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Renaissance Men? Behind the Scenes at the *Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (Dakar, 10–31 December 2010)

In the week leading up to the opening ceremony of the third *Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (FESMAN 2010), held in Dakar and organized around the theme of the ‘African Renaissance’, it seemed increasingly likely that festival-goers and participants would be treated to a fiasco of unfinished venues, persistent power cuts and general indifference on the part of the local population: if your only information came from the opposition newspapers, you would have been convinced of this. Walking around the streets of Dakar in early December of last year, I came across dozens of billboards scattered across the city displaying the highly striking poster of the Festival but almost all locals to whom I talked seemed to know little if anything about the planned events. On the very eve of the Festival, it was widely reported in much of the Senegalese media that delays in construction work at the Stade Léopold Sédar Senghor would lead to the postponement of the opening ceremony itself. Such reports seemed highly plausible as the festival had already been postponed several times, and the December 2010 dates had only been confirmed a few months in advance.

It was thus more in hope than anticipation that I turned up at the stadium early on the evening of 10 December but, in the end, I need not have worried for I arrived to find thousands of people gathering there for the ceremony. Indeed, newspaper reports the next day (even the opposition press) indicated that around 50,000 people had attended the ceremony with many thousands locked outside forced to follow proceedings on big screens erected for the occasion. Admission was free (as it was for all of the events that took place during the festival) and the promise of a *son et lumière* extravaganza, plus turns by major African musicians (including Youssou Ndour, Manu Dibango and Ismael Lô) had mobilized what had previously appeared to be an indifferent Senegalese public. I was intrigued to see most people in the queues to enter the stadium carrying ‘personal’ invitations from the President to attend the opening ceremony: these had, apparently, been distributed in their thousands across the city in the weeks preceding the festival. It suddenly became apparent that, on certain levels at least, the planning for the festival had not been quite as chaotic as it had seemed. It was also apparent that the opposition press was actively willing the festival to be as chaotic as their increasingly sensationalist headlines predicted it would be.

Scanning the crowd around me in the seemingly interminable wait for the festivities to begin (nothing could start until the octogenarian president of the country, Abdoulaye Wade, had arrived from the airport fresh from greeting visiting heads of state from neighbouring countries), I could make out small groups of teenagers (male and female), parents with children and even some other vaguely lost looking white Westerners like myself. However, it was striking that the stadium as a whole was dotted with what were quite clearly organized groups, mostly made up of teenagers wearing t-shirts bearing the festival logo on the back and a photograph of President Wade on the front. The opposition papers would later claim that these groups had been bussed in and kitted out by the local organizers of Wade’s PDS party, desperate for a full house on the opening night. Although I cannot independently verify such a claim, it is not hard to believe, as spare cash always seems to be forthcoming in Senegal to pay for the mobilization of small armies of teenagers. That very morning, I had seen small bands of teenage boys racing along the coast road from the airport to the city centre attaching multicoloured flags to trees and lampposts: many bore the festival logo while the remainder boasted the colours of the host nation and the guest of honour, Brazil. (The emergence of Brazil, likely host of an eventual fourth festival, as an avowed ‘black’ culture and major economic power of the global south is one of the most intriguing stories of FESMAN 2010, but I do not have the space to discuss it here.)

Before the festivities began, the crowd was obliged to endure well over an hour of speeches by local and visiting dignitaries. President Wade gave a long, rambling and clearly improvised speech which sought at various moments to whip up the enthusiasm of the crowd by deploying some of the rallying cries that had brought him to power a decade ago, notably 'Travailler, Encore Travailler, Toujours Travailler!' The fact that only small pockets of the crowd rose to their feet in a whirl of applause and ululating approval made it clear that not everyone there was on the PDS payroll. Perhaps sensing that he was losing his audience, Wade suddenly and incomprehensibly began to perform an extempore translation of his own words for visiting, non-French speaking guests: but, in his heavily accented English, this was transformed into 'We must *walk*, keeping on *walking*, always *walking*'. What exactly the African Renaissance might mean in all of this remained a mystery to me.

Although I had feared the worst in advance, the ceremony turned out to be an amazing spectacle. One entire stand was employed as a giant screen on to which was projected a series of animated images designed to relate several centuries of African history in a narrative devised by the black British playwright Kwame Kwei Armah. On the pitch itself, hundreds of dancers choreographed by the Ivoirien Georges Momboye played out a series of ritualized tableaux to accompany the on-screen imagery. As a whole, the ceremony sought to encapsulate the very theme of the festival, that of an African Renaissance: Africa was the cradle of civilization; it endured slavery and colonialism; but it finally overthrew its oppressors and we are now witnessing the re-birth of a continent, given visual form in the projected image of Wade's Monument de la Renaissance Africaine, the giant bronze sculpture unveiled on the fiftieth anniversary of Senegalese independence in April 2010. Now, I consider the monument to be pretty grotesque, a monument to Wade's outsized ego rather than a symbol of any genuine engagement with the continent, the diaspora and their history, but by the end of the show, I found myself swept away by the romance and excitement of this imagined new page in world history. I still firmly believed that the monument, and in many respects the festival itself, were primarily designed to massage Wade's ego but I began to wonder what if, despite the ambiguities in this coming together of representatives of the 'black world'—and the ambiguities do not come much bigger than a giant bronze sculpture, built by North Korean workers skilled in constructing neo-Stalinist figures of the 'The Dear Leader', commissioned (and allegedly designed) by Wade, an economic liberal—something new might well be born?

I was not expecting to feel so well disposed to the notion of an African Renaissance, based on my experiences earlier that day, for the Festival had, in fact, officially begun on the morning of 10 December with the launch of what was clearly designed to be its intellectual centrepiece, a major conference held in the luxurious surroundings of the Méridien Président hotel (the festival programme referred to it as the 'conférence structurante'). The opening session was chaired by President Wade who spoke at great length (over an hour) about the cultural unity of the black world and the need for political unity on the continent, declaring at one point (something he would reiterate in his speech at the opening ceremony later that night) that he would happily become 'Governor of Senegal' in a United States of Africa, a claim difficult to believe of a politician who exercises a vice-like grip on power and looks likely to make a run for a third term of office next year at the age of eighty-six. He then had the gall to claim that African politicians were ahead of their intellectuals in thinking about the prospect of African unity: does he mean those same intellectuals who are subject, in so many countries across the continent, to censorship and the arbitrary whims of their leaders who have systematically destroyed the civic space in which intellectual interventions might occur? The most prominent of the visiting heads of state at the festival was Libya's Colonel Gaddafi, a key architect of the African Union, who at the time of writing, is in the process of brutally crushing a revolt against his forty-two-year dictatorship. Is this the type of political leadership that Wade has in mind? If Gaddafi is a symbol of the African Renaissance, then it is no wonder that so many African intellectuals remain sceptical about it.

Over the course of the two days I spent at the 'conférence structurante', I got no closer to

gaining any clear sense of what speakers understood by the African Renaissance: at times, we were deemed to be living through it, at others we were exhorted to create the policies and forums that would make it a reality. Most dispiriting of all was a strand of Afro-centrism that equated African Renaissance with the celebration of a glorious Pharaonic past, and that seemed intent on reducing the work of the great Cheikh Anta Diop to a backward-looking nostalgia (most obvious in the contributions of Théophile Obenga and Runoko Rashidi). I gradually began to feel as though I were trapped in a bizarre time warp in which the potential dangers of such Afro-centrism (for example, Mobutu's 'authenticity' project in 1970s Zaïre) were completely unknown.

Where was the bridge between this turn to the past and Wade's vision of a unified pan-African future? Similar issues had preoccupied Léopold Sédar Senghor at the first *Festival mondial des arts nègres* in 1966, which paradoxically evoked classical antiquity and postcolonial modernity in the same breath. In effect, Senghor sought to 'perform', through his writing and through the festival, an African renaissance, to define an African classical age that could act as an inspiration for the future. If such a gesture had a clear significance in the years immediately following independence, what did it mean in 2010? The idea of an African Renaissance had first emerged from post-apartheid South Africa in the 1990s and had been adopted by Wade as the early years of the new millennium marked a period of rapid and sustained growth in numerous countries across the continent. But by the time the festival took place, the world was in the midst of a global financial crisis and economic growth had stalled. As I will argue below, culture and development have been intertwined themes at the various editions of FESMAN but the relationship between the two remains highly problematic.

It was impossible not to be struck by the disparity between the resources lavished on the events taking place at the Méridien Président and the relative chaos that surrounded virtually all of the other academic events. Particularly memorable (for all the wrong reasons) was a wild goose chase around four different sites on the University campus in search of a round table discussion that was, according to the on-line programme, due to feature, amongst others, Alain Mabanckou, Dany Laferrière and Edouard Glissant (who, it would later transpire, was in fact already terminally ill at that time). Picking up other lost festival goers as I zigzagged my way round the campus, our small rag-tag group finally found the 'right' building only to learn that staff there had no idea that they were supposed to be hosting an event of any kind, although they warmly invited us back for a series of discussions with African writers that they would be hosting over the following days.

Lecturers to whom I spoke claimed that the government had shown little interest in, and dedicated limited resources to, any of the academic events beyond those taking place at the Méridien. Invitations were sent out late in the day and the money for plane tickets was in many cases only released days before speakers were due to travel. When one adds to this cocktail of ineptitude travel problems caused by the snow in Europe and the US, it is understandable that so many big name speakers—particularly Mamadou Diouf and Achille Mbembe—failed to materialize. The organizers had, bizarrely, decided not to create a Festival centre, which meant that the on-line programme was the only source of advance information on events; however, it was so unreliable that the organizers began to produce flyers with updated daily programmes from which events billed on-line for the previous two or three months would suddenly disappear on the day they were due to take place.

It was not just at the University that chaos sometimes reigned. A symposium on African cinema was supposed to take place at the Place du Souvenir africain on the Corniche. I turned up on three separate occasions only to find that it had been postponed each time; when it reappeared on the programme a fourth time, I decided to stay away (on the principle of 'fool me four times, shame on me') only to discover that it had gone ahead after all..

A giant inflatable cinema had been installed at the Place du Souvenir for daytime screenings while night-time screenings took place outdoors with the Atlantic as a breathtaking backdrop. The seat upholstery was decked with images from classic African films, great black directors or artists (Sembene, Césaire, Senghor), and the walls of the surrounding buildings were plastered with giant

reproductions of posters of some classic African films (*La Noire de, Touki Bouki*); however, prints of the scheduled films would regularly fail to materialize and last-minute DVD substitutes would replace them. The site was ready (well, pretty much, as workmen and diggers were active on the fringes of the site throughout the first week of the festival), resources had been found to put state-of-the-art equipment in place but the overall festival organizers seemed to have given little thought to the actual content, much to the chagrin of the dedicated team of academics invited very late in the day to devise a coherent programme.

