Into the Abject:
Fracture Zones in Francophone African Literature

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Under the direction of
Dr. Judith Preckshot

September 2018

Acknowledgements

I've learned so much on my journey to completing this dissertation. I've learned a lot about myself, particularly how to keep motivated, to find creative ways around writing roadblocks, to recover from my failures and to draw the most benefit from my successes. I could not have learned any of these valuable lessons and I certainly could not have completed this dissertation without the wonderful people around me.

I first want to thank my adviser, Judith Preckshot, who remained tireless in her support of me (even two years after retirement). Her comments on my work were pure gold. Nobody has ever read my work as critically as Judith, nor has anyone given me more constructive feedback. But she also went above and beyond helping me hone my ideas and clarify my writing. Judith helped me to access something inside me that I never knew was there, and I am not sure would have found it without her help.

I also would like to thank the rest of my committee: Eileen Sivert always interspersed the most affirming praises among her critical comments in each of my chapters—both the praises and the constructive criticism helped me immensely. Hakim Abderrezak's passionate teaching of a graduate course on interrupted trans-Mediterranean migration was the spark that ignited my interest in what I would come to call fracture zones. Jaime Hanneken's infectious energy and focus on literary theory helped me to clarify concepts at the very core of my project. Having such a supportive committee was a truly a wonderful gift.

Thank you to my husband, Alphonso Jones, whose unwavering belief in the importance of my work on fracture zones and its possible implications outside of academia helped to keep me going. Thank you to my friends and colleagues. Dissertating is long, lonely work and my best writing days were spent along-side friends in person or virtually. Among the many great people who shared my dissertating journey with me are: Lia Mitchel, Emily Durham, Adriana Gordillo, Chris Ice, Jacci Rivard, Charlotte Taubel, Tracy Rutler, Shikha Goodwin, Kate Droske, Ioana Pribiag, Liz Byron, Déborah Lee-Ferrand, Marina Calas, and Agnès Schaffauser.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone whose life has been touched by fracture.

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Introduction

Fracture zones: Imaginary Geographies and Concrete Realities

"Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?"
- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p45

Night has fallen and a motley group of men and women gather on a rocky Moroccan beach. Their humid eyes strain as they imagine they can see the land beyond the dark fog across the Mediterranean Sea: Europe, a land of hope, even an Eldorado for some mesmerized by tales of lucrative jobs and easy living. These travelers hail from across the African continent. Holding onto the hope of a better life (perhaps economic stability or escape from war), the tired men and women now wait for a signal from the *passeur,* a Moroccan fisherman-cum-smuggler-of-people to whom they paid a fortune—exponentially more than tourists pay to take the ferry across from Europe. When the time comes, the migrants, with their *passeur,* haul the small wooden boat into the sea and embark on this last, perilous leg of their journey. Their trip will be nothing like the uneventful thirty-minute ferry ride European tourists take daily from Spain to Morocco. In the small boat, travelling under the cover of night to avoid detection by the Spanish authorities, the migrants steel themselves for the travails that lie ahead. Maybe a wave will swell up and capsize the overcrowded vessel, knocking its passengers, many of whom cannot swim and have no floatation devices, into the sea. Perhaps the *passeur* will become spooked at the sight of the Spanish Guarda Civil patrolling the waters and throw his passengers overboard while still far from the shore—his work as a *passeur* is his

livelihood after all and he must ensure the possibility of future trips. The drowned bodies of the would-be migrants may wash up, like so many "strange fish," on the shores of Morocco, as Youssouf Amine Elalamy depicted in his novel *Les Clandestins* (2000). Maybe their cadavers will be fished out of the water to be placed together in a giant, communal plastic bag in a Spanish morgue where they will go unclaimed for want of identification[1], as journalist Isabella Alexander reported in her article on the 47 bodies pulled out of the sea on Spain's coast on February 4th 2018[2]. Or, perhaps the sea itself will swallow up their lifeless bodies, erasing the migrants from existence as it has done to unknown numbers of would-be trans-Mediterranean migrants.

The harrowing scene presented in the above vignette represents countless, real-life tragedies repeated time and again, particularly in the past few decades. Europe has laid claim to the Mediterranean Sea, pulling this interstitial body of water into its own purview to transform it into an intercontinental border whose purpose is to control and even inhibit the movement of people from the global South to the global North[3]. As Hakim Abderrezak noted in his book, *Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and the Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music* (2016), this once vibrant space of

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[1] As Hakim Abderrezak explains in *Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and that Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music* (2016), clandestine migrants leaving North African shores for Europe have been known to burn their identification papers in hopes of making repatriation difficult for European authorities (7-9).

[2] Isabella Alexander's article, "Forty-seven people died crossing the Mediterranean in a wooden boat earlier this month. This is their story" was published on the website of WLRN Public Radio and Televison on March first 2018.

[3] The disparities in economic power due to the polarization between prosperous nations and less prosperous nations that has been amplified by globalization can be viewed (imperfectly) along a line dividing the northern and southern hemispheres. The "global" North includes those countries with political and economic power, encompassing the West and parts of Asia including China, Japan; the "global" South includes those countries who have little or no political and economic power, that is, developing nations and former colonies of the West. As my study will be largely focused on France as a representative of the global North I will frequently refer to western ideologies and world views that I contend shape much of the global North and its interactions with the South—in this case France's former African colonies.

intercontinental exchange which was called “The White Sea of the Middle” in Arabic, is now transformed into “an experimental space where decisions, debates, and laws are tried out in order to establish Europe’s view of what the global North wants and what the global South will have to accept” (Abderrezak 60). The very possibility of Europe claiming and deforming this liquid space into a quasi-impenetrable barrier speaks to social theorist Étienne Balibar’s definition of political borders as unnatural and arbitrary. In his book, *We, the People of Europe?* (2004), Balibar describes borders as historical institutions in that, “there have never existed anywhere, ‘natural borders,’” and borders are the “great myth of foreign policy of nation-states” (Balibar 109). Though “myth” they may be, power-infused borders have very concrete effects on those who bump up against them. Indeed, the fourteen watery kilometers that separate Morocco from continental Spain have become impassable for many, due to the European policy making its desire to transform its Southern border into a wall “protecting” it from the threat of the global South. Maritime tragedies in the Mediterranean began to increase in number and in frequency in the 1990s after the signing of the Schengen Convention by France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, which united Europe and gave birth to the concept of a “fortress Europe” which must be defended against incursions from the global South. In his article “La Méditerranée, un mur en devenir?" (2005), Ali Bensaâd asserts that Europe has *militarized* the sea in order to create an artificially insurmountable border with its Southern neighbors through the implementation of the S.I.V.E.[4] (99). And indeed, as Abderrezak maintains, Europe has transformed the sea

[4] As a result of pressure from its northern neighbors, Spain has employed a system of electronic devices (Système Intégré de Vigilance Extérieur), that can detect a small boat in the Mediterranean Sea before it

from a fluid body into a space of "interrupted flow" (18). Bensaâd's and Abderrezak's positions are supported by theorists Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau, who aptly describe the widespread militarization of borders in the global North in their manifesto against "walls," *Quand les murs tombent: L'identité nationale hors-la-loi?* (2007). They argue that borders, militarized to become protective walls to contain and neutralize perceived threats to the North, are a symptom of a society that, inhibited by its own binary thinking[5], has failed to think about, and with, other subjectivities[6]. These walls can take the form of :

> […] un corset de textes législatives, l'allure d'un indéfinissable ministère, ou le brouillard d'une croyance transmise par beaucoup de médias qui, délaissant à leur tour l'esprit de liberté, ne souscrivent qu'à leur propre expansion, à l'ombre des pouvoirs et des forces dominantes. Ainsi le mur peut-il être subreptice ou officialisé, discret ou spectaculaire (8).

Indeed, the tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea, which relatively recently have caught the attention of the global public[7], are just one visible symptom of a much larger, more insidious and deeply-entrenched phenomenon: the formation, maintenance and

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reaches the Spanish shore.

[5] I will discuss the concept of binary thinking in detail shortly.

[6] Full quotation : "La tentation du mur n'est pas nouvelle. Chaque fois qu'une culture ou qu'une civilisation n'a pas réussi à penser l'autre, à penser avec l'autre, à penser l'autre en soi, ces raides préservations de pierres, de fer, de barbelés, de grillages électrifiés, ou idéologies closes, se sont 'élevées, effondrées, et nous reviennent encore avec de nouvelles stridences. Ces refus apeurés de l'autre, ces tentatives de neutraliser son existence, même de la nier, peuvent prendre la forme d'un corset de textes législatives, l'allure d'un indéfinissable ministère, ou le brouillard d'une croyance transmise par beaucoup de médias qui, délaissant à leur tour l'esprit de liberté, ne souscrivent qu'à leur propre expansion, à l'ombre des pouvoirs et des forces dominantes. Ainsi le mur peut-il être subreptice ou officialisé, discret ou spectaculaire" (Quand les murs 8).

[7] According to the BBC, these deaths—which had been ongoing for decades—were declared a crisis in 2015 when large numbers of people arrived/or died trying to reach European shores. These people were fleeing conflict in their homelands of Syria (the largest number of refugees by far are from Syria at this time), Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, to name a few (Information taken from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911 accessed at 12:22PM 4/19/2018).

unanticipated violent mutations of what I call “fracture zones.” I developed the term fracture zones as a tool to theorize interstitial spaces where two elements come into violent contact but in which one element, the author and gatekeeper of this violent space, has all the power. Take, for instance France and Africa, as this is the primary relationship that will be studied here. The Mediterranean Sea which connects the two should be a fluid, porous space where the French and Africans might intermingle and participate in equal exchange. However, at Europe’s behest it has become a space that is fluid and passible only to one side, Europe, whose citizens may cross it at their pleasure, as illustrated by the tourist ferry in the opening vignette. To the other side is has become a dehumanizing and deadly space that swallows up African lives. It is precisely the effects of the transformation of a fluid, connective space into something unnatural a hard border that separates that are at the heart of my dissertation.

Fracture zones, as I will maintain, are born of the global North’s inability to think beyond a limited Manicheistic world view, coupled with the excessive power it exerts over individuals and even countries from the global South. As I am examining a phenomenon that I view as characterizing Franco-African relationships on a large scale, I have chosen to draw on literary works from across Francophone Africa. My literary canon includes a novel from a Djiboutian author: Abdourahman Waberi’s *Transit* (2003); novels by Senegalese authors: Aminata Sow Fall’s *Douceurs du bercueil* (1982), Cheikh Hamadou Kane’s *Aventure ambigüe* (1961) and Ken Bugul’s *Le Baobab fou* (1984); one by a Cameroonian author: Léonora Miano’s *L’Intérieur de la nuit* (2005): and a novel from a Franco-Algerian author: Nina Bouraoui’s *Garçon manqué* (2000). Moreover, my

analyses of these diverse novels, spanning a period of forty-four years and hailing from across francophone Africa, will establish the proteiform nature of fracture zones as the multifaceted consequences of forcibly dividing and even polarizing human reality. Each chapter will build on the work of the previous chapters, with the first three dedicated entirely to examining the effects of fracture on African countries and individuals and the last chapter addressing the question of whether French society can survive the consequences of its fracture with Africa humanely.

Significantly, the majority of the novels I am examining are written by women and have female protagonists. Often-times, when a critic focuses on women's writing this focus will be clear in the title of the work. Here it is not, although "gender" will appear in some of the chapter titles and subtitles. I have chosen to omit gender from the title of my dissertation, all the while keeping a focus on women, in order to highlight the unqualified importance of contributions female authors have to offer as part of a larger corpus of literature depicting African experiences. I contend that, due to their already othered, objectified and inferior position in the African patriarchal societies depicted in the novels I examine as well as in European patriarchies, women's experiences allow for a deeper examination of fracturing both on physical and on psychological levels.

The rest of this introductory chapter is dedicated to developing a more detailed definition of fracture zones through the presentation of a supporting theoretical apparatus. I will divide my presentation into three main parts. The focus of the first section is an exploration of the notion of liminal spaces. I draw on Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and of the third space as presented in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), which

offers a "jumping off point" to my own theorization of the type of troubled liminality represented by the Mediterranean Sea. I have chosen Bhabha's theory of hybridity here because he works directly with the concepts set forth in binary models (such as that of the colonizer versus of the colonized) and looks specifically at the space of contact between them. It is this space that is of central importance to my theory of fracture zones. Bhabha's third space, like the sea in its natural state, is a connective and essentially fluid one between two solid bodies. This first part will serve to lay the groundwork for my own investigation into this paradoxical liminality by first examining the fluid connectivity of Homi Bhabha's hybrid space and the increasingly impenetrability Ali Bensaâd notes in his theorization of the Mediterranean Sea as a barrier to movement from South to North. The second part of this introduction explores the mechanisms behind the global North's perceived need to construct impenetrable borders so as to inhibit fluid exchange with the global South. To do so I will delve deeper into the process of creating the binary divisions at the heart of western subjectivity. Drawing on works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One*, I will demonstrate that these unnatural and imaginary divisions preclude the possibility of even perceiving that which is outside of western subjectivity. The final element in my presentation of the theory underlying my concept of fracture zones will be an exploration of precisely that which is excluded from the Subject/Object binary. With reference to Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter*, Julia Kristeva's *The Power of Horror*, and Christopher Miller's *Blank Darkness,* I will depict the abject as the frightening and shadowy presence that both fuels the Subject's creation of life-consuming fracture zones and is produced by them. Following

this refinement of my terminology, I will lay out a map of my examination of fracture zones in the chapters to come.

Part 1: Theorizing interstitial spaces

Bhabha argues that the borders that appear to exist between peoples—particularly those between colonizers and (formerly) colonized, which are his main focus, are porous, thus allowing for exchange. Moreover, the intercultural encounters that occur within these borders produce a space favorable to the deconstruction of hegemonies and the formation of hybrid identities. This space can be found at what he calls "the articulation of cultural differences." Bhabha succinctly establishes the contours of this theory on the first page of *The Location of Culture*:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and focus on those moments and processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular and communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sights of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (1).

Bhabha's use of the word "articulation" is very significant for his visualization of hybrid space. Playing on the polysemy of this word, we can see that it encompasses two key components in Bhabha's theory. First, articulation indicates the possibility of movement. If we think of the word "articulation" in a medical sense, as Bhabha's use of the term "connective tissue" invites us to do, we envision the many joints in our body which connect two bones. In the human body this interstitial space between two solid masses is filled with synovial fluid—a viscous liquid whose purpose is to make movement possible

by preventing the friction that occurs when two solids are rubbed together. To further illustrate the connective quality of his third space, Bhabha offers the image of a metaphorical staircase. Bhabha's staircase is a space of constant movement connecting two floors to each other in an eternal "to and fro" motion:

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither movement of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (4).

As evidenced in this metaphor, the third space defies the binary thinking as it fills the space in between categories thought to be polar opposites. By occupying such a position, the third space, as a "connective tissue," allows for constant exchange, thus making binary divisions impossible to maintain. Furthermore, whereas Manichean categories are thought of as well-established and fixed, Bhabha shows that the third space is one of movement that prevents the establishment of such "primordial polarities." As such, Bhabha's third space is one of contestation and negotiation which challenges all involved to be in a constant process of redefining and negotiating cultural identities through what he calls "the borderline engagements of cultural difference" (2).

The second definition of the word "articulation" refers to expression and even creation. Omar Acheraïou notes in *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization* (2011) that "for Bhabha and for most postcolonial scholars hybridity and

the third space are conduits of a revolutionary politics of identity and cultural relationships" (91). Far from representing a border that marks a limit, for Acheraïou, Bhabha's third space is one "where 'presencing' begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world—the unhomeliness—that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (9). It is in this third space of liminal interaction, contestation and negotiation that something new is articulated and this newness, argues Bhabha, is necessary for cultural innovation.

Bhabha's third space is thus one where binary oppositions are transgressed and therefore lose their power. Accurately summing up Bhabha's conception of this liminal space, Acheraïou writes: "According to Bhabha, this in-between space of enunciation resists binary categorizations and essentialism. His contention is that cultural identity always emerges in the contradictory and ambivalent space where binarism and claims to cultural purity are transcended (1994, 38-9)" (95-96). The question Acheraïou poses in *Questioning Hybridity,* which I second in this study, is essentially, "What if binaries do not dissolve in this interstitial space?" Acheraïou argues that it is unrealistic to posit that the power structures that fuel binary divisions simply dissipate in a third space, allowing for the formation of hybridity. Such a contention, he states, demands an ignorance or a blindness to the concrete realities of experiences in interstitial spaces. Indeed, the very notion that the Mediterranean Sea could be transformed into a wall separating Europe from Africa illustrates the potency of binary divisions. A natural non-hierarchical movement is precisely what is inhibited in the spaces of contact between Europe and Africa in the interest of maintaining the global North/South binary.

Indeed, in contradistinction to Bhabha's protean space of intercultural negotiation, Bensaâd writes of the border between Europe and Africa in terms of a violently enforced division:

> […] elle devient gouffre qui engloutit quotidiennement des vies humaines. En cela aussi, ou plutôt pour cela surtout, elle est une fracture. Fracture où sombrent des vies humaines dans leur passage entre deux mondes qu'elle sépare de plus en plus. Fracture parce qu'elle est voulue comme telle et qu'elle est sillonnée par des bateaux de guerre alignés contre des radeaux civils et cela pour y construire un nouvel attribut, antinomique d'une mer, et particulièrement de celle-ci : l'infranchissabilité (99).

For Bensaâd the interstitial space of the Mediterranean Sea is a gaping chasm that fractures where the Bhabhaian staircase joins. Instead of connecting these entities, drawing them closer together and opening up a space for negotiation, this interstitial fracture separates them more and more ("elle sépare de plus en plus"). Europe's increased enforcement of its southern borders reifies, thus immobilizing, Bhabha's ever-moving, ever-changing connective tissue. In Bensaâd's apt words, Passerelle, la Méditerranée est en voie de transformation en mur. Mur de guerre pour signifier la fracture et tenter de la pérenniser" (Bensâad, 99). Returning to the medical sense of an articulation as a fluid filled space that allows joints to move, we now can imagine a case in which the synovial fluid has been solidified or extracted. This would result in friction and even erosion where the solid masses of bones and cartilage come into direct contact with each other[8]. Instead of creating favorable conditions for the formation of a hybrid space, the fault line creates a fractured space to which Bensaâd refers as a *mur de guerre* and a *ligne de faille*:

[8] https://www.southerncross.co.nz/group/medical-library/rheumatoid-arthritis-causes-symptoms-treatment

"Cette ligne qui met en contact direct ces deux mondes à ce que les géologiques nomment le miroir de faille, c'est-à-dire la ligne de cisaillement et de frottement de la faille" (Bensaâd 101). In the place of a fluid exchange which would allow for contestation, negotiation, and innovation there is a consumption of life itself in the form of countless, mostly African, bodies that wash up on the shores. What's more, Bensaâd makes clear that human lives are not merely lost in this space, their loss is willed and they are voraciously swallowed up (*englouties)*. Moreover, the violence of this murderous fracture is dispensed in a grossly uneven manner. In his description of the fractured Mediterranean, Bensaâd paints a stark image of the reality of power differences that allowed the sea to be transformed in the first place: Europe lines the Mediterranean with warships to combat Africa's rickety rafts overfilled with civilians. The militarization of the sea thus negates the optimism of Bhabha's third space as it follows that there can be no negotiation and thus no cultural innovation if one side obliterates the other.

Part 2: Binary Oppositions and Western Subjectivity: The Road to the Abject

This second section focuses on the underlying mechanisms that allowed for such an antithetical transformation of fluid spaces such as the Mediterranean Sea into fracture zones. Bhabha's theory of a third space is based on the assumption that peoples and individuals are not cut-off from each other and that there is always an interstitial space of exchange where groups come into contact—much like the Mediterranean Sea which has historically been an interconnecting space between Europe, Africa and the Near East. However, a problem arises when Europe sees this fluid interstitial space as a challenge to the privileged identity it has fashioned for itself based on a polarized separation between

itself as the Subject and everyone else as the Other. There is no room for interstitiality in Manicheistic thought, only a sharp dividing line. Therefore, I will maintain that the global North has endeavored to transform its borders into protective walls in order to maintain its notion of Subjectivity based on the Subject/Other binary. The next few pages are dedicated to an exploration of the binary oppositions at the foundation of Europe's view of itself and the world. I will investigate the ways in which the western Subject distorts or even erases any other subjectivities that might compete with its notion of its own universal subjectivity, thus creating a system of the subject that cannot know difference.

Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978)[9], provides an excellent introduction to the Manicheism at the heart of the dominant western world view. The foundation of Said's argument is that the Occident created the entity called the Orient through the practice of Orientalism. The Orient is what Said calls an "imaginative geography.*"* The term "imaginative" references the mental processes through which the Subject defines and produces an "Other." Said explains that this process is arbitrary in that does not require the participation of the people deemed "Other" (54). He adds that it "is enough for 'us' to set up these boundaries in our own minds; 'they' become 'they' accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from 'ours'" (54). It is worth noting that Said does not claim this mental process is unique to Westerners. He explains that the formation of a category in which to confine the foreign is a mental shortcut seen across civilizations, not one unique to the West: "all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of

[9] Acheraïou, who returns to Said in his discussion of hybridity, points out the prominent place Said holds in the field of postcolonial studies: "Said was among the first of the postcolonial critics closely to scrutinize [sic] colonialism's discursive practices" (90).

knowledge" (67). This process, he elaborates, is a natural one through which the human mind defends against the "assault of untreated strangeness" (68). He further adds that in the place of what seems absolutely foreign "cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but, for the benefit of the receiver, as what they ought to be (68). This conversion in and of itself is not what makes Orientalism so noxious. Instead it is, again, the prominent role that the idea of European cultural supremacy vis-à-vis "all of the non-European peoples and cultures" played (and continues to play) in the construction of European identity (Said 7). Orientalism owes its strength and durability to European cultural hegemony both inside and outside of Europe (Said 7).

The Other—in this case the Oriental—is a median category fashioned by the Subject to stand in for the foreign within the Subject's symbolic. As a median category, the Other occupies the space between the known and the unknown, allowing the foreign to enter the realm of the familiar as "a version of a previously known thing" (58). Taking Europe's encounter with Islam as his model, Said explains the reasoning behind the West's creation of the Orient as a median category:

> If the mind must suddenly deal with what it takes to be a radically new form of life—as Islam appeared to Europe in the early Middle Ages—the response in the whole is conservative and defensive. Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity. The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and the mind reduces the pressure by accommodating things to itself as either "original" or "repetitious" (58-59).

Here, Said argues that the European mind of the early middle ages, being unable to imagine a world view different from its own, assigned its own meaning to Islam. Created

by Europeans as a lesser version of their own, superior world view, Islam seen through European eyes lost its threatening potential to challenge European subjectivity. Islam remains different, but it is no longer outside of European understanding. Thus, with the creation of the median category, what was once remote and threatening in its potentially uninhibited mobility is now confined and limited to acting out a script written by the West. Said expresses the predicament of the Orientalist Other using a theatrical metaphor: "[T]he Orient is the stage on which the East is confined. […] [It is] not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (63). The Other, Said explains, "sits quietly on […] the Oriental stage. He is given a genealogy, an explanation, even a development, all of which are subsumed under the simple statements that prevent him from straying elsewhere" (64).[10] Thus, arguably, the Other, as a median category defined and confined by Western terms, is merely an extension of the Subject's imaginary. Said notes that in Orientalist discourse the Oriental is made to live "in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence" (40). Significantly, he adds, "Yet what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather a whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations from the West" (40). However, it must not be forgotten that although the Other is granted its "own" parallel history, traditions and societal structure, this identity is essentially empty as it remains a

[10] "The dangers of free-wheeling heresy are removed when it is transformed into ideologically explicit matter for an alphabetic item. Mohammed no longer roams the Eastern world as a threatening, immoral debauchee; he sits quietly on his (admittedly prominent) portion of the Oriental stage. He is given a genealogy, an explanation, even a development, all of which are subsumed under the simple statements that prevent him from straying elsewhere" (64).

Western creation forcibly imposed upon another people, a system of one that does not know difference.

The Western Subject fashioned itself on its strongly held belief that Western civilization was at the pinnacle of historical development. However, for the Subject to be in the place of universal right, the Other must be "less-than," a degraded version of the Subject. Therefore, the very "essence of Orientalism is an ineradicable distinction between Western *superiority* and Oriental *inferiority*[11]" (Said 42). Locked in his inferiority, the Other is seen as the negative element in the Subject/Other binary—a permanently inferior, degraded copy: "The Oriental is irrational. Depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal.'" (Said 40). The Westerner is in the place of the universal and the right while the Oriental is relegated to the particular and the deficient. From the Western subject's position, it is in the natural order of things that the superior West rule over the Orient believed to be wanting in cultural, technological and economic development. Indeed, throughout *Orientalism,* Said reinforces the notion that the very way the Oriental is perceived is skewed, allowing for a certain view of the Western self which justified and maintained Western imperialism. Take, for example, France's *mission civilisatrice,* which became an integral part of the politics of the Third Republic and which guided French colonialism of the late 19th and 20th centuries. The logic of the *mission civilisatrice* is rooted in the idea of an inherent superiority of the invading (French) people, thereby making it rational to occupy a territory in the interest of transforming the "sauvages" who inhabited the land

[11] Italics mine.

into "civilisés"; the French were to use their superiority to "aid" others (Stora, Transfert, 34)[12].

Significantly, this fundamental process of creating an Other as a degraded reflection of the Subject is not limited to the West's encounter with foreign peoples. In patriarchal social structures—like those that dominate not only the West, but much of the world today—the male Subject divides his "own" people into Manichean categories along gender lines, creating a feminine Other to reflect back his superiority. Feminist theorists, such as Luce Irigaray, explain that, like Said's Oriental, women are defined entirely from the outside and are therefore purely creations of the male Subject.[13] In her

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[12] I will discuss France's *mission civilisatrice* in greater detail and develop my discussion of the effects of a specifically French imperialism in the chapters to come.

[13] However, tempting as it is to make the (too facile) parallel between feminism and Orientalism, it behooves us to consider the Orientalism embedded within Western Feminism in order to discern which paradigms can still be useful for this line of argumentation. Indeed, I certainly recognize that African women's relationship to Western (particularly White) feminism is a rocky one to say the least. In her book *The Dynamics of African Feminism: Defining and Classifying African Feminist Literatures*, Susan Arndt presents and explains the issues African feminists have with the practice of reading African women through White Western feminism. Prominent among these concerns is the question of "race," particularly its invisibility in White Western feminism. Arndt explains that:

> […] with regard to African women, White feminists practice the very behavior for which they criticize patriarchal oppression: ignorance and arrogance. When White Western feminists speak of 'women' they mean 'White women'. The do not see beyond their own society and hence ignore or marginalize the specific problems of African women (33).

Uninformed—or even unconcerned—about the situations and problems faced by women living in, for instance, African countries, White Western feminists claim to speak in the name of all women. This assertion, argues Arndt, "is not only imperialist, but even racist" (34). Furthermore, when White Western feminists do turn their attention to the specificities of African women's lives they do so voyeuristically, focusing on certain aspects (such as circumcision for example) and seem unable to consider any other issue (Arndt 75). Moreover, one complaint Nigerian theoretician Catherine Acholonu has voiced about applying White Western feminist notions to African contexts is that not all African societies traditionally had a patriarchal hierarchical structure that oppressed women and that this oppressive structure was imported and imposed upon Africans by the West (Arndt 55). However, I agree with Arndt's assertion that while colonialism indeed "imported new gender hierarchies, thus worsening the specific condition of women all over Africa" (55), Acholonu's insinuation that precolonial African women may not have been oppressed before the European invasions does not hold true on a large scale. Indeed, in the Francophone African works I will analyze in this dissertation, women are depicted as, to borrow Arndt's words, "the social 'Other', oppressed and discriminated against by men and patriarchal structures" (56). Moreover, none of the works I am studying suggests that this oppression is entirely new and/or imported. Arndt goes so far as to argue that "[u]ltimately, the anti-feminist position of Africans committed to gender issues has more to do

text *Marché des femmes* (1978), Irigaray describes the condition of women as only having identity as objects trapped in an economy of "ho(m)mo-sexual desire" (objects exchanged between men):

> La loi qui ordonne notre société, c'est la valorisation exclusive des besoins-désirs des hommes, et des échanges entre eux. Ce que l'anthropologue désigne comme passage de la nature à la culture revient donc à l'instauration de l'empire de l'hom(m)o- sexualité. (168)

As evidenced by language of the quote above, men are active and capable of bestowing meaning on the world—much as the Orientalist bestows meaning upon the Orient—whereas women depend entirely on men for their meaning. Women in patriarchal society, Irigaray contends, are a commodity exchanged between men and therefore must be fashioned by men's social and symbolic labor:

> *Les marchandises, les femmes, sont miroir de valeur de/pour l'homme.* Pour ce faire, elles lui abandonnent leurs corps comme support-matière de spécularisation, de spéculation. Elles lui abandonnent leur valeur naturelle et sociales comme lieu d'empreints, de marques, et de mirage de son activité (173).

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with the (understandable) opposition against the imperialism of the West in general and White Western feminism in particular than with a disagreement over feminism's fundamental ideas" (Arndt 67). Arndt also cites Senegalese author Mariama Bâ, who explains that in spite of differences that should not be glossed over or ignored, there is an essential commonality in women's experiences of patriarchy. This citation illustrates well the basic premise of my analysis:

> There is everywhere…in the world a woman's cry being uttered. The cry may be different, but there is still a certain unity…The cry that they utter, the women from these countries, their cry will not be exactly the same as ours—we have not all got the same problems—but there is a fundamental unity in all of our sufferings and in our desire for liberation and our desire to cut off the chains which date from antiquity (Cited in Arndt 67).

All comparisons and similarities aside, it is not at all my intention to equate the situations of the African protagonists in the novels I study with those of white western women. I share Bâ's view that although women worldwide suffer oppression by patriarchal societies, situations differ greatly from one country to another and one woman to another, especially when cultural and racial hegemonies come into the picture. The inextricable interconnections between "race" and gender are indeed central to my project, and while these connections are not adequately addressed by the White Western feminist theorists I draw on, I will examine these intersections throughout this dissertation in my textual analyses. That said, my recourse to white femininism is integral to this project as does help me to develop an operative theory of the adject as will be evident in the coming pages.

As evidenced in the quote above, women give something up, "their natural and social value," when they are brought into man's symbolic system. Thus, as an Other, Woman is an iteration of what Said referred to as a median category between the known (that which can be subsumed in the dominant symbolic system), and the foreign (that which is outside of this system and thus in excess of it). In *Bodies that Matter* (1993) Judith Butler aptly sums up Irigaray's argument that the feminine within patriarchy is an empty category which stands in the place of an erased identity:

> […] the masculine occupies both terms of the binary opposition and the feminine cannot be said to be an intelligible term at all. We might understand the feminine figured within the binary as the *specular* feminine and the feminine which is erased as the *excessive* feminine (Butler 39).

Irigaray illustrates that women's representation in this economy, as Butler terms it, is "precisely the site of their erasure" (37). While woman's body is made to be a passive recipient of male desire—"the beautiful object of contemplation"—her sexual organ, understood only as a sort of inverse of the phallus, "represents *the horror of nothing to see.* A defect in this systematics of representation and desire" (Irigaray 26). In this case, women's sexualized bodies represent the specular feminine (or the feminine in the masculine binary), and her sexual organ stands in for what Irigaray calls the excessive feminine, that which is outside of the masculine economy and is therefore unintelligible. Woman's sexual desire or pleasure is rendered not only unthinkable, but terrifying. Significantly, while the median category of Said's Other was given a genealogy and an origin story that the Western Subject formed from a partial knowledge based on

stereotypes of cultures deemed Oriental, Woman was allowed no origin separate from man.[14] Woman is always already man's Other.

Irigaray's excessive feminine, however, suggests the existence of what might lie beyond the Subject/Other binary, something is not (yet?) fully imaginable. The true feminine—the excess feminine—exceeds the representational capacities of Subject's phallocentric symbolic system and thus must be constantly suppressed or the system itself risks dissolution. Butler calls this constantly expelled liminal element the "abject"—which she is quick to say does not uniquely refer to the excess feminine, but to any element which is repudiated so that the Subject can exist as such. While the Other can be thought of as the tail-side of the Subject's coin—the negative to the Subject's positive—the abject remains far more nebulous and therefore threatening. The abject is thus a slippery subject that invites further investigation.

Part 3: Beyond the Binary, the Abject at the Border

In order to sufficiently elucidate how I employ the term abject, I will draw on two different lines of thought. First, I will explore the abject in its role as a border demarcating the edges of the Subject with the help of Butler's *Bodies that Matter* (1993). I will present Judith Butler's premise that as the constitutive border of the Subject, the abject is yet another category formed to neutralize and contain an outside that could threaten the Subject's hegemony while defining the limits of the subject's domain. As Butler draws on the work of Julia Kristeva, I will also refer to Kristeva's *Powers of*

[14] Take, for instance, the Biblical origin story of Adam and Eve (the first man and woman) so well-known in the west. According to the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God created Adam in His image and then created Eve as a companion for Adam. Moreover, Eve is thought to literally have been part of Adam, being that God took one of Adam's ribs to create her.

Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1980) in which she presents the abject as a frightening liminality to the human. Secondly, I will go on to investigate the concept of the abject as a placeholder for all that exceeds the Subject's dichotomy and is therefore deemed unknowable: if the Subject were a dot on a piece of paper, then, in this view, the abject would be all of the "blank" space surrounding it. To better understand that blank space, I will consult Christopher Miller's *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (1985), the focus of which is specifically on Europe's failure to create a stable identity for Africa as Orientalist thought did for the East, thus leaving Africa to exist as a nebulous and threatening expanse outside of the Subject's territory.

Butler's theorization of the abject helps to clarify that it is wholly different from the Subject and the Other. Butler presents the abject in terms of an unavoidable product of Western subject formation:

> This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet 'subjects,' but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject (3).

Butler argues here that for the subject to exist there must be abject beings. For there to be livable zones there must be unlivable zones produced by what is in excess of the subject/object dichotomy and what consequently forms the boundaries of the subject. In other words, the very constitution of the subject is essentially antagonistic and predicated

on exclusion: if there were no abjected bodies[15] there would be no Subjects. Butler adds further on in her introduction that the human is bound by the "inhuman and the humanly unthinkable" which form its *constitutive border* (8). The Other, conversely, is a stable but degraded reflection of the Subject, a reflection contained in its parallel, opposite and still unthinkable identity. The abject must constantly be expelled for risk of infecting the Subject.

In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva explains that the abject, as a border, is ambiguity itself because, "it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (Kristeva 9). This ambiguity is frightening for the Subject and therefore given a negative valence. To this end, Kristeva makes clear that the abject is often equated with dirt, disease, death and human waste: "…refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There I am at the border of my condition as a living being" (3). She clarifies that "filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies to a *boundary*

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[15] Significantly, although Bulter bases her theory on gender, she also directly warns against envisioning the abject as representing any one group of people. If the abject is understood as those beings who inhabit the unlivable zones of social life, those who "do not enjoy the status of the subject" and those whose subjectivity cannot be fit into the imaginary category of the Other, it could be applied in varying degrees to anyone in the West who is not white and male but especially to those who are neither:

> There is no singular outside, for the Form requires a number of exclusions; they are and replicate themselves through what they exclude, through not being the woman, not being the slave, whose propriety is purchased through property, national and racial boundary, masculinism, and compulsory hertersexuality […] And there will be no way finally to delimit the elsewhere of Irigaray's elsewhere, for every oppositional discourse will produce an outside, an outside that risks becoming installed as its non-signifying inscriptional space" (52).

Equally I would like to make clear that I am not aiming to give the abject a fixed identity; rather my argument hinges on the necessity of recognizing that the abject encompasses all that is unintelligible to the subject. This stance will become clearer through the course of my dissertation as I examine works from different regions of Africa as well from different points view vis-à-vis Europe.

and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin" (69). Because the abject forms the borders of the Subject, it is seen as perpetually encroaching on the Subject's space. Returning to Butler's definition of the differential process of Subject formation we can see that the creation of the rigid categories that determine subjecthood produce, and are thus haunted by, instabilities resulting from the creation of unstable zones that they exclude and against which they define themselves (Butler 4). The abject is therefore a constant threat that must be purged by any means necessary.

Unlike Kristeva and Butler who come at their theories of the abject through the lens of gender, Christopher Miller's work focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Francophone Africa in particular. Miller contrasts what he calls Africanist discourse[16] with Said's Orientalism. He argues that while the Orient is a negative for Europe, a diametrical, symmetrical Other, Africa is an unknowable darkness. Miller presents Africa as that which is outside of the terms of the Western binary. He explains that while "[t]he negativity of Orientalism is that of a fully constituted nonself" (15), the Other of the Subject, Africanist Africa is nothing because in the "relationship between the self and other, the third is null" (Miller 16). Whereas Europe was able to pull the Orient[17] into its purview, Africa represents that which Europe failed to fully acquire and domesticate; Africa is the unknown darkness (Miller 19).[18] Africa, Miller explains, was historically

[16] Miller defines Africanism as series of rhetorical moves that have remained remarkably similar throughout the ages, which thus makes it similar in form to, if different in content from, Orientalism.
[17] North Africa and the Middle East
[18] Moreover, Miller notes that this failure was not due to a lack of empirical evidence; in fact, he notes that there "was not real difference in knowledge of the two places" in the 18th and 19th centuries (20). As Miller explains, "Even in the presence of empirical knowledge, Africa and things African are privileged locus of

seen through Western eyes as a sort of void, a Terra Incognita (23). Moreover, the parts of the continent that were "known" by Westerners were variously described as paradisiacal and hellish. For instance, writers from Greek antiquity depicted the land they called Ethiopia as populated by noble savages, as well as by horrific headless animal-men (Miller 28). Thus, unlike the stability of the identity of the Oriental Other, Europe's image of Africa has been a malleable one, frightening in its unknowability. Africanist discourse is ruptured as it is unable to locate a pre-existing essence for Africa. This critical gap between the knowable and the unknowable is also the abject; it is the interstitial space where that which cannot be known by the Subject touches the border of what is known.

As a liminal space, the abject lies both inside and outside the binary oppositions at the heart of western subjectivity, forming the border between the known and the unknown, and as such is itself both known and unknown. It is thus a space that allows for the theorization of what happens at the borders of the subject's territory—which, after all, is particular even if the subject believes it to be universal. The notion of the abject is vital to my theorization of fracture zones and the wanton destruction of life that occurs within these violent, non-Bhabhaian liminal spaces. In the opening vignette, for instance, we can think of the passengers on the Moroccan fishing boat as rendered abject by the fracture. Dehumanized by the European countries attempting to repel them from their borders, the passengers have become like a garbage population to be disposed of, not individuals with their own lives, their own hopes and dreams.

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lags, breaches, delays, and failures in understanding and knowledge. The perception of the continent remains 'dark'" (20).

Fracture zones, I contend, produce abject beings and are in turn legitimized by the Subject's need to protect itself from the very abject beings it produces. In this dissertation, "Into the Abject: Fracture zones in Francophone African Literature," I will descend into the abject to explore fracture zones and the process of "abjectification" that Francophone Africans are made to undergo to protect and justify French subjectivity. Moreover, through my textual analyses of Francophone African novels, I will demonstrate that interstitial fracturing and the abjectification that goes along with it are not limited to African bodies at the borders of Europe. I maintain that fracture zones can occur anywhere that France and Africa come into contact including within African countries torn apart by (neo)colonial influences, as well as within the psyches of individuals torn between incompatible world-views bestowed upon them by bi-raciality, bi-nationality, or bi-culturalness. Finally, I will also consider the abject as that which stands in for what is unknown and incomprehensible to the Subject. Taking this view of the abject, I also explore the abject as a possible window to something beyond the binary, albeit a debased and murky one. My purpose in studying the abject in the various contexts I proposed above is to establish the enormity of what lies beyond the Subject's binary (and is violently excluded from this "universal" binary) and to take a step toward exposing that the negative qualities written on to the abject belong to the Subject and not the abject.

Part 4: Fracture Zones in Francophone African Literature

My study is divided into four chapters, each of which builds on the conclusions of the previous chapters as well as explores novel elements of fracture and new iterations of

fracture zones. The aim of the first two chapters is largely to clarify what constitutes fracture zones, how they manifest and the stakes for those subjected to them in the Francophone African literature I am studying. In Chapter one, **Zones of (Im)mobility and Fracture in Abdourahman Waberi's *Transit* and Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail,*** I paint a dynamic picture of my concept of fracture zones as physical spaces of contact that sharply divide a powerful France from relatively powerless African countries. Moving from the captivity global Southerners experience at France's internal geopolitical border-spaces, such as the international Roissy Airport, to the "border-space" created by France's insidious yet firm and deforming grip on a former African colony, Djibouti, I demonstrate that power-infused binary oppositions do not dissolve in an interstitial space of fluid exchange and negotiation; instead they are reinforced as the global North reifies its borders, making them increasingly impenetrable to those hailing from the global South. I argue that within these "protective borders" fracture zones are formed in which unwanted populations are (im)mobilized and abjectified. Finally, I investigate the death of Waberi's bi-racial child protagonist, Abdo-Julien, as symbolic of the death of the Bhabhaian hybrid. His death, I will maintain, illustrates that, in the place of fluidity, there is a sort of fault-line—a polarized tearing of interstitial space and of those who would inhabit it.

Chapter two, **Fractured Inner Worlds: Neocolonial and Gendered Alienation in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Aventure ambigüe* (1961) and Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1983),** explores France's historical fracturing of African subjectivity that began with its progressive invasion of the continent. The chronological breadth of the works in this

chapter will serve to expose the lasting, deadly effects of the relationship of France to African nations and individuals subjected to its colonization. Through my analyses of Kane and Bugul's protagonists, I demonstrate that fracture zones are not confined to the physical world but produce distorting effects that infect and deform the psyches of the colonized, causing internal fissuring and even internalized abjectification. Moreover, while the first chapter focuses largely on male protagonists, the second chapter will introduce the complications experienced by women, who occupy the already-othered gendered position within both the patriarchal social structures of their native land and of the West. My turn toward female protagonists, which will continue throughout chapters three and four, will allow for a more pointed examination of fracture zones, the effects of which are compounded for women.

The second half of my dissertation is dedicated to examining complications of fracture zones that threaten not only to destroy Francophone African societies but also to deform the French social body itself. This second half will also offer glimpses of what might lie beyond the binary, and even beyond the Subject's abject. Chapter three, **Infection, Gendered Fracture and Afropessimism in Léonora Miano's *L'Interieur de la nuit,*** returns to considerations of fracture zones in their manifestation as physical spaces as discussed in chapter one that are amplified, however, by the fracturing of psychic spaces discussed in chapter two. My reading of Miano's Mboasu, a fictional central African country in the grips of civil war, will consider how existential destabilization and erasure manifest on a societal level. I will analyze Miano's depiction of an isolated Mboasan village to consider the lasting transgenerational trauma of

France's invasion and colonization of African nations. I will suggest that Mboasu's fracturing contact with France has been treated by its people like a wound that is bandaged but not treated, leaving room for infection to grow, an infection manifest in Mboasu's chaotic landscape, pock-marked by the internecine violence of Mboasan mercenaries attacking individuals and communities. At the same time, while my reading will expose a need for Africans to identify problems within the African continent, and work to resolve them, it will not let Europe off the hook. My analysis of Ayané, Miano's alienated, western-educated protagonist will expose the distortions of Europe's abjectifying gaze which focuses on the horror of physical acts of violence on the ground in Africa but ignores the ways in which western influences fuel it. In this chapter I also consider that the masculine suppression of the (true or in Irigarayan terms, excess) feminine results in societal fracturing and cripples those who might otherwise have provided resistance to the infection spreading across the country: the women who remain in the villages that the mercenaries victimize.

My concluding chapter, **Devoured by Fracture: Nina Bouraoui's *Garçon Manqué,*** returns to look at the effects of fracturing on both sides of the Mediterranean. Focusing on the experiences of Bouraoui's troubled, young Franco-Algerian narrator, this chapter will bring my examination of fracture zones back, full circle, to Bensaâd's metaphor of the militarized Mediterranean Sea—a no-longer-fluid space where human lives are not only lost, they are *devoured*, violently and voraciously swallowed up. Moreover, I will demonstrate that fractures are destroying the future not only of the (formerly) colonized, but that of Subject/author-of-fracture as well: France. The sharp

dividing line the *Métropole* historically maintained between itself and its colonies has become more diffuse resulting in a peculiar malaise affecting both sides: Algeria's malaise stems from a need to reconstruct an Algerian subjectivity untainted by French occupation and therefore free of French influence. For France, I contend, this malaise is very much due to what I call the return of the Subject's expelled abject. I will demonstrate that the true threat to the French social body is its own institutionalized amnesia with respect to its (neo)colonial violence. The burial of these memories allows the unresolved and examined violence to grow and fester in silence and to lead to a sort of insidious necrotic infection.

Throughout the course of these chapters I take significant steps in my exploratory journey through various fracture zones in Francophone African literature. Each chapter further exposes the nuanced and deadly effects of the global North's imposed dividing of humanity. While locating solutions to this deep-seated and constantly growing problem is well beyond the scope of this study, I strive, in my dissertation, to expose this deadly fracturing of humanity, its unevenly noxious effects on global Southerners, and also the ways in which the sickening of the global North itself is occulted. Finally, in guise of a sort of obscured hope for a potential resolution to fracture zones, my analyses of the novels in my canon take me into the borders of the abject, through and past its definition as the Subject's constantly expelled waste, to offer a glimpse of what might lie beyond the North's Manicheism and the fractures it causes.

