Us and Them

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART THREE: *JE SUIS AUTRE* /**I IS NEITHER THIS NOR THAT**

SPECIAL SECTION: Student Essay

Introduction

ABBES MAAZAOUI
Editor

The refugee crisis in Europe and the widespread anti-immigrant sentiment in western democracies have put the issue of otherness on the front burner. In response to what some have dubbed "twenty-first century problem," studies on foreignness have increased considerably. This special volume contributes to the understanding of this debate, by examining various aspects of the reality and representation of foreignness in the humanities.[1]

 The articles are grouped into three sections. In part I, "A Country of One's Own," three authors deal with the issue of assimilation and conversion as experienced by three women. **Marilyn Button** explores Frances Milton Trollope's experience of social ostracism and prejudices in her personal and professional life as both a woman and a traveling writer. **Bernadette McNary-Zak** examines how Dorothy Day identifies and reframes alienation in her adopted religious worldview within a socialist framework. **Abeer Aloush** addresses the case of identity construction of Jewish Egyptian singer and actress Layla Murad during the reign of President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

 In part II, "On the Margins," five authors analyze what the Algerian writer Y.B. calls the "intranger[s]"[2], those who are excluded in their own country. **Julius Bongkorog** analyses historic cases of categorization in the Victoria

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[1] Some of the articles featured in this issue, including those by Marilyn D. Button, Abeer Aloush, William J. Donohue, and Tessa Gray were part of an international conference organized at Lincoln University, April 1, 2017, on "Making Strangers." Those by Julius Bongkorog, Jennifer Boum Make, Eïmma Chebinou, Shaun D. Friday, Edward Egbo Imo, Bernadette Mcnary-Zak, and Mark Edwin Peterson are original contributions.

[2] Cited in Edwige Tamalet Talbayev (245).

Division of the British Southern Cameroons from 1916 to 1961 and their purpose of subjecting particular regions and groups to multiple layers of strangeness. **Edward Egbo Imo** uses the example of absurdity in Ola Rotimi's *Holding Talks* to illustrate the metaphysical anguish and psychological trauma that alienate a section of Nigerian society. **Shaun Friday** affirms Longfellow's relevance and modernity in today's society's and reevaluates his faith-fueled advocacy for victims of colonial power across ethnic, religious, and gender boundaries. In his article "Footnotes and Dictators," **Mark Edwin Peterson** shows how marginalization is literally inscribed in the structure of the book as demonstrated by the examples of Chicano authors, Junot Diaz and Salvador Plascencia. **William J. Donohue** compares the experience of minority students in composition classes to the marginalization of Meursault in *The Stranger* of Albert Camus.

The third section, titled "*Je suis autre*/I Is Neither This Nor That*,"* continues with the motif of the "intrangers," and discusses more specifically post-colonial alienation in contemporary France. The first author, **Mina Apic,** examines in *Les désorientés* d'Amin Maalouf, the predicament of feeling alienated from one's own identity and culture, and the struggle to reconcile the ideal of cosmopolitism with the duty of loyalty to one's own country of origin. **Jennifer Boum Make** traces the cross-cultural transfers prompted by the main character's relocation from the Antilles to France in Gisèle Pineau's *Exile According to Julia*. **Abeer Aloush** analyzes, in Leila Sebbar's *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique,* the collective trauma and the spatial dispossession of the *beur* or French-born youth whose parents or grands-parents are immigrants from North Africa. The *beur*'s experience of alienation and revolt is also the subject of **Eïmma Chebinou**'s essay on French cinema and specifically *La Haine* (hate) and *La Désintégration,* which highlight the correlation between failure of integration, identity crisis and religious radicalization.

The last section, "Student Essay," gives voice to an undergraduate rising scholar, **Tessa Gray**, who discusses the ways in which the United States creates and enforces its "exclusivity" by marginalizing non-whites.

It is hoped that this volume, which coincides with the 75th anniversary of Albert Camus' famous novel, *The Stranger,* contributes to more understanding of the plight of those excluded, marginalized, and categorized as "not one of us".

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PART ONE

A COUNTRY OF ONE'S OWN

Making and Unmaking Strangers:
Frances Milton Trollope and the Power of Inclusion

MARILYN D. BUTTON
Lincoln University, Pennsylvania

Introduction

Ancient cemeteries often tell us much about the lives of those interred in their graves. For example, outside of the city walls of Florence, Italy, in the Piazza Donatello, lies the Protestant Cemetery, also known as the English or the Non-Catholic Cemetery, and sometimes even "the Stranger's Cemetery." It is the resting place of Protestants, agnostics and atheists—all those who, for whatever reason, did not in their lifetime embrace the Catholic faith. They include a coterie of like-minded nineteenth century literati and friends, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the transcendentalist Theodore Parker, Frances Milton Trollope, and members of her extended family.[3]

Similarly, further south, by the ancient pyramid of Cestius, lies the Protestant Cemetery of Rome, a beautiful garden graced by the elaborate Victorian graves of English Romantic poets John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, American writer Richard Henry Dana, Italian Marxist and nationalist Antonio Gramsci, and African American entrepreneur Sarah Parker Remond. These accomplished men and women shared at least one thing in common: they were not Catholics, and the location of their gravesites was determined accordingly.

A different experience of community is evident in the cemeteries outside the Quaker meeting houses of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Parallel to the tombstones of local

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[3] Harry Mount brings the history of this cemetery up to date in an informative article from the *Spectator*, citing Frances Milton Trollope among the many prominent literati buried there.

residents known to be abolitionists, lie those of former slaves. Although unmarked, their presence nevertheless signals the Quaker belief that all men and women are equal in the sight of God.

Together, these burial grounds highlight one way in which communities have historically addressed differences of ideology and religion that have existed among its residents. The recognition in death of the historic split between Catholics and Protestants hints at other equally divisive factors that afflict communities in the heat of daily living, including politics, gender and class. This paper will explore the resolution of these issues in the life of Frances Milton Trollope (1779-1863), an intrepid English entrepreneur, novelist and travel writer, whose international adventures thrust her into a world in which her "differences," which were at first painful and isolating, became a source of wealth, creativity, and personal enrichment. Her personal credo, penned in a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, enabled her to survive the pressures of alienation as well as to celebrate the triumphs of inclusion: "*Allez toujours [*always keep moving]," she advised, "is what those who know the world best always say to the happy ones of the earth, who are sailing before the wind. *Allez toujours a*nd you will reach a station which no woman has ever reached before" (Trollope, *Letter* 164).

Social ostracism was common to many 19th century women, who longed for greater inclusion into the professional, educational, and civic life of their times. In 1832, the date of Mrs. Trollope's first literary publication, women had only just begun to implement the revolutionary ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft as they sought to create lives beyond the domestic sphere. Mrs. Trollope was among those who moved successfully from loving mother and wife to international pilgrim, professional travel writer and novelist. In so doing, she embraced a new personal paradigm: instead of a culturally defined life of female docility, she identified with the pilgrim and adventurer of the Biblical and classical traditions which had informed her education and shaped her culture.

Biblical/Classical Models for the Stranger

Contemporary philosopher and essayist Elie Wiesel traces the Judaic notion of the stranger to the Old Testament character of Abraham whose identity was not tied to a location, but rather to a covenantal relationship to God and to the social dynamics implied by that covenant. As an archetype, Abraham's status as stranger and foreigner emerged from his immigrant status, having moved from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran, where he lived expectantly for possession of his own land.[4] Wiesel extends this notion of stranger to include all humanity, observing that "Man, by definition, is born a stranger: . . . he is thrust into an alien world which existed before him—a world which didn't need him. And which will survive him" (Wiesel 53). Abraham's experience is replicated in the New Testament, in which conversion symbolizes the shift from stranger to rightful resident. Writing to the fledgling church in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul described it thus: "So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God," eligible to inherit, with their Old Testament forebears, the full rights of citizenship in a country fully obtainable only in death (*The Bible*, Eph. 2:19). Because of the inherent difficulties of being a foreigner or stranger, both Jewish law and Christian character urged sympathetic treatment of any sojourner who embraced the moral principles of the Mosaic Law. The benefits of such inclusion were amply demonstrated in the life of Ruth, the Moabite, who by adopting the God of Israel, became central to the Jewish genealogy of Christ. Equally dramatic is the example of Lot's angel visitors, whom he insists on welcoming into his own home. These heavenly messengers protect Lot and his family from wicked townspeople, and ensure their escape from the burning sulpher that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Similarly, the Apostle Paul, once converted, though disbarred from formal leadership in the synagogue, is welcomed as the intellectual

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[4] The Abrahamic covenant included the promise of a land to be inherited by Abraham and his descendants, thus implying a wide range of family and community relationships. See *Genesis* 12:1-2 in *The Holy Bible,* Revised Standard Version.

leader and pastoral guide of those thousands who adopted the new religion. The Judeo-Christian tradition recognizes that being a stranger makes considerable psychological and emotional demands on an individual, but at the same time, provides innumerable possibilities that can be developed in the context of a reformulated community.

Homer created another archetypal wanderer, Odysseus, in the Hellenic tradition developed at least 1000 years after Abraham. In his legendary journey home from Troy, Odysseus confronts a wide array of human and mythical beings who either aid or abet his destiny. The ancient Hellenic civic code of *xenia* governed the dynamic of these relationships. Under the guidelines of this concept, which emphasized hospitality and appropriate treatment of strangers, the host was obligated to welcome the wanderer: to offer without question food, drink, and a bath without question. When the satisfied sojourner was ready to leave, the host offered another gift as a gesture of continued good will. In return, the guest was expected to be tactful, entertaining, respectful of cultural traditions, and equally generous with gifts. Terrible punishment awaited the person who failed to honor the principles of *xenia*, since, according to Greek tradition, any stranger could be a god in disguise. For this reason, King Alcinous treats Odysseus to a lavish banquet and sends him off with the gift of the winds; conversely, Odysseus becomes the object of Poseidon's wrath because he blinds the eyes of his host, the Cyclops.[5] It has been argued that the entire Trojan War resulted from Paris' abuse of *xenia*, in his abduction of Helen from the home of Menelaus.

Five centuries later in the *Metamorphoses*, the Roman poet, Ovid, tells the Greek myth of Lycaon, the wicked host who insults his guest (Zeus in disguise) by offering up the boiled flesh of his own son for a meal.[6] His punishment is to be transformed into a wolf—an apt reflection of his true character. Even in real life, the ultimate punishment among the Greco-Romans for violating the

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[5] In his discussion of Euripides' *Electra*, Verheij suggests that the Homeric concept of *xenia* in the *Odyssey* is foundational to Greek culture and undergirds parallel passages in subsequent Greek tragedy.
[6] See Ovid, Book I, *The Metamorphoses*.

concept of *xenia* was exile. For example, Ovid was exiled from Rome for polluting the mores of Augustus' Empire. Oedipus Rex chose exile as the ultimate punishment after learning of his terrible past. A millennium later, Dante was exiled from his beloved Florence on political charges—an agony which undoubtedly contributed to his vivid depictions of suffering in "the Inferno."[7]

Historical Contributions to the Stranger Motif

The cultural traditions of the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman worlds carried within them predictable and contradictory impulses as they related to the stranger. A significant landmark in history, one that created a community of aliens, emerged in the development of the Jewish diaspora in 70 C.E. following the conquest of Jerusalem by Roman Emperors Titus and Vespasian. No longer a powerful national force, Jews grew into a dislocated people, to the extent that during the Middle Ages, the "wandering Jew" became a trope for the outsider.

  The Protestant Reformation similarly challenged the dynamics of the stranger's experience as it witnessed vast migrations of non-conformists and Roman Catholics from one place to another, searching for a safe space in which to practice their faith traditions. Whereas the Inquisition restricted freedom of personal and cultural expression, Calvin's Geneva earned a reputation among dissidents for toleration because of civic policies which skillfully integrated refugees into the mainstream of its economic and religious life. Thus, this long historical tradition of the pilgrim-stranger, well known to the European elite and middle classes, shaped identities in unique ways. This was particularly evident from the fifteenth century forward, as growing interest in the scholarship of the Bible and the cultural traditions of Greece and Rome gained strength in the educational and intellectual lives of the masses.

  Thus, to be a stranger—a foreigner—an outsider—was to be vulnerable, and usually in need of help. Overcoming alien status often required the recreation of a new, culturally

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[7] Dante's revenge on personal and political enemies in the form of retributive punishments pervades the *Inferno.*

diverse people according to negotiated political and cultural guidelines on both sides. This process of assimilation tested both the dominant culture's willingness to accept outsiders and the foreigner's ability to embrace change.

Mrs. Frances Trollope as Stranger

Mrs. Trollope would have been familiar with these literary and historical precedents because of her education as an upper middle class Victorian woman. She was exposed to Biblical and classical texts in her father's library and engaged in debate about contemporary politics with her family and friends. However, she may not have been aware that the same challenges facing Abraham—social exclusion, delayed fulfillment, frequent uprooting—would be her lot in life as well.

The issue of cultural adaptation first emerged in Mrs. Trollope's life when, in her mid-fifties, she embarked on a vessel bound for the United States intending to raise funds for her bankrupt family. Born to a conservative middle class family outside of London, married to an ineffectual lawyer whose scholarly work on a theological dictionary proceeded no further than the 'd's, she was forced to leave comfortable circumstances when the family income could no longer support life in London. Her destination was Nashoba, Tennessee, where she planned to join her radical friend Frances Wright in an experimental community designed to educate free Blacks.[8] She traveled with the reluctant assent of her husband and in the company of two daughters, her son Henry, and a French artist and protégé Auguste Hervieu, but stayed only ten days in the damp swamps of the American South. Nashoba proved far too rural for a woman used to the vigor of city life, and Trollope's unrealistic expectations of the living conditions rendered Wright's radical experiment untenable. Trollope and her entourage migrated north to Cincinnati, "the metropolis of the West" where she embarked, in partnership with the Western

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[8] Susan Kissel suggests that in this female partnership, the terms "conservative" and "radical" lose their distinction as both women shared a common vision for gender and racial integration and argued for women's rights, industrial reform, and abolition.

Museum of Cincinnati, on new money making ventures, each of which reflected not only her goal of fundraising, but also her imaginative and informed creativity.[9] Although the success of her Cincinnati efforts was inadequate to sustain long-term commitment to life in the New World, it provided her with ample material for journaling. So, penniless but prepared for her next adventure (publishing), Mrs. Trollope returned to the east coast for the return journey home to England. Perhaps at this point, she had learned the great lesson of life that she had coveted for her husband: "the lesson of yielding" to the vicissitudes of life (Heinemann 37).

Mrs. Trollope never even tried to assimilate to a new culture; the unpleasantness of American folkways and her distaste for the American people rendered the thought untenable. She later observed: "The squalid look of the miserable wives and children of the men was dreadful; and often as the spectacle was renewed, I could never look at it with indifference" (Trollope, *Domestic Manners* 17). What she did do, however, was to use her unusual experience in the States to lay the foundations for future professional success.

Inspired by the many travel writers of the 19th century, Trollope published her notes on the new nation in a travel journal entitled *Domestic Manners of the Americans (1832)*. Her book was full of scathing remarks about the American West; her social commentary attacked slavery, women's position in society, and the bad manners of American men. She also rued the absence in the United States of an historical culture parallel to that with which she was familiar. Her harsh words, though probably justified, reflected antipathy toward an entire culture but they won her a broad

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[9] A classical education and strong literary background can account for much of Mrs. Trollope's success at the bazaar. The first of her ventures, "The Invisible Girl" consisted of private room decorated to evoke ancient Egyptian civilization, from which a mysterious voice (her son's) answered questions from curious public. A second exhibit attracted admission paying visitors by a series of lurid wax scenes from Dante's "Inferno," designed by a young sculptor, Hiram Powers. Although Mrs. Trollope later disowned responsibility for these attractions, her ability to recognize, and take advantage of, popular tastes accounts for much of the success of her professional life.

reading audience. She shocked her audiences in order to access their pocketbooks.[10]

The Challenge of Critical and Social Ostracism

Domestic Manners drew immediate public attention, and thrust her into the precarious position of being scrutinized by editors and vilified in public for her caustic commentary about American life. Trollope's poverty first, but now more importantly her words—unsympathetic to her American cousins—earned her the epithet of 'that gossiping woman,' while her denunciation of the subservient lives of American women and the vulgar habits of cigar smoking American men placed her soundly in the camp of unpopular, shrewish bluestocking women. One critic wrote, "No author of the present day has been at once so much read, so much admired and so much abused" (*The New Monthly Magazine* 417). Even her most sympathetic biographer, Michael Sadleir, describes the reaction to her work as "violent" (102). Overnight, she became celebrated but socially ostracized.

No longer just a barrister's wife, and now an outspoken feminist social critic, Mrs. Trollope must have felt alienated from the polite society in which she grew up. But she had also identified a blueprint for the future that she used for the next forty years of her life. She proceeded to pursue it with vigor, through extensive European travel, notetaking and publishing, the pursuit of personal roots, and most importantly, the creation of community.

Disciplined writing habits contributed to her professional journey. In twenty-four years of consistent literary output, fueled by the illnesses of husband and children, she published over forty books, including six travel journals, thirty-four novels, two long narrative poems, and several anti-evangelical verse dramas. Her novels consistently provoked controversial responses as she addressed the most pressing social causes of her day,

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[10] Helen Heineman suggests that the Cincinnati bazaar displays as well as this first of many publications were the result of Trollope's "determination to give the public what it wanted" (Angels 187). What could be seen as a journalistic compromise, however, was partly the result of personal temperament and the need to raise money to support a large family.

including the abuses of factory life, the failure of the English poor laws, slavery, and the hypocrisy of the established church and the rights of women.[11] In fact, most of Trollope's novels include strong female characters. As a result, Michael Sadleir notes that her productivity was such that between 1836 and 1859, her readership began to depend on her regular annual contributions to periodicals (90).[12]

Mrs. Trollope's travels were funded by generous publishing advances. Appreciative of the success of her first work, Bentley & Sons, Treacher & Whitaker, and John Murray sent her off on excursions that lasted from 2 to 10 months, and resulted in 2-3 volume travel journals. Over a ten-year period, Trollope wrote the next four travel journals: *Belgium and West Germany in 1833* (1836); *Paris and the Parisians in 1835* (1836); *Vienna and the Austrians* (1838)) and *A Visit to Italy* (1842). By these and related publications, she escaped the scrutiny of life in London and succeeded in paying the family bills incurred by her husband's legal practice and three tubercular children.

Extended travel, however, aggravated the rootlessness that came from the death of her husband in 1835 and from relationships that had been jarred by her caustic analyses of American and European culture. Only when she went to Italy—still a popular stop on the Grand Tour, the site of the revival of classical learning, and the favored destination of her literary hero and namesake, John Milton, did she find a place where she felt she could again call home. Supported by an advance in 1841 from her publisher and friend Richard Bentley, she embarked upon a three month tour of Tuscany, which began with an exhilarating trip across the northern Italian Alps and included a visit to Vallombrosa, a favored mountain retreat of the European travelers in the Apennines,

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[11] Specifically, *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1839) is set in Manchester's factories. *Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day* (1843) explores the negative effects of the English poor laws, especially on women, and *The Blue Belles of England* (1842) mocks the fashionable literary world of London. *The Refugee in America* (1832) and *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw: or Scenes on the Mississippi* 1836) describe the abuses of American slavery.

[12] Michael Wheeler elevates Trollope's work to the mainstream of 19th century social-problem novelists (Wheeler 19).

known for its natural beauty and the somber gothic atmosphere of its abbey.[13] Trollope's love for this location, the leisured life of the Italians, the southern clime, and the beauty of the landscape urged a ten month extension to this visit which was cut short by an abrupt return to England, necessitated by the illness and death of her daughter Catherine.

Grieving, troubled by memory of better days in London, and still in need of funds, Mrs. Trollope returned to Italy in 1843, and identified Florence as her final destination. The process of putting down roots there did not happen immediately and may not have even happened completely. It took these two trips to transition gradually from stranger and alien, to loved and respected resident of Florence. How did this transition take place?

Finding Community in Florence, Italy

The final achievement of Trollope's life was made possible with the support of family and friends, starting with Bentley's provision of enough money to cross the Channel, and her own deliberate cultivation of an artistic community in her lavish home at the Villino Trollope located at the Piazza Indipendenza—her third and final residence in Florence. Here, she drew around her all that was brightest and best in Florentine society. Friday afternoon receptions were crowded with a range of interesting people, including Lord Holland, the British Minister, and the aging poet and critic Walter Savage Landor. She received calls throughout the year from Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, the sculptor Hiram Powers and their old friend Auguste Hervieu. When a break from Florence was needed, she enjoyed summer visits to the nearby Baths at Lucca, and winter visits to Rome. She performed in local dramatic performances, and her appearance as Mrs. Malaprop in an amateur production of *the Rivals* won her popular acclaim. She became fully engaged in a vigorous

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[13] Trollope's description of her visit to Vallombrosa in May 1841 reflects familiarity with Ariosto's praise of the monastery's hospitality and likens the scenic beauty of the area to Milton's description of Eden in *Paradise Lost* (Chaney 292).

artistic and social life which kindled fond memories of earlier days at Harrod, her favorite homestead in England.[14]

Not everyone was receptive to Mrs. Trollope's effort to create community, however. There was still the barrier of class that prevented many of the ex-patriate literati from joining her social gatherings. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for example, was key among those intellectuals who struggled to overcome her aversion to Frances Trollope. But eventually, community won out when Browning's son Pen visited Mrs. Trollope's granddaughter for an afternoon of play. The two women, thus forced into social engagement through the friendship of their descendants, decided to "forget one another's offense, in print or otherwise," and learned at least to tolerate, if not to enjoy, each other's company (Richardson 177).

The Italians themselves also had trouble embracing Mrs. Trollope as an honorary Florentine due in part to her inability to fully appreciate their culture. In spite of her love for Dante, her background in the classics, and her penchant for studying people, the pundits and elitist editors nonetheless judged her two volumes of *Travels to Italy* to be superficial, "amusing" and lacking in depth of commentary. They believed that the Italian people and their rich history deserved a more review than what Mrs. Trollope was able to offer (Heineman 207-8).

Fortunately, the tutelage of her learned son Thomas, whose love for Italy can be measured by the content and volume of his literary works, invited her deeper reflection on the plight of the Italian poor and Italian Risorgimento.[15] Growing awareness and commitment to the social and political life of pre-unification Italy thus earned her the respect of not only the Italian people but other expatriates more deeply involved in the cause, even as it drew Mrs.

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[14] Heineman's description of this period of Trollope's life (Chapter 16) is extensive and supported by the discovery of 250 previously unpublished letters which affirm the satisfaction that Trollope derived from this time in her life.

[15] Thomas Adolphus Trollope, Frances Trollope's first son, was a prolific writer of Italian history and fiction, producing over sixty volumes of scholarly and creative work. His massive history of Florence and his political engagement on behalf of Italian nationalists earned him the Order of Sats Maurice and Lazarus, by Victor Emmanuel II of Italy.

Trollope away from further literary publication.[16] The home she thus created was the site of matured judgments, supported by a lifetime of prolific literary productivity, and shaped by her firm commitment to family and friends. Together, these elements provided a solid antidote to the isolation that had come from impoverished circumstances, a questionable reputation, excessive travel, and the sorrows of personal loss.

  The complexity of Mrs. Trollope's lived experience and professional accomplishments requires the lens of both Victorian culture and perspective of the modern world for full appreciation. Against the damning popular Victorian assessment of Mrs. Trollope's literary style and intellectual depth, is the contemporary critical recognition of her achievement as that of a visionary feminist entrepreneur. Her courage, strengthened by friends and family, enabled her move from social isolation, through pilgrimage, and finally to a settled notion of home. Her example, which follows the pattern established by the heroes of ancient literatures and culture, is a good one to emulate and provides a timeless model for any woman facing similar challenges.[17]

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[16] Mrs. Trollope's last novel, *Fashionable Life in Paris and London (1856),* emphasizes community living as a solution to many of life's challenges.

[17] I am indebted to the Directors of the Humanities Conference at Lincoln University for inviting me to revisit my doctoral dissertation on Frances Trollope. In so doing, I have reread Michael Sadleir's important work, *Trollope: a Commentary* in which he presents a deeply sympathetic view of the life and work of Frances Milton Trollope. I now share his perspective.

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Converting Alienation:
The Case of Dorothy Day

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Rhodes College, Tennessee

Religion is the opiate of the people.[18]

One wonders how Karl Marx would respond to Dorothy Day's appeal to his observation about religion. Marx made the observation to illustrate sharp criticism and deep disdain. Clearly aligning his views with a growing body of skeptics intending to point out the illusory function of religion, Marx emphasized the condition of alienation at the center of religion, a condition, he would further contend, that requires an immediate, revolutionary response. Day's appeal supplies a different context.[19] In her spiritual autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* (1952), Day first acknowledges and then dismisses Marx's observation as she recounts her religious conversion. While this outcome may not be surprising, it is telling that Day retains alienation as an interpretive trope in her narration, thereby reinforcing an intellectual recognition of Marx's intent about the limitations of religion.

It is clear that Day's religious conversion did not require denunciation of her socialist orientation.[20] Day was

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[18] Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 132. See Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction."

[19] Dorothy Day was born in 1897 and died in 1980.

[20] A number of scholars have addressed Day's religious conversion and her Catholic, socialist worldview. For a holistic consideration of the evidence of Day's conversion, see the work of June O'Connor who writes that Day "brought to her conversion an unconventional morality that was shaped in part by her interests in a Communist workers' revolution

informed prior to her religious conversion, especially in college, by socialist thought; she had friends affiliated with the Communist Movement at the time of her religious conversion; and she remained involved in socialist activities following her religious conversion. Moreover, Day offers an explanation for her religious conversion directed to her brother and socialist friends in her 1938 work, *From Union Square to Rome*. With this in mind, a reading of the conversion narrative as it is told nearly fourteen years later in *The Long Loneliness* suggests that Day appeals to a condition of alienation in order to inscribe a socialist orientation on her adopted religious worldview for a broader audience.[21] Specifically, Day's conversion narrative presents a process of identifying, contesting, and reframing alienation as a deliberate state that causes tension and begs resolution.[22]

Alienation Identified

In *The Long Loneliness* Day gives a vivid description of her state of being prior to her conversion to Catholicism in 1927 at the age of thirty. She writes in the chapter titled, "Having a

together with an attraction to anarchism that sustained itself throughout her life" ("Dorothy Day's Christian Conversion" 166).

[21] Recent studies of religious conversion demonstrate a process of transitioning ideas. On Day, see the observation of Robert Coles that "Her conversion was a newly sanctioned continuation of her way of thinking rather than a dramatic turning away from a former viewpoint" (59). That this was recognized at the time of publication is evident from one book reviewer, Carl E. Purinton, who observed: "She has spoken of her early days in the radical movement, expressing as it did her longing for human community. Her conversion to Roman Catholicism did not mean a turning away from social radicalism; it meant rather undergirding that with a spiritual dimension and directing it in the spirit of Christian love" (217). Regarding the circumstances of composition around *The Long Loneliness* and the link between the book and *From Union Square to Rome*, see Paul Elie, "Why & How Day Wrote It."

[22] As Marcello Musto asserts, "Alienation was one of the most important and widely debated themes of the twentieth century, and Karl Marx's theorization played a key role in the discussions" (79). In his review of the 1997 reprint of *The Long Loneliness*, published to commemorate Day's birth, Paul Gibson explains that "The 'long loneliness' of the title is both personal and social: it refers to the personal loneliness of an activist leader, but also to the loneliness of humanity without authentic community" (16).

Baby," that although she is living with Forster Batterham, her common-law spouse, in a small house on Staten Island, she feels increasingly alone "as a sybaritic anchorite" (133).[23] In her solitude, she begins to pray. While her prayer is neither contrived nor forced, she assumes a critical stance. Slipping into close self-reflection and dialogue with an imaginary interlocutor, she chides herself about this impulse to pray by recalling Marx's sentiment about religion: "And over and over again in my mind that phrase was repeated jeeringly, 'Religion is the opiate of the people'" (132).[24] Day combats this claim by insisting that her prayer arises from happiness when she attests: "I did not turn to God in unhappiness, in grief, in despair--to get consolation, to get something from Him" (132). Over the course of this internal dialogue, we see that Day first names and then dismisses a "compensatory" model of religion, as joy and gratitude express a noble and worthy origin for prayer.

Her joy is sustained as she learns of her pregnancy, an unexpected event. During the gestation period, characterized as it is with anticipation and liminality, Day's determined solitude can be read as a form of alienation productive of reflection and meaning around a changing self-identity. As the pregnancy steadily continues, Day's prayer is eventually coupled with attendance at worship services, including the Roman Catholic mass, that challenge self-understanding. The incorporation of these ritual practices increasingly isolates her from Forster and his anarchist, atheistic worldview. Her self-awareness is heightened as she comes to accept, first intellectually and then emotionally, the consequences of the pregnancy on her relationship with Forster. Despite her love for Forster and her desire to interpret that love in the context of a religious worldview, she is acutely aware of a growing rift.[25] Forster's insistent

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[23] In his interview of Dorothy Day, Robert Coles writes that "as one moves through this stirring, unsettling chapter, it becomes clear that she was...lonely, a bit unnerved, self-deprecating, and prone to moodiness" (46).

[24] For a brief explanation of Marx's view on religion, see Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion* 118-148.

[25] Regarding Day's interactions with key male figures in *The Long Loneliness*, Eugene McCarraher explains that Day "enacted a complicated play of deference and defiance" (12).

unwillingness to recognize changes in Day's attitudes about religion are intensified in her recollections. The tension with Forster is further exacerbated by what it exposes, namely, a pre-existing condition of self-alienation of which she was formerly unaware. "I had thought all those years that I had freedom, but now I felt that I had never known real freedom nor even had knowledge of what freedom meant" (135). Day grapples with notions of dependency and reliance as her thinking about personal responsibility and family life evolve. Day's concerns and practices continue to distance her from Forster and from others as she defiantly asserts her mutual resolve for motherhood and for religion. In the midst of assertion, however, she is acutely preoccupied by the concomitant and inevitable loss to come from her unrelenting resolve.

Alienation Contested

Day's condition of self-alienation abates, to some extent, upon the birth of Day's daughter, Tamar Teresa, in 1926. Her happiness is effusive as she expresses desire to publicize the birth in the magazine, *New Masses*, explaining, "I was glad to write this for a workers' magazine because it was a joy all women knew, no matter what their grief at poverty, unemployment and class war" (137). This article, incidentally also titled "Having a Baby," appears in the June 1928 edition. The article is a tightly crafted account focused on the day of Tamar's birth; simultaneously descriptive and thoughtful, Day's tone is entertaining. For example, she explains that in the taxi ride to the hospital, she is accompanied by her cousin Carol, who refers to their outing as "another kind of joy ride" (5). After admittance, Day recalls a conversation with a nurse who described a recent film. This prompts Day to muse about the value of "moving pictures" and "music" for birthing mothers (5). A four-paneled cartoon of a stork delivering a baby appears atop the second page of the article.

Day's literary playfulness is tempered by several forms of alienation in the article. The hospital is a foreign space; its unfamiliar, clinical orientation is demonstrated at the opening of the article when Day explains that she received her "white ticket, which entitled me to a baby at Bellevue" (5). Power and gender dynamics expose further strangeness.

Whereas the hospital space is overseen by males who are largely absent or misplaced, the space is operated and filled by interactions with female nurses, staff, and other expectant women. Day observes the silent presence of men in this feminized space when she writes about the pain of her contractions. Experiencing the spacing between contractions, she recalls novels that include accounts of birth. Coyly, she writes: "All but one of these descriptions had been written by men and with the antagonism natural to a woman at such a time, I resented their presumption" (6). Day's emphasis on the interpersonal contacts and conversations she shares with other women thereby replaces "these descriptions" with alternative voices that uphold the birth process as a site of truth and knowledge in its own right.

Day's own experience of alienation in this space is heightened in her account of being anesthetized. Just prior to receiving anesthesia (ether), Day describes her pain in vivid terms; as the anesthesia numbs her she admits that "It was the first time I had thought of the child in a long long time" (6). When she wakes, the liminality of pregnancy has come to a close. Culminating in the birth of her daughter, Day is self-aware of her new status as mother, and an accompanying set of new interactions in the mother-child relationship. Motherhood literally reorients Day's thinking about the world and her place in it. She is overcome, again, by joy and gratitude.

Missing from her recollections in the *New Masses* article are appeals to religion. Such appeals pepper her memories of the birth in *The Long Loneliness*. Day indicates that she was reading the *Imitation of Christ* leading up to the birth, thereby introducing an intellectual component to the development of her religious thinking (136). Furthermore, she admits regret over her impulsive, negative response to another expectant mother who offered her a medal of St. Therese of Lisieux (140). Finally, as Day embraces a maternal role for her daughter, the souls of both are the central objects of her concern: "There had been the physical struggle, the mortal combat almost, of giving birth to a child, and now there was the struggle for my own soul" (138). In the face of this concern, she retains an unflinching resolve

for her maternal identity to be situated in, and informed by, a religious worldview.

Alienation Reframed

Day's decisions about Tamar's baptism as well as her own inevitable reception of the sacraments retain their divisiveness. Day admits her own internal turmoil when she explains in *The Long Loneliness*: "For myself, I prayed for the gift of faith. I was sure, yet not sure. I postponed the day of decision" (136). Her relationship with Forster and with unsupportive others would be sacrificed.[26]

Like the period of pregnancy, the period of Day's catechumenate contained anticipation and liminality. Previous experiences of alienation suffuse an appreciation for a broader condition of alienation as she writes:

> My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to want to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God. Without even looking into the claims of the Catholic Church, I was willing to admit that for me she was the one true Church. She had come down through the centuries since the time of Peter, and far from being dead, she claimed and held the allegiance of the masses of people in all the cities where I had lived. (139)

Conflation of "the masses" with the religious congregation designates a notable shift that promotes even more contemplation.[27] Her quandary pressed for an answer that would emerge gradually over time in many efforts to reconcile these outwardly competing interests. Day had

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[26] In a letter written in March 1928, just four months after she was formally admitted into the Catholic Church, Day wrote to Forster: "It is terribly hard to even mention my religious feelings to you because I am sure you do not think I am sincere. But it is not a sudden thing, but a thing which has been growing in me for years. I had impulses toward religion again and again and now when I try to order my life according to it in order to attain some sort of peace and happiness it is very hard but I must do it" (Ellsberg 18).

[27] See *The Long Loneliness*, 144, as well as the discussion in O'Connor, "Dorothy Day's Christian Conversion," 168-172.

maintained previously in *From Union Square to Rome* that Christians "have failed to learn a philosophy of labor, have failed to see Christ in the worker" (5). However, sustained prayer and reception of the sacraments, official marks of membership in the Roman Catholic Church, would afford a means by which Day would "see Christ in the worker."[28] As James Terence Fisher observes, through her conversion Day joined the masses "in their alienation" (24). By positioning alienation as a shared condition in the context of a religious worldview Day would produce an interpretation of Catholic social justice that confronts the condition of alienation.