Perhaps imbued with the spirit of President Wade, the Festival mastermind, the organizers seem to have prioritized 'making lots of stuff happen': for whatever criticisms one might make of Wade, there is no denying that he is a perpetual whirlwind of activity. The festival was packed full with a bewildering array of events, and, we must remember, everything was free to the public. During the ten days I spent at the festival, I went to a football match between the U-20 teams of Senegal and Brazil, which was followed by a parade of great black sportsmen, including Tommie Smith and John Carlos, the athletes who gave the black power salute from the podium at the Olympic Games in 1968; I attended a great exhibition of contemporary art at the Biscuiterie de la Médina; there was a rather low-key exhibition of 'traditional' art at the newly renovated Musée national (whereas the traditional art exhibition had been the centrepiece of the 1966 festival); I saw the Ethiopian National Ballet troupe at the Maison de la Culture Doua Seck and returned there the next day for Mondomix's outstanding, high-tech interactive exhibition on black music. Every night, there was a free, open-air concert at the independence monument in Colobane, and huge crowds turned up to see the likes of Youssou Ndour, Salif Keita and Diams. Time caught up with me and prevented me from attending any of the theatre, architecture or literature programmes, and I was particularly disappointed to miss out on the chance to take part in the Festival's 15km road race. By any standards, this was a big and incredibly eclectic festival that sought to engage with a wide range of audiences.

I have dwelt at such length on the range and organization of the festival events for a number of reasons: first, because anyone trying to piece together after the fact the way in which the festival unfurled will be faced with a somewhat unreliable newspaper archive—for the opposition press, the festival was largely a chaotic disaster (its successes all coming despite the shortcomings of the organizers), while for the state newspaper, *Le Soleil*, it was a brilliantly organized triumph; second, because I think the organization and nature of the festival can reveal important points about larger ideological issues. While in Dakar, I spent a day at the National Archives sifting through some of the papers from the 1966 Festival and was amazed at the meticulous nature of the planning: the copious correspondence, the attention to detail, and the selectivity with regard to who would be invited to participate. The 1966 event was quite clearly far better organized but also both much smaller and more highbrow in its tastes (Senghor allowed a section on popular music but it was marginal within the overall programme) than FESMAN 2010. The high tech, decentred and participatory qualities of the latter event stand as clear positives but it was also chaotic, ideologically incoherent, and its democratic tendencies can easily be read as populism and demagoguery: Wade's Senegal emerges from the festival as a hybrid mix of *dirigiste* state intervention sitting uneasily alongside a vaunted free-market spirit.

I came away from the Festival, my head buzzing with a series of questions. In 1966, Senghor knew exactly what he meant by 'arts nègres', but even though FESMAN 2010 retained these terms, it was quite clear that the organizers (perhaps unconsciously) were not solely interested in 'the arts' but rather in something much wider and more nebulous, that was loosely termed 'culture'. But what exactly did FESMAN 2010 mean by 'culture'? And how exactly would culture play a role in bringing about the 'development' that would underpin the African Renaissance? Again, we were on familiar territory here, for not only Senghor in 1966 but also Algeria's Houari Boumedienne at the *Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain*, held in Algiers in July 1969, claimed that culture and development went hand in hand and that culture should play an important part in creating a new, universal civilization. Fanon explored similar ideas in the conclusion to *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961): in the

aftermath of empire, a new humanism is required and culture is given a fundamental role in that process. The trouble is that, beyond the development of the creative industries, it has proven impossible to imagine practical ways in which culture might in reality bring about such a change.

In order to bring some sort of conclusion to these rather fragmentary reflections on FESMAN 2010, I would like to cite an incident from the 1966 festival. One of the most interesting ways in which FESMAN 1966 had raised thorny questions about the nature of culture arose in relation to the prizes awarded for literature and cinema. In the midst of the celebration of Senghorian Negritude, it was the self-educated, Marxist novelist Ousmane Sembene (a compatriot and arch-enemy of Senghor) who won one of the major prizes for literature for his novella, *Le Mandat*, an ironic critique of the failures of independence in Senegal (of which Senghor was President, let us not forget). Sembene, then just beginning to develop a parallel career as a filmmaker, also won the film prize for his beautiful film, *La Noire de*, about the powerful hold that France continued to play on the imagination of Africans. Where Senghor saw the Festival as the embodiment of his conception of an emerging Pan-African culture and the expression of Negritude, the prizes awarded to the socially and politically committed fiction of Sembene illustrated the extent to which rival visions of African culture were coming to the fore: for Sembene, racial solidarity counted far less than socio-economic ties linking together the poor and the exploited. If culture is linked to development for Sembene, it is culture that emerges from below rather than culture imposed from on high.

Should art and culture celebrate shared values or be used to cast a critical eye on problems in society? Should the artist be a servant of the state or remain permanently wary of the power of the state? Sitting in the audience at a 'Homage to Sembene and Djibril Diop Mambety' during FESMAN 2010, I suddenly found myself wishing that those two hugely talented mavericks of African cinema could have been there to cast their own quirky, critical and unwavering eyes on the festival. With their firm belief in the beauty and value of African culture, and their profound wariness of politicians, they might have presented a vision of the African Renaissance that refused to fall in line with calls for a state-defined package of policy documents and talking shops. In fact, despite attempts in the 'official' sections of FESMAN 2010 to impose a poorly defined but singular vision of black culture (not least at the 'conférence structurante'), it was for me the often dissenting, open-ended, inquiring, joyous and spontaneous nature of artistic and cultural expression that emerged as the defining feature of the festival. FESMAN 2010 was thus a highly significant forum that told us interesting and complex things about an elusive object known as 'black culture': it just happens, I would argue, that the things it told us were not those intended by President Wade. And I think that this is something of which Sembene and Mambety would have approved.

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‘Lancer, aujourd’hui, c’est créer l’événement’: Exoticism, *Engagement*, and Post-War Publishing Strategy

This article will trace the largely forgotten example of Christine Garnier, a journalist and best-selling author, who published several novels and books on travel and ethnography in the post-war period based on her time spent in West Africa.¹ In light of scholarly fascination with misattributed authorship in Camara Laye’s early novels, and ongoing research into the position(ing) of writing of, and on, Africa by metropolitan publishers,² the hoax surrounding authorial identity in Garnier’s first novel, published under an ‘African’ pseudonym by Bernard Grasset, strikes a dissonant chord. Stemming from a larger project on *édition engagée* in the post-war period in France, the aim here is to explore a link between Mongo Beti’s cutting assessment of French literary reception in his well-known article, ‘Afrique noire, littérature rose’, published in *Présence Africaine* in 1955, and Garnier’s bestsellers, *Va-t’en avec les tiens!* (1951) and *La Fête des sacrifices* (1959). Garnier’s later novel provides a rare example of popular writing that responds, albeit problematically, to the project of cultural valorization associated with many African writers during this period. Beti’s essay, key to understanding his early position in the literary field, offers a relational critique of this field that is closely attuned to structural inequalities underlying the production and reception of African fiction in the metropole. The present comparison resists exclusive racial, national or gender-based critical frameworks in order to recontextualize material features of this literary landscape by unpicking selected strategies of a prominent mainstream publisher in the field of cultural production.

In ‘Afrique noire, littérature rose’, Mongo Beti notes that ‘Il n’est guère, à notre connaissance, d’œuvre littéraire de qualité inspirée par l’Afrique Noire et écrite en langue française. Quand je dis œuvre de qualité, j’entends surtout une œuvre accueillie, connue, admise comme telle par le grand public’.³ Beti’s recourse to a quantitative definition of ‘qualité’—that is to say, ‘par le grand public’—indicates a concern regarding reception and subsequent valorization that characterized the work of politically engaged writers in the period leading to decolonization, though not often in such stark terms. While more refined definitions of ‘le grand public’ remain unclear in the absence of a thorough sociological study of the reception of African literature in the post-war period, Beti’s gesture towards immediate impact reminds readers of the frustrations faced by politically engaged writers regarding the ‘efficacité actuelle’ of their work.⁴ Beti’s article, best-known in conjunction with his barbed critique of Camara Laye’s *Le Regard du roi* (1954),⁵ provides an illuminating assessment of tensions in the literary field in this period, marked by debate over who could write what fiction about Africa, and for which readers. It seems clear that the political and cultural positioning of *éditeurs engagés* such as Alioune Diop, Pierre Seghers, or François Maspero, should be understood in relation to more commercially minded publishing activity. Janos Riesz has argued for the need to consider early African literature of the 1920s and 1930s alongside con-

* Bernard Grasset, *Lettre à André Gillon sur les conditions du succès en librairie* (Paris: Grasset, 1951), p. 11.

¹ *Le Fétichisme en Afrique noire* (1950), *Va t’en avec les tiens!* (1951), *Les Héros sont fatigués: Visages du Libéria* (1953), *La Fête des sacrifices* (1959), *Dakar* (1961).

² See Adele King, *Rereading Camara Laye* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); and F. Abiola Irele, ‘In Search of Camara Laye’, *Research in African Literatures*, 37 (2006), 110–27. Sociologically oriented studies of African literature in French in this period include: Romuald-Blaise Fonkoua, Pierre Halen and Katharina Städtler, *Les Champs littéraires africains*, *Lettres du Sud* (Paris: Karthala, 2001); Richard Watts, *Packaging Post/coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2005); V. Steemers, ‘Literary (Neo)colonialism: Publication and Critique in Metropolitan France of Four Francophone African Novels (1950–1970)’, unpublished PhD Thesis, Michigan State University, 2007; and Buata B. Malela, *Les Écrivains afro-antillais à Paris 1920–1960 stratégies et postures identitaires*, *Lettres du Sud* (Paris: Karthala, 2008).

³ Mongo Beti, ‘Afrique noire, littérature rose’, *Présence Africaine*, 2: 1–2 (1955), 133–45 (p. 133).

⁴ Beti, ‘Afrique noire, littérature rose’, p. 134.

