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The Voyager in Question:
Histories of Travel, 1930-2010

By

Olivia Chidori Yoshioka-Maxwell

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

French

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Suzanne Guerlac, Co-chair

Professor Karl Britto, Co-chair

Professor Tyler Stovall

Spring 2014

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in French

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Suzanne Guerlac and Professor Karl Britto, Co-Chairs

This dissertation is situated within a field of cultural studies that seeks to develop a broader understanding of the political stakes of twentieth- and twenty-first century debates over who can travel. This line of inquiry responds to the persistent tendency in travel writing over the course of the century to exclude certain subjects in movement from the role of the traveler. The question, “What is travel?” is often treated in both literary texts and criticism as a philosophical or abstract question, stripped of its historical and political implications. I ask, what is the relationship between this effort to restrict the identity of the traveler and France’s imperialist history? How and why are non-European subjects denied the status of traveler, and how does the debate over the traveler / tourist binary, which has received more critical attention, relate to the reification of colonial and postcolonial subjects in the role of the “sedentary native”? Taking these questions as a point of departure, this dissertation explores how the theoretical opposition between the dynamic traveler and the passive travelee is constructed, undermined, and directly challenged in texts belonging to a wide variety of genres, from the historical novel to the Oulipian literary exercise to autofiction.

The first part of the dissertation considers representations of travel at the “apogee” of the French Empire in the early 1930s. In Chapter One, I analyze how the 1931 Colonial Exposition, in framing a visit to the fair as a voyage around the world, both reifies the identity of the European visitor to the fair (indigenous to the metropole) as a traveler and reinforces the notion that the colonial subjects imported to perform the role of the “natives” at the fair (many of whom had traveled thousands of miles to reach Paris) could never occupy the role of the traveler. Chapter Two moves across genres to André Malraux’s adventure novel *La voie royale* (1930). I show how this modernist text—while continuing to exclude colonial subjects from the role of the traveler—nevertheless challenges the association of Europeans with dynamism and progress so central to the rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice*.

The second part of the dissertation analyzes texts from the last quarter of the century that reconfigure ideas of travel. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate how Maryse Condé’s two-volume historical novel *Ségou* (1984-85) challenges the myth of African ahistoricity that emerges from both colonial historiographies and certain Negritude discourses through its narration of histories

of travel in West Africa and throughout the Diaspora. In contrast to the representation of West African cultural spaces at the Exposition through an essentialized, monolithic architecture, the figure of the city in *Ségou* is a site of cultural exchange and hybridity.

Chapter Four turns to two works published during the mid-1970s: a watershed moment for the history of tourism and immigration in the twentieth century. I juxtapose Georges Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1975)—an account of several days spent sitting in the Place Saint-Sulpice—with Rachid Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (1975), which narrates an unnamed emigrant's struggle to navigate the subterranean labyrinth of the Paris metro. I explore how Perec's encounters with tourists circulating through the Place Saint-Sulpice can shed light on the ways in which native Parisians respond to the presence of Boudjedra's protagonist in the metropolitan capital. In both texts, interactions between Parisians and travelers to Paris are shaped by the natives' anxiety over the perceived globalization of mobility in the 1970s.

In Chapter Five, I examine a pair of texts representing urban itineraries in the French capital at the turn of the century: Bessora's *53 cm* (1999) and Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (1999). By reimagining Paris as a site of travel, the location of multiple histories and cultures, the texts read in this last chapter fundamentally undermine the oppositions between “here” and “elsewhere,” home and abroad, traveler and native, and more broadly speaking, between travel and dwelling, which have defined colonial and neocolonial ideas of travel throughout the twentieth century. Finally, in the Afterword, I suggest how an approach to travel literature structured around close attention to historical context can inform contemporary debates over the disciplinary boundaries of French / Francophone Studies.

For Dad and Mabs

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Introduction

The Traveler's *Other* Other: Critical Re-negotiations of Travel in the Twentieth Century

Recounting the origins of her sojourn in Paris to a skeptical social worker, the narrator of Bessora's novel *53 cm* (1999), Zara, compares her arrival on the bank of the Seine in a dugout canoe to that of Pocahontas disembarking on the bank of the Thames centuries before:

[I]l y a sept ans, je débarque d'une pirogue creusée dans le bois d'okoumé, sur les bords de la Seine; comme Pocahontas, en son temps, débarqua sur les bords de la Tamise. J'ai vingt et un ans et j'entends bien me consacrer à l'ethnologie des peuples primitifs, inventorier leurs talismans. Je m'assigne donc un terrain, la Gaule. Oui. Je suis gaulologue; contrairement à Pocahontas, qui n'était pas anglogue. (29)

An international student, Zara struggles throughout the novel to legalize her French residency status in order to continue her anthropology studies in Paris. In a riotously funny parody of narratives of exotic encounter, she observes the strange ways of its indigenous population—a tribe she refers to as the Gauls (*les Gaulois*)—alternately adopting the role of an explorer, adventurer, or anthropologist. Zara's name for this ethnic group refers to Roman ethnography and evokes the discipline's longstanding ties with imperialism, as the earliest surviving ethnographic description of the Gauls (*Galli*) that names the group as such is found in Caesar's historical account of the *War against Gaul* (*Commentarii de bello Gallico*), written circa 50s-40s BCE (Boatwright 16). The Gauls remain a powerful nativist and nationalist symbol in France, and Gallic resistance to Roman imperialism is celebrated, with some irony, in the famous and long-running *Astérix* comics.¹ Zara is thus associating herself and her ethnographic project with an earlier, successful conquest of the region that is now France.

However, it emerges clearly in *53 cm* that it is the natives, the Gauls, who hold the position of power over Zara due to her precarious economic and social status. Moreover, although Zara demonstrates a mastery of imperialist modes of looking and speaking, she is nevertheless read by the Eurocentric natives of Gaul as the foreign Other based on her physical appearance, her manner of dress, and other material signs. These cultural and racial signifiers prevent her from fully appropriating the role of the subject. The Gauls resist being forced into the subordinate position of the Other and turn the gaze back against her. While Zara's aggressive attempts to assume the role of the traveler present her as an alternative to the traditional model of the white, male traveler, the novel does not suggest that this mode of "exotisme à rebours" allows for a reversal of existing, and unequal, power dynamics.²

I cite Bessora's novel here because of the way it foregrounds so explicitly the political stakes of laying claim to the role of the traveler. Written at a moment when numerous travel writers and theorists were advocating a de-politicized and de-historicized vision of what it means

¹ See Pellegrin; and Blanc-Hoàng.

² Romuald Fonkoua uses this term in his discussion of African travelers who journey "à l'envers," in which he refers to both the work of Wolfgang Zimmer on the exoticism of African writers in Germany (117n2) and Édouard Glissant's *Soleil de la conscience*, which likewise uses the term (qtd. in Fonkoua 141). Victor Segalen's use of the expression *exotisme à rebours* in his *Essai sur l'exotisme* (50) has been taken up by postcolonial critics such as Siobhán Shilton to describe the situation of the traveler who is both the subject and the object of the gaze ("Postcolonial Approaches" 96-98, 127n35).

to travel, 53 *cm* highlights the importance of acknowledging the intertwined legacies of colonialism and racial ideologies when talking about travel. Bessora parodies many of the key traveler figures of the European canon, from the explorer of the Age of Discovery, to the Orientalist traveler fascinated by the harem, to the twentieth-century field anthropologist. However, in spite of Zara's efforts to appropriate these roles, sometimes simultaneously, the focus on her racialized, sexualized, and gendered body in her encounters with the Gauls reveals the lingering hegemony of the traditional notion of the traveler even in late-twentieth-century discourses of travel. Even as Zara attempts to turn the "Gauls" into her objects of study, her body is scrutinized, profiled, measured, and documented. The obsessive attention paid by both Zara and her interlocutors to anatomy and physiognomy allows for a parody of the racial "sciences" and points towards the privileged status of white, male bodies, which can circulate unnoticed, unhindered, whether at home or abroad.³

During the medical exam required for obtaining a temporary residency permit, the doctor who inspects Zara's body for signs of illness that might contaminate the host country—"les virus ne s'attaquent qu'aux étrangers"—subjects her to an anthropometric gaze, documenting "tous [s]es millimètres." As part of this dehumanizing encounter, the health inspector, who holds so much power in determining whether or not Zara will be allowed to remain in France, casually inscribes himself within a lineage of European travelers to the exotic elsewhere as he waxes nostalgic over the imperialist itineraries he has traced: "[I]e bon docteur me raconte ses voyages de routard: la Malaisie, le Kenya, la Turquie. Les immigrés de l'OMI [Office des Migrations Internationales, the former French Immigration Office] lui rappellent de bons souvenirs. La diversité des races le fascine" (14). The doctor does not relate his memories of backpacking to Zara as to a fellow traveler; rather, in drawing an analogy between his interactions with patients at the OMI and his encounters abroad, he seems to locate Zara among the natives who lent color to his earlier travels. The passage of so many immigrants through his office is framed as an exotic spectacle, a sequel to the encounters with alterity outside the Hexagon. The doctor's experiences as a traveler shape his perspective on the place of immigrants within French society: they are the perpetual Other. Although official discourses tout the color-blindness of French national identity, the doctor is highly attentive to racial categories in his function as an agent of the state. As a traveler, he has experienced the freedom of movement that comes with his privileged economic, social, and political status. As a bureaucrat, he is charged with regulating the mobility of the erstwhile travelee who now seeks access to the metropole. The foreign bodies that threaten to destabilize the boundaries between center and periphery are contained as the doctor reasserts the traveler / native binary.

Zara's ultimate failure to be recognized as the seeing subject by the "Gauls" reinscribes her as the perennial native, the passive object of the imperialist gaze; her imminent deportation at the end of the novel—another displacement—paradoxically signals her expulsion from the field of travel. Zara is constantly profiled as a suspicious foreign body, she is "read" by her Gallic interlocutors as an outsider; her very status as a foreigner implies her experience as a mobile subject, someone who has necessarily departed her "pays natal" to intrude upon the métropole.

³ As Timothy Mitchell describes in *Colonising Egypt*, European travelers to the Orient did not want to be subjected to the same voyeuristic and exoticizing gaze they turned on the "natives": "The representation of the Orient, in its attempt to be detached and objective, would seek to eliminate from the picture the presence of the European observer. . . . To establish the objectness of the Orient, as something set apart from the European presence, required that the presence itself, ideally, become invisible" (26). See also Mohanram on race, gender, and in/visibility.

But the exoticist and primitivist language used by interlocutors such as the doctor at the OMI—as well as, bizarrely, by Zara herself—to describe Zara’s body and her cultural baggage seems to position her among the native figures that have historically been the immobile object of the colonial traveler’s gaze. Why is Zara, world traveler, global citizen, *gaulologue* in the field, denied the status of the traveler?

This dissertation is situated within a field of cultural studies that seeks to develop a broader understanding of the political stakes of twentieth-century debates over who can travel. I establish a genealogy of ideas about travel that begins with the cultural moment at the apogee of the French empire and leads up to the 2011 Étonnants Voyageurs literature and film festival in Saint-Malo. My interest in the figure of the traveler is shaped by a persistent tendency in travel writing over the course of the century to exclude certain subjects in movement from the role of the traveler. The question, “What is travel?” is often treated in both literary texts and criticism as a philosophical or abstract question, stripped of its historical and political implications.⁴ I ask, what is the relationship between this effort to restrict the identity of the traveler and France’s imperialist history? I am interested in how and why non-European subjects are denied the status of traveler, and how the debate over the traveler / tourist binary, which has received more critical attention, relates to the reification of colonial and postcolonial subjects in the role of the “sedentary native.”⁵ I explore how the theoretical opposition between the dynamic traveler and the passive travelee is constructed, undermined, and directly challenged in texts belonging to a wide variety of genres, from the historical novel to the Oulipian literary exercise.

Anti-tourist discourses and the accompanying trope of the “true” traveler—defined in opposition to the tourist—are a crucial feature of European travel literature from the nineteenth century forward.⁶ James Buzard describes the function of the tourist / traveler binary: “Snobbish ‘anti-tourism,’ an element of modern tourism from the start, has offered an important, even exemplary way of regarding one’s own cultural experiences as authentic and unique, setting them against a backdrop of always assumed tourist vulgarity, repetition, and ignorance” (6). As travel became ever more accessible to a wider swath of the population in Europe, the tourist—symbol of the masses—appeared in ever larger numbers in the spaces that were once the sole province of the “romantic” traveler, the heir of the aristocratic Grand Tour tradition.⁷ The true traveler attempts to distinguish himself from his European counterparts, whether the vulgar

⁴ The preface to the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* collection (whose author is generally assumed to be Michel Le Bris) demonstrates scorn for all forms of theory and criticism. Charles Forsdick points out that Le Bris has been especially hostile towards post-colonial criticism, particularly Said’s *Orientalism*, citing Le Bris’s attack on Said in an interview included in *Fragments du royaume* as “l’hystérisation de toute pensée, le refus de toute complexité, de toute nuance” (197, cited Forsdick, *Persistence* 165). Le Bris moreover asserts travel writers’ special exemption from considerations of the socio-historical context of travel and literary practices.

⁵ I employ here the term used by Jean-Didier Urbain in *L’Idiot du voyage: histoires de touristes*, “l’indigène sédentaire.”

⁶ In addition to Buzard, see also MacCannell; Culler; Frow; and Holland and Huggan. Paul Fussell examines anti-tourist rhetoric but ultimately ends up reproducing the tourist / traveler binary.

⁷ Although he does not use the binary terms “traveler” and “tourist,” John Urry identifies a parallel distinction between what he calls the “romantic” and “collective” tourist gaze—a distinction that has its roots in the early development of mass tourism. Whereas for the “romantic” tourist gaze, “the emphasis is on solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze,” for the “collective” tourist gaze, it is the “presence of other *tourists*, people just like oneself, that is . . . necessary for the success of” tourist sites such as seaside resorts (45-46, emphasis original). Although Romanticism’s celebration of individual communion with nature encouraged the growth of “scenic tourism” (20-21), from the perspective of the romantic tourist, the practitioners of such emerging leisure activities do not partake equally of the spiritual experience that scenic tourism can confer.

tourist or the settled *colon*, whose existence in exotic parts is merely an extension of mass society and culture back in the metropole.⁸ The urgent need to distinguish one's own travel practices from those of the masses continued into the twentieth century. As Kimberley Healey notes with regards to travel writers of the first third of the century, "the distinction between self and foreign other is often secondary to the distinction between self and all those other lesser European travelers, writers, or tourists." The true traveler or anti-tourist seeks to occupy the position of "the third marginal party, the singular *we*, in the encounter between East and West" (20). The preoccupation with distinguishing the traveler from the tourist is perpetuated throughout the century and remains prominent even in the present moment, as I will discuss below.

The present study brings together critical perspectives on the traveler's relationship with his Others: the vulgar tourist, yes, but also, and more importantly, the colonial Other, the "sedentary" native. While a number of studies focusing on anti-tourism discourses in travel literature have acknowledged the doubled relationship between the Euro-American traveler and his countrymen abroad, critics have often failed to recognize the traveler's *other* double, the figure of the *indigène sédentaire*.⁹ This is the silent staffage figure of Orientalist paintings; the vendor in the bazaar or the villager dazzled by the sight of the white man; the person so associated with the colorful scenery that she or he is perceived as merely an outgrowth of the landscape, or is even erased entirely—present only through a haunting absence.

In the representation of any journey, the traveler defines him or herself in relation both to the people indigenous to the lands traversed, and to the physical environment. In many accounts of European imperialist travel, the voyager embodies mobility, while his surroundings, into which the country's inhabitants are collapsed, are sessile: the people that he encounters in the spaces of travel are passive, traversed and traveled over like the countryside. To use Mary Louise Pratt's term, the traveler's native double is the "travelee": "persons traveled to (or on) by a traveler, receptors of travel" (242n42). The dominant subjectivity of the European traveler abroad often reduces the native bystander to the status of "extra" on the set of travel projected by the traveler; as such, the travelee serves to authenticate the author's representation of the cultural or natural landscape. While less interested in exploring the colonial context in which relationships between traveler and travelee are implicated, Jean-Didier Urbain's portrait of the "indigène sédentaire" in *L'Idiot du voyage: histoires de touristes* identifies a binary relationship between traveler and native: "Face au touriste, l'indigène sédentaire par nécessité découvre que les rôles de visiteur et de visité ne sont pas réversibles. Pour eux, pêcheur de l'Algarve ou paysan du Yucatán, le nomadisme de loisir est un luxe inaccessible. Ils ne seront jamais touristes. S'ils partent, ils seront immigrés, promis à une autre sédentarité: celle de l'exil" (16-17). The element that seems to define the relationship between the "visiteur" and the "visité" is that of class: the tourist has the means, both the funds and the free time, necessary to enter into this "nomadisme de loisir." The "indigène sédentaire" can never shake off the identity of stasis: even if she or he

⁸ I frequently use the masculine pronoun to refer to the figure of the romantic traveler, or the colonial traveler, as such voyagers are constructed as male subjects within the travel discourses that I analyze here.

⁹ My understanding of the evolution of critical perspectives on travel is deeply indebted to the work of Forsdick and Shilton, in particular Shilton's plotting of responses to the dominant view of travel regarding works by both colonial and postcolonial authors. She demonstrates how even those critics (e.g. MacCannell and Urbain) who have attempted to question the individualistic posturing of the "true" traveler fail to fully consider how this doubling of the traveler's persona is seconded by another in the form of the passive "travelee" (62). An exploration of the intertwined histories of travel literature and Euroamerican imperialism (informed by postcolonial perspectives) is also found in the work of Holland and Huggan; Mills; Spurr; Clark; Youngs; and Grewal, among many others.

undertakes a voyage, s/he will nevertheless be excluded from the field of travel. Even the experience of exile for this figure, Urbain suggests, lacks the individualistic and historical qualities of the exile that defined the Lost Generation.¹⁰ The travelee is outside of history, timeless; the identity of this figure is rigid and essentialized.

The dissertation is bracketed at one end by an analysis of the 1931 Exposition Coloniale de Paris, at the apogee of the French Empire, and at the other by an exploration of competing visions of travel in the ostensibly postcolonial era of the 1990s and early 2000s. The corpus of texts I examine is defined by several recurring tropes of travel, which are either deployed or challenged in the works under study. As my study attempts to contribute to the decolonization of critical discourses surrounding the genre of travel literature, I have focused in particular on those tropes that persist from the “apotheosis” of the imperialist project at the Colonial Exposition to a pair of texts that incarnate a belated exoticism at the new fin-de-siècle. Two literary manifestos, the 1992 *Pour une littérature voyageuse* and the 2007 “Pour une littérature-monde,” form a counterpart to the case study of the Colonial Exposition: the ideas of travel shared between these cultural productions stand out as particularly relevant for any attempt to establish alternative models of travel.

I open this dissertation with an examination of the 1931 Colonial Exposition, which was intended to transform the fairgoer from a visitor, to a colonial traveler, and then to a nascent colonizer. The strategy at the heart of this undertaking was to structure the spaces of exhibition as a model empire such that upon entering the Bois de Vincennes the fairgoer became a colonial traveler. He was reified in this role of colonial traveler through carefully orchestrated interactions with a cast of supporting characters—colonial subjects brought to the metropole to feature in the exposition’s various attractions—who collectively performed the role of colonized “natives.” This inversion of the actual relationships of visitors and “natives” to the space in which these encounters took place—the Parisian *banlieue*—was enabled by a phantasmatic geography mapping the fairgrounds as a series of distant lands, far from the familiar spaces of Paris. Framing a visit to the fair as a voyage around the world (a “Tour du monde en un jour”¹¹) reified the identity of the European visitor to the fair—indigenous to the metropole—as a traveler, and reinforced the notion that non-European populations could never occupy that role. By projecting the spaces of travel as outside the metropole, the Exposition reaffirmed an essentialist conception of travel as necessarily *elsewhere*, implicitly placing Paris, the center of the empire, outside the realm of travel. This model of travel continued to be influential throughout the twentieth century.

The rigid division between the “ici” and the “ailleurs” that was the central conceit behind the “Tour du monde” is echoed in many of the essays collected in the volume entitled *Pour une littérature voyageuse*, which brings together various forms of literary reflection on travel by writers closely affiliated with travel literature, but also by authors whose work is more loosely tied to the genre.¹² Many of the contributors to this volume have been influential in shaping discourses of travel in French cultural spheres in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, both through their own wider oeuvres and through their involvement with the “Étonnants Voyageurs” literature and film festival held annually in St. Malo since 1990.

¹⁰ For a study of the complex renegotiations of the intertwined concepts of exile and expatriation in the twentieth century, see Kaplan 101-42.

¹¹ The name of this attraction will be abbreviated as “Tour du monde” in what follows.

¹² The contributing authors are: Alain Borer; Nicolas Bouvier; Michel Chaillou; Jean-Luc Coatalem; Alain Dugrand; Jacques Lacarrière; Gilles Lapouge; Michel Le Bris; Jacques Meunier; Georges Walter; and Kenneth White. All citations are drawn from the original 1992 edition of the collection.

Scholars of francophone travel literature have been increasingly interested in the collection since the late 1990s, in part due to the popular reach of the festival with which it is associated, but more importantly because the prefatory “note de l’éditeur” presents the assembled essays as the manifesto of a nascent literary movement. Following the publication of the 2007 “Pour une littérature-monde en français” manifesto, there has been renewed interest in the 1992 volume—and from a wider critical audience—in light of the connections between two texts: not only is the presumed author of the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* preface, Michel Le Bris, one of the four co-authors of the later manifesto, but many of the contributors to the 1992 collection are signatories of the *littérature-monde* manifesto.¹³

In the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* essays, we witness a surprising persistence of colonial travel tropes into the later part of the twentieth century. The exclusively male and European traveler that emerges from essays penned by Borer, Coatalem, Lacarrière, and Le Bris stands in stark contrast to, for instance, Bessora’s protagonist Zara, whose racialized and sexualized body prevents her from fully assuming the role of the explorer, adventurer, or anthropologist. The points of overlap between the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* essays and the 1931 Colonial Exposition provide the main contours of what I identify as a model of colonial travel for the twentieth century. Like the “Tour du monde” at the Exposition, the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* essays define travel as a voyage out from the metropolitan center, inevitably bracketed at the far end by a distant, preferably “intact” space untouched by Western influence, outside any networks of cultural exchange. This emphasis on the “dehors” and the “ailleurs” as the sole sites of travel produces a polarized geography that necessarily excludes the points of home—Europe, but more specifically for my purposes here, France—from the realm of travel.

The preface declares the need for a new approach to literature, one that shakes off ideological and formal constraints in order to “travel.” In a certain sense, the notion of a “littérature voyageuse” that the preface advances is more open than conceptions of travel writing developed primarily in relation to the conventions of the *récit de voyage*. The appended bibliography furnishing “Quelques repères historiques”—for the most part comprised of what are presumably representative works of “littérature voyageuse”—includes a *bande dessinée* (Hugo Pratt’s *La Ballade de la mer salée*) and novels (e.g. J. M. G. Le Clézio’s *Désert*). Moreover, both the bibliography and certain essays recognize writers who do not conform to the dominant image of the white, male traveler.¹⁴ And yet, many of the essays nevertheless promote a model of travel that was already seen as on the verge of extinction in the nineteenth century, when the rigid division between the confining spaces of “home” and the expanses of the “grand dehors” began to be called into question by the disappearance of spaces unmarked by European imperialism.¹⁵ The anxiety over the vanishing authenticity of the Other’s culture and the imminent or actual loss

¹³ Several of the contributions to the volume *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde* explore the connections between the two texts; see for instance Hargreaves et al. “Introduction”; Forsdick, “‘On the Abolition of the French Department?’”; Ridon; Dutton, “From *Littérature-voyageuse* to *Littérature-monde*”; and Garane. In addition to these essays, see also De Toledo; Hindson; and Forsdick, “From ‘littérature voyageuse’ to ‘littérature-monde.’”

¹⁴ For instance, “Quelques repères historiques” includes works by such authors as Ella Maillart and V. S. Naipaul, as well as a biography of Isabelle Eberhardt (Delacour and Huleu).

¹⁵ Here I am both referring to the title of Le Bris’s book *Le grand dehors* and more broadly to the recurring figure of the “dehors” and its “étranges rives” as the antidote to the “affres du petit moi agonisant” of those sedentary writers—and literary critics in particular—who refuse to participate in the “aventure géopoétique” (White 186, 196).

of real, direct experience is a hallmark of the modern traveler, who is forced to recognize that traditional lifeways have not only been transformed beyond all recognition in the spaces of home, but are equally endangered in the no longer “intact” spaces on the margins.¹⁶ The sense of loss that pervades the Orientalist voyage accounts of figures like Gérard de Nerval and Gustave Flaubert is prominent in the work of a *fin-de-siècle* figure like Victor Segalen. In order to preserve his sense of self, crumbling within the rapid homogenization of mass society, the modern traveler abroad reasserts the cultural and racial differences between himself and the native other. For the exoticist traveler, self-recognition is only possible through the shock of contact with extreme alterity. Thus, the supposed destruction of exotic cultures under the homogenizing influence of large numbers of Europeans abroad, whether tourists or *colons*, was perceived as a formidable threat by the early-twentieth-century traveler attempting to redefine himself through encounters with the (disappearing) Other. For the “true” traveler, the appearance in large numbers of vulgar tourists and bourgeois *colons* in distant lands that were once his exclusive province seems to anticipate the impending disappearance of a refuge from the conformist, stifling culture at home.

The trope of the “disappearing exotic” (Behdad 47) in many of the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* essays thus harkens back to earlier traditions of imperialist travel literature, defining what it means to travel from an exclusively European perspective. Moreover, in spite of the preface’s denial that the collection aims to propose a theoretical program of travel, travel writing, or literary practice in general, many of the authors do present their individual modes of travel as exemplary (Urbain, “Catanautes” 7).¹⁷ There is a common notion of the true traveler and his practices that emerges from these essays, one which dovetails neatly with the Exposition’s voyager type. Situating these points of overlap historically reveals the “true” traveler’s passionate attempts at self-distinction to be gestures of exclusion. The consecration of a limited set of practices as real travel negates the experiences, not only of fellow tourists, but of people who voyage for study or work, migrants, exiles, and other categories of mobile subjects. The work of decolonizing critical discourses of travel is a delicate balancing act. It is crucial to recognize the mobility and experiences of these individuals; however, simply subsuming all forms of displacement under the rubric of travel threatens to erase the historical specificity of very different kinds of journeys. For example, the bibliography of “Quelques repères

¹⁶ The modernist malaise represents a continuation of nineteenth-century trends. As Ali Behdad observes regarding the later generation of nineteenth-century Orientalists abroad that includes Nerval, Flaubert, and Isabelle Eberhardt, such “belated travelers” struggle to contend with the perceived “disappearance of the Orient, its dissolution by European colonialism” (66). Nerval’s *Voyage en Orient*, published in 1851 but relating experiences from his journey in 1842, offers a nostalgic lamentation for an irretrievable past, “a time when ‘real’ adventures in unknown lands were possible” (Behdad 35). The entry of the maligned figure of the tourist into Nerval’s text signals a break between the author’s experience of travel and that of earlier generations, with their access to a more authentic, less frequented Orient. On the perpetuation of the nineteenth-century trope of the “disappearing exotic” (Behdad 47) into the early twentieth century, particularly as exemplified in the work of Victor Segalen, see Bongie; and Forsdick, *Persistence of Diversity* and *Victor Segalen*.

¹⁷ Although the opposition of home and “dehors” and a longing for “intact spaces” are to be found in many of the reflections on travel included in the volume, certain voices do not promote this model with the same vigor; moreover, a less rigid notion of travel can be found in the larger oeuvre of some of the contributing authors. For instance, the set of remarks by Nicolas Bouvier gathered under the title “Petite morale portative” features Bouvier’s reflections on his identity as both a traveler and a dweller—a citizen of his native Geneva. His portrait of the city’s cosmopolitan character seems to privilege the contributions of its unusually large population of travelers; however, he also highlights the city’s status as an asylum for political and religious refugees. This attention to the multi-directional nature of cultural exchange is reminiscent of his travel narrative *L’Usage du monde*. See Shilton and Forsdick (*Persistence*) for a discussion of Bouvier’s place within the field of twentieth-century travel literature.

historiques” lists Primo Levi’s account of his return home to Turin from Auschwitz in *La trêve* (*La tregua*, 1963) alongside the aforementioned *bande dessinée*—Hugo Pratt’s *La ballade de la mer salée*, making no visible distinction between a Holocaust testimonial and a chronicle of the adventures of roguish sailor Corto Maltese.

Jacques Lacarrière opens his essay “Le Bernard-l’hermite, ou le treizième voyage” with a description of the only kind of travel that he deems worthwhile: “Il se situe exactement à l’opposé du voyage-éclair. Mais comme il n’existe pas en français un terme unique pour désigner un ‘déplacement de longue durée à caractère non orageux’ je le nommerai: voyage au ralenti, flânerie, musardise. Il consiste à visiter le plus lentement possible êtres et choses, à fréquenter patiemment leur histoire, s’immiscer posément dans leur vie intime” (105-06). We witness in Lacarrière’s essay an anxious need to differentiate his manner of travel from that of the masses, to distance himself from his recognized double, the tourist. His reflections betray a certain contempt for any form of travel that is not carried out in this mode of leisurely intrusion, reminiscent of what Urbain terms the “nomadisme de loisir.” The “travelees” of this ideal voyage—Lacarrière’s other, implicit doubles—are painted as depersonalized “êtres” to be visited and frequented. Lacarrière’s evocation of these passive “êtres et choses” renders even more abstract the already dehistoricized vision of the encounter between the tourist and the “indigène sédentaire” that Urbain describes. All agency is attributed to the traveler, while the “natives” are static dwellers, mere cultural objects. Moreover, Lacarrière insists on the opposition between home and abroad, thus ordaining the “Ailleurs” and the “Lointain” as the only sites of travel (106).

Nostalgia for an even older era is palpable in Alain Borer’s essay “L’ère de Colomb, l’ère d’Armstrong.” Borer mourns the passing of the Age of Discovery, “l’époque heureuse où, dans un monde aux contours indécis, l’on pouvait imaginer au loin une ‘exotique nature’” (35). In the modern era of space travel, space is in ample supply but places are rare; these sites are needed to restore travel’s “dimension noble”; namely, “le sens d’une quête, l’exigence d’une errance” (37-38). “Les peuples voyagent peu,” affirms Borer, “ce sont quelques individus . . . qui voyagent pour les autres” (19). Borer defines this rarified group of travelers as those for whom “home” is located somewhere in the spaces comprising the prehistoric supercontinent Laurasia: “*Nous* parcourons pour l’essentiel la Laurasie (Amérique du Nord, Europe . . . Groenland) variée mais réunifiée à notre époque, homogénéifiée par les transports et les images, notre chez-nous” (20). Borer omits Asia from the list of geologically predetermined *points de départ*, glossing over this lapse in logic with an ellipsis. Implicit in Borer’s map of travel is the suggestion that the territories comprising the travelers’ “chez-nous” are necessarily incompatible with the act of travel by virtue of their familiarity (20). Like Lacarrière, Borer draws a distinction between travelers and travelees, assigning these roles in accordance with an imperialist geography that he projects as the natural order of things.¹⁸

In contrast to this celebration of the individual, Jean-Luc Coatalem’s contribution to the volume, “Un mauvais départ,” mourns the demise of the old colonial order. While Coatalem’s yearning for a lifestyle irremediably lost in the wake of decolonization resonates with the exoticist traveler’s longing for intact spaces, nevertheless his lament for defunct colonial institutions is in tension with the interests of individualistic travelers like Borer and Lacarrière,

¹⁸ And yet, despite this polarizing vision, Borer also describes eloquently the possibility of travel within France, celebrating a kind of “vertical travel” opposed to the practice of carving horizontal swaths across the globe. He also toys with the idea of an ironic touristic voyage in the twentieth *arrondissement* of Paris, which is for him a kind of local exotic site, “à peu près inconnu” (25).

who define their spaces and practices of travel against the forms modeled by the masses. In setting out for the Euro-American traveler's "ailleurs persistant," the "encore informe[s]" territories composing the prehistoric landmass Gondwana, Borer differentiates himself from both his sedentary counterparts in "Laurasia" and the immobile populations at his destination. As the title of his essay indicates, Lacarrière sketches out the contours of the thirteenth and ideal form of voyage—that of the hermit crab—in opposition to twelve inferior types of travel. However, his model of travel is also implicitly defined against the sedentary habits of the static "êtres et choses" to be visited. The competing perspectives of Coatalem and his colleagues Borer and Lacarrière recall a long-standing feature of twentieth-century discourses of travel; namely, the traveler's hostility for other Europeans on the margins, whether tourists or *colons*. These models of travel are all, however, produced from the perspective of a male, Euro-American traveler, whose ideal site of travel is still located in the exotic elsewhere.

This dissertation considers both forms of travel that overlap considerably with these models, as well as alternative models of travel. As such, my study is in line with those postcolonial theories that have recently begun to challenge imperialist models of travel by reframing journeys undertaken by both colonial and postcolonial subjects as travel. These studies have worked to expand the definition of travel, to break down the reified, essentialist opposition between traveler and native, travel and dwelling. In the second half of my dissertation, I position the journeys undertaken by the erstwhile "native" in relation to existing models about travel, focusing on the mobility of the "travelee" or *visité*, whether reverse travelers who retrace colonial trajectories, or those engaged in travel on the (former) colonial periphery.

My study of "reverse" travel draws on the work of scholars such as Romuald Fonkoua and Edward Said. Fonkoua examines narratives of the "voyage à l'envers" of francophone African and Caribbean travelers to France. Such travelers challenge both the role assigned to the colonial subject and the status of Paris as outside the realm of travel. As the metropole, Paris is necessarily the center, the point of departure, home. These texts disrupt the polarization of the "ici" and the "ailleurs;" in other words, the vision of travel as necessarily elsewhere that we find both at the Exposition and in the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* collection. These voyagers perform a sort of reverse exoticism, but even as they train their gaze on the French and the culture of the metropolitan center, they are aware that they persist as the object of the metropolitan dwellers' gaze. In his discussion of "le retournement de l'exotisme," Fonkoua emphasizes that the legacy of colonialism still shapes relations between travelers and natives. In the Anglophone context, Said explores the postcolonial appropriation of "such great *topoi* of colonial culture as the quest and the voyage into the unknown" in representations of the northward voyage from the (former) colony (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 30).

The presence in Paris of "reverse travelers" like Bessora's Zara, or the "travailleurs indigènes" at the Exposition, or the protagonist of Rachid Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (see Chapter Four) remind us that Europe—the imperial center—was and is just as much a site of cultural encounters as the frontiers of the New World or other spaces on the "periphery." By pointing to long histories of contact, these texts remind the reader that the metropole, while geographically distant from the colonial borderlands, is nevertheless a "contact zone," a cultural space that is fundamentally hybrid, not the location of a homogenous, immutable Frenchness. In *Imperial Eyes*, Pratt uses the term "contact zone" to describe "the space of colonial encounters . . . in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (6). She contests a model of cultural

relations as a unidirectional process whereby ideas and aesthetics are diffused out from Europe, the point of origin that remains impermeable to the cultural influence of the colonial periphery. The forms of exchange that Pratt identifies in the contact zone question the binarism of the center / periphery model. I draw on Pratt's study of the contact zones shaped by European colonialism to examine forms of travel and cultural exchange in West Africa in Maryse Condé's historical novel *Ségou* (Chapter Three). Her study also informs the theoretical framework through which I explore narratives of travel to and in Paris, the metropolitan center, in a subsequent chapter.¹⁹

Although I frequently use the terms “center” and “periphery” to describe the imperialist cartographies that remain influential for contemporary theories of travel, my intention is to disrupt these binaries through my analysis of unconventional travel narratives. My study of cities in both Europe and Africa, as well as of “reverse travelers” from the former colonies to France is informed by the challenge to traditional models of cultural exchange articulated by Caren Kaplan, who insists on the permeability of cultural spaces:

In most theoretical accounts, the influx of immigrants, refugees, and exiles from the “peripheries” to the metropolitan “centers” both enriches and threatens the parameters of the nation as well as older cultural identities. Yet definitions of locations as “centers” and “peripheries” only further mystify the divides between places and people. Centers are not impermeable, stable entities of purely defined characteristics that come simply to be contaminated or threatened by “others” from elsewhere. Rather, the large metropolises that draw waves of new populations are dynamic, shifting, complex locations that *exchange* goods, ideas, and culture with many other locations. (102)

The emphasis on the “contaminating” influence of immigrants and the focus on contemporary patterns of cultural transformation in French nationalist discourses obscure longer histories of exchange and the heterogeneity that already exists in a given cultural location. In Kaplan's vision, both metropole and colony are nodes in a larger network of cultural exchange. I contend that the travelers from the former colonies in texts such as *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* and *53 cm* are thus linked not only to the travelers who played the role of the natives in Exposition, but also to the historical travelers in *Ségou*, whose circulation among West African cities such as Jenne, Timbuktu, and the eponymous capital of the nineteenth-century Bamana Empire contributes to ongoing cultural transformations in these sites.

I argue that the narratives of these travelers' voyages work against current discourses that emphasize the threat of more recent patterns of exchange emerging in the wake of decolonization by calling attention to the “constant movement of people and ideas” (Pratt 90) from the colonial frontier to the metropole. However, they also underscore the legacy of unequal power relations in which postcolonial subjects are inscribed, connecting the histories of violence and oppression embodied by a figure like Pocahontas to the contemporary predicament of traveling subjects who, having reversed imperialist itineraries to land in the former metropole, are there confronted with racism and xenophobia. While recognizing the hybridity that defines France like any other

¹⁹ Pratt primarily focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European narratives of travel to the colonial frontiers; for instance, the writings of Alexander von Humboldt in the Americas, or Anders Sparrman, William Paterson, and John Barrow in South Africa. However, she does consider Argentinean author and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's account of his voyage “in reverse” to Europe—written from the perspective of a member of the white creole elite—in *Viajes en Europa, Africa y América* (1849).

cultural space, these authors nevertheless refuse a facile celebration of such patterns of cultural cross-fertilization under the sign of multiculturalism or the post-racial society. Rather, they constantly draw attention to the ties between histories of imperialist violence and attempts to represent culture in the present, a persistent theme in the texts I examine in Chapters Four and Five.

The texts I explore in the second half of the dissertation—*Ségou* (Chapter Three), Georges Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* and Rachid Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* (Chapter Four), and Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* and Bessora's *53 cm* (Chapter Five)—represent forms of travel that are excluded from critical discourses oriented around the practices of the romantic, sophisticated traveler. These are the journeys of vulgar tourists, city-dwellers who transform their own native habitat into a site of *errance* and exploration, pilgrims, scholars—but also emigrants and exiles, people whose geographical displacements are shaped by circumstances of coercion and violence. As scholars such as bell hooks and James Clifford have observed, the project of expanding the definitions of travel has its own pitfalls, given what Clifford calls the “historical taintedness” of the term. As many of these voyagers come from places and cultures marked by colonial legacies of exile and forced relocation, it is difficult to recuperate these narratives of movement into the genre of travel literature, as voyage accounts have tended historically to narrate voluntary forms of movement.

In his 1989 essay “Notes on Theory and Travel,” Clifford suggests using a metaphor of travel to understand how theory and criticism are developed from the historically, socially, and politically specific location of the theorist and critic.²⁰ He builds on this discussion of travel as a metaphor to propose a related critical agenda that would focus more directly on practices of travel. He asks: “How do different populations, classes and genders travel? What kinds of knowledges, stories, and theories do they produce?” Clifford advocates a wider definition of travel, one that acknowledges journeys and people in movement that are frequently excluded because they do not conform to the traditional model of the “individualist, bourgeois voyager” (35).

In her essay “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” bell hooks challenges Clifford's use of the term “travel” in the 1989 essay. Though she appreciates Clifford's efforts to expand the categories of travel and theory to include a broader range of subjects and perspectives, hooks nevertheless cautions against subsuming all forms of movement under the rubric of travel as this would prevent the crucial recognition that for some people in movement, “travel . . . is not about play but is an encounter with terrorism” (174). hooks contrasts this experience of voyaging in fear and uncertainty with the forms of travel that Clifford “playfully” delineates.

Thus, theorists of travel must negotiate overlapping but contradictory frameworks when approaching postcolonial narratives of journeys. On the one hand, efforts to open up narrow and exclusive definitions of travel to acknowledge the agency of more people in movement work towards decolonizing the genre of travel literature itself. And yet, while refiguring immigration

²⁰ The “location” that Clifford describes is not a fixed one, but rather “a *series* of locations and encounters, travel within diverse, but limited spaces. . . . With different degrees of comfort and privilege, [the intellectual] moves around in complex, constrained travel trajectories. . . . Theory is always written from some ‘where,’ and that ‘where’ is less a place than itineraries: different, concrete histories of dwelling, immigration, exile, migration.” This is as true for white, male critics writing from a position of privilege as for critics writing from the historically marginalized perspectives of postcolonial subjects, of women, etc., even though the latter are more frequently acknowledged to be writing from a historically specific position against a dominant standpoint.

and exile as forms of travel constitutes a radical revision of colonial models of travel, such a recuperation risks erasing circumstances of violence and coercion surrounding the journey.²¹ Simply affirming the status of these subjects as travelers does not suffice to overturn the imperialist model opposing the dynamic, mobile figure of the European traveler, and the figure of the *indigène sédentaire*, the object of the imperialist traveler's gaze. My analysis is structured around close readings of works that are not generally associated with the genre of travel literature; for instance, adventure novels and historical novels. While I have chosen these texts for the types of journeys they represent in order to put pressure on the boundaries of the genre, nevertheless, the act of framing Condé's *Ségou*, Bessora's *53 cm*, and Boudjedra's *Topographie* as narratives of travel is as much about historicizing the concept of travel as it is about challenging the traditional understanding of the genre.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. In the first part, I examine the model of travel staged at the 1931 Colonial Exposition as an expression of what Panivong Norindr terms the "contemporary colonial ethos" at the height of the French empire in relation to André Malraux's *La voie royale* (Chapters One and Two). I position the Exposition as an "intertext" for Malraux's travel narrative in recognition of the enormous influence and popularity of the model of travel promoted in the Exposition fairgrounds on the outskirts of Paris: the Exposition's "readership" constituted approximately 8 million visitors. The extensive coverage of the event in the press meant that even those who did not attend the Exposition would likely have been exposed to its images in widely read newspapers such as *Le Matin*, *Le Petit Parisien*, and *Le Petit Journal*, as well as more specialized magazines such as *L'Illustration* and *Revue des deux mondes*.

Written at the same cultural moment of the apogee of the French empire, nevertheless *La voie royale* participates in a literary tradition that departs from the Exposition. Whereas the Exposition asserted a fantasy of total distance and difference between here and elsewhere, Malraux was all too aware of how colonialism had changed the periphery. The protagonists of *La voie royale* struggle to experience a dying authenticity. The distance between Malraux's novel and the Exposition is not merely a reflection of political differences: *La voie royale* is marked by sense of belatedness and disappointment. It is precisely due to its representation of the colonial periphery not as a refuge from the homogenizing effects of mass society, but rather as an exotic space in crisis, that I identify Malraux's novel as modernist. The anxiety displayed by protagonist Perken, an aging adventurer, over the looming expansion of the *mission civilisatrice* into his remote territory can be connected to similar expressions of longing for spaces untouched by processes of modernization in the work of early-twentieth-century travelers like Segalen, a lament over the loss of "diversity" and the increasing homogenization of the globe.

And yet, while Malraux's travelers see themselves as different from the *colons* who make the journey from Europe to Asia and Africa, nevertheless both the modernist traveler and the potential *colon*—a role temporarily assumed by the visitors to the Exposition—participate in a binary relationship with the same figure, that of the *indigène sédentaire*. While many "true" travelers resented and even criticized European imperialist practices, nevertheless their own

²¹ Clifford, however—in his later work *Routes*—ultimately suggests that the term "travel" be retained, along with an awareness of the differing cultural, political and economic circumstances of each traveler. This broader notion of travel then implies a wider field of "travel stories" produced out of these forms of movement: "Travel . . . denotes a range of material, spatial practices that produce knowledges, stories, traditions, comportments, musics, books, diaries and other cultural expressions" (35). Asserting that "[e]ven the harshest conditions of travel, the most exploitative regimes, do not entirely quell resistance or the emergence of diasporic and migrant cultures" (35), Clifford explicitly presents this wider definition of travel as a way to acknowledge the agency of these traveling subjects.

relations with colonial subjects represented a variation on the model of interaction promoted in the official imperialist vision as manifested at the 1931 Exposition. Still, the traveler / native opposition in Malraux's text is a troubled one. In *La voie royale*, the decadence of modern Cambodia vis-à-vis its glorious past, a degeneracy heavily emphasized at the Exposition, threatens to contaminate the two protagonists, to impede their quest to discover valuable artifacts in the heart of the jungle.

The second half of the dissertation works to destabilize both the Eurocentric binary between home and abroad, which locates the site of travel exclusively outside Europe, as well as the lingering opposition between the European, white, male traveler and the passive, sedentary native. Mildred Mortimer's remarkable study of the journey motif in African novels written in French reveals the prominence of travel narratives in African literature; however, the voyages that feature in the novels of her corpus are intimately tied to the history of French colonialism. A truly radical challenge to the traveler / native opposition would call for a history of "native" travel unrelated to European imperialist expansion. Such a history is provided by Maryse Condé's two-volume historical novel *Ségou*. Although it ostensibly tells the story of a legendary metropolis in West Africa, the eponymous capital of the Bamana empire, the narrative focus is in fact split between relating events in Segou and following the adventures of successive generations of the Traoré dynasty, who embark on both voluntary and coerced journeys throughout Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Such voyages, whose point of departure and destination are both located on the periphery, do more than reverse the usual Eurocentric orientation of the terms "home" and "abroad"; they fundamentally disrupt the conceptual legacy of colonial cartographies structured by a center-periphery divide to posit a field of African travel outside the European frame of reference.

Ségou presents the relationship between identity and place as one that, as opposed to being fixed, is constantly being renegotiated. My theorization of cities broadly speaking draws on ideas regarding the relationship between travel, dwelling, and identity advanced in the work of James Clifford and Paul Gilroy. Clifford has suggested the need to rethink the space of the city as well as of culture itself as sites not only of dwelling but of travel (*Routes* 30). This way of conceptualizing the city supports the notion of Segou as a permeable space of exchange, an idea that is incompatible with the myth of an intact culture that stokes the imagination of those of Condé's characters who are dispersed throughout the African diaspora. I argue that, although Segou's status as a hybrid space is sometimes contested within the novel, the predominant image is nevertheless one of a cultural site that is extremely mutable, constantly adapting in response to external influences and internal shifts in identity and affiliation. But while the narrative emphasis on cultural transformations in the Bamana capital pushes back against the essentialist views of the African interior cherished by many of the Traoré sons living far from "home," the novel also resists certain characters' attempts to posit Segou's cultural hybridity as an essence rather than a process.

In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Gilroy argues for a more complex understanding of identity in relation to histories of travel, foregrounding such terms as routes, exile, and rootlessness, rather than roots and fixity.²² Focusing on narratives of both violent dislocations (the Middle Passage) and volitional travel (tourism), Gilroy contends that assembling such a diverse corpus will allow us to challenge the "folly of assigning uncoerced or recreational travel experiences only to whites while viewing black people's experiences of

²² See also Alasdair Pettinger's anthology *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic*, which brings together a wide variety of representations of journeys, from slave narratives to tourist accounts.

displacement and relocation exclusively through the very different types of travelling undergone by refugees, migrants, and slaves" (133).²³ In *Ségou*, West African subjects are not merely "travelees" (Pratt 6), native bystanders traveled over by the dynamic European traveler, nor are their journeys exclusively of a coerced nature. Condé's novel seems to stage the kinds of traveling identities that Gilroy and Clifford imagine. In spite of the fantasy of (*ré-*)*enracinement* in Segou cherished by many Traoré sons living in exile, even those sons who manage to return to the city are led to recognize that this perceived homeland does not offer a stable, monocultural identity. Prefiguring the theories of diasporic identity that Gilroy develops in *The Black Atlantic*, *Ségou* calls into question the possibility of articulating identity in relation to any one location—including the Caribbean.

Building on the broader theories of traveling identities articulated by hooks, Clifford, and Gilroy, I study a wide range of voyages in *Ségou*, both volitional and coerced forms of mobility, including but not limited to those implicated in African-European political and cultural exchanges. As I suggest above, it is important to consider journeys that take place outside European cultural and political formations in order to develop a more nuanced, historically grounded concept of travel. My reading of Condé's novel contributes to the growing body of critical literature that focuses more narrowly on various genres of African travel writing. Many influential studies of African travel narratives privilege narratives and practices of travel that emerge in the context of European imperialism.²⁴ However, critics such as Liz Gunner, Ursula Baumgardt, Madeleine Borgomano, and Aedín Ní Loingsigh, often responding explicitly to Eurocentric historiographies of travel literature, have suggested that the journey motif is a longstanding feature of West African narrative traditions, and that its prominence in oral and written literature is not exclusively due to the influence of European literary traditions.²⁵ In analyzing a historical novel, I am able to expand the vision of West African practices of travel beyond the (post)colonial context, while remaining attentive to the fact that Condé writes from the position of a postcolonial subject.²⁶

²³ Here, in contrast to hooks, Gilroy refers to the coerced forms of movement experienced by refugees, migrants, and slaves as "types of travelling"; however, he tends to reserve the term "travel" to discuss more volitional journeys.

²⁴ For example, Mildred Mortimer identifies the many African travelers involved in European voyages of exploration and conquest as "auxiliary" personnel—translators, guides, conscripted soldiers—as well as new patterns of movement provoked by colonial interventions in innumerable aspects of West African society, including existing education and labor systems. Although many of the displacements that took place in the colonial context were coerced, and thus do not correspond to dominant European conceptions of travel in volitional terms, the recognition of these travelers and their agency serves to counteract the willful amnesia of European voyage accounts.

²⁵ Seeking to displace the dominant European voyage paradigm, Madeleine Borgomano sketches out the contours of the "voyage à l'africaine." However, in distinguishing between the exclusively utilitarian character of African travel and the nature of touristic travel – travel for travel's sake— Borgomano's model of African travel recalls what Gilroy sees as a persistent tendency to recognize only the "recreational travel experiences" of Europeans. See also Khair et al.

²⁶ In her typology of voyages in Fulani oral and written literature, Ursula Baumgardt challenges the idea that contact with Europeans was the catalyst for new patterns of movement in West Africa through her observation that the historically nomadic Fulani became increasingly sedentarized as a result of European intervention (244). Baumgardt's discussion, though brief, suggests the overwhelming generic and formal variety of representations of travel in Fulani oral literature. On Fulani pastoral poetry, see also Seydou.

Other travel genres and practices that need to be considered more fully are Islamic pilgrimage and literary accounts thereof. Unlike the Eurocentric anthology *One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage* (Wolfe), which includes only one African traveler (Ibn Battuta), J. S. Birks's

Such a historicization of travel is also central to my examination of travel to and in Paris in Chapters Four and Five, whether the accounts of “reverse” travelers in Bessora’s and Boudjedra’s texts, or in Georges Perec’s *Tentative d’épuisement d’un lieu parisien* and Patrick Modiano’s *Dora Bruder*. These texts are invested in situating travel in a specific historical context; moreover, their representation of the city draws attention to how time makes and remakes urban space. Again drawing on the theories of urban space articulated by Clifford and Gilroy, I contend that these texts’ emphasis on the historical context of displacements to and in the city differentiates their representation of travel from models that posit culture in abstract terms. Even those travel writers who lament European imperialism’s deleterious impact on “traditional” cultures and the exotic experience—for instance, Segalen and Lévi-Strauss—to a certain extent cling to the possibility that *somewhere* there is yet an intact, autonomous culture site that remains outside of any network of cultural exchange. Such a vision is predicated on the past existence of an authentic, fixed culture prior to the cultural shifts and developments that came with widespread, mass imperialism. Even as Modiano and Perec demonstrate nostalgia for those familiar aspects of their city that are disappearing—particularly in the face of mass tourism in Paris for Perec—nevertheless they recognize that the sacred, intact sites that they long for did not, in fact, ever exist. They track the changes to the Parisian topography, without trying to resurrect a cultural past, fixed in time. This poses a challenge to the touristic vision of Paris as a spectacularized object, as well as to the static notion of French national identity upon which exclusionary immigration policies are based.

As I discuss above, many of the entries in the 1992 *Pour une littérature voyageuse* collection demonstrate a startling number of continuities with earlier colonial trends of thought about the nature of travel and travel writing, in spite of dramatic historical and social changes over the course of the twentieth century, notably decolonization. The coda to the dissertation will explore how the rigid binaries of colonial travel narratives—traveler and native, colonizer and colonized—continue to inform many of the important interpretive frameworks for reading French literature, in particular, the 2007 “Pour une littérature-monde” manifesto. While the French / Francophone dichotomy is justly criticized by the manifesto’s authors and its signatories—including such famous literary figures as Maryse Condé—the rubric that they propose instead, “littérature-monde,” has its own problems. Categories such as “French” and “Francophone” do in many ways perpetuate the binary identities that form part of the colonial legacy. Nevertheless, the call to erase these distinctions also risks obscuring the histories of violence and oppression from which these categories emerge. In its disdain for criticism and theory, the “Pour une littérature-monde” manifesto often echoes the rhetoric of *Pour une littérature voyageuse*’s preface, with its intense will to eschew historical accountability. As the title “The Voyager in Question: Histories of Travel, 1930-2010” suggests, the *mise en question* of the figure of the traveler that I undertake in this dissertation examines the act of travel not merely as geographical displacement, but as a set of practices shaped by historical circumstances. Focusing on these histories, literary and otherwise, can open up new perspectives on the ethical and aesthetic implications of representing travel in the twenty-first century.

Across the Savannas to Mecca: The Overland Pilgrimage Route from West Africa focuses on the kinds of itineraries traced by various affluent characters, many of them highly regarded Islamic scholars, in *Ségou* (e.g. *Terre* 28-29, 297). See also Eickelman and Piscatori; Netton; and Touati. While some theorists of travel distinguish between religious and secular forms of tourism, a whole range of recent scholarship on religious tourism suggests how contemporary tourist practices are shaped by this history of what Coleman and Eade call “sacralized travel” (see Bianchi; and Badone and Roseman).

Chapter One

The 1931 Exposition Coloniale de Paris and its Travelers

The 1931 Exposition Coloniale de Paris is a site of contestation over what it means to travel. The Exposition's featured attraction, the "Tour du monde en un jour," produced a model of travel that was founded on a set of exclusions—in particular, the consistent denial of the travel experiences of colonized populations. The metropolitan French subject was defined as a traveler against the figure of the native "travelee," an opposition that naturalized the outward momentum of French imperialism. While the structure of the "Tour du monde" reified the European fairgoer as a traveler, the Exposition's paratexts—guidebooks, press reviews—not only exclude colonized subjects from the field of travel, echoing the "Tour du monde"'s traveler / native binary, but also marginalize the practices and perspectives of other travelers, in a reflection of the competing interests involved in the Exposition's representational project. It is essential to recognize the complex and multiple meanings of the "colonial traveler" in order to fully demystify the figure of the "sedentary native." In this chapter, I identify models of travel and conventions of the *récit de voyage*, broadly defined as any narrative of travel, including those found in guidebooks and illustrated press reportages, which continue to be influential throughout the century.

As a prominent early-twentieth-century French text concerning travel, the Exposition reveals on a massive scale the social and political stakes of representing movement at the apogee of the French Empire. Contemporary scholarship focusing on the politics and poetics of the fair from the perspective of its organizers often conveys a sense of the organizing vision as coherent and monolithic. A closer examination of the discourses of travel that emerged in the context of the fair reveals the fissures in contemporary opinions regarding the nature of colonial travel. In reality, even within the pro-colonial sector of society and government, there were vast differences in perspective on how to best represent travel in order to further the political goals of the French imperialist state. *Colons* who had settled in the colonies insisted that travel writers, tourists, and other dilettantes could not possibly share their more authentic experience of the colonies, one born of practices of dwelling, not travel. Bizarrely, this rhetoric echoes the stance taken up by romantic, individualist travelers vis-à-vis the vulgar tourist. Each group sought to justify its own representational authority in relation to other competing voices, emphasizing the superior authenticity of their experience. In all of this jockeying for primacy amongst the various European colonial authors, there are two consistent themes: first, a persistent attempt to exclude other experiences of travel; and second, assumptions regarding the natives' inability to represent themselves. However, as I will discuss in this chapter, in addition to the points of discord within pro-colonial factions, dissenting voices speaking for the colonized populations on display in the fairgrounds challenged the Exposition's representation of their mobility.