In an article on Day's religious conversion, "Dorothy Day and Gender Identity: The Rhetoric and the Reality," June O'Connor writes: "As a humanistic socialist by inclination and a Catholic by choice, she affirmed the dignity and respect due to human persons regardless of gender, class, employment status, religion, or race" (16). During the years following Day's religious conversion, her "humanistic socialist" orientation was wed to her Catholic piety, enabling her to address the condition of alienation through dialogue and action with others "as brothers and sisters in Christ." On May 1, 1933, the first issue of *The Catholic Worker* was published as a mouthpiece for the movement she co-founded with Peter Maurin. Patrick Jordan explains that the aim of the movement "was to bring the social implications of the gospel 'to the man on the street' by living with the poor, practicing the works of mercy on a daily basis, and resisting war and participation in industrial society's never-ending preparations for war" (xv).[29] The movement anchored communal solidarity as a revolutionary response to a communal condition of alienation. American Catholic historian, Jay P. Dolan, observes that "Unlike Catholic liberals, the Catholic Worker recoiled from politics and argued for a spiritual solution to society's problems" (411). Jordan contends that because it "ran counter to the thrust of much of American society and the church's own self-

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[28] In an editorial published in November 1949, Day asserted, "I firmly believe that our salvation depends on the poor with whom Christ identified Himself" (Ellsberg 271).
[29] About the Catholic Worker Movement, Patrick Allitt observes that the movement "bore the stamp of her preconversion experiences as a labor radical and pacifist" (148).

preoccupations," (xv) the movement avowed a critique of the social, political, economic, and ecclesiastical power structures perpetuating a communal condition of alienation.

So, fourteen years after the religious conversion that it recounts, *The Long Loneliness* encouraged support and fueled opposition. According to Daniel M. Cantwell of the Catholic Labor Alliance, the book warranted endorsement. Cantwell's review of the book is balanced by the criticism of others when he opens by writing: "Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement have been the center of considerable controversy in Catholic circles for a long time. That their opponents have not all died is evidenced by the kind and number of protests which came to the Catholic book club in Chicago when the name of this was sent out as a book club selection" (114). Support for, and skepticism about, Day's vision continue to be debated today as the ongoing work of Catholic Worker houses of hospitality across the United States attests to the persistence of commitments to personalism and to voluntary poverty.

In his study of Dorothy Day, James Terence Fisher suggests that "Accounts of Day's conversion have suffered from a tendency to search for causes rather than meaning" (14). A brief look at Day's appeals to alienation in her conversion narrative in *The Long Loneliness* contributes to the latter. In her conversion narrative, Day proposes an interpretation of alienation as a pervasive part of the human condition. Writing from the perspective of a devout Catholic, Day recalls instances and experiences of alienation for their formative and summative impact on her changing self-identity. By presenting her efforts to wrestle with alienation in this way, Day manages a balance between disillusionment and hope.

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The Nature of Identity:
The Outer Context and Inner
Self of the Jewish Minority under Nasserism

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Historical Context

This study's central proposition shall unfold gradually in order to explain the historical context, which can be summarized as follows: a historicized structural analysis of the sequence of sociopolitical events surrounding the pre-1948 Middle Eastern Jewish minority communities, which were positioned at the edges of both Jewish and Arab nationalisms and (unwillingly) caught on the political frontier between the two up until the present Arab-Israeli impasse.

Until the end of the first comprehensive Arab-Israeli confrontation in 1948, approximately 800,000 indigenous Jews were living in the (predominantly Islamic) societies of the Arab Middle East and North Africa. Most of their communities had lived there continuously for many decades and even hundreds of years in some areas. Toward the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, these Arabized Jewish communities became the most crucial tipping group in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the one hand, and in relation to the consolidation of nationalism in the region on the other. Unwillingly trapped in a volatile frontier between the establishment of the Israeli state and Arab nationalism, these communities could be — and indeed were — included and excluded at different conjunctures by both the Jewish and the Arab national movements, in accordance with the balance of power among competing subnational constituents within the two movements. Their inclusion or exclusion would inevitably lead to the evolution of a different

sociopolitical boundary for each movement and, consequently, to a profoundly different internal configuration of the two collectivities. Where did Layla Murad stand? And more importantly, did Egypt represent for her an imagined nation/community as per Benedict Anderson's concept that a nation is a socially constructed community imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group?

What Is a Nation?

Based on Yael Tamir's writing, I argue that Murad struggled with the definition of a nation. Tamir said that a nation "exhibits both a sufficient number of shared, objective characteristics — such as language, history or territory — and self-awareness of its distinctiveness." Also, she defines the nation as "a community whose members share feelings of fraternity, substantial distinctiveness and exclusivity as well as belief in a common ancestry and a continuous genealogy" (268). Although Murad feels that Egypt is a nation with an ample number of shared traits (e.g., language, history, and territory), she lacked the feelings of fraternity; she was forced by the social pressure to sever her relationship with her biological family and community. In order for Murad to save her image in life and her legacy held by her renowned Muslim sons after life, she had to choose a different mean of existence: The Muslim Nirvana. The erasure of her origins was a deliberate choice to save her from the Jews exodus from Egypt at this stage. If a nation is a shared community, then what is nationalism and how did it deny Layla's citizenship and ownership of her country: Egypt?

Murad's own society sent her into exile as the mirror image of the Jews in the diaspora. It was these excesses and indulgences for which she herself was searching in the national psyche. She was forced to mirror the "Other" by betraying her roots and intersubjectivity. Sigmund Freud draws an explicit parallel between the infantile state in developmental psychology and the primitive state in cultural evolution. For him, the unconscious marks a resurgence of this pre-rational aspect of psychological or cultural subjectivity. What the rational, conscious mind perceives as a bizarre coincidence will appear as a fulfillment of animistic

beliefs to the "primitive" mind or the reemergence and confirmation of dormant wishes and desires to the "modern" mind. Freud insists that literature provides a more "fertile province" for the uncanny than real life, and thus he starts questioning the aesthetics. It is not only the sense of uncanniness that arises as a result of political conflict, but also fundamentally a problem of subjectivity that is political and psychological in equal measure.[30]

What is Nationalism?

The second core question—how to define or understand nationalism—is easier to answer than the first. However, it is not altogether unproblematic. To explain this claim, I have chosen to discuss Ernert Gellner's definition of nationalism; he noticed that it can be best defined by the amalgamation of political, cultural, class-based, liberal, conservative, fascist, communist, territorial, pan, linguistic, religious, 'civic,' primordial, separatist, integrationist, colonialist, and racial viewpoints. At the same time, neglecting to compare the dynamics that take place within each instance as well as the dynamics that take place across—as distinct from between—national movements can develop simultaneously in a mutually antagonistic manner.[4]

If pan-Arabism equally and simultaneously fulfills Gellner's "principle of nationalism," then we may well be conceptually correct but faced with yet another dilemma: it appears that those organized sociopolitical bodies that were perhaps the most committed to "nationalism" were exactly those which were non-nationalist — such as communist, religious, or nationalist groups. More importantly, even a tentative empirical observation of such groups' respective histories vis-à-vis Egypt's dominant nationalist group instantly reveals that the latter group frequently arrested, deported, or assassinated many of its "fellow nationals." As sought by Egypt's Marxists and Islamists, respectively, the Egyptian working class or Nasserism/Pan-Arabism had to secure their political self-rule and, in so doing, exercised a profoundly different type of sociopolitical exclusion.

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[30] Freud, S. (1915). *The Unconscious*. SE, 14: 159-204.

I characterize this moment of coming-together as the "political uncanny," an intentional twist on the Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson's "political unconscious." As trained readers, we are conditioned to look for the political in the non-political. However, in terms of Jewish alterity under the circumstances of Nasserism's exclusion and deprivation, where the polis wraps around the person and everything is at once familial and political, reading the impulsiveness of an identity struggle may present a different pattern of meaning. Where Jameson argued that the political is the "unconscious" of the ostensibly apolitical quotidian, I locate a body of work in which the political problem becomes a catalyst for a psychological episode that aligns closely with Freud's theory of the uncanny. This usually involves a crisis of subjectivity triggered by the collision of the political metanarrative (e.g., pan-nationalism and pan-Arabism) with a character's experience of doubling or a split self. Through Murad's work, I will offer different conceptualizations of the fragmented self of religious minorities during the nation-building process.

The psychological or inner life of the conflict—that of trauma, fear, desire, and the paradoxes of identification—all collide with the political. In the uncanny stories explored here, the resolution of Murad's identity is hardly the endgame so persistently grafted onto narratives of the conflict. The question to ask here is whether her conversion to Islam reflected this impulsiveness or a sort of life necessity to assimilate into an expulsive society fully driven by the delusion of pan-Arabism led by the charismatic Nasser. In the next section, I will examine her conversion motives, reality, and reasons.

Conversion to Islam

During his third visit to Murad, Hassan el-Banna handed her a version of the Qur'an and asked her to read it. He then gave her something to think about, namely, a strategic exit from the struggle and the political threat. While reading the Qur'an, she was thinking about what was real and what was metaphorical, so it was an education as well. This was a way for her to claim that her heritage was not so important that

she had to hold on to her Jewish identity, especially under the surrounding sociopolitical circumstances.

The process of conversion has its own internal dynamic. John Lofland and Norman Skonove have identified six conversion motifs, each of which is characterized by the degree of social pressure involved, temporal duration, and level of affection: (1) "intellectual," which involves reading and investigating alternative theodicies and entails self-conversion with no social pressure; (2) "mystical," a situation that is effectively intense, brief, and often occurs when a person is alone; being a confusion of fear and love, social pressure is non-existent; (3) "experimental," in which the convert adopts a "show me and I will try it" attitude; no social pressure exists in this case either; (4) "affection," in which personal attachments or a strong liking play a central role; social pressure is medium and functions as a support; (5) "revivalist," which is the managed ecstatic arousal in a group context (e.g., el-Banna's visits); the duration is brief and social pressure is high; and (6) "coercive," in which compulsion, confession of guilt, and acceptance of the ideological system are central. Social pressure is high, the process may be prolonged, and the primary affect is fear. Love is secondary.[31]

I argue that Murad's conversion was both coercive and revivalist at the same time, for it did not employ loose encapsulation and incorporated low social pressure. It was not intellectual, experimental, or mystical, especially since her Islam involved no pursuit of those spiritual goals that indicate a search for meaning or a path in life. In addition, her Islam did not apply such religious requirements as prayer, diet, dress, and social relationships. I argue that her conversion was a type of "rational" conversion that includes intellectual, political-oriented paths. The only mystical drive was seen through her songs, when she sang for the pilgrimage: "You people going to the dearest prophet" – يا رايحين للنبي الغالي – or other Islamic practices. Her conversion serves the multiple ends of community belonging and a new sense of self-assurance. It is an oscillation toward a more

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[31] The theory of conversion is cited in *Protest: Studies of Collective Behavior and Social Movements.*

secure life, one designed to avoid being forced to join the second exodus of Jews from Egypt in the fifties.

Immanuel Kant held that the self could not perceive itself directly because it is the perceiver, not the perceived. It cannot perceive itself any more than a camera can take a picture of itself. Thus, since it can only see other objects, events, and circumstances, how is self-awareness possible? The key to Kant's solution is that the self can perceive events and that perception is itself an event. The self can perceive its own acts of perceiving and thus gain indirect knowledge of itself (Mrlnick 52). Although the self cannot perceive itself directly, in isolation, it can catch itself in the act of doing something. The camera was here to depict Murad's threat. Being Jewish had locked her into a hostile anti-Semitic national discourse. She was well aware of her situation as an iconic figure that Egyptian society had placed under a microscope. Her self-awareness was the motif that made her look for a protective shell by changing her faith and rejecting her heritage, both of which involved breaking with her nuclear family and deracinating herself from her community.

I argue that Murad's conversion was the declaration of a new identity; however, identity specificities cannot be created from a very recent moment or decisive decision. One's continuity of identity is weakest when all of one's involvements or ongoing experiences change abruptly. Being involved in ongoing experiences provides a basis for being the same person across time, as argued by Wilhelm Dilthey. In the middle of an experience, the multiple possible future events are partly determined by past events. Identity also revolves around unity, which means that during the present moment your thoughts and wishes are part of you and are closely connected to your id. Unity over time (continuity) means that today one is the same person as the person who existed before. Continuity over time is a main criterion of identity. Both unity and continuity present different concerns and dilemmas to the individual trying to form an identity. "Memory does not constitute identity; memory presupposes identity." (*Culture Trauma* 113) Therefore, Murad's conversion was a phase in the process of self-defense. Unfortunately, because it did not guarantee her safety and protection, she had to take further steps to construct a shelter in a hostile society influenced by Nasser's

discourse. Murad had to exist, and the possibility of doing so in Egypt meant that the survival of her fame and image was critical. Choice, either explicit or implicit, singles out and actualizes one possibility from the set of possibilities. How do we explain that the self can exist as a continuum of reality across time and as distinct from others? I answer this question by outlining a "model of identity" that suggests its functions, components, and definition processes.

A Model of Identity

The functional aspects of identity help one make choices and decisions about one's relationships with the surrounding community. These relationships become impossible if one's identity is poorly defined or in transition. With that said, conversion furnished Murad a sense of strength and resilience. It also involved her attempt to find personal goals that would provide direction in her life. A second functional aspect of identity is the interpersonal dimension, namely, her social role and personal reputation. Her identity thus became the "persona" that she presented to the public. This leads to another functional aspect: "individual potentiality." To an extent, in her case this aspect means that she had a realistic personal goal and sufficient self-esteem. And so, her struggle with the accusations of political discourse did not destroy her; rather, it gave her the strength and patience to overcome the rumors and survive as the Egyptian Nirvana,[32] as she used to be called in public, even though she chose to withdraw from the public sphere in order to keep a low profile.

      Each identity contains an indefinite number of components. Self-definition is the most salient one, for "who are you?" is the important question. The hierarchy of components starts by (1) the assigned one given by default (e.g., gender and family lineage); (2) "single transformation" (e.g., motherhood) and the hierarchy of criteria according to which people seek to redefine themselves (e.g., making a fortune); (3) the optional choice, in which religious or political affiliations appear; and lastly (4) the "required choice" that makes it possible for one to make the "final

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[32] Nirvana in this context means supreme beauty of the soul

presentation." I argue that Murad's identity passed through these four stages, a process by which she was able to construct her escape from the surrounding sociopolitical anti-Israeli[33] discourse. She redefined her assigned identity as a Jewess by being recognized as a famous star who earned a fortune and a valuable reputation. Her optional choice was to convert, deny her heritage, disown her family, and marry another Muslim man named Waguih Abaza,[34] the officer who had handled her case of espionage for Israel and to whom she bore a son: Ashraf. After her divorce, she married a third public figure, a Muslim as well, Fateen Abdulwahab, a famous film director with whom she had a second son: Zaki. Her required choice was to withdraw from the public sphere at the peak of her fame, aged thirty-nine, in order to reinforce the idea of her sincere conversion and deliberate rejection of her Jewish heritage.

The third and fourth types of self-definition processes refer to self-definition by acts of choice rather than achievement. There are several possible ways to be, and they are not clearly arranged along an unequivocal dimension. The last type of self-definition is quite problematic, for there are no clear rules about what choice a person should make. This becomes an identity problem when the person believes that the answer lies "within." The identity is expected to contain priority preferences, namely, metacriteria, for making such choices. The components are all the units of self-definition, the ways in which the person might answer the question: "Who am I?" The self-definition process should include the four components in order to shape the final presentation and resolve one's identity struggle.

For example, Murad failed to prove her loyalty to Nasser's socialist nation in her song "With Unity, Order, and Work – بالأتحاد والنظام والعمل" because she sang it to Mohammed Naguib.[35] In fact, this attempt to praise the Free Officers in

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[33] It is more convenient to say anti-Israeli instead of anti-Semitic because Arabs are Semitic by origin as well.

[34] Her first husband, who had a relationship with el-Banna, was Anwar Wagdy, a famous Muslim actor.

[35] Mohammed Naguib was the Chief of "Free Officers" who led the 1952 coup in Egypt; in 1954 he was arrested by Gamal Abdel Nasser and his group when he asked to turn Egypt into a democratic country and recommended that the army withdraw from the civic life. He spent his

1952 did not cause the very same Free Officers to lift the ban they had placed on her songs. Besides, her struggle was due to the nature of self-definition, which by itself is not enough to explain why identity has become an abstract and elusive entity. This caused Murad's continuous impasse, which I shall refer to as "destabilization." In simple terms, she was unable to unify the functions of her identity component. One way of defining the self provides continuity only if it remains the same throughout the person's life. If the identity components change, then the unity of the self over one's lifetime is lost. Actual changes separate the present and future selves from the past self. Therefore, her past/present identities were in conflict and locked her into a distorted dilemma.

In the case of an identity deficit, the problem is not having enough identity; however, having too much identity can also be a problem. Identity deficits (the Muslim identity of the newly converted Jewess Murad) can seem to involve conflict. The key to distinguishing between the crisis and the deficit is to determine whether there are commitments and, if so, what they are. Identity conflict, in contrast to identity deficit, is not associated with any particular stage in life because it arises from the interaction between personal commitments and circumstances. Circumstances force one to make a choice that will involve betraying one or another commitment. On a different note, the subjective experience of Murad's identity conflict is that of being in an impossible situation or of being torn between two deeply felt values. In addition, identity conflicts are sometimes resolved by circumstances: Murad had no choice but to accept the betrayal or loss of one identity, despite the fact that she often sought to maintain the betrayed component in some minor fashion via compromise and compartmentalization. But how can one's identity be undermined, changed, altered, or destroyed? In the coming section, I will try to answer this question through the theory of brainwashing techniques.

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life until the death of Nasser under house arrest ; he got freed in 1972 under the reign of Nasser's successor Mohammed Anwar el-Sadat.

Brainwashing Techniques

Brainwashing does not mean cleansing; rather, it implies replacing old ideas with specific new ideas. One of its strong features is the importance of making the person want to change. In Murad's case, not only did el-Banna provide her with the means to change, but she was also keen to go through the change. All he did was try to secure her active participation. In other words, she was an active, as opposed to a passive, participant. Brainwashing involves cutting the individual off from prior interpersonal relationships based upon the old identity and attempting to establish one or more new relationships based upon the new identity being instilled. It associates guilt and depravity with the old identity, pushes one to recognize and then confess this remorse, and puts one under the full control of another so that he or she will be an active participant.

Every identity consists of a set of inner motives and impulses; personal desires and needs, however, have become more important as the focus for defining the self. Religion can be a very effective context for identity. On a different note, the potential aspect of identity is likewise defined by society, for it sets the range of meanings and purposes to which people can devote their lives. Simply put, success is defined and validated by society.

As contexts for identity, societies vary along one main dimension: how directive or restrictive they are in defining identity. At one extreme a society can be rigid and inflexible, as was the case under Nasser. Egyptians were overwhelmed by his pan-nationalism movement, the resentment toward the building of a Jewish nation, and the establishment of the State of Israel. Thus, each person's identity tends to be fixed firmly by his or her society, and the individual has little freedom to choose. Obviously, in such a society self-definition tends to emphasize the simple types of processes. Building the Egyptian nation gave each individual a large range of possibilities for identity, and each individual had to shape it through acts of personal choice and commitment. So, each Egyptian either achieved fulfillment by performing the tasks and roles assigned by society or chose not to do so and was therefore considered untrustworthy.

Next, individuals seek fulfillment in private and away from society, which was why this young and famous actress and singer withdrew and lived in seclusion for the rest of her life. There may be psychological consequences from relying predominantly on society, rather than religion, to serve as identity's context. Concern with the self is linked to social validation and recognition, instead of spiritual ends. For this reason, perhaps, people are more concerned with impressing their peers and neighbors. The third stage of this progression is alienation, meaning that one understands that there is no escape from society and that he or she is nothing more than its helpless victim. The fourth stage that of accommodation, is reached when individuals begin to accept the fact that society neither permits escape nor promises fulfillment.

Two different approaches can be taken to understand identity: studying its external contexts (e.g., religion and society) or the inner self. Religion can be an effective contextual paradigm within this context because it provides firm and presumably trustworthy answers to life's problems and decisions; there is thus no need for personal metacriteria. Identity is clearly defined within the context of religion, and so it tends not to be problematic. This explains Murad's voluntary conversion. The concept of the inner self, which has expanded over time, is now considered to be large, stable and continuous, unique, vitally important, real, and difficult to know. In addition, it is presumed to contain thoughts, feelings, intentions, personality traits, latent capacities, sources of creativity, ingredients of fulfillment, and solutions to the dilemmas of identity.

The contents of the inner self thus refer to some phenomena that do, and others that do not (in any sense), exist. Once she felt threatened, Murad placed herself on the track of change by converting and thereby alienating herself from her Jewish society. Her relationship with her family was difficult, possibly due to her conversion. Between 1967 and 1970, hundreds of Jewish men, including her brother Isak Zaki, were rounded up and sent to the Abu-Zaabal and Tura detention camps. Families were allowed to visit beginning in 1968, and some noted that Murad was never seen visiting her brother. After her retirement, she remained in total seclusion until her death, even refusing to attend a

1992 Cairo International Film Festival ceremony designed to honor her; her son Ashraf accepted the award on her behalf.

I argue that Layla Murad's last will and testament is the proof of her life struggle. It consisted of a few requests. For example, she asked her sons Ashraf and Zaki not to announce her death in public until after she had been buried. She wanted them to take her corpse to Masjid el-Sayyeda Nafitha, the largest mosque located beside the cemeteries, to conduct the service according to the Islamic rituals but then, as it was whispered, to bury her corpse secretly in the el-Bassateen Jewish Cemetery. She fulfilled her commitment to society by reiterating her loyalty and sincere conversion, which also saved the face of her sons and helped them deal with her legacy. However, she found her resting place beside her family, including her father and brother, and decided to sleep in peace forever with her ancestors, whom she had been forced to disown for most of her life.[36]

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PART TWO

ON THE MARGINS

Strangers in the Victoria Division of the British Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961

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This paper is aimed at examining the presence of strangers in the Victoria Division of the Southern Cameroons. Analyse the dynamics of their movement to the plantation settlements of the Division; discuss the construct of *otherness* between the strangers (outsiders) and the indigenous insiders and; the colonial statutory regulations that protected the latter against the former.

The Victoria Division is coterminous with the present Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. It is bounded to the North by the Fako (Cameroon) Mountain to the North East by the Meme Division and the River Mungo and the River Wouri Estuary to the South East, to the South by the Atlantic coastline stretching from Ambas Bay to Rio del Rey; to the East by the Littoral Province; and the Ndian Division to the West (Monono 21). The Division was first carved out as one of the twenty-six administrative units of the German Kamerun in 1894. It was known then as the Victoria Berzirk (District). Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and its extension to Cameroon, the Germans were defeated in the territory by a joint Anglo-French force in 1916. This was followed by the partition of Cameroon between Britain and France with the former taking one fifth of the territory and the latter four-fifth. The British further divided their narrow and disjointed strip of Cameroon into two: British Northern and Southern Cameroons. The German Victoria Berzirk was renamed Victoria Division by the British administration in the Southern Cameroons. This was the Division of most of the German plantations and home of the indigenous Bakweri and Balong people.

The German annexation of Cameroon in July 1884 had been followed in earnest by the opening of plantations on sequestrated Bakweri and Balong lands. The first plantation was opened in 1885 and in 1897 the West African Plantation Victoria (WAPV), the largest plantation concession was opened by Carl Woermann Trading House of Hamburg (Bongkorog 76). The plantations engaged the production of crops such as rubber, cocoa, coffee, kolanuts, tobacco and subsequently banana. The labour demanded by the plantations was enormous and the immediate coastal ethnic groups, the Bakweri, Bakolle, Bomboko and Balong could not adequately supply the needed man power. The German plantation owners were forced to move further into the interior of the protectorate, particularly, to the Bamenda Grassfields to recruit labour. Some other labour also came from the French Cameroons and from Nigeria to the plantation settlements of the Victoria Division. These labourers constituted the strangers (outsiders) population in the area.

Accounting for Strangers' Presence in Victoria Division

The plantations of the Victoria Division were an amazing pull of attraction to migrant labour from out of the Division. The plantations required much labour which was not readily available in the immediate settlements. The first suppliers of labour to the plantations were the Bomboko, Isubu and Bakweri ethnic groups. However, this labour was largely insufficient (Epale 96). Labour scarcity at the coastal plantation towns was partly a consequence of its demography. The coastal areas that played host to the plantations were sparsely populated. The mountain ethnic groups were not numerous enough to supply the labour needed in the plantations. This caused the movement of labour from the Grassfields in the Northern part of the Southern Cameroons to the coastal plantations.

Migration to the coastal plantation settlements was also motivated by the search for wage labour. Colonialism went concomitant with the introduction of a cash economy. Cash was central to every transaction in the society and it was hard to find. The plantations provided a reliable source

of income that attracted labour from the different parts of the Southern Cameroons and from the French Cameroons. The plantations placed the Victoria Division at the verge of economic prosperity as it quickly emerged to a booming economic area. It offered other economic opportunities out of plantations wage labour. Many migrants moved to the coastal plantation towns to cultivate crops to sell to the plantation workers. Others, particularly of Bamileke origin in the French Cameroons migrated to the Victoria Division to take advantage of the flourishing trade at the coast.

Another factor that influenced a wave of migration to the Victoria Division was the colonial tax regime. It was first introduced in Victoria in 1900 by the Germans as a form of rents by people using German land acquired from the English Baptist Missionaries. On 1st July 1903, it was introduced in Douala where all male adults capable of working and unmarried women had to pay. In 1908, the first general tax was introduced. The German taxation policy was aimed at raising revenue for colonial affairs to ward off annual deficits. Also, the taxation policy was intended to make up for the labour scarcity at the coastal plantation towns. It provided that persons in need of cash for tax could render some services (at the plantation) whose nature was to be determined by the district head. Alternatively, they could be handed over to a private employer who would pay the tax to the government and the sum subtracted from his wage (Rudin 338). The tax pressure was quite enormous forcing labour migrants to seek wage labour at the plantations.

Remittances sent home by earlier plantation recruits constituted a strong motivating factor to potential migrants. The exposure of rural youths to the relative wealth and success of the migrants combined with change in taste and fashion and material aspiration made the rural way of life less appealing, discouraged the local people from working in the traditional sector and encouraged further migration to the plantations. This factor attracted many Bayang from the Mamfe Division to the Victoria plantations. Wage labour was desired not just for money's sake but for social advancement. Plantation employment provided and guaranteed a more stable source of income that assured social advancement among peers back home (Ardener et al. 246-47). Visits back home were usually cherished moments to the employees,

would- be- migrants and plantation owners. The remittances and the glamorous and flamboyant dressing of the labour migrants encouraged further movements to the plantations.

Social demands on the people of the interior entities warranted wage labour, particularly, in areas where there was no alternative source of income. Status is an essential element in social stratification. In simple traditional societies, marital status was a principal criterion for classification. However, the bride price or dowry payment was expensive for the adult males against the background of lack of profitable economic activities. This engendered the migration of these impecunious male adults to the Victoria Division to seek wage labour in the plantations. It took quite a fortune to marry a wife amongst the people of Nkambe Division, Esu of Wum Division, the Ngwo, Moghamo and Ngemba (Ardener et al. 247). This influenced their movement to the plantations of the Victoria Division.

The forced labour policy of the French caused many colonial subjects to migrate to the Southern Cameroons plantations areas. The French colonial policy required much labour for the construction of railways, much of which was requisitioned from the subjects. They were not only forced to work, but the condition of work was far from humane. This caused mass exodus from the French Cameroons to the plantation areas of the Victoria Division. Forced labour on the extension of the railway from Njock to Makak and Yaounde caused mass exodus of the Bakoko, Duala and Yaounde to the coastal plantation areas of the Southern Cameroons (Nfi 68-71). In like manner the French obnoxious policy of indigenat caused many young Bamileke from Bafoussam to escape from their villages to the coastal plantations of Victoria Division[37].

In 1948 the *Unions des Populations du Cameroun* was created in the French Cameroon as the first indigenous political party. It was a radical party and demanded immediate independence for the French Cameroons. It had its base in the Bassaland and the Bamileke region. Its radicalism won for it the repression of the French colonial administration. A good number of Bassa and Bamileke,

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[37] Indigenat was a French colonial policy of summary trial whereby non-assimilated Africans were punished without reference to the court of law.

particularly, amongst the male folk were victimised which forced them to move to the plantation areas of the British Southern Cameroons (Bongkorog 109). Migration of labour to the coastal plantations of the Victoria Division took different forms.

The first type of labour migration to the Victoria Division was requisition. The competition for indigenous labour by the traders, government and planters made the labour problem more acute. Plantation concessions used their relationship with interior chiefs to recruit labour for the plantations. The friendship treaty between Dr. Eugen Zintgraff and Fon Galega I of Bali signed in August 1891 assisted the Germans to recruit labour for the coastal plantations (Fanso 29-30). Dr. Max Esser of the West African Plantation Victoria accompanied Zintgraff to Bali in 1896 and in 1897 returned with one hundred Bali labourers from the Grassfields to the Victoria Plantations (Epale 48-49). A major characteristic of this type of labour migration was the use of force. Villages were raided in reckless abandon to recruit labour for the plantations. They raided neighbouring villages so much that by 1904, some 1700 men had been recruited for the West African Plantation Victoria accounting a large Bali strangers presence in the Division (Adametz 161). Also, through conquest, many Bangwa of the Mamfe Division moved to the Victoria plantations (Ndi 46).

The second historical type of labour migration was the recruiter type by private recruiters and the interior chiefs. Chiefs were engaged for the recruitment of labour from the interior against a fee of 5 marks per worker recruited. The recruitment through chiefs was commendable as testified in a thank you letter of 10 December 1917, by F. Evans, the supervisor of plantations to the British Resident in Buea (NAB Ag/1972/2). The first recruits by the Bamenda chiefs numbered some 2000 people for a three-month and six months contract in the coastal plantations. Their work was effective and to encourage further labour supply they were paid slightly higher than the local labourers six pence per working day and rations (NAB Qe/1972/2). These workers proved relevant to the plantations as they have been used to agricultural practices, as opposed to the foresters who engaged in fishing and trade (Epale 96). In this way there was a large number of Bamenda strangers in the Victoria

Division as most of them remained in the plantation areas after the expiration of their contracts[38].

The third historical type of labour migration was the personal invitation type. This was more of a voluntary movement to the plantations. In this type of migration the role and influence of earlier recruits were very important. The flamboyant life style of the former was an attraction to their co villagers who willingly accepted their invitation to follow them to the plantations of the Victoria Division (Epale 111). The movement of the Bayang of the Mamfe Division; the Bakundu, Balundu, Bakossi all of the Kumba Division to the Victoria Plantations was motivated by this ostentatious dream.

The fourth historical type of labour migration to the Victoria plantations was the self-invitation type. Unlike the personal invitation type which had the assurance of a job offer at the plantations, self-invitation did not have any of such guarantee. The labour migrants of this type left their villages without prior notification of a job opportunity at the plantations. All that was required for the initial movement was the presence of a friend, relative or co-villager in one of the plantation areas and their readiness to accommodate them. These migrants who were mostly unmarried youths lived with their relatives pending a job opening in the plantations or some private farms of the host insiders (Ardener et al. 238). Some of these youths were attracted by the booming trade in the Victoria Division. Through self-invitation, youths from the Bamenda Division, Bamileke from the French Cameroons and Nigerian settled in the Victoria Division where they were considered strangers (outsiders).

The concept of strangers

From a primordialist conception of ethnicity, strangers-outsiders were persons whose cultural practices were different from those of their host indigenes, the insiders. According to the British administration in the Southern Cameroons, strangers are those so regarded by the local

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[38] Bamenda here represents people from the Bamenda Division which later became Bamenda Province.

inhabitants (people of the Victoria Division) to who include the Bayang of Mamfe Division, people from the Bamenda Division and *Yaunde* from the French sphere. The Bayang from the Mamfe Division, the Bamenda and all Nigerians were 'natives' from the standpoint of the Land and Native Right Ordinance of 1926. But for landholding purposes in the eyes of the indigenous insiders, they were equally strangers (NAB Ae/42). The Ordinance could have considered them 'natives,' but they were not 'rooted in the soil'; sons of the soil hence were strangers-outsiders. Among the Bakweri, the strangers were known as *wajili* opposed to *wonja* indigenous insiders (Mbake 74). Landholding differentiated the indigenous insiders from the strangers/ outsiders. Land belonged to a descent-based collectivity (the insiders) where the strangers-outsiders reserved only usufructuary rights.

In the British Southern Cameroons and in the Victoria Division there were two groups of strangers-outsiders. The first were the 'native strangers' which were outsiders from the different parts of the Southern Cameroons and Nigerians under British administration. The second were 'native foreigners', outsiders from the French Cameroons mostly Duala, Bakoko, Yaunde, Bassa and Bamileke (NAB Ae/43). The latter found it advantageous settling in the urban areas either for farming or trade. The former were farmers who were attracted to the land by its fertility. This class of outsiders who did not secure wage labour at the plantations moved and settled in rural areas of the Victoria Division among the Balong.

Outside the Victoria Division, precisely in the Kumba Division the 'native strangers' were quickly assimilated into the local community owning both farm and urban land. The 'native strangers' were well conducted and desirable outsiders who were quickly integrated into the local community. The 'native foreigners' were the principal problem. The Duala were contemptuous of the local administration and always intriguing to deprive the local communities of their land. The Yaunde were seldom permanent settlers and prone to violence and difficult to control (NAB Ae/43). The attitude of the Yaunde 'native foreigners' was not only restricted to the Kumba Division as was evident in the deportation of Caspar Njomo from the British Southern Cameroons after he was tried and found

guilty by the Tiko Native Court of the Victoria Division for being in possession of stolen items and a nuisance to public peace and tranquillity (NAB Jc/1940/4). Within the urban and rural space, the indigenous insiders and the outsiders interacted with each other. Ardener identified three broad types of relationship (Social and Demographic Problems 91-92). In the first case, there were blocks of villages occupied by the insiders with very few outsiders. The relationship between the indigenous insiders and the strangers was generally cordial with a quick assimilation of the latter into the descent collectivity. This was typical of long established strangers in the Victoria Division.

Next were the numerous roadside settlements adjacent to the plantations. In these 'native reserves' were strangers' quarters that were not usually under the direct control of the village head, as they had their own quarter heads who were charged with the maintenance of law and order. In larger strangers' quarters, the settlement was divided according to ethnic groups with their own headman. In this case, the strangers reserved some autonomy from the indigenous insiders. However, they remained under the jurisdiction of the Native courts whose bench was manned entirely by the insiders.

In the third form of relationship between the insiders and the outsiders was one where there were no strangers' quarters. The fences separating the villages had dwindled with a declining number of the indigenous insiders against an increasing number of outsiders. This was typical of the Balong area of Victoria Division. As noted earlier, the area was an attraction to most 'native strangers' to take advantage of cocoa cultivation on private farms. In 1957 the outsider-insider population ratio was ten to one in the Balong area (Ardener 92). In their interaction with one another in the rural and urban space the plantation administration and the British colonial authority constructed *otherness* between the indigenous insiders and outsiders.

