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Literary Empires: Education, Literature, and Mobility between Francophone Africa and France

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in French and Francophone Studies

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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and Mobility between Francophone Africa and France

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Professor Dominic Thomas, Chair

My dissertation investigates questions of education in the discourses and representations employed by writers from Central and West Africa who work in the French language. In my project, I question not only the ways education, including French language acquisition and literary pedagogy, continues to be affected by its colonial foundations, but also how this education is reproduced socially in cultural productions and concepts of identity by writers both in France and across Africa. The first chapter examines the ways francophone African women writers subvert the generic form and traditional themes of the *roman à formation* to reflect the gendered obstacles girls faces to obtain an education. In the second chapter, I present the history of two *petites revues* (little magazines) produced and published by Congolese writers to demonstrate how they employed literary techniques and didactic discourses to furnish new

cultural spaces in the years leading up to independence. The third chapter investigates the use of educational discourses during the debates sparked by the "Pour une littérature-monde en français" manifesto published in *Le Monde* by the leading writers in the French-speaking world. Lastly, the final chapter analyzes the status of African arts exhibited in French museums since colonialism through the cinematic productions engaging these issues in this type of setting.

I posit that the colonial education system created a network of mobility allowing students and instructors from France and the colonies to move around the empire. After decolonization, alternate networks of mobilities developed, including relocation for educational or vocational training and clandestine migration. My dissertation incorporates governmental and journalistic archival materials as well as critical readings of literary texts by francophone writers of African origin who record these networks. By focusing on the ways literary pedagogy and educational institutions were incorporated into colonial operations in dialogue with postcolonial literary texts, I demonstrate how French literature both assisted colonial expansion and became the primary mode of cultural representation to document the continuity of mobilities between France and Africa.

The dissertation of Connor Pruss is approved.

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Introduction: Linking Education and Literature with Mobility

"…the social classes make me think of the class levels in a school. People can climb higher only if they pass an exam. And no matter how capable you may be, you still remain the first in the fourth or third level…"- Bernard Dadié, *Climbié*

The Franco-Senegalese writer, Fatou Diome, exemplifies the ways education and literature intersect. She was born on the Senegalese island of Niodior in 1968. Fishing was the main industry at the time and strict gender roles were observed in local society. Growing up, Diome preferred taking tea with the men rather than preparing meals with the women. Her unwed parents were 18 years old at the time of her birth, and she was raised by her grandmother, Aminata.[1] When Diome expressed that she wanted to attend the local French school, her grandmother turned down the idea compelling Diome to attend in secret. Later in life, the writer explained, "J'étais curieuse. Je voulais savoir ce que chantaient les enfants dans cette langue que je ne connaissais pas".[2] Without family to financially support her, a young Diome took on odd jobs to pay for her studies, and she eventually gained acceptance to Dakar's Cheik Anta Diop University with the goal of becoming a French teacher in Senegal. This plan was interrupted when she moved to France with her future husband (now divorced) and sought to publish the fiction she had been writing during her teenage years. In an interview, Diome states, "Mais être écrivain, c'était inimaginable. Je ne savais même pas que ça pouvait être un métier" (Sept. 1, 2003). While the circumstances leading to Diome's career as a writer are in many ways unique, she is far from the only writer to cite their experiences with schools and education as critical to their literary development and work. My project has focused on the relationship between

[1] "Fatou Diome. "Je suis là pour gâcher le sommeil des puissants," *L'Humanité*. August 7, 2015. https://www.humanite.fr/societe/fatou-diome/fatou-diome-je-suis-la-pour-gacher-le-sommeil-des-puissants-581117

[2] Sandrine Morin. "Fatou Diome," L'Express. September 1, 2003. https://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/fatou-diome_808251.html

education and literature examining the ways these two fields inform one another and in doing so furnish social networks based on historical conflicts and cultural practices

The association of education - or instruction that is oriented specifically for children and adolescents - with French literature dates to the Renaissance and the development of humanism, which was later revaluated by philosophers during the Enlightenment period. In 1533, Rabelais released *Pantagruel*, a work that challenged practices of education at the time and advocated for reform that incorporated both the mind and body in pedagogical methods.[3] Decades later in 1580, Montaigne's *Essais* contested the notions of humanism in his comparison of education in Ancient Athens versus Sparta. Throughout his work, Montaigne favors the militarized educational methods of Sparta reminiscent of medieval chivalric practices over the lettered courtesan style of Athens humanists were so fond of during the Renaissance.[4] During the Enlightenment period, Jean-Jacques Rousseau is often credited with modernizing education through his writings on the subject. Today, scholars have found that his work has served to pose philosophical questions relevant to educating children rather than providing any practical framework to instruction, which was mostly contributed by advancements in child psychology for example.[5] These three leading literary figures of pre-Revolutionary France challenged social conventions and proposed radically new ideas through the production of their writing. The valorization of these published works in the present illustrates the significance of this long tradition connecting education and literature that is produced in the French language.

[3] Albert Coutaud. *La pédagogie de Rabelais*. Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1970.

[4] Adèle Payen de La Garanderie. "L'éducation dans les Essais: la fantaisie spartiate de Montaigne," *Revue Educatio*. Vol. 6, 2017.

[5] Jürgen Oelkers. "Rousseau and the image of `modern education'," *Curriculum Studies*. Vol. 34, no. 6, pps. 679-698, 2002.

In the 19th century, the development of formal education systems and the physical site of the school drastically altered the cultures of local communities in France in addition to the overseas regions of the colonial empire. The Third Republic's efforts to redefine collective and individual identities in the metropole and across the colonies implemented new concepts of self-perception as well as a system of values that aligned with their political discourses and imperial objectives. The social institution of the school became a formative vehicle in the ways societies transmit cultural knowledge and influence the process of identification for individuals and communities. One understanding of this social engineering explains, "The identification of the school as the location for the autonomous construction of identity conveys a most basic- perhaps the most basic- republican tenet. It reformulates the view, championed by orthodox republicans and laicists, of the school as a 'foundational space' from which the autonomous rational individual and republican citizen emerges".[6] Educational reforms were at the forefront of expanding French republicanism that emphasized educational institutions as an essential conduit to convert citizens to the Third Republic regime's universalist and expansionist ideologies. The success of this systemization of identity through education relied on the continuous internalization and interaction with the system over time leading the construction of school buildings throughout urban and rural areas to gather the youngest members of the communities.

During the 1890's, the Third Republic adapted and implemented national policies to develop a colonial educational system throughout the African continent to advance the objectives of cultural imperialism and economic exploitation. In a critical study of the government regime, Alice Conklin finds many discrepancies between the ways education was reformed in France versus the regime's activities and dealings in Central and West Africa after establishing Dakar as

[6] Leon Sachs. *The Pedagogical Imagination: The Republican Legacy in Twenty-First Century French Literature and Film*. Lincoln, Ne: University of Nebraska Press, 2014.

the largest colonial holding and capital of French West Africa (*l'Afrique occidentale française,* A.O.F).[7] Conklin's analysis of the ideologies and policies of the Third Republic shows that they developed the notion of *la mission civilisatrice* to justify their very un-republican colonial practices throughout the overseas empire. This reveals that *la mission civilisatrice* was a means to justify colonialism despite the Third Republic's rhetoric of equality and liberty, which led to discriminatory pedagogical methods among many other atrocious tactics used in the colonies. Additionally, there are two important distinctions between the education systems implemented in France versus those in Africa highlighted by Conklin. In the colonies, there was an emphasis on vocational training in education that focused on regional agricultural and infrastructure needs. Secondly, the universal educational policies of the metropole were not enforced in the overseas territories and school was not compulsory for children (Conklin 79). These differences showed that the colonial regime was concerned with creating an overeducated labor force that might later oppose their subjugation, and to this extent it is important to remember that formal education was available to only a small percentage of colonized subjects. Conklin explains that instead of an abundance of *lycées* graduates that could disrupt the colonial French social order, the education system emphasized agricultural and vocational training for most schools in rural communities. However, the schools in urban centers remained only slightly altered from those in France due in part to the population of French students living in the colonies who hoped to obtain higher education back in the metropole.

The fear of an overeducated labor force also led the French to reconsider their notions of free, universal education valorized by the Third Republic when issuing decrees on colonial

[7]Alice Conklin. *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*. Stanford University Press, 1997.

education. Logistically, it was not practical for the French to enforce such a doctrine throughout their overseas territories, and the French were not actually in the business of educating republican citizens, but rather in cultivating colonial subjects. Even though obligatory schooling was not explicitly enforced, it still informed some decisions of colonial officials in which, "… republican values exercised a decisive influence on French civilizing ideas and actions in West Africa in a variety of areas, beginning with adapted education" (Conklin 82). The conclusion that the colonial regime was constantly in touch with the ideals and practices of the metropole to inform their pedagogical work in Africa allows for the examination of these two education systems as continually interconnected, even after independence was officially achieved. The interconnectedness of the two schools' systems is further compounded by Conklin's summary of the organizational structure applied to the colonial system. To enact their colonial imperatives, the Third Republic regime imposed complex education systems nationally and across their empire that were under the guidance of governmental headquarters in Paris creating a transnational network of educational and vocational opportunities for both French and African students and workers.

The colonial assimilation methods not only influenced students to assume the French language and republican identity, but they also reshaped local cultural practices that continued to establish transnational social networks connecting Europe and Africa based on shared forms of expression and medium. According to Conklin, the French education systems in Central and West Africa were comprised of the three sectors: regional, rural, and urban. There were four types of education offered including primary, professional (vocational), higher-primary, and commercial or teacher training. Students had to earn entry to the regional schools, located in the colonial capitals, where only the best students from the rural and urban schools were allowed

(Conklin 79). This competition style education system led to the development of a new social class of colonized Africans referred to as the *évolués* who had obtained a higher level of French schooling, yet still lived amongst the colonized communities.[8] Notably, it is from the class of the *évolués* that the first generation of francophone African writers emerged to produce literature and other cultural productions critiquing their experiences under French colonialism. For example, *L'Enfant noir* by Camara Laye was published in 1953, Bernard Binlin Dadié's *Climbié* was published in 1956, and *L'Aventure ambiguë* by Cheikh Hamidou Kane was published in 1961 (authors from areas that would later be, respectively, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Senegal). These novels detail the experiences of African male students in the French colonial education system and the impact this education had on the customs and practices of local African communities. Not only were students able to circulate across the different regions for educational purposes, but also teachers and school officials were trained and stationed throughout a vast education system that spanned several continents. The teachers and officials were constantly relocated in various regions of the empire depending on the availability of resources and the perceived value of a region. Although they were not considered citizens, the construction of generations of French educated African students allowed the colonial regime to turn individual integration into a collective experience that circulated and shaped daily experiences, which later became represented in the cultural productions of artists and writers.

The critical study of literature produced in the French language by writers of African origin reveals the multiple ways in which these literary texts function to document the transnational networks that operate through human mobility and the circulation of culture. Paul Gilroy established in *The Black Atlantic* that Black history and migrants have been viewed as an

[8] Daniel Tödt. *The Lumumba Generation: African Bourgeoisie and Colonial Distinction in the Belgian Congo*. Translated by Alex Skinner, Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter 2021.

illegitimate intrusion on authentic European nationalism where modern aesthetics are often configured by appeals to national and racial particularity.[9] Following Gilroy's theorization, my approach to education and literature from a transnational perspective allows the subjects of this study to transcend the confining structures of the nation-state in addition to the constraints of ethnic and national particularity. African writers publishing in the French language are forced to navigate a complex social landscape with obstacles such as financial resources, literacy, and migration among others that are prevalent following decolonization and the spread of globalization. Dominic Thomas has shown that migratory routes inscribe themselves along a multiplicity of transnational networks in the 21st century. However, literature maintains an important function in documenting the evidentiary mode in Africa.[10] Indeed, Thomas finds that postcolonial francophone African writers employ similar methods as 18th century writers who use experimental constructs as a political and social critique by inverting accepted norms and standards so as to mirror back discourses. This paradigm is anchored in colonialism and slavery to highlight how these events contributed to wealth and prosperity in Europe (Thomas 151). From this perspective, it becomes clear that francophone African writers and their published works are significant participants in the French literary traditions that are molded by experiences with education and schools. The continuation of education is a primary motivation fueling the relocation of individuals that often goes overlooked until represented in art and literature by those who have experienced it.

[9] Paul Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

[10] Dominic Thomas. "The Global Mediterranean: Literature and Migration," *Yale French Studies*, no. 120, 2011, pp. 140–153.

While the subject of colonial education has been well studied by scholars, this dissertation project focuses on the ways writers represent and engage issues related to education from the end of the colonial era to the present.[11] To conduct this study, I selected a body of literary work produced by writers and cultural figures (actors, editors, etc.) who originate from Central and West Africa. My analysis of these works is informed by critical scholarship in fields such as colonial and educational history, film studies, gender studies, literary criticism, postcolonial studies and more. The Republican school in France has been extensively debated throughout history, and the source of considerably controversy as governments have endeavored to implement various forms of identification and universalist practices since the Third Republic. However, the experiences and perspectives of ethnic minorities are rarely discussed or represented in French mass media or public discourse. By focusing on Central and West African francophone writers, I examine how their literary work critiques French educational experiences both in African schools and in those located in France. Additionally, this approach reveals that educational institutions (schools, universities, etc.) and literary productions (books, films, etc.) participate in social networks that codify cultural practices as well as the social values and ideas that are widely upheld across local, national, and transnational contexts.

The first chapter examines the traditional literary genre of the *roman à formation* (Bildungsroman) as interpreted by francophone African women writers. The primary works in this chapter include Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (1979), Aminata Sow Fall's *L'Appel des arènes* (1982), Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1982), Calixthe Beyala's *Les Honneurs perdus* (1996), Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), and Léonora Miano's *Afropean Soul*

[11] For critical works on colonial education see Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Columbia University Press, 1989), Spencer D. Segalla, *The Moroccan soul: French education, colonial ethnology, and Muslim resistance, 1912-1956* (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), Nicholas Harrison, *Our Civilizing Mission: The Lessons of Colonial Education* (Liverpool University Press, 2019).

(2008). This gendered approach to the genre of the *roman à formation* reveals new insights into the unique obstacles facing girls and women in relation to obtaining an education in comparison to their male counterparts. Women writers are required to subvert the traditional structure of the *roman à formation* to reflect more accurately the experiences of female students in the space of the school.

In the second chapter, I assess the ways in which French education is discussed and represented in two *petites revues* (little magazines) published by Congolese writers leading up to political independence. By analyzing the literary articles, writing contests, and editorial choices of these magazines, one can better understand how these publications and their authors were able to transform the cultural spaces of the magazines into formative literary and social tools. One publication from the former Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), entitled *La Voix du Congolais* was published from 1947-1960 and another publication, *Liaison*, ran from 1950-1960 based in the French Congo- Brazzaville (now Republic of the Congo). These two magazines developed cultural spaces to cultivate concepts of identity steeped in the collective historical experiences and future social interests of the emerging independent Franco-Congolese societies. These magazines also helped to circulate a multiplicity of didactic discourses as well as subversive literary forms and genres in contrast to official colonial discourses.

Looking at issues in the 21st century, the third chapter address the debates around the "Pour une littérature-monde en français" manifesto published in Le Monde on March 19, 2007 and explores debates from the perspective of education as a primary culprit repeatedly highlighted by critics and writers as exacerbating cultural and social problems. Following the manifesto, debates arose amongst journalists, scholars, politicians, and writers, which often included critiques, follow-up articles, and interviews with the signatories. My reading argues that

these events culminated ten years later in 2017 when presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron implicitly contrasted with the manifesto's appeal for a global expansion of French literature. Instead, Macron argued not only for the emergence of a "*récit national*" (national narrative or novel) in a widely circulated media interview aimed at increasing support for his campaign, but he also advocated for the expansion of the French language throughout the nations of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF/ *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*). Between 2007 and 2017, the conflicting debates between French literary figures and the discourses of politicians unveils a sociopolitical climate spanning across the French-speaking world that is struggling with issues of diversity, globalization, and nationalism that are historically mediated through educational spaces and practices.

The last chapter addresses the social activist turn in educational institutions, such as museums and universities, concerning the ownership and restitution of African art pieces and cultural objects. Following the release of the 2018 *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain: Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, the French government identified hundreds of thousands of pieces originating from Africa but stored in archives, museums, and universities across France leading the country, and began the process of returning select pieces to their country of origin (in most cases, now politically independent former colonies). First, I assess the history of government reparations and repatriation in France to establish the development of official recognition for historical injustices as an official political strategy. Then, I examine two cinematic works in order to investigate the ways museums in France incorporate and represent African arts in their collections and exhibitions in accordance with strategic government policies. I analyze the 1953 documentary *Les Statues meurent aussi* produced by Présence Africaine and the 2021 Netflix series *Lupin*

starring Omar Sy to comprehend how museums function as institutions to valorize concepts of national heritage in addition to cultural projects tied to social inclusion. This reading demonstrates how cultural productions and spaces tied to national culture are cultivated to represent specific ideologies that bolster concepts of national heritage both domestically and internationally.

Not only does this dissertation center on the impact of education on writers and their work, but it also focuses on representations of educational discourses and institutions in different cultural mediums and generic forms. By reading films, magazines, and TV shows alongside articles, critical works, and novels, the corpus of this project incorporates an expanded definition of literature that allows for creative expressions across a variety artistic medium. This expanded notion is necessary to consider fully the cultural dialogues that take place when narratives are told and retold using different methods or techniques, for example when a book is adapted for television. While the term education has many definitions depending on the context, each chapter clarifies the intended meaning behind my use of the term as well as the specific social and temporal context in which it is discussed. Bringing issues of education into dialogue with cultural productions and literary figures leads to new insights on the overlapping questions of identification and representation found in both fields. The study of education and literature opens novel pathways to understand the influential affects these two fields enact when they are employed together whether by activists, politicians, or writers.

Chapter 1: Subverting the *roman de formation*: Representing Education by Women Writers from Central and West Africa

Introduction

Globally, there are more boys who attend school than girls, but in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, North Africa, and Southern regions of Africa there are many more girls than boys enrolled in schools. In 2005, it was shown that 72 million children are excluded from receiving an education due to a number of factors, and the majority of those children (around 41 million) were girls from disadvantaged groups living mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.[12] While recognizing that Africa is a vast, diverse continent, girls across Africa south of the Sahara face the highest rates of education exclusion in spite of the awareness that the inclusion of educated women in the workforce is a considerable boost to national economic development (Tembon 5, UNESCO).[13] The examination of girl's education is additionally important for the exceptional circumstances girls and women confront when considering who can actually attend school and for how long their duration at an academic institution may last. An emphasis on gender is critical to questions of education since girls tend to leave school earlier than boys to begin domestic work or marry in addition to starting their education later than boys overall.[14] These issues impeding girls' education have historically shaped and continue to underlie the scope of literature produced in the French language by women from Central and West Africa. By studying how women writers who originate from these regions discuss and represent education in their literary work, new insights are revealed into the

[12] Mercy Tembon. *Girl's Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth*. Washington DC: World Bank, 2008.

[13] "Education in Africa." Data for Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO, 2019, http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/education-africa.

[14] Marie-France Lange. *L'École et les filles en Afrique : Scolarisation sous conditions*. Paris: Karthala, 1998.

problems and complexities in obtaining education for girls and women as well as the reception of institutionalized systematic education in the respective African communities depicted.

The women writers born in these regions who include educational themes in their work are compelled to subvert the social expectations imposed on girls and women in their cultures. The emergence of francophone women writers in Africa demanded the need to differentiate their educational experiences from the well-established corpus of male writers who represented their own involvements with the French colonial education system. Previously, the concept of subversion has been linked to francophone women writers working in Africa by scholars looking at the social impact resulting in the emergence of the authoress. Nicki Hitchcott asserts that the position of the woman writer in francophone sub-Saharan Africa is by its very nature subversive.[15] Whereas the contents of the literary texts themselves may not be explicitly about resistance, their very existence alone can be read as an act of subversion. Further, the cultural perception of writers as a male profession, the higher levels of illiteracy among women, and traditional preconceptions about the domestic role of women in society has made it extremely difficult for an African woman to pursue a career as a writer (Hitchcott 5). Hitchcott hints toward education by mentioning the higher levels of illiteracy among women than men, but her study is focused more on the craft of writing in African cultures produced by women. Odile Cazenave has evoked the framework that Julia Kristeva defined as a literature of subversion, "This is the place where literature opens us onto the possibility of multiple meanings- simultaneously surface, subtextual, supratextual, and metatextual- onto the planes of polysemy" (4).[16] Cazenave examines a specific generation of women African writers in French who seem to react against

[15] Nicki Hitchcott. *Women Writers in Francophone Africa*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.

[16] Odile Cazenave. *Rebellious Women: The New Generation if Female African Novelists*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000.

the dominate characterizations of African women by male writers and critics. From the early 1980s to mid 1990s, women writers became more openly rebellious and directly engaged in social issues.[17] The recording of feminine daily life allowed women writers to single out various mechanisms of oppression that limit the status of women. Through literature, daily norms that were once considered part of the private domain passed into the public sphere (Cazenave 4). Drawing from these sources, I approach the texts of this study through a reading of subversion to examine how discourses and themes of education are represented in order to challenge oppressive social norms in addition to the neocolonial practices that further exploit African women in particular, in addition to communities and resources. Understanding these subversive qualities underlying the corpus of African women writers in French is crucial to improve our studying the ways these writers disrupt preconceived discourses and reductive representations.

Women writers from Central and West Africa working in the French language subvert the traditional generic form of the *roman de formation* (*roman d'apprentissage*) to reflect the untraditional paths that girls and women undertake to obtain schooling. The *roman de formation* may be more widely known as the *bildungsroman*, or perhaps in English as a coming-of-age story, is usually credited to Goethe for modernizing and developing the genre that would come to dominate Western literature throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Although, Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532-64) and Fénélon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699) are two examples of literary works that heavily engage themes of education centuries earlier in the French literary tradition. The emergence of African literatures produced in French was dominated by this genre but were written by male authors featuring the experiences of young male protagonists under the French colonial school system. Notable examples of these works

[17]Christopher L. Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*, University of Chicago Press, 1990.

include Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir* (1953), Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* (1958), and Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* (1961) among many other examples continuing to be a popular genre to address postcolonial issues of the present day. Therefore, any scholarship on this generic form and its relation to gender must incorporate an understanding of the historical exclusion of women writers from this cultural field of literary production. My objective is not to provide a comprehensive study of francophone women writers working in Africa, but rather to analyze how a sampling of these writers portray the educational tasks and experiences of girls and women who attend school at various levels.

I have selected a corpus of literary texts by women from different time periods starting with the emergence of francophone women's literature in Central and West Africa during the 1970's to the 21st century writers who navigate between the African continent and France. This chapter incorporates Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (1979), Aminata Sow Fall's *L'Appel des arènes* (1982), Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1982), Calixthe Beyala's *Les Honneurs perdus* (1996), Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), and Léonora Miano's *Afropean Soul* (2008).[18] Key questions will shape this study: How is the French education of girls and women represented in comparison to traditional and religious forms of education in African communities? What are the issues facing girls and women with regards to pursuing an education in French? What can these representations tell us about the local issues facing girls that affect girls on a global scale?

[18] Mariama Bâ. *Une si longue lettre*. Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines du Sénégal, 1979.
Calixthe Beyala. *Les Honneurs perdus*. Albin Michel, 1996.
Ken Bugul. *Les Baobab fou*. Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines du Sénégal, 1982.
Fatou Diome. *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*. Editions Anne Carrière, 2003.
Aminata Sow Fall. *L'Appel des arènes*. Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines du Sénégal, 1982.
Léonora Miano. *Afropean Soul*. Flammarion, 2008.

The subversive nature of the fictional texts considered, both intentionally and unintentionally work to undermine traditional literary forms and genres as well as to deconstruct social myths around girls' education, social and gender roles, European migration amongst others. The methodological framework for this chapter is informed by research in fields such as literary criticism, gender studies, sociology, and women's studies. When considering educational institutions across national borders, one must realize that statistics on length and duration of schooling often fail to account for the difference in how much knowledge is distributed by the educator and retained by the pupil during their respective school years (Hanushek 26).[19] My reading of these writers from the perspective of French education does not presume that the agency of these women relies on the neocolonial institutions that impart schooling. Rather, I am interested in the ways these writers subvert institutions of power to gain agency from the discourses they impose as a means to enhance their agency or alleviate their oppression. First, I will analyze the previous scholarship on African women Francophone writers to address the social questions around why women writers in Central and West Africa begin to publish later than their male counterparts. The second section investigates how the spaces of the household and the school come into rivalry in the narratives developed by women writers to critique the obstacles and oppression girls experience in both spaces, unlike the experiences of their male peers. The third and last section also considers the singularly female issues of gender-based violence perpetuated by male characters who are affiliated to French education or schooling. This reading helps me to establish that the literary representation of this physical harm mirrors the metaphorical cultural and social violence inflicted on girls in the name of education, whether it be the traditional domestic method or systematic French schooling. The entrance of women

[19] Eric A. Hanushek. "Schooling, Gender Equity, and Economic Outcomes". *Girl's Education in the 21st Century*. World Bank, 2008. Pp. 23-39.

writers from Central and West Africa on the global literary scene through the established genre of the *roman de formation* corresponds to the earlier rise of African literatures in French by men between 1920-1976 who employed the genre from young male perspectives (Miller 247). While the *roman de formation* focusing on the female perspective is situated within a complex web of cultural and social networks, almost unique to girls and women, keeping them from the education and training need to publish a work of literature. This new interpretation of the genre focusing on the female experience and voice extends beyond the single critique of the French colonial or neocolonial school employed by male writers. In fact, these writers demonstrate in their narratives that women of all ages can obtain the knowledge needed to grow and improve their lives through various adaptions and critiques of the educational practices within their communities.

African Women Writers & Their French Education

The term education is defined in many ways throughout this chapter that I will clarify and situate depending on the author in question in addition to the historical context in which the narrative is set. First, all conceptions of education are considered on equal terms within this analysis to emphasize the author's intentions and the narrative voice concerning their treatment of a respective form of education within a text. This approach to education through literature understands that, "Education is not a benign 'good' at every moment of its historical path, but rather it is a set of practices that have been used differently by individuals, groups, governments, and international agencies, depending on their intention, power, and conceptions of gender" (4).[20] At its core, education is the transmission of knowledge from one to another, and traditional

[20] Marianne Bloch. "Gender and Educational Research, Policy, and Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa: Theoretical and Empirical Problems and Prospects". *Women and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Power, Opportunities, and Constraints*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998.

methods of education for girls in Central and West Africa revolve primarily around the preservation of culture and society within and around domestic spaces, such as the household, where older generations pass on knowledge to the younger ones. Indeed, all the writers discussed in this chapter are deeply influenced or are engaged by this method of transmitting knowledge and use various methods to represent its significance and impact. Apart from this domestic form of education, the oldest external form of education available to children in predominately Muslim African countries of West Africa, like Senegal or Mali, is the informal system of the Koranic schools. One study of Koranic schools in Senegal shows that approximately 50% of girls and 60% of boys attend Koranic schools, and only 15% of girls and 27% of boys attend these schools for longer than three years.[21] Mariama Bâ and Calixthe Beyala are the only two women writers of this study to portray koranic schools in their work with both portraying how the knowledge and values transmitted there align well with the ideological concepts typically instructed through one's domestic education. The same study on education in Senegal concludes that in the 21st century many times the Koranic schools end up competing with the systematic national education system for students' attention and time, perhaps due to the lack of funding and resources in the latter institution. In addition to domestic forms of education and Koranic schools, the implementation of colonial French education introduced new forms of formal, systematic education to Central and West Africa, which disrupted and perverted the existing methods of transmitting knowledge in these regions.

The writers and literary texts of my corpus are all in some way influenced or impacted by this historical form of education, but it must also be differentiated with the postcolonial systems of education in Africa today that still are structured in similar ways to the French

[21] Pierre André and Jean-Luc Demonsant. "Koranic Schools in Senegal: A Real Barrier to Formal Education?" CEPS/INSTEAD, 2012, Working Papers n°2012-34.

system, but operate as independent, national institutions. Since the publication of francophone women writers in Africa did not appear until 1976, all the literary texts analyzed in this chapter focus primarily on postcolonial educational practices in national African school systems. These schools in Central and West African typically continue to instruct in French, and the curriculum can look similar to the French Republican education with slight alternations depending on the African nations respective political and social policies. Often, the women writers of the late 20th and 21st centuries call back to colonial educational practices to critique and represent the effects of such a history in African communities over time. Over the course of this chapter, I attempt to explain the specific form of education I am referencing within a respective context to demonstrate the overall competition and intersection of education for girls and women in Central and West Africa. One of the key questions to consider pertains to the structural mechanisms in place that contributed to delaying the access to education of African women when compared to their male counterparts, especially when one considers that men began publishing in the 1920's. Similarly, one can also think about this context by comparing access to education between French and British colonies in order to gauge what differences existed.[22]

The first French school for girls in Central or West Africa was established in 1819 by the Sisters of Saint-Joseph of Cluny in Senegal, two years after the first school for boys. The school aimed to educate white, mixed race, and later black girls to be good mothers, housewives, and domestic workers in addition to adding new converts. This type of religious colonial schooling was limited to only a few communities in Senegal and expanded as the French colonial system expanded. In 1853, the French colonial administration developed the exclusive *Ecole des fils des*

[22] René Maran, born in Fort-de-France, Martinique and lived in parts of Central Africa during his life. He was the first black writer to win the Prix Goncourt in 1921 for the work *Batouala: A True Black Novel*. Flora Nwapa from Nigeria is considered the first African woman to publish in English with her first novel *Efuru* in 1966.

chefs to appeal to the local ruling classes, while already setting up a discrepancy between the education of boys and girls in the region. Diane Barthel highlighted that, "No similar school for girls was considered. Here, then we see the origin of the educational discrepancies between boys and girls in the coastal areas with their differing mission and governmental schools, and between all children on the coast and those of the educationally disadvantaged interior" (142).[23] The first public and secular schools to welcome girls opened in 1860 in *l'Afrique occidentale française* (AOF, French West Africa), however the first institutions dedicated to the schooling of women in the former *l'Afrique équatoriale française* (AEF, French Equatorial Africa) would not open until the end of the 20th century (26).[24]

The education of girls and women under French colonialism was so marginalized that Kelly Duke Bryant's analysis of French colonial education in Senegal states that "Both formal education and politics were gendered male in Senegal at the turn of the 20th century […] But enrollment at girls' schools never came close to rivaling that at the boys' schools because most families preferred to train girls at home to fulfill their future roles as wives and mothers and because Muslim families opposed such schooling on religious grounds.[25] According to Bryant, ten French primary schools across the four colonial communes of Senegal (Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar, and Rufisque) enrolled some 1,841 male and 668 female students (Bryant 17). Over the course of the 20th century the education of girls and women in African communities continued to trail behind the rates at which boys and men received schooling, especially in rural regions.

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[23] Diane Barthel. "Women's Educational Experience under Colonialism: Toward a Diachronic Model". *Signs*. Vol. 11, No. 1. 1985. pp. 137-54.

[24] Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana. *Littérature féminine francophone d'Afrique noire : Suivi d'un dictionnaire des romancières*. Paris : L'Harmattan, 2000.

[25] Kelly M. Duke Bryant. *Education as Politics: Colonial Schooling and Political Debate in Senegal, 1850s-1914*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

Under French colonial rule, only the children of the African and French elite attended school. Even after decolonization, the rate of formal education attendance for a significant period remained low among the general population.[26]

Previously, scholars have questioned both the role of Islam and the French civilizing mission in limiting the education of girls, particularly in rural communities of Central and West Africa. Generally, families maintain a desire for girls to receive a certain level of education (often the secondary level), but also there exists a concern that education will lead girls to be too independent from their families (Stringer 9). The French regime worried about the reception of schooling by Christian missionaries in Muslim communities, and they hoped that public, secular education would advance the overall goals of the civilizing mission (Barthel 143). The biggest concerns centered around the ways that systematic French schooling contradicted or interrupted the traditional methods of educating girls to become good wives and mothers according to their cultural traditions and religious customs (Bryant 22, Stringer 8). Although, there were some Islamic communities that did choose to send their children to French colonial schools, which was viewed as practically beneficial for future employment. Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *L'aventure ambiguë* presents an example of a Muslim community sending the chief's son to the French school as a case study before sending the other children. By the end of the novel, the male protagonist is resentful of the colonial education he received for isolating him from his family and culture. With regards to the education of girls, one scholar finds that the father plays a more significant role than the mother when deciding whether to send their daughter to school. Between 1930 and 1960, one significant factor in whether a girl attended school was if her father had received French colonial training. In 1939, the *École Normale des Jeunes Filles de Rufisque*

[26] Susan Stringer. *The Senegalese Novel by Women: Through Their Own Eyes*. New York: Peter Lane, 1996.

was established for all French speaking Africa to train women teachers and midwives. The class schedule in a typical school day reveals the "hidden curriculum" to assimilate the students and limit their future careers in addition to the inherent belief that a woman's education must have practical value. The morning courses consisted of French, arithmetic, and the sciences, while in the afternoon students learned hygiene, childcare, sewing, cooking, and drawing all in the preferred French style (Barthel 148).

Since most educational opportunities catered to the children of the social elite, especially the male students, the chance to study abroad in France, often to complete their university degrees, was not a formative factor for girls in the same manner. One study showed that during the 1959-60 school year, there were 2,516 students from Central and West Africa studying in Paris at a university. Of those students, 1,887 were men and 629 were women, just a quarter of the students.[27] These opportunities to study and travel aboard in Europe may have been a critical factor in the development of literature by men compared to women. Kembe Milolo asserts that male students, including the writers Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Ferdinand Oyono, and Mongo Beti, were able to study in mainland France at vastly greater rates than women. Oyono and Beti were even living there as students when their first novels were published.[28] Perhaps, the economic and social restrictions preventing a larger number of girls from participating in these educational exchange programs delayed the literary output of women in the French language. The earliest published texts by black African women are generally recognized to be Marie-Claire Matip's autobiography called *Ngonda* in 1958 and Thérèse Kuoh Moukoury novel *Rencontres*

[27] Philippe Dewitte. "1945-1960, le regard des étudiants africains sur la France," *Hommes & Migrations*. 1994. pp. 30-34.

[28] Kembe Milolo. *L'Image de la Femme : Chez les romancières de l'Afrique noire francophone*. Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1986.

essentielles in 1968 about a woman whose husband wants to leave her for failing to produce a child. Both women were born in Cameroon. In 1965, Annette Mbaye d'Erneville of Senegal published her collection *Poèmes africaines* in Paris. She is also credited with introducing Mariama Bâ to *Les Nouvelles Editions Africains* in Dakar (Hitchcott 17). These first literary contributions by women writers are noteworthy for their historical debut on the literary scene, yet the texts remain relatively obscure and unknown to readers and scholars alike.

Importantly, just because the first women novelist in Central and West Africa did not appear until the second half of the 20th century does not mean that incredibly gifted and intelligent women did not exist. Women of Letters and successful female scientists in addition to the role of the *griottes* in oratory literature comprised an underrepresented group of women in the lead up to decolonization and the women's rights movements across the globe (Herzberger 9). It was not until the 1970s and 80s that the education of women was more generally emphasized, especially in rural communities that frequently have significantly lower education rates (Lange 8, 13). Indeed, this coincides with the emergence of the first published novels as part of a new corpus of African women writers in French such as, Aminata Sow Fall's *Le Revenant* (1976), Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (1979), Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1984). Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* is often given special consideration for being the first African novel in French by a woman to be centered on the challenges and issues related to the female experience in Senegalese culture (Miller 250). Susan Stringer notes that in the development of African women's writing in French and other languages that women tended to heavily prefer the form of the novel over other literary forms like poetry and theater (15). While this is true in Senegal and generally in West Africa, Nicki Hitchcott finds that the majority of African women poets in the French language originate from central Africa, particularly among Congolese

women who use poetry to challenge the contemporary political climate (18). In Irène Assiba D'Almeida's landmark study of francophone African women writers, she finds:

> Another important factor in the emergence of women writers might be the increased presence on African soil of publishing houses. It is striking to see that the largest number of female writers come from Senegal and Cameroon, two countries having long-established local presses. These presses are crucial for literary initiative as writers know they will have opportunities for the publication and distribution of their work. The emergence of an educated readership that has the means and leisure to read and values education and literature is also a factor […] (6).[29]

D'Almeida underscores the external factors of publishing houses and a reading audience that is also required to support and engage the writers encouraging them in a way to continue with their work. Without these external factors, the literary voice of the author and text exist only in isolation, unable to participate in the greater literary dialogue. However, even during this burgeoning literary output, the instructional resources offered to girls and women were still in short supply compared to the opposite sex. In some areas, schooling was only viewed as a social necessity for women to prevent a decline in fertility rates, to improve the level of public sanitation, or to spur economic growth by allowing women to participate. Certainly, these types of social discourses around education contribute to the perception that the schooling for girls must impart a utilitarian training instead of empowering women through education (Lange 10).