The binary relationship between the European traveler, figure of mobility and progress, and the *indigène sédentaire*, embodiment of passivity and backwardness, was fundamental to the representation of imperialist activity, whose primary condition is movement away from the metropolitan center, as well as to the colonial project of the *mission civilisatrice*. However, paradoxically, casting the metropolitan visitor to the fair as a traveler was a provisional step. The fair's organizers proposed an inexpensive tour of the colonies to the masses in order to further the larger goal of the Exposition, which was to promote long-term investment in the colonies and

to increase settler colonialism.²⁷ In his treatise *Grandeur et servitude coloniales* (1931), longtime colonial administrator Albert Sarraut, whom Herman Lebovics describes as “the leading spirit of the colonial movement in the 1920s” (*True France* 63), deplored the French empire’s deficient *colonies de peuplement*. Whereas in the British colonies of Canada and Australia, the majority of the population was—like the governing powers—white, only a small number of French *colons* occupied Indochina, West and Equatorial Africa, and Madagascar, such that the colonial government was obliged to maintain relations of dominance over the largely indigenous population. In addition to lamenting the regrettably authoritarian nature of colonial relations in their current state, Sarraut also voiced his fears that the relatively few *colons* rendered the French colonies more vulnerable to the contaminating influence of anti-colonial movements in neighboring colonies (10-11).²⁸

In order to remedy the failure to generate widespread interest in settlement, the organizers of the 1931 Exposition first sought to cultivate the supposedly natural French instinct towards imperialism, to transform the French enthusiasm for the exotic into a deeper investment in the distant elsewhere. In his history of the French colonial effort, Pierre Deloncle aggressively countered the naysayers who were disseminating the idea that “le Français ne sait pas coloniser, n’as pas l’esprit colonial, n’a même pas le goût de sortir de chez lui.”²⁹ The Exposition’s “Tour du monde” attraction would remind the fairgoer of his passion for leaving home behind. While voyage accounts, adventure stories, and colonial exhibitions had long been a substitute for actual travel to the colonies, the fair’s organizers hoped that a simulated experience of travel at the Exposition would facilitate the creation of a *conscience impériale*.³⁰ “L’on ne naît pas colonial,” Louis Malleret observes in his study of French exoticism, “...on le devient. Le voyageur prend une mentalité différente de celle qu’il gardait dans son logis. Partir, c’est consentir à devenir un homme nouveau” (123). If only the organizers could transform the metropolitan homebody into a traveler, they might inspire him to invest in the colonies, even to settle there.³¹ The “voyage de Vincennes” was intended as a prologue to the colonial encounter—an “invitation au voyage,” not its replacement.

To this end, the Porte Dorée, entrance to the Exposition, was presented as a magic portal transporting the visitor to faraway lands on a whirlwind trip around the world, all while remaining only a short metro ride away from the center of Paris (see fig. 1).

²⁷ The idea to hold an international exposition devoted solely to the representation of the colonies in Paris was to a large extent inspired by the success of the colonial sections of earlier universal expositions (dating back to the 1867 Exposition Universelle) and the more recent colonial expositions held in other cities and countries. While the specific needs of the imperialist state vis-à-vis the metropolitan citizenry changed over time, with corresponding changes in policy and rhetoric, the attempt to instruct and shape an imperialist public preceded the development of specifically colonial expositions (Leprun 86). On the evolution of the *expositions universelles* over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*; Schneider; Leprun; Morton; Hale; and Lebovics.

²⁸ Sarraut attributes the growing nationalist movements in French colonies to the failures of their British neighbors (Indian independence movements are implicitly evoked here) (10-11). On Sarraut, see also Girardet 191-94; Wright; Lebovics, *True France*; and Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads*.

²⁹ “La continuité de l’action coloniale française.” Spec. issue of *L’Illustration* 23 May 1931: n. pag.

³⁰ In his analysis of French exoticism, Louis Malleret asserts that the French lack of interest in actual travel is paradoxically joined with a fervent love of *récits de voyage*: “Ce peuple, le plus casanier de la terre, le moins ouvert aux appels du vaste monde, a toujours montré un goût décidé pour les récits d’aventures lointaines. Retenu au sol natal par de fortes attaches, le bourgeois français s’est complu à une autre évasion, à de merveilleux voyages accomplis en imagination” (9).

³¹ While colonial settlement failed to live up to the expectations of the imperialist state, there were huge developments in mass tourism in the interwar period (Girardet 180-81).



Figure 1 "Une porte de Paris s'ouvre sur le monde." Advertisement in *L'Illustration* 25 July 1931: "Annonces" section 23.

The fairgrounds were organized as a miniature version of the French empire, with individual compounds for each of the colonies, whether older colonies in North America and the Caribbean, or the more recent acquisitions in Africa and Asia. The promotional material surrounding the Exposition—guidebooks, advertisements, newspaper coverage of the exhibits, and other paratexts—blurred the distinction between representation and reality, confusing the spaces of exhibition and the spaces of the colonies.³² Through this “state-sponsored hallucination” (Miller 65), visitors to the fair were invited to experience their encounters in, for example, the Indochina or West African compounds as part of an actual voyage to these regions.

Travel writer Paul Morand’s review of the Exposition reveals the mechanisms of the Exposition’s simulacrum of travel to exotic climes.³³ Morand relates how he was lured into the Cambodian pavilion by the “parfum authentique” of incense sticks. Once inside, Morand gazes through the windows onto familiar vistas, the country’s landscapes represented in a series of dioramas. These exotic if artificial sights beckon him back to the scene of his earlier wanderings: “Par les fenêtres du diorama, je revois la masse violette des monts de l’Éléphant et la Chaîne annamitique, le corps ployé des paysans repiquant le riz; mais, sans rien retenir de l’immobile sagesse des bonzes jaunes à tête bleue, rasée, je rêve de nouveaux départs” (337). While Morand, as a seasoned traveler, readily identifies the manufactured qualities of his “tour du monde” in the Parisian suburbs, nevertheless the experience of the simulacrum spurs him, a vicarious traveler, to embark on new voyages.

Echoing the rhetoric of those in the procolonial lobby who spoke of imperialism’s roots in the “fatalité instinctive de la race française,”³⁴ Morand contrasts the sedentary nature of the “bonzes jaunes” with his own impulse for travel; though he is captivated by the exotic scents of

³² On the “hallucinatory” aspect of the Exposition, see Lebovics, *True France*; and Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads*.

³³ Morand was well known for travel narratives such as *Rien que la terre* (1926) and *Le Voyage* (1927) (Healey 98). The title of Morand’s review, “Rien que la terre à l’Exposition,” refers to his narrative of a voyage around the world in *Rien que la terre*, which attempted to represent world travel in the midst of a crisis of exoticism: what is there left to see?

³⁴ Cario and Régismanset 162.

the Buddhist milieu, ultimately it only offers tokens of the exotic, not a model to emulate. Like his fellow fairgoers, “planteurs virtuels,” “boucaniers égarés dans l’épicerie,” “conquistadores arrivés à la vie quatre siècles trop tard,” Morand is swayed by “le *wanderlust*, l’aventure, le rafraîchissement des qualités viriles par le risque,” the qualities that inspired the intertwined destinies of exotic travel and imperialist expansion: “tant d’aventures centrifuges, d’expéditions, de périple océaniques, de transhumances” (330). Significantly, Morand includes plantation owners—men who literally put down roots in the colonies—among the Europeans caught up in the grand sweep of the imperialist adventure, alongside such consummate figures of mobility as pirates and conquistadores. Even in dwelling, the planters’ presence in the colonies is a testament to the European passion for wanderlust and adventure. This virile movement stands in stark contrast with the immobility of the “bonze jaunes” Morand encounters in the Exposition’s Indochina compound. However, in reality, the Buddhist monks who held ceremonies in the Laos pavilion, a makeshift pagoda, were hardly the immobile denizens of a distant sanctum as Morand portrays them here, but rather had traveled to France to perform authenticity for visitors to the fair.³⁵ What were the political stakes of the trope of the sedentary native?

The “native” workers hired from the colonies to perform their culture for an avid metropolitan audience were essential to the fiction of travel. However, this incursion of the colonies and their indigenous populations into the metropole troubled rigid ideological and institutional divisions between spaces and cultures, boundaries that were fundamental to maintaining the hierarchical power relations between colonizers and colonized. The “tour du monde” attraction was structured by a profound contradiction: the people imported from the colonies to play the role of natives in exotic climes had travelled far in order to temporarily dwell on the outskirts of the metropolitan capital.³⁶

The mystification of the relationship between the visitor and the *animateur* as a series of encounters on the periphery between traveler and native was essential to the representation of the French colonial enterprise at the Exposition.³⁷ Escalating conflict throughout the empire belied the image of colonized populations as passive and docile, and called the legitimacy of existing colonial practices into question, even as the state attempted to gain public support to expand the scope of imperialist interventions.³⁸ One of the greatest challenges to the figure of the *indigène sédentaire* lay in the encounters between metropolitan French and the growing numbers of colonial subjects—soldiers, students, and workers—in the hexagon, particularly visible in urban centers like Paris, Marseille, and Toulouse.³⁹ In this chapter, I examine the strategies of

³⁵ According to a description in *Illustration*’s 25 July 1931 special issue focusing on the Exposition (one of many), the Laotian section of the Indochina compound “comprend une réduction de la bibliothèque de la pagode de Sisakhet, à Vientiane, une autre de la chapelle de la pagode de Xieng Thong, à Luang Prabang, une belle porte néo-birmane, un pavillon d’exposition . . . et diverses cases construites en s’inspirant des maisons d’habitation du Laos” (n. pag.).

³⁶ The 8 line was extended to the Bois de Vincennes, adding the “Porte Dorée” stop at the entrance to the fairgrounds, where the Palais de la Porte Dorée was located (“Le ‘métro de l’Exposition’ circule depuis hier” 1).

³⁷ While the *Rapport général* frequently uses the term “travailleurs indigènes” to refer to the artisans, camel drivers, servers, and other employees, I prefer the term “animateurs.” My use of this term is inspired by Sylviane Leprun’s evocation of these workers’ function at the Exposition: to “animate” (*animer*) what would otherwise be a lifeless set (Leprun 122, 158, 181). The use of live actors to stage the “reconstitutions de la vie indigène” offered something that dioramas populated by mere mannequins could not.

³⁸ See Girardet 109-44 and Ageron, *France coloniale ou parti colonial?*

³⁹ These encounters were represented in literary works such as Lucie Couturier’s *Des Inconnus chez moi* (1920); Bakary Diallo’s *Force Bonté* (1926); and Albert de Teneuille and Truong-Dinh-Tri’s *Bà-Dâm: roman franco-annamite* (1930).

representation employed to contain the reality of colonial relationships, as the opposition of native travelee and European traveler was inverted or questioned outside the fairground walls in ways that exposed the violence of French colonialism.

From Camel Drivers to *Tireurs de pousse-pousse*: Native Mobilities in Question

From dance and musical spectacles to performances of everyday life in recreated urban and rural environments, the activities of the “natives” were used to authenticate the colonial simulacrum. The *animateurs* were meant to be indissociable from their native setting in the eyes of the fairgoer, an impression carefully fostered by the presentation of these individuals as occupying their native habitat. The hallucinatory spaces of the French empire in miniature both reified and collapsed the distinctions between center and periphery, metropole and colony, and traveler and native. On the one hand, the Exposition reaffirmed the essentialized identity of colonial subjects as sedentary “travelees.” The phantasmatic re-mapping of the fairgrounds as a succession of distant lands placed Paris itself outside the realm of travel. The voyage undertaken by the visitor to the fair necessarily unfolded “elsewhere”: the metropole was only the point of departure for the “tour du monde” attraction. “Que nous sommes loin de Paris!” exclaimed Paul-Émile Cadilhac in his account of a “Promenade à travers les cinq continents,” as he was “transported” to the Sudan through his encounters in the French West Africa section. And yet, an essential element of this illusion—the performances of the *animateurs*—meant that in 1931 large numbers of colonial subjects poured into Paris. The city’s status as a destination for these travelers is elided in the narratives of encounter in the Exposition.⁴⁰ While their presence in the fairgrounds bolstered the precarious fiction that the Porte Dorée opened onto another world, their temporary residence in the metropole troubled the premise of a separation between center and periphery. The “native” workers at the fair were the real travelers of the Exposition, while the majority of the visitors to the fair were “indigenous” to metropolitan France.⁴¹ The “natives” were placed in the role of what Mary Louise Pratt terms the “travelee,” the passive bystander who is traveled over by the dynamic, mobile European traveler abroad. And yet, in the visual and textual presentation of the Exposition, the *animateurs* are generally denied their role as world travelers. It is only within the fictive universe of the “Tour du monde” that the camel drivers, dancers, singers, artisans, and other workers are “travelees”; however, this fiction is strained by their proximity to the heart of the metropole.

A pair of images that accompany an article about the opening of the Exposition in *L’Illustration* exemplifies the rhetorical sleight-of-hand at work in the presentation of the fair workers. These photographs show a group of people and camels destined for the Bois de Vincennes at the beginning and end of their journey.⁴² Whereas in the photographs, the people are to a certain extent included in the narrative of travel through their presence in the frame, as

⁴⁰ Paris the city had already been considered a travel destination for many years. However, it was a destination for a certain class of travelers, a site of travel as a leisure activity, tourism. MacCannell analyzes tourist guides created on the occasion of the 1900 Exposition Universelle de Paris in his discussion of the emergence of a new concept of travel, namely “the modern idea that no reason need be given to visit Paris except to see the city itself and its sights”—a departure from earlier motivations for travel such as pilgrimages, or visiting friends and family (60).

⁴¹ The organizers estimated that approximately 8 million people attended the Exposition; they supposed that about 4 million of these visitors were Parisians, 3 million were from the provinces, and 1 million were foreigners (Ageron, “L’exposition coloniale de 1931” 505).

⁴² On the history and politics of *L’Illustration*, see Lebovics 59n17.

well as through the caption identifying both “indigènes et chameaux,” they are elided entirely from the article, which focuses on the animals being imported for the zoo:

Le parc zoologique se peuple. . . . [Certains] animaux, suffisamment domestiqués, circulent librement à travers l’Exposition, sous la conduite d’un gardien. Du nombre sont les chameaux et les éléphants qui débarquèrent il y a une quinzaine de jours à la gare parisienne de Reuilly. Là, s’achevait un long voyage dont les clichés de notre correspondant de Dakar nous montrent pittoresquement le début. L’épilogue aussi en a été fixé par l’objectif: contraste amusant des chameaux défilant entre un tramway et des lampadaires sur l’avenue Daumesnil (“À l’Exposition Coloniale” 60).

The article recognizes the distance between Paris and Dakar, commenting on the “long voyage” completed by camels and elephants; however, the geographical displacement carried out by the people in the photographs goes unacknowledged. Moreover, even though the caption acknowledges the camels’ travel companions, by referring to them as “indigènes,” they remain paradoxically anchored to their point of departure. The camel drivers’ mobility is only acknowledged when safely confined within the walls of the park, where they can “circule[r] librement” alongside the animals under their care. The article not only erases the fair workers’ journey to Paris, but also and perhaps more importantly, omits any mention of their promenade through the city, thereby re-asserting the insurmountable divide between center and periphery. In highlighting the incongruity of exotic specimens of “elsewhere” in the modern urban landscape, the text mentions only the camels. The verb “fixer” reveals the camera’s role both in objectifying the native bodies, and in arresting motion, introducing stasis into the narrative of a journey.⁴³ The fact that the people in the photographs are labeled as natives both at the point of departure, their ostensible “home,” and in Paris, demonstrates the extent to which the rhetoric surrounding the Exposition sought to contain the threat to the idea of the spaces of empire as rigidly distinct and consequently to notions of culture as immutable and discrete (Kaplan 102). The colonized subject was always an “indigène sédentaire,” even in the metropole.

⁴³ The role played by photography in “fixing” otherness is well documented. See Nochlin; Alloula; Anne Maxwell; and Hight and Sampson.

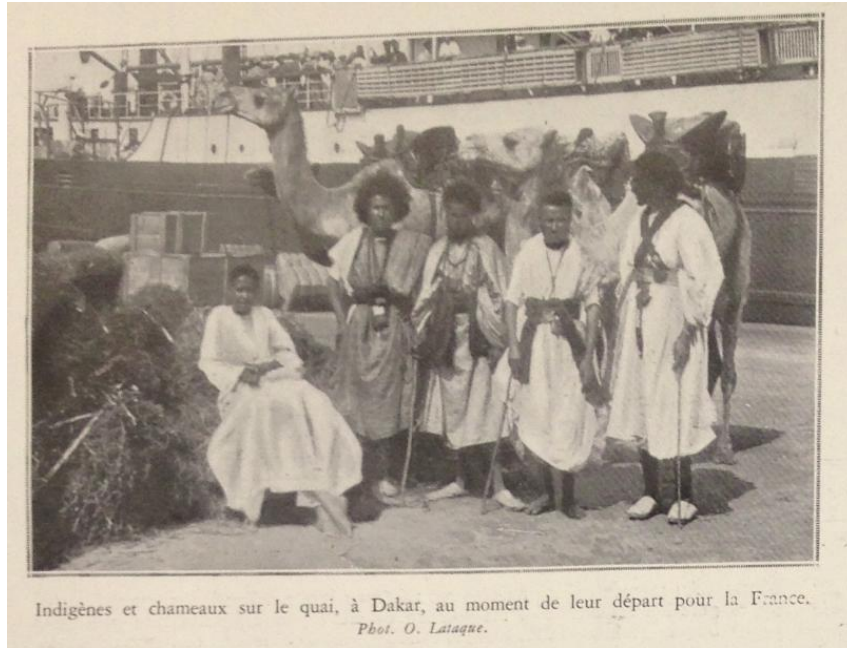


Figure 2 “Indigènes et chameaux sur le quai, à Dakar, au moment de leur départ pour la France.” *L’Illustration* 9 May 1931: 60.



Figure 3 “Indigènes et chameaux débarqués à Paris gagnent l’Exposition par l’avenue Daumesnil.” *L’Illustration* 9 May 1931: 60.



Figure 4 "Les indigènes arrivent. Chaque matin, les autobus amènent des indigènes de tous les points du globe." *Le Journal de l'Exposition Coloniale* June 1931: 2.

The contradictions of the Exposition's phantasmatic geography are summed up in the oxymoronic heading for a photograph from the June 1931 issue of the short-lived unofficial newspaper *Le Journal de l'Exposition Coloniale* (fig. 4): "Les indigènes arrivent." Even when transplanted to spaces that perceive their "foreign" bodies as precisely *non-native*, non-Europeans remain perpetual "indigènes."

The fiction was difficult to sustain. Organizers attempted to keep *animateurs* in "native" garb as much as possible to maintain the illusion that the colonial encounter was taking place elsewhere (Morton 112-13). Given the centrality of the climate in discussions regarding the difference between metropole and colony, the oppressive heat of the tropics would need to be communicated in one way or another; native garb was instrumental in conjuring up a tropical ambience when the cold dreary weather of Paris failed to convince. In the photograph of fig. 3, the image of the "indigène" is undone not only by the site of their promenade, the avenue Daumesnil, but also by their attire—somewhere between Dakar and Paris the camel drivers donned rain ponchos to protect themselves against the April showers of a wet Parisian spring.

While the article in *L'Illustration* does not comment on the incongruity posed by the rain gear, thereby preserving the fiction of the native in his natural habitat, other articles drew attention to the shift in environment. For instance, an article in *Le Matin* commented on the extensive amenities of the living quarters in the AOF section and suitable clothing furnished by the exhibition. In doing so, it destabilizes the phantasmatic geography of the "Tour du monde"; however, its propagandistic tone suggests that this moment of dissonance is a public-relations move. The *Matin* article seems to respond implicitly to criticisms raised in papers like *L'Humanité* regarding the treatment of fair workers, for instance in an article from 6 May 1931

announcing the inauguration of the Exposition. The writer for *L'Humanité* comments paternalistically on the plight of a group of *animateurs* in the West Africa section, noting that these “pauvres naturels . . . grelottent sous leurs minces vêtements, en attendant l’inauguration somptueuse d’aujourd’hui.” Although diminishing the fair workers’ agency, the article also disrupts the conceit of “elsewhere” maintained in so many of the Exposition paratexts.

Participatory mobile entertainments such as camel rides had a strong symbolic importance for both the fair’s organizers and its detractors. From the late nineteenth century, entrepreneurs in the business of mass spectacle had understood that simulated motion was essential for producing a realistic simulacrum of travel.⁴⁴ The experience of native transportation technologies was a popular and varied attraction; *piroguiers* in the Togo and Cameroun section vied with their Malagasy competitors on the Lac Daumesnil, as well as with the *animateurs* offering boat rides on the body of water installed for the “village lacustre” in the West African section.

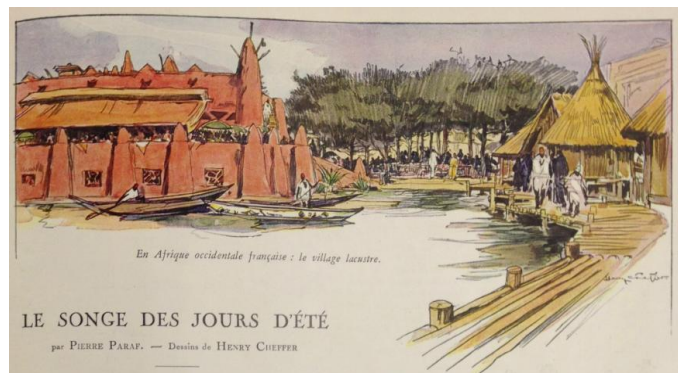


Figure 5 Cheffer, Henry. "En Afrique occidentale française: le village lacustre." Illustration for Pierre Paraf, "Le Songe des jours d'été." *L'Illustration* 25 July 1931: n. pag.



Figure 6 Cheffer, Henry. "Navigateurs malgaches." Illustration for Pierre Paraf, "Le Songe des jours d'été." *L'Illustration* 25 July 1931: n. pag.

⁴⁴ See Schwartz on various technologies and methods used to produce an experience of travel in panoramas and other forms of entertainments (167-76).

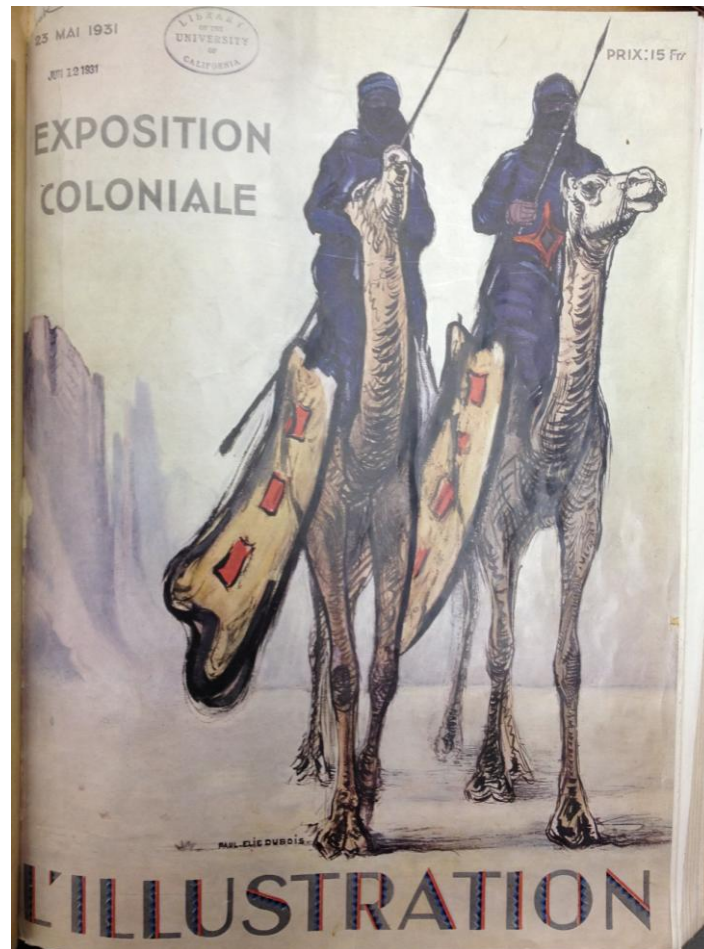


Figure 7 Cover of *L'Illustration* 23 May 1931 spec. issue on the Exposition.

Pierre Paraf's description in his article for *L'Illustration*'s 25 July 1931 special issue on the Exposition of various mobile entertainments, from camel rides to a promenade on the lac Daumesnil, reveals how such attractions functioned within the simulacrum of travel. Paraf considered the camel a symbol of the Orient so fundamental that he asserts, "[q]ui s'embarque pour l'Orient ne se sent vraiment arrivé que lorsqu'il aperçoit son premier chameau." Taking a camel ride, visitors to the Exposition could experience a specifically Oriental mobility, "le balancement de l'Orient qui marche, celui des migrations et des prières, des travaux et des méditations." Although Paraf does figure the Orient as a space of movement, the types of journeys that he identifies belong to the realm of the pre-modern and the traditional: migrations, pilgrimages. Similarly, the sensation of motion afforded by a ride in a Malagasy pirogue on the man-made lac Daumesnil is so stimulating to the visitors' fertile imaginations that they forget they are still in the park. Paraf chides his fellow "travelers": "Pourquoi croyez-vous indispensable de pousser des cris, passagères qui voulez avoir l'air d'avoir peur?" And yet, swayed by the presence of the enigmatic Malagasy oarsmen "[qui] se penchent sur le lac avec une gravité si impassible que l'eau nocturne semble leur confier d'étranges secrets,"⁴⁵ Paraf almost allows himself to be absorbed into the fantasy.

⁴⁵ Such forms of transportation within the fiction of "elsewhere" in the Exposition had a long history. The *Guide Illustré du Bon Marché Exposition 1900* notes that by going on a promenade in a "filanzane" (a chair carried

While the *animateurs*' involvement in these forms of mobile entertainment literally set them in motion—albeit circumscribed by the fairground walls—nevertheless this movement did not pose a significant challenge to the reification of the fair workers in the role of the sedentary native. The journeys of those who embark for the Orient are the only ones that count as experiences of travel. A journey on camelback or in a pirogue only constitutes travel when it is undertaken in the name of leisure, by those who experience these transportation technologies as exotic and quaint, for whom the “balancement de l’Orient” is marked by difference. Travel is constituted by promenades and pleasure trips, not pilgrimages or utilitarian displacements in search of work. Like the pilgrims and migrants of this Orientalist imaginary, the camel drivers and oarsmen who trace the same routes as the fairgoers are not recognized as fellow travelers. Only the passengers are considered to be “traveling.” Just as the interpreters and guides who accompanied European travelers from the earliest days of exploration were excluded from narratives of “discovery,” so again are the *animateurs* marginalized as mere “auxiliaires indigènes,” their mobility represented as subordinate to that of the colonizer.

Far from challenging the image of the sedentary native, the mobility of the camel drivers and oarsmen within the parameters of these transportation technologies in fact contributes to a re-enactment of the hierarchical social relationships enforced in the colonies. Modes of transportation and travel were seen as intimately linked to the degree of civilization. As Dana Hale observes, the Fête du Tourisme Colonial that took place in the fairgrounds in June 1931 was consistent with other racial discourses at the Exposition, in that it privileged the “native” contingent of the Indochina section over that of the other colonies. Whereas the African colonies were represented by horses and camels as *moyens de transport*, the Indochina procession included bicycles and antique and modern cars, as well as the more picturesque elephants (Hale 155). However, this elevation of the Indochinese relative to the other “races on display” was not present at every moment of the event planning. The organizers initially intended to continue the tradition, begun at the 1889 Exposition Universelle de Paris and renewed in 1900, and again at the 1906 and 1922 Expositions Coloniales in Marseilles, of offering rides in a *pousse-pousse* pulled by a “coolie.” In spite of Governor General Pasquier’s warning that there would likely be significant opposition to the attraction, the technical committee went so far as to purchase 150 rickshaws, but was forced to scrap these plans when the Chinese consul formally complained to the commissioner general regarding the proposed use of Chinese workers to pull the *pousse-pousse* (Hale 151).

While the mobility of camel drivers and oarsmen at the 1931 Exposition did not compromise the figure of the sedentary native, nevertheless the figure of the *tireur de pousse-pousse* did become a site of contestation. The performance of “otherness” promised by the *tireur de pousse-pousse* became a focal point for Vietnamese students collaborating with other radical students and workers to protest the Exposition as a whole. Secret police reports on the organizing and political meetings of these young radicals reveal the centrality of this figure to the anti-colonial rhetoric of these students.⁴⁶ In mid-April, an “agitateur annamite” named Tran Le Luat made contact with an employee in the Indochina section to inquire after the living conditions of

by porters), the visitor is able to “se donner l’illusion d’une expédition en panier à Madagascar” (128). See also *Paris Exposition 1900* 329-30.

⁴⁶ Such an exotic and local transportation device contributes to the illusion of travel abroad, as is evident in the musings of the 1900 Exposition Universelle’s Guide on the attractions of its predecessor: “On se souvient du succès qu’obtinrent en 1889 les pousse-pousse tonkinois, à l’esplanade des Invalides. On peut aujourd’hui se promener en *filanzane* dans le Trocadéro et se donner l’illusion d’une expédition en panier à Madagascar” (128).

the recently arrived *animateurs* (colonial soldiers and workers) and to learn whether there would be any rickshaws at the Exposition.⁴⁷ For the “Comité de lutte de Marseille,” which authored a tract to distribute among Vietnamese sailors in the city in mid-April (in the midst of the arrival of several ships transporting colonized subjects from the colonies for the Exposition), the *tireur de pousse-pousse* appeared the very incarnation of the myth of the backwards colonial subject incapable of self-governance:

[Leur but est de] tromper le public en lui montrant que nous sommes encore ignorants et sauvages, que nous pratiquons encore de “vils métiers”: tirer le pousse-pousse ou porter la mallette et la pipe en courant derrière le pousse-pousse d’un fonctionnaire fumeur d’opium, tout cela pour provoquer la risée du public et établir à ses yeux que nous sommes encore incapables d’avoir conscience de nos intérêts et, à fortiori, de nous gouverner.⁴⁸

The “comité de lutte” objects in particular to the use of rickshaws in Europe, as their Vietnamese and Chinese “camarades” will appear all the more servile in their current setting, a “pays où jamais l’homme ne sert de bête de trait à d’autres hommes.” The perception of the rickshaw puller as a degrading symbol of savagery and inferiority is a recurrent theme in the militants’ discourse, particularly since the laborer takes the place of the work animal. As a second tract produced by the Marseille Comité de lutte suggests, the *tireur de pousse-pousse* would be yet another “bête curieuse” on display for the French public, comparable to the camels and elephants that wander through the fairgrounds.⁴⁹ Having undertaken what Scott McConnell terms the “leftward journey” from Vietnam to France, these groups of militant intellectuals found the figure of the rickshaw puller, whose movement was completely bound to the will of his customer, particularly repugnant. The very existence of these students in the metropole posed a manifest challenge to the traveler-travelee binary promoted by the Exposition and in many of the works of colonial authors I cite in this chapter.

This second tract, addressed to an imagined group of “Camarades! Tireurs de pousse-pousse nouvellement arrivés en France!,” ties the humiliating spectacle offered by the *tireur de pousse-pousse*’s hindered mobility to the larger problem of imperialist surveillance and dominance. The liberation of the *tireur de pousse-pousse* is explicitly linked to the larger goal of

⁴⁷ “Rapport de l’Agent X.” 16 April 1931 (erroneously dated 16 April 1930). SLOTFOM III, carton 3. ANOM, Aix-en-Provence. Information on the conflict surrounding the inclusion of “tireurs de pousse-pousse” in the Exposition comes from archival research carried out at the Archives nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM) in Aix-en-Provence. The ANOM’s holdings include reports and notes made by undercover agents working for the Service de contrôle et d’assistance en France des indigènes des colonies (CAI), a division of the Service de liaison avec les originaires des territoires français d’outre-mer (SLOTFOM), part of the direction des Affaires politiques branch of the Ministère des colonies. Agents working for the CAI were tasked with infiltrating political groups, including those formed by students from the colonies, in order to gather data on political dissent.

⁴⁸ Translated tract in quoc-ngu appended to a 13 April 1931 note from “Le délégué du Service de Contrôle et d’Assistance en France des Indigènes (CAI) à Monsieur le Directeur des Affaires Politiques, Ministère des Colonies.” SLOTFOM III, carton 3. According to a note regarding tracts appended to communication 3671 (17 April 1931), the same tract was also meant to be distributed in Toulouse. SLOTFOM III, carton 3.

⁴⁹ SLOTFOM III, carton 3. According to a 14 April 1931 report from the CAI Délégué in Marseille, the “comité de lutte” intended to board the boats in the Marseille harbor and distribute these tracts to the colonial subjects; however, thanks to the vigilance of the CAI agents, their efforts were thwarted. When they went to meet the boats on several occasions, they were prevented from boarding the boats by the presence of numerous agents and police officers on the docks. SLOTFOM III, carton 3.

transgressing the boundaries between center and periphery, and disrupting the colonial hierarchy altogether. The students and workers involved in the Marseille “Comité de lutte” intended to distribute this letter amongst incoming Exposition workers, supposing that a large number of *tireurs de pousse-pousse* would figure in their ranks. The tract calls on these rickshaw pullers (who would in fact never materialize) to strike on the opening day of the Exposition, to “quitter . . . les brancards de pousse-pousse” and join their fellow workers in claiming the same working conditions as the French. In condemning the organizers’ practices of surveillance and segregation, the tract’s authors draw connections between the tactics employed to manage the unruly natives in the Bois de Vincennes and colonial policies with a broader reach. The tract exhorts the imagined contingent of *tireurs de pousse-pousse* to demand “la liberté de circuler après le travail et d’entrer en relations avec les gens de l’extérieur,” “le droit, après l’Exposition, de retourner en Indochine ou de rester en France à [leur] gré,” as well as, and in relation to this second claim, “des conditions convenables de retour en bateau, et en cas d’abandon du droit de retour, une indemnité égale aux frais de rapatriement par mer, etc.” The Comité de lutte’s demand that fair workers be granted unrestricted access to the rest of the metropole and perhaps even beyond perhaps anticipates a subsequent ruling made in July 1931, which required the “natives” to cloister themselves nightly in their “colony” for the duration of a curfew determined by their section’s commissioner (Miller 72-73).

The organizers and their allies in the government, particularly the agents of the “Service de Contrôle et d’Assistance en France des Indigènes des Colonies Françaises,” were alive to the dangers posed by allowing free intercourse between the “natives” and metropolitan dwellers, whether their “compatriotes” or “ouvriers européens,” to borrow the terms used in an April 16, 1931 memo reporting on various surveillance activities. The author of the report, “Agent X,” comments on the movements of a certain Lê Ngoc Dinh, an “Annamite” who arrived with other workers; however, unlike the majority of the *animateurs*, who were housed in and confined to the fairgrounds, Dinh was living in unknown accommodations outside of the Bois de Vincennes, which Agent X is anxious to locate. Perhaps surprisingly, given his subversive behaviors, Dinh appears to be an “évolué,” who will occupy the post of secretary in the Annam or Tonkin pavilion. Despite this privileged position, Dinh has been observed participating in “longues” and “fréquentes” conversations on war and politics with European laborers employed in the construction of the Angkor Wat reproduction.

While Dinh had an official function at the Exposition, other political dissidents circumvented the various security measures in place (for instance, the use of identification cards) and successfully infiltrated the fairgrounds, including two Vietnamese workers identified only as An and Phan, known dissidents, who made contact with native guards in the Indochina section. Although Phan is described as an “Annamite,” he is also identified as a professional lacquerer employed “chez Dunand” (presumably the atelier of the famous lacquer artist Jean Dunand, an important Art Deco figure), and can be assumed to be a Parisian resident.⁵⁰ The notable variation in the socio-economic status of the dissidents and agitators who attempted to infiltrate the Exposition, hailing from both the intellectual elite and the working class, is a sign of the true dimensions of France’s large immigrant population in the early 1930s: the radical student groups in the Quartier Latin were not the only agitators. While a “Rapport sur la situation morale des détachements indigènes indochinois stationnés dans le Cantonnement sud du Palais d’Angkor” on 20 July 1931 asserts firmly excellent outlook of the Indochinese contingent—docile, tranquil,

⁵⁰ “Rapport de Désiré.” 21 April 1931. SLOTFOM III, carton 3.

and above all, deferential—these statements ring hollow in light of the fact that the curfew and containment policies described above were enacted the same month.⁵¹

For the Vietnamese militants and their allies, the figure of the docile and subservient rickshaw puller was intimately tied to the Exposition's rhetorical goals of simultaneously defending and promoting the economic and political interests of the imperialist state. The emphasis on the economic prospects of the colonies was paired with an attempt to obscure the violent practices developed for the exploitation of their resources, as well as to hide the turbulent reality of indigenous resistance to French rule. Alfred Janniot's decorative frieze on the walls of the permanent Musée des Colonies—the images of the French empire that were meant to endure after the disappearance of the ephemeral spectacle in Vincennes—represents the material contributions of French possessions in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere. In the Indochina section of the frieze, men and women are shown cultivating and harvesting tea, cotton, rubber, coffee, silk, and rice. Labels for these products are carved into the bas-relief itself, a strategy that maximizes legibility for the ignorant fairgoer, but also serves to render them more abstract, almost allegorical. The serene expressions of a man and a woman gathering rubber contradict the circulating reports on colonial abuses. Although the bas-reliefs represent the colonies as a collage of exotic, fertile landscapes, a garden of earthly—and highly profitable—delights, life on the rubber plantations was in reality a “hell on earth” (Binh 23).⁵²

While the organizers ultimately cancelled their plans to include the *tireurs de pousse-pousse* in the Exposition, nevertheless the image of the rickshaw puller continued to circulate in Exposition paratexts and in the French colonial imaginary more generally. In the *Guide officiel*, an advertisement for the Compagnie Française du Caoutchouc, which appeared on a page facing facts and figures on economic and social development in the colony, features a bare-footed Indochinese coolie pulling a stylish European woman in a *pousse-pousse*. The coolie is wearing the straw hat (*nón lá*) widely recognized as a symbol of Indochina, as distinct from other regions of the Far East (Hale 160).⁵³ Illustrations for the Indochina section included a drawing of a man wearing the *nón lá* and carrying a pole with buckets suspended from each end, familiar from the trademark for the Société anonyme des Rizeries Indo-Chinoises and the Nuoc Mam label for the Société Française des Produits Alimentaires Azotés (Hale 72, 146). Another picture in the *Guide officiel*, which depicts two people working with cattle, accompanies a discussion of the still largely undeveloped Laos, where “[l]es antiques attelages de bœufs s'étonnent encore au passage des automobiles sur les premières routes” (61). The advertisement for the Compagnie Française du Caoutchouc names the *pousse-pousse* first on the list of vehicles for which its line of products might be useful, emphasizing the importance of the picturesque conveyance in the life of the colony. The figure of the *tireur de pousse-pousse* is linked to the neighboring images of other forms of manual labor, and contrasts with the modern transportation technologies introduced by the French. As the *pousse-pousse* is naturalized as a “traditional” mode of transportation, the cultivation of rubber by French companies seems to preserve these lifeways; the image of the

⁵¹ “Rapport sur la situation morale des détachements indigènes indochinois stationnés dans le Cantonnement sud du Palais d'Angkor.” 20 July 1931. From the office of the Commissaire-adjoint, signed Eckert. SLOTFOM III, carton 3.

⁵² For a first-hand account of the colonial rubber plantations, see Tran Tu Binh, *The Red Earth: A Vietnamese Memoir of Life on a Colonial Rubber Plantation*.

⁵³ In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the image of an Asian coolie pulling European travelers adorned trademarks and labels for products as varied as textiles, coffee, chocolate, and flour, although the latter two were not Asian products (Hale 74, 144).

pousse-pousse on the rubber advertisement obscures the violent dislocations occasioned by systems of labor conscription in the Red River Delta for the rubber plantations.

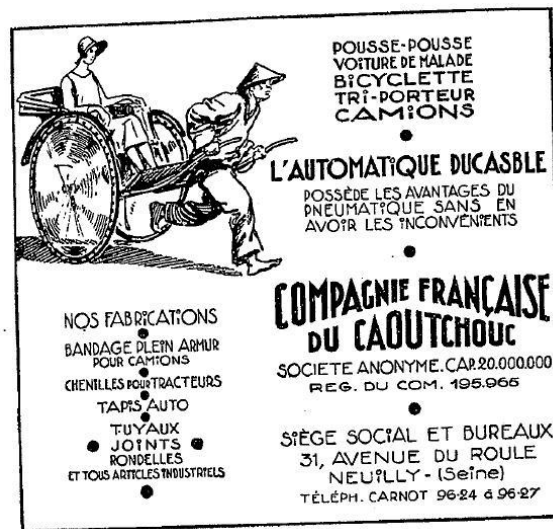


Figure 7 Advertisement for the Compagnie Française du Caoutchouc (*Guide Officiel*, n. pag.)

In the advertisement, the arrested motion of the “coolie” forms a complement to the other images of “traditional” life in the *Guide officiel*, or on the walls of the Musée des Colonies. Although the role of the “coolie” was not performed by live actors at the Exposition, it was not entirely excluded from the representation of the colonies, and remained an important icon of colonial travel in Indochina.⁵⁴ These tropes of “tradition” competed with the evocation of a rapidly modernizing Indochina, for instance in the procession of transportation technologies at the Fête du Tourisme. While the picturesque Indochina embodied by the *tireur de pousse-pousse* undoubtedly held significant appeal for the tourist, it is clear from advertisements for cars and household appliances that a representation of the colonies as not so very “sauvage,” nor so very different from the metropole, was part of the strategy for appealing to potential *colons*. Metropolitan French who would be willing to commit to a settled existence in the colonies would do so in order to access a more comfortable and luxurious lifestyle than they could obtain at home; true *colons* were attracted by the colonies’ advantageous economic and social prospects, not the promise of adventure. And yet, the image of the coolie was not without its own attractions for the potential settler, as the connotations of servility that the Vietnamese militants were swift to recognize spoke to the racialized nature of the colonial hierarchy, the very condition that allowed for greater social mobility for *colons*.

The figure of the *tireur de pousse-pousse* reveals the multiple and often contradictory perceptions of the French travelers and settlers in the colonies. However, even as the image of the coolie was employed in visual and written texts to evoke different forms of colonial experiences for an eager metropolitan audience, this trope of colonial literature and *récits de voyage* also became a potent symbol around which an elite group of “reverse” travelers—Vietnamese students in France—articulated their critique of the Exposition and the colonial

⁵⁴ In his article on labor abuses on the colonial rubber plantations, Stephen Harp explores how Michelin advertisements and guidebooks shaped the creation of domestic tourist identities in France, examining the intimate ties between this tourism and the colonial rubber plantations that provided the materials for Michelin tires.

imaginary more generally. Moreover, the fact that the technical committee was ultimately forced to relinquish its plans to have around 150 *tireurs de pousse-pousse* circulating in the fairgrounds due to political pressure, testifies to the growing instability of the colonial apparatus, not only its ability to govern colonized populations, but also its authority to represent its own mission. In abandoning the *tireur de pousse-pousse* attraction, the fair's organizers recognized not only the formal complaint communicated by the Chinese consulate, but also the less overt (if exceedingly well-documented) acts and voices of dissent amongst politically radical members of the Vietnamese community in Paris and even in the very bosom of the Exposition.⁵⁵

Seduction and Instruction: the Dual Modalities of the "Tour du Monde"

How did the organizers conceive of the traveler who would embark on the "tour du monde" in the Bois de Vincennes? Was this traveler a vulgar tourist, or a romantic exoticist, superior to the superficial impressions of the masses of tourists who attended the Exposition? Guidebooks, press reviews, and advertisements present strikingly varied forms of addressing the visitor. These incongruities, as well as the bizarre assemblage of attractions and representations boasted by the Exposition, reveal the organizers' attempts to appeal to many different sectors of the public. The figure of the traveler that emerges from these texts is incoherent, full of discrepancies. What were these competing interests? How do they relate to contemporary debates over the relationship between colonial literature and travel?

Before the exposition opened, former Prime Minister André Tardieu observed that the French public was as yet ignorant of the scope of its own empire, remarking that "[c]hez nous la conscience impériale est à naître" (qtd. in Norindr 23).⁵⁶ The exposition was conceived of as a means to bring the farthest reaches of *la Plus Grande France* closer to home: in luring the fairgoer "abroad," the fair's organizers sought to elicit, in him or her, the desire and will to colonize. Appealing first to the visitor's curiosity, the author of the *Guide officiel*, André Demaison, expresses his hope that the erstwhile "curieux" will return again to the fair "en connoisseur et en ami" (21); that the tourist would in turn become knowledgeable and supportive regarding the imperial enterprise. The *Rapport général*, a mammoth seven-volume report on the organization and outcomes of the Exposition, incessantly reminds its readership of the spectacle's pedagogical aims, affirming that "la manifestation de Vincennes avait pour objet principal d'instruire la masse française des choses coloniales à laquelle elle restait jusque là trop étrangère. L'Exposition était avant tout une œuvre d'éducation nationale" (5.2, 322).⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ For instance, on 9 June 1931, five *animateurs*—three men and two women—were deported back to Indochina for "menées révolutionnaires" at the express demand of Pierre Guesde, the section's commissioner. SLOTFOM III, carton 3.

⁵⁶ Norindr 23. On imperial consciousness and the "colonial idea," see also Girardet; Ageron, *France Coloniale ou Parti Colonial?* 250-59 and "L'Exposition coloniale de 1931"; Ezra 21-46.

⁵⁷ While the *Rapport général* offers a wealth of information on how the individual sections were planned, as well as institutional histories of and perspectives on each colony, it is not clear how closely the content corresponds to what was actually available to visitors to the exposition. The *Rapport* was published three years after the close of the Exposition and was not intended for mass circulation, unlike the numerous pamphlets and monographs produced or commissioned by the organizers. Significant space is devoted to assessing the economic and "moral" impact of the exposition, and there are extensive details offered on the behind-the-scenes planning and steps taken to manipulate the visitors. There is also a frank discussion of the economic crisis, an issue that is marginalized in official discourse about the Exposition while it was still under way. It was not, however, entirely excluded: in "Les origines et les buts de l'Exposition Coloniale," Marcel Olivier addresses concerns over the impact of the financial crisis on the economic prospects of the Exposition, but remarks comfortingly that the "spécialistes des maladies sociales" are

frivolous aspects of the fair were presented as a mere supplement to the didactic materials—and yet, were seen as absolutely essential to the Exposition’s success. As Robert de Beauplan observes in his article on the Indochina section, “si instructive et indispensable que fût une documentation technique, il ne fallait pas perdre de vue que l’on s’adressait à un large public dont la bonne volonté se laisserait vite devant des tableaux statistiques ou des échantillonnages de produits. Pour attirer les visiteurs et les retenir, il était indispensable de recourir à toutes les séductions du pittoresque et à la magie irrésistible de l’art.” Commentary on the Exposition emphasized the importance of direct contact and experience for awakening the *conscience impériale*. In a review of the West Africa section for the *Revue des deux mondes*, Gabriel Angoulvant ties the didactic aims of the Exposition, the education of the “collectivités ignorantes” to the means through which the organizers’ intended to achieve this goal; namely, the manipulation of the senses: “[c]’est en faisant pénétrer, par l’œil et l’oreille, ces notions sommaires, mais indispensables, dans les collectivités ignorantes qui doivent être instruites en même temps qu’elles satisfont leur curiosité, qu’on créera dans ce pays, qui en manque, une conscience impériale” (836).⁵⁸ At the end of a fact-filled report on the Togo and Cameroun section in the *Guide officiel*, Demaison suggests the need for a “documentation physique et personnelle” to supplement the didactic displays: “Et maintenant, n’hésitez pas à vous délasser à la visite des artisans de ces pays. Confiez-vous aux solides piroguiers du Wouri, la rivière de Douala. Buvez le café et le chocolat des plantations de là-bas. Vous ajouterez ainsi une documentation physique et personnelle aux notions dont vous venez de vous enrichir” (123). The slippage between the Wouri river, and the Lac Daumesnil in the Bois de Vincennes puts the traveler in direct contact with the colonial spaces. The “documentation physique et personnelle” involves not only the manipulation of the fairgoer’s eyes and ears, but of his taste buds, nostrils, and his body as a whole, to be placed in the care of “solides piroguiers.”

assuring the public that the financial crisis is coming to an end; he cites the hundreds of thousands of American tourists in Europe as positive evidence of economic recovery (50).

As is clear from the *Guide officiel*, the embodied experience of the visitor was as important as the facts and figures offered by promotional material and the didactic displays. Unfortunately, although students today can draw on the *Guide officiel*, we are unable to access the vital “documentation physique et personnelle.” The *GO* was intended as a paratext to the central cultural experience of a visit to the Exposition itself, an experience that we can only piece together in a limited and fragmentary way through the *Rapport général*, guidebooks, reviews in the press (text and images), literary accounts, bureaucratic archives, and the few remaining architectural monuments (the former Musée des colonies, now the Cité nationale de l’histoire de l’immigration) to survive an event that was intended to be ephemeral.

⁵⁸ A prominent figure in the French imperialist *oeuvre* in West and Central Africa, Angoulvant served as Governor General of Côte d’Ivoire intermittently from 1908-16 and as Governor General of Afrique Équatoriale Française from May 1917-January 1918 and Governor General of French West Africa from January 1918 to July 1919, among other high-ranking administrative positions throughout the Empire. In the early planning stages of the Exposition, he was named *Commissaire général*, but was forced to relinquish the post after 1927, when he became the deputy of the French possession in India (Olivier, “Buts et origines” 49). As Governor of the Côte d’Ivoire, he conducted an aggressive “pacification” of the country, as many regions falling within the boundaries of the newly demarcated territory were still engaged in strong military resistance to the French invasion, a campaign which he recounted in *La Pacification de la Côte d’Ivoire, 1908-1915: méthodes et résultats* (1916). Among the measures taken beyond military action were internments, the imposition of financial penalties (“amendes de guerre”), and “regroupements de village”—a practice involving the “resettlement and reorganization of colonized peoples into administrative units” (Burnham 577-78).

Competing Visions of Exoticism

Although the Exposition's target audience was the "collectivités ignorantes," the *Guide's* focus on the visitor's "documentation physique et personnelle" seems to privilege the individual in a way that is bizarrely incongruous with the organizers' stated intentions of cultivating a *conscience impériale* amongst the masses, and reveals an interest in two categories that Chris Bongie identifies as central to the exoticist project: "authentic experience" and "sovereign individuality" (9). In his study of fin-de-siècle exoticist writing, Bongie describes the modern subject's anxious search for authenticity and a "lost individuality" (11) in a rapidly homogenizing world, a portrait that resonates strongly with the late-twentieth-century evocation of the traveler's crisis in the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* manifesto: "the modern (Romantic) *individual* [is] a subject who, desirous of experience, is nonetheless constituted by the impossibility of that experience" (10). In advocating an expanded colonial presence in the far-flung, relatively untouched places of the world, the attitudes espoused in the *Guide officiel* and other promotional materials clash with the perspective of Segalen and other travel writers from the same era, who yearned for an encounter with the Other free from the contaminating influence of other Europeans. Nevertheless, like Segalen, key Exposition texts also decry the exoticist clichés of earlier Expositions, attempting to produce a more authentic, realistic representation of the colonies through its "restitutions de la vie indigène."

The "adresse au visiteur" demonstrates this contradictory conception of the fair's target audience: "Cher visiteur, qui que vous soyez, vous n'êtes pas un esprit quelconque, du moment que vous avez quitté votre ville, votre demeure proche ou lointaine, vos occupations et vos plaisirs, pour venir aujourd'hui vous associer à la grande manifestation française qu'est l'EXPOSITION COLONIALE INTERNATIONALE de 1931" (17). The initial brushstrokes of this portrait of the visitor signal his uniqueness, as the very act of leaving home imbues him with a sort of cultural and intellectual superiority. The visitor stands out from the masses—yet, at the same time, his impulse to visit the fair reflects an attitude shared by many in this historical moment, one that Demaison deems "le grand sentiment qui anime notre époque; namely, curiosity for the unknown and exotic. The organizers would like to transform this curiosity into a passion for the *mise en valeur* project—to divert an erotic fascination with the feminine wiles of the *congaie* into an enthusiasm for rubber cultivation; to replace the silhouette of palm trees with the industrial contours of a palm oil factory in the mind of the traveler.

Many of the Exposition's paratexts reflect a perceived tension between the familiar and the new, the hackneyed and the authentic, the seductive and the instructive, a tension that resonates with the crises that characterized much early-twentieth-century travel literature.⁵⁹ The *Guide* frames the visitor as more than the average vulgar tourist, but rather as someone who would expect an authentic experience of the colonies: "Vous ne trouverez pas ici une exploitation des bas instincts d'un public vulgaire. . . . [The organizers] vous ont considéré, cher Visiteur, comme un homme de bon goût. Point de ces bamboulas, de ces danses du ventre, de ces étalages de bazar, qui ont discrédité bien d'autres manifestations coloniales; mais des restitutions de la vie tropicale avec tout ce qu'elle a de vrai pittoresque et de couleur" (18). Demaison demonstrates scorn for the "bas instincts d'un public vulgaire," and highlights the organizers' preoccupation with (re)creating an experience of the colonies that was both realistic and enticing. And yet, despite the expressions of contempt for the crassness of the masses, the

⁵⁹ My discussion of the dual modes of seduction and instruction is indebted to Lebovics's analysis in *True France* of what he terms the "dialectic" of the "fabulous" and the "improving" at the Exposition (67-83).

“public vulgaire”—a formulation that brings to mind Angoulvent’s evocation of the “collectivités ignorantes”—was in fact the intended audience of the Exposition.

Although Demaison celebrated the Exposition’s success in reproducing a convincing simulacrum of the colonies, his remarks regarding belly dancers betray an uneasiness regarding the difficult task of representing them authentically, and an acknowledgment of the heavy baggage of the exoticist imaginary. Numerous scholars have argued that there was a “shift from a popular/exotic to a governmental/*mise-en-valeur* mode of exhibition” as the organizers grew more concerned with gaining popular support for long-term colonial projects than with generating profits from the Exposition itself (Miller 224n20).⁶⁰ Press reviews and official reports certainly emphasized a break in ideology and representational strategies from earlier exhibitions: the 1931 Exposition was more serious, the representations of the colonies more authentic. However, such attempts at self-distinction had been made at earlier Expositions as well, and as we will see, the supposed break with the unabashed “foire” ambiance of earlier expositions was hardly definitive, given the persistence of such classic tropes as palm trees, dancing girls, camel rides, and “villages noirs.”⁶¹ Directed at the “collectivités ignorantes,” the 1931 Exposition’s mode of exoticism was necessarily popular, even as the organizers earnestly endeavored to distinguish their production from earlier exhibitions.

Moreover, such assessments tend to gloss over distinctions between different kinds of exoticism; the term itself is heavily weighted and its usage tends to conflate a wide range of aesthetics and ideologies. For one vein of exoticism, the equation of the exotic with the popular is antithetical. Bongie argues that the figure of the *foule* or “such ominous abstracts as Society or the State” (11) represent the enemy of the exoticist project in the minds of *fin-de-siècle* exoticist writers such as Segalen, who maintains in the *Essai sur l’exotisme* that “l’exotisme ne peut être que singulier, individualiste. Il n’admet pas la pluralité” (64). Thus Segalen rejects the popular in favor of the individualistic. Any mode of representing the other that was directed at the “collectivités ignorantes” does not belong to the exoticist tradition embraced by Segalen and Malraux, for whom the encounter with the other offers an escape from mass society. Charles Forsdick’s study of 1930s travel narratives does not view exoticism as a relic of the Conquest era, nor does he see it as incompatible with modernism; rather, he identifies in the exoticist’s anxiety over the “end of travel” a particularly modernist lament. To a certain extent, Segalen’s aesthetics—and in particular, his assertion of the individual over the *foule*—responded to the ethos of the *mise en valeur* mission, with its emphasis on increasing the French presence in the colonies.

