The ambiguity of the in-between: Perceptions of assimilation in early francophone African literature

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Abstract

With its promise of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité,* France has long welcomed immigrants within its borders. However, as immigrant communities have become more established throughout the country, questions have arisen in regard to what constitutes French national identity. Should the nation adopt a spirit of tolerance, allowing new arrivals to integrate into French society while retaining their own cultural identity, or in an effort to preserve and perpetuate French language and culture, should immigrants instead be required to assimilate and adopt the customs of their new homeland? While integration versus assimilation of immigrants is of particular importance today as French society continues to evolve, it is not the first time that the country has had to consider the implications of welcoming foreigners on its soil. Dating back a century ago to when France's Third Republic set about building an empire under the guise of the *mission civilisatrice,* assimilation has long been used to promulgate French culture around the globe.

However, despite the lofty goals of France's civilizing mission, assimilation complicated matters for colonizer and colonized alike as it ironically threatened the foundation on which colonialism was based. In order to maintain a notion of superiority and to justify their presence in the colonies, the colonizers could not allow the colonized to fully assimilate lest they become their equals, eliminating the need for a colonial presence altogether. Consequently, colonized subjects who attempted to assimilate were relegated to the ambiguous realm of the "in-between" – a transitory space between the native culture they left behind and the French identity that they would never be permitted

to have.

Testifying to the ambiguous status of the *assimilés*, colonized African writers of the interwar years turned to literature to express their views on the colonial experience. Such writers include Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, Bakary Diallo, Lamine Senghor, Chukri Khodja, and Ousmane Socé Diop. As pioneers of francophone African literature, these men had much to say regarding the benefits and challenges that cultural assimilation posed to the colonized individual. Published more than 75 years ago, their works established an enduring legacy that continues to provide insight on the effects of the colonial past and speaks to the ambiguous position in which many *assimilés* find themselves today. Thus, taking into account the influence of historical events during the interwar years that would prove decisive to the future of French colonial Africa, this study ultimately seeks to examine the evolution of ambiguous sentiment toward assimilation as demonstrated by the lives and works of these francophone African authors.

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Introduction

Assimilation. A gradual process by which members of one society seek to adopt the norms and values of another so as to be accepted by the members of the new society and recognized as their equals. For those considering such a transition, it is important to understand the implicit loss and gain of self that is at stake when undergoing this process. French-Tunisian writer Albert Memmi highlights this very concern when he mindfully observes, "Le refus de soi et l'amour de l'autre sont communs à tout candidat à l'assimilation."[1] As if describing the symptoms of a disease or the potential consequences of a risky decision, Memmi's statement also suggests a degree of ambiguity that inherently accompanies the process of assimilation, as it begs the question of who the *soi*, or "self," really is as individuals attempt to remake themselves within the socio-cultural framework of another culture.

A fundamental feature of French colonialism under the Third Republic, this notion of rejecting one's identity to take on that of another proved to be a point of contention between colonizer and colonized throughout the colonial period, but especially during the height of French imperialism between the World Wars. Republican France's imperial approach to colonialism and how it justified its actions were truly brought to the test during this critical moment of colonial history, with the years between the wars characterized by a general sentiment of ambiguity in regard to where the empire was headed, as well as for colonial subjects who, well acquainted with France's civilizing mission and its promise of a better (i.e. "French") future, began to demand rights equal to

[1] Albert Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé, Précédé du Portrait du colonisateur* [1957] (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) 138.

those enjoyed by French citizens of the metropole. For the first time, France had to justify its approach to colonialism and practice of assimilation as it was challenged to follow through on its promises by those people it had colonized.

Examining colonial history and addressing the importance of assimilation to French colonialism, Alice Conklin's book *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa*,[2] traces the evolution of the Third Republic's *mission civilisatrice* from its origins in 1895 until the midpoint of the interwar years around 1930. Focusing specifically on the implementation of the civilizing mission by the Governors General in West Africa during these few decades of what might be considered the "golden age" of French imperialism, Conklin demonstrates how republican France was able to justify its seemingly contradictory status of also being an empire. In an effort to comprehend what inspired France to establish a colonial doctrine and pursue a colonial agenda, Conklin describes how among European imperial powers at the time, France felt a special sense of duty to spread its civilization to all corners of the globe. Establishing this distinction in the first lines of her introduction, Conklin states, "Of course all European powers at the end of the nineteenth century claimed to be carrying out the work of civilization in their overseas territories; but only in republican France was this claim elevated to the realm of official imperial doctrine."[3]

According to Conklin, this high regard for French civilization implies three things about the colonial ideology of the Third Republic.[4] First, it infers that French colonial

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[2] Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997).
[3] Conklin 1.
[4] The explanation of the following points is paraphrased from pages 1 and 2 of Conklin's introduction.

subjects, or colonized individuals, were thought to be too primitive to rule themselves, but that there was nevertheless potential for them to rise from their primitive state and become civilized. Secondly, due to the universal values it inherited from its revolutionary past, and because of its industrial strength, France saw itself as ideally suited to help the populations of the world it deemed primitive to attain this higher level of civilization. Lastly, and stemming directly from the two previous suppositions, the Third Republic believed that it had the right to remake what it determined to be primitive cultures according to its own – French – image, essentially assimilating them all uniformly to French culture. Thus, a dichotomy between civilized and primitive was founded and cited frequently to maintain the supposed superiority of French civilization vis-à-vis the colonized "other", all the while upholding the promise of assimilation as the keystone of colonial progress.

However, despite the key objective of civilizing the world *à la française,* in order to maintain an imperial republic to perpetuity, it became imperative that the Third Republic and its colonial administration not allow colonial subjects to become their intellectual and cultural equals. This phenomenon plays directly into what Albert Memmi terms "the colonial system" in his *Portrait du colonisé*. In this foundational text of colonial and post-colonial theory, Memmi explains that the colonizer and colonized were born out of the specificities of the colonial situation, the existence of the colonizer depending upon that of the colonized and vice versa. According to Memmi, despite the fact that assimilation was said to be a central feature of colonization, the two notions were in fact rather contradictory, with the concept of assimilation being counterintuitive

to that of colonization. Summarizing this notion, Memmi states, "…voici l'essentiel: l'assimilation est encore le contraire de la colonisation; puisqu'elle tend à confrondre colonisateurs et colonisés, donc à supprimer les privilèges, donc la relation coloniale."[5] Therefore, despite the attempts of the colonized to assimilate and become the equal of the colonizer, the colonizer will never accept the process of assimilation as being complete. If they were to do so, the colonizers would not only lose their sense of superiority and other inherent privileges, but would also have to officially acknowledge that the colonial system had served its purpose and that the need for colonialism and the role of the colonizer within it had reached its end. Hence, in a vain attempt to assimilate, colonized individuals are obliged to play the role of an ever toiling Sisyphus character as they retain a necessarily ambiguous position and are never permitted to succeed in their endeavor to attain equal standing with the colonizer. For this reason, Memmi concludes that, "…dans le cadre colonial, l'assimilation s'est révélée impossible."[6]

As time went on and colonial subjects began to come to terms with the situation that Memmi outlines, the rendering of complete assimilation as an unattainable goal began to complicate matters for France and its colonial administration. Calls for reforming the colonial system became more prolific as the colonial civil society upon which the French relied to administer their empire came to realize the disparity between what it meant to be a subject versus a citizen of France. Educated and well-disciplined in accordance with the educational standards of the metropole, members of the colonized elite – known as the *évolués* – proved to be more of a bane to the French colonial

[5] Memmi 161.
[6] Memmi 140.

administration than a blessing, as they were able to demand equal rights citing the very republican values that their colonial administrators and schoolteachers had taken so much pride in teaching them.

The historian Gary Wilder recognizes the risk that such an elite posed to maintaining the stability of an already fragile imperial nation-state, asserting, "Politicized African elites disrupted state taxonomies upon which colonial order supposedly depended. Openings were created within which these elites could make demands that the logic of colonial humanism had supposedly precluded."[7] Thus the *évolués* complicated rather than resolved colonial antinomy. Echoing Conklin's observations and referring to the example of colonial French West Africa, Wilder observes, "…by the mid-1930s, the colonial state's fraught attempt to protect and transform indigenous society had contributed to the type of sociopolitical disorganization that its policies were meant to forestall."[8]

To stave off further discontent in the colonies, the French government responded with what Wilder terms "colonial humanism", which was intended as a means of humanizing the process of exploitation in the colonies via, "…an extension of metropolitan productivism, statism, and welfarism."[9] However, while the French sought to implement this revised colonial philosophy, a group of Paris-based colonial elite provided an alternative approach to ameliorating conditions of colonized people residing within the colonies. In 1930s Paris, Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Léon Damas,

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[7] Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005) 149.
[8] Wilder 149.
[9] Wilder 4.

each one of them having come from a different corner of the French empire, came together and formulated the concept of negritude, which sought to affirm the unique identity of the colonized individual and to justify the right of colonized people – considered subjects of the French Empire – to be recognized as equals to citizens of the French metropole. Wilder summarizes this sentiment with the term "cultural nationalism", a reappropriation of assimilationist policy as viewed by the founders of Negritude that called for a unified recognition by colonized individuals that they deserved to be considered French without having to give up entirely on their African roots.

While contrary to imperially-minded France's one-sided understanding of assimilation, it would seem that the Negritude Movement of the 1930s suggests that assimilation can function, at least in part, as an enriching experience for *both* colonizer and colonized, supplementing one's own culture by incorporating select elements of another. Indeed, this was the idea proposed by Léopold Senghor in his 1945 essay *Assimiler, non être assimilés*. It is with great admiration that Senghor begins his essay by referencing Hubert Lyautey and his work while administrator in the protectorate of Morocco. An enthusiast for local culture, Lyautey desired that the Moroccan people, despite their varied ethnic and linguistic origins, come together as a "…groupement d'humanité, sans rien abdiquer de leurs conceptions individuelles pour établir une commune raison de vivre."[10] According to Senghor, to attain this "idéal commun", one must have a form of assimilation that permits association. Explaining the importance of this concept, he states, "Il s'agit d'une assimilation active et judicieuse, qui féconde les

[10] Léopold Senghor, *Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Seuil 1964) 39.

civilisations autochtones et les fasse sortir de leur stagnation, ou renaître de leur décadence. Il s'agit d'une assimilation qui permette l'association. C'est à cette seule condition qu'il y aura 'un idéal commun' et 'une commune raison de vivre,' à cette seule condition un Empire français."[11] As Senghor reiterates throughout his essay , it is not "*association OU assimilation*", but rather "*assimilation ET association*", as it is through association of cultures that both sides will ultimately benefit from assimilating certain cultural elements from one another. Thus an individual must be an active participant in assimilation, choosing to incorporate what elements of another culture would benefit them most, rather than having a foreign culture imposed upon them and being forced to assimilate. Senghor himself was a perfect example of just such a colonized individual. Educated in the French system and well versed in French language and Classical studies, yet never losing sight of his African heritage, Senghor was able to feel at home whether in Paris or Dakar. However, in spite of his best intentions to render Lyautey's *idéal commun* a reality, Senghor's experience with assimilation marks perhaps the exception rather than the norm, as many colonized Africans seeking to assimilate became lost as the ambiguity of their situation blurred the perceived clarity of France's colonial vision.

It is clear that the issue of assimilation was an important one during the interwar years, but Senghor and the other founders of Negritude were not the only colonized individuals at the time questioning assimilation and contemplating their role within France's empire. They were in fact preceded by a number of African writers taking up pen and ink to engage with the issue of assimilation through literature. First appearing shortly after World War I and continuing until World War II, such works were written by

[11] Senghor, *Liberté I* 45.

tirailleurs sénégalais and future African politicians alike. Considering the historical context that inspired, fueled, and supplemented their writing, as colonized subjects of France and products of the colonial system, these African writers were particularly attuned to the sense of ambiguity brought about by the notion of assimilation. The authors in question include Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne (1886-1976), Bakary Diallo (1892-1979), Lamine Senghor (1889-1927), Chukri Khodja (1891-1967), and Ousmane Socé (1911-1973).

It is this first generation of francophone African writers who will comprise the collective focus of this study. While their individual experiences are unique, each of these men shares in the common experience of assimilation. Playing their role as colonized individuals within the colonial system, they are no longer wholly African, but also not yet wholly French, and as a result are dually exiled to somewhere in between the two cultures. As authors, they question whether assimilation is indeed feasible and grapple with the ambiguity of their situation in their writings, by which they provide much valuable insight on how to interpret the experience of assimilation from the point of view of the colonized – ranging from complete admiration to total rejection of the practice. By closely considering the lives and writings of the authors noted above and the historical circumstances that influenced their work, this study will highlight how each author responds to assimilation and reacts to the ambiguity of the colonial vision and their place within it.

While they all use writing as an outlet to express their take on assimilation and the colonial experience, the authors under consideration in this study employ a variety of

literary genres to frame the presentation of their individual points of view. To categorize the texts in question by genre, they include short story, autobiography, newspaper article, historical fiction, poetry, and realistic fiction, and the list could likely continue with further subcategories of fiction and non-fiction. Given such variation, this study brings together what might be considered a heteroclite grouping of texts not often seen together in an analysis of literature of any period. There is also a question of whether or not all of these works can be considered *literature* – short stories intended as material for school primers and colonial propaganda offering a striking case in point.

Debate over the perceived literary value of the earliest works of francophone African literature has been ongoing since scholars first sought a point of departure from which to establish the African literary canon. Christopher L. Miller identifies a key participant in this debate in his book *Nationalists and Nomads.* [12] In Miller's discussion of the francophone past he references specifically the work of Lilyan Kesteloot and her book entitled *Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude.*[13] As Miller describes, Kesteloot's assessment of francophone African literature at the time centered around Negritude in the early 1930s, with all works preceding that time being relegated to the status of "precursors" to the movement or being deemed as "not sufficiently literary" to be considered as part of her study.[14]

In the fifty years since Kesteloot published her book, scholars have questioned her decision to dismiss authors and texts that did not originate with Negritude. As this study

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[12] *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on francophone African literature and culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998).
[13]*Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude* [1961]. Trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1974).
[14] Miller, *Nationalists* 11-12.

and those of Miller and other contemporary scholars[15] seek to demonstrate, the importance of these "precursor" texts to those that would follow cannot be denied when considering the complete history of francophone African literature and the significance of this literature as a reflection of the development of African cultural identity. In regard to the question of how "literary" these texts are, Miller offers an innovative – if not iconoclastic – solution when he proposes, "…to displace literariness or, rather, resituate it within a broader history of discourse." To further explain his approach, he adds, "If, as a methodological experiment, we short-circuit aesthetic definitions of the literary and turn to a material position instead, a general reappraisal becomes necessary. If we take as 'literature' simply everything that is written, we will be freer to examine writing as it happened, in whatever form it took."[16]

Adopting Miller's definition of literature as "everything that is written", regardless of genre or perceived command of language and quality of writing, the texts that comprise this study all merit an important place in the discussion of the origins of francophone African literature in whatever form they take. Where other literary scholars have dismissed these texts and their authors, or parceled out the various works to consider them separately in accordance with the standard categorization of genres, this study looks at them collectively as they all serve to testify to the socio-cultural climate of colonialism during the interwar years and reflect the varied reactions of colonized Africans to the experience of colonialism and assimilation.

To better grasp the concept of assimilation and how it played out during the time

[15] For example, see the works of Guy Ossito Midiohouan and J. Ayo Langley.
[16] Miller, *Nationalists* 12.

the African authors considered in this study were writing, the insights of Albert Memmi are especially pertinent. Writing his *Portraits* several years prior to African independence, Memmi drew from his own experience of colonialism to deem assimilation a tool used by the colonizers to maintain their superiority and to exploit the colonized. Born to a Tunisian Jewish family and educated in the French schools of the protectorate of Tunisia, Memmi was well situated to comment on the ambiguous relationship between colonizer and colonized. While he maintained ties to his North African heritage, he also identified as an intellectual educated in Western thought, placing him squarely between two cultures – that of the French colonizer and of the colonized African.

Given his unique vantage point on the issues of colonialism, Memmi discovered that his ideas on the consequences of colonial exploitation had a universal quality, resounding with oppressed people from around the globe. In the author's preface to the 1966 edition of *Portraits*, he writes, "Le seul mérite que je me reconnaisse donc est d'avoir tenté, par-delà mon propre malaise, de rendre compte d'un aspect insupportable de la réalité humaine, et donc inacceptable, et destiné à provoquer sans cesse des bouleversements coûteux pour tout le monde."[17] Having identified colonialism as a form of ceaseless oppression – assimilation being deemed impossible and the colonizer refusing to relinquish control over the colonized – Memmi comes to the conclusion that the only way to bring such exploitation to an end is for the oppressed to rise up against

[17] Memmi 21.

the oppressor.[18] However, while Memmi dismissed assimilation as futile, perceptions of the practice changed over time as former colonies of the French Empire pursued decolonization and gained more autonomy.

As Memmi implies in his writings, during the colonial period, the practice of assimilation was rather one-sided as "uncivilized" colonial subjects were expected to give up their "primitive" ways and espouse the values of French civilization. The French colonizers however had little to do but bask in the light of their own sense of superiority. Born into French civilization and sporting French citizenship as a birthright, they sought to set themselves apart from the colonized people to create a distinction between "civilized" (i.e. "French") and "uncivilized" (i.e. "African"), effectively drawing a line between "us" and "them" that would ensure the need for colonialism to perpetuity.

However, as the work of Homi K. Bhabha suggests, this line was not as well-defined as had been thought, but was actually quite porous, rendering the supposed distinction between colonizer and colonized increasingly unclear and leading to the creation of an ambiguous "Third Space" that challenged the previously accepted binary model of assimilation. According to Bhabha, assimilation can no longer be thought of in terms of transitioning from one culture to another, but must instead insist upon the interconnectivity of various cultures and how they interact and influence one another. Following this model, post-colonial theorists such as Bhabha have interpreted

[18]In this regard, Memmi's ideas are very much in line with those of Frantz Fanon. As illustrated in *Les damnés de la terre*, published in1961, Fanon calls for the *lumpenproletariat* to rise up from their low position in society, and to revolt against the oppressor to erase class distinctions and to set society right again on equal footing. The fact that both Memmi and Fanon are writing around the same time and arrive at similar conclusions (i.e. revolution) is not surprising, as their ideas reflect the reality in which they lived. African independence movements sprung up in earnest in the wake of France's defeat in Indochina in 1954 and at the time Memmi's and Fanon's books were published, the Algerian War for independence (1954-1962) was well underway.

assimilation not in terms of how it creates a distinction between cultures, but rather in terms of how different cultures converge, interact, and mutually influence one another.

It is this realm of cultural interaction that Bhabha examines in his aptly titled *The Location of Culture*.[19] In this seminal work, Bhabha challenges the general use of binaries as a means of differentiating between cultures. Manichean distinctions of categories such as race, class, religion, and ethnicity are deemed too simplistic – the fine line separating the elements of each category becoming increasingly blurred upon closer inspection. Providing a new perspective, instead of focusing on what separates one culture from another, Bhabha is more interested in where they overlap – what he terms the "in-between".[20] Highlighting the importance of this interstitial space to the study of cultural development, Bhabha writes in his introduction:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference. These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.[21]

Drawing from this explanation, Bhabha recognizes that cultures are in a continual state of flux, constantly adapting and changing as they encounter one another. He interprets this

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[19] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
[20] The "in-between" and Bhabha's interpretation of it will be examined further in Chapter 4 of this study which examines Ousmane Socé's *Karim* and *Mirages de Paris*.
[21] Bhabha 2.

cultural hybridization as a necessary and positive interaction, as it plays a significant role in carving out a multicultural society characterized by the interconnectivity of numerous cultures.[22]

While Albert Memmi and his contemporaries may have determined that assimilation was impossible in the context of colonialism, the ideas proposed by post-colonial intellectuals such as Homi K. Bhabha would seem to suggest that assimilation – the process of adopting the cultural and social characteristics of a culture other than your own – is perhaps unavoidable and occurring imperceptibly as cultures come into contact with one another. Such an interpretation lends itself well to highlighting the ambiguous nature of assimilation. The path of assimilation is not nearly as straightforward as implied by its definition - the process of transitioning to become part of another group offering many potential outcomes and begging many questions. With the power to shape and redefine a society, is it to be considered beneficial, or detrimental? Should it be encouraged, or restricted? Would it serve to enhance, or undermine a society? These were the same enigmatic questions being asked during the interwar years by colonizer and colonized alike. Attempts to answer them are recounted in the literature composed

[22] Such notions of cultural development are also very present in the work of Martinican writer and thinker Édouard Glissant, whose concept of *antillanité* – "Caribbeanness" – would blaze a trail for the *Créolité* literary movement and valorize Caribbean identity for its multifaceted nature. A byproduct of several centuries of colonization in the region and the cultural and racial mixing that ensued, Glissant argues that Caribbean identity has no singular point of origin and cannot be characterized as having a uniquely African, Asian, or European root, as its background can be traced to all of them. For this reason, Glissant was an admirer of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophical concept of the rhizome. Explaining this model of thought in opposition to the tendency to describe cultural development in terms of having a root or single point of origin, Glissant writes in *Poétique de la Relation*, "[Par rapport à la racine] la notion de rhizome maintiendrait donc le fait de l'enracinement, mais récuse l'idée d'une racine totalitaire. La pensée du rhizome serait au principe de ce que j'appelle une poétique de la Relation, selon laquelle toute identité s'étend dans un rapport à l'Autre" (*Poétique de la Relation: Poétique III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990) 23). Essentially, Glissant is suggesting that culture is not fixed, but is constantly evolving, and more importantly that it is not to be interpreted solely as a singular, immutable entity, but also recognized in broader terms as a product of its interactions with other cultures.

by the African authors considered in this study. Writing at a time before the colonized began to articulate their experiences in terms of theory and philosophical inquiry, Diagne, Diallo, Senghor, Khodja and Socé all used literature as a means to make their views on colonialism known to the French colonizer. It is for this reason that their work merits special attention and needs to be regarded as an important contribution to understanding the colonial experience.

While literary scholars and historians have previously studied these authors and their writings on an individual basis, this dissertation seeks to consider them collectively as examples of francophone African literature coming out of the Interwar period. In this respect, the objective of this study is not unlike what Christopher L. Miller seeks to accomplish in the previously cited *Nationalists and Nomads*. In his book Miller calls for a re-evaluation of francophone African literature of the 1920s, whereby dispelling the widely held perception that French speaking Africa saw no literary output of its own until Negritude in the 1930s. To this end, Miller writes in his introduction, "The Negritude movement that emerged in the late 1930s is too often seen as the *first* organized intellectual response by blacks to French colonialism; as I try to show, Negritude was in fact preceded by a generation of far more radical thinkers and activists."[23] Miller then continues, explaining that the goals of his book are to: 1) Correct the understanding of the point of origin of francophone African literature; 2) Bring attention back to the colonial period despite the current focus on post-colonial literature and thought; 3) Acknowledge the literary contributions of works published during the colonial period in Africa; and 4) Recognize the importance of teaching African literature to achieve a deeper

[23] Miller, *Nationalists* 2.

understanding and appreciation for it as world literature.

While agreeing with the points that Miller is making in *Nationalists and Nomads,* and acknowledging that many of the literary works he analyzes are also under consideration in the following chapters,[24] this study seeks to go beyond Miller's initial analysis to focus specifically on the variety of views held by colonized Africans regarding assimilation, and the resulting ambiguity that arises from their position in the colonial system. Each of the proceeding chapters will then feature one or two of the African writers being considered in this study, and will illustrate not only the important literary production of the authors in question and their stance on the issue of assimilation, but will also trace the key factors behind the historic development of colonization that drove the authors to write of their experiences as African subjects of the French Empire during the first decades of the 20th century.

Highlighting the crucial role of education in France's African colonies and how schools were established there by the Third Republic to be used as tools for promoting assimilation, Chapter 1 features the work of colonial educator Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne. After a presentation of the objectives of the colonial education system as it pertained to France's civilizing mission and Georges Hardy's role therein, as well as an assessment of the practice of assimilation versus association – a distinction that was of particular importance to Hardy's reformative vision for French West Africa – the chapter will turn to a discussion of Diagne's biography and writings to suggest that Diagne himself was very much a product of assimilation. An analysis of his *Les Trois Volontés de Malic*

[24] Further references to Miller's ideas and commentary on his analysis as presented in *Nationalists and Nomads* will be made in the proceeding chapters.

serves to fortify this assumption. Published in 1920, Diagne's school primer is considered by many to be the first work of francophone African fiction. Reflecting the reforms in colonial education proposed by Hardy and the teaching background of Diagne, Malic's story is one that depicts assimilation as a positive experience in order to inspire African students to follow his example. Through his desire to quit koranic school in order to attend the French school in his village, followed by his leaving his family to continue his studies in the city and eventually rejecting local social custom and becoming a blacksmith, Malic gravitates toward French culture as he gradually distances himself from the traditions that characterize his African heritage. In this respect, the young African boy is a reformer, demonstrating through his three wishes how French culture is ultimately more desirable and advanced than the African culture of his ancestors.

However, the moral of the story is an ambiguous one. While presenting a pro-colonial stance, Malic's rejection of his own African culture serves to illustrate the negative aspects of colonialism as well. This is perhaps a reflection of Diagne's own dilemma as a colonized intellectual caught between African tradition and French modernity. Yet it is for this very reason that *Les Trois Volontés de Malic* is so significant, as it presents much insight on the actual experience of colonialism as perceived by the colonized. Furthermore, it provides an especially fitting beginning to this study, as Malic's story essentially maps out how France envisioned its civilizing mission playing out. From the introduction of French civilization to Africa through colonial schools to colonized Africans' subsequent adoption of Western ways resulting in the growth and prosperity of their previously "uncivilized" community, the book reflects

what France would have considered to be the intended result of its colonial vision. Malic, and arguably Diagne, represent this ideal – albeit ultimately problematic – assimilated outcome of colonialism, and as such provide a promising point of departure for the discussion to come.

In terms of historic events that would play a role in determining the success or failure of France's colonial empire, World War I was likely the most significant. The Great War was an important event in terms of defining how France viewed its colonial subjects as part of the *mère patrie* even though they were not considered French citizens. Chapter 2 addresses this ambiguous stance by recounting the experiences of the tirailleurs sénégalais – the black colonial regiments recruited from throughout French Africa to fight on behalf of France. Following a presentation of the history of the recruitment process and the role of the tirailleurs during the war, the chapter will then compare the lives and works of two former tirailleurs – Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor – to demonstrate how the war brought about a variety of opinions regarding colonialism and the role of assimilation.

To continue in the same pro-assimilation vein as offered by Diagne's writings in the previous chapter, Bakary Diallo's autobiographical account *Force-Bonté* – published in 1926 – was applauded by the French as evidence of the success of the colonial mission. A fervent apologist of French colonialism despite the injustice he experienced as a tirailleur sénégalais fighting for France in the empire and the metropole, Diallo presents nothing but admiration for France as he marvels at the "force" of its military and the "bonté" of the French people he befriends. Born into a Peul family, he expected to

become a sheep herder, but proved to be a very poor one even though his family had been herders for generations. Feeling rejected by his own culture, he finds solace in the sense of belonging and unity offered by the French army. He finally feels accepted, and begins to read, write and speak French, and becomes so enamored with the generosity of the French people that he doesn't understand how anyone could possibly oppose the greatness of French civilization and all its virtue. The tirailleur's faith in France doesn't even fade when he suffers being wounded on the front, wanders the streets of Paris without money or food, and is denied permission to return home, blaming French bureaucracy rather than the people. Diallo's story, rendered even more credible as it is a personal account of his time in France, provides yet another example of a colonized individual praising French civilization and the merits of assimilation, despite the way in which France left him to fend for himself following the war.

However, not every tirailleur's heart harbored such unconditional love for France. While he and Diallo may have fought in the same war on behalf of the French, Lamine Senghor's barbed critique of colonialism could not differ more from Diallo's panegyric to France. Representing two extremes of how colonized Africans interpreted colonialism, comparing the lives of the two men and their contrasting opinions on the issue of assimilation is particularly revelatory in regard to understanding the overall perceptions of France's colonial subjects during the Interwar period. Senghor encapsulates his anti-colonial stance in *La violation d'un pays,* in which he presents a highly critical view of France's imperial ventures. Published in 1927 - the same year as the author's death - and subsequently sold at a small profit to fund activities of his Ligue de Défense de la Race

Nègre in France and the colonies, Senghor's thirty-one page pamphlet follows the tragic story of Dégou Diagne, and reads as a short history of the interactions between Europe and Africa. Set in a peaceful African village, it isn't long after the arrival of *l'homme pâle*, also known as Monsieur Bourgeois, that ambition and greed corrupt and enslave the Africans, leaving them no choice but to rise up with all those who have suffered oppression to revolt against the tyranny of Roi Colonialisme and his mother the Reine République.

As suggested by Senghor's conclusion in *La violation d'un pays*, the debate over assimilation was not limited solely to West African circles, but was taken up throughout the empire. As Algeria figured so prominently on the French colonial landscape, colonized Algerians were especially well-positioned to join in the discussion. The colonized intellectuals of Algeria – who also occupied an ambiguous position in colonial society - had produced French language literature even earlier than their West African counterparts, and as a result their publications represent some of the earliest challenges to colonialism by subjects of the French Empire. Chapter 3 of this study addresses the unique relationship between colonial Algeria and France by looking first at the history that brought Algeria into France's imperial fold and then transitions to a discussion of Chukri Khodja as a member of the Jeunes Algériens elite during the interwar years who was writing about the potential consequences of assimilation.

As his biography reveals, Khodja himself was a victim of colonial ambiguity, and his novels mirrored his own anguish over attempts to bridge the gap between Algerian and French cultures. In reviewing Khodja's life and his literary works, this chapter will

begin with a brief discussion of his first novel *Mamoun, l'ébauche d'un idéal*, published in 1928, as the book sets the stage for Khodja's treatment of assimilation in his second novel. A thought provoking work before its time, *El Euldj, captif des barbaresques* - published only a year after *Mamoun* in 1929 – takes an arguably radical approach to thinking about assimilation by turning the tables so that it is the French who are obliged to assimilate rather than the Algerians. Set in the 16th century, the novel's main character, Bernard Ledieux is taken as a slave after his ship is attacked by corsairs. In order to escape his sorry fate, he converts to Islam, goes on to marry his master's daughter, and has a son by her who becomes an influential mufti. All seems to go well for him following this total acceptance of his captor's culture, but all the while he is emotionally tormented for having turned his back on his Christian faith and the wife and children he already had in France. In the end he dies, unable to reconcile his African, Muslim present with his European, Christian past. Yet the story does offer some glimmer of hope for the future. In the final pages of the book, Lediousse's son confesses that he has known his father's secret all along, has learned the French language, and has found that many aspects of his father's French heritage have enriched his own character as an Algerian and Muslim. Recounting such a tale provided Khodja the unique opportunity to question the practice of assimilation and critique the colonial system from within, and reflected the approach to assimilation adopted at the time by the Jeunes Algériens – molding together the best of both worlds to foster a dually Algerian and French identity.

Rounding out the discussion of francophone African authors' treatment of assimilation in their writings during the interwar years, the final chapter of this study

focuses on Senegalese statesman Ousmane Socé and his contributions as a writer to the African literary canon. Socé published only two novels early on in his career - *Karim* in 1935, followed by *Mirages de Paris* in 1937. In both books, Socé addresses the question of assimilation and its practicability by hinting at the illusory nature of the transitional "in-between" that inhibits the colonized individual from becoming French. As suggested in the novels, while intended as a transitional space, the in-between instead becomes a purgatory as those who enter the space can never leave it. Tracing the development of this notion from the first chapters of *Karim* on through *Mirages de Paris*, this chapter seeks to examine the ambiguous nature of what Homi K. Bhabha would refer to as the "third space".

To this end, the chapter will focus especially on *Mirages de Paris.* This novel tells the story of Fara, a young African man who is selected to go to Paris to attend the Colonial Exposition of 1931, but, as the title of the work suggests, his life there does not meet up to his expectations. Initially, the novel seems to support the concept of cultural assimilation. Despite being frequently marginalized due to racism, Fara falls in love with Jacqueline, a white Parisian woman from a bourgeois family. The couple lives happily together, and chooses to ignore the fact that their being of different races and of different cultures has attracted the stares of many less accepting people. Tragically, their happiness is not meant to continue when Jacqueline dies shortly after giving birth to their baby. Fara, unable to live without his wife and feeling disillusioned by his attempt to assimilate, drowns himself in the Seine. Analyzing Fara's story as he dodges the pitfalls of assimilation offers a sobering conclusion to this study. Bookending Chapter 1, in

which it is suggested that Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic* presents a road map of colonial good intentions, Socé's *Mirages de Paris* offers a retrospective of how those intentions played out.

Ultimately, all of the African authors considered in this study are pondering similar questions in their writings in regard to assimilation – although they answer them in different ways and approach the issue from a variety of angles. As colonial subjects chasing after the promises of France's civilizing mission, all of these men were pulled in to the "in-between", giving rise to the existential question of "Qui suis-je?". Thus, what is the role of the African subject within the colonial vision? Is it possible for them to traverse the "in-between" and assimilate? If so, to what degree? Can one be partially assimilated, or must one leave their former self behind entirely to take up the ways of the colonizer? In light of all of the promises made by the French in their colonial vision, where does the colonizer ultimately lead – and leave – those colonized people they proposed to mold into their equal? In the end, the ambiguous legacy of France's colonial endeavors still stands and there is no one, clear answer to these questions, as evidenced by the varying views of the African authors presented in this study. However, their ideas represent the beginning of a debate that would be picked up by the Negritude Movement, and continue through the period of African independence and beyond.

As this study considers examples of francophone African literature written and published throughout the Interwar period, it becomes clear that African writers at the time had much to contribute to colonial discourse regarding the challenges that cultural assimilation brought upon them as colonized individuals. As early works of African

literature, they also provide significant historical insight on the origins of assimilation – an issue of current importance as France continues to grapple with many of the same questions encountered during its colonial past. By acknowledging the validity of the opinions expressed nearly a century ago by some of the first authors of francophone African literature, and recognizing the significance of their previously forgotten works, literary scholars, historians, and politicians alike stand to gain a clearer understanding of France's ambiguous colonial legacy.

Such an understanding is rendered all the more important as reverberations of colonialism continue to be felt throughout the francophone world today, particularly in the form of emigration from the former colonies to France. Questions of nationhood and issues of immigration arise regularly in France today, resulting in proposed solutions that bear a striking resemblance to colonial thinking in their attempt to distinguish those who are *ready* for French citizenship versus those who have yet to integrate French republican values and customs into their lives. However, given the growing cultural influence of the greater francophone world on the Hexagon and the integration of francophone people into French society, it is becoming increasingly difficult to discern what modern "French" identity actually looks like. This phenomenon has become especially apparent in francophone literary circles. As Christopher Miller observes in *Nationalists and Nomads*, "But now there are far greater numbers of African writers writing in France than at any previous time, and far better established African communities there. Parts of France must therefore be considered within any analysis of francophone spaces in the world; France,

through a strange twist of fate, is now an appendage of Africa."[25] This role reversal then bears the question, as France essentially becomes more Africanized, how will it live up to its celebrated values of liberty, equality and fraternity while preserving its individuality? It would seem that it is now France's turn to navigate the "in-between" as it confronts the multicultural identity of its national future.

[25] Miller, *Nationalists* 56.

Chapter 1

Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne: Promoting the colonial vision through *l'enseignement adapté*

Considered widely to be the first work of francophone African fiction, Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic* made an important mark on the timeline of literary history when it was first published in 1920. However, its legacy and that of its author have proven paradoxical to scholars of African literature, leaving them to question the sincerity with which Diagne writes of the merits of French colonialism. There is much irony in the fact that this twenty-eight page book, intended as a primer for African schoolchildren and written as a panegyric to France and all that the colonies stood to potentially gain through exposure to French civilization, stands as the precursor to major works of African fiction that would interpret the experience of colonialism from a significantly more critical and negative point of view.[1] This observation falls in line with that of Dorothy Blair, who also highlights the ironic nature of the text and hints at the advent of Negritude and the skill of its writers and poets when she states, "…in filling the need for a school reader in French for the West African colonies, Diagne was founding a line of black writers who would use with elegance and ease the French language he taught their fathers; but the burden of their works will be the direct antithesis of his procolonial accolades."[2] In a similar vein, Joseph Mbelolo observes, "Diagne puts the

[1] To name but a few of the most notable examples: Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* (1956), Sembene Ousmane's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960), Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* (1961), and Yambo Ouologuem's *Le devoir de violence* (1968).

[2] Dorothy Blair, *Senegalese Literature: A Critical History* (Boston: Twayne, 1984) 41. Providing evidence that Diagne influenced the work of later African writers, Blair also cites a passage from Senegalese writer Birago Diop's autobiography *La plume raboutée*: "This is what Birago Diop has to say about the impression that this modest twenty-page book had on him, as he recalls his first school years in Dakar: 'Meanwhile, on the path that opened out, leading to knowledge, the discovery of the world and of oneself, I felt myself concerned for the first time in the matter of 'literature' by a little book, *Les Trois Volontés de*

finger on many problems like Western education, cultural conflict and conflict of generations, the presence of colonial powers, problems that are the treasure of later novels much better written."[3] Thus Mbelolo suggests that the text introduces a number of themes that had a significant impact on colonial life, and that it speaks specifically to the changes within African society and culture brought about by colonialism, but that it does so in a facile form that Diagne's successors would address in more sophisticated terms.

Nevertheless, despite its intended readership of African children and its pro-colonial bent, details which arguably make this founding text all the more intriguing, this story about a precocious African boy and his zeal for attending the French school in his village cannot be so easily diminished in importance and relegated to the category of "colonial literature"[4] and consequently dismissed as such from the African literary canon. Indeed, *Les trois volontés de Malic* merits much more than a passing mention made in reference to the earliest beginnings of African literature composed in French. It not only offers much insight on the aims of colonial policies that came into vogue in French West Africa following the First World War and how these policies were potentially perceived by colonized African subjects, but also serves as a literary point of departure from which would evolve the ideas and writings of African novelists to come. Regarding this latter point, Richard Watts begins his discussion of "Literature and collaboration in sub-

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Malick [sic], written by a Senegalese teacher, Mapathé Diagne, nicknamed 'Square-Head,' of whom I caught a glimpse one day in the school playground …'" (Blair, *Critical History* 40). It seems that Diagne's little book made quite an impression on Diop and his path to becoming a writer, as he discovered not only literature, but *African* literature. Despite the book's subject matter, for young Birago the fact that it was written by a black Senegalese teacher with whom he was familiar made literature all the more relatable and accessible.