Rather than focusing solely on gender, is it possible the development of francophone African women writers is a consequence of an inherited colonial legacy with its own patriarchal baggage? The lack of education for girls in the regions colonized by France when compared to the regions formerly colonized by Britain seem to show a significant difference between literacy and scholastic rates. According to the statistics compiled by UNESCO on the levels of child literacy, there emerges a certain distinction between countries along the lines of their colonial

[29] Irène Assiba D'Almeida. *Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence*. University of Florida Press, 1994.

history and ongoing linguistic practices after independence.[30] It should be noted the statistics were not available from every country, and each country maintains different national public education systems and faces their own unique challenges in the postcolonial era. The UNESCO profile for each country recognizes this by rating each country by level of income from low income, lower middle income on up, thus the statistics provided here are meant to provide a comparison of reading proficiency between Anglophone and francophone countries to examine the treatment of gender regarding education no matter the countries income level. The following data provides the portion of children who achieve at least a minimum proficiency level in ready by 2nd/3rd grade, which is separated by boys and girls. Looking at countries from the former British colonies, Ghana (boys- 70%, girls 72%), Kenya (boys- 37.5%, girls 38.6%), Sierra Leone (boys- 16.7%, girls 15.4%), and Uganda (boys- 32.5%, girls 33.8%) all indicate that girls have surpassed their male counterparts to possess higher levels of literacy. However, the data becomes more complicated in countries formerly colonized by France. For example, Burkina Faso (boys- 25.2%, girls 35.3%), Mali (boys- 1.6%, girls 2.2%), and the Republic of Congo (boys- 38.3%, girls 38.3%) indicate that girls have surpassed or kept pace with the rates of the boys. Yet, the data from Cameroon (boys- 31.9%, girls 27.3%), Côte d'ivoire (boys- 17.9%, girls 15.1%), and Senegal (boys- 30.8%, girls 26.5%) show that considerable efforts still need to be made to improve literacy rates for girls in these regions.[31] Another factor besides colonial history recognizes that there are predominantly Muslim communities who inhabit the territories once occupied by France, and that these are cultures that valorizes women to be discreet and passive

[30] http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/country-profile/

[31] Cameroon is an example of a country with several colonial histories being colonized first by the Germans in 1884. After Germany's defeat in WW1, the region was split into two colonies, British Cameroon and French Cameroon. The country today is still divided along linguistic lines with the minority Anglophone speakers asserting their rights among the majority francophone government and communities.

members of the collective society (Stringer 9). Traditionally in these cultures, women were responsible for the education of children through tales and fables, while the *Griots* were the only ones allowed to perform for adult mixed audience. Additionally, the familial pressures as a wife or mother, too many domestic duties, too many children, and a lack of social resources, especially in rural communities, were just some of the enormous responsibilities expected to be performed by women (Herzberger 29, Stringer 11). Often when children are seen as vital assets to the successful running of a household, the education of a child is seen as an investment that could be "wasted" on girls, since they will live with their future husband's family one day (Stringer 11).

Indeed, the destruction of colonialism and the ongoing issues of globalization, such as climate change, migration, and wage suppression, have helped to deteriorate certain advancements of women in African societies. One scholar points to the privileged position frequently held by women writers in Central and West Africa who have benefited from a system based on exclusion and Western dominance, "Most women novelists enjoy a privileged position in their respective countries as members of the new elite formed in Western universities" (Herzberger 21). The writings often depict women from all social strata, sometimes even villainizing or turning into antagonists the female characters who offensively advocate for France and French education for Africans, while valorizing the women on the outskirts of their communities, such as prostitutes or women with mental health issues. The so-called modern careers of the middle class were dominated by men during the colonial period and after, leaving schools and hospitals as the main options for educated women to seek work (Stringer 7). The *École Normale des Jeunes Filles* provided a rare space for young women to advance their education beyond the secondary level. This institution would see several graduates go on to

become well known writers, such as Annette Mbaye d'Erneville, Mariama Bâ, Nafissatou Niang Diallo, amongst others (Herzberger 27). In Bâ's novel, the narrator and protagonist, Ramatoulaye remarks on her education, "À son école française, les étudiantes étaient des sœurs destinées à la même mission émancipatrice… L'école leur fait apprécier de multiples civilisations sans reniement de la nôtre. La directrice de l'école concorde avec les options profondes de l'Afrique nouvelle, pour promouvoir la femme noire" (38). Thus, the formal education system did assist some women to gain economic and social success, but the clear majority of girls and women remain with few options and resources (Lange 25). This is further troubling since historically men have been able to control operations of the nation-state and the national narrative across the African continent without affecting the pillars of nation formation, since it is traditionally women who perform the task of safeguarding of national culture.[32] Most interestingly, it is Aminata Sow Fall who concludes that it is not a question of gender or religious difference that impacted the evolution of African literatures in French by women authors, but it is a linguistic difference inherited in Africa from the former French colonizers. Simply put, Fall finds that over the course of European literary history overall there are just not as many French women writers as English ones (Stringer 12). This thought-provoking conclusion from Fall places the locus of the historical literary question within the greater social problematics of French history and society.

Based on this information, there exist a number of individual and collective social factors that informed the development of literature by women writers in French in Central and West Africa. For example, the bias in educational practices under French colonialism, the insufficiencies in postcolonial school systems for girls to gain advance language skills, the local familial structures unique to each community, the lack of local publishing outlets and of a wide

[32] Ayo A. Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010.

literary audience were all determining factors in the delay of fictional literary publications. The strides made toward the end of the 20th century and into the 21st century to expand educational opportunities for girls and women in Africa south of the Sahara is proven to coincides with the expansion of literary works released by women writers. Understanding this correlation between education and literature reveals new insights on the literary works from the women writers who originate from these regions in addition to their critiques of the ongoing social networks between these regions in Africa and France through shared educational and linguistic practices and systems. The problematic history of French education for girls in and from Africa positions the women writers who engage the themes and discourses of this history as important voices with firsthand experiences of these institutions and the repercussions they impose in the lives of girls and the others of their communities.

Girls In-between the Household & School

The narrative tension between the spaces of the household and the school emerges as a critical site in the works by the women writers of this study creating a double critique not found in the *romans de formation* by male novelists. As one moved from the colonial context to the postcolonial one, women writers the genre of the *roman de formation* becomes a space to address the challenges confronting girls and women who desire an education according to the progression of social issues from the threat of colonialism on local cultural practices to the impact of European migration in the 21st century. In the narrative struggle between the household and the school, the necessity to preserve traditional forms of cultural and social knowledge from the imposition of systematic French education permeates the literary works of women from Central and West Africa. In this section, I employ the term household over home in accordance with Ayo Coly's book, *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood*, which is especially helpful to

establish how the concept of home is ideologically loaded for African women in a postcolonial context. Coly remarks that the traditional social place of the woman in the home and as the home now became a national signifier of national culture and sovereignty (8). This perspective underlines the opposing relationship between the domestic space of the household and the outside space of the school in a sort of competition over the transmission of cultural and social values. I begin by exploring how social expectations and practices are represented in order to prepare girls for their future roles as wives and mothers in addition to their training in domestic work, rather than prioritizing formal or systematic schooling away from the household. Yet, traditional forms of education play a significant function in preserving customs that are passed culturally and socially from older female relatives to younger ones that is often seen as interrupted by attending school. The next section looks at the treatment of girls within the space of the school, especially by male authority figures. Women writers represent a certain form of gender-based violence inflicted by male educators toward girls and young women that originates in the colonial school but continues to this day. Furthermore, there are other issues preventing girls from attending school, such as domestic responsibilities, arranged marriages, or the risk of pregnancy are issues forced primarily on girls, but it does not automatically have to be the end of a girl's education. Despite receiving a privileged and often extensive education themselves, the literary texts by women writers do not necessarily privilege the space of the school over traditional practices of transmitting culture and knowledge. Unlike the earlier *romans de formation* by male writers under colonialism, women writers have to navigate two spaces of learning, which ultimately results in the double critique of both social spaces subverting, which subverts the singular critique of the earlier *romans de formation* by the male writers directed at French colonialism.

In Bâ's *Une si longue lettre*, the question of education proves crucial to her calls for improving her society in general and the position of women specifically. The narrator-protagonist, Ramatoulaye, undoubtedly favors girls attending school for their own benefit, but she also mentions her concern for the preservation of her culture's customs and practices. Primarily, education is viewed by Ramatoulaye as a positive influence to assist girls in realizing their own potential and talents. In speaking explicitly about the education of girls, she remarks, "Nous avons droit de l'instruction qui peut être poussée jusqu'à la limite de nos possibilités intellectuelles" (Bâ 115). This declaration coincides with the turn toward women's rights in the 1970's and the global attention on the inequalities for opportunities between men and women. The social inequalities of Senegalese women emerge in several ways in the literary text from the practice of polygamy, limited career opportunities, to heavy domestic workloads. Yet, Nicki Hitchcott points out the internal conflict between a "confidently feminine voice" and the feminist objective to expose the patriarchal practices suppressing women in her reading of the Bâ's work. Hitchcott concludes, "[…] many of the women characters in Bâ's novels constitute their identity in terms of first class/caste, then race, then gender, the ideology which emerges from a close reading of her texts, posits a new female identity, rewriting the traditional African concept of the collective in terms of solidarity among women" (85). Hitchcott's perspective helps to define who is meant when Bâ says, "Nous avons droit de l'instruction". This appeal for broadening and including girls and young women in the systematic institutions of the school stands in contrast to the previous gendered discourses upholding marriage and motherhood as the ultimate goals for a woman in life.

Indeed, Bâ's collective concern for the state of education amongst girls in her community is reflected in her novel's treatment of the characters who are set up as the romantic rivals of the

protagonist and her friend. However, the protagonist does not necessarily hold the girls whom their husbands take as second wives as villains or antagonists. Rather, she seems to portray them as empty vessels manipulated by forces beyond their control. Ramatoulaye describes her husband's second wife as, "Binetou est déjà morte après ses épousailles à Modou" (Bâ 132). This description underscores the lack of agency many young women possess under these customary practices in addition to the mental toll they can inflict on the young victims. The narrator remarks, "Quant à Binetou, elle avait grandi en toute liberté, dans un milieu où la survie commande. Sa mère était plus préoccupée de faire bouillir la marmite que d'éducation […] Victime, elle se voulait oppresseur" (Bâ 92-93). The lack of education and options for Binetou contributes to her status as a victim leading her to act aggressively and greedily in her newfound social status as Modou's second wife. The transition from the vulnerable position of the victim to a position of oppressor demonstrates a desire to regain one's agency and sense of individuality. Yet, there is also a vengeful aspect to inflict the same type of dehumanization onto others. Bâ's novel features women who both yearn to break free from the patriarchal structure limiting women's choices in addition to women who uphold these social practices and structures by enforcing young women to cooperate with the desires of the men in their lives.

Une si longue lettre presents the story of *la petite* Nabou as an example of an older woman trying to mold a young girl into the perfect wife and mother according to traditional Senegalese Muslim culture. *La petite* Nabou is raised by her aunt with the specific purpose of shaping her into the perfect spouse for her son, Mawdo, who is already married to Aïssatou, Ramatoulaye's friend and the recipient of the letters of the narrative. Moreover, Bâ highlights the role of education in concluding why girls like Binetou and *la petite* Nabou are so susceptible to the oppressive conditions determining the courses of their life before childhood ends.

Ramatoulaye concludes, “L’empreinte de l’école n’avait pas été forte en la petite Nabou, précédée et dominée par la force de caractère de Tante Nabou qui, dans sa rage de vengeance, n’avait rien laissé au hasard dans l’éducation qu’elle avait donnée à sa niece” (Bâ 90). The narrator decries the severe emphasis on the traditional domestic education in Nabou’s upbringing by Tante Nabou, which undermines the effectives of her learning at school. Yet, the narrator remains sympathetic to the numerous responsibilities bestowed upon young women who are expected to maintain a household in the traditional fashion. She laments, “L’ordonnancement du foyer requiert de l’art. Nous en avons fait le dur apprentissage, jamais terminé […] Être femme ! Vivre en femme ! Ah, Aïssatou !” (120). Again, the narrator evokes an inclusive tone to formulate her critique on the social expectations placed on women that never cease to impact their experiences. The burdens of domestic affairs that must be assumed primarily by women require extensive knowledge and training to manage, which formulates the basis for the novel’s emphasis on formally educating girls and young women so they will be better prepared to make the decision to get married or start a family. Through education, both the narrator and Bâ herself perceive that society can improve by equaling educational and career opportunities for both genders.

Whereas Bâ warns against the lack of education for girls resulting in forced domesticity and arranged marriages, Ken Bugul’s *Le Baobab fou* focuses on the damage of French colonial education on girls and families. Bugul’s novel depicts a young woman who is consumed by her French education leading to a double exclusion from the community in which she was born in rural Senegal as well as by the society she seeks in Europe. Coly identifies Bugul’s protagonist, also named Ken, as well as the protagonist of Fatou Diome’s *Le Ventre de* l’Atlantique, as following the trope of the homeless daughter in a postcolonial house (112). Due to each

protagonist's failure to conform with the accepted social roles for men and women within their respective communities, these "homeless daughters" initially embraced spaces of formal schooling leading to exile in Europe. After this geographic and cultural separation, the women have trouble reconnecting with their families and friends upon their return, which further marginalizes them from their native communities. In Coly's reading of *Le Baobab fou*, she asserts that the protagonist maintains an ambivalent relationship with Africa over the course of the narrative. Ken's return to Senegal and her discovery of the dead baobab tree at the end reveals the realities of her mythical perception of African culture and society while living as a migrant abroad. Coly concludes that Ken has not found her way home at the end of the novel (14). Coly's analysis of Bugul's text helps to establish the difficulty of returning to the feminine domestic spaces and the household for these female protagonists in spite of a strong yearning for familial and communal ties. The education that the characters prioritize as a means of identification comes to interfere with, and in some cases severe, their former connections leading to develop fictionalized or idolized versions of the communities left behind.

The social exclusion face by the protagonist in *Le Baobab fou* is represented as an intensely isolating experience with the narrator presenting several critiques that place French colonial education in opposition with her ability to integrate with her family and community. Ken states, "L'éducation traditionnelle s'empêtra. La génération façonnée par l'école française entra dans la solitude, face à la famille traditionnelle" (Bugul 146). She continues by lamenting her inability to communicate with her stepsisters and even her older brother who is now a teacher having himself graduated from the French school, "Nous n'avions pratiquement jamais vécu ensemble, et de plus j'étais la seule femme de toute une race, issue du fleuve et jaillie du Ndoucoumane, à être passée par l'école […] Comment avoir des frères et des sœurs et ne

pouvoir communiquer avec eux?" (Bugul 158). There is a breakdown of the family structure for the protagonist who points to her gender and the schooling she has received as the differentiating factors. The other girls and women cannot relate to Ken's experiences outside the scope of the household and community, especially since the narrative is set during a time when girls and women faced high levels of educational exclusion. Her brother, the teacher, does not face social isolation or solitude in the same way as Ken due to the emerging social class of Western educated African men in the years leading up to decolonization and after independence. The protagonist's previous admiration for her French education and the culture of her so-called ancestors the Gauls, whom she goes in search of when she leaves Senegal to study abroad in Belgium, quickly turns to resentment when she realizes her position as one fetishized and marginalized in Europe. As a result, the narrator returns to the familial household in an attempt to reconnect with the culture of her Senegalese ancestors represented by the titular baobab tree, but ultimately it is shown that Ken fetishized an imaginary home all along in a fashion similar to the imaginary Africa fetishized by the Europeans she met abroad.

Even in later years when the education of girls and young women became further institutionalized and supported at the state and local levels, women writers still struggle to integrate their schooling with their familial and social circles. Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* presents a protagonist, Salie, who is a "homeless daughter" to reprise Coly's phrase again, similar to Ken in Bugul's *Le Baobab fou*, except set in a later postcolonial timeframe. Salie maintains both a privileged and marginalized status in the narrative amongst her native island community in Senegal, which is explained by her academic and literary success in France. When the protagonist returns to visit her family on the island, she is reminded of her inability to belong in the social spaces typically occupied by women in the community. Salie states, "Depuis

longtemps, elles me considèrent comme une feignante qui ne sait rien faire de ses dix doigts à part tourner les pages d'un livre, une égoïste qui préfère s'isoler pour gratter du papier plutôt que de participer aux discussions dans le jardin attenant à la cuisine" (Diome 171). This citation demonstrates not only the different opinions on the acceptable place and work of women from the community, but also the valorization of the domestic household over education and success abroad. The treatment of the protagonist by the other women is read by Coly as proving that the economic clout of a writer living in France is eclipsed by Salie's gender and status as a divorced woman with no children. This results in her being regarded according to the customs and norms of her community as a cultural and social failure. In a society with a strict division of gender roles and space, such as the one represented in Diome's narrative, Salie's inability to integrate with the women means she is left without a space in the community of her birth (Coly 112-13). Unlike Ken in *Le Baobab fou*, Diome's protagonist is determined to remain in self-imposed exile in France and not return to live in Senegal, which Coly also regards as a decision based on gender. No matter how well educated she becomes or how many books she sells, Salie will always be judged as an unmarried woman living independently from her familial household and responsibilities. The isolation from her family she experiences due to her education begins very early on in her studies in spite of her attempts to reunite her passion for learning with the love she has for her family. When Salie begins primary school, her grandmother suddenly shuns her success of being ranked the top student in her class. When Salie and her teacher, Ndétare, try to explain it to her, she responds, "-'Oh, vous deux, là, laissez-moi tranquille avec vos histoires d'école! Je n'y comprends rien moi. Je ne sais ni lire ni écrire, alors laissez-moi tranquille'. Son visage était triste. Je me mis à pleurer. Je voulais continuer à partager avec elle mes histoires d'école, mon histoire tout simplement" (Diome 71). This devastating interaction with her

beloved grandmother prepares the protagonist early on for the eventual exile she experiences from her family and community in the end. The inability to reconcile her academic and literary interests with the traditional family structure compounded by her failure to uphold the domestic expectations of a woman in her community further drive the protagonist into a self-imposed isolation. Both Ramatoulaye from *Une si longue lettre* and Ken from *Le Baobab fou* accept the social expectations and limited spaces permitted to women in the end, despite their previous valorization of systematic education, to maintain their familial and social bonds and avoid complete exclusion. Salie in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* is unable to accepts these terms, and therefore she chooses exile in France.

Another commonality that emerges between the two literary texts by Bugul and Diome is the deconstruction of widely circulated social discourses related to Western superiority and migration through an educational lens. Dominic Thomas establishes in his analysis of Diome's work that she inserts herself in a greater literary tradition begun under French colonialism of critiquing the oppressive policies France enforces across the African continent.[33] In explaining how Diome sets out to deconstruct the discourses of French superiority and globalization, Thomas states:

> Whereas writers during the colonial era such as Ousamne Socé, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and Bernard Dadié (all of whom Diome alludes to in her novel) were concerned with the 'ambiguous' nature of the cultural encounter with France- initially in colonial schools through the exigencies of the civilizing mission, and subsequently through travel to the metropole- Diome extends and updates the implications and parameters of her work in order to situate her observations and critique within the contextual framework of a reflection on globalization and its impact on Africa (187).

By embracing the works of Socé, Kane, and Dadié, all of three of whom produced important works in the genre of the *roman de formation* and the canon of African literatures, Diome also

[33] Dominic Thomas. *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism*. Indiana University Press, 2007.

"updates the implications and parameters" of the *roman de formation* genre to reflect the gendered challenges facing women who seek improved educational and economic opportunities. The three male writers employed a more traditional approach resembling the bildungsroman genre mirroring the accepted European narrative pattern of an adolescent male protagonist who grows and develops after a series of encounters and adventures. Yet, the novels of Socé, Kane, and Dadié stand out for pushing back against previously accepted concepts of European and French superiority with the male protagonists becoming disillusioned with French culture and eventually learning to reembrace their native communities and cultures. Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* illustrates how girls and women can experience a similar process of cultural disillusionment, but she shows how this process can lead to different outcomes based on one's gender. Additionally, Diome also references Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699) in another moment of notable intertextuality, this time with one of the earliest and most renowned examples of a *roman de formation* in the French literary tradition. This historical evocation reminds the reader that issues related to education and migration are two of the oldest themes in the development of the French literature.

Diome's novel uses discourses and themes related to education as a means to escape ongoing pernicious migratory practices. *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* makes explicit remarks warning against the misconceptions of the prosperity awaiting migrants from Central and West Africa when they reach Europe, such as, "La France, ce n'est pas le paradis. Ne vous laissez pas prendre dans les filets de l'émigration" (Diome 114). Despite her literary success in the novel, Salie finds herself as a migrant living in Strasbourg but still experiences social exclusion when she returns to Senegal. The protagonist-narrator continually warns the others of her island community against migration to France while promoting an idealized version of her native

country and urging her brother to remain. In the narrative, Salie remarks on the ways her French education has familiarized her better with Paris than her own country of origin, while highlighting her unfamiliarity with the cultural landmarks that are high glorified by both Westerners and her former countrymen, “Il paraît que les grandes mosquées de Dakar et de Touba sont très belles. Je ne les ai pas visitées. C’est marrant, je connais Paris, alors que je ne connais même pas Touba” (84). Salie’s valorization of Senegalese culture and society is consistent with her anti-globalization critique pointed out by Thomas and her endeavor to promote discourses valorizing local culture and history. However, her lack of knowledge of Touba diverts from the experiences of Socé, Kane, and Dadié who all lived most their lives in the country of their birth with Socé and Dadié even getting involved in government affairs in Senegal and Ivory Coast respectively. There is no welcome back celebration for Salie or future government appointment, as a divorced, childless woman who is financially independent. She stands in contrast to the social expectation of women passing on their cultural heritage within the domestic space of the household. The author recognizes this gendered imbalance and the character of Madické, Salie’s brother, is a major focus of the narrative. He is employed to exemplify the African youths’ fascination with European culture, since he aspires to join a European football club and is confronted with fewer restrictions or judgments by the conservative island community.

Returning to a colonial context from a postcolonial point of view, Bugul’s novel, published in 1982, also deals with the attraction of Europe and the harsh realities one face’s there when she leaves her community behind to study abroad. Despite being published two decades after decolonization, the novel represents the experiences of a girl growing up under colonization and dreams of reconnecting with her “ancestors” the Gauls in Europe. In *Le Baobab fou*, Ken,

the protagonist, can only warn against the racism and hardships for Black Africans in Europe after she naively leaves Senegal to study in Belgium hoping to discover the Gallic ancestors emphasized in her French colonial school's curriculum and textbooks, as was common in the French colonies across Africa. The novel undermines the former discourses of the civilizing mission imposed on African cultures mainly through institutions like the colonial schools as previously noted by Thomas above with writers like Kane and Dadié. Although like Diome, Ken's experience in the colonial school system is not entirely like those of the male characters in the earlier *romans de formation* by African male writers in French. In looking back on the exceptional circumstances leading to Ken's enrollment in school, the first-person narrator states:

> C'était la première fois que l'école française faisait son entrée dans le village, elle se trouvait en pleine brousse […] N'ayant ni petit frère, ni petite sœur, j'étais allée à l'école française, la plus jeune de l'unique classe et la seule fille de ma famille, à compter toutes les générations, à avoir franchi le seuil d'une école […] La classe entière avait répété après l'instituteur, cette première lettre de l'école française dans ce village du Ndoucoumane. L'école française qui allait bouleverser mille mondes et mille croyances qui se cachaient derrière les baobabs médusés en prenant des formes humaines (Bugul 114-15).

This citation demonstrates the extreme departure Ken takes by crossing the threshold of the French school with regards to the customary roles of women as reflected by the female relatives who have come before her. Ken's remembrance of leaving the household to attend school is informed by her culture's limitations of the social spaces accessible to girls in addition to the future domestic expectations of a wife and mother. The disclaimer on the size of her family underlies the protagonist's unusual exemption from the space of the household where typically domestic obligations with chores and younger family members would otherwise require her assistance. Certainly however, the French colonial school proves to be a wretched alternative space for Ken who craves a sense of belonging and inclusion due to the breakup of her parents and nuclear family. After her travels abroad, she can now distinguish the cultural effacement

wrought by the French civilizing mission metaphorically represented by the petrified baobab tree and ominous human forms.

The migration to Europe and the racial discrimination that Ken experienced there challenge her to reconsider her identity in addition to the axioms of the education she received that imposes subtle, yet effective, pedagogical methods in the colonial curriculum. These methods were meant to draw students away from their cultural and familial heritage in favor of the imperial practices of the French colonial regime. The destructive nature of the colonial education system misled the protagonist into believing her trip to Belgium would be a type of homecoming to rejoin long lost family once part of the same Gallic tribes. Instead, the protagonist-narrator is alienated or exoticized, "L'école française, nos ancêtres les Gaulois, la coopération, les échanges, l'amitié entre les peuples, avaient créé une nouvelle dimension: l'étranger. Ne plus pouvoir reconnaître chez les siens, les liens vrais qui façonnaient et pouvaient guider les destins […] J'avais trop joué avec un personnage: une femme, une Noire qui avait cru longtemps à ses ancêtres gaulois […] (Bugul 129). In remembering what lead her to this point, she recalls reaching a certain point in her adolescence after consuming large amounts of French cultural productions and adopting Western mannerisms, "Maintenant, j'étais prête pour l'apprentissage de l'Occidentale que je voulais et souhaitais être. Quelle tragédie !" (Bugul 142). The loss of her identity as a Senegalese woman due to the all-consuming nature of her colonial education is represented as a tragedy leading to the disruption of her family and social life. By analyzing the ways colonial education has impacted her life, the protagonist teases apart the discourses, texts, and images suppressing indigenous African cultures and societies by the policies and practices of French imperialism. However, the consequences of the unraveling of her education results in an identity crisis when the narrator recalls the pejorative language used

in the instructional material provided to African students attending French schools, "À nouveau l'indéfinissable me hantait, me heurtait dans ce qu'il y avait de plus profond et de plus sensible, c'est-à-dire dans mon identité, une identité à assumer. Mais quelle identité ? Dans tous les manuels scolaires que j'avais eus, le Noir était ridiculisé, avili, écrasé : *Toto a bu du dolo, Toto est malade, Toto a la diarrhée, Toto pleure*' ou bien les Noirs étaient mis les uns contre les autres : '*Toto tape Pathé, Pathé tape Toto"*' (Bugul 106). By deconstructing her education, the protagonist begins the process of shedding a foreign identity that never fit properly, and she can discern the systematic pedagogical techniques employed in the French colonial school to cleave students from their familial and social attachments to the community. While Diome subverts discourses tied to education and migration in a postcolonial context, Bugul deconstructs the colonial discourses advancing notions of French superiority and the civilizing mission. The objectives of Bugul and Diome to dismantle the dominant language and representations around women and education within their respective eras shows the ways that women were confronted with similar experiences as the male characters in other *romans de formation* by men, but they also face another set of social and domestic challenges imposed by agents and systems of authority.

Another way African women writers in French subvert the generic form of the *roman de formation* is by representing the education of characters of the opposite gender. The writers, Aminata Sow Fall, Fatou Diome, and Léonora Miano employ characters who are boys to demonstrate how systematic French education interrupts the transition of cultural heritage and customs, but also how systematic education can assist with economic and social development. Fall's *Appel des Arènes*, Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, and Miano's "Depuis la première heure" center primarily on the struggles of male characters in relation to their French education,

sports, and their involvement with the local community.[34] By employing a central male figure in the narrative, women writers can enlarge the scope of their critique to include social spaces limited to or inaccessible to women. While *Une si longue lettre* does not feature any major male characters in depth, the narrator surmises well the essential problematic of what is lost when boys fail to unite their formal schooling with their cultural heritage and the customs of their community:

> Que feront ceux qui ne réussissent pas ? L'apprentissage du métier traditionnel apparaît dégradant à celui qui a un mince savoir livresque […] La cohorte des sans-métiers grossit les rangs des délinquants. Fallait-il nous réjouir de la désertion des forges, ateliers, cordonneries ? Fallait-il nous en réjouir sans ombrage ? Ne commencions-nous pas à assister à la disparition d'une élite de travailleurs manuels traditionnels ? (Bâ 42).

Not only are women writers interested in the female experience, but they are concerned with the plight of their male counterparts who have also been victimized by colonization and the neocolonial practices that persist to this day. The citation from Mariama Bâ recognizes that not every male or female student will be able to succeed at school leading her to question whether the valorization of formal schooling is worth the loss of those who would otherwise have become skilled laborers continuing a long, celebrated cultural tradition. The three women writers mentioned above and analyzed in this section employ themes related to sports that consume their male characters in different ways. Fall's *Appel des Arènes* addresses similar questions on the preservation of traditional customs from the threat of neocolonial policies and the encroachment of globalization. Rather than focus on elite skilled laborers like Bâ, Fall approaches her narrative around the history and the cultural practices of Senegalese wrestling, which is part of a large collective performing arts and storytelling tradition in the region. The novel presents the story of 12-year-old Nalla whose successful parents worry about his lack of attention in school, despite

[34] Miano's "Depuis la première heure" is the first short story in her collection *Afropean Soul* (2008).

hiring an esteemed private tutor, M. Niang, to help him. When it is discovered that Nalla spends all his free time sneaking away to the wrestling arenas, his mother fails to understand the attraction considering the people there as "sans civilization". M. Niang reflects then tells Nalla's mother and father:

> Il en a tiré la conclusion que les parents de Nalla ont adhéré à une autre forme de pensée qui rejette dans les sphères du barbarisme toutes les manifestations exprimant la vitalité des peuples non encore dépouillés par le tourment infernal de la civilisation moderne. Il a vu en Nalla une victime et il en a éprouvé une grande peine. 'L'aliénation est assurément la plus grande mutilation que puisse subir un homme' (Fall 67).

The parents' contempt for traditional customs that pre-date colonialism mimics the language of Western superiority used to ridicule and suppress local African cultural beliefs and practices to advance economic expropriation. The teacher in the narrative considers the social isolation and a desire for a community as the driving force pushing Nalla to the wrestling arenas. With this information, M. Niang begins to incorporate in his lesson plans with Nalla aspects of wrestling culture, such as its storied history, the chants of the arena, and the ceremonial poems recited by the wrestlers known as "*les bakks*". At the end of *L'Appel des arènes*, the author offers a solution to this separation of education, family, and cultural heritage by harmonizing and fusing each component to compliment and support the others. Nalla's parents come to accept his passion for wrestling, and his father even realizes many other intellectual types in the community attend the events, which propels him to make a deal with his son that they will attend the wrestling matches together Nalla does his homework with his father as well. The positioning of Fall's literary text from the perspective of a male protagonist suggests a wider statement on merging local cultural traditions within educational and familial institutions.

Instead of focusing solely on a single female or male protagonist, Diome's *Le Ventre de L'Atlantique* uses the brother sister pairing of Salie and Madické to compare the similar and

gendered differences in their educational process and involvement with the community. Indeed, Diome, like Fall, employs a male character to expand the scope of her critique to a broader spectrum of society, not only members of the opposite sex, but also a youth culture highly invested in aspirations of migrating to Europe. Ayo Coly finds that with soccer identified as the route to France, education is totally neglected, and the human capital of the island is unproductively channeled into soccer. The youth are only concerned with leaving the island and the future of the island does not factor into their projects (Coly 104). From this perspective, the protagonist, Salie, and the schoolteacher, M. Ndétare, set out to educate and persuade the young men of the community to obtain the skills necessary to develop the surrounding economic and social opportunities. To convince her brother to give up his dreams of playing football in Europe, Salie tells her brother, "[…] j'avais réuni une somme, petite en France mais énorme là-bas, de quoi ouvrir une boutique sur l'île. Rien de faramineux, juste une sorte d'épicerie, qui ne serait jamais cotée en Bourse, mais offrirait une activité nourricière plus rassurante que la pêche et moins périlleuse que l'émigration clandestine" (Diome 212). The sister's offer is framed as a safe alternative to the less certain and more dangerous options she proposes. Her intention of helping to develop businesses and a middle-class in the community is also not without its challenges. However, the narrator implies that her brother, Madické, has undergone his own educational process and training over the course of the novel to prepare him to accept the financial assistance. Madické's own *formation* in the narrative becomes evident when he decides to help his community by opening a new business, and especially when he urges his sister to relocate from France. He implores, "Je ne te parle pas de vacances, mais de revenir pour de bon, ici, chez toi: tes racines doivent chanter en toi" (Diome 252). Of course, the protagonist does not heed her brother's appeal and return, but as stated earlier and argued by Coly, the gender

difference of the siblings permits who is able to stay in the community and who must live in exile. These two literary texts by Fall and Diome reveal insights on women writers who use male characters to portray parts of society limited to women, such as sports culture, that either negatively or positively impact the collective society.

Léonora Miano's "Depuis la première heure" also features a male focused narrative, but Miano employs a first-person narrator, thus assuming a more dominant social voice than that accorded to a female narrator under the misogynistic and patriarchal systems rooted in France and Cameroon, both sites mentioned in the text. Although, Miano's short story shares many commonalities to the problematics raised by Diome concerning European migration, sports, and a male character who struggles to find their place in society. In the story, the first-person narrator and protagonist relates a sorrowful account of migrating to Paris from Douala, Cameroon by an agent promising a future career as a professional football player. When he quickly realizes the hardship and deceit that comprises his new life in France, the narrator internalizes feelings of shame about his failure to obtain economic success while abroad, which prevents him from returning to Cameroon. He compares his distress to the history of African students who studied abroad under the colonial system but were too embarrassed to return home if they did not succeed, "Ceux qui entourés et choyés sur la terre de leurs pères, ne surent s'accoutumer aux rigueurs de la vie d'ici. Tout à coup, ils se sont mis à échouer à tous les examens […] Un matin, las en deuil d'eux-mêmes, ils ont cessé d'aller à l'université. Ils ne sont pas rentrés au pays, où on attendait tellement d'eux. L'honneur d'un patronyme trop lourd sur leurs épaules les a rivés à les noirceur et à la vacuité" (Miano 28). This harking back to the longer *roman de formation* tradition of African male students studying in Paris reveals an effort on the author's part of updating this tradition, which includes the globalizing dominance of football in addition to the

degenerative migratory practices of the 21st century. By the end of the story, the narrator remains resolute in his decision to stay in France despite his lack of resources. He concludes, "Je ne peux pas rentrer. Je n'y parviens pas. Je n'aime pas ce pays. Ni son climat, ni le rythème qu'il impose […] Le Cameroun non plus n'est pas un paradis. Sur ma terre que la solidarité a quittée pour faire place à la férocité moderne, on ne vit que sous l'œil des autres" (Miano 33). This preference of the narrator to finish his days exiled in obscurity instead of facing his community upon his return points to an internalized inflation of the neocolonial discourses bolstering the perceptions of an abundance of economic prosperity in France and Europe in general. Miano's short story utilizes a male protagonist to recall a longer tradition of African migrants who traveled to Europe under similar pretenses of obtaining educational opportunities in France under the colonial regime, but instead were used as tools to advance the imperial mission throughout the African continent. Miano's postcolonial narrator follows a similar misleading route to France that unknowingly severs the bond connecting the narrator with his community allowing a chance to critique the zero-sum discourses expecting a path to financial success by migrating to Europe. Ultimately, the works of Fall, Diome, and Miano centering around young male characters demonstrate that the struggle between the space of the school and the household is not necessarily unique to girls or women, and there is an overlap that exists in the shared experiences of overcoming domestic and educational challenges.

This section established that these literary works by women writers from Central and West Africa approached through the lens of French education uncovers an ongoing narrative trend positioning the space of the school in opposition to the space of the household. This narrative trend often results in a cyclical pattern that guides the student between the two spaces after of series of events alter their outlook and relationship with either or both the household and

the school. The literary representations of these two spaces and the characters who occupy them are forced into a metaphorical competition over the transmission of culture and knowledge between the effects of the French education and the traditional forms of education centered in the household. Over time, the writers update the compounding issues facing those who seek an education in correspondence to the evolution of social problems from the preservation of local customs under colonization to the clandestine migratory practices of the 21st century. Effectively, the *romans de formation* incorporated in this study engage a cyclical educational pattern where the student breaks from the family or household to seek schooling, eventually the student experiences suffering through the school, which culminates in a return to the space of the household and a renewed appreciation for their cultural heritage and traditional practices. As previously argued, women writers from these regions must personalize and adapt their individual literary representations to mirror the unconventional and gendered circumstances that girls and women encounter while navigating between their domestic situations and the systematic education system. Occasionally, the writers utilize their narratives to reconcile or find a certain harmony between the two institutions of the household and the school that would bolster both individual and social development. It certainly becomes evident that the ongoing battle between domestic and educational spaces with women at the frontlines reinforces the unequitable distribution of men in positions of power determining who has access to certain spaces or not.

Sexualizing the Young African Female Student

In studying the issues confronting girls who attend school in Central and West Africa, several women writers discursively link education with narrative representations of young women who are exploited and victimized in the space of the school. In looking at the previous research, gender-based violence (GBV) is identified by one study on the education of girls in the

country of Benin to be a major obstacle in the promotion of education since it is still widely culturally accepted.[35] Despite girls' enrollment rates rising from 36 percent to 85 percent in 2005, only 47 percent of girls who enter primary school in urban areas and 14 percent in rural areas transition to secondary schools, compared to 70 percent of boys in urban areas and 39 percent in rural (Akpo 144). The study considers many factors preventing improved enrollment rates but concludes that, "Some of these constraints, such as poverty and cultural barriers, are being discussed openly and being alleviated through various interventions. However, GBV-which is very often manifested in verbal, physical, and sexual harassment and abuse in schools-is overlooked by the school community" (Akpo 145). Without being able to bring to light this one-sided violence, women's groups, activists, artist, and writers must be given greater consideration when they raise awareness of the problems reinforcing the oppression of women. While these statistics are specific to Benin and do not represent all Central and West African countries, the cultural pervasiveness of GBV extends beyond a national, regional, or continental problem, and women writers and other media outlets have documented ongoing patterns of it for decades. In 2018, the Senegalese newspaper *Dakar Matin* published the article "*Sénégal: L'Exploitation sexuelle dans les écoles secondaires révélée*" based on a report by the Human Rights Watch to address the high rate of sexual harassment and violence toward girls and young women by teachers and other male school officials.[36] The article reads:

> Face à cette situation, Human Rights Watch appelle le gouvernement du Sénégal à adopter rapidement des mesures clés pour mettre fin à ces pratiques illicites dans ses écoles, notamment en signalant systématiquement toute allégation d'exploitation sexuelle, et en adoptant un code de conduite national ainsi qu'une politique interdisant spécifiquement toutes les formes de violence sexuelle à l'école (*Dakar Matin*).