And yet, in spite of his aversion to imperialist expansion, Segalen’s disdain for exoticism in its “acceptation quotidienne” resonates remarkably with the criticism of the touristic “littérature de paquebot” promulgated by colonial literature theorists such as Roland Lebel, Louis Bertrand, Louis Malleret, Jean Ajalbert, and Clothilde Chivaz-Baron. Writing from the vantage point of the *mise-en-valeur* era, these authors—like Segalen—demonstrate contempt for the “acceptation quotidienne” of exotic representations. Roland Lebel criticizes the writing on the colonies from the Conquest era as “pittoresque et superficiel,” the work of “chargés de

⁶⁰ See also Schneider; Lebovics, *True France* 52-54.

⁶¹ In her discussion of the 1900 Exposition, Leprun highlights goals similar to those expressed in official documents presenting the 1931 Exposition – to both attract and seduce the visitor and inculcate in him or her a certain understanding of the “progrès de la civilisation” (86). Referring to the “colonial city” at the 1889 Exposition universelle, Lebovics observes that “the Republic had been promoting a colonial consciousness at various expositions for over forty years” (54).

mission” and journalists sent to produce reportages on the newly “pacified” colonies. Such representations, produced by metropolitan authors for the metropolitan public—“une grosse masse de lecteurs”—lack the penetrating observations to be found in the writing of the true *écrivain colonial* (77). Like contemporary scholars of colonial representations, Lebel distinguishes between this early period of “littérature de conquête” and the later period of “littérature touristique” in which he is writing; however, for Lebel, both eras are marred by works of “faux exotisme” churned out by “voyageurs” and “passants” (79).⁶² Such travelers can only retain “impressions hâtives” from their brief sojourn in the colony (80). Similarly, Louis Bertrand rails against the “impertinence” of the “écrivain qui ne voit dans un pays étranger qu’un spectacle, un prétexte à s’émouvoir ou à s’exalter, qui ne sait absolument rien de ce pays, qui néglige de s’en enquérir, ou qui n’apporte avec lui qu’un bagage de notions confuses, ou banales, ou fausses, sur l’art, sur les mœurs, la pensée, la religion, la civilisation tout entière de ces peuples exotiques” (qtd. in Lebel 81). While Gouverneur Général of the Exposition Marcel Olivier, in an essay on the Exposition’s “origines et buts” published in the *Revue des deux mondes*, dismisses the *écrivain sédentaire* in favor of the *écrivain-voyageur* who seeks out a first-hand experience of the colonies—if only in the Parisian *banlieue*! (54), Lebel and his colleagues, despite sharing Olivier’s political views, routinely displayed contempt for the travel writer.

Lebel’s portrait of the typical “touriste colonial” bears a striking resemblance to the fairgoer who embarks on the “voyage de Vincennes.” The conceit of the “tour du monde” seems to validate the perspective of the “passant” for whom the “pays étranger” is merely a spectacle. In fact, the “tour du monde en jour” seems to embody the very travel practices that elicit the ire of Lebel and his colleagues. And yet, even as Demaison touts the value and efficiency of the “voyage de Vincennes,” his rejection of belly dancers, bazaars, and bamboulas echoes Lebel’s criticism of the endless recycling of “conventionnel[s]” and “fantaisistes” clichés in exoticist literature (Lebel 80). In spite of the organizers’ constant efforts to distance the 1931 Exposition from its predecessors, there was a systematic use of exoticist tropes from earlier Expositions dating all the way back to the nineteenth century. The visitors to the Exposition passed through the magic portal of the Porte Dorée with the same “bagage de notions confuses” as the average colonial tourist; and in many ways, despite claims to the contrary, the Exposition offered a confirmation of their preconceived notions.

Associationist Policy and the Stakes of Authenticity

The rejection of the exoticism of the “littérature de paquebot” in favor of a more “authentic” representation of the cultural, geographical, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the colonies was an aesthetics that resonated with the growth of “associationist” policies in the early twentieth century. The valorization of native art and architecture represented a concrete departure from urban planning in the assimilationist era, marked by large-scale military conflict, which tended to favor the razing of native cities and monuments.⁶³ Scholars have noted a

⁶² Unlike the reportages and travel narratives produced by “passants” in the early years of colonial occupation, the memoirs and first-hand accounts of war by colonial soldiers are treated respectfully by Lebel. Such works “restituent la physiognomie vraie de l’action et . . . montrent, dans la beauté des gestes qu’on ignorait ou qu’on dédaignait peut-être, l’œuvre accomplie par nos soldats coloniaux” (77).

⁶³ In her study of how shifts in colonial rhetoric translated into urban design policy in the colonies, Gwendolyn Wright argues that proponents of association “insisted on respect for and preservation of distinctive local cultures, even cultural differences among indigenous people, including tribal councils and historic monuments,” having

convergence between emerging racial ideologies and a new “politique indigène” reflecting the idea of association, while nevertheless suggesting that the design of pavilions at the Exposition continued to display a degree of hybridity and even of *métissage* out of keeping with the emphasis, so central to the concept of association, on maintaining distinctions between cultures.⁶⁴ As in building projects in the colonies, interpretations of “authentic” indigenous architecture were skewed in ways which reflected the mediating influence of architects in the service of the state. However, the organizers of individual sections at the Exposition, and the architects they employed constantly reminded the public of the authenticity of the architecture of the pavilions, the “indigenous villages” inhabited by natives transported from the colonies, and the reproductions of monuments. These frequent reminders point to the organizers’ anxiety over the perceived authenticity of these displays and signal the importance of the *animateurs* for authenticating them. The emphasis on authenticity over titillation was an essential part of the rhetorical project of convincing the visitors to the Exposition that the “voyage de Vincennes” could stand in for direct experience.

The Exposition was a highly stage-managed production that attempted to pass itself off as direct experience. And yet, the “voyage de Vincennes” was only meant to be a provisory step: the organizers wanted the visitor to undertake a real voyage to the colonies. However, the strategies employed at the Exposition that were intended to lure the visitor out of the metropole did not always coincide with the techniques used to encourage the metropolitan subject to actually settle there. The prospect of commuting via camel, however picturesque, was less likely to retain colonial settlers than the promise of being able to afford luxuries in the colonies that were out of reach at home. Many of the ads and articles in the press or in the *Guide officiel* were quick to point out that modern conveniences such as cars, gas stations, and refrigerators were now readily available in the colonies; “au seuil même du désert,” comments an advertisement for Shell service stations. The Shell ad nevertheless superimposes the textual presentation of its services over a photograph of a desert oasis, simultaneously disrupting and reinforcing the picturesque image of the Sahara, as the presence of such symbols of European modernity in the distant elsewhere would have disrupted the experience of the exotic for the traveler whose picturesque image of the Sahara was not compatible with such technology.

realized that “this respect, when combined with social services like schools and hospitals, might counter resistance far more effectively than military strength” (73-74). Wright in fact sees the 1931 Exposition as “a swan song of the associationist approach to colonial urbanism” (306), as increasingly visible resistance to French rule revealed the futility of pacification through social policy.

⁶⁴ Morton observes a correlation between associationist policies and newly prominent racial theories discrediting cultural assimilation through education. Proponents of scientific racism such as Georges Papillaut asserted that the intellectual and moral faculties of inferior races could only be developed through miscegenation, which would lead to the concomitant degradation of the white race (Morton 82-83, 186-90). See also Lebovics 99-100; and Hodeir 96-98.

Drawing on Thomas G. August’s analysis of the importance of the historical circumstances of the rise of Nazism, Miller suggests that the purpose of the Exposition was to both reassure critics of the Left that France was not abusing her colonial subjects, and to demonstrate to Germany that France was not “the agent of miscegenation and decadence” (August 145, qtd. in Miller 69). The associationist policy of “specificity and segregation” would respond to both of these political imperatives.



Figure 5 Advertisement for Shell oil and gas in *L'Illustration* 23 May 1931. The text reads: “Jadis, après une longue marche dans les dunes, la fatigue faisait apparaître aux yeux hallucinés du voyageur le point d’eau sous les palmes... Aujourd’hui, l’automobile a vaincu le Sahara et le ravitaillement en essence et huile n’est pas un mirage trompeur. Dans les colonies les plus reculées, au seuil même du désert, comme sur les routes du Métropole, le SERVICE SHELL pionnier de la civilisation, prête à l’automobile son aide efficace.”

The “mise en scène” of the colonies reflects the ambiguous and paradoxical commingling of modes of representing the other, the product of competing concerns and expectations. Moreover, it is characterized by a tension inherent to the colonial program: to both celebrate progress on the part of colonized populations, and to defer the full realization of their evolutionary potential.

Traveling Natives and the Reversal of the Colonial Gaze

The experience of colonial travel offered by the “Tour du monde” was made possible by the importation of hundreds of colonial subjects into the metropole, a practice that put heavy pressure on the concept of the social and cultural divide between metropole and colony, so central to maintaining the racial hierarchies that supported French colonial ideologies. While some reviewers such as Paul-Émile Cadilhac were carried away by the fantasy of travel (“Que nous sommes loin de Paris!”), other Exposition paratexts betray a certain anxiety over the potential consequences of the natives’ journey to the metropole. In a satirical article for the unofficial *Journal de l’Exposition Coloniale*, author Max Deauville offers a breaking news report on nascent plans to hold an “Exposition de Blancs chez les Noirs” in 1934, observing: “C’est chose faite: la Métropole va exposer ses indigènes sous les cocotiers aux portes de Tombouctou.” The article presents itself as a playful inversion of the conceit of the Exposition Coloniale; for instance, whereas the metropole’s exposition of its African colonies featured dancers and singers, “sur la scène du désert,” famous Parisian singers Saint-Granier and Mistinguett will perform duos “dans la nuit africaine.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The latter was herself implicated in the tradition of sexualized dance with ties to the sexualization of the belly dance, as she performed at the Folies-Bergère, Moulin Rouge, and the Eldorado, known for her risqué routines; her

However, this inversion of the terms of the Exposition does not provide any real reversal of perspectives. There is no attempt in this imaginary Exposition to reproduce the experience of travel to France for the African fairgoer—the coconut trees of the Timbuktu skyline will not be eclipsed by a reproduction in miniature of the Eiffel Tower. The program for the “Exposition de Blancs” in many ways mirrors the history of imperialist expansion: the natives to be displayed seem to follow in the footsteps of earlier colonial travelers. For instance, the article informs its readers that the “indigènes blancs” will be transported to Timbuktu in vehicles on caterpillar tracks under the direction of André Citroën, whose “Croisière Noire” and “Croisière Jaune” expeditions penetrated into regions of Africa and Asia that were relatively unfamiliar to the metropolitan public, returning with images of people and places encountered that further fueled the French exoticist imaginary (Morton 88).⁶⁶ Moreover, the representation of the future fairgoer reproduces racist tropes that were considered archaic and excluded from the canon of exoticist tropes at the Exposition, marginalized in the Bois de Boulogne.⁶⁷ A drawing captioned “La Revanche du Blanc” depicts a racist caricatural “African” leaning over the edge of a cooking pot placed atop a roaring fire, gazing at a white man holding a long, pronged utensil. The trope of the African cannibal is revived here, albeit evoked in reverse. Although this image purports to “return” the violence of early colonial encounters—whose accounts are laced with fear of the cannibalistic other—the explicit and brutal nature of the image runs counter to official rhetoric regarding the relationship between France and its West African territories; the image of the bloodthirsty African was virtually absent from the Exposition.⁶⁸

It is the metropole putting *itself* on display at the “Exposition de Blancs”; France continues to monopolize the authority to represent, just as in the Bois de Vincennes. Within the fictional space of the satire, the power dynamics of the colonial relationship rest intact. While the central conceit of reversing the object and viewing subject of a human zoo constructs its humor through the reproduction of racist stereotypes, it is also the occasion for political and social satire, with metropolitan France as its target. One attraction, a “stand forain,” will feature the “tours de ‘Forces’” of Mme. Hanau, who has engaged, as her huckster, the banker Albert

legs were insured for an enormous sum. For the ties between Parisian dance routines and the belly dance, see Çelik and Kinney.

⁶⁶ Fordick mentions accounts of the “Croisière Noire” as noteworthy examples of texts showcasing static natives (*Persistence* 76).

⁶⁷ On the human zoo exhibiting a group of people from New Caledonia, see Lebovics, *Human Zoos*; and Dauphiné. For a fictionalized account, see Daeninckx.

⁶⁸ Lunn argues that extreme stereotypes of Africans as belligerent and fierce warriors, both inhumane and less than human, “sexually depraved and morally repellent,” was considerably altered in the context of World War I (3). The residual savage stereotypes held over from the years of European conquest of Africa was still useful when deployed against the German enemy. However, such images were dangerous and awkward when it came to negotiating the presence of West African soldiers in France among a fearful population, whether for training, quartering, or hospital recovery. Lunn further contends that the French metropolitan government adopted the “paternalistic imagery espoused by advocates of African recruitment in the colonial army” (among them Gabriel Angoulvant as governor of West Africa in 1918-19) when portraying the soldiers to the public, but privately worked with military authorities to limit interactions between African soldiers and metropolitan citizens to the greatest extent possible. This dual approach of celebrating the place of colonized subjects within the empire, while attempting to maintain sharp distinctions between metropole and colony, clearly still held cachet long after the end of World War I, and was a policy common to the organizers of the exposition as the event took shape in their hands over the course of the 1920s and into the 30s. On the history of West African soldiers in France, see also Mann.

Oustric. In this little joke, Deauville calls out the parties involved in several financial scandals.⁶⁹ Who is the audience for this satire? While the extradiegetic audience for Deauville's article overlaps neatly with the 1931 Exposition's public, there is a shift in the diegetic audience for the spectacle of Europeans on parade. The fairgoers who flock to the gates of Timbuktu for the "Exposition de Blancs" are, within the fiction of the satire, France's African colonial subjects, and thus do not, for the most part, line up with the readership for the paper, which was targeted at the Vincennes tourist. While the other articles in the paper praise the work of the *mission civilisatrice*, here what the satirist proposes to put on display for France's colonized populations—and for the benefit of the paper's metropolitan French readers—are the failings of French society. The somewhat ham-handed result points towards a set of unforeseen consequences arising from the encounter between object and spectator, between colonizer and colonized, in the Bois de Vincennes. What if, instead of seeing the apotheosis of empire, the colonized subjects learned a different lesson?

Pierre Mille had articulated similar concerns in a short story published in the collection *Sur la vaste terre* (1906).⁷⁰ Mille's most famous literary creation was the colonial soldier Barnavaux who, as Jennifer Yee observes, represented "l'homme simple, Monsieur Tout-le-monde" (ix). Those of Mille's short stories that center on Barnavaux are constructed through a dialogue between Barnavaux and the narrator, a more educated and literary man, with a higher social status than Mille's simple soldier (Yee viii-xiii). Mille wrote two stories that involve a chance encounter between the narrator and Barnavaux at an Exposition: the 1900 Exposition Universelle and the 1931 Exposition. In the story "Barnavaux, homme d'état," the narrator watches as Barnavaux attempts to enter a building in the Indochina section by the wrong door, only to be reprimanded by one of the "tirailleurs annamites" sitting on guard at the entrance. In response, the tipsy ("pas saoul, mais gai"!) Barnavaux plucks the soldier out of his seat, sits down in his chair, pulls the soldier onto his lap, and kisses him affectionately on both cheeks, much to the merriment of all around him—except the livid and humiliated Vietnamese soldier. Following this episode, Barnavaux observes to the narrator the dangers of allowing colonial subjects to make the "voyage à l'envers" to the metropole:

Les expositions, c'est la ruine du respect qu'on doit aux blancs. Tous ces sales sauvages ne devraient jamais quitter leurs pays, ils ne devraient même pas savoir que nous en avons un qui ressemble aux leurs, un pays où il y a de la terre, des pierres, des arbres comme chez eux, et des esclaves blanches qu'ils peuvent se payer pour vingt sous, derrière les Invalides. Quand nous sommes là-bas . . . Nous sommes des espèces de mystères, des bons dieux vivants. . . Mais nous les faisons venir en France, nous leur montrons qu'il y a parmi nous des espèces d'esclaves, qui font les besognes que pour rien au monde un blanc ne voudrait faire chez eux. Malheur! . . . Vous croyez que c'est un moyen de les impressionner? Ils nous méprisent. (68-69)

⁶⁹ He is referring to the "Affaire Oustric," which exposed banker Albert Oustric's and Ministre de la Justice Raoul Péret's involvement in speculation and fraud, as well as to allegations of fraud levied at Marthe Hanau. These scandals were given heavy coverage in *Le Canard Enchaîné* (Martin 88).

⁷⁰ In *Au Maroc: chez les fils de l'ombre et du soleil* (1931), Mille criticizes palm trees exoticism, echoing concerns about colonial literature and the 1931 Exposition (Shilton 78).

In recognizing the pitfalls of staging a colonial encounter in the metropole—problems that might arise even within the highly regulated and phantasmatic spaces of the Exposition, Barnavaux positions the colonial subjects imported to the metropole as participating in a kind of reverse travel. Although he does not question the legitimacy of the racial hierarchies imposed through French imperialism, nevertheless he does undermine the assertion of his own racial superiority by attributing strong analytical powers to the “sales sauvages,” whether the audacious Vietnamese soldier or any of the other races on display. Although the extreme primitivism of “Une Exposition de Blancs” does not depict the spectacle’s African audience as the astute readers that Barnavaux imagines them to be, nevertheless both texts display a level of unease over the Empire’s potential vulnerability when the colonial encounter is displaced to the metropole. While the recognition of France’s social and economic problems does not seem to create a moral problem for the *mission civilisatrice* for Deauville and Mille’s commentators, conversely, the fact that the colonized are savages and brutes does not erase France’s own internal weaknesses.

A journalist for the *London Times* marveled at the degree of interaction between colonizer and colonized, traveler and native at the Exposition: “No attempt is made to prevent [the colonial people working at the fair] from getting to know their European visitors. . . . The French do not regard the natives at Vincennes as a sort of raree show!” (qtd. in Benedict 49). In truth, the French public responded to the natives very much as a “sort of raree show,” and despite official statements to the contrary, the organizers did not fully preclude this attitude. And yet, the chance encounters at the Exposition that appear as travel anecdotes in some reviews are dangerous in that they offer the silent staffage figure—the travelee—an opportunity to intervene in the textualization of that encounter. The narrator of Paraf’s “Songe d’un jour d’été” recounts his encounter with a Cameroonian *tirailleur* named Hamaoa, whom the narrator mockingly refers to as “le philosophe” in acknowledgement of the “Sagesse des Nations” that permeates such profound observations as, “Ton pays, même s’il est mauvais, c’est ton pays.” The narrator is pleased to learn about Cameroon’s culture from the encounter, its music and arts; he nevertheless is disappointed that his sensationalistic pre-conceptions are ill-founded when Hamaoa tells him that his family is monogamous. However, Hamaoa rises to the occasion, producing a friend with seven wives so that his new metropolitan acquaintance will not have to “partir désillusionné.”

While the encounter with Hamaoa ultimately confirms the narrator’s assumptions regarding the primitiveness of the travelee, nevertheless, the fleeting moment of “déception” signals the unstable quality of the interaction, even within the controlled and regulated realm of the text. Such encounters were even more hazardous in the actual fairgrounds; it appears that the paternalistic familiarity apparent in the *tutoiement* that takes place in Paraf’s account of his visit “chez [ses] amis du pays noir” was energetically rebuffed in certain situations in the fairgrounds.⁷¹ While the title of the article “Une visite aux noirs de l’Afrique Occidentale Française” certainly conflates the spaces of display and the spaces of the colonies, the account of this visit undermines the conceit of the “tour du monde” by drawing attention to the West African *animateurs*’ status as precisely not native to Paris:

⁷¹ “De nombreux visiteurs qui avaient employé le tutoiement vis-à-vis des marchands des souks furent vivement réprimandés par ceux auxquels ils s’adressaient. Ils se déclarèrent stupéfaits de cette agressivité” (Ageron 506-08).

Tout ce monde est encore un peu dépaycé. Dame! Après un long voyage pénible sur mer, la température pluvieuse de ces jours-ci n'est pas faite pour faciliter l'acclimatation.

Noirs et noires circulent, enveloppés de lourds manteaux et d'imposantes couvertures, chaussés de souliers solides, du numéro 46 et au-dessus.

The interview with one Mme. Dalanda Diallo through the intermediary of the *garde de cercle* interpreter only further undermines the conceit of “elsewhere,” as Diallo offers remarks on such typical touristic topics as the weather: “Très contente d'être venue en France. Mais n'y a-t-il donc pas de soleil? Ce serait si amusant s'il ne pleuvait pas!”⁷² The light-hearted tone of this encounter, as well as the focus on the wardrobe change necessitated by the shift to Paris, is meant to counteract the “exposés” on the poor living and working conditions of the Exposition in papers like *L'Humanité*, and yet, the representation of the “natives” slips away from the official line of the Exposition, drawing attention to the distance between “home” and Paris. While the representation of Dalanda Diallo reinforces racist stereotypes in other ways, her small talk about the weather might have issued from the mouth of any tourist.

As the rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice* relies so heavily on the metaphors of leaders and followers, the figure of mobility is central to the evocation of this imperialist project. Olivier describes the growing mobility of the Africans, who can now leave their forest abodes on the roads that he and his countrymen have traced there. The role played by the African laborers, who were exclusively responsible for the creation of these roads, is utterly elided, and their literal and figurative movement along these paths is marginalized or deferred. For Jean d'Esme, it is 7,000 kilometer's worth of roads “au coeur de cette... brousse jadis si farouche” that has allowed the “races opprimées, décimées, agonisantes, abominablement exploitées” to emerge from the darkness. The astounding economic growth (possibly fabricated) of French West Africa is due to the expansion of the infrastructure, notes Demaison. In light of this he demands, “que sera-ce le jour où l'ensemble de ces peuples sera desservi par des réseaux complets, qui aboutiront à des ports judicieusement choisis?” (74). The celebration of the accomplishments of the *mission civilisatrice*, clearing roads into the very heart of darkness, is coupled with an expression of anxiety over where else these roads might lead, how the imperialist movement might rebound, how these paths might be traveled.

Barnavaux's caution regarding the consequences of allowing colonial subjects to transgress the boundaries between colony and metropole seems to prefigure the resentment over the “ungrateful” déclassé student. The comparative analysis that the imperialist state would have truly wanted to preclude was around political rights and civil liberties.⁷³ The roads to France for the “leftward journey” of the Vietnamese students are viewed as intimately tied to their political challenges to French rule. What about the roads leading out of the African “brousse”? Given the increasingly fraught relationships between the Vietnamese elite and the French government, both in the colony and in the metropole, the characterization of West Africans as belonging to the “least evolved” races took on a paradoxically positive valence, when this lack of development was qualified as an indication that West Africans were disinclined to violent resistance. In his

⁷² As Morton points out in her analysis of this article, the evocation of the “gourmandise” of Diallo and the garde-cercle hints at a cannibalistic appetite, a reminder of marginalized tropes of African primitiveness. But the discourse of Diallo differs distinctly from the patois catchphrase for Banania, which the article also employs (“Consuming the Colonies” 61-62).

⁷³ See Roubaud 128-29.

discussion of the *mise en valeur* of the West African colonies, including infrastructure development, Angoulvent hastens to reassure the reader that in these territories, “[l]e génie de notre pays a rencontré, pour s’y épanouir, les races les moins évoluées, mais les plus loyales... enfin nous pouvons puiser dans ce pays une partie de notre sauvegarde extérieure, sans craindre que se tournent contre nous les armes dont nous lui aurons appris le maniement...” (835). Angoulvent places particular emphasis on the zealous participation of West African soldiers on the behalf of France in World War I (849-51). However, in spite of Angoulvent’s attempt to set up an implicit opposition between the “bon soldat”—the interwar era’s answer to the “bon sauvage”—and the militant intellectual, most of the militant African students in Paris in the 1920s were veterans (Miller 16-17).⁷⁴ Soldiers, students, and workers were all responsible for creating the “effervescence nationaliste” that menaced colonial rule.

The 1931 Colonial Exposition institutionalized the opposition between traveler and native in order to create a nation of *colons*. The reification of the colonial subject as an *indigène sédentaire* concealed the growing anxiety over the consequences of that triumph of the *mission civilisatrice*—the metaphorical and material “road building”—for the separation of center and periphery. Even as the organizers touted the routes criss-crossing African forest, savanna, and desert, or the railroads and ports of a “jeune” and “frémillante” Indochina, to garner interest in the colonies’ economic prospects, they struggled to contend with the reality that the outward momentum of imperialism had rebounded, that in penetrating to the most distant recesses of the colony, they had inadvertently positioned the metropole, and especially Paris, as a destination for the “leftward,” northward, and eastward journeys of the Empire’s colonial subjects.

In spite of his assertions that among his compatriots there are many travelers waiting to be born, in spite of his enumeration of his nation’s long history of outward movement and expansion, and in spite of his own identity, firmly defined in terms of travel, Paul Morand’s review of the Exposition has a barely concealed layer of anxiety over the “return” of the Empire to the center. The playful tone of his reverie on the arrival of the colonies in the Bois de Vincennes belies his uneasiness over the dangerous ramifications of the ties between metropole and colony; over the collapse of distance between center and periphery:

Les antipodes nous paient maintenant de retour, renvoyés vers le centre comme la balle par le mur. Les colonies, désormais sevrées, rendent à la patrie nourricière les visites que celle-ci leur a faites depuis six siècles. Paul et Virginie débarquent à Paris en voyage de noces. Les descendants des Incas de Marmontel, aux habits de plumes et aux casques de turquoises, dessinés par Berain, les fils des *Otaïtiens* de La Pérouse, cuirassés de nacre, plantent leurs tentes, érigent leurs cases sur le plateau de Gravelle. Les chefs noirs, aux joues plus entaillées de cicatrices que le troc des caoutchoucs, se frayent dorénavant vers nous, en avion, un chemin à travers la distance, comme nos pères se frayèrent jadis dans leur sylvie des sentiers, au sabre d’abattis; voilà qu’ils nous égalent en curiosité et en audace. (330)

The image of the colonies “returning” to Paris begins with the innocuous image of a “voyage de noces” for Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s Paul and Virginie, icons of the literature of the “ailleurs” and of innocence who, though exotic and Creole, are nevertheless recognizably French; it will not even be the first journey to the metropole for Virginie. The tone shifts with the arrival of the

⁷⁴ The *tirailleur* on the Banania trademark is the epitome of the “bon soldat” stereotype.

“descendants des Incas” and the “fils des *Otaïtiens*,” figures emerging from the exotic imaginary and the history of French imperialism. These erstwhile immobile characters were mere objects of the picturesque; now, in a flurry of phallic metaphors, they stake their tents and erect their huts in the Bois de Vincennes. The anxiety is compounded by the return journey of the “chefs noirs”; Morand emphasizes the primitive and the traditional through the reference to cheek scarring, while the evocation of their utterly modern mode of transportation simultaneously incorporates them into the realm of progress and modernity: far from traveling on camelback, they will arrive in the metropole via airplane. Their trajectory to Paris is the mirror image of the violent penetration into the jungle performed by an earlier, perhaps more active generation of Frenchmen. The mobility of the natives signals their status of rivals and competitors. Like the colonizer, they are inflamed by the “grand sentiment” of the era—their curiosity and audacity attest to their dynamism; no longer objects of curiosity, they turn their gaze to the metropole.

Morand’s patronizing treatment of the “Parisien sédentaire” takes on a sense of urgency in the face of this onslaught. The armchair traveler can only handle the sanitized and romanticized vision of the “tropics” staged in the Parisian *banlieue*: “[D]es Tropiques sans moustiques ni venins, sans soifs ni fièvres, un Vincennes sans vampires, un lac Daumesnil, -- frère cadet du Tchad,--sans alligators. Tout ce qu’il y a de mortel dans les plus beaux climats disparaît derrière tant de noms ravissants et de bêtes soyeuses” (330). It is due to this passion for the romantic, coupled with a “paresse” and a “torpeur” (331), that the French have been outpaced by their own colonial subjects. The appearance of so many antipodeans in the Bois de Vincennes is merely the latest symptom of the disconcerting proximity between colony and metropole: “[L]’avion soude les colonies à la métropole . . . Le trajet de la périphérie au centre est maintenant si rapide, nos réactions si nerveuses, et immédiates, qu’il semble que la Tour Eiffel soit ébranlée lorsqu’un séisme secoue les Antilles; et nous songeons à notre sécurité parisienne lorsque la radio nous apprend qu’un typhon a ravagé le matin même la baie d’Along” (330). The growth of organized resistance and revolt on the part of colonial subjects is beginning to take on the terrifying dimensions of a natural disaster; it seems hardly coincidental that one of the metaphors of impending doom refers to the Caribbean, the site of the first successful war of decolonization—in Haiti. An “effervescence nationaliste” is gaining traction in both colony and metropole—seemingly distant sites now bound together by the journeys of colonizers and colonized, travelers and erstwhile travelees.

Chapter Two

White Men and Medusas: Arrested Motion in André Malraux's *La voie royale*

Before embarking on his quest to penetrate into the menacing depths of the Cambodian jungle in search of ancient Khmer treasures, the young protagonist of *La voie royale*, Claude Vanec, ruminates on the stifling existence that he seeks thereby to evade:

Il avait réfléchi naguère, sans avoir la naïveté d'en être surpris, aux conditions d'une civilisation qui fait à l'esprit une part telle que ceux qui s'en nourrissent, gavés sans doute, sont doucement conduits à manger à prix réduits. Alors? Aucune envie de vendre des autos, des valeurs ou des discours, comme ceux de ses camarades dont les cheveux collés signifiaient la distinction; ni de construire des ponts, comme ceux dont les cheveux mal coupés signifiaient la science. (37)

Perhaps the most significant figure of capitalist society in this pantheon of complacent men is the car salesman, purveyor of a transportation technology that corresponds to a completely mechanized form of mobility. Claude's journey from France to the heart of the jungle is accomplished through multiple forms of transport: boat, car, ox-cart, and on foot. At the novel's climax, Claude's travel companion and seasoned adventurer Perken forces his body into motion, staggering stiffly across the compound of a tribe of unpacified Moï forest-dwellers into the bared weapons of these savage natives.⁷⁵ Perken's halting, jerky march toward an uncertain fate, in which the possibility not just of death but of torture—including, horror of horrors, castration—looms large, is most obviously a physical expression of his will to dominate both himself and the native other. The vindication of white masculinity in the novel is intimately tied to the male traveler's will to propel his body through space.

The colonies offer the tantalizing prospect of forms of individuation that are not available in the metropole. The two men's slow, tortuous progression through the jungle with their ox-carts is the precise antithesis of the comfort and ease offered by the latest automobile models. Their successful acquisition of valuable Khmer artifacts, crowned by Perken's display of dominance among the primitive Moï, appears to confirm the exotic periphery's status as a site untainted by the decadence of a Europe in crisis. However, Claude and Perken's seeming departure from a modern existence—one defined in terms of cars, stocks, and feats of engineering—into the jungle is complicated by their failure to access the hyperbolic mobility of an earlier generation of adventurers. Claude's sense of having transcended the alienation of

⁷⁵ In using the term Moï and other ethnonyms (e.g. "Cham"), I am following Malraux's own practice, partly for consistency's sake but also because, given the dubious accuracy of the ethnographic and even the geographical details that Malraux incorporates into the text, it would be difficult to determine how these terms might correspond to populations described in more reliable sources. However, I do this in full recognition of the complex history of the term's use in colonial ethnography. In the early colonial period, the lowland Vietnamese designation for the populations living in the Central Highlands—"Moï"—was adopted by the French and applied broadly to these ethnic groups. The term is highly pejorative; as Saleminck notes, "Moï" "can be glossed as 'savage,' but with servile connotations added by the slave trade that was concentrated in the Highlands" (28). The Central Highlands, as a geographic area, were defined in this era in terms of their inhabitants, referred to as the "Hinterland Moï" or "Pays Moï." The names for both this geographic region and the people who live there have changed numerous times over the course of the twentieth century, primarily in response to shifts in policy or political ideology. Whereas the generic term "Montagnard" is the most common in international usage, Saleminck notes that the current policy in Vietnam officially recognizes 53 individual ethnic minorities, in addition to the "Kinh" or "Viêt" ethnic majority, and does not have a broadly defined ethnonym for the Central Highlands populations (29).

modern life through his victorious quest for Khmer treasures is subsequently undone as Perken's kinetic triumph in the Moï village results in a debilitating injury. Even as he struggles to differentiate himself from the slick car salesmen back home—symbols of his generation's mediocrity—Claude is uneasily aware of his inability to reclaim the status of the intrepid *broussard*, icon of the bygone Conquest era. Claude occupies an ambiguous position, caught between this heroic past and the banal, stultifying present. The aura of belatedness that hangs over Claude and Perken's journey complicates the opposition between metropolitan modernity and colonial pre-modernity that is frequently evoked in the novel. The systematic implementation of *mise en valeur* principles of colonial governance and imperialist expansion underway within the French Indochinese territories at this historical moment contributes to the sense that European degeneracy will soon overtake even these distant outposts.

In a crucial scene midway through the novel, Claude and Perken undertake the grueling task of wrenching a set of stones engraved with priceless bas-reliefs from the Khmer temple to which they are affixed. They must grapple with the material structure of the building and overgrown vegetation—opponents that are strangely endowed with life and the will to resist the men's actions. This conflict is explicitly framed as an obstacle to the men's spatial progression through the forest, but also as a threat to their gendered and racialized identities as virile white men. Up until the struggle with the stones and the forest entangling these coveted objects, Claude and Perken define their identities through their status as dynamic travelers, thereby differentiating themselves from the inert existence of vapid Europeans, whether in colonial or metropolitan society, and indolent natives alike. Following this encounter, however, the valorization of movement over stasis is overturned as the hyperbolic mobility that characterized an earlier generation of *broussards* comes to be associated with the relentless efficiency of the train and other forms of mechanized transportation. The rapid extension of train lines in the men's wake casts both their arduous journey through the forest and Perken's immobilization in a new light. Compared to the decisive mobility of the train, their halting progression through the jungle is no longer merely a worrying symptom of their *déchéance*—although this anxiety does linger on—but also a mode of travel that distinguishes them from their mediocre European counterparts: engineers, car salesmen, colonial bureaucrats. The more embodied and physically exerting their movement is in the jungle, the more forcefully it lends itself to the production of a coherent European male subject.

In spite of his nostalgia for the unfettered movement of the *broussards*, it is the vexed mobility characterizing Perken's dogged, lurching march toward death in the Moï compound and his subsequent immobilization that paradoxically allow him to distinguish himself from the despised *colons* in a way that this earlier era's extreme mobility no longer can. Similarly, the slow and laborious pace of Perken's journey to reach his mountain stronghold before dying differentiates this movement from the future voyages of *colons* who would trace this same route in the relative comfort and ease of the train. Despite his contempt for the policies and rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice*, Perken's aspiration to make a stand in his remote man-who-would-be-kingdom in the mountain highlands is oddly consonant with economic and social practices promoted to further the state's expansionist agenda in the *mise en valeur* era. The "tour du monde en un jour" staged at the Exposition was after all an attempt to foster long-term investment in the colonies, not a celebration of transitory passage through the colonies. It is Perken's compromised mobility that permits him to redeem his project of definitive dwelling in an age when similar practices of settlement are being institutionalized.

In this chapter I intervene in the ongoing debate over the politics of *La voie royale*'s participation in colonial-exotic literary traditions. The novel has historically received little critical attention, overshadowed as it is by the third novel in Malraux's "Asian" trilogy, the Prix Goncourt-winning *La condition humaine* (1933). However, it is interesting to note just how much of the existing scholarship seeks to discount the novel's ties to the principles and practices of French colonialism in Indochina. There are exceptions, notably Panivong Norindr's seminal study of the novel as precisely a "symptom of French colonial ideology" (89). The point of departure for my own examination of *La voie royale* is the fact that these opposed critical models bizarrely adopt a parallel approach to this question, relying equally on the suppression of different moments of ambiguity in the text to argue for or against the novel's complicity with colonial ideology.

My analysis explores in greater depth the stakes of movement and immobility in *La voie royale* in order to demonstrate the critical possibilities opened up by reading this novel as a travel narrative. I argue that Malraux's fascination with the tension between mobility and stasis allows him to stage of a set of crises around white masculinity in a way that is more complex than has been acknowledged in previous scholarship. Looking at the dynamics of travel and movement in the novel allows us to understand the novel's profoundly ambivalent relationship with both the colonial-exotic tradition from which it emerges and the humanist philosophy that it espouses.

Mobility, Stasis, and the Modernist Predicament

La voie royale narrates Claude and Perken's journey along an ancient thoroughfare to loot the Khmer temples that line the road.⁷⁶ Claude, a twenty-six-year-old Frenchman, initiates the venture, setting out for Indochina armed with an archeological map of Thailand and Cambodia on which he has demarcated regions that, having yet to be explored and inventoried by official archeological institutions, are thus ripe for the pillaging. During the passage to Indochina, he encounters the mysterious Perken, an older Danish man who is the frequent object of rumors circulating among the colonial society in miniature onboard, according to which "il avait vécu parmi les indigènes, et les avait dominés" (15). Claude comes to the conclusion that he will need the assistance of a man with knowledge and experience of the unsubjected territories on the map if he is to succeed in reaching the temples and transporting the sculptures back to Europe. Claude proposes the scheme to Perken as a way for the latter to obtain sufficient funds to arm his men in the mountain highlands. For Perken, the adventure in the Cambodian forest is primarily a means to an end: his goal is to reassert control over his domain and stave off the onslaught of "civilization"—that is, large-scale European colonial expansion. An added goal of their mission is the search for Perken's missing comrade, the even more enigmatic Grabot, in the realm of the still "unpacified" Moï communities.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The "voie royale" connected Angkor Wat and the nearby Tonlé Sap lake and river system, to the Chao Phraya river basin in contemporary west Thailand.

⁷⁷ The novel is a rewriting of Malraux's own abortive attempt to steal bas-reliefs from temples at Banteay Srei with his wife Clara and friend Louis Chevasson in December 1923. While Malraux and his companions succeeded in removing a number of sculptures from the temple complex, they were arrested before they could return to France with their booty. Malraux and Chevasson were convicted of theft in Phnom Penh in July 1924. Both defendants appealed their case before the higher court in Saigon, which in October reduced and suspended both men's prison sentences. However, it upheld the lower court's ruling that the sculptures would remain in the possession of the Albert Sarraut Museum in Phnom Penh, as the property of the king of Cambodia. I am indebted to Walter Langlois's account of the events in *The Indochina Adventure* (1966), as well as Vandegans; and Lacouture. However, in light of

As Claude and Perken make their way through the jungle, they are haunted by the thought that their progress is followed by the invisible but omniscient Grabot, a Kurtz-like figure that they assume to have maintained a position of dominance over native communities deep in the jungle. In an abrupt reversal of assumptions regarding European physical and intellectual superiority, they discover in the second half of the novel that Grabot, the consummate figure of the conqueror, has been subjugated and emasculated (and likely castrated) by the very people he was supposed to rule. In a sense, the violence to which Grabot has been subjected is consistent with the representation of the Moï elsewhere in the narrative—savage, scarcely human. But Grabot’s fate differs from that Prosper Odend’hal, another adventurer of legend who met an early end in the jungle. Whereas Odend’hal, “le chef blanc,” met with a sensational death during his ethnographic mission among the Jarai people—“assommé à coups d’épieux, la nuit, par les hommes du Sadète du feu” (11)—Grabot is forced to perform menial labor.⁷⁸ Bound to and compelled to turn a millstone, the once-powerful *broussard* Grabot has been reduced to the status of a cog in the machine—albeit a very primitive one when compared to the ruthless efficiency of the train. In spite of the exotic setting (and taking into account the obviously different circumstances of physical coercion), Grabot’s condition as he turns in an endless circle is uncomfortably reminiscent of that of the decadent modern man, resigned to his “niche à chien” (36), that Claude and Perken despise.

Even the remote areas traversed in the novel have been brought within the orbit of modernity in the sense that they too have become a site of the absurd, a recognition forced on Claude and Perken when they confront the spectacle of abased white masculinity in the Moï village. The novel exposes the futility of dreams of escape from the social order through its emphasis on the homogenizing effects of colonial expansion on the most exotic corners of the world. The irruption of the modern European predicament in a space on the outskirts of empire, a setting represented in many other ways as outside of history, seems to challenge the notion of extreme difference between metropole and colony, as the European men are unable to evade the destiny of *déchéance* that awaited them in Europe by fleeing to the faraway East. Perken’s frequently evoked notion of personal *déchéance*—the gradual erosion of the mind and the will—is tied to broader shifts in colonial policy through which the systematic exploitation of the colonies’ resources has supplanted the spirited individualism and heroic feats of an earlier generation of men.

Perken’s anxiety over the inevitable approach of the forces of progress and modernity towards the farthest reaches of the colony in the symbolic form of the railroad locates the narrative at the particular historical moment of the *mise en valeur* era. But his ambitions with regards to the highland Moï are the exact antithesis of the Exposition’s stated goals of bringing progress to the backwards natives through economic development. For the government, the threat to French dominance in the region did not come from savage “tribes” in the mountains, but rather from Vietnamese nationalist groups, whose aims were, according to colonial author

Langlois’s deeply problematic methodology, I have consulted many of the original news sources at the Archives nationales d’outre mer for an understanding of Malraux’s various activities in French Indochina (see footnote 87).

⁷⁸ Odend’hal, an explorer and scholar associated with the Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient, was “killed by partisans of the *p’tau apui*, the Master of Fire, because of his insistence on seeing the sacred saber meticulously guarded by the Jarai” (Salemink 304n18). Salemink 74-75 and Jennings 101 mention briefly Odend’hal’s role in furthering the *colonisation savante*. In their accounts of French expansion in the mountain regions, as in Malraux’s novel, Odend’hal’s murder (Jennings 106) seems to carry a kind of symbolic importance, belying sanguine reports on the success of the *mission civilisatrice* in these then-remote areas.

Claude Farrère's polemical Exposition review in *L'Illustration*, the massacre or enslavement of the Moï, Cambodians, Laotians, and other neighboring communities.

In contrast, Malraux's novel erases the threat of nationalist movements and indigenous anti-colonial dissent, and instead posits an anachronistic world in which the untamed forest and its inhabitants present their opposition to the white men who attempt to pass through or over them.⁷⁹ Claude and Perken are what Ali Behdad has called "belated travelers," out of step with the colonial ethos of the era in which the book was published. While Grabot's humiliation considerably deflates the myth of white male superiority, paradoxically, the articulation of this challenge is contingent on a *mise-en-scène* of anachronistic tropes of savagery and primitiveness. Claude and Perken's confrontation with the absurd in the distant reaches of the colony ultimately does not affirm a sense that the inhabitants of this space share the existential crisis of the travelers who pass through it. The protagonists' initially hazy recognition that the Conquest era is over suggests the flattening of diversity due to the diffusion of imperial influence; however, homogenization does not signal parity or even similitude: the Moï are represented as less than human, assimilated to the unity of the jungle.⁸⁰

Claude and Perken's unstable identities as travelers represent a departure from the bravado of the Conquest-era version of travel embodied by figures such as man-who-would-be-king David de Mayrena and adventurer-ethnographer Prosper Odend'hal. In an anecdote that sums up the spirit of this bygone age, Perken recounts Mayrena's legendary wild ride through the jungle after Christian missionaries refused to allot his "petite concubine chame" space in their cemetery: "[il] a emmené à dos d'éléphant [son] cadavre . . . à travers la forêt insoumise, pour qu'elle pût être ensevelie comme les princesses de sa race" (12).⁸¹ Rejecting the social and cultural proscriptions of the colonial avant-garde—missionaries—Mayrena cuts through the hostile forest, demonstrating his mastery of the transportation technologies of the unpacified tribes. His brash dynamism and frenetic mobility contrast with the passivity of the native concubine's corpse, which even in death serves as a foil for Mayrena's hypermasculinity.

Unlike either of these polarized figures of mobility, Claude and Perken's movement is constantly hindered. Exhibiting the European's typical dynamism, Claude feels spurred to action, but his journey is not facilitated by the state. Though Claude is technically a "chargé de

⁷⁹ The fact that the menace posed by Vietnamese nationalists—who were, as Norindr points out, the real "unruly natives" from the perspective of the state—is completely absent from *La voie royale* is all the more surprising in that Malraux had aligned himself with Vietnamese anti-colonial political movements in 1925-26, a few years before the novel's publication. Moreover, the conflict between the two European men and the Moï radically re-writes Malraux's own experiences in the jungle in the course of his temple raiding. In her account of the expedition in her autobiography *Nos vingt ans*, Clara Malraux does not name any encounters with hostile tribes among the various difficulties faced by the party (Ha 133n31). Rather, the real obstacle to their success was the intervention of the colonial administration.

⁸⁰ Here I disagree with Leslie Barnes, who argues that Malraux's Asiatic novels depart from the traditional emphasis on cultural or racial difference in colonial-exotic literature to implicate the colonies in the European modern predicament: "Because twentieth-century Asia, in Malraux's view, suffered from the same sort of existential absurdity plaguing the West and could thus no longer be celebrated as an alternative model, the novels progressively treat this conflict as a universal one between man and his fate" (44).

⁸¹ The Cham are a minority ethnic group in Southeast Asia. In the late nineteenth century, colonial anthropologists estimated that around 130,000 Cham were living in French Indochina between the future states of Cambodia and Vietnam alongside the majority populations of 12 million Vietnamese ("Annamites") and 1.5 million Cambodians ("Khmers"), as well as the minority population of 500,000 "Moï" (Bayly 587). In the French colonial era, the Cham—like the Khmer—were seen as the modern remnants of a defunct civilization of "monumental builders as well as conquerors and rulers" (ibid 589). See also Philip Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery*.

mission,” he and Perken face the resistance of the colonial administration, as their project is more representative of an earlier age given over to individual profiteering than of the methodical and purportedly more sustainable exploitation characteristic of the *mise en valeur* era. Despite their adherence to certain outmoded social and economic practices, Claude and Perken do not go plunging through the forest on the back of an elephant; this romantic feat is incompatible with other dimensions of their mission. Claude and Perken’s mercantile ambitions are outside the scope of Mayrena’s interests, and generally speaking outside of Perken’s as well. They seek to haul goods out of the “forêt insoumise,” and thus their progress is halting; they must manage a whole caravan of carts and draft animals to transport the stones.

Any reading of the novel must take into account its complicated relationship to earlier modes of representing colonial travel: in spite of its anachronistic portrayal of colonial travelers clashing with primitive, savage native communities, the text is nevertheless pervaded by an uneasy awareness of the demise of the era in which such forms of encounter predominated. Criticism on *La voie royale* has failed to fully explore the novel’s ambivalence toward a whole range of competing philosophical and ideological orientations suggested by the two men’s complex identities as travelers. While the majority of the scholarship on the novel disregards its complicity with what Norindr calls the “contemporary colonial ethos,” there have been more recently some attempts to re-examine typical readings of the novel’s metaphysical reflections by exploring the ties between the novel’s borrowings from colonial-exotic literature and its humanist or “proto-existentialist” philosophy.⁸² However, among these analyses there is a similar tendency to ignore a set of inconsistencies in *La voie royale*’s portrayal of the relationship between the travelers and natives. Such studies pass over instances where the novel subverts colonial-exotic tropes, focusing primarily on its adherence to certain variants of colonial ideology; specifically, Conquest-era notions of white male superiority and native savagery.

Critical Impasse: *La voie royale* and the Colonial Ethos

Numerous critics have investigated the role played by exoticism in the elaboration of metaphysical thinking that takes place in Malraux’s “Asiatic trilogy”—*Les conquérants* (1928), *La voie royale* (1930), and *La condition humaine* (1933)—as well as in his other writings on the “Orient,” such as the essay *La tentation de l’Occident* (1926). Like many other French writers of the interwar era, Malraux turned to Asian cultures to reflect on possible solutions for a European “crise de conscience.” In the 1927 essay “D’une jeunesse européenne,” Malraux observes that European civilization, having successively lost religious faith and “l’espoir de trouver dans les sciences le sens du monde,” is now “privée de tout but spirituel” (200).⁸³ In his response to Henri Massis’s *Défense de l’Occident*, Malraux describes the appeal of Asian cultures for Europeans attempting to construct new systems of thought, the “allégories” and “mythes” through which “la pensée européenne [s’exprime]” (209). As Woong-Kwon Kim points out, Malrucian scholars

⁸² This is Leslie Barnes’s term.

⁸³ The editors of the Gallimard *Œuvres complètes* see in this formulation an echo of Paul Valéry’s indictment of Western scientific advancement and moral superiority in the wake of World War I (Malraux, *OC*, 1145n4), a parallel that is likewise observed by Walter Langlois, Roger Stéphane, Jean-René Bourrel, Nina Tucci, Woong-Kwon Kim, and Henri Copin. In contrast, Barnes suggests that Malraux’s sense of the absurd was less a response to the war, with its perceived foundations in misguided rationalism, and more a reaction to “another of the West’s ill-conceived notions of progress and order, namely, the French colonial mission” (60), citing his experiences of the corrupt colonial justice system and of the social inequalities engendered by the colonial order in French Indochina more generally.

have for the most part interpreted the Asian backdrop—including *La voie royale*'s setting in Cambodia—as an abstract figure standing in for “le destin,” and which is merely incidental to the protagonists’ struggle against the absurdity of the human condition (42).⁸⁴

Panivong Norindr, Marie-Paule Ha, and Leslie Barnes are among the few scholars to have taken into account the relationship between Malraux’s exoticism and racial essentialism or, more broadly speaking, the contradictions between his humanism and the reproduction of colonial rhetoric in his work.⁸⁵ The point of departure for Norindr’s study of *La voie royale* is indeed the fact that the majority of Malrucian scholars obscure the links between his fiction and literary and ideological currents that promote essentialist ideas of cultural and racial difference.⁸⁶ Norindr argues convincingly the need to read *La voie royale* intertextually in relation to other representations of Malraux’s adventures in Indochina to counter the scholarly practice of those of Malraux’s biographers and critics who blur the lines between Malraux’s life and his fiction.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in his groundbreaking effort to challenge decades of Malrucian scholarship, Norindr downplays the novel’s profoundly ambivalent relationship to models of colonial travel that were dominant in the cultural moment shared by *La voie royale* and the Exposition Coloniale. Ha’s reading of *La voie royale*, like Norindr’s, tends to overlook the ambiguity that characterizes the relationship between traveler and native, colonizer and colonized, emphasizing that the unilateral dehumanization of the native precludes any true articulation of a humanist philosophy.⁸⁸ However, more than Norindr, Ha recognizes that the *démodé* status of the Conqueror mode is a theme within the narrative itself and that Malraux engages consciously with the conventions of the adventure novel genre. While I do not disagree with Ha’s conclusions

⁸⁴ Psychoanalytic readings of the novel similarly see the Cambodian jungle as the site of a conflict with the mother figure. Kim, on the other hand, asserts that the three novels’ Asian setting points to an intense interrogation of “Oriental” cultures. Kim reads *La voie royale* as a series of cultural encounters through which protagonist Perken attempts to conquer and assimilate the Oriental other’s knowledge and belief systems, specifically an engagement with tantric Buddhism (44).

⁸⁵ For instance, even as Jean-René Bourrel examines the role played by exoticism in Malraux’s reflections on the human condition, and recognizes the influence of the historical circumstances of production in the interwar period, he nevertheless fails to acknowledge the ties between these literary and historical currents on the one hand, and what Norindr terms the “contemporary colonial ethos” (89) on the other. Similarly, Roger Stéphane’s discussion of the last generation of true adventurers, or “hommes de l’action,” as embodied by Malraux, T.E. Lawrence and Ernst von Salomon, also neglects to examine how French imperialism shaped Malraux’s figure of the adventurer.

⁸⁶ Walter Langlois and other of Malraux’s biographers have struggled to account for the seeming incongruity between the “Indochina adventure” and the political affiliations claimed by Malraux’s public persona. In addition to depicting Malraux as a staunch promoter of anti-colonial struggles through his articles in *L’Indochine* and *L’Indochine Enchaînée*, Langlois argues that *La voie royale* and Malraux’s other novels set in Asia are a continuation of his “involvement in the Annamite cause” (201). Geoffrey Harris’s demystification of Malraux’s role in anti-colonial movements offers a sharp rebuke to the work of Langlois and his successors.

⁸⁷ This misguided approach is epitomized in Langlois’s work. For his study of Malraux’s two “Indochina adventures”—the first set in the Cambodian forest and the second in journalistic milieus in Saigon—Langlois draws incautiously on Malraux’s self-representations in interviews and non-fiction writings as well as, incredibly enough, Malraux’s fictional rewriting of the first “Indochina adventure” in *La voie royale*. Perhaps because of the impressive breadth of Langlois’s research into archival sources sometimes inaccessible to subsequent scholars, many of Malraux’s critics have relied on Langlois’s treatment of these events, thereby consolidating a legend which is at its foundations a self-fashioned one. The mythological proportions of his life story have been documented in more recent studies, as biographers such as Olivier Todd have approached Malraux’s work more critically. On the politics of Malraux’s journalistic endeavors in Saigon, see Ho Tai; Giebel; Peycam; and Zinoman.

⁸⁸ In contrast, Ha sees Malraux’s unfinished novel *Le Règne du malin* as a relatively successful mobilization of exoticism in the service of a universalist, humanist philosophy.

regarding *La voie royale*'s dubious humanism, I would suggest that the lines between colonizer and colonized are not so sharply drawn as she argues.

Although Leslie Barnes's study of how Malraux's intervention in the genre "transition[s] the novel . . . from exoticism to literary existentialism" (3) resonates with the broad scholarly interest in Malraux's metaphysics, her approach departs from the tendency to eclipse the relationship between Malraux's humanism and his activities in the colonies. Barnes's innovative treatment of the "Asiatic trilogy" demonstrates the influence of colonial-exotic literature and of the French colonial enterprise more generally on metropolitan artistic movements, usually seen as discrete from petty genre literature confined to the colonies. However, Barnes explicitly brackets the question of Malraux's politics in her study.⁸⁹ This is a problematic approach, given that she bases her definition of the exotic literary tradition in which Malraux's work participates on Segalen's essentialist notion of the impossibility "d'assimiler les mœurs, les races, les nations, les autres" (25). While Barnes's study restores the colonial context of Malraux's Asian novels, it perpetuates the trend among Malrucian scholars and biographers to read his colonial experiences as merely the source of his humanist or proto-existentialist philosophy.

Barnes's survey of literature produced in or about French Indochina, including many genre works that have been consigned to the dust-bin of modernist literary historiography, allows her to situate *La voie royale*'s protagonists in relation to a precisely delineated array of colonial-exotic types. Her argument that Malraux's Asian novels prefigure the existentialism that will find its more widely recognized expression later in the decade in Jean-Paul Sartre's work is constructed upon her meticulous plotting of "proto-existentialist" figures in texts that are frequently dismissed as mere works of genre fiction—for instance, adventure novels. In exploring the stakes of Claude and Perken's quest for Khmer ruins in relation to the similarly marginalized genre of the travel narrative, I hope to provide a more nuanced account of *La voie royale*'s staging of the intersection between categories of race and gender. Such an approach can open up a way out of the critical impasse regarding the novel's ambivalent relationship to the colonial ethos at the height of the French Empire.

Passage to Indochina: *Escales* and *Rêveries*

Well before the protagonists confront the dangers of the jungle, the first part of the journey, the sea voyage to Asia, is characterized by a fraught relationship to mobility.⁹⁰ Although this segment of the journey represents the greatest geographical displacement, Claude's experience of the passage to Indochina is one of stasis in movement. The microcosm of colonial

⁸⁹ Barnes's meticulous and nuanced examination of formal qualities specific to French exotic literature in Indochina draws on historians of French colonial literature such as Henri Copin and the early scholar Louis Malleret. The position of politics in Barnes's analysis is complicated; while she is attentive to historical circumstances of production, she clearly states in framing her project that her primary interest lies in the emergence of Malraux's existentialism: "The persistent question of whether Malraux was a colonial apologist raises the thorny question of precisely *who* was included in [his] notion of the individual at the helm of his own destiny. . . . My purpose here is not to weigh in on Malraux's complicity with colonial ideology. Rather, my goal . . . is to demonstrate the combined influence of literary exoticism and Malraux's colonial encounters in *La Tentation de l'Occident*, which is the foundation for his later existentialist fiction" (44n22).