⁵ Mongo Beti, ‘Le Regard du roi par Camara Laye’, *Présence Africaine*, 2: 1–2 (1955), 142–45.

temporaneous colonial 'hypotexte' in order to understand shared discourse and to refuse reductive readings of texts as products of a racially defined ontological essence.⁶ This article seeks to extend his argument to consider the material circumstances of late 'colonial' discursive production. Revisiting Garnier's problematic novels invites speculation on the lived connections between this mode of writing and parallel anti-colonial, anti-exoticist rhetoric.

In the post-war period, commercial editorial strategy continued to attract metropolitan readers with paratextual rhetoric of 'authenticité' and 'exotisme'. Sustained critique of the exoticizing gaze, notably by Frantz Fanon in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1951), has led, in part, to the eclipse of such texts amid the hierarchical preference for high-brow literary texts of resistance and perceived marginality in postcolonial literary studies.⁷ Far from being a blithe attempt to rehabilitate texts that undeniably continue to exert a certain discursive violence, this study of Garnier aims to locate Beti's polemical argument for social realism as literary strategy more clearly in the complex contours of the field of cultural production.⁸ Jean-Marc Moura has described the post-war period as an 'époque de silence, d'anomie [...] pour l'exotisme' that began in Western Europe with the advent of decolonization.⁹ As established by several important studies, including Moura's *La Littérature des lointains* (1998), the terms 'exotisme' and 'exoticism' remains 'sites of contested meanings',¹⁰ applied pejoratively to exclusionary discursive othering, and more neutrally to a Segalenian 'aesthetics of diversity'. According to Moura, 'exotisme' as literary strategy foundered in the post-war period as 'L'étranger colonisé, l'homme dominé d'hier, semble à ce moment sortir du champ de visibilité de l'écrivain européen, à la fois trop proche dans son immédiate violence et trop éloigné des canons par lesquels il avait été défini pour... des centaines d'années.'¹¹ Other examples of the post-war exotic include adventure stories in Henri Vernes's *Bob Morane* series, or the *Signe de piste* collection, illustrated by Pierre Joubert, which continued to stage Africa, and Africans, as a backdrop for narratives of European adventurers.¹² One text in the latter series, *Kel'lam fils d'Afrique* (1958), by Catholic missionary Jean-Marie Carret, was also published under an African pseudonym, Kindengve N'Djok, though the publication does not appear to have provoked the same reaction, or sales, as Garnier's text.

'Afrique noire, littérature rose' presents an urgently voiced *état des lieux* and manifesto for developing committed, realist African literature despite the obstacles faced in terms of reception. Beti attacks 'picturesque' writing and ethnographic representations of Africa by French and African writers, arguing that 'écrire sur l'Afrique Noire, c'est prendre parti pour ou contre la colonisation. Impossible de sortir de là'.¹³ For Beti, the negative effects of colonization were omnipresent in African societies, and therefore must be so in writing about Africa. Naming Garnier's novel among others, he suggests that the political and aesthetic demands of a largely European readership have led to an opposition between 'pittoresque' and realist literary discourses on Sub-Saharan Africa that is perpetuated by European cultural producers. His insistence that 'littérature de qualité' is

⁶ János Riesz, 'Littérature coloniale et littérature africaine: hypotexte et hypertexte', in *Les champs littéraires africaines*, ed. by Romuald-Blaise Fonkoua (Paris: Karthala, 2001), pp. 115–34.

⁷ See Chris Bongie, *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/colonial Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), *passim*.

⁸ For a detailed overview of this methodological approach see Pierre Bourdieu, 'Le champ littéraire', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 89 (1989), 3–46.

⁹ Jean-Marc Moura, *La Littérature des lointains: histoire de l'exotisme européen au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1998), p. 197.

¹⁰ Charles Forsdick, *Travel in Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Cultures: The Persistence of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 49. See also Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 1–32; Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), pp. 295–386; and Jennifer Yee, 'French Theory and the Exotic', in *Postcolonial Thought in the French-speaking World*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 185–94.

¹¹ Moura, *La Littérature des lointains*, p. 198.

¹² Alain Gout and Alain Jamot, *Pierre Joubert, 70 ans d'illustration pour 'Signe de piste', Tome 1, 1937–1955* (Sens: Delahaye, 2005).

¹³ Beti, 'Afrique noire, littérature rose', p. 138.

above all measured by the size of its immediate readership goes on to state that, 'au point de vue de l'efficacité, à quoi sert-il qu'un chef-d'œuvre ait été écrit ou même publié en 1955 s'il ne sera connu, lu par le public qu'en l'an 2000?'.¹⁴ In light of recent studies on the resituating of anti-colonial rhetoric within postcolonial studies, this sentence provokes necessary reflection, while re-confirming Beti's commitment to the 'efficacité actuelle' of literature.¹⁵ Bourdieusian analysis of mechanisms of postcolonial literary reception in the work of Graham Huggan, Robert Fraser, and Sarah Brouillette, focus largely on the systems that produce, disseminate, and commodify literature published *after* the historical events of decolonization.¹⁶ Beti's conviction that the tastes and political sensitivities of a European readership and, as a result, European publishers, were shaping the output of African writers is an important reminder of earlier material realities, frustrations, and anxieties of anti-colonial authorship. He describes Garnier's novel *Va-t'en avec les tiens!* as an example of the 'livres réactionnaires et racistes auxquels les vitrines des librairies nous ont habitués' claiming that the book, whose author is not named, was penned by the clerk of a bourgeois 'colon' seeking glorification of his work in the colonies in print.¹⁷ Although the significance of Beti's misidentification of Garnier should not be overplayed, her novels do offer a rare example of writing by a woman in the decolonizing context, and a more complex textual and paratextual parallel than Beti's dismissal suggests.

Va-t'en avec les tiens! was released in Grasset's prestigious *Cahiers verts* series under the name Doëllé. Founded in 1921, this series had included works by François Mauriac, Jean Giraudoux, and André Malraux, among others. Following the infamy of his trial in 1948 for collaboration with the occupying forces, Bernard Grasset was eager to restore his best-known collection and salvage his reputation.¹⁸ Evidence suggests that the calibre and success of the series faded after the war, but its distinctive plain green covers still differentiated Garnier's book from the more garish covers of popular romance and adventure fiction such as Alsatia's *Signe de piste* collection. Garnier's book had an initial print-run of 1900, but went on to sell 135,000 copies in its first year, also winning the *Grand prix littéraire de l'A.O.F.*, which had been awarded the previous year to Ousmane Socé Diop's *Karim*.¹⁹ By way of comparison, Beti's *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* sold 17,000 copies in its French edition between 1956 and 1970, while Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse* sold 500,000 copies in 1954.²⁰ Sales figures are an indicator of commercial success, not of aesthetic or subjective 'literary' value, nor necessarily of readership. While an empirical view of reception is arguably limited, and finding reliable national and international sales figures often impossible, Garnier's success, termed 'phenomenal' in a *Time* magazine review of the English translation, does seem significant in light of Beti's exposition of a quantitatively defined 'littérature de qualité'.

Garnier's textual and paratextual play on an 'authentic' first-person African narrator frames a narrative driven by themes of irreconcilable cultural/racial difference and clichés of black female desire, coloured by descriptive tics of flora, fauna, climate, indigenous 'irrationality' and animistic religion. Garnier's narrator, Doëllé, is a nurse in the maternity ward of a Togolese village, as introduced through her 'authorial' preface. The narrative recounts her alienated experience of living

¹⁴ Beti, 'Afrique noire, littérature rose', p. 133.

¹⁵ See, for example, Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 10, and Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, pp. 1–39.

¹⁶ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001); Robert Fraser, *Book History through Postcolonial Eyes: Rewriting the Script* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers and the Global Literary Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹⁷ Beti, 'Afrique noire, littérature rose', p. 138.

¹⁸ Bernard Baritaud, 'La renaissance des Cahiers verts après la Seconde Guerre mondiale', in *Daniel Halévy, Henri Petit et les Cahiers verts*, ed. by Toby Garfitt (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 85–93; and Anne Simonin, 'L'édition littéraire', in *L'Édition française depuis 1945*, ed. by Pascal Fouché (Paris: Cercle de la Librairie, 1998), pp. 30–88.

¹⁹ <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817006,00.html> [accessed 21 February 2011].

²⁰ Statistics taken from Heinemann African Writers Series archive, Reading University. See also Jean-Yves Mollier, *Édition, presse et pouvoir en France au XX^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), p. 239.

between colonial and indigenous communities. Her desire to be accepted in the white colonial community, ideally through partnership with a European man, culminates in her failed plot to poison the recently arrived Parisian wife of the French doctor which forms the central intrigue of the novel. Grasset's decision to place a black mask on his white author is thus reflected and reversed through Garnier's protagonist, who seeks, and ultimately fails, to assimilate herself with her white employers.²¹

To an extent, the text typifies Fanon's problematic diagnosis of racial pathology and female desire in this period, as developed through his readings of contemporaneous novels by Abdoulaye Sadjı and Mayotte Capécia.²² Sadjı's *Nini*, which appeared in a special issue of *Présence Africaine* on 'Les Ecrivains noirs' alongside an extract from Beti's *Ville Cruelle*, presents another problematic portrait of a 'mulâtresse' and remains in print today.²³ Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis Martiniquaise*, castigated by Fanon as an 'ouvrage au rabais',²⁴ has been carefully revealed as a pseudonymous concoction by French publishers, based on the memoirs of Martiniquan Lucette Ceranus Combette and her lover, a French lieutenant. As A. James Arnold concludes, 'Il est temps de reconnaître que *Je suis Martiniquaise* est un roman français, conçu par des Français qui ont pillé les mémoires d'un autre Français, et qu'ils ont destiné au public français le plus large possible.'²⁵ This parallel suggests that Grasset's editorial strategy was not an isolated case and that authorial identity, which continues to be a charged topic in postcolonial criticism, should be understood in the performative dimensions of its material construction.

