episode I will highlight certain aspects of the plot, which illustrate the different types of interactions that occur between German and Issogo. This will assist us in understanding the nature of the manoeuvres used by the colonisers and how the African protagonists react. Throughout this chapter I will be commenting specifically on how the Germans and the French approach colonisation, how individual Europeans and Africans survive using transcultural manoeuvres, collaboration or language, and how the Issogo cling to their traditions in the hope that these will prevail.

2.2. Intercultural Interactions in *LAEPE: Veillée* three

In brief, *veillée* three portrays the taking, by the Germans, of a census and the establishment of a treaty between the Issogo and the Germans. It follows an episode in which the first *Kommandant* returned to Germany after an attempt to recruit an indigenous task force was unsuccessful (pp. 33-40) as the chief, Assanga, had hidden the Issogo men. *Veillée* three opens with

the village surrounded by German troops who force the Issogo to assemble in the village square (pp. 47-48). Having never encountered the like of this before, the Issogo propose three explanations for the sudden presence of the foreigners: first, they might have fallen from the sky with umbrellas; second, perhaps they changed into crows and regained human form on arrival in the village; third, they could have spied on the Issogo in order to trap them (p. 48). Those proposing the third solution, the most logical to Western readers, are ridiculed, illustrating the profound difference between Issogo and European thinking (p. 48). Presumably to prevent insubordination following the demise of the first *Kommandant*, six columns of soldiers accompany *Kommandant* n° 2 (pp. 48-49) who orders Assanga to be brought before him (p. 49). The terrified troops fear Assanga's supernatural powers and make excuses for their inaction until the *Kommandant* fires a shot (pp. 49-50). Assanga nonchalantly appears but on seeing the soldiers, feigns a warm welcome, proffering a hand to the *Kommandant* who ignores him and barks orders (p. 50).

A stammering, indigenous interpreter approaches Assanga demanding to know whether the chief is an enemy of the German Empire (p. 50). Assanga deflects the question, replying that he hates violence and respects tradition. The interpreter insists on knowing whether Assanga is a friend of the French, and if he has seen any French spies (p. 51). Assanga's response indicates that no Whites are to be trusted and that he is not going to swear allegiance to the Germans. In order to avoid direct confrontation, the interpreter deliberately mistranslates Assanga's words by telling the *Kommandant* that the chief has said that Germany will crush France (p. 51). Overcome with emotion, the *Kommandant* promises to overlook the bad reports his predecessor gave about Assanga (p. 52). No doubt relieved that the tension has been broken, the soldiers put down their arms and drink with the villagers.

The interpreter begins the census by writing the villagers' names on paper (p. 53). The Issogo are proud of seeing their names in writing until Assanga reminds them that such practices steal their identity (p. 53). The Germans attempt to estimate Issogo ages by counting teeth, which causes much amusement when an old woman is deemed to be sixteen while her son is apparently twenty-eight (pp. 53-54). Assanga points out the anomaly to the interpreter who admits that sometimes the Whites have strange ideas such as that the earth is round and rotates (p. 54). The *Kommandant* chats with Assanga as though they were old friends (p. 54), but then orders the soldiers to round up the Issogo, a move which sends them fleeing into the bush (p. 55). Assanga breaks a cola nut, giving half to the *Kommandant* as a sign of peace and they shake hands (p. 55). However, Assanga surreptitiously throws his half of the nut away (p. 55).

A treaty dated 1914 is drawn up between Germany and the Issogo (pp. 55-56), who number two hundred in total with eighty-six adult males. Under the treaty Assanga is required to surrender

his sovereign, legislative and administrative rights to the German authorities with five conditions: the territory cannot be ceded to a third power; treaties set in place with other foreign governments are invalid; grounds cultivated by the Issogo and villages will remain their property and that of their descendants; taxes must be paid annually to kings and chiefs; and during the initial stages of establishing the German administration in Cameroon indigenous customs and traditions will be respected.

An African miscreant is brought before the *Kommandant*. Assanga pleads clemency but the *Kommandant* overrules him by shooting the traitor in cold blood (pp. 56-57). When the Germans depart, Édène, unable to comprehend why Assanga did not defend the traitor, questions him about the killing (p. 58). Assanga uses the incident to illustrate to Édène how it is possible to become a murderer in the defence of others (p. 59). The next day she is woken by the funeral procession of the *Kommandant* who, according to the German soldiers, has died in his sleep (pp. 59-60). Assanga smiles at the news, commenting cryptically that “[u]n guerrier ne doit jamais abaisser sa garde” (p. 60) and Édène is reminded of the cola nut that Assanga offered the *Kommandant*. For the time being the Issogo have some measure of victory against their German oppressors.

Several types of intercultural interaction feature in this episode. First, the *Kommandant* arrives with a display of brute strength, surrounding the village with soldiers, enforcing rather than negotiating a treaty with the Issogo, and overruling Assanga’s authority and indigenous justice in shooting the traitor. Second, the interpreter feigns mediation but in fact collaborates with the Germans while trying to keep peace with Assanga. This places the interpreter in the invidious position of being dishonest, mistranslating and ultimately betraying his people in order to avoid direct confrontation, although to a certain extent his mistranslation protects the Issogo. Third, the squadron of *nègre* soldiers also collaborates with the Germans, using force against their own countrymen. Fourth, Assanga initially attempts direct resistance but is thwarted by the interpreter. However, fifth, Assanga and the Issogo experience some degree of triumph in feigning agreement with the treaty but ultimately murdering the *Kommandant*. The German approach to intercultural interaction is that of the imposition of power without any real attempt at negotiation.

2.3. Strategies and Tactics

While *LAEPE* concerns the domination of indigenous culture by a foreign power in the colonial context, it is clear that the interaction between coloniser and colonised is far more nuanced than would at first appear. The situation allows for different forms of empowerment, some involving brute strength and others that are subtler. It is for this reason that the intercultural relationships between these two groups might be better interpreted with reference to Michel de Certeau’s writing on strategies and tactics, since this theory allows for the empowerment of all

parties, indicating that authority does not necessarily reside entirely with the apparently stronger adversary. De Certeau may assist with investigating the relationships that exist between strategies and tactics and those who employ them. Our interest lies in whether intercultural interactions within *LAEPE* are shown to be effective in promoting positive relationships between coloniser and colonised and leading to genuine intercultural understanding.

De Certeau defines the difference between strategies and tactics as the contrast between manoeuvres used by those who want or who have power and those used by the disempowered:

a tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power. [...] strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the *establishment of a place* offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever *utilization of time*, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power. (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 38-39, italics in text)

Therefore strategies are the business of those who assume power, while tactics belong in the realm of those who do not possess power. The aim of the establishment of power is assimilation of the other (absorption into the mainstream culture) not their integration (retaining the cultural identity of minority groups).

Strategies are spatial, for example, domination through acquisition of territory, while tactics are temporal and include opportunistic reactions to strategies at specific times. In the context of this thesis, the word *strategies* will be used to describe the overarching policies and systems set in place by the dominant or powerful forces (colonisers) to control their subjects from whom power is (apparently) removed (colonised). *Tactics*, on the other hand, refer to opportunistic actions (often spur of the moment) employed by the dominated (colonised Africans) to counteract the strategies of the German and French colonisers. De Certeau describes the weakened position of those obliged to employ survival tactics, who are constantly “on the back foot” and whose “room to manoeuvre” is restricted by the strategies of the more powerful:

The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to *keep to itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver “within the enemy’s field of vision,” as von Bülow put it, and within enemy territory. It does not, therefore, have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in

isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of “opportunities” and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. (1984, p. 37, italics in text)

While de Certeau’s definition of strategies in a colonial context concerns establishing territory or creating an inhabitable space for colonial powers, in *LAEPE* territories can be conceived of as physical (Issogo property), intellectual (Issogo minds) and spiritual (Issogo souls). The aim of the German and French occupations of Cameroon as portrayed in the novel is to possess all of these territories. We will see that the Germans use force and military power whereas the French adopt the more subtle approach of the *mission civilisatrice*. Clearly these strategies involve the imposition of power without a hint of negotiation. Certain individuals such as Michel Ange, Assanga, Zoa, Father Wolfgang and the Issogo men also wish to dominate. Other subsidiary characters (the interpreter, the *nègre* soldiers, monsieur Taxes) desire power but to a lesser extent.

In response to the manoeuvres of the colonisers, the colonised take advantage of every opportunity to defend themselves, but this is not always effective against the superior military and technical power of the Europeans. As seen above, tactics cannot be formulated before strategies become clear, meaning that the less powerful are forced into a waiting game and always at a disadvantage. For example, in response to German recruitment strategies for an indigenous labour force or army conscripts, Assanga’s tactic is to conceal the men (pp. 33-35, 40-41). The Germans then retaliate by surrounding the village, using an interpreter, taking a census and imposing a treaty, all measures against which Assanga’s tactics are to fake agreement to the treaty and murder *Kommandant* n° 2. How effective Issogo tactics are in the long-term against the onslaught of the Europeans remains to be seen. While the Issogo manage to strike back on occasions, in the face of the colonial powers their culture is ultimately decimated.

2.4. German Colonisation

The Germans are represented as implementing the process of colonisation of Cameroon and the Issogo through a variety of means, some relating directly to the establishment of authority and infrastructure, others causing a breakdown of African culture and traditions. With respect to authority, the Germans impose law and order and make regulations (pp. 31-32), regard Cameroon as a province of the German Republic (p. 39), install *Kommandants* (pp. 39-40), establish a treaty (pp. 55-56) and overrule indigenous justice (pp. 56-57). They recruit indigenous soldiers and administrative personnel (pp. 33-34, 50-57, 115-120) and use military power to address non-compliance (pp. 47-49, 119-121). According to Édène “[l]es jours s’enroulaient dans leurs mains comme un manuscrit biblique” (p. 31). Regarding infrastructure, the Germans build roads, cut

down forests and are constantly on the move with new projects (p. 32). Concerning their impact on African culture and traditions, the Germans challenge indigenous knowledge and beliefs (p. 31), attempt to “civilise” the Issogo (p. 31, 38), employ a religious authority (Father Wolfgang) to evangelise (pp. 115-116), and take advantage of the Issogo who are perceived as sentimental and malleable (pp. 190-191). While there are potential positives in the strategies employed by the Germans (the building of roads), *LAEPE* depicts a consistent erosion of Issogo territory, culture and traditions in direct proportion to the establishment of colonial power.

The Germans are portrayed as domineering and uncompromising, primarily interested in controlling Cameroon, and in using the Issogo and their territories as a resource (pp. 31-35, 55-57). They assume authority with an arrogance that implies their rule will not be questioned. Assanga observes that in German society “l’essentiel ne consiste pas à se soucier de la provenance d’un bien, mais de le posséder” (p. 35). The first *Kommandant* explains to Assanga that “le Kamerun [...] n’est qu’une province de notre Empire germanique!” (p. 39) while the 1914 Issogo census and treaty (pp. 53-57) demonstrate German interest in possessions not people. With the Germans there is no negotiation with intercultural communication consisting of passing on official orders to Assanga (pp. 34-39, 49-54, 116-118) or through indigenous collaborators, such as the interpreter (pp. 47-58), monsieur Taxes (pp. 114-118) and the soldiers (pp. 33-34, 48-49). The Germans show no mercy, and do not tolerate insubordination as demonstrated when the villager is shot in cold blood (pp. 56-57).

The Germans play a game of cat and mouse with the Issogo and, while Assanga responds with tactics that temporarily thwart them, the Germans always have a more forceful comeback strategy. *Kommandant* n° 2, whose reputation precedes him and is described by Edène as “la pire chose qui pouvait nous arriver” (p. 40), is responsible for the taking of the census. *Kommandant* n° 3 attacks the village when Assanga refuses to pay taxes (pp. 117-124) so Michel Ange becomes General of the Issogo Army, and trains the Issogo in European combat. One month later, the Issogo plan an attack, and when it fails to eventuate, it is because the Germans are defeated, not by the Issogo, but by another foreign power, the French (pp. 123-126). The African tax-collector (monsieur Taxes) is found swinging from a tree, with the implication being that Assanga was responsible (p. 127). Under the leadership of *Kommandant* n° 3, the remaining German troops attack during a church service where rebellion against the foreigners is incited, resulting in mass destruction, death and injury (pp. 183-188). Following the raid, *Kommandant* n° 3 is captured by Assanga who condemns him to death while Michel Ange wants to hand him over to the French military tribunal. The *Kommandant* tells Assanga that the Issogo could have avoided German domination by attacking rather than welcoming them (pp. 190-191), indicating that, for the

Germans, there is only one approach – that of force. Assanga later releases the *Kommandant* (p. 191) for reasons unknown, perhaps hoping that he will be captured by the French.

In these incidents, German strategies are clearly authoritarian and on a grand scale with the aim of subjugating the Issogo and controlling Cameroon. As the long-term effect of the German treaty is the surrender of Assanga's authority as a chief (pp. 55-56), and it is clear that indigenous traditions will be respected only in the interim (p. 56), all the Issogo can do is to retaliate wherever possible. Throughout the remainder of the novel, the demise of Issogo culture is a constant source of worry for the clan (pp. 271-273, 276-285), until finally only Assanga really knows the traditions (p. 313). Thus the process of cultural erosion begun by the Germans and continued by the French forces the indigenous population to progressively reconstruct their collective cultural identity according to colonial norms.

2.5. Christian Evangelism

Depictions of domination by the Reich include attempts to establish a German mindset and destroy Issogo culture and traditions through evangelism. This is important to the discussion as it presents an alternative means of intercultural encounter that does not come under the heading of the direct imposition of German authority. Christian evangelism and missionary endeavour is introduced through the character of Father Wolfgang who arrives at the Issogo village independently (pp. 111-114) but is next seen in the company of *Kommandant* n° 3 (p. 115). While some Issogo appear to superficially adopt various aspects of Christianity in attending church services and establishing the Revival Church there is no evidence of a life-changing experience. The Issogo who adhere to Christianity are not examples of religious piety possibly because leaders such as Father Wolfgang are hypocritical and uninspiring.

In his role as a priest, Father Wolfgang's strategies include threats and intimidation to bully converts rather than spreading the Gospel of peace (pp. 111-115, 131-133, 153-155) resulting in ridicule of him and his religion by the Issogo. Interactions between the missionary and the Issogo are portrayed as theatrics, for example when he exclaims he has been chosen to bring the message that "le Royaume des Cieux est arrivé!" (p. 112). Most Issogo consider Father Wolfgang's message as "[p]aroles en l'air" (p. 112), think he is mad (p. 112) and comprehend that they are "victimes d'une supercherie" (p. 113). He is constantly the butt of Issogo humour, evidenced when he returns with *Kommandant* n° 3 (pp. 115-116). The Issogo taunt him and wave fake magic statues under his nose (p. 133). The priest's double standards are evident when he tells Assanga he has not married "[p]our servir le Seigneur" (p. 113) but, after criticising Assanga's relationship with Biloa (pp. 131-133), he is found in the arms of a beautiful negress (pp. 153-155). He culturally discriminates in holding two church services: one in the morning for Whites (purgatory) and the other in the midday

heat for Africans (hell) (p. 177). All types of miscreants attend Father Wolfgang's church services "pour défier le corps du Christ" (p. 177). His strategies simply prove that his version of Christianity is unable to inspire the Issogo to take up the real message of the Gospel – love and compassion for others.

It is difficult to see how Christianity might be considered an effective strategy as there is no noticeable change in Issogo morality or mentality. For example, Gazolo, Édène's future husband is apparently so keen to take up Christianity that his children are the first to be baptised (p. 166) with his eldest son becoming Chrétien n° 1. However Gazolo later beats Édène until she miscarries (pp. 324-328) and Chrétien n° 1, while a choirboy in Father Wolfgang's church, cheats on his wife (pp. 314-315) and plays on his attraction to Édène (pp. 332-324). The charlatan healer, Awono Awono, is portrayed as Christ-like, with God his father and humanity his family (p. 398). He supposedly shuns worldly pleasures as they burden the soul, exhorts people to love one another, claims special healing powers and says he has come to save the Issogo from hell (pp. 398-399). Awono Awono equates sickness with sin, promising to heal those who have "l'étincelle de l'amour" (p. 405). However he is exposed as a thief and is imprisoned for armed robbery (pp. 434-440). The Christian Revival Church is run by deluded African pastor, Jésus Oukouassi, and his promiscuous wife, Maria-Theresa d'Avila (pp. 445-50).

If Christian evangelism is an intercultural strategy on the part of the Germans to change Issogo culture and further their cause in Cameroon, it is a resounding failure. The Issogo who follow Christianity do not demonstrate its fundamental tenet of love for others. Christianity is not depicted as inspirational but as a hypocritical farce, with all its proponents portrayed as caricatures. Although each Issogo child is well-schooled in the concepts of "Christ", "Patrie", "Sang" and "Chrétien" Édène comments that "ces mots déposaient comme un chancre au bout de nos âmes" (p. 166). Open resistance to Christianity is evident in Assanga's observation: "[j]amais, je ne laisserai éduquer mes enfants dans la foi chrétienne, s'il est en mon pouvoir de l'empêcher" (p. 150).

2.6. French Colonisation

Unlike the Germans, the French are not portrayed as having great military prowess, despite their defeat of the opposition in World War I. The French military undertake punitive raids (pp. 28-29) and are responsible for the German departure from Cameroon (p. 269) establishing their own regime with Michel Ange as *Commandant* (p. 254) that is still in force at the end of the novel. Their strategy is the *mission civilisatrice* that is, education and the imposition of certain living standards in line with French society at the time. At the 1931 congress of *La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme et Les Colonies*, sociologist Albert Bayet described the French *mission civilisatrice* as follows:

Le pays qui a proclamé les droits de l'homme, qui a contribué brillamment à l'avancement des sciences, qui a fait l'enseignement laïque, le pays qui, devant les nations, est le grand champion de la liberté [...] a la mission de répandre partout où il le peut les idées qui ont fait sa propre grandeur [...]. Il faut nous considérer comme investis du mandat d'instruire, d'élever, d'émanciper, d'enrichir et de secourir les peuples qui ont besoin de notre collaboration. (Bayet, 1931, as cited in Moujahid, 2011, p. 422, ellipses in text)

Clearly the French considered they had the right to impose the principles that had made their nation great on their colonies regardless of whether this intervention was welcomed or not. According to Fortescue (2000, p. 167), the French felt the *mission civilisatrice* was especially appropriate for Africa given that they, "like other Europeans, tended to underestimate the cultural sophistication of traditional African societies". Michel Ange sums up supposed French superiority with the words "nos méthodes n'ont rien à voir avec celles des Allemands! Ce pays sera développé en un rien!" (p. 235). The French chief surgeon reiterates the aims of the *mission civilisatrice* in saying "[n]ous sommes là pour les éduquer et non pour les maintenir dans l'obscurantisme! C'est ça notre rôle civilisateur!" (p. 422).

Like the Germans, the French are characterised as employing a range of strategies to ensure the establishment of their *mission civilisatrice*: in particular the taking of physical territory, passing legislation, and destroying Issogo culture and traditions. In founding their presence in Cameroon they drop bombs, build hospitals, study science, take an interest in Issogo health, conscript Africans, govern Cameroon, expand their territory, send interns, and promise compensation (pp. 269-271, 417-342, 468-473). In changing legislation they administer justice (pp. 389-396, 458-462) with Michel Ange becoming chief magistrate. In destroying Issogo culture and traditions they cause social upheaval, build schools and mandate the French language (pp. 269-271). As with the Germans, there are potentially positive aspects to the French initiatives such as the provision of education and hospitals, but the overall impact is the eradication of the Issogo way of life.

The novel focuses on encounters with the Germans directly in four *veillées* (two, three, seven and nine) but the French as a nation are not as present and are mentioned briefly in *veillées* twelve, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen. It is more through interactions between Michel Ange and the Issogo, both in his acceptance into the tribe and his rejection of them in becoming *Commandant*, that the reader is able to appreciate the French *mission civilisatrice* at work. The French are depicted as not quite as intelligent or single-minded as the Germans. Akouma Labondance leads them a merry dance, capturing Michel Ange (pp. 371-396), and the compensation/burial ceremony

for indigenous soldiers who fought for France is a complete farce (pp. 468-473). The French judicial system is portrayed as hypocritical, and Michel Ange's incompetence is highlighted during Édène's trial for her desertion of Gazolo when, as Governor of Cameroon, he is forced to revoke indigenous marriage in order to justify leaving his indigenous wife, Espoir de Vie (pp. 458-462).

The French are depicted as more subtle than the Germans but just as destructive as they insinuate themselves into Cameroon's social and political fabric, and study the indigenous population like a species (pp. 420-422, 428-430). The Issogo seem a little more trusting of the French than of the Germans perhaps because they have been "softened up" by their time with Michel Ange until his ruthless betrayal of them. They appear to regain some of their pride during the *mission civilisatrice* as Édène comments "nous découvriions que notre sang nègre valait son pesant d'humanité" (p. 185).

When Michel Ange prepares to leave the village, Édène notices a change in his demeanour: "[i]l nous dominait déjà et, déjà, il nous supériorisait" (p. 237). Henceforth, this attitude characterises the Frenchman's dealings with the Issogo, and when the Issogo arrive at his house with Espoir de Vie, his soldiers beat Assanga. Rather than apologising, Michel Ange states that they were simply doing their duty (pp. 261-263). Michel Ange marries a French woman, refusing to acknowledge his union with Espoir de Vie as being official (p. 264). He denigrates the Issogo using terms such as "[q]u'ils sont drôles, ces Nègres! [...] Ils sont vraiment adorables! Adorables!" (p. 266), reducing them to the status of simple children. Espoir de Vie is accepted as a gift along with the animals, and becomes a servant in his house (pp. 265-267).

Michel Ange portrays "cette ambivalence fondamentale des rapports entre le colonisateur et le colonisé" (pp. 191-192) more than any other character in *LAEPE*. We have already noted his ability to change allegiances during Édène's trial and the farcical burial ceremony when a riot ensues during which he loses a forearm, screaming "Dieu de merde d'Afrique!" (p. 472), which will force him to leave Africa (pp. 468-473). It is through him, as the duplicitious figurehead of the French government in Cameroon and the Issogo "blanc-fantôme" (pp. 12-14), that the French *mission civilisatrice* is seen to be just as calamitous in its impact on the Issogo as the German imposition of authority. Issogo culture is eroded by the French presence (p. 313) and Assanga chooses to die under French government, overwhelmed by "ce chemin de la folie dans lequel le continent noir s'engouffrait" (p. 462).