⁹⁰ Robert McNab refers to Malraux's evocation of the passage to Indochina in his study of the 1924 journey to French Indochina undertaken by the participants in a "surrealist love triangle": Max Ernst, Paul Éluard, and Éluard's wife Gala. Like Claude and Perken's travels in Indochina, their voyage brought them into contact with the colonial society, Khmer ruins, and exotic jungle landscapes. *Ghost Ships: A Surrealist Love Triangle*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

society on the ship transforms this long voyage into a sojourn in the colony. Claude has in a way already arrived at his destination, yet he remains mired in a constant state of expectation, forever waiting for the real adventure to begin.⁹¹ The resulting sense of inertia is deeply troubling to Claude, as his ability to distinguish himself from other Europeans, both in the metropole and in the colonies, appears contingent upon the successful realization of the expedition along the *voie royale*. This first stage of the voyage seems hardly propitious given that the vast—if slow to develop—expanse separating Claude from the mediocre men of his generation in the metropole only serves to throw him among an equally insipid society on board the ship.

Even as he crosses seas and oceans, progressing from port to port, passing before exotic vistas—“les feux de la côte somalie perdus dans l’intensité du clair de lune où miroitaient les salines” (7), “un grand pan rouge de la côte d’Égypte” (12), “le long triangle du phare de Colombo rama[nt] dans la nuit” (21)—Claude feels confined. Mirroring the situation on board the ship, the unfamiliar lands through which he passes on the way to Asia cannot retain his interest, nor do they offer any real encounter with alterity. A scene in a Djibouti brothel, for all its exotic sensuality and racialized eroticism, is rendered less fantastic when Claude draws a comparison with a brothel in Paris frequented by *petits bourgeois*, whose half-hearted attempts at sexual perversion he finds unbearably insipid.

A passionate call to action erupts in the midst of yet another febrile perusal of his map of the *voie royale*: “Se libérer de cette vie livrée à l’espoir et aux songes, échapper à ce paquebot passif!” (40). The lumbering movement of the “passive” ship mirrors his oscillations between the tedious reality of life onboard the ship, and his fantasies regarding the temple-raiding expedition. These reveries become infused with the tales and rumors regarding Perken circulating among the *colons*—stories imbued with a kind of uneasy mobility, one confined to the decks of the ship: “La légende de Perken, maintenant, rôdait dans le bateau, passait de chaise longue à chaise longue comme l’angoisse ou l’attente de l’arrivée, comme l’ennui malveillant des traverses” (15). Captivated as they are by Perken’s legend, the other passengers, many of them civil servants bound for the colony, demonstrate a pathetic need to infuse a bit of romance and danger into their dreary lives—an appetite for the fantastic that Claude views with scorn: “Jamais [il] n’avait vu à ce point le besoin de romanesque de ces fonctionnaires qui voulaient en nourrir leurs rêves, besoin contrarié aussitôt par la crainte d’en être dupes” (15). The prowling figure of

⁹¹ The narrative of the passage to Indochina in *La voie royale* is reminiscent of Gide’s account of his sea journey to Africa in *Voyage au Congo* (1927). It would be interesting to consider how Malraux’s novel might relate to Gide’s travel journal, which like *La voie royale* was published at the “apogee” of the French empire. Unlike the critical discourse surrounding Malraux’s novel, discussions of *Voyage au Congo* have long focused on the politics of Gide’s text in relation to the “contemporary colonial ethos”; in particular, how his attitude toward essentialist ideas of race such as those articulated by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in *La mentalité primitive* can illuminate the limits of his critique of the colonial enterprise. In a longer version of this project, I plan to explore how Gide’s travel journal—like *La voie royale*—engages with outdated modes of representing colonial travel. Like Malraux, Gide is a “belated traveler,” acutely aware of the extent to which his experience of Africa is mediated by his library of travel literature. Whereas *La voie royale* is shaped by the conventions of the Conquest-era adventure novel, Gide’s text might be situated with respect to an even earlier tradition of Romantic travel writing. In a manner reminiscent of Gérard de Nerval’s or Gustave Flaubert’s lamentations over their inability to access the real Orient, Gide feels that the true beginning of his adventures is constantly deferred, disappointed over and over again when confronted with the unexpectedly banal African natural and cultural landscape. In terms of a comparison with *La voie royale*, it would be particularly interesting to consider how the purported impossibility of experiencing the real Orient might be renewed or reinvented in Gide’s travel journal, and how this sense of belatedness might relate to the specific geographical and historical context of *Voyage au Congo*.

Perken's legend reveals the workings of colonial society: the interdependence of the banal and the exotic, boredom and fantasy. This "besoin du romanesque" is tied to the colonial agenda then in vogue; the *colons*, representatives of the state, are attracted by romance and legend because their lives in the colony are so dreary. Such a hunger for excitement among the *colons* aligns them with the pathetic clients of the Parisian brothel that Claude previously evoked with such contempt: metropolitan subjects and their counterparts in the colonies are united through their mutual acceptance of living life "à prix réduits." This marked correspondence between the two social milieus is an early indication of the futility of any attempt to escape from the decadence of modern Europe on the margins of empire: not only in colonial cities like Phnom Penh and Saigon, but unto the very heart of the jungle.

Malraux sets up an opposition between the protagonists' ambitions and the prescriptions of the official representative of the state's cultural interests in Saigon, Ramèges—director of the fictitious "Institut de France."⁹² Prior to setting off into the forest, Claude meets with Ramèges so that the latter can accommodate him with the paperwork necessary to requisition supplies for the journey. Deeply suspicious of Claude's motivations, and devoted to shoring up the prestige of his own institution as well as the broader imperialist effort referred to as the *colonisation savante*, Ramèges articulates clearly the official position, that the stones be left *in situ*.⁹³ Claude and Perken interpret Ramèges's efforts to obstruct the free circulation of Khmer artworks as an attempt to circumscribe their mobility in the colony more generally; unlike Claude and Perken, tiresome bureaucrats such as Ramèges or the men's fellow passengers during the trip to Indochina do not translate their romantic fantasies into action. The protagonists' rejection of social norms is intimately tied to their mobility and to their identities as travelers. But the lines are not so sharply drawn: like Perken and Claude, the functionaries on board the ship (and even Ramèges) harbor a passion for adventures outside of colonial society; moreover, they too seem stretched thin by a malaise born of inactivity and inertia.

The images conjured up by the bulletins of archeological institutes over which Claude pores constantly, or his map of temple sites in Thailand and Cambodia, seem to liberate him from the confines of the plodding ship. Mentally he leaps ahead along the trajectory to the heart of the jungle, drawing on accounts of earlier adventures for the *mise en scène* of fantasies regarding his own projected voyage.

Encore quinze jours de cette avidité; quinze jours à attendre sur ce bateau, avec une angoisse d'intoxiqué privé de sa drogue. Il sortit une fois de plus sa carte archéologique du Siam et du Cambodge; il la connaissait mieux que son visage... Il était fasciné par les grandes taches bleues dont il avait entouré les Villes mortes, par le pointillé de l'ancienne Voie Royale, par sa menaçante affirmation: l'abandon en pleine forêt siamoise. 'Au moins une chance sur deux d'y

⁹² This is a phantom version of the real-life École Française d'Extrême-Orient, whose affiliates clashed with Malraux during his trial over the theft of the Banteay Srei sculptures.

⁹³ Barnes argues that Ramèges's attitude toward Claude's mission, and in particular his dictum that the statues remain *in situ*, is not "a measure taken in the name of a greater collective mission," but is rather "an act of calculated self-preservation" (110). She further asserts that such bureaucratic figures are, in Malraux's novel, "outlaws . . . who impose arbitrary laws to serve their own goals" (*ibid.*). It is true that Claude's activities met with little resistance as he earlier negotiated with bureaucrats in the metropole. However, I would argue that Ramèges, in protecting the interests of his institution, does so as a gesture of commitment to the purported colonial mission of building up and preserving the cultural heritage of Indochina, the *colonisation savante* advocated in the pages of the official organ of the École Française de l'Extrême-Orient.

claquer... Pistes confuses avec des carcasses de petits animaux abandonnés près de feux presque éteints, fin de la dernière mission en pays Jarai: le chef blanc, Odend'hal, assommé à coups d'épieux, la nuit, par les hommes du Sadète du feu, dans le bruissement de palmes froissées qui annonçait l'arrivée des éléphants de la mission... Combien de nuits devrait-il veiller, exténué, harcelé de moustiques, ou s'endormir en se fiant à la vigilance de quelque guide?... On a rarement la chance de combattre... Perken connaissait ce pays, mais n'en parlait pas. (11)

Claude's fantasy of the jungle is a patchwork of romantic and bureaucratic accounts (like Claude, Odend'hal was officially a *chargé de mission*). He is already hazily tracing his future experiences onto the map, while at the same time attempting to see his own role as traveler in a lineage with earlier voyagers: Odend'hal, Mayrena, and Perken. But the mobility seemingly promised at the sea journey's end in these fantasies appears simultaneously to be illusory: even as Claude's thoughts race ahead to the moment when he will embark on his trip through the jungle, the imagined travel through this perilous terrain appears slow and halting. This evocation of Claude's delirium connects the period of anticipation on board the ship to the nights of fearful waiting and watching that he will pass in the jungle.⁹⁴ Doubt and apprehension can only be calmed by Perken's presence.

When Claude first pitches the idea to Perken, the latter's response seems to suggest that he will be able to fulfill both Claude's longing for the *romanesque* and the undertaking's pragmatic requirements. In outlining the risks of the venture, Perken demonstrates his knowledge and experience of both colonial society and the wilderness:

- L'administration française, je la connais. Vous n'êtes pas des siens. Elle créera des obstacles, mais ce danger n'est pas grand... L'autre l'est davantage, même à deux.
- L'autre ?
- Celui d'y rester.
- Les Moïs?
- Eux, la forêt, la fièvre des bois.
- C'est ce que je pensais.
- N'en parlons donc plus: moi, j'ai l'habitude... (32-33)

The prospect of being forced to "rester" in the jungle is posed as the greater danger, a menace that is simultaneously concrete and ambiguous. Perken associates the success of the enterprise with the ability to move through and emerge from the forest; in his account, impeded motion signals danger and stasis is equated with failure. In asserting his familiarity with such risk factors, Perken seems to suggest that this fate of immobilization will not be theirs. And yet, Claude's sense of confinement and inertia during the passage to Indochina, combined with his nervous anticipation of many nights of wakeful vigilance once they have truly embarked on their

⁹⁴ Claude's identification with a drug addict is ambiguous, suggestive of both passion and boredom, magnifies his possibly inadvertent resemblance to the typical *colon*. Commenting on the figure of opium in the self-image of *colons* in Indochina, Milton Osbourne observes that the drug "came to be associated with the boredom of colonial existence" (qtd. in Srilata 57n6). This evocation of Claude's drug-like haze on board the ship complicates his attempts to distinguish himself from his bored fellow passengers, as well as a contemptible opium-addict doctor that the two men encounter later in Thailand.

journey, undercuts Perken's cynical display of confidence. The heroic feats of real-life adventurers of yester-year have devolved into mere legend, igniting the interest of enterprising young men like Claude, but also serving as fodder for the fantasies of vapid bureaucrats.

Welcome to the Jungle: Im/Mobility and Alterity

Once they enter the wild reaches of the forest, the men's struggle to maintain a coherent identity is primarily articulated as a confrontation between the European traveler and the *indigène sédentaire*. The relationship between the European traveler and the flora and fauna of the jungle informs the representation of the relationship between colonizer and colonized in this section of the novel. In the jungle, the distinction between the mobile and the sessile gradually erodes. The breakdown of these categories of difference goes beyond a mere destabilization of the identities of traveler and native, generally defined in terms of mobility and stasis. Never mind the inertia of malaria-ridden local populations: in the forest, the faltering movement of the European traveler can scarcely vie with the steady pace of the climbing ant or the inexorable encroachment of vegetation on all human activity.⁹⁵

With little experience of the forest, Claude struggles to read this new, menacing environment: "L'unité de la forêt, maintenant, s'imposait; depuis six jours Claude avait renoncé à séparer les êtres des formes, la vie qui bouge de la vie qui suinte; une puissance inconnue liait aux arbres les fongosités, faisait grouiller toutes ces choses provisoires sur un sol semblable à l'écume des marais, dans ces bois fumants de commencement du monde (66)."⁹⁶ The unexpected collapsing of distinctions between living organisms in the jungle, between "la vie qui bouge" and "la vie qui suinte," parallels the even stranger blurring of boundaries between animate beings and inanimate objects from the protagonists' first encounters with temple ruins along the Way:

Ils avaient rencontré déjà des petits monuments écrasés, aux pierres si serrées par les racines qui les fixaient au sol comme des pattes qu'ils ne semblaient plus avoir été élevés par des hommes mais par des êtres disparus habitués à cette vie sans horizon, à ces ténèbres marines. Décomposée par les siècles, la Voie ne montrait sa présence que par ces masses minérales pourries, avec les deux yeux de quelque crapaud immobile dans un angle des pierres. Promesses ou refus, ces monuments abandonnés par la forêt comme des squelettes? (65)

⁹⁵ Barnes observes that an exaggeratedly fertile and "excessively inhuman" nature that inspires both fear and fascination is a feature of colonial-exotic literature with ties to French existentialist literature (131). Bourrel similarly reads the evocation of the Cambodian jungle in terms of its psychological effect on the subject. But while both critics focus on the function of the untamed forest as an internal landscape; only Barnes pays any real attention to the ways in which the figure of the savage and decadent forest works to dehumanize the region's inhabitants.

⁹⁶ It is difficult to untangle the narrative voice in this passage, whether it is the third-person narrator who differentiates among the various organisms, or whether this is *discours indirect libre*, recording Claude's initial experience of the forest before switching back to the third-person narrator who signals Claude's abandonment of any effort to distinguish between mobile and static creatures after a few days in the forest. Certainly Claude's anxiety over the uncanny movement of the forest, his fear born of inexperience, seems to inform the description of the revolting plant and animal life in the forest in the first part of the passage. Frohock, in commenting on the muddled point of view in *La voie royale* (as compared to *Les conquérants*), claims that the narrative point of view is ascribed to Claude for all of the novel up until the moment when he begins to attack the stones; the point of view then shifts to Perken (50).

Serré, décomposé, pourri: in a bizarre series of disruptions of Linnaean taxonomy, the mineral is also both animal and vegetable: the piles of rock are *rotting* and the tree roots resemble “pattes.” The assimilation of the stones to the jungle’s fetid vegetation and creeping beasts assimilates these manmade structures to the wilderness; the relationship between the temples and the *voie royale*, product of an indigenous human civilization, is broken down through the degenerative forces of nature.

The decadence that Claude observes in the temple ruins along the *voie royale* seems to manifest his fear of the impending “décomposition” of his own mind in the “lumière d’aquarium” of the forest, the inevitable outcome of passage through a space “où les formes se gonflaient, s’allongeaient, pourrissaient hors du monde dans lequel l’homme compte” (65). As Ha notes, in the forest “things lose their solidity and their density, that is, elements of maleness, succumbing to an amorphous chaos” (64). The forest’s state of putrefaction seems to give form to the decrepitude that comes with age, a future that Perken contemplates with horror: “La vraie mort, c’est la déchéance . . . Vieillir, c’est tellement plus grave! – Accepter son destin, sa fonction, la niche à chien élevée sur sa vie unique . . .” (36). The concept of *déchéance* articulated here, while central to the elaboration of Perken’s metaphysical philosophy of life, is more embodied than Claude’s disgust with a life lived “à prix réduits.” Perken’s haunting vision of the gradual weakening of the will and the softening of expectations that prefigure the ultimate acceptance of one’s “niche à chien” in society reflects his fear over the weakening and softening of his body. His pressing need to dominate the native Other—whether “his” men in the highlands or the prostitutes he encounters in Djibouti and Thailand—is intimately tied to his dawning sexual impotence. And indeed Perken recognizes that the dreams of military conquest and political power that pervaded his youth have metamorphosed into erotic fantasies (62).

While the emphasis on *déchéance* as a function of aging posits the question of decline in universalist terms, the representation of the Cambodian jungle as a site of decay is similar to the image of the Khmer descendants promoted at the Exposition, which codes *déchéance* in racial terms.⁹⁷ And yet, in Malraux’s novel, decadence is not exclusive to the exotic, distant space of the colonies, but is a phenomenon in metropolitan Europe as well. While, as Charlotte Rogers notes, the physical and moral corruption of Europeans in the colonies is a common trope of tropical narratives, one which is implicated in racialist discourses, anxiety over the degradation of European civilization forms an undercurrent in many early-twentieth-century accounts of travel to Asia. Perhaps the logic-defying physical property of the “masses minérales pourries”—the gradual softening of a hard substance—reflects not only the tropical threat of emasculation for the two protagonists, but also a burgeoning identity crisis endemic to Europe.

Perken in many ways already sees himself as a relic of the past, recognizing that his plans to re-assert control over his remote highland kingdom—to “laisser une cicatrice sur [la] carte”—are untenable given the shifts in colonial policy.⁹⁸ He aligns his own *déchéance* with the ubiquitous decay of the jungle, observing: “Mon projet est aussi pourri. Je n’ai plus le temps.

⁹⁷ James Nichols’s discussion of the theme of *déchéance* in the novel tends to privilege the universalist reach of Perken’s philosophical meditations. On the overlaps between *La voie royale*’s rhetoric of decay and concerns regarding the degradation of Khmer cultural artifacts in the colonial scientific community, including scholars who had clashed with Malraux over his attempted theft of bas reliefs such as Georges Groslier, see Edwards 158. Edwards also explores more broadly contemporaneous uses of the figure of Khmer ruins in social discourses; for instance, the didactic appeal of Angkor Wat for governor general of Indochina (1897-1902) Paul Doumer as a warning against degeneration among French youths (35; 250).

⁹⁸ Ha does acknowledge Perken’s awareness of the *décalage* between his project and outlook and the dominant colonial ethos in Indochina, post-Conquest era.

Avant deux ans, les prolongements des lignes du chemin de fer seront achevés. Avant cinq ans, la brousse sera traversée: routes ou trains” (61). For both men, and especially for Perken, the voyage along the *voie royale* appears to be only a means to an end—and yet, the quest to penetrate and subjugate the forest is also framed as an expression of their will to dominate. However, in observing that his grand designs are as “pourri[s]” as the decaying forest, Perken preemptively undermines the possibility that the journey that lies ahead of them can in any way allow him to transcend his destiny of *déchéance*, or offer Claude an alternative to a life of mediocrity. Not only is victory over such a rotting, flaccid forest far from grandiose, but the forest itself seems to contaminate and infect their purpose. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the fact that the colonial infrastructure will soon be expanded through these wild and untamed regions means that the relentless, mechanized mobility of trains or cars will soon render utterly redundant the path that they have struggled so laboriously to carve through the jungle. The fierce satisfaction of conquest will soon be supplanted by the drudgery of the *corvée*. The life as a car salesman that Claude seeks to evade will soon overtake him even in the colonies.

While Claude does not identify the retrograde nature of his project in the forest as explicitly as Perken, his sense of its ultimate futility is revealed in another set of meditations on the forest. Gazing at the jungle from the liminal space between the region brought under the velvet yoke of the *mission civilisatrice* on the one hand, and the vast reaches of the “forêt insoumise” on the other, Claude sees the two spaces as united in a state of decay:

Claude regardait avec passion ce prologue de la forêt qui l’attendait, possédé par l’odeur de la vase qui se tend lentement au soleil . . . par le mol aspect des animaux amphibies. . . Au-delà des feuilles, dans chaque trouée, il tentait d’apercevoir les tours d’Angkor-Wat sur le profil des arbres tordus par les vents du lac: en vain; les feuilles, rouges de crépuscule, se refermaient sur la vie paludéenne. . . La fétidité lui rappela qu’à Pnom-Penh il avait découvert, au centre d’un cercle misérable, un aveugle qui psalmodiait le Ramayana en s’accompagnant d’une guitare sauvage. Le Cambodge en décomposition se liait à ce vieillard qui ne troublait plus de son poème héroïque qu’un cercle de mendiants et de servantes : terre possédée, terre domestique où les hymnes comme les temples étaient en ruine, terre morte entre les mortes. . . . Devant lui la forêt terrestre, l’ennemi, comme un poing serré. (48-49)

On the one hand, the representation of the forest as a closed system taps into Claude’s fantasy of the jungle as a cache of priceless artworks, out of reach for all but the most enterprising adventurer. The emphasis on the forest’s enclosure denies the circulation of the “voyageurs anciens” whose Sanskrit accounts of the *voie royale* in fact, as Claude acknowledged previously, form one of Claude’s primary textual sources for plotting hidden treasure troves in the forest (30). The erasure of these historical travelers from the routes through the forest positions Claude and Perken, and their colonial predecessors, as the sole figures of mobility.

However, the “tour du monde en un jour” attraction’s binary of European traveler—harbinger of progress—and sedentary native is disrupted by the fact that Claude’s project is implicated in the decadence he sees before him. Claude is “possédé” by the smell of the mud—an odor that haunts Perken as well, reminding him of the putrefaction of his ideas and plans, as well as the deterioration of his body. This abdication from rational thought troubles Claude’s

attempts to distinguish himself from normative French society—metropolitan and colonial alike—as well as from the senile, disease-ridden natives. In spite of the gesture of *renfermement* that he observes, Claude’s vision of the rotting forest collapses distinctions between this wild, untamed space and the urban colonial centers in modern, “domesticated” Cambodia: even the spaces inhabited by the banal, insipid *colons* of the boat to Indochina are riddled with decay.

The forest’s possession of Claude here anticipates the influence of the sculptures themselves, simultaneously alluring and unyielding, which are likewise a threat to reason and caution. And yet, the assertion of the forest’s impotence before the virility of the two white men that is pronounced during the confrontation with the bas-reliefs later in the novel seems to resolve the ambiguities that lace this prologue. In the following section, I will examine the protagonists’ defeat of the menacing jungle and successful conquest of the Khmer ruins that the forest enshrouds. This scene, which figures prominently in studies on both sides of the critical debate I described above, has been framed as both a humanist triumph and as an affirmation of racial hierarchies. While this conflict is clearly central to the construction of the protagonists’ identities as racial and gendered subjects, by reading it as a crisis of identity for Claude and Perken as travelers—dynamic, mobile individuals—I hope to produce a more nuanced understanding of the implications of Claude and Perken’s victory for the novel’s conception of white masculinity.

Petrification and Putrefaction: White Masculinity in Question

After a series of failed encounters with the ruined temples along the Way, Claude and Perken finally discover an intact bas-relief of dancing girls on the wall of yet another crumbling structure. The narration of their violent struggle to remove the carvings sets up a series of juxtapositions involving the mobile, dynamic European men; their apathetic male Cambodian porters and drivers; and the stones themselves, symbols of the ancient Khmer civilization. The comparison between the protagonists and the modern Cambodian men sets up the Europeans as physically and intellectually superior. This hierarchical relationship is in part articulated around the Cambodian men’s apathy regarding Claude and Perken’s desecration of the Khmer cultural legacy: far from objecting to the plundering of the temples, the porters and drivers are complicit in it.

The relationship with the coveted bas-reliefs is more complex. At first glance, it would appear to correlate closely with the binaries established through other encounters along the way, with the stones’ heaviness and immobility seemingly mirroring the lethargy of the malaria-ridden natives in their caravan and in villages lining the route through the forest. However, these massive blocks—adorned with dancing girls—also project a malevolent and recalcitrant force, one that is bizarrely coded as feminine. The heroic battle to extract the stones from the temple structure wavers between a vindication of the superiority of European masculinity against the Cambodian male *auxiliaires* and a disruption of this very identity through the equally gendered conflict with the stones themselves. The modern Cambodians’ indolence indicates their general attitude of indifference, which in fact contrasts sharply with the stones’ passivity *as* resistance.

Before turning to the confrontation between the European men and the stones, I will first examine the representation of the relationship between the Europeans and their Cambodian *équipage*. Claude and Perken’s frenetic activity is repeatedly juxtaposed with the drivers’ listlessness, as the Cambodian *auxiliaires*’ involvement in the expedition is described in terms that undermine any dynamism that might potentially be attached to such an activity. Building on

the erasure of non-European travelers produced by the evocation of the jungle as a closed system, which denies the movement of the “voyageurs anciens,” the following passage struggles to elide the fact that the Cambodians participate in the act of trail-blazing:

Le boy cria aux conducteurs des charrettes de venir avec leur coupe-coupe: voix stagnante, écrasée par la voûte des feuilles... Les mains à demi crispées de Claude se souvenaient des fouilles, lorsque le marteau retenu cherche à travers la couche de terre un objet inconnu. Le buste des conducteurs s'abaissait d'un mouvement lent, presque paresseux, et se relevant d'un coup, droit, dominé par la tache bleue du fer qui reflétait, en tournant, la clarté du ciel invisible ; à chaque mouvement des fers parallèles, de droite à gauche, Claude sentait dans son bras l'aiguille d'un médecin qui jadis, cherchant maladroitement sa veine, lui raclait la chair. Du chemin qui peu à peu s'approfondissait montait une odeur de marais, plus fade que celle de la forêt ; Perken suivait pas à pas les conducteurs. Sous ses souliers de cuir un roseau mort sans doute depuis longtemps craqua avec un bruit sec: deux grenouilles des ruines s'enfuirent sans hâte. (67-68)

The cart drivers are performing the role that European literature of discovery assigns exclusively to the white leaders of the expedition: that of penetrating a virgin territory. The prolific growth of the forest necessitates the kind of vigorous pathbreaking that is a prominent motif of exploration narratives. And yet, because the menial labor required to cut through the vegetation to the temple site is delegated to the native hirelings, even when Claude and Perken stray from the beaten path, they nevertheless follow a course laid out by modern Cambodians. Not only are the two Europeans preceded by the defunct “voyageurs anciens,” but by their living, moving Cambodian subalterns as well. Here, it is the cart drivers and not Perken who “laiss[ent] une cicatrice” on the forest topography.

However, the violence of the act of penetration, as well as the Cambodian *auxiliaires*' dynamism and mobility, is diminished through the juxtaposition with Claude and Perken. The image of Perken hard on the heels of the drivers, along with the slippage between “pas à pas” and “peu à peu,” emphasizes the natives' crawling pace. When the boy, Xa, shouts, his voice is “écrasée,” muffled by the vault of the trees. The evocation of Xa's “stagnant[e]” voice and the “odeur fade” issuing from the newly cleared path dips into the rhetoric of decay frequently used to describe the jungle, and forms a contrast with the “bruit sec” emitted when Perken steps on a dead reed.

The act of trailblazing is further obscured by the description of the Cambodian men's bodies. The “lent” and “paresseux” movement of the cart drivers is the logical extension of their somnolence and apathy, likening them to the “grenouilles [qui] s'enfuirent sans hâte,” and contrasting them with the feverish activity of the Europeans. The Cambodians move in unison: the plunging motion of one “buste” stands in for the movement of many. The image of the “fers parallèles,” rather than undercutting the homogenizing effect of the singular “buste” by revealing the plurality of the men, instead unites their bodies in a synchronized gesture. The flattening of separate bodies into a single form creates the appearance of an undifferentiated mass, which brings the two European men's individuality into relief; here even Xa, one of only two Cambodians participating in the expedition who is identified by name and the only one to stand by Claude and Perken when the rest of the *auxiliaires* desert them, is stripped of his individuality and reduced to his subaltern role within the crew, as the “boy.” The use of the reflexive verb

“s’approfondir” to describe the gradual growth of the path further erases the Cambodians’ agency in this development. The trail seems to appear of its own accord, as both the hands that wield the machetes as well as the arms that lower and lift the tools are erased. Even the erect posture (“se relevant d’un coup, droit”) is “dominé” by the blade itself, which is in turn surmounted by the smothering canopy of trees.

The Cambodians’ hands and arms—the parts of their bodies that are most immediately linked to the action of clearing the path—are eclipsed from view as the narrative shifts to Claude’s perspective, at which point the latter’s hands and arm intrude upon his perception of the scene. His hands are half-clenched at the memory of his delicate and skillful manipulation of an archeologist’s tool, an instrument of the *colonisation savante* that contrasts with the clumsy blows of the coupe-coupe. Their tensed state sets Claude apart from the “mollesse” characteristic of the forest’s wildlife and the indolent gestures of the Cambodians. As the sight of the drivers’ handling of their tools induces an unpleasant sensation in his arm, Claude’s bodily memories again intrude on the scene. His recollection attenuates the brutal force of the swinging machete, drawing a parallel between the coupe-coupe and the needle wielded by an incompetent doctor. In the image of the doctor’s inept search for his vein, the figure of the plunging needle is a reminder of the mosquito’s proboscis; through a series of displacements, the Cambodians’ actions are assimilated to the habits of the mosquito. The transition is hardly surprising, as the Cambodians are frequently figured as both victims of the disease and as menacing insects, transmitters of disease. The role played by the Cambodians in this early foray off the beaten track is eclipsed by the lingering consideration of Claude’s bodily experience. The encounter between the Cambodian *auxiliaires* and the carved stones showcases the contrast between ancient Khmer potency and modern Cambodian degeneration. While the superiority of the Khmer ancestors is generally evoked through reference to their aesthetic prowess and creative force at the Exposition, the military and political power of the Khmer Empire is resurrected in the stones’ passive, material resistance to both modern Cambodians and Europeans.

The passive immobility of the stones does not resemble those aspects of the forest characterized by flaccid weakness; rather, it recalls the slow, strangling encroachments of the forest that both abandons and clings to the crumbling monuments in the earlier tableau of “masses minérales pourries.” In this conflict, there is a *rapprochement* of the two clashing parties: the “hostilité” and “opiniâtre[té]” that characterize the stone’s immobility match the force of the “entêtement” and “volonté tendue” that propelled Claude to and through the forest:

Claude ne quittait pas la pierre du regard... Nette, solide, lourde, sur ce fond tremblant de feuilles et de ronds de soleil; chargée d’hostilité. [. . .] Cette pierre était là, opiniâtre, être vivant, passif et capable de refus. [. . .] Tout l’entêtement, la volonté tendue, toute la fureur dominée qui l’avaient guidé à travers cette forêt, tendaient à découvrir cette barrière, cette pierre immobile dressé entre le Siam et lui. (80-81)

When first facing the bas-reliefs, Claude brims with a confidence that he will find difficult to sustain over the course of the encounter. He evokes a terrifying, mysterious force—“quelque chose d’inhumain”—only to suggest the hollowness of such a threat when pitted against the virility of “deux hommes blancs”:

Plus que ces pierres mortes à peine animées par le cheminement des grenouilles qui n'avaient jamais vu d'hommes, que ce temple écrasé sous un si décisif abandon, que la violence clandestine de la vie végétale, quelque chose d'inhumain faisait peser sur les décombres et les plantes voraces fixées comme des êtres terrifiés une angoisse qui protégeaient avec une force de cadavre ces figures dont le geste séculaire régnait sur une cour de mille-pattes et de bêtes des ruines. Perken le dépassa: ce monde d'abîme sous-marin perdit sa vie comme une méduse jetée sur une grève, sans force tout à coup contre deux hommes blancs. (77)

In this initial moment of reckoning, there is what seems to be an unequivocal assertion of the white men's invincibility. And yet, this position is already highly unstable. For all the emphasis on death and abandonment, the physical struggle is framed as a conflict between animate beings. The stones are imbued with a measure of mobility through the regal "geste séculaire" of the dancing girls. The anthropomorphization is further augmented by the simile likening the apparently defeated forest to a "méduse jetée sur une grève." The figure of a jellyfish might seem to merely extend the metaphor of the "monde d'abîme sous-marin," and the image of a beached jellyfish is reminiscent of other representations of the forest's wildlife as flaccid and weak. However, the polysemy of the word "méduse"—also the term for the monster of Greek mythology—seems to revive Claude and Perken's fears of immobilization—the fate of being forced to "rester" in the forest. The forest's power to petrify the men passes metonymically from the strangling vegetation to the stones entombed in this "monde d'abîme sous-marin":

Après tant d'efforts, la forêt reprenait sa puissance de prison... Dans l'entaille triangulaire, la poussière du grès coulait doucement, brillante et blanche comme du sel, accentuant, par sa chute de sablier, la masse de la pierre, de la pierre qui reprenait une vie indestructible, une vie de montagne: le regard en restait prisonnier. Il se sentait lié à elle par la haine comme à un être animé; et c'était bien ainsi qu'elle gardait le passage et qu'elle le gardait lui-même, qu'elle se chargeait soudain de l'élan qui depuis des mois portait sa vie." (83)

Here Claude veers sharply from his former brash assertions of the superiority of white masculinity to lapse into a sense of utter submission to the malevolent force of the jungle and the monumentality of the Khmer architecture. The feminized stones seem poised to assimilate the men to their state; massive Medusas that are both made of stone themselves and capable of petrifying the very men who struggle to dislodge them and put them into circulation. In a temporary setback, when his hammer breaks, Claude is frozen by fear: "il resta immobile, atterré" (82). Confronted with these Medusa-like dancing women, Claude himself becomes *médusé*.

The two men finally succeed in dislodging the stones and loading them onto the ox-carts manned by the apathetic Cambodian drivers who, "[a]ttentifs aux mouvements de leurs petits buffles . . . regardaient les pierres sculptées, sur lesquelles se croisaient les cordes, avec une grande indifférence" (87). The possession—"durement acquise"—of these female bodies allows the two white men to resist the "violence clandestine" that pervades the forest. In the immediate wake of their victory, Claude experiences a resurgence of his earlier sense of power and virility as the oppressive forest is emasculated in its turn: "La forêt, la force des lianes et des feuilles

spongieuses s'affaiblissaient pourtant: ces pierres conquises le défendaient contre elle" (87). The forest, which threatened to immobilize Claude, to imprison him, to force him to "y rester," is neutralized by the act of possession and sexual dominance. The stones, bound by cords, protect Claude against the forest—represented by the figure of the binding, strangling "lianes"—from which he wrenched them.

The confrontation with metaphorical Medusas—the feminized forest and stones—seems to prefigure Perken's debilitating injury and ultimate immobilization as a consequence of the long-anticipated encounter with the savage Moï. However, the petrification that Perken undergoes in the Moï compound is no longer suggestive of compromised masculinity, unlike in Claude's experience of the conflict with the stones. The revelation of Grabot's debasement marks a turning point, after which the men no longer aspire to define themselves in relation to the kind of hyperbolic mobility embodied by someone like Mayrena. Over the course of the confrontation with the Moï, the disrupted mobility characterizing the protagonists' arduous trek through the jungle is transformed from a troubling symptom of *déchéance* into the site of a potential re-assertion of dominance and subjectivity. The violent mobilization of the stones—these objects that had previously been seen as an impediment to the men's movement—is no longer the measure of their success; in fact, the stones become increasingly irrelevant as the narrative progresses. Perken's immobilization following the encounter with the Moï is a material trace of his triumph—a memorialization in flesh and bone of his final expression of the will through mobility.

After acquiring the stones, Perken and Claude continue in the forest until they arrive at a Moï village where Grabot is rumored to have last been seen; there, they discover Grabot in ruins. He has been castrated and completely blinded, his one good eye fed to the village dogs. Moreover, in a literalization of Claude's and Perken's experience of being "lié" and "attaché" to the stones, Grabot is "attaché à la meule"—bound to and forced to turn a millstone. However, even hobbled, Grabot remains strangely mobile, constrained to turn in circles around the interior of the dark hut in which he is imprisoned. Perken and Claude's unauthorized search through the compound for Grabot prompts the villagers to arm themselves and surround the hut, leading to a stand-off. Faced with the prospect of meeting the same fate as Grabot, Perken is momentarily immobilized. Then he boldly leaves the hut, exposing himself to the weapons of the Moï clustered at a distance, and strides across the compound towards their chief. Significantly, in his march across the compound, Perken "ne sui[t] pas le sentier"; unlike some earlier moments in the forest, when Perken was content to follow the path through the underbrush hacked out by the Cambodian *auxiliaires*, this time he marks out his own itinerary and forces himself to follow it. Such a deviation from the beaten path—a small-scale attempt to "laisser une cicatrice sur [la] carte"—costs him his life: he falls onto a booby trap of poisoned war spikes.

Before Perken leaves the cabin, Claude observes that his companion is "pétrifié" (130). This temporary state of immobility becomes rigidity in movement as "Perken march[e] vers les Moïs, pas à pas, tout le corps raidi" (131). In the earlier scene of trailblazing, Perken's swift stride as he followed the Cambodian *auxiliaires* "pas à pas" was an assertion of the superiority of white masculinity against the feeble physicality of the Cambodian men, with the latter struggling to clear a path "peu à peu." Here, in contrast, his faltering gait highlights the magnitude of his triumph over his own body—fearful, human, even weak. The adjective "raide" is employed numerous times in the narrative of Perken's march towards his fate, both from Claude's and Perken's points of view. The hardening of Perken's body is a physical expression of his fear, but

it also reflects the hardening of his will, as he masters this fear and forces his body into movement:

Jamais il n'avait marché ainsi, sans plier les genoux. La force qui le soulevait connaissait mal ses os: sans la volonté qui le jetait vers la torture avec cette puissance d'animal fasciné, il eût cru dériver. Chaque pas des jambes raidies retentissait dans ses reins et son cou; chaque herbe arrachée par ses pieds qu'il ne voyait pas l'accrochait au sol, renforçait la résistance de son corps qui retombait d'une jambe sur l'autre avec une vibration que coupait le pas suivant. (131-32)

The image of Perken's stiff body distances his slow, halting movement from the "mollesse" of the forest and its wildlife, the languor and inertia of the modern Cambodians, and the passive immobility of the watching, waiting Moï. Perken's movement also clearly differs from Mayrena's mad dash through the forest, but Perken's stiff-legged march toward an uncertain fate in many ways testifies to the end of the era of heroic individualists like Mayrena and Grabot. In an age where the boundaries between the hostile forest and domesticated colonial spaces like Phnom Penh collapse, where swift and efficient modes of transportation can carry vapid *colons* ever farther into the jungle, only a vexed mobility like that characterizing Perken's traversal of the Moï compound can allow him to "cracher à la face de la torture, en toute conscience et en toute volonté, même en hurlant" (131).⁹⁹ In striding across the clearing toward the Moï warriors, Perken acknowledges and accepts that he may suffer Grabot's fate. Once a roving adventurer, Grabot is now hobbled and coerced into a form of continuous movement that both echoes Samson's fate and seems to anticipate Camus's Sisyphus. Perken's successful mobilization of his own petrified body is contingent upon him embracing the possibility of this utterly degraded physical existence. His renewed immobilization at the end of the conflict with the Moï—the culmination of this brief yet tortuous journey—signals his escape from Grabot's perverted mobility: it is a lasting, fixed testament to his open defiance of fate.

At the beginning of the novel, Perken and Claude are defined against both Europeans and Cambodian men in terms of their dynamism and mobility: they shrug off the constraints that the director of the Institut de France, Ramèges, attempts to impose upon them with the dictum that the stones remain *in situ*, and the narrative elides the Cambodian men's role in the act of path-breaking. It is surprising, then, that the apotheosis of Perken's masculinity is precipitated by his "petrification," which begins in the conflict with the stones and comes to fruition in the Moï compound. However, this startling reversal of the earlier orientation must also be understood in relation to Perken's fear of sexual impotence, a concern that figures largely in his conception of the human condition. His theory of mental and moral *déchéance*—coded in primarily masculinist terms—is closely tied to the idea of physical decline. Perken's comments on the physiological aspects of his sexual practices are overshadowed by his admission that he is intent on mastering the natives' "cultes érotiques": "Songez que je commence à comprendre leurs cultes érotiques, cette assimilation de l'homme qui arrive à se confondre, jusqu'aux sensations, avec la femme qu'il prend, à s'imaginer *elle* sans cesser d'être lui-même" (63). This articulation of Perken's eroticism appears over the course of a longer meditation on *déchéance*, in which Perken notes that his youthful need to conquer men and possess territories has been partially supplanted by his

⁹⁹ Here, I disagree with Charlotte Rogers, who suggests that this act needs to be understood as a symptom of Perken's growing madness as a result of jungle fever. Perken is fully conscious of the risks he is taking; he engages in these acts of rebellion and resistance in the face of destiny.

mature desire to dominate women. Although sex represents for Perken a conquest, the act of dominance itself is paradoxically performed through a form of intense identification with the other. The forms of eroticism that Perken seeks to appropriate indicate that for him, sexual potency is not merely a question of his physical capacity to penetrate feminine bodies, but also a complex negotiation between asserting and suppressing both sexual difference and the other's subjectivity. He wants to access the sensual experience of his partner, but without acknowledging her subjectivity, or losing his own.

Perken's experience of being temporarily united with the stones as he attempts to wrest them from the malevolent forest as "Medusa," when each blow he strikes on the temple seems paradoxically to bind him to the structure, is not a sign of weakness or disintegration, but rather an instance of erotic domination through assimilation to the material of the stones themselves. However, he comes close to "cesser d'être lui-même" through the near loss of his "lucidité": "Perken continuait de frapper, mécaniquement, repris par la fureur . . . Des coups répétés, de la perte de sa lucidité, un plaisir érotique montait, comme de tout combat lent; ces coups, de nouveau, l'attachaient à la pierre" (85). Perken's traversal of the Moï compound, in which he is both petrified—belatedly assimilated to the form of the feminized stones—and stubbornly mobile, seems to demonstrate his successful mastery of the "cultes érotiques." His actions in the Moï compound—confronting the male warriors, carving a path through the compound—seem to correspond more closely to his youthful desires of establishing dominion over men and territories (albeit on a small scale here). However, reading the scene through the lens of the sexualized encounter with the stones reveals the slippage between his march toward torture and his erotic ambitions, as expressed earlier in the novel. Perken's petrified mobility is the embodied expression of his defiance, "en toute conscience et en toute volonté"; he is more lucid than in his attack on the temple. The evocation of Perken's rigid body not only renders visible the hardening of his will, but also seems to suggest that he has transcended the threat of impotence.

Conclusion

The shifting meaning of mobility and stasis throughout the novel reflects the ways in which the figure of the traveler was in flux at that particular historical moment. Grabot's condition symbolizes the obsolescence of the Conqueror model, as the novel suggests that the former adventurer shares the degraded state of the relics of the Khmer civilization: "Une puissante ruine. Et il avait été plus que courageux. Celui-là aussi pourrissait sous l'Asie, comme les temples" (125). The influence and power of men like Grabot and Perken has been transferred to representatives of the state or appropriated and consolidated by large economic interests—for instance, concessionary companies formed to exploit natural resources like rubber. Such a shift is in fact already anticipated by Mayrena's wild ride—a response to interdictions imposed by Christian missionaries. His journey through the jungle is perhaps not only a mad rush to accord his concubine the appropriate funeral rites, but also in a sense his flight from colonial society.

Perken is no longer defined by his mobility at the end of the voyage. He hopes to regain and defend his territory against frantically mobile enemies: waves of Moï refugees, the Thai army that is pursuing them, and the agents of French colonial expansion. Perken's mobility—progressively compromised as the narrative progressed—has now given way to the complete immobilization of his body; in a figure reminiscent of the earlier image of Ramèges stubbornly attempting to prop up his dying institution, Perken clings to his realm and the villages of his allies for meaning:

Il leva les jumelles sur le village qui reparut avec une netteté surprenante, entre les deux masses troubles des souliers.

Dans sa vie qui dévalait maintenant en précipice, ce village s'enfonçait comme une pierre à laquelle il devait s'accrocher – comme celles du temple. Et les jumelles revenaient, d'elles-mêmes, vers la colonne. (164)

The figure of the “masses troubles” recalls the images of the “masses minérales pourries” – particularly given the explicit reference to the temples that shortly follows – and emphasizes Perken’s heavy, monolithic quality. Perken’s earlier fusion with the temple is amplified here; he is buried under the weight of Asia, crumbling away like the Khmer legacy and the decadent Grabot.

The threat to Perken’s kingdom in the mountains is the “State”: “L’État était au fond de cette obscurité, chassant devant lui les tribus animales avant de chasser les autres, allongeant de kilomètre en kilomètre la ligne de son chemin de fer, enterrant d’année en année, toujours un peu plus loin, les cadavres de ses aventuriers” (160).¹⁰⁰ In the early part of the novel, the state is represented by figures like Ramèges, who both refuses to penetrate into the back country and forbids Claude and Perken to take anything out of these virgin territories: like the fate that he destines for the Khmer relics, he will remain *in situ*. However, in the later part of the novel, the state and its agents appear progressively mobile; the men’s slow, difficult passage through the forest is haunted both by the imagined spies of Grabot and the figure of the train that Perken senses in their wake, both spatially and temporally speaking. While Grabot’s surveillance turns out to be nothing more than a ghost of the past, the threat of the train, harbinger of wide-scale economic and social development, materializes by the end of the novel.

There is a kind of accelerated velocity of the usual process of colonization in the bizarre temporality of the last section, in which the military intervention of the “colonne” and the infrastructure development of the *mission civilisatrice* are contemporaneous. Perken notes grimly that the Thai soldiers sent to the region, ostensibly in reprisal for Grabot’s treatment, are accompanied by railroad engineers (168)—colonial versions of the young men “dont les cheveux mal coupés signifiaient la science” that Claude knew, and despised, back home. Perken is more alarmed by the engineers than the military: whereas soldiers might be battled and even repelled in a final heroic showdown between men of action, the engineers are coming to “laisser une cicatrice” on the map of the undeveloped back country that Perken himself aspires to permanently mark.

Perken’s vision of colonialism, his figure of the *colon*, finds its negative and its double, not only in the stagnant figure of someone like Ramèges, tied to his institution and needing everything to remain *in situ*, but paradoxically at the other end of the mobility pole, in the figure of the train, and the *mise en valeur* mentality and policy embodied by its penetration into Perken’s highland territory.

Whether in stasis or mobility, the Moï seem bizarrely to mirror the mediocre Europeans whose ranks Claude and Perken refuse to join. Following Perken’s immobilization, the Moï—formerly characterized by an “immobile agitation” (133)—are also set into motion as the Thai government profits from the torture and imprisonment of a white man to invade the regions inhabited by the Moï.

¹⁰⁰ It is left somewhat ambiguous as to whether the source of this threat is the Thai or French imperialist state, or merely the more abstract entity of the “state.”

Les Stiengs en fuite balayaient les villages; la colonne qui les suivait perdait beaucoup d'hommes dans la haute forêt, par le poison des blessures surtout: les miliciens traitaient les malades abandonnés par les grenades, les blessés par les baïonnettes. La migration creusait la forêt comme la lente ruée des animaux vers les points d'eau; elle le remontait vers l'Est sans troubler sa surface froncée, mais, au soir, de longues lignes de feux dans l'air immobile, droites, indiquaient l'arrêt de la marche épique des tribus sur la fuite sans fin des arbres. (160)¹⁰¹

The sardonic phrase “marche épique” is applied to the tribes whose movement is described elsewhere as “fuite,” “ruée” and “migration.” This is not the epic march of a well-ordered army, but rather a form of movement that is simultaneously characterized as the result of irrational terror and as the banal migration of “bétail en transhumance” (161). The second appearance of the term “fuite” unites the fleeing Moï with the aggressive fertility of their surroundings, the “fuite sans fin des arbres,” which so overwhelms those who pass beneath that not even the passage *en masse* of the Moï through the forest can “troubler sa surface froncée.” The Moï, even in movement, retain something of the sedentary native’s “immobile agitation.” Even though they are now characterized by a frenetic mobility—seemingly tracing out a path for the railroad to follow in the near future—the Moï do not share the temporal moment of the *mise en valeur* era. Like Perken and Claude, they are stuck in the past—but the Moï’s backwardness is not that of two men who have inadvertently outlived the heyday of their genre, but rather signals a complete denial of what Johannes Fabian terms a coevalness.¹⁰²

Malraux’s novel both demonstrates nostalgia for the past and reveals the futility of such fantasies by acknowledging the historical conjuncture in which it is set. The *mise en scène* of anachronistic tropes of the savage native paradoxically facilitate the novel’s engagement with questions central to modernist travel literature, which is above all concerned, not with articulating the racial and cultural differences between European and colonized subject or native, but rather the difference between the modernist European traveler-narrator and other Europeans abroad. Whether through their travel practices, or in Perken’s goal of settlement, Malraux’s protagonists assert their difference from other Europeans.

In the age of the train and the automobile, the arduous, laborious trek through the jungle takes on a new meaning; it is not merely a watered-down version of the hyperbolic mobility of Mayrena’s wild ride. Perken’s complete immobilization is an embodied testament to his triumph of the will—his refusal to let himself go soft and accept the “niche à chien” that society wishes to assign him. It is no coincidence that Perken’s fierce repudiation of *déchéance*—the decrepitude that comes with age, and in particular sexual impotence—in the form of his stride across the compound ultimately results in the hardening of his body. This immobility does not signal a final collapse between “la vie qui bouge” and “la vie qui suinte”—far from it. “Perken pétrifié”—like the march across the compound—is the visible, physical expression of the aging hero’s will in the face of Moï savagery. However, this threat is the dying breath of a defunct era; Perken’s gesture also—and more importantly—constitutes his refusal of a life lived “à prix réduits,” in a “niche à chien.” This is form taken by masculinity triumphant in the modern era.

¹⁰¹ Here Malraux uses “Stieng” interchangeably with “Moï.”

¹⁰² In his seminal work *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, Fabian uses this term to identify “a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (31).

And yet, Perken's triumph is tempered by an ambiguous encounter with a young prostitute in Thailand, after he has been completely immobilized by his leg wound. The narration of this episode echoes the language used to describe Perken's violent assault on the temple: "Il regardait [le visage de la prostituée] comme un masque, presque séparé de la sensation sauvage qui le collait à ce corps qu'il possédait comme il l'eût frappé" (157). In spite of Perken's lingering physical prowess and the "petrification" of his body, Perken's failure to achieve complete mastery of the native "cultes érotiques" signals his ultimate impotence, as he is unable to access the woman's sensual experience: "Malgré la contraction des commissures des lèvres, ce corps affolé de soi-même s'éloignait de lui sans espoir; jamais, jamais, il ne connaîtrait les sensations de cette femme, jamais il ne trouverait dans cette frénésie qui le secouait autre chose que la pire des séparations" (158). In spite of the assertion of a certain kind of sexual dominance, this encounter evacuates much of the force of Perken's triumph of the will in the Moï compound.

This failure cannot be remedied by the "fraternité virile" that is cemented when Claude abandons the stones—thereby forsaking possible social freedoms that they might buy him—to accompany Perken to his territory in the mountains. Claude nevertheless articulates his decision as a foregone triumph: "Il ne pouvait pas l'abandonner, le livrer à la fois à cette humanité dont il le sentait à jamais séparé, et à la mort. . . . Vainqueur ou vaincu, il ne pouvait en un tel jeu que gagner en virilité, qu'assouvir ce besoin de courage, cette conscience de la vanité du monde et de la douleur des hommes" (155). Claude rejects social order and conformity, while at the same time asserting the almost transcendental power of *fraternité* and the cultivation of social bonds whose nature might allow him to distinguish himself from his European contemporaries. And yet, young Claude's renewed faith in exotic travel as a site for cultivating his virility—as well as to lay the groundwork for a new humanism—separates him from Perken, this relic of an earlier age, who in his final moments rejects the bonds of fraternity that have sprung up between Claude and himself to assert "[i]l y a seulement moi... [...] moi... qui vais mourir..." (182). The knowledge that the Conquest era has passed will apparently die with Perken.

The gap between Perken's final understanding of his own obsolescence and Claude's belief in the transcendental potential of travel on the margins of empire seems to reflect the novel's ambiguous relationship to the genre in which it participates. The staging of exoticist tropes such as the savage jungle, the bestial native, and the virile man-who-would-be-king in fact only underscores the dissonance between *La voie royale* and the colonial ethos of the moment in which the novel was published. But the presence of these figures in the novel is far from incidental. Malraux draws on this familiar repertoire to erect a hierarchical vision of white masculinity in the tropical world at the height of the French empire. Malraux's new "man of action" is, in this novel, precisely a white man of action who, though largely untroubled by native men, is unsettled by the flicker of subjectivity in native women, resistant in their very passivity, who trouble the mobility and the masculinity of these belated adventurers. The promise of full mastery of the native other seemingly offered by the triumph over the Medusas and the Moï in the forest remains far from fulfilled when it is put to the test in Perken's encounter with the prostitute in the Thai village. Unlike the passive acquiescence exhibited by the corpse of Mayrena's concubine, the power of the stone dancing girls is partially revived by the prostitute's passive resistance and superior mobility vis-à-vis the incapacitated Perken and his desires. While the series of crises around white masculinity are partially resolved by multiple renegotiations of the travelers' identities, Perken's seeming transcendence of the modern condition through his petrification begins to unravel over the course of the very encounter where he hoped to bring it to full fruition. Neither the agents of the colonial state nor the new exemplar

of white masculinity emerge untarnished by their brush with the *récit de voyage* in Malraux's *La voie royale*.

Chapter Three

Murailles / chemin: Cultures of Travel and Dwelling in Maryse Condé's Ségou

In a letter written to entreat the return of one of the family's sons from his schooling in the rival urban center of Hamdallay, the aging Siga—patriarch of the aristocratic Traoré dynasty whose fortunes are the focus of Maryse Condé's novel *Ségou*—situates the hoped-for *retour au pays natal* in relation to the tragic fate of other Traoré sons scattered throughout the Diaspora:

Notre famille a connu la tristesse de voir ses fils dispersés à travers le monde. L'un d'entre eux a été emmené en esclavage au Brésil. Un autre a trouvé la mort au royaume de Dahomey. Chacun d'eux a laissé des fils dans ces terres étrangères. Devenu le chef de la famille, je n'aurai de cesse que je ne réunisse sous le même toit tous ces enfants épars afin que nos ancêtres éprouvent satisfaction et réconfort. Je te le dis, où qu'ils soient à présent, nos enfants reprendront la route qui mène à Ségou. (*Murailles* 373)¹⁰³

Siga's letter is both an expression of paternal affection and an assertion of the family's right to reassimilate the son, Mohammed, into the family milieu and animist Segou society after his Islamic education in a foreign land, undertaken at the behest of his father Tiékoro, a converted Muslim.¹⁰⁴ In affirming the inevitability of the Traoré sons' return to Segou, Siga presupposes the diasporic subject's need for a rooted source of identity—a concept that is fervently espoused by certain practitioners of Negritude in the twentieth century. The use of the singular definite article in the phrase “la route qui mène à Ségou”—a prominent leitmotiv in the novel—erases the geographical specificity of the in fact *plural* routes that lead to Segou and downplays the significance of Segou's status as a node in a larger network of travel. Segou is both a destination and a point of departure for numerous kinds of journeys—commercial travel, pilgrimages, scholarly quests, as well as the coerced movement of exiles and enslaved populations. Both travelers hailing from foreign lands and those of Segou's people who return home after living abroad contribute to the ongoing transformation of Segou's culture, which is represented in Condé's novel not as a fixed essence but as a set of constantly shifting practices. Siga's implicit dismissal of the significance of these routes is crucial to his construction of Segou as the source of an authentic Bamana identity and the sole site of legitimate origins for the Traoré sons scattered across the globe.

While Condé's monumental two-volume historical novel is ostensibly a narrative of life in the eponymous capital of the Bamana empire in the nineteenth century—a story about dwelling—as the passage cited above suggests, the novel is equally an account of journeys. The narrative alternates between recounting events that take place in Segou involving the family members who remain in the city, and following the Traoré sons who are “dispersés à travers le monde.” The road to Segou takes on quasi-mythical dimensions in the imagination of many of the Traoré sons and their descendents scattered throughout the world, who long for the stable

¹⁰³ The first volume, *Les murailles de terre* (referred to as *Murailles* in what follows) was published in 1984; the second volume, *La terre en miettes (Terre)*, was published the following year.

¹⁰⁴ Condé for the most part uses the standard French orthography for the names of various places (e.g. Ségou, Djenné), ethnic groups (e.g. Peul, Bambara), historical personages (e.g. Cheikhou Amadou), topographical features, etc. Except in quotations, I use common English spellings for place names and ethnic groups; for historical personages (e.g. Seku Amadu), I use the spelling most consistently adopted by the English-language historiographical works consulted.

cultural identity that the city seems to offer. However, by projecting a discourse of a sometimes hyperbolic hybridity onto “precolonial Africa,” as represented by Segou, Condé disrupts the notion of pure cultural origins and reveals the impossibility of a harmonious *retour au pays natal*.