The construct of *Otherness*

The division of Victoria into plantation land, 'native reserves' home for the indigenes and strangers' quarters led to the construction of ethnicity a useful tool for *otherness*. The

separation of colonial settlements according to ethnic lines started in the colonial period with the British indirect rule system. Geschiere and Jackson argue that indirect rule just like the French *la politique des races* were inspired by the idea that people should be kept where they belong in order to facilitate ruling them (Fourchard 187).

Kano in Northern Nigeria was a laboratory for the British residential segregation. In 1909, the new Resident of Kano Province, Charles Temple, ordered all Southern Nigerians and other West Africans in the city to reside in the first military cantonment created in 1904. This later became known in 1911 as *Sabon Gari* the new town in the Hausa language. The colonial authorities argued they wanted to respect the sanctity of Islam in Kano, and the Southerners were predominantly Christians (Fourchard 192) and (Muhammad et al. 379). This colonial ordering of the society led to the invention of ethnicity in Northern Nigeria and the construction of *otherness* among the different Nigerian ethnic groups in that part of the colony.

In the British Southern Cameroons and in the Victoria Division, a major plantation town there was residential segregation as discussed in the second form of relations between the insiders and outsiders. There was the plantation settlement, the 'native' reserves and the strangers' quarters. However, residential segregation in the Victoria Division was not an official British policy as was the case in Kano. The strangers' quarters in the Victoria Division were established by the settlers themselves through continuous aggregation of settlers or strangers of similar cultural back- ground into the same area. As people moved to the plantations they immediately sought the solace of their fellow strangers. This primordialist conception of ethnicity served as an adaptive mechanism that enabled new outsiders into the Victoria Division to adjust successfully to the increasing alienation of the mass society (Nnoli 76). In this way residential segregation developed in the Victoria Division.

Although it was not an official colonial policy in the Victoria Division it was, however, encouraged by the German plantation owners and the British indirect rule. The plantocracy (plantation administration) had an interest fostering *otherness* between the insiders and the outsiders; among the outsiders between 'native strangers' and 'native

foreigners'. The German plantation authorities had earlier proposed the separation of camps according to ethnic groups. The Germans were particularly interested in this *otherness* to facilitate the recruitment of labour for the Victoria plantations. Plantation employees were encouraged to go back to their villages to invite their co-villagers to the plantations. *Otherness* was, therefore, necessary for labour recruitment for the various estates. Indirect rule too promoted *otherness* for its own benefit.

Inherent in the indirect rule system was divide and rule. The essence of *otherness* was to keep the strangers distance from the insiders so as to facilitate British rule over the colonial subjects. It neutralised any common front to oppose British rule in the territory. Besides the construction of *otherness* to facilitate the administration of the colonial subjects, *otherness* was also required for further recruitment of labour for the plantations. The insider/ outsider dichotomy was further reified by the British with use of stereotypes: 'lazy native' and 'hardworking strangers' for the former and latter respectively. These stereotypes were to some extent internalised by the insiders and outsiders which encouraged the former to keep a steady flow of labour to the plantations. In another *otherness* device, the Bamenda outsiders were referred to as 'backward' as opposed to the more 'advanced' insiders (Vubo 159). Delancey argues convincingly that the British deliberately neglected the development of the Bamenda Division to maintain the region as permanent suppliers of labour to the coastal plantations (308). As demonstrated *otherness* was an essential construct not only for the purpose of colonial administration but also for the supply of labour to the Victoria plantations. The insiders/outsiders cleavage was reified with colonial statutory regulations controlling access to land by the strangers.

Strangers' Land Rights

Right of ownership on land made the distinction between the 'sons of the soil', insiders and the outsiders and the division hardened as land became scarcer (Boone 48). The Victoria Division was the most affected by the German land alienation policy. Between 1897 and 1905, during the reign of

Jesko von Puttkamer, a total of 400 square miles of land in the later Victoria and Kumba Divisions were alienated to European individuals and companies. Of this lot, 83,000 hectares were alienated out of Bakweri lands situated in the Victoria Division (NAB Ac/92). In this way communal land in the 'native' reserves became scarce, and the colonial authorities were obliged to protect the land rights of the indigenous insiders against the outsiders whose numbers kept increasing. In the Victoria Division the colonialists were very protective of the insiders' rights on land reinforcing the customary land tenure system in what Boone describes as "institutionalisation of colonialism's customary land tenure system" (49). This in itself hardened the dichotomy between the insiders and the outsiders.

In his letter of 12 July 1939, J.G.C Allen District Officer Victoria writing to the Resident reminded the latter of British responsibility to protect the land rights of the indigenous insiders enshrined in article 5 of the Mandate Agreement. It stated:

> In framing of laws relating to the holding or transfer of land, the mandatory shall take into consideration native laws and customs and shall respect the rights and safeguard the interest of the native population. No native land may by transferred, except between natives, without the previous consent of the public authorities, and no real rights over native land in favour of non-natives may be created except with the same consent (NAB Qd/a/1936/5).

This article of the mandate agreement inspired a series of statutory regulations that protected the insiders against the alienation of their land by 'native strangers' and 'native foreigners'. Strangers' land right was restricted to usufructuary and not ownership[39]. Differences over land rights between the indigenes and strangers had often resulted in conflict.

In the Balong area of the Victoria Division complaints were made against strangers to the Divisional Officer.

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[39] Usufructuary right is limited to control over crops on land and not ownership of the land

Among other things, the strangers planted cocoa (perennial crop) on land given to them for the cultivation of food crop only; trespassed over boundaries of farm lands allotted to them; clear pieces of land for farming without reference to the village council and unlawful transfer of land rights from one stranger to another. The strangers countered, arguing that it was just a ploy by the insiders to seize their crops as no specifications had been made when the land was given to them. To the colonial authorities both parties needed each other, but any land given to a stranger must be registered against a fee. The tenancy agreement should define clearly the boundaries of the land allotted; specify the kind of crops to be cultivated, and the duration of occupation. For perennial crops, the period should be fairly long for the stranger to reap the benefits of his labour. This contract was renewable at the discretion of the insider (NAB Qf/a/1936). All this amounted to the protection of the land rights of the insiders as it denied the outsiders a permanent alienation of indigenous land. Colonial protection of Bakweri 'native' reserves against the strangers' occupation was even more rigorous.

In a memorandum D.H.J.N.O 332/37 of 11 September 1937, the District officer Victoria established rules protecting insiders against the strangers titled "Native Reserves in Victoria District Rule for Protection against Invasion by Strangers'. The document established *inter alia* No "native' is allowed to sell or give as security his or her farm with temporary or permanent crops to strangers. In case the farm-owner was in distress he should bring it to the Chiefs and Elders of the community. It was forbidden that farms of food crops as cocoa, palm trees and coffee are offered in the way of lease or sale to any stranger without the full knowledge of the Chiefs, the Elders and the villagers. No stranger is allowed to sell or lease land directly to any other stranger, but must first report his intention to the Native Authority, who would advertise it to the indigenes so that they could redeem their land from the stranger. Should there be no buyer (insider) to compensate the outsider for his labour, it shall be left to the discretion of the village head. A defaulting stranger shall lose his usufructuary right and shall be liable to a fine of not less than 20 pounds. The buyer shall likewise not be allowed to enter into possession of the land

which shall become part of the 'native' reserve for common use. New strangers are forbidden to take any piece of land in cultivation without the permission of the Native Authority. Defaulters are liable to a fine of 5 pounds or three months imprisonment, and to quit the land. No 'Native' (insider) is allowed to give land to any stranger-outsider for cultivation without the knowledge of the village heads and Elders in Council (NAB Qf/a/1936).

The above stated memorandum went a long way to harden the distinction between the insiders and the outsiders as the strangers were further estranged. While protecting the insiders customary land tenure the strangers outsiders status was highlighted which, to some extent strained their relations. However, strangers could obtain land for cultivation by applying for a licence to farm. Such application was addressed to the Native court having jurisdiction in the village group or clan area in which the stranger desires to farm. It was studied by the village head or clan council and forwarded to the colonial Authority with such comments as it was deemed proper. The licence was then issued specifying the crops to be planted; boundaries of the allotted plot; and period of occupation. Such a licence was not transferable and was subject to revocation where the terms of agreement were not respected (NAB Qf/a/1936). The colonial control of the customary land tenure resulted in what Boone calls 'derived rights' to land, which is conditional access granted to outsiders based on permission of indigenous insiders (49). The net effect was a widening cleavage between the strangers and their host indigenes.

Strangers and Political Participation

The 'native'/strangers, insiders/outsiders dichotomy was essential in the politics of inclusion and exclusion (Ndeh 31). As the indigenous insiders desired the exclusion of the outsiders on grounds of land holding, so too the strangers sought their inclusion on grounds of their tax contribution and development of the Victoria Division. This ignited the insiders/outsiders competition for political participation in the various local councils. In 1910 the German reorganised the local administration leaving out the strangers from the councils as their birth was not 'rooted in the soil'; 'sons of the

soil'. Following the expulsion of the Germans from the territory, between 1916 and 1922, the British, who had succeeded the Germans in this part of the protectorate, carried out new reforms still excluding the strangers whose numbers were soaring (Monono 72).

Between 1922 and 1935 strangers protested their exclusion from the local councils. Earlier in 1918 Mr. Bannerman was appointed to represent the strangers in the Tiko Native court with an observer status. He could only participate in matters that had an outsider as one of the parties. Following the strangers protest, in 1935 four outsiders were brought in the New Town Victoria council; two representing the Grassfields (people from the Bamenda Division and later province) and two representing the Hausa community (Monono 72). At the same time the colonial administration protected and reinforced superiority of the indigenes in the creation of federative council to serve as a broad base clan council. In this way the dominant position of the minority insiders shall be secured against the growing numbers of the outsiders in the Division.

The indigenous Bakweri Chiefs protested the inclusion of strangers into the local councils. They argued that stranger elements could not be admitted to the councils and court benches because the indigenes were competent enough to represent them. Also the strangers did not know Bakweri tradition and could not, therefore, sit with them in the councils and courts (Mbake 75-76). The colonial officials countered arguing that the strangers were paying taxes and ought to have a say in the local council. In 1942, Mr. Max Fohtung a Bali from the Bamanda Division fluent in *Mokpe* (the Bakweri Language) and Mr. Mandoline a 'native foreigner' of Yaunde origin were appointed to the Victoria federated Council (NAB Ag/1941/27). The strangers' representation in the Victoria Division council was still not satisfactory.

On 20 January 1957, the Kamerun Union of Settlers (Strangers) petitioned the Commissioner for the Cameroons through District officer Victoria for the under representation of the strangers in the local councils. The latter did not only contribute to the economic development of the Division but, they were in the majority and therefore, deserve a say in the local politics. According to the registered list of voters in the

Division, in the Tiko Council Area, there were 4689 strangers against 457 indigenes; in the Victoria Council Area 2210 strangers against 387 indigenes; in the Buea Council Area 3002 strangers to 901 insiders; and in the Balong council Area 2543 settlers against 91 indigenes (NAB Si/1957/3). In reference to the figures above, the Union requested the Commissioner for the Cameroons for equal representation of insiders / outsiders in the councils of the Division.

The colonial authorities were caught between protecting the interest of the minority insiders and the majority strangers who legitimately deserved greater say on grounds that they pay taxes which help to make up the present Government of the Division and the general welfare of the people. A compromise solution was found. It increased strangers' representation while maintaining the insiders in the majority. In the Victoria council there were 25 indigenes against 8 strangers; in Tiko 22 indigenes against 1l strangers; in Balong 21 indigenes, 6 strangers; and Bakolle 14 indigenes, 8 strangers (Monono 86). Evidently, the colonial authorities aligned with the insiders to the exclusion of the outsiders from full political participation in the Victoria Division.

The Victoria Division was a centre of attraction to thousands of labour migrants from the other Divisions of the British Southern Cameroons, the French Cameroons and Nigeria. These migrants constituted the strangers (outsiders) in the Victoria Division. Their presence led to competition for land which became scarcer and hardened the distinction between insiders and outsiders. *Otherness* between the insiders / outsider became essential for the recruitment of labour from out of the Victoria Division whose growing numbers compelled the colonial authorities to institute statutory regulations to protect the former against the latter.

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Between Alienation and Absurdity in Contemporary Nigerian Drama: Ola Rotimi's *Holding Talks* as Paradigm

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Since early post-colonial times down to the present day democratic governance, Nigeria has been thrown into one form of leadership crisis or the other. This predicament is traced largely to the insensitive disposition of the leaders towards the plight and welfare of their people. It cannot be over amplified that the institutionalization of democratic governance in Nigeria since May 29, 1999, has not brought about the envisaged turn around and improvement in the standard of living among the Nigerian masses. Since its inception as a system of governance in Nigeria, there has been a high ray of hope for improved livelihood among the followership class considering the air of freedom and collective consciousness which ideal democracy embodies.

Seventeen years and more into democratic governance in Nigeria, there is seldom any form of infrastructural or human resource development to show for it. The stunted or worse still, stagnated growth and development of the socio-economic structure and human capacity building of the Nigerian country has brought about the upsurge of such criminal manifestations as broad-day-and- night armed robberies, incessant kidnappings, rapid suicide bombing, series of agitations for self-determination, cybercrimes and fraud among others. These developments have further put in the minds of average Nigerians, the feeling of estrangement, nihilism, ennui, anguish, despair and disillusionment among others. These feelings are in turn expressed in various forms depending on the psychological dispositions of the various geo-political enclaves that make up the Nigerian country. Whereas some geo-political or ethnic groups express the feeling of estrangement by boycotting every governmental

event or program, thus being unpatriotic, some extremists constitute themselves into a nucleus of revolutionaries who are often tagged "anti-establishments" as a way of registering their displeasure over government's insensitivity to their plights. The current agitation for self-determination by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) under the leadership of Mr Nnamdi Kanu, is a clear example of the feeling of estrangement among the followership class in Nigeria.

   Another medium through which Nigerians have registered their disenchantment and detachment from the nation's body polity is through drama just as we find in the ideological commitment of such pioneer absurdist playwrights as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Arthur Adamov. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the alienation and absurdist tenets in contemporary Nigerian drama using Ola Rotimi's *Holding Talks* as a paradigm.

The Concept of Absurdism

Generally, the term absurdism is used in reference to a philosophical standpoint based on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless and that the search for order brings the individual into conflict with the universe. As a philosophy, absurdism explores the fundamental nature of the absurd and how individuals, once becoming conscious of the absurd, should respond to it. Albert Camus, one of the early philosophers to introduce the term into philosophy states that individuals should embrace the absurd condition of human existence while also defiantly continuing to explore and search for meaning (Camus 3). History has it that absurdism originated from the 20th century strains of existentialism and nihilism. Pratt Alan notes that absurdism, existentialism and nihilism arose from the human experience of anguish and confusion stemming from the absurd i.e. the apparent meaninglessness in a world in which humans, nevertheless, are so compelled to find a meaning or create it.(7) Scholarly opinions however express a remarkable divergence between the three schools of thought. The divergence is summarized in Crosby Donald's analogy, thus:

> Existentialists have generally advocated the individual's construction of his or her own meaning in life as well as the free will of the individual. Nihilists, on the contrary, contend that "it is futile to seek or to affirm meaning where none can be found . . . Absurdists, following Camus's formulation, hesitantly allow the possibility for some meaning. (4)

Drawing from Camus' analogy as enshrined in his *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger*, the absurdists also devalue or outright reject free will, encouraging merely that the individual live defiantly and authentically in spite of the psychological tension of the absurd.

The notion of the 'absurd' permeates all the major writings of Albert Camus with *The Myth of Sisyphus* as the lead work on the subject. In his absurdist masterpiece, Camus conceives absurdity as a confrontation, an opposition, a conflict or a divorce between two ideals. In specific terms, he defines the human condition as a confrontation between man's desire for significance, meaning and clarity on the one hand and the silent, cold universe in which man has been thrust, on the other. The realization or encounter with the absurd leaves the individual with a choice namely, suicide, a leap of faith or recognition. Camus concludes that recognition is the only defensible option (41). Camus' cardinal interest in *The Myth of Sisyphus* is to express the existentialist truth that human freedom is anchored on men's natural ability and opportunity to create their own meaning and purpose--to decide or think for themselves.

For Camus, the individual becomes the most precious unit of existence, representing a set of unique ideals that can be characterized as an entire universe in its own right. In acknowledging the absurdity of seeking any inherent meaning, but continuing this search regardless, one can be happy, gradually developing meaning from the search alone. Camus writes:

> I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death, and I refuse suicide. (64)

"Revolt" here refers to the refusal of suicide and search for meaning despite the revelation of the absurd; "freedom" refers to the lack of imprisonment by religious devotion or other moral codes; and "passion" refers to the most wholehearted experiencing of life, since hope has been rejected. Camus' summative thesis in *The Myth of Sisyphus* reads rather paradoxical especially as it concerns freedom. Here, he contends that freedom cannot be achieved beyond what the absurdity of existence permits but, the closest one can come to being absolutely free is through acceptance of the absurd.

Theatre of the Absurd: History and Evolution

The phenomenon known as Theatre of the Absurd is a child of necessity. Its emergence is tied largely to the incessant brutality and devastation of human lives and properties especially in Europe due to the Second World War. Brockett and Ball note that the avant-gardist doctrines of Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud took root in the 1950s and 1960s where they exhibited considerable influence on theatre, first in Europe and then in the United States. The reason for the overwhelming patronage of Brecht and Artaud's theatrical experiments was "because Europe had suffered so much devastation and been subjected to so many atrocities, its post-war mood was much more serious than that of America" (Brockett and Ball 183).

Brockett and Ball add that by the middle of the nineteenth century, in France, questions regarding truth, values and moral responsibility were pursued by the existentialist philosophers with Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus as the lead voices. A group of playwrights emerged in France around 1950 and accepted the views of Sartre and Camus about the human condition. But unlike the latter, these playwrights believed that making rational and meaningful choices was impossible in an irrational universe (185). For the absurdists, the world consisted of chaos, lack of order, logic or uncertainty, and their plays embodied this vision in a structure that abandoned causal relationships. The critic Martin Esslin came to label dramas containing these characteristics as absurdist putting into cognizance Albert

Camus' description of the human condition as 'absurd' in his *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Theatre of the Absurd, therefore, is not a conscious movement like Surrealism, Expressionism or Realism but a coincidental compilation of works that portray human disillusionment, alienation and despair as a result of the horror occasioned by the Second World War by Martin Esslin in his book *Theatre of the Absurd* (1961).

      The New Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre defines theatre of the absurd as the works of loosely associated group of dramatists writing in the 1950s and 1960s, whose plays are characterized by a broadly similar view of the futility of existence (92). Like Esslin, *The New Penguin Dictionary of the Theatre* acknowledges that theatre of the absurd is an offshoot of Camus' earlier description of the human condition as being "absurd" and also that "Despite their dislocated language, illogical plots, and intellectual seriousness, the plays are often comic, reflecting the irrationality of real experience" (2). In a parallel vein, Alex Asigbo notes that absurd dramatists present the disorder and senselessness of human experience in an irrational and illogical manner, and that "Absurd plays use existential characters that are defined by their actions on stage and not by past memories or actions" (31).

      History also has it that the four major absurdist playwrights *ab initio* are Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Arthur Adamov. However, in a subsequent edition of his book *Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin added Harold Pinter as the fifth absurdist playwright; he noted as well that each of these writers has unique preoccupations and characteristics that go beyond the term "absurd" (Esslin 12). As he puts it, "each of the writers in question is an individual who regards himself as a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in his primitive world" (Qtd. in Dukore 669). In terms of language and structure, absurdist plays draw huge influences from Elizabethan tragi-comedy, Surrealism, Dadaism and most importantly, Existentialism. Jones Styan observes that most absurdist plays are crafted in the generic mode of tragi-comedy especially those of William Shakespeare (13). Esslin corroborates Styan's observation when he states that Shakespeare's influence is acknowledged directly in the titles of Ionesco's *Macbett* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (23). Interestingly,

theatre of the absurd still stands out as one of the greatest manifestations of the avant-garde theatrical experiments that emerged since the wake of the 20ᵗʰ century.

Synopsis of *Holding Talks*

Ola Rotimis's *Holding Talks* is often adjudged an archetypal absurdist Nigerian drama in form and content. In terms of content, it portrays the collapse of pragmatism within the tiers of leadership in contemporary Nigeria. Using an impoverished barber's shop as the setting, the play satirizes the ridiculous inactivity of Nigerian leaders in situations that call for immediate actions. In this play, the character who is known as Barber engages one of his customers, whom the playwright christens Man, in an argument that leads to a bet over a trivial issue of whether his hand shakes. In the end, Barber loses the bet to the character of Man and unable to stand the shock of losing the only money in his coffers, he slumps. The situation becomes absurdly comic when Man, engages in holding talks with Barber's apprentice rather than take pro-active measures to revive the dying Barber. The verbal slug-fest between Man and Apprentice lingers to the dangerous extent that Barber passes out. Yet Man expresses the feeling of indifference as he sends Apprentice in a series of "fool's errand". Moments later, Man confirms Barber's death and yet sees in his death another opportunity to blame Barber for arguing with him from the beginning.

Reluctantly, Man persuades Apprentice to go and make formal entry at the Police station and Apprentice returns with a female Police officer who saunters ridiculously into the Barber's shop with a tissue paper and a faintly-flowing pen in pretended agility to extract information from Man and Apprentice. Amidst her unprofessional disposition towards extracting information, Man and Apprentice conspire and become mute momentarily to the utter frustration of the Police Officer who storms out of the scene, thereby leaving Man and Apprentice to continue in their "holding talks." The play ends on this static and unresolved note as Man still engages Apprentice in frivolous talks while the body of Barber still lies lifeless on the floor.

Aesthetics of Absurdism and Alienation in *Holding Talks*

Our recourse to aesthetics of the absurd in this essay would include the dramatic form which the playwright Ola Rotimi has encapsulated in the play in a bid to communicate his intuitive feelings and pessimistic vision of the Nigerian society. Such forms include; partially developed plot, devaluation of language, existential beings as characters, and the exhaustive use of poetic images.

(i) The Use of Partially Developed Plot

The plot of *Holding Talks* is devoid of such fully-developed plot ingredients as exposition, conflict, complication, rising action, climax and denouement. As the play opens, Barber and Apprentice are seen in the Barber's shop wallowing in the idle fancies of sleeping and leafing through the pages of newspapers with boring captions respectively. Rotimi captures the scenario, thus:

> *Apprentice Barber is sitting on the stool. Nothing to do, he is leafing through the pages of some tattered newspapers, stopping now and again to read out, in an unfeeling air, idle drawl, the captions on some of the pages--all of which report on TALKS--all species of TALKS:... On the bench at the other side of the shop, the Master Barber himself lies full-length, face heaven-wards, asleep. Or trying to sleep.* (1)

Amidst Barber and Apprentice's idle wait for a customer, the character known as Man enters with an air of sophistication and disgust for the rickety and impoverished composition of the shop. The meeting between the three characters does not express the supposed warm camaraderie that ought to exist between a business man and his client. On sighting Man, Apprentice, without any form of pleasantries, "steps sprightly ahead of Man, gets to the swivel-chair, and steadies it with toady diligence for man to sit in" (1). Without any form of verbal exchange still, Apprentice drapes Apron on Man as a way of preparing him for the master Barber to give him a haircut. It is only after this preparation that

Apprentice manages to utter a word to Man, thus: Music, sir? Man turns down the offer and so Apprentice in another attempt to impress him, offers to put on the standing fan. This time, Man accepts the offer but Apprentice's antics to impress his customer are again truncated as the fan refuses to rotate with the expected maximum speed even after adjusting it to the maximum knob.

On his part, Man understands the impoverished condition of the fan and so decides to ignore it so he can have his haircut but as Barber approaches to dig the clippers into his hair, Man interrupts the process by asking Barber, thus: "You know Gabriel?" Barber tries to enquire more about the Gabriel in question but Man disengages from the conversation by responding rudely to Barber, thus, "If you don't know Gabriel, you don't know Gabriel" (3). Man beckons that they go straight to the business of haircut and as Barber makes again to dig the comb into man's hair, the latter interrupts the process again but this time with the excuse that the hand of Barber shakes. Man's unfounded discovery brings about another round of argument between Man and Barber. The deduction here is that the plot is stagnated to the point that it does not signal any form of rising action neither does it point to foreshadowing. One observes that the real deal of haircut between Barber and Man has been put on hold in favor of holding trivial talks. Even the collapse of Barber after losing the bet is greeted with indifference as nothing serious is done to revive him. The playwright captures this stagnated plotting technique, thus:

> MAN. (*...lets go of Barber's legs, and straightens up*) You see what I mean? I mean, I will continue to be myself. To be kind and gentle: always ready to help . . . I bet you, by the time we get this man to the hospital, he'll be dead as mud. You know what I mean? Dead-dead. Iron dead. Door knob dead. Marble-stonedead. You know? Ice-block dead. Dead-wood dead. Stone floor dead. Dead weight dead. Rock bottom dead. I mean: dead. . . . (10)

The response of Man above aptly underscores the inaction of the leadership class in situations that call for emergency in

Nigeria. The same thread of insensitivity runs through the Nigerian security system as we find in the character of Police Officer who comes into a supposed serious crime scene with tissue paper and pencil as materials to put down his report. What the playwright has done here is to reflect the absurdist tradition of partially developed plot through the technique of playing down on causality. The entrance of the Police Officer does not, in any way, improve on the development of the plot. This is in conformity with the stark realities in Nigeria whereby the policing system is porous, amateurish, indifferent and locomotive in their response to duty on the excuse that they are poorly equipped by their leaders. In the play, Rotimi adopts the cyclical plot pattern whereby the dramatic actions play out arbitrarily in a kind of vicious circle without tangible structural progression, thus, underscoring the position of Camus' in his *The Myth of Sisyphus* that "...This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity" (15). The plot of the play is reaped of such essential elements of plot as foreshadowing, rising action, complication, climax, falling action and denouement as the characters consistently engage in meaningless conversations, verbal slug fest and war of wits with little or no genuine concern for the body of Barber which lies motionless on the floor.

(ii) Devaluation of Language

The issue of language devaluation remains one of the predominant tenets of theatre of the absurd. In the play under study, language is devalued through the use of repetitions of words, disconnected dialogue and onomatopoeia. In an attempt to activate the fan in the Barber's shop to work to full capacity, the following dialogue ensues between Apprentice and Man:

> MAN. High, put it on high
> APPRENTICE. Yes, Sir…
> MAN. Is that maximum?
> APPRENTICE. No, Sir, this is high, Sir. Do you want maximum, Sir?
> MAN. Maximum, yes, try maximum

> APPRENTICE. Yes, Sir...
> MAN. Is that maximum?
> APPRENTICE. Maximum, Sir. Yes, Sir.
> BARBER. That is maximum, Sir.
> MAN. I see. Let him try high again, then.
> BARBER. Go back to high.... (3)

The words "high" and "maximum" in this excerpt are used interchangeably in a derogatory sense in order to underscore the absurdist position that words in human language have lost their semantic relevance and as such can no longer guarantee effective communication. Similarly, the word "maximum" is repeated in several sentences in the excerpt in an attempt to control the fan to work in its highest speed; yet the speed does not progress beyond the one we get when the knob is on low. Also, the term "personality" is abused to the ridiculous extent that the character of Man begins to babble it like a sound, thus:

> MAN (*trying to make out the word*). Oh, Personalata! (*Exaggerates the pronunciation.*) P-e-r-s-o-n-a-l-a-t-a Give the word its deserts, man. It has weight. When you say it, let it fill the mouth like a lot of substance, a lot of raw meat...p-e-r-s-o-n-a-l-a-t-a. (29)

Here, Rotimi takes a satirical swipe at the Nigerian nation for laying so much emphasis on class stratification such that only societal figures and personalities are given primary attention in public service, thus, creating some form of alienation for the ordinary citizens. Man charges Apprentice to go to the police station with the air of a "personality" if he desires immediate attention. As he puts it "To talk to the police et cetera, one must have it. It's the prerequisite, the key to being listened to brother. Personalata! (29).

Another manifestation of devaluation of language is by way of disconnected dialogue. The character of Man consistently wallows in arbitrary response in course of his dialogue with Barber on one hand and Apprentice on the other. Having lost the bet to Man, Barber slumps but rather than help Apprentice to rush Barber to the hospital, Man

engages Apprentice in disconnected dialogue and fruitless talks at the expense of Barber's life, thus:

> (...*Man turns to Apprentice who is bending over the prostrate bodyof Barber, utterly disconcerted*)
> MAN. Haircut is how much?
> APPRENTICE. Ten pence, Sir.
> MAN. Total: fifteen pence... (*He dips a hand into his pocket, brings out the amount...ambling over to Barber's body*) help me carry this...
> APPRENTICE. To where, Sir
> MAN. (*Coolly*) Where do God-loving people carry their neighbors to, who fall down dying? Can we do like God-loving people, then?
> APPRENTICE. I'll go get a taxi first, and then-
> MAN. What is wrong with that car outside? Not good enough?
> APPRENTICE. That ...Mercedes Benz, Sir.
> MAN. Hm, not good enough
> APPRENTICE. Ah...well...how could we...the owner, Sir.
> MAN. What if I tell you I'm the owner? (9)

Man's arbitrary response, as evident in the excerpt above, confuses Apprentice as Barber continues to die slowly but surely. Though Man and Apprentice are engaged in a dialogue, there seems to be no communication between them as nothing is being done to revive the dying Barber. The above scenario aptly captures one of the positions of theatre of the absurd which states that human communication is a far cry especially in a world where existence is worthless and experience purposeless.

(iii) Existential Beings as Characters

Quite characteristic of absurdist dramas, the characters in *Holding Talks* are character types and existential beings that lack psychological depth and personal history. The playwright uses character types to portray the feeling of alienation amongst the common masses in Nigeria. Man is quite symbolic of the ruling class who care little or nothing about the suffering masses. Right from his entrance into

Barber's shop, Man goes about with an air of sophistication just to underscore his robust social status and affluence. Though he poses like a wealthy man, he does not hesitate to dispossess the poor of the little in their coffers. He throws caution to the wind and dips his hand into the dying Barber's pocket and makes away with the money therein. In another development, he offers a blind beggar and his boy a cash gift of four pence and after receiving blessings from the blind beggar, he interrupts their exit and yanks two bananas out of the three left in the beggar's bag in order to recoup from the goodwill he has extended to them *ab initio*. The character of Man is a metaphor for the leadership, capitalist and opulent classes who consistently alienate the lower class through oppression, intimidation and exploitation.

On the other hand, the characters of Apprentice, Barber, Blind Beggar and Boy symbolize the alienated Nigerians who engage in the routine of day dreaming, fantasizing and monotonous activities such as fondling with worn out radio and fan knobs in anticipation of a favorable response that may never come. Having been alienated enough by the ruling class, the suffering masses (as exemplified in the characters of Barber, Apprentice and Blind Beggar) wallow in self-pity and helplessness as they continuously do the bidding of the ruling class. Apprentice consistently relies on Man for instructions on how to handle Barber's unconscious state even when Man engages him in circumlocution, thus:

> APPRENTICE. I'm ...going to get a ...taxi
> MAN. Taxi? What for?
> APPRENTICE. To carry him to the hospital, Sir
> MAN.   Really,   now!
> You?...taxi?...him...carry...hospital?
> (*Bursts into uproarious laughter.*)
> APPRENTICE. (*Puzzled*). I ...does...doesn't it make sense, Sir?
> Will it get me in trouble?.... (21)

The last question posed by Apprentice in the excerpt above aptly portrays Apprentice as not just a straightjacketed and irrational character but also as a character undergoing some form of metaphysical anguish and mechanical rigidity

accruing from accumulated intimidation, oppression and marginalization by the ruling class. Rather than confront his fears (MAN) and hold him responsible for Barber's collapse, Apprentice prefers to take the blame just to extricate himself from Man's wrath.

Our analysis so far reveals that Rotimi's *Holding Talks* is an archetypal Nigerian absurdist drama that deploys the partially developed plot technique, devaluation of language and existential beings as characters to evoke the feeling of alienation between the high and low social classes in the Nigerian nation. The playwright also used such poetic images as an impoverished barber's shop hosting weather-rattled ceiling fans, swivel chair and clippers to portray poverty and squalor in the Nigerian country. In a parallel vein, the playwright also ridicules the inefficiencies and inadequacies of the Nigerian police force. This is evident in the arbitrary entrance of Police Woman into the Barber's shop with mechanical military agility for interrogation with such ridiculous interrogation materials as pencil and tissue paper. It is the cumulative effect of the decadence in the nation's social structure that brings about the feeling of alienation, nihilism and ennui amongst the citizens of Nigeria.

The paper has revealed that Nigeria, as an independent nation, is shrouded in some form of lingering leadership crises which has, in turn, occasioned the feeling of nihilism, ennui, despair and disillusionment among the citizenry. In the course of our analysis of Rotimi's *Holding Talks,* we have observed that the leadership class, as represented in the character of Man, has continuously alienated its followers (Barber, Apprentice, Beggar and Boy) by impoverishing them and denying them access to such social services as health care, security, education, electricity and recreation. Rather than deliver these basic amenities to the common masses, the leaders continuously engage them in lofty but empty talks and promises to wet their appetite as well as tickle their fancies.

Rotimi's *Holding Talks* is a clarion call on the leadership class in Nigeria to take pro-active measures in the delivery of social welfare to the poor masses as well as improve on the general living conditions of the average Nigerian through the creation of flexible and sustained economic policies. It is

hoped that creating such enabling economic machineries would help to transform the mindset of the suffering masses from the feeling of estrangement, alienation, absurdity, nihilism and pessimism to that of optimism and patriotism.

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The Gentle Trailblazer: Longfellow's Faith-fueled Advocacy for Victims of Colonial Power across Ethnic, Religious, and Gender Lines

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Twenty-first century scholars of all ages and disciplines learn about multiculturalism and the lingering cultural malaise that permeates postcolonial America. Efforts to change old prejudices, to increasingly enlighten minds, and to promote unity and respect are foundational to many artistic and cultural endeavors. While people often think of these as new ideas unique to recent scholarship and social awareness, it is important to note that, despite the cultural insensitivities, abuses, and discrimination that are an admitted part of American history, there have always been people who noticed, objected, and even worked to influence change. Long before Ethnic Studies and Postcolonial Criticism came to prominence, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, fueled by his Unitarian Christianity, employed Biblical allusion, sentimentality, and faith language in writing "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie," "The Song of Hiawatha," and "The Slave Singing at Midnight" to illustrate how impersonal colonial agendas had deeply personal consequences for Black, Native American, and Acadian (French Canadian) people caught in their wake.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine on 27 February 1807 and died in Cambridge, Massachusetts on 24 March 1882. His family was drawn from "New England's modest, old-stock, cultural elite" who distinguished themselves as "patriots and public servants" (Maine Historical Society[40] "The Family of . . ."). During his

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[40] Maine Historical Society will be abbreviated to MHS.

75 years, his efforts produced some of the most popular and beloved poetry in American literature. He wrote everything from critical essays and language textbooks to love stories in both prose and poetry, and his words are well-remembered and oft-quoted (MHS "Leaving Portland . . ."). Dana Gioia characterizes the quality of Longfellow's writing as "excellence without condescension" (WGBHForum 28:59–29:03) and points out as evidence of the accessibility and quality of his writing that both Queen Victoria and her servants were equally excited to meet him when he visited England. Although later critics have sometimes been uncomplimentary because his writing was more traditional than that of his contemporaries or the rebellious modernists that followed, his works remain relevant because of not only their influence on the formation of American identity, but also their early position in the American literary tradition.