In the novel, both colonial powers have a profoundly detrimental effect on Cameroon and on the Issogo with neither showing any signs of seriously attempting to accommodate Issogo traditions. While three German *Kommandants* feature in the novel, the perspective they portray is that of the German Reich and does not necessarily reflect personal viewpoints, except perhaps in the

case of *Kommandant* n° 3 who comments on how the Issogo should have been more aggressive (p. 190). Therefore readers gain few insights into individual German thoughts about Cameroon and the Issogo. However, through the character of Michel Ange, intercultural interaction takes place at a personal and an administrative level. Michel Ange's interactions with the Issogo will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.7.1, while the stark contrast between his perspective and that of the Issogo, and ramifications of this for intercultural understanding, will be developed in further detail in Chapter 5 (on the mamiwater) and in Chapter 6, the conclusion. Issogo tactics are unable to prevail against the European powers causing Assanga to comment:

[c]haque matin de nos vies, nous nous réveillons sur une terre qui appartenait à nos ancêtres, mais que les Blancs commandent. [...] Nos enfants, nos femmes et nos hommes conduisent leur vie selon l'ordre établi par les Blancs [...]. (p. 298)

2.7. Transcultural Manoeuvres

We turn now to the depictions of European and indigenous characters who attempt to guarantee their survival through crossing cultures and integrating, assimilating, adopting other cultural norms or collaborating. Michel Ange is the one European character in *LAEPÉ* with the opportunity to become part of Issogo society when he is welcomed into the clan but then works his way up into the hierarchy of the French military. Tristan is the second example of a European who attempts to infiltrate indigenous society in order to study healer Awono Awono for scientific purposes. Zoa (sorcerer and clan leader of the descendants of the panther women) is the notable instance of an indigenous character who betrays his culture in favour of a European lifestyle. Indigenous personalities who play a specific role in collaboration with the colonisers are monsieur Taxes, the interpreter and the *nègre* soldiers. Under this heading, language as a means of intercultural interaction will also be discussed.

2.7.1. European attempts to integrate or assimilate into African society. From the start the Issogo realise that Michel Ange is a conman but are unaware of the full extent of his duplicity. They describe him as the “blancfantôme” (pp. 12-13) and “le grand sorcier blanc” (p. 25) with his bag of strange objects and magic umbrella (pp. 20-21, 24-26). He is seen as “inculte” (p. 21), his personal hygiene leaves a great deal to be desired (pp. 20-21), and he is a constant source of amusement and frustration to the Issogo and to the green spirits (p. 237). His assets are his military experience (p. 44), ability to feign wisdom with obtuse responses to questions (p. 44), and cunning which enables him to avoid the Germans looking for French spies (pp. 48, 51). Assanga spares his life but watches him closely (pp. 26-29), realising his knowledge will be useful but also that the

Frenchman considers the Issogo ignorant (p. 110). Michel Ange promises inventions which never eventuate, designed to make the Issogo the most advanced civilisation on earth (pp. 25-26, 43-44). Nevertheless Assanga accepts him as a loyal subject of the Eton Republic of the Issogo (p. 26), and makes him General of the Issogo Army. However Michel Ange does not fight with them because he is awaiting the arrival of the French troops (pp. 121-125). He deceives Espoir de Vie by producing dozens of *cafés au lait* (mixed race children) behind her back, some of whom (for example, Bob junior) join the French military, torch villages and, in rejecting their indigenous origins (pp. 27-28) parallel their father's later actions.

Michel Ange appears to have adopted Issogo cultural norms in taking a wife, living like them and producing children, and is referred to as “un Éton particulier” (p. 43). However, *veillées* ten and eleven (the mamiwater tale and Michel Ange's return to the French army) demonstrate that this assimilation is hypocritical. Michel Ange remains with the Issogo while the Germans are in power, but his allegiance is clearly French. He cannot (or will not) adopt Issogo norms and reverts to his French way of life on rejoining the army. It is possible that Michel Ange is a deserter from his position as Chief Sergeant in the French army of Gabon, seeking refuge from the Germans in the Issogo village, and is untrustworthy from the outset (pp. 15-18). He could also be one of the French spies the Germans are looking for (p. 51), and this could explain why, when the Germans attack the village, Michel Ange disappears (p. 48). He maintains contact with the French army during his stay with the Issogo as, when *Kommandant* n° 3 is captured by Assanga, Michel Ange wants to hand the German over to the French military tribunal (p. 189). This would also explain his meteoric rise to the position of *Commandant* only a few months after leaving the Issogo (p. 254).

Michel Ange's tactic is to keep a foot in both camps (Issogo and French) so that, when the time is right, he can switch sides. He comments that, on his arrival in Africa, he allowed himself to be fooled by Issogo practices (p. 424); however the reader knows that he willingly accepted Issogo hospitality (*veillée* one). Édène's trial illustrates his ability to use circumstances to suit his purposes when he acknowledges but then annuls traditional marriage to avoid accepting responsibility for his indigenous wife (pp. 458-462). His equivocal attitude towards Cameroon is evident following Assanga's funeral, when he encounters Édène, claiming that he is torn between France and Africa and would like to die in Africa (pp. 465-468). While Michel Ange seems to have survived quite successfully for some time straddling both the indigenous and French worlds of Cameroon, eventually his career ends in humiliation (pp. 469-473).

A further example of a European attempting to integrate into indigenous society is that of Tristan, a young French doctor on internship in Cameroon, who considers that there may be some substance to the alternative medicine of Awono Awono and uses this as his survival strategy.

While Tristan initially appears genuine, his curiosity is not in the healer as an equal, but rather “à la manière hypocrite des Blancs” (p. 421) as a “specimen” or an unusual phenomenon. Tristan wants the recipes for Awono Awono’s potions and envisages them both at European conferences to establish his own fame and fortune (pp. 421-425, 428-431) with no guarantee of reciprocal benefits for the healer. Tristan’s attempts at friendship with Awono Awono are regarded with fear and suspicion by Issogo and French alike. The Issogo distrust his intrusion in their society but are concerned that if they act there may be retaliation because he is French (pp. 430, 433). On the other hand, the French think that Tristan may be undermining their authority, and force his repatriation to Europe on the pretext that he is mad (pp. 422-425, 432-433), implying that seeking to understand the Issogo equates to insanity. So what might we conclude from the examples of Europeans who straddle both European and indigenous cultures in order to survive? They are clearly not successful in intercultural interaction long term although they may succeed in the short term. Their intercultural interest in the Issogo is insincere and self-serving.

2.7.2. Africans who become *blanchisés*. The prime example of an African adopting European culture in order to survive is Zoa (pp. 281-311), who recommends change as the means for the Issogo to counteract the erosion of African traditions and voices his opinion at the night of the sorcerers:

Avant tout, je voudrais dire que quelque chose qui ne se transforme pas est une chose morte. Vos rituels n’ont pas changé depuis la nuit des temps. Comment voulez-vous combattre quelque chose de nouveau avec de l’ancien? Une civilisation telle que la civilisation occidentale, avec une aussi vieille que la nôtre? (p. 283)

In imposing European ways on the descendants of the panther women, Zoa destroys their cultural identity, reducing his people to alcohol dependency, prostitution and despair through sorcery. Assanga defeats Zoa using the same sorcery, releasing the clan from his domination, but cannot restore its lost cultural identity (pp. 309-310). Assanga comments that “[i]ls retrouveront des bribes de leur passé” (p. 310), indicating that, once cultural identity is lost, only traces of it can be regained. Zoa fails to acknowledge the strength of indigenous culture while his fellow sorcerers consider that adoption of a European lifestyle would rupture with the natural order (pp. 284-285).

Africans who use the tactic of straddling both societies are not successful either in the short or long term. Attempting to become *blanchisé* (p. 450), to use Édène’s term, may ensure survival for some time but in fact, indicates slavery to colonisation. The use of “*blanchisé*”, evoking the artificial whitening process of bleaching laundry, implies that adoption of a newer culture requires

the betrayal to a certain extent of the older cultural identity. For Édène this results in Africa thinking it is independent when in fact it is simply attempting to rival the West with nothing more than a shallow display (p. 450). It seems that in trying to accommodate two cultures, one must lose part of one's original cultural identity.

The term *blanchisé* is reminiscent of Frantz Fanon's comment that the crux of the matter in colonisation is that Blacks wish to be White because of the perception that "[l]e Blanc s'acharne à réaliser une condition d'homme" (Fanon, p. 31). Fanon is also evoked by Édène's quote from a *nègre* poet: "*Je suis un nègre qui apprend le français aux petits Français de la France*" (p. 450, italics in text). This recalls Léon Damas' poem *Hoquet* (1937) as quoted in Fanon (p. 39) about the model Martiniquais child:

Vous ai-je dit qu'il vous fallait parler français
le français de France
le français du Français
le français français

According to Fanon (1952, p. 30), the answer for Blacks is not to become *blanchisés* because "le Noir qui veut blanchir sa race est aussi malheureux que celui qui prêche la haine du Blanc." Both White and Black are trapped in their respective colours with the former considering themselves superior and Blacks wishing to show Whites that they are equals in intelligence and nobility of thought (Fanon, p. 31). Fanon (1952, p. 48) suggests that the solution to the problem of *blanchissage* lies not in adopting white ways, which assumes that White is superior, but in assisting black people to free themselves from the destructiveness of colonisation. This seems to accord with both Édène and Beyala's perspectives. Beyala (2006) emphasises that, in order to move forward, Africa must regain her own ancestral history and her own identity, that is, throw off the shackles of colonisation. Édène expresses the same notions in the passage on *blanchissage*, confirming that the way forward is not to be found in cheap imitations of white concepts, which in her opinion equate to "un rite de possession semblable à une messe noire sur le corps vivant de l'Afrique" (p. 450).

2.8. Collaboration

The "*nègre*" soldiers and monsieur Taxes (who collects revenue for the Germans, pp. 117-118, 127) are portrayals of African characters who collaborate with the Germans. Another collaborator, the interpreter, appears during the census collection and treaty (pp.50-58) and will be discussed in section 2.9.2.

2.8.1. The *nègre* soldiers. The first “escadron de Nègres” (p. 33) arrives with *Kommandant* n° 1 in their smart red uniforms. They are in a jovial mood with one playing a *balafon* (African xylophone) and singing about taxes, while others search for the Issogo men whom Assanga has concealed (pp. 33-35, 40-41). The pejorative term *nègres* used by Édène captures the intense Issogo disdain for countrymen who side with the enemy. As seen in section 2.2, the second group of indigenous soldiers arrives with *Kommandant* n° 2 (pp. 48-50). They are primarily concerned that Assanga might use his magic powers and are loathe to act decisively until the *Kommandant* fires a shot (p. 50). These soldiers may have decided that the best tactic for survival is to side with Germany’s military power, but ultimately they are caught in the unenviable position of having to betray their fellow Africans or possibly kill them. Collaboration in *LAEPE* must be widespread as, when Akouma visits Fondamento de Plaisir’s *café-bordel*, “elle n’avait jamais vu autant de Nègres aussi hiérarchiquement « importants » dans une espace si exigü” (p. 359).

2.8.2. Monsieur taxes. Clearly proud of his elevated status (p. 115) monsieur Taxes identifies more with the Germans than the Issogo over whom he attempts to assert authority by claiming to be a friend wanting honest collaboration. He is portrayed as a caricature and not to be taken seriously. Assanga’s retort “nous ne sommes pas des esclaves” (p. 117) to monsieur Taxes’ demand for healthy men prompts threats which are later carried out by *Kommandant* n° 3 in a punitive raid on the village (pp. 119-121). Following the proposed retaliation by the Issogo on the Germans, monsieur Taxes is found hanging from a tree – almost certainly Assanga’s doing (p. 127). Clearly his attempts at collaboration were not successful, placing him in the position of betraying his own people for which he pays with his life.

2.9. Language and Translation

Language is a means of intercultural communication between the Germans and the Issogo, and a medium for the imposition of the French *mission civilisatrice* (section 2.6). Language is included under transcultural manoeuvres with the interpreter’s attempts to avoid conflict during the taking of the census (pp. 50-57), as well as the Issogo’s ability to communicate in German with *Kommandant* n° 1 and his communication with them, presumably in Eton. The discussion of language in *LAEPE*, in particular the spoken word, features also in section 5.4 which deals with Beyala’s comments on the use of French and in section 5.5.2 on *oralité feinte*.

2.9.1. Communication between the Germans and the Issogo. The first *Kommandant* arrives in the village exclaiming “Ma souka!” (p. 33), depicted by Édène as “germanisant notre langue” whereupon the villagers reply “Es gibt keinen Man!” reported in French as “Il n’y pas d’hommes.” The explanation for this response offered by Édène (p. 33) is that, because the Germans have repeatedly taken advantage of the Issogo, the Issogo are determined this will not

happen again: hence their emphatic statement in German showing they understand the intent of the intrusion into their village. The conversation continues in the French of the narrative, without it being clear which language is being spoken (p. 34), no doubt because some authorial choices with respect to language have been made to allow the story to flow. The *Kommandant*'s comments evoke humorous quips from Assanga about the effects of genes on reproduction and using foreign labour (pp. 36-37) indicating that complex communication is not a problem. The Issogo appear to have limited proficiency in German but understand body language and gestures as evidenced when the *Kommandant* describes the Issogo women as "sales rebelles" (p. 38) which is apparently not understood but provokes them to spit at him. However impressive the sparkling repartee between Assanga and *Kommandant* n° 1 appears at this point in the text, communication as a strategy (at least from a German perspective) fails in this encounter resulting in the inclusion of an interpreter in the next meeting with *Kommandant* n° 2.

2.9.2. The interpreter. The interpreter's dilemma has been introduced in section 2.2. Assanga's honest answers to the interpreter, such as "[u]n Blanc est un Blanc! Je suis pas fou pour mettre mon doigt entre l'écorce et l'arbre!" (p. 51) highlight his general distrust of Whites, and his unwillingness to become involved in conflict. He orders the interpreter to translate directly, but, terrified, he tells the *Kommandant* exactly what he wants to hear in order to fend off direct confrontation. This enables the census to proceed with relatively few problems except that the interpreter then becomes the butt of Assanga's comments about the inappropriateness of writing names and counting teeth in the context of Issogo traditions (pp. 53-54).

Throughout the census, the interpreter concentrates on translation seemingly without attempting to reconcile cultural differences or assist with intercultural clarifications (pp. 53-54). However, he does offer an explanation of the misdeeds of the condemned man on behalf of the Germans provoking an angry response from the Issogo towards the miscreant (p. 57). In so doing, the interpreter protects himself by publicly supporting the German viewpoint while maintaining some credibility with the Issogo. The employment of a translator may be seen as an attempt to achieve some degree of communication between the Issogo and the Germans. However this is fraught with complexity because the interpreter imposes authority through the census but does not encourage intercultural understanding. Whilst an altercation is prevented, Assanga's real opinion never reaches the ears of the *Kommandant* and therefore honest and open communication is simply not possible.

Using the Eton language appears to be a useful strategy for the Germans who wish to dominate Cameroon. However, ironically, a lack of language fluency can also be seen as contributing to peaceful cohabitation. If *Kommandant* n° 2 were an expert in Eton language, a

confrontation would be unavoidable as he would understand perfectly the conversation between Assanga and the interpreter. Likewise, knowledge of German would be an important tactic for Assanga in his discussions with the *Kommandants*. Few details are given about the linguistic exchanges between Assanga and Michel Ange except that Michel Ange knows some Eton (p. 14), and Assanga may speak some French. Indigenous Africans occupying important positions speak imperfect French which Édène describes as a deliberate attempt to begin separating themselves from France through a distortion of the language “en bradant des voyelles, en dilapidant des consonnes, en hypothétisant la grammaire. Ce n’était pas grave: pour la décolonisation il fallait bien commencer par quelque chose” (p. 359). Again, this seems reminiscent of Fanon (1952, p. 37) who acknowledges that the colonised Black desires to access the world of the Whites through some mastery of the French language:

le Noir Antillais sera d’autant plus blanc, c’est-à-dire se rapprochera d’autant plus du véritable homme, qu’il aura fait sienne la langue française. [...] Un homme qui possède le langage possède par contrecoup le monde exprimé et impliqué par ce langage.

Having acquired Damas’ “français français” in order to access the French world, indigenous officials in *LAEPE* are now attempting to disconnect. Therefore language is useful to a certain extent in *LAEPE* as a strategic tool in facilitating communication and tapping into aspects of another culture but does not expedite intercultural relationships.

2.10. Adherence to African Traditions or Resistance to Change

A further tactic evident in *LAEPE* is the attempt to deal with intercultural conflict and protect indigenous culture through adherence to tradition or resistance to change, either out of devotion to tradition or lethargy. Unlike the Issélé, Douala and Boulous, the Issogo seem particularly resistant to colonisation (p. 40), for no other reason than that changing their customs is too onerous according to Édène. She elsewhere mourns the passing of the same traditions seen as a positive model that produced an idyllic Africa in which men lived in harmony with nature and the gods (pp. 7-9, 474-475). However, belief in the power of the gods and spirits, while sometimes offering protection, is a double-edged sword which turns against the Issogo without discriminating between culpable and innocent. Curses descend on the village through misapplication of sorcery or misconduct by a single person (for example, *Espoir de Vie*’s curse, pp. 239-253). Likewise, Assanga’s chieftaincy, while providing some protection against the colonisers, causes the Issogo to become dependant on him to the point where they seem incapable of defending themselves.

Therefore, while African traditions can be a powerful means of protection in some circumstances, they become a threat in others.

Sorcery is used for protection, and Assanga calls a fast and a gathering of the sorcerers when the world is changing so rapidly the Issogo can no longer keep up (pp. 271- 273, 276-284). Assanga describes Zoa as a “*prisonnier de sa sorcellerie vengeresse*” (p.303) meaning that sorcery can be as much a trap as an asset, but proceeds to defeat Zoa with superior powers (pp. 293-297, 302-310). The implications of the tale of Zoa are that such feats can be used for good or bad, can enslave or liberate and that, once destroyed, cultural identity is very difficult to regain (pp. 309-310).

No doubt due to the absolute authority of the chiefdom, the Issogo appear incapable of taking the initiative, and their complete reliance on Assanga and Michel Ange renders them unable to plan their survival in the face of colonisation. From the first encounter with the Germans, Assanga protects the Issogo as best he can but warns them that they need to take responsibility for their own destiny (p. 41) and that the Whites will destroy them (p. 42). Assanga worries about the impact of the French (p. 150), and the sorcerers’ convention is called because the Etons feel powerless against the Europeans (p. 281).

When using European skills might be advantageous, the Issogo do not make the most of these due to their adherence to culture and traditions. Michel Ange assists the clan with his military knowledge and trains the men in European-style warfare. However, the Issogo are confused as their tribal wars are fought with champions representing the tribes (pp. 89-91), and after one month of training have only succeeded in pointing their weapons in the right direction (p. 123). On the day of the attack, the Issogo want to fight in broad daylight until Michel Ange advises them to wait for nightfall (p. 123).

While the Issogo seem convinced that change is not the answer, they appear to do little to preserve their traditions. Assanga estimates it will take at least one hundred years to stop the advancement of colonisation (p. 290) and Alina’s statement that “*notre façon de vivre se perdait comme grains de sable dans le vent*” (p. 293), describes the fragility of indigenous culture in the face of the Europeans. Eventually “*seul Assanga Djuli était encore capable d’imprimer aux chants anciens et aux rituels la même tension qu’à un arc d’ébène*” (p. 313). Assanga is thus both the advocate of change and the custodian of traditions and is eventually so worn out by this responsibility that he chooses to die (pp. 462-464). When Assanga departs the world, presumably Issogo traditions die with him.

2.11. Conclusion

When looking back on the range of different representations of intercultural interactions in this chapter we see, in general, mostly cases of failed intercultural communication. This has been clarified using de Certeau's categories of strategies and tactics that allow for differing levels of empowerment to analyse the nature of the interactions that take place. Strategies employed by the colonial powers are designed to establish the European presence in Cameroon and to subjugate the indigenous inhabitants. Against these strategies, the tactics used in response by the Issogo are temporarily effective, but are then overcome by new strategies, provoking new tactics in a vicious cycle that positions African and European characters in a constant state of flux, forcing the indigenous population to continually readjust. The strategies employed by the colonial powers can be classified as imposed authority, meaning that the Issogo are obliged to accept the rules and regulations of the Germans, and the insidious *mission civilisatrice* of the French. Europeans such as Michel Ange attempt to guarantee their survival through straddling cultures, while Africans like the interpreter, monsieur Taxes and the soldiers endeavour to counteract these moves through collaboration or, in the case of Zoa, by adopting the cultural norms of the Europeans. While African traditions cannot withstand the onslaught of the colonials, victory is not one-sided with the Europeans experiencing a degree of tragedy and loss.

The examples of intercultural interaction in *LAEPE* are overwhelmingly failures, doubtless because they are based on the imposition of authority by the colonial powers on the indigenous population without negotiation. As such they are antimodels of effective intercultural interaction. Rather than displaying any genuine attempt to put themselves in the shoes of the cultural other, most European characters in *LAEPE* show little inclination towards developing the tolerance and respect that might lead to effective intercultural understanding. Intercultural interactions in *LAEPE* involve dishonesty, disempowerment and domination by the colonial powers resulting in the annihilation of Issogo traditions. As *LAEPE* presents so many antimodels of successful intercultural interaction, one could ask whether it is at all possible for European and African to coexist harmoniously, or how a novel presenting such a bleak portrayal of interculturality could itself be considered an effective act of intercultural communication? An author of Beyala's calibre would hardly produce a story doomed to failure. Given that all the negative examples encountered in *LAEPE* are based on imposed authority, perhaps there are other models of successful intercultural communication that the text might provide. While few examples of positive intercultural interaction appear in *LAEPE*, the next chapter will explore the possibility that the novel itself might be a successful act of intercultural communication. Chapter 3 will assist with determining whether intercultural understanding between Black and White is possible in *LAEPE* and if negotiated authority might provide the means to effective intercultural communication.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVE THEORY AND THE INTERCULTURAL NARRATIVE

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we observed that examples of interculturality at the level of the diegesis in *LAEPE* were overwhelmingly negative with disastrous repercussions for the characters concerned. Yet Beyala's purpose in authoring *LAEPE* was clearly to write a novel that would entice Francophone readers to view the world of colonised Cameroon portrayed from an indigenous perspective. One would suppose that her aim was to write a book, which, while its diegesis portrayed failed intercultural understanding, was nevertheless successful in terms of its own ability to reach out to an intercultural audience, and was therefore not a literary failure in itself. We are therefore faced with the paradox that, while intercultural interaction in the diegesis fails, the book itself could still present as an effective act of intercultural communication. From the perspective of this thesis, which began with the premise of ongoing poor intercultural communication between Africa and France due to the aftermath of colonisation, *LAEPE* might even be viewed as attempting to bridge the gap between African and non-African in offering possible solutions for more productive intercultural relationships. Our task is to discover how *LAEPE* might achieve this, and given that interculturality within the book fails dismally, the other avenue worth exploring is that of effective communication through narrative. As proposed at the conclusion of Chapter 2, storytelling may be the only successful act of intercultural communication in *LAEPE*, exhibited through narration that simultaneously targets the double addressees of African narratee and Francophone implied reader. In this chapter we will investigate exactly what it is about the novel itself that allows it to bridge the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous in a way that does not happen within the story. We will see that the notion of authority is the link between the strategies of the colonials in *LAEPE* and the tactics of the narrator in a literary work.