Garnier's narrative is structured by a parallel between Doëllé's beauty and that of the doctor's wife, Urgèle, who arrives from France and proceeds to enchant the men of the local colonial administration, including Doëllé's lover, the magistrate. Doëllé's resulting jealousy leads to her attempt to poison her rival. Her action is checked, however, by her realization that this action would represent a return to the traditions, the 'mailles d'un vieil idéal dépassé', which, as a self-declared 'évoluée', she has renounced.²⁶ As the narrating subject, Doëllé is placed in a notional position of power over Urgèle. Her narrative frequently lingers over descriptions of Urgèle's clothes and material possessions:

Des valises béaient à terre, lourdes de parfums inconnus. Des robes de soie et de velours étiraient leurs plis sur la cotonnade fanée des fauteuils... Parmi les ciselures du Dahomey, se lovaient, comme des serpents guindés, des colliers de Paris... je demeurais saisie de trouble. Car le monde qu'elle avait apporté dans ses bagages, je ne le connaîtrais jamais!²⁷

Unlike Sadjı's *Nini*, which ends with his desperate protagonist packing her bags for France, Garnier's novel concludes with the departure of the European characters and Doëllé's hope that it will be her son instead who will go to France and develop 'une attitude désinvolte [qui] sera pour moi celle d'un étranger'.²⁸ Despite giving her protagonist an education, and a Portuguese heritage which lightens her skin, Garnier erects insurmountable barriers along racial and cultural lines between her characters. These barriers are reinforced by the paratextual framing of the narrative

²¹ Garnier's autobiography describes Grasset's sizable editorial input; see Christine Garnier, *Jusqu'ou voient mes yeux*, Collection Vécu (Paris: Laffont, 1975), p. 89.

²² Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1992; first publ. 1951), pp. 33–50.

²³ Abdoulaye Sadjı, Mongo Beti and Jean Malonga, *Trois écrivains noirs* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955). *Va-t'en avec les tiens!* was recently considered for Harmattan's *Autrement Mêmes* series but as it is still under copyright the project is in stasis. My thanks to Lourdes Rubiales and Roger Little for this information.

²⁴ Fanon, p. 34.

²⁵ A. James Arnold, "'Mayotte Capécia": De la parabole biblique à *Je suis Martiniquaise*', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 305 (2003), 35–48. See also Christiane P. Makward, *Mayotte Capécia, ou, L'aliénation selon Fanon*, Collection Monde caribéen (Paris: Karthala, 1999).

²⁶ Christine Garnier, *Va-t'en avec les tiens!: roman* (Paris: Grasset, 1951), p. 8.

²⁷ Garnier, *Va-t'en avec les tiens!: roman*, p. 19.

²⁸ Garnier, *Va-t'en avec les tiens!: roman*, p. 302.

with Garnier's appended glossary of terms. Richard Watts has used Genette's concepts of epitext and peritext to examine the ideology of colonial literary patronage and preface-writing in Francophone writing, together with issues of gender. The 'mediation and translation of the text's foreignness' for a largely metropolitan French readership he describes, provides important context for Beti's polemical call for realist 'littérature de qualité', as a counterpoint to bestselling 'pittoresque' representations.²⁹ As Huggan comments in his critique of the 'postcolonial exotic', such apparatus may be seen as a way of 'domesticating' the text, making it available for what might be euphemistically called "general consumption".³⁰ Garnier's narrative investigation of failed cross-cultural understanding between Doëllé and Urgèle is reflected by this manifestation of the need of the implied reader to understand cultural difference by grasping anthropological facts. In this sense the text is precursor of the 'anthropological exotic' defined by Huggan as a postcolonial phenomenon,³¹ posing the question of how far the function and construction of the exotic shifted during this earlier period of political upheaval and cultural reappraisal.

A survey of press coverage in the Grasset archives shows that Garnier's pseudonymous identity was soon uncovered.³² This unmasking is seen in reviews of Garnier's novel and their reaction to what Genette terms the 'effet pseudonomique', in other words, the effect of being conscious of pseudonymity.³³ Some reviewers express frustration, even disappointment, in knowing the true identity of the author. In *Le Monde*, Emile Henriot claims, 'comme ce qu'elle exprime n'est pas sans valeur, sous son apparence individuelle, romanesque et sentimentale, on aurait préféré savoir de l'auteur du livre lui-même ce qu'il comporte d'*authentique* ou d'interprète.'³⁴ In *Liberté de Normandie*, one of numerous regional newspapers represented in Grasset's press dossier, the reviewer François Raynal writes, 'ce n'est pas une Noire qui a vue les Blancs, mais une Blanche qui fait parler—fort bien, trop bien—une Noire',³⁵ suggesting a perceived qualitative linguistic disjuncture between the European narrative and the voice of its subaltern subject/object. Elsewhere, Garnier is compared to Boris Vian, pseudonymous author of bestselling *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* (1946), and to Claire de Duras, whose *Ourika* (1823) was a runaway success as the first text to ventriloquize a black female narrator.³⁶ The 'effet pseudonomique' of Grasset's decision underlines the distance between the verisimilitude of Garnier's narrative technique and implied authorial preface, and the reality of the production and reception of her text.

A brief anonymous review in *Le Canard enchaîné* complains, 'on eût tellement préféré saluer en ce livre un nouveau Batouala'.³⁷ René Maran, whose imbrication with debates on 'authority' and 'authenticity' in his prefaces to *Batouala* (1921) is better known, reviewed Garnier's text in March 1951, both in print and on the radio. In his radio script, he declared that the novel, 's'il n'est pas un attrape-nigaud, confirme de façon singulière, avec un talent nourri du savoir le plus sensible et de la plus sensible mesure, ce qu'une logique dénuée de tout parti pris racial permettait depuis longtemps de prévoir.'³⁸ He praises the 'valeur exceptionnelle' of 'ce très beau livre, discret, humain, tout plein de résonances nuancées et délicates, et qui pénètre au plus secret de l'âme et de la pensée nègres'. However, in an article published three months later, while commenting positively on her style, he laments, 'on ne voit pas très bien pourquoi son auteur a préféré signer ce roman du pseudonyme de Doëllé, alors qu'elle a fait paraître, il y a 3 mois sous [...] son vrai nom, *Le Fétichisme*

²⁹ Watts, p. 9.

³⁰ Huggan, p. 272.

³¹ Huggan, p. 50.

³² All press articles taken from Christine Garnier press dossiers, Éditions Grasset archive, Institut Mémoires de l'Édition contemporaine (IMEC), Caen. Where not cited, full article details were not available in the archive.

³³ Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987). p. 48.

³⁴ Emile Henriot, 'La Vie Littéraire', *Le Monde*, 3 May 1951, IMEC.

³⁵ François Raynal, 'Livres en liberté', *Liberté de Normandie*, 20 March 1951, IMEC.

³⁶ Robert Kanters, 'Lettres de Femmes', *La Gazette des Lettres*, 15 May 1951, IMEC.

³⁷ Anon., *Le Canard enchaîné*, 14 May 1951, IMEC.

³⁸ René Maran, 'Causerie radiodiffusée sur ondes courtes le 28 March 1951', IMEC.

en Afrique Noire, le savant ouvrage qu'elle a écrit en collaboration avec M. Jean Fralon.'³⁹ Maran draws attention to Garnier's qualification to write about Africa. His shift places the novel firmly in the line of 'romans exotiques', arguing that its contents are opposed 'avec une secrète mais ferme douceur à toute combinaison ethnique.' Maran thus engages with the themes in the novel and its racist tensions, despite the residual sense of paratextual ethnographic authority.

Grasset's decisions reveal a deliberate editorial intervention to create the illusion of an 'authentic' female African voice, eighteen years before the first novel in French by an African woman, Thérèse Kuoh-Moukoury's *Rencontres Essentielles* (1969), was published.⁴⁰ His commercial goals suggest a perceived demand among the intended metropolitan readership to hear such *témoignages* through a guise of 'authenticity'. The issue of 'authenticity', disputed in postcolonial theory for its reductive bind to authorial biography and essentialized identity, overlaps with that of 'authority'. Both are touted in Garnier's numerous press reviews as a positive (and apparently lucrative) paratextual attributes for the fictional representation of Africa. According to Deborah Root, 'authenticity' is now a chimeric term which 'does not exist in any absolute, pure form outside the endless debates of academics'.⁴¹ At the time of its publication, sustaining a binary distinction between authentic and inauthentic authorship played a vital, albeit temporary, role in generating discourse about Garnier's first 'African' novel. In the same year, Grasset wrote in his *Lettre à André Gillon* that 'le talent n'est pas un fait, étant toujours discutable. Il y faut ajouter pour lancer une œuvre, une chose indiscutable, comme est sa publication dans une collection recherchée, le fait que l'auteur a seize ans, ou qu'il est sourd-muet, ou qu'il se trouve en constante dispute avec sa femme'.⁴² Such tactics, reminiscent of a twenty-first-century public relations, validate Bourdieu's assertion that 'the production of discourse (critical, historical etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work'.⁴³

Garnier's novel-writing developed during the decade, notably with *La Fête des sacrifices* (1959), which explores themes of interracial relationships and the tensions experienced by African elites educated in Europe on their return to Africa. The polyphonic structure of this text and range of precise reference marks a clear difference in approach from *Va-t'en avec les tiens!*. Written on the cusp of decolonization, the novel is set in Belgium and Dakar and tells the story of Thierno, an expert in African masks, working at the Institut français d'Afrique noire (IFAN) and his partner Awa, who works as a secretary at the Dakar-Niger railway office and is also president of the women's Club de la Liberté. This urban association undertakes consciousness-raising missions to improve the situation of rural women. At a meeting described near the start of the book she argues in favour of African women's rights, declaring, 'Vous, les hommes d'Afrique, vous n'avez qu'un mot aux lèvres: Indépendance. Nous, les femmes, opprimées, colonisées depuis des siècles, nous crions aussi: Indépendance! Mais pas à la France — à vous!'.⁴⁴ In a press interview, Garnier claims anthropological authority for her novel, based on meetings she had attended with women in Dakar 'qui veulent devenir les égales des hommes dans le domaine de la politique, du syndicalisme'.⁴⁵ When Thierno meets Belgian redhead Irène, who moves to Dakar to marry him, Awa is thrown into a position of uncertainty and, against her declared proto-feminist ideals, she decides to marry a polygamist. The narrative then develops through alternate chapters told from the perspective of each woman as their ideals and expectations are tested by the actions of their partners.

³⁹ René Maran, 'Le roman d'une métisse', June 1951, IMEC.

⁴⁰ This book was written in the 1950s but failed to find a publisher; see Beverley Ormerod Noakes and Jean-Marie Volet, *Romancières africaines d'expression française: le sud du Sahara* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), p. 12.

⁴¹ Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996), p. 78.

⁴² Grasset, p. 17.

⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. by Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 35.

⁴⁴ Christine Garnier, *La Fête des sacrifices: roman* (Paris: Grasset, 1959), p. 48.

⁴⁵ Philippe Diolé, 'Demain l'Afrique devra compter avec les femmes', *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 19 November 1959, IMEC.