Longfellow began writing early and had his first poems published in 1820 when he was only a young teenager. The following year, he started attending Bowdoin College where he graduated in 1825 with notable classmates Nathaniel Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce (Baym and Levine). After studying and traveling in Europe for a few years, Longfellow returned to Bowdoin to teach, and in 1831, he married Mary Potter and began writing critical essays and language textbooks. On his next extended trip to Europe, in the first of his life's great tragedies, he lost his young wife and their first child to miscarriage (MHS "Leaving Portland: . . ."). While he traveled to fight his depression over his loss, he met Frances "Fanny" Appleton. It would take her seven years to return the love Longfellow soon developed for her, but when she did, they married, and she was the "great love of [his] life" (MHS "Leaving Portland: . . . "). Longfellow continued to write, and he taught at Harvard University while he and Fanny had a beautiful life together and were blessed with six children (MHS "Henry's Life in Cambridge"). Longfellow's life would be touched again by tragedy, first with the loss of their youngest daughter to an illness when she was only a toddler, and later when a terrible accident and fire led to the death of his beloved Fanny (MHS "Elder Years"). Longfellow was seriously injured trying to save his wife from that fire and bore the scars the rest of his life. He never stopped writing, but he was never again as

prolific after this loss. These are just a few of the major events of Longfellow's life that contributed to the character and experience that would inform his compassion for others in his poetry.

Longfellow had an interesting blend of Christian thinking that shaped the ways his faith influenced his writing. During the American Renaissance, ideas about religious faith were changing dramatically from those of the Puritan faith of the early colonists. The Unitarian and Universalist movements in American church history ran counter to the rigid and uncompromising tenets of Calvinism, particularly those that sacrificed any semblance of human free will to an extreme interpretation of the sovereignty of God (Robinson). As happens whenever a pendulum reaches the edge of its arc, it must begin to swing back in the opposite direction, and even in the Puritan church, pastors were starting to question the harshest aspects of Calvin's doctrine of election (Robinson). This view held that God had elected some to salvation and the rest to damnation and that individuals had no part in their eternal destiny. The arbitrariness and capriciousness this view attributed to God was becoming untenable to many Christians. The extreme nature of this idea caused a great deal of consternation, and when the Universalists offered the radical idea that "salvation is for all" (Robinson 3), people were ready to embrace it and accept its emphasis on "the moral imperative of good works" (4). Some who were not willing to go quite as far as the Universalists retained some aspects of Calvinism, but chose to "emphasize God's benevolence, humankind's free will, and the dignity rather than the depravity of human nature" (Robinson 4)—these were the Unitarians. In addition to these changes in theological understanding, the sermon style was changing, too. Puritan practice had long held that imagination was dangerous and susceptible to temptation, but between 1800 and 1860, pastors and preachers began to see how appeals to the human imagination could so move the emotions of a listener that the mind and heart could be opened to faith (Reynolds). During this time, "a spirit of piety permeated much secular fiction and poetry" (Reynolds 15), and as this idea caught on, writers increasingly used the power of story

to move people's hearts toward this newer, gentler (sometimes more liberal) understanding of Christianity.

It was in this climate that Longfellow came to his Christian faith. He was raised by "parents (his mother in particular) [who] avoided stern sectarianism in favor of more liberal and progressive spiritual ideals" (MHS "The Family of . . ."). Longfellow's family was most aligned with the Unitarian church, and his brother Samuel was a Unitarian minister (Robinson). However, their Puritan roots kept Longfellow on the more traditional side of Unitarian theology rather than the more extreme Transcendentalism that was gaining popularity (Robinson). Longfellow's Unitarian (with shades of Universalist) Christianity held great significance for him, and his beliefs informed his storytelling and infused his poetry with Biblical allusion and the language of faith.

Longfellow's long narrative poem "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie" is one of his most famous works, and it is an impressive poetic achievement that was also a commercial success. Despite its popularity, critics have often dismissed it for its sentimentality. What these critics have deemed to be its downfall should more accurately be recognized as indicative of Longfellow's humanizing resistance against the dehumanizing effects of living in a modernizing world and a tribute to a noble people whose humanity deserved to be remembered.

"Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie" is a fictional story set within the true events of the Acadian Removal of 1755, remembered by the Acadians as "*le grand derangement*" (Faragher 84). It is a heartbreaking, yet uplifting story of abiding love in the face of colonial cruelty. The Acadians were a group of people living in what is now the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. After residing in this area surrounding the Bay of Fundy for more than a hundred years, these descendants of French colonists had intermarried extensively with the Native Mi'kmaq people. The two cultures had blended uniquely to become the Acadians (Faragher), and together they had established a life so lovely that Longfellow called it "the home of the happy" ("Evangeline" line 19). When these peaceable people refused to choose sides between the French and the English, "it was a response to the facts of life on the margins of empire, to the

uncertain ricochet of their homeland back and forth between empires" (Faragher 86). The Acadians had learned that when living between rival empires, at any moment, they might need today's enemy to be tomorrow's friend, and it did not serve their best interests to make enemies of either side. Their desire to live "at peace with God and the world" (Longfellow, "Evangeline" line 103) was taken as a threat to British authority and what followed was a calculated move by the British that can only be called an "ethnic cleansing" (Faragher 84). In a diabolical plan a year in the making, the British called the men to a meeting where they would be taken hostage until they would agree to surrender their homes and families on the false premise that they would be sent to join other French communities in Canada (Faragher). Longfellow portrays the cold announcement in these few short words: "'Prisoners now I declare you; for such is his Majesty's pleasure!'" ("Evangeline" line 441). In an instant, their peace was shattered, and in a further nasty trick, they were to be sent not to other French Canadian settlements, but to far-flung destinations throughout North American British holdings, a plan "aimed at nothing less than the complete destruction of the Acadian community" (Faragher 91). When they executed their plan, many families were separated, and some never saw each other again (Faragher). This tragic and inhuman flexing of colonial power was the true story that ignited Longfellow's crafting of this fictional telling of the resiliency and faithfulness of one young, devout, true-hearted Acadian woman he named Evangeline.

Longfellow hoped for an America where unity could be found among people from different faith, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and this desire for unity informs his poetic storytelling in "Evangeline" (Higgins). While Higgins posits that Longfellow presents a vision of the Acadians' Catholicism that is intentionally "not too Catholic" (558) and one without its hierarchical structures too much in evidence, the difference is one of emphasis, not anti-Catholic views. At a time when the Catholic Church was still not particularly welcome in New England, Longfellow, with his Unitarian openness, was more tolerant of Catholicism, and his favorable characterizations of Evangeline and her people illustrate his hope that Catholics could find a place in America. In the scene where Evangeline's beloved father dies

of a broken heart at the forced expulsion from their home, Longfellow draws readers into the emotions of these displaced Catholic believers:

> Such were the words of the priest. And there in haste by the sea-side,
> Having the glare of the burning village for funeral torches,
> But without bell or book, they buried the farmer of Grand-Pré.
> And as the voice of the priest repeated the service of sorrow,
> Lo! with a mournful sound, like the voice of a vast congregation,
> Solemnly answered the sea, and mingled its roar with the dirges. ("Evangeline" lines 655–660)

By separating Evangeline and the priest of Grand Pré from the external trappings of their Catholic religion while highlighting the essence of their faith in God, Longfellow broadens out the resonance of it to a much larger group of believers.

Not only did Longfellow write with religious unity and openness in mind, but in another expression of his gentle trailblazing, he portrays Evangeline in a way that both honors and bucks traditional ideas about the feminine ideal (Joiner). She fulfills all of the 19th century's ideal "attributes of True Womanhood . . . [which were] divided into four cardinal virtues--piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 152). Longfellow also portrays her as determined, proud, and willful in her pursuit of finding Gabriel, characteristics more traditionally associated with male heroes (Joiner). Joiner relates these qualities to the martyrdom of Evangeline's suffering for love and her willingness to sacrifice her life in faithfulness to God and to Gabriel. Evangeline comes across not as a martyr in the victim sense, but as a strong woman with a love so abiding that she will allow nothing to deter her. Longfellow places sentimental focus on a heroine whose deep faith, sacrificial love, and powerful emotions connect her with her community in service to others despite her own suffering

(Blair). When given the opportunity to stop searching for her husband, Evangeline refuses, saying,

> Whither my heart has gone, there follows my hand, and not elsewhere.
> For when the heart goes before, like a lamp, and illumines the pathway,
> Many things are made clear, that else lie hidden in darkness.'
> Thereupon the priest, her friend and father-confessor,
> Said, with a smile, 'O daughter! thy God thus speaketh within thee!
> Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted. (lines 715–720)

Evangeline's desperation to find her husband at any cost and her determination to follow her heart when reason might advise a more practical path puts heroism in a feminine frame, and this was unusual and bold on Longfellow's part. A more traditional 19th century approach would have been to make Gabriel the heroic character searching for his beautiful wife and coming to her rescue, but instead, Longfellow marks Evangeline the hero and Gabriel the one in need of rescue. Blair explains that "Evangeline" is "part of an attempt to make the 'language of the feelings and the heart' into a coherent ideology, in that despite the geographical dislocation of [the] heroine, . . . [her] sense of shared feeling could . . . become part of how . . . communities define themselves." Longfellow wrote "Evangeline" as a tale of "the beauty and strength of a woman's devotion" (line 17) to invoke sympathy for the suffering of the Acadian people, and he chooses a young woman as the face that makes the suffering personal.

    In addition to the sentimental portrayal of Evangeline as a noble and pious character, evidence of Longfellow's faith as his motivation for how he cares about and honors the Acadian people in "Evangeline" shows in his Biblical allusions and faith language throughout the poem. He describes the blustery Canadian autumn, saying, "Harvests were gathered in; and wild with the winds of September / Wrestled the trees of the forest, as Jacob of old with the angel" (lines 152–153). Longfellow likens the weather to the

story of the all-night wrestling match between Jacob and the Angel of the Lord (Genesis 32:24-30). Early in the story, Longfellow foreshadows and symbolizes the imminent expulsion when he writes:

> Yet were her thoughts of him, and at times a feeling of sadness
> Passed o'er her soul, as the sailing shade of clouds in the moonlight
> Flitted across the floor and darkened the room for a moment.
> And, as she gazed from the window, she saw serenely the moon pass
> Forth from the folds of a cloud, and one star follow her footsteps,
> As out of Abraham's tent young Ishmael wandered with Hagar! (lines 376–381)

In this allusion, Longfellow calls to mind the story of Abraham's Egyptian handmaid Hagar and their son Ishmael; mother and child are unfairly driven away from their home, but God rescues them, and Hagar would call Him "the God who sees me" (*New International Version*, Gen. 16.13). These are only two of many times Longfellow borrows from the stories and people of the Bible to enrich his poetic storytelling.

In addition to direct references to the Bible, Longfellow also uses the language of Christian faith as he follows Evangeline through her life of faithfulness to God. When Evangeline is discouraged, the priest encourages her with the message that her patience will leave her "heart . . . made godlike / Purified, strengthened, perfected, and rendered more worthy of heaven!" (lines 726–727). When she is sad, Longfellow writes of the "voice that whispered, 'Despair not!'" (line 730), describing the Holy Spirit whom Jesus called the "Comforter" (*King James Version,* John 14.16). Even in Evangeline's final heartbreak, holding the lifeless body of Gabriel in her arms having only just found him, she does not rage or scream at the sky, but instead, cradling Gabriel's head, "Meekly she bowed her own, and murmured, 'Father, I thank thee!'" (line 1380). There is nothing so faithful as the choice to magnify the tiniest

blessing while suffering crippling pain, and Longfellow demonstrates his understanding of the heart and vocabulary of faith throughout Evangeline's tragic but triumphant love story.

In addition to "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie," Longfellow wrote another extraordinarily popular book-length narrative poem called "The Song of Hiawatha." As with "Evangeline," Longfellow's inspiration is rooted in the realities of people's lives, but his poetry is a fictional treatment that gives him a great deal of freedom to express more than just historical events in verse. In the "The Song of Hiawatha," Longfellow again finds inspiration in the stories of a marginalized people (stories collected by the linguist, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft), the Native Ojibway / Ojibwe people and the neighboring Dacotahs, who lived near the Great Lakes (Nurmi).

As a lover of languages, Longfellow (who spoke as many as eight languages according to Gioia), was interested in including what he could of the Ojibway language in this poem to preserve the sound of the Ojibway storytellers as well as some of the legends they told:

> Sounds of music, words of wonder;
> 'Minne-wawa!" said the pine-trees,
> Mudway-aushka!" said the water.
> Saw the fire-fly, Wah-wah-taysee,
> Flitting through the dusk of evening,
> With the twinkle of its candle
> Lighting up the brakes and bushes, ("The Song of Hiawatha" Kindle Loc. 75467)

The beauty of the natural landscapes and the legends themselves take on a magical quality within the imagery and the music of the trochaic tetrameter Longfellow chose to convey this story.

As he honored the culture and faith traditions of the Acadian people in "Evangeline," Longfellow writes to honor the culture and faith traditions of the Ojibway people in "The Song of Hiawatha." He also looks for points of connection between his Christian faith and the Ojibway spirituality of Hiawatha. Roylance posits that Longfellow simultaneously romanticizes Ojibway culture and sanitizes the idea of the

disappearing Indian. Although he dramatizes the fading away of Native American life and culture by having the poem end with Hiawatha in his birchbark canoe, sailing away "To the Islands of the Blessed, / To the Kingdom of Ponemah, / To the Land of the Hereafter!" ("The Song" Loc. 78928), Longfellow resists the total eclipse of Native American culture by paying homage to the stories and language of a people he admires (Roylance). Nurmi sees Longfellow's efforts as "an attempt to author a national American narrative" (254), and although it may be highly romanticized to fit a desire for "cultural unity" (255), it illustrates Longfellow's care and concern for Native Americans.

Not only did Longfellow write to honor and preserve some of the cultural heritage of Native Americans, but he quietly acknowledged the damaging effects of colonialism on their lives. Like the Acadians in Nova Scotia, the Ojibway and Dacotah people suffered tremendous loss because of the machinations of colonial power, and Longfellow wanted people to view these Native people with compassion, and he again draws upon his Unitarian sense of inclusion and connection in his poetry. He lays out this aim in the Introduction and addresses his story to readers, saying,

> Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
> Who have faith in god and Nature,
> Who believe that in all ages
> Every human heart is human. ("The Song" Loc. 75035)

Longfellow's belief in the humanity of all human hearts is founded in his suggestion that the Ojibway Great Spirit may be one and the same with the God of the Bible. He does not come right out and make that claim as a formal theological statement, but in his terminology and subtle connections to a biblical worldview, the idea is clearly in his thinking. In the Peace Pipe chapter, Longfellow writes about "Gitche Manito, the mighty, / The creator of the nations" ("The Song" Loc. 75118), and a few lines later, he says wisdom comes "From the lips of the Great Spirit, / From the Master of Life, who made you!" (Loc. 75136). The God of the Bible is also known as the Almighty (*New International Version,* Gen. 17.1), as Spirit (*New International Version,* Gen. 1.2), and as Creator

and Giver of life (Gen. 1–2*)*. Just as God promised to send a Savior for His people (*New International Version,* Gen. 3.15), Longfellow writes in the words of the Great Spirit, "I will send a Prophet to you, / A Deliverer of the nations" ("The Song" Loc. 75136). He may not have been making a one-to-one correlation between Jesus Christ and Hiawatha, but the similarities are an apparent effort to find connections between the faith of Christians and the faith traditions of the Native American people he sought to honor.

In 1842, Longfellow published a collection called *Poems on Slavery*. One poem in the collection is "The Slave Singing at Midnight," and in this powerful piece, Longfellow once again writes to gain sympathy and compassion for another group of people who were being devalued, abused, and oppressed by the economics of colonialism and its aftermath: African slaves and their descendants. As he did in "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha," Longfellow advocates for the slaves by holding up a story of the overcoming, resilient, and hopeful spirit of one slave who sings in the darkness and pain of being a slave. Longfellow is moved by this man's courage, and he writes,

> And the voice of his devotion
> Filled my soul with strange emotion;
> For its tones by turns were glad,
> Sweetly solemn, wildly sad. ("Slave Singing . . ." 599 lines 13–16)

As in his other poems, Biblical allusion and the language of faith figure prominently in how Longfellow makes his case for the people he seeks to honor and defend. The songs the slave sings are from the Bible, "the psalm of David! . . . of Israel's victory . . . of Zion, bright and free" ("Slave Singing . . ." 599 lines 1, 3, 4). The slave is inspired by the story of God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and their story of triumph gives him hope (Longfellow). Hearing the slave singing songs of faith reminds Longfellow of Paul and Silas in the Bible, who were in prison for their faith. They, too, responded to adversity by singing into the darkness "of Christ, the Lord arisen" ("Slave Singing . . ." 600 line 18). When they sang, an earthquake broke them out of prison, and they were set free (*New International Version* Acts 16).

Longfellow wistfully wonders when the African American slave will receive his "earthquake" and the freedom he longs to enjoy. This poem is a pointed statement in support of abolition, and in it, Longfellow exerts his influence to call Americans to live up to the Christian values so many of them profess.

Longfellow's poems, "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie," "The Song of Hiawatha," and "The Slave Singing at Midnight" were early forerunners of the ideas that inform the literary theories that explore Ethnic Studies and Colonial and Postcolonial Studies. Many other 19th century writers communicated from a particular perspective on what was good, orderly, and moral, and they often made hard and fast distinctions between "'our' home and order from 'theirs'" (Said 1113); this was not Longfellow's way. He was not interested in conferring superiority on one culture or people or religious persuasion over another. Robert Dale Parker says that "Indian identity is unthinkable without contact and exchange between Indian and non-Indian cultures" (1058). In paying tribute to Native American stories, Longfellow expresses his aim to illustrate for all Americans something of Native identity and to honor it as an inherent part of American identity. Furthermore, Bhabha says that

> the exercise of colonialist authority . . . requires the production of differentiation, individuations, identity effects through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of power. (1174)

Longfellow resists this differentiation and preferential treatment by showing that human beings from all backgrounds experience the same emotions when their lives are overrun by the raw, unfeeling power of colonial authority. In one particularly insightful scene in "Evangeline," Longfellow draws together the ethnic and postcolonial elements. Evangeline meets a Shawnee woman whose Canadian husband had been murdered by Comanches, and the woman tells "Slowly, with soft, low voice, and the charm of her Indian accent, / All the tale of her love, with its pleasures, and pains, and reverses" (Longfellow "Evangeline" Lines 1130–1131). Evangeline's heart is moved, and she weeps with her because the same

pain of lost love tears at her own heart. The apparent differences between the two women dissolve in their shared experience and loss because of the larger conflict over land and power. Longfellow, in a story-within-the-story, asks the reader to notice that lost love hurts the same regardless of skin color, culture, geography, or background. His purpose is much the same in "The Song of Hiawatha" and "The Slave Singing at Midnight": he asks his readers to notice the universal resonance of human emotions while appreciating the beautiful distinctions of culture among different groups of people. Longfellow was ahead of his time in writing to connect people across cultural barriers, and his Christian faith gave him hope and confidence in knowing

> That the feeble hands and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> Touch God's right hand in that darkness
> And are lifted up and strengthened (Longfellow, "The Song" "Introduction")

With this mindset, it is not surprising that Longfellow was sought out by abolitionists who wanted his help in making their case. In fact, Longfellow was good friends with Charles Sumner, the United States senator who has been called "the Senate's most outspoken opponent of slavery" (Schultz 241). Sumner was so bold in his opposition that he was brutally beaten in the Senate chamber by a pro-slavery congressman (Schultz). Though it took him nearly three years to recover, Sumner survived the attack and carried on his advocacy, and he repeatedly asked Longfellow to join him in his work for the cause of abolition (Lepore). While "politics made Longfellow cringe" (Lepore), and he knew he did not have the temperament or the aptitude for public debate, he did care deeply about abolition for African slaves, and he wrote poetry designed to gently advocate on their behalf. Though he was never interested in becoming a vocal activist, Longfellow quietly blazed a trail that was two centuries ahead of its time in calling people from different backgrounds to cultural understanding, mutual respect, and peace. His writing was his activism, but he said that his poems were "so mild that even a Slaveholder might read them without losing his appetite for breakfast" (qtd. in

Lepore). Mild or not, his work began an important conversation that literary critics and theorists in Ethnic Studies and Colonial and Postcolonial Studies continue to this day.

At a time before people talked about multiculturalism, offered classes on cultural sensitivity, or insisted on political correctness, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was already calling people together through his writing. His desire to honor the stories and cultures of diverse groups in America and to promote unity among people from many different backgrounds was foundational to some of America's most beautiful and inspiring poetry. Particularly in a time when cultural clashes and racial and gender differences seem to overemphasize division and open old wounds left by colonialism, slavery, and discrimination, this remarkable poetry still stands as a monument to one amazing American poet's call for unity. In complementary tandem with this message of unity, Longfellow's illustration of humble gratitude in the moment of deepest loss is a hallmark of true faith in the God who will not let evil have the last word. Longfellow has threaded Evangeline's faith and his own throughout this unforgettable love story and the stories of Hiawatha and the slave who sings while it is dark. Still gentle, still trailblazing, still filled with open-hearted Christian faith, Longfellow in "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie," "The Song of Hiawatha," and "The Slave Singing at Midnight" invokes the power of unique human stories to break down barriers and to honor the resilient people whose combined stories make America strong.

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Footnotes and Dictators

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Generations of scholars have known that they can learn a lot about the literary culture of the hand press era by looking at books as physical objects. The layout, paper, and type of a book reveal its history, including the human relationships involved in producing the many copies that came off the printing press. Commentaries, title pages, and illustrations also reveal details about what people other than the authors thought of specific texts, as editors and printers built the book into something they hope that readers would buy. These details are important, because, as the French scholar Gerard Genette wrote in his influential book on the subject, "The paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers. . . . More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold" (1).

You might think that this threshold space has less to tell scholars of more recent literature, in that modern readers expect less individuality from the books that they buy. The visible paratexts differ very little from page to page and from screen to screen; fonts are hardly distinguishable and few serious texts include pictures that are meant solely to sell the book. This does not mean, however, that scholars cannot deepen their understanding of contemporary literature by examining the paratext of individual books (Bornstein 31). In fact, one thing that is obvious from a few recent books is that this space has become a battleground between authors who wish to find new canvases to present their stories and the forces that make publication happen in the world of corporate capitalism. For ethnic writers in America, especially, paratext has historically been controlled by publishers wishing to attract large audience, so today's

authors have actively sought to control the paratextual space of the books they create.

Ramón Saldívar argued in "Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction," in 2011 that America has entered a new age shaped by the crucible of racial conflicts. Since the turn of the century, a young generation has sought to find ways, according to Saldivar, to grapple with their experiences as ethnic minorities in a country that has gone through the advances of the Civil Rights Movement but still struggles to establish equality on so many fronts during this new age, the postrace era. An important element in that fight is the effort to claim authority for voices that have been kept silent in America's past and to free them from the influence of the white majority in areas where it is unwanted, such as the artistic expression of individual authors. It is my contention in this article that the paratext of the modern book has become a space for many writers to proclaim their complete control over their work against the dictates of editors and the expectations of corporate publishing.

Scholars who pay attention to the developments in modern paratext can track important changes in how authors understand artistic independence and ethnic identity. To show you what I mean, let's look at two recent books by Latino authors, Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and *The People of Paper* by Salvador Plascencia. Both serve as examples of the new movement Saldívar has identified among minority writers. He explains that the use of speculative realism, or post-postmodern manipulation of the daydream, to comment on our historical realities, marks the new postrace literature. "Fantasy compels our attention to the gap or deficit between the ideals of redemptive liberal democratic national histories concerning inclusiveness, equality, justice,... and the deeds that have constituted nations." (594) Writers have turned from the wonder of magical realism to the irony of fantasy in their books to explain why we still struggle with issues of race, using complicated plotting and fantastical elements to tell their stories but also to highlight the struggles of Latino characters in contemporary, that is, postracial life. This new literature also has scoped out the paratext as an area to change the look of the book, taking it under complete

control, just as they manipulate and explore the narrative through speculative realism.

In a 2013 essay, "The Second Elevation of the Novel: Race, Form and the Postrace Aesthetic in Contemporary Narrative," Saldívar lays out some defining features of the new aesthetic.

> 1) It is critical of postmodern literature–most importantly postmodernism's lack of interest in ethnic identities.
> 2) It draws on the history of genres.
> 3) It uses speculative realism–combining several genres but with a highlight on the use of the surreal to investigate the possible/impossible.
> 4) Postracial literature consciously explores the issue of race in modern life. (4-5)

For ethnic writers of the postrace era, their manipulation is not part of postmodern parody or playfulness. The acidic racial joke of their narratives, twisting traditional forms, even reality itself, makes us uncertain whether laughter is the right response, but it definitely demands a response of some sort (11-12).

Beth McCoy, in her 2006 article, "Race and the (Para)Textual Condition," notes that the paratext is usually controlled by the editors of any book, and for most African-American authors this has meant white producers of their finished products; which can be a problem because the paratext should serve the text by "having us read the text properly" (156), but often does not. She argues that authors found ways to try to resist the paratextual mechanics abusing their work, but that many have failed, historically. Those with the capital call the shots, and this has often meant that publishers have engineered the paratext in African-American works to appeal to the larger white audience in the US (164-166). In Saldívar's postrace era of a new millennium authors have come to examine the power interplays in the contested spaces that identity politics still inhabit. McCoy, in a 2005 article, wrote that the authorial challenge for control of the paratext has a history going back to before the postrace period in that earlier works of the Civil Rights era, such as

Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* of 1972, which attacks the use of footnotes as expressions of white power (607).

We can certainly see the author seizing control of multiple aspects of the paratext in Plascencia's 2005 novel, *The People of Paper*. The table of contents contains mysterious images of hand gestures, as well as an unknown code of dots and slashes. Later in the book, the title page itself is recreated with changes, showing the author attempting to reset the story to allow him to manipulate the very first portion that we have already read. The most frequent difference, and the most jarring, is the use of columns to represent the voices of different narrators in many of the chapters. The author, the little girl, and individual gang members of El Monte all get the chance to interpret life as he or she experiences it with individual passages separated from the others. The form of the book shows us powerfully the role that everyone has in this story. But Plascencia does more than give the characters personal voices; in many instances he removes them too. Entire blocks of text get covered in blackness, such as on page 191, when Little Merced successfully keeps her mind from being read, which has the effect of keeping the readers from seeing what she had to say. The negated text makes her even more powerful and individual, because the girl can refuse her interrogators.

While *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, published in 2007, has far fewer departures from the standard look of modern fiction, Díaz does engineer the paratext of the book, most notably in his use of the footnote. Readers have seen this before, especially in postmodern fiction, for humorous effects or to highlight the knowledge of the narrator. What is new here is the jarring difference in tone between the story of Oscar and the information relayed in the notes. For instance, in the very first of these notes concerning a passage on the omnipresence of the fukú curse in Dominican society, we are treated to a long description of the crimes of the dictator who shaped the modern history on the island, Trujillo. This signals a shift in the main text to also discuss the evil of the man. However, while the text goes on about the historical crimes of the regime, the footnote has an entirely different tone, railing about the personal crimes and failings of the leader of the Dominican Republic. He is a

"*personaje* so outlandish, so perverse, so dreadful that not even a sci-fi writer could have made his ass up" (2).

Other notes share this sense of personal outrage at the injustices of Dominican history, some with only a loose connection to the text above. Note 22 comes at a point when the story describes the struggles of a prominent family to remain free from the clutches of the dictatorial government, but the note instead talks about the Spanish "discovery" of the island and the American invasion of 1916 (211). The only connection is that all are beginnings to tragic stories. We know the tragic outcomes to the Spanish discovery, we can guess the results of the invasion, but the family story is an intriguing mystery which the footnote does nothing to illuminate.

Rune Graulund has written that academic speak is one of the many registers of barely intelligible English that Díaz employs in the story of Oscar Wao to serve his political purposes (32-33). The author has an agenda to get us thinking about political issues without realizing it or even suspecting him. His footnotes serve this purpose by imitating postmodern efforts to destabilize our notions of a master narrative while actually providing an emotional support to what is going on in the text above, just in a different voice (36). Support for the narrative includes chastising readers who do not know enough about the horrors of Dominican history to follow along and adding pejorative insults to the descriptions of Trujillo. Not only is Díaz turning over our expectations of the academic footnote, he is also showing contempt for the games we have come to expect from the footnotes of postmodern fiction. As in the notes of traditional academic speak (Gerritzen 416-21), the footnotes promote the authority of the writer while also providing an alternative narrative. However, it is the function of the footnotes in Diaz's novel more than their form at the bottom of the page that shifts the world for readers in the direction of speculative realism, leading them to question the racial realities that they have come to accept.

Like Díaz, Plascencia leaves us wondering about many things that he clearly understands. Just as we cannot always track the mechanics of his metaphors, readers also struggle with the meanings of all the peritextual shifts and alterations. Like the fantasies of lining houses with the lead

shells of mechanical tortoises or mind-reading babies, the paratext presents a world of confusion. This serves to remind us of the disorder and difficulty facing the disenfranchised as they go about their lives in the United States. There is an underlying political point. Readers can never be certain where that point is heading, but the book successfully gets us thinking about the complexities of postrace society by overloading us with mystifying paratextual elements that add a visual version of the speculative realism that is so striking in the dream-like setting.

The threat of the dictator to everyone else's autonomy is a central theme to both books. The fictional author of The *People of Paper* himself serves as a dictator to the characters whom he pushes around. Plascencia even describes him at various points as a frustrated Napoleon fighting to overcome his shortness and his romantic frustrations by holding complete control over the people he puts on paper. In the same way, he controls the lives of the characters and the shape of the words on the page by constantly playing with them in unexpected ways. The various strands of The *People of Paper* show us that the dictatorial author struggles to maintain his overlordship to such an extent that we come to realize that it is a charitable foundation and the publishers who really control the production of the book. Our author becomes just another fighter against greater powers like any one of his characters. Readers are left thinking about control in general as it affects our lives and the lives of people like the migrant carnation pickers we have come to know in the book. We all have dictators trying to shape our lives, but clearly the poor Latinas/os in postrace America face many more instances of powerlessness than many of us readers.

Díaz also uses a fictional author, but in this case he is much more outspoken about the cruelties of dictatorship. Jennifer Harford Vargas has written that Trujillo serves as a character in the novel; *Oscar Wao* is, in fact, a book about dictatorship (11). Obviously, the Dominican regime causes direct harm to Oscar and everyone we meet on the island. The footnotes make it clear that this behavior is part of the general practices of the government, which fit into larger patterns of oppression supported by the American neo-colonialism in Latin America during the twentieth century. The information gained in the footnotes is "especially

important given the geopolitics of knowledge production in the United States that subalternizes–or footnotes, so to speak–Latino American histories" (Vargas 21). Perhaps it is ironic that this remains below the text at the bottom of the page, but the point of these footnotes is always to remind readers that the horrible behavior playing out in the text is just how dictators always behave, even as they try to keep their crimes secret. For Americans, there is the added tension in knowing that the support that their country has provided for the Dominican emigrants living in places like New Jersey is offset by the efforts of their government to prop up rulers of the ilk of Trujillo.

The violence inherent in the neo-colonial projects ties into the complexities of living in postrace America. The limitations and difficulties that Oscar faces in New Jersey are not contrasted with the problems that his family has back in the Dominican Republic as outright differences. Rather, the elements of racism, even those that have been internalized by some of his peers, show themselves as shadows of the horrors of history. Leaving the island has not made everything better; indeed Oscar finds some of what he has been looking for when he goes back to the DR. The heavy hand of the dictator can reach out and snatch people in America, as we learn in the footnotes, just as the legacies of racism follow the Dominicans when they seek new lives in what they hope are better places abroad. The footnotes constantly make the connection between dictator and race. Most of them cluster in the chapters on the crimes of Trujillo, and Yunior, the writer, often brings a personal reflection to the awfulness of the situations described.

Everywhere we see the people in these two books rebelling against the strictures of dictatorship. Their fight against control can be said to stand in for their struggles against the frustrations of postrace life, since it is on display so much more often. Oscar refuses to leave his new love, even though he is directly threatened by the powers of the government. His stubbornness mirrors his reactions to less extreme demands that he suffered growing up fat and nerdy. Oscar fights. And this rebellion continues on when he comes up against direct threats to his existence. We can think back on how he had always tried to be himself and realize that if there is anything to be admired in his opposition to danger,

then he deserves respect for his individuality even when racism or postracial disdain wants to diminish him.

We have seen Plascencia's own rebellion against the standards of book form, against his publishers, against his characters. This all happens alongside the general rebellion of his characters against their author, represented by Saturn, who is eventually revealed to be a fictional Plascencia. An important feature to add to this discussion is how the physical changes made to the expected form of the book represent that rebellion. Little Merced wants to learn to block her mind from others, just as the Baby Nostradamus can. A general theme of the struggle of the characters is their desire to be invisible from the prying eye of Saturn. She has succeeded in hiding from everyone, and the results show on the author's pages. In another visible sign of the increasing rebellion, towards the end of the book the columns representing individual characters have shifted ninety degrees to the side. Chaos is taking over the structure the author has created as the characters begin to succeed in their fight. They begin to find their own voices and sometimes the shift onto the side shows text where the characters directly address the author. Cameroon writes for herself, "To My Napoleon" (213). If the writer is a dictator, "a tyrant, commanding the story where he wants it to go" (228), then the people have turned his tricks against him, ultimately providing cover for Federico de la Fe and Little Merced to walk out of the book entirely (245).

Both books display the use of fantasy that Saldívar described as speculative realism, an identifier for the new postrace literature that he sees developing among ethnic writers in America. The authors' manipulation of the paratext fits into their themes of resisting dictatorship to defend personal autonomy. This is an idea which clearly has deeper meaning for these Latino writers discussing the contemporary American context. The paratext is a natural space for these authors to examine the power of the individual, because of the history of writers of color being at a disadvantage in shaping the look of their work, and as historians of the book, we need to mark this important moment in the changing meaning of paratext and be certain to watch this space.

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A Stranger in Your Own Language: The Marginalization of Meursault and Composition Students

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"Who taught you how to write like this?" said the writing professor.

"My high school English teacher, I guess" came the sheepish response from the student in the English Composition I course.

Jessica was not the best writer. She knew it. She had placed into basic writing and worked hard to improve her writing the previous semester in preparation for the next stage in her writing development.

"It was discouraging" she recounts with a sigh, "because it was something I knew. If you know you are not strong in a certain subject, you know it. You don't need somebody else to tell you because you know."

Jessica had sought out her professor for help. She wanted to improve her writing. She wanted to get better. She wanted a higher grade. Revision was a natural part of her writing process on the way to a developed final paper. She characterized her professor as stern, and she was fine with high standards. What she didn't want, what she didn't need, was the condescension.

"That [remark] always stuck with me," she says, three years after the encounter with the professor.