An exploration of how narratives function generally will elucidate the manner in which the concept of authority, addressed in Chapter 2 in the context of colonisation, operates within a narrative. This will place us in a better position to determine whether interculturality inherent in the act of storytelling itself in *LAEPE* might provide clues for how to improve intercultural communication. To examine this possibility we return to the notion of authority that emerged from the study of intercultural relationships in the previous chapter, but will focus on its role in storytelling with reference to the work of Ross Chambers, whose literary theory unites the notion of authority with that of storytelling. This model for storytelling can clarify how and why literary communication might be considered successful and seductive. However, the study will need to go beyond strictly textual narrative matters to consider the big picture of text plus paratext. The

modern intercultural narrative raises additional concerns about connections between *authority* and *authenticity* in the context of what will be termed the *intercultural pact*. This will require an adaptation and extension of Chambers' work in order to accommodate the particularities of the modern intercultural narrative, and will lead into Chapter 4's discussion of how *author integrity* contributes to the construction of *intercultural authenticity* in an intercultural novel such as *LAEPE*.

Chambers' interest lay in how narrative functioned in 19th and early 20th century English, French and American readerly texts in the Barthesian sense. Our investigation of literary theory begins with Chambers' concept of authority in the narrative pacts that exist between narrator, narratee and implied reader, and *narrative* and *narratorial authority* as developed in *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* (1984). In addition, a study of the importance of the paratext in establishing *author credibility* and how this links with the textual construction of *intercultural authenticity* will prove pivotal in understanding the way in which *LAEPE* can promote itself as an effective act of intercultural communication.

3.2. The Authority to Speak or Narrate

Chambers' literary theory demonstrates that *authority* plays an important part in storytelling in terms of who has the *authority* to narrate, how this *authority* is acquired and its rules of engagement. The analysis of Chapter 2 drew on de Certeau's work about strategies and tactics to demonstrate that the concept of *authority* is crucial to the storyline in *LAEPE* with its portrayal of strategies used by the more powerful to establish and maintain control, and tactics used by the less powerful in order to survive. Strategies were seen as commonly related to physical force (German and French military powers), intellectual domination through education (French *mission civilisatrice*) and spiritual manipulation through evangelism. Those in power in *LAEPE* made no attempt to negotiate or understand the powerless. Tactics such as trickery (Assanga hiding the Issogo men), transcultural manoeuvres (Michel Ange and Zoa), collaboration (monsieur Taxes), the use of language (the interpreter) and African traditions were seen as less confrontational. The conclusion of Chapter 2 left us with the question of whether *authority* within the narrative would present a more positive model for intercultural relationships than the authoritarian strategies in the diegesis. Therefore we will explore whether Édène's authority as narrator prevails, making it possible for *LAEPE* to be considered an effective intercultural communication through the power of storytelling.

The concept of authority is fundamental to an understanding of Chambers, evidenced in his statement that "[w]ithout authority, one has nothing to say and no right to speak" (1984, p. 57). For Chambers, *authority* is paramount to any narrative, not only in terms of who has the authority to narrate, but also with respect to how this authority is established and sustained throughout the

narrative. It is easy to assume that the writer of a literary work automatically has the right to authorship through the acts of writing and publishing. However, the mere fact that an author produces an original work does not mean that others are then obliged to read it. The complexities of the relationships at work in a narrative will be revealed through consideration of the following questions. How does the notion of *authority* function within Chambers' narrative pact? (section 3.2.1) Who possesses this *authority*, and how is this *authority* endorsed and substantiated throughout the narrative? (section 3.2.2) Finally, is there a parallel between the *authority* attributed to the writer and that of the narrator as described by Chambers (section 3.3), and if so, what implications does this have in the context of a modern intercultural narrative such as *LAEPE*? (section 3.4)

3.2.1. Narrative pacts. Chambers emphasises the importance of the transactions set in place in a narrative, suggesting that the same contractual norms at the basis of human social fabric are required for full functionality of the storytelling. In fact, he argues in the following passage that permission to grant the right to author, and hence the right to narrate, is largely in the hands of those for whom the story is intended, and who allow the telling of the tale to proceed – in other words, the narratee and the implied reader:

To tell a story is to exercise power (it is even called the power of narration), and “authorship” is cognate with “authority”. But, in this instance as in all others, authority is not an absolute, something inherent in a specified individual or in that individual's discourse; it is relational, the result of an act of authorisation on the part of those subject to the power, and hence something to be earned. (Chambers, 1984, p. 50)

In sharp contrast to the *imposition of authority* revealed by Chapter 2's study of interculturality in the novel, the power of seduction inherent in storytelling reverses the imbalance and is described by Chambers as a tool used by the powerless against the powerful. It is:

a phenomenon of persuasion: it cannot rely on force or institutional authority (“power”), for it is, precisely, a means of achieving mastery in the absence of such means of control. It is the instrument available to the situationally weak against the situationally strong. (1984, p. 212)

Clearly this quote from Chambers draws on de Certeau's definitions of tactics and strategies (section 2.3), implying that de Certeau's concepts frame the narrative pact just as they have framed

the intercultural interactions in the diegesis. The narrator cannot assume a position of authority or power but approaches the narrative from a position of weakness in comparison to the narratee who hypothetically makes the ultimate decision about whether to participate in the pact or not. The onus is therefore theoretically on the narrator to engage the narratee. Chambers (1984, p. 4) is adamant that the act of narration has its basis in the type of transactions at the core of human social fabric and is the result of an agreement or exchange between the participants in the narrative, without which the narrative risks losing its purpose or intent.

The functioning of the narrative pact is dependant upon a clear understanding by each stakeholder (narrator, narratee and implied reader) of the roles, rights and responsibilities associated with each participant's involvement with the text. An important aspect of this negotiation lies in clarifying the "point" or purpose of the storytelling so that all have a common perception of the agreement and its implications. Each must agree to the terms of the contract of narration and have the same goals, otherwise the storytelling will not be effective:

[n]arrative is most appropriately described as a transactional phenomenon. Transactional in that it mediates *exchanges* that produce historical change, it is transactional, too, in that this functioning is itself dependent on an initial *contract*, an understanding between the participants in the exchange as to the purpose served by the narrative function, its "point." (1984, p. 8, italics in text)

Chambers (1984, p. 14) recognises the interaction between text and reader without which the narrative will not reach its full potential. The reader must actively engage with the text just as the text engages with the reader, otherwise, without this commitment on the part of the reader, the text lacks purpose and the "point" of the storytelling will not be achieved. In order to facilitate this process according to the rules of engagement of the pact, the narrative itself will include hints as to how it is to be read, guiding the reader towards the "point" of the storytelling. This is seen in the quote below from Chambers who refers specifically to *The Purloined Letter* by Edgar Allan Poe (1845) but whose comment has wider applications to other types of texts:

The narration also relates in important ways to its content, the *narré*, and provides in the *narré* significant "clues" [...] or models as to its own functioning as a performative discursive act: how it is (asking) to be received, what it assumes regarding the relationship between itself and its readership, what – in short – its point is as narrative act. (1984, p. 54, italics in text)

Thus, Chambers perceives narrative as a dynamic and fluid transaction between the narrator, narratee and implied reader. It is now our task to explore how the various players, particularly the narrator and narratee, operate within the narrative pact using Chambers' ideas of *narrative* and *narratorial authority*.

3.2.2. Narrative and narratorial authority according to Ross Chambers. Chambers highlights the delicate nature of the relationship between narrator and narratee, explaining *narrative authority* as the imparting of knowledge, and describing the narrator's vulnerability and dependence on the narratee's participation. He identifies the narrator as the "one who *knows*" and "who has 'experience' to impart" (1984, pp. 50-51, italics in text). The narratee who is on the receiving end of the transaction, agrees to the narration in order to be informed. Interestingly, in the very act of divulging information, the narrator places themselves at the mercy of the narratee who has metaphorically granted permission for the narration to take place (1984, pp. 50-51).

Chambers defines *narrative authority* as the authority that comes from the "communication of information" and *narratorial authority* as authority that "derives from the production of art" (1984, p. 207, italics in text). Therefore, *narrative authority* is established by the narrator's capacity to convey information consistent with the fictional world of the narrative, whereas *narratorial authority* concerns the storytelling capabilities and skills of the narrator employed to retain the attention of the narratee and implied reader. Confidence in *narrative* and *narratorial authority* is not established once and for all. Like the protagonists in *LAEPÉ* who employ different tactics for survival, the narrator remains in an exposed position, reliant on his/her versatility to sustain the storytelling process and maintain the interest of the narratee and implied reader to the very end of the tale:

A miscalculation of effect, a failure of *tactics*, and the hearers have lost interest, the narrator has lost control. [...] the narrator, who is situationally condemned to operate without preexistent authority and to earn the authority to narrate in the very act of storytelling, must be a master of certain "tactical" devices that ensure his or her *survival* as storyteller. (1984, p. 214, italics in text)

Thus Chambers' "act of authorisation" works as in a democracy, where the public bestows on a politician or government the *authority* to represent them and govern, but can also remove this authority should the elected parties prove deficient. Just as an inefficient government may be removed from office by an unimpressed public, should a narratee feel that the narrator does not

demonstrate sufficient *narrative* and *narratorial authority*, the narratee will metaphorically set the tale aside, removing the *authority* to narrate from the narrator and annulling the narrative pact.

To illustrate the manner in which *narrative* and *narratorial authority* function, let us digress slightly from our discussion of Chambers, to look at an example of the narrative pact in a popular genre of readerly fiction, the crime novel. Detective fiction is the example par excellence of the importance of rationality in establishing narrative authority in Western fiction. It will become evident that Beyala, on the other hand, produces a narrative that would seem in many ways irrational to a Western readership. And yet, the need for *narrative* and *narratorial authority*, as in magic realism (Magic Realism, 2014) defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a literary genre or style [...] that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic fiction”, is still vital to the story’s communicative success. This section of the thesis will show how both types of authority must still be established, albeit in a very different way, in a narrative such as *LAEPE*.

In crime fiction, the narrator, perhaps a detective solving the mystery or a character caught up in the intrigue, imparts the facts of a case in an illuminating and enthralling manner to sustain suspense throughout the narrative. Crime fiction generally deals with logic, rational thinking and facts, the aim being that the reader will either understand how and why the crime transpired or be left with a puzzle to ponder. The opening to Gaston Leroux’s *Le Mystère de la chambre jaune* (1907-1908) clearly demonstrates *negotiated authority* in storytelling. The narrator is a personal friend of Leroux’s fictional character, Joseph Rouletabille, a young newspaper reporter caught up in the attempted murder of the daughter of a renowned scientist:

Ce n’est pas sans une certaine émotion que je commence à raconter ici les aventures extraordinaires de Joseph Rouletabille. Celui-ci, jusqu’à ce jour, s’y était si formellement opposé que j’avais fini par désespérer de publier jamais l’histoire policière la plus curieuse de ces quinze dernières années. J’imagine même que le public n’aurait jamais connu « toute la vérité » sur la prodigieuse affaire dite de la *chambre jaune*, génératrice de tant de mystérieux et cruels et sensationnels drames, et à laquelle mon ami fut si intimement mêlé, si, à propos de la nomination récente de l’illustre Strangerson au grade de grand-croix de la Légion d’honneur, un journal du soir, dans un article misérable d’ignorance ou d’audacieuse perfidie, n’avait ressuscité une terrible aventure que Joseph Rouletabille eût voulu savoir, me disait-il, oubliée pour toujours. [...] C’est qu’en vérité – il m’est permis de le dire *puisque’il ne saurait y avoir en tout ceci aucun amour-propre d’auteur* et que je ne fais que transcrire des faits sur lesquels une documentation exceptionnelle me permet d’apporter une

lumière nouvelle – [...]. Ce que personne ne pût découvrir, le jeune Joseph Rouletabille, âgé de dix-huit ans, alors petit reporter dans un grand journal, le trouva! [...] Bien mieux, mon ami *doit* parler. Vous allez donc tout savoir; et, sans plus ample préambule, je vais poser devant vos yeux le problème de la *chambre jaune*, tel qu’il le fut aux yeux du monde entier, au lendemain du drame du château du Glandier. (Leroux, 1907-1908, pp.6-8, italics in text)

The narrator adopts a methodical approach from the outset, not only appealing to the Western reader’s fascination with conundrums of this kind but also to the rationalist, logical thinking framework that characterises the Cartesian mindset. The first-person, fictional, narrative pact is firmly established, as the narrator takes the narratee into his confidence in order to reveal the facts behind the mystery, and inviting the implied reader to join him in drawing together the missing threads into a cohesive whole. The narrator feels compelled to recount this extraordinary adventure, and, doubting that the narratee (the public individually and collectively) knows the whole truth, promises full disclosure.

Narrative authority is closely related to the establishment of consistency of information within the fictional world and staging a credible context. Leroux’s narrator first adopts a position of authority as the one possessing knowledge of the case and launches immediately into a description of the circumstances surrounding the story. Second, the narrator states his reasons for telling the story, assuming that the narratee (and the implied reader) will want to know the truth. Third, the narrator is a close friend of Rouletabille, a reporter and reliable eyewitness primarily responsible for solving the case. Fourth, the narrator has not been permitted to divulge the truth because Rouletabille wanted the case to be forgotten. Fifth, the mystery is described as the most intriguing and famous crime of the last fifteen years, and is known to the public. Sixth, the narrator’s revelation coincides with reignited interest in the case prompted by a newspaper article about the victim’s father, Strangerson. Finally, the narrator promises to metaphorically step aside and allow Rouletabille to tell the story himself, adding authority to the narration with the promise of an eyewitness account.

Narratorial authority is established more subtly through a range of literary tactics, and is evident through the manner in which the information is imparted. The narrator bursts with excitement at finally having the opportunity to disclose the truth, using words and expressions charged with persuasive rhetoric such as “*mystérieux et cruels et sensationnels drames*”, “*audacieuse perfidie*” and “*terrible aventure*”. The narratee (and implied reader) are hooked into participating in the story by unexplained enigmas, suggested rather than stated, such as the link

between the renowned scientist, Strangerson, and the crime. Implied questions create further intrigue. Why has Rouletabille been so strongly opposed to the truth being told? How has the affair suddenly resurfaced and why should the truth be revealed now? The narratee is addressed directly by the narrator (*vous*) and promised that the tale will unfold before their eyes. The narrator promises that personal pride will not interfere and that he will step aside and transcribe. Convinced that the narratee has been enticed into the narrative pact, the narrator is poised and ready, awaiting approval to proceed with the tale. Permission granted, the narrator loses no time and plunges into the story so as to not risk losing the narratee's attention. The *negotiated authority* of the narrative pact is clearly at work in this fine example of popular, readerly crime fiction based on rationalism and logic.

The obvious question is that, while it can easily be seen how the narrative pact applies to Leroux, how does such *negotiated authority* relate to a novel based on a different system of logic and consequently a different reality, such as *LAEPE*? *LAEPE* questions assumptions of authority and notions of truth through a juxtaposition of European Cartesian thinking with an African indigenous framework based on spiritism. Similarly to Leroux's narrator, Édène, in the prologue, seduces the narratees (and implied reader) into the world of shared narratives through African storytelling and *oralité feinte* (section 5.5), weaving in African themes of the ancestors, the supernatural and Issogo traditions, and establishing the format that the book will follow as a series of nightly stories or *veillées* (pp. 7-8). Principal characters are introduced with a warning that terrible events will follow which will assist the non-African reader in understanding why “nos peuples ont toujours les pieds dans l'Antiquité et la tête dans le troisième millénaire” (p. 8). The prologue diverts momentarily (pp. 8-9) to a concept familiar to Western literature, that of Paradise Lost, again striking a common chord with the non-African implied reader. The description of Africa before the Whites implicitly evokes the Garden of Eden, with Africans invited to mourn the passing of the traditions and culture of a great continent while non-Africans are encouraged to discover what has transpired in Africa and why. Immediately after the account of Michel Ange's arrival into the Issogo tribe appears an African creation story explaining how the different ethnic groups came to be, and how racial conflict and wars originated (pp. 18-20), pre-empting the ensuing confrontations between European and African. Creation stories are universal in their “desire to explain the world and its history” (*Creation Stories from Around the World*, 2000, p. 46), and the inclusion of an African creation story emphasises human commonalities, important to a saga which elsewhere highlights the stark divisions between races.

Unlike the cold, hard facts of a criminal case, Édène's knowledge and authority are those of the wise-woman and oracle who divulges information only as needed, being so ancient that even the

stars cannot remember her age (p. 8). She embodies the wisdom of eternity, remembering when Africa was Paradise, when deities lived in harmony with men and nature, men possessed great spiritual power, and the spoken word was law (pp. 8-9). Through the commonalities of storytelling, Paradise Lost and creation myths, an intercultural dialogue is set in place from the beginning, designed to appeal at one and the same time to the narratees (Issogo children) and the implied reader. While L  roux’s narrator works very hard to convince a rationalist audience familiar with detective stories,   d  ne’s task in *LAEPE* seems even more complex, as she attempts to enlighten her Francophone audience, many of whom think in a Cartesian fashion, about the wisdom of African philosophy.

In *LAEPE*,   d  ne’s logic, and that of her clan, the Issogo, defies Western rationalism. In keeping with her viewpoint that those who think in a Cartesian fashion will not comprehend her story,   d  ne confronts her narratees and implied readers with the paradoxical statement (given the narrative is in French) that “[u]ne confession   crite dans une langue   trang  re est toujours un mensonge. C’est dans la langue de Baudelaire que nous mentons” (p. 11). This immediately suggests that Western perspectives will simply not work in the context of this novel and that non-African readers should prepare themselves for a text that will challenge their thinking about the nature of truth and reality. The comment is a not-so-subtle gibe at the language and Cartesian mindset of French colonisers and their descendants (one of the two targeted audiences of the book), and foregrounds the notion that a completely different frame of reference must be adopted in order to understand the sagacity of *LAEPE*. While the requirement for *authenticity* necessitates the contextualisation of the story in an African framework, *LAEPE* must also appeal to rationally thinking Western readers. This requires   d  ne, the narrator, to maintain a delicate balancing act between portraying an African perspective while engaging a Cartesian audience.

Therefore, within the first few pages of *LAEPE*,   d  ne negotiates a narrative pact in which her *narrative authority* is established through her status as the African wise-woman, *griotte* and chief’s daughter, while her *narratorial authority* entices the African narratee and Francophone implied reader into a tantalising saga with the insinuation to Western readers that, in order to comprehend the reality of her people which is based on a completely different form of logic, they will need to put aside Cartesian thinking. Assuming that her audience is engaged,   d  ne sets the scene matter-of-factly, beginning her experiences as a small child with “[a]u moment o   commence cette histoire, moi   d  ne B’Assanga Djuli, j’  tais haute comme trois pommes” (p. 11). Narratees and implied readers are plunged directly into the world of the Issogo, and the first significant intercultural event, the arrival into their tribe of the *blanc-fant  me*, Michel Ange de Montparnasse.

From the beginning of *LAEPE*, the parameters of the *narrative pact* are deftly set in place through the establishment of Édène's *narrative* and *narratorial authority*.

Through the examples provided, we have seen how Chambers' theory is relevant not only to the readerly fiction of crime genres based on rationalism and Western logic, but also to an intercultural narrative such as *LAEPE*, grounded in the African oral tradition. However, there is one pivotal aspect in which the intercultural narrative differs significantly from the texts that Chambers studied, and that is the need for the establishment of *intercultural authenticity*. It is at this point that we need to part company with Chambers in order to investigate the requirements for *author integrity* and *intercultural credibility* in the contemporary intercultural narrative.

3.3. The Importance of the Paratext

While many intercultural narratives are essentially readerly fiction, like the texts that Chambers based his work on, the intercultural narrative is nevertheless quite distinct from the genres that Chambers studied, and therefore adaptation or extension of his ideas may be required to accommodate the requirements of this type of writing. Of particular interest in the context of a modern intercultural narrative will be the relationship between the paratext, *authority* within the narrative pact and *author credibility*, and how this in turn impacts on constructions of *intercultural authenticity*. To explain the importance of the paratext to the intercultural novel and how it links with the intercultural integrity of the author and their text, we will look at three cases where the reputations of authors of intercultural narratives and their work have been compromised or supported by the paratext: Jeanne Hyvrard's early writings (1975-1977); Helen Demidenko's *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1984); and Li Cunxin's autobiography, *Mao's Last Dancer* (2003). These examples will respectively illustrate: (i) fabrication of author cultural identity by a reading public through lack of paratext; (ii) cultural paratext manufactured by the author to authenticate a book; and, (iii) intercultural identity supported by paratext relating to the author.

Paratext is described by Phillipe Lejeune (1975, p. 45, italics in text) as the "frange du texte imprimé, qui, en réalité, *commande* toute la lecture (nom d'auteur, titre, sous-titre, nom de collection, nom d'éditeur, jusqu'au jeu ambigu des préfaces)". For Gérard Genette and Marie McLean (1991, p. 261) paratext is "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers." There are two main facets to the paratext, the peritext and the epitext (Genette & McLean, 1991, pp. 263-264). The peritext consists of physical attachments to the text itself such as the cover, photos, acknowledgements, preface and notes. The epitext is comprised of related external materials, for example interviews, articles, reviews, commentary and reading guides. Genette and McLean (1991, pp. 265-266) also acknowledge the importance of factual paratext, information not specifically about the text itself but which contextualises the story and

contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the narrative. In the digital age, where readers have ready access to vast quantities of information, the paratext is of even greater importance to an informed audience than in previous years.

Let us begin with the unusual case of the inferred identity of Jeanne Hyvrard and the impact of this concoction on the reception of her work. Between 1975 and 1977, Hyvrard was widely acclaimed as an exciting but elusive new author (Arnold, 1996, pp. 157-158). Suzanne Dow (2009, p. 149) says that Hyvrard's first two publications were "fictional asylum narratives told through the voice of 'Jeanne la Folle'" whose "madness is explicitly presented as a form of protest against the masculinist and colonialist society in which the narratives are set". At the time of publication of her early works, no author information about Hyvrard was available and, therefore, in order to present the reading public with an image of her as authentically Martinican, her publishers, *Les Éditions de Minuit*, effectively created an author identity from her writings (Arnold, 1996, p. 158). In constructing Hyvrard as "the absolute Other of Frenchness, in her French West Indian Post-Negritude feminist avatar", this "totally conditioned the earliest reactions to her fiction" (Arnold, 1996, p. 158). Publishers, critics and readers alike were so intent on establishing Hyvrard's authenticity that the public persona of a black, insane Antillaise writer appeared to evolve quite naturally from lack of information about the real person.

Hyvrard's texts criticised colonialism but were always not seen to do so. Cathy Wardle (2007, p. 5) comments that Hyvrard's writings were viewed from the perspective of a white, male French reader. Her works were saturated with "the textual signs of authenticity" according to Arnold (1996, p. 158) and therefore it was assumed that she was Martinican. Hyvrard's audience may have mistakenly thought that no white French writer would be so bold as to condemn France's *mission civilisatrice*, and therefore assumed that the author was a black woman, protesting about discrimination against indigenous females in Antillean society during the aftermath of colonisation.