[3] As quoted in Jahn et al., *Who's Who in African Literature* (Tübingen: Horst, 1972) 101.

[4] The term "colonial literature" is used here to refer to works of fiction published by French authors during the colonial period that often exploited stereotypes of wild and uncivilized Africa to serve as the exotic backdrop for adventure stories.

Saharan Africa" with these words:

> When the first work of francophone colonized fiction from sub-Saharan Africa was published in 1920, a die was cast. Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic* […] is a paean to the benefits of colonialism, and it is in line with or, as the years pass, against this example of the vocation of francophone literature that works from this emerging literary field will implicitly be written and evaluated.[5]

With the publication of Diagne's story, literature became an outlet for francophone African writers to express their stance on colonialism.

Assimilation and association figure prominently among the features of colonial policy to be addressed by the African writers under consideration in this study. To this end, the objective of this chapter is to examine how Diagne approaches these notions within the realm of colonial education and its relation to the greater civilizing mission - *Les trois volontés de Malic* providing an insightful glimpse of how Diagne justified his ambiguous role in carrying out the colonial vision while at the same time becoming a product of assimilation himself. In order to gain a deeper appreciation for the text and to better understand the circumstances surrounding its creation, before investigating Malic's story it is important to first become familiar with the educational reforms of the interwar years that inspired the book's pro-colonial stance, and how Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne's views may or may not have aligned with those depicted in the book based on his other non-fictional writings and what information is known on his life.

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[5] Richard Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2005): 27.

Debunking the myth of les Africains gaulois: Adapting education to a colonial milieu

There was a time when discussions surrounding colonial education often included mention of black African schoolchildren being taught about their blue eyed, fair haired ancestors the Gauls. This misconception stemmed from the assumption that colonized Africans attending school in their rural villages were learning the same lessons as their French counterparts in the Metropole. Such an idea is not entirely unfounded, as it falls in line with 19th century imperial minded France's practice of assimilation --- molding the uncivilized African subject politically, socially and culturally into a model French citizen by following the same prescription used to bring up all good republican patriots in France. Before 1890, assimilationist theory was indeed applied to colonial education. Priscilla Blakemore attests to this fact when she states, "In assimilationist theory education was assigned the role of familiarizing students in the colonies with the European economic, social, and moral order as a first and most important step toward integrating them into that order. For this work it was assumed that French education need not be altered in structure, content, or method." [6]

However, scholars have since demonstrated that this practice did not necessarily imply that African students were learning about their supposed European ancestry. Referencing the *Congrès Intercolonial de l'Enseignement dans les Colonies et les Pays d'Outre-Mer*, held as part of the Colonial Exposition of Paris in 1931, Denise Bouche highlights the great lengths to which the colonial administration went in order to quell such persistent rumors, "Sans nier complètement la possibilité du fait, le représentant de

[6] Blakemore, "Assimilation and Association in French Educational Policy and Practice: Senegal, 1903-1939," *Essays in the History of African Education* (New York: Teachers College P, 1970) 86-87.

l'enseignement en A.O.F., Davesne[7], le rejette dans un passé incontrôlable: 'La vieille anecdote des élèves noirs récitant une leçon sur *leurs ancêtres les Gaulois n'est plus qu'une légende'.'"*[8] Providing further clarity on the matter, Blakemore adds that, "…it is incorrect to assume that public education in [French-speaking West Africa] followed the metropolitan model throughout the colonial period. Indeed, the first system of education organized by the French in 1903 for their West African colonies was adapted to local conditions in both structure and content."[9]

Reflecting on this observation, it is worth noting Blakemore's implication that there was a time when the content and style of colonial education mirrored that of its metropolitan counterpart. This may not have occurred throughout the *entire* colonial period, and the colonial school curriculum may or may not have featured the Gauls in its lessons, but there are in fact instances of colonial pupils being taught *à la française* throughout the 19th century. Perhaps the most well-known example of this phenomenon in French colonial Africa occurred in the Four Communes of Senegal: Dakar, Rufisque, Saint-Louis and Gorée. Socially, politically and historically unique as compared to other West African colonies, the communes were established as European colonial settlements in the 17th century, and maintained a diverse population of native Frenchmen, mulattos,

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[7] André Prosper Davesne (1898-1978) was a French educator and writer, as well as author of the *Mamadou et Bineta* series of reading primers that were used to teach French in colonial schools.

[8] Denise Bouche, "Autrefois, notre pays s'appelait la Gaule…Remarques sur l'adaptation de l'enseignement au Sénégal de 1817 à 1960," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 8/29 (1968): 111.

[9] Blakemore 85. On this point, see also Harry Gamble's scholarship regarding the French colonial education system ("Developing Cultures: Debates over education in French West Africa, 1930-1950." Diss. New York U, 2002). In his study, Gamble traces the evolution of colonial education from the 1930s to the 1950s by highlighting the shifting attitude of the colonial administration vis-à-vis assimilation versus association in the colonial classroom. He begins during the interwar years of the 1930s when assimilation fell from favor and education prioritized the preservation of regional society and culture, echoing in many ways the regional movements that occurred in France under the Third Republic. A return to assimilation would resurface however at the end of World War II when African elites pushed for metropolitan education to be replicated in the colonies as they sought equal consideration for French colonial subjects.

and black Africans - Catholics and Muslims alike. [10] Despite their differences in race, origin and religion, inhabitants of the Communes were united by their French nationality. Having fully embraced the concept of assimilation, each commune enjoyed all the rights associated with French citizenship, abided by metropolitan laws, and as of 1879, was even allowed to have a representative in Parliament. For all intents and purposes, the Four Communes were not colonies, but an extension of metropolitan France itself.

Due to their status as *assimilés*, citizens of the Communes benefited from a French education. "Since 1847," explains Alice L. Conklin, "when primary education was first officially organized in the colony, these families [i.e. families of assimilated local leaders, for the most part of mulatto descent] had insisted that the same curricula and exams used in the metropole be adopted in their schools."[11] Yet the practice of assimilation in the area of education would not extend far into the 20th century. In 1903, Ernest Roume became Governor General of French West Africa, and among the first reforms he made was to do away with assimilation. Conklin explains that the new Governor General "…rejected assimilation as inappropriate and politically dangerous for a colony as vast and ethnically diverse as West Africa…" Conklin goes on to add that in the area of education, "Roume realized that the metropolitan school system, transplanted to West Africa, would not contribute to the kind of development the Government General now wished to undertake, ostensibly for everyone's benefit. This development required

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[10] Alice L. Conklin distinguishes the Communes from the colonies when she describes the four cities as an "enclave" and that they "…formed an anomaly in French West Africa after 1880, when the French began to extend their conquest beyond the coastal settlements of Senegal. The territories of the interior were placed instead under special protectorate regimes, which, at least in theory, respected existing African institutions and polities." (*A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997): 77).

[11] Conklin 77.

greater African agricultural productivity and skilled workmen for infrastructure construction, not lycée graduates."[12] Change in policy therefore became essential to the realization of Roume's vision for West Africa.

Thus from the latter years of the 19th century on into the first decade of the 20th century, France forged a new colonial policy based on the concept of association that would alter its theoretical approach to "civilizing" its colonized subjects. In lieu of denying pre-colonial Africa a history of its own and nullifying the value of African cultural traditions, as assimilation had done, association readily acknowledged cultural difference and valorized indigenous customs while also introducing French morals and social improvements to colonized society. As African schoolchildren were among the first to engage directly with French culture and language, the colonial classroom was transformed into a sort of socio-cultural laboratory where the theory of association could be put into practice. In this manner, adapting the traditional French curriculum to local conditions in the colonies became *de rigueur*. This newfound cultural awareness and sensitivity underlines the importance of education to accomplishing the objectives set forth by French colonial policy, with the new curriculum being carefully crafted to achieve specific outcomes for its African pupils attending rural village schools and, for some, regional schools.

At the village level, the focus was to be on mass education and providing colonized Africans with the rudiments of French language and moral values as well as some basic gardening skills that would lead to the creation of *jardins scolaires* as an extension of the classroom on school grounds. As Blakemore explains, "The course of

[12] Conklin 77-78.

study for Africans was established by the 1903 law which specified that the curriculum for the village school was to include 'spoken French; and in addition, reading, writing, arithmetic and the metric system; and practical lessons in agriculture.'"[13] Such teachings would allow African students in rural areas to better access all that French ingenuity had to offer and help them to become active participants in meeting colonial objectives for social and moral development. The ability to communicate in French would minimize the need for interpreters and provide a greater sense of unity among the ethnically diverse populations of the African colonies. Basic mathematics would aid in the practice of trade and commerce. Familiarity with Western agricultural techniques would not only help increase food production in rural communities in which students resided but would also provide African students with the necessary skills to develop the land into a source of agricultural production to benefit all of the French colonial empire. In the spirit of association, each subject was carefully selected to strengthen the rapport between colonizer and colonized and maximize resources at the local level in order to ultimately benefit the welfare of the colony as a whole.

Noticeably absent from this list of school subjects are history and geography. Under the new approach to colonial education, teaching French history and geography proved problematic to the colonial cause. Not only were African students unfamiliar with the geography, topography and climate of France, but teaching the French Revolution, the Universal Rights of Man and values *of liberté, égalité, et fraternité* to a classroom of students whose homeland was under foreign occupation had the potential to inspire thoughts of emancipation and the premature end of France's colonial endeavors.

[13] Blakemore 93.

Referencing a 1924 guide to curriculum reform, Gail P. Kelly conveys the legitimacy of this concern, stating, "If the history of France was to be taught at all […] it was to be simplified and expurgated, for Africans had no need to learn of bloody civil wars, the French revolution, or the taking of the Bastille. History, as far as those who controlled the schools were concerned, was to deal with West Africa."[14] To remedy this situation, discussions of French history and geography were avoided, and in keeping with the tenets of association, local history was prioritized, but restricted to the moments when France was represented in only the most positive and beneficent light. As Kelly describes, "The government insisted that history instruction have simple goals: to convince students of the legitimacy of French rule, that the present was better than the past, and that Africans who attended school would not become alienated from their own societies."[15]

While these objectives were also extended to programs for regional schools, the students that were selected to attend them received more advanced schooling and were generally earmarked to become members of the African elite that would serve in auxiliary positions to support the most immediate needs of the colonial administration. Citing the 1903 law for educational reform, Conklin elaborates on what subjects were offered by regional schools, "At this level, equal weight was to be given to French language, Arabic (where appropriate), reading, writing, math, geometry, drawing, French history 'in its relation to the different countries of West Africa,' and 'notions of physical and natural science applied to hygiene, agriculture and local industry.'"[16] Additionally,

[14] Gail P. Kelly, "Interwar Schools and the Development of African History in French West Africa." *African Studies Association* 10 (1983): 168.
[15] Kelly, *African History* 168.
[16] Conklin 80.

students typically received some degree of professional training, and were awarded a certificate of primary education upon completion of their studies to demonstrate their readiness to enter the colonial work force in some capacity.

Hence, particularly at the village level, the colonial administration was very insistent on implementing a relatively basic educational program of reading, writing and arithmetic, as revealed in the following address of Governor General William Ponty[17] to the Conseil de Gouvernement in 1908:

> Rassurez-vous […] il n'entre pas dans ma pensée de multiplier les établissements donnant autre chose qu'une instruction primaire très simple. Il faut, en effet, prendre nos populations au stade où elles en sont de leur évolution. Apprendre à l'indigène à parler notre langue, à la lire, à l'écrire, lui inculquer quelques rudiments de calcul avec quelques notions de morale, c'est suffisant pour le moment […] Une fois qu'il les possède, l'enseignement doit, pour nos jeunes indigènes et en dehors d'une élite d'une culture plus élevée qu'il sera de notre devoir d'encourager, devenir et rester pratique.[18]

It is interesting to note the imperative tone of Ponty's address, as it suggests a degree of inquietude among French colonial leadership. Calling upon government representatives to rest assured that the educational program in the colonies would remain quite simplistic, and insisting that education remain at only the most practical level would seem to

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[17] Amédée William Merlaud-Ponty (1866-1915) served as Governor General of French West Africa from 1908 until his death in 1915. Having taken on an influential role in the restructuring of colonial education during his tenure as governor, upon his death his name was given to the celebrated normal school then situated on the island commune of Gorée. The École normale William Ponty would go on to produce the best of the African elite distinguishingly known as "Pontins", West African writers and major politicians among its noteworthy graduates.

[18] Cited by Denise Bouche as being from the Gouvernement général de l'A.O.F.'s *Situation générale de l'année 1908* (Gorée: Imprimerie du Gouvernement général, 1908) 24. (Bouche 115).

indicate that Ponty was well aware of the possibility of education leading to social unrest. It would seem that the likelihood of such an event is nowhere in the near future if one considers the colonized population as Ponty does, placing them at a low level of socio-cultural evolution and deeming them capable of only acquiring the most basic academic skills. Nevertheless Ponty alludes to practicing a form of social control as a precautionary measure to avoid the risk of having a colonized African intelligentsia challenge the intellectual superiority of the colonial administration.[19]

In adapting education in the colonies, it was important to balance the full potential of a French education with the degree of knowledge that the colonial administration deemed sufficient for colonized Africans. To summarize this aspect of colonial education, Kelly states, "Despite fluctuations in policy and ways of thinking about education throughout the interwar years, the schools adhered to their mission of teaching the French language, adjusting Africans to their milieu, and extolling the benefits of French rule".[20] Prioritizing the value of an education in French and presenting the positive moralizing influence the French purported to bring to the colonies took on primary importance as the colonial administration envisioned its educational policies.[21]

Georges Hardy as crusader for the cause of association

Georges Hardy was all of twenty-six years old in 1912 when William Ponty

[19] For more on how the creation of this French educated African elite contributed to the anxiety of the colonial administration following the First World War, and consequently brought about certain educational reforms in colonial schools, see Spencer D. Segalla's article, "The Micropolitics of Colonial Education in French West Africa, 1914-1919." *French Colonial History* 13 (2012): 1-22.
[20] Kelly, *African history* 166.
[21] For more information on how the French perceived their role as educators in the colonies across the colonial empire, see also Kelly's article, "The Presentation of Indigenous Society in the Schools of French West Africa and Indochina, 1918-1938." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26/3 (July 1984): 523-542.

named him as his "Directeur de l'Enseignement." In her introduction to the 2005 republication of Hardy's *Une conquête morale*, J.P. Little cites Ponty's criteria for the position as "jeunesse exigée, avec le goût du risque et de l'aventure spirituelle." Little then elaborates on the magnitude of this appointment and its significance to Hardy's career, stating, "Son [i.e. Ponty's] choix tombe sur Georges Hardy […] qui se trouve ainsi à l'âge de vingt-six ans dans une position de pouvoir et d'influence redoutable, point de départ d'une longue association professionnelle avec les colonies […]."[22] A graduate of history and geography from the École Normale Supérieure, Hardy was as motivated and ambitious as he was intelligent, and throughout his career held numerous positions[23] in the colonies that allowed him to greatly influence educational policy: Directeur général de l'instruction générale in Morocco, Directeur de l'École Coloniale, and Recteur de l'Académie d'Alger in Algeria.

Indeed, his name being practically synonymous with the development of education in French West Africa during this time period, Georges Hardy played a major role in adapting colonial education along the lines of association, a concept of which he was a staunch proponent. Hardy makes his position on this matter quite clear in his 1928 publication, *Histoire de la colonisation française*. With sixteen years of experience in French colonial Africa, Hardy offers a critique of the old practice of assimilation, suggesting that it is not necessarily an advantageous approach to colonization: "Il n'y a pas de peuple sans civilisation, si l'on entend par là un ensemble cohérent de coutumes et

[22] Little, Introduction vii.
[23] In addition to these responsibilities, Hardy as a historian was also a prolific writer, penning works on African art and culture, the history of French colonization and geography of the African colonies, and biographies on the great colonial leaders Louis Faidherbe and Hubert Lyautey.

d'institutions, et il n'y a pas de civilisation qui puisse être du jour au lendemain remplacée par une autre, sans danger de déséquilibre profond pour le groupement intéressé."[24] In place of assimilation, Hardy stressed the importance of adapting the process of colonization to the preexisting socio-cultural makeup of West Africa, arguing that the colonizer should only intervene to reform the affairs of the colonized when it would prove beneficial to both parties involved.

To defend his position, Hardy presents what he perceives to be the key features of "la politique indigène" that should characterize colonization.[25] The first feature he mentions is that of *pacification* and "faire régner l'ordre et la paix" in order to establish a sort of Pax Gallica in Africa by putting an end to tribal warfare and ensuring that justice is properly served. Once peace has been restored, the process of *adaptation* can begin whereby colonial leaders govern through local leaders so as not to directly disturb local forms of government to which the people are accustomed. In a further attempt to gain the trust and collaboration of colonized individuals, Hardy then stresses the importance of patient *apprivoisement*,[26] or a winning over of the people gradually so as not to have them feel threatened and create "une atmosphère de défiance et d'hostilité." Yet even once the colonized people acknowledge the benefits of colonialism, to take full advantage of them they must be properly fit in body and mind. For this reason, Hardy puts much

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[24] Georges Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française* (Paris: Larose, 1928): 319.
[25] The following information is paraphrased from Hardy's *Histoire de la colonisation française*, pages 318-323.
[26] Hardy's use of the term "apprivoisement" is somewhat revealing of his attitude toward bringing French civilization to the colonized African people. Derived from the verb "apprivoiser" – to tame or to domesticate – the term is more frequently used in reference to animals. While Hardy may have employed the term here in a figurative sense, it does seem to suggest that he may have viewed Africans as being of a particularly inferior status culturally – and perhaps intellectually – when compared to the French. This would have drawn from misconceptions and racial stereotypes of the times, as black Africans were considered by Western scientists to be evolutionarily inferior to people of the white race.

emphasis on the *amélioration de la vie matérielle* and the importance of introducing proper hygiene and sanitation to improving health, and the *amélioration morale et intellectuelle de l'indigène*, which was to be accomplished through schools.[27]

Based on what he describes, Hardy interprets France's role as colonizer to be that of a benevolent guardian, watching over its colonized African charges and helping them to come to terms with their humanity so that they might not remain "victimes de la géographie ou de l'histoire, […] menacées de disparition par toutes sortes d'infériorités et de misères."[28] Harboring nothing but good intentions, Hardy understands France's colonial endeavors to be "…vraiment la plus noble des œuvres et le plus beau couronnement de son histoire."[29] He holds firmly to this belief even as he recognizes the potential paradox of colonization being carried out by a democratic republic such as France, and even goes as far as to admit that "…il est vrai qu'une entreprise de domination étroite et d'exploitation conviendrait mal à un peuple qui s'est toujours présenté comme le défenseur des opprimés."[30]

To understand how Hardy reconciles this concern, one must look back to his seminal work *Une conquête morale: l'enseignement en A.O.F.*, in which he offers his own definition of colonization that reflects his understanding of it as a moral responsibility. Dispelling any criticism of the practice, he explains that it is not, "…en un

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[27] The overall success of Franco-African relations in the colonies depended upon this final feature in particular, as it was key to accomplishing the aims of colonization. Taking account of the past and future achievements of colonial education, Hardy states, "Il faut, du moins, reconnaître que, dans l'ensemble, le développement de l'enseignement français a dès maintenant fourni à la colonisation un nombre considérable d'auxiliaires indigènes vraiment utiles et qu'au prix de quelques précautions, - adaptation, éducation morale, - l'école française aux colonies doit devenir de plus en plus un précieux instrument d'amélioration matérielle et d'apprivoisement." (Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française* 322).
[28] Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française* 323.
[29] Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française* 323.
[30] Hardy, *Histoire de la colonisation française* 323.

mot, traiter les pays conquis comme un citron qu'on presse et les habitants comme des esclaves." Rather, colonization is the, "… transformation du pays et des habitants, respecter le plus possible l'indigène dans ses biens et dans sa liberté, l'amener à comprendre nos intentions et à les seconder […] et je maintiens que cela seul mérite le nom de colonisation."[31] Herein lies what Hardy considers to be a "moral conquest", convincing the colonized people that France, more than any colonial power, has their best interests in mind and that for this reason they should accept French efforts to introduce measures that will improve their way of life. As Hardy clarifies further, "Mise en valeur du pays, attachement raisonné de l'indigène à notre œuvre, tel est donc l'objet de la nouvelle conquête. Conquête moins rapide que la première, mais aussi féconde et méritoire, et dont l'instrument ne peut-être que l'école."[32]

Indeed, schools were of paramount importance to colonization, serving as the very foundation of colonialism. Providing a means of transmitting colonial objectives to colonized people, education granted access to all features of Hardy's "politique indigène" and stood to become even more important to the colonial cause as it sought to have colonized individuals recognize the appeal of French civilization and modernity. It was due to his desire to demonstrate his high regard for education that Hardy published *Une conquête morale: l'enseignement en A.O.F.* in 1917.

Perhaps his most well-known publication, the work maps out Hardy's vision for colonial education in great detail, and is quite ambitious in scope. Little says of the book that, "Avec sa capacité prodigieuse d'assimilation et de compréhension des faits, le texte

[31] Georges Hardy, *Une conquête morale: L'enseignement en A.O.F.* 1917. Ed. J.P. Little. (Paris: Harmattan, 2005): 11.
[32] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 12.

présente dans sa structure globale et dans la minutie du détail le tout jeune système d'enseignement pour la Fédération tel qu'il était conçu par le Gouvernement général, établi en 1895."[33] More than twenty years after the creation of the Government General of French West Africa, Hardy was able to lend his voice to putting colonial administrators' ideas on education into practice and made a concerted effort to ensure that their intentions were carried out. However, this fact does not discount the significant role Hardy personally played in reforming colonial education. Little reiterates this point, stating:

> Hardy is very much the voice of colonial France, and the ideas the book [i.e. *Une conquête morale*] contains are representative of what was in fact official policy, whose roots lie in the thinking of *Gouverneur-général* William Ponty, for whom education was a matter of particular concern. To state this, however, is not to underestimate Hardy's contribution: although the ideas did not originate with him, it is generally accepted that he played a vital part in their shaping.[34]

Thus Hardy was actively perpetuating the concept of *l'enseignement adapté* as introduced by Ponty.

Unfortunately Ponty died before being able to appreciate Hardy's success with the publication of *Une conquête morale*, but the importance of the book to the colonial cause was still recognized by one of Ponty's successors, François Joseph Clozel, who was Governor General of French West Africa from 1915 to 1917. In having the honor of writing the preface to the book, Clozel echoes Hardy's views on the importance of a well-

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[33] Little, Introduction viii.
[34] Pat Little, "Ambiguities of the "mission civilisatrice" in Georges Hardy's *Une conquête morale: l'enseignement en A.O.F.*" *Essays in French Literature* 41 (Nov 2004): 80.

defined and calibrated system of education in the colonies to the success of colonization, concurring that, "…la formation intellectuelle et morale de nos indigènes dépend en majeure partie l'avenir de notre œuvre coloniale."[35] In regards to the content of this intellectual and moral upbringing, Clozel advocates that colonial education remain at a basic, utilitarian level, stating, "Je pense que le premier résultat à obtenir de l'enseignement que nous donnons dans nos colonies doit être le résultat d'utilité pratique, pour nous d'abord, pour nos indigènes ensuite."[36] In this respect, Clozel viewed colonial education to be mutually beneficial, albeit unequally so, for the colonizer and the colonized. Providing the colonized Africans a basic education not only upheld the ideals of France's civilizing mission, but presented the French colonial administration with a society more open to accepting its authority and being able to adapt to a foreign presence in their homeland.

Holding tightly to the ideals of association, in his introduction Hardy illustrates this notion further in reference to the classroom, where adaptation is required of both teacher and student to acquire the desired outcome of an able and socially responsible work force. As Hardy reveals, "Au vrai, les mêmes devoirs s'imposent à l'école sous toutes les latitudes: il lui convient de s'adapter aux facultés *actuelles* de ses élèves, c'est-à-dire de mettre son enseignement à leur portée, et de s'adapter en même temps aux besoins du pays, c'est-à-dire de préparer à l'œuvre gouvernementale les meilleurs auxiliaires possibles."[37] However, while adaptation may be necessary in any classroom, Hardy stresses that it will not necessarily occur to the same degree in every classroom

[35] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 3.
[36] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 3.
[37] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 8.

and that it may require different approaches dependent upon the origins of the teacher and students. Using a metaphor to illustrate his point, Hardy remarks, "Un bon jardinier ne soigne pas un rosier sauvage de la même façon qu'une délicate orchidée […] De même, il est certain que l'enseignement des indigènes ne peut se donner les mêmes programmes et les mêmes méthodes au Tonkin et au Congo […]." Offering a possible solution to the gardener-teacher, Hardy suggests, "Donnons donc aux intelligences qui nous sont confiées une nourriture appropriée et soigneusement mesurée."[38] Adapting educational methods to a specific locale thus requires a certain degree of fine tuning and socio-cultural awareness, taking into account what subjects should be taught and how they should be presented to colonized students.

Concerning this careful selection of course material, Hardy generally advises that, "Tout en s'adaptant au milieu indigène, l'enseignement colonial doit donc s'attacher à garder dans ses programmes tout ce qui peut contribuer à former l'esprit, à donner des habitudes de raisonnement, à développer les facultés d'observation et de bon sens,"[39] all of which complements Hardy's vision for the *amélioration morale et intellectuelle* of colonized people. Accomplishing such a lofty goal as developing someone's sense of reason requires exceptional individuals of a varied background who possess the ability to transmit to others what they have learned themselves through reason and good sense. To merit the respect and admiration of their students, the actions of colonial teachers had to reflect the virtue and knowledge about which they taught in their classes. As Hardy explains, "Le maître se trouve constamment sous les yeux des enfants indigènes comme

[38] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 14.
[39] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 21.

un exemple vivant; il suit de là qu'il doit se présenter à ces esprits facilement impressionnables dans des conditions de moralité parfaite et devenir pour eux le prototype de l'homme juste, droit, généreux et discipliné."[40] Furthermore, educators would need to possess, "…un ensemble de notions solides sur l'hygiène coloniale, l'agriculture, les travaux manuels, […] et qu'il soit parfaitement au courant des méthodes spéciales appliquées à l'enseignement des indigènes."[41]

In seeking to fill such posts, the French colonial administration identified colonized Africans as an untapped resource. Acknowledging the prospect of their contributions to colonial education, Hardy sees in properly trained Africans the ability to teach the precepts of colonization just as proficiently if not more successfully than European instructors. "L'instituteur indigène connaît la langue, les mœurs et les idées du pays mieux que quiconque," asserts Hardy. He then justifies his claim, saying, "Bien dirigé, cultivé, soigneusement formé à sa tâche, il est en mesure de pénétrer dans l'esprit de ses congénères plus profondément que l'instituteur européen, de lutter avec des armes plus précises contre les préjugés et les résistances injustifiées, d'exercer une action plus sûre et plus continue."[42] Drawing from this list of desirable qualities of an African teacher, one name stands out, and it is as if Hardy had this man in mind when attempting to characterize the ideal individual for the job.

[40] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 21.
[41] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 21.
[42] Hardy, *Conquête morale* 120-121.

Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne: Poster child of Hardy's "Conquête morale"

A product of French colonial education, Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne[43] took on a very active role in implementing Hardy's plans for adapting education in the colonies within the framework of association. Diagne was born circa 1885 in the Gandiol region of Senegal just south of Saint-Louis. He was very active throughout his life, devoting much of his career to education. Having completed his studies and receiving his teaching certification from the École Normale de Saint-Louis du Sénégal, in 1907 he went on to train in Saint-Louis as a primary school teacher. The following year, he moved to Dakar where he continued his teacher training at the École primaire de la rue Thiong. From 1908 on, Diagne held positions at schools throughout Senegal, from Podor in the north to towns in the Casamance region of the south. In 1942 he received special distinction as the head of the "4ème Secteur Pédagogique du Sénégal" before being promoted to the position of "Inspecteur de l'Enseignement Primaire", no doubt well-merited after his many years' experience as a primary school teacher. Diagne eventually retired from education in 1949 and settled in the town of Sedhiou where he continued to work as a secretary to the local mayor until his death in 1976.

Relatively early in his teaching career, in 1915 he developed a relationship with Georges Hardy. As Director of Education in French West Africa, Hardy selected Diagne to work with him as he sought to reform colonial education in Senegal. That same year, Diagne also received a commission from French publishing house Larousse to write a book that would be used as part of the primary school curriculum in French West Africa.

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[43] The following biographical information is taken from Papa Samba Diop's *Archéologie littéraire du roman sénégalais. Écriture Romanesque et cultures régionales au Sénégal (Des origines à 1992)* (Frankfurt, Ger: IKO, 1995): 138-140.

As Diop observes, "*Les trois volontés de Malic* porte la marque de ces deux évènements: il prêche pour une école française prédominante dans la formation de base des élèves sénégalais."[44] Considering the magnitude of these two appointments to Diagne's career, it is thus not surprising that Diagne dedicates *Les trois volontés de Malic* to Hardy: "À M. Georges HARDY [sic], directeur de l'Enseignement au Maroc[45], qui mérita le titre d' "Architecte de l'Enseignement de l'Afrique occidentale", je dédie ce petit récit, hommage de ma respectueuse affection. – Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne."[46] It is evident here that Diagne held Hardy in high regard, advocating that Hardy deserved to be recognized as *the* person to be lauded for the development of education in West Africa. Diagne could not have honored Hardy's significant role in adapting French education to the colonial setting in a more fitting way. As a tribute to the reformer of colonial education, the book is intended for African schoolchildren and presents an example of how colonialism stood to impact their African destiny to bring about progress and modernity.

However, tapping into readers' concerns over the book's representation of colonialism, some critics have questioned the authenticity of Diagne's apparent pro-colonial position as portrayed in *Les trois volontés de Malic*. Verbalizing readers' confusion, Christopher L. Miller writes, "Readers of *Les Trois Volontés* often wonder what could have motivated [Diagne] to write it and whether it can in any sense be considered ironic."[47] Referencing the same issue, Watts' states, "Yet the mere fact of

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[44] Papa Samba Diop 140.
[45] By the time of the book's publication in 1920, Hardy had left French West Africa for Morocco, where Lyautey had named him Director of Public Education, Fine Arts and Antiquities.
[46] Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, *Les trois volontés de Malic* [1920] (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1973): 1.
[47] Christopher L. Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on francophone African literature and culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998): 48.

indigenous authorship of colonial propaganda alone is enough to provoke in contemporary readers a critical suspicion regarding the authority of the writer in question. By this I mean that the circumstances in which *Les trois volontés de Malic* was produced […] forces us to consider the extent to which we should attribute the work to Diagne alone."[48] In coming to this conclusion, Watts does not mean to imply that Diagne was not the one who actually put pen to paper and wrote the story, but, "Rather, I am implying that a literary text in French produced at the height of colonial influence in sub-Saharan Africa is necessarily the result of some form of collaboration between colonizer and colonized […]."[49] In other words, Diagne's telling of Malic's story and the manner in which he describes the boy and his desire for a French education would perhaps suggest the influence of colonial authority requiring him to project the benefits of French civilization in a positive light.

When so much of francophone African literature addresses the harmful consequences of the colonial period and the injustice and inequality endured by colonized populations, it might indeed seem implausible that the author of the first francophone African work of fiction could have so readily endorsed colonialism. Drawing from the thematic content of his written work, Diagne has been deemed, "…l'un des premiers à avoir posé la question de la cohabitation de la culture occidentale avec la civilisation noire."[50] Based on the story of Malic, the potential success of cultural cohabitation with which Diagne is credited as having been among the first to address would not only appear

[48] Watts 28.
[49] Watts 28-29.
[50] Makè Dangnokho. "Journée internationale de l'écrivain africain: Hommage à Amadou Mapaté Diagne." *Journal LeSoleil,* 11 June 2009.

feasible, but also desirable. Whether this reflects Diagne's personal and sincere belief in the virtues of the colonial system, or the desire of the book's publisher to put a positive spin on the presence of the French in Africa requires further investigation. Considering that *Les trois volontés de Malic* is ultimately a work of fiction, and that it was a commissioned piece likely written to please its publishing sponsor, it is difficult to assess Diagne's actual position on the matter. Nevertheless, a look at some of his non-fiction publications proves quite revelatory, and suggests that his admiration for Hardy, association, and the value of a French education are likely to be genuine.[51]

Papa Samba Diop says of Diagne's collected works, "*Les trois volontés de Malic* est la seule fiction écrite par l'auteur, dont le reste de l'œuvre est assez hétéroclite quant aux domaines abordés (histoire, géographie, sociologie, ethnologie, médecine), mais très cohérent quant à sa ligne de conduite qui est de participer à l'implantation, au Sénégal, de l'école et de la culture françaises."[52] Examining the subjects and topics that are featured in Diagne's writings, including folklore, hygiene, agriculture, regional history, and ethnology, it is clear that the writer's interests were wide in scope, taking into

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[51] Additionally, Mame Malado Diakhaté's thesis entitled, "Parcours D'un Enseignant: Ahmadou Mapate Diagne," (Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Faculté des Sciences et Technologies de l'Education et de Formation, 2011) includes pertinent archival research to further the assumption made here in regard to Diagne's pro-colonial stance. Diakhaté describes Diagne as "…l'exemple parfait du « produit » colonial vu les distinctions dont il est l'objet" (3). This conclusion stems from information contained in the "Dossiers Personnels" of the Archives Nationales de Dakar in which Diagne's name is referenced in the following files: 3C027, 3C030, 3C032, 3C036, 3C093, and 3C112 – 3C116. According to Diakhaté's findings, Diagne was nominated numerous times for the Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur due to his service to France as a colonial educator. The Gouverneur Général Jules Marcel de Coppet is cited on May 10, 1938 as having said of Diagne: "Esprit fin et cultivé, Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne est l'un des exemples les plus frappants de la réussite de notre œuvre éducative. Je serais particulièrement heureux de voir récompenser ses longs et dévoués services par l'attribution de la Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur pour laquelle je le propose chaleureusement" (Diakhaté 3). For an African teacher to have received such accolades from the colonial governor general implies that Diagne must have demonstrated a strong commitment not only to colonial education but also to France's colonial mission in general.

[52] Papa Samba Diop 140-141.

consideration a number of the subjects he inevitably taught in primary schools throughout Senegal. In this sense, Diagne was the ideal example of what Hardy was looking for in an *instituteur indigène*. As a native Senegalese, he possessed a broad range of knowledge and experience, especially in matters of local or regional history that claimed such a prominent place in colonial curriculum once association came into vogue. Having been educated in French schools himself, Diagne admired all that a French education could offer, and could also relate directly to the lives and experiences of his African students, acting as a sort of socio-cultural intermediary between the French and his own African countrymen.

Being published by the journals in which his writing was featured also infers Diagne's acceptance of what the colonial mission was trying to accomplish and establishes his active collaboration in seeing colonial objectives to fruition. Take for example the *Bulletin de l'enseignement de l'Afrique occidentale française*. Created in 1912 by Georges Hardy, it was developed as a pedagogical journal to aid French and African teachers of the colonies alike, and encouraged colonial educators to submit articles on ethnographic observations they made at their posts or gathered from students in order to gain a better understanding of local society and customs. Similarly, the *Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F.* was created in 1918[53] as a scientific journal. The committee of its title was selected by the Governor General of French West Africa from among notable individuals residing in Dakar, throughout the greater West African colony, and abroad, all of whom sought to coordinate research

[53] At that time, the journal, published three times a year, replaced the committee's previously annually published *Annuaire* that had been in existence since 1916.

efforts in the colony and publish their findings in a journal accessible to everyone regardless of what corner of the empire they resided.[54] There was also *Outre-Mer: Revue Générale de Colonisation* directed by Georges Hardy, the goals of which closely resembled those of the other journals listed, but with a greater focus on ethnographic studies and life in the colonies. For Diagne to have been published by any of these journals would indicate that he and his work were well received by the committees of French administrators directing their publication. It is telling that while he wrote the procolonial *Les trois volontés de Malic* according to the specifications indicated to him by a French publisher that commissioned the book, Diagne's praise and admiration for the French is still evident in his non-fictional writings in which he would have had more of a choice in how to present his observations. Even without the constraints of a commissioned work limiting his freedom to express what he may personally have thought of colonialism, when given the opportunity Diagne still wrote openly in praise of French colonization and all that it had to offer his African homeland.

Touching on the Manichean themes of French versus African, modernity versus tradition that would later be featured in the tale of Malic, one of Diagne's first articles, "Le dispensaire et l'école", alludes again and again to the benefits to be had from adopting hygienic practices introduced by the French as opposed to following the advice of marabouts and animist healers. The very first line of the article speaks to the credo of the civilizing mission, stating, "Depuis 1902, par le dispensaire et l'école, le Gouvernement poursuit avec méthode et persévérance l'œuvre humanitaire et bien

[54] Paraphrased from the "Extrait des statuts" of the journal, published by the Imprimerie du Gouvernement Général in Gorée in the January-March edition (No 1) of 1919.

française d'Assistance médicale et d'éducation des indigènes." [55] This plays directly into Hardy's notions of the *amélioration de la vie matérielle,* symbolized by the health clinic, and of *la vie morale et intellectuelle,* symbolized by the colonial school, as necessary components of colonization through association. Furthermore, in describing humanitarian aid as something that is "bien française" implies that Diagne attributes such examples of humanitarianism to the French colonizer, raising France even higher on its moral pedestal.

Diagne follows up this statement by describing the doctor and the teacher as playing the same indefatigable role – fighting together to stave off ignorance and suffering of the African people: "…docteur et aide-médecin, instituteur et moniteur luttent sans relâche contre les terribles maux qui déciment la race."[56] Teacher and doctor, clinic and school therefore work in tandem. In recognizing the importance of public health, Diagne concludes, "Ainsi l'école, en réhabilitant le dispensaire, aura accompli sa mission la plus urgente et prouvé sa solidarité avec un des organes les plus importants de l'assistance indigène."[57] Thus the school plays an important role in promoting the clinic and as a result the general state of public health also improves as people begin to see for themselves the clinic's rate of success.

Students may at first be hesitant to go to the health clinic when they need medical treatment. However, lessons in good health presented by their teacher, especially an African teacher to whom they can relate, help to reassure them of the doctor's ability to

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[55] Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, "Le dispensaire et l'école," *Bulletin de l'enseignement de l'A.O.F*. 20 (Jan 1916): 25.
[56] Diagne, "Dispensaire" 25.
[57] Diagne, "Dispensaire" 31.

heal them. Thanks to the lessons that their teacher taught them, when students fall ill they know that to feel better they will need to go to the clinic. In this way, the colonial teacher takes part in a sort of intellectual covert operation – teaching by example. Diagne reminds his fellow teachers , "N'oublions jamais *qu'éduquer c'est de se donner en exemple*. Mettons à contribution l'esprit d'imitation de nos élèves, inculquons-leur de bonnes habitudes, et ils se chargeront de les introduire, presque insidieusement, au sein de leur famille."[58] Following this logic, one lesson on the importance of washing one's hands can then set off a chain reaction as students return home for dinner and explain to their families that they need to wash their hands before eating. The family follows the student's example, and gradually the local community adopts the habit and incorporates it into their daily routine.