[35] Michele Akpo. "Combating Gender-Based Violence in Benin". *Girls' Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth*. The World Bank, 2008.

[36] "Sénégal : L'Exploitation sexuelle dans les écoles secondaires révélée," *Dakar Matin*, Oct. 15, 2018.

This report underscores the ongoing and widespread illicit practices that pervade educational institutions. The appeal for a new national code of conduct with regards to sexual violence in schools presents the opportunity to distance the future of Senegalese education from a tumultuous past corrupted by foreign invaders. The article's positioning of sexual violence within the realm of education as a priority issue for the national government demonstrates the social devastation these acts can trigger on the collective, rather than one gender over another.

The scope of this section covers a variety of topics related to gender relations and sexual practices in addition to GBV. The women writers of this study represent a broad range of incidents and situations relating specifically to the female condition and the treatment of boys and girls from sexual exploitation by teachers, unplanned pregnancies, and arranged marriages, which complicate and threaten to interrupt the pursuit of education. Earlier women writers, like Mariama Bâ and Ken Bugul, address this issue for its damaging impact on the lives of vulnerable young men and women during colonialism and the years after independence. Later, Calixthe Beyala and Fatou Diome reprise these themes to illustrate how girls and young women are subjected to a spectrum of debilitating and harmful social practices that impede their pursuit of education in a way not relevant to boys or the male experience. In many ways, these representations of sexual abuse, aggression, or violence also come to reflect the cultural destruction and violence enacted by the colonial or neocolonial practices of French systematic education in Central and West Africa.

Perhaps, the most explicit and extreme examples of gender-based violence stemming from the space of the school is represented in Bugul's *Le Baobab fou*. The protagonist, Ken, experiences a series of abusive and exploitative behavior from male authority figures in charge of her schooling. At the same time, Ken discovers she is pregnant while studying abroad, she

recalls her first sexual experience, “Devant un chantier, je repensai à tout ce qui m’était arrivé depuis que ma virginité qui me rattachait à toute une génération de mœurs et da traditions s’était envolée avec mon professeur d’histoire” (Bugul 61). The male teacher inflicts a double type of harm on the protagonist by first taking her virginity and then by tarnishing her beliefs in the religious and social customs that valorize the innocence and purity of girls. The sexual violence committed by the protagonist’s teacher re-perpetuates a colonial practice of subjugating African women as sexual objects. Further, there is a metaphorical signification concerning the perverse effects of French education to corrupt traditional methods of transmitting culture and knowledge in each community. Indeed, the young woman African student has become so sexualized within her society that even other women are represented as expecting physical relationships between young women and the older male authority figures in charge of their education. This sort of behavior is seen in another scene when Ken is expelled from the family she is living with by the wife of the school’s director for suspecting her of a sexual affair, “Je n’avais pas encore douze ans et je ne comprenais pas ce qui m’arrivait […] La femme m’insultait, menaçait de me tuer, me traitait de putain. Je n’avais aucune notion de ce que pouvait être une putain et encore moins que je le fusse” (Bugul 131). The abusive treatment of the protagonist who assisted the family with chores and childcare reflects the larger vulnerable position girls are placed in when the connection to the familial household becomes disrupted through catastrophic events, such as colonialism. The protagonist finds herself at the mercy of others to obtain her education overtime and across geographic regions as she advances in her studies. After her unjust expulsion from the previous family, later it is revealed that the husband intended to take the 12-year-old Ken as a second wife, she moves in with a twice divorced aunt who allows her to resume her studies, but the protagonist stays with other relatives including older brothers who were educated in the

French school systems as well. In fact, the narrative even depicts how boys are not immune to sexual exploitation and harassment either, especially under the colonial regime. When her brother, Souleymane, enrolls in a technical school run by a religious group, he tells Ken about a confrontation with a priest, "Mais je me suis retenu; il s'est mis en colère et m'a invité à faire un choix: ou faire l'amour avec lui, ou vider les lieux. Voilà, j'ai quitté" (Bugul 107). *Le Baobab fou* presents a series of devastating scenes connecting male characters in a position of authority related to the French school system perpetuating inappropriate behavior and harmful actions against vulnerable students in their charge. Bugul's novel certainly provides the most numerous and extreme examples of the possible sexual exploitation and violence existing in and around the space of the school. These disturbing depictions foreshadow the protagonist's eventual identity crisis resulting from a pattern of destructive behavior while abroad compounded by episodes of racial discrimination. This demonstrates the ways one's experiences with schooling and education can have lasting effects and consequences in one's life.

Mariama Bâ is aware of the consequences and outcomes education plays in shaping one's future, and despite the possible risks she advocates for more schooling for girls affirming that not all gendered issues have to hold someone back from improving themselves. Bâ's novel is highly critical of the obstacles that impede girls from advancing in their education, especially those obstacles imposed by an oppressive patriarchal system. Although, Bâ does not portray gender-based violence as explicitly as Bugul, Bâ is also highly invested in bringing to light the ways systematic education victimizes the same young female students who face familial and economic hardships to attend. When Ramatoulaye's daughter who is still in *lycée* becomes pregnant by an older student studying law at the university in *Une si longue lettre*, the narrator uses the opportunity to critique the gendered aspect of this occurrence based on who will suffer the most

blame and hardship as a result. Upon hearing the news, Ramatoulaye's main concern becomes limiting the effects of the pregnancy on her daughter's, Aïssatou (named after her friend), graduation from school and a prosperous future. She remarks, "Comment manœuvrer pour éviter le renvoi de ma fille! […] Lui, Ibrahima Sall, n'encourait aucun risque de renvoi, à l'université. Et même, s'il n'était que lycéen, qui signalerait à son établissement sa situation de futur père ? Rien dans sa présentation ne changerait. Il demeurait 'plat'…. Alors que le ventre de ma fille, rebondi, serait accusateur" (Bâ 158). Even though, Aïssatou and Ibrahima maintained a consensual relationship leading up to the pregnancy there is still a metaphorical gendered violence inflicted by the school that exists to punish the girl unjustly, certainly in comparison to the boy. Nonetheless, the narrative does not punish or doom the two characters for their very human mistake. Rather, the characters are able to turn their initial problems into a story of happiness and success. Instead of the social pressure tearing the young couple apart, Ibrahima begins to tutor Aïssatou so she does not fall behind in school, "Ibrahima Sall talonne Aïssatou pour ses leçons et devoirs. Il a à cœur la réussite de son amie. Il ne veut pas être la cause d'une quelconque régression. Les notes de Aïssatou montent : à quelque chose malheur est bon !" (Bâ 160). This scene helps illustrate the overall theme of improving the social conditions of women within the two social institutions of the school and the family. The narrative establishes a reconciliation between the spaces of the household and the school to create the optimal support system for girls and women to improve their circumstances. As one of the earliest novels by a women African writer in French, both the author and narrator hope that future generations will be able to bridge the divide between the household and systematic education so that the two institutions will bolster each other to the prosperity of the greater society.

Perhaps, the most widely featured and ongoing gender-based issue represented by women writers from the earlier years of Mariama Bâ to the present novels of Beyala and Diome is the practice of terminating a girl's education to enter a premature and arranged marriage. Hitchcott states on the treatment of polygamy by women African writers in French, "Polygamy is presented as anti-nature, something imposed upon women (and men) by the cultural pressures of tradition" (42). As previously mentioned, *Une si longue lettre* pushes back strongly against the traditional Senegalese social practice of interrupting a girl's education for matrimonial purposes. The narrator of the novel describes the girls who endure this fate as living in cages and emotionally dead as a consequence of this exploitation, as analyzed in the previous section. In Beyala's *Les Honneurs perdus*, the protagonist's, Saïda, best friend, Amila, surprises her when, "C'était l'année de nos quinze ans. Pendant deux semaines, elle ne vint plus à l'école" (Beyala 81). Later, Amila admits her absence from school to Saïda is because, "Ma tante croit que pour moi le moment est venu de voler de mes propres ailes" (Beyala 83). The lack of support Amila receives from her family to continue her education forces her to make the desperate decision of marrying an older man to support her. She is quick to adopt Western mannerisms, speaking only in French, and wearing intricate outfits with makeup to try to fit in the adult world she has been thrust into by marrying a 40-year-old man. This problematic lack of support for girls' education resulting in desperate acts to secure basic comforts may not be an example of gender-based violence stemming from the space of the school, but the systematic arraignment of marriage based on economic gain is a gender-based issue consistently preventing girls from advancing their education in a way not seen with boys. Beyala depicts a contradictory example to Bâ showing how the traditional cycle of arranged marriages is often the culminating solution when a

girl can longer be cared for by her own family, rather than provide her the training or skills necessary to live independently.

Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* represents a situation where both the family and the French school inflict gender-based harm onto a young female character underscoring the vulnerability of women who do not receive support from either social institution. Recalling Bugul's character, Diome introduces the character, Sankèle, who is forced into a sexual relationship with a male teacher at the age of seventeen and becomes pregnant with his baby. Yet, unlike Ken, Sankèle is not necessarily forced into the relationship by the teacher himself but rather the social pressures of her family to get married. Sankèle is from a poor fishing family and her parents are elated when the rich, successful *l'homme de Barbès*, due to his time spent in the neighborhood in Paris, comes to offer marriage to their daughter. After secretly pining after her French teacher, Sankèle is devastated by this news and openly rejects it to her parents. Her mother responds, "Attention Sankèle! Ne nous couvre pas de honte dans ce village! Tout le monde parle de toi. Si tu fais des bêtises avant ton mariage, nous sommes perdues. Ton père ne me le pardonnera jamais, et toi, il te tuera, c'est la charia" (Diome 130). This sort of declaration places the family's future prosperity on the hopes of their daughter's marriage turning her instantly from a fellow family member into a commodity from which the family can make a profit. The threat of death if she does not comply to the family's wishes further implies how little value she is deemed to possess without a prosperous marriage. No longer being able to trust her family for support, the character turns to the next most influential social institution in her life, the school she attends. In searching for any solution to avoid the arranged marriage, Sankèle decides to confess her love and offer her virginity to Ndétare, her teacher, "Devenir fille mère était la solution la plus radicale pour réduire à néant la stratégie matrimoniale élaborée par son père"

(Diome 130). Once her family discovers she is pregnant, they lock her in the house to avoid social shame, and Ndétare is eventually able to help her flee the island with whatever resources he could provide her. However, the teacher should not be excused for his inappropriate relationship with a student, which still inflicts harm toward her as well as forces her to endure her pregnancy in isolation. This scenario presented by Diome demonstrates the vulnerability of girls when they are confronted with gender-based issues that deprive their victims of familial or social support, often resulting in desperate actions and choices. Additionally, the author draws attention to the significant loss these types of scenarios impose on a social level; for the forced exile of a new family as well as losing a young, educated worker, and on an individual level; for the loss of a family member.

The women writers of this study who address episodes of gender-based violence and other gender-based issues employ the space of the school in addition to characters associated with schooling to highlight the unique and unjust obstacles, not affecting the opposite sex in the same manner or numbers, preventing women from receiving an education. Furthermore, the violence perpetuated toward girls in the space of the school is often juxtaposed by the harm inflicted on girls by religious and social practices, mostly from within the household such as premature and arranged marriages, that are comparably exploitative. Both Bugul and Diome portray how violence and discrimination can have negative lasting consequences when girls are exploited by those who hold power in the space of the school. Indeed, Bâ, Beyala, and Diome also show the harmful impact girls and young women suffer through forced arranged marriages that prematurely terminate their adolescence, deprives them of an education, and vastly limits their future opportunities. Looking over this pattern of gendered-based issues represented over time by these writers, it becomes clear that the implementation of a systematic education system

under French colonialism facilitated a cycle of violence and harm that proliferates even after decolonization within the perceptions of accepted educational practices. These writers deconstruct the patriarchal structures that reduce female rights in favor of new social ideologies that restore women's rights to consent and equality. The literary representations of these taboo feminine oriented themes serve to both warn future girls who pursue an education as well as to draw the curtain back on the violence and harassment that thrive on patriarchal hierarchies and high rates of female exclusion.

Conclusion: The Educated Woman on the Margins

The evolution of the *roman de formation* by African women writers is a crucial literary tool to address the social conditions under which girls and women pursue an education. The expansion of systematic French education in Central and West Africa during colonization emphasized pedagogical methods aimed at turning young boy students into a male dominated work force trained to carry out the imperial policies with their local communities. The exclusion of girls and women from advancing their education was compounded by other social issues such as religion or poverty that prevented women from entering French literary scene until decades after their African male counterparts. Further, women writers used the genre of the *roman de formation* to criticize the gendered social challenges girl and women face that do not affect the education of boys or men. These writers depict a metaphorical struggle between the spaces of the household and the school, which compete over the transmission of cultural knowledge and social practices. Finally, the *roman de formation* is an important literary site for African women writers to depict the gendered-based violence and sexual exploitation that pervade in educational institutions and interrupt the pursuit of education. The literary works and authors cited in this chapter address several gendered issues that impact girls and women from all positions in

African society, while the authors and works themselves maintain an unusual and unique position in society given rates of education and literacy in certain parts of the continent.

In reprising the concept of subversion first introduced at the beginning of the chapter, one aspect of subversion most often employed by African women writers working in the French language is the use of marginalized female characters. In the sample of literary works considered in this chapter, there is a frequent narrative tension concerning female characters who are too consumed, almost to the point of obsession, by one form of education, whether it be an attachment to the traditional practices of domesticity or a loyal affiliation to systematic French schooling, but they fail to receive or incorporate instruction in the other form. The female characters represented by these authors suffer social exclusion and conflicts of identity as a consequence of their radical adoption of whichever respective form of education they embrace. Primarily, the characters who express an overt willingness to assimilate to French culture and mannerisms transmitted through the education systems once imposed by the former colonizer face the most scrutiny in their communities. However, one does see examples of characters who cling too unwaveringly to their domestic training and household, which is critiqued for a seeming lack of involvement in the community and social affairs. The decision to represent characters excluded or overlooked from their communities proves to be another device for the writers to analyze the broader social issues relevant to each respective text. Cazenave's study of African women writers in French from the 1980s and 90s states, "In order to respond to the marginalization of women and of women's literature by male critics, women writers started to systematically favor certain kinds of female characters that are typically marginalized in African society. By taking this alternate route, they have created a privileged gaze and a greater space from which to freely express criticism of their society" (10). This turn toward characters who are

excluded by the majority of others is often tied to issues tied to education in relation to the expected social roles maintained in each community depending on age and gender. When characters withdraw completely into the space of the household or the school, it exposes that character to ridicule and mockery by others. Additionally, the character is used to juxtapose their extreme stance against the collective mindset of the community toward French schooling or the preservation of the household.

The co-occurrence of occupying positions of marginalization and privilege stems from the public skepticism toward the colonial histories of French education in Africa as well as a concern for the preservation of local customs and traditional practices. As cited earlier by Herzberger, most women novelists enjoy a privileged position in their respective countries as members of the new elite formed in Western universities (21). Even those who found alternative paths to authorship still participate in the privileged literary networks that operate in the cultural centers of the major cities in Central and West Africa and in the West. Certainly, Kimberlé Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality explains best the overlaps of oppression and privilege to help identify the inherent privilege of a published author in addition to the respective marginalized identities of an African woman, Muslim woman, migrant woman or the multiplicity of other forms of identity that may expose them to ridicule, exclusion or violence.[37] These same women authors represent female characters who are mocked, criticized, and excluded due to their over-attachment to an identity that contradicts the collective public opinion. For example, in Fall's *L'Appel des arènes* the protagonist's mother, Diatta, upholds Europe as "le Paradis" where she adores "l'individualisme et la liberté individuelle" of Western society (88). After she forbids

[37] Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics". *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. 1989: 139–168.

the neighborhood boys from playing with her son at her house, and one of those boys mysteriously dies a few days later, Diatta faces intense and public scorn by the other women. When her husband notices the situation, she replies, "Que voulais-tu? Me voir faire bande commune avec ces illettrées qui n'ont d'autre préoccupation que de raconter des ragots!" (Fall 64). Unlike her husband and son who discover their cultural heritage and reconnect with their community through the wrestling arenas, in the end, Diatta finds a sense of self-purpose and community through her work at the hospital maternity ward, which allows her to impart the knowledge she has obtained from her education in a more socially accepted manner for the betterment of the community. In Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, the protagonist is marginalized in her community when she returns to visit Senegal in contrast to the successful male characters in the narrative who are widely praised upon their return to the island community in which they all originate. Coly's reading of Diome's text helps to establish the narrative irony when she points out the double standard of the protagonist's treatment. Students who are invested and excel in school are criticized for adopting a neocolonial mindset, yet there persists a collective discourse in favor of European migration to obtain economic success.

On the other hand, Beyala's *Les Honneurs perdus* presents two female characters who are brought together in their social exclusion in spite of their opposing educational backgrounds and training concerning the domestic responsibilities and social expectations of women. Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* states, "L'école transforme nos filles en diablesses qui détournent les hommes du droit chemin" to illustrate the collective mindset skeptical of the social impact of systematic French schooling (40). This type of sentiment is deployed against the character Ngaremba who migrated to Paris from Senegal and works in the Belleville neighborhood as an *écrivain public*. However, she is criticized heavily by the protagonist, Saïda, who lives a

fundamentally traditional Afro-Muslim lifestyle in contrast to the Westernized habits of Ngaremba. Even others in their migrant community express their contempt toward her for her status as an *écrivain public* in addition to her educational and social values, "Vous venez faire vos choux gras de nos malheurs, si je comprends bien. Vous autres, intellectuels, semblez être les vautours de la dépravation contemporaine" (Beyala 331). These disparaging remarks regarding her status as an intellectual point toward an overall public distrust or vilification of this social group for profiting like "vultures" off the marginalized oppression of other social groups. The protagonist, Saïda, who carries a certificate of authenticity of her intact virginity migrates to France as a result of the social exclusion she faces from her family, peers, and community. After Saïda fails to secure a husband to leave the familial household for the marital one, her mother tells her, "Tu vaux rien, rien! Rien que manger, et dormir, manger et dormir!" (Beyala 135). The inability of Saïda to grow beyond her domestic education and attachment to the familial household by marrying into a new family, as is the custom in her culture, exposes her to the same type of critique and mockery that is shown to Ngremba for being a French intellectual. From this perspective, not only are French education and mannerisms held in contempt, but also there is a resentment toward those who are too devoted to domestic and religious practices. Ayo Coly concludes that Ngarembga is Africanized out of guilt and Saïda enhances this guilt through her contempt with Ngaremba's lifestyle. Her efforts to save Africa are really an effort to give meaning to herself and to save herself from drifting. Ultimately, she ends up committing suicide as a result of this identitary malaise (70). For Saïda, she finds a future for herself in France by attending night classes to learn to read and write in French in addition to a French boyfriend with whom she loses her virginity at the age of 50. This uncommon approach to education and romance (night school and a late in life relationship) demonstrates possible pathways for women

who seek to overcome their positions on the margins through unconventional methods, thus circumventing systematic education and the traditional customs concerning female domesticity.

The use of unconventional methods to pursue one's education is essential in the greater tradition of women writers and their female characters having to subvert the two formative social institutions of the household and the school. These acts of subversion prove to be vital to the feminist discourses uplifting the social position of women as well as to the development of literature by women authors in the French language in Central and West Africa. The subversive double critique of women writers to be both marginalized and privileged, woman and author, or African and French, depending on the narrative, informs both the individual production of each text as well as the canon of the established genre of the *roman de formation* to incorporate the multiplicity of gendered and singular experiences relating to education. In *Une si longue lettre*, Ramatoulaye laments "Comment concilier les charges double d'une femme qui travaille?" (Bâ 45). This conundrum seems to underlie the subsequent production of *romans de formation* by African women writers, which attempt to resolve the narrative tension between the space of the household and the school that compete over the young female African student. The subversive francophone African women writers employ the *roman de formation* genre as a critical space to reconcile the institutions of the household and the school to bolster the education and social opportunities for girls and women.

Chapter 2: Re-Reading Colonial Little Magazines: Education & Print Media in Congolese Literature

Introduction

The critical study of little magazines (*les petites revues*) – periodicals published by small-scale print operations covering a variety of topics – provides an opportunity to trace the formation of cultural and linguistic practices across regional, national, and transnational contexts. Literary scholars have been quick to dismiss the colonial press due to extensive censorship and derivative writing, yet upon further examination these printed spaces can be seen to play a significant formative role for several generations of African writers in a number of languages. Throughout the French-speaking world, little magazines emerged in the 20th century as an important medium for reaching literary communities in a way books and other media could not.[38] The rise of print technology contributed to the dissemination of the newspaper and magazine form in the West and later in various colonies in Africa, the Americas, and Asia (Bulson 2). The widespread distribution of this periodical form allowed for the circulation of new concepts and understandings of literary genre and linguistic practices equipping this print medium with a unique insight into the development of both regional and transnational Francophone literature.[39] Established in Europe since the 19th century, French language magazines and newspapers were initially developed in the colonies by colonial regimes and missionaries for educational purposes and to regulate information. In the case of the missionaries, these publications were often available in indigenous languages (Peterson 7).[40] Yet soon, magazines and newspapers were

[38] Eric Bulson explains in *Little Magazines, World Form* (Columbia UP 2017) that little magazines in the West emerge from the increased commercialization of literary culture. Yet, in the colonies they are developed in relation to colonialism and decolonization (195).

[39] Derek R. Peterson et al., editors. *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and Their Publics in the Twentieth Century*. University of Michigan Press, 2016.

[40] Mukala Kadima-Nzuji. *La Littérature zaïroise de langue française*. Karthala, 1984.

engaged by local writers living in the colonies and educated in French as an emerging cultural and social space to expand new concepts of literary genre or identity.

In addition to official colonial bulletins, a diversity of print media grew on the African continent from the end of the 19th century developing and expanding during the 20th century. Publications focusing on literature provided opportunities for writers to express themselves as well as to reach both regional and international readers, such as *La Revue indigène* in Haiti (1927-28), *Tropiques* in Martinique (1941-45), and *Présence Africaine* in Dakar and Paris (1947).[41] This chapter compares literary articles, contests, and techniques of two Congolese little magazines in order to better understand how these publications and their authors employed these cultural spaces as formative literary tools. The first publication from the former Belgian Congo[42] (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), entitled *La Voix du Congolais* was published from 1947-1960. The other publication, *Liaison*, running from 1950-1960 was based in the French Congo- Brazzaville (now Republic of the Congo), but with strong editorial and cultural connections to Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) across the river. Both sources represent little magazines that are constitutive of cultural identity and literary practices in the pivotal years of transition from colonial occupation to independence. In what follows, I argue that these two publications furnish cultural spaces to cultivate concepts of identity based on collective historical experiences and future social interests within emerging independent Franco-Congolese societies

[41] The example of *Présence africaine* stands out as an example of a little magazine that has received a certain level of critical attention due to its publication and circulation in France in contrast to the magazines from Haiti, Martinique, and the Congo. See Bulson and Ruth Bush's *Publishing Africa in French* (Liverpool UP 2016).

[42] Belgium officially claimed rights over the Congo territory at the Berlin conference in 1885 changing the name from the Congo Free State to the Belgian Congo from 1908- 1960. After independence, it became known as the Republic of the Congo (*République du Congo*) before changing to the Republic of Zaire from 1971 to 1997. Today, it is known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

by circulating a multiplicity of didactic discourses as well as subversive literary forms and genres.

The connection between the two little magazines *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* exists beyond a shared literary interest, but also the editors and writers participated in both endeavors and championed the causes of one another despite different colonial occupations. The scholar Mukala Kadima-Nzuji has comprehensively documented the shared cultures and histories of the two Congos. Kadima-Nzuji and many of the writers in this chapter grew up in the Belgian Congo before moving to work in Brazzaville. Furthermore, Kadima-Nzuji has shown that Congolese poets and writers in the French language emerged separately from *La Voix du Congolais* but were also bolstered by the little magazine's opportunities and output.[43] For example, the poet and editor-in-chief of *La Voix du Congolais*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba, established his literary reputation in 1939 by winning the first *Prix "littérature orale indigene"*.[44] Paul Lomami-Tchibamba, the editor in chief of *Liaison*, won the prestigious *Prix littéraire de la Foire coloniale de Bruxelles* in 1948 for his play *Ngando*. Both men were major contributors to the little magazines filling editorial and leadership positions while engaging the publication as a vehicle to circulate their literary texts and social critiques.

In this chapter, my initial goal is to establish a brief account of the details surrounding the creation of the magazines. Subsequently, I examine the double function of the magazines as European colonial tools and African cultural literary productions. Then, I present a critical

[43] Mukala Kadima-Nzuji. "La République Démocratique Du Congo : Un Demi-Siècle De Littérature." *Présence africaine*, 158, 1998, pp. 63–79.

[44] "Depuis qu'en 1972 un changement s'est produit, au Zaïre, dans les appellations d'État Civil, les prénoms d'origine étrangère ayant été remplacés par des post-noms d'inspirations africaine, Antoine-Roger s'appelle Bolamba Lokolé" (Kadima-Nzuji 103). Lokolé was a type of musical instrument used to transmit news, additionally the title of a poem by Bolamaba.

background of the two leading figures of the little magazines, their editors-in-chief Bolamba and Lomami-Tchibamba. The next section will analyze the use of literary prize competitions by *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* to attract and expand readership as well as reimagine cultural practices and social norms through the valorization of specific linguistic and literary styles. These competitions helped to institutionalize and circulate the literary aesthetics and forms of the developing postcolonial Franco-Congolese identity. Lastly, I highlight specific articles focusing on education to demonstrate the subversive methods employed by the contributing writers. Kadima-Nzuji summarizes the period in Franco-Congolese literary history in which these magazines were produced as maintaining, "[…] la volonté manifestée par ces 'évolués' de prouver au colonisateur qu'ils s'étaient assimilé sa langue et qu'ils étaient capables de la pratiquer avec habileté" (Demi-siècle 75). Despite this linguistic acquiescence by the writers noted by Kadima-Nzuji, *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* nevertheless offer a unique opportunity to study how little magazines arose from the importation of both a European mode of representation (periodical print media) and linguistic cultural tradition (French language), allowing Congolese writers a means to express their experiences and ideas in a rapidly changing socio-political climate that outpaced other cultural forms such as novels or poetry. Little magazines, specifically *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison*, are revealed to be influential cultural vehicles for crafting regional concepts of literary genre and generate emerging cultural spaces for the development of a collective French-speaking Congolese identity in the face of colonialism and decolonization.

In addition to close readings of the texts printed in *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison*, my research for this chapter engages both recent critical scholarship on little magazines and print culture in African or postcolonial contexts as well as academic material gathered by scholars

during the original printing of the publications in the years leading to the end of colonialism. I use the term "little magazine" (*les petites revues*) as defined by Eric Bulson in his critical work *Little Magazines, World Form* where he argues that little magazines are a literary form that travels across global networks of communication connecting complex systems of cultural and literary exchange. Literary traditions on five continents have been developed through this medium, which allowed experimental narrative and writing methods to circulate widely among readers. The local small printing presses were known as *petites revues* in France, *zeitschrift* in Germany, *secolo delle riviste* in Italy, *revista* or *periodíco* in Argentina, *patrika* in India, *dōjinshi* in Japan, and little magazines in the anglophone world (Bulson 1-3). Bulson explains that the term "little" is preferred to "literary" due to the amount of non-literary content published alongside the poems and prose. Furthermore, he acknowledges the implication of "little" in reference to the noncommercial aspect, the limited publication budget, and small readership size often under 1,000 copies per issue. However, he is careful to point out that he in no way wishes to diminish the perception of these magazines as possessing anything less than significant cultural and social influence. One essential element that is common to these publications is that each little magazine is shaped by specific social, political, and economic realities unique to the milieu in which it is produced (Bulson 4). By concentrating on *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liason*, I hope to ascertain the specific cultural and socio-political factors that shaped the magazines' important contributions to literature and cultural identity in the region.

From the colonial era leading up to independence, little magazines reveal insights on the role of education within the emerging postcolonial societies as well as the relationship between education and print media across French-speaking communities in Africa. From a textual perspective, themes and discourses related to French colonial education are invoked by writers in

the magazines to critique or champion certain policies, always with the improvement of society in mind. From a historical point of view, the occupation of colonial print media provided educational and vocational training for the editors, publishers, and writers to develop their own skills. By acknowledging these different facets of education, these publications demonstrate how French colonial education was adapted, integrated, and subverted by African writers. Indeed, there is little contemporary scholarship or documentation focusing on *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison*, even less so outside of Belgian and Congolese contexts.[45] To fill this void in the archive, one must consult the ethnographical and anthropological studies by European academics in the 1940s and 1950s found in research journals like Cambridge's *Africa*: *The Journal of the International African Institute* amongst others. Despite the palpable colonial bias framing this scholarship, the researchers documented the issues and articles of the little magazines alongside their own commentary, which provides today's scholars with insights on how the reception of specific types of writing published in the magazine by the colonizer. The critical engagement of the colonial archive alongside the two Congolese little magazines yields new understandings on the literary forms and genres circulated across the two Congos and other parts of Central and West Africa.

The Belgian & French Colonial Press in Congolese Society

The first African based periodical appeared in 1826 in Monrovia, Liberia founded by a Black American named Charles L. Force who traveled to across the Atlantic with a printing press provided by a Boston society. The publication was called *The Liberia Herald* and it appeared monthly with four pages per edition. Force died six months after the periodicals founding, which ended its run until 1830 when another Black American John B. Russwurm reprised it. The

[45] Two scholars who have covered *La Voix du Congolais* over time are Honoré Vinck of the University of Leuven and Mukala Kadima-Nzuji of Marien-Ngouabi University.

publication continued to run for over 30 years under new editors until 1862.[46] The first African periodicals published in the French language appeared in Senegal in 1885. Entitled *Réveil du Sénégal*, it was a weekly publication. In 1886, the publication *Petit Sénégalais* appeared in Saint Louis but ran for less than a year. Then a decade later, *L'Afrique Occidentale* was released bimonthly from July 1896 to May 1898 out of Dakar, yet printed in France with 2,000 copies per issue, and notably edited by "des Français, des Métis et des Africains" (Tudesq). These series of short-lived periodicals illustrate the ephemeral nature of local publications due to the great financial costs at this point in history. In the French controlled region of the Congo, the first publications remained firmly administrative and addressed to French colonialists. These included *Congo français* appearing in 1899 or *L'Étoile de l'A.E.F* (*l'Afrique Équatoriale Française*, sometimes the residents of this area are referred to as aéfiens) emerging in 1928.[47] One scholar noted that the *Journal de l'A.E.F.* first published in 1932, became *La France Équatoriale* in 1936, and finally in 1939 *L'Afrique Équatoriale*, which was against the French colonial administration declaring in 1937, "Il est pratiquement impossible de donner aux lecteurs coloniaux des nouvelles d'une authenticité non douteuse et en nombre suffisant" (Tudesq). The limits of print media in the African colonies at this time reflected the French imperial objectives across the continent to advance the civilizing mission through linguistic and cultural assimilation.

Across the river, the colonial Belgian *Service des Affaires Indigènes du Gouvernement Général de Léopoldville* established a media division in 1944 known as the *Comité Consultatif*

[46] André-Jean Tudesq ed. Feuilles d'Afrique: Étude de la presse de l'Afrique subsaharienne. Pessac: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine, 1995.

[47] A.E.F. is the abbreviation of *Afrique-Équatoriale française*, the French colonial region comprising what are today the countries of Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, and Gabon.

de la Voix du Congolais, which operated in the four sectors of press, cinema, libraries, and radio. This colonial expansion to occupy further social spaces led to the development of a bimonthly print publication *La Voix du Congolais* from 1945-1959, later to become monthly in 1947, financed by the colonial regime and by the income generated through advertisements and circulation (*Zaïroise* 41). Published articles were subjected to Belgian censorship in the capital of Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) but managed to cover a wide variety of subjects that included art reviews, education, political editorials, upcoming social gatherings, as well as poetry and serialized fiction. Subscriptions to the periodical were not limited to residents in the colony but were also obtainable in Belgium and elsewhere overseas. The cost of the subscriptions varied depending on the location and origin of the subscriber – with different rates for colonial subjects and Europeans based in the colonies. For example, a yearlong subscription (*abonnement d'honneur*) in 1948 would cost a subscriber in Europe 250 *francs congolais* while a native resident of the *Congo belge* or another colony would pay 100 *francs congolais*. The cost of an individual copy of the magazine was 8 *francs congolais*. One important appeal of the magazine to readers was its assertion of being made "*Pour les congolais, par les congolais*". Indeed, the question of audience reveals the complicated networks in which *La Voix du Congolais* functioned as both a production of colonial expansion and a cultural production expanding ideas of Congolese identity and literature. As a consequence of the education systems instituted by both Belgian and French administrations, a new social class emerged in Brazzaville, Léopoldville, and other urban centers. These were known as the "*évolués*" characterized by their mastery of the French language and middle-class professional careers. The editors and writers of *La Voix du Congolais* belonged to this educated class and addressed the articles and advertisements of the publication to their peers, who comprised a small minority of the

population. Their goal was to broaden the appeal of literature in the French language to the larger Congolese society. Nonetheless, the magazine occupied a substantial space in which to cultivate new concepts of culture and self in the years leading up to independence in 1960. Despite the magazine's colonial origins, it marked a pivotal moment in the expansion of Francophone African literature in the postwar years, one which also coincided with a new era in Congolese poetry and prose writing in French (*Zaïroise* 309).

The ideologies behind the publication of *Liaison* aligned with those of *La Voix du Congolais*, but it employed different methods of circulation and distribution due to the financial support it received from the French *gouvernement général*. The official title of the publication was *Liaison: Organe des cercles culturels de l'A.E.F.*, and it was printed in Brazzaville by the *Imprimerie Centrale Afrique* (ICA-Brazzaville). The specific title of the periodical points to the editor's efforts to forge a connection between writers and readers across all the nations of the A.E.F. territories. Afui Nkili's critical study of the little magazine finds that:

> *Liaison* nait donc au moment de l'épanouissement d'une presse intermédiaire, période pendant laquelle certains organes de presse sont gérés et dirigés par les autochtones, mais avec le concours de l'administration coloniale. En effet, la particularité de cette presse qui émerge en Afrique centrale dans les années 1950, pendant la dernière décennie de l'ère coloniale, est de servir de moyen d'expression à un groupe social très homogène: celui des "évolués", "instituteurs et commis d'administration pour la plupart, qui en avaient jusque-là été privés" (137).[48]

This French educated social class turned to the space provided by the magazine to explore or make sense of their liminal position in colonial society, one which positioned them between the colonizer and the local communities to which they belonged. The editors and writers of these periodicals sought to foster a new understanding of the ways Congolese cultures and societies

[48] Lyvia Afui Nkili. *L'Émergence de la littérature africaine dans l'espace public de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française (1950-1960) : le cas de la revue culturelle Liaison*. 2014. Université de Lorraine. PhD dissertation.

had been affected by the imposition of the French language and other related colonial policies. The French regime fully financed the publication of *Liaison* with the condition that its contents remain entirely apolitical, unlike the Belgian with *La Voix du Congolais*. Each press run of the periodical turned out 4,000 copies and the printed copies of *Liaison* were distributed for free at local cultural centers in the cities of the A.E.F. Over the 10-year print run of the little magazine, 75 issues were published with the first ones growing from 12 pages to 20 pages in under a year. In later years, some issues of the periodical reached over 100 pages demonstrating the growing interest of writers to participate in the expanding cultural spaces leading up to decolonization. The same study of *Liaison* previously cited finds that the magazine was enthusiastically welcomed in neighboring Gabon to such a degree that after just two years of publication, the most represented authors were from that region (Afui Nkili 134). Despite growing popularity among writers, *Liaison* and *La Voix du Congolais* remained accessible only to a small segment of the population in their respective communities. Nonetheless, there are several important factors positioning this social class as pivotal for the success of the colonial regime to operate, which leads the regimes to take a particular interest these formally educated contributing writers.

In 1957, the Belgian research journal, *Aequatoria*, published a short article critiquing the colonial government's hypocrisy in preaching a rhetoric of national privatization while simultaneously launching state run media platforms in the Congo. The author of the article argued that the government running several publications, such as *La Voix du Congolais* and *Nos Images*, is essentially a way, "To bring their message to the native populations, the [Belgian] Government prints educational brochures, and equally, they possess the incomparable tools of propaganda that are the radio, a public-address system, and the cinema..." (108).[49] The

[49] Honoré Vinck. "L'État publiciste, l'État journaliste…," Aequatoria 20e Année, No. 3 (1957), pp. 108-109.

industrialization of the colonies meant that the population was divided into different sectors of skilled and unskilled laborers, consequently establishing an indigenous social hierarchy. The so-called *évolués* of the *Congo belge* and the A.O.F. may have been high on the regional social ladder but they were not the most elevated indigenous class. That status was held by those with academic degrees from Europe. Further, they did not hold any local political authority. In examining the colonial hierarchy in 1949, the Cambridge journal, *Africa*, published the article "The Modern Evolution of African Populations in the Belgian Congo" attempting to categorize the class divisions implemented by the Belgian regime. The Belgian anthropologist, Jacques J. Maquet, established that approximately 11 million Congolese living in the *Congo belge* inhabited one of several colonially imposed social groups. The first and largest group, encompassing about 80-85% of the population, were people who lived in the countryside under the direct control of local chiefs. This type of socio-political unit known as a *chefferie* was financially autonomous with the leaders possessing restricted judicial and political power under the oppressive control of the Belgians. Colonialism introduced the social institutions of formal public education and Christianity to further disrupt the preexisting rural culture and society. Education in the Belgian Congo until World War II was conducted primarily by missionaries in one of four local languages (Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba, and Swahili), which established a division in the colony between who could access the French language and the social benefits with which it came. Only Congolese individuals, who worked directly with the European colonials, and students, who were permitted to a certain level of education, could receive instruction in French (*Zaïroise* 8).