According to Wardle (2005, pp. 68-69) Hyvrard was unquestionably recognised as "the new voice of black Caribbean women" until her real identity was publicly revealed in an article by France Théoret entitled, "Elle n'est ni noire ni antillaise" (Wardle, 2007, p. 18). Readers then discovered the truth, that Hyvrard was white, French, born in Paris in 1945, an economist, a teacher at a Parisian high school, and had spent only two years in Martinique (Wardle, 2007, pp. 1-2, 4). However, so ingrained was the belief that Hyvrard was Antillaise, that to this day she is classed as a Martinican author in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Wardle, 2007, p. 4).

Given the impact of mistaken identity on the reading of Hyvrard's books, it is surprising that she appeared to do nothing to set the record straight. In defining Hyvrard as the black Antillean female and, in considering her first novel autobiographical, her writing was viewed as simply

personal and psychological, which stripped it of all importance in terms of its underlying broader critique of society and politics (Wardle, 2007, p. 5). Hyvrard herself agreed with this, saying that the concoction of the mad black woman was a ploy to avoid listening to her anti-colonial diatribe (Wardle, 2007, p. 5).

Hyvrard's case is fascinating from two perspectives. First it highlights problems caused by a paucity of author information and a failure to rectify this, which can then affect how the author's work is interpreted. Second, and more importantly for our purposes, it demonstrates how, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the intense desire for an authentic author who matches their literary context might be so strong as to cause publishers and readers to make incorrect assumptions about author identity or even create a fictional public persona to fill this role. From Hyvrard's first publication the writer became identified as synonymous with the unstable principal character, "une femme [qui] parle, crie plutôt. Elle est noire, martiniquaise, qu'importe au fond, car elle s'identifie à toutes les femmes" [(*Les prunes de Cythère* (Jeanne Hyvrard))].

The confusion over Hyvrard's identity was caused by a lack of paratext, that is, information surrounding a writer's work that can enlighten the readers' understanding of the narrative. Without this paratext, a public desperate for an authentic author took it upon itself to create a false identity for Hyvrard, leading to an *interculturally inaccurate* construction of the writer and a possible misinterpretation of her texts. Had Hyvrard's audience known her true identity, they would have realised that her writings constituted a criticism of colonialism, not from a black author as expected, but from a white Frenchwoman. Paratext (or lack of it) can make or break an author's reputation, influence the reading of a text, and be the critical factor in deciding whether intercultural authors and narratives like Beyala and *LAEPE* can be considered authentic. The paratext is not only essential to establishing *author credibility* for an intercultural narrative, but access to reliable author information allows the reading public to appreciate textual *intercultural authenticity*. For the intercultural narrative specifically, it will be seen that there is an indestructible link between *author integrity* and the textual construction of *intercultural authenticity*, and that the paratext is the most important consideration in establishing this link. Paradoxically, as can be seen in the case of Hyvrard, absence of paratext makes the paratext all the more important.

3.4. The Intercultural Narrative and Intercultural Authenticity

In Australia, Helen Demidenko's novel *The Hand That Signed the Paper* (1994) rocked the literary world when it was discovered to be a fraud based on a fabricated cultural identity forming part of an intricate artificial paratext. Acclaimed as a literary triumph, Demidenko won the Vogel Award for an unpublished manuscript (1993), and in 1995, the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal and the Miles Franklin Award (Denham, 2010, pp. 2-3). The author purported to be

Ukrainian, and the fictional narrative was criticised as being highly anti-semitic (Goldie, 2004, p. 89) due to its supposedly autobiographical storyline, based on the author's father and uncle who were persecuted under Stalin's rule. During the Holocaust they became members of the SS death squads to retaliate against the Jews held responsible for atrocities directed at the Ukrainian population (Malcolm, 2006). Robert Manne (1995) revealed historical errors in the diegesis, and David Bentley of *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane) exposed the author as Helen Darville, daughter of British immigrants living in Brisbane (China, 2003, p. 2).

The Demidenko Affair indicates how easily the paratext can be used or abused to establish credibility or cloud the truth. Demidenko recognised the power of the paratext in creating *author integrity* and *intercultural authenticity*, skilfully using this to support her fictional world. Taking a Ukrainian name (Shenon, 1995), she went so far as to publicly appear in traditional costume (Cateron, 2006). Sneja Gunew (1996, pp. 6-8) refers to "The Helen Demidenko Show", describing the staging of "the ventriloquizing of 'ethnicity'" (p.6) and deliberate faking of a cultural identity which promoted the work as an intercultural novel, facilitating the "'appropriation of voice'" (p.6) that occurs when one culture presumes to talk on behalf of another. Gunew (1996, p. 8) acknowledges that Demidenko duped her audience with "an 'identikit' of markers" that the public would think was genuine, for example the author's ethnic name and press photos in Ukrainian dress (1996, p. 6). Therese-Marie Meyer (2006, p. 75) states that the cover of Demidenko's novel "makes a substantial claim of representing reality" and Gunew (1996, p. 6) notes the Cyrillic script with pictures of wheat fields and the Ukrainian glossary inside. While Demidenko's novel was promoted as fictional, her meticulously crafted peritext created a convincing semblance of credibility, which, in the eyes of hoodwinked readers, endorsed her right to speak on behalf of an ethnic group she was not part of.

Interculturally fraudulent autobiographies set up a predicament that undermines the reader's initial trust in the author, and by extension the narrator, once the fraud has been discovered. *Forbidden Love or Honour Lost* (Khouri, 2003), *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* (Wilkomirski, 1995), and *The Education of Little Tree* (Carter, 1976) deal respectively with an honour killing in Jordan, the Holocaust experiences of a young Jewish boy, and the childhood of a Cherokee youth. Norma Khouri claimed first-hand knowledge of the murder of her best friend, while in the latter two books, the writers claimed to be respectively the principal protagonists of the Jewish orphan and Cherokee boy. An investigation of the relevant paratexts revealed intercultural fraudulence through misrepresentation of cultural information (Khouri) or misappropriation of cultural identity (Wilkomirski and Carter). The storytelling skills of the writers were never in question as each book was a best seller prior to the discovery of the frauds. However, once the

personal and cultural content was discovered to be untrustworthy, claims to *author credibility* and *intercultural authenticity* could no longer be substantiated. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that, in the case of an intercultural narrative, the intercultural pact is dependant on the paratextual establishment of authenticity.

Proven intercultural fakes are obvious examples of literature where aspects of the paratext contradict claims for *author credibility* and constructions of *intercultural authenticity*. Meyer (2006, p. 1) comments on how important it is for readers to be confident that authors are believable and how devastating it can be when they are found to be *inauthentic*:

There is a phenomenon in literature that startles readers and critics alike, exploding their often unacknowledged belief in a real author somewhere behind a literary text: literary scandals. Authors are exposed as not having “just” used a pseudonym but as having perpetrated a fictional identity. This seems to be particularly offensive when there has been a crossing of ethnic definitions.

Whatever the motivation, an intercultural fake reveals the author’s assumption of the right to write (speak) on behalf of a cultural group or about cultural events when they are not qualified. Given the sensitive nature and distressing nature of some intercultural narratives, Whitlock describes “the production and witnessing of testimony as sacred acts of remembrance” (2007, p. 119). There may therefore be not mere dishonesty in an intercultural fake, but an abuse of trust and a violation and betrayal of those who actually lived the experiences in the narrative:

In discussions of testimony in particular, imposture is inconceivable and beyond the pale as an outrageous abuse of faith and trust. For this reason, the hoax leaves a legacy of suspicion and taint in its wake that diminishes trust for testimony more generally. (Whitlock, 2007, p. 119)

As a result of literary scandals such as those described above, the paratextual construction of authenticity has become a matter of great importance for intercultural narratives. We live in an age of knowledge explosion where modern readers have easy access to electronic information, and are well-placed to determine whether a writer possesses *integrity* and if claims to *intercultural authenticity* can be justified. Beyala, with her high public profile, and claims that she is inauthentic, needs to convince her reading public of her integrity as an author of intercultural narratives. Even in cases that seem to warrant few concerns over authenticity such as intercultural autobiographies

there may still be the need to convince readers of *intercultural authenticity*. One such autobiography, Li's *Mao's Last Dancer* (2003), illustrates beautifully the writer's concerns over the establishment of *intercultural authenticity*. The book is the account of a Chinese dancer who defected to the West and now lives in Australia. The autobiographical pact (Lejeune, 1975) is established through Li's invitation to the reader to participate in his personal story, and to avoid any possibility of doubt about authenticity, Li's preface states that this book is his story. This statement is supported by a substantial paratext, comprised of peritext (photos, biography, dedication, postscript and family tree) and epitext (website, testimonials, movie, reviews, literary analyses, interviews, teaching notes and historical information about Mao's China and Li's village). However, Li clearly felt it was insufficient to simply produce an amazing story, and needed to provide his readers with proof of *intercultural authenticity*.

In contrast to Demidenko, the paratext of *Mao's Last Dancer* supports Li, not only in the claim that this is his personal story, but also in his role as narrator, and is offered as proof of his *narrative authority* while the fact that the book was a best-seller and was translated into several languages is testimony to his *narratorial authority*. Two distinct purposes are served by the paratext: first, that of sealing the *autobiographical pact*; and, second, that of substantiating the *intercultural pact*. It is this consistency between the information imparted in the internal world of the book and the external world of the author that engenders credibility, enabling a claim to be made for *author integrity* and the construction of *intercultural veracity* in the text. Without any reason at this time to doubt the truth of either the personal or cultural information given, the reader can have confidence that *Mao's Last Dancer* is an *interculturally authentic* autobiography.

In the case of a prominent figure such as Calixthe Beyala, integrity and credibility in the eyes of the public are of paramount importance. Beyala's high profile is under constant scrutiny through exposure in the media, in interviews, as an author, and in her representation of M.A.F. For Beyala as author, already accused of plagiarism (section 1.3), it is imperative that constructions of authenticity for herself and her works be seen to be firmly re-established. Furthermore, if *LAEPÉ* is to be considered an effective act of intercultural communication, geared to both African and non-African Francophone readers, both Beyala and the novel must be deemed authentic by her reading public. Our investigation of Chambers, the paratext and intercultural fakes in this chapter has led to a discovery of what is necessary for an intercultural narrative to claim to establish *author credibility* and *intercultural authenticity*. The connection between the factual paratext and the fictional world of the intercultural narrative is the crux in determining both the integrity of the author and the text.

3.5. Conclusion

While Chambers' theory proved useful in providing a foundation from which to describe how readerly narratives function, it does not address the specific requirements of the intercultural narrative in terms of *authenticity* given that the intercultural narrative was not a focus for Chambers. Regardless of whether the narrative is an autobiography or a novel, *author credibility* and the construction of *intercultural authenticity* are dependant on paratextual evidence. With modern intercultural narratives, readers have the advantage of increased cultural awareness provided through easy access to paratextual information, and are in a position to test for themselves to some extent the validity of claims to constructions of authenticity by the author or the text. Readers are interested in whether the intercultural pact has been observed; that is, they expect the intercultural context to be authentic. As Beyala has been labelled inauthentic, the paratext of *LAEPE* will be an important factor in decisions about whether a claim can be made for her integrity as an author of intercultural narratives and for *LAEPE*'s construction as *interculturally authentic*. For Beyala, such supporting paratext consists of print and electronic material in the form of books, articles and interviews about the author and her work, her website and Facebook page, Twitter, media (Youtube), reviews and critiques. Given that the paratextual establishment of *author integrity* is crucial to the construction of *intercultural authenticity* in an intercultural narrative, the next chapter will investigate how these concepts apply specifically to *LAEPE*. It asks whether the vast amount of paratextual evidence surrounding the novel supports a claim for Beyala's *credibility* as the author of *LAEPE* and if this is sufficient to establish *intercultural authenticity* in the text.

CHAPTER 4

LAEPE AND INTERCULTURAL AUTHENTICITY

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter 2 the concept of authority in the diegesis of *LAEPE* was explored through the portrayals of the strategies of the more powerful (Germans and French) in imposing authority on the less powerful (Issogo) and the corresponding survival tactics of the latter. The ineffectiveness of authoritarian strategies in promoting intercultural understanding was highlighted, and this led to considerations that perhaps *negotiated authority* as in the narrative pact might prove more conducive to positive intercultural relationships. Chapter 3 focussed on Chambers' model of narrative pacts, and the application and extension of his concepts of *narrative* and *narratorial authority* to the intercultural narrative. This study exposed the challenges that exist in the modern intercultural narrative: those of *author credibility* and the *construction of intercultural authenticity* as well as the importance of the paratext in establishing this authenticity. Examination of several interculturally authentic and fraudulent narratives demonstrated how easily the intercultural pact, which guarantees intercultural authenticity, is ruptured when it becomes known that authors have falsely claimed expertise in specific cultures and events or have misappropriated cultural identity. Intercultural authenticity is easily undermined if the internal fictional world of the narrative is not seen to be consistent with the factual paratext. We will now turn our attention to *LAEPE*'s paratextual construction of *author credibility* and *intercultural authenticity* with the aim of investigating whether the paratext supports the claim for the positioning of Beyala as a writer qualified to speak on behalf of Africans about Africa, and whether a case can be put for the construction of intercultural authenticity in the novel.

4.2 The Paratext and Author Credibility

Beyala's skill as a writer is not in question and is evident in the substantial list of successful publications in French and in translation, and in literary prizes and awards (Appendix 1). The primary concern here is whether her integrity as an author of intercultural narratives is paratextually supported and how this might assist the construction of *intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE*. The question of credibility is all the more important for Beyala as she has been deemed "inauthentic" on several levels such as her portrayal of African society, alleged plagiarism, and in claims from prominent African contemporaries that her writing is not genuinely African and neither is she (section 1. 3). Hitchcott comments that, following accusations of plagiarism in 1996 and the Beyala affair, "suddenly Beyala [...] was no longer an 'authentic African author' and so became invalidated" (2006b,p.106). Hitchcott (2006b, p.107) goes so far as to suggest that "[f]or Beyala, plagiarism is part of her game [...]". Beyala plays with the notion of authenticity just as she plays

with definitions of identity. This is all the more reason for readers of *LAEPE* to have concerns about the intercultural authenticity of the novel.

Odile Cazenave (2000, p. 119) attests that, “[d]espite her growing popularity [...], Beyala has remained controversial amongst Africans because of her choices in the portrayal of Africa and Africans”, suggesting Africans might question Beyala’s right to speak on their behalf. Likewise, Claudia Martinek (2005, p. 1) contends that Beyala is not widely appreciated by African male critics in particular, and has “become estranged from her African origins”. Dawn Fulton (2009, p. 176) describes Beyala’s relationship with France and Africa as “ambivalent”, raising questions of cultural identity that might cast doubt on the *intercultural authenticity* of her writing. These statements indicate concern over Beyala’s suitability as an author who claims to reliably represent Africa and Africans.

Beyala challenges such criticisms, highlighting the advantages of her dual status which gives her the opportunity to write freely and gain international recognition (Matateyou (1996, p. 613). Beyala claims that not living in Africa gives her a position of objectivity: “[o]n évalue peut-être l’Afrique à sa plus juste valeur parce qu’on est à l’extérieur du système tout en le connaissant; et qu’on voit mieux ce qui s’y passe” (Cévaër, 1993, p. 161). She is adamantly both African in culture and European in her thinking: “Je suis intimement les deux et sans les deux, je ne suis pas” (Wolmer, 2010). Thus Beyala herself claims the right to speak authentically on behalf of Africans and French, and to appeal to these dual audiences in her writing, a defence crucial to positioning herself as an authentic African author. Perhaps in the same way that the paratext substantiated Li’s autobiography and his integrity as an author, the answer to the restoration of Beyala’s credibility lies in a study of the paratext of *LAEPE*?

4.3. The Paratextual Construction of Intercultural Authenticity and *LAEPE*

In section 3.3 the paratext was defined as consisting of peritext (physical additions to the text itself) and the epitext as items external to the text (Genette & McLean, 1991, pp. 261-262, 265-266). For the 21st century reader the paratext is likely to be even more important than when Genette published his work due to ready access to author information via technology. Chapter 3 centred on the notion of the construction of *intercultural authenticity* through the paratext and its importance in constructing authenticity. With respect to *LAEPE*, we will be looking at all three elements of the paratext: peritext, epitext and factual paratext. The peritext for the two principal editions of *LAEPE* (Albin Michel-Livre de Poche and Albin Michel, both 2002) consists of four items: illustrations of trees, the title, story summary and cover notes. The substantial epitext includes interviews, critical reviews, journal articles on *LAEPE*, and factual paratext about Beyala’s public persona, her Beti

and Bamileke ethnicities and the German and French occupations of Cameroon. In discussing paratextual support for the *intercultural authenticity* of LAEPE, we will first consider the peritext.

4.3.1. The peritext.

4.3.1.1. *The cover design and title.* The cover of the version used for this thesis (Albin Michel – Livre de Poche, 2002, Version 1) shows a photograph of an artefact held in the Berlin museum, a bronze relief of a palm tree from a Benin palace, while the cover of the other (Albin Michel, 2002, Version 2) portrays stylised black trees on a red background. While a brass relief from Benin (V1) on the cover of a Cameroonian story may seem incongruous, this nevertheless invites a reading of historical significance.

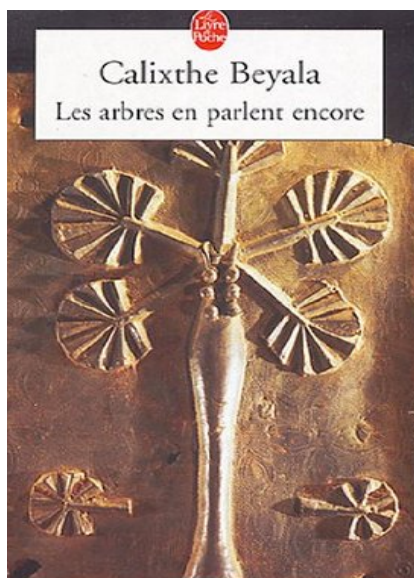


Figure 1. The book cover of version 1 of *LAEPE* (V1) used for this thesis. Published in 2002 by Albin Michel (Livre de Poche).



Figure 2. The book cover of version 2 of *LAEPE* (V2). Published in 2002 by Albin Michel.

The use of trees in the title of the novel has three possible connotations. First, the tree has great ethnic and cultural significance for indigenous Africa. In an interview (Dini, 2002), Beyala reflects on the significance of the book's title, explaining that the reference to trees is relevant to the book's African philosophy, and that for Africans "les arbres pouvaient avoir un esprit humain, sentir, toucher, intervenir même." In addition trees symbolise roots to the earth, tradition and history while books are made out of them. The novel *LAEPE* itself could therefore be perceived as a living entity with a human soul, made from a tree, preserving memory and cultural roots, and grounding its characters to the earth. *LAEPE* appears to be a significant work for Beyala as her stated aim was to write at least one novel every two years (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1998, p. 76). However,

LAEPE took ten years to write with Beyala considering African philosophy a necessary inclusion, being “[u]ne idée inconcevable en France parce que dans ce pays on dénie aux Noirs le droit d’avoir une quelconque profondeur intellectuelle” (Gbadamassi, 2007), an indication of the difference in thinking between Africa and the West which will be foregrounded in section 5.6.

Second, the reference to trees evokes the *arbre à palabres* or African discussion tree with its specific connotation in traditional African society of a meeting place for the resolution of problems. According to Jacques David (1974) the *arbre à palabre* is an “[a]rbre sous lequel se réunissent les gens du village pour discuter.” As foregrounded in section 1.1, the clash of African and Western perspectives due to colonisation is still the subject of much debate today and is reflected in the themes of the novel. Beyala makes the claim that *LAEPE* embodies African history and is a way of backtracking to find solutions to Africa’s problems for which Africans and French alike must accept responsibility with these words:

Ce livre étant une saga de cette histoire de l’Afrique, je ne pouvais pas faire abstraction de ce genre de phrases, qui par moments, remettent en question notre propre attitude, nous interpellent pour nous demander de retraverser notre histoire afin d’exorciser nos propres maux. (Dini, 2002)

LAEPE could therefore be considered a starting point for discussion, reconciliation and resolution of complex intercultural issues: an attempt to find a solution to the problematic Franco-African relationships that still exist today.

Finally, the title suggests an incredible story that still has the trees talking: a mind-boggling notion for Western readers, but which would, in the context of Beyala’s statement above about the animist belief that trees contain human spirits, no doubt make perfect sense to an African audience. As readers are seduced into a saga of monumental proportions, Édène hints that a Western audience should set aside their normal modes of thinking in favour of an African perspective. The inclusion of “en” in the title immediately sets one wondering exactly what the trees are talking about, which, of course, can only be discovered by reading the novel. Chances are that readers will be drawn to *LAEPE* by the symbol that is culturally important for indigenous Africa and evokes the traditional African place of reconciliation, and the strategic choice of a title alluding to a compelling story. Thus the African symbols contained in the peritext of the cover design and title of *LAEPE* support the establishment of *author credibility* and *intercultural authenticity*.

4.3.1.2. The cover notes. Cover notes for both versions forecast *LAEPE*’s principal themes of colonisation, cultural difference, intercultural misunderstanding and the plight of modern Africa.

The notes preempt turbulent intercultural interaction, setting up questions about the nature of interculturality within the novel, and portraying Africa's current dilemma as a continent caught between old and new:

Edène, la narratrice, est née en l'an VI avant la guerre de 1914. [...] Et Dieu sait qu'elle en a vu ! La rencontre heurtée, violente, de deux mondes, au cours des colonisations allemande puis française. Les paradoxes d'un pays pris entre son mode de vie ancestral, ses croyances, ses guerres tribales, et l'irruption du XX^e siècle européen. (V1)

A negative outcome is envisaged for the cultural clashes that will emerge between Michel Ange and the Issogo and suggest that he might not comprehend Africa: "Michel Ange de Montparnasse, un soldat français, tente de se fondre dans la communauté. Mais un Blanc peut-il réellement percer les mystères de l'Afrique et s'adapter à cette vie si différente?" (V2). Although set in Cameroon, readers are informed that they will experience "toute l'histoire de l'Afrique [...] avec ses légendes et ses réalités si solides qu'elles résistent à toutes les occupations étrangères, qu'elles soient allemandes d'abord, puis françaises en suite" (V2). While the notes suggest foreboding about the nature of intercultural relations in *LAEPE*, they promise that African philosophy will survive.

The cover notes of *LAEPE* therefore propose a reading of the novel as an intercultural narrative, foreground intercultural conflict and query whether intercultural understanding between Africa and the West is possible. They state that the story is an authentic portrayal, including reality (facts) and legends (spiritism) of Africa's history and that African philosophy will withstand any onslaught from European culture. References to Beyala's writing skills (V2) prepare readers for a saga they will not be able to put down as: "Beyala évoque la douloureuse confrontation entre les Noirs et les Blancs, leur éternelle et inévitable incompréhension". The notes make a case for Beyala's integrity as a writer about Africa's history and support the *construction of intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE*.