This text is significant in its self-conscious references to the independence movement and African writers and film makers, which indicate shifting coordinates in the cultural field of production. The conversations between Thierno's Senegalese colleagues, reported via Irène's narrative voice, provide a contrast to the stock 'colonial' characters. In a central section, one character, an anonymous film maker, asks:

Ne croyez-vous pas que par le film nous pouvons aussi aider à l'émancipation, à l'élévation de notre peuple? Senghor, Birago Diop, Camara Laye, Ferdinand Ayono [sic], Sembène Ousmane, ont fait connaître, par leurs écrits, les souffrances et les élans de notre Afrique, mais ils ont touché une élite, non la masse. Il faut mettre cette littérature en image, la traduire dans tous les dialectes, utiliser le film pour éduquer les peuplades les plus lointaines.⁴⁶

This passage seems to echo directly those of contemporary progressive African cultural producers such as Paulin Soumanou Vieyra and Sembène himself, and forces the reader to locate Garnier's discourse explicitly alongside that of the African authors mentioned. The character then goes on to criticize cinematic depictions of Africa, citing points of reference within popular Western culture with which the implied reader might be more familiar:

C'est qu'on a projeté sur les écrans trop de films comme *Tam-Tam*, *La Reine noire*, *Mogambo*, *Safari*, et j'en passe. C'est que les films qui ont pour cadre l'Afrique sont presque toujours sans nuances, bourrés d'inexactitudes, oscillant entre la pornographie et le style music-hall.⁴⁷

By fictionalizing contemporary discussions between black intellectuals regarding the new wave of cultural production that must accompany independence, the text is suggestive of immediate responses to the changing coordinates in the field of cultural production. Irène's observations and reactions, however, typify one definition of exoticism that posits African 'authenticity' as a salve to the materialism of Europe. She adheres firmly to an essentialized binary division between Africans and Europeans: 'Cet instinct qui vous unit si profondément aux forces de la nature... Tout ce que nous avons perdu, nous!... Le matérialisme dévore l'Occident. Je crois, je suis persuadée qu'un jour ce sera vous qui nous délivrerez de notre esclavage'.⁴⁸ Garnier's discussion of gender inequality in this text, an infrequent feature of contemporaneous anti-colonial writing, seems anomalous in the discourse of the period. While arguably groundbreaking in terms of its description of the emergence of an African feminist consciousness in published discourses on Sub-Saharan Africa, reading Garnier's description of Irène's idealistic European viewpoint from a postcolonial perspective consistently reveals the problems of applying universal ideas of equality to other cultures. This text presents what might tentatively be termed an anti-colonial exotic. Such a mode, through its representation of cultural difference in this period, reveals the changing politics of popular representation of Sub-Saharan Africa underlying the context of its discursive and material production.

Unlike Garnier, whose 'effet pseudonomique' rested on the inauthenticity of her proposed authenticity, Beti's choice of pseudonyms (Eza Boto, then Mongo Beti) shows a desire to locate that nominal aspect of his identity explicitly in Cameroon. As R. P. S. Drumont relates in *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*: 'Boto, Boto, tout le monde s'appelle Boto dans ce sacré pays'.⁴⁹ Beti, meanwhile, refers to an ethnic group and region in the southern part of the country. In the 1950s, Beti's fiction and non-fiction writing revealed his awareness of the hierarchies of cultural producers shaping the representation of Africa to a largely European readership. Garnier's largely-forgotten bestsellers provide a thought-provoking comparison. While these texts are not militantly anti-colonial in themes or content, locating them relatively in the metropolitan field of cultural production

⁴⁶ Garnier, *La Fête des sacrifices*, p. 193.

⁴⁷ Garnier, *La Fête des sacrifices*, p. 194.

⁴⁸ Garnier, *La Fête des sacrifices*, p. 196.

⁴⁹ Mongo Beti, *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1993; first publ. 1956), p. 78.

provides a rare example of a metropolitan woman writer engaging with the politics of representing Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s. Despite the problematic suggestion that interracial relationships are unsustainable in the contemporary climate, Garnier's novels blur the line Beti sets out between racist, picturesque, colonial texts on the one hand and anti-colonial realist writing on the other.

The arguably low-brow nature of Garnier's texts should not distract from their prominent position as bestselling examples of a reformulated exoticism. *La Fête des sacrifices*, with its deliberate juxtaposition of African and European female narrative voices, and passing references to African authors and the *négritude* movement, is, in some ways, a more progressive popular novel about Africa. That Garnier's novels have been largely forgotten, since their last reprinting by Presses Pocket in 1968, suggests the time-bound appeal of their depiction of European presence in Africa in the period of decolonization. Investigating literary reception in the post-war period continues to present methodological challenges which account for the lack of a more rigorous sociology of literature of the period. Nevertheless, examples of the commodification of constructed difference in the post-war period form part of an ongoing assessment of the mechanisms and strategies of literary production and reception of colonial and postcolonial writing. Relocating selected texts produced in the metropole, including those dismissed by Beti and by postcolonial critics, supplements our historical understanding of material tensions in the field of cultural production. Such links nuance postcolonial readings of anti-colonial resistance writing by recontextualizing the narrow discursive matrix from which a heterogeneous metropolitan readership drew often-limited impressions of Sub-Saharan Africa.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Sassine: Saint Monsieur Baly, Glasgow Introductory Guides, 56. By CHARLOTTE BAKER. Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2010. 52 pp. Pb £6.00. ISBN: 978-0-85261-916-2

Recent additions to the Glasgow Guides series have dealt almost exclusively with texts from the Francophone canon rather than from metropolitan French literature. Whether this is the result of a strategic decision on the part of the editor, or whether it simply reflects the dynamism of Francophone postcolonial studies in general, is difficult to tell. What is sure is that Charlotte Baker's succinct presentation of Williams Sassine's novel, *Saint Monsieur Baly*, is a very welcome addition to the list. Sassine was an important writer but one who never courted celebrity or engaged with the Francophone literary machine that might have helped 'package' him for wider consumption. Hence, he remains a peripheral figure on the broader French literary scene and since, as Baker points out, only one novel, *Wirriyamu*, has ever been translated into English, he is virtually unknown to that hugely influential readership of monolingual Anglophones. Baker's book is therefore the first substantive study of Sassine in English and it provides a very useful introduction to both the overall output of the writer and his somewhat neglected first novel. True to the spirit of this series of guides, Baker provides ample contextualizing material to ensure readers are able to situate the text historically and in a geo-political frame while also understanding Sassine's importance on the surprisingly rich Guinean literary scene.

The presentation of the novel itself explores the major themes that preoccupy Sassine and the tensions that he identifies in dealing with them. The guide rightly links Baly's pedagogic ambitions to his frustrated desire to father children of his own, while associating the messianic nature of his crusade to build a new school with his urge to create a new religion rather than with any conventional notion of 'sainthood'. Sassine develops these two thematic strands, pedagogy and religion, in highly complex and subtle ways. As he enters retirement, Baly effectively re-invents himself through his project. The outward-facing, social mission to relieve poverty and bring enlightenment to the masses is articulated with reference to a developing personal struggle, namely Baly's attempt to come to terms with his past. His peculiarly utopian vision grows stronger as the novel progresses yet it exists within, and in spite of, an acutely dystopian setting. Baker's analysis goes some way to demonstrating how this personal drama is indissociable from a civic response to circumstances: his rejection of a degraded political and cultural order and his refusal of prevailing orthodoxies (pedagogic, ideological, religious) constitute a type of political action, just as they posit a syncretic type of religiosity, but they are anything but conventional. Whereas the novel is able to employ understatement, allusion and poetic licence to suggest the complexity of Baly's position, Baker has the difficult task of conveying to readers how these various thematic components are deployed in the novel. She does this with great aplomb. Her sensitive reading of the text is informed by an impressive knowledge of the wider context of Francophone literature.

Perhaps a little oddly, Baker deals with Sassine's obsession with physical degradation and decay in a final section entitled 'Narrative structure and form'. The metaphorical significance of the flies that feed on the rotting body of 'l'homme pourri' permeates the whole novel but there is no attempt by Baker to argue that it should indeed be considered as a structuring device. This is possibly a missed opportunity. It could be argued that Baly is a latter-day existentialist hero, choosing to live on the knife-edge of ambivalence and uncertainty in a fundamentally alien universe. Baly's naivety and his increasingly childlike hopefulness are examples of a character embracing the only ethical response he has come to find acceptable: that of repeatedly taking the risk of committing wholeheartedly to a belief in 'humanity', however degraded. It would, however, be inappropriate to dwell on aspects of Sassine's novel that Baker has not explored in the limited space available to her. The book she has written will surely serve to prompt new readers to pick up

Sassine's novel and entice those who already know his work to revisit it.

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Soccer Empire: The World Cup and the Future of France. By LAURENT DUBOIS. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010. 352 pp. Hb £30.95. ISBN: 978-0-520-25928-7

In the years since the victory of the French football team in the 1998 World Cup, the relationship between sport, race and empire has come to occupy a prominent position within many socio-political studies of France. The multiracial nature of the team has led to a situation in which a bewildering and often contradictory array of metaphorical associations have become attached to *les Bleus*: for Le Pen and the Front National, the team symbolized the decline of France which was deemed to be a direct result of mass immigration; for some liberal commentators, the team was proof of France's vibrant multicultural diversity; while still others, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the 1998 victory, saw in the national team a vindication of French integration policies.

Laurent Dubois' brilliant new volume attempts to trace these metaphors, exploring the ways in which meanings have become attached to the French team, and detailing how the highly charged debates around these differing interpretations shed light on questions of diversity, integration and exclusion, as well as the complex legacies of slavery and empire in contemporary France. Politicians, activists, public intellectuals and academics have all grappled with these questions, and Dubois is a highly informed, witty and intelligent guide through these debates, which crisscross a wide range of fields from sociological analysis of the *banlieue* to the sometimes cliché-ridden world of football biographies. For the non-American reader, the sections describing actual football matches can at times make it seem almost as though one is reading about football in a foreign language (plays, overtime, soccer, etc.) but Dubois clearly knows and understands the game—despite the occasional lapse (the AC Milan player Gennaro Gattuso is not a defender)—, even if his main focus is in fact on the ramifications off the pitch rather than on that which happens on it.

The opening chapters delve back into the history of football and the contribution of colonized footballers during the colonial period, but the primary focus of the volume is—as the sub-title suggests—very much on the period since 1998. The chapters generally follow one of two patterns: they either begin with a key moment from a football match, and its socio-political consequences and interpretations are then explored in detail; or they begin with controversial incidents from postcolonial France and then relate them to the world of football. For example, Lilian Thuram's goals in the 1998 semi-final and Zinedine Zidane's goals in the final are preludes to explorations of the lives of the two players; the aborted 'friendly' match between France and Algeria on 6 October 2001 prompts reflection on the complex relationship between the two countries and on the position of the population of North African origin in France; even Zidane's infamous *coup de boule* in the 2006 final is analysed at great length for the multiple social, cultural and political debates to which it has given rise.