As a teacher himself, it is clear that Diagne thinks of his job as an educator as consisting of much more than simply presenting a given lesson and evaluating his students' academic progress. Addressing again his fellow African teachers, Diagne confirms this characterization:

> Ne croyons jamais avoir accompli toute notre tâche, rempli toute notre mission parce que nous avons bien préparé et assez bien fait notre petite classe, parce que les cahiers de nos élèves sont corrigés et soigneusement annotés, parce qu'enfin notre comptabilité scolaire est bien à jour. Pour moi tout cela n'est que le côté théorique du métier, de l'ouvrage: un ouvrage théoriquement fait est à peine à moitié achevé."[59]

[58] Diagne, "Dispensaire" 30.
[59] Diagne, "Dispensaire" 29.

Demonstrating great concern for the well-being of African students, Diagne seeks to put theory into practice in order to save his students from the misfortune of falling victim to superstition and putting their faith in the wrong people.

Written in this spirit, "Le dispensaire et l'école" reads more as a moralizing tale accompanied by advice on how to use Diagne's approach of teaching by example than an article on the state of health clinics and schools in French West Africa. Diagne's background as a primary school teacher comes through in the article as he shares anecdotes about Madame Fatou and her sickly newborn, Alarba the lame person, and Adiouma the blind man. In each of these cases, the individual in question lost everything to the marabouts and charlatan healers that had taken all of their money in payment for treatments that didn't work. Herein lies the moral of the story. Greatly dismayed, it was too late when they finally accepted the idea of going to see the French doctor who, as Diagne makes sure to point out, could have saved all of them if only they had come to him sooner. Sharing his personal experiences and illustrating his point in this manner serve to demonstrate just how strongly Diagne felt about his role in the *conquête morale* of West Africa and attest to his full endorsement of colonial education.

Further illustrating his endorsement of French colonialism and the practice of association, in 1919 Diagne published "Un pays de pilleurs d'épaves – Le Gandiole" in the *Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F.* In this article, Diagne plays the role of local historian to talk about his ancestral home of the Gandiole region. He begins with a thorough description of the region's landscape, from its beaches along the Atlantic coast and its proximity to the mouth of the Senegal River to the fertile

agricultural land in the interior. To further demonstrate his familiarity with the region, he also includes a discussion of the flora and fauna of the area, and lists off its natural resources, salt featuring principally among them. The greater portion of the article however is devoted to a detailed account of pre-colonial Gandiol under the control of the Damel[60] of Cayor in the 19th century, and how France came to claim the region as a protectorate in part thanks to a battle with the people of Gandiol over rights to salvage shipwrecks.[61]

As Gandiol was situated on the coast, the inhabitants of the region made use of whatever materials they could salvage from shipwrecks that had washed up on shore. However, that tradition came to a sudden end in 1821 when the French government demanded that all salvaged material be returned to the owner of the ship. As the materials represented part of the livelihood of the Gandiol people, they refused to abide by the agreement and violence ensued. The French overpowering the Africans, it was not long before a treaty was signed in 1826 in which Gandiol leaders gave up their claims to the salvaged goods to live at peace with the French. Negotiations were led principally by Le baron Roger, the French governor of Senegal. Diagne appears to have admired the governor, describing how, "…avec sa connaissance approfondie de la mentalité des noirs, apportait à cette constatation les atténuations nécessaires."[62]

Based on Diagne's accounts of the ensuing situation, it would seem that the

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[60] *Damel* is the title for the ruler of the Kingdom of Cayor, which was a sovereign kingdom from the mid-16th century up until it was acquired by the French in the 19th century.

[61] Miller also provides a summary of this event in his treatment of Diagne's works. (*Nationalists and Nomads* 49).

[62] Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, "Un pays de pilleurs d'épaves – Le Gandiole." *Bulletin du Comité d'études historiques et scientifiques de l'A.O.F.* 2 (1919): 152.

Gandiol people admired the governor as well, so much so that the Damel felt that he might be deposed by his own people in favor of being ruled by the French. This led to the Damel taking out his frustration on his own people, and as a result many of them fled to take refuge in the French city of Saint-Louis. Unfortunately, according to the traditional caste system of the Gandiol people, those who had fled from the Damel recognized themselves as captives or slaves. Knowing that the French did not permit slaves in their territories, yet not willing to give up tradition and their designation as slaves, they were obligated to return to Cayor.[63] In spite of this, the Gandiol people did not leave without expressing their desire to remain friends with the French. Diagne cites a letter written by the Gandiolais to the governor of Senegal, saying, "Nous partons donc […] mais dans quelques pays que nous allions, vous pouvez être assuré, Monsieur le Gouverneur, que nous serons toujours vos amis et nous espérons qu'aussi longtemps que nous vivrons, rien ne viendra troubler cette amitié."[64] Diagne concludes the article by explaining how the Gandiol people lived up to their word, assisting their French friends in subduing the Moors as they continued to assault areas of Senegal.

As Diagne recounts this episode from the history of Franco-Gandiol relations, it is striking that he, especially as a descendant of the Gandiol people in question, never

[63] Miller elaborates on this account in his discussion of "Un pays des pilleurs…", using Diagne's explanation of why the Gandiol people could not remain in Saint-Louis as an example of how the all-inclusive nature of assimilationist policy did not always hold up in practice, which he terms a "fundamental incompatibility between French values and local society." Referring to Diagne's account, he states, "The words that Diagne choses [sic] here are powerful: "their most precious interests and their age-old customs," which cannot be reconciled with French rule, even by subjects who want accommodation." Hence Miller concludes that this "…stands as a reminder, within an assimilationist discourse, of real heterogeneity" (50). Despite the lofty goal of assimilation to render everyone the same in the spirit of freedom and equality for all, here is perhaps one example in history of how assimilation was ironically too exclusive and inflexible in its universalism.

[64] Diagne, "Un pays de pilleurs…" 175.

wavers in his support of the French cause and the colonial practice of association. Indeed, he shows nothing but admiration for the French governor of Senegal and how he so graciously spared the Gandiolais even though they had threatened French interests in the region. In the closing paragraph of the article, Diagne actually lays the blame on the Gandiol people[65], stating that it was their fault that France had to take violent action against them: "Sans aucun doute, les Gandiolais ont réparé depuis longtemps leur faute de Safileme, cette rencontre insignifiante que la France avait pardonnée sur-le-champ. Mais eux qui n'oublient pas facilement le bien, continuent à prouver la fécondité de l'acte du baron Roger."[66] However, there is some degree of contradiction in this assessment. France did not necessarily pardon the Gandiol people immediately.

According to a letter from Le baron Roger to the French king, excerpts of which Diagne cites in his explanation of events[67], the governor of Senegal was requesting that more arms be sent to the colony so that the French could effectively defend themselves should the battle continue. The governor had even considered burning down the villages of Gandiol in violent retaliation, writing in his letter that, "Il eût été désirable qu'on eût pu sur-le-champ brûler leurs villages et telle était bien mon intention."[68] While in the end the governor held off razing the villages, albeit for tactical reasons and not out of graciousness, such a desire for retaliation does not necessarily reflect the good natured

[65] The choice of title for Diagne's article is also a case in point. The word "pilleur" does not generally have a positive connotation. Describing his homeland as a "land of plunderers", Diagne does not paint the Gandiol people in a good light. Diagne only seems to admire them when the Gandiolais accept that they were at fault for unjustly salvaging French ships, apologize for any wrongdoing and make peace with the French by essentially abandoning their traditions and customs in order to abide by French rules that infringed on their own sovereignty.
[66] Diagne, "Un pays de pilleurs…" 176.
[67] Diagne, "Un pays de pilleurs…" 156.
[68] Cited by Diagne, "Un pays de pilleurs…" 155.

actions of the governor as inferred by Diagne. Even though he does not explicitly identify himself as being pro-French, his overlooking the significance of this episode and in the end upholding the governor's actions as admirable would suggest that Diagne harbored a certain degree of affection for the French and supported their taking over of West Africa to establish a French colony.

Expressions of this unwavering support continued later in Diagne's career. In 1933 while still a teacher in Sedhiou, he published two ethnographic articles that featured African ethnicities of the region, the Balantes and the Diolas, and their social customs. Both of the articles follow the same format and share many of the same section headings, as if Diagne filled in the details according to a prescribed template. The first section is on family life and details the breakdown of responsibilities assigned to particular members of the family and the family's expectations in regard to its contribution to the greater community. The next section discusses marriage traditions, including social views on polygamy, how a man goes about finding a wife, the obligations of husband and wife to one another, and acceptable means of dissolving the marriage. Naturally, a section on children and rights of inheritance and ownership follows, leaving the remaining sections to highlight civic duties, laws and the local justice system, and funeral rites. Diagne's thorough explanations play directly into the practice of association within French West Africa. The information presented serves to familiarize readers, most of whom are part of the colonial administration, with local customs to facilitate the intervention of corrective measures if such customs deviate too drastically from French moral and social standards.

Diagne takes pride in his part as a researcher in the field. Reflecting on his work in his closing remarks on the Balantes, he states:

> Si ces notes peuvent, dans une certaine mesure, contribuer à une meilleure connaissance des coutumes Balantes […] nous nous sentirions pleinement récompensé de nos modestes recherches. Y a-t-il une récompense supérieure à celle de chercher pour jeter une lueur, si faible soit-elle, sur la mentalité et la coutume de ces multitudes de races que la France veut connaître, pour mieux remplir auprès d'elles sa mission de Nation tutélaire et civilisatrice.[69]

Similar words conclude his study on the Diolas, a people who "…appartient sans doute à cette grande masse de noirs que l'on dit primitifs ou attardés." Diagne then continues, making a clear reference to association:

> Mais n'y a-t-il pas dans ses coutumes des principes à sauvegarder, dans son esprit des sentiments à développer et dans sa façon de vivre des habitudes à conserver, des penchants à développer? Sous l'action de la France éducatrice, le peuple diolas laborieux, économe et discipliné, lorsqu'il se sent bien tenu, peut devenir demain, une des meilleures races sénégalaises.[70]

Therefore, if the African people are only willing to accept French intervention and recognize all that French civilization has to offer, they can adapt and reform their ways to have a better life.

Diagne himself represents a successful case in point. Particularly in his article on

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[69] Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne. "Contributions à l'étude des coutumes des Balantes de Sédhiou." *Outre-Mer* 1 (Mar 1933): 42.
[70] Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne. "Notes sur les coutumes des Diolas du Fogny Oriental." *Bulletin de l'enseignement de l'A.O.F.* 83 (Apr – June 1933): 106.

the Balantes, he often groups himself with the French colonizer rather than with the colonized Africans. Talking about the political organization and administration of the Balantes, Diagne underlines the fact that before the French arrived, there was no real sense of order among the people at any level in their society. With the arrival of the French however, "*Notre*[71] occupation a fait disparaître l'anarchie, assuré la paix, imposé le respect des individus et de leur bien. Plus de pillage, de vols à main armée, d'assassinat prémédité."[72] Here Diagne's use of the possessive adjective "notre" when discussing the French occupation of Africa implies that he thought of himself as French, or in the very least as part of its civilizing forces. From lessons on hygiene to get Africans to the clinic to support of France's attempts to reform the social organization of African families and villages, each of the articles mentioned here plays a part in extolling the virtues of French civilization to colonized people. Gradually gaining their trust, Diagne does his part as an African évolué and serves as a living example of all that colonized Africans stand to gain from association. In this respect, Diagne's own life and works represent perhaps just as much a success story for association as the writer's fictional fable of Malic. Ambitious, intelligent, and open to change, Diagne was truly an advocate for association, a sentiment which is clearly present in his telling of Malic's story.

"Les trois volontés de Malic" as parable of association

On the surface, the story of Malic is quite straightforward, presenting a linear narrative that advances the story as the boy makes all his dreams come true and attains

[71] Emphasis added.
[72] Diagne, "Balantes" 21.

his greatest desires. The story opens with excitement in the village of Diamagueune – a French school is to be opened for the village children. Malic, however, is dismayed to not have made the list of students, and becomes depressed by his family's refusal to allow him to attend the school. His family, unable to cope with his despair, relents, and Malic is granted his first wish and is admitted to the school. He is such a successful student, that he is selected by the education inspector to continue his studies in the regional school, fulfilling his second wish. Once again his family is reluctant to let the young boy leave them behind in the village, but they recognize it is in Malic's best interest and permit him to go. While at the regional school, Malic takes an interest in metalworking, and receives a technical education to become a blacksmith. His family, being of noble origins, it quite taken aback by this news, believing that it is not right for someone of noble birth to be a blacksmith. Nevertheless, Malic completes his training and returns home to practice his trade, his aging family's faith in him restored now that he supports them and is home to cheer them with stories from his childhood days.

Taking a closer look at Diagne's story reveals that many of the pro-colonial opinions that Diagne expressed in his non-fictional writings are also featured here, and the text is rife with examples of how France's practice of association was beneficial to the colonized Africans of Diamagueune. The meaning behind the name of the village alone is significant. Referencing the town in the first sentence of the story, Diagne adds a footnote to inform readers that "Diamagueune" means "la paix vaut mieux."[73] Such a name suggests a comparison to a time of unrest, about which the reader learns while being introduced to Malic's family. Malic was raised by this mother because his father

[73]Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne, *Les trois volontés de Malic* [1920] (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1973): 1.

had been killed in battle while fighting for the French in their efforts to tame the "wilds of Africa." The narrator describes him as "…un brave volontaire sénégalais qui était tombé glorieusement dans la forêt épaisse du Dahomey."[74] Both of Malic's grandfathers had also been involved in supporting French colonial conquest. Dargueune had been wounded in "…la chaude affaire de Niomeré", and Manoté, who was also the village chief, had fought with Faidherbe. The narrator explains that Manoté "…avait préféré l'amitié de ce grand Français à celle d'un Damel injuste et sanguinaire. Il avait pris le parti des Français parce qu'il était sûr de leurs bonnes intentions."[75] Due to their experience, Malic's grandfathers were more knowledgeable than anyone in matters of war and peace, and were grateful that the French had come to establish order and calm to their African homeland. As Dargueune explains, "Finies les guerres sans merci et sans motifs sérieux […] La paix est bonne. La paix vaut mieux que tout. C'est pourquoi notre village a échangé son nom de Khékhane [meaning "Batailleur"] contre celui de Diamagueune."[76]

As illustrated by this example of war and peace, *Les trois volontés de Malic* is a very Manichean text in which the dichotomies of African and French, tradition and modernity, are alluded to often, with all things French being portrayed as better than traditional African customs and institutions. Another such example of this tendency occurs upon the opening of the French school in Malic's village. The French commandant explains to the villagers that the new teacher, "un homme de votre race […] ne maltraitera jamais vos enfants. Il ne leur imposera aucune corvée pour son intérêt

[74] Diagne, *Malic* 3.
[75] Diagne, *Malic* 3.
[76] Diagne, *Malic* 4.

personnel, il ne réclamera aucun salaire en échange de sa peine."[77] This description of the school's teacher is a subtle critique of the marabout that directs the local koranic school at which Malic is a student. The physical location of the French school and koranic school stresses their ideological opposition to one another, the French school having been constructed directly facing the koranic school across the road. The narrator points out the differences between the two institutions, expressing a preference for the French school: "Sans doute, l'école n'est pas la maison de l'éternel festin, mais en tout cas elle est fort différente de l'établissement d'en face, du dara ["Grande école"] du marabout."[78] Malic's cousins verify this comparison after a few days at the French school, telling Malic that, "…l'instituteur n'est pas comme le marabout. Il ne torture pas les petits enfants: il ne connaît pas Manitoni et auprès de lui on ne voit ni cravache ni martinet ni baguettes de tamarin."[79] This is yet another example of how the French sought to reform African ways with peace and friendship through association, recalling Hardy's notion of the "conquête morale" that necessarily followed the physical conquest of African territories.

Through the young boy's desire to quit koranic school in order to attend the French school in his village, followed by his leaving his family to continue his studies in the city and eventually rejecting local social custom and becoming a blacksmith, Malic gravitates toward French culture as he gradually lets go of local tradition. In one respect, this makes the young African boy a pro-association reformer. Through his actions he

[77] Diagne, *Malic* 6.
[78] Diagne, *Malic* 8.
[79] Diagne, *Malic* 8.

demonstrates how adopting elements from French culture is a means to a desirable end as a successful businessman, and in seeking that end the whole community of Diamagueune is transformed for the better. Yet in distancing himself from the African culture of his ancestors, Malic might equally be considered an iconoclast by the same actions. Instead of promoting association as a balance of French and African values, and demonstrating how the two cultures can benefit one another, Malic's actions show a complete departure from tradition as he prioritizes French education and overturns many long held beliefs in his determination to follow in the ways of the French. Thus, rather than presenting a case of association, in many ways it seems that Malic's story is more assimilationist in nature, bringing in to question whether assimilation and association are truly all that different in practice.

While examples of this phenomenon are not readily visible in the story, they can still be seen in the undercurrents of the main plot. For example, the misgivings of Malic's mother, Sokhatile, in regard to his going to the French school and later to the regional school suggest that perhaps pursuing the ways of the French does not lead to such a desirable end after all. Using Malic's father as a prime example, she counters her son's pleas by explaining, "Je ne veux pas que tu quittes le village, que tu ailles mourir dans un pays lointain. Et puis, qu'a gagné ton père à être soldat? Il est mort en brave, nous racontent ses camarades, mais que serions-nous devenus sans tes grands-pères Dargueune et Manoté."[80] In spite of her concerns, Malic persists, going as far as to threaten suicide if his mother does not allow him to attend the French school.

Perhaps the most significant example of Malic's insolence toward traditional

[80] Diagne, *Malic* 10.

culture is his decision to become a blacksmith. Upon receiving the news, his grandfathers are devastated. Within the traditional social hierarchy, Malic's family was of a much higher station than metalworkers, and so having Malic adopt their trade would be a disgrace to his family. Fittingly, it is Yakham the griot, the guardian of his family's legacy, who is most outraged, shouting, "Travailler comme un gnégno [i.e. artisan]! Lui, Malic, dont les ancêtres ne touchaient d'autre fer que celui de leur sabre ou de leur fusil? Les Toubabs ont sans doute changé le pays, mais nous n'en arriverons jamais jusque là!"[81] Despite his determination, the griot is unable to change Malic's mind, saying to the boy, "Tu deviens trop vieux, mon petit Malic. Ta tête contient trop d'idées neuves. Nous voulons bien que tu ailles à l'école, mais nous ne désirons point que tu penses comme les Toubabs." Malic has lost his ability to think within the framework of his own culture, French ideas of freedom and equal opportunity having taken over his thoughts without regard to his socio-cultural background. Revealingly, these are the last words the reader hears from Yakham, as the griot has died by the time Malic returns to Diamagueune three years later with his diploma in metalworking in hand. This could be interpreted as a symbolic gesture on the part of the author. In West Africa, griots are the traditional keepers of oral history and genealogy, representing a link to the African past. As Malic has chosen to cut his ties to the past to begin a new future in the spirit of French progress, he no longer needs his griot to remind him of what would traditionally be expected out of him in life.

While it can be said that *Les trois volontés de Malic* illustrates a pro-association

[81] Diagne, *Malic* 26.

discourse and the potential for the practice of association to succeed, certain elements in the story also reveal cracks in this approach, aspects of Malic's tale more closely resembling assimilationist thought and blurring the line of distinction between assimilation and association. In theory, it was argued that the approaches were quite different, but in practice the ability to discern between the two is rendered quite ambiguous. Interpreting Diagne's text in this way, it becomes clear that the story of Malic is much more than a simple children's story. A product of its time and heavily influenced by colonial policy, *Les trois volontés de Malic* was significant in that it forged a path that other African writers would follow, appropriating the writing of fiction as a means to enter into discussion on the issues of colonialism and the effects of assimilation on colonized people. Presenting his perspective, Diagne brought his life experiences from working in colonial schools as an African teacher to indicate that he had been just as influenced by assimilation as the young African boy he had created. Other writers would follow him to demonstrate a similar trend, coming from varied backgrounds and experiences to provide further insight into the relative success and/or failure of colonial assimilation. The First World War was one such influential experience, by which two Senegalese men – Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor - would develop their skills as writers to produce two works of francophone African literature that would further perpetuate the debate over assimilation with their opposing viewpoints on the matter.

Chapter 2

Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor: Debating Assimilation in Tales of Former Tirailleurs

While colonial education played a significant role in introducing colonized African subjects to the rudiments of the language and culture of the French metropole, a world war would also contribute to assimilation and to bringing the colonies further into the imperial fold. Highlighting the importance of military service in this endeavor, historian and colonial scholar Marc Michel describes how the French army functioned in tandem with schools and the colonial administration in Africa as "…un efficace agent d'acculturation", and concludes that, "… l'Armée, sans doute moins que l'Ecole toutefois, fut elle aussi porteuse d'une espérance d'assimilation qui fut, au moins jusqu'en 1946, la suprême aspiration des jeunes 'évolués'."[1] In his assessment of how hopeful colonized African elites might best assimilate into French culture, Michel alludes here to how a military career stemmed naturally from the firm foundation of a colonial education.

Fueled by the enthusiasm for intellectual development and cultural reform in the African colonies, French education had promised colonized students a better life and opportunities for social advancement that their local culture and traditions would otherwise not have permitted.[2] For such students, the prospect of serving along the front lines in Europe might then be considered a natural step forward in the process of assimilation. The sovereignty of the French motherland under threat, France looked to

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[1] Marc Michel, "Les troupes noires, la grande guerre et l'armée française." *Tirailleurs Sénégalais: Présentations littéraires et figuratives de soldats africains au service de la France*. Eds. János Riesz and Joachim Schultz. (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1989) 16.

[2] Herein lies the important example of Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne's Malic discussed in the previous chapter.

her colonies for aid, portraying *colonized* subjects as *French* subjects fighting for a common cause. It was in this spirit that the tirailleurs sénégalais[3] came to be, and thus the Great War offered able bodied African men an opportunity to not only experience first-hand all that they had learned in their school books about the *mère patrie*, but to also demonstrate their allegiance to the empire and their commitment to defending the values introduced to them through France's civilizing mission.

However, as Michel's comment cited above suggests, it is important to note that joining the ranks of the French army was not limited to the African elite or to those who had been educated in colonial schools. Schools were instrumental in setting in motion the process of assimilation among colonized people - introducing them to French values, culture, and language through education - but the military provided yet another venue to accomplish the same goals. Joining the army did not necessarily require any previous education or knowledge of French, and by rendering everyone equal in rank regardless of language or place of origin, the military can be thought of as the ideal embodiment of the collective and universalizing force of assimilation. In this respect, particularly for colonized Africans that might not have benefited from receiving a colonial education, the military may have done more to promote assimilation than schools, providing a fast track to integrating into the French army and to being considered for French citizenship. There was also the added benefit of travel abroad within the empire or even to the metropole. The latter destination was especially likely during a time of war when soldiers were

[3] Without a succinct equivalent in English, this is the French term for the men recruited from France's African colonies to serve as infantrymen in the French army. It is important to note that while the term suggests that these soldiers were exclusively Senegalese in origin, the tirailleurs sénégalais in fact came from various African colonies and were of various ethnicities.

needed on the European battlefield, thereby ensuring African recruits a trip to France - an opportunity not afforded to all colonized subjects, educated or otherwise.

During World War I, metropolitan France thus became a central *point de rencontre*[4] for subjects of all corners of the French empire as the government actively brought in colonized troops to defend the rights of liberty, equality and brotherhood. As revealed in accounts of their experiences, charmed by colonial and republican rhetoric, these men expected to be received as equals by the French. The reality however was much to the contrary, and the colonial forces disembarking on metropolitan shores experienced an ambiguous reception upon arrival. While they were valued as reinforcements and served as a reminder to French citizens of the great resources that the far-off and exotic colonies stood to provide, there were also concerns on how to best manage the presence of African forces while in Europe. Race relations were an issue, as interactions with French citizens posed a potential threat to the supposed superiority of colonizer over colonized upon which colonialism relied. This led to varied reactions among tirailleurs sénégalais as they came to terms with how their expectations of France and their ability to readily integrate into French society corresponded to reality.

Unfortunately there are few written accounts on the perceptions of African soldiers vis-à-vis their experiences in Europe.[5] The principle objective being to keep

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[4] For more on this phenomenon and the irony of Paris's dual role as a diverse imperial capital and headquarters for anticolonial movements during the 1920s and 30s, see especially Jennifer Anne Boittin's *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010).

[5] Hence the importance of Joe Lunn's efforts to promote the inclusion of oral accounts to the written historical record. While traditional archival resources provide much insight on the circumstances surrounding great events of the past such as World War I, seeking out those implicated in such events and taking down oral histories of their experiences stands only to enhance the written record. In conducting interviews with African veterans of the war in his research, Lunn has given them an opportunity to play a

track of reinforcements along the Western Front, the French military personnel responsible for recording events and developments during the war had little interest in how African soldiers sent off to the front lines actually felt about being far from their homelands and fighting on behalf of the empire. Laura Rice makes note of this lacuna in military records. Citing her research on the memory of the World Wars and the role of African soldiers in those conflicts, she states quite matter-of-factly, "Few records seem to have been kept of African attitudes and experiences during World War I. The fact is that military authorities didn't care to ask and assumed there was little to be told."[6] With a paucity of official records available on the subject, literature composed by former tirailleurs sénégalais not only brings their experiences to life, but also becomes a significant source of insight on how Africans approached assimilation and interpreted their roles as colonized individuals within the colonial system during wartime. Putting the acquired intellectual merits of France's civilizing mission to use, African writers are able to employ the language of the colonizer and the written word to call into question the promises of assimilation.

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role in how the past is to be remembered, whereby creating a more complete picture of history. This has led to a change in traditional historical methodology that, as Lunn observes, "… has presented an ever more varied, complex, and truthful rendering of the past, not only by incorporating different cultural perspectives, but also by showing how the lives of Africans, no less than Europeans, were affected (and often distorted) by the events that engulfed them." Thus there is great value in considering oral sources and what they contribute to collective memory and history. Transcribing the past through a multitude of voices sharing their individual memories and insight, Lunn concludes that, "This cacophony heralds the end of former masquerades between colonizers and colonized in the hagiography of imperial history; now, a fuller awareness of the myths and masks used in the past allows us to discard them, and permits the faces of the participants – with their distinctive individuality and shared humanity, to come into sharper focus." (Lunn, "Remembering the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and the Great War: Oral History as a Methodology of Inclusion in French Colonial Studies." *French Colonial History* 10 (2009): 143. See also on the same subject Lunn's "Kande Kamara Speaks: An Oral History of the West African Experience in France 1914-18." *Africa and the First World War*. Ed. Melvin E. Page. (London: MacMillan, 1987). 28-53).

[6] Laura Rice, "African Conscripts/European Conflicts: Race, Memory, and the Lessons of War." *Cultural Critique* 45 (Spring 2000): 136.

Representative of the full gamut of attitudes toward colonialism as expressed by colonized Africans, *Force-Bonté* by Bakary Diallo and *La violation d'un pays* by Lamine Senghor offer two opposing views of the colonial experience, with Diallo's autobiography recounting his time in the war and his enduring admiration for France, and Senghor's allegoric Marxist tale falling resoundingly in line with anti-imperialist sentiments. While both men were from Senegal and fought for France as tirailleurs sénégalais, by comparing their lives and writings it becomes readily apparent that not all colonial soldiers perceived colonialism in the same light. Influenced by their experiences in World War I and extended stays in France following the end of the war, Diallo and Senghor offer up two viewpoints on the experience of colonialism and on their attempts to assimilate into French culture. Thus this chapter proposes to examine how the circumstances of war that brought so many Africans to Europe ultimately inspired and made possible some of the earliest works of francophone African literature. To this end, the chapter will look first to a brief overview of the history behind the creation of the tirailleurs sénégalais and their role in World War I, and then turn respectively to Diallo and Senghor, examining their lives and work to assess how their writing is informed by their experiences in France and how it serves as an expression of their approach to assimilation and as a means of coping with their ambiguous position in colonial society after the war.

Africa to the rescue: The role of the tirailleurs sénégalais in World War I

World War I proved a pivotal moment in French history. Having lost to the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War more than forty years prior, the French Third

Republic was eager to restore France's reputation as an important player on the world stage. The fact that the colonial empire had spread to all corners of the globe by the time the Great War began in 1914 played an important part in reinforcing this image, and as the war raged on, France would benefit greatly from its colonies. Perhaps the most notable contribution of the colonies to the war effort came in the form of armed manpower. It is estimated that the French military mobilized more than 600,000 colonial subjects throughout the empire from 1914 to 1918. Of that number, nearly 150,000, the majority of them tirailleurs sénégalais from French West Africa, were brought to France and were placed in active combat on the front lines.[7] While these numbers are relatively small compared to the millions of Frenchmen that were called up to fight during the war, the mere presence of colonial soldiers in Europe nonetheless made a significant statement to allies and adversaries alike and attested to France's belief in the unity of its empire.

This proved a particularly bold move by the French army, as France was in fact the only colonial power to actively bring troops in from its colonies to defend the metropole. Stressing the potential risks of this decision, and to explain the rest of Europe's fears in following suit, Myron Echenberg states:

> . . . [W]hat distinguished France from other powers was its determination to use the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* extensively as an expeditionary force in every corner of

[7] These are the numbers quoted by Nicole Zehfuss in her article, "From Stereotype to Individual: World War I Experiences with *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*," *French Colonial History* 6 (2005): 137. For more information on the specific numbers and origins of the colonial soldiers, particularly for the tirailleurs sénégalais, that fought for France in World War I, see especially Myron Echenberg's "Slaves into Soldiers: Social Origins of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais." *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade*. Ed. Paul E. Lovejoy. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1986. 311-333. Zehfuss' dissertation "The Force of Culture: Transforming Relations between France and West Africa, 1914-1939," Diss. U of Virginia, 2000, also provides a thorough account of the contribution of the tirailleurs sénégalais to the war effort, and how their presence in France altered how the relationship between metropole and colony, colonizer and colonized, was to be appreciated and understood.

> the French empire, whether for purposes of conquest, occupation, or later, counterinsurgency. From these uses came still another, the defense of the mother country […]. In short, France did what other colonial powers dared not do: arm and train large numbers of potentially rebellious colonial subjects in what was euphemistically called the art of modern warfare but what could also be described as modern methods of exercising military will against their European overlords.[8]

In spite of the risk of uprisings and armed rebellion,[9] faced with a growing number of casualties and a reputation to uphold as a strong imperial republic committed to the values of equality, France nevertheless pinned its hope for victory on the goodwill of its colonial subjects.

Including African regiments in the war effort did as much for showing off France's colonial resources to the world as it did for promoting the colonial agenda to French citizens of the metropole. Marc Michel makes a note of this phenomenon when he observes, "La présence des 'Sénégalais' en France fut aussi suffisamment nombreuse, dans les camps de l'arrière et dans les tranchées du front, pour éveiller la conscience métropolitaine à l'existence réelle des colonies et des hommes de ces colonies qui étaient restés jusqu'alors dans un imaginaire assez flou et sommaire."[10] As mentioned

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[8] Myron Echenberg, "Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960." Eds. Allen Isaacman and Luise White. *Social History of Africa* 2 (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991) 5. Also examining the pros and cons of having African soldiers in Europe, and for an informed discussion of Germany's reaction to France's African forces being present in Europe during and after the war, see Dick Van Galen's article "Black Shame," *History Today* 56/10 (Oct 2006): 14-21.

[9] Such fears turn out to be valid, as will be seen later in this chapter's treatment of Lamine Senghor's *La violation d'un pays* and his call for revolution to put an end to imperial France's exploitation of its colonial subjects. Advocating for reciprocated violence as the only way to bring an end to all the colonized people have suffered as subjects of the French Empire, Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* might also be said to draw from these very concerns.

[10] Michel, "Les troupes noires…" 18.

previously, the circumstances of the war created an opportunity for the general French population to come face to face with their colonies. This encounter introduced the residents of France to an empire that had until that time been largely invisible and unknown to them beyond what they might have read in the adventure stories of colonial fiction or seen in staged displays at colonial fairs.

Expecting marauding barbarians, the French welcomed instead brave soldiers to whom they owed much gratitude , and as they became better acquainted, a general affinity for the tirailleurs sénégalais developed within French culture.[11] Michel alludes to this shift in public opinion when he states, "…[P]lus le temps passe, plus l'opinion positive sur les soldats noirs paraît se renforcer durant la Grande Guerre. En fait, elle substitue progressivement dans l'imaginaire métropolitain l'image rousseauiste du 'bon nègre' à celle du 'sauvage', d'autant plus facilement que sa férocité est tournée contre le 'Boche' haï."[12] Drawing from this observation, the African soldiers became in a sense more human for the French people as they came to know them on a more familiar basis, allowing their perception of savagery to shift to the German enemy that had aggressively threatened the stability of France and her colonies alike. To demonstrate the newfound solidarity felt by the French people for the colonies, many colonial troops were befriended by French families, and in the case of wounded veterans, by the nurses and

[11] Perhaps the most familiar example of this is the grinning, caricatural image of a tirailleur sénégalais used in early ads for Banania, a brand of banana infused cocoa drink mix. The black African man, sporting the tasseled red cap traditionally worn as part of a tirailleur's uniform, provides a positive review of the drink in a caption that reads "Y'a bon Banania" ("Is good, Banania"), which remained the eponymous slogan for the popular brand until as recently as 2011. In that year the Mouvement Contre le Racisme (Mrap) won a suit in a French appeals court that officially deemed the wording racist and demanded it be removed from the Banania label. For more details on the trial, see Julio Pelaez's May 20, 2011 article, "'Y'a bon Banania' disparaîtra bel et bien" at lexpress.fr.

[12] Marc Michel, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre: L'appel à l'Afrique (1914-1918)* (Paris: Karthala, 2003) 127.

doctors who cared for them as they recovered. In this sense, the French people took on what could be characterized as a maternal role, seeing to the needs of their colonial children during their stay in the metropolitan home.[13]

The tirailleurs were further likened to children through the use of simplified language, rather infantile in nature, termed "petit nègre" or "français tirailleur". As the majority of African recruits did not speak or understand French, the French military created and actively taught this pidgin language to facilitate communication on the battlefield without having to take the time to instruct the tirailleurs on the finer and more complicated points of French grammar and phonetics.[14] Thus, molded out of a sense of imperial paternalism, the image of the African barbarian of popular imagination soon metamorphosed into that of the more innocent and benign *grand enfant*. Dick Van Galen comments on this shift in French mentality, stating, "Paying their blood tax for the Mère Patrie made the brutal savages of the colonial expositions the new heroes of the day, in the eyes of many French."[15] In this manner, while the presence of tirailleurs sénégalais in France helped dispel certain stereotypes of Africa and its people, it also created new ones that continued to underscore France's perception of Africa as inferior and in need of French civilization.

Racial stereotypes also played a key role in the ideology used to support the

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[13] This display of generosity features prominently in Bakary Diallo's accounts of his time in France, which he praises at length in *Force-Bonté*. For more details on the complexities of the relationship that evolved between colonizers and colonized during the war, see Chapter 7 ("L'aventure ambiguë") of Michel's comprehensive study of the tirailleurs sénégalais' involvement in World War I, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre: L'appel à l'Afrique (1914-1918).*

[14] For more on the French military's development and promotion of "français tirailleur", see especially Chapter 4 ("Race and Language in the French Army") of Richard S. Fogarty's *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008).

[15] Van Galen 19.

creation of colonial forces. While serving as a military officer in French West Africa from 1907 to 1911, General Charles Mangin had been impressed by what he considered to be the innate warrior-like traits of the African troops under his command, about which he wrote at length. Summarizing Mangin's main suppositions, Echenberg observes, "In his various writings, Mangin put forward two basic themes: first, that black Africa was an almost inexhaustible reservoir of men, and second, that by nature and history these men were ideally suited for military service."[16] Both of these assumptions fall in line with European stereotypes of Africa and its people that were popular during this time. Given the vastness of French West Africa, it was widely assumed that the region was brimming with inhabitants, who in their supposed uncivilized state had honed their skills as barbarian warriors through the ongoing chaos of tribal warfare.

In support of this reasoning, in 1910 Mangin published what is perhaps his most well-known work, *La Force Noire*.[17] In it, the general enumerates the qualities of the African people that he feels render them ideal soldiers. In his study of Mangin's writings and the motivations behind his thinking, Joe Lunn cites five such qualities:

> …(1) [A]n ability to live in harsher climates than other races; (2) the capacity […] to carry heavy loads great distances; (3) a nervous system that was less developed than that of 'whites', which gave them greater resistance to pain and hence more willingness to shed blood in battle; (4) the patriarchal nature of African societies, which endowed them with a sense of discipline and hierarchy that was readily transferable to military life; and, finally, (5) the 'selectionist' argument that

[16] Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts* 29.
[17] Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire* [1910] (Paris: Harmattan, 2011).

> Africans were naturally suited to be excellent soldiers, since Africa had for centuries been a 'vast battlefield'.[18]

Mangin came to these conclusions through his observations of African society and culture during his military campaigns in West Africa. However, within this general assessment of African deportment, Mangin went one step further to distinguish between "warrior" and "non-warrior" African ethnicities,[19] as determined by the degree of civilization attained by a given ethnicity. Essentially, Mangin identified certain Africans as more fit for military service than others based on where they were on the path to accepting and adopting the merits of France's civilizing mission. As Lunn explains, "Assessments of the comparative degree of 'civilization' among African groups relied upon a set of subjective value judgments about the relative merit of their respective cultures and customs; they also generally corresponded to the size, and hence the military strength, of the pre-colonial African states."[20] Harkening back to the earliest encounters between Africans and the French, it follows that those African ethnicities near the Atlantic coast were generally considered more civilized, as they had been in contact with Europeans longer than those in the interior. Thus Mangin's francocentric point of view and classification of African soldiers can be seen as yet another example of how the French sought to validate their role as colonizer and establish the terms that would determine the readiness of colonized Africans to be included in the process of civilizing

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[18] Joe Lunn, "'Les Races Guerrières': Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War." *Journal of Contemporary History* 34/4 (Oct. 1999): 521.
[19] For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see Lunn, "Les Races Guerrières".
[20] Lunn, "Les Races Guerrières" 523. It is interesting to note that these subjective determinations were in fact taken seriously when it came to decisions regarding which African ethnicities to target for recruitment into the corps of tirailleurs sénégalais. On this point, Fogarty states, "These ideas influenced recruitment, and the French administration in the colonies often applied conscription selectively, with different quotas for different regions according to their ability to provide warlike recruits" (27).

their own homeland *à la française*.