Chapter 1
Zones of (Im)mobility and Fracture in Abdourahman Waberi's *Transit* and Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail*

Clôturés, emmurés
Captifs d'une terre autrefois bénie
Et qui n'a plus que sa faim à bercer

Passeports, certificats d'hébergement, visas
Et le reste qu'ils ne nous disent pas
Sont les nouvelles chaînes de l'esclavage

Relevé d'identité bancaire
Adresse et origines
Critères d'apartheid moderne

L'Afrique, mère rhizocarpée, nous donne le sein
L'Occident nourrit nos envies
Et ignore les cries de notre faim

Génération africaine de la mondialisation
Attirée, puis filtrée, parquée, rejetée, désolée
Nous sommes les Malgré-nous du voyage
-- Fatou Diome, *Le Ventre de L'Atlantique*

The lines cited in the above epigraph, taken from Fatou Diome's novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), illustrate some of the stakes of mobility for Africans in the current global era. Indeed, mobility in the current age of globalization[19] is the privilege of those who enjoy access to the world's wealth and resources (usually residents of the global North) at the expense of all others (particularly residents of the global South). As Zygmunt Bauman remarks, in spite of technologies such as cyberspace and

[19] A hallmark of globalization is that a small portion of the world's population controls nearly all of the wealth (and has nearly all the political power) in the world. This leaves, in Amar Acheraïou's words, the majority of the world population "poverty-stricken and working in conditions close to those of slavery; most of the world's population has to survive on less than two dollars a day" (165). In his book addressing the problems of "post-independence" Africa, *Sortir de la grande nuit,* Achilles Mbembe describes globalization as "l'expansion généralisée de la forme marchandise et sa mainmise sur la totalité des ressources naturelles, des productions humaines, bref sur l'ensemble du vivant" (Mbembe 80).

improvements in transportation, some individuals are now inhibited from free movement more mercilessly by both physical and temporal obstacles (18)[20]. The complexities of, and impediments to, displacement are apparent in even the most cursory reading of this poem. The mobility of these would-be migrants is inhibited: in Diome's poem they are "clôturés", "emmurés" and "captifs". Furthermore, to describe violent captivity of the postcolonial subject and the polarization of power relations that created this situation in a time of supposedly increased freedom, Diome evokes three violent events fueled by gross disparities in power: slavery, the apartheid, and the Holocaust. She uses phrases such as "Les nouvelles chaînes d'esclavage" and "critères d'apartheid moderne" to emphasize the binary division between those who may cross borders freely and those who may not. Significantly, Diome closes her poem with the line: "Nous sommes les Malgré-nous[21] du voyage". This phrase not only brings to mind the captivity experienced by the would-be migrants, it reminds us of the fact that often these people are forced to migrate by

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[20] Bauman writes, "*[R]ather than homogenizing the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances tends to polarize it*. It emancipates certain humans from territorial constraints and renders certain community-generating meanings exterritorial—while denuding the territory, to which other people go on being confined, of its meaning and its identity-endowing capacity. For some people it augurs an unprecedented freedom from physical obstacles and unheard-of ability to move and act from a distance. For others, it portends the impossibility of appropriating and domesticating the locality from which they have little chance of cutting themselves free in order to move elsewhere" (18).

Globalization is complex, large-scale phenomenon the origins of which are still widely debated. I would like to point out here that I am not attempting to say that globalization is a tool freely manipulated by the global North. Such an argument is beyond the scope of this study. However, I am certainly in agreement with other postcolonial scholars, such as Omar Acheraïou, who contend that the costs and benefits of globalization are distributed in such a way as to favor the global North. In his critique of globalization, Acheraïou explains "Geopolitically, globalization implies that the nation-state, which formerly had almost complete sovereignty over domestic economic, social, and political issues, is now more dependent on a global economic and institutional order. […] [T]he sovereignty of the countries of the South, most of which are financially almost entirely dependent on global structures of power such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, has suffered far greater erosion than the sovereignty of the developed nations of the North" (163).

[21] *HIST., emploi subst. plur. Les malgré nous.* Nom donné aux incorporés de force alsaciens et lorrains dans les camps de travail de l'armée allemande pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. *Les enrôlés de force (les "malgré nous ") furent environ cent trente mille. La moitié d'entre eux sont toujours vivants* (*Le Monde*, 3 avr. 1981, p. 38, col. 6). atilf.atilf.fr, s.v. "malgré nous", consulted 11/07/10.

conditions beyond their control. In other words, for these *Malgré-nous du voyage*, (im)mobility[22] is not an expression of subjective agency but a condition imposed on them from without; borders are not porous gateways but spaces of captivity.

Analyzing Abdourahman A. Waberi's *Transit* (2003) and Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* (1998) this chapter will serve to elaborate my term *fracture zones* as a tool to theorize liminal spaces between the global North and South that do not connect but sharply divide in an attempt to maintain binaries. I divide my study into three sections: The first section, "Violent Immobility and Abjectification in Zones of Transit," will focus on representations in these novels of the political and administrative border zone that is Roissy Airport[23] to demonstrate that fracture zones function as spaces in which the global North confines those it deems threatening to the maintenance of its privileged subjectivity. I will further argue that, (im)mobilized, global Southerners trapped within this interstitial space are not only unable to effect societal change but are also subject to existential destabilization as identities are essentially ripped away to make way for the process of abjectification. The second section, "Djibouti, A Country Fractured," will examine Waberi's representations of the newly independent and civil war-torn Djibouti as another form of fracture zone. Djibouti, like Roissy is a space of divisive contact between the North and the South. My analysis will reveal how France fuels the fragmenting conflict in Djibouti by secretly helping the rebels who are laying siege to the government, keeping the country unstable, weak and dependent on French

[22] This is a term I develop in this chapter and will use in future chapters as well. It essentially refers to a type of immobile mobility characterized by futile attempts at progress toward a place or objective. Therefore, there is a type of almost vacillating that never actually leads anywhere.
[23] Also known (Charles de Gaulle International Airport, Roissy is France's largest international airport and as such a common point of entry for visitors, immigrants and refugees.

aide. In other words, France keeps Djibouti in a stagnant borderline space where it is independent, but not quite. Invoking this much more expansive iteration of a fracture zone, I will present a situation of chaos, violence and immobility on both political and existential levels. Finally, in the last section, "Death of the Bhabhaian Hybrid" I will address one of the defining elements of the fracture zone that distinguishes it from Bhabha's liminal zone: the impossibility of a Bhabhaian hybrid agent, taking as my prime example Waberi's hybrid character Abdo-Julien, son of Harbi Awaleh and his French wife Alice. I will demonstrate that this hybrid figure—known for his ability to cross borders and unite peoples and cultures by connecting them in a fluid and ever-changing way—could not survive the fracture zone in which, due to the concrete reality of its rigid, fragmenting divisions, does not allow for Bhabhaian hybridity.

Part 1: Violent (Im)mobility and Abjectification in Zones of Transit

The ability to move plays and has historically played a significant role in determining who qualifies as a subject in the West. In her essay, "Transporting the Subject: Technologies of Mobility and Location in an Era of Globalization," Caren Kaplan discusses the importance of mobility in Western modernity. She aptly notes that "[m]ost enlightenment political philosophies and social structures share the tendency to celebrate mobility, oscillating among democratic, imperialist, and fascist notions of expansion" (35). It follows that for these expansions to occur borders must be porous. Furthermore, in addition to these physical expansions, a significant mark of Western modernity is the ideal of universalized displacement of the subject through a seemingly

infinite mobility of the mind.[24] The Western Enlightenment dream, Kaplan writes, is one where ideas are free to flow across borders, allowing the subject access to places the body may not reach (35). This idealized fluidity of movement and apparently limitless access to knowledge has been advantageous to the modern Western subject, offering him[25] the economic, political and intellectual benefits that mark Western modernity (Kaplan 35). However, as Kaplan also observes, this modern paradigm of mobility is not without its complexities and contradictions. Among them are differences in material conditions and the disparate social relations on which the mobility of the modern subject is based, along with the reality that movements are "discrete, always uneven, and infused with power relations of tremendous complexity" (Kaplan 35).

Kaplan links the Western subject's mobility to the foundation of his self-definition and in doing so sheds light on the uneven power relations that allow him to be mobile. To this end she traces the importance of travel for Western subject formation back to Greek antiquity, often viewed as the foundation of Western thought. Kaplan writes:

> [F]ollowing the concept of the voyage of the Athenian *theor*, foundational to Western culture, is the idea that travel produces the self, makes the subject through spectatorship and comparison with otherness. Thus, in this ideology of subjectivity, distance is the best perspective on and route toward knowledge of the self and others. Self-knowledge, standpoint, then requires a point of origin, a

[24] This mobility is facilitated, for instance, by increased presence of, and access to, written materials as well as visual materials, thanks to cinema, television and, more recently, the internet.

[25] My use of the masculine "him" is intentional as I am signalling that those who enjoy full subjectivity have historically been male in Western societies, as in most patriarchal societies.

> location that constitutes the subject as a viewer and a world of objects that can be viewed or surveyed (36) [26].

As Kaplan illustrates in the citation above, mobility demands contact with otherness, and the subject defines himself by the distance he perceives between himself and the other as the object of his observation. At the same time having a sharp definition of who the self is in relation to the other provides a stability to the location of the self's subjectivity. This fixedness is expressed by reference to a "point of origin." Despite his being in motion, a certain stability or security is identifiable in the constant location of the self as the observer of the other.

The hierarchical thinking that fueled Western subjectivity in the modern period is now present on a global scale and is producing a global re-stratification. Globalization has intensified the polarization of populations by an unequal distribution of its gifts, thus creating vast differences between those from the global North and those from the global South. New, seemingly limitless technologies allow the knowing subject to further distance himself from the object with the aim of gaining previously unheard-of power (Kaplan 36). However, those at the receiving end of globalization are increasingly territorialized with little or no possibility of displacement. The Westerner's subjectivity can now be defined in terms of the global and the local, with globals being those who have the right to travel and define themselves without being tied to and defined by a specific locality yet, at the same time, are able to remain connected to a stable sense of

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[26] "One of the older definitions of *theory* stemming from Greek antiquity refers back to a 'body of *theors* sent by a state to perform some religious rite or duty'. […] What is most interesting, given more recent developments, is that the state-sponsored *theor* is also referred to as a 'spectator,' as 'one who travels in order to see things'" (Kaplan 32-3).

identity. As Bauman argues, the locals, on the other hand, are emptied of meaning to be redefined and "domesticated" according to the needs of the global subject.

Political borders, particularly those that separate the North from the South, perform an indispensable role in the current era of globalization: they protect the Northerner's privileged subjectivity. These borders allow the global subject to be mobile while ensuring the security of his/her identity and the rights connected to it vis-à-vis the local. In her article, "Paradoxes on the border of Europe," Kartik Varada Raj writes that the border "serves a *polysemic* function where it differentiates between individuals" (517). Those who enjoy the right to mobility pass unhindered across porous national borders. However, for those who are repeatedly stopped and regulated by them, borders are anything but porous. In the past few decades, national borders and the perceived need to identify who is a citizen have become particularly salient with the increased movement of people and goods between countries. Balibar argues that the increasingly rigid implication and maintenance of the national borders in the global North is due to a need of citizens to believe that their rights actually exist. Such a belief is confirmed when witnessing that foreigners do not enjoy the same privileges as national citizens or that their rights are precarious, therefore maintaining the appearance of a clean binary division between them. As spaces of regulation and control, policed by specialized authoritarian regimes existing within social democracies, these political borders jeopardize political rights, if not also human rights—particularly for clandestine immigrants; for this population, they are no-man's lands of invisibility and stagnation.

As I will illustrate shortly, the selectively immobilizing and dehumanizing functions of intercontinental borders mentioned above are poignantly evident in Waberi's *Transit* and Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercueil*. However, it should also be noted that there is a form of mobility accessible to, and even at times forced on, the underprivileged local; a type of mobility that is not linked to subjectivity. Bauman describes the particularity of this movement in terms of that of a vagabond (as opposed to the global who partakes in the voluntary and unconstrained mobility of the tourist). These people, like those to whom Diome refers as *les Malgré-nous du voyage*, do not freely chose mobility as do the globals, having been instead "spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise" and "pushed from behind" toward Western centers of prosperity (Bauman 92). Bauman describes the situation in which these people find themselves as follows:

> They see their flight as anything but the manifestation of freedom. These are the *vagabonds*; dark vagrant moons reflecting the shine of bright tourist suns and following placidly the planets' orbit; the mutants of postmodern evolution, the monster rejects of the brave new species. The vagabonds are the waste of the world which has dedicated itself to tourist services (92).

The mobility of the vagabonds is essentially another manifestation of their captivity. Confined to the role of "vagrant moons" they add nothing of their own to the "bright tourist suns" of which they are mere reflections. The locals are alienated, denied their identity-endowing capacities. Their movement, thus dictated from without, does not allow them to define themselves or to progress toward a desired objective. Furthermore, as indicated in Bauman's text, their presence as incarnations of what the global Western

subject rejects may, like the abject,[27] be seen as a threat to the West. The vagabond is the tourist's inner demon "which needs to be exorcized daily" (97). These "monsters," these "rejects," this human "waste" must be kept on the other side of borders that guarantee mobility to the privileged, the Subject, at the expense of all others. Vagabonds are thus the abjectified people who occupy the margins or who inhabit various precarious positions of inside-outsiders. In fact, Balibar, citing Latin American sociologists, even refers to some such populations deemed "always already *superfluous,*" as "garbage humans" (*poblacion chatarra*) adding that they serve no other purpose than to be "thrown away, out of the global city" (128). These "garbage humans" are the unassimilated (or inassimilable) populations who find themselves at the margins of Western society who are (violently) squeezed out or rejected in order to confirm the citizen's rights and the subject's subjectivity.

The rest of this section is dedicated to illustrating the very real implications of fracture zones, both as barriers protecting the global North against incursions from the global South and as spaces of existential destabilization and abjectification for those global Southerners caught within. To this end, I will divide this section into two sub-sections. The first sub-section, "Borders and (Im)mobility" will illustrate global Southerners' experiences of confinement and reification within borders-cum-fracture zones created by the North. "(Im)mobility and Abjectification" will elucidate the process of destabilizing the personal and collective identities in order to dehumanize and abjectify

[27] Here I am referring to my reading of Butlerian/Kristevian notion of abject introduced in the introduction to this dissertation. In particular I would like to draw attention to its definition as a constantly expelled liminal element, that which is not fully defined and contained, and which always threatens to infect the Subject.

the global Southerner to further justify the existence of these interstitial spaces of non-right that I call fracture zones.

Borders and (Im)mobility

Waberi and Sow Fall both dedicate a portion of their novels to the plight of individuals from the global South who attempt to cross geopolitical borders. Each author poignantly illustrates the notion of the polysemic function of national borders; that is, that these borders allow some to pass through while imprisoning or filtering out others. Waberi's novel tells the story of two refugees from civil war-torn Djibouti, Harbi Awaleh (a Western educated intellectual who lost his French wife and their son in the war) and Bachir "Benladen" (an orphan born on the day Djibouti gained independence from France and who made his living as a civilian soldier, a *mobilisé*). While waiting in the Roissy airport for authorization to enter the country, these men tell their stories.[28] Sow Fall's novel centers on the story of Asta Diop, a Senegalese woman travelling to France to attend a conference on the World Economic Order. Desspite having all her papers in order, she is stopped multiple times while going through airport check points and then detained and eventually deported for striking an airport agent who, during a "routine" search, tries to insert her finger into Asta's vagina.

For Harbi the sieve-like nature of the Roissy Aiport becomes clear when he goes from being a successful, French-trained businessman married to a French national to a widowed refugee. He reflects on his current status as a man "Perdu dans les boyaux de l'aéroport Roissy que je traversais souvent lors de mes études, de mes voyages d'affaires

[28] A quick note on the language used by each of Waberi's narrators: Harbi speaks a very refined and educated French while Bachir speaks a broken French spattered with words and phrases from numerous languages that he would have heard growing up on the streets of the newly independent war-torn Djibouti.

ou, plus fréquemment, de mes visites en Bretagne" (17). Now that he is part of the unwanted population (a refugee from war-torn Djibouti) seen as threatening the borders of the "global North," he has lost his right to mobility. The French airport had become for him, as for his compatriots, a zone of detention. Lost in the bowels of the airport Harbi has become a member of a surplus population to be expelled. Similarly, Sow Fall's Asta witnesses differential treatment at the airport when she is stopped multiple times in her passage through *and* between checkpoints at the airport, all the while observing countless other passengers pass through unhindered.

The senseless and cruel display of power in the airport experienced by Sow Fall's protagonist not only illustrates the manifestly undemocratic and authoritarian character of this political border zone, it exemplifies the process of dehumanization thrust upon those Southerners seen as encroaching on the privileged subjectivity of the North. For example, the airport police who stop Asta show that they are not interested in actually verifying that she, as an individual, has permission to enter the country. They make a show of taking her documents but do not actually look at them. Unconcerned with her rights, the airport police alone determine—depending on their mood—whether she may enter the country. Asta even notes that the police officer "a l'air de jouer" (15). This playful harassment quickly turns to outright cruelty: "Le deuxième policier a brisé son élan pendant que l'autre continue à la torturer de son regard froid, glacial, inhumain. Il a martelé d'une voix sèche sans appel" (15-16). Thus, not only do the police treat her coldly and cruelly, but their violent machine-gun like voices shout out at her "*sans appel*," leaving no room whatsoever for contestation, no room to express her subjectivity.

These senseless displays of authority and animal-like cruelty are present throughout her ordeal, which includes a cavity search, a lengthy imprisonment in the airport detention center and expulsion to Senegal.

Furthermore, Waberi illustrates that the violence of such authoritarian spaces is also one that can be physically mutilating or even deadly. He links captivity in the detention center of the airport with the physical violence of other borders-turned-fracture-zones when he tells the story of an African debarked from the airplane because his behavior troubled other passengers:

> […] et le trouble-fête fut débarqué, renvoyé à sa cellule, placé à nouveau de détention dans une zone d'attente. Au moins il est vivant, plus chanceux que ceux qui meurent déshydratés dans le désert de l'Arizona (17).

This reference to the at times deadly border between the US and Mexico further emphasizes the necessary violence in forcibly dividing people—particularly into such polarized groups where one side has all the privilege and access to resources, and the other is left with little or no access to such power. Although those detained in the airport or repeatedly expelled are alive, their lives are put on hold in the airport where they wait in limbo, excess baggage in permanent transit, unwanted migrants.

This brings us to consider the most extreme form of inhibited mobility forced on "undesirable" populations caught by the sieve-like function of geopolitical borders: outright confinement. As Bauman notes, spatial confinement has been "at all times the prime method of dealing with inassimilable, difficult-to-control, and otherwise trouble-prone sectors of the population" (106). This confinement, he writes, is the mark of the excluded in the era of globalization (113). In *Douceurs du Bercail* Asta's description of

the confined space of the detention center in the airport where she is incarcerated with others from the global South brings to mind Harbi's statement of being lost in the bowels of the airport, where he and his compatriots are trapped and waiting to be expelled. Asta describes the space as one overpopulated with people of all ages and genders, all visibly members of the global South ("[d]es noirs, des métis et des arabes") (39). The official name of the detention center, "le depot," suggests a warehouse-like place where people--or more accurately things—are held until they can be put to use or disposed of. Moreover, knowing their fates, often from having undergone multiple detainments in "le depot," the involuntary inhabitants of this space have nicknamed it "l'escale," or the layover. The detainees know that this is just a stop on their trajectory back and forth between worlds; many will try to enter again and again.

Waberi, too, develops this idea of captivity and authoritarian reification in his description of zones of transit occupied by refugees from Africa to France. In the following citation Bachir describes his experience on the airplane: "J'étais stocké, non je veux dire scotché, au dernier rang dans le Boeing 747, là où les policiers attachent serré les expulsés quand l'avion il repart en Afrique" (13). The words "scotché," "attachent" and "serré" all evoke the idea of being captive rather than freely travelling to a chosen destination. This citation also alludes to the dehumanization or reification of refugees, which, as I will elaborate in the next section, goes hand in hand with the process of abjectification. The word "stocké" that Bachir used in error suggests things stocked in stores (much like the detainees in the warehouse or *dépôt* of which Sow Fall wrote) rather than voyagers traveling in airplanes. Harbi also describes the flights between France and

Africa as a state of captivity in transit, but he further emphasizes that this is a quotidian event, one that is endlessly repeated:

> Trois individus de sexe masculin seront enfermés dans la cabine exiguë des toilettes […] Un homme à gilet jaune flamboyant portant sur le dos le mention 'Technicien', épaulé par trois agents de Paf (police de l'air et des frontières), a collé sur la porte des toilettes, dit-on, un épais bandeau de scotch gris pour éviter aux éventuels passagers, qui n'auront pas suivi, au moins des yeux, l'encagement, de s'aventurer dans cette cabine. Bizarre comme la même scène se répète presque tous les jours, sur d'autres vols toujours à destination africaine (17).

The idea of captivity is emphasized and repeated by the phrases "enfermés dans la cabine exiguë", "un épais bandeau de scotch", et "l'encagement". The presence of the "police de l'air et des frontières" also reinforces the idea of an authoritarian space. Furthermore, in this citation, there is again a suggestion that the refugee is relegated to the realm of the abject, or garbage population. The men are locked in the plane's restroom just as Harbi described himself as lost in the bowels of the airport. Finally, the quotidian repetition of this scene shows that this is essentially a stagnant space where the only movement is one that leads not to the desired destination but constantly back to the point of departure.

This essentially stagnant movement on the part of the African travelers brings to mind Bauman's "vagrant moons" who are compelled to move in accordance with the wishes of the "tourist suns" whose light they reflect. This immobile mobility, to which I alluded earlier when describing the movement of the plane that brings Africans to France only to turn around to repatriate them, describes a state I call "(im)mobility" characterized by futile attempts at progress toward a place or objective. Waberi creates a powerful image of the (im)mobility forced upon migrants from the South at the borders

of the global North near the end of the novel: "Épuisés, nous étions comme le brouillard cherchant à traverser un océan. Notre existence tournoyait, aspirée par l'œil d'un énorme cyclone, et encore et encore " (153). This cyclone metaphor lends itself well to a description of the violence of globalization on the global South. Inhibited from effecting any meaningful movement yet caught up in the static eye of a constantly spinning storm, these individuals are forced into a futile and essentially immobilizing form of (violent) mobility, an agitated stagnation which characterizes the fracture zone and further differentiates it from Bhabha's innovative hybridity wherein instability and fluctuations disrupt hegemony and bring about change.[29]

For Asta, Harbi and countless other Southerners the French airport is not a zone of free passage to a chosen destination, but one of captivity and stagnation. This experience of extreme immobility is profoundly violent, especially in a world dominated by the powerful global North for whom subjectivity is based to a large degree on the ability to move about freely. Those caught in these selectively porous border zones face dehumanizing treatment by authoritarian police who see them less as people and more as things to be regulated, stored or expelled. The following section interrogates how the abjectifying quality of fracture zones are experienced on a more existential level by the global Southern subject.

Immobility and Abjectification

One of the ways that the North justifies its use of borders filtering systems is the maintenance of the belief that those who are filtered out are dangerous or somehow

[29] Bhabha's third space is one of contestation and negotiation which challenges all involved to be in a process of redefining culture and identity making fixed binary oppositions impossible to maintain.

threatening. To do so means identifying the global Southerner as a menace, thus justifying his or her exclusion. In the following paragraphs, I will use my analysis of Waberi and Sow-Fall's novels to argue that those from the global South caught in the fracture zone undergo a process of abjectification, consisting first of a destabilization of, and separation from, their collective and personal identities, and then an inscription of the monstrous, diseased, violent attributes which are the mark of the abject in the eyes of the Western subject.

One of the ways in which collective and personal identity is destabilized in *Transit* is by the forceful silencing of Djiboutians in the political border zone. Both narrators in *Transit* are cognizant of the threat of violence that menaces Africans who attempt to speak, to tell their stories, while in the political border zone (here represented by Roissy airport). As Bachir explains: "Bon je ne dis rien pace que Roissy c'est danger, on risque de dire ça c'est des emmerdements africains" (14). And Harbi describes the Africans' situation as follows : "Éviter de parler, de trop parler, d'attirer l'attention sur soi comme ce pauvre Ahmed Chehem, mort étouffé par sa propre jactance, ses propres mots dévalant sa gorge comme autant de pierres emmenées par la force du torrent" (152). Speaking, for Africans, calls forth a violence inherent to the fracture zone. It is a violence born of a forced immobility. Words move, they travel up his throat but are stopped before they can be expressed and are sent back down by a powerful force which kills the would-be speaker.

The inability to speak and be heard represents a serious—or fatal as in the citation above—form of violence for refugees (or even populations residing in France descended

from immigrant parents from former French colonies): it signifies the threat of a loss of memory and personal history. This is particularly true in France where an institutionalized forgetting of the colonial period reigns. France, it could be said, constructed a fracture-generating border between itself and its former colonial subjects by excising part of its national history (one that would point to the failure of the *mission civilisatrice*) in the favor of colonial nostalgia.[30] This fracturing of memory allows the persistent application of colonial schemas to certain "categories" of the population, particularly those formerly part of the French Empire (Bancel 24). For this institutionalized amnesia—which whitewashes French history—to function, those who would tell a different story must be silenced and, as is particularly evident in Waberi's novel, this silencing is experienced as violent by those whose histories are to be erased. In other words, not only would these histories challenge the dominant belief that colonization did more good than harm to its victims, it would also force France to acknowledge "foreign" subjectivities, which might threaten its citizens' position as subjects defined in opposition to all others.

People like Harbi and his compatriots risk being trapped in the political border where their personal histories are muted and where they are defined in such a way as to maintain France's nostalgic image of its colonial history. Indeed, to this point, Harbi reflects on his new status as a refugee : "Nous avons laissé derrière nous nos histoires, nos mélodies, nos grimoires et nos ancêtres" (149). Without their personal histories and

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[30] In *La Fracture colonial* Bancel et al. write: "La France […] est pratiquement le seul pays européen à s'être délibérément rangé du côté d'une 'nostalgie coloniale' et de l'oubli institutionnalisé, tentant de dissocier histoire nationale et histoire coloniale" (14). I will return to this nostalgia and even amnesia on the part of France in chapter four when I discuss France-Algeria and Nina Bouraoui's novel *Garçon manqué*.

without their cultures the refugees find themselves in a precarious situation, even if it is not the same kind of danger experienced by those who attempt to cross deserts and seas in order to cross borders. Harbi describes the danger as one born of the violent confiscation of personal history, one that therefore forces migrants to live uniquely in the present. This, in Harbi's words, may lead to being "enseveli avec le present," a present which in Bauman's terms confines them to the empty role of the vagrant moon—in my terms, the abject (149). In a poetic phrase toward the end of his novel Waberi describes the effects of this confiscation of identity in terms of an absent presence:

> Quant à nous, on se décrit comme des absents présents, des quidams flageolants qui ont beaucoup de choses à dire sur leur vie d'avant mais que l'embouteillage de mots dans la gorge rend plus taisieux qu'un régiment de moines bouddhistes. (148)

Deprived of their personal histories these "absents presents," find themselves in an impossible situation: that of being, like the abject which forms the constitutive border of the subject, only partially present to the subject. Moreover, the part that is present is the part the subject chooses to see, which in this case is the part that supports the North's rejection of it. The adjective "flageolant" brings to mind a trembling and unsteady motion which suggests the futility of their attempts at forward motion and which confines them instead to an endless state of agitated stagnation. Moreover, in referring to them as "quidams" Waberi further confirms the anonymity and perceived worthlessness of migrants from the "global South" in the eyes of Northerners.

In addition to the inability to express their subjectivities and speak their stories, both Waberi and Sow Fall also describe a destabilizing loss of time experienced by those

held captive in the border zone. In the airport Harbi remarks : “Ici il y a le silence du désert, les heures tournent à vide” (18). He describes his fellow migrants as people who have often forgotten their age, who have changed their names many times, and whose interior clock stopped the day of their departure from their native land (147). In *Douceurs du bercail*, Asta also remarks that in the authoritarian space of the dépôt, time, for the detainees, ceases to be measurable:

> Le jour…ou la nuit ? Rien ne permet de savoir. Il n’y a plus de cycle. Plus de jour, plus de nuit. Plus d’ombre, plus d’heure, mais l’omniprésence de cette lumière blanche qui frappe, mord au plus profond de la chair, et tape les nerfs. Les lignes du temps brisées. Autant dire le chaos (83).

All contact with the reality of the outside world is cut off. In a windowless room in the basement of the airport, the time of day can no longer be determined. The captives have no solid landmarks with which to orient themselves. The others tell Asta that she can swim through the fog of savagely confiscated time by counting the meals; however, this is not a sure method due to the risk of falling asleep and becoming once again disoriented. Furthermore, there is an omnipresent white light that fills the room. This light, violent in that it hits, bites deeply into the flesh, and strikes the nerves of the captives, whitewashes the room in a way that further renders invisible the personal attributes of the prisoners in effacing their very shadows.

The process of abjectification involves more than erasing competing subjectivities, it involves transforming these subjectivities into monstrousness and waste to be expelled from the borders of the global Northern Subject. In a powerful scene, Sow Fall illustrates that captivity in the border zone can facilitate the stripping away of the

Southerner's very humanity, further facilitating her/his re-inscription as the North's abject. Asta, enraged when the female guard who had detained her submitted her to a cavity search, attempted to strangle the other woman in response to this violent and unnecessary act. At this moment Asta, the unruly detainee, was photographed. When Asta's French friend Anne sees the monstrous image of Asta in the newspaper caught in the act of strangling the airport security guard, she does not recognize her friend who has been transformed into a frightening monster:

> L'Horreur en plein page. Une tête renversée, des yeux révulsés, une langue tumultueuse, des coulées de bave. Et des mains ! Oh ces mains, grosses tenailles d'acier autour d'une gorge enserrée jusqu'aux oreilles ! La langue, la bouche béante, la fixité macabre du regard… (56).

In this image Asta is transformed into something grotesque and inhuman. She is like an animal foaming at the mouth, only more threatening with hands strong as steel. Of course, there is no mention of the unjust and violent situation (her violation by the airport guard) that brought on her rage. There is no mention of anything that might justify her actions and accord her the rights of a subject.

Furthermore, there is a suggestion in Sow Fall's novel that this violent process of abjectification may also leave its mark on the subjects who abjectify. When the lights go out in the detention room, two women are raped. Reflecting on this incident Anne says that "ce genre de barbarie est prévisible dans ces conditions d'enfermement et de cohabitation qui réveillent les bas instincts et la bestialité féroce…chez les détenus comme du reste chez leurs surveillants" (137). Considering that this event takes place in the dark (perhaps the guards turned off the lights or perhaps there was just a momentary

blackout), there is in fact no way of knowing who committed this bestial crime that dehumanizes its victim. The ambiguity of identity of the offender thus indicates not only the abjectification of the detainees (as both victims and possible perpetrators) but also serves as a reminder of the very definition of the abject as the constitutive border of the subject. As such, the abject is necessarily not only a creation of the Western subject, but also part of him, the part that must constantly expelled in order to guarantee the Westerner's privileged identity.

The preceding analyses of Harbi's and Asta's experiences at Roissy demonstrate important qualities of the spaces I call fracture zones. As we have seen, fracture zones function as spaces in which the global North confines those it deems threatening to the maintenance of its privileged subjectivity. Moreover, within fracture zones, the global North attempts to strip global Southerners of their personal and collective identities in order to dehumanize and abjectify them thus justifying the existence of these interstitial spaces of violence and captivity as the civilized North's protective buffer against incursions from the savage South.

Part 2: Djibouti, A Country Fractured

Political and administrative borders, such as international airports, and other zones of non-right within global Northern countries are not the only spaces that can be qualified as intercontinental fracture zones. These are also not the only spaces in which the North and the South come into contact and in which the movement of this latter is controlled sometimes to the point of detention. The immigration politics of global North have also enacted policies and built walls that keep Africans in their own countries—or at least in

the African space--making these African countries into de facto prisons. This section will argue that Waberi's representation of his homeland, Djibouti, is another incarnation of the fracture zone, a place of violent confrontation fueled by a colonial past and a neocolonial present. I will maintain that France's use of Djibouti as a sort of global border with the South as well as the former colonial power's continued malign, but frequently camouflaged, involvement in the region transforms the region into a fracture zone characterized by violence, instability, captivity and abjectification. To this end I will divide my argument into three parts. The first, "France's *Traite-d'Union* with the South," will analyze the ways in which Djibouti became a liminal space and even a global border in the French imaginary. The following section, "Djibouti Fractured," will focus more specifically on the subtle and not-so-subtle French interventions that make this Eastern African country a fracture zone, as well as exploring the idea that Djibouti has "internalized a fracture zone" and, therefore, also has a hand in perpetuating the divisive violence and stagnation that define this space. The final section, "Within the Fracture: Violence and Stagnation," will continue the conversation begun in the previous section through an investigation of the effects of this violent and destabilizing space on the daily lives of Djiboutians.

France's* Trait-d'Union *with the South

In 1862 France made its first foray into the Horn of Africa with the purchase of the port town Obock and in 1896 acquired what would, after its independence in 1977, become Djibouti. As opposed to many of its other colonies, France had no interest in the capital, human or material, that it might be able to extract from the region; the land itself

did not hold French interest. Rather, France was interested in Djibouti's tactical location. Due to its location in the Horn of Africa, Djibouti can be qualified as a type of boundary or borderland connecting intercontinental bodies of water and continents. In her introduction to the English translation of Waberi's collection of short stories called *The Land without Shadows,* Jeanne Garane describes Djibouti as "strategically located on the shipping routes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean," remarking also that it is "often described as a 'land of encounters' at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia" (xi). In his book, *Le Mal Djiboutien: rivalités éthniques et enjeux politiques* (1995), Ali Coubba affirms that, "[p]ar sa position géographique et ses cultures, Djibouti forme un trait d'union entre l'Afrique et l'Arabie" (13).[31] For France, Djibouti was valuable in that it could serve as a gateway between the global North (France) and the global South (France's African and Asian colonies and interests). Quite literally, Djibouti was viewed as a space of *transit.*

The French have historically seen Djibouti as a disagreeable and even unlivable land—due in no small part to its desert climate. One hundred years after colonization European visitors to Djibouti continued to qualify the land as hellish and inhospitable. Waberi notes that six years before Djibouti's independence French novelist Romain Gary suggested that the country was not a place to visit unless "'hell tempts you,' for 'the one hundred thousand extinct volcanoes here make this region of Africa a black chaos of charred rock' (14)" (Garane xii). However, further confirming Djibouti's designation as a

[31] It could be said that this hyphen-land was indeed originally a space of encounter as it was traversed by herding nomadic tribes of which Afars and Somalis composed a majority (Coubba 14). The Horn of Africa also has a sizeable Arab population originating from the neighboring Arab Peninsula which also played a role in the Islamification of the nomadic peoples inhabiting the land.

zone of transit for Europeans, Inge Boer explains in her book, *Uncertain Territorie : Boundaries in Cultural Analysis (2006)*, that deserts, historically, have been spaces that Imperial Europe frequently saw as empty, unclaimed and ripe for colonization:

> Deserts are imagined as empty—primarily, empty of people, of inhabitants—which renders them suitable spaces for colonization. […] The geographical expanses called deserts evoke two related responses: one is to consider deserts as empty, devoid of signs of life, and the other is to subsequently move in, conquer, traverse or colonize these spaces by setting up boundary markers (107).

Boer explains that these desert spaces, even if viewed by some simply as spaces of transit, are not in fact deserted. As she points out they are and have always been spaces that "people defend, attack, that nourish them and that they fight over; they are places of contestation" (108).[32] Djibouti, mainly made up of desert, fits Boer's description of a boundary in many ways, not the least of all for the fact that it is an inhabited space considered, largely by Europeans, as a more or less uninhabited space of transit. Since the time of its first contact with Imperial Europe, Djibouti has not only been a liminal and transitory space but one seen as essentially uninhabited—at least not by flesh and blood members of the human species—but, as Gary notes, the residents seemed "to be made of shadows" (Waberi, *Land Without Shadows* 15).

Djibouti, a Fracture Zone

In 1977 Djibouti became the last of France's colonies in Africa to gain independence. But, as I will maintain throughout this dissertation, independence is a

[32] Inge Boer cites deserts as examples of border space in that they "are not lines, limits, cuts through the inhabited worlds, but spaces themselves" (108). Boer explains that these desert spaces, even if used by some simply as spaces of transit, are not in fact deserted. As Boer points out they are and have always been spaces that "people defend, attack, that nourish them and that they fight over; they are places of contestation" (108).

loaded term when it comes to France's former African colonies,[33] Nyela and Bleten explain that "[c]onçu et mis en œuvre par les puissances impériales d'Europe, le processus de décolonisation n'avait pas pour objectif d'affranchir les territoires colonisés de leur tutelle" (187). In the place of direct rule, decolonization "occulte en fait une réelle dépendance encore plus subtile de ces 'États' vis-à-vis l'ancienne puissance coloniale" (Nyela and Bleton 197). The following paragraphs will analyze the ways Waberi makes clear that Djibouti continues to be fractured by its colonial legacy. Furthermore, I will illustrate Djibouti has internalized this fracturing legacy, the symptoms of which present in its auto-destructive behaviors, which nonetheless benefit its former colonizer.

Waberi's post-Independence era Djibouti is plagued by the divisive legacy of colonialism,[34] one aspect of which is a corrupt postcolonial government built on the foundation of the former colonial government. Waberi exposes, via the voice of Bachir, the corruption of the Djiboutian government which results in an internal fracturing of the country: "Bref, je disais: Wadags, tribus et tout ça, c'est pas un problème. Le problème c'est magouille, corruption et politique" (4). Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young's study of newly independent States, "Convergence to Crisis: Pre-Independence State

[33] In *Sortir de la grande nuit: Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* (2013) Achilles Mbembe reflects on his youth in his native newly independent Cameroon : "L'indépendance sans liberté, la liberté sans cesse ajournée, l'autonomie dans la tyrannie, telle était, je le découvris plus tard, la signature propre de la postcolonie, véritable legs de cette farce que fut la colonisation" (Mbembe, *Sortir*, 42). Due to Cameroon's draconian laws dating from the colonial period (Mbembe, *Sortir*, 43) a single party electing the same leader over and over again would not be successfully opposed. Dissonance could be snuffed out by arbitrary suspension of the rights of the people at any time *à la* colonialism, therefore, making it easy for tyrants or dictators to maintain control even behind a veil of democracy. Countries all over postcolonial Africa, including Djibouti have suffered similar fates. Moreover, colonialism has done more to postcolonial countries than leave disfiguring scars on the governments of its former holdings.

[34] European colonization of Africa had a decisively divisive effect on the people who occupied the land. Territory was partitioned out not in accordance with ethnic lines—many of the ethnicities that make up Djibouti are concentrated at the borders of the country alongside those who share their ethnicity but reside in Ethiopia, Eritrea or Somalia—but to coincide instead with natural boundaries such as rivers and mountains as well as with the proprietary interest of each colonizing country.

Legacies and Post-Independence State Breakdown in Africa and Eurasia" (2002) certainly backs up Bachir/Waberi's observation that the newly independent African states are not entirely new. They are "fragments of pre-independence state authorities whose bureaucracies, resources, debts, informal relationships, and official privileges were handed over almost intact to new governing elites" (38). The new government, as seen in Waberi's Djibouti, perpetuates the inequality and corruption which propagated colonial violence.

Similarly, Achilles Mbembe writes that the colonial relationships that remain intact have not ceased to transform and mutate, thus resulting in yet more internal instability and fracturing. These transformations, he writes, have taken an erratic course toward an increasing number of wars throughout the continent particularly in the course of the last quarter of the twentieth century (Mbembe 143). He points to a correlation—if not a direct relationship— between the weakness of such new postcolonial states and the likelihood of their foundering in civil war. Holloway and Stedman report in "Civil Wars and State-Building in Africa and Eurasia" that in Sub-Saharan Africa the number of civil wars underway increased from eleven to seventeen from the 1960s to the 1990s, a period when much of this region was composed of newly independent countries (163).

Civil war itself is a sign of internalized fracturing. Boer, citing political scientist Luis Martinez, writes that "the violence of civil war leads to the collapse of a political community which, in turn, results in the emergence of interior frontiers […] within the state" (48). This fragmentation and reformation of internal boundaries not only affects the political realm but penetrates civilian life blurring, for one, the lines between "civilian"

and "military," and enemy and fellow citizen. This internal fracturing, creation of new borders and blurring of previously recognized boundaries is ubiquitous and takes many forms in Waberi's novel which is set during a civil war in Djibouti.[35] For example, the government, unable to subdue the rebel groups, requests the help of the *mobilisés* (civilian armies, often composed of adolescent boys), promising them money for their service. This results in the creation of a new division between the civilian workers (whom the government taxed freely to finance the war and who have also often worked months with no pay at all) and the *mobilisés*.[36] In fact, the civilian workers who believe that the *mobilisés* are the cause of their poverty "*[les]voient méchamment*" (71). The situation is thus one where the government not only turns against its citizens (taking money from civilians and not paying the civilian army); it also creates fractures between them, pitting one group against another.

Waberi further draws attention to the internalized, auto-destructive nature of Djibouti's fracturing though Bachir's explanation of what happened to the *mobilisés* after they had served their government. He recounts that, when, after the war, the now *démobilisés* ask for the money promised them, the government opens fire on them.[37] Bachir describes the injustice of what happens to the *démobilisés* at the hands of those

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[35] This war lasted from November 1991 to December 1994.

[36] Waberi describes in Bachir's voice the division produced by the govermental corruption thus: "Les civils, ils sont pas contents de nous à cause de la contribution patriotique. Le gouvernement il met directement dans la poche vingt-sept pour cent de la paie pour supporter la guerre. Alors fonctionnaires, ils nous voient méchamment. Moi, je suis pas d'accord. C'est pas à cause des mobilisés qu'il y a la guerre qu'on dit civile. C'est la guerre qui a appelé mobilisés. Faut pas mettre la charrue devant la vache, non ?" (71).

[37] Bachir explains, "C'est trop l'injustice pace que quand l'armée, elle est pas capable de contrôler territoire, elle dit à mobilizé : aide-moi aide-moi, et maintenant elle tue petits demobilisés qui demandent son largent. Prochaine fois ça va être notre tour" (104).

they served—of those for whose lives they gave up their own—using the life of a family camel as a metaphor:

> Les mobilisés, c'est comme ce vieux chameau que la famille va le tuer pour le bouffer pace qu'il est trop vieux vieux. Le vieux chameau, lui, il dit au chef du campement: 'J'ai travaillé pour toi toute ma vie. J'ai marché, marché et marché pour porter ta tente et ta marchandise. Tu as trop profité de mon dos, maintenant tu veux manger ma viande et mes os. Après ça, tu profiteras encore de moi pace que tu prendras ma peau et tu feras des chaussures avec ça, non ?' Voilà, mobilisés c'est comme vieux chameau-là sauf que nous, on est plus jeunes. C'est tout (97).

Like the *démobilisés,* this animal spent its life in the service of the family to which it belonged. However as soon as it could no longer perform the grueling tasks assigned it, its master killed it, ate it, and used its skin to make shoes. The *demobilisés,* now physically broken and mutilated, ask the government for the money promised them. The government, no longer able to benefit from their bodies, kills them. Waberi's comparison of the *démobilisés* to the old camel is also significant in that while there indeed are similarities between the two situations, there are also glaring differences, differences which emphasize the self-destructive (cannibalistic) actions of the corrupt Djiboutian government. The camel is an animal, a beast of burden, and was never part of the family it served—or even a member of its masters' species for that matter. There were no promises made to the camel of any other kind of treatment; its whole existence in the family was solely for the profit of the family. Therefore, using the hide of the aged animal, to make shoes is logical and benefits the family. (I am not denying that in the eyes of the camel this is an unjust reward for his service only that is a logical conclusion

to the camel's service). In contrast, the *démobilisés* are the same species—the same people—as those in the government—also the government is meant to act in the best interest of the nation—so the government's actions can be seen as akin to a sort of cannibalism. They are benefitting from the lives of their own by destroying these lives. Moreover, killing young men—the future of the nation—just because they can no-longer fight is not only cruel but wasteful and self-destructive.

Furthermore, in addition to this internal fragmentation, Waberi also alludes to the fact that France's presence is still felt as a divisive or incendiary element in Djibouti, and not only in the form of the country's inherited corrupt governmental structure. France is, in fact, behind the scenes fanning the flames of civil conflict all the while condemning it.[38] France helps the rebels by spying for what Bachir calls the Scud 2[39] and by spying for the rebel leader whom Bachir calls "l'Eternel Opposant"who hides in Paris to organize the next wave of rebels, "Scud 3" (77,95). Moreover, Bachir remarks that France simultaneously plays the role of, at times, referee and, at times, doctor:

> Arbitre, il est sorti vite vite avec sourire d'idiot débile sur le visage, avec la sale tête de quelque'un qui a trop trop brouté. Il est parti se cacher dans le consulat de France. De là, il va crier gros mots mot rigolos : exécutions sommaires, tortures, viols, arrestations arbitraires, enfants soldats, pogroms (celui-là c'est bizarre, on dirait pas très très français), épuration, pratiques barbares, massacres, nettoyage ethnique, etc. C'est trop rigolo son langage qui sent les médicaments-là. C'est docteur ou c'est arbitre, faut choisir (103).