And so it goes for this basic writing student. The student has been positioned on the margins of standard academic English, far from the center position held by the professor, despite the student's work living, studying, and interacting in the world of academic English. In terms of the

Burkean parlor, the "ongoing academic conversation" (Burke), Jessica thought she was a part of the conversation, that her writing allowed her to gain access and belonging to the world of higher education, even if she needed to improve. The professor's glib remark negated all of that work.

This essay examines the positioning of both the composition student, Jessica, and Meursault from Camus' *The Stranger*. The outsider positioning of Jessica in her narrative when she thought she was further inside and accepted by that society parallels Meursault's narrative. Often described as "detached" from the society, the interpretation of Meursault's actions by others in the narrative, especially the prosecutor, leads to his marginalization. Ultimately, Meursault is condemned to death as he is deemed a threat to society. The mainstream actors of the society cannot understand Meursault's behavior—from his lack of mourning at his mother's funeral to his lack of remorse for killing the Arab on the beach. Meursault's trial displays a tension between the rational and the irrational and demonstrates Camus' philosophy of the absurd with society's perspective of a clear understanding of Meursault's actions and the irony that Meursault is at peace with his condemnation due to the coldness and meaninglessness of the universe. Meursault is a stranger in the society in which he observes, lives, and interacts.

Methodology

Using narrative inquiry and applying a critical event narrative analysis to both the student's experience and Camus' *The Stranger* provide insight into how these two narratives parallel each other. This type of analysis is typically used in qualitative research to understand Jessica's experience in the composition program. The technique helps to draw out a narrative in the random, complex world of a real person's life where the future is very much uncertain, so past experiences gain importance after the fact.

A work of fiction is manufactured. Events build on themselves for a reason with the structure of the narrative. Of course, there are exceptions, but in the narrative arc the action rises to a climax. There are critical events along the way that build to that climax, and so they are easy to spot

along the way and become even clearer when the climax is reached. The world of non-fiction is not so neat. Applying the critical event narrative to a work of fiction, with a character who experiences being a stranger, foreigner, or alien, provides a metaphor to understand Jessica's narrative from a qualitative research study.

Of importance is locating critical events within experiences. The critical event model suggested by Webster and Mertova guides this narrative inquiry. A *critical event* has an impact on the storyteller, it challenges the storyteller's worldview, it is a change experience, and it can be identified at a later time due to its lasting value (74). These critical events in the student writer's development highlight profound learning experiences and qualify as rich data. They may be unique, illustrative events that stand out from other learning experiences.

According to Webster and Metrova, critical events are characterized by time, challenge, and change (74). The passing of time illuminates critical events. While elapsed time can fade memories, critical events tend to stay with a person and are only deemed critical if in retrospect they have an impact on the storyteller. The passing of time may also winnow unnecessary detail while the amount of time elevates the profound effect. The critical event also challenges the person's prior understanding and worldview. Moving forward, the experience of the critical event creates change that affects a future experience and understanding that may lead to growth. The critical events are not always positive and may be accompanied by like events where similar, but less profound experiences occurred (74).

Narrative Inquiry of *The Stranger*

There are many events in *The Stranger* that are impactful for Meursault and his narrative—the death of his mother, his interactions and observations with other members of society, his trial, his lashing out at the chaplain, and his realization of the absurd. One critical event--that challenged Meursault's worldview, was a change experience, and provided lasting value--came from the prosecutor during Meursault's trial:

> The prosecutor was then asked if he had any questions
> to put, and he answered loudly, 'Certainly not! I have
> all I want.' His tone and the look of triumph on his
> face, as he glanced at me, were so marked that I felt as
> I hadn't felt for ages. I had a foolish desire to burst
> into tears. For the first time I'd realized how all these
> people loathed me. (56)

This realization comes after the warden at the home where
his mother lived testified about the calmness of Meursault at
his mother's funeral, that Meursault did not appear to be
affected or sad at the event—an event that the mainstream
society deemed to be upsetting. Meursault did not cry; he did
not look at her body. He drank café au lait, and he smoked
cigarettes. He believed he was behaving in accordance with
those around him; after all, he was offered the café au lait.
Meursault may have been detached from his mother and the
emotions of her death, but at the very least, he believed he
was performing the societal ritual. His performance,
however, drew disdain from those who testified to build the
persecutor's case.

Meursault thought he was a part of society. He
observed it, he lived in it, he did things that he had to do. He
had a certain understanding of his relationships. This view is
challenged by the prosecutor. In response to the defense
attorney asking if his client is on trial for "having buried his
mother, or killing a man," the prosecutor says, "I accuse the
prisoner of behaving at his mother's funeral in a way that
showed he was already a criminal at heart" (60). The
prosecutor has alienated Meursault from society. According
to the mainstream of society, represented by the prosecutor,
Meursault's behavior shows a pattern of being abnormal.

The prosecutor continues in his closing argument to
assert that Meursault has no regret for killing someone: "Not
once in the course of these proceedings did this man show
the least contrition" (63). Meursault agrees with the
prosecutor's point, but not for the reason the prosecutor
alleges. Meursault explains that he lives "absorbed in the
present moment" (63). Meursault is not sorry or regretful
that he killed someone because in his mind he was acting
rationally, in self-defense from a threat to his well-being. The
prosecutor, however, wins his case by arguing not only that

Meursault is soulless but also that he flouts the society's basic principles. He is able to show that Meursault's behavior is so far outside the norm of the society that he should be put to death.

This critical event firmly removes Meursault from the society in which he felt he was immersed. The effect on Meursault is not seen until the end of the narrative when another symbol of society visits Meursault on death row. The chaplain visits Meursault unannounced to counsel him. Meursault deflects the line of inquiry by the chaplain and counters the various theological topics raised by the priest until Meursault reaches a breaking point:

> I started yelling at the top of my voice. I hurled insults at him. I told him not to waste his rotten prayers on me; it was better to burn than to disappear. I'd taken him by the neckband of his cassock, and, in sort of ecstasy and rage, I poured out on him all the thoughts that had been simmering in my brain. (74)

These thoughts addressed the absurdity of life. Meursault sees a common end for all humanity; therefore, what one does before death is inconsequential: "And what difference could it make if, after being charged with murder, he were executed because he didn't weep at his mother's funeral, since it all came to the same thing in the end?" (75). Meursault's realization that he was loathed and marginalized to the point of death enables him to embrace the present and validates the way Meursault has always lived his life. He has no time for the chaplain and the illusion of religion, preferring to engage in the now.

Jessica, the Composition Student

So, how does the metaphor present in Meursault's narrative extend to Jessica and the marginalization of composition students? When a professor, a representative of the mainstream, makes a remark perceived as condescending such as "Who taught you how to write like this?," the students understands their position in terms of that mainstream. Certainly, I am not equating the professor's behavior to that of the prosecutor. However, the parallel is in

the marginalization. Those critical incidents have a tendency to "stick" with a person.

The study that led to Jessica's narrative is a learning outcomes-based assessment study, a reflection on past learning. According to Walvoord, "Assessment is the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions that affect student learning" (3). From the perspective of student learning, decisions based on assessment may lead to improvement and changes reflected in the curriculum, courses, program structures, budget allocation, or faculty development (Walvoord). Assessment, then, attempts to capture what happened to inform a subsequent improvement action. Walvoord indicates that the end of an assessment project is action where information gained from the process can be used to close the loop.

The cyclical process provides structure for an ongoing program assessment project and has four basic steps (Angelo; Carter; Shupe; Suskie; Walvoord)

1. Establishing student learning outcomes
2. Providing opportunities to achieve those outcomes
3. Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine if student learning matches the expectations
4. Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.

The use of the resulting information is important for the validity of the entire exercise (Huot).

In addition to using assessment for improvement, assessment is often used for accountability. The accountability purpose is often used for economic reasons by an audience outside of a university or by an internal audience who is concerned with that outside audience's perceptions. The centralizing and hyper-focus on assessment leads to Yancey and Huot's reading of the word assessment:

Assessment is a funny term. It sounds formal and institutional. It frequently generates fear and anxiety, and it's not something most people seem to want to

do—voluntarily or otherwise. To say that you are
being assessed, we concede, sounds too much like
being victimized by oppressive actions associated with
arbitrary and inefficient governmental edicts, or by
the mandates of faceless educational management:
actions that in both cases are at best irrelevant; at
worst, quite simply bad, detrimental to the teaching
and learning we work so hard to promote. (7)

Yancey and Huot resolve this problematic definition by
arguing that "it [assessment] can help us—as students,
teachers, and administrators—learn about what we are doing
well and about how we might do better…" (7). In the case of
Jessica, her negative critical event sheds light on the learning
environment created by the professor and student
relationship in an attempt to provide opportunities for the
student to obtain the prescribed learning outcomes.

When adopting an outcomes approach to education,
the goal should not be to prosecute the students for their
failures, a gatekeeper approach to education. Rather, the
goal is to develop student ability to reach those outcomes, a
gateway approach to education. Jessica was on board.
However, her critical event was negative. It challenged the
value of her prior knowledge. Perhaps the professor intended
criticism of one small aspect of her writing, but for Jessica it
made her question all of it. How is she supposed to know if
she can trust any of her prior knowledge, which she is trying
to build on in the development of her overall writing abilities
through a developmental writing course (ENG 099) as well
as English Composition I (ENG 101):

When I came to Lincoln, I wasn't the strongest writer,
so I did not pass the assessment to test me out of
[ENG] 099, and I did take ENG 099. That course was
full of freshmen, and immature freshman. I really felt
for the teacher. I'm not sure of her name, but I know
she is not here anymore. She was an adjunct, and it
was just hard for her to teach because no one in the
class was focused. But that's where I kind of started to
be the type of student I am. I didn't want to add on to
the rest of the kids who weren't really focused. It was
just hard work to get her point across. You know I

> really did feel for her...But I didn't really learn much in that class because the class was just so disruptive.
>
> When it came to [ENG] 101, I took it with … a very stern professor. You know, like I appreciate that. [The professor] was a little discouraging when it came to my writing. I know plenty of times [the professor], um, [the professor] kind of basically asked me like, "where did you learn to write like this?"

The professor's comments had a lasting effect on Jessica.

> It was just more so discouraging. It put my spirits down. I was like, "Ok, I know I'm not a good writer but, you know, you didn't necessarily have to say that."

She credits her self-motivation and perseverance to succeed as the reasons she was able to handle the adversity.

> I went to [the professor] and I asked [the professor] to work with me. But I feel as if I didn't go to [the professor], it would have been like, "Oh I'm just going to write her off. She's a bad writer" type of thing. It is crazy because I'm a senior now and that [situation from three years ago] always stuck with me.

Jessica was able to learn and improve her writing despite negative experiences in the first two composition courses that are designed to improve and prepare students for the college level writing challenges.

Meursault finds peace, understanding, and freedom in his realization of the absurdity of his world. In Jessica's interaction with her writing professor, the professor sought meaning to understand why Jessica wrote the way that she did. In a way, Jessica is able to embrace the absurdity of the professor's comment that undermines the teaching and learning process. Her determination allowed her to continue and find success with writing.

The negative critical event that Jessica experienced, which placed her in a marginalized position within the learning environment, has repercussions for the student's

ability to obtain the learning outcomes within a composition program. According to Donohue, "the learning environment is a factor in attaining the learning outcome. The attitudes of the professor and students can have a lasting and potentially devastating effect on the students' abilities to meet the learning outcomes" (118-19). A recommendation is to address the first step in an outcomes-based education approach—the student learning outcomes. These outcomes are most often derived from cognitive domains, specifically Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom; Anderson and Krathwohl; Suskie). However, additional taxonomies highlight areas not emphasized in Bloom's taxonomy to form three categories: knowledge and conceptual understanding; thinking and other skills; and attitudes, values, dispositions, and habits of mind. By broadening the learning domains to include outcomes drawing from these three categories not only serves as a reminder to faculty and students to look beyond themselves but also posits faculty and students work with each other to learn and develop social responsibility toward each other, creating a positive people effect.

Further, educators can adjust their pedagogy to be more respectful and aware of their position relative to the students in order for the learning opportunities to lead to the learning outcomes. To improve learning, the teaching needs to improve. A pedagogy such as *tough empathy* stresses high expectations in an environment that is supportive, through listening to student needs, without ridicule, and continually tries to assists students in their learning (Kimball). Tough empathy is based in sound leadership: "real leaders empathize fiercely with their followers and care intensely about their people's work. They're also empathetically 'tough.' This means giving people not necessarily what they want, but what they need to achieve their best" (Goffee and Jones).

In order to use tough empathy, a professor needs to be present with each student. The professor has to identify where the student is in relation to prior knowledge and skills as well as the current learning opportunity to meet the learning outcome. The information enables the professor to assist the student. A potentially condescending question such as "where did you learn to write like this" is irrelevant. Rather, the question becomes one that is "absorbed in the

present moment." By focusing on improvement in the current moment, the learning environment is more conducive to the learning outcome, enhancing the positive people effect.

Meursault, living in the present moment, came to accept his marginalization by embracing the absurdity of his environment. However, Jessica strove to overcome her marginalization through her determination and acceptance of the professor's absurd comment. Meursault is resigned to live on the margins. Jessica is attempting to negotiate life within the mainstream. Those in authoritative positions of the norm, such as professors, can heed a reflective lesson to understand the students' point-of-view and position in regards to the mainstream in cases such as Jessica's where the *strangers* do not consider themselves so strange. To use the assessment results of the study to improve the teaching and learning, faculty need to learn from Meursault and Jessica's narratives to accept the stranger and focus on the current moment and how the interactions will affect the future.

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PART THREE

JE EST AUTRE/I IS NEITHER THIS NOR THAT

Entre l'ailleurs perçu comme espace de l'épanouissement et les attaches au pays natal: l'expérience de la rupture dans *Les désorientés* d'Amin Maalouf

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L'écartèlement entre la responsabilité envers notre pays d'origine et l'envie d'un exil selon les résonances d'un espace culturel avec notre âme et nos principes moraux n'est pas un thème nouveau, mais, à notre époque il s'accentue avec la croissance des déplacements et migrations, et se voit accompagné par les thèmes de l'errance, du nomadisme, de l'acculturation, de l'hybridation et de l'interculturalité, qui sont les préoccupations centrales, voire des lieux communs des littératures francophones et des études postcoloniales (Moura, Combe, Bhabha). La tension entre la responsabilité que l'on devrait à son pays de naissance et la tentation croissante de s'en éloigner est une constante du monde globalisé et cette thématique récurrente, aux enjeux culturels autant que politiques, est abordée par Amin Maalouf dans son roman *Les désorientés*, qui porte précisément sur le droit de quitter son pays pour un autre lieu offrant des conditions dont la patrie d'origine est dépourvue. Au cœur de cette problématique se trouve la notion du renoncement, que l'écrivain développe autour de cette question épineuse: choisir son domicile dans le monde entier signifie-t-il abandonner ses devoirs à l'égard du pays natal? L'écrivain nous invite à surmonter ce dilemme en le plaçant au niveau universel et en redonnant ainsi une dignité au pays d'origine autant qu'au pays d'élection. Comment l'œuvre développe-t-elle cette dialectique de la loyauté et de la trahison? L'auteur accorde-t-il sa préférence à une fidélité privilégiant les origines ou bien à une autre qui valoriserait l'universel?

Le citoyen du monde Adam, exilé en France depuis de longues années, est un *alter ego* décalé du romancier lui-même. La problématique des attaches identitaires et ruptures au sein d'un individu issu d'un pays instable, partagé entre diverses fractions et communautés, et l'aspiration à dépasser cet écartèlement intérieur en cherchant l'ancrage dans un humanisme universel, dépourvu de bornes nationales et culturelles, est l'un de thèmes centraux, presque obsessionnels, dans la création de Maalouf, qui relève de ses interrogations vécues, comme le rappelle Dominique Combe:

> L'humanisme des romans historiques d'Amin Maalouf, depuis *Léon l'Africain* (1986), jusqu'au *Périple de Baldassare* (2000), illustre bien ce croisement syncrétique des langues et des cultures sur le pourtour méditerranéen, dans les anciennes provinces de l'Empire ottoman, que résume bien l'identité plurielle et cosmopolite du Liban. À ces identités ouvertes, à ces appartenances multiples s'opposent les "identités meurtrières" dont Maalouf condamne les méfaits dans un Proche-Orient éclaté et en proie à la guerre. (Combe 122-123)

Cette tension constitutive de la création littéraire, que l'on retrouve dans de nombreuses œuvres du romancier (*Les Echelles du Levant, Le Périple de Baldassare, Le rocher de Tanios, Léon l'Africain, Samarcande)*, est au cœur du récit des *Désorientés*. Ainsi Adam, bien que rongé d'interrogations et de remords inavoués, affirme résolument son droit à la liberté: "Tout homme a le droit de partir, c'est son pays qui doit le persuader de rester--quoi qu'en disent les politiques grandiloquents" (Maalouf, *Les désorientés,* 65-66). L'écrivain met ici en exergue la question clé de son roman, à savoir la notion de réciprocité qui place sur le même niveau les devoirs du citoyen et ceux de son propre pays:

> Il faut que vous ne souffriez ni oppression ni discrimination ni privations indues. Votre pays et ses dirigeants sont obligés de vous garantir ces choses; dans le cas contraire vous ne leur devez rien. . . . Au

pays dans lequel vous pouvez vivre avec la tête haute, vous lui donnez tout, vous lui sacrifiez tout, votre propre vie incluse. (244-245)

C'est au nom de cette réciprocité qu'il estime bafouée qu'Adam décide de mettre de la distance entre lui et un pays qui n'a pas su répondre à ses attentes et dont il choisit en conséquence de s'éloigner. Néanmoins, la notion de "lointain," dans le monde contemporain, se relativise drastiquement par rapport aux époques antérieures, comme le souligne d'ailleurs le personnage : "À Paris, je ne suis, après tout, qu'à cinq heures d'avion de ma ville natale" (66). Il s'opère en fait une intériorisation de l'éloignement; proche géographiquement, le pays d'origine reste lointain dans la perception du héros compte tenu de son refus intérieur d'affronter ceux qui y sont restés. Dans le même temps, Adam n'est pas moins conscient que l'homme ne peut jamais se déraciner complètement. Le fait même qu'il ait décidé de ne plus jamais retourner au Liban, tentative obstinée et irrationnelle de tout effacer de soi, révèle sa fragilité et sa nostalgie inavouée. Dès lors, le retour au pays natal–retour qui intervient après la mort de Mourad, son ancien ami devenu ministre corrompu–devient pour Adam tant une obligation qu'une imprévue redécouverte de soi, à la fois douloureuse et joyeuse. C'est une réappropriation tardive des parties refoulées de lui-même qu'il résume dans une exclamation touchante : "je redécouvre la joie charnelle de me sentir sur ma terre natale" (67). Au fond, le pays natal a continué de vivre au dedans de lui, et Adam ne peut que reconnaître alors les nombreuses attaches affectives qui le lient irrémédiablement à son pays d'origine, à commencer par le son de la langue maternelle indissoluble des premiers moments de l'affectivité. La langue est pour lui à la fois un lieu de sentiments et de sensations :

-Toi aussi, reprit-elle, tu ne sais murmurer qu'en arabe. Nous avions discuté toute la soirée en français, mais au lit . . .
-Sans doute. Je ne m'en rends pas vraiment compte. Mais maintenant que tu le dis, c'est vrai que tous les mots affectueux me viennent en arabe. (333)

Il est pourtant moins difficile de faire ses adieux au passé qu'à l'avenir; or, dans la perception du héros désenchanté, le pays d'origine s'identifie au passé. Le pays natal c'est la tradition, les dettes envers les ancêtres et les souvenirs affectifs, mais c'est aussi un espace dans lequel on se sent dépourvu d'avenir, dans lequel le présent même est émietté sous le poids de la corruption, des confrontations et des tiraillements entre factions. Adam en est conscient:

> De la disparition du passé, on se console facilement; c'est de la disparition de l'avenir qu'on ne se remet pas. Le pays dont l'absence m'attriste et m'obsède, ce n'est pas celui que j'ai connu dans ma jeunesse, c'est celui dont j'ai rêvé, et qui n'a jamais pu voir le jour. (67)

La question décisive devient alors celle-ci: que faire quand un pays dévasté par les conflits n'a plus d'avenir? Lorsqu'une société semble en voie de régression sous le poids de conflits insolubles, faut-il rester pour lutter, ou bien abdiquer et partir? Et si fuir était une forme de lâcheté? Ce refus intransigeant du départ est, dans le livre, incarné par le meilleur ami du héros, Mourad. Représentant d'un traditionalisme rigide, ce personnage réactionnaire est du côté du passé, comme le montre le fait que, dans la trame du roman, il n'apparait que dans les souvenirs de son épouse et de ses amis. Cette présence-absence en creux de l'intrigue en fait le dépositaire de valeurs devenues obsolètes, celles d'un communautarisme exacerbé ayant entraîné la trahison des valeurs éthiques universelles.

L'attitude d'Adam est diamétralement opposée à celle de Mourad. Une fois parti, il avait pris la décision de ne plus jamais regarder en arrière, de tout effacer: sa jeunesse même, ses liens les plus chers, tout son passé et de repartir à zéro, sans plus jamais revenir à fouler le sol natal. Cette expérience d'exil, Adam l'a vécue dans une certaine mesure comme une étrangeté au sein de sa personne, n'importe où il se trouvait, une partie de lui échappait toujours à une tentative d'adaptation, d'une pleine insertion au sein d'un groupe, tant au Liban qu'en France. En cela, l'*alter-ego* de Maalouf retrouve la ligne de pensée présente dans la tradition française depuis Montaigne, et en particulier chez

les poètes "maudits", Baudelaire et Rimbaud, avec leur remise en question des appartenances et attaches "héritées" ou "imposées" et leur recherche des relations et expériences les plus authentiques. Encore davantage, Maalouf exprime le trouble permanent transposé en thème récurrent voire obsessif de la majorité des écrivains francophones, situés au croisement des mondes et des cultures, dans un lieu intermédiaire, parfois difficile à vivre. De même, toute la critique des littératures francophones relève dans une certaine mesure de cette problématique :

> S'il y a quelque légitimité à continuer, envers et contre tout, à utiliser les termes fatalement réducteurs et essentialisants de "littératures francophones", c'est en raison des identités culturelles que ces œuvres expriment, ou plutôt, produisent. Le problème des identités, envisagé au niveau des communautés, des peuples, des nations, des Etats-nations, fonde tous les travaux sur les littératures francophones. (Combe 152)

Le seul lien qu'Adam maintient est une correspondance très irrégulière avec ceux qui sont restés ou ceux qui sont partis en même temps que lui, pour s'installer dans divers recoins de la planète entière. Ces échanges épistolaires, et les tensions qu'ils révèlent, permettent à l'écrivain de mettre en évidence les positions opposées des protagonistes. Si Adam a pris le parti de l'exil au nom de l'universel, l'attitude de Mourad se fonde quant à elle sur une valorisation particulièrement forte des traditions de son peuple. Respect et reconnaissance sont revendiqués au nom d'un passé glorieux censément supérieur:

> Notre montagne était déjà chantée dans la Bible quand vos Alpes n'étaient encore qu'un accident géographique, un vulgaire plissement. Les Alpes ne sont entrées dans l'Histoire que lorsque notre ancêtre Hannibal les a franchies avec ses éléphants pour attaquer Rome. (62)

L'attitude de Mourad inaugure alors une série de questions que Maalouf adresse à son lecteur pour mieux le déstabiliser : comment, par exemple, résister à la dérive

d'une société sans tomber en régression soi-même, sans être saisi par une impuissance à agir et même à penser? Quel est le champ d'action d'un être piégé dans un monde en déliquescence, dont le seul projet commun semble être l'autodestruction? La guerre a dépourvu la bande d'amis d'Adam de la sensation d'appartenir à une communauté humaine dans laquelle ils se reconnaissaient comme dépositaires d'un monde et d'un futur. Leur rencontre, organisée par Adam, est une réunion des destins freinés dans leur élan, pliés ou brisés, qui rejoint l'un des thèmes centraux dans la création littéraire de Maalouf: l'affrontement des illusions perdues dans l'effondrement d'un monde. Cela devient une des questions centrales du livre, avec la recherche et la remise en question des liens et des fondements identitaires accompagnés par une certaine réflexion sur les limites et la relativité de l'idée de liberté individuelle. On voit ainsi qu'à la problématique identitaire envisagée sous l'angle de la fidélité s'ajoute la question de la résilience devant les désolations qu'implique l'écroulement des valeurs dans une société donnée. Le refus d'y participer ne suffit pas; il devient nécessaire de résister aux déceptions et de renouer le lien avec un passé commun fait d'héritage séculaire et de souvenirs intimes. C'est ce que Tanya, l'épouse de Mourad, signale à Adam dans l'une de ses premières lettres: "Un ami te déçoit? Il cesse d'être ton ami. Ton pays te déçoit? Il cesse d'être ton pays. Et comme tu as la déception facile, tu finiras par te retrouver sans amis et sans patrie." (64) Réfléchissant à cette remarque, Adam se souvient alors de sa première réponse à Mourad dans l'une de leurs rares conversations téléphoniques: "Moi je ne suis allé nulle part, c'est le pays qui est parti" (65).

Face à ces interrogations sur le choix à faire entre loyauté et authenticité, Mourad incarne en fait le refuge dans les valeurs inamovibles d'un nationalisme sans concession. Le personnage est enraciné profondément dans son sol et dans sa famille dont il perpétue les traditions: "La vieille maison était pour lui bien plus qu'une propriété : elle représentait son statut, son prestige, son honneur et sa fidélité aux siens ; en un mot, sa raison d'être…" (Maalouf, *Les désorientés*, 172) Inébranlable dans sa foi et ses convictions, ce personnage monolithe est en somme une cristallisation des conceptions fixistes de la nation et de la

culture. Or, comme le souligne Dominique Combe, "la pensée de l'identité est toujours guettée par le risque de l'essentialisme" (Combe 154) ; et comme le rappelle Amartya Sen, toute fixité identitaire est intrinsèquement porteuse de violence et de mort (Sen, *Identité et violence*, 2006). En effet, la conception fixiste de l'identité nous amène à considérer le Moyen-Orient et l'Occident comme des blocs monolithiques et antagonistes, voués à un affrontement inévitable. Maalouf, de même que Sen, revendique son appartenance à ces deux mondes, insiste sur le côté illusoire d'une pureté intégriste et prône la liberté individuelle de choix dans la construction d'une identité flexible, faite de multiples appartenances, prometteuse du dépassement des violences qui déchirent le monde contemporain.

En esquissant l'immobilisme morbide de Mourad, en évoquant un essor politique qui est aussi une chute éthique, l'écrivain déconstruit par l'absurde la cécité communautariste dont il critique les contradictions. Adam, pour sa part, se refuse à de telles compromissions: "de mon point de vue, il aurait mieux fait de choisir l'exil que de vivre au pays les mains sales." (Maalouf, *Les désorientés*, 179) Il est donc le contraire d'une position essentialiste; il incarne une conception "fluide" de l'identité, portant sur le mouvement et la transformation dans la lignée de Paul Ricœur. Nous sommes les créateurs de nos récits identitaires, et Adam, à la différence de Mourad est un personnage qui évolue, et assume le rôle créatif qui incombe à chaque individu en ce qui concerne la narration de son histoire identitaire. Également, Adam témoigne d'une conscience élevée de ses propres conditionnements autant que de ses aspirations: "J'ai toujours eu de l'aversion à la fois pour les riches et pour les pauvres. Ma patrie sociale, c'est l'entre-deux. Ni les possédants, ni les revendicateurs. J'appartiens à cette frange médiane qui, n'ayant ni la myopie des nantis ni l'aveuglement des affamés, peut se permettre de poser sur le monde un regard lucide" (171).

On aurait tort toutefois de penser que Maalouf décrédibilise Mourad pour mieux encenser Adam ; autant le politicien véreux ne saurait constituer un exemple, autant l'historien exilé ne parvient pas à proposer un modèle de sérénité. De fait, l'extrême lucidité de Adam le pousse à reconnaître qu'une partie de lui souffre de son exil: "Bilan de

nos trahisons: un exilé, un coupable, une complice. Mais c'est aussi, bien entendu, le bilan de nos fidélités" (71). La vision de Maalouf se révèle en somme de plus en plus désenchantée, comme le démontre ce passage sur le Liban contemporain: "Les guerres ne se contentent pas de révéler nos pires instincts : elles les fabriquent, elles les façonnent. Tant de gens se transforment en trafiquants, en pilleurs, en ravisseurs, en tueurs, en massacreurs, qui auraient été les meilleurs êtres du monde si leur société n'avait pas implosé" (182). Sous le poids de la guerre, l'humanité suffoque et se délite au point qu'Adam, paraphrasant le célèbre adage, en vient à affirmer: "Quand tu es dans la jungle, fais ce que font les fauves" (181). Le choix de l'exil devient alors une échappatoire indigne des valeurs revendiquées, comme l'explique Adam au juif Naïm qui a dû partir en raison de son appartenance religieuse: "toi et moi, nous avons dû nous éloigner du Levant pour essayer de garder les mains propres. Nous n'avons pas à en rougir, mais il serait aberrant de prôner l'exil comme solution unique à nos dilemmes moraux" (183).

Faut-il en conclure à l'échec de toute solution? Il est intéressant de constater qu'à côté des deux extrêmes représentés par Adam et Mourad, l'écrivain met en scène une troisième option avec le personnage d'Albert. Cet homme fragile, à mi-chemin de la fidélité et de la fuite, incarne la dialectique de l'identité et de l'altérité et ce n'est d'ailleurs pas pour rien qu'il est présenté comme homosexuel. Son orientation/désorientation sexuelle que son détachement de l'Orient dont il est le responsable le désignent comme un "désorienté par excellence". Par-là, sa rupture avec les origines a été tout sauf facile. Ne parvenant pas plus à fuir qu'à rester dans son pays, il fait une tentative de suicide, en l'occurrence manquée. Il explique alors à Adam la sensation de piège qui l'a amené au seuil de l'autodestruction: "Je ne pouvais plus vivre dans ce pays, et je ne parvenais pas non plus à le quitter. [...] Tant que j'étais là-bas, je me sentais incapable de partir. Maintenant que je suis loin, je me sens totalement incapable de revenir" (144). Pour comprendre l'enjeu d'un épisode érigé en morale potentielle du roman, il faut tenter de comprendre les motivations des personnages telles que l'écrivain en détaille les modulations. Le désespoir de cette génération est dû à un triple écroulement: d'un

monde, de la personnalité et de l'avenir. La société qui s'effondre provoque immanquablement un écroulement intérieur, désorientation d'autant plus déstabilisante que toute existence individuelle, comme le rappelle Hannah Arendt, est faite des interactions avec son entourage et par conséquent édifiée de valeurs partagées au sein d'un monde et inextricable du tissu social:

> L'existence même n'est en principe jamais isolée; elle est uniquement en communication et dans la conscience des autres existences. . . . Une existence ne peut se développer que dans une communauté humaine, dans un monde donné à ces humains. Dans la notion de la communication est celée, dans le fond, une notion d'humanité comme condition d'existence de l'homme qui n'est pas complètement développée, mais, dont l'idée est prégnante. (Arendt 36; la traduction est par moi)

Or la guerre a dépourvu nos personnages de l'appartenance à un monde commun fait de valeurs partagées et de projets dans lequel ils se reconnaîtraient comme dépositaires d'un avenir à construire ensemble. C'est la raison pour laquelle la seule option possible serait de se rappeler l'harmonie interculturelle, la cohabitation respectueuse des différentes communautés dans le passé, en l'envisageant comme base sur laquelle reconstruire ce que le réel a détruit. Aussi Adam, au nom décidément emblématique, va-t-il tenter de rebâtir le paradis perdu: conscient d'appartenir à une génération des illusions perdues, il s'efforce de réunir la bande d'amis qui rêvaient d'un autre monde au temps de leurs études.

Cette tentative de réappropriation du passé comporte une dimension spirituelle à travers la recherche d'un syncrétisme religieux. Il est frappant de constater que l'écrivain utilise exclusivement le terme de Levant, et non "Liban", lequel n'est jamais employé. De même, pour évoquer l'Irak, le narrateur parle de Mésopotamie, et ce recours insistant aux termes d'antan nous renvoie dans un passé perçu comme plus harmonieux que le présent, à la lisière de l'imaginaire et du vécu. L'onomastique se met alors au service d'une dialectique entre fiction et réalité, avec l'envie latente de réunir l'ancien et le nouveau, le passé et le

présent, l'imaginaire et le réel. Le pays se révèle au fond coupable d'avoir oublié sa propre histoire qui était précisément l'histoire d'un syncrétisme culturel et religieux.

L'éclatement de l'espace culturel se reflète dans la forme générique du texte qui brasse pêle-mêle extraits de journal intime, lettres et courriels entre amis, ou encore narration extra-diégétique en troisième personne. Quant au titre du livre, *Les désorientés*, il fait référence au texte du philosophe arabe Maïmonide, *Le guide des égarés*, que cite d'ailleurs un personnage à propos des conflits qui déchirent leur pays. La référence n'est pas anodine: l'organisation du roman de Maalouf, ensemble disparate de voix condensées sur 16 jours qui sont aussi 16 chapitres, comporte une forte référence ésotérique. Car dans la tradition chrétienne comme dans la Kabale, 16 est le nombre de la perfection et de l'unité –-ce qui correspond bien à l'aspiration d'Adam à la cohérence harmonieuse des éléments dispersés de son espace culturel.

À s'en tenir à cette grille herméneutique, ce rêve semble pourtant hors de portée. Rappelons que dans la symbolique du tarot, l'arcane 16 représente la maison Dieu, à savoir l'échec de qui a voulu s'élever jusqu'à la perfection divine, à l'instar du mythe grec d'Icare ou du mythe de Babel dans la tradition biblique. Or tel est précisément le destin de notre Adam, lequel essaie de récréer le paradis perdu mais fait l'expérience d'un revers si brutal que sa propre vie en devient aliénée. La terrasse de la maison de Mourad dans laquelle les amis se réunissaient autrefois incarne certes leur jeunesse enchantée par les lectures et les rêves, mais aussi le présent qui en a altéré les espoirs et les projets ; elle est donc moins une utopie–entre terre et ciel comme entre contraintes et liberté–qu'une hétérotopie, non-lieu dans lequel tout était jadis possible, mais est désormais perdu à jamais. Tous les personnages demeurant dans ce Levant séismique sont irrémédiablement marqués par le désenchantement: c'est le cas de Sémiramis, qui se retire dans la montagne pour porter le deuil de son amour perdu, ou encore de Ramzi qui, après s'être enrichi grâce à la spéculation, se détache du monde en rejoignant un monastère. De tels destins tragiques, vies brisées par les tumultes orientaux, s'opposent aux parcours de ceux qui ont

rejoint l'Occident pour tenter de maintenir leur intégrité et leur éthique d'antan dans des sociétés qui le permettraient.