In part due to his advocacy for the ideas he outlines in *La Force Noire*, Mangin has been dubbed by some as "le vrai fondateur de l'armée noire".[21] However, the initial founding of the tirailleurs sénégalais can actually be traced back to 1857, when Napoleon III signed a decree to this effect at the prompting of General Louis Faidherbe, then the governor of the colony of Senegal.[22] France's colonial holdings in West Africa during the mid-19th century were limited to the trading centers of the Four Communes situated along the Senegalese coastline, with the city of St. Louis serving as the hub of commercial and administrative activity. In the interest of colonial conquest, Faidherbe was determined to extend France's colonial presence inland. To accomplish this, and to establish a lasting presence to defend the newly acquired territory, he would need an army, and the 1857 decree permitted the governor to make use of the resources at hand, training Africans to make up for the shortfall of French soldiers in the colonies. Hence the original role of the tirailleurs was essentially to quell resistance to French colonization among local leaders in the West African hinterland and to secure the region to facilitate imperial France's economic and sociopolitical interests.

Mangin however saw an even greater potential in the tirailleurs sénégalais, and in the years leading up to World War I, he proposed bringing them to the metropole as a way of supplementing the notably declining number of available French forces. Despite

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[21] As noted in Papa Samba Diop's "La figure du Tirailleur Sénégalais dans le roman sénégalais 1920-1985." *Tirailleurs Sénégalais: Présentations littéraires et figuratives de soldats africains au service de la France*. Eds. János Riesz and Joachim Schultz. (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1989) 39.

[22] On Faidherbe's role and legacy as the original advocate for arming colonized Africans to serve as defenders of France's West African colonies, see most notably Michel's *L'appel à l'Afrique*, chapter 1 "Aux origines", as well as the introduction to Papa Samba Diop's article "La figure du Tirailleur Sénégalais…", 39.

his convictions, Mangin's proposal met some resistance. Several of the general's superiors and colleagues stationed in North Africa expressed racially driven concerns as to whether or not black Africans were mentally capable of combat in modern warfare. As a result, despite his efforts to prove the martial value of African soldiers, Mangin's plans for a Black Army marching across France were largely tabled. Commenting on this decision, Lunn states, "Before the outbreak of the war, in short, the extensive use of Africans in Europe remained at best only a possible contingency plan. Nevertheless, the idea was sown of West Africa as a 'land of soldiers' who could be utilized in the defence [sic] of France in the event of a national emergency."[23] Heavy casualties in the first years of the war brought about just such an emergency, and from 1916 on there was a concerted effort by French forces to recruit men from throughout the colonial empire to serve in the trenches of the Western Front.

A renewed interest in Mangin's proposal ensued, and French officials set their sights on French West Africa. To explain the draw of France's African colonies in this regard, Fogarty notes that:

> There were few clearer statements during the war of how the republican ideology of assimilation (our cause is theirs too) and the civilizing mission (they owe us for all we have done for them) served as an ideal ideological justification for recruiting colonial subjects. Add to that the stereotypical image of West Africa as teeming with millions of ferocious and savage "born soldiers," and it was no surprise that the legislators focused in particular on the potential contribution of

[23] Lunn, "Les Races Guerrières" 526.

the AOF.[24]

With initial demands imposed upon the colonial administration of French West Africa to provide 50,000 soldiers, the government came to rely heavily on coercion and forced conscription to meet their quota.[25] As such techniques took an obvious toll on the relationship between colonizer and colonized and numbers of viable recruits began to wane,[26] the French sought out other techniques to convince African men to join the fight for France. As Melvin E. Page describes, "Where traditional leaders had been fully exploited … local heroes were called upon to persuade their fellow Africans to enrol [sic]."[27] In the colonies of French West and Equatorial Africa, this individual was none other than Blaise Diagne. A member of the Senegalese urban elite, in 1914 Diagne was elected as the first black African representative to the French Chamber of Deputies. Throughout his political career, he used his position to argue for more rights for African

[24] Fogarty 29.

[25] On the various conscription techniques used by the colonial administration and the resistance to such practices by local African leaders and colonized individuals, see Melvin E. Page's introduction to "Black Men in a White Man's War." *Africa and the First World War*. Ed. Melvin E. Page. (London: MacMillan, 1987) 1-27, and Chapter 1 ("Reservoirs of Men") of Fogarty's *Race and War in France*, 15-54.

[26] Joost van Vollenhoven, Governor General of French West Africa during this time, was actually opposed to the French government's continued demands for the colony to provide yet more soldiers. Having noticed the devastating effects of conscription on the local economy and population, van Vollenhoven proposed instead that the colony contribute to the war effort by exploiting its natural resources. Furthermore, van Vollenhoven disagreed with the French administration's form of direct government in the colonies, as he preferred the approach of association and wanted to return to indirect rule where local leaders would have more say and control of the people. Unfortunately, the French government opted to stay its original course, as evidenced by the Diagne campaign, and as a result, van Vollenhoven resigned from his post January 17, 1918, less than eight months since having been promoted to the position. He returned to France where he served at the front as a captain, but tragically he died shortly thereafter on July 20, 1918 from wounds incurred in battle. Despite his short career, van Vollenhoven's ideas and opinions are nonetheless an indication that acceptance and promotion of colonial policy did not necessarily go uncontested within the upper echelons of the colonial administration. For more on van Vollenhoven's legacy, see Genova 32-35, and Fogarty 30.

[27] Page 6.

subjects of the colonies.[28] Thus, he was well situated to act as a liaison between the French government and the African colonies, and in 1918 he was named Commissaire de la République[29] and sent out on an African recruitment campaign. Diagne was remarkably successful in the endeavor, far surpassing the French government's expectations by providing 63,000 African recruits by summer's end. Fogarty elaborates on the reasons for Diagne's success, stating:

> Diagne was the very embodiment of the republican and assimilationist justifications underwriting French demands that colonial subjects come to the aid of the metropole in its hour of need. An elected representative of the government, he represented the republican will of the people more perfectly than the seemingly arbitrary authority of the colonial administration. More important, as a black man, he represented the return Africans could allegedly expect for their loyal service: assimilation and acceptance by white French people as equals, with attendant rights and responsibilities.[30]

Hence Diagne played the role of colonial superstar and was an inspiration to many African subjects, for the first time giving them hope that assimilation was indeed possible and that serving in the French Army was a sure way to gain the coveted rights and freedoms enjoyed by French citizens.

However, Diagne's life and career as a French-African statesman are something

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[28] For a detailed account of Diagne's political career and the rights he was able to ensure specifically for citizens of the Four Communes, see James E. Genova's "Dangerous Liaisons: Diagne's 1918 Recruitment Campaign." *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) 35-40, and Iba der Thiam's *Le Sénégal dans la guerre 14-18 ou le prix du combat pour l'égalité* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1992).

[29] A title and position that put him on impressively equal footing with the Governors General of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa.

[30] Fogarty 51.

of a colonial anomaly. For the majority of African subjects, race was the key factor preventing them from assimilating into French society.[31] Made to feel part of something greater during the war, the armistice at the war's end marked the start of another conflict over the status of African veterans seeking compensation for their service to the empire. Stressing the magnitude of this problem and the threat it posed to the stability of the French empire, Fogarty explains that, "Colonial subjects, especially those in uniform fighting for France, were in theory part of the nation, but were also distanced from it by their racial identity. If that distance disappeared, then so would colonialism, the French Empire, power, prestige, and much else that mattered very much to French officials."[32] France's imperial-republican rhetoric suggested that France fostered a "color-blind society"[33] in which all people in the empire were considered equals regardless of race, whereas in reality - as Frantz Fanon would reveal in his *Peau noire, masques blancs* - colonial ideology depended upon racial differentiation to maintain the paradigm of a superior "us" versus an inferior "them".

After the war, Africans began to question the notion of European superiority. As Page suggests, "Fighting and dying alongside Europeans, [Africans] discovered there was little difference between themselves and white men. Once fearful of killing Europeans, even as a part of war, Africans soon found it easy."[34] Page adds that this revelation ultimately led to an "awakening of race consciousness"[35] that seriously challenged the

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[31] On this issue, see also Laura Rice's article "African Conscripts/European Conflicts: Race, Memory, and the Lessons of War." *Cultural Critique* 45 (Spring 2000): 109-149, which examines race relations in Europe during the World Wars and the role of African soldiers in fighting a European war.
[32] Fogarty 229.
[33] To borrow the term from Fogarty on page three of the introduction to his book.
[34] Page 19.
[35] Page 20.

notion of European superiority. In many respects, it might be said that France's decision to bring African soldiers to Europe to aid in its defense was tantamount to setting in motion the end of the empire. To cite Lunn's interpretation of the dilemma:

> Unlike the situation elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, French colonial soldiers participated directly in the European struggle, and their knowledge of the wider world engendered attitudes and expectations, which, but for the wartime encounter, would have been unthinkable. As such , they represented a novel force on the African scene during the post war era and one which challenged not only the values of the societies from which they came but also the designs of the colonial regime which they had served.[36]

Thus, the circumstances of war and the involvement of the tirailleurs sénégalais opened a proverbial Pandora's Box. Having removed Africans from the controlled and restricted space of the colonies, France had made itself vulnerable to possible revolt as colonized subjects began to recognize the injustice of the ambiguity of their situation and to question the shortcomings of France's promises of assimilation.

The post-war experiences of Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor are a case in point - their individual views on colonialism diverging significantly. Both men were veterans of the war, and had proven their loyalty to the *mère patrie* through the debilitating wounds they suffered in combat. Despite this show of patriotism and the fact that they remained in France after the war, they were never fully accepted into French society as equals, but were instead marginalized and criminalized with the end of their time in the metropole marked by misgivings and tragedy. Diallo, comparatively faring

[36] Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks…" 29.

the better of the two, found odd jobs here and there to support himself, but ultimately relied on the good graces of sympathetic French families to take him in before being repatriated to Senegal to live out the rest of his long life among his own family. Senghor became a journalist and writer, worked for a time as a postal worker, and even married a white French woman and had children. His involvement in local politics however led to his eventual demise as he became more aligned with Marxist views that opposed imperialism. This led to his arrest and imprisonment, which aggravated his already poor state of physical health and ultimately brought his life to an early end. Comparing the lives and works of these two men as they come to terms with their ambiguous presence as former tirailleurs sénégalais in the metropole following World War I, this study will now examine how Diallo's and Senghor's writings frame their respective views on French colonialism and challenge the prospect of the African subject's successful assimilation into French society.

Seeking to belong: Bakary Diallo as ardent apologist of French civilization

Bakary Diallo's *Force-Bonté* has long been considered controversial in African literary circles, and in spite of receiving recognition as the first African autobiography to be written in French, scholars remain divided on how the text is to be remembered. African literary critic Mohamadou Kane highlights the reasons for bringing *Force-Bonté*'s legacy into question in his preface to the 1985 republication of the book.[37] First, he explains how there is a lack of consideration for the book's inclusion in the African literary canon simply due to its pro-colonial stance. While French literary critics have

[37] See Mohamadou Kane, Preface. *Force-Bonté* [1926] by Bakary Diallo. (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1985) III-XX.

praised the work and received it with gratitude, African critics, especially in the years following World War II leading up to African independence, were embarrassed by it and remained silent regarding the book's possible contribution to African literature. In light of the sociopolitical climate in Africa at that time, Kane remarks that, "…cette œuvre allait à contre-courant, au regard de l'évolution de l'africanisme, de l'entreprise de revalorisation des traditions, des thèses de l'école de la négritude, des problèmes que posent, au lendemain de la dernière guerre mondiale, les mutations intervenues dans les rapports entre la France et ses colonies."[38] To further illustrate this point, Kane explains that many African authors preferred instead to take their inspiration from René Maran's *Batouala* to denounce French imperialism.[39] With Maran's work being published in 1921, several years before Diallo's, its popularity and anti-colonial content upstaged *Force-Bonté*, whose ideas were considered outdated given the growing momentum of African nationalism occurring during the interwar years.

The book's paternity is also in doubt, and as Kane explains, there is a question among scholars as to whether Diallo truly could have written it.[40] Uneducated and having learned what French he knew during his service as a tirailleur sénégalais, scholars have hesitated to give Diallo credit as the book's sole author, and have questioned whether or not he may have benefited from the assistance of a ghost writer. This matter is further complicated by the fact that he was a close friend of Lucie Cousturier, remembered

[38] Kane, Preface XVII.
[39] Kane, Preface V.
[40] Dorothy S. Blair examines this issue in her introduction to *African literature in French: A history of creative writing in French from West and Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 15-18, presenting findings obtained through interviews with French acquaintances of Diallo's. Despite the information she was able to glean and/or infer, there is no clear evidence that Diallo had assistance while composing his autobiography.

fondly as the "god-mother" of the tirailleurs,[41] a French writer and artist who took a keen interest in assisting the African soldiers during their time in France.[42] It was also in large part thanks to this relationship that Diallo secured a publisher, Jean-Richard Bloch, a close acquaintance of Cousturier's. Whether such connections were simply serendipitous, or indicate something more substantial going on behind the scenes in regard to the book's authorship has yet to be determined. These lingering issues aside, Kane calls nevertheless for a reevaluation of the book, and argues that it merits reconsideration as a work of literature, separate from any social or political implications.

In view of all of the hardships he experienced while trying to assimilate into French culture, Bakary Diallo might be considered innocently optimistic in his praise of French civilization. Indeed it would seem that he saw France through rose-tinted lenses, upholding an empire to which he felt he owed a great deal for its having set such an example for the cause of humanity. However, Kane reminds the modern reader that the book is a product of its time, and that its author is a subject of the French Empire enmeshed in the ideals set forth by the promises of colonial rhetoric. Kane states, "Enfin l'auteur [i.e. Diallo] a du problème du devenir politique et culturel une approche individualiste et ne peut l'envisager en dehors de l'idéologie colonialiste. Autrement dit, l'assimilationisme s'y fait jour. … C'est l'époque où l'on aspire a un ensemble franco-africain fondé sur la justice, l'égalite, la démocratie progressive – tous veulent conquérir

[41] Blair, *African literature* 17.
[42] For a detailed account of Cousturier's activities during and after the war, as well as her sincere efforts to appreciate and promote African culture as demonstrated by the publication of her books, *Des inconnus chez moi* (1920) and *Mes inconnus chez eux* (1925), see Jennifer Anne Boittin's *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2010) 193-202.

le droit de cité par les armes."[43] In this respect, despite reinforcing the stereotype of the "bon nègre" and serving as a potential source of paternalist colonial propaganda, *Force-Bonté* demonstrates nonetheless an African humanism and provides evidence of Diallo's intellectual abilities. This goes against the standard depiction at the time of Africans as savages with no awareness or appreciation of the world around them. Hence, Diallo's life story is about more than an African simply desiring to be like the French and actively pursuing assimilation, but is an expression of Diallo's admiration for the universal character of French civilization to bring about equality throughout the world. Janos Riesz comments on this notion, stating, "In the final analysis, Bakary Diallo is not so much concerned with defending the French colonial system as he is with overcoming those obstacles that divide and separate human beings and turn them into enemies. He regards French colonialism historically, as a motor and agent toward achieving universality."[44] Reading *Force-Bonté* from this perspective, rather than condemning it for its pro-colonial stance or for the potential illegitimacy of the story it tells, the book offers a rare and honest depiction of one colonial subject's overall perception of colonialism and his place within it.

On the surface, Diallo's attempt to assimilate into French culture would appear to stem from a naïve desire to learn the language and ways of the colonizer. Such a facile interpretation of the text would indeed support the patronizing stereotype of the "grand enfant" wanting to grow up to be just like his French parent-colonizer. However, as Riesz has alluded, the inspiration behind the book goes much deeper than what might be

[43] Kane, Preface XVII.
[44] János Riesz. "The Tirailleur Sénégalais Who Did Not Want to Be a "Grand Enfant": Bakary Diallo's Force Bonté (1926) Reconsidered." *Research in African Literatures* 27/4 (1996): 166.

initially presumed. Examining the text, and in doing so the author's life story, Diallo's account of his attempt to assimilate into French culture can also be appreciated as his way of praising the value French civilization places on equality. As a colonized African subject, he admires France because of the universal human values it upholds and defends – foremost of all freedom, equality and brotherhood. It is these qualities of French civilization that truly draw him in and make him want to learn all he can about the French language and culture.

Having felt like an outcast in his own society, Diallo reflects on the values that the French empire promises all its subjects and sees colonialism as an opportunity to finally acquire a sense of belonging. Language becomes of critical importance to achieving satisfaction of this desire, a conclusion he comes to while pondering over his role as a tirailleur sénégalais in the French Army. Sitting in camp one day, Diallo thinks to himself, "J'aime la justice, l'équité et j'ai l'amour de la liberté… Il faut donc que j'apprenne à parler le français."[45] As this statement suggests, given that he shares an affinity for the same values so integral to the socio-political ideology of France, it naturally follows that Diallo feels obliged to learn French. The language itself somehow becomes a manifestation of equality and justice simply because it is spoken by those whose society is founded on such principles. Hence, Diallo believes assimilation into French culture is but a means to an end – the feeling of acceptance and unity that accompanies the recognition of one's humanity in relation to all mankind.

In learning to read and write, Diallo discovers a means of expression that allows

[45] Bakary Diallo, *Force-Bonté* [1926]. (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1985) 85. Note that all citations from the text are taken from the 1985 edition.

him to come to terms with his place in contributing to and benefiting from collective human thought. The importance that he places on the act of writing is made clear even before reading the first chapter of *Force-Bonté*. In the dedication that introduces the book, he pays homage to all the writers of the world, stating, "Écrivains de France et de tous les pays sans distinction, je vous salue, vous dont la plume apporte au monde terrestre, par un simple mot, une bienfaisante lumière dans l'effort de la pensée humaine."[46] As a contribution to human thought in its own right, Diallo's autobiography thus could be characterized as an enlightening Bildungsroman, in which the author's account of his learning to write and his growing admiration for France becomes synonymous with the development of his human spirit and desire to belong.

Born in the colony of Senegal in 1892 to a Peul family, it was expected that Diallo would follow in the pastoral tradition of his ancestors to become a sheep herder. As he explains in recounting his childhood, "Chez nous [i.e. Peul society], un gardien de bœufs, de moutons et même de chèvres, est un noble personnage. Cela se laisse comprendre, car les Peulhs n'ont que leurs troupeaux pour représenter tous les biens qu'un être humain puisse espérer de la fortune."[47] Thus the young Bakary had little choice in the matter, as tradition dictated that tending his father's sheep would be his chosen profession and would grant him a very respectable place in society.

However, he proved to be a very poor shepherd, losing track of his entire flock as

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[46] Diallo 5.

[47] Diallo 7. It is interesting to note in this brief explanation the foreshadowing of Diallo's eventual detachment from his native culture. While he begins with "Chez nous", suggesting that he considers himself to be included among the members of Peul society, in the next sentence he seems to exclude himself from his treatment of the Peul people, referring to "*les* Peulhs" and "*leurs* troupeaux" in the third person.

he daydreamed in the fields and admired the beauty of nature. Diallo's portrayals of the natural setting border on the poetic. For example, in his description of the landscape, he speaks of how, "D'énormes baobabs aux feuilles vertes, épaisses, aux fleurs blanches, bleues ou rougeâtres, semblent les maîtres de tous les autres arbres. Fasciné par les merveilles de la nature, insoucieux de mes moutons, je contemple cette terre parfumée. Vraiment, Dieu seul est capable ainsi de bien faire."[48] A dreamer, thinker and a poet from a young age, which distracted him and led to his lack of concern for his sheep, Diallo was very much a misfit within his community. Reflecting on his situation, he explains in the opening chapters of his life story how the elders in his community couldn't see past the fact that he was Peul, and that therefore he must be a herder.[49] In certain respects, it is as if he had been born into the wrong culture altogether, and it is in coming to this realization that Diallo decides to break with tradition[50] and leave his homeland in pursuit of a higher calling. His natural curiosity and faith in God drive this decision, as he asserts, "Le Dieu de la nature m'appelle. Il veut me faire connaître de vastes parties de l'univers."[51] So begins his quest into the wider world.

Despite leaving his village behind, Diallo's feeling of exclusion is further compounded by others' perceptions of his racial characteristics. The Peul people are known to have lighter brown skin and for this reason are often distinguishable among African ethnicities. As Diallo observes, "… c'est ma couleur qui, sortie du blanc réel

[48] Diallo 11.
[49] Diallo 16.
[50] On the theme of *le départ* see Kane's introduction, page XIV. Rebelling against tradition would seem to have been a feature of African literature at the time, as it is also present in A.M. Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic.*
[51] Diallo 17.

sans atteindre le noir pur, fait aux yeux des blancs et des noirs une vilaine marque, qui établit la différence de race."[52] Neither black nor white – trapped in the in-between of racial ambiguity – Diallo describes his race not unlike a disfiguring scar that prevents him from being accepted by either black Africans or white Europeans. Nevertheless he manages to make friends with other Africans whom he meets while looking for work in the port city of St. Louis. It is largely thanks to such connections that Diallo finds his way to the military. Through his desire to belong, Diallo is attracted to the French army and its erasure of distinction – racial, social or otherwise. As his friend Samba explains, among soldiers in the army, "[i]l y en a de toutes les races, mais l'ordre les unit tous. Ils sont des enfants du gouvernement. Ils ne travaillent que dans les combats; devant le commandement ils sont égaux…"[53] Going through the process of recruitment to become a tirailleur sénégalais, Diallo is in many respects reborn. His former identity as a noble Peul herder is left behind as he strips off his clothing for a routine medical review. He stands in a room with his fellow recruits, all of them now rendered equals by their nakedness – physical evidence of their caste and ethnicity no longer present to define their individuality. Exiting the recruitment office, their collective identity as soldiers is established as an African officer announces, "A partir de ce jour, vous êtes soldats […] Tous ces hommes devant vos yeux sont de diverses races. Ils ne sont point différents pour autant, car la fraternité les unit dans la ville comme dans la brousse."[54] So begins Diallo's military career and admiration for the unifying esprit de corps of the French Army.

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[52] Diallo 23.
[53] Diallo 25.
[54] Diallo 31-32.

Despite their newfound brotherhood, diversity nevertheless poses a problem among recruits. Coming from various corners of French West Africa, they speak a number of different languages, setting the scene for a colonial version of the Tower of Babel. Diallo laments this aspect of human diversity, observing:

> Les cœurs humains se rencontrent tout vibrant à l'unisson, dans l'harmonie des sentiments. L'humanité, c'est la parole bien comprise. Mais les pays, les races, les couleurs, établis forcément à cause de l'immensité de cette œuvre imposante qu'est le monde, ont produit des divisions, et par conséquent des différences de langues, d'où les malentendus destructeurs du genre humain.[55]

Yet here too, Diallo finds another reason to admire the universalizing effects of French civilization, as French becomes a lingua franca among the soldiers. This brings about Diallo's desire to learn to read, write and speak in French. As noted previously, writing in particular became an obsession for him, and when his efforts to use pen and paper bore fruit, it is perhaps no coincidence that his first written word was "FRANCE".[56] As he traveled through the French colonies with his fellow soldiers, the written word provided an outlet for expressing his thoughts and impressions acquired through his daily observations.

Through his travels, Diallo's admiration for France and French culture continued to grow, particularly during his time in Morocco, where the French military used the tirailleurs sénégalais to put down resistance movements. Assimilation into French culture

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[55] Diallo 68. In narrating the story, Diallo actually makes this observation in reference to his attempt to communicate with a local man he meets while serving in Morocco, but the sentiment expressed is also applicable to the situation he encountered upon becoming a tirailleur sénégalais.

[56] Diallo 85-86.

was to be greatly admired according to Diallo, as he explains, "Avoir des relations avec les Français, c'est apprendre à aimer ce qu'ils aiment."[57] This statement highlights again Diallo's approach to French civilization, and supports the idea that he sought to assimilate into French culture in order to acquire the values and rights enjoyed by French citizens. Developing the reasoning behind his previous statement, he continues,

> Les Sénégalais se sont bien transformés. Leurs idées, leurs goûts, leurs manières d'air, les désirs et les plaisirs qu'ils avaient conservés et se transmettaient de générations en générations n'ont pu résister aux procédés de la France. Ce n'est pas que nos habitudes n'étaient pas convenables, au contraire. Mais il est loyal de reconnaître à la France une finesse particulière.[58]

In this respect, Diallo does not denigrate his own African roots, but simply recognizes France as offering something more in terms of cultural advancement.

Convinced that it was through contact with the French that led to progress in Africa, Diallo cannot understand how anyone could reject the colonizer's presence in their land and not want to become more like the French. In Diallo's eyes, it would seem that France can do no wrong, even when his belief in France is challenged by others. For example, when one of his fellow tirailleurs begins to criticize the colonial system, suggesting that the French are haughty and feel superior to all other people, Diallo immediately comes to France's defense citing what he identifies as its most flattering features: "Le pouvoir de la France est assez grand pour abriter contre tout mal tous les peuples d'Afrique. Elle a un cœur noble et un esprit arbitre. C'est à elle que le bien a

[57] Diallo 76.
[58] Diallo 76-77.

confié la mission capitale de la bonne entente humaine."[59] As a colonial subject, Diallo sees himself as playing a part in that mission, and expects that by carrying out his role, he will eventually be adopted by France through the grace of its power to unite all people beneath the *drapeau tricouleur*. He makes this clear in the conclusion to his support of France, stating, "Estimons-nous heureux pour nos parents, pour nous-mêmes, d'être serviteurs de la France et de travailler sous sa direction à unir les êtres humains dans l'univers. Il nous est possible, en toute sincérité d'acquérir son savoir et sa manière de vivre."[60] With this final statement, Diallo professes a belief that assimilation is indeed possible, and suggests that being part of what France seeks to accomplish through the spread of its values and civilization throughout the world is indeed a valid and worthwhile pursuit.

Diallo's unwavering support for France continues even after he is severely wounded in the mouth while fighting in the trenches of the Marne in 1914. During his recovery, communication was difficult, as he couldn't speak or write, but in recounting this difficult time in his life he frequently recalls "la bonté" of the French people as being what carried him through the ordeal. Sent to numerous hospitals across the country during his convalescence, Diallo devotes many pages to describing all the kind people he met while in the hospital who befriended him at his time of greatest need. However, Diallo's faith in France's ability to unite all people is threatened as he encounters certain realities of French society and the divisions between social classes. This is made all too clear to him by his friend Albertine, one of the French women who visited him regularly.

[59] Diallo 78.
[60] Diallo 80.

The recovering tirailleur is disturbed by how Albertine leaves the room anytime certain families stop in to see him. She explains to him how these families, "…sont de beaucoup supérieurs par la fortune et l'intelligence. Ils voient autrement que nous [i.e. Albertine and her family] et si nous acceptions de rester près de toi, nous risquerions de faire dire des choses qui ne seraient pas dans leur manière de comprendre et qui leur feraient du chagrin."[61] In response, Diallo suggests that this reasoning is absurd, as everyone is still human regardless of the clothes they wear or the varying customs they practice. What is most important, as Diallo explains to Albertine, "…c'est quand y a ce que les Français appellent *bonté*, les Sénégalais *molsdiéré*."[62] He returns to this belief later in the text, applying it to racial distinction, stating, "Les couleurs ne sont que des couvertures et nous savons que les corps ressentent profondément l'action de la bonté et extérieurement celle de la méchanceté. Aimons-nous tous, en dépit des idées superficielles qui tentent de nous séparer."[63] Here once again, blind to distinction created by race and class, the *goodness* that Diallo sees in people is what he feels unites them, enabling him to overlook any fault in French colonial society in spite of the discrepancies arising from putting the values of liberty and equality into practice throughout France's empire.

Diallo concludes *Force-Bonté* with his recovery, but in the final pages shares one last anecdote that exemplifies his perception of the relationship between French colonizer and African colonized subject. Strolling through the Parc Monceau in Paris one day, he comes across a woman seated on a bench feeding the birds from a bag of bread crumbs. Observing the woman, Diallo, in very poetic terms, likens her to France taking care of the

[61] Diallo 121-122.
[62] Diallo 122-123.
[63] Diallo 169.

less fortunate African people, indiscriminately welcoming them all to share in her good fortune: "La Dame partage encore son pain aux oiseaux toujours à ses côtés. Ah! Que c'est doux à voir. Car il me semble que ces oiseaux, c'est nous, les noirs qui désirent aimer, et que cette Dame est la France!"[64] With this benevolent image, Diallo ends his story with the cry, "Vive la force-bonté de la France!",[65] to provide one last show of his admiration for the country. He suffered greatly in coming to this conclusion, yet he is grateful and brushes off the hardships he faced as the happenstance of life. For example, when attempting to lift his spirits after the military rejects his initial request to return home to Senegal, he consoles himself by saying, "Tu connais la France, dans son intérieur général; les injustices militaires que tu as senties ne sont que des accidents de ta vie, comme cela arrive; mais devant elles se redresse, haute et belle, la France généreuse, sensible, poussant à l'extrême sa délicatesse et sa justice pour lutter contre toutes les imperfections de la vie humaine."[66] In Diallo's eyes, France remains the great defender of liberty, equality and fraternity, and he takes what he is given – however meager an offering it may be - in gratitude, not unlike the birds eating from the hand of a kind woman in the park.

In reading about his life and experiences as a tirailleur sénégalais, it is clear that thanks to the war, Bakary Diallo did indeed gain a greater appreciation for the wider world and its many people, perceiving within them a common goodness that rendered

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[64] Diallo 170. The scene that Diallo illustrates through this analogy is reminiscent of the depiction of the French Marianne bringing peace and order to the "uncivilized" corners of the French empire, colonized subjects clutching gratefully to the hem of her unblemished tunic as she arrives in their homeland. Such images were especially popularized through pro-colonial propaganda during the first decades of the 20th century as France sought to justify colonial expansion.

[65] Diallo 171.

[66] Diallo 153.

them human, and therefore equals. However, through it all he never entirely loses track of his roots. Concerning Diallo's legacy, Edward Jones writes:

> He never gives up his Africa and its heritage. He remains a Mohammedan Peulh, despite the numerous cultural contacts to which he is exposed; he elects to continue in his role of self-taught French writer who makes a religion of friendship among men of different races and backgrounds, thus sponsoring a sort of cultural pluralism which is consonant with the ideals of the dreamers of One World. He is greatly impressed by the absence of racial prejudice in France and by the "gentillesse française" which abounded in the homes where he was received as a friend.[67]

Corroborating Jones' assessment, by the end of *Force-Bonté*, Diallo even identifies himself as a shepherd of sorts: "Et, en pensant à vous tous, Français de France, en pensant à tous les bienfaits dont vous nous avez comblés pendant et après la grande guerre, je me sens vraiment heureux d'avoir remplacé ma canne de berger … par la plume, et mon troupeau de jadis par vos nobles sentiments de justice. Je n'avais pas voulu rester berger, mais cette fois, vaincu par la persuasion de la force de votre bonté, je vous demande de me faire le Berger des Reconnaissances." Perhaps this statement can be interpreted as a sign of successful assimilation, as Diallo speaks of replacing aspects of his African life with certain qualities he acquired through his growing familiarity with

[67] Edward A. Jones, "Diallo and Senghor as Interpreters of the New French Africa," *The French Review* 21/6 (May 1948): 446. Diallo's only other published work lends credence to Jones' idea that the writer never fully lost his African heritage. His poem, "Mon M'Bala", written in Pulaar (native language of the Peul) with a French translation and published in *Présence Africaine* (volume 6, 1949: 128-133), is a panegyric to his hometownd, M'Bala. Initially, this seems somewhat surprising, given that Diallo felt like such an outcast during his youth. As the poem was composed in 1948, well after his return to Senegal, perhaps in retrospect Diallo came to value his place of origin – the moral lessons he learned abroad persisting to help him to see the good in all things.

French civilization.

Yet within all of this, one can begin to see cracks in the colonial system and in the design of assimilation. Perhaps there was more truth to the fellow tirailleur's critiques and negative take on France than Diallo would have liked to acknowledge. Even with his veteran status, Diallo had a very difficult time getting aid from the French administration. Despite eventually being granted citizenship, he was never fully integrated in to French society, and ultimately spent the majority of his life in his native Senegal. This leads to questioning the feasibility of the move from theory to practice in France's supposed objective of assimilating its colonial subjects and bringing about equality for all, and draws attention to the vagaries on how the transition from colonial subject to French citizen was to take place.

A call to arms: Lamine Senghor as spokesman for the oppressed

While he never composed a personal account of his experiences during the war as Bakary Diallo did in *Force-Bonté*, Lamine Senghor's position on colonialism and on Africa's role in World War I is made explicitly clear in his writing. Unlike Diallo, it can be inferred from his writings that Senghor did not hold France's colonial endeavors in such high regard. While there is no evidence that they knew one another or had read one another's works despite having been in France at the same time, based on what is known of their positions on colonialism it is probable that Senghor would have been appalled by Diallo's admiration for France in light of its imperial nature. Emphasizing the degree to which they diverged on the issue, David Murphy compares the two men, stating, "Mais Lamine Senghor révèle un nouveau visage au public français, celui du tirailleur radicalisé

par ses expériences qui se lance dans un combat contre les injustices du système colonial, tout le contraire du tirailleur fidèle à la France [i.e. Bakary Diallo] présenté dans *Force-Bonté…*"[68] However, while the two men held very opposing views in regard to colonialism, Senghor - albeit in a more violent and revolutionary manner - does share with Diallo an appreciation for equality and desire to defend human dignity from injustice.

In spite of all that he found wrong with colonialism, it is clear that Senghor benefited from it nonetheless. After all, it was thanks to his service as a tirailleur sénégalais that he had the opportunity to come to France. After being discharged from the army due to being wounded in battle and sent home to Senegal, he was able to receive a pension and return to Paris a short time later – the imperial capital serving as an ideal location for him to become involved with pan-African political groups. Not only did this lead to a job as a journalist and his running for political office, but he also married his wife, Eugénie Comont - a white French woman - and started a family. Thus, even though he was outspokenly against colonialism and all it entailed, it would seem that Lamine Senghor assimilated into French culture and society somewhat in spite of himself. This would ultimately work out in his favor as his integration into French metropolitan society served as an ironic springboard for his anti-imperial activities.

Having experienced the injustice of imperialism first-hand while serving as a tirailleur sénégalais in the French army during World War I, Lamine Senghor sought to defend the cause of all colonized people, and called for them to rise up against their

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[68] David Murphy, Introduction. *La violation d'un pays et autres écrits anticolonialistes*. Ed. David Murphy. (Paris: Harmattan, 2012) viii.

colonial oppressors. As he so famously proclaimed in an address to the first meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League in Brussels in 1927, "The Africans have been asleep for a long time. But be on your guard, Europe! Those who have been asleep for so long will not go back to sleep once they wake up. Today the Africans are awakening!"[69] That same year, Senghor further expressed his anti-imperial sentiment with the publication of his pamphlet *La violation d'un pays*, in which he acutely criticizes colonialism, and illustrates the injustice suffered by colonized people at the hands of European oppressors. Tracing the history of French and African relations from their very first encounter through the ensuing destruction of African society and culture, Senghor accusingly points out the consequences of France's imperialist desire.

Largely forgotten since its publication,[70] *La violation d'un pays* presents a notably early example of nationalistic ideals being voiced within the French Empire, the likes of which would not be heard again until the advent of the Negritude Movement a decade later. Reflecting Senghor's militant and aggressive stance against imperialism, the story reads as a manifesto for pan-African movements of the 1920s, several of which Senghor served as a high-profile leader. Not much is known of Senghor's life prior to his arrival on the political scene in France. While there is some debate regarding his place of birth

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[69] Cited from Jean Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, 1900-1945*, trans. Till Gottheiner (New York: Pica Press, 1971) 454.

[70] A noted exception being David Murphy's republication of the book in 2012, included along with a collection of articles and speeches written by Senghor in *La violation d'un pays et autres écrits anticolonialistes.* It should be noted that Murphy is actively pursuing some significant scholarship on Lamine Senghor, and that this study benefited immensely from the information on Senghor's biography as recounted in Murphy's introduction to his edited collection of Senghor's known writings. Murphy is also preparing to publish a biography of Lamine Senghor, entitled *Lamine Senghor : A Biography*, that will be published by Verso Books.

in Senegal,[71] scholars seem to agree that he was born in the year 1889.[72] According to Papa Samba Diop, who is responsible for having recovered *La violation d'un pays* from archives in the 1980s, Senghor worked as an errand boy in Dakar until enlisting with the 68th battalion of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* in 1916.[73] In the following year, he was wounded and gassed in the course of battle, discharged and sent home to Senegal. By 1921 he had returned to Paris, allied himself with the French Communist Party,[74] and was active in the Intercontinental Union for which, despite being largely self-taught, he began his work as a journalist and wrote anti-imperial, Marxist inspired articles for the organization's newspaper, *Le Paria*.

Senghor truly found his voice in political activism in 1924, when he served as a witness in a slander suit on behalf of René Maran, the Antillean-born, Prix Goncourt-winning author and former colonial administrator in Africa. In an article written for the anti-colonial, pan-Africanist newspaper *Les Continents,* Maran had overtly criticized

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[71] Senghor's exact place of birth is a source of debate among historians, although it is interesting to note that Senghor may have wanted it so for his own political gain. Murphy provides much insight on this point in his introduction to Senghor's written works, suggesting that Senghor successfully obtained French citizenship during his return to Senegal following his discharge from the army partly in order to receive 100% of his pension benefits. If he had retained his status as a colonial subject, rather than French citizen, he would still have received a pension but at the much lower amount of 30% - an example of the degree of inequality suffered by colonized Africans. However, during the 1920s, citizenship was only granted to Africans born in the Four Communes of Senegal, so by establishing that he was born in Dakar, Senghor was able to put forth a valid case for his citizenship - which he was ultimately granted. In addition to receiving his full pension, as a citizen Senghor could also travel freely between Senegal and the metropole, which not only allowed him to return to Paris to begin his work advocating for the oppressed, but also to be with his wife – Eugénie Comont. For more details, see Murphy's introduction, page xxi.