The book may be interested in 'big' historical questions, but it also goes to great lengths to get close to the lived realities of those whose stories it tells. Essentially, Dubois seeks to combine complex historical, political and sociological questions with a lively account of the excitement and passion that can be generated by football: in fact, he comes clean from the start in the preface to the volume and reveals himself as a football fan and a supporter of *les Bleus*. Consequently, his accounts of the lives of players are shaped by anecdotes that have been culled from press reports, player

interviews or (un)official biographies. At times, this 'backstory' can be highly illuminating, providing the reader with a feel for the social contexts from which many of the players emerged in the *banlieues* of Paris or Marseille, as well as the fascinating individual stories of certain individuals, such as Marcel Desailly's move from the streets of Accra to northern France with his mother and her white, French partner. On occasions, though, the desire to give the reader the human story can seem slightly excessive (the passage on Thuram's love of salad at World Cup 98 springs to mind...), and it might have been better to be more selective in the use of certain sources: some football biographies are not necessarily the source of the greatest insight, wisdom or even factual accuracy on the nature of the game and its socio-cultural relevance.

In this context, it should be noted that this is a very handsome volume and the publisher obviously intended that the book should have crossover appeal to a non-academic audience. This is clearly echoed in the style and form of the book and Dubois is to be commended for reaching out so successfully beyond the usual audience for such work. Curiously, though, for a volume, that is so well produced in other ways, the final editing process appears to have been slightly rushed, as there are some jarring inconsistencies in the text: for example, the date of the Heysel disaster shifts at one point from its actual date in 1985 to 1983, and France are stated at different moments in the volume to have defeated Portugal in both the quarter-final and the semi-final of the 2006 World Cup.

This complex tale of football, race and empire features a wide range of often fascinating characters but two figures emerge as the main protagonists: Lilian Thuram and Zinedine Zidane. They were very different as players and they also took diverging approaches to the demands that they respond to some of the metaphorical appropriations of *les Bleus*. Thuram, who was born in Guadeloupe and moved to the suburbs of Paris as a young boy, was the hero of the 1998 semi-final. He has used the symbolic capital acquired through his role on the team to act as a spokesman for ethnic minorities in France, which has led him into heated public debates with Nicolas Sarkozy, among others. Zinedine Zidane is the child of Algerian immigrants and he grew up in the Marseille suburb of Castellane; the hero of the 1998 final, he was the talismanic player of the team for almost a decade and has found himself at the centre of debates about identity and race, and, in particular, the complex relationship between France and Algeria. Uncomfortable in the role of spokesperson, Zidane has largely refused to comment on social, political or historical issues, which in turn has created a seemingly endless swirl of myths, half-truths and symbolic appropriations of his actions. The material on these two players is perhaps the most illuminating in the volume as a whole with Dubois expertly handling the shift between the football pitch and the society around it.

In conclusion, this is an entertaining and intellectually compelling volume, which draws out the centrality of football to contemporary debates about race and the colonial legacy in France. Dubois is one of the most interesting of the new historians of French colonialism and his work is a model of how historical research can throw light on contemporary debates. *Soccer Empire* is a very important contribution to the field and I hope that it attracts the wide audience it deserves.

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Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda: Dismembering and Remembering Traumatic History. By ALEXANDRE DAUGE-ROTH. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010. 291 pp. Hb £44.95. ISBN: 0739112295

Among the abundance of works across a wide range of disciplines which have already been published on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Alexandre Dauge-Roth's monograph is the first comprehensive study of both literary and filmic representations of the genocide. Drawing on Holocaust studies and on theories of trauma, it examines testimonial, literary, theatrical and cinematic responses to the genocide, making it an essential point of reference for any scholar seeking to enhance his or her understanding of the genocide and its representations.

The monograph comprises eighteen short chapters grouped under three broad headings: 'The Testimonial Encounter'; 'Dismembering Remembering. "Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember"'; and 'Screening Memory and (Un)Framing Forgetting: Filming Genocide in Rwanda'. The first section analyses a selection of the testimonies of survivors published within the Francophone world. The second explores the fictional works bearing witness to the genocide written by Francophone African authors as part of the Fest' Africa initiative, 'Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire'. The third section looks at seven feature films portraying the genocide which have been produced by Western directors.

In his sensitive analysis of the testimonies of survivors, Dauge-Roth moves away from the widely accepted view that testimony functions as a form of catharsis, to consider instead testimony as a dialogic space in which survivors can negotiate their trauma on their own terms. He identifies what he calls 'enunciative trauma' (p. 44), experienced by survivors who are being silenced by discourses claiming to speak in their name. Envisaging testimony as a form of social performance, Dauge-Roth's analysis is centred primarily on the play by the Belgian collective Groupov, *Rwanda 94. An Attempt at Symbolic Reparation to the Dead, for Use by the Living*, which aims to counter this enunciative trauma by giving a voice to both survivors and the dead themselves. He examines how the encounter by the audience with what he calls the 'ob-scene' (p. 48) experience of genocide forces them to assume a position of 'hospitality' (p. 49)—understood as an 'interruption' of their own 'cultural scene' (p. 51)—and become co-witnesses of the traumatic experience.

Dauge-Roth devotes his second section to the literature published as part of the Fest' Africa project, 'Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire', texts which are also the subject of Josias Semujanga's *Le génocide, sujet de fiction?* (2008). Ten African authors travelled to Rwanda in 1998, visiting genocide memorial sites and meeting with survivors. The resulting novels, essays, and travel narratives have been crucial in raising the visibility of the genocide in the Francophone world and generating a space for public dialogue. This section of Dauge-Roth's monograph looks at how the authors respond to the suffering of survivors and how they position themselves within the existing mediations of the genocide. Dauge-Roth chooses to focus in particular on Véronique Tadjo's *L'Ombre d'Imana: Voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda* (2000), Koulsy Lamko's *La Phalène des collines* (2000), and Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi: le livre des ossements* (2000). By examining the literary strategies adopted by these authors to convey faithfully the experiences of survivors, Dauge-Roth addresses broader questions about whether literature is an adequate medium for testifying to the traumatic past of genocide. Despite the inability of the authors to comprehend fully the traumatic experience of survivors, Dauge-Roth shows these fictional narratives to be instrumental in seeking political recognition of the victims and addressing the multiple challenges of the legacy of the genocide.

Dauge-Roth also questions whether the seven fictional films analysed in his third section successfully fulfil the duty to remember. He distinguishes two 'pedagogical moments', 'historical summaries' and 'informative dialogues' (p. 196), which the directors use to transmit knowledge about the genocide to the Western viewers. However, according to Dauge-Roth, the films seem to be governed more by cultural expectations and cinematic conventions than by a desire to present a comprehensive understanding of the genocide. Dauge-Roth evaluates the 'realist esthetic' (p. 177)

put forward in the films, showing it to be deceptive and, at times, even reinforcing negationist discourses. This occurs, for example, through the introduction of fictional Western characters (in Michael Caton-Jones's *Shooting Dogs* (2005)), or an exceptional heroic local figure (in Terry George's *Hotel Rwanda* (2004)) with whom the audience can identify. Nevertheless, despite their many pitfalls, these films manage to transcend the dualistic view of Rwandan society—deconstructing the binary division between Hutu and Tutsi—and have the capacity to create an ‘unprecedented visibility and memorial conscience’ (p. 222) of the genocide, successfully bridging the gap between Rwanda and the West.

Dauge-Roth concludes with a reflection on the current situation of cohabitation in Rwanda, focusing in particular on the politics of reconciliation and the alienation of the survivors within contemporary Rwandan society. He addresses the silencing power exerted toward those who embody a disturbing experience, and forces us—the Western audience—to confront our own complicity in this process.

Representations of the Rwanda genocide are too often concerned with a quest for the ‘origin’ of the genocide, reducing the ‘tragedy’ to interethnic violence. In *Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda* Dauge-Roth effectively shows that these consensual narratives do not take into account the complex social, political, and historical factors that, over a number of decades, made the genocide possible. He calls, rather, for a ‘self-reflexive work of remembering’ (p. 56), challenging accepted, harmonizing narratives of the genocide. The large selection of texts and films analysed in this book are representations that do not simply respond to a ‘duty to remember’ (p. 57); they also are all self-reflexive works which seek to position the audience as heirs to the genocide. In other words, we, the audience, are implicated in the testimony and must recognize that the traumatic legacy of the genocide is also part of our own inheritance. Following our exposure to the suffering of the survivors, we can no longer consider the genocide to be something that happened ‘over there’ and must confront the consequences of what happened in Rwanda within our present.

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Présence africaine en Europe et au-delà/African Presence in Europe and Beyond. Edited by KATHLEEN GYSSELS AND BÉNÉDICTE LEDENT. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010. 318 pp. Pb €30. ISBN: 9782296128033

This bilingual volume edited by Kathleen Gyssels and Bénédicte Ledent arose from what they describe as a week-long seminar held at the University of Antwerp in 2005. Debates at this event took place in English and in French, ‘two of the languages representative of the big colonial empires which tore apart the so-called black continent’ (p. 23). The languages of the contributions in this volume therefore reflect a tendency in postcolonial critical practice to engage with legacies of colonialism and neo-colonialism by employing the language of the colonizers. In its title, which deliberately makes reference to the journal *Présence Africaine*, the collection recalls the objective of this journal, founded in 1947, namely, to make the African presence known to the wider world. So, in discussing an African presence, what is meant by this volume? Primarily, the volume concerns itself with the African presence in Europe and the US. From this starting point, the editors attempt to elucidate how Africa and the African diaspora enter into relation with Europe and the Americas, through accounts of migration, either unidirectional or multidirectional.

Collectively, the essays in the volume outline how Africa and the history of the African

diaspora are imagined by Europeans, Americans and Africans and, in doing so, they examine the aftermath of colonization, slavery and the legacy of the Middle Passage. Specifically, in exploring the notion of exile, these case studies interrogate 'identity quests, converging examples of resistance to exogenous models, texts on the problems linked to exile and to the integration into the former colonial metropolises, on the painful struggle against the stereotypes that target African men and women wherever they decide to settle' (p. 23). While not constituting a grand narrative of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the contexts of both Africa and the African diaspora, individual essays do contextualize and pinpoint the drama of exile.