   Mais nous l'avons vu, l'expérience de l'exil chez Maalouf n'est jamais synonyme de rédemption sans condition; au contraire, elle s'accompagne toujours de la conscience des écueils et des failles qui accompagnent la rupture avec l'origine. En ce sens l'exil est vécu par Adam comme une expérience d'étrangeté, comme si l'être n'était finalement nulle part lui-même :

> Moi, depuis l'âge de treize ans, je me suis toujours senti, partout, un invité. Souvent accueilli à bras ouverts, parfois tout juste toléré, mais nulle part habitant de plein droit. Constamment dissemblable, mal ajusté – mon nom, mon regard, mon allure, mon accent, mes appartenances réelles ou supposées. Incurablement étranger. Sur la terre natale comme plus tard sur les terres d'exil. (34)

On peut donc considérer qu'Adam comme un porte-parole de Maalouf et plus généralement des écrivains francophones, lesquels vivent au croisement des mondes et des cultures, dans un lieu intermédiaire aux contours ambigus pour ne pas dire contradictoires. Plongé dans une quête affective de soi en réconciliation complexe avec son passé, le personnage montre au fond que le choix des extrêmes est le plus dangereux, qu'il s'agisse du repli nationaliste ou de la négation des attaches identitaires. Comme le relève le philosophe Yves Charles Zarka, il ne faut pas confondre le cosmopolitisme avec la mondialisation économique, ni la politique avec le cosmopolitique: "Un monde sans frontières serait un désert, homogène, lisse, sur lequel vivrait une humanité nomade faite d'individus identiques, sans différences (Zarka).

   Pour se construire un avenir il ne faut ni sacraliser ni renier son passé, mais plutôt mettre en harmonie les composantes de soi-même avec les acquis de son environnement. Telle est bien la leçon de Maalouf: "Ce qui fait que je suis moi-même et pas un autre, c'est que je suis à la lisière de deux pays, de deux ou trois langues, de plusieurs traditions culturelles . . . Je n'ai pas plusieurs identités, j'en ai une seule, faite de tous les éléments qui l'ont façonnée,

selon un dosage particulier qui n'est jamais le même d'une personne à l'autre" (Maalouf, *Les identités* 7-8).

Il n'y a donc pas d'attaches en dehors des échanges; les attaches héritées ne prennent sens que dans les échanges intenses, dans ce sentiment de proximité à l'autre qui permet la reconnaissance des mêmes idéaux, rêves et élans. Telle est sans doute la plus grande leçon de l'œuvre de Maalouf: cette possibilité que l'Autre stimule au dedans de nous-mêmes des aspects inconnus de notre potentiel humain, avec ce présupposé fondateur que nous ne sommes rien sinon un dialogue ininterrompu avec l'Altérité, un va-et-vient entre l'opacité et le dévoilement qui se fait à travers l'échange et une constante remise en question de ses propres grilles de lecture du monde.

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From Modern France to the Caribbean and Back Again: Testing the Survival Chances of Cultural Transfers in *Exile According to Julia*[41] by Gisèle Pineau

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Gisèle Pineau's 1996 novel, *Exile According to Julia*, tells the story of Man Ya (or Julia) who, victimized by her husband, decided to flee her native Capesterre and join her son, Maréchal, and his family in France. For Man Ya, this trip means parting from Guadeloupe—which she has never left before—, her husband, and most importantly her garden. She arrived in France in the mid-1960s to live with her son and his family. Her son truly believes that he has rescued her from suffering, but social realities in 1960s France and racial tensions were particularly hard on her; they added to her difficult separation from her "Homeland Guadeloupe"[42] (16) and her feeling of guilt resulting from her incapacity to care for her old husband and to tend to her garden (36).

      Man Ya's family settles in France during the BUMIDOM (*Office for the Development of Migrations in Overseas Territories)* years,[43] from 1963 to 1981. This period

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[41] *L'Exil Selon Julia*, original title in French.

[42] The term, "Homeland Guadeloupe," is used as an opposite to "Homeland France" despite the fact that Guadeloupe is considered an overseas territory of France.

[43] The BUMIDOM was a national initiative from 1963 to 1981, led by the then French deputy for Réunion, Michel Debré, whose main goal was to repopulate deserted French regions in the post-war period. The BUMIDOM was an organizational body, in charge of managing Caribbean migration to France. The migration policies, supported by this initiative, were motivated by economic development goals, but did not anticipate the social existence of Antillean workers, once they arrived in France, where they were considered members of the workforce.

was marked by an increase in the number of workers coming from the Antilles to resettle for the most part in new urban housing units around Paris. Yet, in the context of an intensification of migratory flows, Antillean populations were faced with forms of institutional and cultural exclusion. While these practices seem to reflect the modern French Republican ideal, they raise the question of how they can conform to a universalist and humanist model while encouraging a departure from it.

I argue that tracing the cross-cultural encounters and transfers prompted by the back-and-forth movement from the Antilles to France accounts for overlapping and sometimes competing understandings of otherness. I am not suggesting that those cultural encounters and transfers are always successfully performed, or lead to meaningful mutual exchanges. Rather, I propose that they reveal a critical assumption as to how particular conceptions of otherness test the conditions for the formation of productive approaches to cultural differences. For the purpose of my discussion, I will i) analyze the cultural transfers that Man Ya characterizes or enacts, in particular the practice of tending to the Creole garden in her native Guadeloupe; ii) consider the transferability of the narrator's Caribbean cultural imaginary from France to the Antilles; and iii) examine the limits of such transfers as alternative gestures toward the resolution of cultural differences.

Setting the Stage: Integration and Exclusion in Modern France

The French Republican model is widely considered a modern invention that emerged from the French Revolution. Some suggest that this model sustains the disputed notion of "True France" since it implies "the existence of a core of stable values guaranteeing continuity in the ideal of an authentically French cultural identity" (Lionnet 127). This notion is associated with a historical tendency to describe a specifically French tradition of universalism, as "embodied—Christie McDonald and Susan Suleiman suggest—in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," and resulting in "a centralized system of government and education, where citizens [...] could be assimilated under the single banner of

French values" (xi). There is also the question of the portrayal of a humanist tradition inspired by the French Revolution combined with a resilient corollary to a myth of hospitality in France.

However, while some still consider the French Republican model as a way to disseminate a French humanist tradition, others, such as the contributors to the *French Global* project, do not. The latter argue that this model renders the public sphere seemingly homogenous, does little to integrate the newly-arrived, and requires that one abides exclusively by so-called foundational French values. In *Exile*, the narrator describes the direct product of the French republican model, as it informs several aspects of public and institutional life, such as the school, or the police force. In this context, Mariana Ionescu suggests in her discussion of Pineau's novel, that "[...] school is the site most marked by racism" (9; my translation).[44] Indeed, because it is relevant to the expression of the core of national values through, for instance, the teaching of French and the French literary canon, school is the site where difference or deviation from the rule is depicted as an anomaly.

An example of this is when the narrator attends the local school where she is called "the Black Girl," and is confronted with a normative system of writing. At school, her teacher does not simply reject her noteworthy writing talent, but also requires a corrective to the narrator's writing style: "For a start, we're not among Arabs here! . . . We don't write from right to left! Also! That hand right there, that left hand of yours, should not be your writing hand!" (61).[45] Interestingly, Man Ya never attends the French school, but is nonetheless called back to a standardized educational path toward integration through her grandchildren's forcible attempts to teach her how to write her name and read. Her incapacity to do so, in spite of her willingness to learn, is the first measure of an impulse to retrieve previous cultural practices or products, while resisting, consciously or not, a French centralized system.

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[44] "... l'école représente l'endroit le plus chargé de racisme."
[45] All quotes from Gisèle Pineau's novel are originally in French and are translated into English by the author.

Transplanting the Creole Garden: Of Failure of the Practice(d) Space

Man Ya's life away from Guadeloupe is inscribed within the discrepancy created by her painful exile in France, and her persistent desire to return to her abandoned home. While in France, the narrator describes how Man Ya is never in tune with the collective reality:

> My God, the cold penetrates your skin until it reaches your bones. All those white people don't understand when I talk. And they look at me as if I were Lucifer . . . When I come back to Guadeloupe, I will tell Lea that Over-There, that France, this is a sad country. (55)

This passage is one example of the many mismatching experiences that Man Ya relates through a series of temporal and spatial contrasts. Indeed, the spatial disconnect between the "Over-There" that France represents as Man Ya's place of exile and her anticipated return to Guadeloupe is paired with a temporal disconnect between her native land preserved in suspended time and the unceasing passage of time in Man Ya's unsatisfying daily life.

In this respect, the cultural imagery of Man Ya's Antillean homeland remains an imaginary retreat, which is either narrated (in the case of Man Ya) or written about (in the case of the narrator), and where Man Ya can take refuge whenever her dull life as exile becomes unbearable. However, going back to my focus on the cultural transfers resulting from Man Ya's exile to France, I choose to emphasize the physical residue of attempts at transference. It is not to debunk the active role played by imaginary figurations of the native land for exiles to cope with the challenges of displacement, but rather to suggest that an interrupted transplantation of cultural products and practices can be of use in initiating and sustaining the exile's imaginary retreat.

In Man Ya's imaginary flights from the *cité*[46] where she lives with her family, and in the many stories she tells

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[46]The *cité* relates to the low-income urban settlements located in the *banlieue*, which, in Ile-de-France, refers to the area in the periphery of

her grandchildren, she constantly returns to her Creole garden in Capesterre where she cultivates all sorts of medicinal herbs, flowers, and vegetables. The Creole garden populates both the ecological imaginary and the reality of the Caribbean. For instance, Antigua-born writer Jamaica Kincaid considers the garden a key element of Caribbean topography. She writes in *Garden Book* (1999),

> When it dawned on me that the garden I was making (and am still making and will always be making) resembled a map of the Caribbean and the sea that surrounds it, . . . I only marveled at the way the garden is for me an exercise in memory, a way of remembering my own immediate past, a way of getting to a past that is my own (the Caribbean Sea) and the past as it is indirectly related to me (the conquest of Mexico and its surroundings). (8)

For Kincaid, tending the garden is an active cultural practice that involves the recuperation of a local historio-geography that is a renewed focus on the topographic features of the Caribbean and an exploration of collective and individual memory.[47] Like Kincaid, Pineau insists on the importance of the Creole garden in Antillean cultural practices, which she herself cultivates. More precisely, she refers to that space as "the field" in an interview:

Paris. In *Exile*, Man Ya compares her life in the *cité* to living in prison ("la geôle" 128)—which serves as a reminder of the infamous expression "cage à poule" (literally translated as "chicken coop"), popularized in 1950s France with the development of HLMs ("Habitation à loyer modéré," or "rent-controlled housing").

[47] The cultivation of the Creole garden marks a departure from the plantation system, which Martinique-born writer and essayist Édouard Glissant defines as an "anomaly" born of the European modernity in the sense of economic progress through the colonial enterprise and slave trade (*Poétique de la Relation* 88 ["Comment pouvez-vous prétendre qu'une telle anomalie ait pu contribuer à ce que vous appelez la modernité ?"/"How can you claim that such an anomaly could have contributed to what you call modernity?") Even though Glissant suggests that the silencing of slaves on plantations was subverted by the oral culture paradoxically born of an imposed silence by the planter. Alternately, the Creole garden, then and today, continues to produce food, self-sufficiency, and independence (Jean-Valéry Marc; Denis Martouzet 2011/2012).

> The field is [for her] a site of resistance. It refers to the land as a site for cultivating, or for gardening . . . The Creole garden, which is not the garden of Eden, still holds dignity [...] because it achieves self-sufficiency. The garden provides food for the children. (117-18)[48]

It is clear then that the physical inscription of the Creole garden is charged with a socio-cultural imagery of the Caribbean, and is a manifestation of an autonomous existence.

The transplantation of the Creole garden to Man Ya's place of exile, or failure thereof, is useful when considering the possible coexistence of cultural practices within the parameters of the French Republican model. Thus, alongside the imaginary re-creations of the Creole garden in Man Ya's storytelling moments, there is also an attempt to re-inscribe it physically in France. As she is used to tending to a garden which produces food all year long in the Antilles, Man Ya suffers from the cold and frost in Aubigné-Racan, France,[49] and is forced to settle and wait out the winter until she can go back to manual labor again. In the first year, and after long months of prostration in the cold of France, Man Ya comes back to working the land: ". . . Her happiness increases even more when she discovers the garden. . . . Man Ya uproots, sows, waters and watches the growth of her young plants. . . . She makes this earth hers. . . . Working the land gives life to her, sustains her" (66-67). Working the land therefore helps Man Ya develop a gradual understanding and knowledge of her place of exile. The activity also produces actual food products, minus a few crops such as vanilla,

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[48] [Translated from French] "Le champ est pour moi un lieu de résistance, il s'agit de la terre comme lieu de plantation, ou comme lieu de jardin [...]. Le jardin créole qui n'est pas le jardin d'Éden mais qui renferme quand même une part de dignité aussi. Le jardin parce qu'on est dans l'autosuffisance: on peut nourrir les enfants avec son jardin." Ramond Jurney, Florence. "Entretien avec Gisèle Pineau: Réflexions sur une Oeuvre Ancrée dans une Société Mondialisée." *Nouvelles Études Francophones*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2012.

[49] Aubigné-Racan is a small town in the Sarthe department in the region of Pays-de-la-Loire, in North-Western France.

coffee, and cocoa, which simply cannot grow in the unfavorable weather conditions of France.

This dialectical interaction between Man Ya and the land promotes a sense of spatial attachment, provided that she keeps working the land.[50] Unfortunately, her gardening activities are suddenly interrupted when she and her family leave Aubigné for the *cité*, where she is confined to a place characterized by a code of interdiction. A series of negative imperatives shows the extent of non-permissiveness: ". . . Do not leave the apartment without your ID. Do not talk to strangers, you might scare them. Do not talk to anyone since here no one understands Kreyol. [...] It is also forbidden to walk on the grass, to pick flowers, to break branches" (81).[51] The use of the impersonal voice in French suggests that this is a general prohibition applying to all people who live in the *cité*, leaving them with very few rights, in particular the rights "to sit on a bench [...] and get a breath of fresh air" (81). Man Ya thus endures a newly imposed existence, which removes all possibility of ever tending to a garden in the *cité*. Instead of making the garden a space for developing an understanding of the place of exile, the prohibition of Man Ya's gardening activities thus marks an abrupt interruption of her attempt to come to terms with exile. While working the land reveals a therapeutic and pedagogical potential for Man Ya, her inability to continue doing what she likes leads to a slow depletion of her moral and physical integrity.

Transplanting the Vegetal Metaphor: Of Depletion

It is interesting to note that Man Ya's physical condition while in France serves as a reminder of an environmental Caribbean imagery, in particular, of preoccupations with natural landscapes in Antillean literature from Aimé Césaire to the *créolistes*, including Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, and Raphaël Confiant who developed the Creoleness movement[52] in the 1980s. As Dominique Licops observes, it is not rare to find that natural metaphors are

[50] See Tuan 1977; De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991.
[51] The use of bold is for emphasis.
[52] Creoleness started as a literary movement in celebration of the cultural diversity and composite nature of the Caribbean people, for whom the recognition of an African heritage is not exclusive.

being   theorized to imagine Antillean identities. She mentions, for instance, the "tree of Negritude";[53] the "rhizome of Antillanity" (Glissant 1981); and "the mangrove of Creoleness" (*In Praise of Creoleness* [*Éloge de la Créolité*] 1989). While these metaphors rely heavily on the allegorical potential of Caribbean topography, there is always the risk of reiterating imageries of ahistorical tropical islands and exoticized landscapes fostered during the colonial era, as well as that of literalizing the metaphors—in which case the female body is often associated with the land, being reclaimed from colonial power through rape.

Licops makes a case for a displaced vegetal metaphor in Pineau, which no longer refers to the female body as a whole, but rather introduces an investigation into the similarities and differences between natural and human elements exploring the relationship between the two. I, however, am more interested in questioning the survival of the natural metaphor once it is transplanted to France. In her native Guadeloupe, Man Ya travels across rivers and hills (*mornes*) and engages in cultivation and arboriculture in her garden. She is part of this natural landscape, which she makes sure to keep healthy and well-maintained, but her female body does not exemplify a vegetable in particular. Rather, human and natural elements evolve alongside each other. In her Creole garden, Man Ya is part of the various elements of an ensemble, as "she herself sometimes adopted a vegetal posture, did not move until she started to feel numb, imagined she was a mother tree, with a dark bark, her toenails covered with earth, and her arms calling to the sky" (137). All elements of this ensemble, both human and natural, thus come together to shape the vegetal metaphor for a Caribbean ecosystem.

Returning to the narrative's temporal development, Man Ya grows increasingly nostalgic of her "Home Guadeloupe". After having moved to the *cité*, she refuses to leave her bed, and only yearns to return to her homeland. According to the doctor who examined her ("a doctor with an

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[53] In Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939) [*Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*], Negritude is aligned with nature, especially the tree and the soil, against the urbanization and technological imperative having its roots in Eurocentric thought.

understanding of the four seasons")[54] she suffers from homesickness. As Njeri Githire suggests in her analysis of Pineau's works, referring to the illness of exile, it is possible to juxtapose Pineau's characters' physical absence from their home with behavioral dysfunction and psychological disorders (86). Indeed, this is a reminder of Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* (2002), where he describes exile as a condition of "terminal loss," and warns against the eagerness of some to transform it into "a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture" (173). One finds this state of constant estrangement in Man Ya, but increasingly so since her failure to maintain her gardening habits in the *cité*.

Expanding on the notion of an 'illness' which Githire reads, after Said, through the prism of exile, I argue for a change of focus, and a move-away from regarding exile as an interpretive grid, by rather positing illness as a reflection of the fallacy of an alleged French humanist tradition whereby a so-called Republican tradition of hospitality is broken down. Indeed I propose to reconnect Man Ya's illness, not to the simple fact that she is an exile, but instead, to the failure of her attempted cultural transfers. Interestingly, tracing back the first signs of Man Ya's physical fatigue and melancholy, one notes that Man Ya develops severe symptoms as a result of her confinement in the *cité* and her inability to cultivate her garden. The silencing of Man Ya's gardening habit is therefore the first measure of an impoverished vegetal metaphor, followed shortly thereafter by her physical suffering. Unfortunately, she cannot soothe this suffering because France (the land) does not provide her with the appropriate medicinal herbs, unlike her garden back in her "Home Guadeloupe".

The failure to transpose the vegetal metaphor comes full circle as it reveals a wasted Caribbean ecological imagery, compelling us to consider the limits of a crystallized French Republican model, but also Man Ya's lack of understanding of the conditions for a successful transplantation. Simply put, the notion of an illness of inhospitality is the result of a confrontation between two contrasting cultural systems, the French modern state and

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[54] Translated from French: "un docteur-savant des quatre saisons" (124).

Man Ya's Caribbean imagery. In other words, hospitality refers to a willingness to accept manifestations of otherness or cultural variations, while illness expresses an inability to do so from either end.

A New Attempt at Cultural Transfer: Of a Caribbean Imaginary by Proxy

The illness of Pineau's fictional grandmother is thus one possible consequence of a failed transfer of cultural products. A failure which, I suggest, is caused by the fact that those cultural products are envisioned by Man Ya as unchanging cultural realities, and are simultaneously set against the rigidity of the French Republican model. In the case of Man Ya, the announcement of her return to Guadeloupe works as an immediate panacea for her illness of inhospitality. Her expected departure from the authoritarian institutional system that she has endured in France marks a sudden shift in attitude and appearance: "At the thought of her trip home, her eyes, which had been tainted by the realization that she would no longer admire her garden, were now filled with life again, like a blind person whose sight would have been miraculously restored" (135). This return to Guadeloupe is salutary for the displaced Guadeloupean, but also the culmination of a failed cultural transfer.

After Man Ya's departure, the narrator, who suffers from her sudden absence, reproduces the imaginary flights that her grandmother would undertake in order to cope with her highly regulated existence in France. In particular Man Ya would invoke the memory of her garden and the Antilles, and tell her grandchildren about those places where, it is important to remember, the narrator herself has never been. While physically transplanting the Creole garden to France results in a failure, the cultural transfer remains valid as long as it belongs to the realm of storytelling—hence the Caribbean imagery that now populates the narrator's imagination.

However, let us now revisit the proposed strategy of testing the transference of cultural practices and products, but from the opposite direction, that is, from France to the Antilles. It will be recalled that the narrator travels to Martinique and then Capesterre, Guadeloupe, in the second

half of *Exile*, when Maréchal leaves France because of the shock caused by De Gaulle's resignation in 1969. Alternately, though, cultural transference for the narrator operates at the level of the imagination, feeding off Man Ya's imaginary. One might question whether a return to the native land ("Home Guadeloupe" in the case of Man Ya), or a re/turn to a safeguarded imaginary (in the case of the narrator), are the only avenues out of the homogenous universalism promoted by the modern French Republic. Also, alongside the idea of return as an escape or release, is there response to the breaking down of the myth of French hospitality?

In the many letters that the narrator writes to Man Ya after her return to Guadeloupe, she mentions the imaginary visions she has of her grandmother "sing[ing] in [her] garden and picking mangoes, ambarella fruit and oranges" (146), as she borrows Man Ya's storytelling practice to produce her own imaginary. As part of the narrator's desire to create and recreate cultural practices of the Antilles from within France, food plays a crucial role and is perceived as a physical extension of the imaginary Creole garden. The narrator writes,

> We have received the cinnamon, Colombo powder and cassava flour. That same day, Manman made a chicken Colombo with rice. . . . So after eating the Colombo, I didn't brush my teeth because I wanted to keep some of the taste in my mouth. I closed my eyes and I saw you in your garden. . . . (150)

Exploring food as a marker of identity and cultural differences in Pineau's work, Brinda Mehta suggests that, "food [understood as a form of cultural production, in particular cultivation and cooking] becomes an effective strategy to appease the diasporic wounds of separation, migration, and alienation in an unwelcoming French metropolis" (92). I contend that for Man Ya, both her attempt at cultivating the land and her repeated culinary practice while in France testify to the creation of mechanisms to cope with her temporary forced displacement. However, once the culinary practice (the act of cultivating the food, or cooking) becomes a culinary object (the chicken Colombo here), the potential for survival of such

a cultural transfer becomes unsustainable. Unlike Man Ya's case, the food that the narrator consumes is the result of a third party's own culinary activity (that of Manman, her Antillean mother). In the narrator's case, the act of eating therefore prevails over the act of doing, suggesting that the emphasis is now on the notion of experiencing an activity through someone else's cultural practice, rather than on something that is actively learned or directly experienced by someone. This marks a shift in the nature of cultural transfers, and therefore encourages us to reevaluate their critical significance.

In his *Caribbean Discourse* [*Le Discours Antillais*], Edouard Glissant warns against the mere reproduction of cultural practices performed by Antillean populations living in France. He argues that the Antillean migrant "[who] continues to consume blood sausage, rum, vegetables and spice coming from the Antilles," among other things, is [nonetheless] "completely assimilated to the French cultural landscape" (130).

Interestingly, now that Man Ya has returned to Guadeloupe, the narrator develops her imaginary representation of the Antilles through the cultural object (the chicken Colombo) reproduced by Manman. Indeed, consuming the food provokes the narrator's imaginary flights.[55] But the survival of this imaginary construct, as it moves from the narrator's imagination to the physical world, becomes doubtful when she travels to the Antilles with her family, highlighting an alternative mode of response to cross-cultural transfers from her perspective. I suggest that it does not consist of a physical or imaginary retreat from the reality of Modern France, as was the case for Man Ya; on the contrary, it lays the groundwork for a final transfer from the Antilles back to France, in order to develop a pedagogical approach to cultural differences, in contrast with a universalist model.

Problematic 'Return': Of Undoing the Imaginary

In fact, this willingness to test the validity of cross-cultural transfers stands in contrast with Glissant's move to solidify

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[55] See *Exile* 150.

the fate of Antillean subsequent generations living in France, especially the second one, when he suggests in *Caribbean Discourse* that

> Visibly strangers [in France], the children of this generation are entirely assimilated to the French reality. They could not possibly live in Martinique or Guadeloupe. Such an experience would quickly become unbearable for them, for the simple reason that it would reveal their 'difference' from a French person, however without including them in a differentiated Us. (129) [56]

While Glissant's assumption almost exclusively emphasizes the passivity of the second or third generation Antilleans in France, a focus on the potential for transferability of an imaginary of the Caribbean produced by the narrator in *Exile* underscores actions performed by an Antillean who belongs to the generations addressed in *Caribbean Discourse* in order to negotiate two seemingly exclusive sociocultural realities.

Revisiting the notion of 'return' is key to understanding the variations in cultural transfers between Man Ya and her granddaughter. Indeed, in the case of Man Ya, the material transplantation of her Caribbean ecosystem in France having failed, she returns to the Antillean land she was forced to leave. A reminder of Aimé Césaire's 'return to the native land,' Man Ya's going back to Guadeloupe is concretized precisely because the materiality of her native land was never in doubt. Following Césaire's account of the return which "[t]akes root in the red flesh of the soil [and] in the ardent flesh of the sky,"[57] Man Ya's imaginary flights to

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[56] "Visiblement étrangers, les enfants de cette génération sont définitivement assimilés à la réalité française. En aucun cas, ils ne pourraient vivre en Martinique ou en Guadeloupe où la situation leur deviendrait vite insupportable, pour la raison qu'elle révélerait leur 'différence' d'avec un Français, sans les comprendre pourtant dans un Nous différencié."

[57] Aimé Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land: Bilingual Edition* (2016). In Césaire's *Return*, the birth of Negritude is granted upon a reconciliation of the speaker ("I") and the geography of the island going beyond the colonial past.

her native Guadeloupe were possible because of her previous relationship to the land. On the other hand, the conditions of the narrator's "return to the non-native land" (title of section in *Exile*; "The five plagues of the return to the non-native land"; 193) do not have any grounding in the material reality of the land. Consequently, their return predicts the feeble survival chances for the transplantation of an imagined Caribbean onto the physical world.

Prior to the narrator's departure for the Antilles, Pineau makes use of an impersonal authoritative voice ordering the narrator, her family, and probably, the entire Antillean population in France, to go back home. This injunction punctuates the narrative and underscores the narrator's own impulse to return home, even if that space remains the pure product of her imagination. To the repeated injunction "Go back to your country!" (140; 141 personal address in second person singular in both cases), the narrator replies: "I would willingly go back to my country. . . . I want to leave that land that rejects me" (139-40), undoubtedly reinforcing the imaginary construction of the Caribbean. Our realization that the narrator "had imagined a Guadeloupe just for herself" (174), cautions us regarding the transposition of one's imaginary to the physical reality of the Antilles (174). And in fact, when the narrator's family arrives in Martinique, the direct encounter, or rather, confrontation, between imagination and reality, marks the dismantling of an unexpectedly deceitful imaginary.

Let me clarify that my recognition of this outcome is not to disparage the poetic imaginary that helped the narrator cope with the reality of social exclusion in France. Rather, it is to highlight an adaptive methodology regarding the shift from the world of the imaginary to the physical reality of the Antilles. In the narrator's account of her first days in Martinique, there is a distancing from a socio-cultural landscape, completely different from what the newly-arrived had envisioned. This evocative passage in the story vividly describes the visitors' fear and dizziness in face of the excessive alterity of the Antillean populations:

> Suddenly, fear seizes us. . . . There are too many expressions on people's faces. We are not used to that.

> Eyes that speak. Mouths that writhe in heightened
> pain. . . . No, we are not used to those excesses, those
> speaking faces, this fever inhabiting the streets. And
> also, there are all those Black people around us. (180-
> 181)

After the initial brutal encounter with a diversity of people
and cultural attitudes, there is the realization of a
discrepancy between the imaginary and the material world,
which encourages the narrator to develop a proactive
pedagogy of alterity.

Deriving a pedagogy of alterity from the negotiation of
cultural differences not only departs from Glissant's claim of
an ever-already assimilated second or third generation
Antillean, but also works through the initial failure of
cultural transfers. Indeed, the narrator's failure to transpose
her imaginary Caribbean to the physical reality results in a
change of attitude and thinking: "Know the extent of one's
ignorance. To open one's hands to receive one, two crumbs
of this knowledge. Admit one's thirst [for knowledge]" (185).
The narrator, thus, proposes a progressive learning pathway
while circumventing an impossible return. This pathway
gradually undoes a preconceived imaginary, and gives full
expression to the cultural insight born out of encounters with
the varied physical realities of the Caribbean, including
Martinique, Guadeloupe, and finally Man Ya's garden in
Capesterre.

Of Encounters: Articulating Coexistence

The successive failures of cultural transfers during Man Ya's
exile to France shed light on two competing cultural models,
which never come to terms with one another. On the one
hand, the French Republican model supports the promotion
of seemingly preserved universalist and humanist values
dating back to the French Revolution. On the other hand,
Man Ya attempts to transplant Caribbean cultural practices
and products caught in suspended time because of her exile
from her native land. Later the narrator herself travels to the
Antilles and retrieves a pedagogy of alterity formed by her
direct encounter with dynamic cultural variations to her own

preconceived imaginary construct. In this regard, it is clear that the initial failure of the cultural transfer, that is, from the imaginary to the physical reality of the Antilles, is rerouted to produce an active strategy that outlines a willingness to both acknowledge and negotiate constantly changing cultural realities. Proposing to transpose the narrator's pedagogical lens regarding manifestations of otherness to France, thus, initiates the process of understanding that otherness does not have to translate into exclusion, within the parameters of the French Republican model.

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The Reconstruction of Memory and the Spatial Dispossession of "Le Jeune Frontalier" in Leila Sebbar's *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique*

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The Men-memory and the Fabrication of Images and its Visual and Mental Impact

In the context of building national identity, French scholar Ernest Renan (1823-92) encourages one to forget the undesirable facts of history. In this respect, France's historical amnesia coincides perfectly with his argument, upon which a racist discourse has been constructed. This rejection of the feelings of Algerian war trauma is the source of the ongoing resentment directed toward the children of immigrants to North African parents. But despite this deliberate historical amnesia, can these ethnic communities be ignored? And, how can one explain the phenomenon of crossbreeding incarnated by Sebbar's protagonist Mohamed, a Frenchman of Arabic-Vietnamese descent? How did his grandfather, Mohamed the Algerian, come to have a Vietnamese wife? What destiny has played out in the lives of these people, making the Frenchman Mohamed a moving reality in *les banlieues de Paris* (suburbs of Paris)?

The silence surrounding the Algerian war oppresses France's collective memory and explains why Mohamed constitutes such a cultural and racial mixed identity. The latter plays the role of breaking the silence in order to constitute the memory, what French historian Pierre Nora (b. 1931) calls a "man-memory": a person responsible for breaking the code of silence and transmitting a collective memory linked to a traumatic period. Nora says: "The less memory is collectively experienced, the more men need individuals who make themselves men-memoires" (Howell

60). Mohamed is a nomadic type who walks among people carrying his totem images, which, in turn, raise discussions about the war and stimulate the people's memory. Images of war inspire the evil that people try to force into their memories. Clearly, the images of war go beyond Mohamed's simple sense of self-entertainment. In reality, they help him build up the memory of his torn family's history, which also explains his day-to-day trauma.

One of the most lamentable wars in French history is the Algerian war, the bitter memory of which still stifles the collective memory of French people. *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique* explores the transmission of cultural memory of Algerian children through oral traditions and especially through images. It is not strange; therefore, that the protagonist develops a fetishlike thought around the images he collects of different wars. Therefore, the images of wars that Mohamed collected whether from his family members, his community or newspapers and magazines constitute the regeneration of memory and are viewed as a way to invest in the past in order to allow people to behave properly in exile. But because Mohamed has no sense of history or any direct terrifying experiences of living through a war, his memories are built upon the emotional state he experiences while obsessively contemplating the pictures. These images have the power to create memories of events and thereby to suggest a new way to reexamine history and end the healing of misfortune. According to French scholar Roland Barthes, the images are "not dialectical: (image) is a theater where denaturalized death cannot be envisaged, reflected and internalized, or the death of the theater, the foreclosure of tragedy, excludes all purification, all catharsis "(Wilkerson-Barker 37).

In the absence of a real context of war, Mohamed cannot lament; however, investing time and effort in these images gives him the chance to mourn, for they act as a therapeutic measure for him. "There will soon be white flowers in tight clusters, and Mohamed will cut three branches to deposit them as an offering, like an olive or a laurel, under the large picture that he carved with the razor blade in a book on the war in Algeria "(Sebbar 30). This, in addition, leads him to define himself in the mindset of a simulated war, as he "escapes" from his family to live in the

bushes; he buries guns around his home and masters the martial arts, as if he is preparing for an attack: "I know they want to kill me, but I will get them first" (Sebbar 39).

On the same level, the images play the role of a documentary, for Sebbar contrasts actually living the trauma of a war with building an idea through the media or images. One of the novel's protagonists, Laurel said: "Still pictures of the war ... A child who has not experienced war or bombing except on TV, in the cinema ... but it's not the same, it does not leave the same traces" (Sebbar 150). As stated by Henry Giroux, the media have become a substitute for human experience (Wilkerson-Barker 32). However, Mohamed is looking for truth by obsessing over these pictures. This may be a reaction against France's xenophobia vis-à-vis the Arabs.[58]   Unlike   Mohamed,   other   *banlieusards* (suburbanites) are forced to impose upon themselves either indifference or silence because they feel vulnerable and threatened. Indifference grows among youth due to social insecurity and economic instability. And so they use the media as a way to build their memories in the world of capitalism: "(Algerians) often remarked that young people, children of immigrants, are not interested in the history of their country, not even in their war of liberation. For them it is an ancient history, the past of their parents, almost ancestors [. . .] They do not ask questions. In the end nobody tells anything. It is silence" (Sebbar 170).

Like all children of Algerian descent, Momo (the young Mohamed's nickname) has never experienced a colonial war. Without living the direct trauma of war, they formed their views through the media and their parents' stories. In the midst of the taboo placed on the Algerian war, where silence is the only symptom of collective amnesia, these   children's   knowledge   is   disconcerted,   and   the

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[58] From 1830 onward, Algeria became a French territory on which 1 million *Pieds-noirs* would eventually settle and live for generations. The loss of this Algeria shocked the French conscience and symbolized the beginning of the destruction of the great dream of a colonial empire. The Fourth Republic (1946-58), which struggled against the very idea of such a loss, fiercely crushed the Algerian revolution and ignored its stated adherence to the universal principles of human rights (e.g., fraternity, equality, and freedom) in order to inflict abominable and very harsh tortures imposed upon civilian Algerians.

fragmentary nature of their understanding symbolizes the tragic historical amnesia deployed in France since Algeria's independence. Sebbar attributes imposing a comprehensive nationwide silence by the official discourse on the people in order to repress war memories to the government's feeling of "collective guilt." She relies on the relation of images with the past, since *le banlieusard* possesses an empty sense of memory. Sturken says: "The photograph ... is a mechanism through which the past can be constructed and situated within the present" (Wilkerson-Barker 35). Mohamed finds more in these images; to him they represent a world of contemplation outside the universe of cable network simulation, a world in which he can claim different spatial possession.

French historian and expert on North Africa Benjamin Stora says that different media "pose the question of the visual impact in the making of a memory at a time when, moreover, the image plays the role of necessary proof of historical event "(Howell 68). In this respect, *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique* demonstrates the tension described between historical amnesia and the struggle to resist by employing those images that form a simulation of the visual culture and engage in direct dialogue with the personal experience of people. Thus the novel is a dialogue between personal, collective, and official memory whose images are the only authentic witness of the past.