The tension in the novel between the city’s symbolic status as the location of an intact culture and as a site of travel is highlighted through *Ségou*’s intertextual relationship with the voyage account of real-life Scottish explorer Mungo Park, one of the first Europeans to approach Segou, who arrived on the banks of the Niger River across from the city in 1796. The first pages of *Ségou* rewrite the famous arrival scene in Park’s *Travels in the Interior of Africa* (1799) from the perspective of Segou’s residents. Park is denied entry into Segou by its then ruler Monzon Diarra, who is deeply suspicious of Park’s ulterior motives for traveling in search of the Niger River.¹⁰⁵ This thwarted cultural encounter is exceptional within both texts. In his own narrative, Park’s attempt to negotiate access to *intra-muros* Segou is just one instance of his broader imperative to establish relations of exchange and mutual profitability with everyone he encounters.¹⁰⁶ Park’s exclusion from the city in *Ségou* is likewise anomalous when considered in relation to the novel’s representation of broader patterns of commerce in West Africa and appears inconsistent with the reigning Mansa’s usual policies concerning the presence of foreigners in the city.

But while the refusal of cultural contact is unusual in both texts, it is attributed excessive significance by multiple generations of Traoré men who yearn to lay claim to Segou’s cultural legacy. Park’s failure to penetrate Segou’s walls will be erroneously read by Eucaristus, a second-generation Traoré son stranded in “terres étrangères,” as a sign of the impossibility of return. For Eucaristus, the famous “murailles de terre” that give the novel its name seem to embody an intact culture; and yet, they also appear to symbolically bar access to this heritage. However, it is the fact that Park’s exclusion from Segou is an *aberration* that points toward the fallacy of the longed-for *retour au pays natal*. Segou’s fortifications, while massive, are porous; it is precisely because Segou is not a “monde clos” that it would be impossible for the Traoré sons living in exile to access a version of Segou culture that already belongs to the past.

In contrast to the monolithic vision of interior Africa that dominates the imagination of diasporic subjects in *Ségou*, the image of Africa projected in Park’s account of his travels is that of a relatively diverse political and cultural landscape. In the narration of his arrival at the Niger River, Park foregrounds his interactions with fellow travelers on the road and situates his “discovery” within broader systems of knowledge across multiple cultures, both European and African:

As we approached the town I was fortunate enough to overtake the fugitive Kaartans, to whose kindness I had been so much indebted in my journey through Bambarra. They readily agreed to introduce me to the king; and we rode together

¹⁰⁵ Monzon Diarra ruled 1790-1808 (Maiga 71). *Ségou* was the metropolitan center of the more prominent of two Bambana kingdoms (Djata 4). The Mansa’s suspicions were well founded, as the goal of Park’s voyage was to determine the direction of the Niger River’s flow; this knowledge would facilitate the penetration of European commercial interests into the interior. Park’s voyage was funded by the Association for Discovering the Inland Parts of the Continent of Africa, established in 1788. On the relationship between Park and the Association, see Lupton and Brent. On the establishment and principles of the Association and its function within the European exploration of Africa, see Hallett. For a general history of European expeditions to the Niger River, see Bovill.

¹⁰⁶ My understanding of how Park’s recurring attempts to establish reciprocity over the course of his travels relate to the tension between exclusion and exchange in *Ségou* is heavily indebted to Mary Louise Pratt’s study of Park’s text in *Imperial Eyes*.

through some marshy ground, where, as I was anxiously looking around for the river, one of them called out, *Geo affili!* (“See the water!”) and, looking forwards, I saw with infinite pleasure the great object of my mission—the long-sought-for majestic Niger, glittering in the morning sun, as broad as the Thames at Westminster, and flowing slowly to *the eastward*. [...]

The circumstances of the Niger’s flowing towards the east, and its collateral points, did not, however, excite my surprise; for although I had left Europe in great hesitation on this subject, and rather believed that it ran in the contrary direction, I had made such frequent inquiries during my progress, concerning this river; and received from Negroes of different nations, such clear and decisive assurances that its general course was *towards the rising sun*, as scarce left any doubt on my mind; and more especially as I knew that Major Houghton, had collected similar information, in the same manner. (190-91)

Park’s explicit recognition and validation of African geographical knowledge (in addition to that of his European predecessor, Irish explorer Daniel Houghton) is already surprising, given the frequent elision of native informants from narratives of discovery.¹⁰⁷ But even more interesting is the sense of heterogeneity that emerges here. Even as Park shores up his scientific authority by asserting a consensus among representatives of “different nations,” he gestures toward a plurality of political and cultural formations.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, not only are Africans his interlocutors, they are also his fellow travelers. As Park’s arrival on the banks of the Niger falls on a market day in Segou, the surrounding roads “[are] everywhere filled with people carrying different articles to sell” (190). Of course, Park’s recognition of his fellow travelers and African cultures of travel broadly speaking must be understood in relation to the purpose of his journey; namely, to “[render] the geography of Africa more familiar to [his] countrymen and . . . [open] to their ambition and industry new sources of wealth and new channels of commerce” (2). Accordingly, Park’s description of the city and its surroundings emphasizes Segou’s sizeable population and developed economy: “The view of this extensive city—the numerous canoes upon the river—the crowded population, and the cultivated state of the surrounding country—formed altogether a prospect of civilization and magnificence

¹⁰⁷ The presence of native guides and informants threatened to undermine the rhetoric of discovery by revealing that the “uncharted” territories that Europeans were in the act of mapping for European interests had already been navigated and named by earlier explorers (Pratt, 202; Fabian, 29). It could be argued that ultimately Park’s appropriation of native knowledge differs little from Burton’s, as Pratt sees it; namely, “converting local knowledges (discourses) into European national and continental knowledges associated with European forms and relations of power” (202). My use of the term “auxiliary” here is a rough translation of Condé’s use of the term “auxiliaire indigène” to describe the translators and guides in the service of French colonial forces, whether military, religious, or commercial; for instance, Ahmed Traoré of the third generation of Traoré men, son of Mohammed, who returns to Ségou with Archinard’s conquering army (410).

¹⁰⁸ Wise argues that Park sets up a “racial-literacy hierarchy” in which the “unlettered Negro” (Park 151, cited Wise 183) occupies the bottom rung. Accordingly, Park ultimately dismisses the epistemological value of “Sahelian orality-aurality . . . by reducing African orientations to language to mere superstition, or ‘mumbo-jumbo’” (185). Wise also calls attention to Park’s strategy of opening up intellectual exchanges with African interlocutors as a means to allay their suspicions about his intentions; Park’s interest in dialogue is not always even just a means to gather scientific data for the African Association, but also responds at times to his instinct for self-preservation. In light of Wise’s contentions, it is possible that Park’s apparent validation of African knowledge in this scene, which as Pratt argues is exceptional in the refusal of reciprocity, is anomalous within the text as a whole. On the question of Park’s attitude toward African systems of knowledge, see also Ross; Nichols, “Mumbo-Jumbo”; Fulford and Lee; and Haddad.

which I little expected to find in the bosom of Africa” (192).¹⁰⁹ Park’s evocation of Segou’s status as a site of travel serves to foreground the extent to which Africa not only holds “new sources of wealth” but already possesses an infrastructure that European interests can adapt to their own purposes; for instance, the busy roads and waterway crowded with canoes that form literal “channels of commerce.”

The representation of Africa as a network of cities and cultures in *Ségou* overlaps in surprising ways with Park’s account. What is the relationship, then, between Condé’s postcolonial text and Park’s narrative of penetration into the African interior, which facilitated subsequent European economic expansion in the region? *Ségou* initially focuses on the society enclosed by the great “mursailles de terre”—the spaces to which Park is denied access—in its portrait of the metropolitan center of a vast empire at the “apogée de sa gloire” (15). In a sense, the fictional portrait of life in Segou can be read as filling in a lacuna in Park’s text via literary strategies that would have contaminated Park’s claims to veracity. However, *Ségou* quickly passes from a mere supplement to Park’s account to participate itself in the genre of travel literature. As a dual narrative of both urban life and the experiences of travelers to and from the city, *Ségou* disrupts the opposition between travel and dwelling, showing the interpenetration of cultures between Segou and other sites.

While *Ségou* is popularly understood as the French-language analog of Alex Haley’s novel *Roots*, Condé’s vision of the past resists the static qualities of Haley’s idealized representation of the Gambia (Dash 453). Condé also unpins Park’s representation of patterns of cultural exchange and networks of travel from an imperialist rhetoric of mutual advantage. She annexes the African travelers from Park’s account and places such figures at the center of her narrative of a century of West African travel and dwelling. These voyagers are no longer mere bit players in the prologue to a tale of European economic imperialism, but the protagonists of a history of pre-colonial West Africa. It is in equally appropriating a portion of the content (certain historical encounters) and particular *formal* qualities of Park’s text that Condé is able to challenge a range of ahistorical representations of West Africa prior to widespread European imperialism.

Similar to Park’s travel narrative but on an epic scale, Condé’s novel positions Segou as one node in a much larger field of travel; the “route qui mène à Ségou” is only one itinerary among others, and the same road leads away from the city as well. Thus the novel itself expands Park’s representation of Segou as a locus of commercial and cultural exchange and his narration of interactions with African travelers. However, Condé only includes a brief excerpt from Park’s narration of his arrival at Segou—the description of the city’s geographical setting and its built environment, including its high earthen fortifications. This limited view corresponds to a widely held perception of Segou as a “monde clos,” where Segou’s architecture, both grandiose and forbidding, stands in synecdochally for the city’s culture and society. The idea of Africa as a cultural network suggested by Park’s narrative—and consistently communicated by Condé’s omniscient narrator—is rejected by a variety of African and European characters in *Ségou* whose

¹⁰⁹ In striking opposition to the representation of Africa as a savage void in voyage accounts from the era when the slave trade plays a decisive role in shaping European racial ideologies, Park’s “[affirmation of] plausible worlds of African agency and experience” (84) and demonstrations of cultural relativism reveal the shift in economic interests away from the slave trade towards forms of commerce that conceived of Africans “as a market rather than a commodity” (Pratt 71). This representation continued to shift over the course of the nineteenth century alongside changes in the economic and political relations between West African polities and France. See Schneider and Prussin on competing representations of Africa later in the nineteenth century. See Steeves on how the romantic tradition of representing Africans through the “noble savage” trope, in which Park’s text participates, will later influence certain aesthetic and ideological currents of Negritude in the twentieth century.

outlooks are shaped by wildly divergent circumstances and experiences. The myth of an intact African interior and the correlated fantasy of cultural purity unite otherwise highly disparate perspectives, linking a staunchly animist son of Segou (Malobali) to a Christian missionary in the coastal city of Lagos (the Reverend Williams).

In fact, Condé's novel evokes a whole range of competing discourses about Segou and the African interior that nonetheless all depend on a denial of African historicity. What is of particular interest for this study of *Ségou* as a travel narrative is that this denial is in part reliant on a refusal to acknowledge histories and cultures of travel. Even as characters like Malobali and Eucaristus cling to the myth of cultural purity, the novel's intertwined narratives of dwelling and travel, of cities and roads, and the evocation of how these sites participate in networks of exchange and commerce, reveal their vision as a fantasy. Importantly, this longing for an intact location of culture—(interior) Africa-as-homeland—is shown to be not merely the predicament of a postcolonial subject, but of many Traoré sons who share the historical moment of Segou's political and cultural glory. *Ségou* unmoors certain dimensions of diasporic consciousness from their ties to European colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade, to embed these perspectives and experiences in a supposedly pure and intact cultural past.

A Literature That Travels: The Geography of Maryse Condé's *parcours littéraire*

My analysis of Condé's novel as an unconventional travel narrative not only participates in a growing body of scholarship focusing on African cultures of travel, but also contributes to studies of the importance of place and displacement in Condé's work; for instance, the postcolonial Caribbean subject's *retour au pays natal* from the metropole; a different kind of voyage as "retour" or "détour" to Africa and the related issue of the relationship between the figure of "home" and identity; the quest motif; wandering and *errance*.¹¹⁰ These discussions frequently invoke biographical details to bolster their interpretations, recalling the migrations and movements of Condé's own life and asserting correspondences between her geographical displacements and the shifts in narrative setting of her fiction, in particular her return to Guadeloupe after many years spent in France, England, the U.S., Guinea, Senegal, and Ghana. Among these assessments of Condé's work, there is a common reading of the thematic elements that link Condé's first three novels, a perspective which Mireille Rosello summarizes as follows (without adopting it as her own, however): "One could claim that . . . *Héremakhonon* (1976), *Une saison à Rihata* (1981), and *Ségou* (1984) represent an African phrase, a search for some authentic (essentialized) Blackness, a return to the 'Dark Continent,' that is re- or mis-appropriated as legitimate origin" (566).¹¹¹ This interpretive model often describes the emergence of the Antilles as the primary location of later works as not only a homecoming, but as a necessary step towards creative apotheosis, suggesting that Condé's evocation of the Antilles, and her engagement with local literary, cultural, and linguistic heritages, is productive

¹¹⁰ On the theme of the "voyage de retour" to Africa, see Alexander; A. Smith; McCormick; François; and Wilson. On the related issue of the relationship between the figure of "home" and identity, see Le Rumeur; Nyatatu-Waigwa; and Latortue. On the figure of the "détour," see Williams and François (drawing on Edouard Glissant's *Le discours antillais*). On the figure of the "quest motif," see Schwerdtner; Anagnostopoulou-Hielscher; Gaensbauer; Larrier; Latortue; and Becel. For a reading of the journey motif that focuses on biographical elements, see Thomas and Crosta. Regarding the themes of wandering and *errance*, see Bécel; Larrier; Lodewick; and Thomas. Space more generally is also a concern in a number of discussions of Condé's work, including the importance of urbanism and urban spaces: see Adesanmi; Gaensbauer; Larrier; Anagnostopoulou-Hielscher; Licops; and Golumbeanu.

¹¹¹ Miller, Lodewick, and Ouédraogo have also commented on the common framing of the three novels as "African novels" or the "African cycle."

of a truly authentic writing (Rosello 566). Embracing this critical perspective, proponents of *créolité* have assimilated Condé's work to their project, a gesture of recuperation and appropriation that seems at odds with Condé's own negative assessments of the *créolité* movement.¹¹²

Numerous critics have focused on the centrality of the journey motif in the first two installments of the "African cycle," *Hérémakhonon* and *Une saison à Rihata*. Each of these novels narrates the experiences of an Antillean woman who travels to an unidentified West African nation in the hopes of resolving her identity crisis. The protagonist's alienation is a product of her upbringing amongst competing cultural formations, as well as her sense of a rupture with the past due to the violent dislocations of the Middle Passage. Africa appears to these women as an intact and stable site, divorced from the alarming hybridity of Antillean cultural locations. Frustrated in their attempts to piece together a more coherent identity, the protagonists of these novels have frequently been seized upon by critics who see in these figures Condé's indictment of identity quests inspired by essentialist notions of Africa as "motherland."¹¹³

Despite its inclusion in the "Africa cycle," *Ségou* is generally overlooked in discussions of the postcolonial trope of the *voyage de retour* to Africa as a site of authenticity and "legitimate origins." Indeed, with a few exceptions, most of Condé's critics have neglected to explore the prominence of the journey motif in the novel, and have failed to connect the various forms of movement that it represents to the rest of Condé's oeuvre. Prominent tropes of postcolonial travel literature such as the identity quest, exile, *déracinement*, *errance*, and the trajectory between metropole and colony are present in *Ségou*, but are rarely discussed; when they are evoked by critics, they are not examined specifically in relation to theories of travel or the genre of travel literature.¹¹⁴ The failure to consider the journeys of colonial or postcolonial

¹¹² In the piece which closes a volume of essays of which she is the co-editor, *Penser la créolité*, Condé (like other contributors to the collection) criticizes the *créolité* movement for its aggressive policing of the boundaries of Antillean identity. Without explicitly naming names, she alleges that proponents of *créolité* refuse to acknowledge new forms of identity that emerged in the twentieth century, clinging instead to an archaic, nineteenth-century image of Antillean and creole identity and often denying their own time spent in hexagonal France as part of an aggressive regulation of the authentic image of their *pays natal*. In contrast, Condé advocates an understanding of Antillean identity as something that is constantly being reformed through processes of *métissage*.

¹¹³ See Feng; Nyatatu-Waigwa; Lionnet; Miller ("After Negation"); Rodríguez; Murdoch; Mehta; and François. This conflictual relationship to Africa as a source of cultural identity continues to surface in Condé's later novels, whether the narrative is located in African spaces, as in *Histoire de la femme cannibale* (2003), or reflects on these themes from another position in the diaspora, for instance the unfortunate obsession with genealogy and lost origins to the detriment of personal relationships in the present, most prominently in *Les derniers rois mages* (1992). In her reading of *Hérémakhonon*, François argues that, in contrast to Caribbean male writers such as Aimé Césaire who identify Africa as the motherland from which they have been severed, Condé positions Africa as a (disappointing) paternal figure; for Véronica, the maternal is located back home in Guadeloupe (18-27).

¹¹⁴ Two notable exceptions are Cilas Kemedjio and Victoria Lodewick. In "The Curse of Writing: Genealogical Strata of a Disillusion: Orality, Islam-Writing, and Identities in the State of Becoming in Maryse Condé's *Ségou*" and *De la négritude à la créolité: Édouard Glissant, Maryse Condé et la malédiction de la théorie* (*Malédiction*), Kemedjio explores Tiékoro's journey to Timbuktu as a "quête de la lettre" in relation to the identity quests of other characters in *Ségou* and other Condé novels; however, the study of these displacements is subordinated to his broader focus on the different discourses surrounding the role of writing in Condé's writing in particular, and in African and Caribbean literatures and literary discourse more generally. He focuses more closely on forms of travel, including the fantasy of the *voyage de retour* for the Malobali-Eucaristus-Samuel line, in "Les Enfants de Ségou: Murailles en miettes, identités en dérive."

Lodewick, in her analysis of how factors in Condé's personal experience such as exile and cultural displacement led to the development of a writing style she terms "ethnographic fiction," remarks upon the numerous coerced and volitional displacements of characters from their original communities. The encounters with different

subjects is, as I have argued, a pervasive problem in critical discussions of travel and travel literature, and symptomatic of the hegemony of Eurocentric ideas of what it means to travel. However, analyses of Condé's writing have often focused on the various forms of journeys present in her novels, frequently dipping into the lexicon of travel literature criticism to engage with her work. Thus the relative lack of attention to the journey motif in *Ségou* is anomalous when considered in relation to the body of existing critical literature on Condé's other writings.

I argue that in many ways *Ségou* offers the most powerful critique of the mythologization of an authentic cultural past and the figure of the African homeland.¹¹⁵ Surprisingly, alienation and rootlessness, the search for identity and the phantasm of authenticity, are presented not as the predicament of a specifically postcolonial (and perhaps even more specifically, Antillean) subject, such as the protagonists of *Hérémathonon* and *Une Saison à Rihata*.¹¹⁶ These identity struggles also mark the condition of Traoré sons caught up in social, political, and cultural upheavals that already predate the era of gradual but progressive European encroachments on West African geopolitical spaces (mostly on the coast)—what Coquery-Vidrovitch terms the period of “colonial incubation” (c. 1850-1880)—not to mention the subsequent consolidation of the colony known as French Sudan or “Upper Senegal and Niger” (c. 1890-1900) (Coquery-Vidrovitch 160-66).¹¹⁷ The uprooting and violence associated with European colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade are prominent in *Ségou*, and the trope of the *voyage de retour* to a perceived site of legitimate origins emerges in its most familiar form in the diasporic context defined by these histories. Nevertheless, the Middle Passage is only one form of dislocation in an entire constellation of individual journeys and patterns of movement. The vexed relationship between the concept of “home” and various categories of identity is shown to predate the colonial experience – or at least, the experience of European colonialism. In many instances, the alienation of the diasporic subject is shown to be a result of ruptures and displacements occasioned by the expansion of Islamic states.¹¹⁸ Condé builds on the use of the journey motif in two novels dealing with the identity crises of postcolonial subjects in a novel that stages the

cultures and communities occasioned by these journeys allow for the incorporation of ethnographic detail into the narrative (354).

¹¹⁵ In *La poétique de renversement chez Maryse Condé, Massa Makan Diabaté et Edouard Glissant*, Deborah Hess explores the inauthenticity of origins in the context of diasporic thought but does not theorize the issue of travel as such. Kemedjo observes that the “angoisse identitaire” and disillusionment of specifically postcolonial subjects like Véronica and Marie-Hélène is shared by “tout pèlerin qui se lance à la quête des murailles de Ségou” (“Esthétique” 192).

¹¹⁶ Several critics talk about the identity quest specifically in relation to the historical and cultural situation of the Caribbean. For instance, Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 169-73; Nyatetu-Waigwa; and François draw on Edouard Glissant's concept of the *détour* to frame their discussion of *Hérémathonon*. Nyatetu-Waigwa's and François's analyses of *Hérémathonon* and *Une Saison à Rihata* are informed by the dominant critical discourse that frames the Caribbean as the site of Condé's legitimate origins.

¹¹⁷ This military and administrative territory included Segu and many other prominent interior urban settings in the novel such as Timbuktu and Djenné (Coquery-Vidrovitch 160-66). The colonization of the interior was accelerated following the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, where various European powers met to carve up the African continent and distribute the resulting territories among themselves. In addition to Coquery-Vidrovitch, see Chamberlain; and Stig Förster et al.

¹¹⁸ See Hanson on the forms of movement associated with these political and social upheavals. For the question of whether or not El-Hadj Omar Tall's conquest of Segu and other states in West Africa can be viewed as imperialist, see Ibrahima Thioub (131-32). To a certain extent, the jihads waged by Tall and his predecessors are framed as precursors to European conquest, which in fact echoes the rhetorical strategies of the French colonials themselves, as they presented their attempts to dominate West Africa politically and economically as merely the latest in a long line of similar interventions. Thank you to Jonathon Repinecz for drawing my attention to this interesting rhetorical overlap in *Ségou*.

voyages and displacements of other kinds of travelers, beginning in the era when the Bamana empire is at “l’apogée de sa gloire.”

On one level, the image of precolonial Segou as syncretic, the site of a constantly shifting and transforming set of cultures, undermines the lingering colonial myth of a static Africa.¹¹⁹ At the same time, Condé’s novel also pushes back against the essentialism of what she termed in a 1974 essay Senghorian Negritude, whose vision of the past “[se borne à] la magnification d’une Afrique éteinte, l’Afrique des grands Empires ensevelis dans la poussière . . . un rappel d’un mode de vie défunt” (416).¹²⁰ From Condé’s perspective, the cultural legacy that Senghorian Negritude appears to offer intact and whole to diasporic subjects—whom Senghor assembles into an “illusoire communauté ‘raciale’ fondée sur un héritage de souffrances (418)—is necessarily a fossilized one. *Ségou* builds on Condé’s earlier indictments, both in essayistic writing and her fiction, of Negritude’s role in perpetuating the alienation of Caribbean postcolonial subjects through its representation of a (defunct) Africa-as-homeland. The portrait of the Bamana capital in *Ségou* marshals many of the tropes that figure so prominently in what Condé frames as the Senghorian image of pre-colonial Africa: “[L’]Afrique des dirigeants en robes somptueuses, avec leurs griots, leurs guerriers, leurs troupeaux, leurs kôras, leurs esclaves” (415). However, in *Ségou*, every one of these elements participates in the violent disruption of the Senghorian vision.

The dominant critical narrative seems to suggest that *Une Saison à Rihata* and *Ségou* should be considered as a prolongation of Condé’s search for identity in Africa (Rosello 566). From this critical perspective, Condé’s demystification of the *retour* to the African motherland in the 1976 novel prefigures her eventual return to her legitimate Caribbean origins, starting with *Pays mêlé* (1985), published the same year as the second volume of *Ségou*. Examining *Hérémakhonon* in relation to the larger scope of Condé’s oeuvre, Miller points to a lacuna in this critical narrative. Despite her emphatic rejection of the possibility of direct cultural identification with Africa in *Hérémakhonon*, Condé continued to engage with Africa in subsequent works of fiction for nearly ten years after *Hérémakhonon* was published, setting her next three books – *Une Saison à Rihata* and the two-volume *Ségou* – in West Africa.¹²¹

Why does Condé linger in West Africa at this juncture in her *parcours littéraire*? In other words, what does *Ségou* do that *Hérémakhonon* does not? The answer to this question, I think, lies in the relationship between Véronica’s identity quest in *Hérémakhonon* and the proliferation

¹¹⁹ The image of a static, ahistorical Africa has been both upheld and challenged by various schools of historiographers since the height of the colonial empire. Thioub traces these competing voices in his study of the emergence of the Dakar school of historiography. What is perhaps most relevant in Thioub’s study for my analysis of *Ségou* is his discussion of how in the 1970s-80s this group of Senegalese historians broke with “la légende dorée” d’une histoire de l’Afrique réduite à la geste des grands hommes” to focus on “les grandes structures socio-économiques et politico-institutionnelles” (125).

¹²⁰ Lodewick, Miller, Nyatetu-Waigwa, and Kemedjio (“Esthétique”) have commented on the ways in which Condé’s three “African novels” challenge Negritude discourses. Jones (*Racial Discourses*) and Irele, among others, have defended Senghor against charges of racial essentialism.

¹²¹ In “After Negation: Africa in Two Novels by Maryse Condé,” Christopher Miller connects the opening on the level of style in *Une Saison à Rihata* to a growing level of political *engagement*. He suggests that the affirmation of the power of thought and song as tools of political resistance in the final pages of *Une Saison à Rihata* indicate that writing (history) can be one solution to the question of how to negotiate a relationship to the social and political situations in present-day Africa without falling into the immobilized apathy of Véronica and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Marie-Hélène, but also without ignoring the present in favor of the past. Zimra similarly argues that Condé “come[s] into her own as a historical writer” with *Ségou*, having spent her first two novels confronting the “sex-bound and male-defined [identity]” and “traditional gender compartmentalization prevailing in the tragic mulatto convention, usually on the [Mayotte] Capécia model” (“Righting the Calabash” 144-46).

of *voyages de retour* in *Ségou*. For the travelers who undertake, or long to attempt a *voyage de retour*, whether to the eponymous city itself or elsewhere, the relationship to an imagined ancestral home is just as complicated as that of Condé's anti-heroines with regards to West Africa, France, and the Antilles. The dreams of return cherished by Segu's estranged sons and grandsons are blighted by the same sense of failure and disappointment that marks Véronica's and Marie-Hélène's attempts at reconnecting with the African homeland seemingly promised by certain Negritude discourses. By emphasizing the extent to which Segu society and culture change over the course of three generations, Condé demonstrates the fallacy of the postcolonial subject's longing for an authentic cultural past that can be accessed or reclaimed through a *voyage de retour* to Africa. Given that the late-eighteenth-century Segu of the novel's opening is radically transformed over the course of a single generation, it would be impossible for the postcolonial subject to reclaim this past nearly two centuries later, as *Hérémakhonon*'s protagonist Véronica hopes to do.

However, *Ségou* is not merely an epic critique of Negritude across a plethora of geopolitical spaces and multiple generations. By expanding the scope of its demystification of "Africa-as-homeland" to encompass the experiences of pre-colonial subjects, *Ségou* seems to offer a broader cautioning against the teleology of return to legitimate origin. In fact, I contend that *Ségou* problematizes the idea of articulating identity in relation to any fixed place or roots—including the Caribbean. Condé's return to the Caribbean after *Ségou* is surely significant for her evolving cultural identity, yet it seems a mistake to take Condé's admission that she "ha[s] made peace with [her] island" as recognition that dwelling in Guadeloupe was inevitable and necessary for the realization of an authentic creative and cultural self. The final episode of Condé's "détour" in Africa already transposes the disillusionment and ambivalence of the failed *voyage de retour* from Africa to the Caribbean through third-generation Traoré son Samuel's misguided quest to find his Maroon ancestors in the Jamaican mountains. Condé's portrait of Segu as a space of cultural *métissage* challenges the fossilized vision of the past characteristic of Senghorian Negritude, but her evocation of certain characters' dehistoricizing, almost fetishizing vision of Segu's hybridity also highlights the pitfalls inherent in any attempt to construct a coherent cultural identity, as even an identity founded on the concept of *métissage* or *créolité* runs the risk of fixing as "authentic" one variant of a cultural formation that in theory defies such a gesture of ossification.

In my analysis of how Maryse Condé stages her demystification of the notion of cultural authenticity and legitimate origins, I will focus on several key characters and what it means for them to figure Segu as a site of home. I will first focus on a set of three disenfranchised and alienated characters, living in exile far from Segu: in the first generation, one of Dousika Traoré's four sons, Malobali; in the second generation, Eucaristus, son of Naba and adopted son of Malobali; and in the third generation, Eucaristus's son Samuel. I will then turn to four men who succeed in returning to Segu after their travels: in the first generation, Dousika's illegitimate son Siga; in the second generation, Tiékoro's son Mohammed and Malobali's son Olubunmi; and in the third generation, Mohammed's son Omar.

Malobali: Premature Nostalgia, Exile, and the Fantasy of Return

For Malobali, Segu is in fact his point of departure, the place where he is born and raised, but which he abandons in an impulsive gesture of revolt in the wake of his brother Tiékoro's return from Djenné (c. 1810s). Malobali's choice to exile himself from his home is in large part personal, the product of his jealousy over his brother's superior status and influence within the

family, but it also reflects his refusal to adapt in relation to the cultural and social transformations brought about by Islamization. In spite or perhaps because of his mixed cultural heritage—his mother, Dousika’s enslaved concubine Sira, was Fulani and Muslim—Malobali sees the attempts to introduce Islam into Segu as a bastardization. Malobali refuses to acknowledge the syncretism at the heart of Segu’s urban culture and the porousness of the city’s walls. His idealization of Segu as a stable location of culture and identity only grows as he struggles to reaffirm his identity over the course of his peregrinations: as a soldier in the royal Ashanti army and as a servant to two European missionaries in Porto Novo and Ouidah (in modern-day Benin), to name only a few stages of his picaresque adventures.¹²² Far from Segu, Malobali nevertheless yearns to return to his point of departure, a site that he imagines as wholly unchanged—an image that, as we shall see, is belied by the narration of other Traoré sons’ experiences.

Curiously, even before Malobali leaves Segu, he sees the city’s cultures and its patterns of daily life through the essentializing lens of nostalgia. When Tiékoro threatens to send him to Timbuktu for an Islamic education, Malobali impetuously flees the family compound to gaze upon his beloved home:

Ségou! Les hautes murailles de terre. L’eau étincelante et par endroits tumultueuse. Sur les rives, les pirogues des Bozos peinturlurées de rouge et de jaune. Ségou. Cet univers qui était le sien. Les jours de marché, il accompagnait Nya, suivie de ses esclaves aux larges Calebasses. Les gens chuchotaient:

-- Quel bel enfant!

Ensuite pour conjurer un sort toujours jaloux, ils se hâtaient de murmurer les paroles qui tiennent en respect la maladie et la mort. Chaque après-midi, il courait jusqu’à la place devant le palais du Mansa afin d’écouter les diélys. A présent, ceux-ci chantaient la paix retrouvée avec le Kaarta qui venait de donner à Ségou une nouvelle reine. Malobali, bousculant les autres enfants, prenait place au premier rang du cercle des spectateurs. Les bala et les tamani s’interpellaient, puis la voix gracile de la flé répondait à celle, ample et majestueuse, de l’homme. C’est de tout cela que Tiékoro entendait le priver? Alors, il s’enfuirait à l’autre bout de la Terre. On le chercherait en vain. On s’affolerait. On pleurerait. Mais ce serait trop tard. Il serait déjà loin. (*Murailles* 166-67)

The first images of Segu in this passage are ones of fixity: the walls of the city, frequently evoked as a symbol of perennity and stability; the Niger River, whose movement is evoked not through verbs, but rather through adjectival modifiers (“etincelante” and “tumultueuse”), which renders the river’s flow rather static, merely another descriptive detail of the setting; and the pirogues of the Bozos, sitting on the banks of the river, unmanned and still. The agent of the only verb in the sentence fragment describing the boats – the past participle “peinturlurées” – is evacuated from the scene.

Many of the images here are reminiscent of Park’s description of Segu from the outside: the pirogues, the sizable population, the surprisingly developed urbanism. But whereas in Park’s account the pirogues (“canoes” in Park) are on the river—a reminder of the centrality of navigable waterways to European economic ambitions—in Malobali’s version of the scene, the

¹²² Malobali’s travels lead him first to Salaga in a caravan of kola nut traders, then to Kumasi, Cape Coast, and other sites in Ghana during his time as a mercenary in the army of the Ashanti Asantehene; Porto Novo and Ouidah in modern-day Benin; and finally to Abomey, also in Benin, where he dies.

pirogues are on the banks: they are picturesque, not functional. While Park's brief account of Segou—written primarily in a descriptive mode—might seem to fix the scene as an image, he in fact frames the object of his gaze as a site of great potential. Park projects his vision of the city into the future, evoking both literal and figurative prospects.

Malobali's perspective, in contrast, mires the scene in the past. The narrative aspects of the passage in *Ségou* are written in the imperfect, emphasizing habit, custom, and unchanging tradition. The language used to describe the performances of the *diély* [griots] and the litany of accoutrements that form the décor for this grandiose set piece recall Condé's enumeration of the prominent tropes of Senghorian Negritude—"[L']Afrique des dirigeants en robes somptueuses, avec leurs griots, leurs guerriers, leurs troupes, leurs kôras, leurs esclaves." Even the historicizing element of the arrival of a new queen in Segou is subsumed into the larger portrait of Malobali's routine: this event is merely the content of the songs of the *diély* [griots]; it is the activity of gathering around to hear these songs that is important for Malobali's experience of life in Segou. The fact of conflict and change is hinted at by the reference to the newly reestablished peace with a rival family, the rulers of the rival Bamana state of Kaarta, but Malobali disregards these historical circumstances. He does not make the connection between the threatened exile to Koranic school in Timbuktu and the newly reestablished ties with the Kaarta: namely, that Segou's ruler is attempting to build an alliance with other Bamana states to resist the rising power of Islamist political and military rivals. The singular destiny of the Traoré sons and Malobali's own fate, to be the scapegoat of the cataclysmic changes taking place in West Africa, is likewise hinted at by the words murmured by the people he encounters in the streets of Segou, an action that will be insufficient to stave off this destiny. But this menacing future is subordinated to the habitual: the use of the imperfect foregrounds the routine character of such a response to Malobali's beauty. Fate is "always" jealous; the practice of murmuring certain words to ward off an invidious destiny is described in an almost ethnographic mode, which seems to downplay the menace of Malobali's fate. The portrait of Segou through Malobali's eyes is intensely romanticized; he is already nostalgic for a lifestyle that is slipping out of his grasp with the return of his older brother and the concomitant advent of Islam within the family.

Although this scene is marked by Malobali's perspective—reflecting his emotional turmoil—the mode of description aligns his portrait of Segou with other tableaux of urban life interspersed throughout the novel, often to mark a shift in time or geographical setting, and which are presented by the omniscient narrator.¹²³ The adoption of the omniscient narrator's quasi-ethnographic gaze in this scene points toward the problematic nature of Malobali's nostalgic vision. Malobali's refusal to acknowledge the changes already taking place in Segou is uncomfortably reminiscent of what Johannes Fabian identifies as anthropology's denial of coevalness (31). In many of the urban tableaux mentioned above this sense of a temporal separation between the object of description and the omniscient narrator is a function of the text's genre, as historical fiction. But the hybrid narrative voice in this scene, which combines the omniscient narrator's tone and gaze—lingering over picturesque cultural objects—with the perspective of a participant observer, Malobali, seems to place the scene that he observes in a

¹²³ The cultures, social structures, and history of Ségou and other cities encountered by members of the Traoré family are illustrated in great detail; even spaces which are only briefly the setting of the narrative action are situated historically, with the information provided in the narrative supplemented by ethnographic and historical footnotes. For example, Condé offers a disproportionately elaborate fictional portrait of the fairly obscure historical figure Anne Pépin and her historical role in the early development of Senegal as a French colony. See Lodewick's discussion of ethnography and *errance* in Condé's work.

separate temporality. The nostalgic lens through which Malobali sees Segou seems to deny the coevalness of the objects of his gaze. In order to resist the overwhelming changes that his despised elder brother embodies, Malobali must leave Segou; the geographical distance he establishes between himself and Segou allows him to perpetuate this fantasy of atemporality.

Although his departure from Segou was in part a refusal of cultural assimilation to Islam, over the course of his wanderings, Malobali paradoxically shows himself capable of adapting quickly to new situations. For instance, he prospers within the vastly different economy of the coastal town of Ouidah (in the kingdom of Dahomey, present-day Benin), participating in both the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the palm oil trade. And yet, Malobali longs for Segou, for the image of Segou that he cherishes, and that he was loath to lose. He believes in the possibility of a true “retour au pays natal” (282). Condé's use of this loaded phrase is inflected by its association with Césaire's poem, which immediately conjures up the ambiguity of such a project of “return.” From Ouidah, Malobali projects an image of home in which nothing has changed: his (adopted) mother has aged slightly, but still awaits his return; the ruler of Segou when he left, incarnation of the kingdom's strength, no doubt maintains his position on the throne:

Ségou! Ségou! Il fallait retourner à Ségou! Pourquoi s'attarder parmi des étrangers? . . . Que se passait-il à Ségou?

Surement le règne du Mansa Da Monzon se poursuivait en grandeur et en victoire. Que n'était-il là pour vivre ces grandes heures? Ah, poser la tête sur les genoux de Nya! (*Murailles* 281)

The structure of the novel, which narrates in sequence or alternates between events taking place synchronically in different locations, allows us to see that the Segou that Malobali sees as immutable is in fact at the same historical moment ever more influenced by Islam, involved in new networks of trade with Europe and North Africa. At the moment of Malobali's birth, Islam was as yet perceived as a novelty—even a curiosity—by those living in Segou: “L'islam était tout nouveau venu dans la région, apporté par les caravanes des Arabes comme une marchandise exotique!” (29). Over 25 years later, this once-exotic “marchandise” is a familiar part of everyday life, a development that is facilitated in *Ségou* by Tiékoro's interventions among the political and social elite. Malobali's dream of return relies upon a false image of Segou culture and society: he refuses to acknowledge the cultural and political transformations that were already taking place when he left Segou, and sees in cross-cultural fertilization only a betrayal of cultural authenticity and purity.

Malobali scorns the cultural syncretism of coastal cities shaped by the trans-Atlantic slave trade such as Cape Coast, Porto Novo, and Ouidah, comparing them unfavorably to Segou. Following a pattern present throughout the novel of anthropomorphizing cities as either virtuous or promiscuous women, he describes Cape Coast (in present-day Ghana) as a city that “s'étalait sans mur d'enceinte, ouverte, offerte comme ces filles que les Blancs prenaient, engrossaient et abandonnaient, sans mystère avec ses angles droits et ses bâtiments commerciaux. A la vérité était-ce une ville? Non, ce n'était qu'un entrepôt, à tout jamais marqué du sceau infamant du trafic en hommes” (235). With no past but its infamous participation in the slave trade, and devoid of authentic traditions, Cape Coast does not constitute a real city in Malobali's eyes: far from the location of a unique culture, it is simply a warehouse.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Law, on the contrary, argues that a collective urban identity “based on the recognition of diversity” emerged in Ouidah in the era following the establishment of Dahomian rule in 1727 (“Ouidah as a Multiethnic Community” 60).

Malobali cultivates the myth of an intact and pure Segou and ties this image of a monocultural space to the uncomplicated identity that he himself longs for in the stories he tells to his (adopted) son, Eucaristus:

Les fils n'appartiennent jamais qu'à leur père. Tu es un Bambara. Un jour, tu viendras à Ségou. Tu n'as jamais vu de ville comme celle-là. Les villes par ici sont des créations des Blancs. Elles sont nées du trafic de la chair des hommes. Elles ne sont que de vastes entrepôts. Mais Ségou! Ségou est entourée de murailles. C'est comme une femme que tu ne peux posséder que par violence...
(*Murailles* 285)

Malobali claims his own identity as a Bamana person through his assertion of his nephew's pure lineage, transmitted from father (Naba, a "pure" Bamana aristocrat) to son. In fact, contemporaneously with Malobali's evocation of Segou as a pure and unadulterated cultural space, many Segou residents across the class spectrum are beginning to adopt at least some Islam-inflected customs.¹²⁵

Tellingly, many of these changes take place on the level of the urban landscape and in the very architecture that Malobali positions as a symbol of Segou's intact culture. The expulsion of Bamana residents from Djenné in *Les murailles de terre* leads to changes not only in the culture of that city, but in Segou as well following the (re)integration of these exiled communities:

A voir l'opulence de Ségou dans ces années-là, on comprenait pourquoi elle excitait à ce point les convoitises des Peuls de Cheikou Hamdou. Bien sûr, ces 'singes rouges' ne parlaient que d'y implanter l'islam. Mais tout le monde savait qu'ils n'avaient d'autre désir que de faire main basse sur ses richesses et de contrôler ses marchés. Les Bambaras, chassés de Djenné par les persécutions religieuses, avaient rapporté de nouvelles techniques de maçonnerie et les maisons semblaient de véritables palais, avec, au-dessus des auvents des portes, de hauts panneaux décoratifs triangulaires et au faite des murs des frises régulières. Chaque marché illustre la diversité des échanges commerciaux du royaume : mil, riz, vin de miel d'abeille, coton, parfums, encens, peaux, poisson séché et fumé, et objets de traite que leur abondance rendait communs. Quelques années plus tôt, les femmes se jetaient sur cette pacotille. A présent elles ne lui accordaient plus un regard. (*Murailles* 324-25)

Even though the famous "murailles de terre" that figure so prominently in Malobali's vision continue to encircle the city, they have not prevented the importation of new artistic trends and commercial goods.¹²⁶ In an image that parallels Malobali's metaphor of coastal cities as wanton

¹²⁵ The same ruler of Ségou whose reign Malobali contemplates with such complacency favors the importation of exotic goods from Europe and North Africa, materially changing the interior spaces of the palace (*Murailles* 134). Da Monzon's practices of conspicuous consumption reveal the extent to which foreign objects and cultural practices are permitted to infiltrate daily life; these shifts in lifestyle and practice are seen by some as adding to the king's power rather than sapping it; on the other hand, the polyvocal narrative registers the doubts expressed by Da Monzon's councilors and subjects regarding his efficacy as a ruler in troubled times, in particular questioning his decision to let Islam develop in Ségou. And yet, for many of Ségou's residents, the growing influence of Islam is an unthreatening by-product of commerce with Muslim merchants.

¹²⁶ Nehemia Levtzion's *Islam in West Africa: Religion, Society, and Politics to 1800* and *Ancient Ghana and Mali* discuss forms of travel that could be seen as inversions of the pilgrimage to Islamic centers in North Africa and

women (while also echoing the nineteenth-century European trope of the flighty female shopper), Segu's female clientele is conquered without the slightest demonstration of force: they throw themselves eagerly on new products. Such promiscuity belies Malobali's cherished ideal of the cities in the interior. As for the built environment itself, the centrality of architectural prowess to Bamana political and cultural identity does not lead to the promotion of an immutable, "traditional" building style; cultural pride is not incompatible with an interest in products and aesthetics that come from beyond the city's walls. The time scale for these economic, cultural, and social shifts in the 1820s-30s is not one of gradual change and slow evolution. It is evident that the vagaries of consumer trends operate on a scale of years, even months. In Segu's vigorous consumer culture, a desirable commodity one year is out of fashion the next—a phenomenon that seems to validate Mungo Park's enthusiastic appraisal of Segu's potential as a consumer market. This evocation of the shifting urban landscape is a reminder that *all* cities in the novel are marked by the circulation of cultural and commercial products and the migrations of populations: all urban societies manifest cultural hybridity, not only the coastal towns that Malobali despises. The tastes and habits of Segu's fickle consumers indeed shift with the seasons, but not the ahistorical cycle of seasons evoked in President Nicolas Sarkozy's 2007 Dakar speech.¹²⁷ Rather, this evocation of life in Segu over a decade after Malobali's departure suggests that Segu's society is transformed with all the rapidity of other urban sites in the nineteenth century, whether Jenne, Paris, or London.¹²⁸ Malobali's premature nostalgia for a way of life that he attempts to preserve through the very act of abandoning it forms the basis of a myth that will haunt the subsequent generations of his line, from Eucaristus, who orients his fantasy of return around the same site—Segu—to Samuel, who pursues his own quest for roots to Jamaica.

Eucaristus: Alienation and the Lagos-London Trajectory

Eucaristus is the biological son of Naba, one of Dousika's legitimate sons. Whereas cherished first-born son Tiékoro's elevated social status shapes the conditions of his voyage to Timbuktu in quest of knowledge, Naba's departure from Segu represents a complete rupture with his privileged place in Segu society, as he is kidnapped and sold into slavery on the coast of Senegal. He will later abandon his situation in Gorée (a district in Dakar) for very different conditions of enslavement in Brazil where he chooses to accompany a young woman, Ayodélé, whom he encountered earlier in the slave depot awaiting transport to the New World. In Brazil, Naba is falsely accused of inciting rebellion on the slave plantations and is executed. In one of the many instances of picaresque coincidence that fill the novel, Ayodélé later encounters Malobali in Ouidah (again, former Dahomey, modern Benin) where she is repatriated after

the Middle East; namely, the journeys of Islamic merchants who served as unofficial missionaries for Islam, spreading the religion along with commercial goods.

¹²⁷ For an incisive analysis of Sarkozy's speech in relation to the colonial rhetoric of ahistoricity, see Konaré, *Petit précis de remise à niveau sur l'histoire africaine à l'usage du président Sarkozy*.

¹²⁸ The image of female consumers throwing themselves on piles of fashionable goods is reminiscent of Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883). It is of course necessary to take into account Condé's habit of inserting anachronistic discourses and customs into her fiction; for instance, the radical feminist proclamations of her version of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Hester Prynne in *Moi, Tituba...sorcière noire de Salem*. And yet, the image effectively evokes the forms of nineteenth-century commercial exchange in West Africa explored in the essays in Law's edited volume *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*.

Naba's execution.¹²⁹ Malobali becomes a father figure to Eucaristus, in whom he instills the nostalgic vision of Segu that he has nurtured throughout his travels. The image of Segu that Eucaristus inherits from Malobali through the latter's tales is subsequently complemented by the description of the city in Mungo Park's voyage account, which Eucaristus obtains many years later.

In many ways, Eucaristus's anguish over his cultural identity seems to prefigure that of postcolonial subjects.¹³⁰ Given that his identity is shaped by his childhood of enslavement in Brazil and his sustained encounters with European missionaries, he is implicated in histories of violent dislocation that equally inform the experiences and perspectives of Condé's alienated anti-heroines. However, Eucaristus's identity struggles share the historical moment of cultural, social, and political conflict taking place in Segu and its surrounding region, and predate the conquest of Segu by El-Hadj Omar Tall in 1861 and then by the French in 1890. Segu occupies a nebulous temporality in his mind: his predominant image of the city is of a culture frozen in the past, peopled by his lost ancestors. And yet, his dreams of return do to a certain extent acknowledge that Segu society shares his historical moment: in this conception, the obstacles to regaining this mythical home are more geographical than temporal.

Condé's portrait of the Ouidah community of Agudas – repatriated slaves from Brazil – emphasizes their paradoxical, even perverse reverence for European culture.¹³¹ The fascination with Europe inculcated in Eucaristus by his childhood milieu is further compounded by his formation in an Anglican seminary in Sierra Leone. And yet, at the same time, he is tantalized by the uncomplicated identity seemingly offered by the pure cultural site, Segu: "[Eucaristus] était hanté par un désir totalement irrationnel: retrouver le berceau de sa famille paternelle, quelque part au Soudan, à Ségou" (376). The speaker here is his mentor, Reverend Williams, who dismisses the irrationality of this *voyage de retour* to the interior to "retrouver" a place that Eucaristus has never known. Eucaristus's yearning for an elusive cultural heritage conflicts with the legacy that Williams is intent on bequeathing to his protégé: namely, the *mission civilisatrice* of early European missionaries like himself, a torch that must be taken up by indigenous Christian emissaries.¹³²

In spite of his fundamental lack of comprehension of Eucaristus's desire to return to Segu, Williams himself has a romantic vision of African civilizations that remain untouched by European influences. Like Malobali, he frames the difference between African populations on the coast and those in the interior in terms of a binary of purity and vice, subscribing to a similar notion of a more intact interior:

Le révérend Williams ne voulait pas se laisser entrainer à discuter de la nature des rapports de certains Blancs avec les Noirs. Les commerçants, puis les colons blancs avaient dégradé des Noirs en les vendant comme des bêtes et en les faisant travailler dans leurs plantations. Alors ils avaient fait naître en eux des

¹²⁹ Condé noted in an interview that she drew on a literary tradition of "romans d'aventure à rebondissements" (e.g. Alexandre Dumas's *Les trois mousquetaires*) in crafting her picaresque narrative of "coincidences" and "rencontres imprévisibles" (Pfaff 75).

¹³⁰ Or, given Condé's penchant for anachronisms, to echo it.

¹³¹ On Aguda cultural identity and the role played by the Aguda community in the broader social sphere of Ouidah, see Law "Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah."

¹³² On the role of nineteenth-century missionaries in furthering European penetration in West Africa, see Hastings 173-393. On the life of once such emissary, the real-life historical personage Samuel Ajayi Crowther—the first African Anglican bishop in Nigeria—who appears in the novel as Eucaristus's close friend, see also Hastings 339-93 and Northrup 107-131.

comportements qui étaient inconnus de l'ensemble de leurs peuples. Williams en était convaincu. Il n'y avait rien de commun entre les nègres de la côte, dégénérés par le trafic de leurs semblables, ivrognes, prêts à tout pour acquérir les objets des Européens, et les Noirs de l'intérieur, purs, chaleureux, pleins de sagesse qu'il suffisait d'amener au vrai Dieu. (387)

Condé sets up a parallel between the myth of the “noble savage” of the interior propagated by the English missionary Reverend Williams, and the romanticized idea of Segou held by Malobali. Both visions fail to acknowledge the kinds of cultural transformation taking place in these purportedly untainted interior spaces. As discussed previously, Malobali elides all traces of the transformations provoked by contact with Islam from his nostalgic picture of Segou. Williams neglects to consider, or is perhaps unaware of, forms of cultural contact in which Europeans are not implicated. Moreover, both Williams and Malobali draw on the language of vice and virtue. Malobali deploys such language both metaphorically, to evoke the mingling of cultures in the port cities—in contrast with the intact and virginal Segou—and literally, to describe the social practice of interracial sexual relationships between African women and European men.¹³³ Williams uses these figures to affirm the moral degradation of Africans on the coast due to the violence and corrupting influence of the slave trade. The benevolent Williams avoids the specific forms of racial essentialism embraced by his colleagues in the missionary community: in adopting a historical framework for his cultural assumptions, he recognizes the role played by the slave trade and colonialism in shaping social and cultural practices in coastal cities. However, his convictions regarding the civilizations in regions removed from the coast are essentialist and ahistorical, conforming to broad stereotypes of the noble savage. The lack of contact between Europeans and Africans in the interior has allowed them to remain morally and culturally pure; they retain their “local” systems of knowledge, while nevertheless harboring the intellectual capacity to accept the superiority of Christian ideologies. Moral and cultural purity are linked in this discourse, where the desire for European commercial and cultural imports is a sign both of moral perversion and of cultural contamination. As we shall see, both Malobali’s and Reverend Williams’s notions of cultural purity—as well as the latter’s moral doctrine—shape Eucaristus’s identity.

Propelled by his missionary mentors to complete his religious training in London, in 1840 Eucaristus travels to the heart of the British Empire—thereby effectively reversing Park’s earlier voyage to the African interior. A series of experiences in this European metropole lead him to identify fervently with Mungo Park, and in particular the latter’s exclusion from the bustling center of the Bamana Empire over 40 years prior. First, he is seduced by a marquessa, Lady Jane, as part of the latter’s apparent project of having sex with black men and comparing their performances; after a single encounter, she refuses to see Eucaristus again, and he is shut out of her aristocratic home, this unimagined “univers de luxe et de beauté” (403) that eclipses any site of European culture to which he had previously been exposed.

In the immediate aftermath of this psychological blow, his wife Emma sends him a copy of the long sought-after voyage account of Mungo Park. The narrative of the Scottish explorer’s arrival at Segou on the day of Malobali’s birth figured prominently among the tales that Malobali would tell Eucaristus when he was a child. Even as an adult, Eucaristus continued to associate this tale with both Malobali’s lyrical evocations of Segou—including Eucaristus’s own aristocratic heritage within Bamana society—and the world of Bamana folklore more generally. Eucaristus

¹³³ On the circumstances and social weight of these relationships in coastal towns, see Northrup 64–68.

finally “sees” Segou as more than mere fable—through the privileged lens of the written text—from London.¹³⁴ Thus Eucaristus reads Park’s representation of a site that he imagines as home from a dramatically displaced position. The geographical distance, already considerable in relation to his point of departure, Lagos, is dramatically extended by his voyage to Europe. This vast spatial divide is compounded by his sense of an unbridgeable cultural and even temporal gap, as we see in this outpouring of grief and shame provoked by the revelation of Park’s exclusion from Segou:

Sanglotant de honte, de remords et de douleur, Eucaristus s’abattit sur sa couche.

Sur quoi pleurait-il ?

Sur lui-même et son humiliation récente. Mais aussi sur cette pureté de ses ancêtres de Ségou qu’il avait à jamais perdue. Ségou, monde clos sur lui-même. Imprenable. Refusant son accès à l’homme blanc, condamné à errer au pied de ses murailles. Jamais il ne se baignerait dans les eaux du Joliba pour y puiser force et vigueur. Jamais il ne retrouverait l’orgueilleuse assurance de ce temps-là. Peu à peu, ses larmes séchèrent et il se rassit sur son lit. Dans quelques mois, il serait ordonné prêtre. Il savait déjà que sa mission le ramènerait à Lagos. Christianiser et civiliser l’Afrique, c’était son lot.

Christianiser et civiliser l’Afrique. C’est-à-dire la pervertir? (*Murailles* 408)

Eucaristus’s turbulent emotional state in the wake of the Lady Jane debacle is violently aggravated by the knowledge of Park’s failed arrival at Segou. Fixating on Park’s exclusion, Eucaristus concludes that, given his rupture with the “purity” of his ancestors, he too would be refused access to this “monde clos”; or if granted entrance, that he would be unable to integrate into such a hermetic world. A decontextualized snippet of Park’s text—his description of Segou’s architecture from the exterior—fuses with Malobali’s anthropomorphization of the city as a chaste virgin to produce an image of Segou in Eucaristus’s mind as a static, frozen cultural entity—a distant space existing in a separate temporality. As in Malobali’s nostalgic vision of his childhood home, Eucaristus’s romanticization of Segou as a site of cultural purity leads to a denial of its coevalness.

Eucaristus’s recent adulterous encounter with the English marquessa exacerbates his anguish over his corrupt, perverted identity. Upon leaving Lady Jane’s luxurious abode, Eucaristus is initially delirious with joy over having finally vindicated himself for his earlier rejection by one Eugenia de Carvalho, the “plus jolie métisse de Lagos” (*Murailles* 379):

Il regarda la haute façade de l’hôtel particulier et il n’aurait pas été surpris de le voir disparaître, s’émietter comme ces constructions de l’imaginaire qui ne résistent pas à l’état de veille. Brusquement une joie extraordinaire l’envahissait.

¹³⁴ Whereas literary, ethnographic, and historical narratives are all equally mythical and fantastic to Eucaristus when they are transmitted orally (*Murailles* 391-92), the superior authority attributed to Park’s text is consistent with what Kemedjio sees as a pattern of excessive valorization of the written over the oral in twin contexts of shifting power relations in *Ségou*: first, the rising hegemony of Islam and second, the beginning of European penetration into West Africa. Kemedjio establishes a direct link between the “sublimation” or “fetishization” of writing at the expense of orality in the context of conversion to Islam, and the obsession with writing among a new class generated by European colonization.