[72] For more on Senghor's early origins, see especially Murphy's introduction, xviii-xxii, Papa Samba Diop's, *Archéologie Littéraire du roman sénégalais: écriture romanesque et cultures régionales au Sénégal* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1995), and Guy Ossito Midiohouan's, "Lamine Senghor (1889-1927), précurseur de la prose nationaliste négro-africaine." *Sénégal-Forum: littérature et histoire*. Ed. Papa Samba Diop. (Frankfurt: Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1995). 153-167.

[73] Diop 159.

[74] John D. Hargreaves offers several interesting insights to Senghor's involvement with the Communists in his article, "The Comintern and Anti-Colonialism: New Research Opportunities," *African Affairs* 92/367 (1993): 255-261.

Blaise Diagne – then Senegalese representative to the French National Assembly - for having failed to follow through with promises he had made to those of his fellow Africans that he had recruited for the ranks of the French army during the war.[75] As a wounded veteran of the war, Senghor was presented to the court as an example of what Diagne's treachery had cost the people he had promised to serve. While officially Maran and *Les Continents* ended up losing the trial, they succeeded in marring Diagne's reputation in the eyes of the colonized African people he represented. Almost overnight, Blaise Diagne went from being considered the perfect example of an assimilated African and hero to the African people, to being labeled a traitor. Riding the momentum of the response to Maran's article, anti-colonial groups wasted no time in organizing themselves around the issues that had been brought to the forefront during the trial. It was during this time that Lamine Senghor quickly ascended to the top and became one of the strongest African voices speaking out against colonialism.

Demonstrating his commitment to the cause of the exploited, colonized individual, in 1925 Senghor founded the Ligue de la Défense de la Race Nègre (LDRN), with the intention that the League would serve as an umbrella organization for all groups engaged in the fight for equal rights. As noted by J. Ayo Langley, Senghor understood the LDRN to be "… [a] permanent collaboration with those organizations which are

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[75] As stated by Genova: "…[A] series of meetings between Maran, at the time writing for the Pan-Africanist journal *Les Continents*, and the [Union Intercoloniale] produced a decision to publish an article that systematically catalogued Diagne's collaboration with the French government. The article, published on 24 October 1924 in *Les Continents*, accused the deputy from Senegal of deliberately lying to those whom he recruited in 1918 and of participating in a conspiracy to increase the 'economic exploitation of Africa.'" 69. For more information on the trial and its implications to Diagne's and Maran's careers, see Murphy's Introduction, pages vii-xv, and Philippe Dewitte's *Les Mouvements Nègres en France 1919-39.* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985).

genuinely struggling for the liberation of oppressed peoples and for world revolution."[76] Active in anti-imperialist circles throughout Europe, including his participation in the aforementioned Anti-Imperialist League to which he presented his *réveil des nègres* speech in 1927, Senghor began to develop a reputation and was under heavy surveillance by French police. As a result, he was arrested and imprisoned for a minor civil infraction, which Diop suspects to have been but a pretext for the French authorities to put an end to his growing popularity: "Ses déclarations politiques, ses prises de position, mais aussi sa popularité grandissante lui valent d'être étroitement surveillé, puis […] arrêté à Cannes et incarcéré à la prison de Draguignan en 1927."[77] He was released shortly after for health reasons, but died that same year at the age of thirty-eight.

While it is impossible to know what he might have accomplished for the cause of African nationalism had he lived a longer life, he did leave behind evidence of his legacy with a number of articles that culminated in the publication of *La violation d'un pays*. All of his writings reveal his strong commitment to ensuring equality for not only Africans, but for all those oppressed by colonialism. David Murphy offers a particularly apt description of Senghor's political identity when he states, "En effet, entre 1924 et 1927, Lamine Senghor est à la fois un *militant nègre* et un *nègre militant*; son communisme est marqué par son expérience vécue de 'nègre' et son panafricanisme est empreint d'un mépris pour toute forme d'oppression dans un monde qu'il juge dominé par le capitalisme impérialiste…"[78] As a result of this anti-imperial stance, Senghor was

[76] J. Ayo Langley, "Pan-Africanism in Paris, 1924-36," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7/1 (1969): 81.
[77] Diop, *Archéologie* 160.
[78] Murphy, Introduction xviii.

applauded by communist groups and Marxist intellectuals. However, upholding a communist-based agenda was very much a means to an end for Senghor, as it was not Communism that he appreciated as much as its ability to establish a united front to contest France's colonial agenda. Murphy upholds this notion in his assessment of Senghor's political motivations, stating, "Le plus important…c'est la tentative d'imaginer un discours anticolonialiste qui réunirait tous les colonisés: l'orthodoxie communiste compte bien moins que la solidarité entre colonisés."[79]

Solidarity and equality regardless of race were key factors in Senghor's approach to overcoming oppression – allusions to both notions occurring frequently in his writings. To highlight but a few examples, in an article he wrote for *Le Paria* on the 1924 strike along the Dakar-Saint Louis railway, he applauds the white European workers who joined with their African counterparts in protest, stating, "Par une conscience admirable de classe, les Européens refusèrent et, se solidarisant avec l'élément indigène, ils décidèrent la grève générale sur toute la ligne."[80] This moment is rendered particularly important, as it represents what Senghor identifies as the first example of exploited Europeans joining forces with oppressed Africans to bring about change. Senghor concludes the article by stressing the significance of the moment, stating, "…car c'est la première fois que nous voyons les exploités européens des colonies se solidariser d'une façon admirable avec les indigènes de pays opprimés."[81]

In the very next issue of *Le Paria*, Senghor continues to stress the importance of

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[79] Murphy, Introduction xxiv.
[80] This article was originally featured on page 1 of volume 33 of *Le Paria* in May 1925, and is cited here as presented in David Murphy's presentation of Senghor's writings in his edition of *La violation d'un pays et autres écrits anticolonialistes*. (Paris: Harmattan, 2012) 34-35.
[81] Murphy, *La violation* 35.

solidarity in an article entitled "Les Riffains ne sont pas seuls! Ils ont avec eux le monde des opprimés." The article covers the Moroccan revolt in the Rif Mountains and Abd el Krim's[82] push for independence in the region. Using the article as a way to also critique France's mistreatment of Muslims, Senghor again stresses the importance of solidarity among the oppressed when he states, "Tout le monde des opprimés, musulmans ou autres, tous ceux qui luttent pour s'affranchir de la botte des impérialistes européens, sont avec les Riffains pour exiger la reconnaissance de l'indépendance du Riff."[83]

As a final revealing example of Senghor's "color blind" sense of solidarity, in a description of his Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre published in the very first edition of the organization's newspaper *La Voix des Nègres* in January of 1927, he writes to explain the Comité's key objectives. While the majority of the objectives listed have to do with promoting "*La Race Nègre*", among his final remarks Senghor includes, "Collaboration permanente avec les organisations qui luttent véritablement pour la libération des peuples opprimés et pour la révolution mondiale. Enfin et pour tout: lutte sans merci contre le colonialisme, contre tous les impérialistes du monde *de quelque couleur soient-ils*."[84] Drawing from this statement, it is clear that race was an important factor for Senghor as it provided a means to unite one group of people – black Africans and those of African descent - who had suffered oppression due to their racial characteristics. However, Senghor did not limit the reach of his efforts to recruit adherents to his cause to only members of the black race, but to all oppressed people

[82] Mohamed ben Abdelkrim El Khattabi led Riffian resistance and fought against French and Spanish forces during the Rif War (1921-1926), which ended in his defeat and exile and France taking control of the region and cementing its influence over the protectorate of Morocco.
[83] Murphy, *La violation* 39. Originally featured on page 1 of volume 34 of *Le Paria*, June-July 1925.
[84] Emphasis added. Murphy, *La violation* 49.

seeking liberation.

La violation d'un pays persists in promoting this same sense of solidarity among all oppressed people. Published the same year of Senghor's death, and subsequently sold at a small profit to fund activities of the LDRN in France and the colonies, the thirty-one page pamphlet reads as a short history of the interactions between Europe and Africa, a testament to the valiant struggle of the African people to escape foreign oppression and exploitation. Midiohouan seconds this notion in remarking that it is a book, "…dont l'ambition est de retracer de manière synthétique et saisissante l'histoire des contacts entre l'Europe et l'Afrique."[85] Reflecting on Senghor's objective for writing the work, Midiohouan adds:

> Il faut croire que Lamine Senghor a voulu produire […] un texte fondamental retraçant […] l'histoire de l'Afrique 'd'hier à demain' et qui soit, pour les Africains, un document de référence dans la prise de conscience, dans leur histoire, de la nécessité de la lutte contre la domination étrangère et l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme, et du caractère inéluctable de la victoire future des peuples et des classes opprimés.[86]

In reviewing the four short chapters of the text and their account of the European-African encounter, Midiohouan's assumptions for explaining Senghor's motivations gain credence. By the end of *La violation d'un pays*, it is made clear that the narrator is the *porte-parole* of all colonized people, calling for all oppressed peoples to come together to reject colonialism so that they might reclaim their freedom and sense of human dignity.

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[85] Midiohouan, "Précurseur" 159.
[86] Midiohouan, "Précurseur" 163.

To emphasize the importance of this thematic element in the text, *La violation d'un pays* is introduced by a short preface written by Paul Vaillant-Couturier, an influential French communist writer, journalist, and politician. Being endorsed by such a prominent figure of the French Communist Party further illustrates Senghor's anti-colonial stance and ties to the ideals of Marxism. Vaillant-Couturier alludes to this bond as he explains to readers, "Le récit de Shenghor [*sic*] que vous allez lire, c'est, […] à la fois simple et frappante, toute l'histoire du colonialisme."[87] He then insists upon the need for the story being retold within the colonies so that its message might be spread: "Il faut le lire, le faire lire… Il faut qu'il revienne aux pays d'où il est sorti comme une plante des terres chaudes et qu'il y grandisse…"[88] As suggested above, Senghor shared a common bond with certain goals of the Communist Party, namely, putting an end to the capitalist driven pursuits of colonialism. To highlight this fact, Vaillant-Couturier ends his preface by linking the anti-imperial cause of the European proletariat to that of the colonized people of Black Africa: "Ainsi fraterniseront […] les ouvriers de la métropole et leurs frères noirs d'Afrique à la lecture ou à l'audition du simple récit de Shenghor [*sic*], car leur ennemi est le meme: l'impérialisme."[89] Senghor's story, then, recounts why the shared enemy of imperialism represents such a threat.

The story begins in the style of a fairytale: "Il y avait une fois, dans un pays perdu aux fins fonds des brousses […]."[90] The scene described is rather bucolic, from its

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[87] Cited from Vaillant-Couturier's preface to Lamine Senghor's *La violation d'un pays* (Paris: Bureau d'Editions, de Diffusion et de Publicité, 1927).
[88] Vaillant-Couturier, Preface.
[89] Vaillant-Couturier, Preface.
[90] Lamine Senghor, *La violation* 7. Note that in the discussion of the text, all citations and page numbering correspond to the original 1927 publication.

peaceful setting in a far off African-inspired land of long ago to the depiction of a happy family living in a house made of wood from the surrounding forests. Diop argues that this folkloric writing style was necessary if Senghor was to have any success at publishing what could easily be labeled as anti-colonial propaganda:

> C'est en situant le cadre de la narration dans le passé le plus lointain que Lamine Senghor parvient le mieux à révéler les atrocités de son temps. La réussite du récit tient à ce que, ayant pour brûlant sujet l'*actualité* [*sic*] politique des lendemains de la première Guerre Mondiale, il ait feint la *naïveté* [*sic*], pour tout en dénonçant le présent, s'installer dans le passé et annoncer l'avenir.[91]

Albeit a thinly veiled critique of the times, Senghor was nonetheless able to publish the text and tell the story of how "*l'homme pâle*" fooled Dégou Diagne and took advantage of his people.

Prior to the arrival of *l'homme pâle*, Dégou Diagne lived in peace with his family. Their life was so peaceful, that his father had even named their home *M'Bine Diam*, "the house of peace".[92] One day, *l'homme pâle*'s ship is spotted off-shore. Despite his odd appearance, with "la figure si pâle qu'on aurait dit la peau d'un poulet déplumé" and "des poils aussi longs qu'un porte-plume"[93] beneath his nose, he is initially welcomed into the village just as any other guest. A merchant by trade, *l'homme pâle* begins to show his wares to the local inhabitants. He sets before them "de bric à brac, de chez l'épicier, de

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[91] Diop *Archéologie,* 161. It might also be added that by using the medium of folklore and allegorical language in "La violation d'un pays", Senghor was able to express his disdain for the French imperial project without critiquing the French government directly, which would most likely have resulted in dire consequences.
[92] Senghor 8.
[93] Senghor 8.

chez le charcutier, de chez le mercier et du bazaar du coin ….”[94] However, noticeably absent from his collection of banal, everyday items is anything that would be of real use to improving the human condition: “[…] le *pharmacien,* le *libraire* et… ‘*l’humanité’* n’avaient pas, comme par hasard, reçu des commandes du bazardmann ambulant…”[95] Deciphering the allegorical language of the story, *l’homme pâle* and his occupation indisputably refer to capitalist-minded Europeans seeking to establish trade routes with Africa. However, what they offer for trade can hardly be considered of much use to the cultivation of the human spirit, and more often served to corrupt it. An example of this can be seen in an illustration that accompanies this part of the story.[96] The *homme pâle*, his face marked by a mischievous grin, is depicted offering a bottle of “eau de vie” – alcohol – to an unsuspecting group of African villagers.

The corruption continues as the merchant wins over the trust of the tale’s protagonist. With the promise of giving him a special “*fétiche*”, the merchant succeeds in convincing the young Dégou Diagne to bring some of his brothers to his boat the day he is to depart. Dégou betrays his brothers, allowing the merchant to sail away with one, and killing the other with his new *fétiche*, a European rifle. Upon the merchant’s return to his own country, where he is tellingly known as “Monsieur Bourgeois”, his countrymen are duly impressed by what he has brought back, particularly with his “*esclave couleur d’ébène”*.[97] Thus begins the slave trade, and during the years that follow many ships return to Dégou’s village and make off with cargo holds full of his

[94] Senghor 10.
[95] Senghor 10.
[96] Senghor 7.
[97] Senghor 18.

people.

It is interesting to note here the character of "Dégou Diagne," who carries his fétiche as "…le prix de trahison et de l'assassinat de ses frères."[98] It is no small coincidence that Dégou shares a last name with Blaise Diagne. As we know from the author's involvement in the Maran trial, Senghor considered Diagne a traitor to Senegal after sending off so many of his countrymen to die in the trenches of Europe's war without any just form of compensation. Furthermore, the first name of "Dégou" is also significant, as its pronunciation bears quite a resemblance to the French word *dégoût* – disgust – suggesting a certain revulsion toward the actions of this character. Having sold and killed his own brothers for his own gain, Dégou Diagne's actions mark the fall of peace in his homeland.

After this tragic episode, *l'homme pâle*, alias Monsieur Bourgeois, returns once again to Dégou's village, but this time is dressed as a general. He leads an assault on the village which, thanks to "civilized weapons", he wins easily despite the villagers' resistance. He then takes on yet another persona as "Roi Colonialisme", and declares to the villagers, "Il faut qu'on vous civilise!"[99] Here again is an illustration of the irony behind France's civilizing mission. While "civilization" permitted Europeans to fabricate advanced weaponry, using it to conquer a peaceful, albeit less-advanced civilization is hardly representative of the more enlightened notions of liberty, equality, and brotherhood set forth by the "civilized" French Republic.

The story continues with the "Reine République", mother of Roi Colonialisme

[98] Senghor 18.
[99] Senghor 22.

and ruler of their homeland, turning to her son to recruit soldiers to fight in a war against her brother, "Germain Bourgeois," who threatens to take over her kingdom. She promises that those who agree to fight will be considered "…comme les vrais citoyens" in her country, sharing the same rights and freedom as the subjects of her kingdom.[100] Although many of Roi Colonialisme's subjects enlisted to help the Reine République, and won the war on her behalf, the promise that she had made to them did not come to fruition. Her kingdom had become impoverished by the high costs of the war with Germain Bourgeois, and instead of paying her soldiers, she required them to pay higher taxes, spend more on basic needs, and to eat less.[101] The situation of the soldiers in this part of the story alludes to the actual situation in which the tirailleurs sénégalais found themselves after fighting for the French in World War I. Lured from their homes with promises of freedom, they were recruited from the colonies for their manpower, only to have the French government renege on the terms of their agreement at the war's end. Another interesting point here is the contradiction of the name "La Reine République." Using a monarchical title to denote the leader of a republic goes against the very definition of what a republic is. To this end, it would seem that Senghor is implying that the French Republic has come to resemble all too much the tyrannical monarchy that it went to such great lengths to overthrow.

Naturally, the "citoyens pâles" of the Reine République and the "esclaves" of the Roi Colonialisme did not stand long for the failures of their monarchs: "La colère gronda

[100] Senghor 25.
[101] Senghor 28.

et regronda dans les coeurs! monta… et remonta!!!"[102] Finally, on the morning of a beautiful Friday the 13th, revolution broke out as a unified front of "les bronzés", "les jaunes", and "les moins pâles" against the Reine République and the Roi Colonialisme. Both rulers were removed from power, and "…c'était le jour de la libération."[103] To conclude the tale with a happy ending, the narrator enthusiastically adds: "Les esclaves devinrent libres! [L]es citoyens de chaque pays dirigèrent le Gouvernement de leur état. Ils formèrent *l'alliance fraternelle des pays libres* [italics orig.]. VIVE LA REVOLUTION!!!"[104] Thus the revolution in the story was a success because oppressed individuals of varied racial backgrounds and places of origin came together as an "alliance fraternelle" to bring about freedom.

In this light, the conclusion of *La violation d'un pays* is quite prophetic in nature. Expressing a revolutionary sentiment that would not be taken up by nationalist movements in France and its colonies until the 1950s and later, the text pronounces a message of nationalistic freedom that applies to all people who suffered exploitation under colonial rule. As a literary work, while it is not difficult to analyze with its use of allegory and Marxist language, it nevertheless is an important text and demonstrates how literature was used as a platform to contribute to the ongoing polemic over colonization. Indeed, what Senghor presents in this work, whether it be considered an element of propaganda, social commentary, fairy tale, or otherwise, is part of a much greater, international dialogue taking place during the interwar period on the ethical ramifications of the relationship between colonizer and colonized and if it should be of concern to the

[102] Senghor 31.
[103] Senghor 31.
[104] Senghor 31.

cause of humanity. In this respect, Lamine Senghor proposes a noble concept. He largely ignores the question of assimilation and what aspects of one culture might prove beneficial to another, rising above the inherent hierarchies of distinction necessary to make such a determination. Instead, he prioritizes humanity, something shared already by all people, and calls for all races to act as equals and unite to root out those who seek to unjustly impose their will on the universality of mankind.

Out of the common experience of serving as tirailleurs sénégalais in World War I, Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor produced important works of literature that reflect their distinct points of view on colonialism and underscore not only their own ambiguous positions in colonized society, but also the ambiguity of the colonial vision itself. For Diallo, though he suffered greatly at the hands of France's imperial motives, French civilization was something to be admired, as it brought out the goodness in all people and thereby reinforced that aspect of humanity. For Senghor, while he sought French citizenship and established a career and family in France, French civilization was synonymous with capitalism, and as such was something that was corrosive to the human spirit - absent of goodness and humanity as it sought to exploit others for its own gain. Yet ironically, establishing equality for all was of utmost importance to the positions of both men in order to facilitate what might be described as the assimilation of all people into a diverse - yet unified and equal - humanity. Such a concept challenges the validity of the French republican empire's promotion of assimilation as a way to distinguish the inferiority of the colonized from the superiority of French civilization. While meant to

present the French empire as a united front, France's decision to introduce African troops to the metropole during World War I only served to further undermine colonial ideology and complicate the ambiguous status of the tirailleurs who were effectively left in limbo between subject and citizen. It was one thing to rule over far flung colonies and have colonial administrators working to shore up the concept of a republican empire by educating colonized subjects and recruiting them to defend France's promise of freedom – but another entirely when those subjects arrive in France expecting to be treated as equals. Are colonized Africans to always be characterized by Diallo's birds, being gratefully fed by a benevolent Marianne, or are they to take France's ideals to heart and rise up in the spirit of Senghor's revolutionaries and depose a tyrannical overlord? Thus far this study has focused on African subjects assimilating into French culture, but to question the viability of assimilation, the ambiguous position in which it inherently places people, and to better understand its ramifications, it is rather illuminating to consider the process in reverse. Algerian writer Chukri Khodja does just that, turning the tables on the French colonizer in his 1929 novel, *El-Euldj, captif des Barbaresques*.

Chapter 3

Chukri Khodja: Challenging the colonial status quo in francophone Algerian literature

At the height of French imperialism in the first decades of the 20th century, Algeria was the crown jewel of France's colonial aspirations, and represented the culmination of the metropole's hopes and dreams for establishing a firm foothold on the African continent from which it could expand its empire. The region had been of particular interest to the French and other European powers since the 16th century, when corsairs plied the waters of the Barbary Coast and impeded European trade in the Mediterranean. Thus it was hardly an inconsequential feat when the French finally took the city of El Djazaïr in 1830, marking a significant coup for the French as they sought to undermine Ottoman control of the North African coastline. Throughout the ensuing century, France bolstered its presence in the region and progressively carved out the borders of Algeria as they are still recognized today. However, France's expansionist zeal did not proceed without encountering strong resistance and rebellion among its newly colonized subjects.[1]

In an attempt to quell such resistance, the French adopted and readily enforced several key policies throughout the colonial period to maintain control in Algeria despite the fact that they were vastly outnumbered by the predominately Muslim indigenous population. Most notable among these policies was the *Code de l'Indigénat*, which was

[1] Resistance to the European presence in Algeria occurred almost immediately after the French takeover of Algiers in 1830. Impeding French advances from 1832 until his defeat in 1847, the Emir Abd El-Kader was the leader of one of the most important resistance movement. The Emir fought against the French to maintain the sovereignty of Algeria, with the intention of creating an independent Algerian state grounded in the social and religious principles of Islam. While this was ultimately not to be, the efforts of Abd El-Kader to resist the French demonstrate nevertheless that native Algerians were not about to sit by idly to witness the loss of their homeland, especially as they were already on their way to founding a nation in their own right that would take into account their unique socio-cultural identity.

established first in Algeria and later applied to varying degrees throughout France's colonial empire as a way to temper colonized discontent with the promise of some degree of social and religious autonomy. By officially recognizing the Muslims of Algeria as French subjects, as opposed to full-fledged citizens, the colonial government permitted them to continue to practice Islam and to abide by Muslim law, and in some cases even elect representatives to their own local government. In return however, the colonized indigènes were still expected to pay taxes to the French government and were also subject to conscription during times of war. If they were unable or refused to do either of these things, the few privileges they were permitted to have were quickly revoked, with the colonial administration citing such infractions in justifying fines and prison time for offenders as well as the taking of indigenous lands which were then given to European settlers.

In this respect, attempting to oppose the demands of the French colonial administration was a very delicate matter, and was rendered futile more often than not. However, the dawn of the 20th century marked the advent of a new generation of Algerian indigènes seeking to challenge the colonial system not through active rebellion, but by intellect. They were known quite simply as the Jeunes Algériens, a new class of young, educated Muslim Algerians that sought out reforms to the colonial system by citing the principles of freedom and equality that they had learned through the French education system. Thanks to their education, they had come to appreciate French civilization and had largely assimilated into French colonial society while managing to retain their own sense of individuality as Algerian Muslims. Thus, they occupied a

unique position within the colonial social hierarchy and found themselves serving as mediators between the French and their own people. As John Ruedy attests in his study of the historic evolution of modern Algeria, "They were looking to France to emancipate them not only because of the degree of their understanding of and commitment to French civilization but also because they could become a bridge to the millions of their compatriots who in their view had been consigned by centuries of ignorance and barbarism to their present state of poverty and degradation."[2] Their utility in this regard did not go unnoticed by the French, who began to refer tellingly to this group of students, writers and other members of the colonized Algerian intelligentsia as the *évolués*.

In his book *Francophone writing in transition*, which examines the corpus of Algerian literature being produced during the interwar years, Peter Dunwoodie offers the following definition for *évolués* in the context of French colonization in Algeria:

> The meaning of the term is…inseparable from the fundamental polarisation that structured western imperialist ideology: the *évolué* is the colonized individual who, thanks to the contact and education that constitute the heart of France's civilizing efforts, has abandoned a benighted past (Arab – oriental – Islamic) and absorbed not merely the French language but the values, attitudes and culture of the colonizer. The perfect *évolué(e)* is thus demonstrably 'French' yet, since s/he is an *évolué(e)*, s/he is, equally obviously, not French.[3]

Thus the évolué is obliged to straddle two worlds, standing on the bridge that spans the

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[2] John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2005) 107.
[3] Peter Dunwoodie, *Francophone Writing in Transition: Algeria 1900-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005) 11.

void between the colonizer and colonized, but unable to cross to join either side.[4]

In his studies of Algerian literature of the interwar years, Ahmed Lanasri suggests that this phenomenon was of intentional colonial design. He observes that in order for the French to justify their conquest of Algeria and their right to domination over its people, that they had to "légitimer l'illégitime". To explain this notion, he adds, "On comprend, dès lors, pourquoi la puissance coloniale ne pouvait objectivement rendre le même l'Autre. Le rendre même signifie ne plus pouvoir l'assujettir car on ne peut assujettir son semblable. L'Autre doit donc rester différent pour que puisse se perpétuer la domination du conquérant."[5] Therefore, the colonizer cannot allow the assimilation of the évolué to come to fruition, lest the colonial power seeks to lose its sense of superiority over its colonized subjects.[6]

Whether or not the évolués were aware of the fact that complete assimilation was likely unattainable does not seem to have affected their efforts to bring about change. Heedless of their problematic and isolated position in colonial society, being neither wholly accepted by the French nor appreciated by Algerians, they proceeded nonetheless with their agenda and put their French education to use as they turned to literature to

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[4] It is perhaps due to this phenomenon that the *Jeunes Algériens*, despite their best intentions, were not well received by the general Algerian population – Algerians of European descent and *indigènes* alike. Ruedy elaborates on this point in his study, stating, "The overwhelming majority of colons…feared the Young Algerians and rejected their program as a dangerous threat to the stability of French Algeria. For their part, this very narrow gallicized elite seemed to be more at home in the company of French liberals than with their own people. They never performed particularly well at the polls, a fact which they attributed to the conservative composition of the narrow electorate but which certainly reflects a degree of cultural and ideological disconnectedness" (109).

[5] Ahmed Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne de l'entre-deux-guerres: Genèse et fonctionnement* (Paris: Publisud, 1995) 39. Lanasri's observations here echo those of Albert Memmi, who noted the same phenomenon in his *Portraits*.

[6] In this regard, it is as if the French colonizer suffers from a variation of "hero syndrome", wherein they must ensure that the colonized subjects perpetually retain their perceived sense of inferiority in relation to the colonizer, allowing the colonizer to feel a sense of superiority and that they are working for the greater good as they seek to civilize the local society.

share their impressions of the colonial experience. Modeled after colonial adventure stories, the colonial elite were able to publish works that called into question the ambiguity of their situation and their being marginalized as French subjects despite having been born in a French territory and educated in French schools. Emulating the colonial novel was thus a means to an end, as they were able to reappropriate the genre to meet their own needs and to have their voices be heard by a wider audience. In reference to this trend, Lanasri states, "Imitant donc la littérature coloniale, la production des Algériens se caractérise, elle aussi, par son aspect didactique. Elle illustre une thèse à l'aide de héros typés ayant valeur collective." However, this is not to say by any means that early works of Algerian literature were mere imitations of a European model. To the contrary, Lanasri goes on to point out the ingenuity of their efforts, adding "…leur prise de parole est un acte véritablement original pusiqu'elle va rompre le monologue colonial."[7] After decades under colonial rule, the colonized perspective was finally granted a voice through the writings of the évolués.

Chukri Khodja's, *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques,* is one such literary work that, perhaps more than any other novel written at the time, directly challenges colonial rhetoric. Khodja, an évolué himself, uses the text and the adventures of its eponymous tragic hero to highlight disparities in the French colonial system – particularly those surrounding the notion of assimilation. The novel features a unique perspective on the subject, as it highlights the difficulties faced by those, such as Khodja and other members of the Algerian colonial elite, who attempt to take on the challenge of becoming more

[7] Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne* 204.

like people of another culture and religion in order to gain a degree of acceptance and freedom in the society in which they live. The story of El-Euldj thus becomes a testament of the évolué experience, and it would seem in many respects that Khodja wrote the story just as much for himself as he did for his readership as a way to come to terms with his own ambiguous place in colonial society as a young, French educated, yet Muslim man living in colonial Algeria. To fully appreciate Khodja's novel in this light, before turning to an analysis of the text itself, it is important to first examine the historical context of the book's publication and how it fits in to the corpus of early francophone Algerian literature. This study will then also consider examples of other works written by Khodja in order to gauge a better sense of the author's personal point of view vis-à-vis colonialism and his potential motivations for writing and publishing the works that he did.

The Jeunes Algériens and the promotion of Algerian identity through assimilation

When studying the history of Algeria during the 1920s, it is important to understand the fractured nature of Algerian society at that time. With the centennial of France's 1830 arrival in Algeria less than a decade away, there was no longer anyone alive who would have been able to recall what life in Algeria had been like before the French conquest. Historically, we know that prior to being under French control, Algeria had been ruled by the Ottomans since the 16th century. France had used this fact to its advantage. As Aboul-Kassem Saadallah explains in his account of the history of Algeria, when the French took Algiers in July 1830, they presented themselves as liberators, and not as conquerors, as they had successfully removed a tyrannical dey from power

whereby freeing the local population from the hardship suffered under his reign. They even went as far as to sign an accord with local leaders granting Algerians free practice of religion and allowing them to continue to practice their own culture, speak their own language, and retain their own land.[8]

In this manner, the French began their administration of Algeria, as they would do elsewhere as their empire expanded, along the lines of association by which French and Algerian cultures were permitted to coexist. However, this period of intercultural harmony was short lived. With an official order issued on July 22, 1834, the French declared the conquest of Algeria to be a *fait accompli*. The Algerian political and social hierarchy was rendered null and dismantled as all native Algerians, regardless of their position in local society, were placed under French authority as imperial subjects. As Saadallah explains:

> Dans presque tous les territoires contrôlés par la France (protectorats, colonies régulières, etc.), les Français se proposaient de conserver (ou de créer) et d'améliorer les structures existantes, et de coopérer avec une certaine classe (par exemple la bourgeoisie) déjà implantée dans les territoires en question. Dans le cas de l'Algérie, ils firent plus que vaincre, exiler et disloquer la bourgeoisie nationale, ils "intégrèrent" l'Algérie à la France par l'annexion totale en 1834.[9]

Rendering Algeria's newfound status even more official, the French Constitution of 1848 established the title of Governor General of Algeria and legalized the creation of Algerian departments that were to be integrated directly into the French administrative system of

[8] Saadallah 10.
[9] Saadallah 41.

the metropole. It should be noted that neither of these important documents, the order of 1834 nor the constitution of 1848, was written in consultation with Algerian leaders, whereby dissolving any hope of Algeria existing as an independent state, and ushering in the practice of assimilation as France actively sought to incorporate Algeria into its empire.

However, assimilation of Algeria's government and infrastructure did not extend to the Algerian people, who were reduced to being categorized simply as *indigènes* or *Arabes* as French administrators and colonists came to occupy the upper echelons of colonial society. Perhaps in an effort to cement its superiority within the colony and to draw a clear distinction between colonized and colonizer, there seems to have been little effort on the part of the colonial government to encourage Algerians to assimilate into French society. Even education, essential to intellectual formation and social advancement and a key facet of the French civilizing mission elsewhere in the empire, was hindered for Algerians by the French government. While a small minority of indigènes was educated in French schools in the utilitarian interest of producing local interpreters, functionaries and teachers, the French largely neglected the education of Algerians, considering them "une race incorrigible et inéducable."[10] This lack of education becomes readily apparent when one considers that despite living in a French colony very few Algerians during the colonial period were able to communicate in the French language. Saadallah, citing the statistics of historian Raymond Aron, reveals the alarming degree to which this was true when he shares that in 1948, after over a century of French occupation, only 15% of Algerian men and 6% of women could speak French,

[10] Saadallah 45.

and a mere 6% of Algerian men and 2% of women were capable of writing in French.[11]

The status of Algerians in colonial society diminished further as more European immigrants arrived to occupy their lands. As power of the colonists and their influence over French colonial politics grew and the restrictions of the Code de l'Indigénat came to be more frequently enforced, it became increasingly difficult for the indigènes to maintain a sense of who they were as a people. Displaced and discriminated against by the colonists, they became unwelcome strangers in their own homeland. To emphasize this sentiment, Saadallah states, "…Les Algériens n'étaient ni citoyens français, ni nationaux algériens. Aux yeux de la loi française, ils étaient des sujets; aux yeux des colons, ils étaient des serfs, une *race conquise*; mais à leurs propres yeux, les Algériens n'étaient *rien*."[12] However, the one thing that Algerians did manage to hold on to was their faith. As historian Benjamin Stora observes, "Après la conquête française, l'islam, installé solidement en Algérie depuis le VII^{e} siècle, reste la seule 'patrie' de référence idéologique pour la masse des Algériens musulmans."[13] Thus, in the absence of any semblance of Algerian national identity, Islam was the one constant that remained intact despite the tumultuous effect of French colonization on Algerian society. It therefore comes as no surprise that the Muslim faith was a key feature of a growing sentiment of Algerian nationalism that came about during the first decades of the 20th century.

The turn of the century marked what Stora has termed "l'éveil du nationalisme algérien"[14] as nationalist-minded groups representing a full spectrum of political

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[11] Saadallah 45.
[12] Saadallah 18.
[13] Benjamin Stora, *L'histoire de l'Algérie coloniale, 1830-1954* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991) 41.
[14] Stora 74.

persuasions began to grow in popularity. While their approach to confronting colonialism varied, from the Association of Muslim Algerian Ulama calling for theological reform as a means of mending the rifts in Algerian society to the more militant Étoile nord-africaine arguing outright for independence, each group sought to tease out some semblance of a national consciousness.[15] Among these groups was also that of the Jeunes Algériens. Seeking to redefine how Algerians saw themselves within colonial society, as assimilationalists the Jeunes Algériens assumed a socio-political middle ground by pursuing intellectual endeavors to bring about a renaissance of Algerian pride while also praising the principles of French civilization. By creating a national press, establishing a variety of social clubs, and studying Algerian history from old archival documents written in Arabic rather than from French textbooks published in the metropole, they set about exhuming precolonial Algeria to rediscover their unique heritage and to identify ways in which the influence of France's presence and contributions to Algerian society had complemented that legacy. [16]

Comprised of members of the French educated Algerian elite, through their education the Jeunes Algériens had come to admire France's nationalist spirit and veneration of freedom and equality and wanted to see that such values were extended to all of France's people, including her colonized Muslim Algerian subjects. From this privileged point of view, they were able to reconcile the injustice suffered by Algerians in the name of colonial expansion with the enlightened ideals that France held so dear and

[15] For more information on the various Algerian nationalist organizations that came to be during the first decades of the 20th century, see Ruedy, Saadallah, and Stora.

[16] In many respects, what the Jeunes Algériens attempted to achieve in Algeria was not so different from what Senghor, Césaire and Damas did for black Africans several decades later – a sort of proto Negritude à l'algérienne.

sought to pass on through its civilizing mission. These pro-assimilationist views were also shared by Ferhat Abbas,[17] whose positions on the matter encapsulated what the Jeunes Algériens were seeking to accomplish. An advocate of assimilation during his early career as he sought equal rights and standing for native Algerians, Abbas was an Algerian statesman who would later go on to become one of independent Algeria's first political leaders. Elaborating on Abbas's philosophy, Stora writes:

> Il prône donc l'égalité des droits avec [les Français], mais reste attaché à sa personnalité religieuse; pour lui, on pourrait être à la fois Français à part entière et musulman à part entière. Il impute toute l'injustice du colonialisme à la colonie européenne. Pour lui, il y a deux Frances, deux politiques: l'une de colonisation et d'oppression, l'autre d'apport de civilisation, de prestige moral. Il espère que la France choisira la bonne voie.[18]

This explanation of Abbas's understanding of what it meant to be an assimilated Algerian echoes the core beliefs of the Jeunes Algériens. Advocating for assimilation, the group was willing to overlook France's colonial transgressions to achieve a democratic ideal that offered the same treatment for all, colonial subject and citizen alike. While this was likely not what the French had intended to happen when they admitted those few indigènes students into the colonial classroom,[19] what resulted opened doors for many French educated Algerian intellectuals seeking a venue to express their own experience

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[17] Abbas's assimilationist views did not however remain constant throughout his career. Becoming disillusioned with the French and their dissatisfying attempts at colonial reform, he eventually became a nationalist. For more on Abbas, his career, and his influential role in Algeria's independence, see especially Stora and Ruedy.

[18] Stora 75. Regarding Abbas's views on which path France chose to follow in their administration of colonial Algeria, see previous note.

[19] For more details on how colonial education inadvertently set in motion the rise of Algerian nationalism, see especially Saadallah 144.

of assimilation and what it meant to not only be a Muslim Algerian but also admirer of French civilization and all it had to offer.

Due in part to the efforts of the Jeunes Algériens to create intellectual circles and promote activities that would bridge the rift that had been created between French and Algerian societies, the early decades of the 20th century saw the emergence of Algerian literature being written in French by a number of colonized évolués. Just as other early examples of francophone literature elsewhere in colonial Africa, the importance of such works has often been either largely ignored by literary scholars, or dismissed as imitative of colonial fiction and adventure novels.[20] For example, in his prolific studies of francophone literature of the Maghreb, Jean Déjeux proposed that significant works of Algerian literature did not come about until the 1950s with the approach of independence. Of Algerian authors writing prior to 1945, he observed, "Leurs auteurs s'adressent aux Français et, s'ils critiquent parfois avec mesure l'influence néfaste de la colonisation sur le mœurs (l'alcoolisme en particulier), ils n'omettent jamais le généreux couplet sur ses bienfaits et sur la Mère-Patrie. D'une certaine façon on peut dire qu'ils envisagent leur société avec le regard du colonisateur."[21] However, armed with an understanding of what the évolués were seeking to accomplish in terms of assimilation during this time, Déjeux's suggestion that these early authors were only interested in appeasing their

[20] Hafid Gafaiti also notes this trend in his studies on censorship of North African literature. He states, "French and North African critics usually describe the literature of this period as mimetic literature (*la littérature du mimétisme*), because most authors were perceived as trying to imitate their French models." However, imitating French writing style was actually a clever technique employed by Algerian authors to avoid censorship of their novels. Gafaiti continues, "While this description is valid concerning the style of writing, the authors used French colonial ideology and values in subtle ways to defend their own views and to articulate the specificity of their culture and identity." (Gafaiti, "Between God and the President: Literature and Censorship in North Africa." *Diacritics* 27.2 (1997): 61).