The strict regulation of education by the Belgian and French colonial regimes underscores their efforts to divide social groups by controlling and censoring the transmission of

culture and knowledge. Colonial education in the *Congo belge* consisted of vocational training and the acquisition of job skills; schools were prohibited from engaging any literary pedagogy (*Zaïroise* 8). This lack of formal instruction in literature separates the Belgian colonies from the French held territories in Africa where colonial education relied on literary pedagogy as an essential component to the assimilation process. The next category on the colonial hierarchy were the students and workers who were subjected to the meager education system. They numbered around one and a half million people who reached a certain level of education or skill and were referred to as the "detribalized" in Maquet's study.[50] This social group lived in centers developed by Europeans, such as work camps, industrial plants or native cities adjacent to colonial settler populations and avowed no political authority to the rural *chefferies*. These urbanizing centers were quite stable in population and in line with colonial doctrine which favored settled family units and discouraged the flux migration traditional to the region in pre-colonial times. Amongst this social group, one can divide it further into two social groups. First, the manual laborers who worked outside the *chefferies*. Then, in the following group, Maquet identifies the *évolués* who worked as accountants, clerks, teachers, medical assistants, shopkeepers, etc. The editors and writers of *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* belonged to this segment of the population below those with European degrees on the social ladder.

The little magazines used this social status as a marketing ploy and rallying point to promote their periodicals and the messages they circulate. The disclaimer of Bolamba's magazine states "*La Voix du Congolais* s'adresse à l'élite congolaise". The editors and writers sought to establish a new cultural space in the collective imagination of various social groups in

[50] Jacques J. Maquet. "The Modern Evolution of African Populations in the Belgian Congo." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 19. 4, 1949, pp. 265–272.

the *Congo belge* with the publication of the magazine. In a similar fashion, Paul Lomami-Tchibamba, the editor-in-chief of *Liaison*, writes in the first issue:

> Comme l'indique son titre, son ambition est de rapprocher les élites de la Fédération aéfienne tout en leur donnant l'occasion et le moyen de se communiquer des idées nouvelles, de se livrer à des recherches de pensées africaines, de s'interroger sur leurs possibilités, sur leurs virtualités, de chercher quels sont les apports artistiques, littéraires ou musicaux que l'A.E.F. peut harmonieusement intégrer dans la civilisation occidentale que la France s'est chargée de nous dispenser jusqu'ici (*Liaison*, no.1, 1950).[51]

By limiting those who could participate or access these spaces, the magazine explored new ways to conceptualize or define cultural identity through literary and socially engaged writing, especially in the French language, that employed both colonial and Congolese discourses and themes. The restrictive boundaries of the colonial hierarchy were reproduced in the cultural space of the little magazine that needed to limit itself to a select audience, namely the Congolese *évolués*. To support their colonialist imperatives, the Belgian and French regimes purposefully limited the expansion of the French language and censored any cultural productions from which it was produced. Thus, the writers of these publications turned to cultural representations, through literature and journalism, to engage readers and expand their audiences by incorporating regional influences or themes within the socially imposed European forms and modes of representation.

Why would the colonial governments concern themselves with the financing of a niche magazine targeted to such a minority group within the population? The achievements of the expanding French-speaking Congolese social group did not go unnoticed by the colonial regimes or other writers throughout Africa and in Europe and the Americas. The Belgian and French regimes not only afforded the *évolués* the means to represent their artistic and literary interests

[51] Paul Lomami-Tchibamba. *Liaison*, numéro 1, 1950, p. 3.

with *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison*, but they also facilitated a method for the regimes to access the *état d'esprit* of this educated segment that is critical to the colonial work force. Therefore, the little magazines began under these two visions of colonial occupation and cultural representation.[52] Looking specifically at the *Congo belge*, there were approximately 40,000 members of the *évolués* class by 1949 and they were directly linked to the third "detribalized" social group of Congolese as defined by Maquet. The most-elevated indigenous class were those who obtained advanced degrees in Europe, "[they lived] with and exactly like their European colleagues" (Maquet 268). According to Maquet, this class maintained a great symbolic value for the *évolués* since it illustrated that a person of African origin could thrive in European settings, especially the universities. In comparison, the *évolués* were often presented as, "the prefiguration of what the majority of the Congolese are going to experience tomorrow" (Maquet 268). From this perspective, one can see the vested interest the Belgian and French had in financing print periodicals produced and targeted to this marginal, yet crucial social group. Mukala Kadima-Nzuji's extensive research on the history of Congolese literature in French exposes that, "La création de *La Voix du Congolais* constitua, au même titre que la fondation des cercles dont elle fut le trait d'union et le seul organe d'expression, un des moyens utilisés par le pouvoir colonial aux fins d'exercer son contrôle sur les 'évolués' qui devenaient de plus en plus nombreux et dangereux pour sa survie" (*Zaïroise* 40). The Congolese *évolués*, educated in the style of the colonizer, began to employ their education to examine and question their own position in society and among a wider transnational literary network.

[52] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines the two senses of the term "representation" in her landmark piece, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1983). First, the sense of political representation as in speaking on behalf of another. Then, cultural representation as in "re-presenting" in art or philosophy.

This reconsideration of the colonial periodicals as insightful cultural productions afforded these little magazines a double function depending on who is reading the text, a colonialist or a local African reader. The Belgian and French regimes seemed to assist rather than repress the circulation of ideas and information, while concurrently advancing their own objectives of economic and social control. Kadima-Nzuji finds that "C'est que, en définitive, le but principal de *La Voix du Congolais* était de permettre d'une part aux 'évolués' d'échanger leurs idées, de faire l'apprentissage de la presse, et, d'autre part, à l'administration d'être éclairée constamment sur leur état d'esprit" (*Zaïroise* 46). Therefore, a double function of the magazine was unveiled with the colonial regime censoring this new cultural and social space, in contrast to Bolamba, Lomami-Tchibamba, and the other writers who sought to define and expand it. In considering the financing of *Liaison* by the French colonial regime, their effort to restrict the periodical to what they considered purely cultural subjects, as opposed to political ones, points to the regime's desire to remain in control of the quickly evolving Congolese cultural identities and social practices. One scholar finds that, "*Liaison* est née grâce au concours financier du Gouvernement général. En effet, la revue voit le jour pour assurer la coordination des cercles culturels de l'A.E.F. créés sous l'impulsion du Haut- Commissaire Bernard Cornut-Gentille qui dirigea la Fédération de 1948 à 1951. Pour garantir sa survie, la rédaction va donc s'interdire de publier tout article qui a trait à la politique" (Afui Nkili 268). From the point of view of the colonial regimes, these publications provided direct access to the concerns and opinions of the writers in addition to monitoring what was ultimately published. For example, if the subjects touched on by writers were deemed in breach of censorship regulations, then the regimes were better equipped to root out the writers behind the dangerous materials. For local Congolese and African readers, the little magazines offered a space to circulate literary pieces and to attempt to formulate social

critiques that illustrated Black artistic accomplishments. Even more importantly, the editors and writers contributed editorials, poems, short stories, etc. so as to turn these periodicals into educational tools that would enhance the formation of an emerging Congolese literary community.

Throughout the course of their existence and circulation, the two polarities of *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* as both authoritarian colonial products and self-constitutive literary tools interacted and influenced each other, while coming into opposition at times. A recent critical study on colonial print culture in Africa asserts that the majority of Francophone African literature produced between 1913-1960 was published by periodical presses.[53] Print technology allowed political groups new tools for the self-constitution of cultural and civic ideas and a widening the channels of communication (Peterson 4). The importation of colonial education along with these new technologies provided local communities with the eventual means to facilitate the independence movements that arose across the empire leading to eventual decolonization. The artistic and intellectual accomplishments of individuals living under colonialism contradicted the European rhetoric of inherent superiority leading to artists and writers to challenge such notions. Therefore, the cultural spaces carved out by little magazines like *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* maintain important positions in the historical record and literary archive for the unique perspective found in the articles and texts they published. The writers and their published work provide scholars today with insights on the discourses, images, and literary methods employed by certain social classes in the years leading up to the independence of the two Congolese nations.

From Writers to Editors: Bolamba & Lomami-Tchibamba

[53] Peterson argues that African literatures were produced from newspaper writing (Peterson, etc. 22).

One of the central figures deciding the cultural forms and genres circulated by the magazine, Antoine-Roger Bolamba (1913-2002) stands out as the leader in the production of *La Voix du Congolais* from an editorial and literary perspective. He had already established a reputation as a poet and writer by winning recognition through various publications and prize competitions, when he was appointed the editor-in-chief and went on to manage the publication through its 14-year run from 1945-1959. During that time, Bolamba contributed articles, editorials, reviews, poems, in addition to serialized and short fiction to the magazine, while continuing to consolidate his literary reputation outside of the Belgian Congo. In 1955, Léopold Sédar Senghor introduced Bolamba in the "*Préface*" to Bolamba's best known collection *Esanzo: Chants pour mon pays* published by Présence Africaine.[54] Senghor remarked that "Bolamba n'a pas été amené, il s'est amené dans les Lettres françaises, avec ses idées-forces, ses rythmes et ses images. Je ne parlerai pas des idées de Bolamba. Ce sont les grands thèmes de la Négritude. […]" (10). This assessment helps to reveal the larger transnational networks in which Bolamba and the magazine, where most of Bolamaba's poems were first printed, participated. Bolamba and his fellow writers reimagined European modes of representation, such as poetry and various prose forms, in a Congolese context to engage with likeminded French language writers from other colonized regions. Senghor concludes, "Bien sûr, c'est une gajeure, pour Bolamba, d'écrire en Français, pour le paysan nègre, dans cette 'langue de gentillesse et d'honnêteté'. Les artistes ne manqueront pas de trouver ici des gaucheries. Il se trouve que le Poète s'est proposé de charmer son peuple, mais pas avec les moyens des habiles" (12). Senghor's warning to those critical of Bolamba's language highlights the importance of Bolamba's literary work as invested in the social context from which it was produced.

[54] Léopold Sédar Senghor. "Préface," *Ensanzo: Chant pour mon pays*. Éditions Naaman, 1977.

Despite working through European modes of representation, Bolamba and the other contributors to *La Voix du Congolais* developed localized literary genres to appeal to the larger French-speaking Congolese communities. Senghor applauded Bolamba's awareness of the particularities of his identity, commenting that he been able to "resté Nègre et Bantou", as opposed to going down the path of complete assimilation to colonial literary aesthetics or cultural identity. One poem in Bolamba's collection, "Poème mongo", demonstrates one of the more explicit ways the poet conceived of regional Congolese and transnational French forms and styles. The poem is presented on the left side of the page in the mongo language with a translation of the poem in French on the facing page. The use of the two languages suggests a willingness to open the literary spaces within the decolonizing society and to include a broader range of social groups and cultural styles. Bolamba's interest in Congolese society extends beyond just the literary imagination. He concerned himself with the education and social development of the *évolués*[55] and French-speaking classes by using journalism and literature as a vehicle to connect with his audience and distribute his work.

In looking at the literature published in *La Voix du Congolais*, Antoine-Roger Bolamba stands out as the most prolific contributor of poems, serialized fictions, and sketches. Kadima-Nzuji has determined that the literature developed at this period can be broken down into two time periods: 1945-53, which was witness to a heavily romanticized poetry, most likely from the outgrowth of French romanticism featured in the educational textbooks assigned to the most advanced students; and 1954-60, which marked the development of a new Self in the expanding

[55] In addition to his pieces published in *La Voix du Congolais*, Bolamba also published *Les problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire*, Élisabethville, L'Essor du Congo, 1949 (coll. "Études sociales").

world.[56] This romantic period is denoted by recurrent themes of nature, rural village life, love and death, etc. However, the literary texts of this time cannot be dismissed as purely repetitious reproductions possessing no cultural or political value. The writers of *La Voix du Congolais* engaged with the style and themes of the French romantic movement of the 19th century as well as the discourses of the colonial regime to represent their liminal position between Congolese and Belgian societies and to produce foundational texts in the emerging canon of Franco-Congolese literature. The poem "Le Hibou" by Bolamba, published in 1946, typifies how the poet situated his work within the cross-section of the overlapping Congolese and European cultural and social frameworks. The opening lines state "Quand tu pleures, hibou, on n'ose fermer l'œil. / Ton accent démoniaque est voilé de mystère".[57] The genre of romanticism comes across in the narrative voice's direct address to the owl as well as the owl's personification as an otherworldly being. The sensational language projects the fears of the narrative voice onto the owl in a method similar to that of the French Romantics who conflated notions of the Self/Other and Marvelous/Mundane binaries.[58] Looking at the evolution of modernity in Black Atlantic literature, Yogita Goyal argues that "… romance allows these writers to collapse time and space to give us a whole, or shine a beam of light onto one moment, or even to give us a progressive history read backwards from a future point of redemption" (10).[59] While Goyal herself explains that she is not overly concerned with defining terms with "an array of meanings", the romantic

[56] Mukala Kadima-Nzuj. "Avant-Propos Pour Une Lecture Plurielle De La Poésie Zaïroise," *Présence africaine*, 104, 1977, pp. 86–93.

[57] Antoine-Roger Bolamba. "Le Hibou," *La Voix du Congolais*. Nov. 1946.

[58] See Ali Behdad's *Belated Travelers* (Duke University Press 1994) and Yogita Goyal's *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature*.

[59] Yogita Goyal. *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

genre allows 20th century Black writers to navigate a complex social network in similar ways as the figures of 19th century romanticism (13). The reading of this genre across the networks of the African diaspora allows Goyal to trace the subversive qualities writers employ by working through this mode of representation. In addition, Goyal highlights the communal dialogue these writers craft outside traditional geographic and temporal boundaries. Bolamba's romantic poems express the subversive nature of the genre in an effort to embolden the collective imagination of a literary community amongst the members of the French-speaking Congolese social groups.

From today's postcolonial perspective, the imposed cultural forms and educational standards of the colonizer can be peeled away to examine the ways Bolamba and other Congolese writers employed oblique generic modes and language to represent their ideas. In Kadima-Nzuji's analysis of "Le Hibou", he has noted that the figure of the owl represents the messenger of death in many regional cultures in Africa (*Zaïroise* 87). This insight alongside the understanding that the Belgian regime serves as the greatest threat to the Congolese people's existence, allows the reader to interpret the figure of the owl, whose voice is "voilé de mystère", as a colonial figure speaking a foreign language. The closing stanza of the poem states, "Tes crimes jusqu'au ciel montent avec le vent. / Leur poids finira bien par tomber sur ta tête. / Le soir, sous tous les toits, on murmure souvent / Des propos dédaigneux qui feront ta défaite" (Bolamba). The hushed plotting to overthrow the threatening figure of the owl resembles the struggle led by the Congolese people to liberate themselves from the colonial Belgian regime. The poet invokes the tone and themes of the romantic genre to conceal his critique against the hostile Belgian censorship policies. To advance his literary and social messages, Bolamba's writing must first appease the regulations of the supervising colonial offices before they could be distributed to his audience. In contrast to Kadima-Nzuji's dismissal of this early period of poetry

as reproducing European aesthetics, the romantic genre found in Bolamba's early poetry functions as one of many ways that he and other writers incorporated progressive literary ideas in the publication as a political critique and appeal to a larger public.

Following in the steps of Bolamba and *La Voix du* Congolais, Paul Lomami-Tchibamba (1914-1985) used his previous journalistic experience to launch *Liaison*, his own periodical based in Brazzaville. His first editorial position was with a missionary publication entitled *La Croix du Congo* before joining Bolamba at *La Voix du Congolais* upon its creation in 1945. Lomami-Tchibamba used the platform to not only develop his creative writing skills, but also to establish an anti-colonialist reputation for his severe critiques of the Belgian regime printed in the periodical.[60] In fact, Lomami-Tchibamba's 1945 article "Quelle sera notre place dans le monde de demain?" (further discussed in the last section of this chapter) caused such an uproar that he was apprehended by the colonial authorities for censorship violations leading to a corporal punishment.[61] This experience illustrates the enormous risks the writers of these little magazines undertook to express their opinions in a public manner. By explicitly speaking out against colonial injustices, Lomami-Tchibamba and other writers of his generation faced life threatening consequences. As a result, writers had to be creative in their efforts to undermine the authorities through subversive literary methods, such as allegory and metaphor, to evade censorship. While working for *L'Aéronautique des Travaux Publics* in 1948, Lomami-Tchibamba was the winner of *Le concours littéraire de la Foire coloniale* for his novel *Ngando*. Upon receiving this award, *La Voix du Congolais* featured the article "Concours Littéraire -Les impressions d'un Lauréat" in September 1948.

[60] Sayouba Traoré. "Paul Lomami Tshibamba, le défi par l'écriture". Radio France internationale. Aug. 8, 2018.

[61] Silvia Riva. *Nouvelle histoire de la littérature du Congo-Kinshasa*. Harmattan, 2006.

Fleeing the oppressive Belgian authorities in 1950, Lomami-Tchibamba established the periodical *Liaison* in Brazzaville to amplify his views on both the future of Congolese culture and society. It should be noted that once the French regime decided to fund the publication of a new periodical they reached out to Lomami-Tchibamba asking him to move from Léopoldville to direct the new little magazine in Brazzaville, which he gladly accepted. This move was further enabled by the greater reception of his 1948 novel *Ngando* in Brazzaville than in Léopoldville as well (Afui Nkili 377). One scholar has noted that "il dirige la revue […] comme un véritable défense et illustration d'une civilisation noire […]" (Riva 78). Writers like Bolamba and Lomami-Tchibamba were imbued with both a sense to write and create their literary work in addition to a desire to valorize and uplift the communities in which they live. In order to reach local audiences as well as to demonstrate the merits of Congolese literary culture, Bolamba and Lomami-Tchibamba acknowledged the difficulties of working within the language of the colonizer. In an editorial printed in *Liaison*, Lomami-Tchibamba wrote:

> Depuis, la connaissance que nous commençons à avoir de la langue française apparaît de plus en plus comme un des moyens qui nous permettent aujourd'hui d'explorer les contreforts si abrupts par leur caractère abstrait des sciences européennes, et pour notre pénétration dans cette trépidante civilisation occidentale dont le globe terrestre est devenu l'insolvable tributaire dans presque tous les domaines, la langue française nous est, depuis, un indispensable atout. Aussi expérimentons-nous chaque jour qu'une connaissance améliorée et approfondie de cette langue nous permet de gravir les échelons sociaux et d'occuper, la tête levée, des places respectables sinon respectées au milieu des autres hommes de races différentes et de cultures autrement avancées (1950).[62]

The colonial rhetoric glorifying the colonizer's civilization lurks behind the citation's praise of the French language, but even more striking is the writer's plea for equality amongst the biased colonial mindset regarding African cultures as lesser. The image of "la tête levée" signifies the repeated dehumanization and humiliation of colonized peoples who must find value in their own

[62] Paul Lomami-Tchibamba. "Faut-il introduire les langues vernaculaires dans l'enseignement pour les Africains?", *Liaison*, no. 3, 1950, p. 3.

abilities and knowledge. Lomami-Tchibamba realized that the French language could be used as the tool by which Congolese cultures and writers established themselves as leading intellectual figures in the world. In 1956, Bolamba and Lomami-Tchibamba made great strides toward expanding the Congolese cultural presence when both men traveled together to Paris to attend the *Premier Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs* (Riva 79).

Bolamba and Lomami-Tchibamba figure prominently in literary history for their important contributions as writers who played a significant editorial role in promoting and expanding Congolese literature in French. In working to bolster writers and engage audiences, the little magazines were still confined to operate under the control of the Belgian and French regimes, which limited their abilities to communicate openly with readers. Therefore, Bolamba and Lomami-Tchibamba employed their periodicals to showcase literary and editorial pieces by African and Black writers that demonstrated the intellectual accomplishments of these writers to the readers of the magazines.

Literary Prize Competitions

Another way little magazines engaged audiences was by the implementation of literary prize competitions. These competitions present an example of the merging together of the literary and social objectives for both the colonial regimes and the Congolese writing staff of the magazines. Both *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* employed literary competitions as part of their outreach tactics, but the scope and objectives of the contests depended on the specific periodical. *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* held several prize competitions over the course of their publication runs, altering the themes and guidelines slightly for each competition to valorize specific local or transnational ideals. French-language based literary prize competitions organized or sponsored by regional colonial institutions proved not only to be a clever marketing

ploy for *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison*, but they also played an integral part in the development and diffusion of Franco-Congolese literature. Kadima-Nzuji explained:

> Historiens et critiques ont souvent souligné l'importance et le rôle des concours dans l'éveil littéraire au Congo belge […] Il serait cependant inexact de penser que hormis les quelques textes (contes, fables, nouvelles, théâtre, etc.) publiés par des revues et journaux congolais et européens, la production littéraire est demeurée un fait occasionnel, ne surgissant que lors des concours organisés par l'autorité coloniale (*Zaïroise* 161).

Bolamba and Lomami-Thibamba proved that Franco-Congolese texts deserved to be published on their own merits, having themselves published several collections of poetry and prose in the years leading to independence, in addition to other publications by such writers as Désiré-Joseph Basembe[63] and Francisco José Mopila[64] who were also active at the same time. Unlike literary prize competitions run by other publications and colonial institutions in the French-speaking world,[65] the writing contests of *La Voix du Congolais* advertised and sought specifically the participation of the *évolués*. For a contest held in 1946, the magazine announced:

> Un Concours Littéraire Ouvert Aux Évolués – Dans le but de stimuler l'activité intellectuelle des "Évolués" de leur faire prendre conscience des richesses de leur peuple par des recherche méthodique sur des sujets intéressant le monde indigène et de les pousser ainsi à un travail personnel et ordonné pour constituer une Bibliothèque franco-Congolaise qui sera l'œuvre des indigènes eux-mêmes de la colonie et des territoires sous mandat belge (*La Voix du Congolais* 1946).

The regulations of the competition specified that the literary entry must treat an element of the indigenous experience in an original and personal style that was open to the French-speaking *évolués* residents of Belgian Equatorial Africa. For the colonizer, the submissions proposed by the colonized middle class offered the Belgian regime priceless insights to the concerns and

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[63] Désiré-Joseph Basembe, *Les aventures de Mobarom*, Élisabethvlle, Éditions du Progrès, coll. "Écrivans congolais," 1947, 35p.

[64] "Le Congolais hispanisant, Francisco José Mopila, qui publie en 1949, à Madrid, sous les auspices de l'Institut Madrilène d'études Africaines, ses *Memorias de un Congoles*" (Kadima-Nzuji 162).

[65] See Ruth Bush's *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization 1945-1967* (Liverpool University Press 2016).

issues that were the most pressing for the members of this social group. Additionally, the initiatives proposed by the prize competitions of *La Voix du Congolais* called for a type of institutional canon forming of Franco-Congolese literary texts as a burgeoning cultural space. The prize competitions working in company with the magazine yielded new literary texts by indigenous writers who inhabited the region and that represented the experiences and the lives of the Congolese people during the final years of the colonial era. Kadima-Nzuji summarized the situation as follows in his historical study of prize competitions in the *Congo belge*, "En dehors de cet intérêt sociologique qu'ils présentent, les concours n'ont guère apporté d'œuvres majeures empreintes de sceau de l'authenticité de leurs auteurs" (*Zaïroise* 192). Despite the apparent lack of critical or financial success of the pieces submitted to the magazine, this type of literary framework for the prize competitions, based on prefigured cultural expectations, implicitly engaged complex political and social networks with relation to both regional and transnational identity and culture. In addition to the sociological interest proposed by Kadima-Nzuji, recent critical scholarship on literary prize culture and periodical publishing in Africa during the 20th century reveals further understandings of little magazines as "incubators of literary genre" and enforcers of universal values (Peterson 1; Bush 92).

The regulations and prizes incentivized the public to take on the implicit objectives of the competitions by influencing the ways writers construct identity through literature. In 1948, the magazine featured a literary competition sponsored by the Rwandan King Mutara III, emphasizing the following, "Les organisateurs du concours étaient persuadés qu'en demandant un travail relativement court, ils permettaient aux concurrents d'aiguiser leur plume, de porter tous leurs efforts sur la forme afin que celle-ci atteignît la perfection littéraire" (*Zaïroise* 175). The highlighting of literary form in the advertisement demonstrated a certain cultural expectation

of conformity and normalization, in this case pertaining to the colonial standards of cultural representation associated with the French language and literary networks of the postwar years leading up to decolonization. The cultural space of the little magazine incorporated the regional interpretations of these global literary forms and genres reimagined and represented within a Franco-Congolese context. Ruth Bush has argued in her critical study of Francophone publishing throughout the African diaspora that literary prize culture can reinforce normative ideas of literary value and creative expression, "in response to pressure from political ideology and/or marketplace demands" (93). The competitions endorsed by *La Voix du Congolais* endeavored to systematize the circulation of printed cultural productions developed in the French-speaking milieu of the Belgian Congo. The standards of little magazines as a European mode of representation, along with colonial censorship, exerted a limitation on the content, form, and language that a writer could use. These confines compelled poets and writers to reimagine the boundaries of genre and language, while operating within the socially accepted literary field.[66]

One literary prize competition in *La Voix du Congolais* stands out in contrast to the other French language dominant contests for its inclusive approach to cultural and linguistic identity. According to Kadima-Nzuji, the 1950 competition called for a Theatrical contest that accepted plays from any native resident of the *Congo belge* or *Rwanda-Urundi* in one of five languages: French, Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba, or Kiswahili. The juries were divided up by language, and the French jury consisted of the *Procureur général* Léon Guébels (known in colonial literature under the *nom de plume* Olivier de Bouveignes), several representatives from the *bureau de presse de l'information*, and other Belgian colonial cultural figures. In contrast to the previous competitions that restricted entries to the *évolués* and French language contributions, the

[66] Bulson defines a literary field as a sociological category of the relationship between the writer, the patron, the markets, and guidance in context of social, political, and economic forces (36).

theatrical prize competition was open to a broader section of society: “Le concours est accessible à tous les autochtones du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi; aucun droit d’inscription n’est exigé” (*Zaïroise* 177). The consideration of several indigenous languages illustrated the potential for flexibility within the emerging cultural identity deemed appropriate by an educated liminal social group with the ability to influence the circulation of literary and social ideas. Such linguistic flexibility was not seen in the literary competitions held in the French colonial regions, which prioritized the French language component of the competitions a logical step given the crucial importance of assimilation via language in French colonial spaces.

The literary competitions held in the A.E.F. and associated with *Liaison* implemented a different approach. From early on in the print run of *Liaison*, Paul Lomami-Tchibamba, the editor-in-chief, implemented an open call contest style to both promote the periodical and also to attract new writers from the Congo and surrounding regions. The goal was to encourage submissions and *Liaison* appealed to their readership saying, “À vos plumes! […] les pages de Liaison sont à votre entière disposition”. Unlike in the guidelines for the literary competitions in the Belgian Congo, the pages of *Liaison* and the competitions found in the French territories did not emphasize or single out the “évolués” social class with their appeals, even if it may have been implied. In the third volume of *Liaison*, the editor in chief makes the following call for new writers who originate from the regions of the A.E.F.:

> *Liaison* est appelé à devenir un grand périodique de l’A.E.F. C’est à vous de rehausser l’intérêt que ce bulletin n’a jusqu’ici pas cessé de susciter autour de lui, grâce à vos articles. Autour de vos Cercles culturels, constitués des comités de rédaction qui seront chargés de nous faire parvenir toutes informations relatives à vos activités culturelles et sociales dans vos localités respectives. Tout lettré aéfien se doit d’écrire dans *Liaison*. C’est d’ailleurs une heureuse occasion qui s’est offerte à chacun de nous de s’entraîner (*Liaison* 1950).[67]

[67] Paul Lomami-Tchibamba. *Liaison*. No. 3, 1950, p. 17.

Lomamai-Tchibamaba's appeal to transform *Liaison* into a leading African cultural publication was premised in the idea of encouraging and motivating it readers to pick up their pens and advance the cultural activities of their communities through journalism and literature. The editor's emphasis on the notion that the periodical offered Congolese and writers from other central African regions the opportunity to train or hone their literary skills underscores the educational importance these little magazines held for the editors and writers who worked on them. One scholar has in fact emphasized how this type of education also offered a greater social value than just to the betterment of the individual, "Au vu de ce qui précède, la place des Aéfiens était dans les organes de presse et les cercles culturels, ces rassemblements qui participent à l'apprentissage des individus pour le bien de la communauté" (Afui Nkili 152). The validation by the members of these various cultural centers where social gatherings and activities are performed was vital to advancing the objectives of the periodicals. This communal approach to literature and the inclusion of as many writers as possible demonstrates the cultural expansion that *Liaison* attempted to enact in order to cultivate a greater network of readers and writers across the Congo, Central Africa, and the French-speaking world in a more general manner.

While the literary competitions of *Liaison* focused primarily on attracting new contributors, the French colonial regime executed two large scale literary prize competitions in each of their official African regional sectors to promote French language cultural productions on the continent. The *Grand prix littéraire de la mer et de l'outre-mer,* the *Grand prix littéraire de l'A.O.F.*, and *le Grand prix littéraire de l'A.E.F.* were awarded from 1949-1960 (Bush 224).[68] The literary competitions accepted entries in any genre from poetry, novels, short stories, essays, reportage etc., as long as the work was produced in the French language. The winning *lauréat*

[68] The first award for *le Grand prix littéraire de l'A.O.F.* was in 1950, and the first award of *le Grand prix littéraire de l'A.E.F.* was in 1951.

was presented with 50,000 francs and could be living in the colonies or in mainland France. As a result, all of the early winners of the *Grand prix littéraire de l'A.E.F.* hailed from the metropole creating a source on contention amongst the editors and writers of *Liaison*. One scholar noted, "En effet, dans le numéro 44 de Liaison, figurent les noms d'Étienne Tardif, Henri Ziéglé et Françoise Rougeoreille, respectivement lauréats en 1951, 1952 et 1953. L'article se termine sur le souhait que le prix littéraire soit décroché en 1955 'par un jeune Aéfien d'origine'" (Afui Nkili 241). However, it would not be until 1956 that a Congolese poet named Martial Sinda won the *Grand prix littéraire de l'A.E.F*. Sinda was an active member of *Liaison* at this time, echoing Lomami-Tchibamba's previous colonial literary prize win from 1948, which illustrates how Congolese literature was bolstered by little magazines but also operated and succeeded in a larger literary network.

After Independence in 1960, the French colonial literary prize competitions ceased to exist and were replaced in 1961 by the *Association des écrivains de langue française* (l'ADELF)'s *Grand prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire*. A critical study on French literary competitions finds that this currently ongoing prize competition was conceived from a colonial framework but has evolved into its own role in the literary world, "De ce point de vue, le Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique noire prend explicitement la relève des deux prix de l'AOF et de l'AÉF remis sous la colonisation. Né dans le creuset de la littérature coloniale, il a cependant récompensé au fil du temps des textes connus pour leur anticolonialisme ou leur marxisme, publiés notamment par les Éditions du Seuil et Maspero" (537).[69] While this literary competition now actively works to undo the oppression and damage of colonialism, the questions still remain

[69] Ruth Bush and Claire Ducournau. "La littérature africaine de langue française, à quell(s) prix? : Histoire d'une instance de legitimation littéraire méconnue (1924-2012)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, vol. 55. 2015, pp. 535-568.

as to whether these types of competitions maintain the legacy of a colonial framework imposed on French language literature. Indeed, even the requirement for writers from sub-Saharan Africa to work in the French language in order to be eligible for recognition from these influential literary groups suggests that the writers from these regions must evaluate whether to prioritize their local cultural practices in order to achieve a more transnational appeal to their literary work.[70] However, Congolese writers feature prominently on the list of *Grand Prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire* awardees with some of the most notable names in French and francophone literature winning such as Guy Menga in 1969, Henri Lopes in 1972 and 1990, Sony Labou Tansi in 1983, Emmanuel Dongala in 1988, and Alain Mabanckou in 1999 -- to name some of the better known.[71]

In summary, the literary prize competitions helped diffuse the linguistic and literary objectives of the little magazines, inspiring the public to participate in these evolving and expanding cultural spaces. Whether motivated by economic ambitions (to obtain prize money) or literary ambitions (to become a writer), one principal goal of the competitions was to attract a French educated Congolese audience and encourage them to identify with the literature and messages of the periodicals, while simultaneously engaging with the range of literary forms and styles revered by both the competitions and magazines. To assist in the expansion process, the articles and literary texts published in the magazines centered heavily on discourses and themes of education.

Subverting Education in Little Magazines

[70] This process is further complicated by the fact that formal school-level education is administered in French as well.

[71] Full list of winners found at http://adelf.info/grand-prix-grand-prix-litteraire-dafrique-noire/

The subject of education provides an intriguing point of entry when looking for a rupture between the policies of the Belgian and French colonial regimes and the ideologies of the writers in *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison*. Due to the strict colonial social structure imposed on the Congolese societies, members of the *évolués* were expected to obtain a certain amount of formal western education and to adopt specific social behaviors so as to function as a metaphorical bridge between the European colonizer and the larger colonized populations. The editors and writers of the little magazines aimed at the *évolués* incorporated these educational and social ideologies imposed on a limited portion of the colonies and undertook to apply the model to greater sections of society than the colonial regimes were willing to permit. Whereas it was in the interest of the editors and writers to uphold an inclusive notion of Franco-Congolese identity, this contrasts with the Belgian and French policies aimed at controlling who had access to certain levels of linguistic and vocational knowledge. The scholar Silvia Riva highlights an article in the second volume of *La Voix du Congolais* entitled, "Quelle sera notre place dans le monde de demain?" written by Paul Lomami-Tchibamba asserting that the Congolese writers were already questioning the precariousness of colonial society from the very beginning of the magazine's publication. Riva reveals that the Belgian regime flagged the article and punished its writer: "[…] la censure répondit par une leçon exemplaire: pendant trois semaines, avant de se rendre à la rédaction, Lomami-Tchibamba subit une inspection et l'humiliation du fouet" (40). This brutal consequence underscores the dangers faced by the editors and writers who used the space of the little magazine to question the colonial authorities. Further, this physical violence demonstrates how issues connected to the restriction and access of education remained a significant issue for both the colonial regimes and the local communities.

The last section of this chapter examines specific examples of discourses and arguments tied to education that appeared throughout the publication history of both *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* leading up to decolonization. Often, the editors and writers of these little magazines resorted to subversive literary genres and methods to avoid detection from the colonial censors. Additionally, the editors and writers of these periodicals employ educational discourses and certain literary styles and genres as formative tools turning the magazines into an educational space to instruct and influence Congolese literary audiences.

The editors and writers of the little magazines operating under colonial rule adopted subversive techniques into their work to avoid similar punishments to the one imposed on Lomami-Tchibamba. Another article published by *La Voix du Congolais* in 1948, "*Le Rêve du Congolais*", written by Étienne Ngandu shows that writers toward the end of the colonial era subverted certain ideological policies while also invoking colonial discourses.[72] Ngandu explains that the Congolese people should conduct themselves with the understanding that "la Belgique d'Outre-mer et la Belgique Métropolitaine ne forment en pratique qu'un seul pays […]" (6). He discusses a return to the principles of Christian morality, the hard work needed to advance the Congolese forward, and the necessity to continue the civilizing mission of the Belgian regime. At the beginning of his article, Ngandu states:

> Nous rêvons d'un Congo meilleur, d'un Congo où la famille, base de la société, serait respectée et stabilisée; d'un Congo où nos enfants recevraient une instruction plus solide que celle qui nous fut dispensée; d'un Congo où la femme noire serait suffisamment éduquée pour remplir convenablement son rôle de gardienne du foyer; d'un Congo où il n'y aurait que la sympathie entre les races; d'un Congo où le Blanc ne serait plus seulement un maître pour le Noir (Ngandu 6)

In his opening remarks to the article, inflected with colonial rhetoric, Ngandu links the issue of education with the most marginalized members of the colonial hierarchy, Congolese women and

[72] E. Ngandu. "Le Rêve du Congolais," *La Voix du Congolais*. Jan. 1948: 6-8.

children. An obstacle to expanding the *évolués* class became the lack of women who identified with the social group and who shared the same interest in the lifestyle that Western educated Congolese men had come to adopt. This contributed to the writers of *La Voix du Congolais* championing an expansion of the national education system to not only broaden the *évolués* class, but also to include the participation of women in these social dialogues and spaces. The magazine even published the writings of one of the earliest female Congolese writers, Marie Mboyo, who specialized in regional based short fiction and tales (Riva 40; *Zaïroise* 99). Nonetheless, the women who lived in these regions were subjugated to strict social codes and maintained extremely limited political rights.

Ngandu's "Le Rêve du Congolais" belongs to a collection of writings published in the little magazine that raised attention for the education of girls in opposition to the colonial doctrines of the Belgian regime. In 1951, the Belgian journal *Aequatoria* published "L'Instruction des filles" highlighting the social messages of certain articles that appeared in *La Voix du Congolais* for their subversive nature.[73] The author, G. Hulstaert, attempted to expose the Congolese writers' reasoning as flawed and not compatible within the realm of the colonial mission. The article described the writers as "bitterly complaining" of the lack of education for girls. Hulstaert cites Antoine-Roger Bolamba's essay "Problèmes de l'évolution de la femme noire essor du Congo" (1949) where Bolamba explained one of the failures to develop education for girls in the Belgian Congo resides in the lack of female colonialists who accompanied the men. The main concern of Bolamba in the text is valorizing a Christian/European style institution of marriage in the Congo as a means to incorporate women and children into the *évolués* society. To challenge Bolamba's thesis, Hulstaert cites another Congolese writer, A.G.