En ce moment, il ne pensait pas à Emma qu'il venait d'offenser si cruellement. Mais à Eugenia de Carvalho. Ah, elle l'avait raillé, méprisé, traité de 'sale nègre' [. . .] Eh bien, sa maîtresse était blanche et aristocrate! Non seulement blanche, mais aristocrate! (405)

Gazing in stupefaction at the façade of the impressive mansion in Belgrave Square, Eucaristus wonders if such a solid object will reveal itself to be a mere castle in the air—a sense of unreality that extends to the physical act that he has just committed. In a reversal of Malobali's evocation of the cities of the interior—cities “comme une femme que tu ne peux posséder que par violence”—here the stately building stands in for the body of the woman that he has just possessed, but not by force. The gendered power relations in Malobali's formula are further disrupted when the marquessa cuts off all contact with Eucaristus following their first and only rendezvous. The only additional attention that she accords him is a note informing him that his sexual performance trumped that of an earlier conquest, “Kangourou,” a black acrobat operating in the Haymarket theater district. The sexual encounter with the marquessa both unsettles and reinforces the social dynamics of his relationship with Eugenia de Carvalho back in Lagos. In spite of the momentary transgression of racial boundaries through sexual contact, Eucaristus's interaction with the marquessa results in a dramatic re-inscription of his identity as a racialized subject.

I want to highlight here the parallel between Eucaristus's fear of exclusion from Segu and his rejection by Lady Jane. While the mansion in Belgrave Square is still present the following day, he is denied entrance beyond the foyer. Far from crumbling into dust (“s'émietter”), the marquessa's imposing residence—and the racial and class lines reaffirmed by Eucaristus's expulsion from these spaces—rests solidly intact. Oscillating between revulsion and despair, Eucaristus waxes poetic over the inaccessible marquessa in terms that communicate both the fetichized whiteness of her skin and the impenetrable barriers between them: she is a “terre de lait et de miel dérobée aussitôt qu'atteinte” and a “tour d'ivoire” (406). While he did in fact “possess” the marquessa, their relationship is ultimately just as ephemeral as a castle in the air. In contrast, the process of racialization enacted through Eucaristus's encounter with the marquessa will only become more systematic in subsequent decades as European powers forcefully take possession of more and more territories in the “Scramble for Africa. Meanwhile, the economic and political might of the Bamana Empire—symbolized by Segu's walls—diminishes over the first half of the nineteenth century to finally fall into “miettes” (as the title of the novel's second volume—*Terre en miettes*—implies).

Through his sexual relations with a white aristocrat in London, Eucaristus imagines for a fleeting moment that he has transcended the racial and class hierarchy in Lagos, in which he occupies an ambiguous position. In his earlier interactions with Eugenia in Lagos, he partially claims his ethnic identity when he proposes that she address him by his Yoruba name, Babatundé, rather than his Christian name. However, with Eugenia, he is never able to relinquish the Portuguese surname that his mother was given when she lived in enslavement in Brazil: “A chaque fois qu'il voulait . . . prononcer [son patronyme paternel], quelque chose l'arrêtait, lui révélant toute la réalité de son aliénation. Babatundé Traoré, non jamais!” (380-81). His noble lineage will afford him nothing within the rigid social hierarchy in Lagos, and Eucaristus has partially assimilated the racist contempt exhibited by the inhabitants of Lagos—especially the Europeans and their mixed-race descendents—for the darker-skinned Africans of the interior. Eucaristus's horror at the prospect of being assimilated with this latter group prevents him from fully assuming his dual ethnic identity. He clings to the imposed Portuguese surname, a marker

of his rupture with his Bamana heritage, even as the “incongruité” (380) of this European name for someone with such dark skin earns him the barely concealed disdain of Eugenia and her younger brother.

Conversely, Eucaristus professes his aristocratic roots from another position within his personal diaspora, London, in conversation with the marquessa: “Mon histoire débute, bien sûr, avant ma naissance. Par celle de mon père, un noble bambara...” (404). In asserting his noble lineage—through his biological father, the aristocratic Naba, and not through the father figure who confided this heritage to him, Malobali—Eucaristus seems to momentarily overcome his alienation as a hybrid subject. As an object of desire for an aristocratic white woman, he is able to recognize his Bamana heritage and, in claiming this identity as his own, establish a sort of parity with Lady Jane. Upon leaving her home, all the doors in the city seem to open—even the hermetic world of London nightlife seems suddenly accessible—but Eucaristus is once again thrown into confusion following his rejection.

Eucaristus’s frustrated attempt to penetrate into the home of the marquessa and to possess her body again is linked to his imagined inability to access the “monde clos” of Segou; his rejection by his white, aristocratic mistress of one night leads him paradoxically to identify with Mungo Park, “l’homme blanc, condamné à errer au pied de ses murailles.” Despite the explicit expression of identification with the European, this projected failure is in fact founded upon the fantasy of cultural purity that Malobali instilled in him. His imagined exclusion from Segou—site of the longed-for uncomplicated identity and elevated social status—signifies for him the impossibility of reconciling the alienation of his experiences as a racialized, culturally hybrid subject. Even if Eucaristus were to fully embrace his vocation as a Christian missionary, he would always be seen first as a racialized subject by the color-obsessed community of Europeans and Agoudas in Lagos. Conversely, he imagines, the bastardizing effects of his cultural education would mark him just as surely as an outsider as the light skin of the European Mungo Park. Brooding over their common destiny to wander fruitlessly at the foot of Segou’s impregnable walls, Eucaristus neglects to take into account the rest of Park’s narrative. In focusing only on the explorer’s failed arrival at Segou, Eucaristus misses the fact that this one moment is anomalous in a larger story of exchange and reciprocity.

One might excuse this omission initially, given that the arrival scene is the key moment in the text for a lost son of Segou, but the second volume of Condé’s novel reveals that in the years to follow Eucaristus comes to “port[er] un attachement fétichiste” for Park’s account, for its depiction of the “berceau supposé de la famille” (190).¹³⁵ One might reasonably assume that Eucaristus’s fervor for Park’s narrative—not to mention his passion for travel narratives in general (*Murailles* 397, 399)—led him to subsequently peruse the text more carefully. Contemporary readers familiar with either Park’s or Condé’s representation of the African interior might see a certain irony in Eucaristus’s choice to persevere in his belief in the cultural purity of these distant regions. Both texts suggest that, while Eucaristus’s particular cultural formation might be incomprehensible to other residents of Segou, foreign cultures are more

¹³⁵ While Kemedjio suggests that Eucaristus treasures this text because it is a material sign of belonging to the class of évolués, or to borrow Kemedjio’s term, the “aristocratie de la lettre” (*De la négritude à la créolité* 66) there is a certain irony here in that the term “fétichiste” immediately recalls the designation applied to the Bamana religion by Muslims and Christians alike. Moreover, when Eucaristus reads for the first time Park’s description of his failed arrival, he hears Malobali’s voice in his head, repeating the words that form a refrain throughout both volumes of *Ségou*: “Un jour, tu viendras à Ségou. . .” In this climactic moment of reading Park’s account, not only does the oral overlay the written, but Eucaristus’s desire for an elusive cultural heritage gives more prominence to the oral.

readily accommodated by the large urban metropolises in the interior than the isolated incident of Park's exclusion would seem to allow. In fact, Condé's depiction of Segu's social, political and cultural transformations in the time period between Park's arrival on the banks of the Niger River in 1796 and the French conquest of the city in 1890 promotes an almost hyperbolic vision of the city as a space of cultural hybridity.

Moreover, both Malobali and Eucaristus fail to see how Segu might be implicated in the networks of travel and exchange in which their journeys and experience participate. Malobali constructs a narrative about Segu's impenetrability from the distant lands in which he is stranded; Eucaristus reads what he interprets as an assertion of purity from even farther away. Malobali, as we have seen, elides traces of cultural inter-penetration from his tales as part of his willful nostalgia for a moment that may never have existed. Meanwhile, Eucaristus's initial traumatic confrontation with the seeming impossibility of return to the intact "berceau de la famille" through Park's text—based on voyage made over 40 years prior—takes place in England. Moreover, the account of Eucaristus's sojourn in London relates this African traveler's surprise and disgust at the naïve and idiotic reactions he provokes among these presumably cosmopolitan British natives:

Dans les rues, dans les cafés, toutes les conversations s'arrêtaient tandis que des centaines de paires d'yeux gris, bleus, verts, à l'éclat insoutenable se posaient sur lui. On touchait sa peau pour voir si elle n'était pas enduite de peinture. On touchait ses cheveux. On s'écriait, dès qu'il ouvrait la bouche :

-- C'est qu'il parle ! Et il parle anglais !

Était-ce là le comportement d'hommes civilisés ? Eucaristus se rappelait la courtoisie avec laquelle on accueillait les Blancs au royaume de Dahomey, où il avait grandi. . . . Pourquoi le considérait-on comme un animal d'une espèce singulière ? Après tout, la présence de Noirs n'était pas chose nouvelle en Angleterre. A la fin du siècle précédent, il y en avait tant que le Parlement avait dû passer une loi pour les rapatrier en Sierra Leone. (*Murailles* 398)

Eucaristus is contemptuous of the Londoners' provincialism, recalling in particular the long history of circulation between Africa and England, involving both coerced and volitional movement. Eucaristus himself has reversed Park's journey and successfully penetrated into certain segments of London society—including, if only provisionally, Lady Jane's boudoir. Just as the ruler of Segu had, at one point, refused Mungo Park entrance into Segu, Lady Jane holds the power to shut out Eucaristus; and yet, in an image reminiscent of Segu's fickle female shoppers, she invites a series of men into her home, constantly seeking out novel, exotic products and superficial cultural contact. Strangely, in spite of Eucaristus's recognition of how patterns of cultural contact and global migration shape urban life at one site in his life of many travels—London—he does not imagine that Segu might be touched by the same phenomena of cultural commerce. He similarly ignores the implications of the generic status of Park's text—a travel narrative—for his romantic image of Segu; he not only projects Park's exclusion onto his own imagined *voyage de retour*, but also elides the very different experiences of travel suggested by Park's encounters with fellow African travelers familiar with Segu's *intra-muros* life. Not every traveler is condemned to wander at the foot of Segu's mythical walls. Eucaristus's expression of alienation suppresses the existence of cultures of travel in interior Africa.

Qu'est-ce qu'une ville? Hybridity, Identity, and Place

Eucaristus's sense of irreparable alienation from Segu is arguably a product of his experiences as a diasporic subject; his identity crises are easily recognizable through reference to Condé's postcolonial anti-heroines. And yet, it is not only exiled and disenfranchised characters like Malobali and Eucaristus who struggle to reconcile the hybridity of urban cultures with their longing for cultural stability. Far from the vilified promiscuity of the coastal cities, Traoré sons living in the supposedly "pure" interior—including behind the high walls of Segu—also grapple with the complexities of cultural *métissage* on the level of both collective and individual identity: Siga in the first generation; Mohammed and Olubunmi (Malobali's son) in the second; and Omar (Mohammed's son) in the third.

These characters' perspectives must be read in relation to the idea of urban life articulated by the omniscient third-person narrator in portraits of cities ranging from West Africa to Morocco to England. Malobali's and Eucaristus's romantic image of the cities in the interior—and, as we shall see, the similarly essentialist views of Traoré sons who have actually experienced life in these cities—differs dramatically from the omniscient narrator's repeated observation of the mutability of urban cultures. A particularly clear instance of this kind of commentary is found in a set of musings that preface the narration of the mass expulsion of Bamana and other ethnic groups from the West African city of Jenne—including first-generation son Tiékoro and his family:

Qu'est-ce qu'une ville? Ce n'est pas un ensemble de maisons de paille ou de terre, de marchés sur lesquels on vend du riz, du mil, des calebasses, du poisson ou des objets manufacturés, de mosquées où l'on se prosterne, de temples où l'on répand le sang des victimes. C'est un assemblage de souvenirs intimes, différents pour chaque être, ce qui fait qu'aucune ville ne ressemble à une autre et n'a d'identité véritable. (*Murailles* 157)

These musings are followed by an elaborate portrait of the city's built environment and its customs—and how these aspects of Jenne figure in the lives and memories of Tiékoro, his companion Nadié, and their children. The omniscient narrator privileges the city's "usagers" (to borrow Georges Perec's term) over its physical structures. The tableau of Jenne, although drawing on conventions of ethnographic and historical description, is animated through an evocation of the activities and experiences of the city's inhabitants—both those with a fugitive presence in the city, like Tiékoro's family, and those with longer ties to the city. The theorization of the city quoted above suggests that only such an account of the diverse inhabitants' thoughts and memories can take the full measure of life in Jenne. The omniscient narrator's vindication of the relationship between the city and the ethnic communities expelled immediately thereafter offers a less than subtle commentary on the illogic of the attempts on the part of the followers of Seku Amadu to cleanse the city of its animist Bamana elements.¹³⁶

Condé's fictional account of this mass exodus and the violent cultural conflicts that it manifests already problematizes the romantic notions of interior Africa that Malobali and Reverend Williams will express years later. But the assertion that no city possesses an "identité véritable" carries this disruption of the notion of cultural purity still further, undercutting all of the Traoré sons' subsequent attempts to locate their roots in any one place. Even as they

¹³⁶ For a thorough history of the creation of Amadu's Islamic empire in the Macina, see Amadou Hampâté Bâ's foundational work *L'empire peul du Macina*; for a more concise overview, see Robinson 139-40.

recognize the cultural shifts taking place around them, Traoré men who are firmly enmeshed in Segou society continue to cling to a notion of the city's "identité véritable" that is in fact rooted in a bygone era. However, the rejection of change on the part of Siga, Mohammed, and Olubunmi is not the only source of a problematic conception of urban character. The lyrical evocation of Segou's vitality from the perspective of third-generation son Omar is likewise symptomatic of an essentialist cultural vision. Reminiscent of the *créolité* vision of Caribbean cultures, Omar's definition of the city's "identité véritable" in terms of an intrinsic hybridity elides the violent circumstances from which many of these hybrid cultural forms emerge.

Ségou n'est plus dans Ségou!

The emphatic rejection of syncretism embodied in the expulsion of minority communities from Jenne finds a parallel, oddly enough, in a lamentation over how life in Segou is being transformed by Islamization, voiced by the first-generation son Siga. Son of another of Dousika's enslaved concubines, Siga was compelled to accompany his aristocratic elder brother Tiékoro on his scholarly quest to Timbuktu. Promptly separated from Tiékoro by the master of the Koranic school, Siga is forced to make his own way; similar to Malobali, he subsequently demonstrates a surprising knack for commerce (skills unbecoming of an aristocrat within Segou's highly regimented caste system). Siga's business travel and romantic adventures take him from Timbuktu to Fez and finally back to Segou, his motherland; as with Malobali, Siga's yearning to return home is often expressed through his longing to once again be close to the matriarch, Nya. Despite the richness and variety of his travel experiences, including exposure to the vibrant culture of these Islamic cities, Siga—a resolute animist, again like Malobali—resents the growing influence of Islam within his home city:

A cause de son éléphantiasis, [Siga] ne pouvait aller qu'à petits pas. Pourtant cela ne l'incommodait pas. Il était devenu comme un promeneur forcé de contempler des paysages qu'autrement il aurait traversés sans les voir. Ségou n'en finissait pas de changer. Des maisons neuves avec leurs terrasses et leurs tourelles à créneaux triangulaires. De rares toits de paille. Partout, des enfants emprisonnés dans les cages des écoles coraniques. Illogique, à leur vue Siga eut un regret. Que n'avait-il poussé plus loin ses études alors qu'il était à Fès ? Mais alors ce savoir qui ne se dissociait pas de la foi islamique le rebutait. (*Murailles* 415)

Siga, the inadvertent *flâneur*, is led to contemplate the shifts in the urban landscape more attentively than he would have but for his reduced mobility. Unlike Malobali, Siga acknowledges the transformations to Segou's urban cultures—indeed, at this moment in his urban promenade, distracted by recent debates over the future of Islam in the region, all Siga can see are the changes (the scene takes place sometime between 1845-1852). He is distressed by the sight of the numerous Koranic schools that have sprung up around the city—both because he regrets his failure to capitalize upon his chance to join what Cilas Kemedjio terms "l'aristocratie de la lettre" (*Malédiction* 66) and because the children who once circulated freely in public spaces are now cloistered indoors in accordance with the new cultural system. Siga's sense of impending doom blinds him to presence of children playing in the street who, in the tradition of his own childhood, either wear a loincloth or go entirely nude.

Siga's mournful consideration of the new form of the city in the wake of Islamization is reminiscent of Baudelaire's narrator in "Le cygne": as in Paris, the "Hausmannization" of Segou

has changed the urban skyline and left the city's inhabitants filled with nostalgia. The narrator's grief in "Le cygne"—"la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas ! que le cœur d'un mortel"—is echoed throughout the novel, and becomes a kind of refrain, for instance in this dramatic elegy for the city pronounced by second-generation son Olubunmi (Malobali's son with Romana da Cunha) in the wake of Segu's defeat by Tall's armies in 1861: "Olubunmi sentait que la paix et l'équilibre des jours d'antan étaient révolus, que Ségou ne serait plus jamais Ségou, mais une autre, dépossédée d'une partie d'elle-même, intégrant, assimilant mille éléments qu'elle finirait par croire siens, alors qu'ils lui étaient, en réalité, radicalement étrangers, imposés par ses vainqueurs. Oui, le destin de Ségou était scellé" (*Terre* 46). Olubunmi's knowledge of his hybrid origins (his mother belonged to the Aguda community in Ouidah) and the diasporic context from which he emerged before returning to Segu as a baby does little to inform his understanding of the equally hybrid milieu where he was raised—Segu. Instead, he reifies the city as the location of a uniform culture. From the outset, *Ségou* emphasizes the eponymous city's instability, but this leitmotiv is continuously at odds with the myth of Segu's intactness, fixity, and impermeability—frequently articulated around the figure of Segu's imposing walls.¹³⁷ The idea of the city suggested by the novel's opening lines, a fragment of a griot's song—"Ségou est un jardin où pousse la ruse"—is incompatible with Olubunmi's conviction that Segu's essence will be evacuated from the city in the wake of Tall's conquest—that "Ségou ne serait plus jamais dans Ségou" in spite of the fact that the bulk of the population survived the war.

Beyond these competing rhetorics, the belief in a cultural essence that will somehow be dissipated by the conquerors is belied by the narrative's repeated demonstration of the resiliency of urban populations. This tension is evident in a scene where second-generation son Mohammed contemplates morosely the fate of Hamdullahi, the capital of Seku Amadu's empire in the Massina. After seeing their homes razed by Tall's armies in 1862, the city's inhabitants struggle to pick up the pieces of their lives:

Qu'une ville est oubliée! Deux jours auparavant, Hamdallay brûlait. Deux jours auparavant, ses habitants la désertaient. A présent, alors que la fumée des incendies était encore tiède, les maisons recommençaient à s'édifier . . . les marchés à se peupler de femmes offrant le lait caillé, les abattoirs public à exhiber leurs quartiers de viande écarlates. La vie, la vie reprenait ses droits. Puisque El-Hadj Omar était vainqueur, il fallait bien s'en accommoder. (*Terre* 141)

This hasty rebuilding of the city in the immediate wake of its defeat is seen as an act of hypocrisy by Mohammed, as if the resurrection of the built environment symbolizes an abrupt switch in allegiance from Seku Amadu's regime to the new political and social order imposed by Tall. In Mohammed's lament over what he sees as the dishonorable actions of the residents of Hamdullahi, the city itself stands in for its citizens: "Qu'une ville est oubliée!" The treachery on which Segu is said to be founded likewise seems to invest the very structures of Hamdullahi. The conception of urban culture as a fixed essence is implicit in the reproach that Mohammed levels at the city's fickle denizens. And yet, years before, Mohammed had already announced the extinction of the city's essence with the death of its founder, Seku Amadu: "Hamdallay n'est plus dans Hamdallay..." (413). How is it possible to repeatedly lament the demise of a city's

¹³⁷ According to Lilyan Kesteloot, these lines have almost the status of a proverb and form a refrain for the epic of Segu that she transcribed and edited. While these lines do not seem to figure together in this exact sequence anywhere in the Kesteloot version of the epic, they are presented in this order in her introduction and it is this sequence that Condé reproduces word for word in *Ségou*.

soul without acknowledging the agency of its inhabitants, the weight of their lived experience? Mohammed's failure to see the reconstruction efforts undertaken in Hamdullahi by the survivors of Tall's attack on the city as anything other than an act of betrayal aligns his perspective with other characters' rejection of forms of cultural hybridity emerging under less violent circumstances, whether in their surrounding environment (Malobali, Eucaristus) or in themselves (Eucaristus).

Paradoxically, Mohammed's distress among the smoldering ruins of Hamdullahi points to the limits of defining a city's character in terms of hybridity. In accusing the people of Hamdullahi of disloyalty, Mohammed both asserts his essentialist conception of urban culture and erases the significance in historical terms of their attempts at reconstruction: it is an act of survival undertaken by people in a war-torn region. It would be a mistake, however, to conflate the people's resigned acceptance of the new way of life—their attempts to “accommodate” their conqueror—with the forms of hybridity that emerge from more volitional patterns of cultural contact. If the city must necessarily put aside its old ways in order to survive under the new order, the new practices that evolve in this context are not formed through the same kinds of cultural processes that earlier shaped the frenzied consumer practices of female shoppers in Segou.

Sangs mêlés, pays mêlé

In spite of Olubunmi's and Mohammed's anguished views of the extinguished essence of Segou and Hamdullahi, respectively, Segou is perceived as persistently hybrid by the next generation. In the following passage, we see the city through the eyes of Omar, Tiékoro's grandson, more than 50 years after Malobali's premature expressions of nostalgia as he gazed upon the same sights. As the heir of both the Traoré aristocratic lineage and the cultural legacy of his illustrious grandfather Tiékoro, famed Islamic martyr and scholar, Omar returns to Segou to help implant Islam in this stubbornly if secretly pagan country. Once there, he is seduced by its syncretic and cosmopolitan society:

Omar était amoureux de Ségou. Tout comme au premier jour de son arrivée, son animation ne cessait pas de l'enchanter. Il ne comprenait pas ceux qui disaient qu'elle avait perdu son attrait avec la venue de l'islam, car, pour lui, au contraire, les gestes de la foi s'y paraient d'une originalité et d'une vie qui n'appartenaient qu'à elle. Les mosquées lui semblaient plus riantes, les écoles coraniques moins sévères que partout ailleurs, tandis que les psalmodies des talibés et l'appel des muezzins se répercutaient sur des notes hautes, presque joyeuses, parlant d'espoir. Il aimait rôder sur les rives du fleuve et regarder les pirogues enluminées glisser sur l'eau. Parfois, il aidait les pêcheurs à haler leurs barques sur la rive, et ceux-ci raillaient:

-- Eh, Torodo, est-ce que tu prétends être un homme de l'eau?

Alors, il expliquait qu'il n'était pas un Torodo, et les hommes hochaient la tête, comme s'il leur plaisait que fraternisent dans leur antique cité toutes les races et toutes les origines, et qu'y naissent des êtres hybrides, participant de cultures diverses. Il arriva jusqu'au marché aux bestiaux, ou, selon une coutume qui avait résisté aux guerres et aux rivalités, les Peuls venaient offrir leurs bêtes de trait et de selle. On y entourait deux hommes qui, avec force gestes, racontaient une histoire extraordinaire. (*Terre* 321)

One could interpret the persistence of certain cultural and economic practices (telling stories in the marketplace, Fulani herdsmen bringing their livestock to sell) as a Senghor-esque sign of the essential immutability of African culture. Many features of the landscape that were essential to Segu's identity for Malobali, two generations earlier, appear again in this passage, which likewise describes a routine. Moreover, there is a reminder of how the economic sectors of Segu society are rigidly defined along ethnic lines—a “Torodo” (Tukolor/Futaka) cannot be an “homme de l'eau”: horse and livestock trading is still the province of the Macina Fulani. But whereas a heavy stillness lays over Malobali's vision of Segu, here there is a great deal of activity. The boats that are static and unmanned in Malobali's portrait of Segu, here the boats are part of economic and social life—in fact, Omar even interacts and enters into dialogue with the men, asserting his own plural ethnic heritage, which he sees as fundamental, ultimately, to life in Segu, although not in every urban culture.

However, Omar's celebration of hybridity and transculturation elides the Bamana elites' violent resistance (including a revolt during which Mohammed is killed) to Tall's conquest of Segu and the consequent imposition of Islam on the city. Omar comes to Segu as an emissary of Islam—his perception of the expressions of the faith in the city's architecture and in the calls of the muezzin as joyous, laughing, and hopeful must be understood in relation to his alliance with the conquering forces. His knowledge of his father's political activities is minimal; in his enthusiasm for Segu's vitality, he fails to take into account the fact that when Mohammed joined the movement of resistance against Tall's order, he chose his Bamana family to the exclusion of other aspects of his cultural identity, thereby answering the rhetorical question he posed earlier in a moment of identity confusion: “Le sang, le sang n'est-il pas plus fort que tout?” (*Murailles* 430). Omar's panegyric of Segu's hybridity goes beyond the city's built environment and its cultural practices to celebrate the mixing of blood—*métissage* on a quasi-biological level:

Ségou! Ce n'était pas seulement une ville imposante avec de majestueuses constructions. C'était, Omar s'en apercevait déjà, une métropole où cultes, coutumes et croyances s'enchevêtraient, Bambaras, Peuls, Bozos, Somonos mais aussi Sarakolés, Toucouleurs, Sonraïs ayant mêlé leurs sangs, leurs langues et leurs fois, au cours des guerres rallumées aussitôt qu'éteintes et d'alliances renouées aussitôt que rompues, où aucune race n'était pure, aucune caste rigide, aucun savoir souverain. Et ceux qui l'entouraient reflétaient bien cette diversité de leur cité, cette tolérance, cette complexité. (*Terre* 296)

War and all its horror is here reduced to petty squabbles. The violent circumstances in which these languages, faiths, and “sangs” were mixed—including the rapes committed by many of the Traoré sons—are elided to create a harmonious portrait of tolerance and diversity.

Omar's romanticization of this cultural *métissage* seems to echo here the omniscient narrator's presentation of animist culture in terms of its greater liveliness and more tolerant attitudes, in contrast with the rigid dogmatism of Seku Amadu's and Tall's Islamic regimes. Shifts in Segu's culture are often framed in such a way as to project the city's *intrinsic* ability to “accommodate” new cultural practices, both those introduced via systems of economic exchange and those imposed by conquering forces—Tall's in 1861 and the French in 1890. However, while the city may be “oublié[x],” the reader cannot help but retain the scenes of bloody conflict and the mournful refrain over disappearing habits. While Malobali's willful nostalgia refuses to acknowledge any cultural shifts, Omar's lyrical evocation of life in Segu suppresses

certain aspects of the city's history of cultural exchange. The omniscient narrator supplements its complacent, even romantic evocation of Segou's resiliency with accounts of historical violence; Segou's hybridity—while effectively undermining Negritude's monolithic vision of the past—is not reified as the city's true essence. The life of the city is ever the product of historical processes and the agents who participate in them.

Conclusion

What can this novel written by a Caribbean novelist offer for thinking about a field of African travel literature?¹³⁸ Read through the lens of travel criticism concerning the rest of her corpus, the novel appears to connect this history of African cultures of travel to other identity struggles: to connect the past and the present, and moreover to consider spatial and cultural dimensions as well as the temporal. The relationship between Samuel and the earlier Traoré sons in his line (Naba, Malobali, Eucaristus) can usefully inform an understanding of the weight of Condé's Caribbean-ness. Like Eucaristus, Samuel longs to stake out a stable identity in relation to a "supposé berceau de la famille." However, in a brutal rejection of his cruel and authoritarian father—and the particular expression of Eucaristus's alienation—Samuel invests in the other half of his family tree: he travels to Jamaica to find his legendary, nearly mythical ancestors, the Maroons:

Pourquoi la Jamaïque? Parce que la haine de Samuel pour son père s'était, par une mystérieuse alchimie, transformée en haine de l'Afrique. Il haïssait cette terre où les Noirs, indigènes ou évolués, peu importe, étaient condamnés à obéir aux Anglais, à baisser la tête devant eux en balbutiant: "Oui, sir", où rien n'avait de prix, ni leurs langues, ni leurs dieux, ni leurs coutumes, où tout leur était arraché. Après avoir conquis l'île de Lagos, en faisant tonner leurs canons, les Anglais s'apprêtaient à s'emparer de l'arrière-pays auquel, déjà, ses missionnaires faisaient réciter le catéchisme de la soumission. Alors, il fallait fuir de l'autre côté de l'eau, atteindre l'autre rive, là où s'élevait une terre fière, verte comme le Paradis où les Noirs savaient dire: Non." (191)

Even though Samuel conceives of his project of return as an absolute negation of his father's idealization of Segou, his critique of the cultures of the coastal cities echoes both Malobali's and Eucaristus's discourse. The evocation of Jamaica as a "terre fière" simply borrows the terms of Eucaristus's bitter rejection of Lagos society, whose hybridity he juxtaposed unfavorably with the pure cultural legacy of his father, Malobali, "un fier Bambara" (*Terre* 189). The mere appearance of the figure of "Paradis," given the dire consequences of earlier generations' idealization of the *pays natal*, soundly anticipates a brutal demystification of the history of resistance suggested by the emphatic "Non."

Samuel's *voyage de retour* ends in complete disaster. Long before he arrives, the Maroons in the mountains had negotiated a truce with the British at the expense of their compatriots—in other words, they had begun to pronounce the contemptible "yes." Samuel is invited to participate in the contemporary concerns of the oppressed classes in Jamaica—to live in the present moment of political resistance rather than the past—an invitation that he turns down to seek his ancestors in the mountains. The mockery greeting Samuel's professions of

¹³⁸ The paratextual presentation of Adame Ba Konaré's *L'épopée de Segou* (1987), both in the dust jacket blurb and in the preface by historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo, seems to suggest that Condé is an outsider, a dilettante, who does not have the authority to speak, as neither a historian ("histoire romancée") nor an African (specifically Malian)—unlike Ba, who is both.

longing for that stable location of home echoes, in harsher tones, the expressions of amusement frequently elicited by Véronica's description of the purpose of her voyage to an unidentified African country in *Hérémakhonon*. Here Condé expands the dimensions of her indictment of the Africa-as-homeland myth in the earlier novel to question the validity of any attempt to tie identity to a fixed location of culture.

Disillusioned and overcome with despair, Samuel eventually wanders to the shore, dreaming of a return to Africa. A couple of fishermen hail him, and ask for his help, which he willingly gives, experiencing "un fugitif bien-être" from the physical exertion. This scene seems to mirror the exchange between Omar and the two fishermen, but whereas Omar is able to explain his hybrid lineage in clear and complacent terms, Samuel responds to his companions' simple inquiry "On t'appelle comment?" with a complete abnegation of his identity: "Mon nom, c'est Sans-Nom, oui!" (*Terre* 270).

In assuming the name "Sans-Nom," Samuel challenges Malobali's assertion of an unbroken patriarchal line that guaranteed Eucaristus, son of aristocratic Naba, a fixed place within an immutable Segou society. However, Samuel is not simply validating the Reverend Williams's assertion that enslaved populations "perdaient toute identité en traversant l'Atlantique" (375). The last image of Samuel's tale—"A force de ramer, l'embarcation atteinait la pleine mer" (*Terre* 271)—is deeply ambiguous. Crouched miserably in the boat, Samuel is drowning his despair in a bottle of rum and ruminating over his lost heritage. But this vehement repudiation of his identity could also be an occasion for Samuel to reconsider the meaning of roots—a project that his father, Eucaristus da Cunha / Babatundé Traoré, was never able to undertake. Samuel might be able to live in the present.

With Samuel's tale, Condé begins her "return" to the Caribbean. It is perhaps easier for readers approaching the novel through the lens of diaspora theory to recognize the futility of Samuel's quest, as the Caribbean is more readily accepted as a site of hybridity. But Samuel's sudden longing for pure cultural spaces in interior Africa that his father had tried to claim as his legitimate origins reveals the links between Samuel's voyage to the Caribbean—the projected site of authenticity for the Antillean Condé—and the longing for a stable identity made manifest by the *voyage de retour* of so many other Traoré men. Samuel's return to the Caribbean warns against reading *Ségou*'s demystification of roots as limited to the familiar *détour* in Africa. Rather, this voyage tracing a familiar route to the *pays natal* participates in this travel narrative's broader disruption of the very notion of an "identité véritable" defined in relation to a given place.

Chapter Four

Photophages / Lotophages: Tourism, Migration, and Proximate Ethnography in 1970s Paris

In this chapter, the site of travel shifts away from the colonial periphery back to Paris. I examine representations of travel in two texts published in 1975: Rachid Boudjedra's *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* and Georges Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*. I explore how Perec's encounters with tourists circulating in Paris shed light on the ways in which native Parisians respond to the presence of Boudjedra's protagonist, an unnamed emigrant, in the metropolitan capital. In both texts, interactions between Parisians and travelers to Paris are shaped by the natives' anxiety over the perceived globalization of mobility in the 1970s.

Like many mid-twentieth-century travel writers—perhaps epitomized by Lévi-Strauss and his horror over the decline of human diversity into monoculture—Perec was alarmed by the threat to cultural identity posed by the growing patterns of global movement. This was hardly a new concern—Lévi-Strauss was himself echoing fin-de-siècle exoticists like Segalen.¹³⁹ And yet, a sense of imminent decline did not prevent Segalen or Lévi-Strauss from continuing to pursue cultural diversity in distant climes. Perec himself meditates on the pleasures of travel abroad in texts such as “Promenades dans Londres” and *Espèces d'espaces*. However, in other texts from the late 1960s-early 80s, including *Tentative*, Perec advocates new ways of engaging with spaces and cultures, focusing on his native habitat—Paris—as a place of lived experience and history. In this novel mode of ethnography, the familiar spaces of home replace far-flung locales as a site of fieldwork. Reflecting on the long-standing anthropological tradition of staking out a terrain far from home, Perec subtly links such practices with imperialist violence. Now it is time, he suggests, for us to look at ourselves and at what is happening in France.

Specific social and cultural shifts in 1960s and 70s Paris form the background to this new field of study. For Perec, the masses of tourists coursing through the city incarnate the economic forces that are transforming both the urban landscape and the lived experience of native Parisians. His response to these encroachments on his native habitat is to focus his attention on what he refers to as the “endotique,” rather than fleeing to the periphery. And yet, the ubiquitous presence of tourists in Paris distracts Perec from the main focus of his writing project in *Tentative*, which is the banal and transitory events taking place in the *lieu parisien* of the title, the Place Saint-Sulpice.

The representation of tourist cultures in Boudjedra's novel must likewise be read in relation to shifts in global patterns of mobility in the 1970s. The explosion of mass tourism and the reshuffling of European cartographies in the wake of widespread decolonization seem poised to reshape travelers' experiences of exotic sites in the former colonies. The metropolitan French's growing uneasiness over the possibility of escape from their anesthetized experience of everyday life is compounded by their anxiety over the increasingly visible presence of postcolonial subjects in the hexagon. *Topographie* relates the experiences of its protagonist, an unnamed emigrant, over the course of a single day, 26 September 1973, as he attempts to navigate the twisted labyrinth of the Parisian metro system. Upon exiting the underground, he is brutally murdered by a gang of vigilantes. The natives' hostility toward the emigrant reveals a xenophobia that is partly born out of fear over the waning economic boom at the end of the *Trente Glorieuses*. The violence to which the protagonist is subjected reveals the persistent

¹³⁹ See Bongie on the constantly renewed lamentations over the end of travel.

imbalance of power between France and its former colonies. Even as Parisian natives—on both individual and institutional levels—impede the emigrant’s access to the metropole, the metro passengers who move alongside him in the subterranean maze long to travel to the Orient, an imaginary geography that nevertheless overlaps with the cultural spaces in which the emigrant’s home is located.¹⁴⁰ These wearied commuters yearn to escape the alienating *métro boulot dodo* lifestyle and the implacable commodification of every aspect of their lives in tourist destinations like the island of Djerba, off the Tunisian coast. The prospect of escape remains seductive in spite of their burgeoning awareness that the highly commercialized images in the vacation advertisements present a mere mirage. Moreover, the increasing mobility of people around the globe, including their fellow Parisians, threatens to compromise their experience of being elsewhere: it is difficult to escape the daily grind when one bumps into one’s neighbors on an exotic island. The collapse of distinctions between home and abroad is further exacerbated by the growth of movement in the opposite direction. Not only does the population of immigrants in the metropole—particularly those from North Africa—seem poised to destabilize French national and cultural identity, their participation in the French economy threatens the comfortable consumer lifestyle enabled by the now waning economic boom of the *Trente Glorieuses*. Boudjedra deftly juxtaposes the seductive image of a vacation on the island of Djerba—yet another symptom of French commodity culture—with the violent exclusion of the emigrant from the metropolitan economy, and indeed from the very spaces of the capital. Through this evocation of divergent experiences of travel, Boudjedra shows how the regulation of forms of mobility perpetuates the unequal power relations emerging from France’s imperial history.

Topographie and *Tentative* push past Eurocentric travel literature’s conventional preoccupations with tourist cultures; namely, the ways in which vulgar tourists compromise the experiences of the sophisticated, independent-minded traveler who shares their spaces of travel abroad. Both authors ultimately dismantle another prominent trope of Eurocentric travel writing as well—that of the passive, non-European travelee, whose voice and perspectives are excluded from the narrative. In a novel twist on the standard outlook of travel writing, both Boudjedra and Perec reflect on tourist behaviors from the perspective of the travelee, tying the tourist cultures they observe to historical circumstances of economic and cultural imperialism.

“Notre propre anthropologie”: Writing the City in Perec’s *Tentative d’épuisement d’un lieu parisien*

The representation of tourist practices in *Tentative* reflects Perec’s anxiety over the unprecedented growth of mass tourism and its ties to the explosion of commodity culture—developments that are in turn linked to the renovation of Paris as a neo-bourgeois, rationalized space (Bourdin 31). The stakes of Perec’s writing project in *Tentative*—describing Paris from the perspective of an *indigène sédentaire*—are usefully illuminated if we read *Tentative* in relation to the modes of observing and experiencing urban space that he outlined in two essays written for the *Air France* in-flight magazine (*Atlas*): “Promenades dans Londres” and “Tout autour de Beaubourg,” published in April and October 1981, respectively (Beaver 49).

The first essay, which is partly a personal account and partly prescriptive, differs from the latter essay, as well as from *Tentative*, in its evocation of travel experiences from the more

¹⁴⁰ I do not mean to reproduce here the conflation of specific cultural locations into a generalized Oriental zone, but rather to acknowledge the way Boudjedra’s novel draws connections between these sites in Tunisia and Algeria through the protagonist’s identification with certain aspects of the cultural setting in the Djerba advertisement.

conventional perspective of the traveler, rather than the native. I want to focus in particular on one of the activities that Perec addresses: touring the city in a bus. Perec notes that riding on the upper floor of one of London's distinctive double-decker buses is "une des manières les plus agréables de parcourir la ville." In fact, while a ride in a touring coach had already begun to be considered one of the most prefabricated and least individualistic ways to travel, Perec suggests that the vantage point from the upper stage of a municipal bus can offer the tourist new perspectives and experiences; specifically, the "surprise rare de découvrir une ville de la hauteur d'un premier étage de maison... tout ce que nous sommes habitués à voir apparaîtra ici d'une manière un tout petit peu nouvelle, dépaysante pour le regard et pour l'esprit" (80).¹⁴¹ Here we see a *rapprochement* between Perec and the masses of tourists who experience foreign cities from the interior of a touring coach, a recurring motif in *Tentative*.

This moment of identification is diminished as Perec reveals that such moments of taking the bus to "parcourir la ville" are part of his broader practice of *flânerie*, whose primary imperative is to "se laisser aller au petit bonheur... pour que se composent, au gré des heures et du temps qu'il fait, des itinéraires plus ou moins capricieux, plus ou moins sinueux"—quite a different program from the fixed circuits of the touring coach or even the ordinary municipal bus. Here Perec celebrates the itinerary that leads "off the beaten track," a trope that James Buzard identifies as central to sophisticated travelers' efforts to distinguish themselves from other voyagers to the same sites of travel: "the authentic 'culture' of *places* – the *genius loci* – was represented as lurking in secret precincts 'off the beaten track' where it could be discovered only by the sensitive 'traveler,' not the vulgar tourist" (195).

When Perec writes about his own travel experiences abroad, he echoes some of the classic figures of anti-tourist rhetoric, valorizing the sensitive traveler at the expense of the vulgar tourist. For instance, in *Tentative* Perec identifies the tour coach passengers exclusively by the epithet "touriste," but in his essay on London he uses the term "voyageur" more frequently in referring to the community of his fellow tourists.¹⁴² He also counsels against certain practices characteristic of the stereotypical "vulgar tourist"—namely, the attempt to know the city through a perfunctory visit to every attraction—an approach seemingly embraced by the tourists in *Tentative*. His audience for "Promenades" is "le voyageur qui vient du continent" (79), implicitly understood to be armed with a substantial measure of economic and cultural capital.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Cultural scholars and travel writers had long been denigrating group tours and their technologies. In *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, Daniel J. Boorstin asserts that developments in automobile technologies have played an important role in transforming travel irrevocably into tourism. Innovations in automobile design have led to the creation of an enclosed bubble, "the new moving 'picture window' through which we can look out from air-conditioned comfort while we hear our familiar radio program" (2012: 111). Developments in this one transportation technology have paralleled other shifts in the touristic field, with the end result that *travel* is no longer possible—only tourism: "Planned tours, attractions, fairs, expositions 'especially for tourists,' and all their prefabricated adventures can be persuasively advertised in advance. . . . [w]e go more and more, not to see at all, but only to take pictures" (117).

Levenstein argues that Boorstin's attitude was increasingly shared by American tourists in the 1970s, a shift in perspective that reflected "the central goal of the 1970s zeitgeist: personal development" (226). Levenstein cites the June 1970 issue of *Holiday* magazine, declaring that "[t]he days when [American tourists] 'regarded Europe as a museum' and were 'content to be spectators' were over. . . . Now tourists arrived 'determined to participate in European life, not observe it from a discreet distance. . . . Over the next two decades, the tourists' greater readiness to have unplanned encounters was reflected in the declining proportion of them taking escorted group tours" (233).

¹⁴² This is surely in part a reflection of the particular venue in which he was publishing the essay. In this highly commercial piece, he would likely endeavor to avoid offending his audience of travelers/tourists.

¹⁴³ Perec does not use the term "voyageur" exclusively in "Promenades, even using "voyageur" and "touriste" somewhat interchangeably at key moments. For instance, he bases his ideal mode of travel on the example of

Well equipped with knowledge of the local culture, language, and history, even if the Continental traveler were to get lost “dans le dédale des petites rues de Soho” (83), this would constitute an adventurous foray into unknown territory—in striking contrast to the unnamed traveler’s desperate odyssey through the subterranean labyrinth of the metro system in Boudjedra’s *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée*.

Perec’s representation of tourism abroad when he is himself a practitioner differs strongly from his discussion of tourist behaviors in his native city. In his other 1981 essay for *Atlas* magazine, “Tout autour de Beaubourg,” Perec explicitly links the phenomena of mass tourism to the pernicious effects of urban renewal. In this essay, Perec leads his audience on a tour of the old quarters on the Right Bank, massively transformed by the installation of the Centre Pompidou and the Forum des Halles in the 1970s. Perec documents the patterns of movement and activity of both natives and travelers around the newly constructed and entirely alien Centre Pompidou, describing the performers, street vendors, and hawkers who set up on the plaza in front of the museum, as well as the crowds of people who circulate nearby. These animated modes of work and play are contrasted with the hulking structure of the museum itself, awkwardly inserted into this quarter saturated with history and legend, as well as a site of modern life: “le Centre Georges-Pompidou a un peu l’air d’un gros extraterrestre dont on ne sait pas encore très bien s’il arrivera à survivre quand il aura quitté son scaphandre et toute sa panoplie de tuyaux...” (76). The museum is clearly a foreign object, one which has dramatically changed the life of the quarter. Perec mentions sympathetically those among the older generation who feel alienated by these transformations to the local culture—the “retraités nostalgiques promenant leur chien, tout en cherchant le coin improbable des boulistes ou des joueurs de manille” (70). And yet, the Beaubourg quarter—everything *around* the museum—has managed to sustain some of its older habits, while also hosting new patterns of everyday life and the informal economies created through the activities of street performers and vendors. Although they yearn for the old ways, the older folks continue to stroll through the quarter with their dogs. Crocheting housewives still exchange private gossip in these public spaces, reminiscent of the stubborn, lingering presence of Dickens’s Madame Defarge. Although the young lovebirds who talk of their future under young trees may be participating in spatial practices and habits as new as the freshly planted greenery, their presence is not a sign of the annihilation of Paris’s historical past. It is instead an indication of how urban life manages to reassert itself against the violence of officially sanctioned and executed “urban renewal.” Perec’s essay does not suggest an opposition between the modern and the traditional when considering the habits and activities of the people who live and / or work in the quarter. The bustle of the crowd and the everyday life in the here and now do not form a contrast with the “vieilles pierres” and “précieux vestiges” that comprise the surrounding neighborhood, one of the oldest in Paris. Rather, Perec situates these contemporary “usagers de l’espace” in a lineage with earlier generations of individuals and communities who were also subject to the violence of state interventions; for instance, the 1834 massacre of every single inhabitant of an apartment building in what is now rue Beaubourg on the orders of one Maréchal Bugeaud, on suspicion of harboring insurgents (74). The resilient

Stendhal’s visit to London, praising his habits as those of a “touriste modèle s’il en fût” (82). In this chapter, I generally use traveler and tourist interchangeably in recognition of Perec’s own blurring of the conventional distinction between these two terms.

Parisian natives are able to compensate for the blow to the urban ecosystem dealt by the invasion of the alien Centre Pompidou.¹⁴⁴

While the neighborhood manages to accommodate the Centre Pompidou's foreign body, the artificial reordering of urban space and life posed by the monstrous Forum des Halles is utterly incompatible with existing modes of everyday life. Perec observes that the visitor to Paris who thirsts for modernity after a lingering promenade amongst historical relics "retrouvera le monde d'aujourd'hui, et peut-être de demain, dans les presque 50 000 mètres carrés d'équipements de commerces et de loisirs répartis sur cinq niveaux entre les quelques 200 boutiques du 'Forum des Halles'" (76). In this evocation of the target audience of the Forum des Halles—bourgeois natives and visitors to the city—Perec ties the economic, social, and cultural processes of urban renewal to contemporary tourist cultures. In promoting his renovation projects, Georges Pompidou—whom Hazan presents as the twentieth century's answer to Haussmann—framed developments such as the transformation of Les Halles as his refusal to allow Paris to devolve into a "fossilized museum" (Levenstein 237). However, the old Les Halles was a working market as well as a tourist site, deeply intertwined in both the history and the modern life of the quarter. Unlike many of the shops and street vendors that sprang up around the new Centre Pompidou, most of the boutiques in the Forum des Halles are franchises of domestic and international chain stores. Perec's portrait of the Forum challenges Pompidou's interpretation of urban life, suggesting that it is in fact the installation of a new museum and a shopping mall—geared in large part towards natives with a surplus of time and money or tourists—that could lead to the fossilization of the quarter. Work and production have been displaced by the now exclusive modes of leisure and consumption. The Forum is both futuristic and fossilized, a mere lifeless simulation of Paris. Catering to non-natives (including bourgeois Parisians from other parts of the city), this reinvention of the neighborhood has eradicated many existing local practices and marginalizes former "usagers de l'espace." The Forum des Halles is emblematic of the violence of cultural and economic imperialism, whether by domestic or international agents.

And yet, while the withering portrait of the Forum des Halles betrays a palpable anxiety over the fate of "demain," the essay as a whole conveys a sense of the resilience of a wide range of practitioners of everyday life. Although the twin alien invasions hover menacingly in the background, the tourists and bourgeois who are the target consumers of sites like the Forum des Halles—and to a lesser extent the Centre Pompidou—are not the focus of the essay. The essay is rather a tribute to the residents of the quarter: retirees with their dogs, housewives with their crocheting, students with their hamburgers, young lovers, street performers, local vendors. These "usagers" and their diverse spatial practices resist the commodification of everyday life in Paris.

Tourists and Natives in the Place Saint-Sulpice: *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*

¹⁴⁴ The Centre Pompidou is also a space for artists—albeit a different group from the street performers outside—and thus a site of creation, unlike the Forum des Halles. The composite form of the museum offers multiple resources to the community: for instance, its open-shelf library is exceptionally accessible to the general public, as well as a more specialized clientele of scholars and artists, especially when compared with a Byzantine institution like the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Despite the government's stated intentions of encouraging the democratization of art and knowledge, it is important to consider how the insertion of the museum into the community contributed to gentrification of the neighborhood and other forms of social exclusion (a concern that is outside the scope of my discussion here). On the ideologies behind the creation of this museum-library hybrid, as well as its actual design and construction, see Deroo.

It is the life of this native community that Perec sets out to document in *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*. The text is the record of three consecutive days spent sitting in various spots around the Place Saint-Sulpice in October 1974. Perec evokes those aspects of the Place that have not been exhaustively documented—not the famous church that gives the site its name, but rather the shifting elements that transform the Place throughout the day as a lived, cultural, and social space. He focuses on the banal and the transitory, the habitual and unremarkable movement of people and things in this carefully delimited terrain: “ce que l'on ne note généralement pas, ce qui ne se remarque pas, ce qui n'a pas d'importance: ce qui se passe quand il ne se passe rien, sinon du temps, des gens, des voitures et des nuages” (10). The Oulipian constraints that Perec imposes on his project force him to focus his attention exclusively on the Place. Although he shifts his seat and his vantage point over the course of the day, for the most part he is quite immobile. The structure of *Tentative* is basically a list of observations; the text resists a narrative or descriptive mode. Perec's observations of the dense accumulation of individual and communal spatial practices in the Place over the span of several days allow for a *détournement* of the conventional figure of the native as a silent, staffage figure.¹⁴⁵ Perec's native perspective is foregrounded here; moreover, this adoption of the native's point of view does not simply reproduce the parameters of a typical travel narrative—generally an account of an individual's experience—but rather evokes both a personal experience and collective life. I contend that Perec's project of writing Parisian spaces in *Tentative* is a native's response to the way Paris as a lived space was changing as a result of urban renewal and mass tourism.

Perec's writing project leads him to engage in spatial practices that differ from the majority of the activities that he observes on the part of the “usagers de l'espace” who share the Place with him, as well as from his own usual routine. Nevertheless, *Tentative* represents a radical departure from dominant Western ethnographic practices.¹⁴⁶ Perec identifies with the community whose habits he documents: the site of fieldwork is his own native habitat. Moreover, Perec does not adopt the typical anthropologist's objectifying, disembodied gaze: he foregrounds the extent to which *he* is observed by the other (often transitory) occupants of the Place.

The approach to writing the city that Perec employs in *Tentative* is part of a broader anthropological, sociological, and historiographical project—*Lieux*.¹⁴⁷ In the 1973 essay “Approches de quoi?” Perec outlines a practice of attentive observation to one's own

¹⁴⁵ In her study of Perec as a “botaniste de l'asphalte” in the vein of Baudelaire and Poe, Nordholt compares the spatial practices (and aims) of the figure of the “flâneur immobile” in *Tentative* with the protagonist of *Un homme qui dort*, a “flâneur éternellement en marche.” The indifference and alienation that characterize the protagonist of *Un homme qui dort* contrast sharply with the acute practices of observation and extreme attentiveness that Perec adopts in *Tentative*. Nordholt argues that Perec's attention to patterns of movement and trajectories in *Tentative* participates in his broader project of identifying—or perhaps inventing—rules that might govern the seeming chaos of urban spaces, and to ultimately pass from the individual to the collective (75).

¹⁴⁶ Perec plays the role of attentive observer, but he does not study the community from the outside; he is as much a participant in the life of the Place Saint-Sulpice as the people around him. Moreover, he does not pretend to the “quasi-invisibility of participant observation” that is an “established convention for staging the attainment of ethnographic authority” (Clifford, *Predicament* 41).

¹⁴⁷ Sheringham observes that *Tentative*, though bearing formal similarities to the *Lieux* project, was likely intended for publication in *Cause commune* from the outset (262). The contours of the *Lieux* project—its goals and methodologies—are sketched out in several texts from the 1960s-70s, including “Travaux pratiques” and the 1973 essay “Approches de quoi?” “Travaux pratiques” is one of the many small texts that make up *Espèces d'espaces*, written over the course of 1973-74. On *Lieux*, see Sheringham 257-61, who in turn draws substantially on Philippe Lejeune's discussion of the project in *Georges Perec: la mémoire et l'oblique* (141-209).

surroundings to remedy the “anesthetized” mode of living that dominates in a society that has forgotten how to see the ordinary and habitual aspects of everyday life. In order to push back against the privileging of the spectacular and extraordinary, Perec suggests the need for “notre propre anthropologie, celle qui parlera de nous, qui ira chercher en nous ce que nous avons si longtemps pillé chez les autres. Non plus l’exotique, mais l’endotique” (11-12). With the verb “piller,” Perec recalls European anthropology’s historical complicity with the colonial enterprise and suggests turning away from this set of practices in order to train a reflexive anthropological gaze on a group that has historically monopolized this perspective and position of power: to become ethnographers of the self.

In contrast to the immobility of the speaking and writing subject, Perec, the objects of Perec’s gaze are generally in movement, foregrounding the Place’s status as a lived space and highlighting the spatial practices of its “usagers” over established landmarks. While his preliminary inventory of “choses strictement visibles” includes such fixed items as paving materials and the stones that make up the church’s masonry, the catalog also makes note of passersby: humans, a basset hound, a head of lettuce peeking out of someone’s shopping bag (11-12). The majority of the text is devoted to these ordinary subjects, not the tourists who traverse the Place, although I will turn to his preoccupation with these characters in a moment. Perec clearly demarcates those uses of the spaces that fall within the purview of the ordinary and habitual—and the indigenou.

For instance, in describing human interactions with the church, Perec differentiates between the act of visiting and the act of worshipping: “Des gens entrent dans l’église (est-ce pour la visiter? Est-ce l’heure de la messe?)” (36). Ordinary church-goers enter the church or stand in front of it in the context of a funeral on the first day, a wedding on the second day, and Sunday church services on the third. These ordinary human “usagers” find their avian analog in the pigeons that frequent the famous and elaborate fountain on the Place. Perec is very attentive to the pigeons’ behavior, observing whether they are perched on the fountain’s basins or bathing in its pools. Like the churchgoers, neighborhood residents on their way to and from the market, and people out walking their dogs, the pigeons’ presence in the space is a function of their habits. The habitual “usagers” participate in the life of the place. This involves both habitual activities—attending regular church services (humans), bathing (pigeons)—as well as the celebration of important milestones in a person’s life: birth, marriage, death. The everyday life of the residents has temporal dimensions; it is not fossilized.

This banal, everyday use of the Place’s landmarks contrasts with the actions of tourists in the same space. For instance, various tourists (on foot) take pictures of the noteworthy monuments in the Place, whether the fountain (37) or the church (50). The sight-seeing practices of the tourists threaten to reduce the life of the Place Saint-Sulpice to a few outstanding features: in the preamble, the church and the fountain figure most prominently on the list of things that have already been described, inventoried, and photographed. But whereas the tourists frame the Place as an image, fixing this *lieu parisien* outside of time, the list-like structure of Perec’s text resists lapsing into the construction of the picturesque.

While the majority of *Tentative* does correspond to Perec’s intentions of documenting ordinary life in the Place, the intrusive presence of tourists puts pressure on his writing project. The threat that mass tourism poses to the life of native Parisians is particularly clear in the silent, ephemeral encounter between Perec and the tourists who traverse the Place Saint-Sulpice in private touring coaches. From his fixed vantage point, Perec evokes the masses of tourists coursing throughout the city, observing and spectacularizing it from the buffered space of the

coach. As we have seen in the essay “Promenades dans Londres,” when he is abroad, Perec dabbles in stereotypical practices such as touring the city in a bus, while also distancing himself from other tourist behaviors. However, the flexible attitude that Perec demonstrates towards the tourist approach to experiencing a foreign city when he is traveling abroad is emphatically denied when he is the “travelee,” an *indigène sédentaire* subjected to these practices in his native habitat.