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[38] France's undermining of African progress is not unique to Djibouti. Mbembe notes that "Dans son pré-carré, la France […] est connue, à tort et à raison, pour son soutien le plus tenace, le plus retors et le plus défectible aux satrapies les plus corrompues du continent et aux régimes qui, justement, ont tourné le dos à la cause africaine" (*Sortir* 26).

[39] Scud, what Bachir calls the Frud ("Front pour la restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie"), is named after the often inaccurate Iraki missile used in the first Gulf War (Waberi 21).

As a not-so-neutral "referee," France plays a significant role in the violence in Djibouti because, as this word suggests, it is at least in part France who judges and encourages the war like a referee in soccer match. Conversely, Waberi suggests that when France has decided it has had enough of the violence, it transforms itself into a not-so-benevolent doctor condemning the barbarous practices that it encouraged while in the role of referee. This switching of roles, arguably, allows the global North to at the same time maintain its position of superiority over the global South by demonstrating that the citizens of the latter are indeed monstrous, violent and/or diseased. This in turn further justifies the dehumanizing practices at political borders supporting the notion that these borders protect the Western subject from the abject that lies beyond. Not unlike the violence (of undetermined origin) that occurred in the *dépôt* in Sow Fall's novel when the lights went out, France places the blame for the violence on the monstrousness of the Djiboutian people, denying its own role in it.[40]

Djibouti therefore finds itself suffering from the alienating judgments of the global North who sees in it and its people a violence and disease to be kept on the other side of the border. Bachir reflects along these lines when he says : "[l]e monde entier, il dit : Somaliens, Africains, tout ça, c'est des sauvages qui font guerre civile tout le temps" (96). But then he adds that those who condemn them do not understand the reality that they live, a reality that necessitates violence for survival. Those who should be ensuring the people's survival, such as the politicians at the head of the state, are stealing from

[40] Judith Butler's statement that the abject, which must be expelled from the subject, must indeed form its constitutive border is helpful in understanding that the monstrosity of the abject is not intrinsic to those who are labeled as such; it comes about in extreme situations of violence, captivity, alienation, loss of personal history due in no small part to the Western subject's influence.

them. In response to this theft from above, Bachir explains that those left without must provide for themselves with whatever they can find: "Il faut nous comprendre. Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire quand politiciens-là ils ramassent toutes les gamelles et toutes les papotes ? Quand ils te mangent la peau sur ta nuque. Tu prends fusil, c'est tout. Nous, on n'a pas confort, villa, voiture, congés payés-là comme Français, Anglais, Américains, et même Novégiens qui sont gentils […]" (96). For Waberi's Bachir, being *gentil* is an unaffordable luxury. Here, Waberi further complicates the image of the barbaric global southerner exposing the injustice of the situation wherein a part of the global population must fight for food while another enjoys luxuries and can claim to be peaceful and thus superior. At the same time, in this citation Waberi also takes this idea of a global divide and further develops it. It is not a purely global North versus global South divide; it is one that has become a fracture internalized by the South resulting in situations where the national politicians cannibalistically eat the skin off the necks of the people, forcing them to fight for survival. The destructive elements (in the forms of the civil war, the corrupt postcolonial government, and France's other neocolonial influences) are indeed inextricably intertwined in Djibouti, creating a fracture zone wherein boundaries are chaotically fragmented and reformed.

Life Within the Fracture: Violence and Stagnation

In the first part of this chapter, *Violent (Im)mobility and Abjectification in Zones of Transit,* I analyzed Waberi's and Sow Fall's protagonists' experiences of captivity in Roissy airport as symptomatic of the destructive effects of such fracture zones. I determined that the main effects of captivity in this fracture zone are a confiscation of

personal and collective identity and a loss of access to markers of outside reality such as time. These losses result in a destabilization or hollowing out of the postcolonial subject which is then reinscribed as the abject vis-à-vis the global North's subject. In Waberi's Djibouti a similar process of destabilization occurs. The combination of internal conflict and of European involvement creates a situation essentially much like that experienced by those captive in the Roissy airport. I will demonstrate that Waberi's Djiboutians are violently destabilized, deprived of their collective and personal identities and rendered abject in the eyes of a global North which takes on paradoxical role of referee and doctor/remediator.

The most visible characteristic of life in Waberi's Djibouti is the ubiquitous presence of violence. Waberi evokes so many images of the violence in Djibouti that it is evident that it is not only widespread, but also an integral part of quotidian existence; violence has been internalized by the people. Bachir and many of his compatriots are among those, in the words of Mbembe, "pour qui la brutalité et la violence muette de la mort sont devenues un style de vie, tandis que le fusil représente le seul espoir d'accès aux ressources" (146). Waberi emphasizes the link between the war and the needs of daily life when Bachir explains that the rebels mostly attack when they need food and water (60). Furthermore, for Bachir, the war not only represents violence and death, it is also a way to make and honest living, "La guerre c'est bon pour la vie, je veux dire pour gagner sa vie proprement, sans histoires. Combien de morts? Pourquoi tout ça?" (43). Life and war are so linked in the minds of Bachir and his entourage that his best friend Aïdid plans on offering him a weapon to celebrate his eventual wedding day (131). In other words,

violence is such an integral part of life that a weapon, a symbol of violence, is seen as an appropriate gift on a day celebrating a happy union.

The banal violence of this space of fracture destabilizes identity and deforms even the small children stealing from them their innocence and turning them prematurely into soldiers: “Ces petits, ils ont trop peur pace que leurs chefs ils les font trop souffrir pour oblitérer vie facile d’avant” (77). To become warriors, the children must be excised of their memories of a more peaceful past so that they know only fear and violence. Bachir explains that the children are given guns and forced to kill a rebel. After having accomplished this, their faces are washed with the blood of their victim. Once initiated, these children are ready to kill anyone easily, even, in the words of Bachir, “maman, tonton, cousin, muezzin, et tout tout” (77). In other words, the children of this civil war-fragmented borderland are transformed into violently fractured individuals—indeed, monsters—so that they may commit the atrocities demanded of them. Bachir explains, “Petit soldat, c’est trop trop danger tout le temps pace qu’il mélange le jeu et la bataille. Il mélange la vie et la mort avec gros sourire sur son visage” (77). In this citation Waberi takes further the idea of the mixing of war and life previously introduced in his description of the *mobilisés*. He shows that boundaries between life and death, human and inhuman are no longer clean ones; in fact, they are blurred and fragmented and these two opposing elements—life and death—have become inextricably mixed. Nyela and Bleton describe the child-soldier as a new phenomenon previously unknown in Africa. They offer the paradoxical description of this figure as being both the executioner and the victim:

> Bourreau dans la mesure où l'enfant est coupable des crimes les plus atroces, ainsi qu'il ressort de leurs propres récits, mais aussi victime puisqu'il n'échappe pas à l'instrumentalisation par des chefs de guerre sans foi ni loi, avides de pouvoir quand ce n'est pas simplement l'enrichissement. L'enfant devenu soldat, drogué, manipulé devient lui-même une terrible arme à la disposition de ces cruels psychopathes (234).

Reading the child-soldier in this way suggests a sort of metonymy for the Djibouti's situation within a fracture zone that Djibouti has also internalized as it is forced to be violent by a more powerful force yet is at the same time a victim of violence.

Desspite the scenes of active violence, the instability experienced in Djibouti seems to lead nowhere, like the (im)mobility that marks the experience of the potential migrants stuck in the airport and/or endlessly returned to their point of departure. Waberi's continual references to the widespread usage of khat, an amphetamine-like substance, emphasizes the idea that the actions of the people are essentially futile; they do not lead to a desired destination but always back to the point of departure. Awaleh, Harbi's deceased father, explained to his grandson Adbo-Julien that there are two types of fathers, those who smoke khat and those who would like to smoke khat (127). This suggests that instead of actively working to better their situation the men wish only to escape it. Khat leaves them immobilized, suspended in time while giving them a sense of euphoria that prevents them from desiring, much less struggling for, a better future. Furthermore, the common usage of khat and other drugs also allows the soldiers to continue fighting savagely. Bachir explains that after having mixed various drugs and alcohol, "[…] le sommeil il fuit tes yeux. Le ventre, il fait plus d'histoires, c'est tout. Tu peux plus pêcher la pitié pour personne, même un petit petit petit enfant" (64). Yet at the

same time, the soldiers' use of khat inhibits them from revolting : "[…] se révolter, mais ça je crois pas beaucoup à cause du khat. Khat ça fait parler parler, rêver rêver et après zero patates. Khat ça endort l'énergie du corps" (71). In other words, the agitation and the violence that compose Bachir's daily life and that of so many of his compatriots is essentially simply another manifestation of stagnation.

The existential stagnation Waberi depicted in his descriptions of the family men and the soldiers' dependence on mind altering drugs in their daily lives is indeed widespread in his depictions of the country's population. The entire country can be seen as, in the words of Bachir, "trois points de suspension" (55). Essentially suspended between life and death, the people are no less confined than those in the detention center in Roissy. Awaleh paints a dark picture of Djiboutian life using as an example the village As-Eyla, which was turned into a "camp pour les personnes déplacées":

> Des enfants ramassent grain après grain, à l'emplacement exact des camions, une petite poignée de maïs ou de riz. Ils ont un pied dans la vie, l'autre dans le néant. […] Le reste du temps ils restent allongés sur leur natte, tellement faibles et asthéniques, recroquevillés en fœtus, les grands yeux secs rivés sur la ligne de l'horizon (129).

The lives of these children (those who would normally be the future of the country) is nothing more than an endless period of waiting punctuated by the cyclical arrival of the vans that bring just enough food to keep them in a state between life and death. Here again Waberi presents an ambiguous image of the help provided by a Europe which vacillates between the roles of referee and doctor. The children need the food brought by the vans, but this food only allows them to continue their lives in a sort of stasis, too

weak to move. Furthermore, the children are, instead of growing up, returning to a fetal state, a state in which they live but are unable to effect change in their environment. The children conform to the infantilizing view of the global North, becoming the shadows described by Gary.[41] This image of static or even regressing, powerless children contrasts sharply with the role of the child in traditional Africa. Nyela and Bleton describe the role of the African child as:

> […] la pierre angulaire de la société. Source de 'richesse' tant économique que symbolique, il participe, par son travail, à l'enrichissement du groupe auquel il appartient et assure la perpétuation de la lignée. En ce sens. Il est le trait d'union entre les vivants et les ancêtres morts, dont il est en quelque sorte la réincarnation (235).

Djibouti's international aide indeed only helps to gut and destabilize the region. A strong society cannot be built on a cornerstone of "shadow-children." Perpetually reproduced fetuses cannot ensure family lines and collective identity cannot be passed on if the *trait d'union* between the living and their ancestors is severed.

This European "doctoring" which does not help the children to grow but keeps them suspended in a state of dependence not only seems to infantilize and stunt the development of the people, it has the noxious effect of stripping away or hollowing out collective identity and traditions. Awaleh notes that instead of singing the praises of nomadic warrior heroes as was done in the past, the people are singing the praises of the van drivers who bring them just enough food to survive. This is particularly significant for a people who once proudly swore, "Jamais je ne me soumettrai à une vie où le ventre

[41] French novelist Romain Gary noted that the residents seemed "to be made of shadows" (Waberi, "Land Without Shadows" 15).

me guide le regard" (129). Not only do the people wait, dazed eyes fixed on the horizon, for the vans bearing food to arrive, but this sustenance arriving from foreign lands only further illustrates Djiboutians' disconnect from their native land. For instance, one of the foods the vans still bring and have been bringing since the first day of Djibouti's independence is powdered milk, which Awaleh calls *"le lait des refugiés"* (127). Awaleh asks when the nation's babies will once again drink milk from their mother's breast instead of that made from the infamous powder sent to them from international European charities (127). Happiness, in this land, "aurait la forme d'une fontaine lactoire" (126). In other words, happiness would be the possibility of Djiboutians sustaining themselves on their homeland without being dependent on reconstituted milk shipped in from the North.

This section expanded my definition of fracture zones from the controlled authoritarian violence of political borders to the chaotic landscape of civil war-torn Djibouti to reflect on the idea of the population of a whole country violently suspended in a fracture zone. Classified by the imperial West as an interstitial space of transit, a land desirable only as a strategic stopping place on shipping routes, it is seen as a chaos of charred rock uninhabited except by mere shadows of people. The global North's alienating views of Djibouti help to render the population of this country abject by fixing them either into the image of perpetuators of endless wars, corrupt government officials or helpless citizens dependent on the generosity of a benevolent Europe. In this way the global North transforms the Djiboutians into the shadow creatures it believes inhabit the country. Like the would-be travelers from the global South detained in the Roissy airport, the Djiboutians are stripped of their collective identities and histories to become the

empty surfaces reflecting only the inscriptions of the Western subject. Moreover, Waberi's Djibouti has "internalized a fracture zone" and therefore has come to have a hand in perpetuating the divisive violence and stagnation that define this space.

Part three: Death of a Bhabhian Hybrid in a Space of Fracture

A portion of Waberi's novel is also narrated posthumously by Harbi's deceased son Abdo-Julien, who, born the same day as Bachir, has nothing in common with the young man Harbi ultimately takes with him to France. Whereas Bachir was orphaned, Abdo-Julien enjoyed his childhood as the light in his parents' eyes. Whereas Bachir dropped out of primary school to enter what he calls the VA (*la vie active*) where he struggled on the streets to earn his keep, Abdo-Julien spent all his time immersed in books and taking in the conversations and stories of the adults around him. Finally, and very significantly, unlike Bachir, Abdo-Julien is the product of the marriage of a Djiboutian man to a French woman. Abdo-Julien is therefore culturally and biologically hybrid, yet he does not survive to function as a fluid connective tissue that makes the maintenance of binary oppositions impossible.[42] Instead it is Bachir, who spent his life fully immersed in a fractured Djibouti, who now waits in the fracture zone that is Roissy Airport with Abdo-Julien's father. This final section will focus specifically on Abdo-Julien and on why he was doomed to die before reaching maturity. By way of an analysis of Waberi's bi-cultural character I will conclude this chapter by exposing the ways in which Bhabha's hybrid figure ultimately does not stand up to the concrete realities of fracture zones in which the strict maintenance of polarities cultural articulation and innovation.

[42] Bhabha's third space defies the binary thinking as it fills the space in between categories thought to be polar opposites. By occupying such a position, Bhabha's hybrid agent becomes a sort of "connective tissue," allowing for constant exchange, thus making binary divisions impossible to maintain.

A Utopian Figure of Bhabhaian Hybridity

Born of what he refers to as a love without boundaries Abdo-Julien can cross borders closed or inaccessible to others. Like Bhabha's hybrid figure who functions as a connective tissue between cultures, Abdo-Julien is one who can easily navigate between languages, collective memories, historical references (from recent to ancient times) and cultures (49). In fact, Abdo-Julien is the very embodiment of collective memory—the *trait d'union* between the living and their ancestors that Nyela and Bleton described the child as the cornerstone of traditional African society to be. Awaleh, his grandfather, who serves as the keeper of the collective memory in the family, calls him "petit cactus" which he defines as the tree of memory (102). Abdo-Julien recognizes the misrepresentations of Djibouti's colonial history in French history books—the aim of which is to feed France's desire to believe that colonization did far more good than harm to those subjected to it. He, thanks to his frequent conversations with his paternal grandfather, also knows the history of the nomads who populated the land before France's intervention and before their "gifts" of education which separated people from their clans and their traditions.[43]

Moreover, this cultural and historical knowledge allows Abdo-Julien to see and make connections between pieces of information or events that might seem discrete and unrelated to others. This ability is particularly salient when he is in his father's library which he describes as a "fatras de papiers […] un capharnaüm" (47). Harbi's library is an unorganized, incoherent mass of texts coming from disparate sources, including

[43] These gifts, Awaleh explains, changed the ancient traditional relations between community members from those of mutual support to those of capitalistic competition.

communications from the rebel Frud, the Djiboutian government, and French newspapers. This heteroclite corpus illustrates Harbi's recognition of the necessity of making connections between multiple points of view that make up the Djiboutian fracture zone. However, the fact that this mass of texts in his library is incoherent points to Harbi's inability to make the necessary associations and is symptomatic of his failure to make sense of the chaotic fracture zone. That the worldly and educated Harbi is unable to effectively organize his library underscores the importance of Abdo-Julien, who, as a hybrid agent, as one who occupies a fluid space of cultural articulation, has the capacity to make the necessary connections. Unlike Harbi who is to some degree still caught in colonial binary oppositions of Djiboutian (colonized) or French (colonizer) identities which informed his youth, Abdo-Julien, bi-cultural child of the independence, is not limited by these categories. In fact, to this end, Abdo-Julien states, "Je me refuse à interpréter un récit, un bout d'histoire intercepté ici ou là comme une musique unique, une partition donnée une fois pour toutes" (48). This refusal to adhere to one timeless interpretation further supports the notion that Abdo-Julien does the work of a Bhabhaian hybrid agent whose job it is to prevent any calcification of identities. Furthermore, it is Abdo-Julien's ability to go beyond boundaries to re-interpret information that allows him to begin to make sense of Djibouti's fragmented landscape as he does in the following passage:

> Souvent, je parviens à relier par les chemins tortueux et mystérieux de mon imagination certains noms qui reviennent dans les journaux avec les noms de la rue que j'arrive à décrypter sur les trop rares plaques encore lisibles ou ceux que je capte au détour d'une discussion entre adultes (48).

Combining what he reads in his father's chaotic library with overheard conversations and mostly effaced street signs, Waberi suggests that Abdo-Julien has the capacity to remap and possibly salvage the city lost during the upheaval of Independence and, later, of civil war.

Significantly, Abdo-Julien promises to go beyond finding meaning in the fragmented world around him. He, in the manner of an ideal Bhabhaian hybrid, promises to bring newness into the system as well. Abdo-Julien proposes to bring about a revolution that would heal the fractures that plague the country and which would allow Djibouti—which he sees as a nation in gestation—to finally be born. He imagines forming a revolutionary musical group along with others of his generation which he describes as: "la génération qui a tété la musique jamaïcaine dont la naissance coïncide avec la mort du prince chevelu" (79). In other words, they are a generation nourished by a sense of the need for justice for the downtrodden and national unity—exemplified by the music of the late Bob Marley—in the post-independence era. Significantly Abdo-Julien's imagined group of musicians would give voice to the nation, heal internal fractures and shake up those living in a state of cultural and political stagnation. Their ultimate goal is "élaborer une préface musicale à cette nation en gestion, sonner l'heure de la soudaine éclosion des savoirs neufs" (80). In other words, as I will illustrate in the following paragraphs, Abdo-Julien's musical group is to represent and to do the work of the hybrid agent on a very large scale.

Abdo-Julien names this group the Mau-Mau after the revolutionary Kenyan fighters whose cause helped Kenyans to eventually win independence for their country

from the English colonizers. Abdo-Julien chose this name in particular because it characterizes "[u]n guerrier anticolonialiste, anti-impérialiste, tiers-mondialiste et panafricain qui plus est" (82). This image contrasts greatly with the actual conditions in Djibouti during the novel. While Djibouti is indeed an independent country, it is not completely free of the colonial/imperial powers that ruled it before it gained its independence. (France still lurks behind the scenes as the refuge of the rebel group FRUD, acting as a referee judging and adding fuel to national disputes, and as a doctor, albeit an inefficient or even a corrupt one which provides the villagers with just enough food to keep them in a stasis between life and death.) The Mau-Mau as anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist warriors would promise to rid the country of this noxious influence. Furthermore, as third-worldists and pan-Africanists, Abdo-Julien suggests that the Mau-Mau would bring about a unity among Djiboutians who are not only divided between the rebel groups and the government but also between the many different ethnic groups that form the developing nation. Finally, he adds another important characteristic to his description of the Mau-Mau: they are peaceful—Abdo-Julien uses the words "tranquilles peinards" to describe them. Instead of adding to the violence in this civil war-torn country, the Mau-Mau will use music to accomplish their goals peacefully.[44]

Significantly, Abdo-Julien describes the Mau-Mau as a group of musicians "férus de musiques tournoyantes, turbulantes […]" (79). This is to say that the music they produce is one of movement, one that has the potential to unsettle those caught in state of

[44] It is ironic that Abdo-Julien's Mau Mau is a peaceful resurrection of the extremely violent anti-colonial Kenyan fighters whose intervention cost many lives. The Kenyan group was violently subdued by the British occupiers, taking with them many African civilians, victims to British counter-violence and scare tactics.

(im)mobility or stagnation. Abdo-Julien mentions his parents' generation as one such group in particular need of some shaking up, for it was this generation which led the revolution that resulted in the country's newfound independence. Abdo-Julien describes the Mau-Mau's greatest reward as:

> réussir à faire chavirer les vieux corps de quarante ans à l'instar de nos parents, en leur jouant un morceau de salsa, de pachanga d'hier ou de rumba endiablée, leur rappelant le temps de leurs études à l'étranger (79).

In this way he hopes not only to awaken the revolutionary spirit of the past generation, but through music he hopes to bridge the gap between generations; an act that he describes as "pas une mince affaire dans ce pays" emphasizing the fragmentation of the country not only along ethnic lines but also along generational lines (80). Abdo-Julien recognizes that in order to do this he must descend deeply into the mysteries of the past in order to stir the cold coals of the past revolutionary spirit, filling the air with its ashes (79).

In addition to stirring the coals of past revolution, this music promises above all to be a unifying and renovating voice for the nation. Influenced by jazz, Abdo-Julien describes this music as one characterized by the emergence of an individual voice, one that is full and complete, at the heart of a collective (80). It is a voice which sings "dans toutes les langues du lieu en même temps, voire dans la même chanson, la même haleine" (81). In other words, this revolutionary voice is as unified as if were produced by an individual yet at the same time, it reflects the diversity of the country. Jazz is a good genre on which to base this new music as it is characterized by a multiplicity of improvised melodies that join together to produce a harmonious whole in which the

different pieces can be heard. Jazz can be described as a fluid unity of different melodies and voices which are constantly evolving and changing through improvisation. However, Abdo-Julien takes his role as an ideal, innovating hybrid agent even further by illustrating that the Mau-Mau's music while inspired by jazz is not jazz; it is truly a new music specific to Djibouti which both reflects the diversity of the land and the need for movement. He underscores this active movement by describing the music using a variety of verbs: it is a music that plunges and slides, one that ricochets off the volcanoes, crosses the seas of insects, dances on the line of the horizon, and runs across the flattened countryside (80).

However, with Abdo-Julien, Waberi takes the figure of the Bhabhaian hybrid a step further to illustrate the utopian bent theories of hybridity risk taking and to highlight the unfeasibility of such ideas in fracture zones. The young Adbo-Julien imagines that he, as an agent of union between worlds, can create a new, *utopian* world at their interstices. He believes that he and the object of his boyhood infatuation, the family's maid, will populate this new world:

> Elle serait Ève (ou Hawa), et moi Adam (ou Aden). Ensemble nous adam-et-èverions un monde nouveau où la vie serait généreuse avec tout le monde, où chaque instant serait une cérémonie (49).

This passage truly epitomizes an idealized image of the work of the Bhabhaian hybrid. For one thing it reflects both sides of the cultural divide represented in Abdo-Julien's name—which I will discuss in detail shortly—with the inclusion of both the French and the Arabic translations of the mythical first man and woman (Adam and Eve). The impossibility of such a perfect future is implied with Abdo-Julien's exaggerated

optimism: Abdo-Julien imagines a world that is not only just, but one where there are in fact *no* conflicts. This is the first passage which so pointedly illustrates the immaturity of Abdo-Julien's vision for the future and in doing so hints at explanations of his premature death. In the passages that follow the one cited above, it becomes increasingly evident that there is yet no place for this hybrid agent who represents the interconnectedness of cultures and peoples, who embodies memory, voice, and, importantly, promises cultural innovation and rebirth in the fracture zone that is civil war-torn Djibouti.

Confrontations with Fracturing Reality

In his very name, Abdo-Julien suggests the possibility of cultural fusion all the while implying its impossibility in this space of fracture. The elements that make up his name each reflect part of his heritage: Djiboutian (as represented by the common Arabic prefix Abdo) from his father, and French (represented by the French name Julien) from his mother. In fact, Abdo-Julien describes his position as that of a "trait d'union entre deux mondes," much like the hyphen that separates the two cultures represented by his name (49). However, a tension and possible fracture are evident after a closer inspection of his name. While Julien is a common first name in France, Abdo, meaning "servant" would not traditionally stand alone as a name in Arabic; instead it is a prefix often followed by another name, usually one referring to God. Therefore, alone, Abdo is a mere fragment of a name which begs the question: of whom is Abdo-Julien the servant? Is he subservient to the space itself—the tension-ridden hyphen that separates "Abdo" from "Julien?" This servitude is arguably problematic even if the hyphen can be read as symbolizing a Bhabhaian interstitial space. Being a slave is being captive and there is no

place for such confinement in Bhabha's fluid, non-empirically ordered space. Read as a fracture, this hyphen which separates Abdo from Julien is a warning sign of the certainty of his premature death.

It quickly becomes evident that the tension of living as a hyphen between opposed worlds is tearing Abdo-Julien apart from the inside:

> À y réfléchir, j'ai partie liée avec ce passé, cette mémoire coloniale pas toujours rose panthère. C'est pourquoi il m'arrive de renier cette mémoire partagée et, du même coup, de me renier, renier mon côté maternel et ma peau pourtant pas si claire que ça. Refouler tout mon être, me défouler aussi et crier sur les toits : 'Ne m'appelez pas métis. Métis fut la première épouse de Zeus, roi des dieux d'Olympe. Elle mourut de façon terrible.' Mais cela non plus, les gens d'ici ne le savent pas. Alors ? Alors, bouche cousue (119).

Abdo-Julien carries within his bicultural being the conflict between the aggression of the colonizers and the oppression of the colonized. These two sides are set as polar opposites which refuse compromise. The result is that Abdo-Julien, the keeper of memory, feels the need to deny the memories of French violence—an act that is impossible without denying "Julien" and leaving "Abdo" as an unviable fragment of a person. He is, therefore, indeed a servant, a captive of the hyphen which both defines his life and brings about his death. Abdo-Julien can be said to embody Acheraïou's notion of the *métis*, those who occupy what he terms "the space of the impossible."[45] Acheraïou describes the *métis* as schizophrenic subjects, "torn between the unattainable wholeness (reconciliation/fusion

[45] In his book, *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization* (2011), Amar Acheraïou defines the space of the impossible as "a site of extreme psychological, cultural, and racial alienation in which the duplex, unique identity of mixed-blood offspring is subject to double denial: it is tacitly or explicitly rejected by both sides of identification—the Western and non-Western—of which hybrid subjectivity is constitutive" (79).

of their Western and non-Western sides) and the temptation of purity (retreat into racial binaries depending on circumstances and interests)" (82).[46]

It is telling that he compares his story to that of the goddess Metis from Greek mythology who was known for her wisdom, intelligence, and her ability to adapt and even change shape. However, she was killed by her husband, Zeus, the reigning king of the gods, who feared her power and the possibility that she would give birth to a child who would dethrone him. This unfortunate story foreshadows Abdo-Julien's death at the hands of his countrymen who do not see him as a hybrid agent who could help heal the nation's fractures, but as the son of a French woman and therefore a part of an enemy they fear. As the famous myth goes, Metis died, cannibalized by her husband. Abdo-Julien also is—symbolically—cannibalized: he is killed in the civil war; in other words, he is killed by his own country.

Furthermore, in the passage cited above Abdo-Julien is violently silenced much like the Africans caught in the fracture zone of the Roissy airport. He yells his story from the rooftops yet is unable to make himself understood by his compatriots who do not have the same cross-cultural education as he does. They seem to overlook his Djiboutian side which he emphasizes is clearly visible by the color of his skin which is not all that fair. Moreover, Waberi uses the phrase "bouche cousue" to describe his forced muteness which emphasizes that Abdo-Julien's silencing is a violent and irreversible one. His mouth is not just closed but sewn shut.

[46] Note that here we are not talking about the DSM 5 definition of schizophrenia the mental illness, but rather using the term to envision split or bifurcated ("schizo" from the Greek word skhizein meaning "to split") mind ("phrenia" taken from the Greek word phr-ene meaning "mind").

Like Abdo-Julien himself, his musical dream of unifying the nation is also silenced before it matures. In his descriptions of the music the Mau-Mau will produce he makes many references to the music of his parents' generation and the importance of including it in this new group's repertoire as this music was the in the background of the successful fight for independence. Moreover, reconnecting his parents' generation with its revolutionary spirit is an integral part of his plan to unite the country under a common cause. However, in the chapter that follows his description of the Mau-Mau, Abdo-Julien describes the consequences of his parents' musical trips down memory lane:

> En général, ça se passe par cycles […]. La musique de leurs jeunes années a un effet bénéfique sur le moral des troupes, papa se fait guilleret, esquissant même quelques pas de danse, […] maman est joviale d'abord, puis la tension monte d'un coup et bascule dans l'hystérie […]. Et ça peut se terminer par un bruit terrible de vaisselle brisée (94).

This passage illustrates well how the effects of captivity in the fracture zone on those who might otherwise be (or have even previously been) agents of revolution. The music itself fails to give any sustained morale to the "troops." Instead of inspiring his parents to action it merely permits temporary escapes into a past for which they are nostalgic. In the end, this inspirational, revolutionary music is not better than the khat used by the village men and the soldiers to escape the monotony and/or violence of daily life. The (im)mobility that characterizes the experiences of those caught in fracture zones comes through here with Waberi's description of Alice's reaction to the music. After enjoying the pleasant mood brought on by listening to her favorite records, Alice's mood suddenly swings as far to the negative side as it was on the positive side: from jovial she becomes hysterical. The sound of music is replaced with the sound of destruction; it becomes the

terrible sound of breaking dishes. Furthermore, in conformity with the model of (im)mobility, Waberi describes this as a cyclical event, one that endlessly restarts and never leads to a desired or even a new outcome.

The roots of the Mau-Mau's music are thus essentially rendered impotent; therefore, it follows that the revolutionary music cannot be born. Abdo-Julien's utopian dream never sees the light of day in this space of fracture and he, the ideal Bhabhaian hybrid, describes himself as stillborn:

> […] Abdo-Julien, mort-né dans sa dix-septième année, esprit errant dans la grande tradition des *dibbouk* qu'on trouve dans Golem, bambin cycliquement sur le retour à l'instar des *abikou* dans la région du golfe de guinée et dont le cordon ombilical est enterré de côté d'Ilé-Ifé, destin extraordinaire dans le droit fil des *shafeec* de chez nous (94).

Dead at the age of seventeen, Abdo-Julien, along with his juvenile dreams for a better future, never reacesh maturity. Like the half-dead village children who, instead of growing up to be the future of the nation, return to a fetal state perpetually waiting for the European vans to bring them food, this hybrid agent—and the hope he would offer—symbolically reverts to a fetal form, powerless and underdeveloped. Abdo-Julien, stillborn, now reduced to an errant spirit who, unable to occupy anything but the clumsiest of bodies (that of the ill-coordinated, slow-witted Golem), retains his hybridity and fluidity. Waberi illustrates this by describing his errant spirit using terms employed various peoples across Africa: *dibbouk* (Jewish), *abikou* (West African), and *shafeec* (East African).

Abdo-Julien's spirit cannot take the innovating form of the Bhabhaian hybrid in this country paralyzed in a fracture zone. Even Alice—who throughout the novel idealizes *métissage*—is forced to recognize its impossibility:

> L'heure n'était pas aux amours et aux saveurs métisses au sein de cette contrée erratique, cette matrice si féconde qu'elle est incapable de garder ses enfants sauf au prix d'une camisole de force et de silence névrotique (87).

There is no place for a love without borders in a place where borders between the global North and South, the local government and the citizens, and those between ethnicities are strictly defined and violently upheld. The only children this fertile womb can keep are those who will live in violence and silence, not those who would bring about a new future, making connections between peoples and uniting the country. This message is even further driven home by the fact that after both Alice and Abdo-Julien are killed, Harbi "adopts" the violent and fractured Bachir—he claims Bachir as his son so that he can save the young man's life—and brings him along to Roissy Airport. Where they wait.

Conclusion

Together, the three sections of this chapter paint a dynamic picture of my concept of fracture zones as they manifest in physical spaces of contact between a powerful France and relatively powerless African countries. Moving from the captivity global Southerners experience at France's geopolitical border-spaces, to France's insidious yet firm and deforming grip on a former African colony, Djibouti, I demonstrated that power-infused binary oppositions do not dissolve in an interstitial space of fluid exchange and negotiation. Instead, the global North reinforces the binary divisions it projects onto the world to create protective borders, which it violently defends. These "protective

borders" form fracture zones in which unwanted populations are (im)mobilized, at times stripped of personal and collective identity in order to be abjectified. As the final section on the death of the Bhabhaian hybrid illustrated, in the place of fluidity there is a sort of fault-line, a polarized tearing of interstitial space. Abdo-Julien was able to inhabit a fluid connective space as long as he remained in the cerebral world of his own creation, but once he was faced with the concrete reality of a newly independent, civil war-torn Djibouti where his French heritage marked him as the enemy, he was killed.

Although this chapter focused on the current era of neocolonial globalization, it would be erroneous to think that fracture zones are produced uniquely by these relatively current events. Rather, as I mentioned in my introductory chapter, militarized geopolitical border zones and spaces of transit are just the tip of a metaphorical iceberg of existential violence Europe has historically committed and continues to commit on African peoples. My examination of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Aventure ambiguë* (1961) and Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1984) will explore France's historical fracturing of African subjectivity. I will demonstrate that fracture zones are not confined to the physical world but produce distorting effects that infect and deform the psyches of the colonized, causing internal fissuring and even internalized abjectification. Moreover, while the first chapter focused largely on male protagonists, the second chapter will mark the beginning of my focus on the additional complications experienced by those who occupy the already-othered gendered position within patriarchal social structures in addition to internalizing intercontinental fracture zones.

Chapter 2
Fractured Inner Worlds: Neocolonial and Gendered Alienation in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Aventure ambigüe* and Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou*

"L'arrivée des Blancs avait sapé des fondements sacrés, les avait disloqués pour faire du colonisé un angoissé à perpétuité"
--Ken Bugul, *Le Baobab fou* p102

In the first chapter, we saw that the binary thinking that fueled colonialism and continues to fuel neo-imperialism has deeply destructive effects on the physical realities faced by its victims. My readings of Sow-Fall's and Waberi's novels illustrated that power-infused polarities do not dissolve to produce a space of negotiation, but instead remain as protective borders that are desperately defended by those whose privileged identities depend on them. These "protective borders" form fracture zones in which unwanted populations are (im)mobilized and abjectified. This chapter will demonstrate that fracture zones are not confined to the physical world but produce distorting effects that infect and deform the psyches of the colonized causing internal fissuring and even internalized abjectification.

For insight into the mechanisms through which othering, a process that originates in the mind of the Subject, can become internalized by the Othered, I draw on Kelly Oliver's book *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (2004). Oliver argues that "the colonization of the body and the material of the world is always the colonization of psychic space" (49) and that, therefore, colonization goes far beyond the seizure of land and the immobilizing oppression of

bodies. As the title of her book suggests, Oliver draws on psychoanalysis in her theory of internalized oppression. However, her theory, which is very much informed by Fanon's writings on the pathological effects of colonization the colonized,[47] differs in an important way from the work of traditional psychoanalysts. Psychoanalytic theory is based on the premise that internal drives and affects are the key forces in subject formation. Oliver proposes a psychoanalytic *social* theory that "reformulates psychoanalytic concepts as social and considers how subjectivity is formed and deformed within particular types of social contexts" (xvi). Oliver maintains that affects do not originate within the body or psyche but are, instead are "relational and transitory" (xix). Following Fanon, Oliver contends that "(a)ffects move between bodies; colonization and oppression operate through depositing the unwanted affects of the dominant group onto those othered by that group in order to sustain its privileged position" (xix).

Significantly Oliver's focus on the effect of the colonizer's unwanted affect on the colonized goes far beyond an investigation into Freudian projection. While Freud focused uniquely on the "effects of projection on the ego of the agent," like Fanon, Oliver is concerned with the plight of the recipient of this unwanted affect. Oliver explains that "[u]nwanted affects are not so much projected onto another person but transferred onto or injected into another person such that the recipient's own affects are transformed" (48). This injection takes the form of an internalized violence, a cruel superego, that destroys from within.

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[47] See *Peau noire, masques* blancs (1952) and *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961) for Frantz Fanon's studies of how the colonized is injected with the colonizer's poisonous attitudes.

Drawing on Oliver's theory that the colonizer injects unwanted affects into the very psyche of the colonized, I will divide my study into two main parts focusing on analyses of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Aventure ambiguë* (1961) and Ken Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1984) respectively. I will demonstrate that the disfigurement of the colonized psyche not only inhibits the formation of a Bhabhaian hybridity, it fractures the colonized from within producing insidious and long-lasting effects that prove to be greatly exacerbated for women who also suffer gendered alienation within patriarchal societies.

The first part of the chapter will examine the process of internalization of the colonizer's reality and the resulting distortion of the (neo)colonized's inner world. My analysis of Kane's *Aventure Ambiguë,* which is among the first Francophone West African novels published, focuses mainly on one aspect of the colonial confrontation: the existential shock experienced by Africans forced to internalize the binary oppositions at the heart of French colonialism.[48] Kane's novel is set in a traditional Senegalese community, the Diallobé Kingdom. The Diallobé find themselves confronted with the choice of adopting a world view in complete opposition to their own or slowly dying out in a world dominated by European hegemonies imbued with their cultural and technological superiority. Kane's protagonist, Samba Diallo, a member of his community's nobility and by birth in line to succeed the chief, embarks on a philosophical, "ambiguous" adventure which reveals a process of internalization of this fissure between Europe and colonized Africa. Samba, who began his education in a traditional Coranic school (*le Foyer Ardent*), becomes one of the first children of his

[48] The colonizer/Subject versus the lesser colonized/Other.

village to be sent to French school, chosen by his people to learn Western ways in hopes that he would one day lead the community to a more prosperous life. Unable to reconcile what became an increasingly internalized division between Western philosophy and the spiritual teachings[49] at the heart of his community, Samba continues, through his studies as a philosophy student in France, his quest for a philosophy that could encompass both world views. In this section I will analyze the result of his adventure as an insidiously violent destabilization of his African identity fueled by a progressive loss of *repères*[50] connecting him to his original identity, along with the preclusion of the development of a Western identity and the impossibility of a hybridity in its place, which brings about Samba's captivity in a state of alienation and existential immobility leading to his premature death.

The second section, which analyzes Bugul's *Le Baobab fou,* will explore the more intense level of alienation that Bugul's female protagonist experiences in neo-colonial Senegal and in Europe. Bugul's novel can be read in part as a response to Kane's novel through its numerous intertextual elements including the basic structure of the plot. Both novels follow the tragic life-course of a Senegalese child who is among the first to go to French school; both protagonists venture to Europe to continue their educations; and both return to Senegal, their lives and selves irrevocably altered. However, unlike with Samba,

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[49] The spiritual teachings in Samba's (and Kane's) community are those of Sufism. Sufism is a sect of Islam less amenable to syncretism which advocates the abandon of all sense of dualism with the aim of living in unity with the Divine. Divine unity is attained through self-discipline and a deep focus on God's omnipresence in every aspect of life. (http://ias.org/sufism/introduction-to-sufism/).

[50] *Un repère* is a landmark or point of reference. I use the French term because not only is this particular word used frequently in both of the books I am analyzing in this chapter, but the French reader would also see the word "*père*" meaning father. In Kane's novel there are three important father figures: Samba's own father, *l e maître* who is the spiritual father of the community, and the chief who is the tribal father. In *Le Baobab fou* the use of this word often refers directly back to the loss/lack of family experienced by the protagonist.

Ken's experience cannot be understood in terms of an existential shock between two worlds. For one thing, Ken did not have the benefit of a solidly established identity from which to be alienated. Already as a child she suffered a lack of *repères*—and *remères*—connecting her to her culture of origin. This is due in part to her mother's departure from her father's home when Ken was five years old and to the fact that her aged father is too caught up in his prayers and helping others to be a father to her. It is also due her community's ambivalence toward, and even rejection of, Ken as one of the first village girls to attend western school. Indeed, by virtue of her gender, Ken suffers internal fissuring from multiple sources, thus adding a complication to the sort of binary division experienced by Samba. Ken's fragmentation began in the section of the novel called *Préhistoire de Ken,* at age of two when, in an attempt to mimic her elders, village women wearing jewelry, she lodged an amber bead deep into her ear, thus beginning a lifetime of painful lessons of what she must do to conform to her assigned gender role. In the main section of the novel, *Histoire de Ken,* Ken is faced with another fragmenting life experience: attending western school. Feeling disconnected and unwanted in her native land and having learned and internalized the alienating French mantra "Nos Ancêtres les Gaulois" Ken leaves on a scholarship for Belgium where she finds herself captivated by and captive to, an identity constructed for her based on her sexualized and now racialized body. I will therefore argue that, unlike Samba's existential shock, Ken's experience is determined not only by a lack of *repères* on which to form a basis for her identity but also by a complex of interrelated and interacting forces that fracture the protagonist from the inside. I will maintain that Ken dwells in what Bugul refers to as an atrocious third

dimension. In the place of innovation and growth, this third space leads her to a state of mental destabilization, abjectification and, metaphorically, death.

Part 1: Samba Diallo's Existential Bifurcation

The Diallobé's Dilemma

Kane takes but a few pages to describe the origin of the problem that Samba's community faces, the cataclysmic event that is the source of his ambiguous adventure. However, this very brief description of the advent of colonialism aptly highlights the violence done to the Diallobé identity by an unanticipated encounter with the strange and powerful world of the French invaders. Kane describes the West's insertion into Africa as an initial shock, a strange dawn marked by contradictory images. He describes this first "morning" of the West in Black Africa as a paradoxical montage of images; of smiling Westerners, canons firing and brilliant, shining glass beads (59). This first encounter is at once violent, for those at the business end of the canons, and joyful, for the conquerors enriched by their "birth" into their new world. This metaphorical morning marks the sudden invasion of a surprised and unprepared Africa by a significantly more powerful Europe and the creation of a fissure between worlds. This differential power and the cultural hegemony it supports allow Europe to be blind to African subjectivity and to force Africa to adapt to an irrevocably transformed world.

However, in order for Africa to be brought into the West's purview, its prior existence and subjectivity must essentially be erased or rendered impotent. This, as Kane illustrates, was a two-step process. Paralyzed by the shock of the sudden attack by these previously unknown, frenetic, white invaders, many who resisted, Kane writes, were

conquered before they could understand what had happened, and those who attempted to reason with the invaders suffered the same fate as those who fought. When morning turned to day, all were conquered and subjected to a new order: They were, "recensés, répartis, classés, étiquetés, conscrits, administrés" (60). Indeed, the first step of induction into the new order of Western subjectivity, the physical violence of the takeover by the white men, is given very little space in this novel. It is, rather, the redefining and rebuilding of Africans in the image of their Western conquerors that is at issue here. It is the process of psychological and even spiritual penetration, erasure, and rewriting of a people's collective and in Samba's case, personal identity, that drives the plot of Kane's novel.

This process of internal re-definition was powered by the introduction of Western schools into traditional African communities. Where the cannon was the agent of the physical takeover, the school is that of the more insidious penetration into the mind and spirit: "L'école étrangère est la forme nouvelle de la guerre […]" (48). The cannons served to set into disarray, to destabilize, to create chaos of a preexisting order. It is thanks to this chaos that the invaders are able to impose their new order:

> L'école nouvelle participait de la nature du canon et de l'aimant à la fois. Du canon, elle tient son efficacité d'arme combattante. Mieux que le canon, elle pérennise la conquête. Le canon contraint les corps, l'école fascine les âmes. Où le canon a fait un trou de cendre et de mort et, avant que, moisissure tenace, l'homme parmi les ruines n'ait rejailli, l'école nouvelle installe sa paix. Le matin de la résurrection sera un matin de bénédiction par la vertu apaisante de l'école (61).

It may be the cannon that created the “hole of ashes and death” and "captured bodies”, but it is the school that assures the permanence of the conquest by filling these rents in the cultural fabric with its own meanings and thus captivating the people. Kane's use of the verb "*fasciner*" reflects well the imprisoning form of oppression enacted by colonial and neocolonial western education in Africa. Fascination involves holding one mentally or spiritually captive, subjugated. One who is fascinated is incapable of turning away much less so of rebelling. To further emphasize the kind of existential captivation exercised by the school, Kane describes its influence as that of a magnet that traps and redirects those caught in its field: On voit les hommes se disposer, conquis, le long de lignes de forces invisibles et impérieuses. Le désordre s'organise, la sédition s'apaise, les matins de ressentiment résonnent des chants d'une universelle action de grâce" (61). Insidiously coercing the people to align themselves with Western ways, the school preempts insurrection by creating a sort of outward peace. The French colonial schools, if we return to the words of Zygmont Bauman cited in the first chapter, could be said to rob the local land of its identity-endowing capacity[51] henceforth allowing a European consciousness to enter the minds and spirits of the Africans they colonized, to overcome resistance from the inside as well as from the outside. The school's purpose is thus to assure that there will be no rebellion by erasing original collective identity and substituting it with an identity fashioned for the conquered people by the conquerors.

[51] Bauman writes in *Globalization: The Human Consequences* that not only are residents of the global South inhibited from moving freely to the global North, many are tied to a locality increasingly denuded of its “meaning and its identity-endowing capacity” (18). They are thus “increasingly dependent on sense-giving and interpreting actions which they do not control” (Bauman 3). Those tied to such localities are made captive to a place not by local politics or cultural and familial ties but by outside forces emanating from the global.