The Creation of the "*Jeune frontalier*" Phenomenon

The picture of his grandmother Minh implies the story of his grandfather Mohamed, a soldier in the French colonial army. At the end of the Indochina war,[59] he comes home with a

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[59] The First Indochina War is known, as the Anti-French Resistance War in Vietnam, began in on December 19, 1946 and lasted until August 1st, 1954. Fighting between French forces and their Viet Minh opponents in the South dated from September 1945. Vietnam was absorbed into French Indochina in stages between 1858 and 1887. Nationalism grew until World War II provided a break in French control. Early Vietnamese resistance centered on the intellectual Phan Bội Châu. Châu looked to Japan that could successfully resist European colonization. The war had extended to the neighboring French Indochina protectorates of Laos and Cambodia. To enforce its power in Indochina, France enlisted soldiers from all her colonies especially North Africa to domesticate Vietnamese

Vietnamese wife. For Momo, each picture evokes a stage of France's colonial historical context, while the whole collaborates to build the collective memory and enhance his personal understanding of his self. The irony lies in the fact that the young Mohamed, whose life emanates from these two colonial wars, has personally witnessed neither of them. The pictures he possesses enable him to build intimate relations not because of their geographical representation to whether Vietnam or Algeria as such, but because through them, the young Mohamed can reconstruct missed relationships and spatiotemporal frameworks. In other words, they constitute "places of memories" in which he has not lived and, as Nora says, serve for a self-evaluation of the Algerian war by the generation that did not testify (Howell 61).[60]

While the images produce memory, another phenomenon arises due to the absence of knowledge, that of the "*jeune frontalier,*" which, according to Giroux, concerns young people who live in insecurity and instability. "The crisis of representation has resulted in an economically and socially insecure world in which young people are condemned to wander multiple borders and spaces marked by difference and otherness "(Wilkerson-Barker 32). In these spheres, they belong to no space or place despite their diversity in languages and cultures.

Both the multicultural encounter and the conditions of cross-border *banlieusards* create, according to Giroux, a state of despair or indifference that causes those affected to search for the immediate pleasure. This search is linked to the individual parent's intimate events, for the first

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national troops. This war caused the split of the *Indochinois* region and gave the birth of three countries Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

[60] The French political system and media still avoid applying the term "war" to describe the truly massive massacres of Algerians in order to camouflage the painful reality of a real all-out war. Instead, the political regime uses such nebulous and deceptive phrases as "the events in Algeria" or "the operation to restore civil peace in Algeria." French history, which is incapable of recognizing this period, thus cannot reconcile itself to it. Always a taboo, the Algerian war is very seldom taught in schools–a reality that is still true even today. More recently, and under the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-12), a law had passed to glorify the role of colonization as much as to rationalize, in positive terms, its most disastrous consequences.

generation of immigrants remain committed to temporal collectivity by telling their war stories. The nomadic Mohamed, finding himself without shelter or protection, compares himself to the Palestinians, whose problem is to confirm a nation-state. For one reason or another, his cultural hybridity leads him to isolation. Despite the difference in space between Mohamed and the Palestinians, the image is strong enough to capture his grief. His peers do not have the same feelings and thus do not understand his attitude. He speaks to his friends, reiterating that the Palestinians must live in their own country, on their own land.

> - And you think you'll find your land?
> - Yes, if I want to. It will always be my land there, the village of my grandfather Mohamed, his house, his garden, his grave in the cemeteries.
> - And here?
> - Here too, if I want, I can stay. I'm born in France.
> - And do you think we will go back to our country, to our land?
> - I do not know. You have a country? Palestine is no longer a country. Israel has a country, why not the Palestinians?
>   Mohamed no longer eats. He has only tears in his eyes. His friends are astonished at his passion for men he has never seen, knows nothing about a country in the East where he may never go. He says that sometimes he thinks he is like the Palestinians, without land, without house, without olive trees, without sheep. (166)

Sebbar draws a parallel between the *Beurs*[61] and the Palestinians that implies the need of peace; Mohamed needs to coexist with other peers in his country: France. Coexistence is defined as a state in which two or more groups

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[61] The word beur was coined using backslang by reversing the syllables of the word arabe, which means Arabic or Arab in French. For example, "Arabe" becomes "a-ra-beu" then "beu-ra-a" and "beur" by contraction. Since the late 1990s, a lot of young people have used the twice-vernalized term rebeu as a synonym. This term is now the dominant term used by the younger generations (under 30).

live together while respecting their differences and resolving
their conflicts nonviolently. This is not a new concept, but
peoples find their security in coexistence. Mohamed's
contradictory feelings between belonging and dispossession
are unknown to a condition of exile, nomadism, racism, and
collective oppression. Having this hybridity of different
cultures gives him the feeling of dispossession, a feeling that
drives him to take an interest in the images of war. When
living the war's trauma through pictures, he is engulfed by a
mindset of alienation. Mohamed's inability to mourn
becomes the most significant in his identification with the
children of families dismembered by the war. This reality
applies to his own family history, which is fractured and
deeply imbricated with the violence of the colonial past and
its heavy consequences. In fact, these traumatic memories
initially affirm his sense of social dislocation and stir up his
rebellious attitude until he decides to leave home. By
discovering his roots in history, he can identify with the
present. It is as if Mohamed, in order to protect himself
against further loss in a threatening world, must defend
himself against the pain of separation by taking up arms and
becoming an adult who controls all of his affairs. He feels
threatened all the time by the people who meet him in his
path, like the mechanic Mr. André, the Policeman Louis
Petit, Félix Lenoir the worker in the railway, and especially
Tuilier, who used to work as a technician in the French army
during France's post-Second World War effort to reassert
itself in Vietnam.

A Caption of Loneliness, and Otherness

Deprived of the possibility of joining a social unity such as a
family, *les banlieusards* live captured in a locked sphere
without the support of France's largest community or state
sustenance. This cultural condition echoes with Giroux, who
argues that, in postmodernism, the culture of children
cannot be considered being isolated from the political, social,
and economic condition of democracy (Wilkerson-Barker
32). From this perspective, *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique*
becomes a declaration of how the *banlieusards* have been
prevented from entering the collective and historical
framework that would enable them to become social subjects

rather than mere objects of history. Giroux says in this connection: "We sacrifice even the dearest resources of our future: our children" (Wilkerson-Barker 39). Orphans are clearly at the center of the events shown in these pictures. Mohamed is absolutely bound to those children, whose lives have been completely destroyed. Myra, the young one with whom he exchanged letters, did not understand one of the pictures he was sharing:

> Myra does not understand why Hami gives her these pictures. Pictures of war without legend, without date of which she does not know what to do with! ... Myra watches them for long time; a girl on the knees of the American soldier with short hair, clear eyes, mouth tight. The child must be five years old. A Vietnamese, eyes black and grave, rings of gold to her ears. On the other photo, a boy of eight or nine years cries desperately, hanging on the back of a truck where lies, on a mat, a young woman dead, mouth open, flies on his bloody shirt. It is his mother. On the last picture, the child, a boy probably, is back, kneeling bare foot. A man, his father, holds him in his arms laughing [...] For this picture, Mohamed wrote, behind, . . . a sort of legend ... this man is a *mujahid*[62] . . . Mohamed tells as if he knew the man and his history. (183-84)

These pictures represent documentary facts and expose us to the trauma of innocent children, most of whom have had their lives destroyed by France's colonial wars over the years. While it is nice to encourage children to imitate their parents, these young men become criminals by imitating their parents' defeatism or through their own rebellion:

> Of course, when privileged white kids mimic destructive adult behavior, such acts are generally treated as aberrations. But when disadvantaged kids do so, it becomes a social problem for which they are both the root cause and the victims. (Wilkerson-Barker 39)

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[62] A fighter to death for a cause.

Sebbar confirms the simple right of the children of North African immigrant parents to incorporate different characteristics as a main component of their culture identity. In denouncing the idea of "Français de souche"[63] to become just "French," Sebbar expresses the homogeneity of a French society constituting diverse elements, a harmonious mixing together and living in the same place where the love of France brings them closer together. Mohamed says to the girl he has passion for:

Mira, I know your name.
It is me! I am Mohamed for my father;
Mehmet for my mother;
Madou for my sister Melissa;
Hammidou for my grandmother Minh;
Momo for friends
or the Chinese or (better) the green Chinese of Africa.
(89)

Mohamed gives a line for each name, which gives it equal importance. He gives none of them any preference, despite the fact that each one refers to a different culture. He is called Mohamed by his Arab father, Mehmet by his Turkish mother, but "the Zulu," "the Indian," or "the savage" by the cops who are always chasing him. Although these names are actually nicknames that indicate regional variations of the same designation, they actually refer to one person.

To embody the complexities of a multicultural personality, *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique* is a mixture of stories: a family drama, a love story, and several secondary stories. To find internal peace, Mohamed, the protagonist identifies himself with the men who fought for Algeria's independence. He idealizes them as icons for the people who live around him. He aspires to the absolute in the world: that of a nineteenth-century romantic hero. *La Chartreuse de Palme*, which Myra reads, for example, is a meta-text that shows Mohamed that he, like Fabrice Del Dongo, was born too late to participate in the heroic moment that he so admires. "Mohamed and Del Dongo both seek to define themselves in

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[63] It means authentic French ; an expression used by the extreme right wing in France.

the absolute at the heart of the chaos of history" (Baroghel-Hanquier 62).

This novel of universalism sheds light on the absence of transparency in the world. "He runs," which is repeated throughout the novel, specifies the novel's very tone because it is all about a marginalized person who lives on the periphery of a society due to his otherness. And yet he emerges victorious from this moral incarceration because he refuses to get caught without affirming his multicultural identity. Mohamed, therefore, expresses Sebbar's desire to support the assertion of all *Beur*, a people with a mythical journey of self-knowledge and truth. Sebbar says: "From where I see them, from where I hear them, I want them to remain unassimilated, strange, and violent, with their peculiarities and their ability to grasp the Modernity ... they (youth who are in such struggle) are my myth" (Baroghel-Hanquier 63);She says about Mohamed:

> He is running.
> The child is still running. He knows where he is going and the turns he has to take to go to his family, the cemetery, the school, the police station, the college, the bistros, where cops and dogs [...] The cars stop to let him pass, the buses brake, and the travelers look at him. He does not turn his head at the noise of engines, squealing of tires.
> He runs confident.
> Sovereign (49).

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De La Haine (1995) à La Désintégration (2011): *d*u beur galérien au beur djihadiste

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Loin d'être une simple fiction, le cinéma, en représentant le jeune de banlieue, est un outil au service du réel qui permet de répondre aux débats contemporains sur les problématiques de politique sociale, d'intégration et d'insertion ainsi que sur la question identitaire. C'est dans cette optique que nous nous servons de deux films, *La Haine* (1995) de Mathieu Kassovitz dans *La Désintégration* (2011) de Phillipe Faucon, pour aborder la question des difficultés d'intégration vécues par deux personnages beurs, Saïd et Ali, et leur transformation en un paria de la société.

Dans cet article, notre argument repose sur le fait que les films provoquent un basculement des concepts théoriques des appareils répressifs et idéologiques d'État, développés par le philosophe marxiste Louis Althusser (1918-1990) dans son texte "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État". Ce basculement trouve son origine dans l'échec d'intégration vécu par les personnages principaux des deux films. La peur de ne pas se sentir français implique une hostilité qui conduit à la révolte du beur et à la dissolution identitaire, en d'autres mots à un sentiment de ne plus être un citoyen français à part entière. Face à cet échec et à une peur de reconnaissance identitaire française, le beur s'invente une société et une identité. Les deux personnages voient cette dernière se dissoudre, ce qui par le caractère marginal des héros, remet alors en question la définition de la citoyenneté française.

Tandis que de nombreuses théories se consacrent à la xénophobie ou à l'islamophobie, peu d'études sont dédiées à la manière dont l'Islam ou la délinquance permettent de se recréer une place dans la société; encore moins d'études

analysent la xénophobie venant de celui qui est considéré
"étranger". Ainsi, les études abondent sur *La Haine*,
mais sans s'attarder sur le rôle des personnages beurs du
film: Abdel le participant (sa mort possible, puis finalement
réelle comme leitmotiv du film) et Saïd l'observateur, le seul
personnage qui échappe à la mort. En effet, Saïd, dans son
statut de spectateur, ouvre le film (premier plan rapproché
sur son visage) et le ferme (autre dernier plan rapproché).
Ainsi, notre travail tourne autour de ces questions
principales: Quelles sont les conséquences du sentiment de
non appartenance et de la marginalité dans la société
française? Quelles sont les stratégies de survie identitaire?
En quoi Ali, le terroriste suicidaire, et Saïd, l'insouciant,
établissent des moyens pour fuir la "société de contrôle"?
Comment l'observateur de la mort dans *La Haine* devient le
participant de celle-ci dans *La Désintégration?* Comment la
mort créée par l'appareil répressif de l'État est-il devenu la
mort engendrée par le citoyen lui-même dans sa propre
idéologie de l'Islam fondamentaliste? Pour tenter de
répondre à ces questions, nous démontrerons, dans un
premier temps, la manipulation par les personnages et la
mise en scène des appareils répressifs d'État et, dans un
second temps, la manipulation et mise en scène des appareils
idéologiques d'État pour enfin mettre en relief les
conséquences de ces deux concepts menant à un état de
tétanie et à la mort chez les personnages.

D'entrée de jeu*, La Désintégration* présente l'histoire
d'un personnage pourtant "bien intégré"*,* Ali, mais qui peu à
peu réalise qu'il ne se sent plus français face à la
discrimination qu'il subit. Cette situation le rapproche d'un
endoctrineur qui promeut un Islam radical, Djamel, et
prêche une version fondamentaliste de cette religion. Celui-
ci, empruntant un discours fataliste et anti-français, attire
des jeunes et les pousse vers le terrorisme qu'ils considèrent
comme la seule protection contre un monde occidental qui
les a depuis longtemps ignorés et rejetés. De la même
manière, *La Haine* met en scène Saïd et ses deux amis en
banlieue parisienne filmés pendant une journée entière. Le
film a pour trame la vengeance de leur ami, Abdel, victime
d'une bavure policière. Saïd et ses partenaires, Hubert, un
jeune d'origine africaine, et Vinz, un juif, se retrouvent aussi
dans une société qui les rejette et les marginalise. Dans une

tentative de garder espoir, les personnages s'aliènent davantage et tentent cependant de trouver refuge dans la boxe (Hubert), la violence (Vinz), et la délinquance (Saïd): moyens pour eux de fuir la réalité.

A la vue de ces deux films, les contextes nous permettent d'évaluer l'être et le devenir des beurs de banlieue qui s'inscrivent dans leurs actes. Dans la conception existentialiste sartrienne du "Je suis ce que je fais", les personnages se définissent dans la continuité du film en refusant d'adopter la norme et par ce fait, renversent le pouvoir de la culture française dominante qui n'est plus la leur. Cependant, ce libre arbitre a ses failles et amènera l'angoisse chez les deux personnages. A ce sujet, Carrie Tarr observe un phénomène dans lequel "les films du cinéma de banlieue racontent une histoire différente et permettent d'articuler l'exclusion et la double conscience pour défier le pouvoir de la culture française" (1997, 67; ma traduction)[64]. Cette question du pouvoir retrouvé montre comment la banlieue est sous "la société de contrôle" (Deleuze 1990). Celle-ci est rejetée par les personnages. En effet, le but d'une telle société dominante est de "concentrer; de répartir dans l'espace; d'ordonner dans le temps; de composer dans l'espace-temps une force productive dont l'effet doit être supérieur à la somme des forces élémentaires" (Deleuze 1). Le "milieu d'enfermement" est clairement perçu dans la construction spatiale des cités de banlieue où s'établissent de hautes tours collées les unes contre les autres.

L'enfermement est aussi une allégorie de leur psyché. En conséquence, les deux personnages Ali et Saïd, conscients de leur avenir incertain, éprouvent un sentiment anti-français. Ils sont aussi victimes de racisme, dû au délit de faciès, victimes de discrimination et étrangement dépourvus de structure familiale. Comme réponse à cette aliénation vécue, Ali cherche protection dans sa propre idéologie religieuse et Saïd fuit la répression. Dans ces actes qui définissent leur "existence" au sens sartrien, la théorie althussérienne permet une différente évaluation des personnages beurs. De ce fait, ce qui les rejoint est le fait

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[64] "films from the cinemas of the periphery tell a different story and provide the potential to articulate exclusion and double consciousness in a way that challenges the hegemony of French culture" (Tarr 67).

d'être emprisonnés par celles-ci - ce qu'Althusser appelle "l'appareil d'État" répressif ou idéologique:

> L'État, c'est alors avant tout ce que les classiques du marxisme ont appelé *l'appareil d'État*. On comprend sous ce terme: non seulement l'appareil spécialisé (au sens étroit) dont nous avons reconnu l'existence et la nécessité à partir des exigences de la pratique juridique, à savoir la police, les tribunaux, les prisons; mais aussi l'armée, qui (le prolétariat a payé de son sang cette expérience) intervient directement comme force répressive d'appoint en dernière instance quand la police, et ses corps auxiliaires spécialisés, sont 'débordés par les événements'; et au-dessus de cet ensemble le chef de l'État, le gouvernement et l'administration. (16)

De cette manière, la première scène du film présente d'emblée l'appareil d'État et sa "force répressive" avec la présence de CRS face à Saïd. En leur faisant face, dans un plan rapproché, Saïd affronte la réalité. Les tours de la cité l'encerclent, l'empêchent de voir et d'aller loin dans une société dans laquelle l'intégration lui est impossible. Cette répression si violente se perçoit dans l'affiche du film *La Haine* où l'arme tenue par Vinz est pointée vers celui qui regarde l'image. Visée par Vinz, elle met en place deux mondes: Nous (la banlieue) contre Vous (la société, ici ciblée). Saïd se trouve au centre comme dans la plupart du film, ce qui révèle sa position entre Vinz et Hubert. Cet entre-deux témoigne d'une part de l'insertion de Saïd dans son groupe (la banlieue représentée par Vinz et Hubert) et, d'autre part, de sa désintégration dans la société, une façon de montrer qu'il tente de s'y faire une place. Cette difficulté est clairement mise en évidence dans la dimension spatiale qu'occupe Saïd dans le film. En effet, il se fait rejeter dans différents lieux (sur le toit, à l'hôpital, chez l'épicier etc.), et ces rejets illustrent un échec d'intégration.

Dans ce même ordre d'idée, *La Désintégration* fonctionne aussi comme une illustration de la répression, et amène à observer un phénomène identique dans l'affiche du film. Celle-ci présente l'endoctrineur Djamel et Ali sur fond de drapeau français. En regardant ensemble dans la même

direction, tous deux observent sûrement l'échec de leur intégration et celui du modèle républicain. Ainsi, la désintégration aurait deux sens : l'échec d'intégration et la fragmentation identitaire. De plus, la violence répressive se manifeste sous une forme plus cachée, à savoir, dans "l'infrastructure" qu'Althusser définit comme "base économique", ("unité" des forces productives et des rapports de production) (13). Après qu'elle ait 'discriminée' Ali dans sa recherche d'emploi, la violence répressive incite alors le personnage à utiliser sa propre idéologie: sa religion pour en faire une doctrine nationale.

Alors, il n'est plus question d'appareil idéologique "de" l'État mais d'appareil idéologique "contre" l'État. A ce sujet, la crainte de non-appartenance et l'image d'une identité ostracisée gagnent un pouvoir de contagion que Djamel répand au sein du groupe pour ainsi former une contre-idéologie. Cela induit le recours à la violence et au sacrifice dans le Djihad, afin de recréer une identité rendue impossible par la société. Les jeunes deviennent alors l'outil d'un pouvoir destructeur par le discours de Djamel qui contrôle tout grâce à sa connaissance de la religion. Même si la peur est, selon le psychologue Paul Ekman, "inné[e]" (6), Djamel l'instille dans les esprits et montre que la peur est nécessaire pour survivre dans la société, en les convainquant que la France leur déniera toujours un statut. Ainsi Djamel affirme :

> Ils ont eu besoin de vos parents pour ramasser des poubelles ou tenir des marteaux-piqueurs, mais si vous aspirez à autre chose, là, ils ne veulent plus de vous . . . . T'as fait exactement ce que les gaouris (blancs en arabe) attendent de toi, tout pour que tu comptes plus! Si tu es seul aujourd'hui, au point de demander à un étranger de t'héberger, c'est parce qu'en France, on a tout fait pour que tu ne sois plus rien. On t'a tout pris même le moyen d'apprendre ta religion, il reste plus que ton prénom. Cette société est un danger pour vous.

Cet exemple montre que la reprise de contrôle idéologique est sans doute un moyen d'exister. Althusser présente l'idéologie, non les idéologies, comme "un système des idées,

des représentations qui dominent l'esprit d'un homme ou d'un groupe social" (34). Elle repose aussi sur le contrôle de l'individu en lui imposant un certain comportement fidèle aux idées et croyances. Plus précisément, Althusser considère les institutions suivantes comme des appareils idéologiques d'État: l'institution religieuse, familiale, juridique, politique et artistique. Cela nous amène à nous pencher sur ses questions:

> Quelle est exactement la mesure du rôle des appareils idéologiques d'État? Quel peut bien être le fondement de leur importance? En d'autres termes: à quoi correspond la "fonction" de ces Appareils idéologiques d'État, qui ne fonctionnent pas à la répression, mais à l'idéologie? (25)

La fonction de cette dernière dans les deux films ne sert pas à contrôler, étant donné qu'elle n'appartient plus à l'État mais aux personnages. Elle, au contraire, a pour fonction de développer une résistance et d'être contrôlée.

  Tout comme l'État contrôle à travers la police dans *La Haine*, Djamel, dans *La Désintégration*, contrôle à travers l'Islam pour pouvoir persuader que la religion plutôt que la France peut changer sa vie. En effet, le film s'ouvre sur une scène de prière collective représentant une forte présence idéologique musulmane et l'absence de celle de l'État. Cela s'exprime dans les propos de Djamel dans la scène suivante: "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, c'est du vent! Ce qu'il faut comprendre, c'est Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité entre Blancs!" Dans cette déconstruction de la devise républicaine, Djamel fait en sorte que la religion devienne une nouvelle devise à l'encontre de l'État. Il justifie ses propos en racontant une expérience où il a été victime de discrimination, ce qui l'a poussé à se radicaliser. Comme avance Althusser, "ce n'est pas leurs conditions d'existence réelles, leur monde réel, que les 'hommes' 'se représentent' dans l'idéologie, mais c'est avant tout leur rapport à ces conditions d'existence qui leur y est représenté" (39). A travers cette citation, il est clair qu'Ali se reconnait seulement dans sa propre religion, plutôt que celle de l'État, pour ainsi pouvoir exister. D'autre part, le rapport à ces conditions d'existence de beur de cité, se caractérise par l'institution familiale, qui dans les films est

quasi absente. Ainsi, dépourvus de repères familiaux, les personnages se retrouvent vite endoctrinés, en particulier Ali. Avec un nom de famille qui le trahit dans sa recherche d'emploi, une mère, agent de propreté au revenu modeste, et un père hospitalisé dont l'absence, qui selon Tarr, "souligne la difficulté qu'ils ont à reprendre contrôle de leurs vies" (Tarr 69; ma traduction*)*,[65] Ali le vit dans la construction de son avenir et dans sa famille. La famille d'Ali tente de fermer les yeux sur la discrimination évidente. Ali trouve alors refuge et compréhension auprès de l'idéologie de Djamel qui, sans le forcer, l'écoute et le rassure pour pouvoir mieux l'endoctriner. C'est dans cette optique que la sociologue spécialisée dans les études islamiques, Felice Dassetto, évoque les psychologues Joule et Beauvois qui explorent la stratégie d'endoctrinement*:* "Un effet de persuasion est d'autant plus efficace s'il est fait à l'enseigne de la liberté et non pas de la contrainte appelée 'soumission librement consentie : . . . je te dis ceci, cette vérité . . . mais tu es libre de penser'" (16). Ali trouve une source de compréhension en Djamel qui dit: "On les dévalorise toujours les jeunes, moi je les écoute". Dasseto mentionne d'autres psychologues Kuppens et Yzebyt qui étudient la famille de substitution symbolique donnant un sens de sécurité:

> Pour constituer un lieu social d'attachement affectif : une sorte de nouvelle famille qui idéalise la famille qu'on a quittée, un mélange entre famille de sang et famille d'idéal. Ce groupe d'affiliation donne naissance à une solidarité de compagnons de combat et d'épreuves. Ce lien émotionnel renforce par ailleurs l'identité sociale. Le groupe offre un lieu d'affectivité mal rencontrée au sein de la famille. (33)

Ce phénomène de "nouvelle famille" se retrouve dans *La Haine* où Saïd est le seul personnage dont les parents sont totalement invisibles. Saïd perd aussi le contrôle de sa propre vie, ce qui le pousse à chercher refuge auprès de ses amis en guise de famille substitutive, pour ainsi oublier ce sentiment de non appartenance à la France. Malgré son

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[65] "Underlines the difficulty they (les enfants) have in taking control of their live" (Tarr 69).

manque de contrôle, il reprend ce dernier à l'intérieur de son cercle d'amis. Lui seul, dans sa position d'entre-deux, est capable de cimenter le groupe (la banlieue) quand Hubert et Vinz affichent leur différends. A travers cela, pour reprendre la citation d'Althusser mentionnée plus haut, il est évident que le personnage ne se représente pas dans le monde réel mais dans son propre microcosme en se créant une nouvelle famille, donc de nouveaux idéaux.

D'autre part, force est de constater que Djamel joue un rôle essentiel dans la création et l'aggravation de la francophobie- hostilité envers la France--mais aussi de "l'islamofolie"--folie attachée à un islam fondamentaliste. L'idéologie et la répression de l'État entraînent alors un sentiment de francophobie: à la fois une peur de l'autre France (la France d'en haut) et une hostilité envers celle-ci. A ce sujet, les psychologues McCauley et Moskalenko avancent:

> Un haut degré d'hostilité envers un autre groupe est souvent décrit comme de la haine. Des théoristes affirment que la haine est une émotion, voire un sentiment chargé à la fois de haine, de peur et de mépris. Dans notre cas, la haine n'est pas une émotion mais une occasion de vivre plusieurs émotions à la fois, cela dépend du devenir de ce qui est mépris. (432; Ma traduction)[66]

Les deux films présentent ce sentiment caché de la haine qui provoque la peur de ne pas être considéré français. Dans *La Haine*, il est aussi question de francophobie née de la répression de la police. Cette francophobie se dirige non pas à l'encontre des Français blancs (la police est représentée par des minorités) mais vers la politique de répression et d'idéologie française qui renomme le beur dans la société française. En effet, ce système de croyances et d'idéaux met en place ce qu'Althusser appelle "l'interpellation" (49). Ce

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[66] "A high level of categorical hostility toward another group is often described as hatred. Some theorists believe that hate is an emotion, perhaps a combination of anger, fear, and contempt. In this view hate is not an emotion but the occasion of experiencing many emotions, depending on what happens to the hated target" (Moskalenko et McCauley 432).

concept est très présent dans les deux films, où les appareils s'adressent à l'individu et le catégorise.

> La scène théorique imaginée se passe dans la rue, l'individu interpellé se retourne. Par cette simple, conversion physique de 180 degrés, il devient *sujet*. . . . Ce qui semble se passer ainsi en dehors de l'idéologie (très précisément dans la rue) se passe en réalité dans l'idéologie. L'individu est interpellé en sujet (libre) pour qu'il se soumette librement aux ordres du Sujet, donc pour qu'il accepte (librement) son assujettissement, donc qu'il 'accomplisse tout seul' les gestes et actes de son assujettissement. Il n'est de sujets que par et pour leur assujettissement. (49-50)

Cependant, l'interpellation dans les films prend un autre sens, la voix de l'État devient une voix visible et audible: la police dans *La Haine* et Djamel dans *La Désintégration*. L'interpellation subjective mais surtout objective: l'individu n'est plus un sujet mais un objet. Cette réalité se fait remarquer dans la scène de la garde à vue où Hubert et Saïd sont torturés. Comme le note Frantz Fanon dans son texte "L'expérience vécue du Noir", le corps est objectivé quand le Noir prend compte que le racisme est réellement présent lorsqu'on l'interpelle dans la rue "Tiens, un nègre!" En effet, Saïd n'est qu'un "bougnoule" et les agents de police rendent objet les corps des deux personnages, attachés à une chaise, tordus dans tous les sens, les cous étranglés et les bouches écartelées. Dans cette scène, où l'appareil répressif est non seulement participant mais aussi observant (un des officiers regarde sans intervenir avec un air honteux), la violence répressive incite à adopter un comportement imposé par l'État au risque de limiter la liberté de l'individu. Althusser rajoute qu'au moment où l'individu est interpellé, il perd toute son autonomie. Cependant, Hubert en ordonnant à la police de ne pas toucher Saïd, et donc en se révoltant, refuse cette interpellation. En d'autres mots, les deux, même étant attachés, résistent à l'idéologie dominante qui provoque malencontreusement la violence policière à leur égard. La scène d'après, où Saïd et Hubert sont emprisonnés dans une cellule, renforce clairement cette idée.

L'interpellation dans *La Désintégration* est aussi présente, non à travers l'appareil idéologique de l'État qui interpelle mais à travers celui du citoyen français beur, qui se retourne contre Ali et le conduit au suicide. Elle est aussi visible et audible, l'endoctrineur Djamel l'établit et objective non seulement le corps d'Ali (imposition de la prière) mais aussi l'esprit de ce dernier (Djamel l'incite à se tuer au nom de l'Islam). Ali rejette son identité française en la désintégrant: il la déshumanise lui-même, et son identité devient celle d'un nouveau musulman. En ce sens, Djamel continue l'œuvre de la société française: exclure Ali. À cet égard, Djamel déclare: "À partir de maintenant, vous n'êtes plus des Français. Vous êtes des musulmans. Vous ne faites plus partie de cette cité, de la France mais de la Oumma islamique". À travers ce discours idéologique, Djamel leur retire leur identité et renomme ses disciples. Il redéfinit aussi la religion comme un outil de peur. Ali veut échapper à sa position de victime en rendant victime à son tour la société. Il utilise la religion comme outil pour réapproprier une identité perdue. Quand il se laisse pousser la barbe, sa sœur remarque: "Tu sais que tu ressembles de plus en plus à Ben Laden?" À cela, il répond*:* "Oui, et alors? Lui au moins, il est reconnu! Parce qu'il fait peur! Vous, vous faites rire, avec vos associations qui ne servent à rien!" Par cette déclaration, il est clair qu'Ali souhaite représenter un symbole de peur à travers l'intégrisme, qui pour lui, est la seule façon d'exister.

Il convient aussi de noter que l'endoctrinement a trois fonctions: un rappel de l'échec de l'intégration à travers l'interpellation, une méthode pour développer la francophobie mais surtout, pour reprendre Foucault, une surveillance étatique pour mieux contrôler et punir. Le dispositif oppressif de l'état ainsi que celui du terrorisme engendrent, tous les deux, un processus de déshumanisation. Ces deux formes d'oppression en effet manipulent aussi bien physiquement que mentalement et amènent vers le non-être de Saïd et d'Ali. C'est ce qui explique le fait que les personnages cherchent à leur tour à se déshumaniser. Cette déstabilisation de l'appareil idéologique, reprise par Ali, conduit à un renversement des rôles, une déconstruction binaire beur/État où le beur, initialement victime de racisme et de discrimination, développe à son tour cette même hostilité envers l'État dans une forme de résistance.

Dans ce sens, Ali détruit l'idéologie de l'État pour pouvoir la remplacer. Cela s'illustre par la violente scène dans laquelle Ali déchire les posters de sa chambre. Son sens d'identité se perd au fur et à mesure que sa haine s'accroît. Ali détruit les posters de femmes nues, de sportifs ou d'artistes représentant les symboles occidentaux pour qu'il puisse se rapprocher de sa propre croyance: ses valeurs culturelles et religieuses. Ceci traduit le rejet de la société dominante par Ali et sa guerre personnelle contre le monde occidental. C'est ce que décrit un des experts en études sur le terrorisme, Marc Sageman, comme "un signe d'une guerre occidentale sur l'Islam"[67] (83 ; ma traduction), et qui est perçu comme tel par Ali, le djihadiste en devenir. Celui-ci s'attaque ensuite à un autre appareil idéologique de l'État: l'éducation. En effet, lorsqu'Ali est en classe, il se révolte et hurle que l'envoi de CV est totalement inutile: "C'est une France de merde! J'suis raciste, ils me l'ont fait devenir! Tu peux faire tous les efforts que tu veux, c'est pipé !" Cette scène symbolise l'échec de l'éducation et donc de l'idéologie française. Cette dernière est représentée par son instituteur, lequel répond: "Il y a des noirs et des arabes qui trouvent, faut t'accrocher !" qui ordonne à Ali de se taire et qui utilise ce sarcasme: "Mais oui Ali, on est tous des racistes, si tu penses que tous les employeurs sont des racistes, c'est à eux de te discriminer, c'est pas à toi de le faire à leur place!" A travers cette citation, le double discours est évident. La France ignore les problèmes réels d'intégration et bâillonne celui qui veut se révolter, et paradoxalement elle admet que la discrimination existe bel et bien: "C'est à eux de te discriminer". Le refus d'Ali de se taire et son acte de déchirer son CV face à l'idéologie (l'instituteur) est une façon à lui de renoncer à adopter les croyances et les valeurs dominantes**.**

Dans la même lignée, Saïd redéfinit à son tour celles-ci à travers l'écrit. Il utilise le graffiti et écrit son nom avec une calligraphie arabe sur le van des CRS pour afficher son identité. A ce sujet, Edouard Glissant affirme dans son *Traité du Tout-Monde*: "écrire c'est dire" (121). En prenant en compte cette théorie, Saïd, subversif, se sert de ses propres idées (sa culture de banlieue et sa langue d'origine, l'arabe) pour ainsi dominer la répression (le van du CRS). En effet,

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[67] "a manifestation of the western war on Islam" (Sageman 83).

Saïd utilise l'écrit comme moyen de résistance. Il change sur une affiche de rue: "Le monde est à vous" à "Le monde est à Nous". Avant cette scène, Saïd et ses deux acolytes sont expulsés d'une galerie d'art parisienne (l'art: une des institutions idéologiques). L'artiste en refermant la porte dit: "Ces jeunes de banlieue !". Ce rejet démontre qu'ils n'appartiennent pas à la France, ils sont déjà catégorisés. Aussi, la situation spatiale du centre (Paris) utilise le mode d'interpellation que Saïd rejette à travers son vandalisme de l'affiche pour ainsi redéfinir sa position de sujet dans la société. Hubert et Vinz ont trop pris au sérieux la réalité de la cité que Saïd a refusé d'affronter. Ses yeux fermés, à la fin du film, montrent un choc et la fin de sa naïveté mais Saïd finit par renoncer de voir en face la violence de l'État.