4.3.2. The epitext and factual paratext. Our treatment of intercultural fakes in section 3.3 prompted an identification of the factual paratext in particular as the factor that determined whether the internal fictional world of the narrative was consistent with the external world of the author. Genette describes the epitext specifically as "any paratextual element not materially appended to the text [...] but circulating [...] freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space" (1997, p. 344). The factual paratext, which is part of the epitext, is constituted "of a fact whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is

received” (1997, p. 7). Examples of factual paratext given by Genette (1987, p. 7) are incidental information such as the author’s age or sex, memberships, literary awards or information concerning the author or context of the work. The intercultural fakes discussed in Chapter 3 demonstrated that a lack of factual paratext can provoke a reading public to construct their own author (Hyvrard) while the presence of factual paratext can discredit a fraudulent author (Demindenko) or further endorse author integrity (Li). In the case of *LAEPE*, the epitext consists of interviews, reviews, and Beyala’s interventions in *LAEPE* while the factual paratext comprises information about Beyala’s ethnicities and Cameroon’s colonisation. We will determine whether the epitext of *LAEPE*, particularly the factual paratext, enables a construction of *intercultural authenticity* and *author integrity*.

4.3.2.1. Beyala’s ethnicities. A recurrent theme in the factual paratext of *LAEPE* (referenced in interviews and reviews) is that of Beyala’s ethnicities and family history which are critical to establishing her *cultural authenticity*. Born the sixth of twelve children in 1961 in Cameroon’s largest city, Douala, she spent most of her childhood and adolescence there, in the poverty-stricken shantytown area of New Bell. According to Hitchcott (2006a, p. 44), after Beyala’s father abandoned the family, she lived with her grandmother who raised the children according to traditional values. Although Beyala moved to France at the age of seventeen, she is reputedly a fluent speaker of numerous African languages including several dialects. Beyala maintains her ethnic heritage by returning to Cameroon every year to make ancestral sacrifices (Matateyou, 1996, p. 607). She has commented that in her novels that she reworks her grandmother’s tales (Matateyou, 1996, pp. 605-606), and has used Beti mythology in *LAEPE* (Tchakam, 2004). Beyala’s indigenous background, relocation to France, and fluency in both French and African languages enable her to communicate across African and French cultures in a manner that may not be possible for other authors. Critics have used Beyala’s dual citizenship as evidence of “ambivalence” (Fulton, 2009, p. 176) or estrangement from Africa (Martinek, 2005, p. 1). However, her cultural and linguistic straddling might be seen to further the case for *author integrity* and the construction of *intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE*.

4.3.2.2. Beyala’s personal interventions in *LAEPE*. We have noted above that readers of modern intercultural narratives need security in the knowledge that authors possess *intercultural credibility*, and that their books are *interculturally authentic*. The paratextual material surrounding *LAEPE* includes Beyala’s own attempts to shore up such *authenticity* through independent support for textual references to Beti mythology and African philosophy, as well as her style of narration and recreation of traditional African stories. Beyala makes it quite clear that in *LAEPE* she is returning to her cultural roots and has used her ethnic background and African philosophy in the

framework of African storytelling (Tchakam, 2004). Her reason for doing this is that “[i]l vaut mieux savoir d’où l’on vient pour savoir où l’on va”. Matateyou notes the essence of African oral tradition in her writing, which, according to Beyala, originated with her grandmother who “racontait les mythes, épopées et autres histoires traditionnelles” (Matateyou, 1996, p. 605). Beyala claims that in her writing, she repeats her grandmother’s stories but recreates the language (Matateyou, 1996, pp. 605-606).

For *LAEPE* to impact on its audience as an intercultural narrative, and mindful of the accusations of inauthenticity that have already been made, Beyala needs her reading public to accept that she is, without doubt, an authentic African author with the right to speak about and on behalf of Africa to Francophone audiences. Beyala’s interventions, as outlined above, are her personal testimony to support her construction of herself as an African author and to substantiate the intercultural point of the narrative.

4.3.3. Factual paratext. Much public factual paratext surrounds *LAEPE* in the form of cultural and historical information, and this has a bearing on the reading of the novel, the establishment of *author credibility* and in contextualising the narrative in an *interculturally authentic* framework. The factual paratext relevant to *LAEPE* consists of information about the Bamileke/Beti people (Beyala’s ethnicities) and associated culture and traditions of the spirit world, family structure and the chieftancy, in addition to the history of Cameroon’s colonisations by Germany and France. With this in mind, let us explore how the factual paratext of *LAEPE* might assist with the construction of Beyala as an “authentic” writer of African novels as well as establishing *intercultural authenticity* in the novel.

4.3.3.1. The Bamileke and Beti cultures of Cameroon. As *LAEPE* is set in a Cameroonian village, frequent references are made to external signs of indigenous culture such as housing, clothing and food. Contextualising the novel in cultural aspects which are independently substantiated in the factual paratext sets the story in an *interculturally authentic* framework. However, of all the various aspects of indigenous culture portrayed in the story, those that have the most bearing on intercultural interaction are the spirit world, family structure and the chieftancy of the Bamileke/Beti people. There is a wealth of information about the Bamileke but not as much on the Beti-Pahuin ethnic group. However, as they are very similar in traditions and social structures, information on the former has been used throughout section 4.3.3.1.

4.3.3.1.1. The Spirit World. Alain Bouwa (2004, p. 6) comments that the spirit world is fundamental to the Bamileke social system, present in every aspect of indigenous life, and is so much a part of indigenous reality that there is no division between human and spirit worlds. The gods are all-powerful (Bouwa, 2004, p. 6). Bamileke spirituality is a complex, highly organised

system with priests of different ranks under the leadership of the clan chief or king who is divinely chosen (Bouwa, 2006, p.39, 46). Ancestors are worshipped (Bouwa, 2006, p.44) and the Bamileke believe nature is controlled by the gods (Bouwa, 2006, p.46). Animal totems are common and have specific meanings; for example, lion (chief), panther (prestige) and elephant (strength) (Bouwa, 2006, p.36). Curses and blessings are very real, with beliefs and rituals related to death dominating all facets of life (Bouwa, 2006, pp. 38, 48).

Close interaction between spirit and human worlds permeates *LAEPE* with a prime example analysed in the tale of the mamiwater in Chapter 5. The prologue (pp. 8-9) and epilogue (pp. 474-475) portray an idyllic Africa with gods intermingling with men, and the creation story (pp. 18-20) describes the four powerful but fickle and selfish spirits who made humans and the different races and who only concern themselves with men when bored. There are frequent references to the playful green spirits who protect the village, highlighting the close communion between nature and the Issogo. Examples abound of curses or retribution from angry gods, powerful sorcery, spiritist rituals, ancestor worship, demonic possession, protective measures against spirits, and supernatural explanations for natural events. The tale of Zoa begins with a spectacular competition amongst sorcerers in animal skins who shape-change, create glow-worms, and conjure up foetuses in blood, laughing skulls, falling stars and shooting banana trees (pp. 276-280). The depiction of the relationship between human and spirit worlds in *LAEPE* fits with research into Bamileke/Beti spiritism and therefore contributes towards the framing of the novel in a culturally authentic setting.

4.3.3.1.2. Bamileke family structure. Bouwa (2006, p. 39, 48, 82) describes the Bamileke extended family structure as centred around the male head who protected family territory, functioned as a priest, administered ancestral heritage and acted as representative. Family unity and peace were of utmost importance with deviant behaviour being severely punished (Bouwa, 2006, p. 82). The patriarchal, polygamous system of family lineage was designed to ensure descendants (Bouwa, 2006, p. 91, 102). Marriage was traditionally arranged and required parental consent. For a woman, marriage meant obedience to her husband and relegation to household duties (Bouwa, 2006, p. 87). Divorce was impossible (Bouwa 2006, pp. 87, 91). The problems caused by the patriarchal society's tenets of polygamy, lower social status of women, and their child-bearing and domestic role, form a significant part of the diegesis of *LAEPE*, provoking differing responses from principal female characters, some of whom rebel while others choose to submit. The abuse of women in *LAEPE* prompts Édène to observe that "l'amour pouvait être une cruelle servitude et [...] pour s'enfranchir, il fallait avoir une volonté peu commune" (p.93). Édène's sensitive depiction of indigenous family hierarchies and the intolerable situation of the Issogo women fits with Bouwa's factual paratext on family structure and the role of women, thereby supporting the

construction of *intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE*.

4.3.3.1.3. *The power of the chief or fon.* Bouwa (2006, pp. 77-79) describes the power attributed to a Bamileke *fon* (chief or king) as that of an absolute monarch. The *fon* dominates the social system and is the spiritual connection between his people and their ancestors. In keeping with Bouwa's description, a reading of *LAEPE*, particularly the prologue (pp. 7-8), leaves no doubt as to the physical presence, spiritual prowess, and indisputable authority of Assanga Djuli, the Issogo chief. Endowed with all the attributes to qualify him as clan leader, he is a supreme warrior, instructor and repository of Issogo traditions and knowledge. Édène describes him in these terms:

Quand Assanga Djuli parlait, tout le monde pouvait croire que c'était lui, et non nos aïeux perdus dans les décomptes de notre généalogie, qui avait levé une armée de mille hommes [...]. Il était haut comme un baobab et concentrait dans ses yeux noirs la force tranquille d'un pape romain. Il était un viellard dans le sens éton du terme c'est-à-dire qu'une lumière magnétique lui conférait le pouvoir de masquer ses vraies pensées. Il pouvait aussi bien enseigner la religion, les sciences occultes que la médecine ou les sciences naturelles. Il était voyant avec une habile capacité à jauger les hommes et à lire les signes de la brousse. Il était l'héritage de tout ce que nos ancêtres connaissaient. (p. 7)

To emphasise Assanga's elevated social position and the high esteem in which he is held, Édène likens him to two powerful spiritual images – the Issogo ancestors and the Roman Catholic Pope. However, Assanga's absolute authority has negative consequences for the Issogo, who throughout the narrative are incapable of thinking for themselves, wholly dependant on him for their survival (pp. 41-43) and suffer the anger of the gods/spirits with respect to his personal decisions (*veillées* eight and ten). Chiefs are clearly not immortal and Assanga is often subject to attempts by his successor, Gazolo, to dethrone him (pp. 147-149, 169, 219). While the privileges of being a chief are evident, according to Assanga “[c]onduire un peuple est un lourd fardeau” (p. 219) and “[p]lus on a de pouvoir, moins on est libre” (p. 395). The inclusion of a paratextually supported principal character in the form of a traditional chief whose daughter is the *griotte*, adds considerably to the sense of *intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE*. Bamileke and Beti customs and beliefs relating to spiritism, family structure and the role of the chief in *LAEPE* are independently supported by the factual paratext which establishes a substantial interculturally authentic context for *LAEPE*.

4.3.3.1.4. *The colonisation of Cameroon and the timeline of LAEPE.* Although precise dates are not mentioned in *LAEPE*, Beyala gives readers an idea of the timeframe in an interview: “L’histoire se déroule entre 1914 et nos jours, entre les deux guerres, c’est la traversée de toute

l’Afrique. Pendant cette période, le Cameroun est un pays qui a connu aussi bien la colonisation française qu’allemande” (Dini, 2002). In brief, Cameroon became a German protectorate in 1894. In 1914, with the onset of World War I, the French and British occupied the country until the Germans surrendered in 1916, whereupon it was divided between France and Britain. In 1946 the British and French territories became a UN Trust, and in 1954, British Cameroon was included as an autonomous part of Nigeria with French Cameroon becoming an independent republic in 1960 (International Crisis Group, 2010).

Regarding the different approaches to colonisation by the German and French governments, Tamanji (2011, p. 106) characterises the German colonisation of Cameroon as “direct rule” of its people by a white bureaucracy that treated the indigenous people as “a ‘natural resource’ that should be exploited for economic development through a peaceful governance.” Military force and forced labour were frequently used (2011, p. 50), the aim being to develop Cameroon as a German economic territory. Conversely, the French attempted assimilation “based on the adoption of the French language, culture, and outlook” (2011, p. 205) seeking to bond its colonies to the Republic and “civilize them through exposure to the glories of French culture and language while exploiting their productivity for French prosperity” (2011, p. 206). Clearly this is a description of the *mission civilisatrice*. There is evidence (2011, pp. 43-108, 202-272) for the evangelisation of Cameroon through German and French mission schools.

Much has been said of the German and French approaches to colonisation as described in *LAEPE* in Chapter 2 (sections 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6) and therefore details will not be repeated here. Édène sums up German colonisation as follows: “Au-dessus d’eux, il n’y avait rien, ils égalaient le Seigneur” (p. 31). Under the French *mission civilisatrice* “[l]es changements autour de nous inquiétaient papa” (p. 271). Events as described in *LAEPE* with reference to colonial domination are quite feasible (the acquisition of a labour force, the census and imposition of taxes by the *Kommandants*) and are within an Issogo timeframe where precise dates are unimportant. There are vague references to wars, for example: “les Blancs avaient fini une guerre et préparaient l’autre, à moins qu’ils ne se battissent déjà – mais les dates précises n’ont aucune importance” (p. 269). Only global circumstances with a direct impact are noted by the Issogo. The descriptions of differences in Issogo experience under the German and French colonisers fit loosely with those detailed by Tamanji (2011), providing further evidence for the embedding of the story in *LAEPE* in an interculturally authentic context.

4.4. Conclusion

In spite of previous assignments of plagiarism and inauthenticity, substantial paratextual evidence is given to support the claim for Beyala as the credible writer of an interculturally

authentic novel in *LAEPE*. The novel's cover designs and title evoke the African *arbre à palabres* with the story itself as a living, breathing entity of African tradition and thought. The cover notes provide a foretaste of the narrative's theme of intercultural miscommunication and invite a reading of the novel as an intercultural narrative. Further evidence for Beyala's *author integrity* and the construction of *intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE* is found in her continued adherence to the traditions of her ancestors and the insights she gives into why and how she wrote *LAEPE*. Beyala herself stakes a claim for her own authenticity as an African writer in stating that *LAEPE* is an important work for her personally in which she presents African philosophy to a world that does not believe in its existence through the recreation of traditional stories handed down by her grandmother. This is supported by the accuracy of cultural information about her Bamileke and Beti ethnicities, which provides the cultural context for the Issogo, the fictional indigenous group who are the focus of the story. Fundamental aspects of indigenous society (the spirit world, family structure and the chieftdom) reflect those of Beyala's ethnic background while factual information about the German and French occupations loosely fits the Issogo timeline and experiences possible under colonisation. These elements are interwoven into a cohesive and complex fabric which begins the process of positioning *LAEPE* as an *effective act of intercultural communication* designed for African and non-African Francophone readers. Having studied the paratextual construction of intercultural authenticity in *LAEPE*, our analysis in Chapter 5 will centre around the textual *construction of intercultural authenticity* in the novel through the concept of double addressees, the use of French language and African storytelling with its simulation in written French (*oralité feinte*) in an exemplary *veillée*, the tale of the mamiwater.

CHAPTER 5

THE TEXTUAL CONSTRUCTION OF INTERCULTURAL AUTHENTICITY IN *LAEPE*

5.1. Introduction

We have seen in Chapter 4 that there is a significant quantity of paratextual evidence that supports Beyala's positioning as a writer of authentic African literature. This evidence was first given in the form of the peritext relating to the tree motive in the cover designs and book title together with the cover notes. Second, and more convincing, was the substantiation of Beyala's integrity through the epitext of her ethnicities and her own statements about why and how she had written *LAEPE*. Finally, the factual paratext of the Bamileke and Beti traditions of Cameroon relating to the spirit world, family structure and chieftancy, left no room for doubt that Beyala has set *LAEPE* very convincingly in an African indigenous reality.

5.2. Techniques Used in the Textual Construction of Intercultural Authenticity in *LAEPE*

Having investigated the paratextual establishment of *author credibility* and *intercultural authenticity*, we will now examine how *LAEPE* situates itself as an effective act of intercultural communication through the textual construction of intercultural authenticity using four specific strategies, namely the use of: double addressees; the French language; African storytelling; and the literary artifice of *oralité feinte*. Each strategy is associated with the narrator's focus on two distinct cultural groups – African narratees (Issogo children) and French-speaking implied readers. The concept of the double addressees within the text of *LAEPE* is mirrored in the audience beyond the text. The use of French targets the French-speaking world which can be divided into two distinct groups: African and non-African Francophones. It is precisely because *LAEPE* is written by an author who positions herself as African while her target audience appears to be primarily metropolitan French readers together with French-speaking Africans, that the book can be considered intercultural communication. The commonality of African storytelling incorporating the literary artifice of *oralité feinte*, a simulation in written French of the African oral tradition, is also geared for Francophone readers. Following a brief discussion of each of these narrative strategies we will investigate their application in *LAEPE* through the analysis of an exemplary *veillée*, the tale of the mamiwater.

5.3. The Double Addressees in *LAEPE*

Our investigation of the implications of Chambers' narrative pact for *LAEPE* (section 3.2) began with the three principal players of narrator, narratee and implied reader. The immediate audience for Édène's story is the Issogo children (narratees) whose participation is often implied rather than explicit. Édène involves the children in her oration at the beginning of each *veillée* with a call and response, speaking directly to them throughout the book, and fulfilling the educative role

of the *griotte* by passing on African traditions and history. Often in the same breath, she makes asides to the implied non-African Francophone reader, inviting them to set aside Cartesian thinking in order to understand an African perspective. The very fact that one of double addressees targeted by the African author through the narrator is non-African makes *LAEPE* an example of intercultural communication. Much is conveyed to the non-African Francophone audience about how not to interact interculturally through the character of Michel Ange who typifies Western perspectives towards Africa. It is through his reactions and commentary that Cartesian attitudes blocking effective intercultural communication between coloniser and colonised in *LAEPE* are exposed. The roles of non-African addressees and Michel Ange will be discussed in further detail following the analysis of the mamiwater *veillée*. In keeping with the nature of the intercultural narrative, non-African French-speaking readers are invited to undergo a little character (re)construction to facilitate intercultural interaction with the indigenous peoples of Africa.

5.4. French as the Language of *LAEPE*

The novel is published in paperback by Albin Michel, one of France's most prominent generators of literary and educational works (Global Publishing Leaders, 2012) making it affordable and readily accessible to a wide reading public. The reading public includes an ever-increasing global Francophone audience, estimated by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie to reach over 700 million by the year 2050 with 80% in Africa (Republic of France - French Diplomacy, 2014). The use of French, one of the three most widely spoken languages in the world, fits with Beyala's desire to write not for a specific cultural group but for humanity in general (Kombi, 1992). Amongst the commentary on Beyala's writing (section 1.3) some is related to her Parisian style which "breaks through the barriers of sound and syntax in French" combining "[c]risp and salty French argots" with "classic turns of phrase and Africanisms" (Jules-Rosette, 1998, p. 191). It is clear that Beyala's choice of style is linked to her views on writing authentically and she feels it is entirely appropriate to use non-literary French as employing the dead language of Baudelaire would be simply imitating the West (Matateyou, 1996, p. 606). Édène has expressed similar sentiments at the start of *LAEPE* from the perspective that, when writing in literary French, it is quite easy to distort the truth because "[o]n racontera de préférence ce qui est facile à exprimer, on laissera de côté tel fait par paresse de recourir au dictionnaire" (p.11). However, in the same breath, she recognises that writing in an African dialect would not have the same impact as the French language when she says "[o]n comprendra aisément que cette histoire racontée dans notre dialecte n'aurait plus la même teneur" (p. 11) and obviously the story would reach a much smaller and localised audience.

The solution for Beyala seems to lie somewhere between literary French and African dialect with a new form of French language. In section 5.4 we noted that Beyala reworks the language of her grandmother's stories, thus reaffirming the necessity for the creation of a new, authentic prose moulded for her purposes, subject to her traditions and cultures but demonstrating her linguistic individuality (Kombi, 1992). In a further interview (Colonisation: Le crédo, 2007) Beyala acknowledges that she can communicate with Africans from many parts of the continent through French "une langue conquérante qui a été remodelée, s'est enrichie avec d'autres formes de pensée, d'autres sensibilités, d'autres sons".

Beyala's use of French therefore serves three purposes. First, it facilitates communication with the global Francophone community rather than being confined to a localised African audience. Second, it provides an innovative author with the means to develop an authentic, linguistic style relevant to her own literary purposes. Third, Beyala remodels classical, literary French to incorporate other types of thinking and sensitivities as befits the complexities of an intercultural narrative. It could therefore be argued that a modern, contextually authentic style of French language is entirely appropriate for a novel such as *LAEPE* which presumes to be an effective act of intercultural communication with an audience of Francophone (African and non-African) implied readers. *LAEPE* straddles the divide between indigenous and Cartesian thinkers (the double addressees), affording non-African readers the opportunity to metaphorically "put on African shoes" in order to appreciate African philosophy and to understand Africa's current situation.

5.5. African Storytelling

Another means through which Francophone readers might become engaged in the novel is through the medium of storytelling itself. The models of African storytelling and its simulated version *oralité feinte* cater particularly for the non-African implied reader, exposing them to African oral traditions and philosophy in a truly intercultural exchange. This discussion will lead into that of the features of *oralité feinte* as employed in the tale of the mamiwater.

5.5.1. The universal nature of storytelling. Storytelling, in the form of traditional folktales, is common to most cultures and the choice of a traditional African story might be seen to strike a common chord with African and Western readers. The universal nature of storytelling makes the African oral tradition (and *oralité feinte*) a powerful means of intercultural communication given that traditional stories contain elements of truth as well as fiction, and these are a means of passing on important messages, resonating with other similar stories as explained by Scheub (1998, pp. 21-22):

Involved in story in the oral tradition are images having to do both with empirical reality and with fiction. [...] Story is a major means of communication in both oral and literary societies, the manner in which a message is conveyed from one generation to another, from artist to audience. [...] Most important, message is a combination of the present story, the network of stories that it weaves into, and the sumptuous palimpsestic tracery of emotions which provides its context.

In indigenous societies, storytelling and the oral tradition have great significance, as written forms of communication are less common than elsewhere. Oral stories are an educational tool, a means of passing on important cultural, traditional and moral codes, preserving history and genealogy, and providing entertainment in the form of theatre, music and dance. Matateyou (1997, pp. 4-5) highlights the importance of storytelling in Cameroon as follows: "In Africa storytelling is one of the corner stones of the cultural life of the people. It is an activity through which the customs, beliefs and the philosophy of the Africans are transmitted from one generation to another." The conceptual framework of African storytelling in *LAEPÉ* not only bridges the cultural divide between Africa and the West but can be seen as informing the double addressees about Africa and its philosophy through the character of Édène.