Forcibly "pacified" by the military arm of French colonialism and, having undergone a profound psychological humiliation which brought into question their collective identity, Samba's people, the Diallobé, are now paralyzed by the choice they find they have to make. The tribal leaders, noting that their people and their traditional ways are slowly dying out[52] as they resist the depersonalizing influences of the French school they are faced with a decision: Do they send their children to this school so that they may learn to be prosperous in a world that, under European influence, is placing more and more value on knowing how to "lier le bois au bois"[53] in order to, concretely and metaphorically, build homes that endure in this new world (19)? The community is caught between the possibility that sending their children to the foreign school may be the only way to assure the survival of future generations of Diallobé, and the knowledge that in doing so they would precipitate the erasure of their collective identity. In other words, the Diallobé are caught in an impossible position with the result that “Le pays Diallobé, désemparé, tournait sur lui-même comme un pur-sang pris dans un incendie” (23). The choice of the adjective "*désemparé*," meaning destroyed, dismantled, deprived of all modes of actions stresses captive state of the Diallobé and the futility of their attempts to exit a death spiral. If the Diallobé stay where they are they will be burned to death, and, like the horse, if they the Diallobé attempt to move they will have to pass through the fire and will not likely come out unharmed or unchanged.

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[52] Note that the Diallobe inhabit a semi-arid region that has historically been very poor in agricultural terms, a region that is now a major source of migration to France.

[53] This phrase, Kane explains in the novel, comes from the fact that the word *école* which, when heard by speakers of his community's native language, sounds like wood.

Samba, the first child of the Diallobé chosen to receive this life-altering education undergoes a sort of existential tearing and immobility as he, the princely guinea pig for Western education, takes the role of the *pur sang* in the fire. The following pages are dedicated to an analysis of how Samba ends up fatally suspended between two opposing identities; progressively deprived of his Diallobé subjectivity while not able to assume a Western one. A brief study of "Le Fou," an uneducated fellow villager who has also internalized the fissure between France and Africa and returned to his community in a state of psychic fracture and immobility, will allow for an exploration of the existential shock as something that extends beyond a purely intellectual malaise. Finally, I will analyze the circumstances of Samba's death and the transformation of the larger Diallobé community at the end of the novel.

Misplaced Hopes for Hybridity

The two main actors behind the decision to send Samba to the French school are la Grande Royale, who originally conceived the idea and promoted it in the community, and le Chevalier, who as Samba's western-educated father had to come to terms with this decision and supported it. However, each one had different goal in mind for Samba's education and its impact on the larger community. La Grande Royale is the respected and pragmatic sister to the chief. In Kane's novel la Grande Royale represents above all the material presence of the Diallobé; she is described as physically imposing. While her brother is the titular chief, la Grande Royale is the one whose presence guarantees the chief's influence over peoples who might otherwise challenge him.[54] Her hope is to create

[54] Kane succinctly illustrates the Grande Royale's power : "Elle avait pacifié le Nord par sa fermeté. Son prestige avait maintenu dans l'obéissance les tribus subjuguées par sa personnalité extraordinaire" (33).

of Samba one who could transgress or penetrate the border between Africa and the West and learn the ways of the West in order to teach his community how to survive in a world increasingly dominated by Europe. She elects the young Samba for this role because he represents the heart of the Diallobé community: he is of noble blood, cousin to the chief, and, although la Grande Royale does not mention this in her argument, it should not be overlooked that he is also a very promising student of his community's spiritual tradition, Sufi Islam--he is the favorite of the *maître,* the spiritual leader of the Diallobé. These two qualities root him firmly in his village's culture and, la Grande Royale believes, make him most likely to survive the identity-challenging effacing of a Western education and the best advocate for change in the traditional Diallobé milieu.

Samba's father, referred to in the novel as *le Chevalier* (the knight) due to his large stature and to the flowing, statuesque robes he wears, sees the consequences of this decision differently than his cousin la Grande Royale. Le Chevalier, both an intellectual and deeply spiritual, is originally discontented with the community's decision to send his son to the French school: "Que ne comprennent-ils, tous ceux-là, jusqu'à dans sa propre famille, qui se précipitent, que leur course est un suicide, leur soleil un mirage!" (79). In a conversation about the setting sun with Paul LaCroix, his colleague and the father of Samba's French classmate Jean, le Chevalier explains the difference between the secular French vision of the world and his Sufi Muslim one. Le Chevalier sees the Enlightenment sun as an artificial sun that, unlike the natural sun, does not exist in harmony with the dark. According to le Chevalier this artificial sun is a mirage both for the Diallobé people and even for Westerners themselves. For the Diallobé it is a mirage

because instead of representing the freedom and enlightenment that it symbolizes for the West, it merely represents another kind of slavery. The motivation for sending Samba to the French colonial school is based on the idea that if they join France, the Diallobé will gain European knowledge and thus not be doomed to oblivion in a world dominated by the North. However, becoming part of this world brings its own kind of slavery: that of being limited by an all-encompassing European (Enlightenment) thought. Le Chevalier sees in the sun a mirage as much for the Westerners as for the Diallobé, because it only offers partial answers to life's questions, "[…] l'évidence est une qualité de surface. Votre science est le triomphe de l'évidence, une prolifération du surface" (90). Le Chevalier understands European thought, which is on what is observable and measureable, to be so limited to the surface that it is blind to everything else. The bright light of an artificial daytime is worshipped at the expense of the more mystical darkness of the natural night. For le Chevalier, a strict adherence to Enlightenment thought and its obsession with understanding and dominating objects comes at the price of an ignorance of the depth that makes the world spherical and thus reduces it simply to a shell of harsh surfaces, a bright disk.

Le Chevalier, however reluctantly, recognizes that the world is increasingly defined by the western world view and comes to accept the community's decision to send Samba to "l'école européenne." Later in their conversation about the setting sun, he admits to Mr. LaCroix: "Nous n'avons pas eu le même passé, vous et nous, mais nous aurons le même avenir, rigoureusement" and that, "[l]'ère des destinées singulières est révolue" (90-91). While la Grande Royale deems it necessary to send Samba to the

French school so that he may introduce into the Diallobé community the qualities and skills that allow the West to survive and conquer, le Chevalier considers instead how Samba might add depth to the increasingly Westernized world, how he might create a space for the subjectivity of the global Southerner to survive and perhaps even help to transform the conqueror's world. He explains to Mr. LaCroix, "cet avenir, je l'accepte. Mon fils en est le gage. Il contribuera à le bâtir. Je veux qu'il y contribue, non plus en étranger venu des lointains, mais en artisan responsable des destinées de la cité" (91). *Le Chevalier* is therefore sacrificing his son to the identity-erasing effects of the western school (offering him as a "guarantee" or "wager") in hopes that Samba may contribute--as a Subject, not as the other produced by the western subject's imagination--to the construction of the new global world:

> Je sais que vous ne croyez pas en l'ombre. Ni à la fin. L'instant, comme un radeau, vous transporte sur la face lumineuse de son disque rond, et vous niez tout l'abîme qui vous entoure. La cité future, grâce à mon fils, ouvrira ses baies sur l'abîme, d'où viendront des grandes bouffées d'ombre sur nos corps desséchés, sur nos fronts altérés. Je souhaite cette ouverture, de toute mon âme. Dans la cité naissante, telle doit être notre œuvre, à nous tous, hindous, Chinois, Sud-Américains, nègres, Arabes ; nous tous, dégingandés et lamentables, nous les sous-développés, qui nous sentons gauches en un monde de parfait ajustement mécanique (91).

With Samba's help the new civilization, which, ruled by the West, will be built on the luminous face of the round disk that characterizes the western world view, will not be fully closed and blind to the abyss that surrounds it. It will open its windows onto this darkness which will provide relief from the light of the Westernized world disempowering and disfiguring "underdeveloped" peoples from the global South.

Interestingly, le Chevalier is himself trained in European thought. Although the circumstances of le Chevalier's education are not directly referred to in the novel, his grounding in French philosophy is evidenced in the passage in which he explains Descartes and Pascal to Samba and his ease in discoursing on the differences between European and African world views when debating with M. LaCroix. So, what makes Samba's situation so different from his father's? Is le Chevalier not actually already an example of the successful hybrid needed to help his community? I contend that le Chevalier cannot fill this role because he remains clearly on one side of the North/South binary. This is evidenced in part by his usage of the pronouns *nous* and *vous* to explain how the two worldviews differ when talking to M. LaCroix. Le Chevalier even emphasizes a fundamental incompatibility of the two worlds using antonyms such as day for the bright sun of the Enlightenment-inspired innovation and night for the deep spirituality of the Sufi Muslim Diallobé. He recognizes the accomplishments of the North, highlighting the attention to questions regarding the material world or what he refers to as the surface, yet at the same time he counters that the North is missing the depth provided by the spirituality so present in Diallobé society. Furthermore, as evidenced by the following citation, le Chevalier includes himself in a *nous* that consists of all “les sous-développés” from the global South who have been conquered and forced into a Northern world— “[…] nous tous, hindous, Chinois, Sud-Américains, nègres, Arabes […]"(91). Le Chevalier thus remains on the outside along with other outsiders and cannot fill the role he envisions for Samba, which is that of the architect who will help build the global city, not as an outsider but as a full, participating subject. *Le*

Chevalier is able to remain on the outside because he has not internalized the divisive foreign element—the Western world view. He remains, like the chief (in Samba's view) "un pays des Diallobé distinct, face à un Occident distinct" (163).

Significantly, while both la Grande Royale and le Chevalier demonstrate in their arguments for sending Samba to the new institution that they are aware of the potential detrimental effects of the Western school, neither seem to fully grasp its implications for Samba as an individual. They both anticipate a form of hybridity between the worlds, albeit a limited one where the West retains the upper hand: La Grande Royale believes that Samba can help the community gain the necessary skills to survive in the conquerors' world and le Chevalier envisions Samba making the world of the global South visible to the new globalized world dominated by the North. Nevertheless, as the following analysis illustrates, even these modest forms of cultural hybridity are not possible when the contact between worlds occurs in an implacable divide and when this contact is seen not only as a meeting of opposites, but as an encounter of unequals. As Samba's experience shows, when the one side has notably more power, it imposes itself on the other to the point of leaving no room for any subjectivity to subsist outside of it. Instead of producing any compromise between the two cultures, Samba's Western education destabilizes his identity by introducing binary oppositions into his psyche, leaving him straddling, and captive to the fissure dividing his inner self.

Contact with the West Bifurcates Samba's Psyche

As literary critic Iheanacho A. Akakuru explains in his article "L'Endoit et l'invers: l'école occidentale dans le discours littéraire africain," Western school for the (formerly) colonized African, is "le moyen foudroyant de la déculturation" (319). In other

words, the school has the violent and devastating effect of a sudden and intense deculturation. It gives as it takes, and the African who embarks on the vessel of Western education cannot know beforehand the danger that he risks (Akakuru 319). This is certainly true of Samba's experience. Like the invasion of Africa as Kane described it, the Western school's initial conquest of Samba happened suddenly and violently:

> Avec [leur alphabet], ils portèrent le premier coup rude au pays des Diallobé. Longtemps, je suis demeuré sous la fascination de ces signes et de ces sons qui constituent la structure et la musique de leur langue. Lorsque j'appris à les agencer pour former des mots, à agencer les mots pour donner naissance à la parole, mon bonheur ne connut plus de limites. (172).

Immediately following this *coup rude*, this hard blow dealt by the French alphabet to the Diallobé, Samba is so mesmerized that upon finally learning to write in French, he is overjoyed.

However, like the violent "first dawn" of the West in Africa and the establishment of schools on its "first day," the Western school had insidious, alienating effects on Samba. It introduced a division into his inner world which would render his Diallobé identity increasingly inaccessible to him. Samba's alienation began with the introduction of binary oppositions into his psyche which would open up a schism between him and the others in his home, particularly his father. This process began with the presence of an alien thought in his mind which would gradually and insidiously gain ground. Observing his father, Samba reflects :

> Il prie, il ne vit pas…À coup sûr, nul autre dans cette maison ne l'aurait pensé ainsi. Moi seul pouvais avoir cette idée bizarre d'une vie serait, de quelque façon, hors de la présence de Dieu…Curieux. Idée bizarre. Où donc ai-je pu la prendre?

> Cette idée m'est étrangère. L'étonnement dans lequel elle me met en est la preuve. C'est en tout cas une idée évoluée, je veux dire qui marque un progrès de décision sur mon état d'esprit antérieur : elle distingue, elle spécifie (106).

In his original education at the *Foyer Ardent*, the Coranic school lead by *le maître*, Samba was taught that God and life are not separate, yet suddenly he sees these two things as distinguished from each other and possibly even in opposition. Even more significant is his realization that this new mental division sets him apart from others. Furthermore, this perplexing idea is foreign to Samba himself. He questions the origin of this strange notion, not immediately recognizing that it may be inspired by his western education. This scene emphasizes the insidious power of the new school and is the first clear indication in the novel of the West invading Samba's mind causing fragmenting divisions in a worldview that he once experienced as whole and all-encompassing. At the same time, he recognizes that this is not just a random thought, but a symptom of a change occurring progressively in his psyche. He describes the gradual loss of his original world view with the image of a man inside him "qui dort […] d'un sommeil de plus en plus profond" and who would never see God and life as separate from each other (107). This new division causes a formidable fissure that begins to separate him from his father. "Samba Diallo n'osait pas tout à fait révéler au chevalier la teneur de sa pensée, et en particulier la faille redoutable qu'il avait cru découvrir" (107). Thus, not only has Samba begun to see the world in a different way than his father, but he cannot even find the words to share this discovery with him, the man with whom he once innocently shared all of his thoughts.

The French school has thus insidiously placed itself between Samba and his previously known world, contesting it and making the former no longer fully accessible to him. Near the end of the novel Samba reflects back on his trajectory and the West's role in it. Stuttering, he explains, "Mais ils…mais ils s'interposèrent et entreprirent de me former à leur image. Progressivement ils me firent émerger du cœur des choses et m'habituèrent à prendre mes distances au monde" (173). It is telling that Kane used the word *image* in this passage because what is at issue is not the process of *becoming* the Western subject but rather of taking on its *image.* In order to be defined and domesticated according to Westerner's needs, he cannot retain his unaltered African subjectivity. Instead of ending up with a net gain—a French education in addition to the Diallobé one he acquired--Samba suffered a deficit in that in adopting the new viewpoint, he takes on the role of the conquering other which is at odds with the role of the conquered object he is also necessarily required to become. Consequently, Samba does not have access to a state of productive hybridity between the two because, in internalizing the division between them, he does not have access to either.

It is finally in France that Samba really begins to recognize the depths of his alienation in a world of objects dominated by the Enlightenment subject. Samba has traveled there to continue his education in philosophy in hopes of making sense of the internalized fissure and the resulting existential disequilibrium he experiences as a result of his French education. Samba experiences a deep malaise in France as at this point he is not only penetrated by French ideas but physically removed from his fatherland and all that connected him to his Diallobé identity. He walks in a state of "demi-somnolence"

through the hot, stifling streets of Paris which he sees as empty of life but full of objects. Samba remarks,

> On y rencontre des objets de chair aussi que les objets de fer. À part de cela [les rues] sont vides. Ah! On y rencontre aussi des événements. Leur consécution encombre le temps, comme les objets encombrent la rue. Le temps est obstrué par leur enchevêtrement mécanique. On ne perçoit pas le fond du temps et son courant lent (140).

From this citation we can see that le Chevalier's fears about the Northern city were not unfounded. This city, with its domination over the material world, its "parfait adjustement mécanique" (91), is one so disconnected from the natural that even time no longer flows but is snarled and tangled by events.

Furthermore, Samba's experience in Paris leads him to the realization that neither he nor Africans can free themselves from European domination by following the Western model and conquering objects as the French did:

> […] si nous acceptons et nous accommodons, nous n'aurons jamais la maîtrise de la chose. Car nous n'aurions pas plus de dignité qu'elle. Nous ne la dominerions pas. […] C'est le même geste de l'Occident, qui maîtrise la chose et nous colonise tout à la fois (166).

Likening the West's colonization of his people to its domination of objects, Samba recognizes that in spite of any material gain learning Western ways may offer, the Western subject has classified him and his compatriots as objects and brought them into his world as such therefore essentially robbing them of any participatory agency. Moreover, it has become clear that in learning to "lier le bois au bois," Samba is not able to fulfill the role *la Grande Royale* assigned him. He is not able help his community to learn to "conquer without being right" as did Europe. In sharing his knowledge about

Western ways, Samba would merely be allowing his community to continue its existence as objects in the face of Western subjects.

Physically and existentially disconnected from his Diallobé identity and having discovered that the only identity offered him by the West is one of a conquered object,[55] Samba thus finds himself essentially captive in a precarious state of existential (im)mobility. While at the family home of his French classmate Lucienne, Samba explains:

> Il arrive que nous soyons capturés au bout de notre itinéraire, vaincus par notre aventure même. Il nous apparaît soudain que, tout au long de notre cheminement, nous n'avons pas cessé de nous métamorphoser, et que nous voilà devenus autres. Quelquefois, la métamorphose ne s'achève pas, elle nous installe dans l'hybride et nous y laisse. (125).

Samba is of those for whom the metamorphosis is not completed; he is separated from his former self but also not allowed to become completely other. Not having access to Western subjectivity, he did not become other. It is thus important to note that the *hybride* that Samba refers to here is not the idealized Bhabhaian hybridity which suggests a productive movement to and fro between cultures and identities. It represents instead an unstable state of unachieved identity in a fissure between opposed worlds--between two masses that come together yet are constantly pulling apart--hence the impossibility of real change or even compromise.

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[55] Samba is very much in the position of the native intellectual that Frantz Fanon describes in *the Wretched of Earth* (1963). Fanon describes the alienation, that stems from the fact the colonizer insists that the colonized learn the language and culture of the colonizer yet refuses to accept the colonized as his equal. The colonized is left in a no-man's land between his own culture (in which he no longer feels at home in part because the others left behind recognize his difference) and the culture into which he will never be fully integrated. See chapter one "Concerning Violence" in *the Wretched of Earth* (1963).

Samba is not a lucid mind between two opposed worlds, but one ruptured by the fissure between them. In the following citation Kane aptly sums up the cause of Samba's malaise:

> Je ne suis pas un pays des Diallobé distinct, face à un Occident distinct, et appréciant d'une tête froide ce que je puis lui prendre et ce qu'il faut que je lui laisse en contrepartie. Je suis devenu les deux. Il n'y a pas une tête lucide entre deux termes d'un choix. Il y a une nature étrange, en détresse de n'être pas deux (163).

Furthermore, unlike his father, Samba cannot stand back and evaluate his situation; he cannot choose between the two sides because he has internalized the rupture between them and is thus relegated to a strange and unstable space. Samba has indeed failed to fulfill his father's hope that the Diallobé (or non-Western) subjectivity have some agency in the new globalized world. Samba's loss of faith, especially following and the death of his influential father figures (the chief and *le maître*) while Samba is in Paris symbolize his loss of *repères*, in other words, his loss of all that tethered him to his Diallobé self. This along with his inability to truly become a subject in the western world, suggests that he cannot help it open "ses baies sur l'abîme" and bring much needed relief to the parched faces of the disenfranchised Southerners. Furthermore, returning to the Diallobé at his father's request does not provide relief from the split inside of him. On the contrary, Samba's inability to re-integrate and take the role asked of him in his village only aggravates the effects of his internalized fissure and confirms the depths of his alienation, further paralyzing him and eventually leading to his premature death at the hands of the Fou.

In the person of the *fou*, Kane offers a parallel to Samba's experience of alienation and an alternative to his very cerebral reflection on his internalization of the fissure between Europe and Africa. The *fou,* who can be read as Samba's less educated and more embodied alter-ego,[56] had returned from his sojourn to Europe before Samba embarked on his own ambiguous adventure. The *fou* represents a possible response for Samba to the alienating effects of travelling to the West: rigid adherence to an all-encompassing identity no longer available to him and the resulting insanity. A *tirailleur sénégalais*,[57] the *fou* entered Europe unprepared to reflect intellectually on his situation not having the benefit of Samba's education in Western culture and philosophy. Stuck in the insurmountable fissure between worlds, he experienced an acute and paralyzing blow which left him trapped in a state of madness.

This existential bifurcation is immediately apparent in Kane's physical description of the Fou, whose state of fragmentation is written into every aspect of his person:

> La vieillesse de cette redingote, sa propreté douteuse par-dessus la netteté immaculée des boubous donnaient au personnage un aspect insolite. La physionomie, comme les habits, laissait une impression hétéroclite. Les traits en étaient immobiles hormis les yeux qu'habitait une inquiétude de tous les instants. On eût dit que l'homme savait un secret maléfique au monde et qu'il s'efforçait, par un effort constant, d'en empêcher le jaillissement extérieur. La versatilité du regard ensuite, jamais arrêté, dont les expressions étaient détruites à peine étaient-

[56] There is very little description of Samba's body or of his physical sensations in Kane's novel. The *fou* seems to fill in this missing piece in the novel.

[57] The *tirailleurs sénégalais* were a group of Senegalese soldiers. This group was created in 1857 by Napoléon III and continued to serve until 1960. These soldiers participated in France's colonial conquests in Africa. They also fought for France in World War II. (information taken from http://www.senegal-online.com/histoire/les-tirailleurs-senegalais/ consulted on 6/11/2018 at 9:25AM)

> elles nées, faisait douter que le cerveau de cet homme pût seulement contenir une pensée lucide (97).

Le Fou is described as an embodiment of an amalgamation of mismatched elements. He wears a dirty European-style fitted coat, part of his uniform, over his loose, immaculately white *boubou*. Kane describes his face as petrified into a mask from which peer eyes expressing the modulations of an ever-present anxiety, as if he were party to a malefic secret but unable to communicate it in other than half-formed thoughts, "détruites à peine […] nées" (97). That his worried eyes are filled with flickers of half-formed thoughts emphasizes *le Fou*'s state of existential captivity as represented by his body's uneasy suspension between two opposed worlds. Indeed, *le Fou's* encounter with the West is mediated by his senses and the physical reactions of his body. In fact, when he recounts his tale to his fellow villagers, *le Fou* physically relives the events he relates with such intensity that when explaining how he got the scar on his stomach he falls violently ill. Later, having latched on to the dying *maître des Diallobé*, symbol of the moribund culture to which he desperately clings, *le Fou* is able to communicate the violence of his encounter with the West to the old man by describing what he calls "une angoisse indicible" in terms of bodily sensations (99). Expressing his existential shock in corporeal terms, *le Fou* gives a precise and detailed account of his experience of France as a place dominated by cold, hard objects. His first impression was the cold, sonorous, tiled floors of the naval station onto which he debarked. Adding his aural perceptions *le Fou* describes an unnatural expanse filled with the sharp sounds of shoes clacking on hard surfaces which contrasted so completely with the soft pad of human feet on warm African sand. He adds that shortly after setting foot in France his body tensed up, shuddered and

trembled and at times collapsed in response to the shock of his surroundings. He felt as if his whole body were rebelling. For *le Fou* this physical reaction seems to be the only access he has to his existential schism: in fact, he explains that it seems to him that his trembling was, "l'écho fraternel de mon corps à un désarroi plus intime" (101). Yet he does not seem to be able to articulate with any rational understanding this internal disarray born of his confrontation with the fissure between Africa and Europe.

Le Fou's insanity is a debilitating symptom of the impossibility of identity formation in the fissure between two opposed worlds. He is trapped in a state of existential stagnation. He tries to adhere to the identity he lost, the all-encompassing identity of the Diallobé. But, like Samba, he has irrevocably been rendered partially other by his contact with the West. In a futile attempt to reclaim his previous subjective integrity *le Fou* rigidly adheres himself to the dying symbol of the unaltered Diallobé culture, the disappearing *repère*: *le maître*. Both *le maître* and the *le Fou* mention that they are fully aware that the religious leader's imminent death marks the end of an era. This knowledge only emphasizes that the *le Fou*'s clingy behavior is maladaptive and unlikely to lead anywhere but to continued stasis in a bifurcated identity. Further indication of his psychic captivity is that *le Fou*, in spite of having held *le maître* at the precise moment when the old man passed away, is not able to accept that he is dead. Like a broken record constantly replaying the same melody, he reenacts his obsession substituting the newly returned Samba for the dead *maître.*

Le Fou tries to reclaim an unadulterated *nous* but cannot purge himself of his distressing European experience. In his desperation he mistakes Samba for the devout

Muslim that *le maître* was. Ironically, Samba has returned at Le Chevalier's behest, bereft of the strong belief in the omnipresence of God and the spiritual in every aspect of life, one of the pillars of the Sufi Muslim Diallobe society. *Le Chevalier had* hoped that his son could again be part of the *nous* of the Diallobé people not realizing that like *le Fou,* Samba has also been irrevocably altered by his Western adventure. Unlike *le Fou,* however, Samba returns to his home country neither deeply disordered nor physically marked by his experience in France, but, as I have previously argued, he is no less caught in a state of stagnation. The logic of the narrative—which demands that the two faces of the European experiment come together—calls for Samba to confront his insane alter-ego. Samba, recognizing the futility of adhering to a fading reality from which he is already irrevocably alienated, does not cling rigidly to traditional Diallobé culture as does *le Fou*; instead, he continues to search in vain for a way to heal the divisions within him, to somehow make the two opposed realities coincide so that he can once again be whole. As Paul Egbuna Modum identifies the key difference between *le Fou* and Samba:

> Contrairement au 'fou', pour qui le contacte avec l'Europe a provoqué le rejet total des valeurs occidentales ainsi que la détermination de rester dans 'l'intimité de la mort des choses', Samba Diallo n'a rapporté de son séjour en Europe que l'ambiguïté. (80).

Le Fou, on the other hand wishes to purge the impurity in the form of Western alterity from himself and from his community. He leads the recently repatriated Samba to *le maître*'s grave all the while calling him *le maître*. The sun is setting and *le Fou* tries to order Samba to perform his dusk prayers, Samba refuses telling his companion that he cannot force someone to pray. *Le Fou* continues to plead with Samba to pray, not

accepting, in his maladaptive adherence to his faded traditional Diallobé identity, that *le maître* is dead and that Samba cannot fill his shoes. All the while Samba is lost in his own thoughts still trying to make sense of the fissure between worlds that introduced binary oppositions into his once all-encompassing world view. The text goes back and forth between *le Fou*'s increasingly frantic calls to prayer and Samba's thoughts. Reflecting on *le maître*'s teachings Samba realizes that he has lost his faith; he no longer believes in *le maître*'s teachings. Samba comes to the desperate conclusion that he must force God to choose to return to his heart and that he alone should not be responsible for the distance that developed between himself and God nor should he alone be responsible for bridging this distance. *Le Fou,* in a last attempt to get Samba to show a sign of continued belief in God demands: "Promets-moi que tu prieras demain, et je te laisserai" (186). Samba responding out loud to his own inner debate replies "Non…je n'accepte pas…" (186). Taking Samba's response as a refusal to pray and therefore as an indication that Samba does not conform to the image of a pure Sufi Muslim identity, *le Fou* shoots and kills Samba and in doing so symbolically attempts to kill the part of himself and his community tainted by the West.

Equilibrium or Existential (Im)mobility?

The meeting of these two individuals, each captive in his own crisis at the fissure between diametrically opposed worlds, culminates in a state of pure stagnation. *Le Fou,* for one, was not able to turn back the clock by killing Samba. In the meanwhile, the new *maître des Diallobés,* the young Demba, has changed the hours of the *Foyer Ardent*--the school where *le maître* teaches the Coran--so that the Diallobé children may attend

French school. In other words, the foreign element that *le Fou* tried to purge has already infiltrated the village. Likewise, the results of Samba's "adventure" are, as the title of the novel suggested, indeed ambiguous.

In death, Samba, who, in the course of his adventure had lost his connection with the values of his community, with the darkness and the shadows that represent the unknowable, unfathomable mysteries of God, became reunited with "l'ombre" (187).[58] In Paris he found himself constrained by and penetrated by objects; even objectified in a world metaphorically ruled by the bright light of the Western sun where mastery of objects was the ultimate goal. In the instant of his death the West loses its hold on him: "Lumière et bruit, forme et lumière, tout ce qui s'oppose et agresse, soleils aveuglants de l'exil, vous êtes rêves oubliés" (188). After this reunion Samba enters a space where there are no dichotomies and light and dark mix, he reflects, "Je suis deux voix simultanées. L'une s'éloigne et l'autre croît" (189). No longer trapped in a world where he is bifurcated by two opposing identities Samba has moved to a utopic space where he is free and whole, able to be both identities at once and neither. However, this bliss only occurs at the "instant" (this word is repeated many times throughout the short passage) of his death in which he lives for eternity, unable to share any of this peace with his community, unable to effect meaningful change. In other words, the peace he finds in death is not a solution for the Diallobé's dilemma. It is, in a sense, a continued state of immobility between two diametrically opposed worlds which no longer tear him apart but coexist.

[58] Remember here the opposition discussed early in this chapter between Enlightenment need to shine light on and know everything and the Sufi Muslim belief in the unknowable mysteries of God.

In conclusion, as I mentioned in my introduction, I chose this novel because the author's focus on the existential shock produced by Europe's invasion of Africa, rather than the concrete, lived reality of physical and economic oppression, questions of race, and impermeable borders, enabled me to concentrate my study on the internalization of the existential fissure created between the two continents. Samba suffered not from the physical act of crossing, or in the case of some, attempting to cross, the border from Africa to Europe; he suffered from a progressive internalization of the border between these opposed worlds that indeed intensified once he was in France, completely removed from the *repères* that connected him to his Diallobé identity. This internalized fissure alienated him from himself, from the Diallobé subject mentioned earlier, who, at the beginning of Samba's French education, fell into an increasingly deep slumber until he became inaccessible to Samba. The effects on Samba of his internalization of this fissure are indeed similar to those experienced by individuals from the global South caught in the fracture zone described in the first chapter, but there are also some important differences. The slow infiltration of the West and the painful division it caused to form in Samba's psyche allows for a study of the insidious roots of what would later develop into a fracture zone. This division destabilized Samba's identity without offering him a viable alternative identity. Instead, Samba discovered that the Western identity that caused his internal schism was an illusion and that accepting this identity would not allow him a subject position but condemn him to the realm of objects in the western world. Samba died because, captive in a state of existential stagnation. he could not heal the division inside himself.

The Role of Women in Kane's *Aventure ambigüe*

Before moving on to the next section of this study, I would like to point out that Kane's ambiguous adventure is a specifically male one. There are, however, several female characters in the novel. For the most part these women do not seem to experience ambiguity or any sort of existential malaise; rather, they are focused on the concrete materiality of the physical world.[59] Of particular note is *La Grande Royale*, who, unbothered by existential angst, fought to guarantee the survival of the Diallobé people in the physical world. Her role was thus limited to setting Samba on the path to Western education with the expectation that he would return with skills that would ensure survival. Lucienne, Samba's French friend and fellow philosophy student, is similarly stereotyped. A budding Marxist, she maintains a deep attachment to the material and does not comprehend either her father's Christian spirituality or Samba's yearning for a resolution of the conflict between his Sufi Muslim spirituality and the Western Enlightenment's sharp focus on mastering the material world. Lucienne is baffled when Samba agrees with her would-be missionary father's statement that he would prefer to offer spiritual help to his impoverished country rather than send medical doctors to treat the illnesses threatening to annihilate the population. Another female character, Adèle, the wife of Pierre-Louis, makes a brief appearance. Referred to as the "Gabonese princess," a corpulent *métisse* covered in jewels, she is a strong presence, but, again, her strength lies in her attention to the needs of the physical world ad not in her ability to add

[59] Kane's depiction of women as uniquely concerned with the material and not the cerebral fits very well into Irigaray's description of women as objects of exchange in man's hom(m)o-sexual economy: "For woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity. As such, she remains the guardian of material substance; whose price will be established in terms of the standard of their work and of their need/desire, by 'subjects': workers, merchants, consumers" (31).

to the philosophical/existential discussion that absorbs the men. *La princesse baguée* instead, requests that the men stop their discussion to pay attention to the material: the women and the food. Each of these women--from disparate backgrounds--is firmly rooted in the physical, material world. Elena Tzelepis and Alena Athanasiou write in their book, *Rewriting Difference: Luce Irigaray and the Greeks* (2010), "Women, more than anyone else, come to exist only and exclusively through the fleshy prerequisite of biological life; men, on the other hand, are invested with the aura of the incorporeal logos—the emblematic characteristic of the human at large" (Tzelepis and Athanasiou110). Thus, while it may seem that Kane's female characters engage in political activities (Lucienne's interest in Marxism and *La Grande Royal*'s interest in the welfare of her people) he always maintains their connection with the material as opposed to the spiritual. In this way Kane precludes the possibility of these characters expressing the kind of existential and spiritual malaise at the heart of Samba's ambiguous adventure.

However, there is one female character that may be read as caught in an ambiguous liminal zone similar to Samba's: Adèle, Pierre-Louis' granddaughter. Adèle was born in Paris of parents belonging to the African Diaspora. Adèle has *pères* without *repères* as opposed to Samba's *pères* who are deeply rooted in their Diallobé community. The patriarch, Pierre-Louis, who was professionally trained (as a lawyer who fought on the side of colonialized Africans against the French colonial regimes), explains to Samba that he does not know where he is from, only that his great grandfather was taken as a slave, brought to the West Indies and baptized Pierre-Louis Kati only to suppress this last name so as not to dishonor it in slavery. Pierre-Louis' sons Hubert (Adèle's father) and

Marc grew up in France and are an army captain and an engineer respectively. Samba reflects on Adèle's situation, noting that her exile is more dramatic than his because while the West insidiously entered his spirit, he was still only *métis* by his western education (168). He had the Diallobé teachings to warn him of the dangers of the West whereas Adèle did not. Unable to recognize the ambiguity in herself that Samba witnessed developing in his mind in his early days at the Western school, he imagined Adèle experienced this meeting of opposed worlds in terms of what he calls her own abnormality and even monstrosity. In other words, Adèle knows nothing besides the *image* or perhaps more accurately the *mirage* of subjectivity offered her by a world in which she cannot exist as a subject but remains eternally an objectified other.

While Kane does take note that Adèle's exile is more dramatic than Samba's due to her distance from her African roots, he merely scratches the surface of the role gender plays in her alienation. In fact, unlike with Samba, Kane first describes Adèle in terms of her appearance and her sexual desirability as a young woman. Samba, invited by Pierre-Louis to have dinner with his family, is greeted by an "apparition" that "fascinates" him. Adèle speaks, inviting him to enter but, being so focused on her appearance, Samba reacts not to her words but to her body, a description of which occurs in the subsequent paragraph. While the physical marks of her African heritage and of her gender each vie for the reader's attention in this paragraph, it is her femininity which both opens and closes the paragraph. Kane begins with a description of Adèle's body in a tight-fitting shirt, the blackness of which brings out the warm sunset-color of her skin ("teint chaud du soleil couchant") (158). Her "masse pesante de cheveux noirs" falls on her shoulders,

becoming indistinguishable from her shirt (158). Her neck is graceful, and her svelte figure emphasizes "le poids d'une gorge firme" (158). Her jade-black eyes reflect, in a flirty feminine manner, a timid smile which she attempts to hide.

Kane does not develop the character of Adèle much beyond this initial description of her very appealing feminine attributes. Described as shy and naïve, she is largely silent during the heated discussion the men have over dinner on the subject of Samba's sense of alienation in France. Adèle only dares to dart furtive, flirty looks at Samba, who is doing the same to her. When invited by her father to share her opinion, or more exactly asked whether she shared *their* opinion, Adèle, embarrassed, smiles and lowers her head without responding. When she finally gets up the courage to speak in front of Samba she does so very quietly, "attentive à ne pas gêner la conversation entre les hommes" that Samba is forced to lean closer to hear her (167). Furthermore, instead of expressing her own view on the subject at hand--the experience of being a part of the African Diaspora in Paris—Adèle expresses a desire to understand things the way Samba does. While this interest on the part of Adèle to some degree emphasizes the point that Kane is making about the irrevocable loss of an African world view in the face of the dominating, parching light of the West, it also suggests her position as an object vis-à-vis Samba. Indeed, Kane develops Adèle's persona only as far as he needs to so that she may serve as another foil for Samba, who connects with her in a way he could not connect with Lucienne because he sees in her a more extreme example of his own alienation. At the same time the fact that Samba is ultimately unable to form any sort of lasting relationship with her serves to reflect his own state of fragmentation.

At the time Kane wrote his novel, women's education had largely not yet entered the consciousness of African communities. Yet Adèle's fleeting, ancillary presence in Kane's novel raises some questions that cannot be answered in the scope of his novel: What might Adèle's adventure look like if she were in Samba's place, if the reader had access to her thoughts and could follow her evolution? How might the experience of being gendered interact with that of being both disconnected from one's cultural moorings and othered vis-à-vis the dominant Western world? Ken Bugul, in a sense, offers a response to this question with her protagonist in *le Baobab fou,* who as a young African woman studying in Europe is painfully confronted with the complexities of being doubly othered.

Part 2: Ken Bugul's *Tierce Dimension Atroce*

Ken Bugul's Senegal in le Baobab Fou

Before delving into my analysis of the experiences of Bugul's first gendered then racialized, protagonist, it is important to note that the Africa that Bugul describes in *Le Baobab Fou* is not the same as the one Kane described in *Aventure Ambigüe.* Kane's novel is based on the existential shock experienced by Africans on, metaphorically speaking, the "first dawn" and the "day" that followed the invasion of Africa by Europe and the process of bringing Africans (in this case Senegalese people) into the Western world, which involved disconnecting them from their own traditions seen as diametrically opposed but also inferior to Western thought. Bugul focuses her novel on what can be seen as the "evening" of this occupation, the period around the time of Senegal's independence from France. The process of internal redefinition through Western schools

that was at issue in Kane's novel has taken a firm hold in Bugul's postcolonial Africa. Bugul writes of whole communities of young *noirs occidentalisés* (Westernized Africans) living in apartments next to white families in large African cities having adopted European lifestyles. She explains "L'imitation néocoloniale fauchait 'l'élite' comme une mangue verte cueillie avec sa sève encore âpre" (145). The elite had no chance to fight against this alienating process; they were indoctrinated by the neocolonial West before reaching maturity, before they could reflect critically on what was happening to them. What is at issue in *Le Baobab Fou* is thus not the question of whether or not to adopt Western ideas and ways of life but more precisely what sort of identity is possible after having undergone a process of westernization and neocolonial alienation, of erasure or rewriting personal and collective identity. It is more a question of what identity a Senegal suffering from the lasting effects of colonialism can claim after independence.

One of the ways in which Bugul symbolizes this loss of pre-colonial identity which preceded her protagonist's birth is through the image of her novel's titular baobab tree, which, during the course of the novel, goes mad and then dies. Bugul's choice of the baobab for this role was far from random. The baobab tree has traditionally played an important role in Senegalese villages, providing many important products ranging from foods and medicines to building materials and often providing shade for village gatherings, most importantly the council of elders. In the first section of her novel, *Pré-Histoire de Ken*, Bugul, narrating in the third person, presents a sort of mythical past for her village, Ndoucoumane. In this past, the baobab seems to offer solutions to all of the villagers' problems: the fruits are good to eat, the fruit's juice and the leaves add flavor to

food and cure illnesses, and its bark can be used to weave the village's famous hammocks (Bugul 23). In fact, Bugul refers to the village as "le pays du baobab" (23). This mythical past seems timeless for the most part until the arrival of the railway, symbol of Western presence in Senegal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not coincidentally, it is also at this time that the baobab tree, which had been growing rapidly, stopped growing. The arrested growth of the baobab symbolically sets the scene for the progressive Western infiltration of and erasure of African identity during the period of their occupation in that it suggests that the traditions associated with the baobab are also ceasing to thrive.

Significantly, Senegal's independence from France did not result in the renewed growth of the baobab or a restoration of the wholeness of pre-colonial times. It did not bring with it the acquisition of identity outside of the one that the West invaded and mutilated. Bugul writes:

> "Les aînés et les oncles engagés dans la lutte pour l'indépendance étaient divisés entre partisans du compromis avec le colon et ceux subjugués par les idéologies de l'Est qui ne coïncidaient pas précisément avec les traditions de l'Afrique. En gros, pour cette Afrique qui avait connu des bouleversements historiques énormes, les pillages innombrables et le carnage de l'homme noir, l'indépendance bafoua l'Espoir. Nous vivons seulement étrangement sans être bien sûr de ce que nous étions" (145).

In this passage Bugul argues that those who were engaged in the fight for independence were not inspired by African ideologies and traditions. Africans on both sides, those who wanted independence and those who wanted to remain under French control, were subjugated to outside ideas, either those from the West or from the East, but not

specifically from Africa. The last line of the citation above explains particularly clearly the problem that faces Ken's Senegal: "we live only strangely without being very sure of what we were" (145). Disconnected from their past by a present that does not acknowledge the specificity of Africa's history in the world, Senegal is no longer clearly on one side of a fissure between worlds as were the Diallobé. Instead these post-independence Africans find themselves in a state of neo-colonization, deeply alienated from their own traditions and still subject to pernicious western influences. Bugul explains this situation in terms of being trapped in an “atrocious third dimension”: "Le colonialisme avait tout ébranlé. Et la conscience s'était noyée dans l'aliénation d'une troisième dimension fascinante et atroce" (64). Bugul uses the phrase “une troisième dimension fascinante et atroce” to describe a sort of existence made unreal, denaturalized by contact with the West. It is a dimension of alienation in which the person or society, infiltrated by colonial western thought, has lost contact with all point of reference which would indicate which direction to take and thus is stuck in a sort of stagnation.

Bugul demonstrates that colonization created this atrocious third dimension by penetrating and destabilizing Africa to the point where Africans are completely alienated from the self-awareness or subjectivity necessary to re-establish an African identity. Bugul gives a good example of the unstable and disorienting situation neocolonial Africans found themselves in even after independence from colonial powers when she describes the 1966 *Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres*:

> Le déchet que le colon avait fait du Noir en l'arrachant à ses rêves trouvait consécration dans cette manifestation mondiale. Le Festival fut le symposium de l'homme noir néocolonial entretenu. La mère Afrique subit l'assaut de la

> coopération qui ne faisait qu'enliser le Noir de plus en plus dans les bouleversements psychiques insondables. (150).

Bugul explains that this event should have manifested the essence of African peoples but instead was more accurately a spectacle of neocolonial compromise serving to relieve western guilt all the while keeping Africans in a state of alienation. By participating in this festival Africans were participating in their own captivity and in what Bugul terms "unfathomable psychic upheavals." Furthermore, it is significant that Bugul uses the word *déchet* to describe the existential violence done to the colonized by the colonizer. The European invaders thus not only progressively separated the Africans from their roots without offering them western subjectivity in exchange, but also brought them into an uneasy existence, this sort of third dimension, as waste. I will argue that this state of waste to which Africans were reduced makes these Africans transformed into the West's image the abjectified constitutive border of the Western subject that I discussed in chapter one.

Thus, for Bugul's young protagonist there was never the possibility of her being a *tête distincte* between the two cultures that there might have been for Samba. In Ken's case the internalized rift between opposed worlds that fueled Samba's ambiguous adventure is no longer a simple dividing line, but a multiply fragmented space of fracture. Bugul, with her clear references to Kane's novel, invites the reader to imagine her protagonist's alienation as a more complex and more extreme version of Samba's (much like what Samba imagined Adèle's alienation to be like):

> "L'aliénation ? Moi qui n'avais jamais connu de milieu, de famille, issue d'une génération condamnée, moi qui n'avais aucun repère, comment pourrais-je

> m'aliéner ? Or l'ambiguité *établie, l'impossibilité* de l'aliénation en était peut-être déjà une" (124).

My study of Ken's "established ambiguity" and her progressive internalization of a space of fracture along the borders between cultures, genders, and races will be divided into two main sections. The first section will explore the elements that coalesced to create the basis for Ken's internalization of such a fracture zone while in Africa, beginning with her original lack of cultural identity-endowing *repères*, then moving on to the early, painful and progressive penetration of a limiting image of Senegalese femininity into her body and mind. Both of these original forms of alienation, I argue, rendered Ken particularly susceptible to the insidious identity-erasing effects of the French school whose neocolonial teachings seeped deep into her psyche leading her to search desperately for her roots, most notably her *ancêtres les Gaulois*. The second section will look at how her self-destructive, neocolonial dream of finding her *ancêtres* in Europe combines with identities imposed on her in Belgium in response to western perceptions of her racialized and sexualized body to facilitate her descent into a state of physical and existential abjection leading to her metaphorical death.