From the mix of immobile and moving things in the preliminary stock-taking, motion becomes the dominant characteristic of a new rubric: “Trajectoires.” Here Perec lists actual trajectories (chiefly bus routes) but also simply lists vehicles without identifying their path—thus “un car allemand” and “une fourgonnette Brinks” appear underneath “Le 63 va à la Porte de la Muette” and “Le 86 va à Saint-Germain-des-Prés” (12). The inclusion of all of these vehicles under the same rubric suggests that they, like the city buses, are perceived in relation to their path, metonymically standing in for their itinerary. Delivery trucks have their delivery routes, and touring coaches have their tourist circuits. Though Perec only makes note of things that are “strictement visibles” in order to capture the specificity of his chosen terrain, associating the vehicles that enter his field of vision with their trajectories connects the Place Saint-Sulpice to other sites in Paris.

Recognizing Paris as a network of sites is central to understanding the specific nature of the tourist gaze, which frames the city as a spectacle. The names “Cityrama” and “Paris-Vision” – the most frequently mentioned tour bus lines – recall older forms of visual culture, the panoramas at the center of what Vanessa Schwartz describes as the late-nineteenth-century “orama craze.”¹⁴⁸ Frequently offering a bird’s eye view of a landscape or an entire city, panoramas constituted a form of inexpensive and convenient “armchair tourism,” and as such participated in the popularization of certain experiences of travel (151), if not in the democratization of travel as an act of geographical displacement.¹⁴⁹ The allusion to these forms of popular entertainment draws attention to the ways in which the tourist’s experience of 1970s Paris is mediated by the tour bus: the fixed circuit, the hybrid of stasis and motion, the walls and windows that enclose the passenger. Coaches like those run by “Paris-Vision” and “Cityrama” imbue a touristic voyage through Paris—an act of horizontal movement—with the passivity of armchair travel, presenting the tourist-spectator with pre-fabricated sights to be seen. The tourist gaze, then, is complicit with the transformation of the city into a simulacrum of itself. Perec’s evocation of the impact of tourism on native life in the fall of 1974 anticipates his subsequent exploration of how urban renovations like the Forum des Halles evacuate lived experience and replace reality with spectacle.

¹⁴⁸ Like other forms of popular entertainment, the panorama allowed Parisian spectators to “experience reality as spectacle,” but surpassed the technology of, for instance, wax museums such as the Musée Grévin. For, whereas competing forms of entertainment “seemed to offer spectators multiple views and a certain degree of power over the spectacle,” the panorama demonstrated an unprecedented degree of control over spectators. The panorama reinvented spectacle as more than the merely visual: it “removed [the spectators’] points of references, jostled and shook them and offered them an experience that engaged all five senses” (Schwartz 150).

¹⁴⁹ Forsdick points out that this craze mirrors the attitude of des Esseintes, protagonist of J. K. Huysmans’s 1884 novel *À rebours*, who makes a virtue of his own sedentarism: “Making an undoubted allusion to the proliferation in the heart of late nineteenth-century Paris alluded to below, the sedentary protagonist asks: ‘à quoi bon bouger quand on peut voyager si magnifiquement sur une chaise?’” (*Persistence* 19-20). Urbain attempts to expand the definition of travel with reference to a vein of travel literature that records the experience of “travelers” who move very little if at all, from Xavier de Maistre’s *Voyage autour de ma chambre* to Jean-Dominique Bauby’s *Le scaphandre et le papillon*.

I would like to zoom in here on a pair of observations, just a few lines, which seem to encapsulate Perec's experience of this threat. On the first day, Perec observes: "D'un car de touristes, une Japonaise semble me photographier" (14). In his next reference to scopophilic tourists, Perec identifies this hunger for souvenirs with the population of Japanese tourists as a whole: "Deux 'Coches Parisiens' sortes de cars à plateforme passent avec leurs cargaisons de Japonais photophages" (34).¹⁵⁰ From a single woman taking his picture, Perec defines an entire sub-species of tourists in terms of this photographic gesture by attributing to them the neologism "*photophage*." The *Trésor de la langue française* observes that words formed with the suffix –*phage* designate groups of animals, or in an archaic sense, "des peuplades mythiques (*galactophages, hippophages, lotophages*) présentant une même caractéristique alimentaire." On the one hand, the resonance with the term "lotophages" seems to locate these "photophages" in the category of mythological peoples. On the other hand, when compared to modern usages of the –*phage* suffix in the realm of zoological classification, the word also recalls the pervasive use of animal imagery in anti-tourist discourses (Fussell 40).¹⁵¹ Perec counters the tourists' spectacularization of his native habitat by transforming the camera's gaze into a symptom of their appetite, recasting these cargos of souvenir-hungry tourists as a population defined by its "caractéristique alimentaire." The reference to diet recalls the European fascination with cannibalism as the ultimate symbol of alterity, and aligns Perec's native perspective with that of a long lineage of European travelers.¹⁵² Although Perec gives voice to the marginalized figure of the native, it is still the European who identifies the other (and here, notably, a non-European other) with excessive appetite. Thus while the re-casting of the traveler in terms of appetite participates in the destabilization of the roles of traveler and native, it also reproduces a familiar rhetoric of alterity. The "photophages" that pass before him hardly fall under the rubric of the banal and the familiar; Perec's response to being photographed by the Japanese tourist is to in turn aggressively objectify the person behind the camera lens.

Perec's passion for classification in this instance has strong political dimensions. The linguistic play here is reminiscent of other "stylistic flourishes" in the text, but also echoes the contempt and vitriol present in "anti-tourist fulminations" comparing tourists to locusts and flies (Fussell 40).¹⁵³ However ludic, the term "photophage" indicts the tourist's complicity in the transformation of Paris from a space of everyday life into an amusement park or an *image d'Épinal*. While the terms "anthropophage" and "lotophage" refer to physical, alimentary consumption, the focus on acts and practices of consumption in Perec's encounter with the "photophagic" tourist participates in a broader assessment of how the emergence of consumer culture in France was transforming the lived experience of its "natives."

In an essay published just prior to Perec's undertaking in the Place Saint-Sulpice, Susan Sontag comments on the role of the camera in packaging reality for touristic consumption. For Sontag, tourist photography reduces travel encounters to "a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir." This practice, Sontag argues, is particularly prevalent among German, American, and Japanese tourists, a characteristic that Sontag explains through reference to the cultural (their common "ruthless work ethic") and the historical (citizens

¹⁵⁰ Perec only attempts to identify the coach passengers in terms of nationality or ethnicity when they are German or Japanese: "Passe un car bondé, mais pas de Japonais" (43).

¹⁵¹ Culler also comments on the prevalence of animal imagery in representations of the tourist (138).

¹⁵² See Barker et al.; and Obeyesekere.

¹⁵³ Other instances of ludic language include a reference to Queneau in his evocation of "ouatures" (voitures) (Sheringham 268).

from industrialized countries suffer from a traumatic break with the past). The intersection of these factors account for the early-1970s shift in the Euro-American cultural imaginary, in which the “fable of the brash American tourist of the 1950s and 1960s, rich with dollars and Babbitry, was replaced by the mystery of the group-minded Japanese tourist, newly released from his island prison by the miracle of overvalued yen, who is generally armed with two cameras, one on each hip” (10).¹⁵⁴ In light of this shift in the cultural landscape, the particularly evocative image of the nearly cannibalistic Japanese tourists does not appear arbitrary, despite the seeming neutrality of such a vague rubric as “choses strictement visibles.” Rather, the rapacious Japanese “photophages” are particularly symbolic of the forces of economic and cultural imperialism that threaten the native Parisians’ way of life. The growing visibility of touristic practices most spectacularly embodied by these foreigners, then, parallels the violent transformations of the Parisian landscape addressed in “Tout autour de Beaubourg,” as well as in the piece “La rue Vilin,” which I will turn to shortly. Perec’s hostility toward the figure of the Japanese tourist is not the manifestation of a targeted, racialized xenophobia, but rather symptomatic of his anxiety over broader cultural and social shifts particular to that historical moment.

As I have noted previously, the tourist’s mode of superficially seeing the Place Saint-Sulpice—as one stop on a circuit of the sights of Paris—contrasts sharply with Perec’s sustained interaction and presence in the Place. Whereas tourists take snapshots of the church or the fountain, Perec makes note of the stones in the church’s walls, the gravel that makes up the street, and the fleeting presence of the pigeons. Ironically, it is the static Perec who captures the Place as a lively space of movement, while the hyper-mobile tourist comes away with only a frozen *image d’Epinal*. And yet, although Perec plans to focus on the “infra-ordinaire” in *Tentative*—rather than the “insolite” or “spectaculaire” (“Approches de quoi?” 9)—the menace to everyday life that the tourists embody compromises his writing project and he ends up recording many more tears in the urban fabric than he originally intended. In a text entitled “La rue Vilin,” Perec evokes more successfully the banal and quotidian, in spite of the backdrop of urban renovation that hovers over the text with even more menace than in the writings I have discussed thus far.

***Flânerie* as Historiography: Tracing the Past in “La rue Vilin”**

In his history of Paris, Eric Hazan references Perec’s novel *Les Choses. Une histoire des années soixante* to tie processes of urban renewal to the emergence of consumer culture during the economic boom of the *Trente Glorieuses*.¹⁵⁵ Hazan argues that the renovation of the city’s ancient quarters in the 1960s-70s led to their “[reoccupation] by the bourgeoisie,” producing

¹⁵⁴ While numerous studies since the 1970s have echoed the terms of Sontag’s analysis, both reproducing the image of the “group-minded” Japanese tourist and citing the same factors to explain these practices (work ethic, “low sense of cultural self-confidence”; see Graburn, qtd. in Chambers 119), recent criticism has focused on the historical context in which these images emerged. For instance, Shibusawa locates the emergence of the trope of the “camera-toting Japanese tourist” in the American cultural imaginary in the 1970s-80s in relation to widespread anxiety over “the positional superiority of this Japanese gaze” produced in turn by “[t]he fear of Japanese economic power...as masculine, perverse, and inscrutable” (294). Cooper points to the archaism of this image in the context of contemporary tourism trends (139-59).

¹⁵⁵ Hazan identifies *Les Choses* as a latter-day “Le Cygne,” arguing that the processes of urban renewal launched in the 1960-70s under the auspices of Minister of Culture André Malraux and Georges Pompidou (first as minister, then as president) were more drastic by far than those of Haussmannization.

“American-style zoning by income” (114).¹⁵⁶ As Kristin Ross notes in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, these property developments paralleled the concerted public / private effort to move the sites of economic, social, and political power to the center, while pushing the zones of industrial production to the city’s periphery. Because the industrial labor force was primarily composed of immigrant workers, this resulted in the concentration of ethnic minorities in *extra-muros* Paris and the concomitant reconfiguration of *intra-muros* Paris as a white, “neobourgeois” space. While immigrant populations had been marginalized on the outskirts of the city in *bidonvilles* from the beginning of the post-war surge in immigration (Hargreaves 69-70), there remained a few areas of concentrated populations of immigrants in *intra-muros* Paris—designated “*îlots insalubres*”—which were “specifically targeted for aggressive renovation in the early 1960s” (Ross 152).¹⁵⁷

Among the “*îlots insalubres*” targeted was an area of Belleville surrounding the rue Vilin, an important site of childhood memory for Perec. Between February 1969 and September 1975, Perec visited the neighborhood and chronicled small details about the street and its life, documenting his survey in a sort of reportage published in *L’Humanité* 11 November 1977 as “La rue Vilin.” This writing project is related to what Michael Cronin calls “vertical travel”: delving more deeply into the details of the place (as in *Tentative*), or across time into its history.¹⁵⁸ The account moves with Perec from building to building, noting the businesses or individuals that occupy a given space, commenting on the state of each structure, whether it is dilapidated, slated for demolition, or recently renovated. In the first entry, 27 February 1969, Perec lingers in detail over number 24, rue Vilin, formerly the site of his family’s home and his mother’s hair salon. The building is in a state of disrepair—one door is blocked off—but there are vestiges of its past life. For instance, the inscription “COIFFURE DAMES” is still legible—“pas encore tout à fait effacée”—above the door. The building is inhabited by multiple generations: Perec observes the passage of two old men and a little girl. And indeed, although many homes and businesses seem abandoned, and in spite of massive efforts undertaken by both property developers and the government to push out the majority of the existing occupants to make way for renovation projects, the neighborhood is at least at the beginning of the project a site of dwelling and living, not just a site of memory. In addition to residential properties, there are commercial establishments, artisans, cafés, hotels; the latter spaces sometimes combined in a form of hostel-like accommodation that often served to house immigrant workers living in *intra-muros* quarters like Belleville (Hargreaves 63-65).

While the massive numbers of tourists in the many quarters of the city compromise the everyday life of its natives, the presence of ethnic minority communities in this neighborhood of Belleville contributes to its life and sociability. Returning to the street in the evening to check out

¹⁵⁶ These renovations were the work of property developers who targeted historical but dilapidated buildings whose tenants lacked the social and economic resources to prevent these massive renovations (Hazan 67).

¹⁵⁷ “Studies of the renovation of specific areas—of Belleville or the rue Nationale area in Paris, or of the Roubaix area on the outskirts of Lille—show that in many cases the very presence of immigrants was used by promoters and interests favoring redevelopment as an indicator of the need for serious intervention. Despite local differences, the studies all show some degree of convergence between the discourses of hygiene and sanitation, on the one hand, and expulsion of foreigners, on the other” (Ross 155).

¹⁵⁸ In *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, and Translation*, Cronin describes the “tension between ... *horizontal travel* and *vertical travel*. Horizontal travel is the more conventional understanding of travel as a linear progression from place to place. Vertical travel is temporary dwelling in a location for a period of time where the traveler begins to travel down into the particulars of place either in space (botany, studies of micro-climate, exhaustive exploration of local landscape) or in time (local history, archaeology, folklore)” (19).

its night life, Perec notes that the lower part of the street is far more animated, for instance: “[l]e vieux café du 22 était allumé, plein d’Algériens. C’est également un hôtel” (22-23). Perec then observes with some surprise that “[p]lusieurs magasins qu[’il] avai[t] cru définitivement fermés sont éclairés” (23). Over the course of six years, however, the life of the quarter is gradually extinguished, its inhabitants displaced; adjectives such as “fermé,” “détruit,” “muré,” “démoli,” “éventré” accumulate and the individual character of each building is reduced to a number. And yet, this degradation of the space is not due to the more visible numbers of immigrant workers in the quarter; in fact, their presence seems to push back against the process of urban renewal. These brief observations illuminate the nature of Perec’s hostility towards the busloads of “Japonais photophages”: it is not to fear over the mere presence of foreigners in the metropole, but rather derives from his anxiety over how mass tourism “fossilizes” everyday life in Paris.

“La rue Vilin” reveals Perec’s anxiety over the role played by urban renewal in obliterating traces of the past, perhaps most clearly when he tracks the changes to the sites of his childhood: the lingering traces of his mother’s salon. The building is still standing in the text’s penultimate entry, 21 November 1974 (a month after the writing project for *Tentative*). On Perec’s second visit to the rue Vilin, a merchant mistakes Perec for a bureaucrat, asking “Alors, vous venez nous détruire?” (24). The expulsions involved in the process of urban renewal are subtly linked to other forms of coerced movement when Perec remarks in passing that the s-curve of the street evokes the shape of the insignia for the *Schutzstaffel*, recalling the role played by this site in the history of French collaboration with the Nazi occupier: Hazan observes that an estimated 8000 Jews were deported from Belleville to Auschwitz via Drancy (215).

The new vision of Paris being carved out by the agents of urban renewal is related to broader economic practices of marketing a picturesque city to wealthy natives (although not indigenous to Belleville) and foreign tourists. After the process of renovation is complete, and most of the original inhabitants have been expelled, the traces of Belleville’s former identity as a “quartier populaire” will be revived and reappropriated to enhance its commercial value. Those aspects of the neighborhood that figured prominently in the rhetoric justifying its renovation are recast as part of its charm and appeal for a certain bourgeois clientele, one seeking a neighborhood full of animation and history: “Le petit épicier qui s’est maintenu contre toutes les menaces d’expulsion devient élément de décor. L’inquiétant immigré se transforme en voisin pittoresque. . . . Le quartier populaire se vend alors comme *quartier exotique*” (Ceaux et al, 107). Near the end of the penultimate entry, Perec cites a notice affixed to 30, rue Vilin:

Bulletin municipal officiel de la
ville de Paris
25-26-27 août 1974
Expropriation du 28 et 30
Création d’un espace libre public à
Paris 20^e

The projected “espace libre public” is the future Parc de Belleville. Perec’s minute tracking of the toll exacted by this process of “beautification” highlights the connections between past forms of state-sponsored violence and the collaboration between private and public interests in the 1970s: a complicity that is subsequently covered up by the verdant carpet of the public park’s well-manicured lawns. While the concession to public interests in the form of an “espace libre public” seems to vindicate the social and political discourses of the early 1970s that justified the

gutting of the quarter in the name of public interest (Ceaux 105-06), nevertheless this seemingly benevolent modification to the Parisian landscape diverts attention from the real motivations behind urban renewal, which largely benefitted private interests, as well as the material impact on the quarter's former residents, discreetly removed to HLMs, mostly in *extra-muros* Paris.

Perec's practices of observation in sites like the Place Saint-Sulpice and the neighborhood of Beaubourg—focusing on day-to-day changes—differ from his survey of the rue Vilin, an emotionally charged space. However, his representations of these varied urban and affective landscapes betray a common set of tensions. He wants to resist the spectacularizing dimensions of the gaze of both the tourist and the property developer, which transforms the city into a series of picturesque scenes, evacuating lived experience. And yet, as he explains in *Espèces d'espaces*, he also longs for such a static culture and place, one that was taken from him:

J'aimerais qu'il existe des lieux stables, immobiles, intangibles, intouchés et presque intouchables, immuables, enracinés; des lieux qui seraient des références, des points de départ, des sources : mon pays natal, le berceau de ma famille, la maison où je serais né, l'arbre que j'aurais vu grandir (que mon père aurait planté le jour de ma naissance), le grenier de mon enfance empli de souvenirs intacts...

As his survey of the rue Vilin makes plain, the sites of his childhood are vulnerable to change.

De tels lieux n'existent pas, et c'est parce qu'ils n'existent pas que l'espace devient question, cesse d'être évidence [...]

Mes espaces sont fragiles : le temps va les user, va les détruire : rien ne ressemblera plus à ce qui était, mes souvenirs me trahiront, l'oubli s'infiltrera dans ma mémoire, je regarderai sans les reconnaître quelques photos jaunies aux bords tout cassés. [...]

Écrire : essayer méticuleusement de retenir quelque chose, de faire survivre quelque chose : arracher quelques bribes précises au vide qui se creuse, laisser, quelque part, un sillon, une trace, une marque ou quelques signes. (179-80)

Such spaces are not only vulnerable to the normal wear and tear of time and weather but to processes of urban renewal motivated by the avarice of property developers. Although he does not indict these forces in this passage from *Espèces d'espaces*, they are clearly implicated in texts such as “La rue Vilin” or perhaps most famously in *W, ou Souvenir d'une enfance*.¹⁵⁹ His writing project in such texts as “La rue Vilin,” *Espèces d'espaces*, and *Tentative* works against the ravages of time and history; however, his attempts to “retenir quelque chose, de faire survivre quelque chose” from the past do not transform it into a picturesque *image d'Épinal*. The list-like

¹⁵⁹ Ravindranathan suggests that the imagined and utopian spaces of Perec's “espace inventaire” or “espace inventé” represent an alternative to the sites of violent dislocations: “[L']espace inventaire, [l']espace inventé, au siècle de Perec, est aussi bien le terrain jouissif et ludique d'expéditions, d'aventures, d'échanges et de nouvelles proximités (aujourd'hui électroniques, virtuelles, etc.) que l'aire traîtresse de déplacements malheureux : migrations forcées, déportations, déracinements, éloignements, ruptures de mémoire, destructions de lieux, naufrages. L'espace est la carte tracée et le témoin hanté des récits de l'humain (265-66). These invented cartographies are implicated in a broader historiographical undertaking. Perec's experiments with stasis and vertical travel involve a remapping of these sites of “déplacements malheureux”; however ludic these projects may be, they nevertheless also work to reinscribe these histories of violence.

structure of *Tentative* and “La rue Vilin” is the form taken by a writing of survival; neither narrative nor descriptive, these textual exercises push back against the dehistoricizing effect of the tourist gaze—against the way the camera frames the world. It is through this rejection of the picturesque—frozen outside of time—that Perec is able to establish links between the present and the largely inaccessible past.

The anxiety behind Perec’s charged encounter with the camera-wielding tourist in *Tentative* is magnified in the exploration of native terrains in texts like François Maspero’s *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* and Marc Augé’s *L’Impossible voyage*. These later texts express a profound fear that *intra-muros* Paris has been reduced to its status as a tourist destination, or even an outpost of Disneyland. For instance, the essayistic “récits de voyage” collected in *L’Impossible Voyage* include an “exercice de fiction” offering a dystopian fantasy of Paris in the year 2040. In Augé’s apocalyptic “ville de rêve,” the Disney corporation is in charge of managing the city as a “spectacle permanent” evacuated of its former residents and transformed into a theme park. This nightmarish vision is the world-as-spectacle is, according to Augé, the work of the tourist industry:

Ces agences [de tourisme] qui quadrillent la terre, qui l’ont divisée en parcours, en séjours, en clubs soigneusement préservés de toute proximité sociale abusive, qui ont fait de la nature un “produit”, comme d’autres voudraient faire de la littérature et de l’art, sont les premières responsables de la mise en fiction du monde, de sa déréalisation d’apparence – en réalité, de la conversion des uns en spectateurs et des autres en spectacle. (14)

Scorn for the tourist is here transferred, perhaps more appropriately, to the capitalistic forces that manage the touristic field. As in *Tentative*, Augé reflects on tourism in Paris from the perspective of the native; however, his attack resonates much more strongly with anti-tourist discourses.

In the account of his month-long journey through the Parisian suburbs, François Maspero reveals that his impulse to undertake this voyage in part stemmed from the sense that “real life” had been pushed to the periphery of the city: “Paris était devenu une grande surface du commerce et un Disneyland de la culture. Où était passée la vie? En banlieue. Le ‘tout autour’ ne pouvait donc pas être un terrain vague, mais un terrain plein: plein de monde et de vie. Le vrai monde et la vraie vie” (25). Part of Maspero’s project is to search for authenticity on the outskirts of Paris. He mocks the media representation of the savage, unknown spaces around the civilized center island of Paris, yet his journey in certain ways remaps the center / periphery structure of conventional forms of travel onto Paris and its *banlieues*, positioning *extra-muros* Paris—with its heavily concentrated population of immigrants and ethnic minority communities—as sites of potential encounters with the other. Thus while Maspero is pushing back against the spectacularization and “Disneyfication” of Paris, his efforts to find authenticity elsewhere reproduce problematic exoticist practices. For instance, as in conventional Eurocentric travel narratives, Maspero and his companion Anaïk Frantz—*intra-muros* Parisians—are the mobile subjects, subjecting the *banlieusards* to their tourist gaze. Further complicating the relationship between traveler and travelee is the way that professional photographer Frantz mediates many of their encounters through her camera lens.¹⁶⁰ In attempting to challenge the binary organization of Parisian space into center and periphery, Maspero at times inadvertently reinforces this very

¹⁶⁰ Gantz 88-90. Kathryn Jones, however, sees Frantz’s camera and the images she produces as a means of communication (129).

opposition over the course of his voyage. In contrast, Perec remains immobile and exposes himself to the tourist gaze in *Tentative* or explores familiar landscapes in texts like “La rue Vilin.”

Although Perec’s approach to describing the Place Saint-Sulpice rejects the spectacularizing gaze of the tourist, the texts that I have examined here do not advocate a more “authentic” version of the everyday that is endangered by the proliferation of tourists in the city. In decrying the violence done to the Parisian topography by the construction of the Forum des Halles and by the insertion of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Perec is not promoting a frozen vision of the past; he recognizes the new habits and spatial practices that emerge and reform around the new sites.¹⁶¹ In his survey of the rue Vilin Perec seeks to leave a written trace of the life of his family and community in an earlier era, yet he sees the current inhabitants of the rue Vilin as vulnerable to the same economic forces that also threaten to erase his own past. His discourse regarding the “espaces intacts” recognizes the impossibility of this very concept, and it resists the *image d’Epinal* of a version of French life frozen at a given moment that is deemed “authentic,” in contrast with many anti-immigration discourses. Thus, Perec’s mockery of the tourists who traverse the Place Saint-Sulpice differs from the “anti-tourist fulminations” of many travel writers through its participation in a broader exploration of how vast economic and social shifts were transforming the relationship between the city and its natives. Although it is not obvious from *Tentative*, whose temporal parameters limit the project to a short duration, nevertheless the “anthropologie qui parlera de nous” is intent on inscribing history, rather than observing and cataloguing cultural difference.

Perec stops short of acknowledging the complexity of the tourist gaze when it is trained on his own city, on himself. His essay “Tout autour de Beaubourg” outlines a model of tourism that would push back against the evacuation of history that was the consequence of the brutalizing of old Paris with the installation of Les Halles and the Centre Pompidou. Even there Perec sees life crawling back into the city. Perec’s vision of Beaubourg and Paris’s future is not yet so apocalyptic as Augé’s 15 years later—he can at least imagine another way of experiencing, interacting with, and writing the city. “Tout autour de Beaubourg” highlights the way life manages to re-emerge even after the urban equivalent of an ecological disaster. The essay is seemingly geared towards tourists; however, given that it is accessible only to a francophone readership, it appears to speak to the same audience claimed by “Promenades dans Londres”: French natives. Addressing the population of French travelers, Perec prescribes a more productive way of dealing with fears over the rapid homogenization of the spaces of home and everywhere due to economic shifts—a model that, as we shall see in Boudjedra’s *Topographie*, fails to appeal to the average Parisian native.

Perec had already tied tourism to the emergence of broader practices of consumption in *Les Choses. Une histoire des années soixante*. For the protagonists of *Les Choses* (French would-be tourists), Jérôme and Sylvie, vacations and travel are merely two examples of a vast array of coveted objects. Travel is sometimes seen as an occasion for accumulating more possessions, as in a longed-for voyage to London, where their sight-seeing practices would be divided between

¹⁶¹ Surely the fate of Les Halles speaks more to the will to fossilize Paris’s landscape than Perec’s writing project: after the structures were torn down to make way for the shopping mall, one of the distinctive pavilions in glass and iron designed by Victor Baltard was transported and reassembled in the suburb of Nogent-sur-Marne, to be preserved like a religious relic.

such acts of consumption as gazing at art at the National Gallery, drinking at a pub in Church Street, and shopping for typical English fashions on Savile Row. Travel is alternately conceived by Jérôme and Sylvie as a means to escape their materialist lifestyles, as in their self-imposed “exile” as teachers in provincial Tunisia. These touristic practices differ sharply from the program of travel that Perec outlines in the “Promenades dans Londres” essay. Perec’s privileging of the “endotique” over the “exotique” in “Approches de quoi?” suggests the futility of traveling abroad to escape the alienation of modern life, and commodity culture in particular. Moreover, although he is specifically referring to the legacy of colonial anthropology in “Approches de quoi?”, Perec’s recognition of the imperialist qualities of this one form of travel calls attention to how other voyages to the former colonies might be implicated in persistent imbalances of power: in other words, how tourist practices after decolonization might be related to the long history of pillaging. The alternative model of cultural encounters—embedded in history and lived experience—that Perec sketches out in the various writings that I have examined here stand in stark contrast to the neo-colonial touristic practices embraced by the Parisian natives in Boudjedra’s *Topographie*.

“Mirages de l’outre-mer”: Post-Colonial Travel in Rachid Boudjedra’s *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée*

I read Boudjedra’s text in relation to an important moment in the history of French and, indeed, European immigration, as well as in relation to a turning point in the history of twentieth-century tourism. 1974 saw the formal halt on inward migration, which effectively put an end to the mass immigration of industrial laborers who had been actively recruited and / or regularized after taking up employment in France during the *Trente Glorieuses* as part of the post-war industrial and reconstruction boom (Hargreaves 165-67; Silverman 42-52). 1974 marks the end of an era and the beginning of new patterns of immigration in France, one marked by even greater social marginalization resulting from difficulties integrating into the labor market (Hargreaves 24-31, 53-54; Silverman 52-69). In *Afrique sur Seine: A New Generation of African Writers in Paris*, Odile Cazenave describes the way a group of late-twentieth-century narratives depicting immigration to France denounce the “miroir aux alouettes” that is held out to immigrants—namely, the alluring but false notion of easily-achieved success in France (118-26). The figure of the “miroir aux alouettes” appears in Boudjedra’s novel as well; although used in a more concrete way to describe the hallucinatory and disorienting topography of the metro, where the protagonist wanders in circles for hours upon his arrival in Paris, it is also an apt metaphor to describe the seductive image of France that prompted the unnamed traveler to undertake the voyage to France in the first place.

Alongside this correspondence with a change in immigration, Boudjedra’s novel was published right on the cusp of what Dean MacCannell has identified as a watershed moment in the history of tourism. MacCannell argues that, beginning in the mid 1970s large corporate interests invaded the tourism sector with unprecedented vigor. Whereas the tourist of the early 1970s was still able to engage in a fairly autonomous mode of sightseeing, subsequent generations of tourists have contended with a field of travel in which “every ‘destination’ is increasingly commodified, packaged, and marketed” (1999: 195). The images propagated in advertisements for such tourist sites, among other visual and textual representations, have supplanted any direct, unmediated experience of these spaces for Euro-American tourists. Boudjedra’s novel, in spite of the narrative setting of 1973, presents these transformations of the

touristic field as already entrenched. The omnipresent advertisements papering the walls of the metro present a highly commodified vision of the “elsewhere” to the metro commuter—specifically in a poster promoting a vacation to the island of Djerba, located off the coast of the former French protectorate of Tunisia, associated in classical mythology with the island of the Lotus-Eaters.

The recognition of the highly mediated nature of tourism in the 1970s allows us to see both the parallels and points of divergence between the status of Paris and Djerba in the imaginations of each site’s would-be visitors. Both the protagonist—an emigrant—and the metro commuter—a potential tourist—are seduced by images of their destination.¹⁶² On the one hand, the protagonist is mesmerized by the image of life in France promulgated by a group of men from his village, the “laskars,” who describe their time there as a series of colorful and lucrative adventures. This earlier generation of *travailleurs immigrés*, now returned to their native land, suppresses the details of their marginalized and precarious situation in France, instead dangling the “miroir aux alouettes” in front of the naïve protagonist. Far from warning him about the perils of life as an immigrant worker, a situation particularly aggravated for Algerians by the specificities of French-Algerian (post)colonial relations, the *laskars* present even the spaces of the metro as a site of unimaginable pleasures, rather than the hellish landscape in which the protagonist is later ensnared: “Tu ne peux pas savoir quelle merveille c’est le métro, il ne faut quand même pas y prendre goût!” (71). The potential Djerba vacationers, on the other hand, seek an escape from the suffocating *métro, boulot, dodo* routine. While this exotic locale promises respite from modern urban life, nevertheless the vacation package is part of the commodity culture that contributes to the alienation of Parisian dwellers: the proposed getaway offers only the illusion of escape.

The protagonist’s vision of the island of Djerba contrasts sharply with the commercialized image of the same site offered to Parisian commuters, as the markers of exoticism and otherness in the advertisements are to him familiar objects. In a sense, *Topographie* could be read as belonging to the set of “countercommodified” travel narratives that emerged in the 1960s and 70s. Mary Louise Pratt argues that these accounts were meant to counteract the “exoticist visions of plenitude and paradise [that] were appropriated and commodified on an unprecedented scale by the tourist industry” in that era. “‘Real’ writers took up the task of providing ‘realist’ (degraded, countercommodified) versions of postcolonial reality” (221). The version of postcolonial reality that the novel communicates through the representation of North Africa appearing in flashbacks to the protagonist’s life in his home village does indeed form a sharp counterpoint to the vision of Djerba promoted in the metro advertisements. This more “authentic” version, like those presented in countercommodified travel narratives, draws on knowledge amassed outside the tourist circuits. However, the juxtaposition of the unnamed emigrant’s perspective with the way Djerba is framed as a tourist destination differs from the opposition between the touristic and the realistic proposed by countercommodified travel narratives, in that the clash of perspectives emerges from an encounter between a mobile “native”—a traveler from the (former) colonial periphery—and these images in the metropole. Boudjedra’s novel does not pit the authenticity of the protagonist’s experiences as a *traveler* to these various sites in North Africa against the contemptibly artificial qualities of tourism in the same regions, but rather his experiences and

¹⁶² Shilton; Owen; Anyinefa; and Holter have examined the relationship between the protagonist’s journey through the metro and models of exoticist travel. On representations of urban space in *Topographie* more generally, see Ruhe. On the figure of advertising images in the space of the metro, see Wrona.

knowledge as a *native* to these spaces—the “visité” or travelee. The gaze that the unnamed emigrant levels at the commodified representation of Djerba in the metro posters is the gaze of the object-turned-subject.

Moreover, it is not the juxtaposition of two competing visions of “elsewhere” that most strikingly evokes a postcolonial reality, but rather the dissonance between the exotic pleasures offered up to the potential tourist to Djerba and the brutal violence to which the protagonist is subjected when he attempts to travel to France. The protagonist’s more authentic knowledge of cultural locations in North Africa (repackaged exclusively in terms of their role as tourist destinations in the metro advertisements) is a reminder of his failure to claim the status of either the tourist or the traveler. His voyage to France, despite being marked by desire and fantasy like that of the tourists, is nevertheless perceived by many metropolitan subjects as merely part of a process of swapping one “sédentarité” for another (Urbain, *L’Idiot du voyage* 16): he is always an immigrant. His killers identify him preemptorily as an immigrant, projecting his sustained participation in France’s industrial economy—a system hovering on the brink of disaster. Murdered as he exits the metro, he is prevented from making the return trip that was part of his dream. His mobility—a frantic, “paralyzed” mobility, John Culbert argues—is permitted as long as he remains contained in the metro, outside of the economy.¹⁶³ The refusal to allow him to pass outside of the metro into aboveground Paris reifies the imperialist cartography of travel, in which the metropolitan center can never be a destination for travelers from the colonial periphery.

Despite opening up an analogy between the two forms of travel—migration and tourism—placed in confrontation through the protagonist’s bewildered scrutiny of the Djerba advertisement, *Topographie* ultimately underscores the extremely different conditions of neo-imperialist and postcolonial travel. The advertisement for a Djerba vacation offers up this exotic destination as a commodity, focusing on the pleasures that await the metro commuter: the consumer’s ability to access these spaces is taken for granted. Although the metro passengers are victims of commodity culture, easily manipulated by advertising that exploits what Renato Rosaldo terms “imperialist nostalgia” to sell a vacation package, the passengers are complicit in the perpetuation of imperialist economic relationships, profiting from a persistent imbalance of power between France and its former colonies. The protagonist, on the other hand, is forced to confront a different kind of mirage: he is unable to simply gain access to France to participate in its industrial economy, neither to the neobourgeois spaces of *intra-muros* Paris nor to the increasingly marginalized sites of industrial labor on the outskirts of the city.

Topographie responds to the murders of numerous Algerian immigrant workers in the summer of 1973 in a wave of racist and xenophobic violence.¹⁶⁴ The novel narrates the journey of an Algerian man who travels to Paris hoping to find work. The nonlinear narrative tracks his movements through the labyrinthine Paris metro system over the course of a single day, 26 September 1973, immediately after his arrival in the capital. Unable to read or speak French, the traveler struggles to find his way through the metro to the home of a cousin who lives in Paris. Helped by a few fellow passengers, but generally rebuffed by the French natives, the traveler finally makes his way out of the underground only to be brutally murdered by a gang of

¹⁶³ In his study of the motif of “paralyzed” travel in nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts, Culbert associates the impeded movement of the unnamed traveler with the “characteristically static” *Nouveau Roman*; however, he differentiates Boudjedra’s novel from works by Sarraute or Claude Simon in light of Boudjedra’s particular political agenda: “In *Topographie*, the protagonist’s paralyzes, impeded progress, and violent end are the symptoms, specifically, of racism and exclusion” (331).

¹⁶⁴ See Jelloun 112-13 and Naylor 106-07 on the historical context of this wave of violence.

vigilantes upon exiting the metro. The protagonist's predicament is obviously different from Perec's situation as the latter attempts to "exhaust" his chosen *lieu parisien*, as well as from other "usagers de l'espace" such as Marc Augé (*Un ethnologue dans le métro*) or François Maspéro (*Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*) who as privileged Parisians can navigate and appropriate the spaces of the metro or RER. Whereas Perec himself voluntarily imposes the constraint of remaining in the Place Saint-Sulpice, the traveler in *Topographie* is lost in the labyrinthine underground structure, circulating endlessly through the same corridors over the space of the day. His disorientation stems in part from his inability to "read" the metro, not only because he is unable to plot a course through its corridors with the ease and familiarity of a habitual practitioner of these spaces, but also literally, as he cannot read the Roman alphabet used on signs and maps.

The narrative is fragmented, a patchwork of multiple voices: there is the police chief who attempts to reconstruct the traveler's itinerary through the metro but neglects any kind of inquiry into the identities or motivations of the murderers; the metro passengers who provide testimony to the police; the interior monologue of the protagonist; and woven throughout the cynical commentary of a narrator who is occasionally identified as the "voyeur." A well-educated immigrant worker who is involved with unions, the voyeur poses a triple threat to the racist institution of the police as well as the economic system that exploits immigrant labor. He is a skilled reader of the cultural artifacts in the metro as well as of social practices; his voice often takes over the narrative, picking apart the rhetorical strategies of the advertisements and exposing the ways they tap into the desires of the metro users. The narrative and anthropological authority conferred on the voyeur, however, carries little weight in French society, where his racially marked body renders him excessively visible.

It is in the protagonist's encounter with two advertisements, juxtaposed both on the page as well as in the diegetic space of the narrative (on the walls of opposite platforms), that we can see most clearly the stakes of the relationship between the would-be French tourist and the emigrant, a travelee-turned-traveler. The first features a baby seated on a chamber pot surrounded by festoons of pink toilet paper, an advertisement for Lotus brand toilet paper. The second is an image of an elderly peasant woman, squatting amidst baskets filled with brightly colored fruits and vegetables that reflect the hues of her clothes. The narrator, perhaps the voyeur, adopts a quasi-ethnographic discourse to describe the latter image, referring to the woman's clothing, the piles of fruits and vegetables, and other material signs to identify the scene as a market in the middle Atlas Mountains in Morocco. In a conflation of distinct cultural and geographical locations reminiscent of Orientalist strategies of representation, this image of a Moroccan market is in fact an advertisement for a vacation on the island of Djerba, which according to legend is the island of the Lotus-Eaters visited by Odysseus and his companions:

[L]e naïf qui [pense] lotus, pense lotophage et de là, le voilà embarqué vers une île extraordinaire dont d'autres affiches vantent le charme (JUSTE LE TEMPS DU VOYAGE, ET VOUS OUBLIEZ TOUT, LA FOULE, VOS SOUCIS... VOUS REDÉCOUVREZ, NON SEULEMENT LE BLEU DE LA MER, LA DOUCEUR DU SABLE MAIS AUSSI DE L'ESPACE, LA LIBERTÉ, L'INSOUCIANCE... FAITES COMME ULYSSE ! DÉBARQUEZ SUR L'ÎLE DES LOTOPHAGES) et l'hospitalité chantée par Homère. (*Les lotophages servirent du lotus aux compagnons d'Ulysse qui en oublièrent leur [patrie]*). (176)

The connection to the *Odyssey* is made explicit both in the advertising language, set off from the narrative by its font, and also via a parenthetical citation of the *Odyssey* also set off by its typeface. Both the image of the lotus blossom and the reference to the island of the Lotus-Eaters are meant to play on the Western cultural imaginary and conjure up associations with pleasure, self-indulgence, and luxury; however, the use of the lotus iconography, as well as the allusion to the *Odyssey*, also evokes the tempting prospect of forgetting one's cares, as the fruit of the lotus, when consumed, is according to classical mythology a powerful inducer of amnesia.

The advertising slogan casts the French metro passengers, both commuters and consumers, in the role of Odysseus, connecting them to the prototype of the Western explorer of an exotic elsewhere. The Djerba advertisement relies on the power of exotic imagery—an Oriental souk, folkloric dress—to conjure up the allure of a locale far removed from the banal misery of the metro. Similarly, the toilet paper advertisement relies on the evocative power of the stylized lotus image that replaced the “o” in the word “Lotus” to distract consumers from associating the product with constipation and hemorrhoids. The advertising slogans seem symptomatic of what Panivong Norindr calls the “colonial blues,” nostalgia for an earlier time when Tunisia and Morocco were even more readily available to metropolitan passengers.¹⁶⁵ “SI DÉJÀ L'ÉTÉ VOUS TENTE/HANTE,” reads one of version of the slogan, or on the following page, in slightly modified form: SI DÉJÀ L'ÉTÉ VOUS MANQUE/HANTE FAITES COMME ULYSSE: DÉBARQUEZ DANS L'ÎLE DES LOTOPHAGES!” Such slogans appeal to certain modes of persistent remembering: nostalgia, longing, and regret. The advertisement's attempts to lure weary commuters into emulating imperialist travelers of the past are both steeped in Orientalist tones and appeal to a broader nostalgia for a less consumerist and artificial age.

The Djerba ad that invites the commuters to visit the land of the Lotus-Eaters frames this voyage in terms of distance and difference. Both ads also appeal to their audience *as* a population of Lotus-Eaters; that is, a group of people who consume a product in order to forget. With the declaration “JUSTE LE TEMPS DU VOYAGE ? ET VOUS OUBLIEZ TOUT, LA FOULE...,” the advertising slogan evokes the classical association of the lotus with amnesia. Describing the toilet paper ad, the narrator notes that the shrewd advertising minds present the rosy-cheeked cherub on the chamber pot in such a way as to make their consumer audience forget the “fonction excrémentielle” of the product being promoted. The juxtaposition of the ad promoting Lotus brand toilet paper on one platform and a voyage to Djerba on the other suggests that these products are meant to appeal to a consumer audience that above all desires to forget. The recurring metaphor of the subterranean passages of the metro as “boyaux” draws an analogy between the experience of the metro and the ills of constipation. Just as the Lotus toilet paper will make its potential users forget that they are dealing with fecal matter, a trip to the mythical island of the Lotus-Eaters will allow the potential consumers of this voyage to forget the time they spend rushing through the bowels of the city. Even though the advertisement for the trip to Djerba frames this trip as an escape to a distant and exotic land, the metro passengers and potential consumers of such a voyage have more in common with the mythical inhabitants of this island than they might expect.

In light of the similarities between the metro passengers and the mythical Lotus-Eaters, it is possible to see the protagonist's journey to France as his own voyage to the land of the Lotus-

¹⁶⁵ In this instance, “summer” signifies more than a season or sunny weather, but also alludes to the “pays du soleil”—the sun-drenched climes of North African countries. Elsewhere in the novel, “soleil” is used to describe some kind of ethnic essence, conflating climate with constitution in the phenomenon of a chilly, succubus-like French woman who drains her Algerian husband of his “soleil” (190).

Eaters. And in fact Boudjedra's novel does frame the protagonist's attempt to migrate to France as an odyssey: a "projet mythique de traverser la mer" (190). While the targeted consumers of the Djerba vacation package are necessarily a group with an elevated socio-economic status within France's industrial society—a group whose social, historical and political circumstances diverge sharply from those of the protagonist—the language used to describe the unnamed traveler's obsessive desire to travel to France is echoed in the evocation of how the advertising message mutates in the consumers' minds: "l'avalanche d'images . . . se transform[ent] en rêve confus ou en cauchemar trépidant ou en désir lancinant ou en projet mythique, (Ulysse, l'île des lotophages, l'évasion, la fuite en avant, le voyage, etc.)" (177). The unnamed traveler seeks to participate in the industrial and capitalist society that the French metro passengers are caught in, from which they both profit and long to escape. Both dreams are represented as mirages, in which the protagonist and the French metro passengers are each in their own way trapped: "Pris au piège, de la même façon que lui, mais pour des raisons différentes, ils butent, eux aussi, dans le réel sordide et que l'imagination des concepteurs rend plus insupportable, car si le voyageur est malmené par cette énigme de l'affiche . . . , les autres, ceux qui le bousculent, l'insultent ou l'envoient promener, ne savent pas non plus où donner de la tête" (197). In here referring to the protagonist as "le voyageur" rather than the more frequent designation of "l'émigrant," the novel invites a comparison between his journey and the advertised voyage to Djerba.

In spite of the similar mechanisms of fantasy and desire, however, the perspective of each set of travelers is shaped by specific histories of engagement with the spaces represented in the advertisement. Where the French metro passengers see the exotic and the faraway, the protagonist sees the familiar. The advertisements are a haunting reminder, not of a lost and lamented colonial past but of a home that is both distant and strangely present in the corridors beneath Paris. It is unclear which of the narrators identifies the scene in the Djerba advertisement as a souk, but it is made explicit that the protagonist recognizes the lotus, whose fruit is reputed in his community to have aphrodisiac properties, and which he is surprised to see blooming on the walls of the metro, as he associates it exclusively with his home country, on the other side of the sea. The colonial associations of the term "outré-mer" are undermined by the reversal of the imperial trajectory: the traveler's "outré-mer" is France. Moreover, the traveler's recognition of the lotus blossom and luscious fruits through a framework of familiarity destabilizes these figures as signs of the foreign or exotic; as Culbert notes, the unnamed traveler's voyage "lacks the stable referents of home and abroad" (335). The protagonist is unable to communicate these moments of dissonance with the other metro passengers; however, the reader is invited to share in the experience of the radically defamiliarized spaces of the metro.

The novel points towards a fundamental power differential between the protagonist and the metro commuter in terms of each subject's ability to access the spaces of their individual "mirage de l'outré-mer." The protagonist hopes to achieve financial success in a country whose population appears largely hostile to his presence. In contrast, as the cynical narrative voice remarks, the most striking aspect of the image on the Djerba ad is its suggestion that "tout est bon marché dans les pays du soleil": that every form of pleasure is readily accessible to the French consumer, from exotic fruits at the market to undisclosed delights rendered all the more titillating by being merely suggested rather than explicitly evoked.

I have evoked two of the symbolic valences of the lotus as a source of both pleasure and amnesia (forgetting). A consideration of the historical specificity of these two kinds of travel – migration and tourism – draws another facet of the Lotus-Eaters myth to the fore, one that is closely tied to themes of pleasure and forgetting and one that is evoked explicitly by the cynical

narrator: the Lotus-Eaters' legendary hospitality (176). Discourses of immigration often refer to ideas of hospitality, casting the different players in global networks of movement in the role of "hosts" and "guests"; the country of immigration is frequently framed as a "host country," underscoring the precariousness or conditionality of an immigrant's administrative status.¹⁶⁶ The myth of success – the "miroir aux alouettes" that traps the protagonist – is tied to a myth of access: in order for the immigrant to succeed, his presence must at least be tolerated by the host country.

The traveler gradually comes to understand that he had been deluded into thinking that he would meet with any hospitality in France in a series of encounters with racism and xenophobia that culminate with his brutal murder.¹⁶⁷ The homicidal rage of the vigilantes in the deserted intersection outside the metro exit is anticipated by the hostility of passersby in the crowded intersections of the subway passages. Superseding these personal, individual gestures of policing the borders of national identity is the institutional racism embodied by the police chief who leads the investigation into the traveler's murder out of self-interest, in case a historian or a politician decides later on to inquire into the incident. All of these reactions to the traveler as foreign and intrusive are the flipside of the titillating exoticism of the island of Djerba.

The illusory French hospitality that is implicit in the traveler's "mirage d'outre-mer" is not the only myth of hospitality in the novel. By framing the voyage to Djerba as a voyage to the legendary island of the Lotus-Eaters, the advertisers hope to evoke their mythical hospitality. The assumption that neo-imperialist French travelers will be welcomed by the inhabitants of Djerba perpetuates the myth of the grateful native who welcomes the civilizing influence of the colonizer. The image of the woman displaying her wares in the market seems to place her in the role of a hospitable Lotus-Eater who is personally offering up these spaces for consumption by the metro passenger.¹⁶⁸

The novel challenges explicitly the myth of native hospitality in its evocation of the homesickness and nostalgia experienced by both an earlier generation of immigrant workers and by the traveler himself. This passage moves from a description of a forest of palm trees whose branches are hung with skins of palm juice to a cluster of ancient villages whose architecture's ochre hue turns to white when the sun is at zenith and sets a fatal trap for any would-be invaders. There are echoes of the picturesque and exotic representation of the "pays du soleil" in this memory of the home country; however, the exposition of how these aspects of the environment were used in defensive warfare tactics, in a show of hostility to an invading host, counters the mobilization of these same tropes in the Orientalist ad for a voyage to the island of the Lotus-Eaters. Although the Djerba ad implies the apparent accessibility of the exotic spaces represented in the ad, by recalling this history of anti-colonial resistance the novel challenges the myth of

¹⁶⁶ See Rosello, *Postcolonial Hospitality*.

¹⁶⁷ Culbert comments on how the traveler demonstrates that his reading skills have developed somewhat over the course of the day in relation to an ad for Amina brand tampons, featuring a joyous-looking woman and a small boy. Whereas he at first assumes that the photograph on the ad poster is meant to be an image of welcome, he later chides himself for assuming that it was a "marque d'hospitalité" (222, 228). There is a strange doubling of this mark of (in)hospitality when the traveler expresses his resentment towards "les propriétaires du tampon et autres responsables de sa mésaventure" (199). Here he indicts the officials who stamped his passport and let him leave the country even though the borders should technically have been closed per government order following the spate of murders of Algerian immigrants in the wake of the 1973 murders of immigrants (although the traveler is not aware of this decree, nor of the wave of violence).

¹⁶⁸ There is an interesting resonance between the demystification of native hospitality and the anecdote reported by Ageron regarding an interaction between fairgoers and the *animateurs* manning the "souk" attraction at the 1931 Exposition, when the latter reacted negatively to the being "tutoyé" by the metropolitan visitors to the fair.

hospitality as it is mobilized by colonial discourses. This blending of picturesque landscape and resistance suggests that French visitors to Djerba may not be the cherished guests that the ad's reference to the *Odyssey* might lead potential consumers to believe.

Aligning the traveler with the Lotus-Eaters who circulate through the spaces of the metro, *Topographie* undermines the notion of the exotic but passive natives, content to remain the sedentary and obliging hosts of neo-imperialist travelers. Like the Parisian metro passengers, titillated by the images of exotic landscapes and “voyages lotophages” plastered to the walls of the metro, the traveler is possessed by confused dreams, throbbing desires, and mythical projects – albeit rather pragmatic and modest in nature. Despite his pragmatism and modesty, the traveler did give in to temptation and allowed himself to be seduced by immoderate dreams. However, the novel does not suggest a facile reversal of imperialist trajectories: instead, it shows the brutal consequences of the traveler's pursuit of his “mirage d'outre-mer” in an age of persistent imbalances of power between France and its former colonies. Even as it appropriates the figure of the Lotus-Eater in its assertion of the protagonist's status as a traveler, the novel does not embrace the Lotus-Eaters' will to forget, refusing the suppression and erasure of histories of colonial violence that are implicit in the metro ad's mythical representation of the island of the Lotus-Eaters. The protagonist's bewildered wandering through the corridors of the metro—an experience marked by recurring paramnesia—echoes on an individual level the broader social patterns of amnesia. One form of amnesia is courted by the metro passengers who long to forget the cares and woes of the *métro, boulot, dodo* way of life. Another is found in the institutional suppression and erasure of histories of colonial violence: as previously observed, the police only delve into the mystery of the protagonist's murder out of fear that it will later be dredged up from the depths of communal memory.¹⁶⁹

A central inquiry of this dissertation is to examine how to expand the field of travel to recognize forms of travel beyond the privileged leisure travel exemplified by the pleasure voyage to Djerba or even the more gritty experiences represented in “countercommodified” travel narratives, but without eclipsing the historical circumstances under which the marginalized journeys of immigrants, exiles, and deportees are undertaken. In Boudjedra's novel, the protagonist's experience of Paris corresponds to what bell hooks describes as certain subjects' experience of travel as terror. For all that the French metro commuters—and potential tourists—are disillusioned and vulnerable to the impending economic crisis, nevertheless their status as citizens affords them powerful protections as they circulate in the city and beyond. In the metropole, as in many tourist sites in France's former colonies, the white male body—unmarked and invisible in a way that the protagonist can never be—is imbued with a freedom of mobility denied to many of the subjects who share the spaces of the hexagon.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Graebner points out the parallels between the will to amnesia demonstrated by the (post)colonial French state regarding the 17 October 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris and the laskars' fatal failure to transmit those aspects of communal memory that might have saved the protagonist from his fate: lessons on how to navigate the tortuous subterranean channels of the metro as well as warnings of the xenophobia and institutional racism faced by immigrants (294-95).

¹⁷⁰ Expanding the range of institutionally sanctioned forms of mobility from the promotion of colonial settlement at the height of the French empire, from the 1930s to the 70s French political discourses on the rights of citizenship began to claim leisure and freedom from work as a right, not a privilege. Furlough highlights the particularities of French conceptions of leisure, drawing a distinction specifically between France and the U.S. Whereas in the U.S. “modern vacations developed as a ‘privilege’ accorded salaried and waged workers as part of their employment ‘package’ . . . access to vacation time in France and in most European states has been politically secured. The vast majority of Europeans are guaranteed as much as five weeks of paid vacation by virtue of their status as citizens, rather than as a result of employee ‘benefits’” (249).

While the rights to leisure and mobility might seem only tenuously linked to the fundamental rights to life and security of person, in fact the brutal transgression of these rights in the protagonist's murder is strongly tied to his exclusion from the role of the traveler. His reification in the role of the *indigène sédentaire* from his killers' perspective—whether the *sédentarité* of the travelee or that of the immigrant—precipitates his vicious exclusion from France. His murder signifies not only a refusal to admit (post)colonial subjects into the national body and the broader range of rights accorded by citizenship, but even precludes them from the precarious, marginalized existence that immigrant workers had been forced to contend with during the economic boom of the *Trente Glorieuses*.¹⁷¹

The protagonist's experience in the metro—and even more so, his murder as he exits into the streets of Paris—shows the limitations of an approach like Augé or Maspero's for articulating an ethics of non-colonial travel. Augé's account of his ethnographic study in the proximate terrain of the metro reveals the extent to which he benefits from the privileged invisibility of the white, male French citizen (paralleling the convention of the invisibility of the participant-observer). What Boudjedra's representation of circulation in the metro highlights is the extent to which even a non-place like the subway system is still structured by social hierarchies, whose categories of difference are organized around visible or audible markers of difference such as skin color and linguistic competency. The desperate figure of the traveler in *Topographie* is absent from the cast of characters that Augé evokes in his playful ethnography of the metro. The reorientation of the ethnographer's gaze in Augé's text is in part inspired by the globalization of mobility and the threat of cultural homogeneity. But while shifting economic practices continue to mobilize capital and people in ever greater numbers, nevertheless the protagonist's fate anticipates the extent to which national borders and identities will remain important frames of reference even after subsequent re-configurations of national borders at the end of the twentieth century. As Laurent Dubois observes, the boundaries that once overlapped with the geopolitical contours of the nation have now shifted to regulate spaces and populations in the domestic zone, including and especially in the banal spaces of the metro system.¹⁷²

While the metaphor of the “miroir aux alouettes” is introduced early on in *Topographie* and the themes of disillusionment and disappointment return incessantly throughout the text, readers are not presented with the particular nature of the unnamed traveler's fantasies regarding France until late in the narrative, and even then the novel only offers a few details. His ultimate goals once he arrives “outre-mer” are modest: to work hard, save his money, and return home quickly with the financial means to buy a milk cow to replace the beloved bovine that recently succumbed to tuberculosis. The pragmatic nature of the traveler's dream seems to confirm the report of his “modestie légendaire,” and contrasts sharply not only with the exoticist fantasy of travel offered to the French metro passengers but also with the laskars' narratives of their debonair adventures in Paris. The protagonist's projected itinerary of outward journey, *séjour*, return journey also differs from the trajectory of the cousin whom he attempts to reach. A longtime resident of France, the cousin has fallen prey to the consumer society in which the metro commuters are also ensnared: like them, he is “pris au piège, enfoncé dans les délices de la société industrielle jusqu'aux narines” (1975: 184). The cousin's residency in France has long

¹⁷¹ Driss Chraïbi's 1955 novel *Les Boucs* offers a portrait of the marginalized existence of an earlier generation of *travailleurs immigrés*.