5.5.2. *Oralité Feinte.* *Oralité feinte* is a literary technique typical of African post-colonial writing and the focus of a study by Alioune Tine (1981, pp. 134-165). For Tine, *oralité feinte* "n'est en quelque sorte qu'une simulation, qu'une 'modélisation' possible de l'oralité proprement dite, qu'un artefact, qu'une réécriture de l'oralité" (1981, p. 160). *Oralité feinte* is the (re)construction of the African oral tradition in written form in French. However, the convincing construction of the semblance of an *interculturally authentic* African oral tale through the distinctive elements of *oralité feinte* is a means of reaching a wider audience, including that of Cameroon. Tine states that the specific purpose of *oralité feinte* is the creation of a sense of cultural reality in African Francophone literature:

La production de l'oralité feinte comme forme d'expression de l'interférence linguistique ou littéraire, semble être liée à une visée stratégique précise: *celle de créer un espace culturel du "vraisemblable" dans la littérature africaine d'expression française.* [...] L'oralité feinte aura ainsi pour fonction de produire l'effet de sens "littérature africaine". L'oralité feinte [...] a pour principale motivation l'inscription de l'identité culturelle [*sic*] et linguistique de l'auteur dans le texte. (Tine, 1981, pp. 139-140, italics added)

At the level of the diegesis in *LAEPE*, the story is pure *oralité* but at the level of the “real author”, the novel is *oralité feinte*. Given that *LAEPE* is written in French and not spoken in an indigenous African language specific to Edène’s immediate audience, nor in fact spoken at all, the novel is clearly not a genuine African oral tale but a simulation. In order for *oralité feinte* to reach its potential, the (African) author not only writes in French but also embeds his/her own linguistic and cultural identity in the text (Tine, 1981, p. 172). The simulated orality behaves like a sounding board, reflecting different African voices, gathering together different types of dialogue and language circulating in African society (Tine, 1981, p. 163). As the keeper of traditions, the African griot is one of the most important voices to be heard in *oralité feinte* where “on note aussi la présence d’actants de la communication qui simulent le rôle narratif du griot ou du récitant traditionnel [...] ou simplement de vrais griots qui incarnent leur rôle traditionnel dans le roman ou la nouvelle [...]” (1981, p. 138).

According to Tine (1981, pp. 162-163) there are two types of articulation in *oralité feinte* which are termed *ethno-texte* (“les modèles ‘littéraires’ de la tradition orale africaine, le mythe, le conte, la légende, le panégyrique, la joute oratoire, la devinette, les proverbes, etc.”) and *l’opinion commune* (“discours quotidien, courant qu’on peut entendre dans une interaction sociale tout à fait ordinaire.”). In summary, *oralité feinte* simulates African orality using a griot, including the author’s linguistic and cultural background couched in a variety of literary and everyday models of communication. *LAEPE* satisfies these requirements with Édène as *griotte*, Beyala’s embedded Bamileke/Beti cultural context, her linguistic identity (French, Eton), the features of *ethno-texte* (African story-telling) and *l’opinion commune* (personal and group commentary).

5.5.3. The mamiwater – cultural background. We now turn our attention to how the literary strategies discussed above – the double addressees (section 5.3), the use of the French language (section 5.4), African storytelling and its simulated form, *oralité feinte* (sections 5.5,1 and 5.5.2) play out in the tale of the mamiwater (*veillée ten*) and its textual construction of intercultural authenticity. This story concerns a prominent figure in African mythology, that of the water spirit, the mamiwater, who is still worshipped throughout West Africa today by a matricarchal priesthood (Zogbé, 2007b). According to Priestess Mama Zogbé (Zogbé, 2007a, pp. 549-562), the mamiwater (Mami Wata) is one of the four primary elements of Earth, Fire, Air and Water that make up the world. Zogbé (2007b) states that the Mami Wata “refers to a pantheon of ancient water deities” whose primary function is healing. The term Mami Wata originates from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and translates roughly as “the wisdom of the water” (Zogbé, 2007b). She is frequently depicted as a beautiful and promiscuous woman, her body encircled with a snake and sometimes as a mermaid although it is not certain whether the latter is due to European influences

on African art (Drewal, Houlberg, Jewsiewicki, Nunley & Salmons, 2008, pp. 65-66). Drewal (2008 et al, p. 66) confirms that there is much historical evidence for African beliefs in ancient “water deities, widely imaged as hybrid human-aquatic creatures”. Critical to the analysis of *veillée* ten is Birgit Meyer’s statement that, once a human is united with a mamiwater, that person cannot remarry a human or have children and will be recompensed with riches from the ocean (2001, p. 122). In keeping with the embedding of author cultural content in *oralité feinte* and the construction of intercultural authenticity in *LAEPE*, the mamiwater character is amply supported by factual paratext.

5.5.4. Tale of the mamiwater – synopsis. The mamiwater episode describes the direct intervention of a powerful spirit into the Issogo world. Typical of each *veillée* in *LAEPE*, number ten presents “a tale within the tale”, a stand-alone intercultural narrative focussing on differing perspectives between African indigenous (spiritist) and European Cartesian (rational) thought in the collision of supernatural and human worlds. Contrasting viewpoints are foregrounded via interactions between the Issogo and the principal European character, Michel Ange. Édène, as first-person narrator and *griotte*, consolidates the narrative pact established with her double addressees, demonstrating *narrative* and *narratorial authority* in an epic tale with a moral message culminating in a monumental battle of wits between the hero (Assanga) and the villain (the mamiwater) to save Assanga’s son, Gatama. Focalised through the eyes of Édène and the Issogo, the reader is invited to empathise with the indigenous viewpoint to comprehend how easily intercultural misunderstanding can occur. A brief synopsis of the mamiwater episode is given here.

Gatama is Assanga’s youngest son, Andela’s favourite, and Édène’s beautiful and artistic brother. He is his parents’ pride and joy (pp. 194-195). Gatama is pursued romantically by three girls, each of whom is discovered in mysterious circumstances, respectively hanging from a tree, drowned in the Sanaga River, and raving mad. Immediately suspicion arises that the spirit of the water is responsible, with the lunatic screaming that she wants nothing to do with the son of a mamiwater. One morning Gatama disappears.

Édène’s family searches in vain for Gatama, with Assanga warning against attracting the attention of evil spirits. Gatama’s sandals and clothes are discovered at the edge of the river. Assanga collects green vines and birds’ eggs on the way back to the village for protective rituals. The family eats an evening meal in Assanga’s hut, and then a violent wind blows while an otherworldly voice performs a solemn incantation. The door bursts open, and the mamiwater appears. She is an extremely tall, fantastical, hairless creature, wearing a purple skirt, and with skin the colour of ripe bananas. She floats and bounds like a fish and her eyes are like glass. The mamiwater claims to be legitimately part of Assanga’s family, as Gatama’s spouse.

Assanga denies this, telling the mamiwater that she will remain imprisoned until Gatama is returned. Gazolo (Assanga's rival) arrives with the villagers, chanting as they surround Assanga's hut, bearing torches and garlic to contain the evil spirit. The mamiwater says she has lived amongst the villagers for thousands of years. She mentions a pact between Assanga's family and the water spirits through the union of Assanga's first wife, Andela, and a male mamiwater when Assanga abandoned Andela for his second wife, Fondamento de Plaisir.

For three days and nights Assanga battles the mamiwater unsuccessfully, ensuring that Gazolo has placed taro leaves around the hut to prevent her escape and using physical force and all the sorcery at his disposal to attempt to overpower her. Michel Ange bursts into the hut wondering where the *femme-sirène* is, but cannot see her. He walks over her, whereupon she whips off his trousers, and transforms into a cat who urinates on his head. When the villagers laugh, Michel Ange is angry and accuses them of fabricating stories.

On the fourth day, the heat is extreme, and Assanga leaves the mamiwater alone, deciding a change of tactics is necessary. Gazolo seizes this opportunity for a leadership challenge, questioning Assanga's methods. The mamiwater screams and begs for company, causing storms, and the hens to lay black eggs and kill their chickens. Dogs and pigs bite the chickens and go mad, which Michel Ange explains as rabies. After seven days, Assanga assembles a group of six naked virgins to enter the hut. The villagers begin incantations, but when the virgins find the mamiwater trebled in size, they flee in fright. At dawn the mamiwater leaves a giant yellow baby, and nature returns to its former fertile state. The villagers place the baby in a basket, and follow a crow down to the river, covering themselves with white or green to resemble spirits. The baby turns into a giant serpent and dives into the water.

On their return, the Issogo discover Gatama naked in front of Assanga's hut. Assanga blinds Gatama in one eye, so that no mamiwater will ever want him again, and spits on his good eye so that it will not remember this incident or take revenge. Édène confronts Assanga about Gatama's disfiguration, wondering how she should tell this story to the grandchildren, and what they will think. Édène comments that this experience honed her skills as a griot in knowing when to speak and when to remain silent.

5.5.5. The ingredients of *oralité feinte* in the tale of the mamiwater. The ingredients of *oralité feinte* employed in *LAEPE* are: the traditional African storyteller or *griot(te)*; the framing of the story in sixteen *veillées* with a prologue and an epilogue; the audience as active participant; African trickster characters; the depiction of African traditions and culture; and the educational purpose or moral to the tale. The first and most pivotal of these is the griot.

5.5.5.1. *The traditional African storyteller or griot(te).* The griot held a position of enormous prestige in African society and was a multi-skilled, narrator, historian and keeper of knowledge (Tine, 1981, p. 147). Thomas Hale (1997, pp. 250-253) describes the responsibilities of the griots as wide-ranging, their duties encompassing entertaining through music or oration, recording history and genealogy, educating and officiating at ceremonies. Djibiril Niane (quoted in Couratier, 2009, pp. 11-12), states that griots could change a story to suit the audience, relate a portion of the tale, abbreviate it, or add recent information. This fluidity was not a problem given that “history is always an arrangement of the facts by a historian!” (Couratier, 2009, p. 12), with the griot positioning “himself in time, in order to give his words a firm foundation” (Couratier, 2009, p. 13). The griot in African oral tradition faces similar problems to the narrator described by Chambers (1984) in having to maintain *narrative* and *narratorial authority* to the end of the story. Édène appears to learn the craft of the griot from Assanga’s nightly education of the Issogo children (pp. 87-88), keeping him company (p. 150), her travels with him (pp. 130-133, 288-311) and discussions following significant events (pp. 58-59, 75, 229-231, 266-267, 309-311, 395-396). Other characters in *LAEPE* behave as griots, for example, Aligbutalé and the orator with their tales of colonials and resistance fighters at Douala and Kongsamba (pp. 180-183, 379).

In keeping with the timeline of *LAEPE*, the instructional nature of the narrative and its immediate audience of Issogo youth, the story in *LAEPE* is told initially from a child’s perspective in simple, matter of fact language, with minimal explanation of historical or cultural background, evolving into a more sophisticated and adult discourse as events unfold and Édène ages. Édène uses *je* for personal experiences and *nous* when the Issogo behave as a collective requiring a group response or reaction such as the arrival of Michel Ange in their midst (p. 13). After leaving the village, Édène remains the spokesperson for the indigenous community, for example, in the farcical scenes of compensation for the Issogo by the French government (pp. 468-473). Édène maintains her *griotte* role throughout *LAEPE* except for occasions when the role of narrator passes from her to a hypodiegetic narrator. This occurs in the tale of Zoa (pp. 293-297) when Édène steps back while Alina assumes the role of narrator.

In the mamiwater tale, Édène restates her credentials as a *griotte* (thus proclaiming her *narrative authority*), explaining that most of her age group have died, leaving her as the history-keeper of the clan (p. 193). She prepares the non-African reader with an aside about the Cartesian perspective: “Si votre regard est cartésien, vous considérez toujours que j’affabule, qu’il ne s’est rien passé à Issogo” (p. 193). Édène then defers to the spirits of the ancestors (Assanga, Biloa and Andela) (pp. 193-194) and displays her *narratorial authority* in setting the scene of the mystical and surreal atmosphere on the morning of the mamiwater’s coming. She warns that encounters with

the spirit world can be unexpected, requiring extreme caution. In doing so she acknowledges Issogo traditions, fulfils the educational function of the *griotte* and entices narratees and implied readers into the narrative pact.

Certains matins, lorsque la beauté secrète du village se dévoile, que les maisons et les arbres acquièrent une pureté trop réelle, que la lumière et l'obscurité s'affrontent sans se mêler, dessinant des tâches d'ombre et de clarté éblouissantes, alors, méfiez-vous de vos sens, prenez garde à vos émotions car les esprits prennent forme humaine et se mêlent aux vivants. Vous pouvez les voir se promener le long des ruelles, s'embrasser sur les doigts des étoiles, rieurs et farceurs, beaux comme les hommes de la première création. (p. 194)

This ethereal description, set in the half-light between darkness and light, is reminiscent of the prologue with its reference to Africa as Paradise Lost. The meeting of light with shadow reinforces the difference between Western (logical and clear) and African (fluid and complex) reality. Prior to the mamiwater's appearance, Édène comments "Nous engloutissons l'amertume de l'histoire qui nous entourait [...]" (p. 201), as the Issogo taste their bitter heritage and, in the double meaning of the word *histoire*, accept this story of Assanga's failings and their consequences as revealed by the mamiwater. The inclusion of the African narrator-*griotte* (supported by factual paratext) satisfies an important requirement of *oralité feinte* and contributes significantly to the textual construction of *intercultural authenticity* in *LAEPE*.

5.5.5.2. The role of the immediate audience. The presence of the narrator-*griotte* requires an active audience. George Ngwa as cited in Mataeyou (1997, p. 15), states that the audience in Bafut (in the North-West of Cameroon) is an invited participant and critic, and may interject, correct the narrator, join in on familiar lines, clarify and comment. Matateyou (1997, pp. 14-15) explains:

The audience generally is called upon at the beginning and at the end of the tale [...]. The content and style vary according to the audience. The way a skilled artist manipulates the audience is what gives him credibility. [...] In fact, the audience in many cases is very critical and active during the storytelling events in Cameroon. It can stop the performer to remind him or her of a portion of the story that was omitted [...].

The participation of the immediate audience throughout *LAEPE* is implied and even at times verbalised in the call and response at the start of each *veillée*. For the mamiwater tale the call and

response is “*Ce que le soleil a vu... Les hommes finissent par en prendre connaissance*” (p. 193, italics in the text). The “call” is uttered by the *griotte* while the narratees reply with a rehearsed response. Édène appeals to the imagination of her young audience through dramatic techniques. The breathlessness in her voice and gestures towards Assanga, Biloa and Andela (there in person for the Issogo but non-existent for readers) are not difficult to gauge as she exclaims “[p]ar exemple, en ce moment, nous ne sommes pas seuls!” (p. 193). One can easily imagine a gasp of surprise from the Issogo children.

The implied audience participation reinforces the *narratorial authority* of the *griotte* as orator. Édène enthralls her narratees with her magical description of mornings when spirits appear in human form and educates them to be on the lookout for such occurrences, preparing them for the arrival of the mamiwater (pp. 193-194). She launches into the tale with tantalising insinuations about the enigmatic nature of Gatama’s sexuality (p. 194). Anticipation is built through the description of the strange circumstances surrounding the three female admirers (pp. 194-195), with a hint at the source of the mystery in the third admirer’s words “[j]e ne veux rien avoir à faire avec un homme mamiwater!” (p. 195). The rhetorical question “[l]e génie de l’eau était-il responsable de ces meurtres passionnels?” (p. 195) is designed to evoke an affirmative answer from the Issogo children. The implied presence of the immediate audience in *LAEPE* complements the narrator-*griotte*’s role and assists with creating the semblance of an authentic African oral story.

5.5.5.3. The structure of the narrative. Matateyou (1997, pp. 8-9) describes African tales as having the specific format of exposition, body and conclusion. The griot sets the scene and then the tale unfolds through a variety of dramatic devices. The conclusion rounds off the story with a moral, final statement or question and answer time. In keeping with the role of the griot as a historian, this structure goes part way towards preserving the history and genealogy of Assanga and the Issogo around a loosely organised timeline from 1914 to the telling of the tale.

Each *veillée* also follows this structure, focussing on a specific event or series of related events, and beginning with a relevant call and response or wise saying which fits Beyala’s approach of “les modes de narration où l’on commençait avec une réflexion philosophique pour finir avec une autre” (Tchakam, 2004). The call and response introduces the *veillée*’s content, providing insight into the associated moral in the form of a proverb or wise saying. The call and response for the mamiwater chapter (section 5.5.5.2) portends a marvellous event which men will finally understand, referring to the mamiwater’s intervention into the Issogo world and their comprehension of her place in their history. Each *veillée* finishes with a resolution, and, in the case of *veillée* ten, this takes the form of Édène reflecting on the mamiwater incident and her role as a *griotte* (pp. 230-231). Many proverbs (wise sayings) refer to speaking and listening, fitting with the

concept of *oralité feinte*, and the theme of oral communication in *LAEPE*. Finally the call and response comes full circle with the first set repeated throughout the short epilogue which reminiscences on the golden days of Africa (p. 453, 474).

Section 5.5.5.1 showed how Édène prepares her audience for the mamiwater tale, giving background information about Gatama and his admirers. The body of the story builds narrative tension from Gatama's disappearance to the dramatic arrival of the mamiwater, the ensuing battle with Assanga, Michel Ange's failure to comprehend, the mamiwater's curse on the village and the visit of the six virgins. The resolution includes the discovery of the giant baby, its journey to the river where it turns into a snake, Gatama's return, and Assanga's measures to protect Gatama from further advances by the mamiwater. The three-part structure of each *veillée* in *LAEPE* and the overall saga therefore follows that of an authentic traditional Cameroonian tale.

5.5.5.4. Animal trickster characters. The artful mamiwater, who bounds like a fish (p. 203), is one of several animal tricksters found in *LAEPE*, such characters being an integral part of African storytelling and contributing to the embedding of the author's cultural background in *oralité feinte* (section 5.5.5.5). Animal trickster characters are generally found in African morality tales and personify human traits in animal form. Matateyou (1997, p. 147) describes animal tricksters as complex characters whose ability to deceive is considered a sign of intelligence. However they are not always artful and sometimes play the role of restorers of natural harmony. In order to carry out their mission they use many tools: disguise, arrogance, courage, suspense, illusion, deception, cheating.

The *Myth Encyclopedia* (Trickster, 2014) describes animal tricksters as usually male, amoral, deceptive, cunning and greedy. They break the rules, shape-change and are intelligent survivors. African trickster characters in *LAEPE* endure through subterfuge and deception and are characterised by similarities to specific animal traits. Apart from the mamiwater, the obvious examples are: Akouma Labondance (*la femme gorille* who shape-changes into a serpent and an eagle to outwit the French military, pp. 373-396); Zoa (sorcerer and clan leader of the descendants of the panther women who subjugates his people to guarantee his survival, pp. 281-311); and Awono Awono (charlatan healer who dupes the Issogo into thinking he has special powers and is described as an ant-eater, pp. 398-402). Some European characters behave like tricksters, for example, Michel Ange (likened to a pig) who takes advantage of Issogo hospitality (pp. 11-18, 20-29); and Father Wolfgang, the hypocritical priest portrayed as a vulture (pp. 111-6, 131-133, 153-155, 177-180).

There is a powerful sense of African tradition through the ancient legend of the mamiwater which serves an educational purpose for the narratees. An unearthly voice from the spirit world

heralds the mamiwater's arrival, invoking the gods and the wind to dispel misconceptions and restore history with “*Ô dieux! voici venu le vent, poussière de l'histoire, dissipe les mirages et retiens le sens des temps*” (p. 201, italics in text). The mamiwater “semblait sortir d'une légende” (p. 202) and the light that fills Assanga's hut is described as “une lumière filtrée par la poussière du temps” (p. 204). While part of the spirit world, the mamiwater displays a plethora of human personality traits such as sulking, bullying and throwing tantrums. In accordance with the restorative role of the trickster described above, the mamiwater has executed her rights to claim Gatama as her spouse and mend relationships between her world and Assanga's family. However this restoration is strictly on her own terms and she will stop at nothing to achieve her goal. When confronted with Assanga's powers, the mamiwater behaves in an unscrupulous manner to get her own way. In spite of her extensive powers, she is prevented from leaving through Assanga's use of the simple devices of drums, fire, garlic and taro leaves (p. 205, 209). She is finally defeated when he ignores her completely, proving her existence is indeed dependant on the Issogo recognising her place in their history and legends (pp. 217-225). According to Assanga, the mamiwater “se nourrit de notre parole, de nos actes et du fait qu'on s'intéresse à elle” (p. 219).

In keeping with the duplicitious and seductive nature of animal tricksters, the theme of disturbing eroticism is central to this *veillée*, linking to the sensuality of the Mamiwater cult. Gatama is “un de ces beautés qui trompent hommes et femmes sur la nature de leur désir” (p. 194), causing the Issogo to reflect on their attitudes to sexuality as both men and women are attracted to him in ways they do not understand. Andela has a highly erotic relationship with a male mamiwater who “l'a baisée de toutes les manières possibles en lui récitant les quatre-vingt-dix-neuf perversités” (p. 207), falling one short of the number of positions in the Kama Sutra. An exchange of insults between Assanga and the mamiwater prompts him to address her as “une petite prostituée qui se fait appeler mamiwater et qui tente de pervertir d'innocents garçons” (pp. 204-205), doubtless a reference to legends about the seductive nature of the mamiwater as well as an attempt to deflate her ego.

Thus we see that intercultural authenticity in *LAEPE* is enhanced through the inclusion of the paratextually supported West African mamiwater trickster character and associated traditions. Hitchcott (2006a, pp. 129-139) also refers to the African trickster, whose amoral behaviour and ambiguity dupe society, suggesting that Beyala herself could be playing this role in her adaptations to changing circumstances in order to survive as an author.

5.5.5.5. The embedding of the author's African traditions in the text. The inclusion of African culture and traditions in *LAEPE* has been dealt with under section 4.3.3.1. Only aspects relevant to *veillée* ten will be mentioned here and these relate primarily to the interaction of spirit

and human worlds. It is this aspect of African traditions which most reveals the great divide between Cartesian and indigenous thinking, causing some discomfort for Michel Ange when he lives amongst the Issogo. The tale emphasises the importance of the ancestors with the spirits of Assanga, Andela and Biloa seated alongside Édène (pp. 193-194) as she recounts it. The Issogo are obviously familiar with the concept of the mamiwater and the fates of Gatama's admirers prompt the query about the water spirit (p. 195) and Édène's comment "[n]ous connaissions des histoires de mamiwater, ces esprits de l'eau qui séduisaient les pêcheurs et les entraînaient dans les profondeurs marines" (p. 206). In the context of Bamileke and Beti mythology (section 4.3.3.1.1), there is an intimate association between many types of spirit and the human world in this *veillée*. The spirits are nurturing and playful, capricious and self-protective, and always interacting with humans. At Gatama's disappearance, they play hide and seek, laugh, create lights and fires, shape-change, poke faces and one even invites Édène to join them (p. 197). Assanga warns against attracting the attention of bad spirits (p. 197) and the green spirits who normally protect the village seem to side with the mamiwater, blocking Issogo attempts to find Gatama (p. 198). The ancestors' spirits upset the cats (p. 205) and green goblins accompany Gazolo's procession (p. 205). Édène describes the intervention of the mamiwater as "la nature capricieuse des forces mystérieuses qui pouvaient frapper selon les règles ignorées des hommes. Personne n'était à l'abri de ces malheurs, alors on ne commenta pas l'événement" (p. 209).