[73] G. Hulstaert. "L'Instruction Des Filles," *Aequatoria*, 14. 4, 1951, pp. 129–130.

Bukasa, who simply states that Congolese parents did not see the importance in educating their daughters, which Hulstaert views as a much more likely reason. He writes, "These [Congolese] authors seem to forget all the immense benefits of which they themselves, their families, and their compatriots have been recipients of the disinterested Christian charity, often heroic, of the missionaries" (129). Hulstaert seeks to dismiss the perspective of the magazine writers, but his engagement with this issue underlines concerns by the Belgian public for the validity of the Congolese writers' reasoning. The *Aequatoria* journal, published from 1937 to 1962, provided a European perspective on colonial practices in the *Congo belge*, but it frequently employed rhetorical discourses to expand Belgian interests in the colonies and further subjugate the Congolese people. The Belgian colonial discourse often tried to embolden itself through the guise of uplifting or civilizing Congolese culture and society. Nevertheless, the subject of education exemplifies how the writers of *La Voix du Congolais* opposed the Belgian regime through the printing press, while possessing their own concepts of cultural identity and social roles in the emerging Congolese nation. The continued insistence on the inclusion of women illustrates a future vision of the *Congo belge* separate from the one imposed by the colonizer, which emphasizes the regional demands of education equality as well as the transnational French language component. The issue of education becomes one of the areas in which the publication puts itself into dialogue or opposition with the restrictions placed on their culture and society.

The active role of women editors and writers in addition to the staunch support for female causes can also be seen across the publication history of *Liaison*. In the first year of the periodical, the seven members of the editorial committee included one woman editor, Mme Barrat-Pepper. By *Liaison*'s ninth year of printing, the editorial committee had grown to 19 members with two women, Mme Céline Yanza and Mme Cabon (Afui Nkili 125). The periodical

supported many initiatives to improve conditions for women, even making efforts to reach out to attract a greater female readership. In 1951, the Congolese politician and writer, Jean Malonga, contributed an article to *Liaison* in which he interviewed 5 female students from the A.E.F. who were studying in Paris. They were asked to share their reactions to the little magazine. Malonga stands out as an eminent historical figure gaining a reputation as a writer as well as winning election as a senator to represent the interests of the colonies in France's fourth republic government from 1948 to 1955.[74] In the interview with the female students, Malonga cites one girl as saying, "Mes amies et moi venons de lire ce petit journal fort intéressant qui s'intitule *Liaison*. Sa lecture nous a sérieusement 'emballées'. On y parle de l'éducation de la femme, du cinéma censuré et propre, du sport, du théâtre, de la musique et de tout ce qui peut intéresser un Aéfien" (*Liaison* 1951).[75] By featuring only females students, this article suggested to the reader that the opinions and articles printed in the little magazine maintained a significant role in the cultural and social values upheld by these prominent students living in Paris. The editorial decision to focus on the opinions of the students pointed to an attempt to reach more women readers including younger women in addition to promoting the accomplishments of female students from the A.E.F. who could compete scholastically in France. Indeed, this interview served the little magazine's objectives to reach not only a large transnational audience, in this case extending from the publication in Brazzaville to the readers in Paris, but also to circulate didactic messages and cultural styles that would influence new concepts of Congolese identity, especially in the transitioning years leading up to decolonization. Furthermore, the little

[74] Jean Malonga's official government biography can be found at: http://www.senat.fr/senateur-4eme-republique/malonga_jean0127r4.html

[75] Jean Malonga. *Liaison*. Vol. 8, 1951, p. 10.

magazine also paid attention to every aspect of daily life and provided guidance on the types of activities or the lifestyle choices that could benefit or harm their respective communities.

In an article published in *Liaison* in 1958, Lazare M'Bemba justified the social importance of the periodical in light of those who dismissed it for literary or political reasons. The article entitled "Beati possidentes" (in Latin) translates to "Heureux ceux qui possèdent" (in French). M'Bemba recounts the story of a friend who refused to write for the periodical, claiming that his French was not good enough as well as the fact that he could not write freely (Afui Nkili 204-05). This satirical rebuke reducing the little magazine to a colonial tool for a limited minority prompted the writer to defend the role of periodicals like *Liaison* that make it their imperative to provide a voice and outlet to their oppressed communities. M'bemba was determined to undermine critiques of the periodical that failed to take into consideration the historical and political contexts that rendered the space of little magazines like *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* so essential to both the literary communities that they served as well as to the wider transnational francophone networks in which they operated. M'bemba states in the article:

> Il ne faut pas perdre de vue le but qui a présidé à la création de *Liaison*, et c'est mal le connaître que de penser de *Liaison* une simple revue à littérature destinée uniquement à distraire ou amuser le lecteur, où les Africains s'essaieraient à la prose et à la versification française. *Liaison* a une visée plus noble: il traite des problèmes fondamentaux de la société africaine; dans *Liaison* nous analysons nos coutumes, appréciant les bonnes, critiquant les vicieuses tout en suggérant des solutions possibles, condamnant les mauvaises; nous y provoquons les dialogues entre Africains de tendances et de vues différentes, entre Français et Africaines...Les uns comme les autres nous y découvrons la pensée et l'âme africaines (*Liaison* 1958).[76]

[76] Lazare M'Bemba. "Beati possidentes," *Liaison*. Vol. 66, 1958.

M'Bemba disputed any reading of the little magazine that reduced its writers and their work to mouthpieces of the civilizing mission or a recapitulation of it. The article reveals how some readers and people living in the A.E.F. took only a feigning interest or had no interest in participating in a literary community or other cultural activities. M'Bemba elevated the endeavors undertaken by *Liaison* as worthy of the elevated social class who contributed to the publication by citing it as "plus noble". Yet, certain subversive elements in the article can be seen in his inclusion of African women in these dialogues as well as his assertion of African intellectualism and individualism ("la pensée et l'âme africaines") in contradiction to the claims imposed by the Belgian and French civilizing mission discourses. The problems and issues touched on in the magazine are framed from both a communal and transnational lens with different sides engaging one another in order to provoke dialogue. Nonetheless, M'Bemba also highlighted the formative role of the little magazine in evaluating or passing judgement on "des solutions possibles" that impacted the "évolués" social class in addition to the A.E.F. region in general. From this perspective, the editors and writers made great efforts to assure their readers that spaces of these periodicals aimed to cultivate members of their own community in order to assist and engage them on the issues they faced daily under colonial rule.

Besides campaigning for increased social rights, *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* worked relentlessly to reconcile traditional African cultural customs and practices with the prevailing social climate under colonialism that undermined or subverted colonial policies. In 1952, *Aequatoria*, ran an article entitled "Cultural Values" that counted three different articles published in the November 1952 issue of *La Voix du Congolais* that promoted indigenous culture.[77] The articles mentioned were written by E. Ngandu on the institutional protection of

[77] V. M. "Valeurs Culturelles," *Aequatoria*, 15. 4, 1952, pp. 146–147.

cultural beliefs and productions of the Congolese people, by M.B. Molengo on preserving the indigenous languages of the region, and an article by Fr. Anki called “De notre musique”. The first article by Ngandu spoke more generally about the preservation of traditional customs, institutions, and practices. He was critiqued by the Belgian author for failing to understand that any threat to the colonial order jeopardized the benefits of the system for future generations. The article by M.B. Molengo called into question why the Congolese did not preserve their native languages when speaking with their families or community members. In describing Molengo’s argument, the author said, “He [Molengo] notices that the Whites preserve their native language in the Congo and they teach it to their children. He reasons that the Congolese should do the same” (V.M. 146). This article from Belgium illustrates that the little magazine was monitored from abroad to analyze and document the *évolués* class. It provides evidence that that the writers of *La Voix du Congolais* were heavily invested in widening the notions of Congolese cultural identity in the social spaces dominated by colonial influence and propaganda.

By valorizing Congolese and African cultural customs and practices, little magazines were able to subvert colonial censorship restricting the periodicals from engaging in politics. The deconstruction of colonial linguistic restrictions and reductive racial discourses by *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* through the promotion of African and Black writers and accomplishments resulted in further destabilization of the colonial hierarchy built on African oppression. In *African Print Cultures*, Derek R. Peterson and Emma Hunter confirmed that newspapers and periodicals played a critical role in the demographic enlargement of politics and in gathering popular support in the composition of African nationalism during the 20th century (17). *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* developed as vital spaces in which to engage a Franco-Congolese audience and to experiment with new concepts of their cultural and national identities not already

predetermined by the colonial regime. At the end of the article "Cultural Values", the author warns of the inevitable liberation movements to come, many of which were already reshaping politics on the African continent. The author observed how "The danger resides in the indiscriminate rejection of [Congolese] cultural contributions, like they all have shouted *en bloc*" (V.M. 147). The article also pointed out the destructive and unforeseen consequences of constantly devaluing the cultural practices and regional identities of the Congolese people. The editors and writers of *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* took it upon themselves to demonstrate how the expanding identity of the *évolués* class was instrumental to all aspects of Congolese life from art, domestic affairs, education, to politics and religion. These little magazines played a foundational role in diffusing pertinent cultural representations, which in turn boosted and glorified the members of this growing social group as well as the cultural values of the emerging independent nations. Acts of subversion became a connecting thread through the various issues of the publications leading up to decolonization, appearing in articles and editorials on all topics, including the literary pieces themselves and in reviews.

Conclusion: Writing for the Future

The study of little magazines like *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* reveals some of the dissident methods used by writers to oppose colonialism as well as their efforts to develop a Franco-Congolese literary canon and cultural identity. After winning the prestigious *Prix littéraire de la foire coloniale à Bruxelles*, the periodical *Présence Africaine* interviewed the 1949 winner, Étienne Ngandu, about his motivations as a writer. He remarked, "J'ai collaboré également à la '*Voix du Congolais*'. Dans cette revue, j'ai posé notamment la question: Quelle sera notre place dans le monde de demain? Cet article souleva certaines polémiques, mais amena

sur le tapis le problème du statut des évolués" (316).[78] Ngandu highlighted the innovative work of the magazine in imagining an independent Congolese society in addition to the importance that art and culture could potentially play once that society was realized. The collected editorials, poems, and fictional writings of these magazines contributed to the formation of a new period in Franco-Congolese literature that would take off in the years after independence in 1960. Bolamba, Lomami-Tchibamba, Ngandu, and the other writers of *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* launched the immense effort to define and expand Franco-Congolese identities amidst colonial oppression during the important years leading up to decolonization.

The two little magazines of this study faced many challenges in reaching as great an audience as they desired while trying to resolve questions tied to education, readership, and circulation. Having said this, what remains clear is that their efforts contributed at multiple levels in shaping identity and literature in meaningful ways. The evidence previously cited illustrates the regional and transnational circulation networks *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* managed to achieve with distribution reaching from Brazzaville to the interior regions of Chad, and the Central African Republic. Further, the little magazines were also distributed in European capitals like Brussels and Paris where they were read by African migrants and students, in addition to European colonialists. These periodicals were also read by some of the leading Black intellectuals of the mid-20th century from other francophone regions, such as the Martinican René Maran and the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor (Afui Nkili 359). However, readership of the little magazines remained confined to a limited audience, and ultimately never truly reached wide public support or engagement. The narrow distribution of colonial education to a minority of the population certainly played a significant role in the reception of these periodicals.

[78] "L'Auteur de 'Ngandu' Nous Parle," *Présence africaine*, 7, 1949, pp. 314–316.

Additionally, the financial burdens and labor intensity sometimes lead to uncertain publication dates factors that may have turned readers away. After six years of publication, Lomami-Tchibamaba was disappointed to number only 150 subscribers to his little magazine, in spite of the enormous effort put into each issue of *Liaison*. The scholar Livy Afui Nkili has concluded that the irregularity of publication was one factor, but another major factor may have been the system of freely distributing the periodicals at local cultural centers for anyone to pick up, which may have prevented readers from actually taking out a subscription. Lomami-Tchibamba proposed a new annual based subscription system to better cultivate a loyal readership, and the little magazine even ran advertisements using the revenues to boost the imagery and format of *Liaison* hoping to attract a wider audience (146-47). Finally, the limited readership must also be considered a consequence of general disinterest for literary texts and pursuits among some segments of the population as is indeed the case in all societies with print media where little magazines are reduced to a more niche segment of the publication industry.

The articles and literary works published over the years in *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* constitute an important collection of texts in the rise of both Congolese and francophone literatures. The publications provided a window into the thoughts and concerns of the *évolués* class for the colonial regime, but additionally, they supplied a literal and metaphoric voice for a burgeoning intellectual class of Congolese artists and writers. Achille Mbembe has exposed the overlap between colonialism with culture and language in his book *On the Postcolony*, "The violence insinuates itself into the economy, domestic life, language, consciousness. It does more than penetrate every space: it pursues the colonized even in sleep and dream. It produces a culture: it is a praxis" (175).[79] Although the French language is central to the cultural identity

[79] Achille Mbembe. *On the Postcolony*. Translated by Steven Rendall. Berkeley : University of California Press, 2001.

and literary productions circulated by the periodicals published under colonial rule, this critical reading of these little magazines reveals a more inclusive approach to the ways these identities and productions were formed. This is seen when indigenous languages were allowed in the literary competitions of *La Voix du Congolais* and the repeated pleas by both little magazines to broaden the rights and opportunities for women. Both the literature and the writers remained engaged with the different languages and cultures of the Congo and other central African regions deemed inextricable elements in their efforts to shape a postcolonial Congolese society. The writers and editors cultivated their periodicals into an educational space to develop concepts of cultural identity based on both regional and transnational values. Identifying the subversive components of the periodicals serves to demonstrate the significance of literary form and genre in their attempts to engage readers. The specific forms and genre published by the little magazines unveil the global networks in which the writers operated by reimagining the form or genre of various African or European influences through their own unique interpretations and positions in society. *La Voix du Congolais* and *Liaison* exhibit how little magazines furnished new concepts of literature and identity in Francophone Africa while expanding local cultural spaces in the face of colonial oppression.

Chapter 3: Toward an *Éducation-monde*: From the *Littérature-monde en français* Movement to Macron's "*récit national*"

Introduction

March 15, 2007 has turned out to be an important date in the history of French literature and in thinking about its position in the library of global literary production. The publication of the "*Pour une 'littérature-monde' en français*"[80] ("Toward a World Literature in French"[81]) manifesto in *Le Monde des livres* on this day triggered a major public debate to which many writers, scholars, and public figures contributed in Europe, North America, Africa, and elsewhere for many years afterward. While some people found the manifesto to be a long overdue critique of the French literary establishment that is centered primarily in Paris, many others were caught off guard when the signatories of the manifesto declared the end of the social and theoretical construct of *la Francophonie*. A term once used to encapsulate the geographical territories and people that employ the French language but live outside of France. Over time, the term has taken on the meaning as a catch all category to classify a wide range of artists and writers from vastly different parts of the globe. The world literature in French manifesto proclaims, "Soyons clairs: l'émergence d'une littérature-monde en langue française consciemment affirmée, ouverte sur le monde, transnationale, signe l'acte de décès de la francophonie. Personne ne parle le francophone, ni n'écrit en francophone. La francophonie est de la lumière d'étoile morte" (Mar. 15, 2007). However, rather than address the merits of world literature as the manifesto suggested, the ensuing debates gravitated instead around the axioms of French education in connection to identity, literature, and politics. In many ways, one could

[80] Michel Le Bris, et al. "Pour une 'littérature-monde' en français." *Le Mode de livres*. March, 15 2007.

[81] Trans. Daniel Simon. "Toward a 'World Literature' in French." World Literature Today, vol. 14, no. 1, Jan. 8, 2010, pp. 113–117.

argue that these debates culminated in 2017 when now presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron contrasted with the manifesto's appeal for a global expansion of French literature with what he described as the emergence of a "*récit national*" (national narrative or novel) in what ended up being a widely circulated media interview.[82] Between 2007 and 2017, the evolution of French literary and political discourses reflect the greater sociopolitical climate struggling with issues of diversity, globalization, and nationalism that are mediated through educational spaces and practices.

This chapter investigates how ideologies and methods related to French education were linked discursively to the *littérature-monde* debates and ultimately emerged as what many have seen as the foremost problematic over this 10-year period. The examination of these discourses used by proponents and critics of world literature reveals that both sides of the debate recognize the role of education to be a principal culprit perpetuating ideologies and practices that divorce writers working in French from those who are considered French writers. By studying the articles and speeches centered on world literature in French from 2007 to 2017 as an ongoing communal dialogue, new insights emerge on the evolving status of literature in connection to education and politics during this time. Throughout the chapter, the term French education is used primarily in a general sense to mean any classroom in which French language acquisition or literary pedagogy is incorporated whether in or out of France. Whenever the scholars and writers cited below make a specific reference to either language acquisition, literary pedagogy, or even a specific educational institution, I attempt to distinguish clearly which facet of education is referenced and the given context in which it was exclaimed. Since the academic and public figures who discussed these issues utilized a variety of media and scholastic platforms, the

[82] "L'imaginaire historique d'Emmanuel Macron," *La Fabrique de l'histoire*, March, 9, 2017.

primary sources of this chapter are drawn from articles in academic journals, newspaper articles and opinion pieces, as well as news and radio interviews. The wide reach and long duration of the discussions of the manifesto's merits or applicability in the years after its publication underscore its impact throughout the global community.

By highlighting the theme of education, the cultural and social problems tied to French literature during this time frame are unveiled from an analysis of the debates on world literature in French versus Francophonie and nationalism. In the first section of the chapter, I explain the importance of reading the 2007 manifesto alongside Macron's 2017 interview as two significant historical literary events competing over the application and interpretation of French literary texts. This section analyzes how these two events employed discourses of French education in contrasting ways to advance their own ideologies illustrating the divide between the literary and political worlds according to Pascale Casanova's definition.[83] The assertion that the literary world and the political world operate at different historical and temporal levels allows scholars to examine the ways different social issues tied to education are treated in each context. Next, I demonstrate how the academic and public discourses between 2007 and 2017 shifted from focusing on concepts of world literature to debating the axioms of education in relation to social divisions as well as on perceptions of French identity and assimilation. I find both proponents and critics of world literature in French indict educational practices as a crucial site to address the issues of cultural and social inclusion in France. Lastly, instead of trying to define or conceive a framework for world literature in French, I propose that educational discourses and practices, specifically language acquisition and literary pedagogy, must transition away from the systematic and institutionalized nationalist frameworks. New approaches in the 21st century must

[83] Pascale Casanova. *The World Republic of Letters*. Translated by M.B. DeBevoise, Harvard University Press, 2004.

include a broader conception of French education, or what may be called an *éducation-monde*. This paradigm shift recognizes that educators and teachers play a pivotal role in the discourses and values transmitted through cultural studies that have the possibility to either preserve existing hierarchies and power structures or work toward equity and inclusion. This re-conception of French education should be expounded from a consideration of previous scholarship drawn from a number of fields in addition to being situated in a greater global context that incorporates an emphasis on the cultural and geographic diversity of French speaking communities.

From *Littérature-monde* to *récit national*

First, what are the circumstances leading the *Littérature-monde* manifesto and Macron's *récit national* to conflict over the instruction of French literature? The discourse of the 2007 manifesto and the expanded follow-up publication edited by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud released the same year, *Pour une littérature-monde*, highlight a variety of topics, such as social exclusion, economic divisions, and systematic prejudices that negatively affect the circulation and reception of literature produced in the French language.[84] The signatories of the manifesto included some of the most recognizable and acclaimed writers in the French language, many who were born or currently reside *outside* of France. Some of the signatories included Muriel Barbery, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Maryse Condé, Didier Daeninckx, Ananda Devi, Édouard Glissant, Nancy Huston, J.M.G. Le Clézio, Alain Mabanckou amongst many others. Even after the manifesto's publication, many of the signatories continued to speak out about the issues the manifesto highlighted, in the media and in their own writings, thereby helping to advance the dialogue around the merits of world literature as well as France's role in excluding people from

[84] Michel Le Bris, and Jean Rouaud, editors. *Pour une Littérature-monde*. Gallimard, 2007.

certain cultural backgrounds from accessing certain opportunities and spaces for not matching a certain racial or social profile. Eventually, Emmanuel Macron's election to the French presidency in 2017 brought along new cultural and social policies trying to unite the French republic and bolster France's relationship with the other nations of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF). To support his policies, Macron launched a new cultural campaign by conducting interviews on the subject with leading media outlets and attempting to recruit French cultural figures, including past signatories of the manifesto, which resulted in the direct conflict between the manifesto's proclamations and Macron's nationalistic posturing. The purpose of this section is to show how both the *littérature-monde en français* movement and Macron's language and cultural policies both propose the field of education as the site to implement social changes according to their respective ideologies and interpretation of French literature. The juxtaposition of the *littérature-monde* manifesto with Macron's *récit national* demonstrates the disconnect of the literary and political worlds that can be bridged through discourses and institutions of education.

In March 2007, the signatories of the manifesto turn to France's colonial past to establish the current cultural divide between the realities of the writers working in the French language and the publishing and media enterprises that are integral to literary circulation. The manifesto asserts that the French literary establishment, centered in Paris, perpetuates a *mission civilisatrice* style commercial system that creates neocolonial hierarchies reminiscent of the past. Accordingly, this system allows the past colonial method of using cultural productions to transmit imperial policies upholding French superiority through educational practices that continue in the present day. The manifesto declares:

> Combien d'écrivains de langue française, pris eux aussi entre deux ou plusieurs cultures, se sont interrogés alors sur cette étrange disparité qui les reléguait sur les marges, eux

> "francophones", variante exotique tout juste tolérée [...] Ou bien reconnaître que le problème tenait au milieu littéraire lui-même, à son étrange art poétique tournant comme un derviche tourneur sur lui-même, et à cette vision d'une francophonie sur laquelle une France mère des arts, des armes et des lois continuait de dispenser ses lumières, en bienfaitrice universelle, soucieuse d'apporter la civilisation aux peuples vivant dans les ténèbres? (Mar. 15, 2007).

These remarks connect a contemporary mindset privileging cultural productions that are perceived as nationally French over others that emerge from different parts of the French speaking world. The signatories criticize these previous justifications for colonialism in which France was purported an obligation to bring its civilization to other cultures. The manifesto stresses France's civilizing mission to be a critical historical factor that actively worked to quell competition of canonical French cultural productions devaluing non-French cultural productions in the process as less civilized or cultivated. Further, the civilizing mission's use of "arts, arms, and laws" developed under the Third Republic regime politicized certain social spaces, the school for example, in France and the colonies to uphold notions of French superiority over competing local cultures and languages. The social policies transmitted as knowledge by colonial institutions, such as hospitals, the media and schools, across the empire affected the circulation and reception of literature produced in the French language by valorizing writers who embodied the values most aligned with the government. Therefore, the manifesto criticizes this mindset in the 21st century that glorifies literature for exploitative reasons that benefit the economic elite or nationalist political agendas.

When the manifesto asks if one must recognize the problem is with the literary milieu itself, the signatories question the ways French literature is both beholden to the colonial past and perpetuates contemporary social issues, like lack of diversity, economic instability and globalization. To better understand how literature operates in comparison to society and politics, Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* and Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest*

provide the theoretical frameworks that outline how language and education are each beholden to literary and political spaces through complex social networks.[85] First, Casanova demonstrates the notion of an international literary space, or the world republic of letters, is a useful tool showing that the literary world works in conjunction and independently from the historical or political world. The literary world (*littérature-monde*) is understood to be a long historical process through which international literature- literary creation, freed from its political and national dependencies- has progressively invented itself (Casanova xii). Importantly, the independent literary world maintains its own borders and capitals, circulates its own currency, and operates according to its own rules of space and time distinctive from the historical, political world (Casanova 4). From this perspective, the manifesto is an effort by the signatories to distance French literature from its nationally politicized history and expand its borders to include a greater number of participants. However, the literary world is still tethered to other worlds through the use of language, which functions as both a literary tool and political instrument (Casanova 115). This politicization of language and literature is at the heart of Viswanathan's study on the institution, practice, and ideology of English studies in India, which was first introduced under British colonial rule. Her study analyzes the ways colonial imperatives altered the content and curriculum of English studies to a discourse or process for political and social control. Importantly, she establishes that literary education and pedagogy, not literature itself, was a major institutional support system of the colonial administration (Viswanathan 3). Though Viswanathan's work focuses on the British context, it provides a critical understanding to deconstruct France's civilizing mission, which relied heavily on the instruction of the nation's

[85] Gauri Viswanathan. *Masks of Conquest*: *Literary Study and British Rule in India*. Columbia University Press, 1988.

long history of glorifying its most esteemed philosophers and writers to promote concepts of French superiority in France and abroad.

My objective in reading Casanova and Viswanathan together is to provide a historical and theoretical framework to demonstrate the role that educational discourses and institutions play over time from French colonial history to the present, ultimately resulting in the *Littérature-monde* movement and culminating with Macron's *récit national*. Establishing the different temporal and ethical spaces that politicians and writers occupy and work within helps explain why the leading writers and cultural figures, such as the signatories of the manifesto, are unable to enact immediate change upon the manifesto's publication, whether within the Parisian literary establishment or out in the greater French society. Rather, the literary world and the writers who primarily inhabit those spaces respond and adopt to cultural and social changes at different speeds than the politicians in the historical, political world who must incorporate their own set of customs and values. Without obtaining subsequent political or social support from the French government and society, the primary power of the manifesto lies in making known the pervading neocolonial ideologies and practices still operating in the global French literary space in addition to the social institutions affiliated with literature like publishers, media outlets, and universities. Social institutions like these function as bridges between worlds connected by shared language and providing glimpses into the ways these spaces interact in conjunction and separately. Viswanathan's study illustrates the ways these institutions can be wielded to affect social change and implement political initiatives. Yet, out of all the institutions cited as continuing this exclusionary and divisive mindset in France, the site of the school and the field of education are most heavily critiqued by the signatories of the manifesto and the participants in the ensuing debates over the years.

The theme of education begins to emerge early on in the collected writings of the *littérature-monde* movement as a critical site impacting the circulation and reception of French literature. The signatories of the manifesto deride the limitations that French politics and society impose on education related to the classification and instruction of literature, which prevent it from progressing beyond the political and national dependencies outlined by Casanova and Viswanathan. In looking specifically at the national French education system, Michel Le Bris states in his expanded essay, published in the collection *Pour une littérature-monde*, that high schools and universities in France reduce literature and literary studies to dogmas through theoretical practices like deconstruction. Le Bris remarks, "This reductive conception of literature is also abundantly represented amongst journalists who write about books and are even writers themselves. Should we be astonished? The latter have all attended [French] schools, many amongst them from the *facultés des lettres*" (31).[86] He indicts the education system for narrowly defining French literature as a mere pedagogical or rhetorical tool to instruct outdated philosophies. By connecting the French schools and students with the journalist, publishers, and writers that they will grow up to be, Le Bris illustrates how institutions and discourses tied to French education impacts the potential ways literature is circulated and received within the country. Rather, he condemns the literary establishment for maintaining rigid divisions on the classification and instruction of literature in the French language based on the country of origin, or even ancestry, of the writer within the French speaking world. For Le Bris and the other signatories, this nationalistic mindset stands in contrast with the present-day realities of where French literature is currently produced and by whom when one considers the diverse cultural backgrounds of France's top prize winning and best-selling authors. For Casanova, this

[86] Michel Le Bris. "Pour une littérature monde". *Pour une littérature monde*. Ed. Le Bris and Rouaud. Gallimard, 2007. 23-54.

disconnect is a part of the key to understanding how the literary world operates, which lies in recognizing that its boundaries, capitals, highways, and its forms of communication do not completely coincide with those of the political and economic world (11). The signatories of the manifesto strive to progress the boundaries of the literary world, yet outside this space these progressive efforts fail to gain traction due to a reliance on nationalistic policies and systematic structures that obstruct the path of minority identities and voices to advance outside of certain social classifications or spaces.

Furthermore, the *littérature-monde* movement faults institutions of education for politicizing the relationship between language and literature for taxonomy and identification purposes that reaffirm ethnic and social divisions. Maryse Condé critically analyzes her own relationship with the French language as a writer who grew up in Martinique, one of the overseas departments of France, in her essay "*Liaison dangereuse*" for the *Pour une littérature-monde* collection.[87] She begins her essay by prefacing, "J'aime à répéter que je n'écris ni en français ni en créole. Mais en Maryse Condé" (205). This assertion of individuality by the writer acknowledges the inherent stigmas of language with which writers, especially those working in the language of a former colonizing nation, are confronted with when they pursue their art. The ideas behind world literature in French are meant to help depoliticize the role of language as the primary literary tool and rethink modes of classifying or identifying writers in the ever-evolving global literary system. Nonetheless, educational discourses and spaces continue to operate based on governmental policies passed down by the nationalist political agendas and exclusionary capitalist systems that often regulate or support them financially. As previously pointed to in the manifesto, Condé locates the source of contention with regards to the politicization of language,

[87] Maryse Condé. "*Liaison dangereuse*". *Pour une littérature monde*. Ed. Le Bris and Rouaud. Gallimard, 2007. 205-16.

and in her case the issue of French versus creole in a Caribbean context, stemming from the institutionalization of education by French colonization. She states, "À la fin du XIX^{e} siècle, l'entrée dans les écoles de la République consacra la marginalisation du créole qui avait permis la communication. L'enfant qui parlait créole était humilié, coiffé d'un bonnet d'âne et mis au piquet dans la cour. Or l'Antillais aime le créole. C'est son double" (Condé 206). The suppression of creole under French colonialism in the Caribbean presents a specific example of educational institutions transmitting oppressive policies to eliminate the competition of French language and culture amongst local communities under imperial control. The French regime actively hunted out and punished these threats in order to facilitate the cultural and economic extraction of local resources over successive generations. Additionally, the legacies of these discourses and initiatives that bolster French superiority continue to circulate in social institutions like education and government impacting the everyday speech and practices of people within today's interconnected world.

Maryse Condé and many other signatories of the manifesto have firsthand experience and direct knowledge of the cultural and linguistic oppression waged by France over time, which complicates their relation to the French language as the primary tool to complete their literary work. In her essay, Condé rejects the notion that the language was given to her when she echoes Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur colonialisme* in explaining that the procedures of colonialization cannot be considered or regarded as acts of exchange since colonial ideology is solely based on dominating and silencing another culture (Césaire 22, Condé 213).[88] Césaire and Condé are writing to dismantle the dominant European discourses propagating the supposed beneficial elements of colonialism, which was essential to the success of France's *mission civilisatrice*. The

[88] Aimé Césaire. *Discours sur colonialisme*. Présence Africaine, 1955.

two writers want to show instead how this destructive history is actually the result of a damaged culture invading another, rather than an inferior culture being invaded. For Condé, she realizes that the French language was passed onto her by her parents who had no choice but to encourage their daughter to learn the language providing her an advantage in the unequal environment in which they lived. Condé critiques the colonial education system for producing nothing more than workers who advance the imperial objectives across the empire, "C'est contrainte et forcée qu'elle [la colonisation] bâtit quelques écoles dans l'intention de former les subalternes dont elle a besoin" (Condé 213). From this perspective, institutions of education and the language they instructed was a means to dominate and gain control. Condé connects the French colonial school to her complicated relationship to the French language to underscore how each function in conjunction with the other to inform social behavior, patterns, and values. This is significant in understanding how the linguistic practices and literary cultures in many of today's Western societies are rooted in an imperialized past that resurfaces in different ways in the present. These ways are eventually revealed when one of the signatories openly debates these issues with the President of the French republic ten years after the manifesto's initial publication.

The messages of inclusivity and openness in French education and literature proposed by the *littérature-monde* movement are implicitly contested in the public arena due to an emerging political movement relying primarily on nationalist fervor. Between 2007 and 2017, France and many other European and American countries experienced widespread social movements and protests leading to more sharply divided economic and political lines that shifted conversations on the role of culture in relation to politics. In France, the 2017 presidential elections brought French culture to the forefront of the media's attention as politicians evoked relics and tropes of the country's past to appeal to a wider audience. Turning to France's exalted literary history,

Emmanuel Macron launched the cultural talking points of his presential campaign platform based on the national valorization of the country as a global leader in the international literary community. This tactic took a more general approach to counter the highly targeted cultural and social messages of his opponent, Marie Le Pen of the National Front party.[89] Macron attempted to reaffirm the national politicization of French literature through education as an attempt to unify a fractured society before the upcoming election. In an interview on social identity with the program *La Fabrique de l'histoire* on the media platform *France Culture*, Macron said:

> Quand je parle de "récit national", je pense que c'est une fonction de l'enseignement de l'Histoire et c'est la partie éminemment politique. Ce n'est pas un roman totalitaire, ce n'est pas une vérité d'État qui doit être enseignée à nos élèves sans aucun recul […] Dans le roman national, il y a des grands repères qui aident à construire notre appartenance à la Nation, qui sont le rapport à notre Histoire et à ses grandes figures que sont les Clovis, les Jeanne d'Arc etc. Dans ces grandes figures françaises se cristallisent notre rapport à une continuité dans le temps, à l'énergie du peuple français, à une aspiration à la liberté, à l'indépendance, et évidemment le rapport au moment fondateur qu'est la Révolution française, le rapport à la laïcité… Ces blocs que nous avons dans notre Histoire constituent le roman national, l'adhésion à la Nation et à la République (March 9, 2017).[90]

The future president recalls medieval French history and figures as a reference for another time when the divided French people struggled amongst one another and rallied around polarizing figures. He views this connection with the past as an existing continuity with the present, yet this approach fails to realize the complex modern social dynamics, such as race and migration, which complicate the relevance of this history in a globalized French-speaking world. Macron turns to educational discourse and institutions in order to circulate and validate this revisionist history. Further, he suggests confining the boundaries of French literature by selecting literary texts that align with his political policies to reaffirm the central government and the nation-state as leading

[89] In June 2018, the political party changed their name to the National Rally, or *Rassemblement national*.

[90] See footnote 2.

influences in social discourses and cultural identity. Whereas the *littérature-monde* manifesto wants to expand the French literary space for more global participation, especially from underrepresented French-speaking communities in formerly colonized regions, Macron hopes to diminish this cultural space to serve as a political tool appealing to people across the political spectrum to unite a nation plagued by socio-economic divisions. The presidential candidate Macron reprises these beliefs in another interview where he places more emphasis on sites of education, similar to the signatories of the manifesto, to transmit and to enact his nationalistic ideology.

Over the course of his campaign and into his presidency, Emmanuel Macron extends his political platform to further expand the role of the central government into French literary and cultural spaces globally. While revealing his plans for the nation's education system, Macron tries to re-establish the space of the school to become the primary conduit to address social change and an individual's relationship to the French nation. Two weeks after his initial remarks on *France* Culture, Macron expounds on his ideas in a follow-up interview with another publication *L'Histoire*:

> J'ai parlé de roman ou de récit national parce que précisément je ne crois pas à la segmentation de notre histoire en épisodes clos sur eux-mêmes. Je n'ignore pas qu'il existe des filiations profondes dans notre horizon national […] Nous devons aussi retrouver l'intelligence de ce qui, dans notre roman national, nous vient d'ailleurs. Le projet national français n'a jamais été un projet clos : il a été un projet de conquête mais aussi le récipient d'influences variées venues du monde entier – il n'est pas de France sans influences italiennes, espagnoles, anglaises, allemandes, et plus tard orientales, maghrébines, africaines, américaines, asiatiques… Notre culture s'honore d'être le fruit de ce syncrétisme, c'est pourquoi j'ai dit qu'il n'y avait pas une culture française : elle ne s'est jamais construite dans la poursuite imaginaire de racines populaires définissant une culture nationale – contrairement par exemple à ce que firent les Allemands de Herder à Heidegger –, mais dans l'ouverture au grand large, dans la confrontation avec l'ailleurs. La culture française laisse à l'Autre une place immense et c'est ce qui la rend si riche : c'est par essence une culture du dialogue, de l'accueil, de l'intelligence du monde. La

> culture française est une parce qu'elle est diverse, comme l'est notre histoire. Voilà tout ce que l'éducation nationale a pour mission de transmettre. (March 23, 2017).[91]

This citation linking the institution of education with the transmission of collective identity through French literature reduces both this education and literature to a political function at the service of changing ideological tides. Recalling Viswanathan's analysis of colonial British education, social institutions like schools and media outlets were vital mechanisms through which knowledge is socially distributed and culturally validated (3). Macron's explicit educational interventions to shape national identity within the space of the school and to reform literary pedagogy harkens back to the colonial discourses and policies that were employed to advance imperial imperatives under the French civilizing mission. The civilizing mission used culture and language to promote concepts of French superiority to justify the expense of colonialism to citizens in the metropole, while proliferating these concepts across the empire as scholastic knowledge. For Macron in the 21st century, he plans to apply a similar strategy domestically through the education system to boost nationalistic morale and perceptions of identity to discourage further social fracturing and upheaval. Rather than expand the boundaries of the French literary space to include more cultural capitals and participation, Macron's position re-solidifies the former colonial hierarchy centering on Paris and leaving the cultural "Others" on the periphery. These nationalist driven policies assume it is in their best political interest to restrict certain types of cultural productions and representations that fail to align with their objectives in crafting social cohesion and national identity. Macron's speeches proposing new political applications on literature and education was critiqued widely by academics and journalists across the political spectrum in addition to the signatories of the *littérature-monde* movement.

[91] "Emmanuel Macron: 'Réconcilier les mémoires'," *L'Histoire*, March 23, 2017.