[21] Jean Déjeux, *Littérature maghrébine de langue française* (Ottawa: Naaman, 1973) 20.

French readership becomes problematic, as one cannot ignore their keen interest in identifying with their Algerian origins. It would seem that Déjeux too might have realized this, as twenty years later in reference to Algerian authors of the same pre-1950 time frame he noted, "Dans le contexte de la forte pression de l'idéologie coloniale, la position des écrivains et des intellecutels ne peut être qu'ambiguë."[22] Thus, while still not fully acknowledging the unique perspective of this group of assimilated Algerian authors, Déjeux at least hinted at the challenge of how to categorize their work, as it was arguably neither wholly French nor Algerian, but existed somewhere in between not unlike the uncertain placement within colonial society of the évolués authors themselves.[23]

Déjeux's comments thus do indeed reveal the ambiguous nature of not only the literature coming out of Algeria in the early 20th century, but also that of its authors. In describing colonial Algeria at this time, Abdelkader Djeghloul stresses that Algeria was in a general state of flux and undergoing a "genèse d'une nouvelle Algérie."[24] This notion coincides directly with the Algerian renaissance that was underway among intellectual circles. For example, the vision of the Jeunes Algériens was to create a new, hybridized Algeria that would integrate French modernity with Muslim tradition. Expounding upon this idea, Djeghloul states:

> Pour quasiment tous les intellectuels de l'époque, la renaissance historique de la société algérienne ne peut se faire qu'au prix d'un long détour, celui de

[22] Jean Déjeux, *La littérature maghrébine d'expression française* (Paris: PUF, 1992) 12.
[23] It should be noted however that Déjeux's writings do provide an extensive inventory of the earliest Algerian works of fiction being published in French, and that he is credited with having found what is considered to be the earliest of these works, cited by Peter Dunwoodie as "La vengeance du cheikh", published in *La Revue algérienne et tunisienne littéraire et artistique* in September 1891 by M'Hamed Ben Rahal (Dunwoodie *Writing in Transition* 26).
[24] Abdelkader Djeghloul. Preface. *El-Euldj, captif des Barbaresques* [1929]. By Chukri Khodja. (Paris : Sindbab, 1991) 11.

> l'homogénéisation de la sphère culturelle sur la base d'une diffusion dans tout le corps social d'une nouvelle culture fondée sur la synthèse entre la modernité occidentale et l'Islam salafi.[25]

Thus what the évolués were proposing was essentially the convergence of French and Algerian culture and society in order to create a new, unified and assimilated whole made up of the best features of both the original cultures. However, as models of what this Algerian-French hybrid would look like, the dubious position of the évolués in colonial society did not present itself as something to be desired.

While the évolués were privileged in many respects as they reaped the benefits of French education and a higher standing in colonial society, they were also doubly cursed as they would never be considered fully French, and were viewed as traitors by many of their Algerian compatriots who felt they had allied themselves too closely with the language and culture of the colonizer. In speaking of the challenges faced by the évolués, Peter Dunwoodie portrays their state of perpetual internal conflict thus, "Like a Janus at war with himself, the *évolué* embodies the ill-fitting, uncomfortable, shifting and contested cultural hybridisation spawned by the colonial contact zone. Even the most assimilated remained critical and conscious of a dual allegiance, living with the sense of having been not only 'uprooted' but inadequately transplanted."[26] *Évolué* being synonymous with *assimilé*, Djeghloul suggests that even attempting this sort of cultural transplantation is impossible within the restricted framework of colonial society. He concludes that "…l'assimilation est, de fait, impossible. L'assimilé est nécessairement

[25] Djeghloul, Preface 20.
[26] Dunwoodie, *Writing in Transition* 276.

un renégat pour sa communauté d'origine, pour sa communauté d'accueil et pour lui-même."[27]

Taking Djeghloul's conclusion into consideration, the challenge before the évolués to navigate between French and Algerian cultures and to ultimately bring them together through assimilation is a Sisyphean task. However, even if complete assimilation is to be deemed impossible, the évolués sought nevertheless to validate the existence of a middle ground that would allow them to be Algerian but also French. This proved to be an alluring ideal for Algerian writers in particular, as it served as a source of literary inspiration for their work and characterized the key endeavor of what they sought to accomplish within Algerian society at a time when it was trying to redefine itself in the present in relation to its colonial past. The writings of Chukri Khodja in particular provide a case in point as they engage directly with the key issues of the time. Having presented the historical development and motivations of the Algerian évolués, this study will now turn to examine Khodja's life and works as an illustration of how literature provided an outlet for the Algerian elite to express their views on the question of assimilation and to engage in dialogue with the French regarding the challenges faced by colonized Algerians seeking to redefine who they are and where they fit within the framework of colonialism.

Chukri Khodja in search of the assimilated ideal

The first authors of francophone Algerian literature were faced with a very delicate task due to their ambiguous position in colonial society. While they had been

[27] Djeghloul, "Un romancier de l'identité perturbée"91- 92. This conclusion is also in accord with Lanasri's observations cited in the introduction to this chapter.

educated in French schools and in many respects more closely resembled the French colonizer than their fellow native Algerian colonial subjects, they were not fully part of either group. Abdelkader Djeghloul describes their situation as an "Étrange jeu de miroirs. Être à la fois le même et l'autre, dans un mouvement de tension parfois très intense, mais jamais dialectisable."[28] Thus they had to write in French about their experiences as colonized subjects, unable to state outright the grievances of their position lest they incur the wrath of colonial censors and risk not being able to publish their books. Speaking to this issue, Djeghloul enumerates the various challenges that Algerian writers encountered, stating:

> Étonnante aventure que celle des premiers romanciers algériens de langue française. Initier un nouveau genre littéraire dans la langue du conquérant. Parler de soi dans les catégories du discours de l'autre en disant subrepticement autre chose que ce dernier. Reconnaître et subvertir les valeurs de l'autre pour induire une reconnaissance réciproque sans jamais en poser les termes dans la clarté.[29]

In spite of all these factors going against him in his literary career, Chukri Khodja did remarkably well toeing the line of publishing works that would appeal to French readership but that also called into question the consequences of colonialism. However, his writings are also unique in that they reflect his own struggle in coming to terms with being an évolué – praising the greatness of French civilization while also calling it out as having forsaken him despite his attempts at assimilation.

Reviewing his biography, Khodja might be considered a perfect archetype of the

[28] Djeghloul, "Un romancier de l'identité perturbée" 81.
[29] Djeghloul "Un romancier de l'identité perturbée" 81.

Algerian évolué.[30] Born in Algiers February 21, 1891 as Hassan Khodja Hamdane Chukri to an educated family, Khodja began life already among the colonized elite. The intellectual character of his family went back to at least his grandfather, who had been a magistrate at the Cour d'Appel of Algiers. Khodja himself went on to study at the Medersa and later also received a degree in Arabic from the Faculté des Lettres in Algiers. By 1910 he was working in the colonial administration.

In his collection of biographical information on Algerian authors, Abdellali Merdaci also says of Khodja that politically he supported "un rapprochement franco-musulman,"[31] This would make sense given that he was an évolué in Algeria during the first decades of the 20th century. While his early schooling at a medersa and eventual obtainment of an advanced degree in Arabic demonstrate a keen interest in the Muslim faith and his ancestral ties to Algeria, the fact that he was so well educated and went on to work in the colonial administration suggests that he must also have been quite active in French colonial society. A closer look at Khodja's few publications also reveals this pro-assimilationist tendency. These include novels *Mamoun, l'ébauche d'un idéal* published in 1928, and *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques* published a year later in 1929, as well as an article written for the journal *Terre d'Afrique* in 1931 entitled "Sur les cimes algériennes."

In each work, Khodja appears to remain true to his évolué roots as he examines

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[30] Jean Déjeux's *Dictionnaire des auteurs maghrébins de langue française* (Paris: Karthala 1984) includes a brief entry on Khodja summarizing the key moments of his life (144). For a more extensive study of Khodja's life, see Leïla Meriane's Master's thesis, *Lecture De L' Œuvre D' Un Écrivain Des Années Trente* (1988) held at the library of the Université de Bourgogne in Dijon, France.

[31] Abdellali Merdaci. *Auteurs algériens de langue française de la période coloniale (1833-1962): Dictionnaire biographique* (Algiers: Chibab 2010) 161.

the challenges of assimilation in colonial Algeria. As Merdaci recalls, the ultimate goal or ideal for Algerian évolués was to assimilate, because for them "…acculturation et assimilation sanctionnent le passage de l'autre côté, dans la civilsation occidentale."[32] However, Merdaci also adds a caveat, stating that "…[le] passage [est] souvent douleureux, suscitant railleries, incompréhension et rejet chez les zélateurs d'une stricte orthodoxie culturelle et morale musulmane." He then goes on to ask the important question, "Mais peut-on aller vers la culture et la science de l'Autre sans se renier?"[33] This is the very question that Khodja examines in his novels, and quite likely a question that he also asked himself. Unfortunately in his own life, the conclusion he came to seems to have followed Merdaci's "passage douleureux". Merdaci, citing the work of Khodja's biographer Leïla Meriane, shares that Khodja was not often seen publicly after 1931, and that he destroyed the vast majority of his writings in the midst of a mental breakdown around the time of Algerian independence in 1962. He then died a few years later in 1967.[34]

Returning to the notion of assimilation being the "ideal" of colonial society,

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[32] Merdaci 161.
[33] Merdaci 161.
[34] Merdaci 161. Certain aspects of this account of Khodja's professional and personal life are quite striking. Firstly, all of his publications occurred within a year or two of 1930, the centennial year of France's occupation in Algeria. This was likely not coincidental, and given the socio-political nature of the themes addressed in his novels, it is quite possible that Khodja wrote the novels in response to questions regarding Algerian cultural identity that came about as Algerians came to terms with their past and present and determined how to forge on into the future. Secondly, the events leading up to the end of Khodja's life, namely his mental breakdown and the destruction of his writings, bear a degree of resemblance to the tragic ends of the protagonists in his novels. Unable to fully come to terms with their assimilated status of existing between two worlds but belonging to neither, both Mamoun and Ledieux become disillusioned by the promises of assimilation and die in a state of mental and physical anguish. Might Khodja have unwittingly predicted his own fate? Finally, it is also revealing that Khodja's breakdown occurred at the dawn of Algerian independence. Having been such an ardent supporter of assimilation and French-Algerian cultural hybridization, it could not have been easy for Khodja to follow the political evolution of the country as it came to reject French culture entirely and took a more militant approach in establishing Algeria's national identity.

Khodja's novel *Mamoun, l'ébauche d'un idéal* might be considered as a Bildungsroman for the Algerian évolué, and also provides insight on Khodja's own understanding of his position in colonial society. In the novel, Mamoun is the son of a wealthy, conservative Arab caïd who had dreams of his son creating a name for himself in colonial society and becoming a great lawyer. From a young age, Mamoun marveled at the advances brought to Algeria by the French, fascinated by the trains that passed through his town on their way to Algiers. Compared to the promises of French modernity in the capital, the young boy cared little for his home life. He viewed his parents as superstitious and overly protective, his koranic schooling as an aimless and onerous task of rote memorization, and his home as a sordid and disorderly mess. Thus, Mamoun was more than delighted the day his father decided to send him off to the French school in Algiers.

Finally aboard the train as a passenger, instead of watching it once again pass him by, he leaves everything behind and, as the narrator describes, heads into the "gouffre de la civilisation."[35] However, once he arrives in Algiers, all does not proceed as planned. While Mamoun does begin his schooling, it is not long before he is summarily expelled due in part to the school's racist views of Arabs, but also because he begins to spend more time in bars and clubs than in the classroom. Progressively losing touch with his Arab-Muslim roots, Mamoun drinks, eats pork, mistreats beggars asking for alms, and falls in love with the wife of a jealous European *colon.* It is not long before Mamoun has spent all of his father's money and is destitute. Feeling simultaneously too ashamed and too proud to ask for help, he becomes gravely ill and in the end is brought home by his

[35] Chukri Khodja, *Mamoun, l'ébauche d'un idéal* [1928]. (Algiers: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1992) 24.

father to die amongst family.

Given the tragic end to the story and all the misfortune Mamoun encounters, it is remarkable that the protagonist never loses faith in his dream of becoming a modern, self-made man, remaining ever grateful to the French and how their civilization had brought about so much change in reforming the traditional ways of his native land. To highlight this sentiment in the story, as he is recovering from one of many low points in his urban adventure when he had been gravely ill and his father had to come to his rescue, Mamoun sits in a city park and the narrator explains how, "…cette vision pleine de charme et d'enchantement l'amenait à raisonner en soi sur les beautés du siècle, sur les splendeurs de la vie civilisée, sur le mérite de la France qu'en moins d'un siècle a fait de l'Algérie un véritable Eden."[36]

One cannot help but connect Mamoun's admiration for France at this moment in the story with that of the author at the beginning of the novel. In his dedicatory remarks, Khodja writes, "À l'âme de la France, qui plane partout, respectée, ce roman, humble écho de l'amour que lui voue une âme silencieusement, mais foncièrement française, est dédiée."[37] In dedicating the novel to the spirit of French civilization, Khodja exposes his pro-assimilationist stance as he suggests that his own soul has been made French through assimilation. As he was an évolué and an adherent of the Jeunes Algériens, this revelation is not surprising. Just as Mamoun, the évolués had high hopes for all that

[36] Khodja, *Mamoun* 53.
[37] Khodja, *Mamoun* 12. While Khodja's praises of France seem somewhat ironic given the atrocities committed by the French in Algeria in the name of colonial expansion, it would seem that he was able to distinguish between the admirable virtues of French civilization and the wrongdoings of the French colonial administration, not unlike other authors examined in this study such as Amadou Mapaté Diagne and Bakary Diallo.

French civilization could do to reform Algeria and make it a united homeland for the French and Algerians alike.

The évolués' ambiguous place in colonial society and preoccupation with creating a sense of Franco-Algerian nationalism through assimilation is also reflected in Mamoun's story. In conversations with Monsieur Rodomski, a professor and friend to Mamoun who plays the role of the voice of reason in the story, Mamoun asks a series of existential questions that reflect the concerns of the évolués as they sought to redefine what it meant to be Algerian. Omnisciently sharing Mamoun's thoughts, the narrator explains "Depuis qu'il avait pris contact de tous les instants avec l'européen, il s'interrogeait. Ai-je une patrie, se disait-il? Quelle est donc cette patrie? Tous mes amis ont une patrie; et moi que suis-je?"[38] Mamoun later answers this question for himself. Sharing his explanation with Rodomski, he states:

> Au fond qu'est-ce une patrie? Ce n'est pas un pays, non. Un pays en somme c'est un territoire et on peut ne pas aimer des rochers, des montagnes ou des oueds. D'après moi la patrie c'est l'ensemble des institutions, des lois, du passé glorieux d'un peuple, du legs scientifique et littéraire formant l'œuvre immuable de ses savants, en un mot tout ce qui constitue la beauté morale d'un pays.[39]

Rodomski then confirms Mamoun's ideas. Impressed by the young man's insights, he replies, "Mais, mon cher ami, vous avez une haute conception de la Patrie, je dirai même une conception que beaucoup de Français n'ont pas. Mais c'est ça la Patrie. C'est un

[38] Khodja, *Mamoun*167.
[39] Khodja, *Mamoun*179.

peu le patrimoine intellectuel et un peu le patrimoine matériel."[40] In this sense, it is as if Mamoun is more French than the French themselves in that he has a greater appreciation for and better understanding of what having a *patrie* really means. From the point of view of the évolués, explaining the concept of belonging to a nation in ideological terms rather than in geographic terms grants them the ability to consider French and Algerian contributions to creating a sense of nationhood as being equally significant. This position would have been very much in their favor as they sought to validate their ambivalent status in colonial society and demonstrate that their assimilated vision for the nation was a desirable one.

However, one cannot help but notice in this explanation the bias of Khodja toward the virtues of French civilization. In some respects, it is quite ironic that Khodja could retain so much optimism for assimilation in *Mamoun* in spite of all the hardships faced by the book's eponymous hero. Prioritizing the pursuit of the assimilated ideal over any actual evidence that it may not be possible despite one's most courageous efforts, Khodja seems to identify more with French and Western civilization in the interest of demonstrating to his fellow Algerians that that is the direction in which they need to be advancing. This impression is justified by Khodja's choice of Frenchman Vital Mareille to write the preface to *Mamoun*.[41] In it, Mareille identifies himself as the "Secrétaire

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[40] Khodja, *Mamoun*179.

[41] As Dunwoodie explains in his article "Assimilation, Cultural Identity, and Permissible Deviance…", being endorsed by a member of the French metropolitan elite was crucial to the success of novels being written by colonized Algerian authors. As their intended readership was to be French, and not Algerian, authors needed to have someone state on their behalf that their works were worth reading. Furthermore, the French also made use of the opportunity to highlight the evident success of their civilizing presence in the colonies - a published work written in the French language by a colonized individual being the ultimate proof of this.

général de la Société des Écrivains de Province,"[42] and explains that Khodja sought him out to ask him to introduce him and his work to French readership. Mareille then wastes no time in presenting Khodja and his novel as a hommage to French civilization.

Introducing the book's author, he makes Khodja out to be an example of the success of assimilation, stating of the novel that, "Son auteur est un arabe dont la claire intelligence s'est merveilleusement assimilé notre civilisation."[43] Thus, Mareille recognizes the development of Khodja's intelligence as a product of French influence, but it is also interesting to note that even though he says that Khodja is an *assimilé*, Mareille still refers to him as an *arabe*, suggesting that his assimilation is perhaps not yet complete. Mareille then goes on to make another reference to Khodja's Arab origins, but uses this opportunity to insist upon the fact that French civilization is clearly superior to the traditions of Khodja's Algerian heritage: "Sans rien perdre de la noblesse traditionnelle de sa race, il fléchit le genou devant une civilisation meilleure et, les bras largement étendus, il ouvre son âme à la *lumière*."[44] Mareille concludes the preface by referring to Khodja as an example to all, asserting that, "Son acte d'hommage est celui d'un bon serviteur de la Justice. Comme lui nous savons que la cause de notre patrie se confond avec celle de l'humanité et que devenir plus français c'est devenir plus homme."[45] If this final remark was any indication of how Khodja himself felt about

[42] Being represented by an official from the Société des Écrivains de Province was thus quite significant. Having such an individual write on behalf of Khodja suggests that he was being recognized as a "French" author. He was an Algerian writer of course, but as Algeria was considered a department of France, and Khodja's published work demonstrated the degree to which he had assimilated into French language and culture, French literary circles would likely have been quick to accept his work as a model of colonial progress.
[43] Khodja, *Mamoun* 9.
[44] Khodja, *Mamoun* 11.
[45] Khodja, *Mamoun* 12.

attaining the ideal of assimilation, it is no wonder that he would seek to identify more with French civilization.

Khodja's allegiance to French civilization reveals itself again in a short editorial piece published in 1931 in the colonial journal *Terre d'Afrique*. The article, entitled "Sur les cimes algériennes," recounts a day Khodja spent touring the Chorfa valley and surrounding mountains in northern Algeria. While the one page compte rendu would seem at first rather insignificant in relation to the importance of Khodja's written work and contributions to francophone Algerian literature, it provides much insight into how he positioned himself within colonial Algerian society. As he describes his encounters with the inhabitants of the mountainous region, it becomes clear that he feels very much an outsider. The bucolic surroundings, while poetically beautiful, are not part of the modern world to which he is accustomed. For example, he is initially very hesitant about riding a mule along the narrow mountain paths. He is only mildly reassured when his guide explains "On s'habitue … à être sur le dos d'un mulet comme on s'accoutume à fumer sa cigarette ou à faire la belote."[46] Khodja is also not very trusting of the local people, and seems to set himself above them by suggesting that they are not only outdated in their traditional way of life, but deceitful. After spending the afternoon in the home of a Berber family, Khodja arrives at the conclusion that:

> La générosité proverbiale du peuple arabe devient un vain mot sur ces crêtes égoïstes. Je crois que toutes les populations de la région du Chéliff, dont l'origine est d'ailleurs apparemmment berbère …dérogent à cette belle renommée du peuple arabe. L'Arabe, ou plutôt le Berbère, chez qui nous fûmes reçus, nous fit

[46] Khodja "Sur les cimes algériennes." *Terre d'Afrique* 129 (Nov. 1931).

une offre gasconne que nous déclinâmes.[47]

While Khodja does not go on to say what the offer was, he makes it clear that it was not something desirable, and that local hospitality left him longing to return to the vehicle that the group had been obliged to leave behind at the trailhead.

The one redeeming aspect of the excursion for Khodja seems to have been a story his Berber host shared about the origins of a Roman aqueduct that ran through the region. Touring the ruins, this mark of Western civilization on the North African countryside seems to provide him some reassurance that Western ingenuity was superior and had been so since Antiquity. He concludes his article referencing the Latin and French names of the cities that continue to benefit from the network of aqueducts put in place by the Romans: "Et voilà comment les vestiges du *castellum acquae* que nous montre Mohammed se trouvent là. Et voilà comment …s'alimentait la cité qui était située entre Oppidum-Novum (Duperré) et Tingitanum (Orléansville)."[48] Considering the way in which he describes the scene and the people he encounters, it is as if the article had been written by a French tourist instead of an Algerian intellectual urbanite, demonstrating the degree to which assimilation was at work in constructing Khodja's worldview. However, in spite of the draw toward French civilization and Western innovation, Khodja could not avoid acknowledging the equally important role his Muslim Algerian heritage played in his identity as an évolué. This struggle to demonstrate the viability of a dual French-Algerian identity is the central focus of Khodja's only other published work, *El-Euldj captif des barbaresques*.

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[47] Khodja "Sur les cimes."
[48]Khodja, "Sur les cimes."

Interpreting dual identity and the feasibility of selective assimilation in El-Euldj

A thought provoking work that might be said to have been written well before its time, *El Euldj, captif des barbaresques*, published in 1929 at Khodja's personal expense, takes an arguably radical and daring approach to thinking about assimilation by turning the tables so that it is the French who are obliged to assimilate rather than, in this case, the Algerians. Pairing historic fact with tales of adventure popularized by colonial literature,[49] the novel opens with its main character, Bernard Ledieux, being taken as a slave after his ship is attacked by corsairs along the Barbary Coast in the 16th century.[50] In order to escape his sorry fate, he converts to Islam, goes on to marry his master's daughter, and has a son by her who becomes an influential mufti.[51] All seems to go well for Ledieux, who is now known by his Arab alias of Omar Lediousse, following this apparent total acceptance of his captor's culture, but all the while he is emotionally tormented for having turned his back on his Christian faith and the wife and children he

[49] As previously mentioned, the Algerian évolués of the 1920s have in the past been criticized by literary scholars for simply mimicking the type of adventure stories being written by popular French authors at the time. While the choice of setting and plot may closely resemble those used in colonial literature, it is more likely that the évolués intentionally borrowed such elements from their French contemporaries in order to appeal to their largely European readership. In this way, they were able to appropriate the genre for themselves to recount the story of colonialism from the point of view of the colonized individual.

[50] In setting *El-Euldj* during the golden age of the Barbary slave trade, Khodja grounds the fictional story of Ledieux in historic fact, lending the story of Ledieux/Lediousse that much more legitimacy. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, historians estimate that millions of white Christian Europeans were captured by pirates and sold as slaves in North Africa. Accounts of what some of these individuals experienced still exist in archives. The travel accounts of 17th century French comedic dramatist Jean-François Regnard are a case in point. Regnard was enslaved for a time in Algiers between 1678 and 1679 before being ransomed back to his family. He details his time in captivity in his collection of travel writings (See *Oeuvres de Regnard, vol. 5*. Classic Reprint Series. Charleston: Forgotten Books, 2015). For more background on the Barbary Slave Trade, see Robert Davis' *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), and Daniel Panzac's *Les corsaires barbaresques: La fin d'une épopée, 1800-1820*, (Paris: CNRS, 1999).

[51] A Muslim judge or legal authority, particularly of religious matters.

had left behind in France. In the end he dies in anguish, unable to reconcile his African, Muslim present with his European, Christian origins.

Upon initial reflection, it seems unusual that Chukri Khodja, a member of the colonized intellectual elite seeking to promote assimilation between the French and Algerian factions of colonial society, would rush to publish a tale that appears so favorable to Christian Europe and the need to establish the freedom and salvation of French civilization in Algeria in light of its barbarous past. Indeed, the conversion story presented in *El-Euldj* could easily be read as an expression of outrage over the forced conversion of European prisoners on the Barbary Coast. However, the novel can also be read more subtly as a commentary on French colonization of Algeria, using the ambiguity of the novel's intended message as a rhetorical device to examine and critique the practice of assimilation and its viability without drawing the ire of French colonial authorities. Thus, even though *El Euldj* is set centuries before, it contains a very specific message for the Algeria of the 1920s, and testifies to the importance of the role of the Jeunes Algériens in promoting assimilation as a means of reconciling French civilization and Algerian-Muslim tradition.

As presented in the novel, Ledieux's tragic end would seem to indicate the impossibility of total assimilation, no matter how strong the will of the person seeking it, as they would never be able to genuinely give up their entire past and upbringing to adopt a wholly foreign culture. Lanasri stresses this important revelation in his explanation of the reasons behind Khodja's decision to feature a Frenchman converting to Islam when he states: "En renversant les rôles, Chukri Khodja montre l'aspect contraignant, et le

procédé avilissant de la politique d'assimilation qui met la liberté au bout du reniement de soi."[52] Guilt over this loss of freedom to be one's self is a key theme of the novel, as illustrated by the book's title. The Arabic term "El Euldj" can be translated as *renégat* or turncoat/traitor, and we can conclude from the descriptor that follows "captifs des barbaresques" that the El Euldj of the title can be none other than Ledieux.

It is not without much consternation that Ledieux becomes Lediousse in order to gain his freedom – yet even with his new Muslim and Algerian identity, he is not truly free – chained to memories of his past and ashamed of himself for having agreed to undergo such a transformation. A sort of identity crisis ensues, as the narrator explains, "Au fond, cette métamorphose inattendue, cette vie renouvelée, ces moeurs tout à fait oppossées à celles qu'il connaissait, et qu'il avait vécues, ce milieu dont il avait dû faire cependant son parti, avaient jeté un émoi dans sa conscience."[53] To further complicate matters for his conscience, Lediousse's first job as a newly minted member of Algerian society is to work as "surveillant des captifs", watching over the prisoners who had formerly been his shipmates and friends. A constant reminder of his betrayal to his own people, the narrator describes how Lediousse is haunted by, "…une voix secrète [qui] s'écriait en lui, dans le silence de la rêverie: 'Traître, tu seras châtié.'"[54]

The biting irony of all Lediousse's anguish is that, despite his conversion and giving up his former, French identity as Ledieux, he is still never recognized as truly being *of* either culture, but is perceived rather as existing in the in-between. Even though on the surface he practices the Muslim faith of his former captors - joining them for

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[52] Lanasri, *La littérature algérienne* 228.
[53] Chukri Khodja, *El-Euldj, captif des Barbaresques* [1929] (Paris: Sindbad, 1991) 113.
[54] Khodja, *El-Euldj* 114.

prayer at the mosque, undergoing circumcision in order to be eligible to marry his former master's daughter, and having a son who goes on to become an influential religious leader – Lediousse is not able to reconcile his past and present. The narrator recognizes this in making the following observation: "S'il avait les dehors d'un adepte de l'Islam, Omar Lediousse avait le coeur foncièrement chrétien."[55] Thus, the old adage "l'habit ne fait pas le moine" holds true, and it is ultimately this false conversion and his inability to quell his inner admiration for his Christian faith that lead to the protagonist's undoing. Thus change – integral to the process of assimilation – is readily addressed in the text – with Ledieux's inability to genuinely do so only augmenting perceptions of him as a hopeless social pariah in both European and Algerian circles.

Ledieux's story therefore seems to suggest that assimilation is not a desirable endeavor, even when one goes about it with the best of intentions in mind. Ledieux simply wanted to be a free man, and, admiring the benevolent gestures demonstrated to him by his Muslim master, he felt a momentary confidence that he was doing the right thing in becoming Lediousse. As the narrator points out, "Sa conversion à l'islam ne fut qu'une parade derrière laquelle avait brillé le feu éphémère d'une passion, et elle fut facillitée par les circonstances."[56] His master, too, only saw good things to come from his slave's entry into free society. He expresses this sentiment in passing to a friend, explaining to him, "J'ai un esclave chez moi. Je me complaisais à le traiter assez humainement, il couchait chez moi et je le considérais un peu comme un fils; tu sais bien que je n'en ai pas et je comptais bien sur sa connaissance pour l'attirer à moi et lui faire

[55] Khodja, *El-Euldj* 141.
[56] Khodja, *El-Euldj* 131.

passer le pont séparant les deux croyances, afin de lui donner toute mon affection."[57] Once again we see the metaphoric bridge upon which Ledieux stands, debating his fate. He is well treated by his master, who wants to recognize him as a son, if only he will leave his past behind and come into the fold. However, despite the best intentions of master *and* slave, and perhaps mirroring those of *colonizer* and *colonized*, we learn at the end of the story that this expectation was not realistic, resulting in regret and a brooding sense of ambiguity.

Yet this is not to say that there are no benefits that stem from assimilation. If approached differently, and in the spirit of association and openness to mutual exchange as promoted by the Jeunes Algériens, change can be a positive and enriching experience for everyone involved. Coming from Khodja's perspective as an évolué, this was the very message he wanted to give French-Algerian society in order to show that unity was possible. To return to the key example of this message in the text, after keeping his French-Christian origins a secret from his son, Lediousse is forced to confess to him in his role as the local mufti, that he has committed apostasy. However, much to his surprise, his son is already well aware of his father's past, which he understands to also be a valuable part of him as he recognizes his dual European-Algerian heritage. The son even went as far as to learn the native language of his father, in which he addresses him directly at the climax of the story, saying, "J'avais bien le droit, ce me semble, de connaître la langue de mes aïeux. Je n'ai pas à en rougir, comme aussi je n'ai pas à rougir de ma religion, que je place au-dessus de tout. J'ai idée que je puis avoir du sang

[57] Khodja, *El-Euldj* 91.

français dans les veines et alimenter mon cerveau de la nourriture généreuse que contient l'islam."[58]

The son continues to impress and humble the father as he explains that it was God's will that they are who they are. He states, "Dieu a voulu que le fils musulman d'un Français redevenu chrétien ait en lui le mélange altier de la fierté arabe conjuguée à l'esprit chevalresque français, grâce auquel il a su te protéger contre le mauvais parti que tous les croyants avaient décidé de te faire."[59] In this sense, Lediousse's French-Muslim son has evolved beyond the Manichean vision of us versus them to recognize the merits of both sides. Thus, he elevates the position of those inhabiting the "in-between", using himself as an example, and suggests that they have the potential to benefit most from all that the diversity of humanity has to offer.

While the story ends with Ledieux/Lediousse's demise, there is nevertheless an expression of hope for the next generation demonstrated in the father's confession to his son, and the son's revelation to his father. Youssef was able to bring elements of being French and being Arab together to become enriched by his dual heritage, whereas Lediousse was never able to come to terms with his situation and place in Algerian society given his French background. Thus, while it would seem that Khodja is suggesting failure on the part of assimilation, he demonstrates nevertheless that it is possible to take parts of other cultures and make them your own.

In this manner, the story of El-Euldj can be interpreted as more than a fictional account inspired by the history of the European slave trade in North Africa. Reflecting

[58] Khodja, *El-Euldj* 164.
[59] Khodja, *El-Euldj*, 164.

the goals of the Jeunes Algériens as they sought to establish a dually French-Algerian society, the novel leaves its readers with a dual message. First, in casting a Frenchman in the role of the unfortunate protagonist, Khodja seems to suggest that the French should be more receptive to the plight of the Algerian people they now consider their subjects. Setting the story at a moment in history when the French played the part of the conquered people underscores this appeal for understanding and mutual respect. Second, in the ideological spirit of the Jeunes Algériens, Khodja concludes *El Euldj* by insisting on the fact that to be effective, assimilation must be undertaken collaboratively, with change and adaptation required of both sides as they take in the best qualities of each culture to forge a new society conducive to cultural hybridity. Khodja was not alone in coming to this conclusion. In his promotion of cultural métissage, Ousmane Socé Diop would make a similar argument as demonstrated in his novel *Mirages de Paris.* Further examining the experience of colonialism from the point of view of the colonized African attempting to navigate the in-between to forge a new cultural identity, it is to his literary contributions to the debate on the viability of assimilation that we now turn.

Chapter 4

Ousmane Socé Diop: Coming to terms with the limits of colonial assimilation

At the heart of France's civilizing mission was the notion of the metropole – and more precisely its Parisian capital - as a central point of origin from which the virtue of French civilization could spread across the globe not unlike the light of a distant beacon providing direction to a ship lost on a dark sea. To the privileged citizenry that resided there, the metropole represented an ideal of modernity and Western innovation that was intended to be admired and desired by colonized subjects living throughout the far reaches of the French Empire. In this manner, a clear distinction between metropole and colonies was established based on French perceptions of what constituted a superior civilization, whereby distancing the metropole from the colonies not only geographically, but ideologically as well.

As a case in point, in Africa the distanciation between colonizer and colonized was upheld by the French even within colonial urban centers. To demonstrate their perceived degree of civilization and superiority in relation to that of the locals, the French built their own modern, European versions of towns right alongside the original African ones.[60] Tree lined boulevards and modern buildings of the *quartiers européens* recalling Haussmann's Paris laid in stark opposition to the narrow, winding streets and close quarters of the *quartiers indigènes*. Take for example Maréchal Lyautey's *ville nouvelle* of Fes in Morocco, and how it contrasts with the labyrinthine medina that dates back to

[60] For a thorough discussion of the socio-political implications of the implementation of European urban design in the French colonies, see Gwendolyn Wright's *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991) and Zeynep Çelik's *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997).

medieval times. There is also the *quartier européen* situated along the port of Algiers, with the city's formidable Kasbah rising above the waterfront and mounting the surrounding hills. When Dakar was named the capital for all of French West Africa in 1902 , *Le Plateau* was designed as the European administrative quarter of the city with the governor's palace, hospital, post office and marketplaces seeming very out of place next to the neighboring Senegalese quarters of the city. While technically parts of the same city, the European and African quarters remained culturally and ethnically worlds apart.

Such a distinction was largely by design, as it allowed denizens of different races to co-exist in the same city while maintaining their respective traditions and cultural character. However, the arrangement also bolstered the colonial presence in the city and for the colonizer was symbolic of Western ingenuity triumphing over what they considered to be the uncivilized African ways of life. As colonial authorities sought to tame the African city by laying out wide streets and lining them with carefully pruned trees, a sense of European superiority permeated the African urban landscape. As attractive as the ordered streets of the *quartier européen* may have been, they were not open to all, and ironically created more barriers than paths to social and cultural advancement for the colonized population. Crossing the street from the Kasbah or the medina to enter the European quarter, and vice versa was not something to take for granted, as it represented a departure from one world and entry into another in which one would find themselves an easily identifiable stranger in spite of never having left the city limits. For both colonizer and colonized, that street marked a border between "us" and

"them" that effectively separated the two groups from one another. As long as everyone stayed on their side of the street, there was no risk of disturbing the colonial status quo that kept the Europeans in power and the Africans accepting their role as colonial subjects and not interfering in the affairs of the colonizer.

An illustration of this phenomenon is laid out in the first pages of Ousmane Socé's novel, *Mirages de Paris*. The text opens with a one line description of Niane, a Senegalese village situated on the fertile plains of Cayor. The next line begins, "Un jour des blancs y firent leur apparition…" It is as if out of nowhere the white settlers arrive, and wasting no time in fortifying their presence and demonstrating their prowess at urban planning, "…ils construisirent un chemin de fer qui transporta des outils; les hommes blancs bâtirent à côté du village un autre qui commandait le premier."[61] By highlighting the intent of the new village being to rule over the original one, an immediate distinction is made between the new European residents of Niane and the African residents who have lived in the village since time immemorial. Thanks to modern innovation, the Europeans came in not to live among the villagers or to learn from them, but to tame the land using their own methods in order to set their version of Niane apart from what they perceived as the disorganized and haphazard approach to city planning employed by the local population : "Ils [i.e. the Europeans] tracèrent de larges rues droites, y plantèrent une double rangée de fromagers…pour arreter les rayons du soleil."[62] Thus the Europeans used their new city as evidence that Africans were in need of Western civilization to bring order to their lives. Comparatively, the original "village noir" stood

[61] Ousmane Socé Diop. *Mirages de Paris*. [1937] (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1964) 7.
[62] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 7.

in stark contrast to the new, well designed and aesthetically pleasing European city: "Les ruelles du village noir serpentaient à l'aventure, se croisaient nonchalamment; elles étaient parties des habitations. Tout le monde s'y installait…"[63] In this initial description of Niane, it is striking to note that while no specific characters have yet been introduced, the reader can begin to perceive some of the differences that will divide the European and African communities.

Despite the implied sense of disorder and lack of harmony in the arrangement of the streets in the African quarter, it is clear that the people that reside there place a high value on communal living, cultural traditions, and on relationships with one another. As explained in the text, the alley like streets serve as an extension of the home during daily chores and as a well-trod connection between individual homes and businesses and the rest of the community. Women gather in the streets to pound millet, butchers spread out hides to dry, and a washerwoman hangs laundry on lines traversing the space. This public space is also of religious and cultural significance, as it is in the courtyard of the mosque where the Muslim faithful gather for their evening prayers and in the surrounding streets where dancers and musicians perform on moonlit nights to the enjoyment of all those gathered around them. This illustration of communal living brings a more human element to the African quarter, as it describes actual people, what they are doing, and how they are interacting with one another. Conversely, despite their sudden appearance on the scene and industrious nature as they set about building railroads and streets, the white residents of the European quarter do not seem to share the same sense of community. While it is presumed that there are indeed people living in this new part of

[63] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 7.

town, they maintain a certain anonymity. The narrator makes no mention of them, and their comings and goings and the affairs of their daily lives remain unknown to those in the neighboring African quarter. Drawing from such observations from the first pages of Socé's novel, it can be inferred that the narrator is likely presenting the story from the point of view of a black African resident of Niane, curiously pondering what life must be like for the Europeans living across town. This appropriately sets the stage for Fara, the tale's tragic protagonist, and his early wonder and growing fascination for the luster of all that European living supposedly has to offer.