Présence africaine en Europe is divided into three parts: 'Présence africaine en Belgique/African Presence in Belgium', 'Présence africaine en Europe/African Presence in Europe', and lastly, 'Présence africaine dans le Nouveau Monde/African Presence in the New World'. Principally, the contributions adopt a historical or literary focus. Included within the first section is a short story, 'Anonymous', by Chika Unigwe, which serves to provide an introduction to the interventions given by Alex Demeulenaere, Caryl Philips, Tomi Adeaga, M'bouh Seta Diagana, Gaëlle Cooreman and Valérie Bada, among others. The focus of the first section is colonialism in the Belgian Congo; specifically, it examines and challenges literary representations of colonialism produced by colonizers. In the second section, a range of testimonies are presented, in the form of historical analyses, interviews, and linguistic and philosophical perspectives on activism and resistance. The third section marks a return to the literary as a way of investigating encounters between Africa and the New World and their legacies. By nature interdisciplinary and transnational in terms of the subject matter, contributors, and critical perspectives, *Présence africaine en Europe* exemplifies the continual struggle against monolingual and monocultural perceptions of Africa and the African diaspora.

A substantial effort must have been required for this volume on the part of the editors, in terms of coordinating the interdisciplinary project. It comes as no surprise then, that the publication is bilingual rather than presenting articles written in a range of languages; as editors Gyssels and Ledent explain practical and editorial constraints prevented such a publication, and they acknowledge that although the 'volume does not include texts in Portuguese or German, or in any of the numerous local African languages, [...] this collection is meant as a step in the right direction' (pp. 23–24). This collaboration clearly required patience to develop and mould into a unified piece of research. The time differential between the original seminar and the publication of this research makes the reader aware of the painstaking commitment to interdisciplinarity that the work represents. In sum, *Présence africaine en Europe et au delà* strives toward the promotion of a continually evolving set of multinational interpretations of the meaning of African presence.

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Poststructuralism and Postcoloniality: The Anxiety of Theory. By JANE HIDDLESTON. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010. 207 pp. Hb £65. ISBN 978-1-84631-230-4

This monograph sets out to analyse the intricate relationships between poststructuralist and postcolonial theorizations by looking at six poststructural theorists writing in the aftermath of the fall of empire. Against this broad historical backdrop, it scrutinizes the different ways in which the abstract theoretical and autobiographical works of Derrida, Cixous, Lyotard, Barthes, Kristeva and Spivak have sought to undermine the hegemony of discourses exemplified by colonial writing practices. While acknowledging that none of these thinkers could be described as ‘postcolonial’ *per se* (with the obvious exception of the only non-Francophone theorist to be included, Spivak), their collective attempts to stage an alternative, non-exploitative ‘encounter with the colonial other’ (p. 3) provide useful case studies for mapping the limitations and potential failings of postcolonial theorization in light of current global concerns.

Primarily then, this is a study concerned with the philosophical question of how to write and negotiate the complex relationships between the theorizing ‘self’ and its object of analysis, or ‘other’, without performing an act of textual colonization. What unites these thinkers is a common desire to create a new idiomatic space in which to write about cultural difference, while circumnavigating the patterns of silencing, appropriation and assimilation associated with the imperial discourses which they counter. The result of this deconstructionist experiment is a ‘theory’ dominated by an acute sense of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity, or what Hiddleston refers to as its embedded ‘anxiety’, that refuses to define and delimit both the theoretical voice (the ‘je’) and the ‘other’ with which it engages. Implicitly, however, Hiddleston ushers in the suggestion that the anxiety of this refusal has not succeeded in transcending the self-other binary, but has produced instead a narcissistic and potentially vacuous project that, in failing both to achieve any workable or coherent writing models and/or to work towards any concrete political outcomes, has written its own ending.

Part One focuses on the multiple works of three poststructuralist thinkers, each loosely united by their connections with Algerian decolonization at an autobiographical (Derrida and Cixous) or political (Lyotard) level. Hiddleston explores their mutual commitment to writing against narrative closure through their wide-ranging treatments of subjects that are familiar to postcolonial theory, including the imperialism of western metaphysics, the political processes of Algerian decolonization, the difficulties of writing and interpreting the ‘other’, and the elusive search for a suitable theoretical idiom in which to imagine a postcolonial nation. The aim is not simply to attest to the debt of postcolonialism to poststructural thinking, but to foreground the ‘anxiety of theory’ that resides at the heart of poststructuralism. This anxiety emerges from its ‘convoluted and self-doubting’ style of writing (p. 26) that additionally reveals an overtly unstable ‘self’ or theorizing persona at the centre of the project. More significant still is the exploration of the difficulties and, at times, impossible obstacles that each ‘theorist’ faces in remaining true to their ethics, which in turn dramatizes problems that have plagued postcolonialism from its inception.

Part Two considers works by Barthes, Kristeva and Spivak, connected here by their experiments in deconstructionism that aim to transcend the boundaries between ‘self’ and ‘other’. Each, however, is shown to have fallen some way short of their goals. In the first place, the writings of Barthes and Kristeva give rise to a reversal of intention, or what is termed the textual ‘uncanny’—instead of reaching the ‘other’ by understanding the alterity within the pluralized ‘self’, both produce a narcissistic fixation on the theorizing persona that appropriates the cultural setting of the other as a playground for his/her own exoticist fantasies. Moreover, attempts by both Barthes and Kristeva to pluralize the ‘self’ through a process of internal othering are shown to be profoundly disorientating, resulting in a latent desire to return to the ‘home’ or back to more stable concepts of nationhood and cultural assimilation. In the second place, the acute self-doubt of Spivak’s hesitant processes of writing and rewriting, along with her reluctance to speak for any

cultural community (p. 172) and her extreme forms of abstraction, are seen 'as one of the most manifest symptoms of a genre entering its demise' (p. 174). As with Part One, the 'failings' and 'traps' into which these thinkers collectively fall perform those that characterize postcolonial theorization and suggest that the disconnection of theory from politics, combined with its philosophical self-absorption, have, like the exiled and disillusioned 'je' of Barthes's *Incidents*, not succeeded in arriving 'anywhere new' (p. 124).

While this monograph provides an expert analysis of the embedded anxiety within these poststructuralist theories, it is not without its problems. First, the structural working towards Spivak as the only 'true' postcolonial theorist to be explored, defined here as 'the archetypal theorist [and performer] of anxious self-reflexivity' (p. 151), has the potential to reduce postcolonial theory to Spivak alone, creating a paradoxically Anglo-centred reading that does not balance itself out with more recent Francophone postcolonial debates. Second, it is not made explicitly clear whether the mutual attachment to the abstract over the material that unites all of these thinkers equates to an overall argument in favour of more politically engaged forms of theory. These issues aside, Hiddleston's post-mortem of poststructuralist postcolonialism offers an important intervention into recent debates on the future of theory. It finds itself in good company among a plethora of recent studies investigating and testifying to the death of theory (p. 175), but ultimately does not subscribe unconditionally to this conclusion. Instead, it carefully positions itself at a moment of transition between theoretical demise and an anxiety that will drive the desire to find something new, something with the potential to respond politically to the pressing demands of globalization and neo-colonialism.

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Mes transes à trente ans (Escapade ruandaise) de Saverio Nayigiziki. Ed. and introduced by JEAN-PAUL KWIZERA. Metz: Université Paul Verlaine, Centre de Recherche Écritures, Collection Littératures des mondes contemporaines, Série Afriques, 2009. 471 pp. Pb €22. ISBN: 978-2-917403-10-5

Si, à l'aube des indépendances africaines, la floraison littéraire échappe difficilement à l'emprise du vent de contestation anticoloniale, *Mes transes à trente ans* (1955) est, sans nul doute, un bon exemple de texte de cette époque qui résiste à cette influence de militantisme. Il ne s'agit que d'une réflexion profonde sur les absurdités les plus marquantes de la vie dans une société en grandes mutations. Rédigé dans les années 1945-46, ce roman autobiographique emprunte les voies sinusoïdales d'une expérience individuelle, en vue d'en faire une autopsie d'une société à laquelle l'auteur jette un regard décapant pour mieux comprendre les paramètres de la condition humaine. Eu égard à la qualité littéraire et philosophique de ce texte, tout lecteur pourrait être intrigué par le fait que ce roman autobiographique que l'on pourrait, à juste titre, considérer comme l'une des rares références à la naissance de la production romanesque de l'Afrique francophone, ait été jusqu'ici presque inconnu du grand public.

L'architecture autobiographique prend sa forme dès le début de ce roman. Justin, narrateur homodiégétique, gestionnaire de la caisse d'une succursale commerciale, fait face aux coups du destin que son créateur Nayigiziki n'a cessé d'éprouver. D'ailleurs, même si le narrateur signe ses lettres par des sigles JH, soit pour Justin Hategeka ou Justin Hanabo, probablement pour camoufler sa vraie identité en tant que fugitif, il partage, par surprise, avec le lecteur les origines de la prédestination de ses misères en tant que Nayigiziki: 'Mon nom lui-même Nayigiziki: qu'ai-je fait à

Dieu? — que mon père découragé me jeta de dépit, est une plainte, un blasphème étouffé, une question étonnée à laquelle répondent éternellement d'éternels ennuis' (p. 126). A cette image de Nayigiziki, le narrateur est confronté à cette question énigmatique d'un homme résigné devant la volonté divine.

Il faut, en outre, rappeler que le titre complet des deux volumes de ce roman publié en 1955 au Groupe Scolaire d'Astrida est *Mes transes à trente ans. Histoire vécue mêlée de roman. I. De mal en pis. II. De pis en mieux*. C'est par ce mélange du vécu et de la fiction, étroitement subordonné à la description minutieuse des événements sociohistoriques et des lieux connus du Rwanda et de la sous-région, et à la référence à la vie réelle de l'auteur, que le poids du témoignage pèse plus lourd que celui du roman sur la balance de la dichotomie fiction/réalité.

L'image de la couleur locale se transmet également par le recours à une gamme lexicale de mots du swahili, du kiganda et surtout ceux du kinyarwanda écrits sans augment à la manière dont un étranger pourrait les utiliser comme emprunts ou éléments de l'opération de transfert langagier. Ajouté au recours fréquent au latin, ce cocktail linguistique servirait à apprécier la peinture du portrait d'un 'évolué' fier de son identité; celle d'un clerc documentaliste qui observe, écoute et prend ses notes sans autocensure. Cependant, on pourrait se demander si un lecteur étranger à ces langues africaines pourrait comprendre facilement le texte sans glossaire.