Consequently, Macron's *récit national* started attracting the attention of academics, journalists, and writers with different political ideologies reacting or responding in the media, almost all expressing a lack of support in Macron's proposals. In an article in *Le Figaro*, a French newspaper with more conservative leaning opinion editorials,[92] one opinion piece asked "L'Emmanuel Macron de Jeanne d'Arc, du Puy-du-fou et du récit national a-t-il jamais existé?".[93] This article helps to date the early iterations of Macron's campaign platform to 2016 when the then Minister Macron delivered several addresses calling for a new revalorization of French history. Specifically, he often praises Joan of Arc at various events and in interviews as an emblem of French identity and history that modern society can relate to for her dedication to certain values in the face of extreme challenges. The conservative editorial lambasts Macron for choosing to highlight Joan of Arc as a noble figure of history but finds him a hypocrite for Macron's condemning speech of Algerian colonization as an act of betrayal to the *harkis* and *pied noirs* groups. For a left of center perspective in *Le Monde*, the historian, Nicolas Offenstadt, rebukes Macron's position for being too out of touch with the realities of the education system and presenting cliché political tactics and tropes.[94] Offenstadt explains:

> Il n'y a jamais eu un seul roman national, même si celui de la France comporte souvent les mêmes matrices, les mêmes thèmes, les mêmes épisodes. Il peut ainsi y avoir un roman national de « gauche », qui raconte une grande histoire émancipatrice qui serait spécifique à la France, en donnant à la Révolution française un rôle central. Mais ces discours et ces récits ne sont pas, heureusement, transposés directement dans les programmes scolaires, qui sont du domaine de compétence de l'institution éducative et doivent répondre à bien d'autres logiques (Nov. 8, 2018).

[92] "The Press in France," *BBC News*, Nov. 11, 2006.

[93] Arnaud Benedetti. "L'Emmanuel Macron de Jeanne d'Arc, du Puy-du-fou et du récit national a-t-il jamais existé?," *Le Figaro*, Feb. 17, 2017.

[94] Cédric Pietralunga. "Centenaire du 11-Novembre: 'Le roman national est une croyance,'" *Le Monde*, Nov. 8, 2018.

The historian notes the recycled historical talking points often employed by Macron's predecessors in France over time since the revolution that venerate well-known historical events and figures to gather supporters. Macron's concepts on the *récit ou roman national* were doomed to fail from this perspective since political parties from all sides are drawing from the same source of events and figures that are remodeled to fit the respective political narrative. Offenstadt points out that modern political discourses and policies operate in their own spaces that no longer maintain direct control over social institutions, like schools, in the same way they did under colonialism. While institutions of education are still beholden to the governing state in many circumstances, it is also a public space that attracts a variety of involvement from different social groups, such as activists, artists, educators, scientists, writers, etc., who contribute to the development of educational curriculums and practices. The competition to control educational institutions and pedagogies exists due to these spaces impact on collective and individual identity, which effects a nation's cultural, economic, and social productions. On May 14, 2017, Emmanuel Macron assumed the office of the French presidency, and not long after, his nationalist posturing was eventually addressed directly in the media by the signatories of the manifesto demonstrating the relevance of this debate over this ten-year period.

Following his electoral victory, President Macron's political speeches at home and abroad related to education and culture begin to raise alarm in the media for their exploitative and seemingly out of date imperial initiatives. In November 2017, the cultural debate turned political controversy initially began with a widely criticized speech given by Macron in front of 800 students at the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso.[95] In the speech, he spoke of his pride in the French language for its global presence and for allowing him, a "provincial" boy, to

[95] *Le Monde* avec AFP. "Macron Au Burkina Faso, Première Étape De Sa Tournée Africaine," *Le Monde*, 28 Nov. 2017.

ascend to the French presidency (Nov. 29, 2017).[96] This along with other remarks that misconstrue the historical power dynamics between France and Africa were criticized for their tone-deaf nature in respect to the setting and audience. Macron vowed to promote French to be the leading language in Africa, and perhaps the world, in addition to strengthening the relations between the nations of *la Francophonie*. With regards to education, Macron proclaimed:

> Et j'aurai deux priorités, d'abord, je veux que la France s'engage massivement pour contribuer à la formation des professeurs, le ministre de l'Éducation nationale qui m'accompagne dans ce déplacement est tout particulièrement engagé dans ce combat, nous prendrons des engagements concrets, mais il est indispensable que la France aide tous les États d'Afrique qui le veulent pour réussir cette bataille contre l'obscurantisme, à former les enseignants, et à construire justement la stratégie qui permettra de former les esprits partout sur le territoire. Ensuite, je serai aux côtés de tous les chefs d'État et de gouvernements africains qui feront le choix de la scolarisation obligatoire des jeunes filles (Nov. 29, 2017).

After his speech, the president held a question-and-answer session with the students "*sans filtre*" in spite of student organization protests against the French presence as well as a small-scale attack on the French army leading up to Macron's arrival (Nov. 29, 2017). The proposal for France to train instructors to educate the masses of different nations across Africa emulates the previous colonial model of education, which granted African students the opportunity to receive a higher education in the metropole before being shipped across the empire to fulfill various bureaucratic or academic positions that are needed. This policy of privileged mobility allowing certain migrant social classes to relocate out of Africa more easily creates a brain drain type of pattern that funnels the most academically inclined students into the French system. Rather than trying to bolster educational institutions on the African continent that prioritize regional cultures and languages, Macron's proposal affirms the central position of the French linguistic and cultural legacy on the African continent that facilitates the flow of economic and social capital

[96] Emmanuel Macron. "Le Discours De Ouagadougou d'Emmanuel Macron," Le Monde, Nov. 29, 2017.

toward Europe. These collected speeches of Macron over time illustrate his intentions not only to strengthen the presence of the nation-state through cultural assimilation, but also the aspiration to establish further France's control at the head of the global French speaking community. It was precisely speeches like this that presented social policies and programs reminiscent of past imperialist endeavors that re-introduced the problems raised by the *littérature-monde* manifesto back into the public domain.

By January 2018, President Macron prepared to launch his project bolstering *la Francophonie* with France fixed at the center of the organization's identity and operations when he and his administration faced a series of major rebukes to their nationalist objectives. To promote his plans, the President asked two successful and well-known French writers to assist in his work, the *Prix Goncourt* winner, Leïla Slimani, and *Prix Renaudot* winner and manifesto signatory, Alain Mabanckou. As prize-winning and widely read authors in France with origins from other parts of the francophone world, Slimani from Morocco and Mabanckou from the Republic of Congo, Macron attempts to expand his ideologically driven policies within the different nations of the OIF to bolster France's social impact. Additionally, he counted on Slimani and Mabanckou to lend his political platforms a respective cultural value brought by attaching the prestige of these two writers to his policies. While Slimani agreed to assist with Macron's French language and culture initiatives throughout the OIF, Mabanckou declined the offer for opposing his cultural and political ideologies. To explain exactly why he declined, Mabanckou released an open letter to President Macron online, not exactly a new manifesto, but he explained to the President how his specific approach to France and *la Francophonie* proved problematic and reiterated several points brought up by *littérature-monde* on inclusivity. Mabankou details how the discourses and policies proposed by the president reinforce

neocolonial practices and exacerbate existing social divisions within the French speaking world. Mabanckou states in the open letter:

> Qu'est-ce qui a changé de nos jours ? La Francophonie est malheureusement encore perçue comme la continuation de la politique étrangère de la France dans ses anciennes colonies. Repenser la Francophonie ce n'est pas seulement "protéger" la langue française qui, du reste n'est pas du tout menacée comme on a tendance à le proclamer dans un élan d'auto-flagellation propre à la France. La culture et la langue françaises gardent leur prestige sur le plan mondial. (Jan. 15, 2018).[97]

This citation echoes the previous statements of the *littérature-monde* manifesto on the historic continuity of economic and cultural exploitation, while also directly responding to the Macron's platform reaffirming France's global prowess through politicized cultural education and training. Mabanckou goes on to note the irony that most academic research in literature classified as "francophone" is conducted at American universities rather than French ones. The letter generated several news interviews with Mabanckou and subsequent articles in widely circulated publications like *Le Monde*,[98] *Le Figaro*,[99] and *The Guardian*[100] who covered the ideological clash.

The confrontation between the novelist and the president provoked a new generation of scholars and writers to reconsider the ideas first raised ten years earlier by the *littérature-monde* movement. In *Le Monde*, the Ivorian/French writer, Véronique Tadjo, wrote an editorial entitled, "Il Est Grand Temps d'Inscrire La Littérature Du Sud Dans l'Imaginaire Francophone

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[97] Alain Mabanckou. "Francophonie, Langue Française: Lettre Ouverte à Emmanuel Macron," BIBLIOBS, Jan. 15, 2018.

[98] Véronique Tadjo. "Il Est Grand Temps d'Inscrire La Littérature Du Sud Dans l'Imaginaire Francophone Occidental," *Le Monde*, Jan. 27, 2018.

[99] Alice Develey. "Alain Mabanckou Refuse De Participer Au Projet Francophone D'Emmanuel Macron," *Le Figaro*, Jan. 16, 2018.

[100] Angelique Chrisafis. "Macron's French Language Crusade Bolsters Imperialism – Congo Novelist," *The Guardian*, Feb. 19, 2018.

Occidental", in support of Mabanckou's letter and his challenge to restructure the networks connecting the French speaking communities of the world. Tadjo writes, "Quant à la Francophonie 'institutionnelle', je suis d'accord qu'elle doit en effet faire son mea culpa car elle n'a pas répondu aux attentes des pays émergents. La Françafrique doit disparaître pour laisser place à de nouvelles relations d'entente" (Jan. 27, 2018). Mabanckou and Tadjo signal a new development in the relationship between the people who inhabit the multicultural spaces of *la Francophonie* and the governmental and social institutions imposed on them. The public dialogue surrounding Mabanckou's opposition to Macron underscores the ideological and temporal disconnect between the literary world and the political one in their competition over educational concepts and practices. Following this debate from the beginning to these culminating moments, it emerges that the site of education becomes a linking point that periodically connects these two otherwise distinct worlds.

The ideological clash between the *littérature-monde* movement and Macron's *récit national* provides the opportunity to study how literature and politics operate separately from one another, but they also employ similar tools and institutions needed to circulate and reach a greater audience. In fact, these public debates on culture's relationship to national identity and authoritative policies exemplifies the way that literary productions and writers often develop amidst moments of social upheaval or political turmoil. In reprising Pascale Casanova, she finds that it is these very tumultuous historical moments that drive the literary world to grow and progress beyond previously imposed limitations or boundaries. When speaking specifically on rivalries and the struggles that exist within each respective national and international literary spaces, Casanova clarifies:

> The literary world needs to be seen, then, as the product of antagonistic forces rather than as the result of a linear and gradually increasing tendency to autonomy. Opposed to the

> centripetal forces that strengthen the autonomous and unifying pole of world literary space and provide both a common measure of literary value and a literarily absolute point of reference (the Greenwich meridian) are the centrifugal forces associated with the national poles of each national space- the inertial forces that work to divide and particularize by essentializing differences, reproducing outmoded models, and nationalizing and commercializing literary life (109).

The antagonizing forces leading up to the *littérature-monde* movement include colonial and neocolonial oppression, migration, economic inequality, and globalization amongst others as major contributing factors that affect each of the signatories in their own unique ways. The challenges and hardships faced by each writer propel literary development to react or emerge from such experiences, whether or not the resulting literature is explicitly engaged in a political context or not. The political encroachment Macron tries to deploy demonstrates one way that rival forces can essentialize cultural and social differences within the literary world in an attempt to enhance the role of the nation-state to inspire social unification. One of Macron's biggest missteps in gaining more support for his platforms comes as the result of his presenting widely acknowledged models viewed as outdated. His policies were exposed to be a form of cultural imperialism based on tactics rooted in the colonial civilizing mission to expand France's cultural and social control within the other nations of *la Francophonie*.

This critical reading of the *littérature-monde* movement with Macron's *récit national* over this ten-year period reveals the contested status of education due to a void or opening in French society. The ongoing dispute unveils a need for inventive cultural representations and increased visibility within the respective literary world and political world in a French context. The *littérature-monde* movement employed educational discourses and institutions in an effort to destabilize the economic control concentrated by the Parisian literary establishment over the circulation and promotion of French language writers. Primarily, the signatories of the *littérature-monde* manifesto contest the ongoing distinction placed on writers depending on their

country of origin or perception as culturally French to earns the qualifier as a French writer versus a Francophone writer by the academic and publishing communities working in the French language. The signatories turn to France's colonial past to pinpoint the origins of this type of discrimination in the colonial practices of *la mission civilisatrice*, and they propose the concept of world literature to help combat the reductive or essentialist approaches to literary interpretation and reception. These notions become the antithesis of President Macron's cultural platform to use French historical and literary productions to increase nationalistic fervor and civic support. By valorizing a nationalistic approach to literature, Macron tries to pull back against the progression of the French literary space attempted by the manifesto to exclude the participation of those who may not be welcome in the social unification project launched during his presidential campaign. The major point of intersection between the two ideological movements of *littérature-monde* and the *récit national* occurs over the role of educational institutions to disseminate knowledge and to influence concepts of both collective and individual identity. The study of these two movements underlines the significance in analyzing the ways educational discourses and institutions are wielded to advance an ideological or partisan objective. While the *littérature-monde* and the *récit national* movements are book-ending moments presenting two vastly different interpretations of French literature, the years in between were dominated by debates that reoriented the original discussions around world literature to be centered instead on issues related to French educational practices. The academic discussion related to *littérature-monde* and *la Francophonie* show how the institutionalization of certain methodologies can conflict with the progression or regression of the literary and political worlds.

French Education after *Littérature-monde*

In this section, I analyze how educational discourses and themes were used by academics to either endorse or push back against the ideas proposed with regards to world literature in French. One major source of contention for academics revolved around the question of substituting the current taxological distinctions made to distinguish French writers from Francophone ones. Between 2007 and 2017, the conversations around world literature in French delved into a reexamination of French education's relationship to literature, society, and the merits of disciplinary classification. In the academic realm, the *littérature-monde* manifesto sparked an existential debate on the use of the term francophone to describe writers working outside of hexagonal France in addition to the term *francophonie* as a methodological framework and cultural term. Despite the perpetual disagreement over *littérature-monde* versus Francophonie, the issue of education surfaces as a common thread both sides invoke as a source of consternation. The examination of these debates allows scholars to analyze the progression and possible future direction of French literary education in the 21st century. One critical study of the manifesto and its aftermath shows that academics overwhelmingly disliked the ideologies of world literature, choosing instead to focus on the merits of Francophonie.[101] Consequently, the culmination of these discourses and the academic figures responsible for dispersing French education prove integral to regulating the overlapping boundaries between the literary and political worlds and choosing to incorporate certain pedagogical ideologies over others.

The current practices related to French literary education are questioned for the role they play in perpetuating outdated and degenerative concepts that negatively impact the cultural landscape in France and the other French-speaking nations, as highlighted in the initial writings by the *littérature-monde* movement. In France, the public education system is known for

[101] Thérèse Migraine-George. *From Francophone to World Literature in French: Ethics, Poetics, & Politics*. University of Nebraska Press, 2013.

resisting the adoption of culturally inclusive curriculums or initiatives for minority groups, which are typically seen as a threat to French universalism. The content of the education offered in France is also critiqued for failing to update or incorporate cultural and historical lessons that include facets of colonial history or the artwork and literature of artists and writers from formerly colonized regions. In analyzing the French national education system, one scholar states, "As for public education in France, most of the time its agents resort to coercion (seen as a good in itself), or resign themselves to giving up teaching; even the minister of education oscillates between these two attitudes, often in a way that is out of step with teachers" (120).[102] Due to this break down in the system of public education, these institutions and those that manage it are reduced to "deploying their capacity for censure" as a social mechanism to stay relevant within the communities that they operate. Regarding the content of school curriculums and pedagogical methods, one finds, "As for Francophonie, the simple refusal to acknowledge its existence is widely employed in teaching […] what remains of literature in secondary education erases nearly *all* literary production from the current or former colonies" (Dubreuil 120). Another critical study states that the resistance in France to developing Francophone studies in academia is explained by a traditional resistance of identity politics; an enduring faith in the universal values of literature; a commitment to critical interpretation as a formal practice, and a reluctance to create academic fields based on multicultural or minority identities (Migraine-George xxix). The few literary works in French incorporated by writers who originate outside of France are often reduced to suggested reading for those at an intermediate reading comprehension level, as opposed to elevated literature, or to obtain biographical details, rather than for artistic or philosophical merit. The diminution of multiple perceptions of identity and cultural productions

[102] Laurent Dubreuil. *Empire of Language: Toward A Critique of (Post)Colonial Expression*. Cornell University Press, 2013.

that are viewed as a threat to concepts of French universalism inherent in the education system contribute to widen the social divides, which stem from a sense of invisibility in society. Of course, this does not apply to individual instructors and schools who may employ more global approaches to their pedagogical methods. Yet, a perennial lack of financial support along with a reluctance to reform educational policies and practices seems to have a paralyzed the space of the school with antiquated methods and ideologies related to French literary education in the 21st century.

One significant consequence of the scholastic policies and programs that neglect the turn toward a global French context in favor of republican universalist ideals is the ways they segregate writers within the Parisian centric French language publishing houses. The publishing houses and the wide range of professional positions that comprise the publishing industry are all part of a vast, complex network made up of various economic and cultural branches. For the past few centuries and into the present, Paris has resided as the Capital at the center of this complex network overseeing the circulation and promotion of writers working in the French language covering as many as five continents.[103] One critical study finds:

> The distinction between writers whom publishers portray as 'French'- principally, those lacking any distinguishing physical difference from the pre-dominantly white, European French- and writers labeled 'Francophone'- those outside of the white, Christian European mold- is easily maintained, especially in the print world, as long as the name of these latter writers remains distinctly not "French" (496).[104]

This type of publishing philosophy bolstering writers whose books correspond to a nationalistic vision dating back to the colonial era mimics the outmoded educational discourses transmitted

[103] It is worth noting the expansive French language publishing network in Québec, but as Collins points out, some Québécois writers have the privilege to blend in more easily into the French print market based on the appearance of the author's name alone.

[104] Holly Collins. "The 'Littérature-monde' vs. the Parisian Publishing Empire," *Romance Notes*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 495-508. 2015.

throughout the French education system. Thus, a cyclical pattern emerges of the social institution of the school feeding into the economic and cultural practices of the publishing industry, which in turn supplies the scholastic material available on certain texts dictating those that are more readily available to instruct. Unlike in the anglophone publishing industries that maintain multiple centers in New York, London, Sydney, amongst others, Paris is firmly situated as the dominate cultural capital for writers who hope to publish in the French language. Being able to travel to Paris is also essential where it is vital to be accepted by the elite ruling class in order to achieve long term financial and popular success. To reprise Michel Le Bris's essay in *Pour une littérature-monde* cited in the previous section, he surmises that French literary education and the institutions that disseminate this field of knowledge should reconsider the theoretical and ideological methods that are embedded within their modes of operation. In a French national context, the repercussions of the manifesto seemed to center on the institutional issues inherent to the public education system and the publishing industry, whereas looking at the effects of the manifesto outside of hexagonal France the debates turned to much more esoteric academic problematics.

Outside of France and the national implications, the academic debates have been less focused on expanding the literary space to include writers working in French from all corners of the globe, but rather they have questioned how one should study and classify these writers without perpetuating a type of academic erasure or essentialization. Upon the publication of the initial *littérature-monde* manifesto, there were some scholars and writers for whom the term francophone is still a relevant and useful term for a number of cultural and pedagogical reasons. In defense of *la Francophonie*, Françoise Lionnet asserts that there retains a global value as a concept and term that promotes writers and literatures from the social peripheries of the French

speaking world who often go overlooked in favor of those from the cultural centers in the West.[105] With regards to education, Lionnet points to the breadth of scholarship on francophone literature especially in countries like Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, focusing on an even more diverse range of geographic regions. For Lionnet, the additional benefit of this scholarly attention can be seen in the pedagogical advantages expanding the content of university curriculums and the allotment of funds to research in these areas. Ironically, the persistent theorization of the field certainly contributes to self-actualizing moments like the *littérature-monde* manifesto and can also contribute to its downfall as an academically legitimate field of study. Lionnet explains that these hyper-focused scholarly critiques, "[…] have also destabilized traditional notions of French studies and comparative European studies, they have led to cultural controversies over the merits of the term Francophone. Such controversies are a symptom of the anxieties that trouble Parisian intellectuals in the face of this ongoing pedagogical revolution" (Lionnet 209). This "pedagogical revolution" cited by Lionnet is also the driving force of the *littérature-monde* manifesto wanting to reform the literary establishment centered in Paris, which still clings and profits off of the French universalist approach that erases competing forms of identity for the sake of national cohesion. Although Lionnet seems mostly opposed to the ideologies upheld by the signatories concerning the abandonment of the term francophone, there is certainly agreement about the conflicting relationship between education and literature in a global French context. To combat the homogenizing aspect of the nebulous terminology behind "francophone" Lionnet offers the new term "francophonies" to encapsulate the diversity and cultural backgrounds of those working in the French language. While the term may suggest a sense of

[105] Françoise Lionnet. "Universalisms and francophonies," *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2/3, 2009, pp. 203-221.

inclusive plurality, it does not necessarily assuage the othering or divisive nature that alienates Francophone literature from French literature.

However, another camp of scholars applauded the efforts of the manifesto and the signatories who spoke out so publicly, some even accepting the *littérature-monde* movement as a challenge to envision a future beyond the current perceptions of Francophone studies. In contrast to the many academic rejections of the manifesto, Christopher Miller imagines what a possible pedagogical framework that incorporates concepts of world literature in French might entail.[106] One primary objective for Miller is to rescue the idea of world literature from the limitations of the manifesto to render it less elitist and more connected to the historical context from which it emerged (Miller 39). Indeed, the manifesto does recognize the privileged position of the successful writers who have access to the Parisian literary establishment, nor does it attempt to address the precarious social position the French language holds in the local communities of *la Francophonie*, like Maryse Condé explains in her *Pour une littérature-monde* essay on Guadeloupe where creole maintains a more favorable position than French. Indeed, Miller finds fault that the signatories do not bring enough attention to those at the margins of the French speaking world. Another critique Miller finds with the manifesto is when the signatories ask:

> Combien d'écrivains de langue française, pris eux aussi entre deux ou plusieurs cultures, se sont interrogés alors sur cette étrange disparité qui les reléguait sur les marges, eux "francophones", variante exotique tout juste tolérée, tandis que les enfants de l'ex-empire britannique prenaient, en toute légitimité, possession des lettres anglaises ? Fallait-il tenir pour acquis quelque dégénérescence congénitale des héritiers de l'empire colonial français, en comparaison de ceux de l'empire britannique ? Ou bien reconnaître que le problème tenait au milieu littéraire lui-même, [...] (Mar. 15, 2007).

While I argued in the previous section that this declaration challenges the continuity of French education's colonial relationship to French literature and its affiliated social and political

[106] Christopher L. Miller. "The Theory and Pedagogy of a World Literature in French." *Yale French Studies*, no. 120, 2011, pp. 33–48.

institutions, Miller highlights in this part of the manifesto a connection with France's history of English envy over the centuries of their shared militaristic and cultural rivalries. By acknowledging these issues with the initial manifesto, Miller is able to deconstruct the hubris and privileged elements inherent in the more exclusive aspects of the literary world in order to parse together new educational concepts. Miller employs critical understanding to the inclusive aspects and progressive ideologies of the manifesto that lend themselves available to the development of new academic and pedagogical tools.

In the past, educational practices around world literature traversed a slippery slope between balancing canonical inclusion for more writers with the rise of competition over who can be included and who is excluded due to capacitary limits. Especially within the American university, world literature became a celebration of multiple nationalisms in competition with one another. Miller finds that this existing theoretical framework results in competitive transmigrations of genius, or cultural capital, that results in a race for cultural superiority (Miller 40-41). The goal for Miller then becomes to formulate a new theoretical approach for world literature in French that escapes or overcomes these institutional and social consequences. Whereas previous approaches to world literature assumed the study of many texts from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds translated into English for example, the challenge before Miller is to conceive of a world literature comprised of writers working in the French language from a variety of different cultural backgrounds without promoting or excluding one cultural tradition or identity over another. In imagining a pedagogy that is built upon the principals of the *littérature-monde* movement, he concludes that, "The concept should embrace a panoply of different modes of intercultural interaction and exchange- going far beyond any allegedly simple oppositions between colonizer and colonized. Apprehension of a whole spectrum of modes of

contact and interface between cultures should infuse the teaching of world literature in French […]" (Miller 43). Miller argues for academics to think beyond the hierarchical binaries forged by colonialism to develop innovative theoretical concepts as diverse as the number of cultures and cultural modes as are found in the world. In spite of these constructive notions, the reality of the current university structure is certainly not equipped for such an expansive restructuring approach, which would require an overhaul of academic classifications and departments. Despite Lionnet and Miller positioning themselves on opposite sides of the academic debate on world literature in French, the two scholars provide perspectives that push the academic debate in positive directions. Indeed, they both agree that educational discourses and the institutions that are engaged in transmitting this field of education related to French literature are still encumbered by the historically nationalized and politicized limitations preventing literary spaces from progressing or reinventing themselves.

In the face of all these debates on educational discourses and institutions, an underlying question remains about whether the debate has drifted too far from the *littérature-monde* manifesto's original concerns for the contemporary state of French literature. Despite academics, writers, and politicians all desiring to enact pedagogical changes, institutions of education alter slowly due to systematic and ideological factors entrenched in French society. Therefore, academics from across the globe who work on contemporary French and Francophone studies turned the conversation inward amongst themselves to center on the role of the university in relation to the issues first raised by the signatories. Thérèse Migraine-George has published one of the few book length critical studies on the *littérature-monde* movement since its release, called *From Francophonie to World Literature in French: Ethics, Poetics and Politics*, where

she contextualizes the manifesto and analyzes the immediate reactions by academics and writers in the following years. She finds:

> Unsurprisingly scholars who have specialized in Francophone studies in Anglo-American academia- where Francophone studies have been very successful in establishing themselves- overwhelmingly come to the rescue of Francophonie while largely discrediting the manifest […] The academic unease created by the manifesto can, in fact, be gauged by the very eagerness with which many of the critics downplay or dismiss its literary and scholarly significance […] *Littérature-monde* is, after all, intended to be about *littérature* and *le monde*, yet in many of these authors' essays, the focus seems to be obsessively shifting back toward issues of academic and disciplinary battle lines (Migraine-George xxiii).

From this perspective, discourses and themes related to education have become the primary sources used by scholars to justify certain pedagogical practices or discredit the declarations made by the manifesto. Migraine-George criticizes these scholars for misunderstanding or willfully overlooking the cultural and social problematics at the heart of the *littérature-monde* movement in favor of maintaining francophone, both the cultural term and the theoretical construct. Thus, these debates by academics prioritizing educational discourses and themes over questions of world literature demonstrate the ways French education is regulated by the boundaries of the literary and political worlds that compete and struggle over the literary pedagogy as a primary conduit to form or influence social concepts.

The culmination of these different academic studies relating problems of French literary education with the *littérature-monde* movement signals an enduring void in both the scholarly field as well as the institutional collective of *la Francophonie*. The unresolved tension over this period of time illustrates the fractured communities and social divisions who continue to express discontent with their status or presence amongst the globalizing and expanding boundaries of French identity in addition to what constitutes a French cultural production. Until there is universal agreement on the classification and usage of these concepts, the examination of these

dialogues presents the opportunity to reevaluate our own pedagogical assumptions and methods in addition to the chance to understand how others might choose to identify themselves or identify with a greater literary or political tradition. In her article, "*Francophonie*: Trash or Recycle?", Lydie Moudileno explains "As a practitioner of *Francophonie* and someone who is very aware of the past, present and future battles in the field, as well as of its inevitable paradoxes, I, for one, do not think we can afford to trash it just yet" (123).[107] As long as the concepts behind francophone continue to fill a void in the global French context and yield fruitful discussions and larger participation by those who might otherwise ignore these regions along with the people who reside in them, then it serves a noteworthy purpose as both a term and methodology. Nonetheless, even the most vocal of supporters of francophone do not find it without fault, such as Lionnet whose suggestion of "francophonies" points to a need for more inclusion and engagement within these discourses and spaces. Since academics have repeatedly sought to explain the role of French education with regards to the *littérature-monde* movement, perhaps then it is necessary to ask how education might arrive at its own globally inclusive movement to address the unsettled disputes furthering social divisions and national malaise.

Pour une *Éducation-monde*

Ultimately, the problematics around world literature in French versus *Francophonie* versus the *récit national* is not a question of literary or political practices but educational ones. By analyzing the academic and public debates from 2007 to 2017, educational discourses and spaces are revealed as a leading conduit transmitting detrimental concepts tied to the production of knowledge and literature in a global French context. Indeed, academics, politicians, and writers from across the ideological spectrum express a dissatisfaction with the current state of

[107] Lydie Moudileno. "*Francophonie*: Trash or Recycle?," *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde*. Ed. Hargreaves, Alec et al. Liverpool University Press, 2010.

French literary education and call for educational reforms or the restructuring of academic institutions. Therefore, resolution to the debates cannot be found in the formation of a new *littérature-monde*, but rather by beginning to imagine the conception of a new *éducation-monde.* If literature and politics form individual worlds as Casanova suggests, then education and educators must make greater efforts to form and liberate their own world free from exploitative pedagogical ideologies and practices. The development of an *éducation-monde* for French language and literary studies provides new opportunities to overcome the political and theoretical reductive approaches applied to literature as well as to incorporate a higher number of readers and writers from marginalized social groups throughout the world.

In thinking of the manner that French education, as both an academic discipline and institutional space, can integrate new approaches and methods to meet the demands of 21st-century social problems, it is best to look at how *littérature-monde* first emerged to fill a specific need. Eric Prieto notes the particular use of the signatories to attach the term *littérature-monde* to their manifesto, which he points out evokes both the work of one specific signatory, Édouard Glissant's *Tout-monde*, *chaos-monde*, etc., and the rising academic discipline of world literature.[108] Pietro questions how Glissant's own work informed the ideologies behind the manifesto regarding him as a "*Post*-Postcolonial Thinker" who understands well the mechanisms underlying the cultural evolution that gave rise to our current postmodern, postcolonial era. Glissant's theories, such as *Tout-monde* and *Poétique de la rélation*, rely on interconnectivity in which one must recognize the specificity of every community while also putting an end to all forms of exceptionalism. Therefore, Prieto finds that Glissant's position is directly symmetrical to that of Le Bris and the other signatories of the manifesto in that the manifesto argues for the

[108] Eric Prieto. "Édouard Glissant, Littérature-monde, and Tout-monde," *Small Axe*. Vol. 33, pp. 111-120. 2010.

need to leave behind the limiting emphasis on French exceptionalism in order to embrace the more inclusive category of world literature (114). From France's civilizing mission to Macron's calls for a *récit national*, educational discourses and institutions have been developed around this perception of French exceptionalism in order to drive out competing ideologies and values. For Prieto, the reading of the *littérature-monde* movement as an extension of Glissant's œuvre proves to be a useful means to demonstrate possible modes of progression that can lead to resolving the 21st-century social problems tied to global issues, like migration, economic inequality, political extremism, etc. He states:

> But in a globalizing world dominated increasingly by a small number of cultural superpowers, the defense of cultural diversity evoked here may be just as important in its own way as the defense of biodiversity—and just as important to the revolutionary potential that the militants are trying to cultivate. This, then, may be Glissant's greatest contribution to postcolonial political theory: his apparently apolitical insistence on the big picture, his ability to keep our focus on the larger, strategic field within which the local battles are fought (Prieto 120).

Prieto locates the merits of *littérature-monde* and Glissant to coincide together in an effort to expand the boundaries and restrictions privileging a certain few cultures over the actual rich diversity of cultures that exist in the world. Whereas the academic disciplines of Francophone studies and world literature emerged to address disciplinary and cultural needs, the ceaseless debates from 2007 to 2017 and into the present signal the rising demand for more innovative methods and practices. To begin to conceive of how French literary education might make similar strides, new concepts of an *Éducation-monde* must evolve beyond notions of cultural, and particularly national, exceptionalism to recognize the scholastic and social value of global diversity.

To state it drastically, but simply, is it necessary to halt French and Francophone literary studies and disband the institutions connected with them? Are cultural and linguistic practices

doomed to a future of political imposition and national essentialism? Charles Forsdick proposes similar questions in his article that assess the impact of the *littérature-monde* movement on French and Francophone studies at the university level. His article entitled, "On the Abolition of the French Department?"[109] is based off of the 1968 landmark postcolonial text "On the Abolition of the English Department" by Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o situating African literatures within the English departments of universities in Kenya.[110] Not only does Forsdick build off of Ngũgĩ's theoretical framework from the French cultural perspective, but it also illustrates how educational discourses and institutions have been criticized for several decades in the postcolonial era for perpetuating outdated and detrimental ideologies, which are transmitted as valuable knowledge worthy of obtaining. Both Forsdick and Ngũgĩ agree, " […] the process implies a radical rethinking of the epistemological and geographical boundaries of the field in which we operate, a rethinking that might usefully be seen as an essential reinvigoration rather than evidence of a spiraling crisis: perhaps abolition of those 'traditional frameworks' (to cite Said) with which our field as long been familiar" (Forsdick 99). The proposed abolition of "traditional frameworks" includes the very same nationalistic ideologies valorized by Macron in his attempts to wield literary education as a social mechanism for his political initiatives. These types of ongoing ideological assaults on French education are still accepted as common political and civic practice in countries throughout the world, which inform the production of knowledge conveyed by schools as well as the ways literature is circulated and received within a respective community.

[109] Charles Forsdick. "'On the Abolition of the French Department'? Exploring the Disciplinary Contexts of *Littérature-monde*," *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde*. Ed. Hargreaves, Alec et al. Liverpool University Press, 2010.

[110] Ngũgĩ's essay was reprinted in his1972 essay collection *Homecoming*.

While the *littérature-monde* movement advocated for both political and social change within the literary world, educational figures and institutions should also take a more active role in understanding how the discourses of their academic fields are beholden to politically motivated ideologies over time. The realization that French literary education is historically linked to a colonial past of cultural suppression and economic exploitation is crucial to any 21st century reforms that are invested in resolving social divisions or collective identity. Forsdick and Ngũgĩ both assert that in order for pedagogical practices to reinvigorate themselves an openness to multilingualism, the need for an inter-disciplinary outlook, and a place for other types of literary productions, such as the oral tradition or new media forms (Forsdick 98). Within the specific field of French studies, the nationalistic associations between the language along with the perception of hexagonal France is rooted in the country's imperialistic endeavors throughout history and continue to benefit the way France is viewed across the globe. Not able to predict Macron's cultural campaign platform several years later, Forsdick points to the binaries implicit in the *littérature-monde* manifesto between the global and national, cultural introversion and extroversion, and sessility and mobility actually underscores a greater problematic. He finds, "For, in addition to these polemical, polarizing binaries there is an unresolved tension between the political (i.e., the search for a globalized, postcolonial literary field of creation and production) and the poetic (i.e., the search for a specific form in which the cultures of the contemporary world might find their expression)" (Forsdick 103). This unresolved tension between the political and poetics highlighted by Forsdick would culminate in 2017 during the French presidential elections and Macron's presidency to use literature as a political tool. Furthermore, these unresolved tensions will continue to compete over educational discourses and

influence in the space of the school until a new educationally liberated world can secede from the control of the literary and political worlds.

The emerging world of education should recognize and subvert the historic inequalities that still inform the transmission of language acquisition and literary pedagogy in many linguistic traditions. Speaking on world literature at an ACLA conference in 2011, Gayatri Spivak argues that truly global educational frameworks must not only expand the canon with new texts, but they must also completely change how we approach the old ones.[111] This approach is particularly pertinent in French studies, which still relies heavily on one of the world's longest and most glorified canonical traditions based on philosophers and writers over many centuries. Additionally, it is difficult to change or combat oppression in the literary world because, like Casanova shows, the hierarchical structure is not a simple model with a centralized dominant power. Since language is not a purely literary tool, but an inescapably political instrument, it is through language that the literary world remains subject to political power (Casanova 115). Therefore, the French language and literature classroom is also subject to this political power constraining both French education and language within a complex transnational network controlled by both private and public entities. Spivak's challenge to reconsider our perceptions of previously understood philosophies or methods is an important step to propel concepts of education beyond the reach of these dissimilated controlling powers. It is not necessary for French literary education to abandon historical texts in favor for the most modern and innovative ones. Rather, it is the role of the scholar and teacher to contextualize these works and to generate knowledge that will progress a discipline or add value to a society.

[111] Gayatri Spivak and David Damrosch. 2011. "Comparative Literature/ World Literature: A discussion with Gayatri Spivak and David Damrosch." *Comparative Literature* 63, no. 4:455-85.

The future of French language acquisition and literary pedagogy can only be obtained outside the existing institutional and social parameters. These restrictive parameters are controlled by the institutional gatekeepers that closely regulate which pedagogical methods are employed. In his article calling for an expansion of bibliodiversity within the French language to more accurately represent the breadth of geographic and cultural backgrounds of writers, Dominic Thomas explains the vitalness of "denationalizing and defrancophonizing *Francophonie*" as a means to de-center France's, and specifically the Parisian elite, reign as the primary beneficiary of the institutions that support the nations of *la Francophonie*.[112] He concludes, "Likewise, *Francophonie* cannot function as an 'ideological apparatus' or a 'geopolitical resource,' and 'whether one likes it or not, the French language no longer belongs only to the French;' 'henceforth the French language is transnational' and permission is not needed to inhabit it'" (Thomas). From this perspective, the speakers and writers of the French language have already evolved in practice beyond the traditional modes of classifications and discourses that academics and politicians have forced on these people and spaces. The expansion of the French language and the cultural productions that emerge from it are already in a state of becoming, and it is the responsibility of educational institutions and those in charge of education to react accordingly. Therefore, a new global approach to French education should place a special emphasis on educators and teachers who are at the forefront in deciding the ideological and pedagogical methods they will implement for their students. Teachers should reassess the formative relationship between education and literature, which underlie one another in a reciprocal exchange that extends across geographical borders and cultural backgrounds. The reframing of the issues raised by the *littérature-monde* movement from a perspective of

[112] Dominic Thomas. "Bibliodiversity: Denationalizing and Defrancophonizing *Francophonie*". *Reframing Postcolonial Studies: Concepts, Methodologies, Scholarly Activisms*. Ed. David Kim. Palgrave, 2020.

education illustrates how the separate literary and political worlds can be bridged or connected providing a pathway to progress beyond past limitations. Therefore, until French education develops its own version of a globally inclusive movement, French and Francophone literatures will continue to struggle over concepts of belonging, identity, and reception.