Procedures associated with warding off or containing evil spirits are described, such as eating *akoumé* (maize) husks to disguise human nature (p. 198); collecting green vines and birds eggs (p. 199); using drums, torches, garlic, and cassava leaves (p. 205, 209); dressing the virgins in cowries (p. 222); chanting and dancing to break the curse (pp. 224-225); urinating and spitting on the urine (p. 225); and dressing in green or white to emulate the spirits (p. 226). The destructiveness of the spirits has been evident in the curses on Biloa and Espoir de Vie but the tale of the mamiwater is the only example in *LAEPE* of an intimate relationship between spirit and human worlds in the form of a union between human and mamiwater (pp. 202-208). The Issogo reality of close interaction between spirit and human worlds substantiates intercultural credibility in *LAEPE*.

5.5.5.6. The moral of the tale. Matateyou (1997, p. 8) states that the conclusion of a typical traditional Cameroonian story contains a moral or means of addressing issues raised in the narrative. *LAEPE* contains advice relating to intercultural and intracultural misunderstanding between colonised and coloniser, and male and female, much of which has been described in Chapter 2 of the thesis. However, the moral of the mamiwater tale is directed at Assanga, and more obliquely at the Issogo men, and relates to Beyala's concept of *féminitude*, described in an essay

(1995, p. 20) as very close to feminism but, according to Beyala, differing from the latter in that it respects differences between male and female. This is a tale about what happens when men do not cherish their wives, an issue that Édène has already referred to in the opening to *veillée* four which deals with Assanga's fatal flaws evident in his appalling treatment of his wives, and, in this case, the fertility treatments undergone by his second wife Fondamento de Plaisir.

On a beau dire: chaque être humain possède au fond de son mécanisme fonctionnel un défaut de fabrication, placé là par les dieux. C'est sa faiblesse, mais aussi sa force. S'il en prenait conscience, il pourrait alors puiser des ressources au plus profond de ses entrailles pour la combattre. Dans le cas contraire, il serait prisonnier de ces brumes qui assombriraient son destin. (p. 61)

According to Édène, Assanga does not recognise his fatal flaws and is a “monstre d'égoïsme” (p. 75), quick to philosophise on human nature with wise sayings but slow to acknowledge the repercussions of his own actions. He fails to learn from his dealings with Fondamento de Plaisir and the curses brought on the village by his union with Biloa. Now the mamiwater claims her rights over Gatama because Andela was comforted by a male mamiwater when Assanga took a second wife. Assanga's fundamental flaws (pride and sense of personal destiny) are publicly exposed by the mamiwater.

– C'est ton orgueil et ton sens du destin personnel qui t'ont perdu, Assanga Djuli. Tu ne peux t'en prendre qu'à toi-même.

– J'aime ma femme et mon fils.

– Fais le calcul du nombre d'heures que tu leur as consacrées dans ta minable vie, ensuite on avisera. (p. 207)

The *veillée* ends with Édène furious about the disfiguration of Gatama followed by Assanga spitting on the good eye to prevent him taking revenge. There is a lesson in the story for Édène as well as she ponders the experience, no doubt realising that, as usual, others suffer because of Assanga's selfishness and wondering how she will ever be able to tell this story to the Issogo children. She matures as a *griotte* in realising this tale is no different from other Issogo tales (heroes with magic powers, flying warriors or spirits of the dead) and, in a parting aside to Western readers, comments that her stories will be just as true as those told by white people about the Issogo (pp. 230-231). She sums up the experience as follows:

il en est ainsi des cauchemars qui prennent racine dans les vraies choses [...]. Ils sont difficiles à conter, mais fascinants. J'évaluai les années qui restaient à venir avant que je ne sois prête à raconter cette histoire. J'appris ainsi quand parler, comment le faire et nouai ma langue ... jusqu'à ce soir. (pp. 230-231)

Throughout section 5.5.5 we have examined how the techniques of Tine's *oralité feinte* are employed in *LAEPE* using the tale of the mamiwater as an exemplar. The skilful simulation of African oral tradition in written form consolidates the textual construction of *intercultural authenticity* in the novel through the character of the African narrator-*griotte* recounting the story of an African trickster, the mamiwater. The moral of this tale, directed at the African narratees, is that tragedy can occur when wives are not respected. However, the mamiwater tale has an underlying moral directed at the non-African addressee through the character of Michel Ange whose attitudes and behaviour demonstrate how not to approach intercultural interaction. This will be discussed in section 5.6.

5.6. The Non-African Addressee and Intercultural Interaction in *LAEPE*

Characteristics of the intercultural narrative (section 1.7) are particularly evident in *veillée* ten in the form of: binary oppositions (encounters between colonised and coloniser); reflexivity (Édene reflecting on her experiences); displacement (Michel Ange's attempted integration into the Issogo clan); and the construction of identity (Michel Ange's struggles to cope within and across differing cultural parameters). In section 5.3 the concept of the double addressees was briefly introduced with a promise that we would return to it following the discussion of *oralité feinte*. It has been noted that in *LAEPE* the double addressees are the narratee (Issogo children) and the Francophone implied reader, and that Édène often speaks to both as occurs in the opening of the mamiwater tale when she greets her audience and then mentions that Cartesian thinkers might consider she is making up this story.

Michel Ange personifies Western perspectives about Africa, with the implied reader alerted to the underlying causes of negative intercultural interaction through the scenes between him and the Issogo. Unlike other European characters in the novel, Michel Ange is ideally placed to comprehend the indigenous African mind. His presence in the village facilitates a study of the opposition of African and non-African perspectives while also permitting an observation of the reconstruction of cultural identity as he decides where his allegiance lies.

The nature of the gulf between indigenous and Cartesian thought is foregrounded in the introduction to the mamiwater *veillée* with Édène's welcome to the double addressees and her

suggestion that Western readers might feel her story is fabrication. Édène speaks directly to the young Issogo and indirectly to non-African readers, inviting them to think as Africans in order to comprehend the continent (p. 193). Édène's comment "[p]ourtant, il s'en est passé des choses pour ceux qui ont quatre yeux pour voir au-delà du réel!" (p. 193) reinforces the necessity for an indigenous perspective to see beyond the obvious in this tale. Bouwa (2006, p. 35) states that, in traditional Bamileke society "[t]hose who practice witchcraft are said to 'have four eyes', a human pair and another, whose use enables one to detect dangers and see phenomena."

As the Issogo and Michel Ange search for the truth behind Gatama's disappearance the contrast between indigenous and Western perspectives becomes patently clear. When the three girls are found in mysterious circumstances, the Issogo immediately resort to belief in a traditional solution, the water spirit (p. 195). At this point, Édène pauses to explain the nature of African reality for the benefit of Western readers. The Issogo have neither the police nor equipment "capable de dénouer la vérité du nœud inextricable qui enserrait le réel et l'iréel" (p. 195). Instead "[n]otre réalité se situait entre songe et veille, entre dédoublement de soi et une matérialité aussi palpable que l'eau des pluies qui nourrissaient nos terres" (p. 195). Unlike the concrete evidence amassed through Western empirical logic, indigenous reality exists in a twilight zone between dreams and wakefulness, requiring negotiation of the duality of spirit and human worlds.

Prior to the discovery of Gatama's disappearance, Édène remarks on the strangeness of "[un] matin où la perception des choses était si différente que nous ne pouvions enregistrer que les lisières de secrets compliqués" (p. 196), demonstrating the sensitivity of Issogo logic to subtle changes in atmosphere even if the cause is not immediately identifiable. When the family returns from the river after finding Gatama's clothing and shoes, Assanga comments "[c]'est le soir où se croise la vérité" (p. 199) intimating that Issogo truth often lies in obscurity. During the search, Édène describes how the Issogo respond to the mystery as anthropologists, story tellers or crazy logicians (p. 199), which nevertheless leads them to a conclusion closer to the truth than they realise, that is, that there is a woman of ill-repute behind the mystery (p. 200). Come the night, Andela is still expecting Gatama to return and is in complete denial of reality (p. 200). Issogo truth is largely determined by the unpredictability of occult forces, but eventually comprehension of these becomes too much even for them, and they choose to deliberately block the mamiwater out of their consciousness in order to cope (p. 210).

In contrast, life is much simpler for Michel Ange who does not notice anything out of the ordinary (p. 210), and for whom life continues as normal. Michel Ange (sections 2.6 and 2.7.1) has adopted a superior attitude from the moment he arrives in Issogo territory (pp. 14-18, 20-29), assuming the Issogo are so gullible that they can be hoodwinked with party tricks (pp. 24-25) and

inventions which never come to fruition (p. 44). He concedes that, living amongst the Issogo, he has sometimes managed to forget he is European, and seems surprised that no harm has ever come to him (p. 210). He refers to the Issogo as naïve children, using the derogatory term *Nègres* as in “[i]ls sont gentils, ces Nègres!” (p. 210). Although Michel Ange has been accepted by the Issogo (pp. 25-29), to him they are nothing more than big children sowing roses in the wind (p. 213). Édène attributes Michel Ange’s failure to comprehend the separation of indigenous and Western thought which exist in parallel but never meet. She considers that the onus is on Michel Ange to overcome the gap in perspectives by putting aside a little of his non-African mindset:

Il ne signala rien d’anormal pendant cet épisode parce que nous vivions dans des logiques différentes: la logique occidentale et la logique africaine. Elles se cohabitaient sans se rencontrer, refermées étrangement sur elles-mêmes. Pour qu’il vécût cet extraordinaire événement, il eût fallu qu’il abandonnât un peu de son savoir, un bout de mathématiques, un morceau de sa langue, des bribes de ses lois physiques. (pp. 210-211)

When the struggle with the mamiwater is explained to Michel Ange, he immediately interprets this phenomenon in Western terms as a mermaid who is battling Assanga (p. 211). He bursts into the hut demanding to know where she is, and then follows the hilarious scene where Michel Ange sees neither the mamiwater nor Assanga and, as predicted by Édène (p. 193), accuses the Issogo of fabricating stories (p. 213). The Issogo are frustrated by Michel Ange’s claims to Western superiority, and to possessing all knowledge and dominating the universe (p. 213). Michel Ange’s limited rationalist perspective does not permit him to think outside of the box or appreciate African history or ritual (p. 221).

Contrasts in Cartesian and African perspectives are further foregrounded in the following examples from the mamiwater tale. When Assanga sends the six virgins to the mamiwater, Michel Ange fails to recognise this as a strategy to defeat her and, struck by their beauty, asks what they are doing. The Issogo now find it difficult to include him in their culture and traditions “à mi-chemin entre songe et réalité” and divert his attention (pp. 222-223). In a play on Michel Ange’s response “[c]’est pas sérieux” (p. 223), which highlights his own failure to take the Issogo seriously, Assanga advises him to tell his countrymen about his experiences as “l’histoire d’un peuple pas sérieux!” (p. 223). Knowing there is little hope of Michel Ange ever comprehending their world, the women serve him maize wine to allow him to escape their realm of the walking dead and spirits who sleep with the living (p. 223). Later Michel Ange, drunk on his verandah, has given up asking questions

and seems stunned to be still alive (pp. 226-227). The episode of the mamiwater appears to be the turning point for Michel Ange who returns to the French military in the next *veillée*.

The sharp division between the nebulous world of African philosophy and the rationalist reality of the European coloniser is embodied in Michel Ange. For all his years of living amongst the Issogo, Michel Ange cannot (or will not) understand their reality or appreciate their way of thinking. There is simply no common ground due to his sense of superiority, arrogance and failure to take the Issogo seriously. Intercultural communication breaks down to the point where, in becoming *Commandant*/Governor of Cameroon and deserting his indigenous wife, Michel Ange demonstrates a complete lack of respect for the Issogo and their traditions. Over time, their experience with Michel Ange in particular, leads the Issogo to the painful realisation that “un voile opaque séparait l’univers des Blancs et celui des Noirs, que nous ne connaîtrions jamais la couleur de leurs âmes [*sic*] et que toute tentative d’interpénétration était vouée à l’échec” (p. 267). Clearly, meaningful intercultural interaction has become impossible due to Michel Ange’s inability or unwillingness to even begin to comprehend how the Issogo view the world.

5.7. Conclusion

The textual analysis of the tale of the mamiwater has brought to light the complexity of literary strategies used by Beyala to win over the non-African Francophone reader. First, there is the use of the double addressee, a technique through which the narrator, Édène, speaks directly to the African narratees (Issogo children) while, at the same time, directing asides to a Western audience, inviting them to think like Africans in order to understand Africa. Second, *LAEPE* is written using Beyala’s individual slant on French language, a strategy that reaches out to both African and non-African Francophone readers, paralleling the *griotte*’s call to the double addressees in the narrative. Third, through the commonality of storytelling, Beyala forges a link between the African oral tradition and the West. Finally, under the umbrella of storytelling, Beyala employs the artifice of *oralité feinte* with its *griotte*, participant audience, nightly stories, animal trickster, African traditions and moral message to entice her Western readers into adopting an African mindset, and in so doing, creates a novel which is textually *interculturally authentic* and an act of intercultural communication in itself.

Furthermore, this tale, in which a powerful spirit intervenes directly into the world of the Issogo, foregrounds the reasons why intercultural misunderstanding might occur with its juxtaposition of an Issogo perspective with that of Michel Ange. As the story of the mamiwater unfolds, it becomes patently obvious that there is a huge gulf between African and European thought that cannot be bridged by the Cartesian approach of Michel Ange who, with his attitude of

undisguised superiority, cannot, or will not, bring himself to think like an African. In fact, Michel Ange demonstrates “how not to do” intercultural communication.

Through paratextual analysis in section 4.3 it has been demonstrated that there is ample evidence to support the first of the two claims that were fundamental to this thesis with its investigation of interculturality and *LAEPE*. The initial claim concerned the paratextual substantiation of Beyala as an author who positions herself as essentially African, qualified to speak on behalf of her compatriots about Africa in creating an interculturally credible context for the novel. The second claim centred around Beyala’s construction of *intercultural authenticity* in the text itself and her production of the novel as an act of intercultural communication designed for a Francophone audience but targeting non-Africans in particular. Through the textual analysis of the mamiwater tale in Chapter 5 it has been shown that *LAEPE* goes well beyond being simply an interculturally authentic novel, and, in the ongoing debate about Franco-African relationships, is of paramount importance as intercultural communication in itself, aimed broadly at a Francophone audience in general, but more specifically at non-African French readers in the hope that they will appreciate the impact of colonisation on Africa and will want to bridge the chasm in intercultural misunderstanding between France and Africa. This literary feat is made possible through Beyala’s expert crafting of a saga in the style of the African oral tradition using the medium of *oralité feinte* to engage a non-African public. Within the parameters of this simulation of African orality she employs an African narrator who, like Beyala herself, claims to be ideally positioned because of her personal experience of colonisation, to appreciate both African and non-African perspectives and is therefore able to communicate effectively with both parties. Therefore Beyala, through the character of Édène, also assumes the role of *griotte*, paralleling Édène’s inculcation of African philosophy into the Issogo children with that of instilling into non-African readers cues for how to approach intercultural communication. So what might Beyala propose as a fruitful course of action by which Western readers might approach interculturality? Possible responses to this question will be teased out in the final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 6

SOLUTIONS OR NOT?

6.1. The Journey So Far

This thesis has been concerned first with the nature of intercultural interaction within the diegesis of *LAEPE*, and second, with the dilemma of how *LAEPE* might function as an antimodel for the failed intercultural interaction in the story. Chapter 1 commenced with a discussion of the current tenuous relationships between France and Africa in the light of the controversial *Loi du 25 février* glorifying colonisation and the prospect that a novel such as *LAEPE*, might present a new perspective on that very theme: that of the hitherto largely unheeded female African writer targeting a Francophone audience of Africans and non-Africans. However, it was noted that, following accusations of plagiarism and a lack of authenticity from her contemporaries, Beyala might not be taken seriously as a writer who could speak about Africa on behalf of Africans to a Francophone audience. This, combined with the complex indigenous content and setting of the novel, is precisely why *LAEPE* may have escaped critical review, except for works by Hitchcott and Pederson Carson (section 1.6), which explored the book respectively from the perspectives of resistance writing and links between geography and gender. The themes of the intercultural narrative (reflexivity and displacement, cultural opposition and cultural identity) according to Crawshaw and Tomic (2004, pp. 1-9) and post-colonial writing were explored, leading to the conclusion that *LAEPE* is both post-colonial and intercultural as it deals with the theme of the colonisation of Cameroon by Germany and France and the subsequent intercultural misunderstandings that arise between African and non-African.

Using de Certeau's concepts of strategies and tactics as a starting point, Chapter 2 examined the nature of interculturality at the level of the diegesis of *LAEPE*, leading to the discovery that the imposed authority of the Europeans did nothing to foster productive intercultural interaction or communication between coloniser and colonised. However, while instances of interculturality in the novel failed, the very existence, publication and sale of *LAEPE* showed that the book itself might nevertheless function as effective intercultural communication between author and reader. This possibility led to the question of whether Chambers' theory of negotiated authority between narrator, narratee and implied reader in the narrative pact might provide answers as to how a modern intercultural narrative such as *LAEPE*, portraying the devastating impact of European colonisation on Africa, might still seduce its readers into an intercultural pact of understanding in order to find some common ground between Africa and the West as a starting point for real intercultural dialogue. Chambers' tenets required some extension to cater for the necessity of the contemporary intercultural narrative and its author to be seen to be authentically constructed, factors

which emerged from a study of how important it is for consistency between the cultural paratextual information about the author and their experiences and the cultural world within the novel to be maintained.

With concerns about Beyala's credibility of paramount importance to the argument, Chapter 4 concentrated on the gathering of paratextual evidence for *author integrity* and *intercultural authenticity* around *LAEPE* through an exploration of peritext and epitext (in particular a significant quantity of factual paratext) related to Beyala's ethnicities and the colonisation of Cameroon. Beyala positions herself as an authentic African writer qualified to speak on behalf of Africans about Africa and this is supported through the culturally valid framework of the novel. The thesis then considered the matter of the textual development of interculturality with an inquiry into the skilful manner in which the narrator, Édène, targets her double addressees (the Issogo narratees and Francophone implied readers) in the analysis of an exemplary chapter of the novel - the mamiwater tale. In addition, the use of the French language and the framework of African storytelling as literary devices were seen to appeal generally to a French-speaking audience of Africans and non-Africans. More particularly, the artifice of *oralité feinte* with its *griotte*, participant audience, *veillées*, animal tricksters, embedding of author traditions and provision of a moral to the story, was seen to be the optimal means of constructing authenticity in this simulation of African oral tradition in written French. In the context of *LAEPE*, this range of literary strategies assumes a far greater significance in that they appear geared specifically to engage Western readers whose Cartesian or empirically "logical" perspective poses problems for intercultural interaction by blocking any understanding of an indigenous philosophy based in spiritism.

What conclusions can be drawn at this point in answer to the problem of how *LAEPE* positions itself to be an effective act of intercultural communication despite negative intercultural interactions throughout the storyline? Beyala convincingly uses a broad variety of literary techniques to position herself as an authentic African writer ideally credentialled and situated to bridge the gap between France and Africa and to appeal specifically to an audience in metropolitan France. The case is convincingly made that readers can have confidence that in the case of *LAEPE*, Africans and non-Africans will find some common ground through the paratextual and textual construction of intercultural authenticity to begin to understand the complexity of colonisation, its devastating impact on Africa, and to ponder the difficult questions surrounding the problem of how to move on. But the questions remain: having found a meeting place for discussion in the context of the *arbre à palabres* of *LAEPE*, are any solutions proposed to the ongoing problem of poor intercultural interaction between Africa and France which began this discussion; and is it even remotely possible to move forward from the annihilation of cultural identity caused by colonisation

in the face of an arrogance that continues to laud the principles behind the *mission civilisatrice*?

Perhaps it is this same arrogance which explains the dissatisfaction of Francophone writers in general as expressed in the 2007 Manifesto “Pour une ‘littérature-monde’ en français”. This document claims that Francophone authors are tired of the artificial separation between their literary world and that of Metropolitan French authors. The manifesto maintains that French literature should no longer be divided into the worlds of “French” (writers born in France) and “Francophone” (writers from France’s former colonies) but should be united under the broader French “littérature-monde” i.e. the all-encompassing universe of French literature which will mean the end of the classification “Francophone”. *LAEPE* poses some searching questions about how literature should be classified and this has formed a significant part of the discussion relating to how Beyala positions herself as an intermediary bridging two different cultures. Just as *LAEPE* makes it clear that Western superiority and Cartesian attitudes block an understanding of African philosophy, Francophone authors are now emphasising that the mindset of superiority behind *La Loi* and the *mission civilisatrice* applies equally to the world of French literature and has prevented the world of Francophone writing from taking its rightful place at the side of Metropolitan French literature. Frequently in *LAEPE* Édène pleads with Western readers to adopt a new way of thinking in order to step outside the limitations of their world, appreciate an African viewpoint and assist with restoring Africa to its rightful place in the world. In a similar fashion Francophone writers are now demanding that France adopt a new perspective on the realm of Francophone literature and recognise the importance of an over-arching world-literature in French.

We therefore appear to be at a significant turning point, not only with respect to the political relationships between France and Africa but also between the literary fields of Francophone and Metropolitan French writers. It would seem that nothing short of a paradigm shift in Western thinking will solve these political and literary divisions. Perhaps as *LAEPE*, through its double addressees, has provided common ground for discussion between Africa and non-Africans through the setting aside of Western attitudes, the “‘littérature-monde’ en français” will provide a place for literary dialogue between the former coloniser and the colonised. It is suggested that in the future the world of Francophone literature will rightfully be seen as on a par with Metropolitan French literature. The continuing debate about the relationship between Francophone and French literature would provide an excellent topic for further research. As a Francophone writer living in France and an author of novels that often deal with the problems of African migrants in Metropolitan France, Beyala can be seen to be breaking down barriers between Africa and France and bridging the divide between Francophone and French literature. The authors of the Manifesto argue, that, just like Beyala, they have made the French language their own and therefore belong in the realm of French

literature alongside renowned classical French authors.

Following the publication of *LAEPE*, Beyala has continued as a Francophone author in the vein of intercultural narratives with the production of six novels largely on the themes of African immigrant women or disadvantaged African women in shantytowns and a film documentary about the Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango. The only other novel dealing with the theme of Africa's colonisation is *La Plantation*, a narrative about Robert Mugabe's expropriation of the property of white farmers in Zimbabwe. *La Plantation* is a first for Beyala in that it is narrated from the perspective of white farmers and their families, and would therefore provide an interesting topic for further research in offering opportunities to investigate how Beyala, having given an indigenous African viewpoint in *LAEPE*, is then able to present a white African perspective on a similar problem. As Zimbabwe was colonised by the British, this novel does not throw any light specifically on the Franco-African relationships which have been a focus of this thesis. However, it would certainly be fruitful to contrast the indigenous perspective presented so convincingly in *LAEPE* with that of the white farmers and their families portrayed in *La Plantation* and to explore the literary techniques used by Beyala to present an opposing viewpoint in the latter novel.