Mes transes à trente ans est un texte qui regorge d'une variété thématique dont un document sur une longue errance devrait sans doute s'enrichir. Cependant, s'il fallait identifier le point essentiel qui constitue la trame événementielle du schéma actantiel de ce roman, on pourrait, sans nul doute, évoquer l'argent comme étant à la fois un bon serviteur et un mauvais maître. Il s'agit ici d'un thème important, surtout dans une société africaine en mutations dont les valeurs d'échanges traditionnellement basées sur le troc, se voient confrontées aux nouvelles règles du jeu d'échanges monnayés.

Gestionnaire naïf convaincu que la solidarité humaine nourrie d'amitié est toujours la garantie de l'honnêteté, Justin est dupé par ses amis qu'il prête une grande somme d'argent de la caisse qu'il gère. Face aux débiteurs insolvables, malhonnêtes et ingrats, il est incapable de combler le trou du déficit et prend le chemin de l'exil pour éviter la prison. Il comprend que 'l'amitié aujourd'hui est un vil marché. Elle s'achète, elle se vend. Elle est conditionnelle, ayant pour base et pour mobile l'intérêt. [...] Si l'argent est un poison reconnu, sa première victime, la plus exposé, est sans contredit l'amitié' (p. 94). Nayigiziki plonge le lecteur dans une réflexion sur le sens religieux de la vie dont Dieu est le seul garant et qui vaut plus que l'argent. La vie que les rwandais appellent 'ubugingo, l'un des rares mots abstraits que nous possédons dans notre langue du Ruanda! [...] Ce mot si difficile à définir! Ce mot qui, comme l'âme et la pensée, comme tous les mots qui servent à désigner les dons directs de Dieu, n'a pas de définition chez les hommes!' (p. 150).

Par ailleurs, Justin s'insurge contre l'injustice sociale d'un monde immonde où les victimes des vicissitudes deviennent la risée des bourreaux: 'Vols, trahisons, abus de confiance, débauche: tout ceci avec une habilité de démon; ce qui fait que les vrais criminels ne sont jamais pincés; ce sont plutôt les âmes franches et simples, les honnêtes gens, les scrupuleux qui, se laissant tromper, sont roulés, triturés dans le choc'. (p. 39). Le romancier fait remarquer que c'est le pouvoir de l'argent qui a bouleversé les mœurs sacrées du Rwanda, et Nyanza est devenue une ville 'où tout, même les amours, à l'encontre des coutumes-lois, se vend aux caprices de qui a le sou' (p. 143).

Somme toute, ayant emprunté les formes épistolaires, de notes de communication et de carnets intimes, Nayigiziki fait du narrateur un vrai clerc qui ne laisse aucun détail lorsqu'il rédige et archive ses procès. Il fait l'éloge de l'hospitalité africaine qui lui a permis de survivre en exil et chante les bienfaits de la christianisation au Rwanda. Il se soumet à la grâce de Dieu toutes les fois qu'il fait face aux moments fatidiques. Même au moment où il se sent comme 'un homme raté; l'opprobre de [sa] génération; un importun aux biens fortunés [...]; une machine à rêver [...]; un aigri que sa propre bêtise exaspère; un malheureux incommode à lui-même; un dévoyé qui rêve sans issue' (p. 62), il attend avec espoir le miracle de la miséricorde divine. Malgré l'excès de sa description narrative qui a fait du texte un document volumineux qui pourrait se résumer en peu de

pages, Nayigiziki a bien présenté une aventure ambiguë d'un homme guidé par la bride par son triste destin mais dont, heureusement, les tranches qui allaient *de mal en pis* vont de *pis en mieux*. Ceci signale l'existence d'une lueur d'espoir pour une victime de l'absurdité de la vie mais dont la conscience personnelle est tranquille.

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

Between Utopia and Dystopia: The Afterlives of Empire

Institut Français du Royaume Uni, London, 19–20 November 2010

The Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies (SFPS) held its annual conference at the Institut Français in London on 19 and 20 November 2010. The event was sponsored by Liverpool University Press and the Bureau de Coopération Universitaire at the French Embassy in London.

2010 was a highly significant year for many African people, for it marked the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of several Francophone African countries. As expected, this had a big impact on academics worldwide, including SFPS members, many of whom focus on Francophone Africa in their research. However, the Society chose not to follow the celebratory theme and tone of some other conferences organized to mark the occasion. It also refrained from focusing narrowly on a particular country or region, or attempting to map broadly the past fifty years of independence, as has been endeavoured at other events. Instead, the SFPS conference took an innovative approach to commemorating such a significant time in Africa's history: it focused on the literary, political, historical or cultural utopian and dystopian representations that came as a result of decolonization in Africa and beyond. By selecting this unusual theme, it pulled together some very unique approaches to academic discourse on African independence and related scholarly research.

The conference was opened by SFPS President, Professor David Murphy who also formed part of the conference organizing committee alongside Dr Georgina Collins and Professor Charles Forsdick. Panels had been constructed both thematically ('Post-imperial Melancholia' and 'Sexuality and Narcissism', for example), as well as geographically, uniting experts on various literary, cultural or political aspects of particular countries and regions such as the 'Caribbean' or 'Algeria'. Particularly worthy of mention is the strong opening panel on 'Utopian Literary Futures', which saw papers on literary representations of migration (Professor Dominic Thomas, UCLA), Léopold Sédar Senghor and the relation between poetry, utopia and political power (Dr Michael G. Kelly, Limerick), and the first congress of Black writers and artists in 1956 (Lucie Mercier, LSE).

On day one of the conference, Charles Forsdick announced the annual Dorothy Blair memorial lecture, marking Blair's outstanding contribution to the discipline of Francophone Postcolonial Studies, both as a scholar and translator. The memorial lecture this year was taken by Dr Kate Marsh of the University of Liverpool, a prominent female specialist in the field who is following in Dorothy Blair's footsteps. Marsh presented a paper entitled: "Nous étions évidemment inspirés par l'exemple de l'Inde": Idealization of 1947, the end of the Union française, and *les ultimes confettis de l'Empire de Duplex*, which explored the political utopic discourses generated as a result of the fall of European colonial rule in India.

The second keynote speaker, who closed the conference, was Dr Ferdinand de Jong from the University of East Anglia. De Jong's paper explored 'Postcolonial Heteropia: The Monument of the African Renaissance', introducing and analysing the range of perspectives on Senegal's controversial African Renaissance monument which overlooks the capital, Dakar. The conference, which brought together almost sixty delegates with research interests in Francophone Postcolonial Studies, provided a unique networking event where current research concepts and trajectories could be discussed with fellow scholars from across the academic world. Feedback from the event has thus been extremely positive and the organizers now look forward to planning the next SFPS conference in London later this year.

GEORGINA COLLINS
UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

René Maran: Un écrivain engagé dans la défense des Noirs?

Reid Hall, Columbia University, Paris, 9–11 December 2010

The conference organized by the International Centre for Research on Slavery (CIRES) within the European Project EURESCL gathered despite the inclement weather in Paris last December to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of René Maran. Entitled rather leadingly ‘Un écrivain engagé dans la défense des Noirs?’ the conference set itself the task of offering an intellectual homage to Maran. This idea in itself provoked many wry smiles as Maran, the man, was seemingly the last person to have wanted a fanfare to his life and work. Maran, the writer, however, is impossible to ignore as this conference amply recognized. Choreographed tirelessly by Elsa Geneste from EHESS, whose thesis on Maran is in its final stages, the conference drew an impressive list of keynote speakers from Europe, Africa and America.

Having overcome the initial surprise that so many of us had fostered research on Maran in isolation, those gathered began to unravel not only the legacy of Maran’s work to postcolonial scholarship today but also the various literary, cultural and political legacies which had shaped Maran’s own work. Two conference interventions are particularly worthy of mention in this context. Bernard Mouralis spoke on the links between Maran and antiquity, arguing that Maran’s classical education grounded in Homeric epic and Virgilian elegy lends a classical Stoicism to his work and endows his fiction and poetry with a notable ‘morale sociale envers la vie coloniale’. This complex relationship between Maran’s *bordelaise* education, his suffering as a colonial subject and his sensibilities as a writer were later analysed by Lourdes Rubiales from the University of Cadiz, who sought to examine the literary and cultural context in which Maran existed in her paper ‘L’émergence littéraire de René Maran: colonialisme, dandysme et poésie’. Professor Rubiales concentrated on the conflicting identities that Maran assumed: French-African dandy, Goncourt award-winning author and impassioned, yet discouraged, colonial anomaly.

Over the course of three days papers were helpfully classified under historic, cultural, political and literary lines, although these headings proved to overlap—the debate over *Batouala*, especially, spanned such interdisciplinary topics as Maran’s political engagement, the reception of the novel in Poland, and the famous incongruity of the book and the preface. At the close of the second day proceedings decamped to EHESS where a conclusive and nuanced session on the Saturday discussed ‘Littérature et engagement’ and, in particular, the function, imagined or otherwise, of literature to effect political and cultural change.

The conference demonstrated the sheer wealth and breadth of scholarship on Maran, but sought, ultimately, to question the assumptions that have served to camouflage his thinking up until now. These, sometimes conflicting, suppositions of Maran’s status as the Senghorian precursor to *Négritude* and the father of anti-colonialism are being challenged at a moment of change in the history of the Francophone canon that Maran himself could hardly have imagined. As we redefine what we mean by ‘France’ and by ‘French’, and as Eurocentric literary boundaries continue to crumble, scholarship on this extraordinary man could not be more relevant.

ARABELLA HOBBS
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Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

Contributions on any topic related to Francophone Postcolonial Studies are invited for inclusion in future issues. Authors should submit electronically two copies of their article, 4,000 words maximum, in English or French to a member of the editorial team. Articles should conform in presentation to the guidelines in the *MHRA Stylebook*, providing references in footnotes, rather than the author-date system. All articles submitted to the *BFPS* will be refereed by two scholars of international reputation, drawn from the advisory and editorial boards. To facilitate the anonymity of the refereeing process, authors are asked that their manuscript (other than the title page) contains no clue as to their identity. Book reviews (between 600 and 1000 words in length) and conference reports (500 words max.) should also be sent to the editorial team.

The deadline for the receipt of articles to be included in the autumn 2011 issue is 31 August 2011.

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- A complimentary copy of new titles appearing in the SFPS critical studies series;
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