This assessment of colonial space and the separation established between colonizer and colonized falls in line with the observations of Christopher L. Miller. In his analysis of the first few pages of the novel, Miller references this notion when he states: "*Mirages de Paris* begins with an evocation of two stereotyped cultural spaces."[64] Yet despite mentioning the presence of *two* cultural spaces, Miller's analysis focuses especially on the way in which the African space is represented. Concentrating the discussion on this particular locale would seem justified, as the introductory chapter to the novel centers predominately on the African quarter, further advancing the notion that the story is being narrated from an African perspective. After a brief reference to the arrival of the white Europeans and how they set about laying their railways and building their version of the city, Miller turns to explain how daily life in the African quarter of Niane "seems to go on as usual" and concludes that "[t]raditional Africa is thus still

[64] Christopher L. Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on francophone African literature and culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998) 60.

associated with open, free space…"[65] Miller then makes a very perceptive observation when he adds:

> …also, traditional Africa is suspended in time – in this initial passage, the verbs used to evoke African life are all in the imperfect tense. African life, in Ousmane Socé's rendering, thus corresponds to the clichés of primitivism; it is composed of habit and repetition, and it is uninflected by punctual narrative, which seems to belong to the world of the whites.[66]

However, while the use of the imperfect tense to describe the activities in the African quarter of the city does seem to imply a sense of daily life plodding along unremarkably, there is one activity described in the text that Miller fails to mention in his careful analysis but that is key to establishing a more complete appreciation of the importance of maintaining a supposed sense of separation between Europeans and Africans in Niane and in the story to come.

Within the narrator's rather detailed description of daily life in the African quarter, there are two sentences that stand out, as they describe something that could hardly be considered just another monotonous day to day activity or household chore set in the meandering city streets:

> Le jour, les femmes sortaient souvent des maisons, s'alignaient le long des palissades en tige de sorgho pour applaudir la fantasia d'un riche villageois qui galopait, ventre à terre, sur son cheval gris pommelé, en souleveant des gerbes de sable. Au seuil du village des blancs, il tirait brutalement sur les brides et asseyait

[65] Miller, *Nationalists* 60.
[66] Miller, *Nationalists* 60.

sa monture…[67]

Within the greater description of day to day life in the African quarter, this fleeting reference to the daily interlude of a horseman galloping through town may not seem particularly important - but it is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it elaborates on the introduction of Niane's African inhabitants to describe a wealthy villager mounted on horseback. When considered alongside the housewives, butchers, and launderers of the working class mentioned previously, the presence of a rich equestrian indicates that there is a social hierarchy in place within the African community, one that exists independently and beyond the reaches of the European community and its colonial influence. Such an arrangement lends the Africans a sense of autonomy in spite of the stated goal of the newly constructed European village being to rule over them, further highlighting the distinctive character of each respective community and establishing them as different from one another even though they are technically both situated within the same town.

To further examine the significance of the African horseman to the novel's introduction, it should be noted that the fact that this event is described as being a daily occurrence is initially somewhat peculiar. The festive spirit described recalls the North African tradition of equestrian fantasias. Usually held only for special occasions or holidays, such events are meant to simulate a cavalry charge, imparting a militaristic undertone to the festivities. As a display of utmost control, men ride their horses in unison for a certain distance before coming to a halt and simultaneously fire their rifles into the air resulting in a single resounding boom. With this in mind, likening a spectacle of equestrian prowess to the challenges faced by the Africans of Niane is not so

[67] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 8.

farfetched. The image of the noble African charging on horseback toward the European quarter provides a constant reminder of how the two cultures are not only different, but how the Africans are forced to face the European community head on with the introduction of Niane's new dual African-European character. In this way, coming out to watch the spectacle on a daily basis would seem justified, as it serves as a metaphor for the colonized Africans and the challenges they face every day, maintaining their pride and self-control as they come to terms with the intruding and commanding presence of the European colonizer.

For all that the horseman's ride through town represents, it is somewhat unusual that the narrator has included the event in the description of the village, but stops short of commenting on it – the exciting account of the rider and his horse comes to a very abrupt end, the text trailing off with an ellipsis before the narrator moves on to describe other everyday happenings in the African quarter. Perhaps this was a deliberate choice on the part of the author, used intentionally as a literary device to suggest that the narrator will pick up the story again at a later time. Or perhaps, the excitement of the moment having subsided, the narrator saw no reason to relate the tale of accompanying the exhausted horse back to the stables. However, as highlighted above, the short account of the horseman's demonstration doesn't describe just any mundane activity or event in Niane, but is symbolic of the intercultural conflict occurring between Africans and Europeans at the time. Taking this in to consideration, the way in which the narrator describes the action of the galloping horse becomes all the more significant, as this is the only time in the description of Niane where the narrator suggests a possible collision, in both the

figurative and literal sense, between the African and European communities.

Up to this point, the description of Niane has emphasized the separation between the African and European quarters of the town and the distinctive features unique to each. Nowhere is there any mention of European and African residents interacting with one another, or leaving their respective part of town to enter that of their neighbor's. The African horseman openly challenges this de facto separation, and races his steed toward "le seuil du village des blancs", but stops just short of crossing the invisible line that marks the point of entry into the European village. As described in the narration, "...il tirait *brutalement*[68] sur les brides et asseyait sa monture." The fact that the rider brought his horse to such an immediate halt, pulling *brutally* at the reins, would seem to suggest a sense of urgency in his actions, not unlike a driver suddenly slamming on the brakes to his or her car to avoid rear ending another vehicle. This then bears the question, why this urgency? What is it that is preventing the horseman, as wealthy, brave and gallant as he is, from spurring his horse on to a full gallop and riding boldly down the wide boulevards of the European quarter?

While no answer is provided in the text, this brief scene is rather emblematic of the limits imposed upon colonized people. In keeping with the tenets of colonialism, the invisible line that divides the African and European communities is not to be crossed without facing serious consequences. It would seem that the African horseman knows this, and while he is daring enough to challenge the colonial status quo by racing to the very limits of what is permissible, he ultimately remains on his side of the line and resigns himself to returning home to remain among his African neighbors. In this way,

[68] Emphasis added.

his story ultimately serves as a warning and foreshadows the challenges that Fara will face throughout the rest of the novel.

Picking up where the account of the horseman trails off, Fara's story becomes a cautionary tale, illustrating one outcome of what can happen when one challenges the division between cultures and actually does attempt to cross the line separating the African realm from the European one. Unlike the mindful horseman, Fara is not cognizant of the risk he takes in leaving his homeland for the French metropole. This is largely due to his upbringing in the colonial education system, which singled him out early on from the other African residents of Niane, and set him on the path to assimilation. Blinded by the promise of all that French language and culture were supposed to offer, he is naively oblivious to the dangers before him as he pursues his dream of traveling to the France of musketeers and castles that he has read so much about in his favorite works of French literature.

Prior to his departure, Fara believes wholeheartedly in the promise of a better life in France, but in spite of all this, in the end he loses everything as his idealism crumbles around him. Even though he has mastered the French language and is very well educated - even by the standards of the metropole - Fara is perpetually limited by his race and is never able to fully assimilate into the European community. What is more, he can't simply return home to Africa, as he has distanced himself far enough from it socially and culturally that he is no longer wholly part of it. Not accepted as an equal by Europeans and no longer wholly African, Fara is exiled to the space of the in-between. This insistence on the separation of European and African space and the affronts to the

ambiguous line that separates one from the other persists throughout Socé's novel, and in this way exhibits the struggle posed to colonized people who, like Fara, dared to believe in the promise of assimilation.

From the arrival of the Europeans in Niane and the building of their city, and the subtle display of protest to their presence by the African horseman, to the introduction of Fara and his role in it all, the beginning of *Mirages de Paris* underscores the challenge of traversing the line from one cultural milieu to another. This chapter will examine this notion of "crossing over" as it is presented in Socé's novel and what it suggests about the viability of assimilation within the context of the colonial vision. While much of the body of scholarly work that has been published on this novel has dealt with its presentation of disillusion as experienced by Africans arriving in the metropole,[69] how it exemplifies the tension of race relations during the colonial period,[70] or its contribution to the genre of African travel literature,[71] not enough attention has been paid to the significance of the novel in terms of how it illustrates the separation of space within the

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[69] See especially Chapter 2 of Christopher L. Miller's *Nationalists and Nomads*, entitled "Hallucinations of France and Africa", 55-89, in which he analyzes *Mirages de Paris* in conjunction with an examination of the Colonial Exposition of 1931 to demonstrate that intercultural encounters in 1930s' France were grounded by the *illusion* of racial equality and the supposed benefits of assimilation.

[70] The following recent publications look at the issue of race as it is handled in the novel, and how Socé's treatment of racial identity in the metropole leads into the philosophy behind the Negritude Movement: Gary Wilder's *The French Imperial Nation State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005) 198-200; Jennifer Anne Boittin's "Black in France: Language and Politics of Race in the Late Third Republic" *French Politics, Culture & Society* 27/2 (Summer 2009): 23-46; Cheikh Thiam's "Mirage de Paris: De la critique des théories essentialistes à l'éloge du pluralisme" *Ethiopiques* 82 (1er semestre 2009): n. pag. Web. 30 Nov 2014; and Daouda Loum's "Métis et Métissages: L'éclairage littéraire en miroir" *French Colonial History* 9 (2008): 79-102.

[71] While they also address the issues of disillusionment and race relations, the following works are unique in that they frame these issues within the context of travel and the colonized African's sojourn to the metropole: Loingsigh Aedín Ní's "*Mirages de Paris:* Staged Encounters of the Exotic Kind" *Postcolonial Eyes: Intercontinental Travel in Francophone African Literature.* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2009): 32-51; and Minike Schipper-de Leeuw's "L'occident et l'Africain occidentalisé: thème du roman négro-africain de langue française" *Civilisations* 23/24.2-4 (1973-1974): 289-304.

colonial world. As illustrated by the dual identity of Niane, within the framework of colonialism there is a designated African space, an equally well defined European space, and where they overlap – which in the novel is ironically Paris – an increasingly complex and ambiguous space of transition that renders the Manichean separation of African and European spaces far more complicated and problematic than initially presumed.

It is within this transitional space that "crossing over" is occurring, and it is by examining this transition from one cultural milieu to another that one can begin to understand the inherent challenges that assimilation posed to colonized individuals seeking to remake themselves to identify with the culture of the colonizer. In this regard, this chapter's assessment of Socé's *Mirages de Paris* draws from ideas advanced by post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha and his concepts of cultural hybridity and the "Third Space" as defined in his seminal work, *The Location of Culture*. Explaining the importance of the "in-between" to the development of culture, Bhabha employs the metaphor of a stairwell – a transitional space serving as a connection between various established levels of distinction (i.e. upper class/lower class, black/white, etc.) that contribute to one's cultural and social identity. It is in this stairwell and moving between levels that Bhabha identifies the potential for cultural hybridity to occur, free of socially imposed restrictions that might otherwise hinder such movement. He states, "This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy."[72] To further stress the importance of this neutral space and its role in fostering cultural hybridity, Bhabha goes on to say that:

[72] Bhabha 4.

> …we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves.[73]

However, as a neutral space allowing people to transition freely from one cultural milieu to another, Bhabha's interpretation of the in-between becomes problematic in the colonial context, as colonized individuals become trapped in the metaphorical stairwell due to limitations imposed by the colonizer. While Bhabha defines the in-between as a space free of political maneuvering that would otherwise inhibit cultural hybridity, it would seem that the colonial hierarchy remains in place, dictating when – if ever – colonized individuals seeking to assimilate are ready to exit the transitional space and adopt the culture of the colonizer. As a result, the process of assimilation is characterized by ambiguity as people are lost in the transition between cultures.

Drawing from Bhabha's notion of the in-between and reflecting on the significance of this gray area of intercultural space, this study will begin by looking briefly at Ousmane Socé Diop's life, how it mirrors the experiences of the African évolués who play the role of the protagonists in his novels, and also consider an early example of the author's treatment of cross-cultural ventures as depicted in his first novel *Karim*: *roman sénégalais*. The study will then return to Fara's story in *Mirages de Paris* to chart his attempts to traverse the invisible line separating Africa and Europe by examining several prime examples of crossing over in the novel and how each is marked

[73] Bhabha 38.

with insight and calls into question the ambiguous nature of assimilation.

The life of Ousmane Socé Diop as inspiration for his novels

Ousmane Socé Diop was active at an important time for black intellectuals from the colonial world, as the sociocultural climate of the 1930s in which they lived was characterized by a wavering between the nationalist movements popularized in the 1920s[74] and calls for the nascent form of a black cultural renaissance that would later become the Negritude Movement. Collaborating with fellow black students while pursuing his studies in Paris, Socé contributed to the ideals of Negritude, and like many of his classmates, went on to a successful career in politics. While Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Léon Damas are perhaps the most well-known black francophone writers to emerge out of the 1930s due to their key roles in the advent of Negritude, Socé also figures prominently in their social and intellectual circle, his publication record actually predating that of the Negritude founders by several years. In reference to the scholarly community's general perceptions of Socé, Christopher Miller observes that as an author, "Ousmane Socé Diop has always been seen as a 'minor' writer," but in spite of this goes on to say that Socé "…was a significant figure, a marginal participant in important events."[75] While his writings are not as well-known or studied as often as the collections of poetry and other works composed by his contemporaries, his novels demonstrate nevertheless a keen understanding of the challenges faced by the colonized

[74] See for example Chapter 2's treatment of Lamine Senghor and his very active involvement with Marxist inspired political groups in 1920s' Paris that critiqued French imperialism as a capitalist venture and called for independence and the emancipation of all colonized people.
[75] Miller, *Nationalists* 59.

évolués and their struggle to navigate the path to assimilation.[76]

Socé was born October 31, 1911 in the city of Rufisque, one of the Four Communes of Senegal.[77] His place of birth is significant, due to the special status attributed to those Africans born within the communes, known as *originaires*, who since 1848 had been officially recognized as French citizens rather than colonial subjects. Possessing such a birthright set Socé apart from other Africans residing in French West Africa, marking him with the potential to become a prominent évolué, and likely played a role in his ability to pursue an education and successful career. He showed potential for success early on. As a young child he attended a Koranic school, and from there, after obtaining his baccalauréat from colonial schools in Senegal, he was granted a scholarship that allowed him to pursue a degree in veterinary medicine in Paris.

It was while in Paris that Socé's writing career began. A member of the black intellectual community there, he was involved in the promotion of Aimé Césaire's newly founded student journal *L'Étudiant noir*, in which the tenets of Negritude began to take form and find a voice.[78] Making his own mark on the origins of the movement and distinguishing himself as a writer in his own right, it was around the same time as the appearance of the journal's first edition that he wrote and published his first novel,

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[76] On Socé's life and the significance of his largely unsung contributions to francophone African literature, see especially Pascal Brousseau's doctoral dissertation, *Vie et œuvre de l'écrivain sénégalais Ousmane Socé Diop: démonstration d'une injustice littéraire et intellectuelle, et révélation d'un monument caché de la littérature africaine*, (Diss. University of Virginia, 2004).

[77] The other communes being Dakar, Saint Louis, and the island of Gorée just off the coast of Dakar.

[78] Socé would remain in dialogue with the founders of Negritude throughout the interwar period, debating his positions on cultural métissage and assimilation with fellow Senegalese évolués such as Léopold Senghor, Abdoulaye Sadji, and Mamadou Dia on the pages of colonial newspapers *Paris-Dakar* and *Dakar-Jeunes.* For more on these debates and the importance of these newspapers as venues for francophone African intellectuals to express their opinions and question the practice of assimilation, see Katherine Lakin-Schultz's doctoral dissertation, *Africa for Africans: Métissage, Assimilation, and French West Africa's Cultural Evolution*, (Diss. University of Virginia, 2014).

Karim: roman sénégalais in 1935, which would go on to receive the Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Occidentale Française in 1947. *Karim* was followed only two years later in 1937 by a second novel, *Mirages de Paris*. In the ensuing decade, Socé transitioned to a career in politics and became the representative of Senegal to the French Parliament from 1946 to 1952. He was politically active in Senegal as well in the years before and after its independence, having founded the political party *Mouvement socialiste d'union sénégalaise* in 1956. He also went on to occupy a number of prominent political posts throughout the remainder of his life, most notably as Senegalese ambassador to the United Nations and to the United States.

Despite being so active on the political scene, he did manage to continue writing on a smaller scale, publishing his *Contes et légendes d'Afrique noire*, a collection of stories inspired by the oral tradition of Senegalese griots, in 1942, and in 1956, a collection of poetry entitled *Les Rythmes du Khalam*. Testifying to the rich and lyrical cultural heritage of Africa, these last two publications in particular bear witness to Socé's enduring ties to his native land that – in spite of a diplomatic career that took him around the globe – remained with him throughout his life. As a further expression of his commitment to promoting francophone African literature, in 1953 he founded the Dakar-based literary journal *Bingo*. Retiring from writing and political life in the late 1960s due to increasing blindness, he later died in Dakar in May of 1974.

From his collaboration with the founders of Negritude while a student in Paris through the time he was active on the world stage as a diplomat of Senegal, Socé advocated for the concept of what he termed cultural métissage, a key feature of his

vision for the future of Africa. However, while they may be similar in some respects, it is important in any analysis of Socé's works to note that cultural métissage and assimilation are not the same thing and that the terms should not be used interchangeably. While assimilation implies replacing one culture with another, métissage suggests a blending of cultures in the spirit of fostering cultural hybridity.

In her study of Socé and his work, Katherine Lakin-Schultz points out that this distinction was not made readily apparent during the interwar years, when the terms were largely considered to be synonymous. She argues against the idea that métissage and assimilation were one in the same, stating, "The notion articulated in AOF [French West Africa] promoted choice and compromise, asking Africans to take control of their future by being open to outside influences that could complement existing culture, not replace it."[79] Confusion over the distinction between the two terms is understandable, especially given that during the 1920s and 1930s, the term "selective assimilation" was more frequently used in place of "métissage." As Lakin-Schultz explains:

> Though present, the term métissage was used less frequently by colonial subjects in the 1920s and 1930s with assimilation or assimilationist more frequently referring to any vocal acceptance of French influence into African life […] Furthermore, assimilation when referenced by Africans in discussions on culture generally referred to selective assimilation, a necessary component of and acceptable synonym for, cultural métissage."[80]

Whether it is termed "selective assimilation" or "cultural métissage", the concept remains

[79] Lakin-Schultz 8.
[80] Lakin-Schultz 11.

the same – a blending of cultures that surpasses the limits of assimilation to result in the advancement of mankind.

Proposing a potential solution to the quandary of assimilation and its inherent limitations, Socé's views were rather revolutionary for the time. Highlighting this point, Lakin-Schultz observes, "Between the wars and into the 1950s, the key question was cultural authenticity: to assimilate or not to assimilate with cultural métissage emerging as a viable compromise with varying degrees of popularity and acceptance."[81] In his writings, Socé remains steadfast in his demonstration of how assimilation – as prescribed by colonialism – poses too many limits on an individual seeking to adopt another culture. It is only through métissage that the assimilé can advance in the process by prioritizing the blending of cultures and how they stand to complement one another, rather than focusing on their distinctions and what separates them. In this way, it is by embracing the ambiguity of the in-between and the interaction of cultures that occurs there that the assimilés can turn things in their favor – "selective assimilation" granting them the power to choose for themselves what elements of other cultures would be most beneficial to their own needs. Cultural métissage thus becomes an extension of assimilation, rendering it possible in an altered form. Socé's novels in particular reflect this notion, and engage actively in the debate over how to redefine assimilation in terms of cultural interaction.

Considering Socé's life story, it might be said that his early life and career served as sources of inspiration for the main characters in his novels, which in turn provided a platform for his promotion of cultural métissage. Not unlike Karim and Fara, Socé

[81] Lakin-Schultz 23. Socé's concept of cultural métissage would become the source of much debate even within his circle of friends, many of whom were strong supporters of Negritude and its promotion of uniquely African culture.

benefited from receiving a French education in colonial schools, which allowed him to more rapidly ascend the rungs of the colonial social hierarchy toward the goal of becoming a fully assimilated évolué. His unique situation as an *originaire* and exceptional educational background also granted him the opportunity to go to France in order to continue his studies in Paris. In making the voyage, he too crossed into a transitional space between the Africa he knew and the unknown prospects of Europe. All of this bears a rather striking resemblance to the accounts of Karim's sojourn to Dakar, and of Fara's adventures in Paris as the aspiring young men seek out a better life for themselves through assimilation of European culture and ideals. However, they remain ignorant of the pitfalls that await them in their travels, and the challenges they face calls in to question whether or not they would have been better off had they never ventured to traverse the line separating Africa and Europe. Was this perhaps Socé's objective in telling Fara and Karim's stories - to make others aware of the risks one takes in pursuit of a glorified ideal? While it is impossible to ascertain the degree to which Socé's biography is reflected in his novels, it is safe to say that his life experiences granted him the necessary insight to compose well informed narratives that address the critical issue of assimilation as experienced by colonized Africans during the interwar period attempting to cross over into the realm of the European colonizer.

Karim, roman sénégalais: Paving the way for Fara's journey to Paris

Before turning to Fara's tragic tale in *Mirages de Paris*, it is important to consider the novel's predecessor, *Karim, roman sénégalais*, in which Socé lays the groundwork for his representation of assimilation that would be explored in more detail later in

recounting Fara's story. In this regard, Karim becomes a sort of prototype for Fara, and as Karim's story unfolds in the spirit of a Bildungsroman, one can identify Socé's first attempts to address the notion of crossing over in both a social and cultural sense, all set within the boundaries of colonial Senegal. Socially, Karim wants to get rich and rise from his current station, to become a *samba linguère*, the traditional title for wealthy men of the noble class. Culturally, Karim seeks to become more modern, which in the colonial context presented in the novel means that he desires to be more European, leaving behind traditional Senegalese dress and customs to fit in with the here and now of urban Dakar – which Karim considers to be a direct extension of Paris and the metropole on African soil. Understanding these two facets of Karim's attempt at assimilation and how they manifest themselves in the story's plot is important, as they not only fuel his exploration of African and European spaces within colonial Senegal, but also allude to key themes that would be further developed in Fara's story.

Karim begins with a full description of the story's titular character. The epitome of youth, the narrator explains that Karim is a young and attractive 22 year old black man from Saint Louis, Senegal. He is educated, holding a *certificat d'études* from the French colonial school, which has allowed him to secure a steady job as a bookkeeper for a local company. While he finds the job tedious and boring, Karim sticks with it so as to maintain a steady income and to look important so that he might impress the young ladies that pass by his office. One girl in particular, Marième, has caught his eye, and as is the custom, he begins courting her by visiting her often, buying her lavish gifts, and sparing no expense to pay griots to sing to her of his praises. In doing so, he ends up spending all

of his money, and is obliged to ask his friends for loans in order to continue to impress the young girl and her family. Karim somewhat naively believes that the hardship will be worth it if in the end it means that he will have proven himself worthy of Marième's hand. Unfortunately, Marième's seemingly wealthy cousin also has his eye on her, and in the end is the favored suitor. Having spent all of his money in his attempt to win over Marième and her family, Karim sets out for Dakar to seek his fortune, in the hopes that being a stranger in the big city with no reputation that he will not have to spend so much in order to win the affections of a fiancée.

Initially Karim does well for himself in the city. While in Dakar, he lives with his uncle and cousins, and finds another bookkeeping job easily enough thanks to his prior experience. However, the social scene in Dakar proves to be not so different from that of Saint Louis. He soon falls into the same trap that drove him away from his home town, falling in love with a beautiful divorcée on whom he spends all of his earnings. The relationship inevitably creates a lot of problems for him, as he no longer has money to send home to his family to help support them, and he falls behind in his work due to all the time and late nights that he is spending with the woman. On the advice of his roommate Abdoulaye, a school teacher who has adopted European dress and considers himself to be an évolué, Karim leaves his girlfriend and takes a greater interest in improving himself by adopting a new persona grounded in European culture.

Despite his newfound friends and busy schedule frequenting the cinema, theatre, and literary salons, it is not long before Karim is once again distracted by a new love interest – this time a Catholic girl from Gorée whose fiancé is out of town for an

extended period of time. In the end, their difference of religion proves more an impediment to their relationship than the fact that she is promised to another man. She becomes pregnant, presumably with Karim's child, and while Karim does admit to truly loving her and wanting to marry her, they are unable to reconcile their religious beliefs and are forced to part ways. She aborts their unborn baby, and Karim ends up in the hospital with malaria and never does learn anything more about her fate. Once he has recovered from his illness, Karim decides to return to Saint-Louis after finding out that Marième's suitor turned out to be a fraud – embezzling money from his employer to appear wealthy. Karim thus wins her hand after all, although it is implied that he is not necessarily happy with the outcome, as even while in the midst of their marriage celebration, he continues to compare his wife to the other women he had loved.

However, *Karim* is much more than the account of a young philanderer and his love affairs. Within the story and the misfortunes that arose for Karim in his quest to win over his first love, it becomes apparent that all the while, Karim is opportunistically jumping between African and European cultures depending on which one suits his fancy at a given moment. The setting of the novel in colonial Senegal lends itself to the challenge of the presumption that cultural assimilation is a gradual and stable progression, whereby accentuating the ambiguous, porous nature of the line that separates African and European cultures. Just as the introduction to *Mirages de Paris* establishes distinct African and European spaces in Niane and the invisible line that presumably separates one from the other, the first pages of *Karim* also insist on distinguishing the African space of Saint Louis from the European space of Dakar.

While it could be argued that Saint Louis was just as much European as it was African given its history and important role as the original capital of colonial French West Africa, the narration describes Karim's hometown as being particularly grounded in African tradition. Within the account of Karim's efforts to impress Marième there are regular references to Africa's distant, pre-colonial past, with specific mention of the *damels*, or kings of Cayor, and of the epic tale of the Malian emperor Soundiata Keita as sung by the griots hired by Karim.[82] The courting ritual too is steeped in tradition, from the role of the griot as social intermediary and purveyor of a family's history to the celebration of Tabaski[83] for which Karim and all his friends dress in their finest boubous to attend prayer at the mosque followed by dancing and feasting with Marième. In many respects, for Karim Saint Louis becomes synonymous with African tradition. Becoming disillusioned following his embarrassing loss of Marième's hand, it is through his desire to distance himself from this tradition that Karim sets off for the modernity of Dakar.

Spurned by Saint Louis in spite of all his efforts to uphold its traditions and customs, Karim considers Dakar to be all that his home town is not. The narrator describes Karim's attitude in this regard by explaining, "[il] était rempli d'admiration

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[82] Ousmane Socé Diop, *Karim, Roman Sénégalais [1935]: Suivi De Contes Et Légendes D'Afrique Noire [1942]* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1948) 20. It is also interesting to the note the use of footnotes by the author in the first chapters of *Karim* to explain particular customs, such as how someone's family name is used to greet them, and to explain the significance of certain historical figures, such as Maïssa Tenda, a *damel* of Cayor known for his extravagant parties. This would seem to suggest that Diop's intended audience was likely not Senegalese, but European, providing the novel with a degree of didacticism that would permit French readers an opportunity to gain some insights on African history and cultural tradition.

[83] Eid al-Adha, or Tabaski as it is known in West Africa, is the annual Muslim celebration commemorating the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael as a test of his faith in God. Celebrants dress in their best clothes to attend prayer, and then return home to sacrifice a sheep to symbolize Abraham's sacrifice of his son. The celebration is characterized by a communal spirit, as the meat of the sacrificed animal is then evenly divided between the family, their friends and neighbors, and the poor. The rest of the day is then spent feasting and celebrating with family and friends.

pour Dakar, la ville jeune, moderne, un prolongement de la métropole."[84] To Karim, Dakar is a European city, especially when juxtaposed to what he left behind in Saint Louis. However, categorizing Dakar as being either African or European is complicated by the fact that it occupies a transitional space, possessing both African and European characteristics. Karim witnesses this cultural coexistence first hand in the city's cosmopolitan marketplace. Observing the interactions between Europeans and Senegalese, Muslims and Catholics, he remarks, "Ce monde discutait et marchandait dans toutes les langues de l'Afrique Occidentale: wolof, français, bambara, soussou, peulh…".[85]

In this way, Dakar is portrayed more as a multicultural crossroads emphasizing transition between cultures than as a fixed and singularly African or European space. Further illustrating this idea, throughout the novel there is an insistence on clothing, with the style of clothing reflecting the degree to which the wearer identifies with African or European customs, traditions, and language. This is particularly true in the narrator's account of Dakar, referencing clothing to illustrate the city's dual nature by describing the scene through Karim's eyes upon his arrival in the city: "Parmi les passants, beaucoup de noirs, vêtus de costumes européens; ils cheminaient à côté d'autres sénégalais qui s'obstinaient à garder le fez et le cafetan de cotonnade traditionnel de leur civilisation négro-arabe."[86]

This distinction between europeanized Africans and those that prefer to remain

[84] Socé Diop, *Karim* 70.
[85] Socé Diop, *Karim* 80.
[86] Socé Diop, *Karim* 70.

closer to their African heritage is readily apparent within Karim's social circle in Dakar. Among his roommates are his cousin Ibrahima, as well as two other men, a student and a teacher who consider themselves to be "européens noirs". Initially, when he arrives from Saint Louis Karim identifies more with his cousin, wearing his best boubou, fez and babouches when going out in the evening to dance to the beat of African drums. However, an impressionable young man, Karim soon begins to ally himself more with Abdoulaye, the school teacher, and takes on a new European persona. He leaves behind traditional Senegalese styles and instead wears European suits and frequents the cinema, theatre, and literary salons, his change of dress serving as an outward expression of his desire to be considered an évolué.

However, despite their outwardly dapper appearance, Karim and his new friends are experiencing much inner turmoil as they struggle to come to terms with their assimilation. Explaining the predicament, the narrator states:

> La polémique s'échauffait … On défendait avec ardeur son point de vue. Au fond, ils hésitaient tous à rompre définitivement avec le vieux Sénégal, pour épouser les mœurs d'Europe, dont certaines s'imposaient. Leur cœur parlait en faveur de la tradition ancestrale et leurs intérêts en faveur du modernisme pratique de l'Occident. Mais, par-dessus leurs discours, d'année en année, une civilisation métisse s'organisait, n'obéissant qu'aux lois de la lutte pour la vie…[87]

This passage encapsulates the struggle of the évolués. In their attempt to assimilate into European culture, they actually rendered themselves rather unique and came to occupy a space all their own somewhere between African and European cultures. Pairing African

[87] Socé Diop, *Karim* 105.

tradition with European modernity, the narrator explains how they embodied a new *civilisation métisse* "…dont l'élément étranger consistait en apports matériels et intellectuels, nécessaires à notre adaptation dans le courant de vie mondiale, dont nous[88] faisons désormais partie intégrante."[89] Yet the struggle of the évolués to thrive in the ambiguous new space they had created for themselves ultimately proves too much for Karim.

In the end, even after all he had done to try to adapt, Karim still encountered insurmountable obstacles in his attempt to reconcile his African roots with his desire to adopt European ways. Marie N'Diaye, the young Catholic girl from Gorée, was admittedly the one woman he truly loved, but their difference of religion prevented them from being together: "…la Société, par ses barrières de préjugés, ces castes à cloisons

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[88] The use of "notre" and "nous" in this passage is striking in that it is the one time in the text that the omniscient narrator implies that he or she identifies directly with the characters as also being an évolué. It would seem that Socé as author revealed himself for a brief moment in the guise of the narrator to express his personal views on the matter of assimilation – highlighting the importance for all cultures to adapt in their encounters with one another to thereby contribute something to the universal whole of humanity.

In this respect, the author/narrator's explanation of the *civilisation métisse* is in line with Léopold Senghor's notion of the *Civilisation de l'Universel.* This concept is further explained in the preface to the third edition of *Karim*, penned by Robert Delavignette. To give his own insights further credibility, Delavignette cites the work of French naturalist and scholar Théodore Monod, director of the *Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*. In reference to colonialism and the struggle that ensued between African and European cultures as they tried to preserve themselves, Monod states:

> Il ne s'agit nullement en effet d'appauvrir l'humanité en assurant le triomphe d'un seul des aspects possibles de la culture humaine, mais bien plutôt de permettre à chaque élément de la famille terrestre d'apporter au concert commun, pour en enrichir l'ensemble, ce qu'elle possède de meilleur. Au terme, par conséquent, d'un choix, d'un tri, chaque culture devant à la fois ne retenir de son propre patrimoine que ce qui mérite de l'être et n'accepter de l'influence extérieure que ce qui est organiquement assimilable et peut enrichir son âme.

(Robert Delavignette, Preface. *Karim, Roman Sénégalais [1935]: Suivi De Contes Et Légendes D'Afrique Noire*. By Ousmane Socé Diop (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1948) 10). Monod's explanation of assimilation mirrors that of Léopold Senghor's notion of the *Civilisation de l'Universel*. Ideally, the intent of assimilation should not be to eradicate one culture in preference for another, but to recognize the complementarity of different cultures and how they can come together to enrich the human experience. How practical a concept this actually is in the context of colonialism and the real world is one of the central questions being addressed in this study.

[89] Socé Diop, *Karim* 105.

étanches, lui avait empêché de l'épouser."[90] Although Karim and Marie are of the same race, come from similar backgrounds as *originaires* of Saint Louis and Gorée respectively, and are even expecting a child together, the society in which they live still finds a way to keep them apart due to their religious differences.

Originally, Karim had left Saint Louis to escape social obligations and expectations, believing that the modernity of Dakar would offer him a sort of liberation from traditional African cultural conventions. Returning to the important symbolism of clothing in the novel, in his attempt at "crossing over", Karim left behind his African attire to don that of the *européen noir*, yet in spite of all his efforts to change both inwardly and outwardly, he was still limited in what he could achieve and is obliged to return home to Saint Louis no better off than when he left. To mark his retreat and transition back to the life from which he had sought to distance himself, Karim once again undergoes a wardrobe change: "Karim quitta son costume européen et reprit la tenue sénégalaise – le milieu faisait la convenance de l'habit…"[91] The "milieu" referenced here is that of Saint Louis with all its traditions and customs to which Karim ultimately must resign himself.

Bidding farewell to his failed attempts to adopt a modern life *à l'européenne* in Dakar, the novel concludes with Karim declaring, "Adieu la vie fantaisiste, mobile, sans souci du lendemain!..."[92] While this statement could be interpreted as Karim's farewell to youth, as he utters it shortly after his marriage to Marième, a ceremony marking his entry into adulthood with all its inherent duties and responsibilities, it might also be read as a

[90] Socé Diop, *Karim* 138.
[91] Socé Diop, *Karim* 145.
[92] Socé Diop, *Karim* 149.

farewell to all he had hoped to accomplish through assimilation. Disillusioned by the promises of a changing world, Karim is trapped in an Africa in transition that requires change and adaptability, but that does not facilitate Karim's necessary passage from the old to the new, rendering the modern life of the *européen noir* more like an unattainable dream than a feasible reality. This was indeed the challenge faced by African évolués during the 1930s, their ambiguous position in colonial society leaving them with few options. Robert Delavignette illustrates this dilemma in his preface to *Karim*, stating, "KARIM [sic] et ses amis ne peuvent plus vivre comme leurs ancêtres. La défaillance de leur idéal traditionnel les laisse désarmés devant la vie moderne qui risque de les briser. Les efforts qu'ils doivent faire pour retrouver le sens de leur vocation, et leur place dans le monde nouveau, tel est bien le sujet de « KARIM »".[93] However, *Karim* was but Socé's first attempt to address the theme of the African évolués' quest to find their place in colonial society.

Socé's second novel, *Mirages de Paris*, would further address the issue of assimilation and its feasibility, but this time the author did not limit his treatment of the subject to the setting of colonial Senegal, but extended the colonial space by bringing his African protagonist to the heart of the French Empire in Paris. Karim's story of misfortune provides but a harbinger for all that lies in store for his counterpart Fara during his time in the metropole. Fara's story is rife with examples of crossing over from one culture to another. Each instance reveals more about the nature of assimilation, challenging the need for it in the context of colonialism to keep the colonized in a perpetual state of uncertainty regarding their place in French cultural society. This study

[93] Delavignette 12.

will now turn to survey these instances of crossing over and examine how they exemplify the ambiguous nature of assimilation and the consequences that befall those who venture to traverse the transitional space between cultures.

Bridging the divide: Traversing colonial space in Mirages de Paris

In cataloging the earliest examples of francophone African literature and tracing the evolution of themes presented within such literary works, Fredric Michelman characterizes the West African novel of the 1930s in the following terms: "…from the middle thirties on, the major thrust of the novel is one of conflict between tradition and modernism within African societies brought about by the impact of colonialism."[94] Thus the struggle of traditional Africa to find new ground in light of the colonial presence was readily reflected in publications from this period. Socé's *Karim* and *Mirages de Paris* then serve as prime examples of the time, with the stories of Karim and Fara presenting, as Michelman describes, "…heroes 'torn between two cultures'."[95] Considering this assessment, in writing these two novels Socé sheds light on the plight of the colonized African caught between two worlds, that of their African homeland and heritage and that of Europe and its modern allure. *Mirages de Paris* in particular addresses this issue, recounting Fara's beginnings in Africa, his voyage to France, and the ensuing disillusion he experienced there as he sought out the Parisian El Dorado he had imagined and expected to find.

In this respect, Socé's second novel is especially significant as it presents its story from the perspective of an African reacting to the discrepancy between expectations of

[94] Fredric Michelman, "The West African Novel Since 1911." *Yale French Studies* 53 (1976): 35.
[95] Michelman, *West African Novel* 35.

life in France based on information gleaned from French colonial schools and from the stories of Africans returning from abroad, and what he actually finds upon arrival in the metropole. In his evaluation of the novel and its importance to the francophone African literary canon, Francis A. Joppa would seem to concur with this assessment. He states, "*Mirages de Paris* se distingue comme, nous osons l'affirmer, le premier roman écrit par un Africain dans une perspective africaine et par conséquent destiné à servir d'antidote aux idées néfastes que propageait en Europe et ailleurs la littérature coloniale."[96] Whether an antidote to counter the effects of colonial literature on the perceptions of Africa, or a reality check for colonized and colonizer alike, Fara's story provides much insight on the experience of colonized Africans residing in France in the 1930s as they struggled to bridge the racial, cultural and social divide that separated them from white French citizens of the metropole.