Ken's Internalization of Gendered and Neocolonial Spaces of Fracture

The young Ken did not have the same foundation in the traditions of her community as did Samba. In fact, whereas Samba occupied the position as royal son, favorite student of the community's spiritual leader, and best hope for the future, Ken never felt like part of her community. She was the last child born to aged parents and as such her birth was not celebrated in her community. Ken's ambiguous foundation in her culture is only emphasized by her name, which unlike Samba Diallo's—the family name

Diallo indicates his clear belonging to the Diallobé people—does not signify connection to any particular family or community. Ken Bugul is a name in Wolof meaning "no one wants it" traditionally given to children whose parents feared they would not survive. Not only does her name not reflect a firm connection to her family, Ken is from a family without real structure that can neither serve as an emotional foundation nor to root her in a traditional Senegalese identity. Indeed, Ken did not have the benefit of the most important resources in the formation of a child's identity: her parents. Her mother leaves her father's house when Ken is only five years old, a departure which causes a permanent fissure in their relationship: in the text Ken goes from referring to her mother as *ma mère* to calling her *la mère*. She also does not feel connected to her older siblings because she did not grow up with them. Furthermore, unlike her siblings, Ken never benefited from the cultural instruction traditionally dispensed by grandparents because her grandmother did not like the fact that Ken, a girl, was enrolled in the French school—a topic I will return to later. Her basically non-existent relationship with her grandmother thus very effectively marks a rupture in cultural transmission so deep that it places her outside the traditional life cycle of her community:"Le petit-fils était l'époux de la grand-mère, la petite fille était l'épouse du grand-père. En créant ce rapport, moins l'infini et plus l'infini représentés par la vie et la mort se confondaient" (153).

Ken's father, with whom she stayed for a while after her mother's departure, also failed to provide her with a traditional frame of reference. He, in many ways, brings to mind a combination of two of Kane's characters, each of whom is firmly rooted in his culture: *le maître* (aged religious leader of the Diallobé) and *le Chevalier* (Samba's

deeply spiritual father). However, he is no father to Ken: "Lors du départ de la mère, pourquoi le père ne m'avait-il pas serrée dans ses bras? Ce père entièrement consacré à la prière et à Dieu" (143). In fact, she never calls him *mon père* (my father) but always *le père* (the father). Ken also refers to him as *l'ancêtre* (the ancestor) which emphasizes the distance that separates her from the man who in other circumstances would have helped shape her understanding of the world, as *le Chevalier* and *le maître* did for Samba before the school created a rift between them. Furthermore, like a deceased ancestor, Ken's father does not seem to have any interest in being connected to the changing world around him. He lost his vision when Ken was five years old and refused to go to the Western doctors who might have been able to restore it. When Ken asks him why he refuses this opportunity, he responds that he has already seen everything. But, Ken tells him, he has not seen her since she was five, he has not seen how she has grown. Her father, the ancestor, has turned away from the physical world and thus does not feel a need for vision:

> Il prenait prétexte de son âge avancé pour dire qu'il n'avait pas besoin, du moins plus besoin, de voir ce qui l'entourait et qu'il découvrait sans regard des choses extraordinaires dans les ténèbres (36).

Ken was very young at the time and did not press him for more information about the extraordinary things he discovers in the shadows. However, she came to regret this after his death recognizing belatedly that *le père* was a "puits de savoir et experience" which was now lost to her. The father's insistence on the extraordinary things that he discovered in the shadows harks back to Samba's father's insistence on the deep spiritual value of the darkness as representative of the mysteries of the Muslim god vis-à-vis the brilliant yet

reductive Western sun which limits itself to the knowable world. This early rupture between Ken and her father, who has turned his back on the visible world and Western science, and the wisdom he could have offered her suggests that the depth that Samba failed to bring to the global city was already completely inaccessible to Ken in neocolonial Senegal. Thus, like Adèle, Ken did not have anything akin to "Diallobé" teachings to alert her to the dangers of the West.

Gender: a Foreign Object Penetrates Ken's Psyche

Not only was Ken destabilized by an early loss of access to the identity-endowing capacity of her family, she also was violently confronted with the image of Senegalese femininity. Left alone at the age of two to play under the baobab tree, the infant Ken picked up an amber bead. This bead, we learned in the *Pre-histoire de Ken,* had fallen from the broken necklace of a female ancestor, Astou, described as, "[…] l'éternelle mère, source jamais tarie, l'indispensable femme sans qui la vie ne serait pas" (19). Astou dutifully followed her husband to settle in a far-away land. In the scene where she loses the bead she is providing refuge for her youngest son who is clinging to her thighs and climbs into her arms and in doing so pulls on, and breaks, the necklace hanging from her neck. The child "[…] n'avait pas peur. Il voulait se rassurer, s'imprégner de la présence de la mère" (19). Astou fills well the role traditionally demanded of African women as described by Catherine M. Cole, Takyiwaa Manuh, and Stephan F. Miescher in the introduction to their book, *Africa After Gender?.* Women are meant to be "carriers of culture and the procreative link between generations" (Cole et al. 6) and to "serve as signifiers of the past and stabilizing forces in the present" (Cole et al. 9). She is there to

link the male child to the familiar when he is in a new land. As Ayo Coly astutely explains in her analysis of *Le Baobab Fou* in *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures* (2010), "[h]ome and place are mediated through the body of the mother here, and the gendered access to the maternal body informs gendered relations to place and home" (6). Neither the male adventurer who made the decision to install their family in a new place, nor the children who were the first "à adopter une forme de vie intimement liée au soleil,"[60] Astou's role was to reassure her son and nourish her children with "des beignets de mil" upon their arrival (20). In this scene, her beads fall in silence, and in silence she recovers all but one which the sand also welcomes it in silence (20).

The infant Ken, in an attempt to imitate the village women she saw wearing such beads as earrings, pushes this amber bead so steeped in local lore deep into her ear canal and then screams in pain: her scream shatters the silence and reverberates into the second and main section of the novel, *Histoire de Ken*. There are a number of elements that make this scene significant, all the more so as it connects the two parts of the book and marks the beginning of Ken's story told in the first person. Importantly the introduction of this foreign object into her body and the ensuing physical pain marks her first existential shock and her "alienation" from a self she did not have a chance to develop in the first place. It is also significant that young Ken does this in order to be like other women who pierce their ears, literally mutilating their bodies--by penetrating their ears with a foreign object—to conform to an image of feminine beauty. That this bead is the remaining trace

[60] The family came from the North, which is described as the land where the sun never shines, to this village described as the land of the sun.

of Astou, who, as the eternal mother, represents an idealized traditional femininity, reinforces the idea that this femininity is not necessarily natural to women but to some degree imposed from the outside. Finally, Ken's shattering of the silence maintained by Astou and other women is both another indication of her painful alienation from the traditional role of women in her community and that of a possibility of an identity outside of that of the silent and enduring mother and wife.

In Bugul's novel, Ken's experience of the limitations of her gender in Senegal indeed support Irigaray's notion that gender is imposed on women from the outside, silencing what parts of them are not compatible with the notions of the (specular) feminine held by the society. For Ken, the shock of the amber bead in her ear is followed by the progressive realization that being female meant that in order to have an identity, to be legible, she must assume a gendered one narrowly defined by her society. Bugul rather succinctly illustrates this in a scene where Ken reflects on her alarming confrontation with her gender before the age of twelve. Ken had been staying with *le surveillant général* and his family in order to be close to her school. While there she did housework alongside of two other young girls who were given to the wife of *le surveillant général* to go to school and to perfect their education as women. Ken had no trouble with the housework and lived there peacefully for three months, always the first to wake and the last to sleep, when the wife of *le surveillant général* sent her away calling her a whore. Innocent of wrong-doing, Ken did not understand the meaning of this word, only that is was not a kind word and that it was one addressed to women. When she entered the

carriage that was to take her to her aunt's house she expressed her confusion to the driver, describing how she was the most useful person at the house. He responded:

> Ah ça, c'est une chose extraordinaire […] par les temps qui courent, les femmes ne veulent plus apprendre à être des femmes, elles ne servent plus à rien et en avoir une comme toi ; mais ne t'en fais pas, ils te regretteront, on regrette toujours une femme. Continue à faire ton mieux (131-132).

The driver attempts to console her by explaining to her how valuable she is, not because of some intrinsic quality she possesses but because she was able to learn to be a woman so effectively; she therefore should not feel bad because *le surveillant général* and his family are the losing party in this situation. In fact, as Ken later learns, she was indeed sent away precisely because she conformed so well to her assigned gender role that *le surveillant général* wanted to marry her and this angered his wife. Immediately following the driver's remarks Ken reflects that he understood nothing of what she was trying to tell him. He was not listening to what was really causing her distress, which was not whether or not she was a good woman but that she had been called a whore, sent away and had to return to the aunt's house where she was unhappy and could not study.

Furthermore, Ken found the driver's advice to continue to do her best to fill the gender role assigned her troubling on a several levels:

> Pourquoi devrais-je apprendre à être une femme ? J'avais à peine douze ans et je n'avais jamais vu mon corps, ni celui de la mère, ni celui de la sœur. Ce que je savais entre mes jambes ne m'avait jamais inquiétée, ce que j'avais vu entre les jambes de l'autre être qu'on appelait homme ne m'avait pas posé de problème ; j'admettais cela comme des différences esthétiques. Et ce cocher qui me parlait de faire mon mieux. Ce que je représentais pour les autres, et ce que je ressentais en moi, c'était comme le jour et la nuit (132).

This passage written in the voice of a pre-pubescent Ken beautifully illustrates the notion that gender was something imposed upon her from the outside, that there is a disconnection between her experience as a subject and how others imagine her to be. Ken's question of why she must learn to be a woman brings to mind the artificiality of what might otherwise be thought of as biological. Why can't she just *be* a woman? This reading is also suggested by the immediate reference to female and male bodies. Bugul emphasizes the childish Ken's lack of interest in learning to be a woman at the age of twelve by establishing her lack of curiosity about the physical differences between the sexes. This idea of femininity is not natural but learned and thus incompatible with her own hopes and desires and her own ideas of herself. Ken indeed did not learn her gendered identity at the knee of her mother and through the stories of her grandmother, both of whom were absent from her early education. This missing indoctrination at the same time liberated her to consider options for her identity while also becoming the source of her painful alienation. The last sentence of the above citation sums up concisely the alienation that Ken experiences while still in Senegal due to this imposition of a gendered identity. What she represented for others, a girl learning to be a woman, and what she felt inside of herself were in complete opposition, like day and night.

After realizing that as a woman she was assigned a specific and limiting identity, Ken observed other village woman critically. She noticed that they passed their days cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children only to spend their evenings making themselves as appealing as possible to their husband, the head of the household and

center of their world. Ken noticed that their existence was only that of the “other” of man. Rejecting this identity, which was in conflict with how she feels inside, Ken concludes:

> Je me disais que je ne savais pas comment j'arriverais à faire de l'homme un jour cet autre moi-même, celui de qui ma survie dépendrait. Je ne pourrais pas être comme ces femmes, qui le soir, attendaient le mari plus que l'air qu'elles respiraient (133).

At an early age Ken refuses the traditional woman's role as a dependent on the man who is necessary to make her whole. She refuses to be simply the specular surface for masculine subjectivity. This refusal of the only role offered her coupled with her lack of *repères* connecting her to pre-colonial Senegalese identity make her particularly susceptible to another type of infiltration and imposition of an identity from outside: that of the Western school.

French Schooling and Alienation

Ken's second moment of existential shock, after that caused by the insertion of the amber bead in her ear being the first, occurred when, at the age of five, she began her education at the western school near her village. This time the foreign object painfully inserted into her ear was not a bead torn from the necklace of a foremother, but the sharp sound of the French letter "i," which she refers to as the first letter of the French school in the village of Ndoucoumane (115):

> Ce son bref et aussi soudain, quand je le prononçai, je le hurlai presque les joues fendues. Le son du "i" avait effrayé les oiseaux qui chantaient toute la journée dans les feuillages. Les termites choisissent de faire leurs termitières ailleurs (115).

The foreign sound of the French "i" is indeed a violent one. Ken can only pronounce it by screaming it with all her might. That this letter frightens the native fauna near the school only emphasizes the fact that the school represents a disruptive foreign element to the ecosystem surrounding Ken's village. This scene also clearly harks back to Kane's description of the French school as a form of war, which conquers in an insidiously violent manner; by fascination. This fascination is particularly evident in Bugul's description of the location of the school as "derrière les baobabs médusés" (115) as it suggests that the surrounding baobabs, symbols of traditional African society, are dumbfounded or dazed by the French school.

With the lack of *repères* connecting her to traditional Senegalese culture, Ken's inner world is not simply bifurcated by her internalization of the teachings of the French school, but insidiously mutilated and deformed. Samba's alienation, due to his internalization of a western world view in conflict with his own, began with the introduction of binary oppositions into his psyche, causing him distress and inspiring in him a strong desire to try to reconcile these two oppositional realities that created a rift in his inner-world. Ken's internalization of this world view was both subtler yet also more extreme because it seeped deep into her psyche, uninhibited and unexamined. Also adding to the destabilizing effects of the French school and to the powerful fascination it has for her, we note that Ken's journey through the French school system was an even more solitary one than was Samba's. Samba benefited both from his father's familiarity with western philosophy and his community's support of his education. However, not only was Ken the only girl from her family ever to attend French school, and not only did

she find herself there alone, with no siblings to guide her, but she was also: "la seule femme de toute une race, issue du fleuve et jaillie du Ndoucoumane, à être passée par l'école" (158). Alone, without the mooring of a traditionally Senegalese world view and having learned that the only identity offered her in her community was one that was in conflict with what she felt inside, Ken even takes a sort of comfort in identity imposed on her through French school: "Je croyais avoir trouvé un moyen de me rassurer en me faisant 'toubab'"[61] (137). Unlike Samba who was fascinated by the French school yet at the same time pained by the division it caused in his once-whole identity, Ken had no such identity to lose. She reflects, "J'aimais de l'Occident l'identification qu'elle m'imposait et la justification que je devrais en donner allait jusqu'au renoncement total à mes réalités les plus profondes" (142). However, as this citation suggests, in order to identify with the West, Ken must also renounce a part of her inner world, because this identification, like that of traditional notions of femininity, does not correspond with how she feels inside.

Reflecting on the distorting foreign element the western school insidiously introduced into her psyche, that impossible desire to *se faire toubab*, Ken concludes:

> "Alors le rêve commençait, imbibé d'irréel. Mais aussi, surtout, le colonialisme, qui avait créé la distorsion des esprits pour engendrer la race sans repères. Le colonialisme avait fait la plupart de nous des êtres illogiques" (85).

Establishing an understanding of what "dream" means in this text is vital to understanding this citation and the degree to which contact with the West had a

[61] "Toubab" is a term used in some West/Central African countries to refer to people of European descent. Specifically, it is used to refer to a position of power, a level of sophistication or culture."Toubab" can be used to refer to Africans who have these qualities.

deforming effect on Ken. This word shows up many times in this novel. Situating my reading of this term in the *Préhistoire de Ken*, I understand dream to mean "dreams or hopes and desires for the future." For instance, in the *Préhistoire de Ken*, the father who brings his family to live in the deserted village believes that "Les rêves [promettent] un monde meilleur" (22). Also in line with the notion that dreams are in the realm of desires and wishes, he differentiates life from reality and in doing so indirectly signals that there is an incompatibility between dream and reality: "On pouvait rêver sa vie, mais on ne pouvait pas rêver sa réalité" (22). You can dream your life or your desired future, but not your daily reality because reality, he argues, is composed of a string of isolated events (22). However, it is important to note that in both the first and second parts of *Préhistoire de Ken*, dreams and reality happen to correspond to each other. In the first part, where, as I mentioned earlier, Bugul presents an image of a timeless and even Edenic pre-colonial past, the dream was mixed with the beautiful and daily life (18). Everyone was happy, and everyone shared everything: birth, life, death, pain and joy. Everyone was connected in the life cycle, and every birth was a reincarnation. This connection between dream and reality continues into the beginning of the second part of *Préhistoire de Ken* when the man and his family take inventory of their new village noting "[…] le baobab à l'ombre duquel la réalité se substituait au rêve et devenait rêve"(19). There is a cyclical interconnectedness between the two: reality stands in for dream and in turn becomes dream. However, this harmony is compromised by contact with Europe in the form of the railroad. The village gathers at the train track to watch the train pass :"[…] sa fumée salit l'horizon en laissant une odore qui longtemps hantait les narines et les rêves" (24). The

smoke from the train, symbol of French colonialism, dirties the horizon and seeps into the dreams of the villagers, metaphorically sullying their dreams for the future.

Ken's dream did not correspond to the reality of her Senegalese life; it was, as stated in the above citation, soaked in the unreal or the illusion of a French identity which, as I will discuss more in detail in the second part of this section, is no more available for Ken than it was for Samba, and perhaps even less so. Nonetheless Ken dreamed of her "ancêtres les Gaulois," and of her future house as one that corresponded with the images of French homes in the magazines she bought second-hand at the market (137). However, attempting to assume this neocolonial identity was a painful affair for Ken, and it created yet another fissure in her inner world:

> J'apprenais par cœur les chansons occidentales et voulais les vivre telles, de plus en plus le fossé se creusait, désespérément. L'Afrique me rappelait à elle par ses élans, ses instants de poésie et ses rites. Mais je tenais bon le lien avec les valeurs apportées par la colonisation. Je ne pouvais plus retourner sur mes pas, ni même jeter un coup d'œil en arrière (143).

In this short passage Bugul poignantly expresses the complexity of Ken's situation. While Ken's connection with Senegal is a troubled by her lack of cultural mooring, her native land still has a hold on her, it remains an integral part of her, calling her to it in the form of urges, poetic moments and meaningful rituals. However, deeply penetrated by *le rêve irréel*, Ken is a willing and active participant in her own indoctrination and actively fights the pull of her native land. The young Ken dreamed of living the stories told in western songs she memorized, holding tight to the values introduced with colonialism in spite of the fact that Africa kept trying in vain to call her back. However, at the same time, Bugul makes clear that this induction into French thought was both painful and not

fully in her control. The void inside her deepened hopelessly with her education and she realized that she had passed the point of no return.

The *rêve irreél* that distorted Ken's inner world permeates her entire being, deforming her body in the same manner that it deformed her dreams:

> Déchirée ! Les talons aiguilles dans le sable chaud qui m'enveloppait jusqu'aux chevilles, le gras qui dégoulinait de mes cheveux décrêpés jusqu'au brûleur, marcher en serrant les fesses. (143).

Torn between two worlds, Ken forces her body into the western costume which is not a natural fit and causes her pain and subjects her scalp to burning chemicals to make her hair straight *à l'européenne*. Espousing this European image of feminine beauty also threatens to physically immobilize her as she tries to walk, *fesses serrées,* her feet clad in high heels better suited to pavement than sinking into the sand of the village street. Indeed, that she is so debilitated by this European image of *feminine* beauty is significant. After all, if she wore a European man's costume she *may* have experienced some discomfort but would not have had such a hard time walking. This is an early indication in Bugul's text of gender discrimination that awaits Ken in Europe.

Race, Gender and Abjectification in Europe

As with Samba, Ken's experiences of alienation become more acute when she travels to Europe. However, unlike Samba, Ken goes there fragmented, already othered and alienated as a woman in patriarchal Senegalese society and deeply penetrated by European thought yet without the necessary reference points connecting her to Africa to put this thought into context. Ken enters Europe in search of an identity that she imagines is waiting for her; she goes there in search of her fabled *ancêtres les Gaulois*. However,

instead of gaining the identity she was seeking, Ken finds herself progressively more captive to an image forced upon her by a European notion of who she is based on its interpretation of her gendered, racialized body. In the following paragraphs I will argue that Ken, reduced to an essentially voiceless object, a body to be classified and possessed, slips increasingly into a state of psychic fracture, eventually giving up her pursuit of the identities she desired (intellectual, wife and mother) and taking on instead the only identity freely offered to her, as we shall see, the abjectified one of a prostitute.

Her trip to Belgium also began with a shock, a physical and existential tearing. Ken is uneasy upon entering the airplane that will take her from Senegal to Europe but it is the moment the machine is airborne that causes her the most distress, the significance of this unease is only emphasized by the fact that she was unaware that what she was feeling was the plane departing from the ground: "Après avoir roulé pendant quelques minutes sur la piste, l'avion s'était immobilisé. Je ne comprenais pas pourquoi et c'est ce moment que mes tympans furent crevés par le vrai départ" (35). The next line, which stands alone as a paragraph, is the short phrase "S'arracher" which translates "to tear itself away." This statement alludes to the existential violence Ken is subject to by being torn away from Africa, a violence she experiences in spite of her pre-existing feelings of disconnection and alienation from her Senegalese roots.

As is the case with the amber bead and the letter "I" this violent shock is also expressed in the form of pain in her ear. Her eardrums are pierced by the airplane's departure. Ken suffers this departure as a type of fragmentation of her self:"j'étais dispersée. Découpée en mille moi-même" (38). Yet, at the same time, Ken comforts

herself with the promises of her all-encompassing dream of Eldorado, her neocolonial dream: "tout ceci allait s'arranger dans le nord sans problèmes. La Terre Promise. Le martyre ne serait plus longue" (38).

Once in Europe, like her male predecessors, *le Fou* and to a lesser degree Samba, Ken also experiences the existential shock of arriving in the West through physical sensations: her body at times shivered with cold and trembled with the shock of being in a new and strange land. However, unlike Samba and *le Fou*, Ken is subject to other limitations due to others' perceptions of her female body. Moreover, as the following paragraphs will illustrate, Ken internalizes these perceptions, progressively becoming the racialized and gendered object as seen through Belgian eyes.

Before leaving Senegal, Ken did not seem to see any contradiction in making herself into a *toubab;* to become *toubab* it sufficed for her to adopt French culture, language and fashion. However, in Belgium, Ken comes face to face with racial difference when she enters a wig shop only to find that the wigs accentuate her difference because they are made for White women. After having her try on a wig and discovering that it does not suit her, the shopkeeper apologizes saying she can do nothing for Ken because she needs an "*afro*" wig. This experience deeply distressed Ken who had previously felt empowered by that fact that as she shopped in the Belgian city she was treated like a consumer, just like everyone else there.[62] Ken left the store and reflected: "Dehors tout prit un rythme nerveux. C'était intérieur en moi. On dirait le grondement du tonnerre qui approche par les grandes soirées pluvieuses de l'hivernage. J'étais

[62] "En achetant, j'étais assez à l''aise. Je ne me sentais ni étrangère ni nouvelle venue, j'étais une consommatrice comme une autre. Je payais, on me rendait ma monnaie indifféremment" (49).

bouleversée" (50). This ominous, approaching storm, which she at first took as outside of herself, she soon learns is also coming from inside. This indeterminate rumbling beautifully foreshadows Ken's internalization of the outside, of others' perceptions of her body. The storm metaphorically hits when she sees her reflection in another store window:

> La façade en miroir d'une vitrine me renvoya le reflet de mon visage. Je n'en crus pas mes yeux. Je me dis rapidement que ce visage ne m'appartient pas : j'avais des yeux hors de moi, la peau brillante et noire, le visage terrifiant. J'étouffais à nouveau parce que ce regard-là, c'était mon regard (50).

Ken does not see herself in this image. She sees a foreign face, more precisely one made foreign by the gaze of others. What should have been a familiar image was made terrifying. This quotation illustrates well her process of recognition of her alterity vis-à-vis the white subject and the internalization of the other's gaze. It begins by shock, disbelief and fear. Ken feels a sensation of suffocation when she recognizes that the image in the mirror is indeed her own. This disturbing internalization of the significance of her color in Europe immobilized her: "J'étais plantée comme un clou au milieu du trottoir. Les gens autour avaient la peau blanche jusque derrière les oreilles […]" (50). Perhaps even more noteworthy is that Ken had to separate her body from her internal sensations of it, by having it reflected back to her through a foreign object—a shop window in the Belgian city—in order to perceive it as those around her did. She concludes:

> Oui, j'étais une Noire, une étrangère. Je me touchais le menton, la joue pour mieux me rendre compte que cette couleur était à moi. Oui, j'étais une étrangère et c'était la première fois que je m'en rendais compte (50).

Ken relied on another sense connecting her to the outside world to bring this foreign idea into her psyche, that of touch. After touching her face, she confirmed her conclusion that she was indeed Black and foreign, an idea that had not previously crossed her mind. This initial shock set in motion the process of internalization of an identity created for her through European eyes.

During her time in Belgium Ken interacted with many people, made friends, had lovers and held jobs. However, these interactions only lead her further down the path of internalizing an identity created for her, the identity she first saw when faced with her almost monstrous image in the store window. None of her relationships brought her closer to finding the identity she was looking for, an identity in which she could express her deepest aspirations and desires, an identity which would fill the void inside of her. Conversely, on the whole, these interactions only served to confirm that in Europe her identity had nothing to do with who she was inside but everything to do with phenotype and the racialized and sexualized identity Europeans assigned her. In the following paragraphs I will illustrate how through her interactions with those around her, Ken's inner world was increasingly destabilized. Time and time again Ken found herself essentially muted, only able to speak and be heard in terms provided her:

> Je n'avais jamais pu parler de moi. En face de Laure et François, je ne me basais que sur des références. J'écoutais, je suivais, je participais, mais ce n'était pas moi. Ils me dépouillaient, me vidaient, m'étalaient (102).

Although in this citation Ken is speaking specifically about her interactions with Laure and François, two of her artist friends, her sense of being outside her body—a body "stripped, emptied, and laid out"—reoccurs in all of her interactions with Belgians. Ken

is essentially silenced; she can speak about foreign and exotic Africa and Africans, but she cannot speak about herself, her inner reality and the emptiness she feels. Ken is only understood if she bases herself on references they understand, which, as I will illustrate, are limited to exoticized notions of Africa and Africans. Ken is able to take on the role of Western interpreter; she is able to listen, follow and participate, but not express her (African) self. By limiting her communication to playing the role they assigned her, Ken's Belgian friends, even if unintentionally, objectified her, trapping her at the intersections of her race and gender. Furthermore, as I will illustrate, in the process of objectifying her, they consumed her, stripping her (*dépouiller*), emptying her, and displaying her.

It seemed that if race proved to be an insurmountable barrier, Ken's gender appeared, at least superficially, to be a way to help her form bonds with other women. Ken and Léonora, her first close friend in Belgium, connected through the shared experience of being women in a patriarchal society, "Nous étions des femmes et nous avions certainement les mêmes cauchemars que ne connaissaient que les femmes" (55). It was Léonora who helped Ken recover from her abortion at the hands of a misogynistic and racist doctor whom Ken described as a hyena and executioner. Léonora opened her eyes to the idea of feminine solidarity, "Ma conscience feminist était née […]: Pourquoi toujours était-ce l'homme qui mettait la femme dans certaines situations et pourquoi était-ce toujours l'homme que la femme allait trouver pour régler ses problèmes" (63-4)? Léonora and Ken spent many hours talking about the plight of women in the second half of the twentieth century, yet Ken explains that there remains a schism separating the experiences of the women: "Je ne lui parlais pas beaucoup de mes soucis, je crois même

ne lui en parlais pas du tout" (67). It is important to note the Bugul published her book at a time before Western feminism even began to recognize that race, culture and geography intervene to make one women's understanding of the feminine different from another's. It is significant that Ken and Leonora's friendship begins with biological functions of women's bodies (Ken's pregnancy and abortion), functions that have historically been used to define women and their social roles and to justify the Western feminists' universalization of women's condition. However, the fact that Ken could not share her personal worries and concerns with Léonora undermined the validity of Léonora's universal interpretation of feminism. As Ken will increasingly recognize, in the West her gender cannot be separated from her race and that the combination of these two elements make her doubly othered and even doubly objectified in the eyes of the Westerners who surround her. Ken concludes: "Ainsi je savais que Léonora n'avait pas saisi mon mal et je m'enfermais là-dedans de plus en plus. Quand j'étais avec elle, je me défoulais mais je ne me découvrais pas" (67).

Indeed, Ken would find, as she made friends in a number of other milieus, that none of the people she met were truly interested in discovering who she was on the inside, in sharing her deepest aspirations and desires. In fact most of Ken's other interactions with Belgians seemed to revolve around their need to consume her for what she represented to them. In this process, perhaps unintentionally, they reduced her to an object, the incomprehensible other.

In order to communicate on any level with her Belgian friends, Ken increasingly offers them the image the they seek in her. The Belgians are satisfied consumers while

Ken withers away inside unable to find milieu in which she could express subjectivity. It so happens that Ken's stay in Belgium coincided with a time when "[l]'Occident s'intéressait à l'Afrique" (75) and when "[c]'était à la mode de connaître un Tutsi, un Peul, authentique" (76). She met Laure, an artist who seemed to share some of her interests:

> Nous semblions tenir le même langage, écouter la même musique. C'était l'époque où l'Occident s'exotisait. Ce qui nous différenciait, c'était qu'elle était une Blanche, mariée, riche et que j'étais une Noire 'déséquilibrée', une aventurière (73-4).

The essential here is that they only seemed to share the same language and interests. This citation reinforces that Ken is a Black, deterritorialized woman and thus different from Laure. Furthermore, if Ken shares interests with her rich, White, stably married friend, it is because Laure has appropriated aspects she believed to be Ken's reality because she found it exotic and stylish. In this way their relationship was that of buyer with resources to that of a seller existing on the margins of European society. At this time the West turned toward the East in order to, essentially, consume or absorb it for the novelty it represented to them: Ces gens riches étaient libres de faire ce qu'ils voulaient, ils absorbaient la diaspora pour l'originalité. 'Nous avons une amie noire, une Africaine', était la phrase la plus 'in' dans ces milieux. La Négresse après les lionceaux et les singes […] (101-2). It was "in" to have an African friend. Thus Ken, for the artists, was akin to a prop. Furthermore, as this citation suggests, by filling this role she was essentially objectified and dehumanized. She was the Black woman classified alongside of other exotic animals such as lion cubs and monkeys. Ken, cognizant of her position in their eyes as this exotic creature, reflects, "J'étais cette négresse, cette 'chez vous autres', cette

‘toi, en tant que noire, il faudrait que……’. Cet être supplémentaire, inutile, déplacé, incohérent" (102). It is particularly evident from this reflection that her artist friends, as culturally savvy as they imagine themselves to be, still see and classify the world in a dichotomous manner: one is either a western subject or one is not. "Vous autres" stands in for all others, just as Ken's reality and perceptions of the world *must be* ("il faudrait que") that of all African women. Instead of finding the identity she is searching for and instead of finding subjectivity in her *ancêtres les Gaulois*, Ken found that with these western friends she was essentially an incoherent composite of their imaginings of what she should be as an African woman.

Ken did not fare better in a less avant-garde bourgeois milieu. Paul and Hélène Denoël, whom Ken referred to as belonging to the peaceful class of *bourgeois sans analyses*, did not use her as an exotic prop, nor did they consume her for the novelty of her African heritage (106). Hélène and Paul lived in a more traditional family setting with their children and were not particularly interested in what was "in." However, Ken was once again faced with an inability to express herself fully with them, and she was again relegated to the role of "ambassadrice du peuple noir" (101). Ken notes that during their long conversations, "Paul ne cherchait qu'un exécutoire pour déculpabiliser de la colonisation" (104). He frequently expressed regret that her people had been subjected to the colonial regime. Paul, she writes, was there to listen to her problems, her tears. Yet she qualifies this willingness to listen by noting that even this apparent sympathy is

linked to how she, as an African, is seen and classified by Westerners: "Au fond, les Occidentaux envient cette 'richesse émotionnelle' de l'homme noir" (104).[63]

However, perhaps more noxious to her was Hélène's reaction to Paul and Ken's long tête-à-têtes. Hélène did not understand that her husband was only interested in Ken as a medium through which he could relieve his colonial guilt:

> […] le mythe de la femme noire et de l'homme blanc et le fantasme inassouvi de ce dernier régnait très fort. Hélène voyait en moi une femme dont les canons de beauté étaient à l'affiche de la mode. La femme noire couvrait les pages des magazines de mode et de pornographie" (104).

Ken could not escape the identity Europe assigned her race and gender. She had no romantic interest in Paul, but her gender made her a rival in Hélène's eyes and her race, along with the myths of African sexuality and white male fantasy only amplified Hélène's fears of sexual rivalry (105).

In fact, throughout her time in Belgium, Ken is continuously assigned the identity of the exotic African woman and is constantly reduced to a body, the sexualized object of white male desire. This is particularly evident in her attempts to earn a living after she, more interested in finding an identity than in continuing her studies, dropped out of school and lost her scholarship. Ken was first hired to work in a sauna in the basement of the apartment building where she was living at the time. Ken did not understand why when she had been hired to clean the sauna, she was then asked to perform massages,

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[63] This is a stereotype that Senghor supported in the 1960's in a move to valorize the African contribution to universal humanity. Europeans contributed reason, philosophy and technology etc. (the strong masculine side), but Africans offered the world emotion, art, music etc. (the soft, feminine side). While supporting this stereotype advanced the agenda of the Negritude movement which aimed to illustrate that Africans were different but equal to Europeans, it cannot be denied that it also served to reify European classification of Africans as occupying the lesser element of an organizing binary opposition.

something she had no experience doing. Her lack of training was irrelevant, however: "Le gros monsieur n'avait pas pris de sauna; il voulait me toucher les fesses, les seins, dans le désordre. Je refusais. […] La nausée me montait des entrailles" (87). This reduction to an object of desire was deeply distressing to Ken who, disgusted, refused his advances. Yet at the same time she took the money he forced on her hoping that it would provide her some sort of relief, some sort of comfort: "Il m'avait remis des billets craquants que je serrais très fort comme cela pouvait me soulager" (87).

Later in the novel Ken again found herself in the situation of being hired for a job for a reason she did not immediately understand. Ken was to dance at a restaurant, an offer she accepted gladly because dancing was something she enjoyed and which calmed and centered her. However, Ken was again hired not for any skill she possessed but because, "like all Africans, she must have rhythm in her blood" (119). That she was an African woman had further appeal for customers: "Mais ce qui amenait les hommes à me côtoyer, c'était la femme" (119). Nevertheless, Ken continued to try to interact with the customers, to communicate with them on an intellectual level, and most of all make the human connections she so desperately sought. She spoke with the patrons about anything and everything-- the moon, art, the wind, architecture; she even asked the men whether or not they had children. Ken had hoped to earn a living without having to offer herself up for consumption; without having to sell "the woman" but once again found that she could not escape the confines of the western male gaze. One of the owners of the restaurant confronts her for attempting to break out of her assigned identity. He explains to her that

she is “très gentille, très bien, très sympathique, mais cela ne suffit pas" (119). He gives her this advice:

> Oh Ken, ne va pas chercher des considérations là où il n'y en a pas, là où il n'en faut pas. Une femme ne peut être rien d'autre que de la consommation. Les gens n'arrêtent pas de nous demander où nous t'avons dénichée; tu allies la féminité à l'intelligence et *tu es noire*. Alors, si tu veux gagner de l'argent, cesse de discuter avec les clients de métaphysique, de Sumer et de poésie (120).

The Belgian restaurant owner's advice harks back to an earlier experience in Ken's life, when, after being expelled from the *surveillant général*'s house, the Senegalese driver gave her advice that similarly denied her subjectivity other than the one they constructed for her. Where the driver praised her for fulfilling exceptionally well the role of woman in Senegalese society, ignoring that she had other desires and goals, the restaurant owner places her in the doubly othered role of the Black-woman- object-of-white male consumption requesting that she repress her desire to communicate with the clients on any other level than that of male desire. The restaurant owner's advice sums up well the futility of Ken's search for an identity in Belgium. Whoever she is on the inside is silenced by the forced adoption of the role of the sexualized, exotic African. He advises her to give up looking for considerations where there are none, or where she should not look. In other words, he advises her to stop trying to be anything other than an African woman defined uniquely in terms of an object of white male consumption.

Throughout her stay in Belgium, Ken is continually subject to an identity imposed on her from the outside, in order for her to be intelligible to Westerners. Like the femininity projected on her body while still in Africa, Ken exists in Beligum as a specular surface reflecting the sexualized and exoticized images projected onto her, images which

leave no room for any expression of her most profound realities. Furthermore, having come from an already shattered base in neocolonial Africa, Ken does not have a solidly grounded pre-existing subjectivity to that could help her resist objectification in the West. Perhaps the most destructive aspect of her situation is that Ken is unable to turn away from the West as she has become prisoner to *le rêve irréel*—the impossible dream of a toubab identity first introduced to her as a child in French school. Ken, this time comparing *herself* to a wild animal, reflects: "Comme une bête traquée qui se jetait dans le piège tendu par des chasseurs, je cherchais une issue en étouffant des élans naturels" (85). The *rêve irréel* seeped into her psyche precisely because she did not have a rooted base, an identity with clear points of reference connecting her to her family and traditional identity from which she could recognize this distorted dream as such.

Furthermore, through her experiences in Belgium of being repeatedly othered and objectified, Ken also realized that her ancesters *les Gaulois* are a myth. Yet she could not rid herself of *le rêve irréel* which has completely consumed her from the inside: "Je m'enfonçais dans une sorte de gouffre dont je ne pouvais émerger. La turbulence de l'histoire, le tumulte de la vie m'avaient ingurgitée, apparemment pour une issue fatale" (106). Captive to the dream of a Western subjectivity that she increasingly knows to be a myth, Ken finds herself deeply, internally fractured. She refers to herself as trapped in a state of madness (98). Not unlike *le Fou* in Kane's text, Ken is desperately clinging to an identity that does not exist for her. However, while *Le Fou* is bifurcated, mentally divided between two identities one of which (the western one) he seeks in vain to purge, Ken is fractured to the point of being caught in a state of nonidentity, desperately trying to

assume one that would allow her a recognized subjectivity. She reflects, "L'être qui devait naître dans le subconscient comme les termites font les termitières, se dissimulait dans une tierce dimension" (114).

This desperate need to be recognized led Ken to complete psychic alienation in which she embraces an identity defined strictly by her gendered and racialized body, one that represents the complete erasure of personal identity and a state of abjectification:[64] that of the prostitute in western society. As Elina Pettinen writes in her book *Globalization, Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking: Corporeal Politics* (2007), the prostitute exists on the periphery of society and lives outside of the formal economy, as a woman selling sex, something that cannot honorably be sold (56). The prostitute as one who cannot have subjectivity without calling in to question the definition of what constitutes a subject yet is called into being by the subjects that use her, existing instead anonymously in the abjection that borders the subject. Ken notes this anonymity when she describes *la Suissesse*, a prostitute who encourages Ken to do the same (again because Ken is African and female therefore can make a fortune selling her body to white men) "[…] elle n'avait pas d'âge, pas de forme, pas de visage. Drapée dans une robe de la même couleur que ce qu'on pouvait appeler sa peau, elle paraissait encore plus anonyme" (123). *La Suissesse*'s lack of subjectivity is brought out in this description by her lack of distinguishing characteristics, from her formless body to her features so unremarkable that she said not to have any face at all. Interestingly the only color Ken notices on the prostitute's body is

[64] Abjection, as I argued in the introduction and in chapter one, involves defining a person in terms of the monstrous, diseased, and unlivable space that forms the constitutive border of the livable, that is, the human. In other words, the abject makes up an uninhabitable zone that surrounds the subject, it is neither fully outside of the subject nor fully included in it. It is precisely that which the subject purges in order to define him/herself as a subject.

that of her skin which covers and defines the body she sells. It is precisely Ken's skin that makes her stand out as an excellent candidate to sell her body and join the ranks of the anonymous class of prostitutes.

For Ken, prostitution represents the complete dissolution in the *le rêve irréel*, an existence entirely in *la tierce dimension atroce*. It is the negation of all reality. However, prostitution also offers a sort of recognition. As a prostitute Ken is desired and she pleases. Her prostitution to European men, which offers no room for thought or subjectivity, allows her a moment of attention, and of identification—albeit as an abjectified being on the borders of humanity—and in doing so provides her a sort of bittersweet relief from the multifaceted ambiguity that defined her existence. In the role of the exotic prostitute in Europe, the *le rêve irréel* and reality finally seem to line up. Describing her encounter with a john, Ken believes she is truly living in reality:

> Il déposa un baiser sur mes lèvres et je crus un instant que je vivais vraiment la réalité, que tout ceci durerait pour la vie, car la conscience de ce moment-là était le rejet total de toute équation de la raison, du réel. Je me sentais comme sortie d'un gouffre qui n'était autre que mes réalités et celle de la vie" (127).

She believes herself to fully inhabit reality the instant the john kisses her because in order to experience this moment Ken must allow herself to completely dissolve in the illusion, in the unreality of the dream. In doing so, she felt, for a moment, freed from the abyss that was the fragmented reality of her life up until that point.

As a prostitute Ken is indeed reduced to a body and nothing more; however, it is not a body as perceived from the inside through the senses that connect her to the world; it is not *her* body. It is instead defined completely from the outside to the point that Ken

herself, completely alienated, has ceased to feel any real connection to it. This reduction of her body to a mere specimen, an object belonging more to others than to herself, is evident in her description of her final act of prostitution:

> […] j'étais désintégrée et détachée de ce conscient qui faisait de mon existence un enchaînement de rêves irréels. Je me déshabillai dans le même coin, afin d'offrir seul ce corps dont je n'avais plus aucune idée et qui émouvait tant ces Blancs qui ne m'acceptaient qu'à ces moments-là (175).

The process of estrangement from her body that began with the moment of (mis)recognition in the store window was now complete. Ken, disintegrated and detached, no longer had any sense of her body as such and in this moment experienced it only as the thing that so stimulated the desire of white men. This exotic, erotic body is simply that which situated her in the space of the abject and in the role of the prostitute.

Escape or Hopeless Death?

While Samba's death at the hands of his mad alter-ego results in leaving his earthly problems to exist eternally in a moment of peace, Ken's metaphorical death is arguably her way of purging herself of insanity, of *le rêve irréel.* It represents albeit an ambiguous move towards rebirth in an identity that is not fractured, a consciousness that is not buried in a *tierce dimension atroce.* Ken's "death" occurs, and perhaps only can occur, at the same time as the symbolic death of the western subject who forced her into the role of the abject, of its constitutive border. Her last john, "l'ami," passes out "ivre mort" before he can possess her. Ken is unable to rouse him. In an effort to get rid of the sleeping man and his small barking dog that threatens to call attention to what she was doing in her apartment, Ken drags "l'ami" out of her door. In the description of the

hallway and the elevator Bugul employs many words that allude both to Ken's death and the death of the john. Together they are in the hallway she describes as "sombre comme un tombeau" (177). When she gets him to the stairs he rolled "comme un cadavre" (177). Once in the elevator with the john, now reduced to an impotent cadaver-like body, Ken feels as if, finally, all of the pieces of her ambiguous adventure have come together in a way that forces her to come face-to-face with her once dissimulated alienation: "j'avais l'impression que tous les éléments de l'indéfinissable s'étaient rassemblés" (178). Ken passes through a symbolic purgatory, imagining all her neighbors judging her and feeling vanquished. Finally, unable to care and ready for death which she sees as her only option, Ken prepares to finish her adventure: "[…] plus rien n'avait d'importance. J'étais à l'ultime étape où il n'y avait plus que le suicide pur et simple" (178). After disposing of the john Ken locks herself in her empty apartment, like a tomb : "Je me croyais morte depuis longtemps, depuis un temps inconnu. L'homme aussi, je croyais qu'il était mort. Je suis restée enfermée pendant deux jours et deux nuits. Je n'avais plus ni faim, ni soif" (180).

Ken emerges from her "tomb," bathed in her own tears at the realization that she was not dead, and that she must continue on, now aware of the depths of her alienation that were, once, hidden by her enthrallment with *le rêve irréel*. She takes the airplane home knowing that return is impossible; the roots, the *repères* and the family she was searching for to help her establish an identity would not be there waiting for because "[l]e non-retour des choses avait amputé la conscience. Le rétablissement était devenu impossible. Rétablissement de l'enfance perdue, envolée un après-midi, la première fois

que j'ai vu un Blanc" (181). There is a clear parallel in this citation, which describes the circumstances of Ken's life, to the neocolonial Africa to which she is returning. Bugul suggests that Africa, having suffered French colonization and the identity-erasing violence of these powerful invaders who, as Kane notes, conquered the continent with cannons and subdued and fascinated its inhabitants through its schools, cannot necessarily return to a pre-colonial state: it has been cut off from its roots, alienated from its subjectivity. However, at the same time, Bugul finishes her ambiguous adventure in a hopeful fashion. In realizing the reality of the "non-retour des choses," Ken is freed from *le rêve irréel* that had confined her and Africa in an atrocious third dimension: "Le rêve m'était interdit comme par la suite tout ce qui consistait en la survie de l'irréel, cette illusion qui donnait envie de poursuivre" (181).

Bugul does not tie up all of the loose ends in her novel, but she concludes with a scene that is both ambiguous yet not completely without hope for the future. The baobab, witness to everything, most notably to the arrival of Europe in Africa, and Ken's abandonment, has, not unlike Ken, gone crazy and died. Like Ken, the baobab remains upright, but dead; it has neither returned to its pre-colonial state where it grew and produced the solutions to all the village's problems, nor does it continue to suffer from madness. Ken returns to the dead tree to silently recite its obituary. The novel concludes thus: "Longtemps, je restai là devant ce tronc mort, sans pensée" (182). No longer imprisoned by the neocolonial dreams that distorted her perception of reality and her hopes for an identity, Ken stands in front of the baobab without a thought, not (yet?) able to imagine a viable identity.

Conclusion

This chapter moved my theorization of fracture zones as something that manifests primarily in physical spaces at the interstices of France and its former African colonies to examine how these powerful divisions have created psychic schisms, deeply destabilizing African identities. Kane's novel highlights the binary oppositions formed between Europe and Africa at the time of Europe's invasion and colonization of African lands and societies. None of the characters is really able to see beyond the Europe/Africa, day/night, secular/spiritual oppositions including the protagonist, Samba, whose contact with (neo)imperial France caused psychic bifurcations. Samba did come the realization that he could never assume a European identity but would always occupy a sort of median category (he would not be able to conquer the world of objecst as the Europeans did because, in the Subject's mind, he would never not be part of that conquered world). In this way, he was aware of his alienation, but, as evidenced by his death at the hands of the *fou*, Samba was unable to reconnect with his Senegalese identity, or to unable to undo the damage done by his internalization of Western thought.