En somme, il va sans dire que les deux films montrent une société française en pleine déliquescence, un état qui perd contrôle et tente de le reconquérir à travers une politique purement répressive plutôt que préventive. Cette répression de l'État ainsi que la religion fondamentaliste amènent à un destin tragique des deux personnages: la tétanie dans la mort observée et la mort subie. La peur dans *La Haine* aboutit à l'autodestruction des personnages, en particulier Saïd qui devient le témoin de ses amis morts. Notons que la mort est introduite dans le film avec la mort d'Abdel (leur compagnon mort à la suite d'une bavure policière) et la mort conclut aussi le film avec la mort observée par Saïd. Ce statut observant/participant de la mort constitue une image du statut du beur dans la société. La mort n'est ni plus ni moins qu'une allégorie d'"une crise généralisée de tous les milieux d'enfermement, des *moules, des moulages distincts*" (Deleuze, 1). Le beur est enfermé dans une "société de contrôle". L'enfermement se passe aussi à l'extérieur. En effet, Saïd remarque, quand lui et ses amis ratent le dernier RER pour rentrer dans leur cité: "On est enfermés dehors !" Ici, l'extérieur, perçu comme une forme répressive à savoir la prison, représente la société de contrôle et celle-ci ne permet pas d'accéder à un milieu d'appartenance là où le sujet est reconnu. Cet enfermement se produit juste avant la mort de Vinz et de Hubert. Dans les deux films, l'enfermement avant la mort reflète alors un espace où il n'y a pas d'issue possible. La peur est aussi le symbole de la société française. Cette peur donne au

djihadiste le choix entre mourir et vivre. Djamel dit: "Avec la prière, vous n'avez pas peur. Si vous avez peur, c'est que vous doutez de Dieu." Le sentiment de crainte doit être ignoré vu sa nature anti pieuse et représente l'ennemi à combattre. Cependant, la doctrine de Djamel, l'endoctrineur, est en réalité l'ennemi pour Ali, car elle seule le pousse à se suicider. Avant le départ vers la Belgique, dans l'objectif de mener une attaque terroriste au sein du siège social de l'OTAN, les personnages de *La Désintégration* sont aussi dans un espace fermé et abandonné pouvant représenter un microcosme de la société qui les contrôle. Ali s'enchaîne au volant et s'enferme dans son propre piège (et sa propre idéologie) auquel il ne peut échapper.

A travers sa mort, Ali perd tout pouvoir, il est dans l'incapacité de renégocier son identité française. Cette sorte de paralysie se retrouve aussi chez Saïd. Se trouvant dans l'incapacité de bouger, il préfère fermer ses yeux plutôt que d'affronter l'appareil de l'état:

> Ainsi la définition de l'État comme État de classe, existant dans l'appareil d'État répressif, éclaire d'une manière fulgurante tous les faits observables dans les divers ordres de la répression. . . . Elle éclaire toutes les formes directes ou indirectes de l'exploitation et de l'extermination des masses populaires. (Althusser, 17)

La réalité de voir l'échec d'intégration, le racisme, les conditions de la cité mais surtout ce que la répression met en forme : "l'extermination". Il convient finalement de constater que les concepts althussériens (la religion et la police) ouvrent et closent les deux films. Ces deux appareils sont responsables des morts et sont impossibles à combattre. Avant la mort d'Ali, l'idéologie est représentée à travers sa récitation du Coran, en plan rapproché, avant de s'écraser dans sa propre voiture. Il y a le même plan rapproché de Saïd, qui observe l'appareil répressif tuer ses amis, sans pouvoir bouger. Le regard de Saïd fait des va et vient entre Hubert et la police, qui pointent une arme l'un sur l'autre. Le regard de Saïd se dirige finalement vers la caméra et prend à témoin le spectateur de son incapacité à vaincre la répression mais surtout à continuer de l'ignorer en fermant ses yeux. L'écran noir qui suit représente ce que Saïd et le spectateur

voient ou plutôt ne voient plus : l'appareil de l'État.

      Carrie Tarr affirme que *La Désintégration* "offre, peut-être à son insu, une critique de ce qu'offre l'Islam contemporain aux jeunes de France" (531; ma traduction).[68] Les deux films montrent le but ultime de l'Islam et de l'État: une prise de contrôle sur le sujet au risque de le perdre. En effet, une société qui tente de trop contrôler finit toujours par "chuter jusqu'à son atterrissage" (citation finale de *La Haine*). A travers des scènes du film, nous avons tenté de montrer comment l'idéologie et l'appareil répressif sont maniés, remaniés et sujets à des tentatives de contrôle. Ces appareils ont aussi contribué à un sentiment francophobe. L'hostilité envers la France constitue un sous-thème des deux films et se lit dans les actes, décisions et devenir des deux personnages beurs. Nous avons suggéré que l'insouciance de Saïd et la violence d'Ali sont les résultats de leur déshumanisation et de leur désintégration engendrée par la société qui ne les intègre pas. Ces stratégies sont aussi des façons de se réapproprier une identité alternative mais surtout de fuir la "société de contrôle" dans la mort. Le choix volontaire de ces deux films a été aussi de démontrer comment un beur peut bousculer l'ordre social établi en passant d'une résistance à petite échelle par la délinquance à une révolte à grande échelle par le biais du terrorisme. Aussi, ces films ont montré que la mort du beur engendre la survie et la domination de l'État. Cependant, cela pousse le beur à ne plus accepter la mort par l'appareil répressif: en se positionnant en martyre, il préférera se donner lui-même sa mort. En croyant fuir la répression et en cherchant protection dans ses propres croyances, le beur n'a pu trouver une réponse à son aliénation car son auto-marginalisation n'a fait que s'accentuer et son identité française n'a fait que s'affaiblir. Dans la scène finale de *La Désintégration*, la mère, en apprenant la mort de son fils dans les médias, court en criant en arabe "Ils ont tué mon fils !" Comme le remarque Tarr (2014), le spectateur ici est libre d'interpréter l'identité de ce "ils". Cependant dans le cadre de notre étude, le pronom pourrait désigner l'appareil répressif de l'État et

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[68] "is also, perhaps unwittingly, offering a critique of what contemporary Islam has to offer young people in France" (2014, 531).

l'idéologie religieuse fondamentaliste qui ont conduit à "la haine" et à "la désintégration" de Saïd et d'Ali.

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SPECIAL SECTION: **Student Essay**

False Perception of Strangeness

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In an attempt to placate the angry masses during his campaign, Donald Trump made this promise to the country that would soon confirm his presidency: "We will make America strong again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And we will make America great again." Trump's campaign proved as effective as the most intelligent performance of 2017. He conquered America, not by numbers or politics, but by understanding the very foundation of America and its glory itself: the downfall and slander of other groups and communities.

If America represented the wall that its president demand be built to keep out foreigners, each brick would be the suffering and misrepresentation of every nation that has crossed paths with it. And just as those bricks construct America, their removal reduces America, particularly the United States, to another blip on the map. The fear is that without the narratives that American ancestors and media have created about foreign people, the country remains in the same field as every other. Trump could attribute the loss of greatness, strength, pride, and security of America to outsiders because it followed the same script that its citizens are privy to: foreigners being different from American people. If that is believable, then it is not difficult to create a correlation between things like job availability and economic strength in America to heightened immigration rates. Trump banked on its citizens believing the ideas being fed to them through television and more deceiving history books. He thought correctly.

To understand the historical evidence to this charge, it is first important to distinguish what it means to be an American in America, and that is to be fair-skinned. This is not to say that African-Americans are not American, or that Asian-Americans are not American. Even Native Americans (or "Indians" when stripped of their "native" accomplishment) are given American rights for being born on American soil. But they are simply given those rights for their birthplace, not for the "citizenship and allegiance" that is claimed, and their ethnic background always takes place before their citizenship. The overpowering connotation of America is whiteness.

This idea is backed by an association test performed by Thierry Devos of American Social Psychology. In 2005, Devos published a study titled "American = White" in which he asked several groups of people to pick photos associated with American ideas (flag, bald eagle) and pictures of white and non-white candidates. Several people initially claimed no bias, believing their idea of "American" to surpass color and culture, but the majority of the subjects subconsciously associated American ideas with white people. Furthermore, subjects considered non-white people "less loyal."

That is why "Americanized" versions of foreign media earn "Americanization" by featuring white people. *Ghost in The Shell,* for example, is a Japanese media franchise featuring all Japanese characters with Japanese names. In the "Americanized" version of the film released in 2017, Scarlett Johansson adapts the lead role, Major Motoko Kusanagi. This caused an uproar with many saying that her casting was blatant-whitewashing, while the director of the remake asserts that her being a cyborg eliminates any duty they have to assigning a Japanese actress. Regardless of opinion, no one can deny the fact of selective casting to appease the audience it is being presented to.

This is not the first and only time that Asian people are misrepresented in media; in fact, it has become so common for *Hatchet* contributor Irene Ly that she's come to expect nothing less: "When you change the channel to Hollywood movies, Asians are either left out completely, or horribly stereotyped. If we even manage to make it on screen, we're almost always the nerds, the kung fu fighters,

the immigrants, or the ones making fools of themselves." This, she says, is all in an attempt to simplify their culture.

The "White America" concept created a status that tries to be proven as the standard. Toni Morrison exposes this idea in her article for the *New York Times*, "Making America White Again," stating that "All immigrants to the United States know (and knew) that if they want to become real, authentic Americans they must reduce their fealty to their native country and regard it as secondary, subordinate, in order to emphasize their whiteness." America loves whiteness--it is not new information. But how exactly does it tie into the self-serving and inaccurate portrayal of other countries? It's simple.

Whites in America are the products of Europeans. Because of this, their distortion is at a different level than darker-skinned countries. When displaying Europe, the angle is to present the lack of opportunity and diversity in comparison to America. English, Spanish, and French natives are rarely considered "dangerous" and instead are viewed as competition, particularly in fields of technology. Jie Zong of the *Migration Policy Institute* shows that European migration served as the backbone of U.S Immigration flows but now has steadily declined since 1960, when Europe caught up on economic opportunity and religious freedom. Since then, there has been little to no portrayal of Europeans as "foreigners" outside of clothing and language because, in all other relevant aspects, they prove superior. Even still, some people try to create a divide. After London's recent terrorist attack, the U.S president sent out a tweet saying, "A great American, Kurt Cochran, was killed in the London terror attack. My prayers and condolences are with his family and friends." Because after all, the lives of great Americans are more important than those in the country intended to be terrorized.

No, the more ethnic-looking countries are attributed with the most stereotypes from American government and media are from the Middle-East and Africa, as well as a few areas in Asia. Physical variations are more distinguished from the traditional American image; so it is easier to capitalize off of that divide. In other words, since these countries hold citizens that look different from what an

"American" looks like, claiming them to have an inherent difference is not farfetched.

The way that American media marginalizes these communities begins with giving their portrayal a designated role. Generally speaking, foreigners are the friends in television. They exist for humor, or to enhance the quality of the show, but never have much of a storyline themselves. *The Big Bang Theory* is a comedy put out in 2006 on CBS. British Indian actor Kunal Nayyar plays the only non-white character on the show, Raj Koothrappali. Koothrappali is an immigrant and friend of the two main characters who has been active all ten seasons of the show; however, despite seniority, he has never developed a love interest or had any elements of his personality explored. Instead, the plot divulges that he is a one-hit wonder astrophysicist with no real talent in his field (proven by his six months of failed research) who cannot communicate with women out of fear. He is given a dog from his two friends and their long-term girlfriends to curb his loneliness and at one point falls in love with Apple's Siri. These are all fine elements to a comedy, except for the fact that Koothrappali's Indian heritage supports his odd and saddening differences. Part of his character is rejecting Indian culture. His fears being sent back to India and his biggest achievement is garnered in trying to avoid it. He refers to his cousin Sanjay as "Dave from AT&T Customer Service" and complains of poverty in India. Much of the content relating to the over-dramatization of his heritage could be construed as offensive, but by it coming from an Indian himself, the show is able to send the same message in a socially acceptable way.

More troubling, however, is Nayyar's introduction to the role. In a 2009 Paley Fest, producers explained that Koothrappali was supposed to be named "Dave," an American with Indian parents. They changed his storyline after meeting Nayyar because he was "so Indian." Producers in American media type-cast, and when it comes to representing foreigners, they lay it on thick. Think of the illegal immigrant and corner store owner, Apu, from *The Simpsons*, whose voice over Hank Azaria says producers asked to perform a "stereotypical accent."

The tactic of the "foreign friend" illustrates diversity but also generates ideas of Americanization. Koothrappali's

character demonstrates what Toni Morrison was referring to when she said that the success of assimilation to American culture depends upon how well one is able to make the native country secondary. Koothrappali rejects his culture in favor of America's (as a joke) and readily accepts the stereotypes affiliated with him and his people.

The most disturbing way that America creates a feeling of strangeness in foreigners is by giving distorted images and information about conditions in other areas, particularly in relation to their own conditions. For example, many late-night commercials rally watching Americans to donate money for homeless children, mostly in places like Indonesia. The commercials themselves are overly-dramatic and feature sad-eyed malnourished children who look far away from American reality. While a great cause to invest in, America is the fourth country with the most homeless people. Television loves to advertise issues in other places, but you will rarely see a commercial featuring a homeless American family (unless one of the members fought in war) because that doesn't do well for appearances.

For issues overseas that cannot be solved by the acts of American civilians, coverage is limited. The biggest example of this type of alienation would be the recent refugee crisis in Syria. In an article designed to give more insight to the situation in Syria, *World Vision* reveals that half the Syrians affected are children. And while the war in Syria has been going on for six years, the past two are the only ones even slightly covered in American news. The media will quickly advertise sick children in other areas, but for world issues that cannot be solved with money, they swipe information under the rug and step away. Not only that, but the U.S government recently tightened its border control system denying access to refugees and/or immigrants from Middle Eastern countries, thickening the divide.

By using news and media to misrepresent and or eliminate the presence of other nationalities, America manages to give its citizens a distorted image of their own country whilst constructing a "border" between them and the rest of the world. However, another more subtle way that America does this is through the usage of a commonly known pesk in society--stereotypes. Stereotypes are seen as offensive, but rarely receive credit for their harmful nature.

Take, for example, sports teams. The usage of the mascot for sports teams isn't offensive on its own--it's what the mascot represents. Team names in sports intend to show aggression and fearlessness: Vikings, Seahawks, Giants, etc. The Washington Redskins use their name in the same way. Just like their ancestors believed and just like they've been taught in school, the Native Americans are the aggressors. "Redskins" are savages and continue to be branded as such. Lakshmi Gandhi writes in his article "Are You Ready for Controversy, the History of Red Skin" that the name originated "in reference to the Beothuk tribe of what is now Newfoundland, Canada." The Beothuk were said to paint their bodies with red ochre, leading white settlers to refer to them as "red men." White Americans adapted the name with a negative connotation through their written works of the time. "The phrase gained widespread usage among whites when James Fenimore Cooper used it in his 1823 novel The Pioneers. In the book, Cooper has a dying Indian character lament, 'There will soon be no red-skin in the country.'" Since then, the image of the angry, red, Indian has been used by American media to instill a vision of aggression. For example, the 1932 Tom and Jerry cartoon "Redskin Blues" episode follows the two characters being attacked by Native Americans, only to survive after being rescued by the U.S. Army.

 Americans still believe, even if subconsciously, that the Native Americans were belligerent, which is why they will continue to use their name and culture to show their opponents and the world that they are wild and bloodthirsty. By subliminally inserting these ideas in day-to-day life, they are distracting from America's own aggression, thus twisting history to enhance their own agenda.

The Oneida Indian Nation in New York featured a radio ad with an audio of NFL player Riley Cooper's use of the "N" Word. Roger Goodell, the NFL commissioner, properly condemned the behavior, but the narrator of the ad brought up a very important point: what about the images he allows to be shown in media? "We do not deserve to be called redskins," he says in the ad. "We deserve to be treated as what we are—Americans."

The glory of America does not lie in its history--that is a fact. For every reputable action is an underlying scandal.

For every moving time period there is a looming hatred. America has stood on the backs of others to garner its reputation, and that is not something that should be aspired to, nor should it be a goal to revert back to. Nationalism is only acceptable without fabrication and misrepresentation. A desire for national identity will always exist as it is an idea not centered solely to the U.S. Naturally, countries develop different cultures and ways of living; however, at the root of it all, everyone is human. The differences that live between mortals are created by experiences, not location or skin color. America's greatness lies in the idea of itself, the potential of its people, and, more importantly, the outlook of its future. There should not be a pressure to be first or greatest, because before we are a country we are a world.

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ABSTRACTS

MARILYN D. BUTTON, Making and Unmaking Strangers: Frances Milton Trollope and the Power of Inclusion

This paper centers the notion of "stranger" in the person of Mrs. Frances Milton Trollope, a nineteenth century travel writer and novelist whose controversial social commentary earned her ambivalent public and critical attention. In twenty-four years, following the publication of *Domestic Manners of the Americans* in 1832, she published over forty works, including novels, travel journals, poems and dramas, all of which addressed major social concerns. However, she experienced social ostracism in both her personal and professional life due to the travel required for these publications, harsh critical reviews biased by class and gender, personal sorrows resulting from the death of family members, and regular geographic displacement. The tension between her exclusion and periodic inclusion in the high places of Europe's social, political and literary life invites comparison with heroes of the Biblical/classical tradition, to whom pilgrimage, isolation and inclusion figured as central motifs in their human experience. Like her archetypal forebears, Trollope bore her stresses with relative equanimity, due in part to her personal motto: *"Allez toujours [*always keep moving*]."* In addition, her ability to create community among likeminded expatriate Anglo-Americans in Florence, Italy, formed a model for contemporary explorations of how personal isolation can be alleviated.

BERNADETTE MCNARY-ZAK, Converting Alienation: The Case of Dorothy Day

A condition of alienation permeates Dorothy Day's account of her conversion in *The Long Loneliness* (1952). This essay examines how Day identifies, contests, and reframes alienation in this conversion account in order to inscribe a socialist orientation on her adopted religious worldview for a broader audience.

ABEER ALOUSH, The Nature of Identity: The Outer Context and Inner Self of the Jewish Minority Under Nasserism

This research focuses on the case of a famous Jewish Egyptian singer and actress Layla Murad (1918-95), who was accused of spying for Israel during the reign of President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1954-71), the founder of pan-Arabism and pan-nationalism. Withdrawing from the public sphere at the peak of her career, aged thirty-nine, she faced many difficulties thereafter due to Nasser's political career and legacy, both of which impacted political choices, Arab politics, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. My research examines the crisis of modern Jewish identity as a minority in Egypt during the second exodus of 1956. Continuities in the historical struggle for liberation, justice, and dignity form a major argument in this study. For instance, Murad converted from Judaism to Islam as a young woman but asked to be buried secretly in Cairo's el-Bassateen Jewish cemetery forty years later as she felt her end approaching. Her will was secretly left to her sons, Ashraf and Zaki; however this incident was never confirmed nor denied. Interestingly, she refused to write any memoirs or keep diaries. Looking at a diverse body of her songs and television interviews, I view the imagination of such conflicted intersubjectivity as an opportunity to offer new approaches that depart from the dominant practice of reading works primarily, and sometimes exclusively, as allegories of political conflict or national identity. Instead, I offer a rethinking of the relationship between political national identity and individual subjectivity based upon my contention that the political narrative is often found at the text's surface and

serves as the preamble to a far more complex and disconcerting exploration of the individual. Without discounting the centrality of the conflict and national identity to these works, I argue that the rational domain of political realism operates as a cover story for the ultimately resurgent irrational unconscious and that the importance of the latter should not be underestimated. In my research, I will examine the crisis of modern Jewish identity, which reflects the erosion and instability of all cultural identities, and the difficulties that Jews encounter in trying to preserve a boundary between themselves and others. While building on cross-interdisciplinary theories of intersubjectivity in psychology, cultural and philosophical studies, I will study the crossing, blurring, or breakdown of Jewish identity as a minority during the nation-building process through the mechanisms of doubling and the split self. I will try to answer several questions, among them the following: Did Murad struggle with alterity until her death? Did her conversion reflect her need for protection and security? How should one explain her conversion at the hands of Hassan el-Banna. the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood as it was confirmed or denied many times? How did she define herself in terms of her art? Which identity did she present? How can examining all of the extremes in Murad's life help us understand her career and identity as a member of Egypt's Jewish community, one who suffered in the fifties? These questions are the starting point of an exploration through which I intervene in regnant theories of meaning in the identity struggle of religious minorities. While my research will unfold through an exegesis of specific materials, including film and songs, my hope is that its theoretical implications will prove relevant to the broader discipline of the study of minority struggle.

JULIUS BONGKOROG, Strangers in the Victoria Division of the British Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961

This article is aimed at examining the presence of strangers in Victoria Division of the British Southern Cameroons. The establishment of plantations by the Germans and its later management by the British led to an influx of labor migrants into the Division that made up the strangers population. The

investigation of primary archival and secondary sources revealed that the creation of strangers' quarters was not an official colonial policy in the Division. It was rather the result of continuous aggregation of strangers with common primordial ties. It was encouraged by the plantocracy and the British colonialists for the construct of *otherness* which was essential for the recruitment of labor for the plantations. The large presence of strangers in the plantations and the surrounding settlements led to a stiff competition for land as it hardened the insiders/outsiders dichotomy. The estrangement of outsiders was further reified with statutory regulations controlling access to land by the strangers and their level of political involvement. Land was not to be alienated permanently to the strangers as their birth was not rooted in the soil. In spite of outsiders' protest, the interest of the insiders reigned supreme. Key Words: Land, Strangers, Otherness, Outsiders, Insiders

EDWARD EGBO IMO, Between Alienation and Absurdity in Contemporary Nigerian Drama: Ola Rotimi's *Holding Talks* as Paradigm

The paper focuses on the issues of alienation and absurdity in contemporary Nigerian drama with emphasis on Ola Rotimi's *Holding Talks*. It is premised on the argument, captured in the play, that the obvious decay in the social structures of the Nigerian nation is tied mainly to the insensitivity of the leadership class towards the delivery of basic social welfare to the common masses. The paper documents that the cumulative effect of corrupt leadership in Nigeria has created in the citizens some feelings of alienation, absurdity and nihilism. The study is qualitative in research approach as it uses Rotimi's *Holding Talks* as paradigm for other Nigerian dramas that are crafted in the absurdist dramatic mode. The predominant observation in the study is that the decay in the social structures in Nigeria has subjected her citizens to some form of metaphysical anguish and psychological trauma that alienate them from the ideals of the society. Against this backdrop, the paper advocates the need for the leadership class to show genuine commitment to the social welfare and plight of the common masses. The paper also beckons on the Nigerian security

agents to be more pro-active and professional in the discharge of their duties. Nigerian playwrights are also encouraged to consistently capture the anomalies in the nation's leadership structure in their plays so as to create social consciousness which in turn would occasion social change.

SHAUN D. FRIDAY, The Gentle Trailblazer: Longfellow's Faith-Fueled Advocacy for Victims of Colonial Power Across Ethnic, Religious, and Gender Lines

Multiculturalism has become a buzzword that garners a great deal of attention in academia, politics, and popular culture. The national dialogue about race and culture is an ongoing one that touches every part of American life. Much that occurs in this conversation is based on the perception that white Christian men are the villains of the American story because of colonialism and well-documented abuses of anyone who stood in the way of its progress. People often believe that attention to the worth and significance of other human stories that intersect in this nation is a relatively new idea. However, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a white, Christian, American man, breaks the stereotype with his gentle, trailblazing efforts to foster understanding and unity through his poetry, and he does it all in the 19th century when concern and openness toward otherness was not a common approach. Longfellow's life was marked with numerous tragedies, but instead of becoming bitter, he grew increasingly compassionate. Encouraged by his abolitionist friend Senator Charles Sumner and sensitized by his own suffering, he was moved by sympathy for three distinct people groups being wronged by colonial powers. Unwilling to engage politically, he instead put his extraordinary poetic skills into action in his own polite, quiet, but powerful advocacy. Long before Ethnic Studies and Postcolonial Criticism came to prominence, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, fueled by his Unitarian Christianity, employed Biblical allusion, sentimentality, and faith language in "Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie," "The Song of Hiawatha," and "The Slave Singing at Midnight" to illustrate how impersonal colonial agendas had deeply personal consequences for Black, Native American, and Acadian (French Canadian)

people caught in their wake. Despite the critics who disparaged his work as more traditional than that of his contemporaries or the rebellious modernists that came after him, his work was significant in its influence on the formation of American identity and a distinctly American literary tradition. If it is important to call out villains in their mistreatment of the *other*, it is also important to acknowledge and honor those who stood against such mistreatment, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow deserves to be so honored for noticing the plight of these injured people, and for caring enough to speak on their behalf.

Keywords: *multiculturalism,   colonialism,   Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 19th Century, American Literature*

MARK EDWIN PETERSON, Footnotes and Dictators

The literary scholar, Ramón Saldívar, has described our current era of culture as being at a point when we are postrace, not in the sense that we have gone beyond racism in America, but that we are now dealing with a new situation. Just as post-colonial describes a time after the clear relationships of colonialism, post-racial indicates that writers now find themselves dealing with the complicated effects of racism on our society, even as many proclaim themselves free from old hatreds. In one article in particular, Saldívar looks at how this climate has initiated reactions from the Chicano authors, Junot Diaz and Salvador Plascencia, in which they write in a style that Saldívar calls speculative realism. Descriptions of the regular world cannot contain the issues and emotions of living in this post-racial world, so these writers feel forced, according to Saldívar, to play with the stage on which their characters live out their stories. Their worlds are filled with the uncertainties formed by people made of paper or the curse of fukú. This paper focuses on the ways in which the authors of these two books discussed by Saldívar use the paratext of their works to continue the push into the unreal, or at least the unexpected. In different ways, Diaz and Plascencia play with the traditional form of the book, manipulating text columns, format, and even the footnotes to bring readers into new spaces. It shows that the structure of the book is a powerful

tool for postrace authors to communicate the conflicts felt by ethnic minorities in our society.

WILLIAM J. DONOHUE, A Stranger in Your Own Language: The Marginalization of Meursault and Composition Students

This essay draws a parallel between the narrative of Camus' *The Stranger* and that of the composition student learning to write within "standard academic English" and provides narrative data from a research study involving perceptions of learning outcomes from a composition student. Despite living within the society and speaking the same language, both Meursault and some students are marginalized and experience difficulty living and adjusting to that world. Meursault, the main character and narrator of Camus' *The Stranger*, is an outsider in the society in which he lives. Often described as "detached" from the society, Meursault's actions lead to his marginalization. Ultimately, Meursault is condemned to death as he is deemed a threat to society. The mainstream actors of the society cannot understand Meursault's behavior—from his lack of mourning at his mother's funeral to his lack of remorse for killing the Arab on the beach. Meursault's trial displays a tension between the rational and the irrational and demonstrates Camus' philosophy of the absurd with society's perspective of a clear understanding of Meursault's actions and the irony that Meursault is at peace with his condemnation due to the coldness and meaninglessness of the universe. Meursault is a stranger in the society in which he observes, lives, and interacts. The composition student may be similarly marginalized by the writing professor. Derivations from the norm of the target discourse community, especially one such as standard academic English where standards are derived from a history of racism and classism, regulate a student to the margins. Acceptance of the stranger by the writing professor and a focus on the current moment may alleviate the marginalization and create an environment conducive to learning.

MINA APIC, Entre l'ailleurs perçu comme espace de l'épanouissement et les attaches au pays natal: l'expérience de la rupture dans *Les désorientés* d'Amin Maalouf

In his novel, *Les désorientés*, Amin Maalouf examines in a subtle and nuanced way different aspects of identity ties, belonging, abandon, as well as possible confusion between cosmopolitan attitude and act of treason. Drawing up the portraits of two friends divided by different conceptions of belonging, between the deep-rootedness in one's homeland and the fidelity to universal values shared by all humanity, Maalouf alternates the two contrasting points of view, and stimulates skilfully the reader's reflexion on the origins of the problem: at what moment a cosmopolitan attitude can be considered an act of treason? During the long years of his new life in France, the main character, Adam, grew determined never to step again on the soil of his homeland, Lebanon, fallen into decay. Maalouf shows how the fascination for an *Elsewhere*, dreamed and lived as a cultural space of the fulfilment of our human potential goes along with a profound disillusion with the deplorable conditions of his homeland. Moreover, he invites us to avoid the confusion of the right to see a foreign country as a place *"où tout parle à l'âme sa douce langue natale"* with the rejection of one's origins. The question is whether the fascination for *Elsewhere* has to induce inevitably the tearing of our identity and affective bonds, and the rejection of any responsibility towards our country of origin.

JENNIFER BOUM MAKE, From Modern France to the Caribbean and Back Again: Testing the Survival Chances of Cultural Transfers in *Exile According to Julia* by Gisèle Pineau

Gisèle Pineau's 1996 novel, *Exile According to Julia*, tells the story of Man Ya, or Julia. She is a victim of her husband's violence, which she attributes to an illness. Consequently, her son Maréchal arranges for her to flee her native Capesterre, Guadeloupe and join him and his family in France. For Man Ya, it means to part from Guadeloupe (— which she has never left before), her husband and, most

importantly, her garden. She arrives in France in the mid-
1960s, only to be confronted with social exclusion and the
increasing racial tensions of the time.   Focusing   on   Man
Ya's trajectory of mobility, I argue that tracing the cross-
cultural encounters and transfers prompted by movement
from the Antilles to France accounts for overlapping and
sometimes   competing   understandings   of   otherness.   I
propose that thinking through those cultural transfers will
allow to test the conditions for the formation of socially
productive imaginaries of migration in the context of
heightened tensions and protectionist attitudes. For the
purpose of my discussion, I will i) analyze the cultural
transfers that Man Ya characterizes or enacts, in particular
the practice of tending the Creole garden in her native
Guadeloupe,—and the uncertain future of vegetal metaphors
once both are transplanted to France; ii) consider the
transferability of the narrator's Caribbean cultural imaginary
from France to the Antilles; and iii) examine the limits of
said transfers as alternative gestures toward the resolution of
cultural differences, in the event of the failure or suspension
of transferability.

ABEER ALOUSH, The Reconstruction of Memory and the
Spatial Dispossession of "Le Jeune Frontalier" in Leila
Sebbar's *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique*

In this era of globalization, *les banlieusard* or youth of
second generation to immigrant parents, who reside in the
difficult French suburbs, present a form of exile and
nomadism. Anxious, hesitant, and confused, their perception
of their identity being targeted impedes their attaining a
form of happiness. As they seek to recognize themselves
within a society that, in their opinion, rejects them, the
ensuing confusion and indignation places them between two
irreconcilable worlds: that of their ex-colonized parents and
that of France. Within this instability, which offers them
neither shelter nor protection, they try to affirm their
belonging to the nation-state. In this paper, I will study the
trauma experienced by these youth as the byproduct of the
"*jeune frontalier*," following the ex-colonized's encounter
with France. This term refers to young people who live in the
difficult suburban areas and have to create their own identity

in order to tolerate a present full of failure. I will examine through *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique* of Leila Sebbar how their background helps exclude them from the collective, national, and historical contexts, thereby preventing them from becoming subjects instead of simple objects of history. Appearing in 1984, *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique* launched the issue of collective trauma of youth whose parents had immigrated to France. In this contemporary world of capitalism and globalism, Sebbar's protagonist Mohamed decides to leave *les banlieues* and live in the cemeteries near his family's house. He continues to run all day long to avoid people, especially cops, and spends all of his time exchanging pictures with others of wars or musical materials like disks and walk-mans. Anxious, worried, and distressed, he feels targeted in his identity. The irony lies in the identity of this young person, whose life emanates from the two colonial wars that have reshaped France's contemporary history: his father is an Arab from Algeria and his grandmother is Vietnamese, a mixture of his self that throws him into an irreconcilable cultural sphere. Algeria and Vietnam forced two major transformations in France's contemporary history, for both of them shook the values of the self-proclaimed republic of liberty. With no shelter or protection, Mohamed tries to confirm his belonging to a nation-state. The mosaic of his identity presents France in terms of its forced multiculturalism. During his vagrancy, he meets people who somehow held on to the heritage of various French colonial wars. By exposing himself to these people, he tries to trace the invisible links to the memory of his family, which has been torn apart by the history of wars. In my research, I will study (1) the men-memory as a mean to break silence and transmit the collective history and (2) the direct trauma resulting from the dialogue between the memory of the fathers' generation and the post-memory of the second generation and how this dialogue produces the phenomenon of the "Young Frontier" who, without owning the place, is creating his own memory. *Le Chinois vert d'Afrique* was written by a French-Algerian writer to remind France of the existence of such Mohamed and to warn its people about the risks of neglecting those who belong to his generation.

EÏMMA CHEBINOU, De *La Haine* (1995) à *La Désintégration* (2011): du beur galérien au beur djihadiste
There is one image of youth that has long been stereotyped by French mass media, and that is the image of second-generation North-African immigrants trapped in shabby projects on the outskirts of Paris. Riots in these ghettoes are typically filmed to emphasize the violent intransigence of young people assumed to be Djihadists. French cinema also replicates these same images, thereby echoing the supposed failure of these young beurs to integrate into the mainstream of French society. It is assumed that violent action motivated by fear or hatred provides the beur with a fantasized representation of an alternative identity. Two films that serve to exemplify this claim are *La Haine* (1995), directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, and *La Désintégration* (2011), directed by Philippe Faucon. Remarkably, *La Haine* almost prophesizes subsequent riots in the Parisian banlieue that exploded in 2005 after a police blunder. Likewise, *La Désintégration* focuses on the tendency of French mass media to label all of these beurs as Muslim fundamentalists belonging to terrorist organizations. The argument made here finds new relevance and opportunity for applying theoretical concepts developed by Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. The main beur protagonists in *La Haine* and *La Désintégration* demonstrate the explanatory power of Althusser's "Repressive State Apparatus" and "Ideological State Apparatus" by predicting the violent resistance against State forces that dehumanize and stereotype citizens who are consistently treated as outsiders in French society. As a result, both the State and the young beurs suffer the consequences of this resistance.
Keywords*: Althusser, RSA, ISA, French cinema, jihadist, beur, banlieue, second-generation, North-African, Kassovitz, Faucon*

TESSA GRAY, A False Perception of Strangeness: How America Creates its Exclusivity

In this paper I analyze the ways in which the media in America has shaped society's vision of immigrants and negatively influenced public policy regarding foreign nations. To illustrate the misrepresentations of the international

community, I will cite examples of images and documents that are superficial, overly dramatized, or entirely false. Further, this paper examines examples of media which present problems around the world without giving a balanced view of the same problems at home. For example, there are several programs created to stop homelessness overseas; however, the U.S is the fourth country with the most homeless people. By advising its citizens to reach out and help other countries, the U.S is essentially saying that they are in the position to be the ones providing in that area. This is misleading, and distracts from the fact that the U.S. itself is suffering in that same department. Furthermore, it is purposeful, as the end goal for America is to appear to be as in control and powerful as possible. By isolating themselves from both issues and advancements in other countries, the U.S media and government have managed to change their citizens' ways of thinking about the world outside of their borders. Conditions overseas have either been heavily sensationalized or hastily overlooked in an effort to cause division between nations, and boost America's own reputation. The enforcement of stricter immigration laws, the lack of conversation about Syria and other violence overseas, as well as the portrayals of foreign people in the media, are all other ways used to create this illusion and distract people from human issues.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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