Conclusion: Education Strikes Back

The popular grassroots protest movement that began in France in November 2008, known as the *Gilets jaunes*, helped lead to the rise of the teachers' movement called the *Stylos rouges*.[113] The online based movement representing teachers in France's public education system at all levels began to protest the resources and conditions of school, salaries and pay structures for teachers in addition to the general lack of public valorization in the profession amongst the greater society. In an article in *Le Monde* detailing the movement, it states:

> Organisés sur les réseaux sociaux, les « stylos rouges » regroupent 60 000 internautes sur Facebook et ont publié un manifeste avec treize revendications. Outre l'arrêt des suppressions de postes, le retrait du jour de carence pour maladie qui a été rétabli pour les fonctionnaires, une rediscussion de la réforme du lycée, davantage de moyens pour les élèves en difficulté ou encore la création d'une médecine du travail dédiée, ils souhaitent en premier lieu le dégel du point d'indice (Jan. 22, 2019).

Recalling the *littérature-monde* manifesto of 2007, the publication of a new teachers' manifesto online that is supported by over 60,000 educators in France signals the broad reforms needed to improve education in the 21st century. Furthermore, the teachers' list of 13 demands demonstrates the political irony of Macron's presidential platform that heavily relied on educational discourses and institutions to disseminate his social policies, yet in reality, his administration has allocated little funding and few resources to the public education system beyond ideological rhetoric. Nonetheless, social movements like this provide a powerful

[113] Mathilde Damgé. "Mouvement des "stylos rouges': pourquoi les profs se mobilisent sur le point d'indice". *Le Monde*. Jan. 22, 2019.

example of the collective power to affect progressive social change that can be mobilized from within spaces of education. By learning from the past and listening to one another, educational institutions and the knowledge that is instructed there can better represent the realities of our globalizing societies in the years to come.

The critical reading of the 2007 *littérature-monde* movement as an ongoing dialogue culminating in 2017 with President Macron's cultural platform reveals key insights into the successes and failures of French literary education over time. The *littérature-monde* manifesto and its celebrated signatories hoped to open the boundaries of the French literary world to minimize the distinctions made between French and Francophone writers as a relic of antiquated colonial educational practices. Ten years later, Emmanuel Macron employed French literary education as an essential site to diffuse his nationalist cultural policies in an effort to resolve social divisions and upheaval. Ultimately, these debates illustrate the how the literary and political worlds collide and compete over spaces of education, as Forsdick stated in an unresolved tension over the political and poetics. After the publication of the initial manifesto, academics and scholars turned the focus of these debates to center on questions of academic classification and disciplinary methods, rather than the merits of world literature in French to address modern issues within the global French network of *la Francophonie*. Eventually, these debates sided with preserving the theoretical and cultural constructs tied to Francophone studies, while also recognizing its numerous shortcomings and destructive history. In the end, academics and scholars are confronted with complex social issues forcing them to reexamine their epistemological and ideological assumptions in the face of rapid social progress and the threat of globalization. Most importantly, educators and educational institutions are challenged to update

their outmoded theories and approaches to align more accurately with the individuals, communities, and writers that they examine.

The study of French and Francophone literature is marked by periods of philosophical dissent and epistemological developments showing how academics fields are susceptible to reformation. To a certain extent, the concepts of *la Francophonie* and *littérature-monde* both echo key demands that respond to France's domineering relationship with the other nations it was colonized.[114] World literature in French provides one of many other possible future approaches alongside the countless others proposed by academics and politicians alike. These debates have been major components of French history since at least the early days of colonialism, have continued to shape the cultural, political, and social landscape throughout the postcolonial era, and remain today integral to 21st century conversations and debates especially given the crucial role education plays in simultaneously structuring and dismantling inequality.

[114] Alec G.Hargreaves. "Introduction: What does *Littérature-monde* Mean for French, Francophone & Postcolonial Studies," *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde*. Liverpool University Press, 2010.

Chapter 4: African Arts in French Cinema and Museums

Introduction

From October 26th to the 31st in 2021, the *Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac* (Quai Branly Museum) in Paris hosted a special exhibition to commemorate France's return of 26 statues from the museum's collection to the government of Benin in an act of political restitution.[115] After a legislative vote on December 24th, 2020 (*La loi n° 2020-1673 du 24 décembre 2020)*, the Quai Branly Museum started the process of returning cultural property to both Benin and Senegal taken during violent sieges under colonialism. The initial phase involved 26 pieces: these were transferred to Benin where they were integrated to the collection at the Ouidah Museum of History (*Musée d'histoire de Ouidah*). They will eventually be exhibited in Abomey, at the Museum of the Epic of the Amazons and the Kings of Dahomey (*Musée de l'épopée des amazones et des rois du Danhomè*) when its construction is completed in July 2024.[116] The directors of the Quai Branly Museum worked in conjunction with museum experts from Benin to display these objects one last time in France in a historically complex and politically tense environment. This symbolic act of restitution on behalf of France provides an example of a government posturing both at home and abroad. Moreover, it illustrates France's efforts to develop cultural institutions that guide the public to value expanded interpretations of national heritage and identity. The French case is hardly unique, and many governments in Europe and North America also face ongoing reckonings about their colonial legacies in addition

[115] "Nous avons décidé avec le Bénin de ne pas faire les restitutions des objets royaux en catimini," *Le Monde*. Oct. 23, 2021.

[116] "Éclairages sur les restitutions du patrimoine africain conservé au musées," *Musée du Quai Branly*. Oct. 21, 2021. https://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/missions-et-fonctionnement/eclairages-sur-les-restitutions-du-patrimoine-africain-conserve-au-musee/

to the (stolen) riches that are either displayed prominently in their museums or stored in their collections and holdings.

However, these transcultural clashes between independent nation states and the former colonial powers are not only occurring at museums. Questions of colonial history and national identity are also being actively debated in other institutions, most notably in colleges and universities. Since 2010, institutions of higher education across the globe, including in the United States, the United Kingdom, and South Africa, have faced growing calls to action from their student and faculty bodies concerning the legacy of colonialism, exploitation, and slavery on their campuses. Student activists and organizations rallied to raise awareness both publicly and amongst their university administrations about issues related to colonial pillage, slavery, museum object restitution in addition to artwork and statue display removals that created tension in the academic communities. In 2015, student-activists at the University of Cape Town protested until a statue of British colonizer Cecil Rhodes was removed from campus. The statue had been erected in 1934.[117] In 2016, a similar protest broke out at Oriel College at the University of Oxford in England over another Cecil Rhodes statue.[118] By October 2021, an independent commission appointed by the university stated that they supported the removal of the statue, but the financial costs would be too great to allow the removal of the statue due to its location atop a building named after him. Instead, a plaque contextualizing the history of Rhodes was placed on the building.[119] Months later in 2016, students at Jesus College at Cambridge University began to

[117] "Rhodes statue removed in Cape Town as crowd celebrates", BBC. April 9, 2020. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32236922

[118] "Oxford University Cecil Rhodes statue: Campaigners issue demands", BBC. Feb. 1, 2016. https://www.bbc.com/ news/uk-england-oxfordshire-35461821

[119] "Cecil Rhodes statue: Explanatory plaque placed at Oxford college", BBC. Oct. 12, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-58885181

call for the repatriation of a bronze statue of a Benin cockerel to Nigeria that stood prominently in a campus hall. The university stated that they would work with museum and Nigerian officials to decide on the best course of action to determine ownership of the statue.[120] In 2019, students at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. protested after the university failed to act quickly enough, even after the university acknowledged their history of slave labor and promising to provide reparations to the descendants of slavery.[121] Over the course of these protest movements, educational institutions such as museums and universities have been confronted with competing political ideologies to influence national discourses and the social narratives they circulate. Often, these tensions manifested in student protests, social media campaigns, and widespread publicity from pundits across the political spectrum.

This chapter explores the role of educational institutions like museums and schools in French society and cultural productions, especially cinema, that invoke themes of African arts and cultures. Often, these cultural productions employ cinematic techniques to confront political failings and to call for greater inclusivity. In 2018, President Emmanuel Macron's government released a landmark report entitled *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain: Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* that he commissioned on the restitution of African cultural heritage held in museum collections across France by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy. The report states, "Mais au-delà des milieux associatifs et universitaires, c'est sans doute dans le monde de la création contemporaine – de la culture savante à la culture populaire – que la question des collections formées à l'époque coloniale et de leur possible restitution a trouvé ces

[120] "Benin bronze row: Cambridge college removes cockerel", *The Guardian*. March 8, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/08/benin-bronze-row-cambridge-college-removes-cockerel

[121] "Georgetown students push university for action on slavery reparations", CBSNews. Oct. 3, 2019. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/georgetown-university-students-protest-inaction-on-slavery-reparations/

dernières années l'écho le plus significative" (19).[122] Sarr and Savoy provide numerous examples of recent cultural productions that engage issues and themes related to museum object restoration. For example, recent novels like *Des lions comme des danseuses* (2015) by Arno Bertina around the fictitious claim of a Bamileke masterpiece at the Quai Branly Museum and Fatoumata Sissi Ngom's *Le Silence du totem* (2018) featuring a museum curator from Africa whose life is turned upside down by the discovery of a mask in a Parisian museum. In addition to examples from world cinema, *Chinese Zodiac 12* (2012) by Jackie Chan about the takeover in Paris, by the martial arts hero, of objects looted in China by France and England in the 19th century; *Invasion 1897* (2014), by Nigerian director Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, in which a Nigerian student steals from the British Museum in London a work belonging to his ancestors; and the Hollywood blockbuster *Black Panther* by Marvel Studios (2018) where a fictional British museum is the scene of a dialogue between an African-American and a museum curator in front of the displays of African artifacts before the museum is attacked and robbed (Sarr and Savoy 20). As well as other artistic mediums, such as photography and dance, works of fiction, both novels and films, have come to reflect the ongoing political and social struggles to eliminate the legacies of colonialism from the transcultural networks that operate in our globalized communities.

To examine the ways that museums and schools are being challenged by activists, artists, politicians, and other critics, I conduct close readings of critical and authoritative sources alongside an analysis of French film productions that engage themes of African arts in a museum setting. Building from the theoretical foundations of Sarr and Savoy's report, this chapter attempts to better understand how museums in France circulate formative ideas on national

[122] Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy. *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain: Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*. November 2018.

identity and cultural heritage through curatorial management related to African arts. Specifically, I will address the primary sources of this study from the perspective of the "double task" (*une double tâche*) as explained by Sarr and Savoy for African countries, firstly to reconstruct a collective memory (*reconstruction de leur mémoire*) and to reinvent oneself (réinvention de soi) concerning the question of museum object restoration (27). My project reframes this double task with regards to France their sites of heritage, and their relations with countries in Africa. In the first section, I assess the history of repatriation in the context of education, museums, and African arts in France. The next section examines the 1953 documentary *Les Statues meurent aussi* produced by Présence Africaine and co-directed by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, which diagnosed the initial problems of African artwork on display in France's museums. Lastly, I analyze the 2021 Netflix series *Lupin* starring Omar Sy as a book end cultural production to Marker and Resnais's documentary that repositions the status of African arts and cultures in French museums, especially the Louvre. These cinematic productions are part of a wider social demand for museums to reconstruct cultural histories in order to reinvent French society in a manner that better represents the diversity of its population.

Connecting Education and Museums with African Art

In France, the relationship between education and museums dates to the revolutionary period when museums were built to educate the public of distant regions inspired by the Encyclopedists' project during the Enlightenment to organize and circulate knowledge. This relationship was further developed by Napoleon III who set up an exhibition hall at the *Palais de L'Industrie* for the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* complete with free educational cards to inform the public of the artwork from 29 countries.[123] By 1931 in conjunction with the height of the

[123] Elisabeth Caillet. "Schools and Museums: Reflections from France," *The Journal of Museum Education*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Museum Education in Europe: Societies in Transition Part 2 (Spring - Summer, 1994), pp. 14-18

colonial era, these public expositions evolved into *l'Exposition coloniale internationale* and the construction of the *Palais de la Porte Dorée*, which has housed over the years a succession of ethnological museums, art museums, and more recently the *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration*. The building was renamed in 1935 to the *Musée de la France d'Outre-mer,* then in 1960 to the *Musée des Arts africains et océaniens*. Finally, it becomes the *Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie* in 1990. Leading up to the development of the *Musée du Quai Branly* in 2003, these collections were merged and moved to be displayed there upon its opening in 2006. From 2007 to 2012, the building housed the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*. Since 2012, the site has featured the *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration*.[124] This example of the different museological collections housed in the *Palais de la Porte Dorée* illustrates the complex history in addition to the need for progress between museums and education regarding the representation of African arts and cultures in France.[125]

The educational discourses and objectives for museums and schools have traditionally been seen as serving different societal purposes, though today both institutions face similar scrutiny concerning the representation of minority cultures and populations. While the progression of museums and the collections they display can change quickly, educational institutions, such as schools and universities, are comparatively slower to enact changes to their curriculums or campuses. Whereas school is an obligation, museums are optional to the individual. In schools, knowledge is always secondhand with the teacher as mediator, but the knowledge gained at the museum is often firsthand, or at least sought out (Caillet 16). Schools and universities have made advances to expand curricular offerings to promote celebrated minority cultures or figures, but

[124] https://www.histoire-immigration.fr

[125] Dominic Thomas. "Museology and Globalization", *Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

they continually gloss over or ignore unfavorable violent events that defy national unity.[126] Meanwhile, the evolution of museums in the 20th century culminated in the 1960's when Post-war European societies has defined three types of museums: 1) War museums and the like 2) those concerned with rapid changes in technology 3) those dedicated to art (Caillet 16). Even today, these museological divisions fail to contextualize the diversity of artwork displayed in former colonizing countries that were obtained during military occupation and wartime raids. In recent years, both schools and museums across Europe and the United States have faced calls to repatriate artwork and cultural objects displayed in their collections and on campuses.

The larger question of what the reparation and repatriation between countries, and how this affected France is of central interest in this chapter. Historically, the term reparation was first used in connection to fines exacted amongst states. Now, it refers to a broader project of making amends toward communities and individuals as part of a politics of regret.[127] Since 1946, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has overseen museum practices and underwent revisions in 2001. The revisions mainly concerned Article 6 related to collections reflecting the cultural and natural heritage from which they derive. Some revisions made include, "the willingness to rethink the ownership of museum holdings (…)", "responding to the repositioning of museological agendas from aesthetic to political ones", and "narrowing the representational gap between 'us' and 'them' to recognize that audiences are also 'postcolonial' (…)" (Thomas 18-19). Outside of the Post-World War II reparations and repatriations conducted in response to Nazi Germany, political reparations became more common in the 1980s. In 1988, the United

[126] See Stephen Sawchuk. "What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack?", EducationWeek. May 18, 2021.

[127] Tiffany Jenkins. "From objects of enlightenment to objects of apology: why you can't make amends for the past by plundering the present", *Dethroning historical reputations: universities, museums and the commemoration of benefactors*. University of London Press, 2020.

States tried to make amends to Japanese Americans following their confinement in government camps from 1942 to 1945 by distributing $1.6 billion in compensation. Subsequent reparation campaign claimants would later appear from South Africa, Namibia, African Americans, Indigenous Americans, Australian Aboriginals, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Notably, France repatriated the deceased remains of Saartjie Baartman to South Africa in 2002. Baartman experienced decades of colonial exploitation and fetishization both during her life and after her death as the "Vénus hottentote" (Sarr and Savoy 13). Historians note that in the 1990s a new form of political leader emerges who apologizes for historical events for which they were not affiliated in acts of "performative guilt" (Jenkins 83). Notable examples from the 21st century include UK Prime Minister Dave Cameron apologizing to Ireland for the so-called Bloody Sunday massacre[128] in 2010. While in France, President Macron has adopted this political strategy on at least two occasions when dealing with former colonies in Africa. In May 2021, Macron offered his apologies on behalf of France to Rwanda for the role France played in the genocide there.[129] Then, Macron drew criticism by apologizing for France's failure to protect those who fought for them during the Algerian War and were left behind after independence. Yet, critics were displeased with Macron's refusal to extend his apology to include France's long-term colonial occupation of Algeria.[130] From financial compensation to state official apologies, how did museums and schools become implicated in these acts that try to amend the past?

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[128] "Bloody Sunday: PM David Cameron's full statement", BBC. June 15, 2010. https://www.bbc.com/news/10322295

[129] "Macron asks Rwanda to forgive France over 1994 genocide role", BBC. May 27, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57270099

[130] "France's Emmanuel Macron heckled asking Algerian veterans for forgiveness", BBC. Sept. 20, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58626309

In correlation to the development of reparations and government sponsored apologies, government-funded institutions like museums and schools became implicated in their role to archive and teach a country's history. One scholar explains that heritage can be understood as national identity claims read back into history, which have been adopted by all political sides as a tool or "weapon" to wield to their own advantages. The term heritage, or *patrimoine* in French, has taken on a new usage now meaning a national heritage made up of people and their customs, rather than the former definition meaning inherited family wealth or the state's treasure.[131] This current trend to revisit national history and the weaponization of identity in political debates underscores the newfound attention on the educational discourses employed by institutions such as museums and schools related to complicated, often violent, historical events. Activists and politicians seek to amend academic curriculums and redistribute museum collections in order to reflect their idealized visions of a nation and its history, rather than confront the difficult, often tragic, realities behind these histories. Perhaps worse, politicians and pundits have increasingly inserted such debates as a distraction tactic leading up to elections to score cheap electoral points and to avoid developing actual social agendas intended to improve society.[132] While many countries in Europe and the Americas are dealing with these political trends, the situation in France has unique qualities given the status of African artwork and cultural objects displayed alongside or included as a part of the greater French cultural heritage.

The vast number of pieces of artwork and cultural objects originating in Africa but held in French archives and collections raise obvious concerns over ownership, representation, and national heritage. These questions have always been there, and what is interesting is why they

[131] Herman Lebovics. *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age*. Duke University Press, 2004.

[132] See Faïza Guène's "In Search of Frenchness", *The Guardian*. Translated by Dominic Thomas. Jan. 28, 2010.

were ignored for so long. Prior to Macron's public apologies in 2021, he first offered a more general olive branch in a speech at the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso on November 28th, 2017. He explained that France's new policy toward Africa is that there is no longer a French policy on Africa. He further outlined his plains to rebuild France's relationship with the African continent:

> Le premier remède c'est la culture, dans ce domaine, je ne peux pas accepter qu'une large part du patrimoine culturel de plusieurs pays africains soit en France. Il y a des explications historiques à cela mais il n'y a pas de justification valable, durable et inconditionnelle, le patrimoine africain ne peut pas être uniquement dans des collections privées et des musées européens. Le patrimoine africain doit être mis en valeur à Paris mais aussi à Dakar, à Lagos, à Cotonou, ce sera une de mes priorités. Je veux que d'ici cinq ans les conditions soient réunies pour des restitutions temporaires ou définitives du patrimoine africain en Afrique.[133]

Macron's acknowledgement of France's large possession of art and artifacts belonging to the different heritages and cultures across Africa demonstrates the state's willingness to accept that the social tides have shifted in favor of a revaluation of history and identity. Yet, he fails to express remorse or culpability for the actions and circumstances often surrounding the pillage of these artworks and cultural objects before their shipment to Europe. Macron's speech also neglects to offer complete restitution of France's collections, suggesting, instead a case-by-case basis in his proposal for possible temporary or permanent return. His proposal imagines a transnational network connecting the cultural institutions of Paris with those in African cities, supposedly for the benefit of cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, Macron himself hoped to benefit as well riding the tides of previous political and social trends.

Following his headline grabbing speech in Ouagadougou, President Macron has employed government resources to examine the colonial legacies and their ongoing repercussions in France. In 2018, Macron's administration funded and released an official report

[133] "Le discours de Ouagadougou d'Emmanuel Macron", *Le Monde*, Nov. 29, 2017.

on the restitution of African cultural heritage and the collections of African artwork and cultural objects held in museum and academic institutions across France. Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy researched and composed the report entitled *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*. On the subject of museum object restitution, the report states, "[…] le geste de la restitution ne saurait en outre être considéré comme un acte dangereux d'assignation identitaire ou de cloisonnement territorial des biens culturels. Il invite tout au contraire à ouvrir la signification des objets, et à offrir à 'l'universel' auquel ils sont si souvent associés en Europe la possibilité d'être éprouvé ailleurs" (2). While the report offers guidelines and recommendations for restitutions from France to countries in Africa, there is an overall condemnation of the extent to which societies from Africa south of the Sahara experienced widespread depletion of their cultural productions. In comparing Europe to Africa, the report explains, "Alors que d'autres régions du monde représentées dans les collections des musées occidentaux conservent chez elles une part significative de leur patrimoine artistique et culturel, l'Afrique au sud du Sahara en est pratiquement dépourvue" (11). A close reading of this report emphasizes that European countries not only profited economically from colonial pillaging, but they also benefitted culturally from their campaigns valorizing European civilizations, while using rhetoric that dehumanized African customs and traditions. A common theme that emerges throughout the report is an argument toward the redistribution of these pieces and a push to recommence relations between France and the African countries who were victimized. On starting over, one reads, "En ce sens, le projet de restitution engagé par la France s'inscrit dans une triple logique de réparation, de rééquilibrage de la géographie culturelle mondiale, mais aussi et surtout de nouveau depart" (Sarr and Savoy 11). Despite the repeated emphasis on new beginnings for future political relations in the report, the first steps should

emphasize the extent to which France is responsible to repatriate and redistribute its cultural wealth.

By considering the results of the report's survey on Sub-Saharan African artwork and cultural objects held in France, the controversial practices relating to museums and other institutions of learning, such as libraries and universities, are exposed. There are currently at least eighty-eight thousand objects in French public collections, which originated from across the African continent. There are nearly seventy thousand such cultural productions at the Quai Branly Museum alone. To compare with African museums, the Sarr and Savoy report states, "Alain Godonou, alors directeur de l'École du patrimoine africain à Porto- Novo, au Bénin, estimait en 2007 qu' 'à quelques rares exceptions près, les inventaires des musées nationaux africains ne dépassent guère 3 000 objets dont la majorité est de qualité et d'importance relative'" (12). Across the French hexagon, there are at least eighteen thousand pieces, probably much more, in the museums of several port cities (Cherbourg, Le Havre, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Nantes, Marseille), along the rivers which link these cities inland (Angoulême, Rennes), as well as in Lyon, Grenoble, Toulouse, Besançon, Dijon, and in several Parisian museums, such as the Musée de l'Armée, or in the heritage collections of the Monnaie de Paris. These specialized collections are further coupled with a second network of collections, that of libraries, which have generally benefited from the division of cultural heritage. Artwork and cultural objects were mainly assigned to museums, while books and manuscripts were sent off to libraries. These two types of institutions, museums, libraries, and including several public archives also preserve photographic, cinematographic, and sound document collections formed during the colonial era, which represent for African countries a first-rate source of memory. (Sarr and Savoy 38). In addition to state or local authority museums, there are also missionary museums, which, like the

African Museum in Lyon (closed to the public since 2017), sometimes house several thousand objects collected in Africa by religious congregations. Furthermore, one must note the university collections, for example the University of Strasbourg, that maintain artwork and objects of this category (Sarr and Savoy 39). Overall, these statistics demonstrate the extreme imbalance of France's acquisition and ownership of items tied to Africa's diverse cultural heritage. In light of the 2018 report, museums and other institutions of learning must now justify the cultural or educational value of the artwork or cultural objects in their collections, especially as they relate to national heritage and identity.

To attempt to justify the extraordinary collection of African cultural productions in Europe, countries like England, Belgium, France, and The Netherlands have constructed refurbished museums as a means to rewrite social narratives on diversity and inclusion. In 2002, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in London opened to the public, but it closed in 2013 amid a scandal concerning the sale of Maori pieces from their collections during the liquidation process.[134] In Belgium, the Royal Museum for Central Africa closed to the public in November 2013 and reopened in December 2018 after renovating and updating their exhibits. The Tropenmuseum in the Netherlands, known in English as the Museum of the Tropics, changed ownership in 2014 (Thomas 14).[135] In France, the two examples of the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* (Museum of the History of Immigration) and the Quai Branly Museum illustrate the active efforts to influence political and social discourses on issues tied to cultural heritage and identity. Besides the changes made to the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* at the *Palais de la Porte dorée* over time previously mentioned, the museum also

[134] Steven Morris. "Museum director leaves post amid police investigation into 'missing' exhibits", *The Guardian*, March 17, 2011.

named the noteworthy historian of Black history, Pap Ndiaye, as the museum Director as of March 1, 2021. The origin of the Quai Branly Museum arises from another debate concerning the role of African artwork and cultural objects in conjunction with France's preeminent museum, the Louvre.

Since the French Revolution turned the Louvre Palace into a museum, this institution has played an important part in the heritage and identity of modern France. Due to the layering of historical significance, the Louvre Museum becomes a palimpsest on which the changing ideas of French heritage have been written and rewritten (Lebovics 145). After a run in on *Île Réunion* between the African arts dealer, Jacques Kerchache, and then Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, in 1990, the question about exhibiting African artwork in Paris's Louvre Museum emerged on a political level. After Chirac's elections to the presidency, the conversation of finding a space in the eastern end of the *Grand Louvre* was begun in June 1998 to exhibit displays on "*Arts Premiers*". On April 13, 2000, the permanent hall at the *Pavillon des Sessions* was inaugurated to house the exhibit. Over 7,000 visitors, the maximum capacity, visited the exhibition on the first day (Lebovics 145). Yet, Chirac's vision to renovate Paris's museums did not end with the Louvre. In 1998, a project to build a new museum was made official. The museum came under the joint supervision of the Minister of Culture and Communication, Catherine Trautman, and the minister of National Education, Research, and Technology, Claude Allège. Further compounding the role of education in museums in France, it has been customary to associate a research center (usually *Centre national de la recherche scientifique*) with a specific museum with scholars serving on the board of directors, consulting on exhibits, and classifying archival objects. French museums were built to serve as social science laboratories for the study of history and societies. The materials on exhibition and in storage throughout these spaces are in

principle there to facilitate the scholarly work (Lebovics 148-50). In what ways does the development and opening of the Quai Branly Museum address issues of representation stemming from the success of the Louvre exhibition, and in what ways does it fail to overcome its historical underpinnings?

On June 20, 2006, the Quai Branly Museum inauguration featured President Chirac as a speaker who described it as a "new institution dedicated to other cultures" and providing "a human lesson that is indispensable to our time". However, this intended lesson by Chirac has become unclear over the years. Although, the Quai Branly Museum does maintain a research program and library, one scholar finds that the emphasis of the museum is on aesthetics.[136] Scholars have also noted that during the planning stages of the museum that the use of the term "*Arts premiers*" (primitive art or first arts) to describe the objects held in the Quai Branly collections was a problematic label used at various times (Thomas 26-27). President Chirac first proposed the museum under the label "*Arts premiers*" but was soon lambasted by critics. Other names proposed included Museum of First Arts (Arts premiers), Museum of Societies and Civilizations, and then Museum of Man, Arts, and Civilizations before settling on the street where the museum is located, *Quai Branly* (Lebovics 151). The difficulties early on in the planning process for this new Parisian institution reflect the complicated political and social pressure at play when governments try to influence cultural narratives in an attempt to rewrite their volatile histories. Nonetheless, the rise of the Quai Branly Museum combined with the closure of the *Musée de l'Homme*, now a museum of physical anthropology, the former colonial museum now called the *Musée des Arts d'Afrique et Océanie*, and the museum of French

[136] Caroline Ford. "Museum After Empire in Metropolitan and Overseas France", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 82, No. 3, Sept. 2010, pp. 625-661.

regional cultures, the *Musée des Arts et des Traditions Populaires*, illustrates the attention and resources the government has invested to advance a new official discourse in the country.

After a controversial start, the Quai Branly Museum has worked in conjunction with President Macron's agenda to promote inclusivity in French society in addition to recalibrating France's relationship with countries in Africa. In a similar fashion as the Louvre, the Quai Branly Museum is now being positioned to advance a new claim to both its own citizens and to the millions of foreigners who visit each year that France has a special relationship, a special concern, a special respect, for the cultures which will be on display in the glorified institutions here (Lebovics 158). Despite Chirac's claims that other cultures are the focus of the museum, one scholar notes that all museums in France valorize the universal due to active republican efforts to inform identity and social narratives through cultural means (Ford 657). These efforts to broaden artistic and cultural representation are challenged by the historical contexts from which these institutions obtained the objects in their collections. Questions of conservation and preservation continue to be exacerbated by economic disparities between the economically prosperous zones of the world and the global south who are "preserved and displayed" in these spaces. Even though France intends to furnish inclusivity, in hindsight the construction of postcolonial memory and of foregrounding components of a shared and constitutive history proved highly problematic (Thomas 17-19). The complexities of French history will continue to be unpacked as museums and schools broaden their scopes to include the stories of minorities and other underrepresented groups. As most museums in France are public institutions owned by the state, they play a critical role in partnering with local schools to facilitate field trips and activities further integrating educational curriculums to sites of national heritage and identity. Ultimately, the eventual 2021 restitution of 26 objects from the Quai Branly Museum to Benin

cited at the beginning of the chapter is the culmination of a national interest in amending past violence as well as a strategic political move to advance French foreign affairs.

The role of education in museums has shifted to address the social debates regarding national history and identity in France. Due to colonial history, migration patterns, and new technology, the consequences and enduring inequalities enacted on behalf of the French government are more easily exposed and circulated today. As a result, the government, at times Macron himself, have felt compelled to respond to these issues, and even going so far to rectify them in a mutually beneficial manner. In an interview on the final exhibition of the Benin statues before they leave France, Emmanuel Kasarhérou, the President of the Quai Branly Museum, said:

> Nous voulions montrer ces œuvres qui ont une histoire : cela fait presque cent trente ans qu'elles sont dans les collections de la France. De la même manière que l'on ne peut leur enlever leur histoire ancienne, on ne peut effacer leur histoire française. Il nous fallait raconter la complexité de cette histoire. Une nouvelle ère s'ouvre pour ces œuvres. Elles retournent au Bénin non plus comme des objets de culte et de pouvoir, mais comme des objets patrimoniaux, ce qui est nouveau. Chaque culture doit construire son patrimoine, en définir the perimètre, la grammaire, la mannière dont on en parle (October 23, 2021).

Kasarhérou notes the new, imposed patrimonial significance of the statues as maintaining their French histories despite their return to Benin because of their time on display in French museums. The theme of new beginnings is used again underscoring France's emphasis to distance itself from its antagonistic past to dismantle the emerging social boundaries disrupting the republican universal mission. Consequently, the educational discourses upheld by institutions of the republic, like museums and schools, evolved to align with the construction of a new French cultural heritage built on inclusive ideologies, yet founded in universalism. The appointments of the accomplished and successful Black men, Emmanuel Kasarhérou and Pap Ndiaye, to leading roles in two of Paris's foremost museums signals a commitment to

institutional change in the country. The next section examines how cinematic cultural productions have engaged issues of African arts in French museums from the end of colonialism to the present.

The Problems of Memory and Heritage

Whereas the previous section examined the social movements leading up to the repatriation of the Benin statues, this section analyzes the cultural productions that focus on representations of African arts in French museums. As previously cited in the introduction, a variety of novels, documentaries, and global films have presented works that engage themes tied to the complex history of these museum objects that stir up questions of belonging, heritage, and identity. In addition to the protests and the calls to action of various social movements, cultural productions serve an important role in circulating ideas and artistic representations that challenge or scrutinize the standard political discourses of a given historical context. The 1953 short documentary *Statues Must Also Die* (*Les Statues meurent aussi*) questioned the status of African artwork and cultural objects held in France toward the end of the colonial era. The project was produced by Présence Africaine three years earlier and co-directed by Alain Resnais (*Hiroshima mon amour*, 1959, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961, and *Mon oncle d'Amérique*, 1980) and Chris Marker (*La jetée*,1962, *Le joli mai*, 1963) whose combined body of work feature some of the leading films of 20th-century French cinema. To support my analysis of the film I incorporate the theoretical hypothesis proposed by Sarr and Savoy stating that African countries are tasked with the reconstruction of their memory ("la reconstruction de leur mémoire") in light of issues on museum object restitution. My approach considers the problems of memory and renewal in relation to the France's national heritage and the place of African arts and cultures. I find that not only does *Statues Must Also Die* confront the inequalities of French colonialism, but it also

works to bolster the place of African arts in accordance with efforts to reconstruct a cultural collective memory in France that recognizes the diversity of populations today.

The concept of memory has emerged as an important concept in postcolonial studies, especially when looking at public spaces glorified for purposes of identification whether it be for political, religious, or social reasons. The 2018 *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain* identities memory as an essential element involved in the debates on museum object restitution. It states, "Il s'agit donc, pour les pays africains, d'accomplir une double tâche de reconstruction de leur mémoire et de réinvention de soi, par une re-sémantisation et une resocialisation des objets de leur patrimoine, en reconnectant ceux-ci aux sociétés actuelles et à leurs contemporanéités" (Sarr and Savoy 27). This perspective emphasizes that the African societies who are just receiving cultural objects from various historical eras are faced with the challenges of constructing a collective memory informed by colonial disruption and possession. While the next section of the chapter looks at the report's call for "réinvention de soi", the issues of memory in the French national context center on questions of recognition, as opposed to erasing or forgetting with regards to sites of public importance. The expression "devoir de mémoire" (duty to remember) started to be commonly used in the French political discourse in the 1990s implying two new obligations for the French state: to commemorate the memory of the victims for which France was acknowledging its responsibility (Jewish deportees during the Vichy Regime), and the recognition of a community (the Jewish one) victim of genocide (Ledoux 239).[137] The social movements that emerged around the expression "devoir de mémoire" illustrate how collective memory is constructed, and subsequently re-constructed, in

[137] Stéphane Ledoux. "'Devoir de mémoire': The post-colonial path of a post-national memory in France: A study of the development of the 'Taubira law'", *National Identities*. Vol. 15, 2013. p 239-256.

accordance with the evolution of political agendas and societal motivations. Public efforts to obtain government accountability and recognition subsequently expanded to other social groups who were also victimized. Over the course of the 21st century, activists and critics have started to ask more loudly in explicit and implicit manners what is the "devoir de mémoire" for museums or other educational institutions who maintain collections of African artworks and cultural objects.

While the focus on museotorial collections has gain widespread attention in recent years, the short documentary *Statues Must Also Die* is a project that developed early notions that would inform subsequent social movements concerning the place of African arts outside of Africa. According to *Merriam-Webster*, museology is the science or profession of museum organization and management, which allows scholars an entry point to comprehend the relationship between exhibitions and the public. After the documentary was commissioned by Présence Africaine in 1950 and finished in 1953, it held its first screening at the Cannes Film Festival the same year and won the Prix Jean Vigo in 1954. Despite the lauded debut, the contents of the film were so far ahead of the standard social discourses of anti-colonialism that it violated censorship and was banned by the *Centre National de la Cinématographie*. Ultimately, the first public showing in France was held in November 1968 during a film series event called "Cinéma d'inquiétude". And finally, the film was widely released on DVD in 2004. Co-directed by Resnais and Marker, the general division of labor saw that Marker mainly was responsible for the commentary of the project and Resnais for the cinematography (Alter 11).[138] The original objective of the documentary for the two filmmakers was not to develop an "antiracist" or "anticolonial" project according to Resnais. Rather, they wanted to highlight African arts, which were little understood

[138] Nora M. Alter. *Chris Marker*. University of Illinois Press, 2006.

by the French public despite the vast collections held privately and by government institutions. For example, Resnais wondered why African art was held in the *Musée de l'homme*, an ethnographic museum, while Assyrian or Greek art by contrast was held in the Louvre (Wilson 22).[139] The director points to the immense patrimonial value the Louvre maintains, and he questions the link between Assyrian or Greek arts in relation to France's heritage as opposed to France's connection to Africa. This problematic as explained by Resnais scrutinizes the institutional efforts taken to ingrain or link certain foreign cultures to the collective French memory, and thus the wider national heritage, whether or not there are any actual cultural, geographic or other socially perceived connections.