In summarizing *Mirages de Paris*, the account of Fara's time in Paris and his sorry fate may seem somewhat predictable given the paucity of success stories from Africans in France during the interwar years. As explained in the first chapter of the novel, Fara grows up in the Senegalese town of Niane. After attending koranic school as a young boy, he goes on to acquire an education in the French colonial school system. As a young adult, he is selected along with a contingent of fellow colonized Africans to

[96] Francis A. Joppa, "Situation de *Mirages de Paris* d'Ousmane Socé dans le roman néo-africain," *Présence francophone: revue internationale de langue et de littérature* 1/1 (1970): 232. In deeming *Mirages de Paris* to be "le premier roman écrit par un Africain", Joppa introduces an issue of much debate among literary scholars as to what novel truly deserves such a designation. To defend his position, he adds in a footnote that while Bakary Diallo's *Force-Bonté* (1924) did precede *Mirages* by just over a decade, it is too closely allied to colonial literature to be considered as presenting an African perspective. Joppa also mentions *Karim* (1935), published two years prior to *Mirages* but criticizes Socé for having fallen victim to "un exotisme abusif" in the text. He does however praise René Maran's *Batouala* (1921) but as Maran was Antillean, Joppa concludes that the book cannot be considered an African novel.

travel to Paris to attend the Colonial Exposition of 1931. It is while he is touring the exposition that he first meets Jacqueline, a young, white, bourgeois Frenchwoman with whom he falls in love despite racial and social barriers. She leaves her family to be with him, and much to her parents' disapproval, they are soon married. As newlyweds, they maintain a humble abode with Fara picking up what work he can, and rely on the camaraderie of a circle of black friends that are also doing what they can to live the metropolitan dream.

The couple soon finds out that they are expecting a baby. They are thrilled by the news, but are dismayed by the concern over the child's mixed race as expressed by Jacqueline's parents and some of their African friends. Before this issue can be resolved, Jacqueline dies in childbirth, effectively putting an end to Fara's illusions of France and of his ability to assimilate into not just French, but Parisian culture. His son is handed over to the care of Jacqueline's parents, and Fara opts to return to Senegal per the suggestion of one of his friends. However, he never does return. Walking along the Seine one day lost in memories of his wife and of the Africa he had left behind, he sees a vision of Jacqueline beckoning to him in the water, and he leaps from a bridge to be with her, thereby falling victim to the mirage of the title and bringing his own life to an end.

In the past, scholars of African literature have had a tendency to dismiss *Mirages de Paris* as a facile read demonstrating little ingenuity on the part of Socé as a novelist. Among Socé's greatest critics was Léopold Senghor. As noted by Christopher Miller in his study of the novel, "Despite their parallel lives … Senghor and Socé were never on the same plane artistically; Senghor judged *Mirages de Paris* to be hastily written and

unpardonably negligent in style."[97] However, Miller goes on to question whether Senghor's distaste for *Mirages* really had to do with questions over Socé's writing style, or more to do with his disagreement about how Socé presented the issue of cultural métissage.[98] As demonstrated in the novel, Socé was very much a proponent of métissage – the notion that one could selectively adopt elements of various cultures to successfully enrich their own. While he would eventually come to agree with Socé's interpretation of métissage later in life when formulating his notion of the "Civilisation de l'Universel," Senghor was initially opposed to the concept which put the two men at odds. In the interest of advancing the philosophy of Negritude early in his career, Senghor sought to promote African culture and, unlike Socé, dismissed the possibility that foreign cultures could be of value in re-establishing a uniquely *African* identity for Africa.[99]

Regardless of the critical reception of *Mirages de Paris*, the novel still retains great value in its depiction of Fara as an African crossing over into European space, or at least his attempt to do so, offering numerous examples of the implications this transitional move entails. Occupying the space between two worlds, full of illusions, hopes and expectations of what awaits him once he has crossed over from Africa to Europe, Fara finds ultimately that he will never leave the transitional space of the in-between. Tracing the instances of crossing over in the text reveals much about the division of African and European spaces, the ambiguous nature of assimilation, and the misconceptions and challenges it posed to the African évolués as they sought to merge

[97] Miller *Nationalists* 60.
[98] Miller *Nationalists* 60.
[99] For more on the debate over métissage and assimilation between Socé and Senghor and how it played out in the colonial press, see Lakin-Schultz's dissertation *Africa for Africans...*

their African heritage with their admiration for European ways.

As demonstrated by the African horseman of Niane riding toward the European quarter of the town, the division between African and European space is readily apparent in the context of colonialism. It is when the line between the two cultures is crossed that the previously clear distinction is clouded by uncertainty and becomes less of a defined line of separation and more a point of no return, as nothing will ever be the same for the individual pursuing the path of assimilation. This is made clear from the very beginning of Fara's story. As a child, he led an idyllic life. When introduced for the first time by the narrator, he is described in relation to the openness and organic nature of the African space in which he was born: "Dans ce vilage [sic] un petit noir poussait comme les tamariniers de la brousse, libre dans l'espace."[100] As local custom dictates, Fara's parents place him in koranic school at a young age so that he might learn to appreciate his family's religion. He develops an admiration for the reading of the Koran, finding its language very beautiful, all while enjoying the carefree joys of childhood between his lessons. However, his destiny would soon lead him away from this initial untroubled period. The moment of transition is well illustrated in the text, presented in a single phrased paragraph to set if off from the rest of the text on the page: "Fara mena une belle existence de bambin jusqu'à neuf ans."[101] It is at this moment of his life that he first encounters Europe when his father accompanies him to the French colonial school, swiftly putting an end to his freedom and ushering in a period of great change.

From his perspective as an African boy, France was a far off place of adventure

[100] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 9.
[101] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 11.

where musketeers carried out heroic feats. While his games of pretending to be D'Artagnan would seem to be innocent enough, they hinted at something much more dangerous as Fara began to distance himself from his own African culture, preferring that of Europe as described in the stories he read in school. The narrator offers a diagnosis of what Fara is experiencing, stating, "Ainsi un dangereux amour de l'exotisme prenait corps dans son âme d'enfant encline aux illusions dorées."[102] It is at this time when the first stage of assimilation can be identified – that of cultivating an admiration for the foreign culture and making it more appealing than one's own.[103] This is confirmed when the narrator adds, "Le plus cher souhait de Fara était de voir cette France dont il avait appris, avec amour, la langue, l'histoire et la géographie."[104] Whereas Fara had found the greatest delight in reciting the Koran, playing in the sun with his friends in the village, and listening to his mother and father's stories, everything was largely forgotten and replaced by his newfound fascination for all things French as he came to learn about the culture of the colonizer.

Drawn to experience France for himself, not unlike an explorer with an inclination for travel and adventure, Fara advances one step further over the line separating African and European cultures when he sets off for Paris to attend the Colonial Exposition. Boarding the ship *L'Asie*, its very name contributing to the exotic allure of the voyage, Fara begins a literal crossing over as the ship serves as a bridge traversing the

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[102] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 15. It is interesting to note the use of the term "exoticism" here. From a Western perspective, the term generally refers to the allure of all things "non-Western" and different, but in this instance there is a sort of reverse exoticism occurring, reflecting the gaze back at the West as France becomes the mysterious other that Fara builds up in his imagination to be a magnificent spectacle of European elegance and modernity.

[103] This is also seen in Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic*, discussed in chapter 1.

[104] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 15.

ocean dividing Africa and Europe. Yet the excitement of his first time at sea is overshadowed by an encroaching sentiment of doubt. Describing the scene, the text speaks of Fara's thoughts and how "Son cœur battait plus vite jusqu'à synchroniser sa cadence à celle du tamtam des machines: chaque tour d'hélice le rapprochait d'un pays immense et prestigieux *qu'il aimait et redoutait à la fois...*"[105] Fara is unsure of whether to feel delight or dread when thinking of what awaits him in France, foreshadowing the ambiguity that would characterize his entire experience while in Paris. For a moment, Fara contemplates whether he wants to continue, realizing that with each push forward that he is getting farther from his home and that he may never see it again. Hit by a sudden change of heart, Fara wishes the boat would stop altogether: "Ce glissement du navire en avant vers un pays immense et prestigieux qu'il ne connaissait pas, ce glissement qui l'éloignait toujours de sa patrie l'effrayait maintenant. Il eut l'envie de voir le navire s'arrêter, le reconduire vers la terre natale."[106] But there could be no turning back, no backpedaling now that Fara had crossed into the transitional space that separated his native African culture from his adopted European culture, blurring them together to create illusions that would haunt Fara for the rest of his life.

His panicked thoughts of returning home dispelled by the dinner bell, Fara descends below deck to the dining hall where he would learn more about French perceptions of Africans and the European view of assimilation than he ever had before. At dinner, the narrator hints subtly at the fact that race would prove a hindrance – and in many respects perhaps *the* hindrance - to Fara's assimilation, as even on board the

[105] Emphasis added. Socé Diop, *Mirages* 17.
[106] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 20.

confines of the ship, Fara is seated with his fellow black Senegalese passengers in the corner while the waiter gives all his attention to the "white table" across the room. However, this permits Fara the one advantage of being able to listen in on the conversation among the white passengers as they discuss the issue of assimilation.

The first of them, a white professor who specializes in black Africa, is convinced that Africans are quite capable of assimilating. After sharing success stories of his best and brightest African students as evidence, he tells his fellow diners, "Je vous assure que les Noirs sont capables d'assimiler notre culture aussi bien scientifique que littéraire…"[107] However, the two other men at his table disagree, and are inclined to drop the entire education system from the colonial project as an act of self-preservation. One of them, a businessman from Perpignan, warns the professor, "…méfiez-vous, ils [i.e. les Noirs] ont une mémoire phénoménale et vos sujets doués pourraient n'être que d'habiles perroquets qui vous récitent des choses auxquelles ils n'ont rien compris."[108] Although it would seem that the man is not entirely convinced of the complete incapability of the professor's African students, as he later cautions, "…il ne faut pas trop leur ouvrir leurs yeux, car vous n'en feriez que des « éléments dangereux » et le jour où ils verront très clair, ils nous f… [sic] à la porte !"[109] His friend, a Syrian agrees with the latter assumption, explaining, "Oui…l'Administration Française a tort de pousser l'instruction des indigènes. On ne peut plus rien faire à la colonie avec des Noirs émancipés…il faut

[107] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 21.
[108] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 21.
[109] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 22. This statement in particular recalls Lamine Senghor's cry of revolution in *La violation d'un pays*, addressed in chapter 2.

laisser les Noirs dans l'ignorance."[110] This episode in the novel is an important one, as it is the one occasion where Fara is able to listen in and gain a better understanding of what white Europeans think of him as a black African and his attempt to assimilate their culture. Their conversation represents an intellectual and ethical debate of the time, and demonstrates the various positions of Europeans on the issue of assimilation and the degree to which it should be encouraged among the colonized population.

Once Fara arrives in France, he expects his voyage to be over. Having crossed the ocean from Africa to Europe, he is ready to experience all that the France of his textbooks and novels has to offer. However, his transition from Africa to Europe is far from over, as for the first time he becomes aware of his difference or otherness in relation to Europeans. Highlighting this revelation, the narrator states, "Cette immensité d'hommes blancs le troublait. Ce fut la première fois de son existence qu'il eut une aussi forte sensation de son être et sa couleur."[111] Contributing to this jarring sentiment, he becomes an object of fascination. For example, upon disembarking after a nine day voyage, the businessman from Perpignan and the Syrian from the boat take notice of him for the first time, addressing him rather presumptively in pidgin French to offer their

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[110] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 22-23.

[111] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 30. This is further exemplified by an incident on the metro while Fara is out and about touring Paris. Surrounded by Parisian passengers, who he describes as very haughty and mechanized, Fara feels increasingly out of sorts as the reality in which he finds himself does not correspond to what he had expected: "Fara se tenait mal en équilibre, respirait mal; ses idées s'enchainaient mal et ses impressions n'étaient pas définies" (34). Finding himself suddenly at the end of a young boy's pointing finger brings him back down to Earth, although what the blond haired boy has to say does little to ease Fara's feeling of vulnerability, as he matter of factly points out the things that make Fara so different from him. He comments on Fara's hair as being "comme des moustaches" (34) and when he goes to shake Fara's hand to apologize at the insistence of his embarrassed mother, it is as if the boy is disappointed afterwards to find his hand is still clean after touching Fara's dark skin. It is striking to note here the important role the Parisian metro also played in other works of francophone African literature as the setting for the black man's realization of his race in relation to the white majority among which he finds himself. This would include works such as Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) and Bernard Binlin Dadié's travelogue *Un Nègre à Paris* (1959).

services as his guides so that they can spend just one day more with "…cette Afrique qui nous est si chère."[112] Recalling their dinner conversation and thoughts about educating Africans, Fara reflects on this change of behavior, concluding, "…on eut dit que l'Afrique exerçait sur eux une influence néfaste tandis que la France faisait renaitre en leur cœur je ne sais quelle généreuse humanité."[113] While it would appear that the men have had a change of heart upon arrival in France and are open to treating Fara as any other guest to their country, the genuineness of their offer seems suspect knowing they harbor such a poor view of Africans. In their interactions with Fara, there is an example of how much the promise of assimilation was based on false representation – offering everything with the intention of only giving a little to a very select few. This follows the man from Perpignan's conclusion that, "Nous sommes en Afrique pour les civiliser, il faut tout de même leur donner de l'instruction, mais pas trop."[114] If this attitude is at all representative of the French in regard to assimilation during the colonial period, it would certainly pose a significant challenge to colonized Africans aspiring to one day attain the same standing as the colonizer preaching the virtues of French civilization, as they are not being given all the resources they need to accomplish this goal.[115]

As the capital of not only the metropole but of the French colonial empire as a whole, Paris played a unique role in maintaining the illusion[116] that colonized subjects,

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[112] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 26.
[113] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 26-27.
[114] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 23.
[115] As previously discussed in this study, and recalling the conclusions of Albert Memmi and other colonial theorists, such an outcome would be undesirable for the colonizer, as equality with the colonized would nullify the perceived sense of superiority used by the colonizer to justify their position over the colonized, essentially bringing colonialism to an end as a fait accompli.
[116] As noted previously, for more on this aspect of Paris and its significance to what he terms "state sponsored hallucination", see Christopher L. Miller's second chapter of *Nationalists and Nomads.*

particularly the évolués, would one day be able to attain equal status with the French citizenry. As a transitional space between France and its colonies where colonial subjects from all over the globe were congregating, it was perhaps the only locale in the empire where the colonized had the freedom and resources available to them to feel as if they were actually making progress toward assimilation. Due to the presence of colonized people in the city, Parisians and those traveling from elsewhere in France and Europe also experienced Paris as a transitional and intercultural space where metropole and colonies overlapped.

At no time was this more apparent than during the Colonial Exposition,[117] when the Bois de Vincennes was transformed to offer a complete tour of the French colonial empire, or at least as it was to be interpreted and showcased by the colonial administration. The narrator explains this phenomenon by describing Paris as a portal to the rest of the world: "Paris offrait le raccourci de tous ces mondes, l'interprétait à sa façon, dans la même apothéose de lumière, grâce à sa large compréhension des humanités…"[118] Having come to France for the purpose of attending the exposition, Fara's insights on the spectacle are telling. This is especially true as he takes on two roles, that of attendee, and inadvertently, due to his race and place of origin, as an extra adding a certain degree of authenticity to the scene. However, this privileged position also allows Fara to see through the smoke and mirrors. The narrator shares some of his innermost thoughts, explaining, "Il eût de l'Europe l'impression de quelque chose

[117] For a comprehensive historical study of the Colonial Exposition of 1931 and its role in selling the colonial mission to the populace of the metropole, see especially Catherine Hodeir and Michel Pierre's *L'exposition Coloniale: 1931*. (Bruxelles: Éd. Complexe, 1991).
[118] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 40.

d'artificiel. Il ne fallait pas gratter la façade des choses sinon, comme le visage des femmes, on en faisait tomber le fard. On était ici au pôle opposé de l'Afrique où tout était rude, élémentaire, mais naturel."[119] In this way, the exposition contributes to a growing sense of ambiguity within the transitional space of the colonial capital, as it becomes difficult to distinguish what is real and what is invented to maintain the illusion of unity between colonizer and colonized.

The importance of Paris as an exceptional place also carries over to Fara's relationship with Jacqueline, as the circumstances of their meeting at the exposition and their ability to openly be a couple would not have been possible elsewhere due to the taboo of interracial relationships. This is true from both the African and the European perspective. When Jacqueline and Fara elope, they debate where to begin their life together. Jacqueline suggests going to Africa, having painted an exotic portrait of all the adventure that would await them there, but Fara rejects the idea, explaining, "En Afrique vous seriez malheureuse…c'est un climat incommode pour vous et vous y rencontreriez de l'hostilité… [vivre en Afrique n'est] pas si facile que vous vous l'imaginez."[120] Fara then proposes moving to the provinces, but Jacqueline insists they remain in Paris: "Oh! non, restons à Paris…J'ai l'impression qu'ailleurs nous nous aimerions moins, je pense même qu'en Afrique, nous finirions par nous haïr."[121] Thus, as long as they are together, neither of them can rejoin their own people, and Paris is their only choice. Nevertheless they do what they can to bring their cultural backgrounds together. Jacqueline decorates their apartment with a combination of French and African items: "les rideaux brodés de la

[119] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 47.
[120] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 105.
[121] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 106.

Samaritaine se mariaient aux pagnes soudanais… [elle] avait harmonisé tous ces objets pour créer à Fara un abri qui rappelât sa patrie première."[122] Yet even though they are able to be together in their own Afro-European world, they still encounter a lot of opposition from those closest to them – a further example of the limits of assimilation when crossing over into the gray area that lies between cultures.

This is especially the case for Fara, who begins to question how he is perceived by Europeans, coming to the conclusion that "…cette foule blanche l'assimilait mal. Elle n'arrivait à le tolérer qu'à force de bienveillance."[123] This sentiment, felt for the first time in his encounter with the man from Perpignan and the Syrian, continues to be reinforced the longer Fara is in Paris. For example, while attending an academic conference on Africa, Fara hears one account of what Europeans think of him, the presenter advancing the following notion: "En France nous avons tendace [sic] à les traiter d'égal à égal, mais arrivé dans leur pays vous découvrez la nécessité de les considérer « inférieurs », « enfantins », « candide et pervers ». Ils sont facilement disciplinés et dévoués, cependant il ne faut pas être trop injustes car ils sont capables de vous empoisonner!"[124] Racism then is noted once again as a culprit in holding Fara back from assimilation, and in some ways seems to be the only thing truly preventing him from advancing toward his end goal. As a case in point, it is also due to his race that his in-laws are less than eager to welcome him to the family, whereas among his friends the color of his skin is something that they are able to look beyond: "Un abîme séparait Fara des époux

[122] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 108.
[123] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 63.
[124] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 67. It should be noted that after including this citation in the text of the novel, the author added a footnote to say that these words had come from an actual academic conference that he had attended.

Bourciez. Entre lui et les jeunes, il n'y avait qu'un fossé de coloration d'épiderme; certaines idées et certains sentiments communs formaient des ponts qui leur permettaient de se répondre, par-dessus le fossé, en maints endroits."[125] Mention of such bridges, albeit fragile ones, permitting cultural exchange and enrichment provides a key metaphor for Fara's story, and offers some hope that the distance between African and European cultures will not always be so great as to be impossible to overcome.

Another instance of a sign of hope for the future is the news that Jacqueline is expecting Fara's child – although the unborn baby too encounters opposition to its very existence, originating surprisingly from his African philosopher friend, Sidia. A copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* featured prominently on his bookshelf, Sidia is very much opposed to the idea of a child of mixed race and chides Fara for not having been more careful to avoid having children with Jacqueline. An advocate of racial purity, Sidia fears that those of mixed race will become "l'homme de l'avenir" and usurp the privileged position of the black évolués – himself among them. Fara counters Sidia's argument with one of the most important messages presented in *Mirages de Paris*, explaining:

> …*tout est métis*; il n'y a pas sur la terre une race pure, une civilisation qui ne soit pas métisse. Toi qui est fier d'être noir cent pourcent, tu es métis avec ta culture européenne! Il a fallu que tu te métisses intellectuellement pour développer ton esprit…C'est encore du métissage et le véritable car ce qui fait un homme c'est encore plus sa culture et ses idées que la coloration de la peau.[126]

Thus, Fara becomes the spokesperson for cultural and racial métissage, which for him

[125] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 92.
[126] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 148.

represents the culmination of assimilation as his child will be a living and breathing representation of both African and European cultures melded together. Furthermore, Fara's debate with Sidia suggests that assimilation does not have to be an "either or" situation, but that one can rise above the ambiguity of being lost between two cultures to embrace them both and live a fuller life because of it.

Unfortunately, just when Fara arrives at this conclusion, and things seem to be looking brighter for him and that he and Jacqueline might indeed lead a happy life *en famille métisse*, Jacqueline dies during childbirth. At that moment, the idealism that Fara had expressed to Sidia in his promotion of métissage comes crashing down. It was only through his and Jacqueline's love for each other that Fara was able to find some satisfaction in his transitional state – if he wasn't willing to admit defeat and return to Africa, and was not truly accepted by Europe, he at least found solace in his relationship with his wife. With her death, the reality of his situation comes rushing back toward him, and it is then that he realizes he was doomed from the start. In reference to all colonized Africans who had come to Paris dreaming of all they would accomplish en route to becoming an évolué, Fara realizes:

> *L'Europe n'avait pas voulu les prendre au sérieux; eux aussi ne la prenaient pas au sérieux.* Ils s'adaptaient à leur nouvelle condition comme les animaux et les végétaux s'adaptent au climat où ils sont transplantés en modifiant, ceux-ci, la structure de leurs feuilles et de leurs fruits, ceux-là leur pelage et leur caractère. L'essentiel était de vivre, de se conserver.[127]

[127] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 182. That the author chose to italicize the first phrase of this passage is not to be dismissed as a simple stylistic flourish. Insisting on this statement suggests that it was particularly

Despite promises to the contrary, it would seem that those colonized Africans seeking to assimilate are not meant to thrive, but simply survive in exile somewhere within the ambiguous space between Africa and Europe.

Embodying the loss and confusion experienced by so many of his fellow Africans in Paris, Fara is finally convinced to return home to Senegal and begins the formal process of repatriation. Admitting defeat, the narrator shares Fara's thoughts, stating, "Il ne s'obstinerait plus à demeurer sur cette terre d'Europe où il ne serait qu'un étranger."[128] After all of his efforts, and at times believing he was succeeding, Fara is still a stranger in France. This then bears the question, if he returns home to Senegal, will he be any less a stranger there? Fara was no longer the young dreamer he was when he left his homeland. While he could cultivate the land or start a small business upon his return, and even marry again and have other children, his Parisian past would continue to haunt him. It is these very thoughts that are occupying his mind in the days leading up to his departure. Walking along the Seine on one of these days lost in his memories, Fara steps out onto one of the many bridges traversing the river as a fog envelops the scene around him. Looking below into the water, he makes out images of Niane, his family, and the trees and fields of the surrounding countryside. These scenes are then blurred and replaced by images of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, and of the metro circulating in its underground tunnels. These two sequences of images thus present him his choices – two very different worlds. Having come too far to go back to Africa, and unable to go

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important and may even be a reflection of Socé's personal views on the subject of assimilation. It implies that no one, neither colonized African nor European colonizer, truly understood the implications of assimilation for both sides and that it would leave so many lost in the void separating the two cultures.

[128] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 176.

forward in France, the fact that he is standing at the middle of a bridge is rather symbolic. Out of options and unable to have the best of both worlds, it is an ethereal vision of Jacqueline that comes to his rescue. Beckoning to him from just below the water's surface, she offers him his one escape: "Fara, délirant de bonheur, plongea dans l'eau froide de la Seine, réchauffée et enchantée par les visions qu'il étreignait dans ses bras."[129] Only in death is Fara able to come to terms with the ambiguity of his situation.

After reviewing Socé's life and how it influenced his writings, how he first examined the endeavor of crossing over in *Karim*, and how his ideas from that novel were further advanced in *Mirages de Paris*, this chapter has presented how Socé perceived assimilation and how it might be understood in terms of the relationship between African space, European space, and the transitional space where they overlap and where cultural métissage and assimilation are actively taking place. Ultimately, *Mirages de Paris* and Fara's story offer an illustration of the ambiguous nature of this relationship and where it can leave those implicated in the colonial vision - suggesting that crossing over and assimilation are dangerous pursuits and that they should not be attempted without a full understanding of the potential consequences that are likely to arise. Socé first presents this caveat in *Karim,* with the title character jumping between cultural identities to suit his fancy before coming to the conclusion that he could not reconcile his desire for European modernity with the African tradition that grounds him on his quest for success in life. The moral of Karim's story seems to have gone unheard by Fara in *Mirages de Paris,* who surpasses his forerunner's attempt at assimilation in

[129] Socé Diop, *Mirages* 187.

colonial Senegal by going to France and integrating into the cultural space of the French metropole. While both Karim and Fara meet different ends, their stories are related in that they demonstrate how assimilation in the colonial context tended to isolate colonized subjects by condemning them to remain fixed in the "in-between". While this would eventually contribute to the undoing of colonialism, in the interim it left the would-be *assimilés* in an ambiguous state with no clear direction as they wandered between the poles of African and European cultures.

Detailing Fara's venture into this intercultural realm, *Mirages de Paris* depicts what could be considered the "final chapter" of the colonial mission. Based on the historical and cultural issues addressed in the previous chapters of this study regarding the French colonial presence in Africa and how it was received by African colonial subjects, the novel demonstrates what assimilation was supposed to accomplish in theory but failed to achieve upon application. In the spirit of the civilizing mission, Fara's story is a reflection of the proposed ideal of bringing up African subjects to metropolitan standards to result in the "uncivilized" colonial subject being transformed gradually into a "civilized" citizen of France. This was to be accomplished by introducing French education at a young age, creating a well-educated group of colonized people that could then serve France and integrate into French society, going as far as to marry white citizens of the metropole and have families in the spirit of métissage. All of this happens for Fara in *Mirages de Paris*, yet the novel ends in tragedy. What does this say for assimilation and that it was being promoted as an attainable goal for colonized people? As a testimony of the colonized African subject and his attempts at assimilation in Paris,

at its conclusion Fara's tragic story reveals the ambiguous legacy that colonialism would leave in the wake of its civilizing mission.

Conclusion

From the outset, this study has sought to address how the first generation of authors of francophone African literature used the written word as a way to share their experience of colonialism as colonized subjects of the French Empire. With little or nothing to go on within the historical record pertaining to how colonized Africans felt about their role in colonization, books published by these writers can be considered collectively to give colonized Africans an opportunity to tell the story from their point of view. As a key feature of French colonialism during the interwar years, the issue of assimilation figures prominently in the works being composed by Africans during the 1920s and 1930s. In reviewing the lives of the authors in question and their publications, this study has presented much insight on how assimilation was felt and understood at that time by those who – at times perhaps in spite of themselves – entered into the "in-between" in pursuit of the promises made to them by the French and as prescribed by the *mission civilisatrice.*

The African authors considered here came from a variety of backgrounds – educated elites, statesmen and future politicians, lawyers, tirailleurs, teachers, and sheep herders – who despite the variation in their social status were all attracted to the universalism as expressed by the French motto *liberté, égalité, fraternité.* It would seem that assimilation to French culture would then have been quite possible for them. Many of them were educated in French schools, worked within the French colonial administration, or had fought for France during World War I. However, even after all their efforts to live up to the standards that France had set for its colonial subjects in order to be considered for French citizenship, all of them remained in an ambiguous position –

reflected by the theme of ambiguity in their novels. They were no longer able to relate entirely with their native African culture, but were also unable to gain recognition from the French as being their equals. This would bring about many consequences for both France and Africa, leading to the founding of the Negritude Movement and later to nationalist movements that would culminate in Africa's independence, but it was during the 1920s and 30s when the reaction of the colonized to the experience of colonialism first began to find a voice. These authors and their texts are thus intertwined to testify to the ambiguity and uncertainty of this period of French colonialism, and this study has focused on them to explore the notion of the "in-between" in which they found themselves by tracing the evolution of the practice of assimilation and how it was perceived by the colonized.

Colonial education played a significant role in promoting French civilization in the African colonies, and it is for this reason that this study began with a discussion of Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne. Chapter 1, entitled "Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne: Promoting the colonial vision through *l'enseignement adapté*" addressed Diagne's life as a colonial educator and supporter of France's colonial vision. He himself a product of colonial education and perhaps one of its greatest proponents for that reason, the articles he published for colonial journals and reviews suggest a total acceptance of French colonialism and all that French civilization stood to offer Africa and its people. The chapter featured a discussion of Diagne's *Les trois volontés de Malic* to illustrate the author's pro-colonial position. Considered by many scholars of francophone literature to be among the very first examples of fictional work written by an African, Malic's story

was not one that future African authors sought to emulate as they sought to distance themselves from the legacy of French colonialism. However, in spite of its pro-colonial bent, the story's message is revealed to be an ambiguous one. While much progress comes from the granting of Malic's three wishes as he becomes more and more assimilated to the benefits of French modernity, it is at the expense of traditional African culture which falls to the wayside and is largely forgotten. African civilization is thus devalorized and lost, usurped by the advances of France's civilizing mission.

While education was one tool used by the French to promote assimilation among their colonial subjects, the military also proved a useful means of generating support for French civilization. Chapter 2 of this study, entitled "Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor: Debating Assimilation in the Tales of Two Tirailleurs," picked up the discussion on that point by looking at the role of the tirailleurs sénégalais and the implications of bringing colonized African troops to France to fight in Europe during World War I. However, after the war had been won, the Africans who had fought on behalf of France began to question their role within it all as defenders of a nation of which they were still denied citizenship and other rights. As former tirailleurs, Bakary Diallo and Lamine Senghor offer two opposing viewpoints regarding their ambiguous position. Diallo writes in his autobiography, *Force-Bonté*, of how much he admires the value placed on equality and freedom in France, even though he suffered serious wounds from combat on the front lines and received nothing more from the French government than a return ticket to Senegal following the war. In stark contrast to Diallo's praise of France, Lamine Senghor took up a militant position as a journalist for anti-colonial,

Marxist inspired newspapers. His *La violation d'un pays* effectively presented a brief history of French colonialism in terms of its violence and injustice, and made an early call for revolution and independence from France. Thus, while both Diallo and Senghor fought in the same war, they came out of it as very different men with very different interpretations of their experiences and how they envisioned the relationship between France and her colonies continuing. Attempts at assimilation left them both largely to fend for themselves as they tried to come to terms with what it meant to be a colonial subject with no promise of acceptance despite the ultimate sacrifice of nearly dying for France.

Debating assimilation and the sense of ambiguity it left with the colonized continues and is extended to Algeria in Chapter 3 of the study, "Chukri Khodja: Challenging the colonial status-quo in francophone Algerian literature." As an early francophone Algerian writer and lawyer, Chukri Khodja sought the middle ground as he questioned the validity of assimilation in his novels, *Mamoun, l'ébauche d'un idéal* and *El-Euldj, captif des barbaresques*. Such a position was most certainly influenced by his ties to the pro-assimilation group, the Jeunes Algériens, which sought to establish a new Algerian identity that drew from both French civilization and the Muslim and Arab culture of the colonized people. Both of Khodja's novels seem to suggest that while complete assimilation drawing exclusively from one dominant culture is not possible and leads to tragic consequences, but as seen in *El Euldj*, occupying the space between cultures and adopting elements from various cultures to enrich your own may well be a worthwhile endeavor.

What Khodja proposes in his conclusion to *El-Euldj* is what Ousmane Socé Diop would later term cultural métissage. Chapter 4, "Ousmane Socé Diop: Coming to terms with the limits of colonial assimilation" considers Socé's life and work and his attempt to lessen the ambiguous nature of assimilation. Through an examination of colonial space and how it is presented in his novels, *Karim* and *Mirages de Paris*, this chapter outlines Socé's promotion of assimilation in the form of cultural métissage. After his protagonists have risked everything in an attempt to assimilate, losing much of themselves in the process, Socé suggests that métissage is the best way to navigate the "in-between", as it permits those attempting to assimilate an opportunity to incorporate elements of all cultures into their own identity. While this proves an impossible feat in his novels – assimilation and métissage being identified as threats to European superiority and to the stability of French colonialism – and his characters are never able to escape their ambiguous place in the colonial system, Socé presents nevertheless some hope for future generations.

In this regard, assimilation maintains an ambiguous reputation, and as demonstrated by this study's analysis of these authors and their writings, there are ultimately a variety of takes on the issue. For Diagne, assimilation was beneficial and desirable and would bring significant progress to Africa, although it would seem that he was blind to what it took away from African culture and tradition. For Diallo, he too found assimilation to be a positive venture, although he suffered greatly in his pursuit of it and ended up returning home to Senegal to live the pastoral life from which he had previously sought to escape. For Senghor, assimilation as prescribed by the French

civilizing mission was seen as bad. However, it is important to note that even while he focused on the social and economic consequences of capitalism as brought about by France's colonial pursuits he also benefited from assimilation, as his citizenship allowed him to remain in France, marry a white French woman, and pursue a career as an anti-colonial activist. Khodja maintained his position for the "middle ground," suggesting that while complete assimilation was impossible, cultural hybridity offered a better outcome. Finally, for Socé, assimilation was deemed possible, but in the form of cultural métissage, seeing cultural hybridity as a good thing, but something that could only succeed in a certain milieu open to accepting such an approach to multiculturalism. Herein lies the dangers of attempting assimilation, especially during the interwar years, when France and its colonies were perhaps not yet ready to pursue it actively, as it would have brought colonialism and France's empire to an end.

It would be up to the next generation of African writers to take up the issue on behalf of France's colonized African subjects, with Léopold Senghor eventually becoming the torchbearer for the cause of métissage. As one of the founders of Negritude, Léopold Senghor was initially wary of Socé's notion of métissage, as he felt that to encourage Africans to adopt various elements from foreign cultures would weaken ties to their own, purely African roots. As Janet Vaillant explains in her biography of Senghor, "Senghor had argued that 'to teach the blacks of Africa the Greco-Latin humanities…would be to spoil the genius of their race, to turn them away from another possible humanity more in keeping with their…congenital aptitudes. To apply to them

the mold of a civilization that is neither made by them nor for them would be wrong.'"[130] Vaillant goes on to explain how Socé countered Senghor's position by arguing that all cultures are mixtures, but that it would be some time before Senghor would come to agree with him and only after he had gained more perspective following his involvement in World War II fighting for France.

Due to his education and intercultural experiences, Senghor considered himself to be just as French as he was African and as such became the ideal figure to promote Socé's métissage, rebranding it "La Civilisation de l'Universel". While he always maintained a great respect for the African culture and tradition of his origin, Senghor always held the language and culture of France in high esteem. In this way, Senghor had the privilege of adopting a unique vision of the world, playing an important role in reconciling the two cultures that he loved so much. Paraphrasing comments of René Maran, friend and colleague of Senghor, Marcien Towa states: "Il [Senghor] porte en son cœur la France et l'Afrique … Et il les aime toutes deux d'un tel amour qu'il ne peut quitter l'une sans laisser à l'autre cette *dimidia pars animae suae* du poète latin. Mieux qu'un ambassadeur, il apparaît comme un médiateur …"[131]

Thus, as a Franco-African "médiateur", Senghor sought to rectify the notion that the black man had no culture or civilization before the arrival of white Europeans to Africa. From his point of view, all people of the world have certain cultural qualities to contribute to humanity, and no one is better placed than Senghor to accomplish this cross-cultural intervention due to his ties to both Africa and France. Jacques Chevrier

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[130] Janet G. Vaillant. *Black, French, and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990) 186.
[131] Towa, Marcien. *Léopold Sédar Senghor : Négritude ou Servitude ?*(Yaoundé : CLE, 1971) 43.

says of Senghor: "…il situe son destin à la croisée de deux mondes complémentaires réunis par le métissage culturel".[132] Senghor is thus the personification of Socé's ideal of *métissage culturel*. While Senghor's concept of "La Civilisation de l'Universel" would not go without criticism, it demonstrates the evolution and continuation of thought that began with his predecessors who drew from their own challenges with assimilation during the first decades of the 20th century.

However, the issue of assimilation is not something that is fixed in the colonial past, but remains even today a matter of contention within French and francophone society as immigration becomes an increasingly critical issue. In the spirit of nationalism, political parties in France such as Marine LePen's Le Front National have sought in recent years to define themselves in terms of nationhood, applying certain standards to deem who is to be considered part of the nation, and who is to be excluded based on solely French cultural norms and perceived values. Where immigrants fit in to this vision has been a point of contention. In February 2014, the then French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault unveiled his roadmap for restructuring policies surrounding the integration of immigrants into French society. However, for some, such as mayor of Nice Christian Estrosi, the proposed reforms were too lax in their acceptance of immigrants to France. Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the plan, Estrosi was quoted by the French daily Libération on February 12 as saying:

> On se demande si le gouvernement ne va pas demander aux Français de s'intégrer, d'apprendre à parler les langues africaines, le mandarin, les langues

[132] Jacques Chevrier. *Anthologie africaine d'expression française : La poésie*. (Paris : Hatier, 2002) 55.

> arabes. Est-ce que c'est à nous de nous adapter? … Je souhaite qu'on apprenne prioritairement à lire, à écrire, à compter à l'école et que l'on fasse une politique d'assimilation à notre héritage de traditions, de culture, d'identité, qui est celle de l'Europe, de la France, des terroirs de France, pour que ceux qui sont déracinés puissent retrouver des racines à partir de la culture qui est la nôtre.[133]

Based on Estrosi's comments here, he seems to suggest that instead of promoting integration, or the blending of French and immigrant languages and cultures to create a sense of cultural heterogeneity within the country, that the French government should pursue a policy of assimilation reminiscent of colonial policy from a century ago. This would effectively prioritize French language and culture and require immigrants to take on a new French identity that would conform to a more unified and nationalized vision for the country, whereby erasing the immigrants' native culture and identity as anything other than French.

While front page news today, the debate of integration versus assimilation of immigrants and how their presence impacts France's perception of its national identity is not new, but harkens back to the glory days of "La plus grande France," when assimilation was a fundamental feature of French colonialism under the Third Republic. Taking this study and the authors and writings it considers into account, it is clear that the path of assimilation remains just as ambiguous today as it was during the interwar years. Where colonial subjects once arrived on the shores of the metropole to seek out the values promised to them by France's civilizing mission, immigrants have now taken their

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[133] "Le Pen et Estrosi favorables à un référendum sur l'immigration", *Libération,* February 12, 2014. Web.

place in hopes of establishing a better life for themselves. It is not clear what direction immigration reform will take in France, but the issue of assimilation of immigrants and how the introduction of foreign cultures stands to impact French national identity will surely remain key points of contention for French policymakers. In light of such potential for change, it is important to not forget the perspective of the immigrant *assimilé,* and what can be learned from those that came before them, as they actively seek a place for themselves within France's increasingly multicultural society.

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