¹⁷² Dubois observes that “[t]he opening of the territorial borders suggests not the elimination of borders and exclusions but their reconfiguration . . . As the more solid territorial border posts and checkpoints are abandoned, a thousand shifting borders are set up within the national territory of France” (16).

since passed his projections: his return to the native land has been endlessly deferred. Like visitors to the mythical island of the Lotus-Eaters, the cousin has sampled the delights of France's consumer society and "en oublie la patrie." Gazing into the future, the narrator observes that the cousin—like the protagonist—will never leave France alive; only his corpse will return to the homeland.

The protagonist's lack of interest in fully engaging with the "délices de la société industrielle" distinguishes him from many of the travelers in the set of late-twentieth-century narratives of the "miroir aux alouettes" that Cazenave discusses in *Afrique sur Seine*. In novels such as J.R. Essomba's *Le Paradis du Nord*, Alain Mabanckou's *Bleu Blanc Rouge*, and Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, many of the (post)colonial subjects who long to make the northward voyage to France are seduced by the prospect of sharing in practices of conspicuous consumption popularized by earlier waves of travelers. In Boudjedra's novel, the protagonist's participation in France's industrial economy is a means to re-invest in the rural economy back home.

Culbert suggests that the traveler, by virtue of his namelessness and anonymity, "stands as a representative sample of a larger North African immigrant population in Paris" (330). In emphasizing the modest dimensions of the protagonist's "mirage de l'outre-mer," Boudjedra sets him up as an innocent *bouc émissaire*, the consummate victim.¹⁷³ The protagonist's adventures seem to enact those of a type that the laskars—recalling their encounters with this figure in their days strutting around the Goutte d'or—identify contemptuously as the "inévitabile et maladroit voyageur qui [met] des heures pour venir à bout de l'écheveau dédaléen du souterrain" (203). And even when these other travelers ultimately conquer the metro and join their countrymen in the Goutte d'Or, many of them likewise are killed or injured in their dangerous line of work, in unregulated factories or at hazardous construction sites: "Mais il n'y a pas que lui... d'autres étaient tombés... d'autres encore... y ont laissé leurs yeux, leurs jambes, leurs testicules, leurs cervelles... [e]t d'autres encore malmenés, écrasés, assassinés, déportés, ravalés, renvoyés, méprisés, haïs, brimés, exécutés, exacerbés, mutilés, noyés..." (83-84). Seth Graebner suggests that the protagonist's subjectivity is eclipsed by the menacing topography of the metro, contrasting the traveler's lack of agency with the "urban savoir-faire" of Sadok, the protagonist of Boudjedra's later novel *Le vainqueur de coupe*. Graebner draws on Certeau's theory of tactical mastery to illustrate how Sadok's ability to navigate the "essentially hostile urban terrain" of Paris allows him to become a historical agent and a "vainqueur" as opposed to a passive, anonymous victim of history (302).

In *Topographie*, the voyeur's skillful demystification of the "écheveau dédaléen" aligns him with an adept "usager de l'espace" like *Le vainqueur de coupe*'s Sadok or the "joueur de flippers," one of the many witnesses interrogated over the course of the investigation—an avid pinball player with a passion for riding the metro. In his testimony, the pinball player suggests that the protagonist's victimization is due to his lack of experience of urban space, a provincialism that he associates with the wider immigrant community: "Tout le monde n'a pas la chance d'apprécier les itinéraires et puis eux, ils débarquent. Mettez un Français moyen dans le métro de Tokyo et vous verrez le résultat!" (1975: 178). Here the verb "débarquer" operates somewhere in between the literal and the figurative. The backwardness of the typical "maladroit voyageur" is perhaps a function of his recent arrival, but the sweeping gesture of the "eux" seems to encompass the broader communities to which these new arrivals belong, both the ones

¹⁷³ In a thorough analysis of the links between *Topographie* and the workings of Greek tragedy, Charles Bonn also reads the unnamed traveler as a consummate victim, a *bouc émissaire*.

they left behind—“*outré-mer*”—and groups in France already in the process of acculturating to metropolitan life.¹⁷⁴ Musing over his possible complicity in the protagonist’s death, the pinball player observes “Oh! la gaffe... J’aurais pu lui sauver la vie. . . . J’aurais dû le mettre en garde: tous ces assassinats quotidiens... Lui conseiller de rentrer chez lui. Il aurait été vexé mais il vivrait à l’heure où il est” (178-79). What exactly does the pinball player regret? That he did not impart more of his tactical experience, having only given the protagonist an undecipherable hand-drawn map of the metro? Or simply that he neglected to urge him to return home?

The witness’s discourse overlaps, albeit in softer tones, with that of the rabidly xenophobic police inspector, who classes the murdered protagonist among “ces types qui viennent nous embêter au lieu de rester à rouiller au soleil de leur douar” (1975: 186). Moreover, these metropolitan perspectives are echoed across the sea in the laskars’ incessant imprecations against the protagonist: “ah ! l’idiot et il se croit preste et agile! mais il aurait mieux fait de reprendre le premier bateau, ça l’aurait dédouané auprès des ricaneurs, des mauvaises langues et autres amis malintentionnés; mais là alors!” (1975: 177). The laskars reify the boundary between modernity and tradition, between the degradations of (post)colonial reality in the metropole and the rural idyll of their village in the Piton, between the essentialized native, inevitably a *naïf* unfit for the challenges of travel, and savvy travelers such as themselves.

What are we to make of the fact that the protagonist of *Topographie*, the consummate victim, becomes the representative of a larger community, rather than the savvy “voyeur,” and what does this have to do with the traveler / native binary? The description of the “inévitabile et maladroit voyageur,” which seems to emerge from the perspective of the laskars, suggests a sharp divide between an earlier generation of “vainqueurs”—the savvy laskars—and mere victims—the protagonist—which parallels the traveler / tourist and traveler / native binaries. Even such a marginalized group as the laskars has its own other: the less experienced, recently mobilized natives. Habile “usagers de l’espace” like the voyeur or the laskars succeed in attaining the mastery of space that otherwise seems to be the province of natives such as the pinball player or proximate ethnographer Marc Augé, whose *Un ethnologue dans le métro* combines the authority of scientific objectivity with the intimate knowledge of the native informant. “C’est un privilège bien parisien,” observes Augé, “que de pouvoir utiliser le plan du métro comme un aide-mémoire, un déclencheur de souvenirs, miroir de poche où viennent se refléter et s’affoler un instant les alouettes du passé” (8). For Augé and other deft urban travelers, the metro labyrinth is not a trap, but rather a tool in the service of their spatial practices. In neglecting to share their superior tactical knowledge, the more skilled metro passengers—including the laskars and the voyeur—further marginalize the protagonist from the field of travel. By extension, they also exclude the broader group of maladroit emigrants that he represents.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ The scope of the “eux” is easier to identify in relation to other moments of the pinball player’s testimony, for instance when he accuses the police of colluding with the press to suppress reports of violence against immigrants. He distinguishes between those members of the working class that belong to the “nous”—the “apaches” of yesteryear—and further marginalized immigrant communities: “Mais alors quant à publier sa photo dans les journaux, ça vous ferait mal. . . . [E]ux, ils sont pas beaux. Vous avez peur d’effrayer les honnêtes gens. Des apaches quoi!” (1975:179) In their discussion of Belleville as a case study of urban renewal Jean Ceaux, Patrick Mazet and Tuoi Ngo Hong describe the almost seamless transition in the Parisian imaginary between successive generations of a criminalized underclass in the quarter, from the “apaches parigots” (71) of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to immigrant communities emerging subsequently.

¹⁷⁵ This exclusion of naïve travelers echoes the terms of Boorstin’s lamentation over the demise of a certain model of travel, the pursuit of “sophisticated pleasures” by an elite group of wealthy, “well[-]prepared” men (80). For Boorstin, the fact that such travel was “uncomfortable, difficult, and expensive” is what elevates it above the easily secured pleasures of mass tourism. Practical obstacles and physical discomfort offer privileged travelers a

Boudjedra spreads culpability for the protagonist's fate across a wide host of characters, from his murderers to the strangers in the metro to the laskars at home. The protagonist's dream is unique—it collapses the boundaries between the provincial and the urban, placing the industrial economy in the service of the rural, and posits a mere cowherd as a daring, if ultimately victimized, traveler. In highlighting the multiple forces that conspire to exclude him from the role of the traveler, Boudjedra reveals that the regulation of the field of travel is not limited to the European colonial traveler / non-European post(colonial) native binary. The attempt to define the traveler's identity in opposition to an inferior other cuts across categories of race and class. This gesture of exclusion structures the relationships among travelers rushing through the corridors of the metropolitan labyrinth below Paris as well as among a group of travelers in a small rural community in Algeria.

Conclusion

The displacement of the encounter between tourist and native from the colonial periphery to the metropole in these texts destabilizes these figures, so often defined in essentialist terms: European tourist and non-European *indigene sédentaire*, often a (post)colonial subject. Perec's voluntary adoption of the role of the immobile native in his encounter with tourists in Paris allows him to draw attention to the ways in which the spectacularizing gaze of the tourist reifies the native and his lifeways as a mere postcard image. Perec's practices of proximate ethnography offer an alternative to the commodified version of travel proposed to the tourists in both *Tentative* and *Topographie*, as well as the commodified leisure experiences offered by the Forum des Halles. Tourism discourses that continue to promote the colonial periphery as a site of exotic pleasures, and which present the everyday life of the natives to these spaces as objects for consumption, are implicated in the economic processes that also lead to the repackaging of Paris's everyday life not only for tourists but for its natives.

The artificial constraints of the *Tentative* project reveal Perec's privileged position as a French citizen; however, the writing project of "La rue Vilin" and other explorations of Parisian space are informed by an awareness of the violent history of the regulation of national identity and of physical access to France. For Perec, the residents of Belleville are not threats to some version of Paris frozen in a touristic image, but rather are vulnerable to violent displacements paralleling those that have already marked the quarter: deportations and expulsions, whether from *intra-muros* Paris or France. Boudjedra's novel reveals that experiences of mobility and stasis are both marked by violence. The relegation of the unnamed protagonist to the role of the *indigène sédentaire* is intimately linked to the violence of deportation. His evocation of the brutal refusal of the unnamed protagonist's status as a traveler is intertwined with a vindication of the emigrant's modest fantasy of travel. The travel projects of a cowherd present the greatest challenge to the social hierarchies articulated around the traveler / tourist and traveler / native binaries.

sense of adventure and contribute to their sentimental education. For Boudjedra's protagonist and the marginalized community that he represents, such challenges are deeply intertwined with forms of institutional discrimination.

Chapter Five
Race, National Identity, and Bureaucratic Alterity in Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* and
Bessora's *53 cm*

The reimagining of the metropolitan capital that takes place in Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (1997) connects urban itineraries of the present moment to past displacements within, to, and from the city.¹⁷⁶ Walking through the city, the narrator points to holes in the city landscape (demolished buildings) and uncovers the role that these topographical modifications play in imposing a history of the city that erases the complicity of the French state in the arrest and deportation of Parisian Jews during the Holocaust. The practices of urban *flânerie* represented in Modiano's text have often been read in terms of the author's attempts to reinscribe historical events and memory (both personal and communal) onto the spaces of the city.¹⁷⁷ The evocation in *Dora Bruder* of the ways in which historical violence continues to shape the form and experience of the city in the present makes this much-studied *récit* an interesting intertext for a narrative of travel published almost contemporaneously—Bessora's *53 cm*. Modiano's palimpsestic account of different histories of movement, past and present, coerced and volitional, finds a parallel in Bessora's account of her protagonist's desperate attempts to avoid deportation from Paris.

In a parody of Eurocentric narratives of the encounter with the Other, the narrator of *53 cm*, Zara, presents her experience of the city as one of travel in an exotic land, borrowing tropes from a wide variety of voyage accounts, including narratives of discovery and conquest from the Age of Exploration as well as ethnographic texts. However, although Zara appropriates the traveler's gaze and assumes the authoritative voice of the conqueror, explorer, or scientist to describe the ethnic group indigenous to Paris (the "Gauls") in her interactions with this population, she nevertheless remains marginalized in French society, denied the identity papers that would render her daily existence more secure. While appropriating thematic elements and formal conventions of the *récit de voyage*, *53 cm* highlights the ways in which this literary form is implicated in the history of European imperialism; the novel historicizes the genre of travel literature even as it mockingly participates in it.¹⁷⁸

I have found Michel de Certeau's conceptualization of the "lieu vécu" in *L'invention du quotidien* useful for my analysis of Modiano, in particular his observation that the material

¹⁷⁶ Many of Modiano's critics have commented on the place of urban itineraries in Modiano's work; see, for instance, Kaminskas's discussion of "promenades . . . [as] a leitmotiv" (938) in *Voyage de noces*.

¹⁷⁷ This conception of the political dimensions of Modiano's walking in the city recalls Maxim Silverman's suggestion that François Maspéro's traveler in *Les Passagers* "refuses the journey of the morally disengaged stroller of the contemporary city who is in thrall to the seductive surface of the commodity" (*Facing Postmodernity* 93). See, for example, Nordholt; and Rose, who consider questions of space, memory, and history similar to those I examine here. However, their explorations of Modiano's (and Perec's as well, in Nordholt's case) urban *flânerie* does not examine the implications of such a "use" of the city for re-thinking the figure of the traveler.

¹⁷⁸ Several scholars have observed the ways in which Bessora's parodic reversal of the colonial ethnographic gaze allows for a critique of the links between contemporary immigration policies and nineteenth-century scientific racism. Susan Ireland examines Zara's "systematic reversal of the main topoi of anthropological discourse" (10) in relation to Clifford's theories regarding the construction of ethnographic authority. Lydie Moudileno examines *53 cm* as part of a larger discussion of attempts by writers and artists, as well as scholars and activists, to "recuperate[e] . . . colonial memory" (202) in the wake of the publication of Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*, from which France's imperialist history is conspicuously absent. She studies Bessora's text in relation to her broader discussion of the figure of Saartje Baartman, whose remains, she argues, have become a site of "transnational, diasporic memory" (209). See also Beschea-Fache; Célérier; and Nack-Ngue.

aspects of a place suggest what is absent in its present state: “[L]es lieux vécus sont comme des présences d’absences. Ce qui se montre désigne ce qui n’est plus . . . c’est la définition même du lieu, en effet, que d’être ces séries de déplacements et d’effets entre les strates morcelées qui le composent et de jouer sur ces mouvantes épaisseurs . . . il n’y a de lieu que hanté par des esprits multiples, tapis là en silence et qu’on peut ‘évoquer’ ou non” (162).¹⁷⁹ Living in the city, interacting with it and incorporating it into a personal narrative, provides the means to push back against the ways in which the city is written into official historiographies. If the inscription of trajectories connecting different spaces in the city has to potential to disrupt the administrative plan of the city, then narratives of movement can be an especially powerful means of resisting official discourses.

Patrick Modiano’s *Dora Bruder*, first published in 1997 and then revised and republished in 1999, relates the narrator’s quest to reconstruct the story of the eponymous missing girl.¹⁸⁰ The narrator comes across a small notice in a nearly fifty-year-old newspaper, a plea for information placed in the 31 December 1941 edition of *Paris-Soir* by Dora’s parents after she ran away from school. It is the report of Dora’s *fugue*, the impetuous movement of a teenager, which sets the narrator in motion. Dora Bruder, her life and history, becomes the object of an undertaking which at times figures as a quest, and at others bears a closer resemblance to a detective case.¹⁸¹ As there is scant information on Dora Bruder, which the narrator pieces together at a painfully slow pace, he supplements his archival research and attempts to track down human sources by walking through the city, looking for traces of Dora Bruder and her parents in the urban landscape.¹⁸²

The narrator’s relationship to Parisian spaces in the present and his journeys through the city are indissociable from his own history within the city and the haunting absences of past Parisian dwellers. The narrator first suggests his own ties with Dora through a common affiliation to various parts of the city, later moving from this initial point of reference to elaborate a history of experiences they have in common. Reading the *avis de recherche*, which instructs the readers to direct any information to M. and Mme. Bruder, 41 boulevard Ornano, Paris, the narrator thinks back on the evolving nature of his relationship with this neighborhood over the years, beginning in his childhood, when he would visit the nearby flea market with his mother and then later, when he would visit a girlfriend who lived in the *quartier*. Over the course of journeys through the streets and buildings of Paris, which he undertakes in his efforts to

¹⁷⁹ Michael Sheringham’s application of de Certeau’s theory of place as an “espace pratiqué” to François Maspero’s *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* (316) has been very helpful for thinking about the narrator’s wanderings in *Dora Bruder* as a set of spatial practices specific to the city.

¹⁸⁰ For a thorough analysis of *Dora Bruder*’s publication history, in particular the implications of modifications to the text from the 1997 to the 1999 version, see Howell; and Morris.

¹⁸¹ Many of Modiano’s works share this narrative structure. The search for missing persons, for clues to one’s own past, are key themes in many of Modiano’s other works, in particular *Rue des boutiques obscures* and *Voyage de noces*. The latter engages with many of the same themes that are prevalent in *Dora Bruder*, but in novelistic form. Modiano has acknowledged that he wrote *Voyage de noces* because he was haunted by the figure of Dora Bruder after reading the “missing” notice in *Paris-Soir*, but the novel did not suffice as a means to work out his preoccupation with the figure of Dora Bruder (Howell 62).

¹⁸² Howell comments on the “dynamism of Paris’s landscape” in terms of “change and effacement” in Modiano’s *récit* (66). The narrator’s “topographical research” is central to her discussion of questions of genre in relation to *Dora Bruder*. Golsan refers to the “conflation of historical epochs, so many superimposed geological or archaeological beds whose many traces can be detected in the present” and comments on the ways in which Modiano evokes “the shadowy presence of Occupied Paris” in his narrative of the city in the present day (46).

retrace Dora's steps, and reconstruct her life, the narrator finds himself retracing in memory his own earlier itineraries. For instance, staring at the plan of the metro, the narrator tries to imagine the route Dora would have taken to go from her *pensionnat* to visit her parents on the weekend in the summer of 1940:

Pour éviter de nombreux changements de lignes, le plus simple était de prendre le métro à Nation, qui était assez proche du pensionnat... Elle descendait à Simplon, juste en face du cinéma et de l'hôtel.

Vingt ans plus tard, je prenais souvent le métro à Simplon. C'était toujours vers dix heures du soir. La station était déserte à cette heure-là et les rames ne venaient qu'à de longs intervalles. (45)

The narrator then goes on to develop Dora's imaginary itinerary, describes the setting more fully, the hour of the day, guessing at her emotional state as he pictures her re-entering the *pensionnat* run by Catholic nuns: "C'était comme de retourner en prison" (46). The narrator uses his own experiences to fill in the blanks of Dora's story in a narrative strategy reminiscent of Augé's mobilization of the metro plan as an "aide-mémoire."

In the previous chapter, I contrasted the utter disorientation of Boudjedra's protagonist with the skillful navigation of the subterranean labyrinth performed by Augé's metro *usager*. Although the typical Parisian's intimate knowledge of the metro, as evoked in *Un ethnologue dans le métro*, usually serves the fairly banal purpose of facilitating movement between two points in the city, Augé also suggests how the individual experience of this and other urban sites participates in broader forms of collective memory. He describes how the plan of the metro lines calls forth his memory of seeing a German soldier crossing the *place* Maubert-Mutualité as he left the metro station (7-8). This recollection of an earlier presence in the city—and the solitary German soldier's largely forgotten itinerary—is for Augé intertwined with the lines of the metro on the map. This evocation of the ways in which personal memory is bound up in the communal experience of the transportation system positions the spaces of the subway as what Annelies Schulte Nordholt calls "lieux comme ancrage de la postmémoire" (245).

The narrator's project to retrace the steps of Dora Bruder draws on these sites of "ancrage" in an attempt to reinscribe a history which has been almost completely erased and to affirm those traces that remain. While the uncertainty and lack of information regarding the circumstances of Dora's *fugue* are what initially brings her to the attention of the narrator, the weight of her absence, which accumulates over the course of the narrative, is tied to the nature of her final disappearance, when she was deported from Paris to Drancy, and then to Auschwitz, where she was killed.¹⁸³ The narrator notes that the route from the Parisian *centre de séjour surveillé* (Les Tourelles) where Dora and other young Jewish women were imprisoned, to the deportation camp at Drancy, is the same route that travelers follow today on their way to France's largest airport at Roissy. Drancy is also a stop on a rail line that runs through Paris and its suburbs. As François Maspero so powerfully evokes in *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*,

¹⁸³ While the narrator's wanderings through the city are clearly haunted by Dora Bruder's last movement—her deportation to Auschwitz—he does not inscribe this equally obliterated trajectory into the text. While the difficult question of how to consider such movement in relation to the concept of the journey is outside the scope of this study, it would be interesting to consider the ethics of Modiano's abstention from such a gesture of the imagination. Such concerns are at the center of Ribeiro's exploration of representations of the journey to the extermination camp in several works of Holocaust testimonial fiction, in which he argues that "the dystopian inversion of the *topos* of the voyage" in these texts constitutes a "central *topos* of modernity" (81).

behind the perceived banality of journeys like commuting to work or traversing the empty space between home and the “real” site of departure, the airport, there are histories of movement and displacement which are deliberately elided from, or ignored by, many historiographies of Paris.

From the end of World War II, de Gaulle and his supporters imposed a certain discourse with regards to the role of the French state in implementing the Final Solution. They refused to acknowledge the complicity of the French state itself, as a political entity, with the Nazi occupier, asserting that the *République* had been hijacked by an illegitimate government; de Gaulle and his forces represented the true French state. By denying the true dimensions of the state’s involvement in the Final Solution, they were able to rehabilitate the police as a force in the liberation of Paris in order to create the myth of a France unified in its resistance to the Vichy government and Nazi occupying army. Such a fiction suppresses the fact that the police forces celebrated as part of the liberating army were also complicit in the deportation and murder of large numbers of Paris’s Jewish population. It was not until 1995, in a now-famous speech at the unveiling of a monument to the victims of the Vélodrome d’Hiver *rafle*, that then-President Jacques Chirac broke with the Gaullist position, noting that “la folie criminelle de l’occupant a été secondée par des Français, par l’État français.” This official acknowledgement of the French state’s complicity, which confirms the assertions of historians such as Henry Rousso and Robert Paxton, circulates in public discourse alongside many competing histories and narratives.¹⁸⁴

The narrative of urban itineraries that I have been describing adds another layer to the historical palimpsest of spatial practices and lived experience in Paris, whether of Parisian dwellers or of people whose presence was more transitory, including German soldiers during the Nazi occupation. However, the aim of Modiano’s evocation of the layers of history in Paris is to recall the subjects who were deported from the city.¹⁸⁵ Where the urban landscape has been modified, where traces of the past have been obliterated and replaced by new structures, Modiano’s narrator recalls these erasures. Wandering in a quarter of the fourth arrondissement where numerous Jewish children were taken away by collaborationist police in July 1942, the narrator observes that the administrative records of the *rafle*, though limited, nevertheless retain traces of the past that have been suppressed from the Parisian topography, as the whole neighborhood was targeted by the post-war government for urban renewal in the 50s. In the records, the same street names and numbers consistently reappear, signaling the disappearance of an entire community, but these coordinates no longer refer to the material reality. In one case, all the apartment buildings along one side of the street (rue des Jardins de Saint-Paul) were systematically demolished after the war in accordance with a “*décision administrative*,” such that only the even-numbered addresses are left (136). While elsewhere in the quarter demolished buildings were replaced by new ones, in this case the land was merely converted to be used as an athletic court, attached to an adjacent school, leaving a gaping hole in between the four- to six-story buildings on either side. In spite of what he perceives as the government’s attempts to eradicate traces of the former inhabitants of the quarter and eliminate reminders of official collaboration with the Nazi occupiers, the narrator remains painfully aware of the historical

¹⁸⁴ See Golsan for a complex analysis of the various histories and “counterhistories” regarding collaboration in the late twentieth century.

¹⁸⁵ Morris examines the intertextual relationship between Modiano’s text and Serge Klarsfeld’s project of memorializing the deported Jews killed in the extermination camps, in particular the *Le Mémorial des enfants juifs déportés de France* (1994, 1995), which contained relevant details about Dora’s life, including her date and place of birth, her last known address, and the *centre de rassemblement* where she was held (280-81).

presence of this community and is haunted by these absences as he wanders through the neighborhood.

The buildings, street signs, and other physical markers that the narrator encounters in his journeys through the city galvanize his attempts to plumb the city's past and to connect the histories of past Parisian dwellers to the lived experience of Parisians in the present moment. The narrator's description of the cityscape conjures up an image of a raised-relief map; he evokes both the elements raised in "relief" from the surface of the city as well as the "*creux*" that appear in contrast to the solid presence of these structures (buildings, signs). It is these irregularities in the Parisian topography that the narrator highlights, remarking: "On se dit qu'au moins les lieux gardent une légère empreinte des personnes qui les ont habités. Empreinte: marque en creux ou en relief. Pour Ernest et Cécile Bruder, pour Dora, je dirai: en creux. J'ai ressenti une impression d'absence et de vide, chaque fois que je me suis trouvé dans un endroit où ils avaient vécu" (28-29).¹⁸⁶ This manner of mapping the city dismantles those historical narratives of the city which, like the urbanism of the post-war period, attempt to gloss over these lacunae and create a smooth and even surface.

While the urban itineraries narrated in *Dora Bruder* recall histories of exclusion based on race, *53 cm* demonstrates the continuing relevance of such considerations in the context of contemporary immigration policies. Allowing or denying access to French national identity has concrete political and social consequences – as in the legitimization of political and social status of individuals through residency permits and identity papers – but it is shown in these texts to be equally if not primarily a question of culture *and* race. And even more importantly for my analysis of these works, the regulation of French national identity dictates the terms of access to the spaces of metropolitan France.

These texts respond to Clifford's and hooks's call to examine different experiences of travel, as the narrators' movement through the city is always doubled or tripled by other itineraries. In *Dora Bruder*, the narrator's ambulation through the city allows him to evoke Dora's deportation as well as his own earlier paths. Moreover, figures from the past are conjured up as the narrator considers an architectural landmark or a street corner. For instance, wandering among the buildings of the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital complex, he recalls the hospital's function in the eighteenth century when it served as a prison for young women before they were deported to Louisiana (18). Reminiscing on his youthful connections to Dora's neighborhood, the narrator likewise remembers the menacing police presence at every intersection during the "événements d'Algérie" in 1958 (8).

As in *Dora Bruder*, the trajectories that Zara, the narrator of *53 cm*, carves through Paris are linked to multiple histories, of Parisian dwellers and "*Français de souche*," as well as travelers from many shores, distant or domestic. Navigating the landscape of the city, Zara recalls the histories of travel to which her own movements are tied, but is at the same time constantly aware of her possible deportation from France. She struggles to determine her place in relation to these histories and within French society, confronting exclusion and contending with the prospect of expulsion. Far from assuming the role of the victim, Zara asserts her cultural sensitivity (!) and superiority as a scientific expert on the Parisian natives, the savage Gauls. And yet, her physical appearance, clothes, and certain behaviors—cultural signifiers to which both she and interlocutors draw attention—render her highly visible: not an ideal state for either an anthropologist or an international student whose residency permit has lapsed. Bessora's parody

¹⁸⁶ Cooke examines the figure of the trace in her study of how Modiano melds different genres to create a "biographical fragment" for *Dora Bruder* (131).

of various kinds of travel narratives places Zara alternately in the role of the explorer, the ethnographer, and the racialized native; her narration of her experiences in Paris oscillates between asserting her position of dominance and recognizing her precarious status within “Gallic” society. Surprisingly, in spite of her condescension toward the “natives” she encounters in Paris, Zara in fact desires above all to assimilate herself to their status—to obtain the stability or “sédentarité” to which the natives are entitled.

All of these tensions are on display in Zara’s visit to the *Center des étudiants étrangers*, a bureaucratic run-in that she humorously frames as an expedition to a temple to obtain the prized talisman known in the native language of the Gauls as the *ca’t de séjou’* (“carte de séjour”). Recounting the beginnings of the expedition to a social worker, she says:

J’arrive... devant la porte du temple, centre des étudiants étrangers. Des explorateurs multicolores pénètrent la demeure sacrée un par un. D’autres sortent par une porte de service, la mine défaite : ils ont échoué aux épreuves, le talisman, ca’t de séjou’, est encore là. Je fouille Moutete, à la recherche d’un cadeau de bienvenue. J’y trouve un casque de cauri, un sachet de frites belges déshydratées, un paquet de Ricola, le bonbon suisse aux plantes, et divers instruments utiles à l’expédition. (30)

Zara narrates the episode at the Center for Foreign Students in the authoritative voice of the colonial anthropologist, adopting a primitivist discourse to describe the natives she encounters. However, her body, her clothing, and her material possessions are named and described in ways that seem to identify them as foreign or tropes of the racial Other. For instance, in her account of this initial foray into the temple, she mentions that she was wearing a barkcloth miniskirt and a blouse of woven raffia, clothing that she contrasts with her later, more culturally assimilated wardrobe of sweatshirt and jeans. She also recalls drawing a palm leaf out of her basket to fan herself in the sweltering waiting room. Zara’s authority as a “reader” of the cultural situation in the temple slips away from her as these markers of difference allow her interlocutors to perform their own reading of her identity and place in Gaul society.

Although Bessora narrates Zara’s tale in French, she italicizes certain words at various moments of her ethnographic journey, to mark them as part of the “native” lexicon, much as an anthropologist would include a word from the language of the ethnic group she or he was studying in order to more accurately explain a concept. This practice underscores Zara’s status as an expert on the Gauls and their culture. Strangely enough, however, the words are marked with diacritics to transliterate a pronunciation which does not correspond to the stereotypical Parisian accent; for instance, the r’s in *carte de séjour* are replaced with an apostrophe to show that this sound is elided. This ambiguous rendering of native speech – the language of the Gauls – contributes to a general sense that Zara’s claim to truly be an expert on the Gauls and their language is a dubious one.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, an unfamiliar word slips into this erudite anthropological discourse. She refers to her basket by using the common noun *moutete*, meaning “a sort of basket” in Mpongwè, a Gabonese language.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Of course, the elision of the r’s immediately calls to mind Frantz Fanon’s portrait of the Antillean subject who struggles to pronounce the French r—“le mythe du Martiniquais qui-mange-les-R”—in his chapter on “Le Noir et le langage” in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (16).

¹⁸⁸ In his collection of *Contes gabonais*, writer and ethnographer André Raponda Walker glossed the Mpongwè word *moutète* as “une sorte de hotte.”

Zara adopts a rather pompous and jargonistic language to narrate her quest for a residence card, which seems to confirm her framing of the trip to the Student Center temple as a scientific expedition as well as her authority as a scholar. The visit to the temple is in fact a banal errand – but at the same time, also an alarming procedure that reveals her marginalized position in French society. Zara recognizes the potential hardships of this mission to obtain access to Gaul, and yet she still positions herself as an expert on the natives and their culture, demonstrating an arrogance similar to that of colonial anthropologists, but with a difference. Ethnographic expeditions commissioned by the imperialist French state could afford to disregard any social codes regulating the communities into which they penetrated, and they frequently invaded sacred spaces to collect religious objects on behalf of ethnographic museums in France. Zara, on the other hand, does not share this privilege, but nevertheless adopts a patronizing attitude in relation to many of the people she encounters, as if oblivious of her marginalized status in French society. The social worker who is Zara’s audience is meant to assess whether or not Zara and her daughter qualify for a family allowance from the French government. She has power over Zara, and can facilitate or impede her efforts to obtain financial support from the state. And yet, during this interview, Zara speaks to the social worker in an increasingly informal mode, eventually addressing her as “tu.”

Zara’s interactions in the Student Center temple are similarly marked, on her side, by the arrogance of an anthropologist who firmly believes in her intellectual and cultural superiority. For example, upon entering the temple, she is subjected to a search by the temple’s guard, a native type called *Police*. Undaunted by this man as he rifles through her possessions, she inquires: “Cher Police, gardien du temple sacré, es-tu Eunuque? Qui est ton maître? Un Sultan gaulois?” (32). Her reading of the situation reveals her familiarity with Orientalist texts generally, but also aligns her with a long literary tradition of French writers turning the exoticizing gaze back upon themselves, for instance in Montesquieu’s *Les Lettres persanes*, written from the perspective of two Persian travelers. However it is important to note that, unlike Montesquieu, Bessora is not a native of France, just as her protagonist Zara is not a native of Gaul. And moreover, in contrast to univocal narratives in which the ethnographer imposes her or his reading of a cultural situation, in this more dialogic narrative the native informant displays some contempt towards Zara, retorting: “Ça s’appelle le ministre l’Intérieur, Mademoiselle!” (32)

Zara nevertheless continues to assert her position of authority as an explorer and an anthropologist. Having successfully passed by the Eunuch guard *Police* and penetrated to an inner sanctum, she upbraids herself for forgetting to bring the traditional goods with which to barter, or to offer to the temple’s priestesses: “*Moutete* manque cruellement des objets usuellement recommandés aux explorateurs: nulle bouteille de whisky, nulle fausse perle, pas la plus petite verroterie. Tout explorateur digne de ce nom sait combien ces babioles sont indispensables avant toute tractation en terre citadogène. Moi, Zara la gaulologue, l’exploratrice du siècle, comment ai-je pu oublier?” (31). Zara’s authority is again called into question, although in this instance, it is she herself who casts doubt on her expertise. Even as she triumphantly announces her superiority over every explorer of the century, and asserts her scholarly prowess as a *gaulologue*, she admits that she has failed to prepare on the most basic level for cultural exchanges with the natives she goes to meet. Moreover, in the midst of this exultant imperialist discourse, that foreign word, *Moutete* slips in again.

Here Zara both mocks the explorer's mode of interacting with indigenous populations and suggests her own failure to impose her authority on her object of study, hinting at her persistent status as an Other within French society. A curious aspect of her parody of those explorers who project a single mindset onto the unknown, cultural Other, is that Zara does not seem to differentiate between this attitude and that of the anthropologist, who should ostensibly be more committed to understanding the cultural specificity of a given population. However, Zara's distress over her inadequate preparations is soon shown to reveal a false understanding of Gaul culture and society. Her belief in the utility of glass beads and other such trinkets as a bargaining tool for gaining long-term access to Gaul is shown to be a miscalculation.

Zara's encounter with the temple priestess, who in our reality as readers is a bureaucrat who processes applications for residence cards, exposes not only the holes in Zara's education, but also her erroneous assumption that her intellectual authority gives her the power to successfully negotiate a place for herself in Gaul society. The temple priestess demands of Zara a sacrificial offering: her passport. Although Zara is well-versed in the order of animist symbols known as *papier*, she doesn't have a passport. Identified as the culturally hybrid, mixed-race progeny of a French-speaking Swiss mother and a Fang-speaking Gabonese father, Zara has an equally complex political identity, as she was born in Brussels. The unusual assortment of objects contained by *Moutete* represents both a confirmation of these diverse origins and a humorous questioning of scientific attempts to fix cultural difference through cataloguing artifacts. Imagining the surprised reaction of a Gaul to this wildly diverse stock of goods, Zara counters with an assertion of the equally diverse and fundamentally hybrid nature of Gaul culture: "Et vous autres ? Que font ces haricots blancs et amérindiens comme du manioc dans votre cassoulet rose et gaulois ? Synchrétisme originaire . . . Pour être blanc, le plus blanc des Gaulois n'est pas moins bâtard, pur ou impur" (30-31). The dish that Zara refers to here, cassoulet, is a traditional French stew whose origin story, relating its creation during the Hundred Years' War, plays a role in nationalist celebrations of French history. Zara here undermines the status of a nationalist symbol in a manner reminiscent of her use of the term "Gauls" to describe the "primitive" group that she studies. While the presence of these beans in a French stew is on one level a reminder of European exploitation of the Americas, on the other hand, as Zara slyly points out, it also shows that even French nationalist symbols are hybrid artifacts.

Both Zara's own identity and that of her object of study, the Gauls, are hybrid, and the fact that both identities resist classification points towards a fundamental challenge to the generally opposed figures of the anthropologist and the native group under study, or the similarly binary conception of the traveler and native. However, while the novel exposes this hybridity, the revelation does not lead to an overturning of the opposition between traveler and native, or between anthropologist and object of study. Disrupting these categories does not carry much political weight if the historical relationships of dominance remain in place.

On the one hand, Zara's failure to operate within the appropriate social and cultural codes exposes the arrogance of the ethnographer who claims to "know" and "understand" the native, but at the same time, it reveals the real precariousness of her situation. Despite her patronizing attitude towards the primitive Gauls, Zara fails to exert any real authority and is subject to both the discriminatory policies of the French state and the whims of her interlocutor in the *Centre des étudiants étrangers*, the "priestess" of bureaucracy. Zara has reinvented the French metropole as a New World, a destination for explorers and anthropologists; she has also subjected a group that has historically monopolized the gaze to a probing ethnographic study. However, she cannot change the power differential that exists between the natives of Gaul and an erudite visitor such

as herself who nevertheless has the shaky legal status of any immigrant without proper documentation.

It would seem that Zara is a perfect candidate for French citizenship, if the qualifications are successful assimilation into French culture, a concern which has been at the center of public discourses on immigration. The creation of the Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du Codéveloppement in 2007 under the Nicolas Sarkozy administration institutionalized the ties between the regulation of immigration by the state and public discourses surrounding national identity.¹⁸⁹ In August 2011, then-Ministre de l'Intérieur Claude Guéant announced that immigrants seeking to obtain a residence card must demonstrate a mastery of the French language. Zara is, by her own declaration, fluent in the only officially recognized indigenous language, “*français*,” an “idiome” that she dubs “un créole extrêmement vivace” (31).¹⁹⁰ This linguistic prowess is but one aspect of her ostensible authority on the culture and society of the Gauls. Of course, the use of diacritics to transcribe the term *ca't de séjou'* suggests that either Zara or her native informants do not have a stereotypical Parisian accent, and the recurring use of foreign terms such as “moutete,” undermine her authority. However, her linguistic competence is amply demonstrated in the majority of the narrative. That Zara is rejected by the priestess based on her lack of a passport, a political document, would seem to suggest that her exclusion is not tied to her problematically ambiguous ethnic identity, but rather is a bureaucratic issue. But is it really a problem of paperwork? Is Zara rejected because of her lack of familiarity with administrative procedures, beloved Gallic rites of passage? Or does her rejection signal some broader ideology or institutional practice among the natives?

To answer this question, we have to look more closely at another aspect of Zara's scientific method. As we have seen, Zara's expedition to the *Centre des étudiants étrangers* provides her with an opportunity to conduct research in the field. In addition to demonstrating her scholarly interest in cataloguing cultural practices, Zara carefully documents her encounters with the Gauls by referring to a series of elaborate racial codes. In a parody of the racial taxonomy designed by the infamous anti-Semitic anthropologist and Nazi collaborator Georges Montandon, Zara attempts to identify each and every person with whom she interacts according to ethnicity, sexuality, linguistic group, type of facial hair, etc. Ironically adopting the tone and parroting the racial theories of French naturalists and anthropologists from her position as a Gaulologist, Zara recalls the obsessive attention to racial categories throughout French history. The measurement that gives the book its title, *53 cm*, corresponds to the circumference of her buttocks, and is a reference to Cuvier's theory that a woman's race is recognizable from this measurement.¹⁹¹ The constant intrusion of this anthropological voice suggests that the definition of French national identity and the regulation of access to France continue to be influenced by Montandon's racial theories. And indeed Zara explicitly calls attention to the ties between the contemporary obsession with identity papers and histories of exclusion in France through a parodic recital of the life story of the *ca't d'identité gauloise*:

¹⁸⁹ See Thomas 59-88 for an excellent overview of the debates and policies regarding national identity and immigration fostered by the Sarkozy administration (2007-12), whose tenure in office witnessed a rapid escalation of xenophobic and racist discourses.

¹⁹⁰ She points to her study of this language in school as the source of her proficiency, but it is also part of the cultural heritage from her French-speaking Swiss mother (28).

¹⁹¹ On the history and legacy of Saartje Baartman's exhibition in England and France, her autopsy by Cuvier, and the eventual repatriation of her remains, see Fausto-Sterling; Gilman; Mitchell (“Another Means of Understanding the Gaze”); Magubane; Qureshi; and Sharpley-Whiting.

Mais le signe absolument absolu d'intégration intégralement totale à la tribu est la *ca't d'identité gauloise*. . . . La *ca't d'identité gauloise* est originaire d'un village fasciste appelé *Vichy*. Née le 27 octobre 1940, de mère inconnue et de père Pétain, elle permettait de repérer des barbares qui avaient pour signe particulier d'être *juifs*. Pétain, l'heureux papa de *ca't d'identité gauloise*, s'était inspiré d'un autre bébé gaulois, né en 1917 : la *ca't d'identité pou' ét'angers* destinée à la surveillance des barbares indignes de la République qui, depuis le 2 octobre 1888, étaient obligés de déclarer leur identité en se soumettant à des examens anthropométriques, le *bertillonnage*. . . . Aujourd'hui, l'OMI ne procède plus à un examen *anthropométrique*, mais à un examen *sanitaire* : même si vous avez une épaule plus basse que l'autre, elle ne peut pas vous refouler. (50)

In tracing the genealogy of the *ca't de séjou'*, Zara aligns her experiences interacting with the representatives of the French state—the priestess, the doctor at the OMI—with those of other marginalized subjects going back over a century. She links the xenophobia and racism that shape late-twentieth-century immigration policy to the anti-Semitism of Vichy-era France, but stops short of comparing the threatened expulsion of undocumented immigrants from France to the deportation of Jews to extermination camps during the Nazi occupation.

On one level, Zara's ethnographic pastiche is part of the broader parody of imperialist ways of seeing the world. But the minute application of Montandon's "scientific" principles, which should theoretically create a rigid hierarchy of races, instead produces a portrait of the Gauls as an extremely heterogeneous population, from the Eunuch and priestesses in this encounter, to people at the market or the gym. The full weight of Bessora's parody and its implications for a reconceptualization of travel becomes clear as we examine this heterogeneity, which appears to signal forms of hybridity whose genealogies have deeper roots than is recognized by hysterical discourses of cultural contamination brought on by mass immigration. The opposition between Zara the traveler and the Gallic natives is broken down by the fact that transnational and transcultural subjects like Zara are already present among the Gauls. Far from being an "intact space," Paris emerges as a site with a long history of encounters between individuals and cultures. Perhaps the diacritics on words like *ca't de séjou'* or *act' de naissance* are a reflection of a diversity of Parisian accents within Paris, and not necessarily a transliteration of Zara's own speech. Moreover, Zara's frequent allusions to the travel practices of the Age of Exploration allow her to remind us that these encounters have been taking place for a long time, that the Empire has not only just begun striking back, but has infiltrated venerated French traditions such as cuisine.

53 cm suggests a revision of Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone." Pratt argues for a subversive dimension of cultural encounters between travelers and natives—namely, that the meeting between these figures creates a zone of cultural exchange. Contrary to the idea frequently expressed in colonial as well as postcolonial discussions of imperialist travel, the native does not passively absorb the culture of the traveler; rather, both parties exert pressure on one other, resulting in multiple cultural transformations from this point of contact (7). It is in relation to this fundamental element of exchange that Pratt asserts indigenous agency. In *53 cm*, the native population does indeed push back against the cultural influence and assumptions of the traveler, for instance when Police the Eunuch guard corrects Zara's notion of a Gaul Sultan. But Zara, the traveler, is also shaped by her cultural encounters, adapting quickly to various cultural practices—her very survival in the metropolitan capital relies on such adaptability. And yet, in

spite of her self-proclaimed expertise on the cultural codes operative in the sacred bureaucratic spaces of the Center for Foreign Students, Zara's first expedition is a failure. Unable to produce the appropriate identity documents, Zara is denied the talisman she seeks: as she says, it is the priestess who has the power and lays down the law.

And yet, even as it narrates a failed quest, *53 cm* offers a solution to the catch-22 that emerges from postcolonial discourses of travel. The novel does not simply propose to place the postcolonial subject in the position of the imperial traveler. Rather, it presents us with a travelling subject who is acutely aware of how her own voyage is located within a long lineage of imperialist and post-imperialist travel. While Zara participates in a sort of reverse exoticism by placing the Gauls in the role of the natives, this turning back of the imperial gaze does not lead to an inversion of the power dynamic that exists between politically and socially marginalized postcolonial subjects and representatives of the ostensibly post-imperial state. The state is still in a position to deny access to the rigidly policed spaces of France. We are never allowed to forget that Zara's itineraries within the metropolitan capital are shaped by the political and cultural legacy of imperialism. By telling this "travel story" in a parodic mode, Bessora is able to simultaneously engage with discourses of French imperialism, racist ideologies, and the genre of travel literature. Such a richly layered narrative structure seems to answer hooks's call to recognize the ways in which some "travel stories" tend to marginalize other experiences of travel. The novel is both riotously funny, and a disquieting articulation of an experience of travel marked by fear.¹⁹²

Moreover, *53 cm* offers a radical revision to the opposition between the traveler and the passive, sedentary native. Parodying the rigid hierarchies and categories established by pseudo-scientific theories of race, *53 cm* frames travel as a series of encounters between subjects whose identities are already hybrid and between cultures that are already plural. Not only is Paris presented as a site of travel, but this evocation of a decidedly *not* intact space suggests a reconceptualization of the city as a location of shifting cultures. These texts suggest new modes of travel, such as circulation in urban and suburban spaces: modes offering an alternative to still-dominant conceptions of travel in contemporary literary-cultural debates, which hold on to a notion of travel as a practice that necessarily entails leaving France for a distant shore.

One of the most interesting moments of overlap in the representations of Paris that emerge from *Dora Bruder* and *53 cm* is found in the narrators' experiences of extreme alterity and disorientation when confronted with institutions charged with regulating history, restricting access and conditioning mobility. The spaces dominated by these institutions are the site of strange encounters with agents of normalcy, whether administrators or police forces. When Modiano's narrator attempts to penetrate the inner sanctum of the Palais de Justice in search of Dora's birth certificate, he is denied immediate access to the building by a guard, and told to wait in the long line of tourists who are likewise attempting to gain access. In a lexical choice reminiscent of Zara's evocation of *Police*, the Eunuch guard of the *centre des étudiants étrangers*, Modiano's narrator refers to the various guards he meets as "sentries," and wonders if a certain administrative official is "l'une de ces sentinelles de l'oubli chargées de garder un secret honteux, et d'interdire à ceux qui le voulaient de retrouver la moindre trace de l'existence de quelqu'un" (16). Confronted with what he perceives as symbols of France's collective will to forget a history of collaboration and racial exclusion, the narrator describes his banal trip to the

¹⁹² Continuing her response to Clifford's essay "Notes on Theory and Travel," hooks observed that "it is crucial that we recognize that the hegemony of one experience of travel can make it impossible to articulate another experience or for it to be heard" (174).

archives in terms of strangeness and alienation: security guards become sentinels and administrative buildings become labyrinths. In both texts, even the most mundane errands present an occasion to rewrite narratives of the city, to call attention to the ways in which the concept of French national identity is connected to the regulation of the spaces of Paris and to evoke histories and lived experiences of exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization.

Afterword

This dissertation opens with a consideration of a dramatic traversal of space—a tour around the world, in fact. The visitor to the 1931 Colonial Exposition was able to pass from the number 8 metro line through the magic portal of the Porte Dorée and set foot on far-off shores. Contemplating the architectural (and technological) wonders of the Angkor Wat reproduction in the Indochina section, he could imagine himself transported to the Cambodian jungle amidst the ruins of the Khmer Empire. At night, the nubile dancers of the Royal Khmer ballet performing against this marvelous backdrop stoked the erotic interest of the Exposition’s “travelers” and seemed to resurrect this defunct civilization—but to the greater glory of the Khmers’ successor, the French Empire. Strolling just a little further down the Grande Avenue des Colonies Françaises, the visitor could gaze upon majestic yet “savage” architecture of the French West Africa pavilion, modeled on fortified cities like Segou and Jenne. The itinerary of the “Tour du monde” brought the visitor into contact with a plethora of diverse cultures, from the mysterious grandeur of Angkor Wat to the alluring primitivism of the West African *tata* to the curiosities of French Equatorial Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, and beyond... all without ever leaving the fairgrounds in the Bois de Vincennes. The journey from the Porte Dorée to “French West Africa” was less than a mile. A group of colonized subjects who embarked at Cotonou (in present-day Benin) in April 1931 traveled over 5000 miles to play the role of “indigènes” at the Exposition.¹⁹³

The staging of a tour around the world—and the accounts of this voyage written for newspapers and guidebooks—was essential to the rhetorical project of the Exposition. The organizers hoped to remind the French that they were a race of travelers, to kindle a passion for the Empire’s “elsewhere”—but also, paradoxically, to entice France’s citizens to settle down in these far-off places: to swap the “ici” for the “ailleurs.” Moreover, the illusion of geographical displacement was crucial for maintaining distinctions between colonized populations and metropolitan subjects; encounters between the *animateurs* and fairgoers were necessarily framed as taking place elsewhere. What is perhaps most significant for my study here, however, is the fact that the success of the simulated “Tour du monde” was contingent upon the erasure of the *animateurs*’ voyage to the metropole.

The 1931 Exposition Coloniale reveals the extent to which certain experiences of travel—and the subsequent textualization of the voyage by the *écrivain-voyageur*¹⁹⁴—rely upon the elision of other peoples’ experiences of travel and spatial practices. Thus my exploration of the journeys of the Traoré sons—students, soldiers, exiles—in Maryse Condé’s *Ségou*, as well as of the “voyages à l’envers” undertaken by Rachid Boudjedra’s unnamed emigrant or Bessora’s Zara, is in part concerned with inscribing these travelers’ geographical displacements into a conceptual field of travel alongside Lacarrière’s privileged “voyage au ralenti, flânerie, musardise” (106). However, articulating alternative forms of travel through a recognition of these non-traditional travelers’ movement through space does not pose an adequate challenge to the exclusionary models found in the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* essays or at the 1931

¹⁹³ Letter from the Lieutenant Gouverneur du Dahomey, Colonie du Dahomey, Gouvernement Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française to Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Direction des Affaires Politiques – 1er Bureau. Service de Contrôle et d’Assistance (CAI). Appended list of “Indigènes à destination de la Métropole.” 7 April 1931 (stamped arrived 26 April 1931). SLOTFOM III, carton 3.

¹⁹⁴ Lacarrière explicitly identifies the *écrivain-voyageur*—a figure that appears in several of the *Pour une littérature voyageuse* essays—as his ideal traveler; this is the identity he himself assumes as a “bernard-l’hermite planétaire” (107).

Exposition Coloniale: travel is still defined on their terms. A truly radical approach to thinking about travel necessarily involves considering the historical circumstances in which the voyage is undertaken, how the voyage fits into a lineage of other kinds of travel—imperialist and otherwise, and how the literary account or *mise en scène* (at the Exposition) of the voyage relates to other representations of travel.

My reading of texts as different as André Malraux's *La voie royale* and Georges Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* is structured by this attention to history. How can we understand Perec's hostility toward tourists without taking into account the ways in which sites of memory and of everyday life were under attack by the forces of urban renewal in the late 1960s-early 1970s and beyond? This historiographical approach is equally if not more important when considering texts whose travelers seek to erase not only history, but the very passage of time from the spaces of travel. Far from the Bois de Vincennes, in the actual Cambodian jungle, Malraux's protagonist Claude Vanneec struggles to sustain the illusion of separation from the decadence of his generation—those legions of insipid men. The passage to Indochina—a dramatic geographic displacement—fails to support a sense of distance and difference even on the very edges of empire. Just as his sense of superiority vis-à-vis his male Cambodian counterparts is founded on a denial of their coevalness, Claude's attempts to insert himself into an extinct lineage of *broussards* are predicated upon a rejection of time's passage: he refuses to acknowledge that history may catch up with him even in the seemingly primordial spaces of the jungle. The failure of Claude's fantasies must be understood in relation to the specific historical moment in which his journey takes place: namely, during the rapid expansion of the French colonial presence in Indochina.

My approach to analyzing the historical dimensions of travel takes on different forms depending on the nature of the texts. Some of the works that I study are explicitly concerned with history—for instance, Condé's *Ségou*. Examining the relationship between the novel's historiographical preoccupations and its representation of various kinds of travel illuminates the stakes of certain characters' refusal to acknowledge the passage of time. Through its depiction of how the cultural and social life of various West Africa metropolises shifts over time, *Ségou* suggests the historicizing function of travel. The denial of temporality expressed by some of the characters—a leitmotiv in this historical novel—can be traced across genres to other texts. Malobali's longing for cultural purity; the perpetuation of archaic exoticisms at the Exposition; Claude Vanneec's lament for the Conquest era; Parisian metro passengers' intertwined visions of a mythical *France profonde* and a neo-colonial tropical paradise (*Topographie*): many of the travelers in the works studied here are afflicted by a sense of belatedness. However, in spite of the textual space they devote to such ahistorical fantasies, many of these same works in fact call attention to the extent of their incompatibility with the historical era in which the travel takes place. Claude's failure to resurrect the Conquest era is central to the philosophical quandaries of *La voie royale*; the metro passengers' yearning to escape to the island of Djerba is engendered by the anesthetizing qualities of their humdrum existence.

Texts like Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder*, Perec's *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*, and Bessora's *53 cm* explicitly tie displacement in space to the passage of time. For Modiano, walking through Paris is a means to restore history; narrating his horizontal movement across the city's surface allows him to reinscribe Dora's life in the city—both banal itineraries and the impulsive *fugue* of an adolescent—into history and onto his cartography of Paris. Perec's observation of touristic voyages through Paris in his inventory of daily life in the Place Saint-Sulpice evokes the shock of alterity in a literary exercise devoted to the ordinary. This encounter

between tourist and native hints at the ways in which a project of such short duration is bound up in historical phenomena on a grander scale and of longer duration.

Having circumnavigated the globe more than once, I will close this dissertation with another glance at Zara's self-identification with the historical personage Pocahontas in *53 cm*. The comparison between Zara's journey to Paris and Pocahontas's voyage to England hundreds of years prior operates on multiple levels: it allows Zara to inscribe herself into a lineage of travelers—more specifically, a lineage of racialized, gendered, and sexualized subjects whose presence in the metropole renders them highly visible. It vindicates Zara's geographical displacement to Paris *as* travel. This moment is a mere prologue to the autobiographical sketch Zara offers to the social worker who may help her to regularize her living situation in France; even as she seeks to establish residency in a foreign land, she persists in asserting her status as a traveler. She resists the framework through which Urbain reads the relationship between the Euro-American and his others; although she is attempting to swap one "sédentarité" for another, she refuses the position of the exile (Urbain 16)—but appropriates multiple other identities. She declares herself an explorer and an ethnologist—people whose spatial practices are excluded from Lacarrière's vision of the traveler (although embraced by other representative figures of "littérature voyageuse"). Nevertheless, as the narrator of her own travel experiences, she is also an *écrivain-voyageur*, whose mode of travel is "le seul qui vaille" (Lacarrière 106).

Unlike the *écrivain-voyageur* of Lacarrière's ideal, however, in narrating her voyage to Paris and experiences there, Zara is equally preoccupied by the history of such voyages, the politically charged cultural encounters to which they give rise, and the power relations that they engender. As the relationship between the historical figures of the Euro-American traveler and the non-European native continues to be reconsidered and recast in new guises, Zara's experiences cast light on the problems inherent in simply replacing the historical binaries of colonizer and colonized, French and Francophone, with the universalist term—*littérature-monde*—proposed in the 2007 manifesto.

In *53 cm*, Zara's status as a world traveler—Lacarrière's "bernard-l'hermite planétaire"—is denied by many of the people she encounters: she can only ever be an *indigène sédentaire*—but one who belongs *ailleurs*. The denial of her status as a traveler is intimately tied to the refusal to grant her the sought-after *ca't de séjou'*, as both pose a challenge to fixed notions of French identity. A concept like *littérature-monde* absolves cultural theorists from the need to think about what French identity might mean in a world of ever more mobile travelers—global citizens—and ever more rigid national borders. The *mise en question* of the traveler involves a consideration of the political stakes of excluding certain subjects from the role of the traveler, in the past, present, and future. Questions of travel are necessarily questions of history as well.

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