Statues Must Also Die employs cinematic techniques and language that is at times didactic in order to demonstrate how collective memory and cultural patrimony are constructed by the careful curation of art and history. The documentary's narrator, Jean Négroni, employs a voice of god narration method to deliver the opening lines of the film, "Quand les hommes sont morts, ils entrent dans l'histoire. Quand les statues sont mortes, elles entrent dans l'art. Cette botanique de la mort, c'est ce que nous appelons la culture." This theme of death to describe history and art relates to the ways both fields go to great lengths to preserve and remember historical events or objects that are deemed valuable even after the era of creation has passed into the present. The offscreen narrator functions as a sort of museum guide or art instructor who leads the viewer through images of displays featuring masks, statues, and other cultural objects originating from the African continent but held in France. Nora M. Atler finds that the use of film to produce and disseminate knowledge is at the base of most of Marker's works. Marker and Resnais share a common interest in using cinema as a spotlight to address social concerns to a

[139] Emma WIlson. *Alain Resnais*. Manchester University Press, 2006.

wide audience. Marker himself regarded *Statues Must Also Die* in particular as a "pamphlet film" (Atler 58). With a run time of 30 minutes, the short documentary is certainly a digestible and informative medium, like that of an instructional pamphlet, to broadcast the directors' film objectives concerning a complicated subject to an ignorant and even hostile audience. The film is punctuated with shot after shot of art pieces and cultural objects from various African countries, sometimes these images feature commentary and other times only music plays in the background. The formal structuring of the documentary film techniques cast African arts as the central focus, or star, of the film contextualizing the history and ideologies behind artistry and craftsmanship in Africa. For example, the narrator states that the French perceptions of art fails to explain many African perceptions of artistic creation, "dès lors tout objet est sacré parce que toute création est scarée, elle rappallent la création du monde et la continue". They explain that many African statues are made of wood that "nous rappellent de l'époque avant l'esclavage de la vieille terre de nos ancêtres". Employing the inclusive first-person plural "nous" invites the audience to reflect on a time before the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and perhaps further back to humanity's shared genesis on the African continent. The use of images of African art pieces and cultural object alongside audio commentary allows the filmmakers to challenge the audience's perceptions of what art means in France.

Statues Must Also Die shows that the construction of heritage and memory is established through specific curatorial methods related to the educational displays featured in the museum exhibits of France. One issue raised by the documentary highlights how the art pieces and cultural objects in the museums have lost their original meaning and significance when they are displayed in decontextualized settings for aesthetic purposes. The decontextualization of African arts in France and the global north is viewed in the documentary as a type of death for the art, as

emphasized by the title and opening lines. Emma Wilson sees the title as speaking of entropy and the loss of meaning. The documentary presents two narratives of loss, first of the erosion of art through time, and then through the acts of the (colonial) other (Wilson 23). The distinction in different types of loss points to the reactions White European audiences might experience in comparison to Black African and European audiences who visit European museums to examine their collections of African arts. The documentary addresses this issue saying, "Les blancs voient l'art pittoresque mais les noirs voient un visage d'une culture". The filmmakers challenge the museums of France to display their collections of African arts in a manner that recognizes the diverse backgrounds of audiences. Particularly, the documentary asserts the importance of these displays to accurately contextualize the pieces and objects to reflect the tumultuous history leading to their lodging in France, particularly for audiences who are more historically informed today. Although there is a death of the original meaning for these items, the concept of death typically invites a pause for reflection, which leads to the construction of memories tied to what that death might signify. The documentary illustrates how African arts held in French museums represent different things depending on the circumstances of the induvial viewing the displays that can either influence or conflict with an individual's experience.

The historical overlap of colonialism, museums, and national heritage are intrinsically linked in the collective French memory, troubling the traditional methods France employs to construct concepts of Republican identity. The museum audiences of today's globalized, postcolonial world now carry an expectation that cultural and social institutions acknowledge this diversity in their public programs and offerings. Spaces like museums and schools that codified and transmitted concepts labeled as knowledge to facilitate the colonialist imperatives enacted by the French have turned into "sites of memory" carrying over this history into the

modern day.[140] In looking at the relationship between memory and spaces tied to national heritage and history, Michael Rothberg argues for a concept of memory that builds off previous scholars in the field, notably Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire*. Both Nora and Rothberg are interested in the ways monuments, museums, cities, and symbols function as a "site of memory". Rothberg goes one step further to include the impact of transnational and transcultural relationships that exist in the production of memory. He explains: "[…] memory emerges from unexpected, multidirectional encounters- encounters between diverse pasts and a conflictual present, to be sure, but also between different agents or catalysts of memory" (Nœuds 9). *Statues Must Also Die* represents African arts as a catalyst of memory within the site of the museum with differing interpretations for White museum goers in comparison to Black museum goers. The art pieces and cultural objects illicit unique reactions conjuring different memories depending on an individual's social position and familial history. According to Rothberg, public spaces like museums are open to reconstruction and reinterpretation by those who engage it through memory. The space of the museum does not automatically function as an agent or catalyst of memory on its own: "[…] sites of memory do not remember by themselves- they require the active agency of individuals and publics. Such agency entails recognizing and revealing the production of memory as an ongoing process involving inscription and reinscription, coding and recoding" (Nœuds 8). This perspective of memory reveals how the space of the museum in the documentary is elevated as an essential site for the production of individual memory for the museum goer and collective memory to develop notions of national heritage and identity.

[140] Michael Rothberg. "Between Memory and Memory: From Lieux de mémoire to Noeuds de mémoire." Yale French Studies, 118/119, 2010, pp. 3–12.

Statues Must Also Die identifies several obstacles that impede the reception of African arts in France, which continue to complicate projects to reconstruct heritage and memory. Despite its production under the end of the colonial era, Marker and Resnais's documentary pinpoints the compounding factors that have continued to affect African arts in addition to those who create them. Changing from images of African art pieces and cultural objects, the documentary closes with a montage featuring a Black jazz musician who plays while archival scenes are shown of Black men and women in various countries encountering racialized experiences and violence. For example, there are images of Black athletes like Jesse Owens and the Harlem Globetrotters, a Black boxer being attacked from the ring after defeating a white opponent, and police brutality in the southern United States. The narrator states, "Les artistes noirs continue de souffrir des menaces par les pays avec une tradition raciste […] le movement du corps, c'est aussi l'art nègre". The ongoing customs and practices ingrained in the social fabrics of a nation from the colonial era to the present continue to confine or reduce Black artists and the work they produce to the margins of mainstream culture. The misunderstanding of African art forms and cultural practices by European audiences further obstructs the ability to develop new inclusive concepts based on transnational networks between the two continents. This is underlined when the documentary asserts, "La colonisation a transformé les sociétés et économies africaines qui dégrade leur travail et change leurs cérémonies aux spectacles". From colonial exploitation to capitalist development, the arts and cultures of Africa are often treated as commodities by the rest of the world to collect or experience. The documentary castigates the commercialization of African arts and its Western appropriation (Wilson 23). Until this valorization of economic growth over tangible support and recognition for artists of an African

origin is overcome, inclusivity projects related to "sites of memory" in France will face questions of representation and restitution.

The documentary, *Statues Must Also* Die, presents two of France most pioneering 20th-century filmmakers turning the spotlight on the place of African arts in the French national heritage. These two directors, Marker and Resnais, employ cinematic techniques, including voice of god narration and montages of art pieces or cultural objects, to address the ways displays of African arts in French museums conjure different responses and memories based on the individual. Public institutions and other places tied to national heritage function as "sites of memory" that recall an individual to a past familial or historical event. Through the documentary's title and commentary, the theme of death alludes to the decontextualization that these pieces and objects experience through museotorial and curatorial decisions including a lack of understanding for the cultures from which they originated. In addition to the destruction caused by colonization, the significance and value of the museum items are greatly reduced by the failure to recognize how they were created or how the items ended up on display in France. The Sarr and Savoy report illustrates one example of a country using repatriated cultural objects to help reconstruct a collective memory, "C'est déjà le cas au Mali, où le musée national prête régulièrement certains objets pour des pratiques rituelles et les récupère ensuite afin de les préserver, comme a pu nous l'expliquer l'actuel directeur des lieux, Salia Malé" (27). Therefore, the onus falls on museums in France to justify their collections and educate the public on the context of certain museum items that might evoke historical oppression or violence. As a leading site tied to national heritage in France, museums like the Louvre are held to the highest standards concerning the representation of African arts. The next section further investigates how the

Louvre takes a central role in the cultural imagination to challenge concepts of French national heritage.

Reconstructing the Louvre with Lupin

As a bookend production to *Statues Must Also Die*, Netflix's 2021 series *Lupin* presents a pop culture phenomenon providing new perspectives on French universalism through the space of the museum. Based on Maurice Leblanc's early 20th-century stories on the "gentleman-cambrioleur" Arsène Lupin, the series *Lupin* was created by George Kay and François Uzan in addition to starring Omar Sy as the main character, Assane Diop, the grown-up child of a Senegalese migrant in France. Assane's father is framed for the theft of a rare, valuable necklace belonging to Marie Antoinette by the rich family who employ him. The murder of his father in prison leads Assane to seek revenge against the privileged family and corrupt institutions that allowed the crimes to occur. According to Netflix's released figures, 76-million-member accounts worldwide watched at least a few minutes of the series over its first four weeks of release. For context, Netflix had 207.64 million subscribers in the first quarter, meaning about 36.6 percent of member accounts worldwide viewed *Lupin*.[141] By using well-known characters and settings cherished by readers for generations in France, the series frames the challenges of universalism related to social integration for international audiences to expand on the traditional figures and institutions central to republican values.

Building from issues related to memory, some museum exhibitions and cultural productions have offered new ideas concerning the redevelopment of sites of national heritage. Partnerships between French museums and those located in Africa, such as the one cited in the

[141] Rick Porter and Pamela McClintock. "'Lupin' Snatches Top Netflix Viewing Spot in First Quarter", *The Hollywood Reporter*. April 20, 2021.

article on the Quai Branly Museum's final exhibition of the repatriated Benin statues, offer an example to consider further altering curatorial projects to be more transcultural. In the realm of French cinema, representations related to art, galleries, and museums have been portrayed as elitist, exclusive, and mostly white. Famously, Mathieu Kassovitz's 1995 film *La Haine* portrays three young men hailing from the housing projects of the *banlieue* who are expelled from a Parisian gallery for mocking the art and not following the expected gallery decorum. The 2011 smash hit movie *Les Intouchables* shows the character played by actor Omar Sy ridiculing his employer for his taste in contemporary art. After Omar Sy's character finds out how much the art is worth, he decides to become an artist himself. However, it is another cinematic production featuring Omar Sy that engages concepts of colonialism and identity while also working to provide broader conceptions of the French cultural landscape. The series *Lupin* reimagines the iconic figure to confront the elitist and dominantly white cultural spaces heralded in the name of heritage. In this section, I analyze the ways *Lupin* points to a cultural reinvention or "réinvention à soi" in France according to the Sarr and Savoy report related to the "double tâche" of art restitution. The series employs the setting of the Louvre to reimagine national heritage, deconstruct racial and social stereotypes under universalism, and reposition African arts and cultures within French society.

While not explicitly focusing on African arts like *Statues Must Also Die*, Netflix's *Lupin* addresses the issue of African migrants in relation to pedantic interpretations of French universalism and cultural heritage. To capture the public's attention, the Louvre Museum strives to be synonymous with the grandeur and wealth of France throughout history that cultural productions, like novels and films, represent to develop narratives that critique or glorify this history. The recent French government trend to recognize historical wrongdoings alongside the

state's investment in specific cultural institutions, like the Louvre and the Quai Branly Museum, underscores the government's prerogative to advance an official policy corresponding to popular social discourses on diversity and inclusion. The proliferation of museum buildings, and closings, and transformations sends the message that the displays at the Louvre and the Quai Branly Museum will at least aesthetically move France away from the colonial era (Lebovics 174). Even outside the hexagon, the current collections of major European museums demonstrate the intersection between museological concerns and sociopolitical ones. The matter of representation or absence of non-Western traditions in Western museums remains of cultural importance to promote cross-cultural understanding and social inclusivity (Thomas 18). The site of the museum maintains a powerful symbol in the ways a society perceives itself or projects itself to others. In recalling my earlier discussion on the Louvre's impactful role as a palimpsest of Republican identification, many productions of French cinema, such as documentaries like *Statues Must Also Die* (1953) and *The Rape of Europa* (2006), films like *Bande à part* (1964) and *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), and series like *Lupin* (2001), have used the Louvre a key location. Not only does the setting of the Louvre attract the interest of audiences, but it also reminds them of the extensive, lucrative collections that are preserved in the name of French national heritage.

The series *Lupin* portrays many well-known French symbols harkening back to the fundamental staples of collective memory, then it flips these symbols to inscribe new ideas and meanings onto them. The coveted stolen necklace of Marie Antoinette at the heart of the show's storyline recalls to a pre-Revolutionary period of corrupt power and wealth in the hands of an elite few. The juxtaposition of the necklace and the setting of the Louvre in the early episodes of the first season enforces the notion that spaces and symbols of national importance are associated

with a predominately white and wealthy upper class. As one of the oldest and most recognizable symbols in France, "The Louvre, in a contemporary interpretation of its Revolutionary-era foundation as national museum, has become associated with the republican value of high culture for all (on certain centralizing and assimilationist terms) in a way inconceivable for any rival museum or tourist attraction" (187).[142] Republican ideals of universal assimilation through French culture have been rebuffed before in movies like *La Haine*, which depicts the harsh reality of minority youths living in urban settings. If the three protagonists of *La Haine* don't belong in a Parisian art gallery, then there is almost no chance of them feeling represented by or belonging to a pompous institution like the Louvre. Over the course of *Lupin*, the setting of the Louvre takes on new meaning in the narrative as the crime of theft unfolds leading the audience to question who the real thief is and who can get away with theft in a place held to be sacred and secure. The series indicates the importance for such symbols like the Louvre to take on a more progressive role for those who cannot identify with the republican values it espouses.

The questions of identity and race are the most intriguing aspects of *Lupin* with Omar Sy's ability to confront assumptions and stereotypes in French society, especially regarding who belongs in spaces tied to national heritage. Using the disguise of a maintenance worker at the Louvre, the viewer is initially led to believe the protagonist is one of many migrants who are employed as janitorial and domestic workers in France. Omar Sy plays a French-Senegalese man named Assane Diop who assumes many identities while living in Paris. Often ignored and overlooked by society after the death of his father, Assane is willing to use that to his advantage to carry out his plans. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Sy states, "'The show is entertainment, and we want to have fun with it,' he says, 'but at the same time we're talking about something

[142] Seth Graebner. "The Louvre Abu Dhabi: French Universalism, Exported", *L'Esprit Créateur*. Vol. 54, No. 2, Summer 2014, p. 186-199.

very serious: that some people in France are simply not seen'".[143] Sy speaks from experience as the son of a Mauritanian mother and Senegalese father who grew up in Trappes in the Yvelines department, a western suburb of Paris, the fourth of eight children. Having already achieved success in France with films like *Tellement Proche* (2009), *Les Intouchables* (2011), *Chocolat* (2016) as well as recognition in Hollywood in productions such as *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014), *Jurassic World* (2016), and *Transformers: The Last Knight* (2017), the success of *Lupin* has certified Sy a global superstar. In conjunction with the show's objective to shine a light on the unseen in French society, Omar Sy himself as both an actor and cultural icon has risen to the forefront as a leading figure developing concepts of identity to reflect the reality of the country's population. An avid Arsène Lupin reader, Assane takes on new identities over the course of the show to demonstrate the invisibility that relegates certain minority social groups to obscurity in France because of a lack of representation.

The expansion of generic forms, the incorporation of greater diversity, and the recognition of historical offences are essential to the reinvention of sites related to heritage and identity. In looking at the revisions made to Leblanc's original work by the Netflix series, there is a slight shift in generic form to render the story more inclusive of the issues found in today's world. One of the first critical studies of Leblanc published in 2001 found that the stories of Arsène Lupin were often overlooked by scholars who are prejudiced against the "roman policier" as "la paralittérature" or "littérature populaire" (Bellefqih 15).[144] Despite a lack of scholarship, the figure of Lupin has made an impact in the cultural imagination of France and now the world thanks to the new series. By the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, the "roman

[143] Tom Lamont. "'My parents still have no clue what I'm doing': Lupin star Omar Sy on Hollywood, fame and fighting racism", *The Guardian*. May 30, 2021.

[144] Anissa Bellefqih. *Arsène Lupin: La Transparence du masque*. L'Harmattan, 2001.

policier" was achieving widespread popular success with writers like Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, Agatha Christie, and Georges Simenon producing some of the best-selling and most enduring works. The Post-war and Postcolonial eras brought about rapid urbanization in addition to an increase in migrant workers from the formerly colonized regions. The "roman policier" developed over time into the subsequent genre of the "roman noir" sharing the similar themes of crime, mystery, and social observation. The writer Dashiell Hammett stands out as a pioneer of the "roman noir" who expanded on American stereotypes of criminals, families, and investigators in his works like *The Maltese Falcon* (1929) and *The Thin Man* (1933).

The series *Lupin* emerges from the generic traditions of the "roman policier/noir" to develop a type of "série noire" to critique French social norms. One study on the role of migrants in relation to the "roman noir" found that the depth of the characters distinguishes this genre from the "roman policier" with a more diverse cast of characters featured from the lower and working classes, undocumented migrants, retirees, sex workers amongst many others represented.[145] The "roman noir's" generation from a previously successful literary formula allows it the capacity to mimic past success, while anchoring their work in a specific contemporary setting dealing with the problems of globalization. One perspective on the impactful power of the genre finds "Parce qu'il intègre les dimensions sociologiques, politiques et historiques, parce qu'il est profondément ancré dans la société de son temps et offre un reflet déformé de la société à travers un prisme négatif, parce qu'il s'intéresse à des personnages en marge de la société et aux crises qui la traversent [...]" (Compard 15). The liberal interpretations of the genre allow cultural productions who represent certain themes and settings a broader space to address issues overlooked in the political or popular discourses. The character of Assane in

[145] Nadège Compard. *Immigrés et Romans noirs (1950-2000*). L'Harmattan, 2010.

Lupin is product of a complex history of colonization and exploitation who continues to face oppression from the French government and social elites. Pulling from a certain literary tradition of tricks, reinvention, and wit found in Leblanc's stories, Assane is able to compete, even outshine his privileged foes due to his intelligence compounded by his social positioning on the margins of society.

The adoption of LeBlanc's work by the series *Lupin* with Omar Sy provides a cultural foundation to anchor the celebrated traits of French society and Arsène Lupin while also revising outdated representations of who can identify with these traits or values. Failed by the traditional institutions of universal assimilation like republican education and the state, Assane turns to his father's favorite stories by LeBlanc featuring the outcast Lupin for a guide to succeed in Paris among the *haute société*. French readers have long been attracted to the irony and humor that are two characteristics of the "lupinien discourse" (Bellefqih 20). This so-called discourse exemplifies the cherished characteristics employed by Arsène Lupin, such as coded language, humor, irony, and of course wit, that have been beloved by students and adults for generations. The use of these elements becomes another tool for Lupin to overcome obstacles or to outsmart his opponent. In speaking of his personal experience as a Black man in France, Sy states:

> "You know the expression, 'breaking the ice'? It's ice," he says. "Because when you come from where I come from, in the suburbs, when you have my height, my skin, that ice – it doesn't break easily. Actually, I think it started me on the path to what I'm doing today. I remember as a teenager I wanted to see smiles on people's faces, not the suspicious look. One way to do that was humour" (May 30, 2021).

The actor's remarks explain how he used comedic elements in his everyday life as a tactic to combat prejudices and stereotypes he countered. When creating a version of Lupin for audiences in the 21st century, the creator of the series in conjunction with Sy merge the traditional qualities of the lupinien discourse to reflect the ways this discourse can be used to disarm racially charged

encounters. Surely, Sy does not see himself purposefully using this discourse when he interacts with people, but the commonalities between Sy's experiences and the valorized qualities of Lupin illustrate the manner that outmoded concepts of heritage and identity can adapt or evolve to serve social needs. Thus, the figure of Lupin becomes an avatar to mediate a diverse representation of characters who embody the qualities upheld by republican but reflect social groups note widely portrayed in the media, at least in a positive light. As a member of a minority group, Sy developed his comedy outside of acting as a mechanism to dismantle preconceived notions of African migrants and Black men in France. This social context underscores Sy's interpretation of Lupin in the series elevating questions of identity and inclusion in the country's most exclusive institutions to a global scale.

The unmasking of the capitalist elites and corrupt government agencies as the true villains of the series *Lupin* is an essential method to demonstrate that the status of migrants in France is tied to the well-being of the republic. In the second season of the series, Assane works with a journalist and her dog called "J'accuse" to uncover the crimes committed against his father. The recalling of Zola's famous letter to the President of the republic during the Dreyfus Affair suggests that themes of corruption, racism, and xenophobia are still relevant today. The effects of the Dreyfus affair are still played out in France concerning issues of assimilation, especially with regards to Muslim communities, borders and migration as well as the cultural and social stereotypes comprising notions of identity. Not only does the series *Lupin* work to expose these injustices, but it also endeavors to unveil the elements of French society responsible for the proliferation of exploitative or reductive aspects affecting daily life. Examining the structure of Leblanc's stories reveals, "Lupin aime afficher un masque translucide, véritable voile transparent qui révèle plus qu'il ne cache. Nous montrerons qu'il exhibe en dissimulant et manifeste en

fourvoyant, même si c'est souvent d'une manière oblique. Le masque se révélera finalement être un signe qui “dé-voile” une vérité profonde que le sujet n’est pas disposé à (laisser) voir” (Bellefqih 21). This layering of masks and symbols that ultimately leads to deeper meanings is pushed further in *Lupin* to add inclusive elements that represent a collective reality for many migrants in addition to members of the working and middle classes in France and beyond. While the action and entertainment of the narrative is important for the show’s popular success, the most critical part of any mystery is the final reveal, and *Lupin* uses the audiences’ expectations of the genre to unmask the culprit as the corrupt figures and institutions who discard others for their own benefit. This unveiling flips the political discourses that vilify migrants in France as a pejorative stereotype in order to illustrate that the ailments of society are fueled by problems in the upper echelons of France. Like Zola explains in his letter to the president, a corrupt government leads to the destruction of the republic as opposed to the individual migrants, like Assane, who are forced to adapt constantly to a hostile social system but are blamed by the media and politicians.

The series *Lupin* expands on generic forms and literary traditions to develop what has proven to be an influential cultural production in France’s efforts to reconstruct concepts of heritage and identify. Omar Sy’s character, Assane, navigates all spheres of Parisian society assuming different identities to exploit the stereotypical assumptions widely circulated. Despite disguising himself as a janitor at the Louvre Museum in the beginning of the series, Assane returns later under the identity of a tech billionaire to buy the valuable Marie Antoinette necklace. Assane’s reimagined entry back to the Louvre mimics the institutional need to reconstruct sites of national heritage to reflect a more accurate image of the country’s diversity. To address these political and social concerns, it has become imperative that these institutions

adopt new museological taxonomies that incorporate and contextualize the objects held in their collections for a global audience (Thomas 18). The series *Lupin* picks up on similar questions and themes found in *Statues Must Also Die* tied to African arts and those associated with them regarding their position in France. While the documentary centers on history and memory, the series focuses on using historical symbols to deconstruct them only to rebuild them in a manner that better reflects the social landscape of France in the 21st century.

Conclusion: Conflicting Mindsets on Museums

The critical study of museums in France from the perspective of African arts and cultures reveals how these institutions have become the focal point with which to address a range of social issues. The Macron government has opened the door to renovating France's relationship with the countries of Africa as well as developing concepts of republican identity that are aligned with the popular discourses found in France's diverse population. Despite France's efforts to represent overlapping histories of African artwork and cultural objects in its institutions, republican universalist ideals limit – or at least- the scope of such considerations in favor of nationalism at sites rooted to national heritage. These political agendas challenge concepts of who belongs in museum spaces and the impact these spaces have within a nation due to the symbiotic relationship between government ministries and cultural practices. Nonetheless, scholars have demonstrated the relative effectiveness of museological practices in addressing the complexity of racial formations and historical process to provide indicators on the postcolonial condition (Thomas 20-21). The release of the 2018 *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy asserted that there emerged a double task ("double tâche") with regards to object restitution for countries who were colonized by France. By turning this double task back on the colonizer,

France, one realizes their efforts to reconstruct a collective memory ("reconstruction de leur mémoire") based on an institutional recognition of historical events in addition to the people who continue to live with the effects of that history. Next, there is an impetus for France to develop a reinvention of its national heritage and identity ("réinvention de soi") to better reflect the diversity of its population. The analysis of French museums that possess significant collections of African art pieces and cultural objects reveals that the countries in Africa are not the only ones who are confronted with this theoretical double task. Macron's government in addition to the cultural productions cited as well as many others have already begun the process of realizing these tasks in France.

Since the end of the colonial era, films, novels, and other cultural productions have represented spaces tied to museums in France to critique the transnational networks operating between Africa and Europe. The co-directors Chris Marker and Alain Resnais developed the short documentary *Statues Must Also Die* (*Les Statues meurent aussi*) to problematize the possession and preservation of African arts under colonialism in France. The use of cinematic techniques and narrative themes related to memory offer an early example of attempts to reconstruct collective memory in spaces tied to French museums. Over half a century later, the 2021 Netflix series *Lupin* provides an influential model to address the lack of representation and visibility for minority groups. By mirroring the representations of Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin next to the migrant experience in France, the series employs racial and social stereotypes as a means to expose the weakness of republic universalism. As the protagonist in the series and a headlining actor, Omar Sy's character pulls from the actor's own lived racial experiences but employs techniques from lupinien tradition to best the obstacles that divide society. Most importantly, he furnishes new space to construct representations of characters typically

marginalized in the media. Together, both cinematic productions establish the continuity between the issues connecting African arts and cultures to French museums that greatly affects concepts of heritage and identity.

To conclude, it has become necessary to address the controversial subject of whether African art pieces and cultural objects should be allowed to reside in non-African museums or should France return all their collections. The subject has divided activists, politicians, and scholars who are positioned on all ends of the political spectrum possessing individual identities. Turning to the official 2018 report ordered by the Macron government, the independent academics of the report concluded in favor of museum object restitution from France to countries in Africa under certain measures related to ownership and historical recognition. The report states:

> Critères de restituabilité:
> 1) Restitution rapide, et sans recherches supplémentaires de provenance, des objets prélevés en Afrique par la force ou présumées acquis dans des conditions inéquitables.
> 2) Recherches complémentaires lorsque les pièces réclamées sont entrées dans les musées après 1960 et par le biais de dons, mais qu'on peut néanmoins supposer qu'elles ont quitté l'Afrique avant 1960 (cas des pièces restées pendant plusieurs générations au sein de familles). Dans les cas où les recherches ne permettraient pas d'établir de certitudes quant aux circonstances de leur acquisition à l'époque coloniale, les pièces réclamées pourraient être restituées sur justification de leur intérêt pour le pays demandeur.
> 3) Maintien dans les collections françaises des pièces africaines dont il est établi qu'elles ont été acquises (Sarr and Savoy 53).

These standards are set in favor of the countries who suffered under French colonialism seeing their cultural heritage pillaged for the sake of others. The report places the burden of responsibility on the museums in France to justify for the possession of art pieces and cultural objects tied to the African continent. Otherwise, any pieces or objects that can be traced back to their culture of origin or is sought after by a specific country or ethnic group should be returned

as soon as reasonably possible. This position of the report supports President Macron's own rhetoric on restoring the cultural heritage to countries in Africa as seen in his now famous Ouagadougou speech. The largest obstacles will therefore be the time to document all the objects in question, the resources to safely transport the objects long distances, and the willingness of French and African museums to partner together to complete such an ambitious project.

Not all scholars agree with the conclusions cited in the 2018 report, and many scholars across Europe have discussed the importance of not engaging in museum object restitution or even government reparations in general. One concern noted is the struggle over recognition from government officials by members of the social groups seeking restitution over a historical loss. In order to bid for compensation and reparations, different groups have to compete over how much they have suffered or who has suffered the most, and this in turn helps to shape a culture of grievance. Due to this competitive aspect, reparations are more likely to divide than reconcile, which reinforces historical power dynamics (Jenkins 89). This perspective posits social cohesion at the forefront of these debates while attempting to operate above the growing critiques on various media platforms for governments to atone for their past misdeeds. One scholar explains, "The obsession with museums and 'their loot' can mean that we avoid with engaging with the deeper forces that brought about war colonization, and imperialism; we focus on objects and museums as the source of domination, rather than seeing them as institutions and artefacts that reflect wider political and social events of their time" (Jenkins 91). The idea that museums and their collections are a distraction from larger sociopolitical issues raises the point that these institutions are tools to assert the cultural agendas of a given governmental regime. Instead of activists and politicians rallying support to champion or protest exhibitions in the name of

national heritage, community organizes should assemble in ways to enact systemic and institutional changes through established political channels.

The growing public interest in African arts and their presence in institutions like archives, museums, and universities signifies the continued relevance of these art pieces and cultural objects in global affairs even after the colonial era. A common theme in the debates over restitution is the need to conduct cautious historical research to assure the quality and preservation of these items in dispute. Since many of the African art pieces and cultural objects have been held in France for long periods of time the origins of ownership are murky at best for many of the thousands of items in museum collections. In discussing the return of the 26 statues to Benin, historian, Pascal Blanchard, has argued, "Il faut être très prudent sur deux points. Le premier est qu'il faut véritablement retracer l'historicité de chacun des objets. Il faut le faire au cas par cas. Deuxièmement, il faut aussi comprendre qu'un musée ne montre pas seulement ses objets nationaux. C'est antinomique avec l'idée universelle du musée" (Nov. 10, 2021).[146] This citation underlines the time and resources required to analyze the vast collections held in French museums. Moreover, Blanchard points out that the traditional function of the museum has been to display exhibits that educate the public on different facets of humanity. This perspective highlights the importance of acquisition history and sources of origin when exhibitions are assembled. By properly contextualizing exhibitions that recognize the role museums serve for government social construction projects, displays featuring items from other cultures can ascend above the reductive discourses tied to nationalism and xenophobia. Capitalism's exploitation of African markets further complicates efforts by national governments to cooperate in a sufficient enough manner to address the problems surrounding African arts across the globe, "Néanmoins,

[146] Nisrine Manai. "'Restitution d'œuvres au Bénin': "Ce chapitre sonne le début d'une nouvelle époque', estime l'historien Pascal Blanchard", *Franceinfo Culture*. Nov. 10, 2021.

la question des restitutions est indissociable de celle du trafic illicite, qui cause actuellement d'importantes pertes à l'Afrique et qui continuera d'en causer si rien n'est fait" (Sarr and Savoy 51). The public's increased demand in France and elsewhere for the accountability of ownership in museum collections alongside their ongoing interest in African arts demonstrates the significance of these collections going forward in foreign affairs. While European and North American governments want to appear sympathetic to their political bases and global allies, it will be up to voters in these countries to determine ultimately the ideologies employed by the state at the institutional level of the museum to construct future concepts of national heritage and identity.

Conclusion: Reducing Education & Literature to a Nation

This dissertation project has highlighted the intersection of education and literature as a focal point in the ongoing debates on diversity and nationalism in the influential social spaces that these two fields occupy. While educational institutions operate under different motives and objectives from literary ones, the two are often connected through a vast history of policies and practices that were wielded to bolster or diminish the circulation of certain ideologies within a specific community or population. The reduction of education and literature to nationalist politics threatens the historical transnational networks connecting societies in addition to the rising interest for inclusive representations in public spheres. Edward Said found that under imperialism education was consolidated with literature and elevated to the level of national culture. The cultural productions elevated to this status were viewed as independent of outside or foreign influences in order to glorify the national values they were regarded as embodying. On the value of situating a cultural production within a larger global context, Said explains, "And understanding that connection does not reduce or diminish the novels' value as works of art, on the contrary, because of their *worldliness*, because of their complex affiliations with their real setting, they are *more* interesting and more valuable as works of art".[147] The denial of the transnational networks established over centuries of human mobility, economic dealings, and shared cultural practices undermines an individual's assessment of social issues as well as their interpretation or argument of a given situation. The recognition of these inter-connected networks spanning from Africa to Europe and beyond allows for a more thorough understanding of the complex dynamics that affect our communities and perceptions of identity.

[147] Edward W. Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994.

Approaching literature to fill the documentary void on the networks connecting Europe to Africa provides a voice to the individuals who occupy the liminal spaces of our increasingly globalized world. Specifically, the history of francophone sub-Saharan African literature has addressed issues tied to education and migration to hexagonal France since the earliest generations of writers during the colonial period and continuing to the present.[148] Whereas media representations often portray human mobility to the global north as degenerative to the status quo or national identity, the critical reading of this literature has shown that these patterns of movement are exacerbated by the historical practices and current policies of the same countries trying to limit the number of migrants crossing their borders. During colonialism, vast networks were established to facilitate the movement of French colonial officials along with African students and workers throughout the empire to enable the extraction of wealth back to France. After independence, the disappearance of the colonial networks was replaced either by new neocolonial economic and educational agreements or by clandestine markets. However, the representation of this progression as illustrated by the primary sources of this dissertation demonstrates that both systems have allowed France to profit the most financially and socially leaving local African communities to face economic and population losses. For example, Fatou Diome's novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* points to a changing mindset among young African populations who reject the centuries of discourses that influence them to leave their place of birth and migrate either to the nearest urban centers or even to attempt a transcontinental relocation. While popular media can only report on events after they occur, the study of francophone African literature yields unique understandings of cultural trends and ideological alignments.

[148] Dominic Thomas. *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism*. Indiana University Press, 2007.

The critical study of these writers and the issues they address in their literary works allows scholars to connect historical events with cultural practices and social ideologies. The first chapter of this project has shown that African women writers are socially positioned between the physical sites of the household and the school. Girls and women in pursuit of education must often overcome gender-based obstacles that their male peers do not face. Next, the second chapter explored the ways Congolese editors and writers employed educational discourses to develop concepts of identity in the emerging independent society. By employing their colonial educations, these editors and writers created new cultural spaces to discuss the social values to be upheld in local French-speaking communities. The third chapter address contemporary issues of cultural and social identification regarding the debates on the reception of writers across the countries comprising the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie* stemming from the initial publication of the "Pour une littérature-monde en français" manifesto. The analysis of these debates revealed that literary figures, politicians, and writers frequently turned to issues and themes tied to French education when discussing the ethnic and racial divisions upheld in literary publishing and the reception of that literature by the public. The last chapter examines the history of political recognition for past injustices by official government restitution or repatriation, especially concerning African arts and cultures. My reading of primary and critical sources demonstrated that although France has taken steps to restoring parts of its vast collections to the countries of origin there remains significant issues with regards to the possession and representation of African art pieces and cultural objects held in France.

Globalized capitalism continues to exacerbate divisions between education and literature and to accentuate nationalist or identity-based lines. Together, these undermine their artistic value or "worldliness". Indeed, these divisionary tactics are revealed to further exclude African

or other minority writers from participating in a French national context despite the overlapping history underscoring their shared cultural practices and forms of expression. Many francophone African writers find themselves in between their country of origin in Africa and France with neither location offering complete social acceptance or belonging. As Thomas has argued:

> A rather unusual set of circumstances inform the African context, particularly if one takes into consideration regional and national particularities, such a broad range of colonial and decolonizing experiments, recent experiments of national sovereignty, vast discrepancies in natural resources, uneven border control, and population mobility, as well as complex regional trade networks (186).

Following decolonization, many African countries have a fraught relationship with France on a political level in addition to the French language on a cultural and social level as well. Globalism and capitalist exploitation have heightened tensions between efforts aimed at participation in a global market and the concern with the conservation of local and regional identities in Central and West Africa continues to struggle. Early generations of women writers, such as Mariama Bâ and Aminata Sow Fall, noted that established customs were upended by colonialism and the enforcement of French policies in local African communities. Later, other writers engaged with a range of postcolonial issues, notably Ken Bugul, Fatou Diome and Léonora Miano represented the impact of borders, economic vulnerability, and the struggles with social identities that African migrants or other migrants encounter. Additionally, African art pieces and cultural objects are reduced to commodities to generate capital for Western art dealers and institutions, which diminishes the historical and cultural values behind these items along with the artisans who have specialized in a specific craft. The analysis of these transnational networks illustrates the extraction of cultural and financial wealth that flows freely toward France, while impeding the creators of that wealth from participating in an equitable manner.

The ability to document and represent the relationship between education and literature that impacts the networks connecting Africa and Europe is essential to unraveling the pejorative discourses circulated during slavery and colonialism. Indeed, Achille Mbembe endorses this type of text-based reading that I have embraced in this project as an effective method in discerning exactly how French colonial education structured networks of exchange and mobility between Africa and Europe and their contemporary legacies. Through his analysis of language, Mbembe shows that the actions and desires of the colonizer left explicit archival traces through their extensive systems of documentation and institutions across the empire. The doubt placed on concepts like "*réalité*" and "*fait*" place a more profound importance on the types of language employed over the course of colonial imperialism. He explains, "Le pouvoir ne consisterait en rien d'autre que le pouvoir de fabulation, le pouvoir de faire accroire, de représenter".[149] The documents and texts that comprise the archival record come almost exclusively from French controlled perspectives. The additional linguistic and social confines imposed on African populations by enforcing the French language complicates the ways local communities were affected. The emphasis Mbembe places on language and representation reveals that colonialism restructured African societies on both a cultural and psychological level. Therefore, African literary texts written in French continue the significant pattern of documentation, which illustrates the ongoing struggles of education and geographical mobilities in communities across Central and West Africa and extending to France.

By expanding the archive and presence of African writers in French institutions tied to education and literature, social projects to improve integration or representation will be

[149] Achille Mbembe. *De la postcolonie: essai sur l'imagination politique dans l'Afrique contemporaine*. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2000.

augmented by tangible inclusion based on communal experiences. The study of African literature in the French language from the colonial to the postcolonial era allows unique insights into the migrant experience that does not derive from a European origin. The incorporation of African and postcolonial perspectives demonstrates that the problems founded in colonial education are still deeply rooted and prominent in the networks of mobility between France and Africa today. Thus, discourses and themes related to education are used to critique these issues by francophone African writers. In portraying the influence of education on discourses and practices related to mobility through a literary mode in the French language, these writers subvert established ideologies that relegate African artists and writers in addition to their works to separate cultural and social spaces apart from European or American ones. The valorization of the transnational cultural connections between nations and across borders offers a much-needed social pathway to overcome the historical injustices that undermine the networks that were embellished using French education and literature.

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