My analysis of Bugul's novel illustrated that the progressive alienation that Samba and his community suffered only grow stronger as time passed and traditional world views were written over by the West's hegemonic Manicheism, first through colonialism and then through neo-colonial influences. The Senegal that Ken lived in no longer had more than fragmentary access to traditional life-styles and world views. Ken, born in an alienated Senegal—symbolized in the novel by the baobab tree gone crazy—was herself always-already alienated. Moreover, any potential connection she might have

to the fragmentary remnants of unalienated Senegalese identity was rendered null by her rejection of a disfiguring image of Senegalese femininity that demanded she become an empty shell, the other of Senegalese men. The illusion of a western identity—which Samba eventually came to recognize as such—was, for Ken, the only image of a live-able identity to which she had access. This illusion seeped, almost completely uninhibited, into her psyche taking the form of what she refers to as *le rêve irréel*, the impossible dream of western subjectivity. This dream, arguably rendered her crazy, like the baobab, and consumed Ken from the inside. Unlike the bifurcated Samba who returns to Senegal, Ken finds herself in a state of multifaceted fragmentation, desperately trying to assume a livable identity in Europe. Progressively forced to accept the only identity offered her in Europe—a dehumanized, exotic object of consummation—Ken ultimately dissolves, giving up any notion of inner-reality to become an empty shell much like the dead baobab that she returns to contemplate.

Both Kane and Bugul depict an Africa that has been deeply disfigured by its contact with Europe—it has been fractured. In chapter three I will continue my exploration of the depth of Africa's internalized fracture. By taking the immediate presence of Europe out of the picture, I will delve deeper into my investigation of the effects in Africa of the sort of abject space it has been made to occupy. I will examine what happens when the wound caused by fracturing is left untended and allowed to fester under a shroud of silence.

Chapter 3
Infection, Gendered Fracture and Afropessimism in Léonora Miano's *L'Interieur de la nuit*

Cette nuit à Eku, c'était l'Afrique perdue, hébétée par le choc de sa rencontre avec l'ailleurs, qui tentait de se relever. Mais l'uppercut culturel qu'elle avait reçu lui avait brouillé l'entendement. Ne se souvenant que très obscurément de ce qu'elle était en réalité, elle se réinventait d'une manière macabre devant les villageois rassemblés. Elle faisait de même pas loin de là, dans des pays dont ils ignoraient le nom. Elle s'auto-mutilait en génocides ou en guerres civiles, comme pour s'enfoncer un peu plus profond dans ses blessures. Parce qu'elle ne pouvait se résoudre à devoir s'absoudre elle-même pour s'être laissé soumettre, piétiner, effacer de sa propre mémoire. Les fils d'Eku se laissaient entraîner. Dans deux ou trois générations, le traumatisme serait encore là. Il serait vivace dans le cœur d'une descendance à laquelle la douleur aurait été transmise, muette et irrépressible. Ce serait une névrose de plus, et on ne saurait jamais quel nom lui donner
--Léonora Miano, *L'Intérieur de la nuit*, 122

Lorsque Nyambey, le créateur du ciel, de la terre et des abîmes façonna l'Homme, ce n'est pas homme et femme qu'il les créa. Il fit seulement l'humain, et l'investit des principes masculin et féminin. […] Chacun avait ainsi son espace où régner. […] Et puis, l'Homme s'enivra. Le pouvoir qui lui avait été donné sur les choses du monde lui monta à la tête. Il lui prit le désir de dominer, de violenter et d'asservir ce avec quoi il est supposé faire corps. Alors, il se fractura. Il rompit son unité, et c'est ainsi que l'homme et la femme naquirent. […] De cette fracture originelle, surgirent les guerres et les inimitiés entre les peuples.
--Léonora Miano, *Contours de jour qui vient*, 236

This study of Cameroonian author Léonora Miano's *L'Intérieur de la nuit* (2005), the first novel in her trilogy *Suite Africaine*,[65] will investigate the contours of the metaphorical night mentioned both in the title of Miano's novel and in the opening epigraph above. This, as I will elaborate, is the "night" of a fractured Africa following the "dawn" of its invasion by Europe. Before moving on to a more detailed introduction to the nuances of this particular incarnation of a space of fracture, I would like first to explain what I mean by "night" and briefly revisit the basic elements that define Africa's forced entry into the fractured existence presented in chapter two. Reading Kane's

[65] *Contours du jour qui vient* (2006) and *Aubes écarlates* (2009) follow *Interieur de la nuit*.

Aventure ambiguë (1961), I introduced the concept of a metaphorical morning marked by the shock of the sudden invasion of a surprised and unprepared Africa by a significantly more powerful Europe, and the existential bifurcation that followed. After first physically destabilizing and creating chaos of existing orders, Europe moved in and colonized minds during what could be thought of as the "day" of occupation following the bloody dawn of invasion. As I argued in my analysis of Kane's Samba, the European invaders progressively separated the Africans from their roots without offering them access to Western subjectivity in exchange. In the second part of chapter two, focused on Bugul's *Le Baobab fou* (1983), my attention moved on to what can be seen as the "evening" of this European invasion: the period coinciding with Senegal's independence from Europe. Bugul's Senegal is physically free from France but now finds itself in a state of neo-colonization. No longer connected to what it once was, Senegal exists only in what Bugul refers to as an atrocious third dimension,[66] as the abjectified waste of the West.

I will begin by demonstrating that Mboasu, Miano's imaginary Central African country, is also in a similar state of neo-colonization, its history and its collective identity having been contaminated and mostly erased from memory. There is, however, one significant difference between Miano's representation of neo-colonial Africa and Bugul's. In both A*venture ambiguë* and *Le Baobab fou* the presence of France in Senegal is obvious and a main focus of the story. Miano, on the other hand, sets her narrative in

[66] I defined this term in chapter two with regards to the state of post-independence Senegal as described in Bugul's novel: "Disconnected from their past by a present that does not acknowledge the specificity of Africa's history in the world, Senegal is no longer clearly on one side of a fissure between worlds as were the Diallobé. Instead these post-independence Africans find themselves in a state of neo-colonization, deeply alienated from their own traditions and still subject to pernicious western influences. […] In other words, colonization created this atrocious third dimension by penetrating and destabilizing Africa to the point where Africans are completely alienated from the self-awareness or subjectivity necessary to re-establish an African identity".

Eku, a small, isolated village at the far edge of Mboasu with little contact with the outside world:

> Leur petit village clôturait le pays, en quelque sorte, et les plus lettrés parmi les citadins n'auraient pas pu le situer sur la carte, dire quelle langue on y parlait ni quelles en étaient les coutumes. Ceux qui gouvernaient le Mbaosu ignoraient tout de leur existence. Ils n'étaient rien (68).

Just as the rest of Mboasu appeared to ignore their existence, the people of Eku were also essentially unaware of the nation outside of their village. The insular village, Miano writes, was bordered to the north by a place that was only visited by necessity and only by the men who went there to earn a living. The women stayed home and cultivated the land which no longer yielded enough food to provide for their families. Closing off Eku's southern limit was thick vegetation that was no longer penetrated by the villagers who believed it to be inhabited by "des créatures inconnues des humains" (12). With the men away at work, the village was made up mostly of women and children who never ventured far outside of the limits of the clearing, only climbing a nearby hill to gather supplies and water. Miano also makes a point of mentioning that the villagers' knowledge of France and the French invasion and occupation of their country was limited. For them mention of France evoked the missionaries who opened a clinic a few kilometers from where the women fetched water as well as the first schools of the country also directed by missionaries who preached a faith that the African students only pretended to espouse (31). It was France that took possession of the land on the other side of the hills and that planted seeds of change in the minds of the young (31). Beyond these vague notions of what France was, it remained to the villagers a far-away world that had no importance to

their daily survival. However, as I will illustrate in the first section of my chapter, Eku is far from the idyllic pre-colonial village Bugul presented in the beginning of *Le Baobab fou*. Miano's Eku has suffered, and continues to suffer, the often insidious effects of Western invasion of Africa for generations in spite of its isolation. An analysis of Miano's isolated Eku, unaware of its infection by pernicious French interventions, allows for a more pointed exploration of the effects of Africa's internalization of the fracture formed by its contact with imperial Europe.

Returning now to the opening citation and to my metaphor of the night, I posit that the central dramatic event of Miano's novel—which I will describe shortly—symbolizes a mutation of the collective destabilization and fracturing seen in Bugul's novel. The space of fracture, like a wound covered over but not treated, has become infected, and this infection takes the form of social disorder and civil war. Miano illustrates this metaphorical infection with a group of mercenaries, led by the warlord Isilo, which descends upon the isolated Eku and forces the population, which is composed almost entirely of women and children, to gather in the center of the village. Isilo, who I will argue is an opportunistic agent of societal decay, claims to be on mission to restore Africa to its former glory. Unfortunately, Isilo, educated in a neocolonial Mboasu, does not have access to memories of Africa's glorious history and, instead, invents a new mythology from obscure and disjointed fragments of the past. After killing the village elder, Eyoum, who would also have been a repository of oral history that may have competed with Isilo's new mythology, as well as anyone else who uttered a cry of

protest, Isilo forces the villagers to kill and eat Eyia, one of their young boys,[67] in a symbolic rite intended to bind them to Isilo's cause. The rebels leave before dawn taking with them nine boys between the ages of twelve and seventeen years. The villagers are left existentially mutilated by the unthinkable and inhuman act they were compelled to commit against their own child. The only recourse available to them was to shroud the macabre events in silence under the deeply ingrained belief that the best protection from evil is not to speak of it. However, as illustrated in the opening epigraph, silencing such trauma does not erase it. Instead it becomes another unnamed collective neurosis endlessly transmitted to future generations. I will argue that Miano's Mbaosu, like Bugul's Senegal, has similarly internalized the fracture created by colonialism and maintained by neocolonial machinations. However, in the case of civil war-torn Mboasu, multiple fissures have come together to create the chaotic landscape of Miano's Africa which seems to have turned inward, attacking its own people.

It is significant that Miano populates her imaginary Eku almost entirely with women who, in spite of the absence of men, continue to abide by a deeply ingrained patriarchal order. Miano suggests that, like Europe's invasion of Africa, the masculine has also invaded and occupies the feminine. This generates a type of societal fracturing

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[67]As Magali Compan notes in her article, "Writers, Rebels and Cannibals: Léonora Miano's Rendering of Africa in *L'Intérieur de la nuit,*" Miano''s use of the concept of "cannibalism" is far from perpetuating a racist accusation. Compan argues that this term and Miano's usage of it is loaded with references to European colonizers' impositions of a radically "other" and inhuman identity on those they colonized. Compan explains that the term "cannibalism" was first coined by Christopher Columbus to describe the Arawaks (a native Caribbean people whom the European invaders would decimate by slavery and murder within 200 years of Columbus' arrival in the Americas). Since then, Francophone authors such as Miano have used this trope as a way to expose and contest the colonial categories of "civilized" and "savage" (Compan 81). Moreover, Miano makes it clear in the novel that the act of cannibalism was forced on the villagers and had no actual connection to traditional practices; instead, the scene is meant to be read as a macabre invention of the invading rebels.

through the forcible creation of binaries and the suppression of subjectivities that might challenge the dominant order. In fact, near the end of the second novel in her trilogy, *Contours du jour qui vient* (2006), Miano locates the origin of societal fracturing in the separation of polarized masculine and feminine principles which once formed a seamless whole. At this point in the narration a wise old woman shares a creation story with her granddaughter in which she refers to the binary gender division as a social "truth" that is unnatural but deeply ingrained. She calls it the *fracture originelle,* from which sprung all wars and hostilities. The elder explains that when Nyambey (creator god) made the Human, he endowed it with masculine and feminine principles. But one day, drunk with power, the masculine developed the desire to dominate the feminine and broke its unity.[68] This, she explains, is how man and woman became two separate beings—separate but, like all binary divisions, not equal. This tale supports the Irigarayan notion maintained throughout this dissertation: that the gender binary is essentially an economy of one, dominated by the masculine, and that any subjectivity outside of it is unimaginable. In her article, "The Question of Reading Irigaray," Elizabeth Weed sums up Irigaray's concern about the societal implications of erasing the feminine and taking the masculine as the universal: "Irigaray's objection is that we thereby have a masculine universal posing as a human universal, a situation that has deleterious psychic and social effects: for women, for men, for social and political health" (17). Returning to Miano's trilogy, the old woman in *Contours de jour qui vient* explains that once—in time immemorial—a

[68]Here I am referring back to the second opening epigraph to this chapter, particularly to the lines "Il lui prit le désir de dominer, de violenter et d'asservir ce avec quoi il est supposé faire corps. Alors, il se fractura. Il rompit son unité, et c'est ainsi que l'homme et la femme naquirent.[…] " (Miano, *Contours*, 236).

seamless whole, "*l'humain,*" comprising both the feminine and the masculine, is now only recognizable through the masculine. As I discussed in the introduction to this study, in patriarchal societies, women are therefore reduced to what Irigaray calls the "specular feminine"—the other of the masculine which precludes the existence of the feminine principle. Butler notes this complete occlusion of the feminine by the masculine in Irigaray's theory: "And when those specular (and spectral) feminine figures are taken to be the feminine, the feminine is, [Irigaray] argues, fully erased by its very representation" (36). It is the way in which the Eku women suffer this colonization by the masculine principle that I will discuss in this chapter. Existentially weakened and even hollowed out by their patriarchal society—which I will argue is itself fractured by its contact with the West, the Eku women are unable to combat Isilo's "infection" of their village.

Miano's protagonist, Ayané, introduces yet another significant element to my analysis as she occupies a liminal space—being at once a native of the insular village and an outsider. Ayané was born and raised in Eku but was always rejected by her community who considered her to be an illegitimate child of the village. Ayané's birth was the result of two major transgressions: first, an exogamous union between a village man and a woman from another village and second, this marriage that also went against the village's gender conventions.[69] This chapter will explore how the possibility for any sort of cultural hybridity that Ayané's exposure to life outside of the insular village may have nourished is nullified. Ayané and the transgressions of traditional gender roles that she

[69]The nature of these conventions and of Ayane's parents' transgressions will be discussed in detail in section two of this chapter.

both embodies and enacts are seen as threatening and she is consequently abjectified by her community.[70]

Moreover, Ayané, in turn, abjectifies the Eku from the interstitial space she occupies. The novel begins with Ayané's return to Eku from France,[71] where she was working on her thesis, to attend to her dying mother. The estranged Ayané, not bound by the same rules as the other villagers firmly rooted in their Eku identity, remains hidden in the branches of a mango tree on her parents' land at the edge of the village throughout the entire ordeal—the invasion of the rebels, the mutilation and murder of Eyia, and the forced act of cannibalism. In accordance with her insider/outsider status in the village, Ayané is positioned too far away to hear the words spoken. Furthermore, Ayané's view becomes obscured at a key moment—that of Eyia's mutilation—because it is at this time that she notices that everyone is so focused on the scene unfolding that she may be able to escape unnoticed. She jumps from the tree consequently losing her privileged viewing place. Ayané is thus witness only to the hauntingly painful scream of the child being sacrificed. After the invaders leave, Ayané approaches the center of the village and sees the mutilated remains of the body from which the scream had emanated. Having only partially witnessed the event—and from a distance at that—Ayané is unable to comprehend the horror that she saw. Ayané, thus, in turn, abjectifies the Eku for what she perceives to be their role in the monstrous act. Miano does not make Ayané out to be a misunderstood heroine who would enrich the community if only the villagers accepted

[70] I will discuss the process of Ayané's abjectification in section three of this chapter.
[71] Ayané is educated outside the village and then leaves to study in France both of which are foreign concepts to the villagers and even more so for the female villagers.

her. As a result of her estrangement from the community, combined with her internalization of damning outside views of Africa, Ayané is unable to fill the role of a Bhabhaian hybrid—one who may form a connective and fluid bridge between peoples. I will demonstrate that Ayané's efforts to understand what happened in the village are hindered by her own lack of cultural mooring, an absence she has internalized as a result of the clan's rejection of her, one that is only amplified by the impenetrable silence in which the Eku are shrouded.

Ayané's reaction of abject horror to the scene of forced cannibalism in the village brings up yet another vital element of this novel that must be addressed before delving into my analysis of this infected fracture: the fact that a cursory reading of Miano's *L'Intérieur de la nuit* might reveal to an uninitiated reader only the desperation and the seemingly unavoidable act of forced cannibalism on the villagers. Magali Compan exposes this very real danger in her article, "Writers, Rebels and Cannibals: Léonora Miano's Rendering of Africa in *L'Intérieur de la nuit.*" She notes that the success of Miano's novel in the Western literary marketplace brought with it certain problems including that of "perpetuating if not an African dream, a European nightmare image of Africa" (Compan 82). A bleak depiction of Africa risks being reduced to a justification of "pseudo-truths once conveyed by colonial discourse," i.e. those that suggest that Africa is indeed an obscure, impenetrable 'dark continent' (Compan 83). Such a reading could

therefore easily slip into the sort of abjectifying Western gaze I identified in chapter one in France's treatment of Djibouti.[72]

This model of thinking is in line with the "racist afropessimism" that Désiré Nyela and Paul Bleton identify in American journalist Stephen Smith's arguments in his controversial *Négrologie: Pourquoi l'Afrique meurt* (2003). In their book *Lignes de fronts: Le roman de guerre dans la littérature africaine* (2009), Nyela and Bleton explain that racist afropessimism involves viewing Africa as essentially monolithic, trapped in a hopelessness springing from its own innate ineptitude. According to Nyela and Bleton, arguably Smith's irrational approach to explaining Africa's ills echos the antisemitic strategies of Holocaust deniers who argue "that reports of the Holocaust are really part of a vast shadowy plot to make the white, western world feel guilty and to advance the interest of Jews"[73]:

> L'Afrique issue du prisme de Smith ne saurait être qu'homogène, enfermée dans une totalité dont la désespérance à laquelle mène sa description relève de la fatalité, du déterminisme ou, si l'on veut d'une forme de spécificité. Ce qui le pousse […] vers la pente glissante du révisionnisme, voire du négationnisme, à propos de la traite négrière et de la colonisation (190).

Smith's main thesis, which very much suggests that Africa is both hopeless and at the root of its own problems, is that Africa is dying of an "assisted suicide"—it is willfully killing itself with the help of the West. Furthermore, he argues that there is a uniquely African specificity at play in Africa's current situation. Smith does not link the lack of

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[72] In chapter one I analyzed Abdourahmane Waberi's *Transit*, focusing on France's role in the Djiboutian civil war as both "doctor" and "referee." France both encouraged the fighting by supporting various rebels and judged it, condemning the war's violence.

[73] (Holocaust Encyclopedia, https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007273)

development and in Africa to Western colonial and neocolonial machinations but to an inherent underdevelopment that "allowed" Africa to be conquered in the first place and to which Africans reverted in the decades following independence. Smith thus asserts that colonization is not at fault for Africa's relative lack of development, but that Africa is impoverished *in spite* of European aid. To this end, he describes Africa as "le continent de l'entropie" that has a "tendance naturelle vers la dislocation de tout ordre structuré" (99). Thus, instead of focusing on the physical and existential violence visited on Africa beginning with slavery and continuing through neocolonialism, Smith's external and abjectifying gaze transforms Africa into an eternal wasteland in grave need of a global *mission civilisatrice* (Smith, 100).

In this study I maintain that while Miano arguably takes up an afropessimistic view, she actively resists reproducing a Smithian racism. Instead I will demonstrate that she engages in what Nyela and Bleton refer to as *afropessimisme actif.* Active afropessimism differs from its, often racist, counterpart in part by acknowledging that a good portion of Africa's problems stem from Western invasion, slave trade, colonial rule and neocolonial exploitation. Also—and significantly—active afropessimism, as underscored by the adjective "active," does not completely write the continent off as a passive victim (either of the West or of its own "nature," as Smith would suggest). Nyela and Bleton assert that when establishing the responsibilities of foreign powers in Africa, it is also important not to obscure those of Africans themselves.[74] One example of how Miano employs active afropessimism in her text is her use of the trope of civil war. In

[74] This incarnation of afropessimism notes that in many cases current African leaders are economically and politically undermining their countries in complicity with the West.

chapter one I introduced the notion that civil war in a postcolonial African country can be a form of fracturing fueled by divisive European influences. In describing the chaos and violence of Djibouti's civil war in his novel *Transit*, Waberi frequently makes direct references to France's active role in creating and maintaining a fracture zone in the country.[75] That said, Miano emphasizes the self-mutilating turn the violence in Africa has taken, the killing and the destruction that, even if fueled by Western influences and interests, is perpetuated by Africans against Africans.[76] In other words, while the current violent conditions can be clearly traced to the past and continuing traumas of contact with imperial and neo-colonial Europe, Miano's novel also draws attention to the ways that Africans themselves are implicated in its perpetuation and its mutations.

Finally, active afropessimism is itself not simply a descriptive form of writing but has the potential to be an *active* one:

> Alors, pessimisme sans doute, car il s'agit de regarder la réalité en face, sans fard, avec lucidité, mais pessimisme actif puisqu'il faut bien, pour ne pas désespérer, faire surgir le jour au bout de la nuit (fût-elle longue), porter, comme l'affirmait Lilyan Kesteloot, la réflexion sur les 'remèdes concrets' à apporter à cette grande

[75] I refer the reader to the detailed discussion of this point in chapter one but will restate here some of the main points. The fragmentation Waberi describes began with Imperial Europe's nineteenth- and twentieth-century division of the horn of Africa without regard to ethnic lines. This partition caused internal divides within territories, hence preventing a sense of unified identity among the peoples grouped together. These divides were then aggravated by French rule which alternately favored one ethnic group over another, thus fostering resentment among them. Even after independence, at the time Waberi sets his novel, France had not completely left Djibouti. Waberi shows it to be present in the form, alternately, of a "referee" who judges and even fuels the conflict, and as a "doctor" who condemns the inhumanity of the war but who provides insufficient humanitarian aid that continues to foster dependence on France. Waberi also alludes to colonial France's role in the legacy of a corrupt Djiboutian government that perpetuates inequality and figuratively cannibalizes its population as symbolized by the plight of the mutilated *mobilizés.* These men not only go uncompensated for their sacrifices, they are also fired upon by a government which, having used them to fight its battle, no longer has need for them.

[76] A concept Waberi did indeed touch on with his description of the exploited and then abandoned *mobilizés* (young civilian soldiers) and into which Miano delves deeper.

> malade qu'est l'Afrique, chacun dans son secteur d'activité (Nyela and Bleton 192).

The purpose of *afropessimism actif* is thus twofold. This kind of thinking qualifies as pessimism as its focus is on the more sinister side of Africa's present and past. It is also active because it is meant to serve as a way of taking stock of—metaphorically bringing into the light of day—societal illness and dysfunction so that concrete remedies can be conceived. This brings us back to a line in the opening epigraph. The Africa Miano describes is not lucidly inspecting and dressing its wounds "because it could not acknowledge that it must absolve itself for having allowed itself to be defeated, trampled, and erased from its own memory" (122; translation mine). Instead it is neurotically transmitting a muted but irrepressible trauma to future generations. I will maintain that Miano's novel is an attempt to journey into the metaphorical night to give this silenced trauma a name and to help Africa emerge from a cycle of physical and existential violence.

The prime goal of this chapter is to delve into the metaphorical night in Miano's novel in order to take stock of the continued and insidious mutations of neocolonial fracturing within Africa and to counter the existentially destructive abjectification projected onto the continent through foreign eyes. I will argue that this can only be done by breaking the silence covering Africa's metaphorical festering wounds and by breaking free of a social structure weakened and infected by Western invasion to imagine subjectivity beyond the abject. To this end I divide my analysis of Miano's *Intérieur de la nuit* into four parts. The first section focuses on Eku's precarious situation of existential destabilization that defines the metaphorical evening before the rebel invasion that

plunges them into the darkness of this metaphorical night. In this section I demonstrate that Eku's patriarchal power structure is not just destabilized, it is weakened to the core by its contact with the West. Furthermore, I argue that because women of Eku have undergone existential erasure to enter the patriarchal symbolic, they remain powerless, captive to a fatalistic mentality that precludes any vision of social change. In section two I analyze the rebel invasion of Eku as a symptom not of a Smithian "African specificity" but of infection of the Mboasan social body resulting from pernicious, identity-mutilating Western involvement. Focusing on the rebel leader Isilo, I elucidate how his project both feeds off of and even mirrors (neo)colonial European destabilization and abjectification of Africa. This section will conclude with an illustration of how the communal silence with regards to the unspeakable evil Isilo visited upon the Eku forms a shroud under which social infection festers, resulting in the metaphorical death of the community.

The third and fourth sections of this chapter focus on the liminal and even the abject as presenting a possibility for healing if taken with a practice of active Afropessimism. Section three concentrates on Miano's protagonist, Ayané, whose position as an insider-outsider suggests the possibility of a productive Bhabhaian hybridity. However, I will argue that the alienating circumstances of Ayané's life make that role unattainable. Without the immunization of a mooring in traditional values, Ayané has been infected with an alienating Western view of Africa and abjectifies the Eku for their role in the horrific scene she partially witnessed. Finally, section four returns to the importance of engaging in active afropessimism and of imagining a subjectivity outside of the limiting and damaged patriarchal one. In particular, I will

analyze the sudden appearance of Epupa "*la folle*," who echoes Eyia's scream with her screams of horror at the state of Mboasan society. Epupa, as I will illustrate, is a liminal character who houses within her body a truly feminine spirit, one that is outside of the patriarchal binary, one that correlates not with Irigary's specular feminine—erased and tamed to be the reflection of the masculine, but with her excess feminine—that which has been deeply entombed in the women of Eku. My analysis will demonstrate that access to the excess feminine is necessary for the Mboasan women to imagine a different life, to envision social change instead of endlessly perpetuating an oppressive, fractured and infected patriarchal model of Eku society.

Part One: A Destabilized African Village on the Shoulders of Women Under Erasure

Eku Insidiously Destabilized by France

Eku may be isolated both physically and culturally from the rest of the country and the world, but it is not untouched by historical contact with France nor—a point I will address later—by the current upheavals devastating the civil-war-torn Central African country to which it belongs. Even before the rebel infiltration, Eku, in spite of its isolation, had already suffered from the devastating effects of the European invasion and colonization of the African continent—a point which I maintain only emphasizes their insidious and deeply impacting effects.

Throughout the novel there are references to Eku's long-silenced trauma stemming from its encounter with the slave trade, such as the story of eight men who disappeared in the now forbidden bush to the south of the village while hunting.

However, significantly, their story is not directly told until the cathartic end of the third volume in Miano's trilogy, *Aubes Écarlates.* In this novel we learn that before the men's disappearances, both men and women had the right to mobility, crossing over the hills and into the bush as they wished. It was not until the countryside was invaded by mercenaries hired by "marchands d'hommes," in other words, slave traders (Aubes 236), that the village elders took restrictive measures to ensure the survival of the remaining community: henceforward, everyone was forbidden from entering the bush to the south. The women, whose duty it was to protect Eku identity and values for posterity and transmit them to their progeny, thus ensuring the community's survival, were entirely forbidden to leave the village. Furthermore, the village elders, faced with the incomprehensibility of the kidnapping, invoked the silence that would thereafter convert the men's disappearance into a timeless event and a nameless trauma, into a violence of which the reality is not fully known to those who bear its scar.[77] Indeed, the villagers knew only to fear the bush and that women were not to leave the village; they did not know why. Without knowing the source of the trauma, the community was bereft of the tools with which to combat its destructive effects.

Many years after the initial contact with Europe, French occupiers of Mbaosu reached the village, undermining traditional social structures to the benefit of the occupiers: "[…] au temps de l'occupation du pays par les Blancs, tout l'édifice social avait été ébranlé" (79). In other words, just as with Kane and Bugul's depictions of post-

[77]This illustrates well an example of Cathy Caruth's theory on how trauma is produced and underscores the effects of a violence whose reality is not fully understood to those who bear its scar. In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History,* Caruth descibes trauma as "not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4).

invasion Senegal, the imaginary Mboasu suffered from a destabilization by forces arriving from without. Like Miano's veiled allusion to the kidnapping of the eight men, the insidious French role in Eku's social structure is not immediately evident. In what can be read as a clever reference to real-life France's secret aid to corrupt tyrannical (and even genocidal) African leaders in the interests of maintaining their own lucrative economic or politically strategic ties to African nations,[78] Miano describes how and why Eyoum, the village chief, came to power:

> Jamais la famille d'Eyoum n'aurait dû avoir le commandement. Ceux auxquels ce pouvoir devait revenir, les parents d'Io, avaient été écartés par les colons qui ne les trouvaient pas assez malléables. Ils posaient trop de questions, demandaient des avantages pour les leurs, comme par exemple l'embauche prioritaire des hommes d'Eku dans les mines. S'ils avaient régné, les hommes seraient demeurés à proximité de leur village […] (79).

Colonial interests were threatened by the leaders of Eku, relatives of Io, Ayané's paternal grandmother. Io's family made too many demands in the interest of protecting the village, including that the village men be allowed to work in nearby mines instead of leaving their families to work in the city. According to the community's traditions, Eyoum should never have become chief because he "cumulait les fonctions du chef et du marabout (ce qui était une transgression) […]" (53). However, he was weak and malleable. His weakness made him the perfect front man for colonial interests. Unlike

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[78] As Nyela and Bleton explain : "Si, à quelques exceptions près, l'accès à l'indépendance résultait de luttes dont le nationalisme avait été ferment, il constituait, pour la plupart des pays du continent, l'aboutissement d'un processus initié et maîtrisé par les colonisateurs. À travers l'octroi et la proclamation des 'indépendances', il s'agissait de redéfinir, dans le cadre des nouvelles relations internationales, instaurées après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, le 'partenariat' entre les anciennes puissances coloniales et les États africains nouvellement constitués. Ce nouveau partenariat n'avait pas modifié la nature des relations entre les protagonistes : la puissance coloniale maintenait son hégémonie à travers le choix des dirigeants de ces jeunes États, souvent consacrés comme 'pères de la Nation'" (187).

Io's family, Eyoum's relatives did not want anything in particular except the power to rule over Eku. The village did not revolt for fear of reprisals by Eyoum's family, "féticheurs" by profession capable of invoking supernatural powers. Furthermore, to maintain his power, Eyoum kept the people in a state of ignorance. Eyoum, who was not educated past CM1 (third year of elementary education), did not educate his sons nor did he advocate the education of any of the other villagers. In fact, before Io intervened, Eyoum would secretly poison children who attended school longer than he thought appropriate with a concoction that would render them mentally incapacitated "pour frapper les esprits des villageois et les persuader que trop étudier était néfaste" (83). Thus, in enabling Eyoum's ascent to power, the colonizers deposed the leaders that were causing them trouble in favor of a corrupt one who would keep the population under control through fear and incompetence for the benefit of the French.

Women Under Erasure

Despite the ascendance of a male leader who does nothing to bolster his community, Eku remains firmly entrenched in a rigid, if impotent, patriarchy.[79] The physical and cultural survival of the Eku within this patriarchy depends on women dutifully fulfilling their assigned roles, and staying within the limits of those roles, in order that "le monde pouvait continuer de tourner […] [e]n dépit des hommes" (44). Men hold all positions of power in the village from that of chief, to the polygamous heads of households. However, the men are largely absent from Eku and contribute almost nothing

[79] In *Sortir de la grande nuit* (2010) Achilles Mbembe discusses the very central position that the masculinity, represented by the phallus, takes in many traditional African societies. He refers to the phallocratic idea that "même en état d'apoplexie, le membre viril serait le symbole naturel de la genèse de toute vie et de tout pouvoir. […] La communauté politique s'est toujours voulue, avant tout, l'équivalant d'une société des hommes ou, plus précisément, des vieillards" (Mbembe 215-6).

to the physical survival of the community. They return three times a year from their menial jobs, the wages from which were largely eaten up to pay their living expenses in the city, to give orders and be celebrated in their homes. After their brief visits the men would leave again and "[l]es femmes restaient là avec le monde sur les épaules" (14). In other words, the village women carry the weight of Eku society on their shoulders yet continue to perpetuate the patriarchal culture that defines and fixes their existence as man's other.

The women of Eku suffer a sort of existential erasure leaving them essentially empty inside and doubly unable to resist the coming invasion by the rebels. In fact, Miano aptly sums up the lived experience of women in Mboasu as one of erasure of the feminine principle in her description of the qualities most valued in women by their patriarchal societies: "La noblesse des femmes, ce n'était pas la pureté, ce n'était pas la soumission, ce n'était pas la faculté de se relever de tout. La noblesse des femmes, c'était avoir immolé la chimère" (44). Pure, submissive women who could survive anything life threw at them were indeed valuable. However, it is precisely the fact that they "immolated" or sacrificed their dream of being anything else besides wives and mothers that makes them noble in the eyes of their society. These women are valuable in Eku's patriarchal society precisely because they were essentially emptied out in order to become what Irigaray refers to as the specular feminine. As such, the Eku women have become merely the reflection of masculine identity, having been unable to acknowledge or preserve a feminine identity that remains in the realm of the unimaginable. Miano's use of the word "chimera" is also significant here. According to the *Oxford English*

Dictionary, a chimera is "[a]n unreal creature of the imagination, a mere wild fancy; an unfounded conception".[80] A chimera is thus something unfathomable, something that cannot be imagined much like Irigaray's excess feminine[81] which, burned at the alter of the masculine, haunts the phallocentric masculine/feminine binary but can find no expression within it. Miano goes on to specify that Mboasu women carry within them a cadaver: "[c]elui du rêve dont la dépouille était mise au tombeau pour l'étérnité" (44). The specificity of the women's existence in patriarchal Mbaosu is that of being hollowed out from the inside, even metaphorically killed inside, in order to take on an identity imposed upon them from the outside—as symbolized by the dead dreams entombed in each woman. Miano presents this oppression as timeless, with no marked beginning and no hope for an end ("pour étérnité") (44).

Cracks in the Patriarchy: a Glimpse of a Feminine Beyond the Binary

At the same time, the strongest, most authoritative presence in the village is not the enfeebled leader Eyoum, it is undeniably Ié, the aged matriarch. At first glance this may appear paradoxical, but the fact that the most powerful voice is not a man's is further evidence of the weakness of the Eku patriarchy as a result of its encounter with the West. Ié's strength would not be so significant if there were also strong men present in the community. Yet, I will illustrate that Ié's status is also evidence that a woman can have a limited amount of power within the community only if she takes on a socially acceptable masculinity.

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[80] OED online version accessed through UMN Libraries. Consulted on 7/1/14. http://www.oed.com.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/view/Entry/31708?redirectedFrom=chimera#eid

[81] This is much like Irigaray's excess feminine which must be erased in order for women to be legible in a patriarchal symbolic system which recognizes women as specular surfaces reflecting back only the masculine.

As a widow who has reached an age where she is less bound by her gender, Ié is able to involve herself in the politics of the tribe, thus taking on a more masculine role. This relative freedom is physically evidenced by her rather stark, even unfeminine appearance. Ié keeps her hair short, "presque ras comme un homme" (63). As Miano illustrates in the following passage, Ié escapes some of the rituals of femininity while, importantly, remaining within her community's patriarchal traditions:

> Depuis qu'on l'avait tondue, ce qui était la coutume lorsque les femmes perdaient leur époux, elle n'avait plus permis à ses cheveux de pousser. Devoir se faire tresser lui avait toujours été un calvaire. Elle portait l'habit traditionnel des femmes du clan, une simple étoffe nouée sous les bras et descendant à mi-mollet. Son pagne, contrairement à ceux des autres femmes, était toujours de couleur sombre. Elle profitait de son veuvage pour ne se vêtir que de bleu marine, teint qui avait toujours eu sa préférence. Les couleurs vives ne lui plaisaient pas (63).

Her hair is short in accordance with the custom that widows' heads are shaved when their husband dies. However, while the shaved head is a sign of mourning for a dead husband, the widow's hair is allowed to grow back after it is shorn. Ié, on the other hand did not permit her hair to grow. Having never liked to get her hair braided, she used her widowhood as a way to be excused from this particular ordeal. Also, unlike the other women who beg the men to bring them brightly colored cloths back from the city, Ié always preferred a deep sea blue and even had a distaste for the reds and yellows worn by the other women. Again, taking advantage of her widowhood, which at first required her to wear dark colors, Ié still wears nothing but her favorite sea blue.

At times Ié seems to be masculine to the point where it is said that she "abritait un esprit mâle"[82] because she acts in ways only allowed to men and unthinkable for women. For instance, Ié is the only woman who dares to eat foods that are prohibited to women, such as chicken gizzards and fish heads. However, unable to truly step outside of the compulsory limitations of her gender, Ié can only push the limits of her gender so far from her position within Eku's patriarchal structure. Yet, at the same time, I will argue that Ié's small transgressions, though impotent to effect change on a large scale, point to the existence of an Iriguarayan "excess feminine" haunting the phallocentric system of "the same" and threatening to escape through cracks in its foundation.

Miano illustrates both the extent of Ié's "masculinity" and the limits of her borrowed power when the matriarch goes to speak with the chief, Eyoum, of her fears for the Eku. Shaken up from the retelling of her frightening, prophetic dream (which indeed clearly—if in figurative terms—foreshadows the invasion and the forced act of cannibalism to which the Eku would be victim in the second part of the novel), Ié takes the liberty of eating one of Eyoum's kola nuts:

> [Elle] la mordit et mâcha sans faire de grimace. Pourtant, Eyoum choisissait ses noix parmi les plus amères. Le vieux se dit qu'elle allait trop loin. Les noix de kola étaient réservées aux hommes. Avait-on déjà entendu une poule faire cocorico ? Même la doyenne des poules ne finissait jamais par se métamorphoser en coq ! Elle qui se montrait si intransigeante dans l'observation des usages sous

[82] Given the definitions of what male and female roles are in this novel, Ié, arguably does harbor a "male mind." Her father did not educate his daughters differently from his sons: "Son père qui l'avait instruite […] des choses dont seules les males étaient informés (103). Her father claimed that this was not a transgression because "[n]os encêtres préfèrent leurs secrets gardés par une femme intelligente, plutôt que par un homme sans cervelle qui en fera mauvais usage" (103). However, interestingly, there is no mention of Ié having daughters and Miano did not broach the subject of what Ié thinks about educating the village girls or whether she attempted to pass her knowledge on to another woman.

> son toit et sous celui de ses fils, elle qui leur imposait la tradition comme un rempart contre tout et n'admettait aucun comportement qui ne fût pas strictement respectueux de l'étiquette ancestrale, voilà qu'elle bafouait tout (66).

A "hen" shockingly masquerading as a "cock," not only did Ié break the taboo that forbade women from eating kola nuts, she ate those of the chief. A further sign of her masculinity was the fact that she did not grimace when eating the exceptionally bitter nuts Eyoum had chosen for himself. This act shocked Eyoum who believed that a woman would always be a woman, and even if she were the leader of women, she would always be less than a man: in his idiom, a hen could never crow like a rooster. Moreover, how could someone who so strictly enforced the traditional etiquette under her own roof as well as those of her sons do something that went so squarely against the patriarchal structure at the root of Eku traditions? Eyoum reprimanded her for this transgression saying that she went too far and that he had never permitted anyone to touch his kola nuts. Janice Spleth comments in her article "Civil War and Woman's Place in Léonora Miano's *L'intérieur de la nuit (Dark Heart of the Night)*" (2012), that, although seemingly transgressive, this scene "allows us to see how men react to such presumptuousness and therefore becomes the means by which Miano confirms the inherent powerlessness of women in this society" (93).

Although I maintain that women in Eku are forced to entomb the cadavers of their dreams to take on the role assigned them, I see this scene as an indication of a destabilized patriarchal structure and of the potential for Irigaray's excess feminine to poke through the cracks of patriarchal oppression. Irigaray argues that this excess feminine, while rendered unintelligible, does not fully disappear. A trace of this excess

feminine is visible when Ié responds to Eyoum's reprimand of her behavior with "un rire sauvage," throwing back her head in a manner that inspires Eyoum to question his preference for young girls over mature women (66). The use of the word "wild" here to describe her laughter suggests that part of her that is unruly and not dominated by the patriarchy; that there is a part of the woman that exists outside the symbolic system that defines her in a limiting and relatively powerless role vis-à-vis men. After laughing, Ié attempts to restore order by respectfully asking that Eyoum excuse her. Yet, poignantly, she adds in her defense : "*Et puis, ce n'est que de la kola, ce n'est pas comme si je t'avais grignoté tes testicules*" (66). In defending her action by claiming that she did not actually do any harm to his person, particularly not to his male reproductive organs, Ié suggests the arbitrariness of the gender-based food prohibitions. Elena Tzelepis and Alena Athanasiou note the subversive potential of women's laughter in their book, *Rewriting difference: Luce Irigaray and the Greeks* (2010): "Irigaray suggested that laughter is 'the first form of liberation from a secular oppression, [This Sex which is not one]' and that she located the very force of laughter in the possibility of undermining the seriousness of meaning—whereby 'seriousness' signals to the univocity of truth that had expelled 'woman' from the order of discourse […]" (Athanasiou and Tzelepis, 106). This power is all the more evident in the fact that Eyoum is silenced by Ié. He finds himself unable to get completely angry with her because she reminds him of the much respected, therefore powerful, late matriarch, Io.

Yet this triumph remains ambiguous. The scene ends with an Ié who will not—or is unable to—fully transgress the limits of her station: "Un hurlement lui brûlait les

entrailles, qu'elle n'avait pas le droit de pousser" (67). Like the other women in the village, Ié is silenced. She carries inside her something that the structure of her society prohibits her from articulating, a truth that burns her from the inside, yet remains inexpressible. Instead she stays in her place and hopes to survive. She sees the macabre scene from her prophetic dream as a test that must be undergone: "Ce qui allait se produire était une épreuve" (66). This fatalistic attitude is in line with the women's ingrained notion that their assigned lot is for eternity. All that is left for the Eku is to meet their fate and to survive. Ié's hope lies only in the women surviving and carrying on their assigned roles, most importantly that of child-bearing. She reflects, "*Si les femmes demeurent, elles enfanteront de nouveau*" (67). In other words, Ié is too caught up in the masculine binary to give voice to the Irigaraian excess feminine which remains inexpressible. Ié can only see the future through the lens of the rigid gender roles that structure Eku society and on which, Ié believes, their survival depends.

Part Two: Infection Reaches Eku

The night that the rebels invaded Eku and gathered all of the villagers to enact their macabre scene, the village, as we have seen, was already metaphorically on its knees. Eku had been destabilized, progressively stripped of its strength after its encounter with the French occupiers who deposed Eku's rightful leaders to install a weak and ineffectual one. Furthermore, the men are absent leaving only women, who have been silenced and even existentially erased by the patriarchal structure itself, to meet the rebels. Any chance the Eku would have had at avoiding the fast approaching tragedy was crippled by the society's very structure: Ié's scream could not be released and Eyoum

would not take action on her warning. Eku was like a wounded body, defenseless against infection. In this section, I will demonstrate that Isilo, the invading warlord, is not representative of a specifically African nature of violence and entropy à la Smith. Instead I will establish that he is an agent of infection, opportunistic and deadly, in this fractured land which has not healed from its destabilizing contact with Europe. Essentially a product of noxious European involvement, Isilo, in turn and under the banner of making the country stronger, commits the same sort of existential violence that Europe committed against Africans, thus replicating the European invasion of Africa under that flag of an African warlord. Moreover, I will make it evident that Isilo even operates under an assumption similar to that of the Western invader—that African people are errant and need to be brought onto the "right" path. Finally, I will establish that the greatest violence in this novel is not the gruesome scene of the child's murder, but the death-like silence that followed the child's scream, a silence that signified the Eku's dissolution in an abject identity Isilo fashioned for them.

Opportunistic Infection

Isilo incarnates the incoherence that shrouds the newly independent, civil war-torn Mboasu. An *Africain instruit,* Isilo learned about African history while at university in the nation's capital, Sombé. In sharp opposition with the population of Eku, Isilo is among those students of history who awoke one morning with "ce mal au crâne, ces souvenirs confus de ce qui s'était réellement passé, et les preuves qu'on avait abusé d'eux parce qu'ils avaient manqué de discernement…" (96). His vision of Africa is a

disconnected and distorted one, the effects of which are compounded by his conflicted personality:

> On le disait perclus de contradictions : non pas froid, mais congelé du dedans, insensible au sort de quiconque, mais en même temps capable de s'émouvoir aux larmes à la pensée de certaines figures historiques telles que Shaka ou Soundiata (90).

Isilo has become frozen from the inside after having internalized the crippling contradictions of the fracture zone between traditional Africa and Europe. He is unable to empathize with the plights of others yet is deeply moved by the stories of epic heroes of a traditional Africa he never experienced as a child and only discovered as an adult, in idealized forms and disconnected from the lived realities of Africans. His disconnection from humanity coupled with his western education and fragmentary knowledge of traditional African stories make Isilo a dangerous element, an agent of infection threatening to further debilitate the already wounded Mboasu.