6.2. Does Édène Propose Any Answers?

To return to *LAEPE*, there are no winners, African or European, and no characters reach ultimate happiness or fulfillment, just a tenuous limbo in which they survive but cannot be considered in any way victorious. The German *Kommandants* are humiliated, killed or captured by Assanga with the Germans collectively finally defeated by the French at the end of World War I and ousted from Cameroon. The French military are outwitted by characters like Fondamento, the guerrilla warfare of Akouma and the Issogo riots. The French judicial system is mocked and overcome by Édène, and Michel Ange (as French Governor) returns to Europe in disgrace after having been publicly exposed as a hypocrite and losing a forearm in the Issogo riots. Indigenous Africans are dominated first by the Germans and then the French, betrayed and undermined by their own people (the interpreter, monsieur Taxes, the *nègre* soldiers and Zoa), and sabotaged by the very Europeans they attempt to assimilate (Michel Ange). European and African religious leaders (Father Wolfgang and Jésus Oukouassis) are farcical and immoral. The Issogo women, victims of the patriarchal society, are continually abused and treated as sub-human chattels by their men, with their only recourse to succumb to violence or flee. The Issogo traditions and culture in their purest form, which made Africa Paradise, are relentlessly eroded by the onslaught of European power. Issogo philosophy eventually disappears with Assanga who, towards the end of the narrative, chooses to die to escape the madness engulfing Africa (pp. 462-464). Thus, in the words of Beyala with which this thesis began (p.1), Africans surrender all their possessions to the West – their lands, bodies, earth, rivers,

fish, bush, mountains finally even their thoughts and their ability to protest.

Hitchcott (2004, p. 23) contends that “African history in *Les arbres en parlent encore* is not a space from which to retrieve either a precolonial past or a postcolonial identity,” and the ending of *LAEPE* raises more questions than it answers, suggesting neither that the solution for Africa is a simple return to the glorious past nor that the road ahead will be easy. Despite the trauma in her life, Édène has survived to a ripe old age, and in the final pages of *LAEPE* it is clear that she is searching for answers to the quandary in which she finds herself, that of being in a cultural no man’s land and of having to pick up the pieces following colonisation. She reminisces about people who have impacted on her life such as her one true love, El Doctor (p. 452, 473). She hears the voices of the first Africans, their storytellers and their legends, Michel Ange, and the sounds of pain (rape and childbirth) – the echoes of the past. Then there is silence followed by the sounds of the future, the victorious, indomitable, *sang-melé* choir, “la voix inviolée de l’imaginaire africain qu’aucune domination ne soumettra puisqu’elle ne saurait la nommer” (pp. 473-474). The voices shout “Nous sommes l’humanité puisque nous sommes métis!” (p. 474), hinting that solutions to intercultural misunderstanding might be found among mixed-race peoples whose identities straddle cultures and who can therefore appreciate their own cultural mix. Édène cannot comprehend the *décryptage* (p. 474) of the voices and so retreats from these visions, saying “[t]ournons donc ces pages de mon incompréhension du nouveau monde et de son nouvel ordre” (p. 474), inviting readers to join her in “turning over a new leaf” on Africa’s tumultuous and incomprehensible past. She reiterates the call and response which started the book: “On disait que ... Que quoi?” (p. 11, 453, 474) and the concept of Africa as Paradise Lost (pp. 8-9, 474-475). The repetition of the original call and response evokes a sense of urgency, inviting Francophone (African and non-African) readers to interrogate the substance of what has been communicated throughout this intercultural narrative in the hope of finding solutions.

Édène’s final perplexing comment on Africa’s history, “[à] moins que ce passé prestigieux du continent noir n’ait été que simple tour de bateleur” (p. 475), is indicative of her confused attempts to understand what has happened to her beloved Africa and what the future holds for the continent. Édène and her readers are left with questions that have no simple answers. According to *Le Petit Larousse*, the word *bateleur* (Bateleur, 2014) means a travelling acrobat performing at fairs and markets. Perhaps Édène, in her overwhelmed state, is suggesting that Africa’s past was just an acrobatic show where performers were forced to keep their cultural balance in difficult circumstances. Or is she implying that Africa’s current situation is such a kaleidoscope of catastrophic events that it is difficult to determine exactly what happened and why, and how to move on?

Hitchcott interprets the last line as indicating that perhaps the “whole story may have been nothing more than a joke” (Hitchcott, 2004, p. 23). This interpretation seems out of context in what has been an epic saga of a tumultuous period in Cameroon’s history, with devastating consequences for indigenous Africans, and which has also left an indelible imprint on the non-African characters. Much effort has been expended by Beyala in the telling of this African saga in terms of constructing an authentically African story to engage the attention of non-African readers who, like Michel Ange with their Cartesian viewpoint, might otherwise not be able to appreciate the indigenous reality of the fantastical nature of some of the episodes, nor be able to comprehend African philosophy. While Édène admits that there are questions about the veracity or historical accuracy of particular portions of the tale (p. 129, 165), this in no way negates the pertinence of the underlying themes of colonisation, cultural difference, intercultural misunderstanding and the plight of Africa for modern readers. Nor does the vagueness of the Issogo memory, perfectly understandable in the context of an Africa with no written records, invalidate the untenable position of modern Cameroon due to colonisation. It therefore seems more appropriate to interpret this final line in terms of the delicate balancing act of an acrobat, reinforcing the notion that Africa’s history is like a tragic performance in which Africa (and its indigenous population) has been spotlighted in its principal role on the tightrope of intercultural interaction.

The nostalgic nature of various passages in *LAEPE*, particularly the prologue and epilogue, suggests that Édène is attempting to comprehend this phase of Africa’s history and lamenting its prestigious past, while looking to the future. Perhaps, as Hitchcott (2004, p. 23) has intimated, Beyala has used storytelling as a coping mechanism to deal with the inexplicable and this story may have a therapeutic purpose for Africans who through it can reminisce about their mythical lost Paradise while visualising a brighter future. Perhaps Édène reworks her personal story and that of Africa with a view to understanding what has happened in order to move on in line with Hitchcott’s statement (2004, p. 23) that the majority of Beyala’s works do not look backwards to position the postcolonial character but portray personalities in a continual state of reconstruction.

Beyala’s concern is for the future of Africa as a continent buried in the past with its head and feet in modernity (Kombi, 1992). This evokes Édène’s statement in the prologue of *LAEPE* (p. 7) where she speaks of Africa caught between the old and the new. Having come full circle with our discussion of *LAEPE* let us return to Beyala’s 2006 conference presentation around the theme of “Où va l’Afrique?” at which Beyala stated “[l]’Afrique’ ne va nulle part. Elle ne va nulle part parce qu’elle ignore qui elle est. On ne peut aller nulle part quand on ne sait pas qui on est, quand on n’est pas défini.” The plight of Africa (and therefore of Cameroon) lies in its loss of cultural identity so that, in the wake of colonisation, the country is culturally paralysed and no longer has a

cultural identity, making it impossible to progress. Stripped of her history and traditions Africa is like a nameless entity which cannot function as it doesn't know who or what it is.

The saga of *LAEPE* is that of a suppressed people, and their suppressors. As the narrator-griotte Édène attempts to make sense of what has happened, and its ramifications for the future of her people, the Issogo, and her country. She realises, as the enlightened reader no doubt will, that the problems caused by intercultural misunderstanding are highly complex with no simple answers. When diverse cultures clash in the process of colonisation, those that are less robust lose their cultural identity as Beyala has stated above. The result for intercultural relationships is “une ambivalence fondamentale des rapports entre le colonisateur et le colonisé, ces paroxysmes de tendresse et de haine, d’amour et de cruauté” (pp. 191-192). Once cultural identity is destroyed, as we have seen in the story of *Zoa*, members of the weaker culture are left with only fragments of their past and what has been lost can never be fully restored (p. 310).

So what are the implications of the novel for the non-African implied reader who has metaphorically witnessed the devastation created by the imposed authority of the rational mindset on the Issogo, as representative of Africa, and the failure of Michel Ange, as a representative of Cartesian thinking, to connect culturally with Africa? Michel Ange reworks his cultural identity to suit circumstances and guarantee his survival but ultimately his allegiance is with France rather than Africa. In the final scenes of the book, when Édène is on trial before Michel Ange for having deserted her husband, she publicly forces his hand before Issogo and French alike, reminding him that he too could be considered guilty of spousal desertion, since he has abandoned the wife he married according to the customs which he now seeks to uphold by finding Édène guilty. Like many of Michel Ange's experiences with the Issogo “ce mariage coutumier n'était que distraction et parodie donc sans validité” (p. 461). Only because his authority would be undermined does Michel Ange declare his cultural allegiance in refusing to recognise indigenous marriage. He maintains this ambivalent attitude until the end, attempting to convince Édène (and perhaps himself) of his love for Africa with “[j]'aime cette terre et j'aimerais y être enterré, me crois-tu?” (p. 468).

Michel Ange's superior attitude and arrogant behaviour prevent him from being able to appreciate the richness of Issogo culture or participate in meaningful intercultural exchanges with the Africans. Akin to the thinking behind the glorification of colonisation in *Loi du 25 février* Michel Ange seems oblivious to the fact that he is the problem and must change if there is to be any possibility of positive intercultural interaction with the Issogo who have welcomed him with open arms. For Michel Ange, whose adherence to Issogo cultural norms has been opportunistic and superficial, the sacrifice is clearly too much and so his solution is to turn his back on them and reinstate himself in the mother culture of France (pp. 233-237). Through the character of Michel

Ange non-African implied readers are offered the opportunity to come to the same realisation he is faced with, that of recognising that his own Western attitudes and behaviours block intercultural understanding. Having recognised this, non-African readers then have a choice between: deliberately changing their perspective in order to embrace African philosophy; or refusing to change, thus turning their backs on engagement in a meaningful intercultural exchange and returning to their old ways. In *LAEPE* Édène makes it clear that the onus lies with non-African cultures to make a deliberate choice to accommodate African culture.

In contrast to the imposed authority of the colonials, Édène has shown how to communicate effectively with an intercultural audience composed of African and non-African readers. She has used her narrative authority to target the double addressees and to negotiate a narratorial position from which she can at least make an appeal to the non-African implied reader to rethink Western attitudes that block intercultural understanding. In doing this, she has mirrored the approach of Beyala, who, through the dual media of African storytelling and *oralité feinte* with its simulation of the African oral tradition written in French, invites both African and non-African Francophone audiences to participate in a discussion of the impact of colonisation on Africa with a view to finding a means to move forward.

The implication therefore would appear to be that imposing one's cultural perspective on another culture simply will not work. Intercultural understanding will only happen through negotiation. Like Édène, non-African readers are left with the dilemma of wondering exactly what has been said in *LAEPE* in terms of how to approach intercultural understanding and how to respond. They have the same choices as Michel Ange: to put aside the Western mindsets that block meaningful intercultural interaction and make a genuine effort to understand Africa, the problems it has today and the complexity of the intercultural fallout that occurs when one culture destroys another; or turn their back on this opportunity and walk away. The onus lies with the non-African reader who might be tempted to dismiss this story as completely implausible given the broad differences that could exist between their rational mindsets and African logic. *LAEPE*, with its textual construction of *intercultural authenticity* through a written simulation in French of an African oral story, its double addressees and constant juxtaposition of indigenous and Cartesian logics, exhorts the non-African world to take Africa seriously, set aside attitudes of arrogance and superiority and embrace an African perspective to foster intercultural understanding.

On disait que Que quoi?

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APPENDIX 1

List of Works by Calixthe Beyala and Awards

C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée, Paris, Stock, 1987

Tu t'appelleras Tanga, Paris, Stock, 1988

Seul le Diable le savait, Paris, Pré aux Clercs, 1990

La Négresse rousse, Paris, J'ai lu, 1995

Le Petit Prince de Belleville, Paris, Albin Michel, 1992

Maman a un amant, Paris, Albin Michel, 1993, Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique noire

Assèze l'Africaine, Paris, Albin Michel, 1994, Prix François-Mauriac de l'Académie française; prix Tropicque

Lettre d'une Africaine à ses sœurs occidentales, Paris, Spengler, 1995

Les Honneurs perdus, Paris, Albin Michel, 1996, Grand prix du roman de l'Académie française

La Petite Fille du réverbère, Paris, Albin Michel, 1998, Grand prix de l'Unicef

Amours sauvages, Paris, Albin Michel, 1999

Lettre d'une Afro-française à ses compatriotes, Paris, Mango, 2000

Comment cuisiner son mari à l'africaine, Paris, Albin Michel, 2000

Les Arbres en parlent encore. Paris, Albin Michel, 2002

Femme nue, femme noire, Paris, Albin Michel, 2003

La Plantation, Paris, Albin Michel, 2005

L'Homme qui m'offrait le ciel, Paris, Albin Michel, 2007

Le Roman de Pauline, Paris, Albin Michel, 2009

Les Lions indomptables, Paris, Albin Michel, 2010

Manu Dibango, Tempo d'Afrique (Film documentary), 2010

Le Christ selon l'Afrique, Paris, Albin Michel, 2012

Other awards

Chevalier des arts et des lettres (1997)

Chevalier de la légion d'honneur (2010)

Officier de l'Ordre de la valeur, la plus haute distinction Camerounaise (2013)

APPENDIX 2

Synopsis of *Les arbres en parlent encore*

The story begins around 1914 when Germany controls Cameroon. Michel Ange de Montparnasse, a French deserter from Gabon, arrives in the Issogo village. Assanga, the chief, welcomes him into the tribe and gives him *Espoir de Vie* as a wife. Michel Ange claims he will make the Issogo one of the greatest nations on earth and promises the Issogo all kinds of inventions which never eventuate. The Germans rule Cameroon with an iron fist, building roads, clearing the forest and making laws. *Kommandant* Hans Von Komer comes to the village recruiting for a labour force and soldiers to find that Assanga has hidden the tribe's men. Humiliated, the *Kommandant* returns to Germany saying he will make a report to Berlin. Assanga warns his rival Gazolo and the Issogo that they face great misfortune and that the Whites could destroy them.

The Germans surround the Issogo village with *Kommandant* n° 2. A treaty is drawn up in which Assanga's sovereign legislative and administrative rights to the Germans with five provisos: Issogo territory cannot be ceded to a third authority; any former treaties are void; Issogo territory will remain their property and that of their descendants; taxes will be collected annually by kings and chiefs; and, during the establishment of the German administration, Issogo customs and traditions will be respected. The *Kommandant* shoots an indigenous miscreant in cold blood and dies in his sleep, with the implication that Assanga was responsible for his demise.

The Issogo social structure is patriarchal which causes great rivalry between Assanga's first wife Andela (mother of his children) and his infertile second wife Fondamento de Plaisir. Tired of Assanga's fertility treatments, Fondamento appears with a baby named Lenfant, claiming it is hers. She proves to be an outstanding mother and the villagers begin to question whether it is Assanga who is infertile. Assanga invites Fondamento to entertain a number of male guests which she does without falling pregnant. She admits to having purchased Lenfant at the markets and Assanga's reputation is saved.

Édène and her friends trespass on the territory of the neighbouring tribe, the Issélé, and become embroiled in a fight with some of their youth. Assanga declares war on the Issélé, and the Issogo champion wins. The German priest, Father Wolfgang, visits the village giving the message that the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived. The Issogo treat him as a joke. The Germans return on another recruitment mission with *Kommandant* n° 3, Father Wolfgang and monsieur Taxes. Assanga organises the dance of the ancestors which is interrupted by a military attack. Michel Ange is appointed General of the Issogo army and trains the Issogo men in European warfare. A month later the Issogo plan an attack which never eventuates because the French army arrives.

Monsieur Taxes is found hanging from a tree, the implication again being that Assanga is responsible.

Édène travels to the markets at Sâa with Assanga where he purchases a young girl, Biloa, as his new wife. Andela and Fondamento de Plaisir are shocked but Andela trains Biloa to look after the house. A marriage feast is held and Assanga honours his promise not to sleep with Biloa until she, under pressure from Andela and fresh rumours about Assanga's potency, seduces him and falls pregnant. A curse falls on the village with extreme heat lasting for nine months and nine days. Gazolo determines that Biloa is the problem and demands that she be sacrificed. Assanga fasts and Gazolo takes charge of the village with the Issogo deserting their former chief. In giving birth to Akouma Labondance, Biloa dies and the curse is broken. In disgust, Fondamento leaves the village.

Édène falls in love with Gazolo's eldest son, Chrétien n° 1, so named because he is the first in the village to be baptised. Édène frequents his house offering to help his mother (Gono La Lune) and his sisters (Chrétienne n°s 1, 2 and 3) with household chores. Édène seduces Chrétien n° 1. Aligbutalé and the orator attempt to organise a resistance against the Germans. The remaining German garrisons attack and Assanga captures *Kommandant* n° 3 but releases him following a discussion with Michel Ange, in which the latter wants to hand the German over to the French.

Édène's younger brother, Gatama, disappears after three of his female admirers are discovered respectively hanging from a tree, drowned in the Sanaga River or raving mad. The mamiwater claims she has rights over Gatama as he is the product of a union between Andela and a male mamiwater which occurred when Assanga took Fondamento de Plaisir as his second wife. Assanga battles the mamiwater with sorcery and physical violence but then decides to ignore her. A curse falls on the village and the mamiwater leaving a giant yellow baby that turns into a giant boa and dives into the river. Gatama returns and Assanga blinds him in one eye to prevent a mamiwater taking interest in him again and then spits on the other eye so that Gatama will not remember.

Michel Ange returns to the French military leaving behind *Espoir de Vie*, whom the villagers promise to return to him when he has re-established himself. *Espoir de Vie* attempts to place a curse on him but it backfires, causing a curse on the village. Assanga discovers *Espoir de Vie* is the culprit and ostracises her. When she is taken to Michel Ange, now *Commandant*/Governor of Cameroon, the villagers prepare gifts and form a procession. Assanga is beaten by Michel Ange's guards and *Espoir de Vie* becomes a servant in his house as he has married a French woman. Édène falls pregnant, Chrétien n° 1 marries *Opportune des Saintes Guinées*, and Assanga gives Édène to his rival Gazolo as a second wife.

The Issogo become increasingly concerned about the impact of the Europeans on their way of life and Assanga calls a gathering of the sorcerers. Zoa, the clan leader of the descendants of the panther women, contends that the way to survive the onslaught of the colonisers is to adopt their ways, a suggestion that does not meet with approval from the rest of the group. A curse falls on the village and Assanga sets off with Édène to find Zoa. They meet Alina, a young girl from Zoa's village. Assanga overcomes Zoa with sorcery, but it is evident that they will never fully recover what they have lost.

Gazolo beats Édène so badly that she miscarries. She hits Chrétien n° 1 with a rock but later binds his wounds and returns to the village where she finds herself ostracised. She leaves the village to join Fondamento at the café-bordel. Akouma Labondance also rebels against Assanga's authority and temporarily stays with Édène and Fondamento. The French military search for an assassin, a *femme-gorille* who can shape-change and who attacks the French. Michel Ange is discovered one day, naked and trussed. When the *femme-gorille* is finally caught Édène realises it is Akouma Labondance who is taken away to be hanged. A charlatan healer, Awono Awono arrives in the region and cures Madame Zambo's son, Étienne, of constipation. Monsieur Tristan, a young French intern, becomes interested in Awono Awono as a phenomenon while Fondamento attempts to seduce him. Michel Ange does his best to discourage Tristan, but when they fail to do so, Tristan is deported back to Europe. Fondamento invites Awono Awono to the café-bordel where he lives with her for a time, eventually robbing her of everything she owns.

After World War II the French are organising compensation for the families of the African soldiers who fought for France. Édène has had an affair with El Doctor, a married man who left his wife for her. She has twins and has been summoned to appear before the French magistrate's court for deserting Gazolo. When Michel Ange attempts to convict Édène she says that he deserted Espoir de Vie. Michel Ange is forced to annul all marriages not recognised by the French Republic and Édène goes free. The next day Assanga decides to die and departs the world thirteen days later.

The compensation ceremony ends in a riot when the Issogo discover that there is no money and the coffins do not contain the bodies of their deceased. Michel Ange loses a forearm in the fight and returns to France but not before telling Édène that Akouma Labondance is alive and that he remains torn between France and Africa. In the final pages, Édène reminisces on El Doctor, the Africa that was and wonders what is in store for Africa in the future.

APPENDIX 3

List of Principal Characters in *LAEPE* in Alphabetical Order

Akouma Labondance – daughter of Biloa and Assanga; *la femme gorille*.

Aligbutalé – entertainer, drummer and orator.

Alima – girl from the clan of the descendants of the panther women.

Andela – Assanga's first wife, mother of his children.

Assanga Djuli – chief of the Issogo clan of Cameroon.

Awono Awono – charlatan healer who befriends Fondamento but then robs her.

Biloa – Assanga's third wife, dies giving birth to Akouma Labondance.

Blanche (la) – Michel Ange's French wife.

Boulou (the) – indigenous group who adopt the religion of Luther.

Chief doctor – part of Michel Ange's entourage as Governor of Cameroon.

Chrétien n° 1 – eldest son of Gazolo and Gono la Lune; seduced by Édène but marries Opportune des Saintes Guinées.

Chrétienne n° 1, 2 and 3 – daughters of Gazolo and Gono la Lune.

Doula (the) – indigenous group who behave as descendants from the Second Reich.

Édène B'Assanga Djuli – daughter of Assanga, narrator and *griotte*.

Ékassi – member of the congregation of the Christian Revival Church.

El doctor – married man who left his family to be with Édène.

Espoir de Vie – Michel Ange de Monparnasse's indigenous wife.

Étienne – son of Madame Zambo, cured by Awono Awono.

Éton – language spoken by the Issogo and alternative name for the clan.

Father Wolfgang – German missionary.

Fondamento de Plaisir – Assanga's infertile second wife.

Gatama – Édène's younger brother, taken by the mamiwater as her spouse.

Gazolo – Assanga's rival for the chieftancy, married to Gono la Lune, takes Édène as a second wife.

Gono la Lune – wife of Gazolo.

Hans von Komer – first German *Kommandant* mentioned in *LAEPE*, returns to Germany.

Interpreter – facilitates the signing of the treaty between the Issogo and the Germans under *Kommandant* n° 2.

Issélés – indigenous group who germanise their young, Assanga declares war on them.

Jésus Oukouassi – pastor of the Christian Revival Church.

Jumeau n° 1 and Jumeau n° 2 – Édène's children.

Kommandant n° 2 – replaces Hans von Komer, murdered presumably by Assanga.

Kommandant n° 3 – replaces *Kommandant* n° 2, captured by Michel Ange and Assanga but is released.

Mamiwater (the) – West African water deities who kidnap Gatama.

Maria –Teresa de Avila – promiscuous wife of Jésus Oukouassi.

Michel Ange de Montparnasse – French soldier and deserter, lives with the Issogo and takes Esprit de Vie as his wife, becomes Commandant and Governor of Cameroon.

Monsieur Taxes – indigenous tax collector who accompanies *Kommandant* n° 3.

Monsieur Tristan –French intern who becomes interested in Awono Awono.

Nègres (soldiers) – indigenous soldiers who accompany the Germans.

Opportune des Saintes Guinées – Édène's half-sister through one of Assanga's affairs, marries Chrétien n° 1.

Orator – accompanies Aligbutalé.

Zoa – clan leader of the descendants of the panther women.