There are a few elements that make the type of civil war seen in Miano's imagined Mboasu—as well as a sizable portion of recently independent African countries—a new and particularly pernicious iteration of civil war on the continent. Nyela and Bleton point out that these civil wars are atypical "non seulement dans le chevauchement des traditions martiales qui [leur] donne, par moments, des allures d'une guerre tribale, mais atypique aussi avec la présence massive de mercenaires […]" (195). The mercenaries who make up Isilo's army are arguably products of a fractured country. They are young men recruited from various villages, as well as kidnapped children and wrenched from their communities to be mutilated and transformed into soldiers. Miano describes the men who voluntarily joined as "essentiellement des aventuriers, prêts à épouser la cause du

premier illuminé capable de les payer" (163). These illuminés, or activists who are at the heart of these rebel groups are often men in their thirties who have been unemployed since they graduated from college and only act to clear their own paths to the spheres of power in the country or, in other words, to get "leur partie du gâteau" (163). Mbembe describes these men as belonging to a class of *superflus*—people who have fallen through the large cracks of a fractured society. This superfluous class, Mbembe explains, is made up of what he describes as:

> […] des gens que l'on ne peut guère vendre en esclavage comme aux débuts du capitalisme moderne, ni réduire aux travaux forcés comme à l'époque coloniale et sous l'apartheid, ou encore entreposer dans des institutions pénitentiaires comme aux États-Unis. […] [I]ls constituent de la viande humaine ployant sous la loi du gaspillage, de la violence et de la maladie, livrée à l'évangelisme nord-américain, aux croisés de l'islam et à toutes sortes de phénomènes de sorcellerie et d'illumination (Mbembe 24).

Therefore, because the government is weak and the economy ineffectual, Isilo is able to create his group of warlord mercenaries who are willing to do anything because they have nothing to lose. Isilo takes advantage of the "independent," weakened Mboasu. He roams the country attacking villages and luring others into his group of mercenaries because the government is at a loss to provide employment opportunities for its citizens or even to protect them.[83]

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[83]In contrast to Smith's assertion that Africans are intrinsically prone to entropy (Smith writes in *Négrologie*: " La seule certitude : le continent de l'entropie, la tendance naturelle vers la dislocation de tout ordre structure […]" (99)) and as I argued in chapter one, there has been much research revealing that newly independent governments in Africa continue to be destabilized by the legacies of colonialism and neocolonial interests. Citing Bessinger and Young, I argued in chapter one that the post-independence government of Waberi's war-torn Djibouti is made up of fragments of its colonial government. Similarly, Achilles Mbembe writes that the colonial relationships that remain intact have not ceased to transform and mutate, thus resulting in yet more internal instability and fracturing. These transformations, he writes, have

Furthermore, the type of civil war perpetrated by Isilo and his mercenaries is not a direct attack on the government nor is it necessarily in the interest of advancing some sort of national interest. It is, as Mbembe explains, truly a *civil* war—a conflict composed of predatory attacks that target civilians (200). Nyela and Bleton clarify that these conflicts, which coincide with what they call the implosion of the State in African nations, take the form of an "affrontement interethnique dans une optique sinon épuration, du moins de domination" (248). This type of conflict, they add, has no front line as it involves attacks on villages, bombardments of neighborhoods, and the rape and pillaging of the general population (248). Along these lines, Isilo's political control through persuasion and terror as opposed to seizing land through military success is an example of what Mary Kaldor and Christine Chinkin call the "globe's new wars" (Kaldor and Chinkin, cited in Spleth 94). Poorly funded and in need of human and material resources, these guerrilla soldiers must "win over the villagers, either by co-opting them or by terrorizing them into utter submission" (Spleth 93). Furthermore, new wars, Kaldor and Chinkin explain, are largely fought in the name of identity—ethnic, religious, or tribal—rather than for ideological or geopolitical goals" (171). Similarly, Mbembe explains that these new wars, often divorced from truly anti-imperialist rhetoric or projects of emancipation, "font appel à des catégories morales dont la spécificité est de conjuguer les imaginaires utilitaristes modernes des résidus des conceptions autochtones de la vie—sorcellerie, richesse et dévoration, maladie et folie" (200).

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taken an erratic course toward an increasing number of wars throughout the continent, particularly during the last quarter of the twentieth century (Mbembe 143).

Significantly, such an appeal to reclaim a forgotten past, brings questions of identity to the forefront. The notion of fighting in the name of identity is extremely relevant to Miano's fractured Mboasu, which is trying to recover a livable post-independence identity. Isilo is not looking to simply conquer territory or even to raid and destroy it but, rather, to gain influence over the people who inhabit it. This type of war serves Isilo's purpose well. It is a useful mechanism with which to construct and solidify, or "fix" identities, as Kaldor and Chinkin write, "through the imposition of a binary opposition between 'us' and 'them'" (171). As I have maintained throughout this dissertation, dividing people into polarized groups is problematic at the very least. Moreover, as much as colonial Europe tried to do to Africa, Isilo's power lies in his ability to silence or existentially erase pre-existing identities that might challenge the one he fashions in order to assure the compliance of the conquered.[84] To "refaire leur monde" to his specifications, Isilo had to "[projeter] sur la terre la mitraille d'un chaos fondateur" (103). There is a clear parallel to be made here between what Isilo is doing to the Eku and what Kane described as the initial shock of European invasion in *Aventure ambigüe.*[85]

Moreover, Nyela and Bleton discuss the treatment of war as "civil chaos" in recent African novels in terms of a *littérature d'échec,* specifically that of the failure of the patriarchal symbol represented by the *père de la nation* (211). This theme of patriarchal failure is certainly evident in Miano's Eku. Insidiously destabilized by years of incompetent government and largely absent men, the moribund Eku patriarchy was

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[84]See my analysis of Kane's *Aventure ambigüe* in chapter two pages 94-98 for a more detailed description of this process.

[85]See the first paragraph of Chapter two Section one. Kane describes a physically violent attack followed by a more insidious induction into the order of Western subjectivity which began the process of psychic colonization of the colonized.

already a damaged social body that could offer no effective resistance to Isilo's forced redefinition. In accordance with his belief that Africa could not be rebuilt upon a weakened foundation and that "[l]a faiblessse chez un homme était dangereuse, contre nature. Il devrait l'éradiquer," Isilo worked to destroy what remained of the weakened patriarchy (98). Like the destabilized structure he represented, Eyoum, the ineffectual chief who owed his position to self-interested European intervention, stood "momifié" before the rebels' thunderous advance on the village.[86] Isilo easily rid himself of the decrepit leader by having the patriarch killed by the village boy who had enthusiastically volunteered his services as interpreter for Isilo.[87] Esa, Ekwé and Ebé, the other grown men remaining in the village, posed no threat of stepping in. Instead of confronting the invaders, these men were "[t]remblants comme des feuilles devant leur destinée. Perdus. Assis comme les femmes et les enfants, lèvres closes, regard vaincu. Ils attendaient que ça passe, n'espéraient qu'en réchapper" (97).

Here Miano yet again offers up a suggestion that there may exist a power outside of the damaged patriarchy that has yet to be tapped. When Isilo first approached where Ié

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[86]Eyoum, who should have attempted to protect his people from this invasion was powerless against Isilo:

> Sans trop savoir comment, il se retrouva courbé devant le soldat, genou droit à terre, avec dans la tête toutes les incantations protectrices qu'il avait pu apprendre au cours de sa longue existence. Elles s'enchevêtraient dans son cerveau bouillant, se percutaient les unes les autres, s'affaiblissant, se confondant, perdant leur sens et leur pouvoir (85).

Finding himself bowed down in front of an outsider young enough to be his grandson, Eyoum was stupefied by Isilo's request to take nine young boys and nine unmarried girls from the village. Miano further emphasizes Eyoum's impotence in the leadership role he should never have attained with his vain attempts to use his supernatural powers as marabout against Isilo. Isilo's menacing presence rendered impotent the very supernatural powers that kept the villagers in fear of Eyoum, symbolically destroying what remained of the patriarchy's strength in Eku.

[87]Epa, an educated young man from the village who resented Eyoum''s weakness and opposition to education, was ordered to kill the old man. Epa, who knew French, had been educated after Io had put a stop to Eyoum's poisoning of educated children. He served as a translator for Isilo and took the rebels' side in hopes of freeing his people from the noxious European influences that keep them in poverty. Epa's rash and unexamined allegiance to the rebels would quickly turn later when Isilo orders his young brother Eyia to be sacrificed.

stood near Eyoum, the old man took a step back in spite of himself, but Ié did not budge nor even blink (75). Uncowed, buoyed by the "excess" feminine deep within her, Ié sat with the other villagers and listened to Isilo's demands. Her impatience with these invaders was obvious in the yawns she muffled during Isilo's verbose speech about unification against a common enemy (98). Also, in contrast to all the others, men and women alike, Ié did not lower her eyes while Isilo spoke. Instead she studied his face intently and attempted to make eye contact with him in hopes of determining what power he served. Ié alone dared to interrupt Isilo in order to speak on behalf of her village:

> [L]a doyenne des femmes d'Eku mit son vieux corps debout. […] Elle n'avait pas peur. Tout ce qui émanait d'elle, c'était sa force, l'importance qu'elle accordait à sa propre personne, et un certain agacement (99-100).

Ié addressed the young men, to whom she could have been a grandmother or even a great-grandmother, saying that she was familiar with the type of evil that they represented. Although at the time she was still ignorant of the cannibalistic sacrifice Isilo envisioned and of his desire to take nine virgin girls captive, she knew he wanted to recruit boys as soldiers. True to her role as a woman in Eku, one who endures her fate and ensures the survival of the community even if it means dying inside, Ié expressed her belief that the rebels represented an ordeal that the village must undergo. Yet, in an effort to protect the future of the clan, she requested that the children, young virgins, and mothers of infants be excused from the forced assembly. In her thinking, "Les hommes qui se trouvaient loin finiraient bien par revenir. Ils prendraient femme parmi les jeunes filles. Elles enfanteraient" (102). While she may not have protected the community from

the horrors that were to unfold, Ié did succeed in protecting a portion of the population, including the nine girls who would have otherwise been taken.

Although Ié's strength was limited by the identity assigned her in patriarchal society, Isilo was impressed by her intelligence and resolve:

> C'était la première fois, depuis qu'il arpentait les villages de cette partie du continent, que quelqu'un, et une femme qui plus était, se permettait de tenter de soustraire une partie de la population. […] Isilo songea que s'il lui avait été donné de voir cela chez un dirigeant africain, il ne serait probablement pas dans cette quête qui occupait sa vie. Il n'aurait peut-être pas à ferrailler avec le sort des Africains" (103-104).

This is the second time in the novel that Ié shows a kind of strength that not only gets the attention of male leader, it also gives him pause even if it does not effect change. Just as Eyoum was shocked by the audacity Ié showed when she took one of his kola nuts, Isilo was so unprepared for Ié to stand up to him that he, for the first time, allowed part of the population to escape his macabre rite as per Ié's request. Furthermore, Isilo compares Ié to a man, and not just any man, but to a *dirigeant*. Certainly, this scene can be read as a confirmation of the eternal powerlessness of woman construed as man's other in patriarchal power structures, especially in that Ié was not able to prevent the forced act of cannibalism, in spite of her show of strength. However, it also invites the reader to imagine what a female *dirigeante* might look like—had the society not been fractured and diseased——when the feminine principle in Eku is survival of the community at all costs and the masculine principle, embodied to some degree by Eyoum[88] but especially

[88] Eyoum would poison children to keep them from gaining an education that might inspire them to challenge him.

by Isilo, is that of destruction of the community in the pursuit of power.[89] The community was thus not truly devoid of all strength; however, the only potential for strength was a female voice, one that unfortunately held no real sway in the patriarchal order of a land that only knew fathers.[90] Unfortunately, ultimately irrelevant in Mboasu's patriarchy, Ié's show of strength could not sway Isilo from his mission to create a new (and macabre) identity for the Eku.

Isilo Irritates Mboasu's Wounds for his own Advantage

Isilo uses his knowledge of the West's pillaging and erasure of traditional African identity as tool with which to unify people under his sinister cause. Isilo claims that he and his soldiers traveled to the land of the Eku in order bring back the lost *repères*[91] and to reclaim "*la vérité qu'ont maquillée les Blancs lorsqu'ils sont venus ici prendre possession de nos vies*" *(77).* With the aim of rallying the Eku to his cause, Isilo metaphorically pokes at Mboasu's wound—the physical and existential gash left by the West's invasion of Africa. He explains to his confused Eku audience, who only wonder why they are being kept from their dinners, how Mboasu ended up in its weakened state.

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[89] Achilles Mbembe describes the cultural configuration that gave rise to this new kind of civil war as one that has as its foundation a "pyramide de la destruction de la vie là où la précédente insiste sur les conditions de sa conservation" (198). He explains that "l'émergence du militarisme en tant que culture et de la masculinité en tant qu'éthique repos[ent] sur l'expression publique et violente des avoirs virils" (199).

[90] In an ironic passage, Miano demonstrates that in Mboasu men made history and were believed to be the cornerstone of society: "Tuer le père n'était pas envisageable dans ces parages, et les patriarches jouissaient du pouvoir suprême. C'était pour cela qu'ils étaient tous prêts à tout. Pour tenir dans leurs mains la puissance de celui qui dirait la loi. Celui que nul ne jugerait jamais. Père de nation. Père de la révolution. Père fondateur. Grand libérateur" (162). "Infallible," the men held all the superior social positions in society, but this was not necessarily for the best of the society because, Miano suggests, their goals were not necessarily to improve conditions for their communities so much as to do whatever it takes to gain the power to make the laws.

[91] As we saw in Kane's novel and even more so in Bugul's, without *repères*, or points of reference that anchor a culture in its past and allow it to orient itself, a people is hard pressed to combat an insidious redefinition from the outside.

While Isilo makes many points that are in line with the concept of intercontinental fracture that undergirds my study, the distance between the lived realities of this isolated African community and Isilo's distorted project are also evident in his monologue. The first point Isilo makes is that when the French colonized Mboasu, they mutilated its history, causing people to forget their collective memories.[92] He claims that Mboasu's weakness resides in the people's collective cultural amnesia (77). At this point there is indeed truth in what Isilo is saying. As I argued in chapter one in my analysis of Waberi's *Transit*, collective amnesia is one result of an existential violence that destroys from the inside, destabilizing and hollowing out the original identity so that a new identity can be assigned in its place without resistance. Isilo pushes further by claiming that the Eku no longer have a connection to God:

> *Malheureusement, au moment de l'occupation coloniale, les identités africaines furent mutilées, la spiritualité détruite. Les envahisseurs emportèrent tous nos grands totems, afin de les enfermer dans des musées et de les réduire au silence ! Ils firent croire aux Africains qu'ils ne connaissent pas Dieu, et qu'Il ne pouvait que les ignorer ! Ils s'employèrent à effacer le nom qu'ils lui donnaient dans leur langue, pour le remplacer par ces vocables vides* (95)!

This existential mutilation was accomplished not only by taking the totems away from the people to be silenced in faraway museums but also by erasing from the peoples' memory the very name by which they called their god only to replace it with a name that

[92] I understand this mangling of history to refer to processes similar to those discussed in chapter two where European colonizers worked to replace traditional knowledge and ways of life with an unattainable mirage of western subjectivity. This, in the neocolonial period, resulted in what Bugul referred to as Africa being in a "troisième dimension atroce" and no longer sure of what it once was.

had no meaning to them. The colonizers, Isilo argues, were then able to convince the people that they did not know God.[93]

At this point in the novel Miano has already made reference to the creator god Nyambey who is still important in the lives of the villagers. Isilo's insistence that they have abandoned all forms of spirituality therefore serves as a further indication of Isilo's foreignness vis-à-vis the Eku; it is another indication that he does not represent them. Furthermore, this limiting outside view of them harks back to a colonial mentality that assumed the absence of any (valid) spirituality in African ethnic groups, making them a blank slate on which to inscribe a Christian ethic. Because Isilo is ignorant of the Eku's spirituality he assumes that it does not exist or that it is inferior to what he can offer, just as Europeans have done with regard to Africans.[94]

Similarly, like Westerners looking at "backward" African nations, to strengthen his hold on the Eku, Isilo abjectifies this group—who, again, have very little if any direct contact with the outside world and almost no interest in having any. Isilo explains to the Eku gathered before him that he sees a destitute people forgotten by the world and why this was not always the case:

> *Lorsque vous pratiquiez convenablement votre foi, lorsque l'Afrique était encore l'Afrique et qu'il ne lui venait pas cette honte d'elle-même qui l'a réduite à n'être*

[93] I capitalize this because, as I will explain later, Isilo refers to a Christian God (which I believe is always capitalized) while the Eku worship a different creator god.

[94] Christopher L. Miller writes in detail about a European tendency to see Africa as blank or malleable in his book *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (1985). Miller argues that while the "Orient" is made, by Orientalist thought, to be the Other of Europe, Africa is made, by Africanist discourse, to be the other of the other. Miller illustrates such a third space is impossible in a diametrical system of thought: "Africa is the Other's other, the Orient's orient, which happens to be called 'Occident,' and which is nothing. […] Africa often occurs as the third part in cultural hierarchies, but, from the moment it is spoken, 'Africa' is subsumed by one of the other two. In the relationship between the self and other the third is null" (Miller 16). Miller goes on to demonstrate historically Europeans have written different and often conflicting qualities onto Africans, from monstrous to beautiful, from natural to aberrant, etc.

plus rien que la fosse septique du monde, elle vivait mieux. C'est cela que je veux restaurer" (109)

Isilo poignantly states that before the people lost access to their faith,[95] "Africa was still Africa." In positing that Africa is now but a hollowed-out shell that has allowed itself, in its shame, to take on the abject identity assigned it by outsiders, that of the world's latrine (*fosse septique)*, Isilo shows that Africa unwittingly self-identifies with that which is tainted, that which must be expelled from the borders of Western subjectivity in order to guarantee the West's identity as a Subject. In so doing, he helps to create, and profits from, the structure of the fracture zone, namely the erasure and abjectification of African identity. Arguably, the Eku do not likely see themselves as a destitute people forgotten by the world or as the abject of the West. This is partly due to the veiled nature of Western influences in Eku (the men kidnapped during the slave trade and the rise to power of their ineffectual leader Eyoum). Furthermore, while their collective memory may be contaminated by silenced Western interventions, they live more in tune with precolonial traditions than does Isilo.

After having revealed to the Eku their state of abjection, Isilo maintains that this problem could be solved if Africa could once again be "Africa." Following Isilo's logic, for Africa to once again be Africa two things must happen. First, as Mbembe puts it in his argument that the violence of civil war has the characteristics of a defecatory act: "En tant que corps étranger ou comme 'poison', l'ennemi est donc soumis à la pulsion excrémentielle : il droit être expulsé, à la manière d'une chose abjecte avec laquelle il est

[95]Miano addresses this notion of a corrupt version of Evangelical Christianity devoid of any true spirituality taking over in the cities of Mbaosu in the second novel in the trilogy *Suite Africaine, Contours du jour qui vient.* This, again, points to Isilo's disconnection with the village people who never were interested in the imported religions and who still worshipped Nyambey.

besoin de rompre brutalement" (188). Second there is a need to recreate legends that would replace mutilated cultural points of reference and that would once again connect the people to their history. In so thinking, Isilo took upon himself the role of architect of a renewed Africa. The omniscient narrator explains:

> La colonisation avait privé l'Afrique de ses repères, alors il [Isilo] allait en fabriquer d'autres. […] Il fallait certes des légendes, pour donner aux peuples une idée d'eux-mêmes. […] C'était tellement vrai que la moindre erreur dans le choix de ces histoires ou dans la manière de les conter était toujours fatale (131-2).

Indeed, Isilo's choice of stories will prove to be fatal, not only physically for the child he will sacrifice, but existentially for the villagers forced to eat him. In a powerful passage Miano's onmicient narrator suggests ironically that it is too bad if these cultural landmarks (these *repères*) Isilo introduces seem to be obscure; it is too bad that it was not an option[96] for Africa "de rassembler ses plus beaux restes éparpillés çà et là sur le sol des temps présents, mais bien de la précipiter dans les souterrains de son âme" (121).

Isilo Injects the Eku with an Infected Identity Suppressing Any Possibility of Resistance

Ironically Isilo's newly created cultural points of references, for which he claims authenticity, are so contaminated with foreign concepts that they are unintelligible to the Eku. Isilo traced their common roots back to the great figures of Christian tradition with the aim of returning to them "their" connection to God. However, the Biblical references in Isilo's discourse rendered it so foreign to the Eku that it was untranslatable:

[96]In the novel Miano uses the word "option" here, but she is using it ironically or perhaps even sarcastically and is suggesting instead that it is too bad that Isilo's project was not to help Africa reclaim its most beautiful traditions.

> On avait beau leur traduire dans leur langue les paroles de l'étranger, il y avait tout de même des mots pour lesquels il n'existait aucun équivalant en Eku, et qui sonnaient aussi creux à leurs oreilles qu'une calebasse vide. Des mots tels qu'Égypte, pharaon, et le même pour certains entre eux le mot Afrique. Quant aux noms d'Abraham, de Moïse et de Jésus, ils ne comprenaient pas comment des hommes avaient pu porter de si laids (94).

Although Isilo's words were meaningless to them, the Eku were not in a position to express themselves, so they were forced to continue listening to these "histoires dénuées de sens" (94). In narrating their "lost faith" in terms of Western mythology and spirituality Isilo, like the European invaders before him, was forcing onto the Eku an empty identity deeply infiltrated with notions from a Judeo-Christian word-view. In fact, the central dramatic event of Miano's novel, when Isilo forced the villagers to sacrifice, then eat, one of their young boys (Eyia) in order to bind them to his cause and to return them to the fold of "their" "lost" faith, could even be understood as a deeply disturbing parody of the Christian Eucharist.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Isilo's cannibalistic ritual of initiation is also significant in that "cannibalism" was a term used by Europeans to justify their invasion of the Americas by attributing a radical "otherness" (characterized as savagery to the point of inhumanity) onto the people they wished to conquer. Isilo appropriated the colonial practice of misrepresentation and, falsely linking it to traditional African practices, claimed that throughout Africa's history such ritual meals were prepared in special circumstances for the purpose of bringing together members of its communities. In this horrifying scene Miano depicts a garish mixture of what Mbembe referred to as residues of indigenous conceptions of life (Mbembe 200). Nyela and Bleton

remark that as paradoxical as it may seem, there is frequently a magico-religious aspect to this iteration of continental civil war : “Inspirés de cérémonies préparatoires des guerres tribales d’antan, ces rituels, surgis du fond des âges, contribuent au blindage occulte, gage de courage, de la férocité et surtout de l’invulnérabilité nécessaires au soldat envoyé au front” (Nyela and Bleton 245). Furthermore, the forced act of cannibalism is in line with the logic of defecation that propels Isilo’s project forward. Mbembe clarifies that this excrementory drive also manifests in the manducation of one’s enemy which he describes as “cette autre forme de violence qui vise à ingurgiter et à incorporer l’ennemi tué ou des parties de son corps. Cette logique de la manducation a pour finalité la captation de la condition virile de la victime et de sa puissance germinative” (188). Indeed, the child’s genitals were removed first and were not fed to the villagers but kept for Isilo himself (Miano 119-120). Finally, as Mbembe points out, the logics of defecation and manducation are united in that they both demand “la violation des prohibitions et des taboos—une manière de profanation” (Mbembe 188).

This cannibalistic act was so foreign and unthinkable to the Eku that even the one villager who had enthusiastically rallied behind Isilo under the belief that the warlord was indeed a visionary balked at it. Epa, who served as Isilo’s interpreter, initially refused to transmit this specious mythology, objecting that eating human flesh was prohibited in Eku customs and that the ritual meals to which Isilo referred were made “*avec des ingredients inhabituels, mais pas de viande d’homme*” (110). Isilo, however, whose vision of African history sprang from a psychotic imagination, would not hear this information and violently silenced Epa—who, as juvenile as he was, represented the last

shred of Eku's masculine resistance—with a "coup de crosse de mitraillette dans l'estomac."

The silencing of Eku's patriarchy proves to be Isilo's most powerful tool in destabilizing and erasing any communal strength or morality—such as their taboo against cannibalism—that might have spurred resistance. While critics have often focused on "the book's terrifying and graphic scene of cannibalism" (Compan 84), I note that Miano spends relatively little time on the scene in which Isilo forces each of the villagers gathered in the clearing to eat some of the stew containing Eyia's flesh. On the other hand, the scream that the child emits as he is being mutilated by one of the village men reaches far outside of the circle of villagers and is of vital importance. Miano returns to the scream and its effects on everyone and everything it touched multiple times throughout the novel. The following paragraphs will analyze one significant function of the scream, which is to suppress whatever might remain of Eku identity so that Isilo may replace it with his monstrous concept of "us." Isilo, I will illustrate, uses the scream as a weapon with which to open a deep wound in the body politic into which he can inject his poisonous reasoning.

The rebels, who prevent the village man assigned to mutilate Eyia from covering the child's mouth, employ this shrill sound as another weapon of psychological destruction, one with the power to cut through the social body and even rip away what might remain of Eku identity: "L'enfant avait poussé un cri, un vagissement inversé. Un cri qui disait qu'il emporterait un morceau de chacun de ceux qui le regardaient souffrir et mourir" (195). In comparing the cry to the inverse of that made by a newborn, Miano confirms

that instead of gaining a new African identity, the Eku had gone backwards, losing what they had retained of their identity. It is as if the Eku identity were still-born. She further compounds this image of loss by writing that instead of adding to the community body, the scream destroyed something in all those who witnessed it. It took away a piece of all those who, in order to protect their own lives, watched the child suffer and die. The scream thus did the bidding of the rebels by terrorizing the villagers. Furthermore, it marked the end of a livable Eku identity and made room for Isilo's inscription of an identity of his own creation. A death-like silence followed the scream :

> Alentour, les villageois assis n'osaient émettre un hurlement de terreur et de dégout qui leur brûlait les entrailles. S'interdisant de réagir par crainte de la violence qui pouvait fonder sur eux et annuler d'un coup les infimes traces de leur passage sur terre, ils se laissaient vaincre. Leur silence et leur apparente absence aux événements étaient aussi la mort. C'était l'écrasement définitif d'existences qui n'étaient déjà qu'un cortège de jours sans joie ni lumière (121).

This silence oppressed the Eku, forcing them to swallow their screams of abject terror and disgust at the dehumanizing act they had been forced to commit. Their muteness was an indication that they allowed themselves to be vanquished because a more powerful force threatened to wipe away the very traces of their existence. However, this silence, this apparent absence from the macabre events happening in their midst, also marked their symbolic death. This silence, thick as "un drap de velours immense qu'on aurait plié en quatre" (126), immobilized the Eku, imprisoning them in the infected identity Isilo thrust upon them. Furthermore, this identity, far from representing a new beginning untainted by Imperial European influences, fit almost too perfectly into a European

nightmare image of Africa. Isilo, in his misguided fight to free Africa of the abject identity written onto it by Europe, forced the Eku into this very identity.

After the rebels' departure, the Eku remain silent, not looking at each other. Those who were under the trees and who participated in Eyia's sacrifice without understanding the reasons for it did not have any desire to recount what they had lived: "Ne pas parler du mal était la plus sûre manière de s'en garder" (196). The Eku maintained the belief that speaking of evil only passes it on to others, and cannot provide answers that might relieve the pain because any explanation of this inhuman act was beyond their understanding. It is significant that this silence, like a bandage covering an infected wound, could only transform this trauma into a nameless pain, a neurosis that would be transmitted to generations to come (Miano 122). It seemed that nothing was left for the Eku "que la vie de ceux capables de manger leurs propres enfants" (195), and this was a tainted and especially abject life.

Part three: An "Illegitimate" Child: Gender Transgressions and Internalized Distance

Not all of the village women, however, were subject to Isilo's macabre scene. Miano's protagonist, Ayané, was not among the village women silenced and abjectified by Isilo's cruel ritual, instead she remained hidden in the branches of a mango tree located, significantly, at the edge of the village on her parents' property. In other words, true to her own liminal identity vis-à-vis the villagers[97], Ayané was not part of the scene that night, but witnessed it from an interstitial space. However, the agency that such a

[97] I mentioned in the introduction that Ayané occupies an insider-outsider position with respect to the Eku. Born to village parents but considered to be illegitimate as a result of their transgressions, Ayané was never truly part of the community body.

position might have allowed—Ayané could have filled the regenerative role of an Eku woman not silenced and abjectified by Isilo—is nullified by Ayané's internalized distance from her people and by her own infection by an abjectifying outside's view of Africa. In other words, Ayané remained too limited by the circumstances of her life to play the innovative role of a Bhabhaian hybrid. Let us begin this section with an analysis of how Ayané came to be inhabited by this distance from her own people.

Ayané's Inheritance

Ayané's distance from her native community was transmitted to her by the transgressions of her parents. While Ié was able to step out of her feminine role legitimately due to her age and her marital status—in other words, she remained within the limits of the socially acceptable—Ayané's parents, Eke and Aama, lived in opposition to the mores and the strict gender roles that defined the lives of the Eku in many ways. Eke did not live by the rules that guided the lives of the other village men. For one, he married Aama, a woman from outside of the community. In this isolated village where lineage is of prime importance—and Eke comes from a noble one—and outsiders are so marked for many generations,[98] exogamy is frowned upon. This transgression of endogamous marriage traditions, along with the fact that he refused to take a second wife, was seen as an "affront aux demoiselles du pays" (16). In fact, he was the only village man to limit himself to one wife instead of taking multiple wives to ensure a healthy number of sons to continue the family line. Also, unlike the other village men, Eke did not go to work for an almost non-existent salary in "ces territoires où se perdaient tous les

[98]One of the ways people are durably marked by their lineage is where in the village they live. The huts in the village are organized in a half circle. Those occupying the huts on the left side of this demi-ring are the descendants of people captured as the spoils of war between tribes.

hommes" (18). Instead he stayed in the village making figurines and water jugs with clay found in the village. Such use of the dirt—a use that had nothing to do with growing food—went against the mores of the villagers.[99] Furthermore, Eke would decorate these frivolous creations with pigments normally only used to paint designs on the body for certain very specific rituals and that had precise meanings. Moreover, the designs he painted had no meaning to the villagers. Finally, to the villagers' disbelief, Eke made a living selling these things in the city to foreigners.

Because he did not conform to their ideas of how men should behave, especially towards women, the villagers began to doubt his masculinity, deciding that "cet homme-là n'en étaient pas un, qu'il faisait aussi bien de rester avec son Aama" (18). In contrast with the other Eku men, Eke stayed home in the village and endeavored to ease Aama's workload. He dug a well near their hut so she did not have to haul water into the village like the other women. Eke also built her a kitchen so that Aama would not have to cook outside as did the others. The villagers' suspicions that Eke was not really a man were "confirmed" when Aama, too weak in the last months of her pregnancy and do what womanly chores Eke had left to her, "avait dû garder le lit, transformant pour de bon son mari en femme" (19). By allowing him to take over her work her at the end of her difficult pregnancy, it was rumored that Aama transformed her husband definitively into a woman.

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[99] Mboasu is, of course, imaginary, and there were no real references to class in this novel. But in West Africa (including parts of Cameroon), while tilling the soil is work suitable for a noble family, making pots or doing other artisanal activities is not—that would be the work of "gens de caste," respected for their creative activities but also looked down upon. In becoming a potter, Eke had taken a step down in class hierarchy.

As a result of these transgressions, Aama was condemned to be an eternal outsider, forever "une étrangère," and never a part of the community of village women who collectively made up the unified body of Eku. At the same time, the unusual way that Aama lived had the disturbing effect of reminding the village women of the cadaver they each carried inside ("la chimère immolée" and "le rêve mis au tombeau pour l'éternité") because she seemed to live this impossible dream:

> Cette femme avait accepté de quitter le monde qu'elle connaissait, pour l'amour d'un homme. Elle ne sentait pas peser sur ses épaules cette fatalité domestique que les femmes enduraient, et s'autorisait d'autres occupations, pour son seul plaisir, Aama était heureuse. Elle vivait dans ce paradis que les femmes d'Eku croyaient perdu, et leur prouvait qu'il était au contraire encore à conquérir (22).

Aama enjoyed a mobility that the village women had long ago ceased to dream possible. She left her village to marry a man from a different village. While the other women carried the world on their shoulders, their lives defined by their endless domestic work, Aama was free from this toil. She was able to engage in activities simply because she wanted to. Instead of using every scrap of usable land to grow food, she, to the villager's dismay, "wasted" the land by cultivating flowers and other inedible plants. Also Aama married for love, not in order to have status in the community by allying herself with higher status families as did the village women: "Que les hommes aient plusieurs femmes ne les dérangeaient pas, puisque les liens de mariage n'avaient pour but que de leur donner un statut en face du clan et de fournir un arbre généalogique à leurs enfants" (38). The women knew that Aama—who had only produced one child and a daughter at that—was happy in a way that they would never be, no matter how many sons they produced.

Aama awoke in the women the pain of carrying within themselves their fossilized dreams by showing that it might be possible to live without internally immolating themselves.

However, even as an 'outsider' in the eyes of the villagers, it seems that Aama could not escape the pervasiveness of the limitations of her gender in Eku's patriarchy. For the village women, Aama's unusual life was not one to be imitated; instead, it was seen more as a cautionary tale:

> Une fois seulement, on avait vu une femme [Aama] tenter de braver l'immuable. Une folle aux yeux du commun. Elle avait fait comme si elle pouvait décider seule de la cadence qui entraînerait la ronde de ses jours. Aujourd'hui elle est vieille et pauvre. L'enfant unique que ses entrailles avaient porté […] ne lui servait à rien (16).

As the above quotation states explicitly, making the effort ("tenter") to go up against the unchangeable fate of women does not imply that Aama was actually successful in doing so, only that she attempted. Furthermore, the phrase "comme si elle pouvait" suggests that a condition for Aama's liberation was not met. Indeed, in the eyes of the Eku women this condition could not be met and Aama's attempt was doomed to end in failure. Going against the common sense of the community and slipping outside of the strict gender roles did not ultimately result in happiness and prosperity. Ironically, while their child was still young, Aama's husband died from a snake bite, which further suggests that Aama did not truly escape the fate of the women whose lives are like a snake biting its own tail. Ayané, who was not raised to be Aama's "baton de vieillesse," as were other daughters in Mboasu, but rather to be a person in her own right, left to study in France instead of staying to care for her widowed mother. In her old age, Aama, the woman who transgressed social norms to live an impossible dream as no other woman could, was

unable to support herself and became a “charge stérile pour le village” (16). This earned her the title of “mad woman.” In the introduction of her book *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature,* Flora Veit-Wild defines the concept of madness in a manner that is congruent with the villagers’ perception of Aama. Citing Susan Sontag, Veit-Wild writes that “Madness means not making sense […] A mad person is someone whose voice society doesn’t want to listen to, whose behavior is intolerable, who ought to be suppressed” (2). Certainly, Aama’s life is unintelligible in the eyes of the village women who cannot imagine her freedom and relegate her to the margins. Symbolically, relegated to the figure of the village mad-woman, Aama ultimately failed to bring the newness Eke’s exogenous marriage might have introduced into the calcified Eku society already well on the way to ruin.

Ayané’s “Illegitimacy” and Internalized Distance

Ayané’s very existence is thus an offense to tradition and the Eku’s survival in the eyes of Ié and the village women. If from the perspective of the Eku Ayané is an illegitimate child of the village, it is not because she was born of unmarried parents (Eke and Aama were married), for in Eku society children born out of wedlock were accepted into the husband's family once the woman married as they were considered a sign of the woman's fertility and a bonus to the man's family. Even orphans, children whose mothers had died, had a well-defined place within the village despite the fact that these children, as Miano explains, were “mal vus” by the village because it was believed that they killed their mothers (105). However, their paternal families still took care of them, even though this usually meant their getting less attention and care than children who had living

mothers (105). Ié reflects on the status of orphans in the village : "Et tant qu'ils étaient là, ils étaient de là. Parce qu'après tout le mal faisait partie de la vie, et qu'il était normal que le clan engendrât lui-même des êtres qui matérialisaient son côté obscur" (105). In other words, while orphans were seen as a sort of evil, they were seen as one internal to the clan, a normal, if undesirable, part of the community body. On the other hand, "illegitimacy," as Ayo A. Coly defines it in her book, *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*, is "the disentitlement from proper belonging, [and] represents the use of foreignness to mark out bodies that are at odds with the social order" (114). This harks back to the process of abjectification discussed throughout this dissertation as this foreignness is threatening precisely because it is found to be within the social body.[100] Ayané indeed represents a sort of internal foreign body in the eyes of the Eku. The daughter of an outsider and the incarnation of a deeply transgressive union, Ayané is seen as an outside, *illegitimate* element that is especially disconcerting to the village because it is physically within it and thus a threat to the health of the communal body that the Eku women were meant to protect. In accordance with long-standing tradition, Ayané and her parents "belong" to the village: "[…] une femme appartient à l'homme qui l'a prise, et de fait, à son clan" (173). Ayané therefore cannot simply be expelled: instead, as I will argue, the villagers demonize her as the incarnation of her parents' faults.

[100] There are two things to keep in mind. The first is that abjectification involves defining a person in terms of the monstrous, diseased, and unlivable space that forms the constitutive border of the livable, that is, of the human. The second is that foreignness in and of itself, however, should not be equated with the abject. The foreign risks being understood as abject when it is seen (usually with fear) as encroaching on subject. In other words, the abject is that which is seen as neither fully outside and distant nor fully inside and familiar.

Ayané's inheritance of strangeness and distance from her native community was confirmed by the circumstances of her birth, which only further brought into question her legitimacy in the village. Eke, in his single-minded wish to protect Aama from the risks inherent in the birthing practices of village women, insisted on taking her to the hospital. This was instead of allowing the matriarch at the time (Eke's own mother, the wise and highly respected Io) to deliver the child in the village, as was tradition. Her birth assisted by western medicine was thus another insult to the village's traditions. Because she was born in the hospital, Ayané's umbilical cord was not buried under a tree in the village, further inspiring the villagers to see her as an illegitimate body in the village. As a further insult to Eku's traditions, Ayané's parents invented her name, not finding any other name pretty enough for their daughter. All names in Eku had meaning and connected a child to his or her ancestors, but to the ears of the villagers, Ayané's name was three empty, unpronounceable syllables. Ié believes that in giving their child this name, Ayané's parents "avaient décrété que leur enfant serait seule à jamais dans ce monde et dans l'autre" (29). Ayané's solitude and illegitimacy were only confirmed by the name Ié and the other villagers gave her, *la fille de l'étrangère*. In a land where one's name is linked to one's destiny, as is the case in Miano's Eku, this name guaranteed that Ayané would always be estranged, distanced from the villagers.

From infancy Ayané is abjectified by the villagers, particularly by Ié, who sees it as her duty to protect the clan from noxious outside influences. The villagers who can find no other explanation for her existence among them demonize her: "Bien sûr, les femmes la disaient ensorcelée, sans doute une sorcière revenue d'entre les morts. Et

même si aucune n'avait pu trouver sur sa peau de marque pour le prouver, elles interdisaient à leurs enfants de l'approcher" (20). As an accused *sorcière,* Ayané was seen as not fully human. She was thought to be the reincarnation of a spirit returned from the dead whose presence "annonçait les fléaux les plus cruels" (23). To be sure, Ié, as matriarch and enforcer of traditional values, demonstrated a particular dislike for the child. In Ié's eyes, Ayané "mettait en danger la santé du corps que représentait le clan en refusant de s'y fonder" (207). She was always the first to accuse Ayané of sorcery and regularly searched in vain to find some mark on her body to prove that there was indeed an evil spirit within the child. The lack of physical proof of this reincarnated evil did not stop the women from forbidding their children from playing with the young Ayané, but this interdiction did not stop the children from approaching her in order to play with the toys Eke crafted for her. However, the children would never touch her and constantly reminded her that she is *la fille de l'étrangère*. Ayané reflects that she always lived "en lisière de son propre existence" (41). Feeling viscerally different from everyone she encounters, Ayané claims at the end of the novel that she has not yet met anyone with whom she did not feel foreign (*étrangère*). Ayané reflects that inside of her, unknown to the others who never had "le temps de s'inquiéter d'elle" (34) was a nasty scar, "cette balafre qu'elle trimbalait au-dedans, de n'être de nulle part" (34).

Like Ken before her, Ayané lacks cultural mooring, having been born to parents who, by their own transgressions, occupied a liminal space at the edge of the community. Moreover, they did not seem to need anyone else, happily living only in the glow of their love for each other. Miano describes Aama and Eke as each other's soul mate more than

as Ayané's parents: "Ce n'était pas comme s'ils ne l'aimaient pas. Ils étaient plus amants, des âmes sœurs, que des parents" (36). Ayané's parents lived unconventionally, yet they chose to conform to one of the customs of their people: that a couple should have a child. Ayané believes that her parents chose poorly: "Ils n'avaient pas réfléchi au fait qu'ils n'auraient rien à lui léguer que l'étrange et la distance" (36). Estranged from ties to their community, they could not offer Ayané the cultural mooring that would tie her to the Eku. Their love for each other, being the "si bel objet" that Ayané later calls it, was an object complete in itself, apart from the community, and ultimately something that could not be passed on to Ayané. Not being able to give the one thing they did possess to Ayané, Eke and Aama had nothing but foreignness and distance to offer her.

Ayané's lack of cultural mooring means that she was thus never inhabited by any sort of traditional identity. This absence of Eku identity arguably allows her to transgress patriarchal Eku's strict definition of femininity (as evidenced, for instance, by the fact that she travels far outside of the village to go to school). Yet at the same time, Ayané remains limited on a very fundamental level by Eku's patriarchy. Unable to truly imagine a femininity outside of the one she witnessed—if from a distance—in Eku, Ayané based her concept of womanhood on essentially the same painful model forced onto the other Eku girls.

In a powerful passage Miano writes that the village girls involuntarily entered womanhood around the age of nine years. Uncles, cousins or men passing by the village would "screw" them in thickets ("On les culbultait dans les fourrés" [37]). This unceremonious deflowering did not shock the girls as it was very much in line with the

brutal idea they had of what awaited them in their marital beds. Once no longer virgins the girls were encouraged to live "freely" until their marriages. However, Miano adds, this was only a free and fulfilling time for those few "fortes têtes, celles qui n'étaient pas du genre de se lamenter sur les coups du sort, sur les choses inévitables comme la douleur et l'humiliation du viol" (38). Rather than a liberating experience, this "freedom" was simply a manifestation of their imprisonment in their bodies. The pain and the humiliation of rape were inevitable for these young unmarried women seen as both desirable and available by the men in the community.

Ayané did not undergo this experience along with her cohort.[101] Disgusted by the idea of "ce flot de sang répandu sous les assauts d'un sexe d'un homme" (37), thirteen-year-old Ayané deflowered herself with a manioc tuber. On the one hand this act is liberating in that Ayané was able to freely choose the time, place and means of her "entry into womanhood." On the other hand, her first sexual experience, like those of the little girls, was without joy and performed under duress. In fact, Ayané mutilated herself because she believed she was going to be mutilated either way and, like the Eku girls, had no reason to imagine that a woman's first encounter with a man could be a joyful experience. In other words, Ayané could not escape the patriarchal symbolic system in which sexual pleasure is reserved for men while the sex act remains for Eku women a violation of their persons and autonomy. In many ways Ayané escaped the limiting and at times painful cycle of life assigned to women in her society: she did not participate in

[101] Miano never specified exactly how Ayané avoided it but there are many possible explanations: she was usually kept away from the other children, she did not have any men in her life besides her father, or perhaps the village men did not want to touch her because they feared the "sorcière" that she was deemed to be.

seemingly endless domestic tasks; she went to school; she freely traveled outside of the village, etc. Yet, at the same time, it remains that her way out of a confining identity leads to inflicting on herself essentially the same painful initiation into womanhood that she would have otherwise undergone. In other words, Miano's depiction of Ayané taking her own virginity is both another example of evidence of the deep-rooted, eternal quality of the Eku women's oppression in their patriarchal society and of a will to a yet unthinkable liberation from imprisonment as the "other" of the masculine.

An Alienated Ayané Abjectifies

Ayané's alienation from her kin is also echoed in her distance from Africa, which, like the blood of her estranged kin, paradoxically remains within her and therefore translates to a distance from herself. Near the end of the novel Ayané reflects :

> Pour le moment, il n'y avait que ces deux boules noires qui s'entrechoquaient dans sa poitrine, se livrant une bataille résolue: L'Afrique et elle. […] La difficulté, c'était les gens. Ces gens qui étaient aussi elle-même et dont elle ne parvenait pas à s'approcher, sur lesquels son regard était toujours celui d'une étrangère (208).

Ayané's internalized distance from the Eku has formed inside of her two "boules noires," knots in her stomach that seem to be at war. These internal knots represent an uneasiness (dis-ease) in regards both to herself as African—but one without firm cultural moorings—and to Africa—or more specifically the distorted fragments of it that she witnesses. The easy cure for her dis-ease might seem to be distancing herself from her Eku heritage by disowning it, yet the fact that these knots are within her indicates the impossibility of disowning what lies within. Indeed, Ayané finds herself unable to simply turn her back on the Eku after Eyia's murder at the hands of his clan.

Miano physically situates Ayané in a liminal position during the warlord's invasion of Eku that very much corresponds to the distance she has internalized, to her alienation, Ayané was not among the villagers compelled to gather in the middle of the village during this macabre night because unlike the others she was able to disregard Eyoum's (the chief's) call to congregate. Instead, Ayané was in the mango tree at the edge of her parent's property—which is itself located on periphery of the village—where she had gone before the invasion to plan her stealthy escape from Eku the after having buried her mother. Ayané's plan was to leave during the night so that she would not have to speak with anyone, and equally so that no one would have to speak with her. Ayané only partially witnesses the horror unfolding in the village as she is unable to hear: "c'était un peu comme regarder un film muet sans sous-titres" (120). In other words, much like the people outside of Africa who watch the world news, Ayané only had access to fragments of what was actually happening in Eku. She saw much of the scene but had no access to information that might have given her insight as to what caused the people below to behave as they did.

Ayané's physical distance from the scene combined with her internalized distance from the Eku puts her at risk for falling into an abjectifying Smithian afropessimism. Horrified by the mutilated remains of the cannibalized child, Ayané does not attempt to understand why the villagers might have felt compelled to comply with the warlord's sinister rite. Instead, as Compan notes, "she directs her suspicions and accusations at what strikes her as the frustrating passivity of the villagers who are told, at gun point, to perform the act of cannibalism" (91). Ayané does not understand why the villagers did

not refuse to kill and eat their child. Would not they rather die to protect their honor? The fact of Ayané's condemnation of the villagers brings us back to the form of abjectification the West is wont to ascribe to those it wishes to keep outside its borders. Not understanding, or in Smith's case, purposely occluding the circumstances behind condemnable actions or events, makes it too easy to overlook the humanity of those involved.[102]

However, unlike Smith who depicts Africa as a monolithic "dark continent," Miano provides the reader with inside perspectives in addition to Ayané's inside/outside one which highlights Ayané's own psychic colonization by the West. For one, as mentioned earlier, she uses an omniscient narrator who relates the scene from the point of view of the villagers at the same time as relating the scene from Ayané's distanced perspective. Miano also brings in a sort of "knowing native informant," as Compan calls her, to mediate between Ayané and the Eku: Ayané's aunt Wengisané (94).[103] Wengisané "critiques Ayané's own complicity in the Westerner's tendency to cannibalize Africa through the recycling of incomplete, fragmentary images of a violent continent trapped in a dark nightmare of violence" (Compan 92). When Ayané expresses her disgust at the villagers' passivity, Wengisané explains:

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[102] This harks back to the monstrous image of Sow Fall's Asta depicted in chapter one. Asta attacked a guard only after having been violated by this guard, but the country only saw her as an enraged monster strangling a French guard. Furthermore, this brings to mind another image from chapter one: Waberi's Djibouti whose civil war is both supported monetarily and politically and condemned by France.

[103] Wengisané is not from Eku. She is from the same village as Aama (Ayané's mother) and currently lives in Sombé, the nation's capital. However, unlike Ayané, Wengisané understands, without judging, the traditional practices and beliefs of hers and others' communities.

> *Ayané ma petite, ne décide pas comme d'autres avant toi l'ont fait que tous ceux qui ne répondent pas à tes critères ne sont pas des êtres humains. Ils ont agi ainsi parce qu'ils étaient probablement trop humains, trop fragiles…* (200).

Wengisané tries to clarify for Ayané the villagers' need to preserve the lives of the community in the face of total destruction, a point of view to which the reader has already been exposed by way of the omniscient narrator. However, in addition to being ignorant of the village women's drive to survive at any cost, Ayané seems, like Smith, to be equally ignorant of the larger causes of the strife and misery in Mboasu originating from its contact with the West. Wengisané attempts to draw Ayané's attention to the hypocrisy of her condemnation of the Eku:

> *"Il me semble d'ailleurs que ce crime terre à terre et très évident te choque plus que d'autres, plus subtils, plus policés, les incessants crimes en masse que commettent les puissants de ce monde. Tu rejettes ces gens qui ne possèdent que leur vie, mais ça te gêne moins que des salopards patentés décident de faire la guerre si c'est bon pour les affaires. Ici comme ailleurs, des forts sont venus terrasser des faibles, et tout ce qui te perturbe, c'est que ces derniers se soient soumis !" (200).*

This inability, or in Smith's case outright refusal, to see how seemingly blood-free political and economic decisions made in far-off lands can and do have fatal results in Africa only makes it easier to abjectify Africa as an inherently violent space.[104]

The effects of Ayané's distance are ambiguous. On the one hand, given the limitations of the existential erasure suffered by the village women whose non-identities are determined by the specular feminine in Eku patriarchy, Ayané's distance allows her

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[104] For an introduction to this line of thinking, see chapter one section two of this dissertation: *Bachir Benladen* explains that for him violence is a necessary part of daily survival and that he and the other *mobilizés* basically cannot afford to be peaceful if they want to survive in a war zone.

agency—albeit a very limited and partial one—denied the other women. The innovative potential of Eke's exogamous marriage thus may not be exactly completely nullified, but, all the same, it is silenced, not recognized by the community. On the other hand, with this distance comes a sort of two-sided abjectification: Ayané not only suffers alienation and even abjectification in the eyes of the village women, she also, in turn, abjectifies them. Suffering from her own internalized emptiness, Ayané has proven—like Ken in chapter two—susceptible to the infiltration of abjectifying Western world views. In spite of her relative agency, Ayané is therefore certainly no Bhabhaian hybrid champion with the power to inspire innovation at the interstices between cultures.

Part four: Reverberations of a Scream in the Night

Isilo could not completely harness the power of Eyia's scream to be used solely for his macabre purposes. Once released, the scream, Miano's audible representation of a symptom of a widespread fracturing and self-mutilation within the African continent, takes on a life of its own. The terrible sound does not stop at the ears of the Eku gathered in the center of the village: "[l]e hurlement envahit la nuit, grimpa par-delà des collines, sembla atteindre la cime des arbres" (119). After having died "dans un gémissement sur les lèvres d'un enfant qui s'évanouit" (120), it did not disappear; it was engraved "à jamais dans la mémoire de chacun" (119). This scream, at once so existentially destructive to the Eku, also could not be easily buried and forgotten; it could thus potentially facilitate a head-on confrontation of Eku's trauma and prevent it from becoming another mute pain transmitted to future generations in the guise of another nameless neurosis. This final section will examine the reverberations of this scream and

the ways in which the power of the scream continues to resonate long after the death of the child. With the potential to foster active Afropessimism—the goal of which is to take stock of Africa's ills, to recognize where Africans are at fault in order to inspire new way of thinking, and to galvanize them into action—Eyia's anguished scream presents the possibility of journeying through the metaphorical night in order to give name to the silenced traumas that foster societal infection. My analysis in this final section will demonstrate that each of a series of reverberations of the scream generates a rupture in the oppressive fabric of the fractured and infected society. Going a step further, I will show that each rupture helps to create a potential space for new beginnings through a series of partial transformations. In particular, I will argue that the destruction left in the wake of Eyia's scream presents a possible opening through which feminine subjectivity outside of the contaminated patriarchal symbolic system could possibly emerge. The remainder of this chapter will be divided into three subsections each focusing on the contributions of three very different women: Inoni, a village wife and mother; Ayané, the estranged daughter of the village; and Epupa/Erzulie, the "crazy" woman inhabited by a goddess-figure.

Silence Pierced: Inoni

In the wake of the scream there was what the narrator described as "plus qu'une agression émotionnelle. Une transformation. Un renversement des forces en présence" (138). It took the form of a disruption of the strict gender roles assigned the villagers, "the breaking of a long-standing contract between men and women and, more specifically, between husband and wife" (Spleth 93). Inoni, one of the village women,

takes advantage of the paralysis of the patriarchal structure to step out of her strictly defined and self-effacing role: “Cette fois, elle n’avait pas pu être une femme et encaisser” (195). For her husband Esa’s role in killing Eyia, Inoni exacted revenge for years of patriarchal repression by beating Esa to a bloody pulp with a hoe. She then left the now unrecognizable man to die in the center of the village where the rebels had gathered the Eku. This was the first time in the village that “une femme levât la main sur un homme” (138). In killing Esa, Inoni, to some degree, steps out of the endless circle formed by the “snake that bites its own tail” mentioned in section one. The wives of the other men present used this rupture widened by Inoni to their advantage. Knowing that after what Inoni had done their requests would be honored, they asked of Ié, leader of the Eku in the absence of the men, the right to repudiate and banish their husbands—acts equally unheard of in the village. Inoni thus set into motion the first step toward an engagement in active Afropessimism: that of breaking the silence that entombs Mboasu in a perpetual state of societal illness. Liberated from the weight of her husband, Inoni also advocates a call to action to counter the imprisoning silence and fatalistic mentality of the community. She first interrupts the ceremony of mourning (for Eyia) defying Ié’s commandment to never speak of what happened that night. Challenging Ié’s authority, Inoni demands “qu’une fois nous disions les choses” (183). Hours after being expelled from the ceremony Inoni again transgresses by recounting to Ayané what happened that night.

However, it is also evident that Inoni’s new-found agency is in many ways incomplete, as are the transformations she sets into motion. Inoni is still profoundly

limited by the patriarchal system which erases the feminine principle to replace it with the specular feminine.[105] For one, the violence of her murderous act is more in keeping with the masculine principle which condones gaining or keeping power by any means necessary. Even Miano's description of the events that unfolded in the wake of the scream as a "renversement des forces en présence" suggests a mere reversal of power within the binary rather than an actual rupture. A further indication that the phallocentric binary remains intact, and that Inoni does not completely break from it, is that Inoni did not attempt to act to prevent Eyia's murder; rather, she accepted the limitations of her role as woman, citing them later as a self-serving justification for her own passivity. After Ié asks why Inoni killed Esa for his compliance to the rebels when none of the other villagers had intervened, including herself, Inoni explains: "*Parce que le linge sale se lave en famille. Nous ne pouvons nous désavouver les uns les autres en présence d'étrangers*" (134). In claiming that she did not herself act in resistance to the men because that would have meant stepping out of her role as wife by contradicting her husband in public, Inoni essentially maintains the patriarchal notion that the masculine is the active subject and the feminine his passive other.

In addition to the questionable degree to which Inoni truly created a rupture in the patriarchal structure in Eku society, we must also consider the compromised morality of her "liberating" exploit. By brutally murdering her husband Inoni committed a crime that

[105]In chapter two I drew upon Butler's reading of Irigaray's notion of the specular feminine in my analysis of gender in Bugul's Senegal. Butler explains that the specular feminine is a "feminine" identity imposed on women; it forms the necessary "other" that defines masculine subjecthood. However, in order to adopt this specular feminine identity—the only one legible in this patriarchal symbolic system—the excess feminine, which is defined as the feminine that exceeds the bounds of masculinity's other, has been rendered unintelligible and is thus erased, unable to find expression.

she herself recognizes as one of "des actes les plus répréhensibles ici chez nous […]" (184). Logically this reprehensible act only further weakens the potentially transformative power and the moral force of Inoni's message. This compromised morality further brings into to question whether any true or lasting transformation occurred in Eku and whether there was an actual break in the patriarchal colonization of the psyche discussed in section one.

Finally, by publicly contradicting Ié during the mourning ceremony, Inoni transgressed the mores of the clan to the point that the others were led to believe that "[p]our avoir assassiné son mari, elle avait perdu la raison" (174). Thus, like Aama whose transgressions resulted in her being labeled mad by the Eku and in her eventual death, Inoni was also marginalized by the Eku who regarded her as mad because she attempted to break the silence dictated by their leader Ié. Inoni's final act of resistance, telling Eku's story to an "outsider," resulted not in a transformation of Eku, but in the death of Inoni who had stepped too far out of her place. Inoni's act of defiance before her suicide—her recounting of the details of Eyia's murder to Ayané, an outsider—brings us to the second partial transformation that Eyia's scream in the night set into motion: the formation of Ayané's first real connection with her village; a connection that was amplified for Ayané when she heard Inoni's story.

Distance Abridged: Ayané

Eyia's scream marked the first step in a personal transformation for Ayané. It triggered a rupture in her notion of reality—a reality defined by her distance from her own people, a distance that she had unthinkingly internalized, and by the abjectifying

external gaze that had insidiously infected her psyche. The scream, Miano writes, communicated more to Ayané than would have all of the conversations she had not been able to hear (120). Although at the time she did not know the circumstances that produced it, this blood-curdling sound connected her to the gory scene and to the villagers subjected to it on a visceral level: upon hearing the scream, her blood froze and she felt fatally exposed in spite of the fact that she remained out of sight of the rebels and the villagers. She was immobilized by this sound that did more than simply fade away, taking a part of the villagers with it: Eyia's cry "circulait encore dans ses vaisseaux sanguins, comme une sorte de fluide glacial qui la maintenait pétrifiée" (125). This shrill scream, which penetrates to her very core, galvanizes her to attempt to bridge the distance separating her from her own people. For Ayané, the child's painful cry awoke in her the realization that she could not remain an outsider, hidden behind her parents' house, blind to the drama that was unfolding in the village: "[e]lle ne pouvait pas se trouver si près, et ne rien savoir. […] l'ignorance ne pouvait être un gage d'innocence" (125-6). The scream had created in Ayané a powerful connection to the scene, compelling her to witness the horror unfolding in the "interior of the night" even if it meant risking her own life. She was therefore forced to abandon her original plan to steal away from Eku during the night, so as not to have to interact again with the villagers. Her clandestine discussion with the late Inoni amplified her connection to the villagers on a visceral level. Not only did Inoni recount the events leading up to Eyia's scream for Ayané, providing her with the information that she lacked, but for the first time in her life Ayané was in close physical proximity to a member of the clan, "Jamais elle n'aurait cru qu'un jour elle se

trouvait si près d'aucune femme du clan" (191). In an attempt to calm the distraught Inoni, Ayané even touched her, a village woman, thus establishing for the first time a physical connection with her people from whom she had always been distanced.

The late Inoni's words were indeed not in vain. They propelled Ayané to take a first step toward an engagement in active afropessimism: a desire to understand the mechanisms at work in Africa's metaphorical night. After leaving the village at the request of Ié, who blamed her for Inoni's suicide in the village well, Ayané went to the capital city of Mboasu where she interned herself in a hotel room for a few days. She still believed that "les ténèbres étaient plus épaisses en Afrique que d'ailleurs," but she took an important first step toward piercing this shroud of darkness (206). Listening to a Panafrican radio station for the first time, "il lui sembl[e] découvrir l'Afrique" (205). Ayané "écout[e] la radio pour tenter de démonter ces mécanismes mentaux qui ne [sont] pas les siens, et amenaient les gens à laisser leurs enfants disparaître dans la nuit ou à les manger. […] Ayané voulait bien reconnaître qu'il y avait là une vision du monde à laquelle elle ne comprenait pas grand-chose" (206-207). She reflects that she has come to a fork in the road where she has a choice between three paths, the first and third of which basically involve turning her back on a people who hurt her in favor of an illusory world where she can stay in an ivory tower of moral superiority. However, the second path

> était un pas vers ces inconnus familiers, un pas sincère, dénué de mesquinerie et d'idées préconçues, qui viendrait faire connaissance et non pas prendre en défaut. [Cette voie] était longue et rude, conduisant sinon à l'acceptation, du moins à la compréhension et au respect. Elle lui semblait plus ardue que la première parce qu'elle consistait à apprendre une grammaire psychique qu'elle aurait dû posséder (209-210).

That Ayané even notes the existence of this second path—one that she will eventually choose and which will propel her in her journey through the course of the next two novels in Miano's trilogy—reveals her recognition that there may be an African reality outside of the seemingly hopeless and abject one assigned the continent by the West. This recognition is a significant step toward bridging the distance Ayané internalized in her childhood and toward an engagement in active afropessimism.

A Glimpse Beyond? Epupa

The next reverberation of Eyia's scream in the night takes the form of a scream "qui ressembl[e] au hurlement d'une femme en couches" (211). This scream was the opposite of Eyia's "vagissement inversé." Where Eyia's dying shriek served to existentially tear apart what remained of the Eku subjectivity, this scream, in calling to mind childbirth, suggests that underneath the pain there may be hope of a new livable subjectivity. The source of this painful but hopeful scream could only be one not contained within the infected patriarchal structure of Mboasu. Any real change necessitates breaking free of both the binary in which Westerners occupy the subject position and Africans are relegated to the abject and the patriarchal binary which, in Irigarayan terms, erases the true feminine to guarantee domination by the masculine.[106]

Epupa incarnates the abject/displaced other at the edge of intelligibility within Mboasu society. Like Aama and Inoni, Epupa is considered *folle* because Mboasans find

[106] Throughout this chapter I have been making the argument that in patriarchal societies—including the Eku—the masculine erases the true feminine in order to bring women into a symbolic order as merely a reflection of the masculine (the other to the masculine subject). The feminine, like a moon reflecting the masculine sun, can do nothing but reflect the light of the masculine and is therefore unable to make any contribution of her own in this system of one. This situation, as I have demonstrated, becomes particularly pernicious on a societal level as the patriarchy itself sits upon a crumbing foundation.

her behavior strange and intolerable—: she is a young woman who wanders the streets alone and naked screaming at passersby—and thus fits Veit-Wild's definition of madness.[107] Expressed only in incomprehensible screams, hers is a voice to which society does not want to listen. For instance, when the man at the desk in the hotel heard Epupa's scream, "il avait seulement levé la tête un bref instant, et s'était replongé dans la lecture d'un quotidian local" (211). When Ayané asks about the scream, the man at the desk explains that it is just the unintelligible rantings of a crazy woman who has been seen wandering the streets of Sombé for the past few weeks. However, as opposed to Aama and Inoni who die as a result of their unthinkable transgressions, and even to Ayané who was more or less shunned by her village and labled *sorcière* while not being able to fully break with the specular feminine, Miano makes of Epupa an element truly outside of any patriarchal binary. This position *beyond* is largely unimaginable for those caught within a symbolic system predicated on the suppression of any subjectivity that might compete with what is—and must be—seen as the only viable subjectivity. However, as I have shown throughout this chapter, it is not completely absent or erased. Let us recall, for example, Ie's *rire sauvage* that evokes an Irigarayan excess feminine, seeping through the cracks in Eku's decaying patriarchy.

[107] Here I am referring back to my discussion of madness in the second section of the chapter: In the introduction of her book *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature,* Flora Veit-Wild defines the concept of madness in a manner that is congruent with the villagers' perception of Aama. Citing Susan Sontag, Veit-Wild writes that "Madness means not making sense […] A mad person is someone whose voice society doesn't want to listen to, whose behavior is intolerable, who ought to be suppressed" (2).

The sudden appearance of Epupa at the end of the novel, her distance from the other characters, and the wisdom that she imparts in her rantings[108] could certainly suggest that Epupa is a sort of mouth piece for Miano.[109] While I certainly find this to be a valid reading, it is important to note that Miano also imbues Epupa with the spirit of Erzulie:

> On eût dit Erzulie elle-même, présentant son visage rouge, sa face violente. […] Sa robe était aussi rouge que le crayon à l'aide duquel elle avait redessiné ses sourcils totalement rasés, et son rouge à lèvres débordant tout autour de sa bouche" (212).

Later in *Aubes Écarlates* it is revealed that there is indeed such a powerful spirit inhabiting Epupa's body and that the words Epupa speaks do not originate from her own consciousness- which, like that of the other women, would be limited by the patriarchal structures that colonized it (*Aubes*, 195). However, Miano also makes clear that this spirit is not a foreign element, it is not an intruder but one who came from deep within the women of Mboasu,[110] not unlike the immolated "chimera" each carry inside. Erzulie is not a flesh and blood woman but a lwa (loa) or spirit or lesser god/dess through whom one may communicate with the Creator God in the syncretic Haitian practice of Voodoo. Furthermore, that fact that Miano brings in Erzulie, a Haitian figure, instead of, for instance, Oshun who originated in West Africa, speaks to another aim of Miano's novel:

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[108]I will discuss this wisdom shortly.

[109]Miano herself writes at a remove from her native Cameroon and seems with her novels, particularly her *Trilogy Africaine* to be trying to understand an Africa abjectified by the West for its violence and misery.

[110]When Epupa/Erzulie addresses the villagers towards the end of *Aubes écarlates*, she is not seen as an outsider inspired by her foreignness: "Personne ne se dressa contre cette femme étrange, aveuglante et rouge, qui ne parlait même pas l'eku. Elle avait démontré […] qu'elle n'était pas une intruse. C'était du plus profond d'eux-mêmes qu'elle avait surgi, pour s'adresser au villageois" (*Aubes*, 243)

a call for Africans to recognize their connections to, and responsibility for remembering the victims of the slave trade.

Significantly, Erzulie is the female prototype of Voodoo (with Legba as the male) and together they are a unified principle—much like the Human in the origin tale told by the grandmother in *Contours du jour qui vient* (236).[111] In fact, the very structure of Voodoo divinities lends itself well to this notion that masculine and the feminine principles were not meant to be divided. As Maya Deren explains in her in-depth study of Haitian Voodoo, *The Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti,* most of the major cosmic forces are either coupled totalities (with both masculine and feminine personae) or androgynous figures (137). In other words, Erzulie, in Miano's novels, easily stands for the feminine principle that was necessarily erased and replaced with the specular feminine within the phallocentric binary. She is an element truly *beyond* the confines of the patriarchal symbolic system, one that could easily be compared to Irigaray's excess feminine. Moreover, Deren notes that "[…] Voudoun has given woman, in the figure of Erzulie, exclusive title to that which distinguishes humans from all other forms: their capacity to conceive *beyond* reality […]" (Deren 138, italics mine). This ability to imagine innovation is particularly important for the fractured, infected Mboasan society which, instead of healing, delves deeper into its wound by mutilating itself in genocides and civil wars (Miano, 122).

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[111]Recalling our earlier discussion about the second opening epigraph ("Lorsque Nyambey, le créateur du ciel, de la terre et des abîmes façonna l'Homme, ce n'est pas homme et femme qu'il les créa. Il fit seulement l'humain, et l'investit des principes masculin et féminin" [*Contours*, 236], She goes on to explain how the masculine principle developed the desire to dominate the feminine and that is how man and woman came to be; with woman not a distinct but integral part of the Human, but, rather, a reflection of man and his desire to dominate.

The lwa Erzulie can take on different forms, such as "coquette to fierce warrior mother to red-eyed weeping crone"[112] The crone (also called *Yeux-Rouges*) is "the one who suffers the burden of the world's sorrows."[113] Like Erzulie *Yeux-Rouges,* Epupa wears a red dress with red lipstick smeared all over her mouth. Epupa/Erzulie rants in her desperation to break the silence covering Africa's festering wounds, the silence that fuels the civil war and gives power to warlords such as Isilo:

> *—Maintenant, il suffit! Je le dis, et le redis. Suffit de faire semblant, de toujours accuser les autres. Ils ont leurs torts, et leurs mains sont souillées du sang dont ils se sont abreuvés. Mais quoi qu'ils aient pu faire, et quelles qu'aient pu être les manipulations ourdies par eux contre nous, ils ne peuvent porter les crimes qui sont les nôtres.*
>
> *Pouvons-nous continuer à prétendre que des millions de nos fils nous furent arrachés, sans la complicité sur place ?*
>
> *Confessons la faute ! Prenons-en notre part. Je le dis et le redis ! Il est temps de reconnaître que nous avons participé à notre propre saignée…Si nous n'admettons pas les noirceurs du passé, saurons-nous nous défaire de celles qui nous étreignent encore si vigoureusement ? Voici ce jour nos fils en route pour la guerre. Voici qu'une fois de plus, et sans prendre la mer, ils sont privés d'amour et de lumière.*
>
> *Tandis que nous quémandons la culpabilité de l'Occident, à qui nos enfants demanderont-ils réparation ?* (213).

With this sudden verbal eruption, Epupa/Erzulie does more than just break the silence shrouding Mboasu, she breaks it in an *excessive* manner. This excess is evident in the very structure of her soliloquy. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that she twice repeats the

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[112] http://www.thaliatook.com/AMGG/erzulie.php.

[113] http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/voodoo/biglist.htm

phrase "*Je le dis et le redis*" which literally "says it" twice. After each repetition Epupa/Erzulie calls attention to a different, festering element of Mboasu's metaphorical wound: first the slave trade and then the current violence that plagues significant portions of the continent. Moreover, Miano employs cutting assonances and alliterations by repeating "i," "s" and "z" sounds throughout the speech and in close succession particularly in the beginning (*"**i**l **s**uff**i**t! Je le d**i**s, et le red**i**s. **S**uffit de faire **s**emblant, de toujours accu**s**er le**s** autres. Il**s** ont leurs torts, et leurs mains **s**ont **s**ouillées du **s**ang dont ils **s**e **s**ont abreuvés"* (213)). This draws the reader through the speech connecting, on an almost palpable level, her call to change ("***il s**uff**i**t")* to her imperative to break the silence ("*Je le d**i**s, et le red**i**s)"* to a need to recognize the extent of the West's culpability (*"Il**s** ont leurs torts, et leurs mains **s**ont **s**ouillées du **s**ang dont ils **s**e **s**ont abreuvés")* and finally connecting it to the need to admit Africans' own role in the violence of the past and present ("*nou**s** avons part**ici**pé à notre propre **s**aignée…**Si** nous n'admettons pas les noir**c**eurs du pa**ss**é, **s**aurons-nous nous défaire de **c**elles qu**i** nous étreignent encore **si** v**i**goureu**s**ement").*

Very much in line with a practice of active afropessimism, Epupa/Erzulie's monologue vividly paints the more sinister side of Africa's past and present. However, there is no distanced sense of judgment in her speech as there is in the American journalist Stephen Smith's condemnation of Africa in his *Negrologie, Pourquoi l'Afrique meurt*. In fact, Epupa/Erzulie presents Africa's pain in embodied and even visceral images which emphasize how both the West and Africa were/are actively killing the African body politic. Western hands are not only covered with African blood, they also

did not stop at shedding this blood, but glutinously drank it ("*dont ils se sont **abreuvés**")*. This vampiric relationship between the West and Africa calls to mind, for instance, the blood taken and consumed in the form of slaves as well as that shed in colonial conflicts and neocolonial proxy wars.

However, Epupa/Erzulie calls attention, in no uncertain terms, to the need to take ownership of the crimes committed by Africans against Africans: "*Mais quoi qu'ils aient pu faire […] ils ne peuvent porter les crimes qui sont les nôtres"* (213). Here again, we see the verbal excess that marks her speech. Where she could have simply used that possessive "*nos*" to qualify the noun "*crimes,*" Miano qualified the noun with a relative clause "*qui sont"* and an empathic pronoun "*les nôtres"* to underscore African ownership of the crimes. Moreover Epupa/Erzulie similarly uses a vocabulary that draws attention to the killing of an African body politic, but this time at the hands of Africans. Opening the second half of her speech, Epupa/Erzulie calls for the recognition of Africans' participation in their own bloodletting (***s**aignée*). Furthermore, it is precisely the silence and inability to admit fault that now allow the sinister acts of the past to vigorously strangle present-day Africa in the form of endless internal wars. Finally, Epupa/Erzulie calls for consideration of what sort of future will be left to an Africa whose sons are marched off to war. Who will these children blame if their own people are depriving them of love and light?

Epupa/Erzulie thus points out Africans' fractured existence, Mboasu's unhealed wound occluded in the metaphorical evening and night, in referring to the blood on the hands of the "others." Although she calls for Africans to acknowledge the crimes they are

committing against each other, it is also evident in this passage that, in contrast to a Smithian racist afropessimism, through the character of Epupa/Erzulie Miano is not suggesting that this is the natural state of Africa. Instead she is calling for a recognition that the current violence and social disorder springs from the silencing the unthinkable acts, committed by "others" but also with the complicity of some Africans. This unacknowledged complicity impedes the formation of a livable African identity--one not marred in the abjection inscribed by the West. Epupa/Erzuie advocates for Africans to admit their own fault, their own participation in the horrors of the slave trade. This buried trauma is repeating itself in the form of societal disorder—particularly in the form of endless wars that claim the lives of their children. Erzulie's rant, which exposes the more sinister aspects of African past and present—is a call for memory and healing in the place of violence and continued existential mutilation.

The novel ends with a third painful scream. When Ayané attempts to speak to Epupa and comfort her, Epupa closes her eyes, raises her head to the sky and screams as she did before and "[s]ans savoir pourquoi, Ayané ressentit le besoin de se joindre à elle. Alors, elle étreignit la jeune femme et, comme elle, cria de toutes ses forces" (214). The scream that burned inside Ié when she could not convince Eyoum of the impending danger and the one that equally burned inside the villagers silenced by horror and disgust at their forced act of cannibalism has finally found expression. However, any hope for the coming day remains ambiguous as the scream it remained unintelligible to all but two women who are abjectified by their communities.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the insidious mutations of neocolonial fracturing in Francophone Africa. My reading of Miano's fictional civil-war-torn country revealed the extremely violent ways in which (neo)colonial France's existential destabilization and erasure of African identities manifest on a societal level, destroying the social body. Among the manifestations of destabilization explored in Miano's novels are: Mboasu's chaotic landscape, pock-marked by the internecine violence of Mboasan mercenaries attacking individuals and communities; loss of cultural moorings on national level due to (neo)colonial alienation; the weakening and break-down of the traditional patriarchal leadership of the society which might otherwise have fought off mercenary attacks; and the continued suppression of the (true or in Irigarayan terms, excess) feminine which may have been able to provide strength and cohesion to the otherwise crippled communities.

Of particular interest was the concept of Mboasu's fracture becoming infected precisely because it was buried in silence in hope of protecting future generations from the horrors of the past. I argue that it is this infection that is actively killing Mboasans. With the social structure weakened and moribund, I conclude this chapter with the suggestion that healing must come from somewhere else, but not from the outside. Healing must come from beyond the fracture, as symbolized by Epupa and her very accurate diagnosis of Mboasu's disorders. Epupa, who as an embodiment of the erased feminine of the Mboasan people, the excess feminine, is as Mboasan as the people who ignore her cries for change, but she is outside of the limitations of the binaries that trap them: certainly outside of the masculine gender binary, but also ably to lucidly inspect Mboasu's wounds and their European AND African origins.

In chapter four I will continue my exploration of infections that have developed in the untreated societal wounds from fracture zones and the deadly results of burying them in a shroud of silence. However, now I will return my focus specifically to the intercontinental fracture between France and one of its former African lands: Algeria. I will interrogate how the physical and existential violence that France visited upon Algeria has mutated into an infected wound that each country has buried, a growing infection that threatens not only the Algerian social body, but the French one as well.

Chapter 4
Devoured by Fracture: Nina Bouraoui's *Garçon Manqué*

> Je viens de la guerre. Je viens d'un mariage contesté. Je porte la souffrance de ma famille algérienne. Je porte le refus de ma famille française. Je porte ces transmissions-là. La violence qui ne me quitte plus. Elle m'habite. Elle vient de moi. Elle vient du peuple algérien qui envahit. Elle vient du peuple français qui renie (32).
>
> Nina Bouraoui, *Garçon manqué*

> Le passé ne sert plus d'explication du présent pour élargir le champ des possibles, mais recouvre le présent pour faire disparaître le futur. (161)
>
> Benjamin Stora, *Transfert de la mémoire*[114]

The painful words in the opening epigraph are those of Franco-Algerian writer Nina Bouraoui's child protagonist in *Garçon manqué* (2000), commonly seen as Bouraoui's first semi-autobiographical novel.[115] Nina,[116] like Bouraoui herself, is the daughter of an Algerian father and a French mother. Born Yasmina Bouraoui in Rennes in 1967 the young narrator, like the author, spent most of her childhood in Algeria. *Garçon manqué* takes place over a dozen years during which Nina lived in Algiers but spent her summers in Rennes and leaves off when she definitively moved to Rennes at the age of 14 to escape the mounting anti-French violence in Algeria. However, the violence that plagues Nina in Algeria is equally present in France and even within the child herself. As stated in the opening epigraph, it is a violence that never leaves her, one

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[114] This is taken from the second edition of *Transfert de la mémoire* published in the second part of Benjamin Stora and Alxis Jenni's dialogue *Les Mémoires dangereuses: suivi d'une nouvelle edition de Tranfert d'une mémoire* (2016).

[115] *Garçon manqué* marks the beginning of a trilogy of semi-autobiographical novels that includes *Poupée bella* (2004) and *Mes mauvaises pensées* (2005).

[116] From here on out I will refer to the narrator/protagonist of Nina Bouraoui's novel as Nina and the author herself as Bouraoui.

that lives within her and that even emanates from her. It is a violence born of fracture: one that comes from the war, her parents' contested marriage, the suffering of her Algerian family, and the refusal of her French side to recognize Algerian suffering and its largely French origins. Furthermore, as Nina reflects, it is a violence that is devouring the child from within her very being: "Mon visage algérien. Ma voix française. J'ai l'ombre et la lumière. Je suis l'une contre l'autre. J'ai deux éléments, agressifs. Deux jalousies qui se dévorent" (33). This image of two "jealousies that devour each other/themselves[117]" is a poignant reminder that the interstitial space that Nina occupies (and that occupies her as it is internalized) is one that promises—more so than Abdo-Julien's and Samba Diallo's failed hybridity—destruction of life in the place of a Bhabhaian cultural innovation. Moreover, Nina's internal and external experiences of interstitial conflict situate the fracturing as occurring very much on a visceral level and opposed to the utopic Bhabhaian thoughts that defined much of Abdo-Julien's very cerebral life experience.

Focusing on the experiences of Bouraoui's troubled narrator, this fourth and final chapter will bring my examination of fracture full circle, back to Bensaâd's metaphor of the militarized Mediterranean Sea—a no-longer-fluid space where human lives are snuffed out, crushed against an impenetrable wall. Here I play on both the denotation of the word "devour," to swallow up or to prey upon, and a connotation, "to consume destructively, recklessly or wantonly; to make away with, waste, destroy."[118] Drawing on Bensaâd's argument in the introduction to this dissertation I first defined fracture zones

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[117] Se dévorer is an example of a pronominal verb in French. As such it can be translated both as "to devour each other" and as "to devour themselves."

[118] Both definitions taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary.* Consulted online on 02/09/2018. http://www.oed.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/view/Entry/51597?redirectedFrom=devour#eid

as spaces of friction and grossly uneven violence that consume or swallow up life itself. In the previous three chapters I have upheld that definition as I added nuance to it through examinations of fractures as physical spaces (geopolitical borders between the Global North and African countries fractured by their contact with Europe) and psychic spaces (fissures and divisions created within the psyches of the [formerly] colonized). The current chapter will establish that fractures are also devouring (destroying, laying waste to) the future not only of the (formerly) colonized, but that of Subject/author-of-fracture as well, in this case France.

The specificity of the Franco-Algerian relationship provides a particularly fertile terrain for my examination of the ill-effects that creating a fracture zone might have on the Subject-author-of-fracture. As I have previously argued, a fracture zone is generated by the Subject as a space outside of itself into which it constantly expels its abject--that which it perceives as diseased, violent or somehow incompatible with its self-definition--in order to maintain the integrity of its self-defined subjecthood. Algeria's place in French imaginary precluded it from functioning as buffer zone,[119] thereby setting the stage for a crisis of French subjectivity. France, I have argued, exports the inequalities and violence that guarantee French political, social and economic privileges to the fracture zones that it creates. However, at the time of colonization, France saw Algeria not as a space fully outside of itself but, rather, as "une 'nouvelle frontière' pour la

[119] Examining the fracture zones I first introduced in chapter one, the Roissy airport and the newly independent East African country of Djibouti, we see that although the spaces and the methods of domination differ, both Roissy and Djibouti are indeed essentially liminal spaces that serve as walls protecting French subjectivity and upholding French interests. Both Waberi and Sow Fall presented Roissy as a carefully controlled and authoritarian space designed to filter out individuals seen as threatening/abject while protecting the privilege of mobility of those deemed citizens/subjects. Waberi's Djibouti, on the other hand, is a civil-war torn country insidiously undermined by a puppet master-like France, which could be said to maintain a sort of control through a screen of chaos.

France, une sorte d'Amérique à mi-chemin, avec ses grands espaces (vides ?) à conquérir, à mettre en valeur" (Stora 22). Using the term *nouvelle frontière,* Stora specifically refers to the definition of frontier in the American context which is defined not as a border delimiting two polities but as "That part of a country which forms the border of its settled or inhabited regions: as (before the settlement of the Pacific coast), the Western frontier of the United States."[120] This *nouvelle frontière* transformed Algeria—in French imaginary—into an integral part of France to be developed and triumphed over, a territory that both belongs to France and one that is in need of *francification*.[121] The French thought of Algeria in terms of "le grand Ouest de la France, notre vierge prairie, certes peuplée d'indigènes, mais qui d'une certaine manière ne sont que partie prenante du décor" (Bancel and Blanchard 42). Unlike other French colonies in Africa or Asia, Algeria made up—from 1848, eighteen years after the conquest of Algers, until 1962—three *départements* of France.[122] Algeria, thus, was technically part of France for more than a century.

The result of this interpenetration was, as Étienne Balibar stated in his *Droit de cité* (1998), that "L'Algérie est irréductiblement présente dans la France comme la France l'est dans l'Algérie" (81). The sharp dividing line the *Métropole* historically maintained between itself and its colonies is clearly smudged here, resulting in a peculiar malaise: each country has within in it the other, which is perceived as a foreign body that is

[120]Oxford English Dictionary online, consulted 12/4/2015

[121] At the same time continental France was being "*francisée*" (under the Third Republic) Algeria was being projected to be rendered French in the same manner as Brittany or Occitania, primarily by mandating that all school instruction be in French and reflect mainstream French culture.

[122] As historian Benjamin Stora notes in *Transfert d'une Mémoire* (1999), for France, "l'Algérie a longtemps été considérée comme le 'joyau' de la colonisation française" (32). This, he explains, was due in part to its large and valuable expanse of land, the number of French settlers who called Algeria home, and, of course, to the fact that Algeria shared the same government as continental France (32).

impossible to expel. David Carroll builds on this notion in his book, *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (2007), when he notes that in the case of France-Algeria this constitutive border is no longer at the edges of the Subject: "The outside, foreign or alien, which in principle are in opposition to the sameness or homogeneous identity of the inside, are in fact located within it, functioning as constitutive elements of the inside […]" (42). Drawing on work of these and other theoreticians, historians and on my own analysis of Bouraoui's novel, I will demonstrate that the presence of this internal foreign element and the existential threat it is made to represent result in crisis on both sides of the sea: in Algeria this is due to a need to reconstruct an Algerian subjectivity untainted by the French occupation and therefore free of French influence;[123] France, I will argue, suffers from a form of what Aimé Césaire called *le choc du retour,*[124] or the return of France's exported colonial violence to infect French soil. This, I argue, is essentially a return of the formerly expelled abject that is found to no longer be expellable and thus remains irreductibly within the French social body, becoming an internal crisis threatening to destroy Republican Subjectivity.

To make matters worse, each country covered over its wounds without (ad)dressing them, thus allowing them to stagnate and fester. As Benjamin Stora reminds us in the opening epigraph[125] the unaddressed past traumas constrict the innovative

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[123] Just as we saw with Mboasu in chapter three.

[124] Decades before the Franco-Algerian war, Aimé Césaire coined the term *choc du retour* in his *Discours sur le colonialism* (1955) to describe the boomerang effect of colonial violence on the colonizer himself. Césaire argues that colonization decivilizes the colonizer, pointing out that each time the French accept the fact of violence committed overseas, civilization acquires another "poids mort, une régression universelle qui s'opère, une gangrène qui s'installe, un foyer d'infection qui s'étend […] il y a le poison instillé dans les veines de l'Europe et le progrès lent, mais sûr, de l'ensauvagement du continent" (11).

[125] "Le passé ne sert plus d'explication du présent pour élargir le champ des possibles, mais recouvre le présent pour faire disparaître le futur" (161)

capacities of the present and, thus, erase the future. Stora famously described France as suffering the gangrenous effects of its repressed memories of the Algerian war in his seminal work, *La gangrène et l'oubli: la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (1991).[126] Stora's gangrene is an apt description of the sort of societal infection I will be discussing. However, for my study, I propose the term necrosis, a more generalized medical condition of which gangrene is but one form. In the medical definition, necrosis occurs from bodily injury or trauma caused by external factors that results in the death of tissue. On a cellular level, death is the result of autolysis, process in which a cell literally *devours itself* through the release of digestive enzymes.[127] In my study, I propose to examine the effects of untreated social and psychic wounds that result in a necrotic social body that is destroying its own future by not dealing with infections caused by past wounds. There are several reasons why I favor the term necrosis over the better-known concept of gangrene for this study, the primary one being that, "*nécrose*" is a term that Bouraoui herself employs in the novel to describe French racism and the silence in which it develops. Secondly, I use the term necrosis because, whereas gangrene evokes an image of a visible piece of rotted flesh, such as an infected limb that must be amputated to stop the spread of infection, necrosis suggests a deadly infection that may be diffuse, insidious, and harder to pin down as it could even refer to the unnoticed death of a single cell that has yet to cause the death of other cells.

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[126] Stora defines this gangrene of the social body as the re-surfacing of buried traumas or what he calls the *retour du refoulé* which materializes in French society as social inequity and out-bursts of violence, particularly between *les Français de souche* and *les Français issus d'immigration.*

[127] Definition of necrosis developed after consulting http://www.woundsource.com/patientcondition/necrotic-wounds July 2nd, 2017

I will demonstrate that both France and Algeria are suffering from forms of infection and even necrosis in Bouroaui's *Garçon Manqué*. Nina, as a figure that both occupies the intercontinental Franco-Algerian fracture zones and carries them within her, allows for a profound examination of the lasting self-destructive symptoms that plague both France and Algeria and which, I contend, result in both societies slowly killing themselves from within as they attempt to rid themselves of perceived foreign invaders. My arguments will be divided into three main sections. The first section will establish Nina's unique and deeply troubled position of embodying the violently opposed binary paradigms: France and Algeria, male and female. In the second section I will examine Algeria, focusing on France's cultural and economic eradication at the time of colonization and arguing that France consumed Algeria, extracting its vitality and replacing it with a sickly and essentially (im)mobile[128] mass of men. My use of the word "men" to stand for the Algerian social body is not gratuitous as Bouraoui depicts public spaces in Algeria as uniquely masculine and even hostile toward women. I will also contend that the sickened (masculine) Algerian social body, in turn, devours the feminine in general and even within Nina, leaving her even more deeply fragmented and disfigured. Finally, this second section will look at the ways in which Algeria's wounds from its fracturing encounter with France have become infected causing social disorder and death. The third section is concerned with France. I will first demonstrate that the war and France's loss reveals that the abject is a constant threat to the Subject precisely because it is indeed part of the Subject—a byproduct of antagonistic identity formation.

[128] This is a term I developed in chapter one. It essentially refers to a type of immobile mobility characterized by futile attempts at progress toward a place or objective. Therefore, there is a type of almost vacillating that never actually leads anywhere.

This, I will argue, with the support of my analyses of Nina's experiences in France, develops into a sort of autoimmune disorder of the French social body as it tries, essentially, to contain and expel what it deems foreign bodies, but which are actually elements of itself. Finally, I will demonstrate that the true threat to the French social body is its own institutionalized amnesia with respect to its (neo)colonial violence. The burial of these memories allows the unresolved and unexamined violence to grow and fester in silence and to lead to a sort of insidious necrotic infection of the French social body that also threatens Nina's life.

Part one: Nina's Fractured Identity

While Nina is inarguably the most deeply fractured protagonist included this study, her situation most closely resembles that of Waberi's young protagonist, Abdo-Julien, who will serve as a point of comparison and a springboard for my analysis of Nina's fractured identity. In the final section of chapter one, subtitled "Death of the Bhabhaian Hybrid" I demonstrated that Abdo-Julien, born of a French mother and a Djiboutian father, is a symbol of failed hybridity within a fracture zone. My study of Abdo-Julien explored the tension between the spirit of Bhabhaian hybridity—a fluid, connective tissue between peoples and generations from which innovation springs—and the concrete reality of unrelenting adherence to power-infused binary divisions that characterize France's relationship with its former African colonies. I demonstrated that Abdo-Julien had two separate existences: the space of the *esprit*[129] in which he was able

[129] The French word *esprit* means both mind and spirit.

to draw on his knowledge of both French and Djiboutian cultures and create a perfect world in his mind (notably, this mental space was not challenged in his daily life which was spent with his loving family and among the books and papers in his father's library); and a physical existence among other Djiboutians (where he was eventually killed by his countrymen who only saw in him Julien, the French enemy, and not Abdo, the truncated Djiboutian). While Abdo-Julien's murder marks his physical death and that of the hybrid figure, his disembodied *esprit* roams the world waiting for a body to inhabit. However, whereas Abdo-Julien enjoys a sort of freedom of *esprit* which allows him an unobstructed space to imagine a perfect hybrid world characterized by fluid exchange between peoples, Bouraoui's Nina enjoys no such bifurcation of space. Nina, as Helen Vassallo so convincingly established in her book, *The Body Beseiged: The Embodiment of Historical Memory in Nina Bouraoui and Leila Sebbar* (2012), *embodies* the Franco-Algerian conflict: "she cannot escape from the internalized conflict, which is the root of the first of her crises of identity, engendering a state of alienation from herself" (26). Nina, I will demonstrate, was always-already fractured by meanings others write onto her body that she subsequently internalized. She is thus unable to escape the forces that were constantly tearing her apart on the inside as well as attacking her on the outside.

Just as Abdo-Julien's awkwardly hyphenated combination of names foreshadowed his ultimate failure as a hybrid figure,[130] Nina's deeply fractured identity is

[130] The elements that make up his name each reflect part of his heritage: Djiboutian (as represented by the common Arabic prefix Abdo) from his father, and French (represented by the French name Julien) from his mother. In fact, Abdo-Julien describes his position as that of a "trait d'union entre deux mondes," much like the hyphen that separates the two cultures represented by his name (49). However, a tension and possible fracture are evident after a closer inspection of his name. While Julien is a common first name in France, Abdo, meaning "servant" would not traditionally stand alone as a name in Arabic; instead it is a prefix often followed by another name, usually one referring to God.

also evident in the name, or more accurately names, that Bouraoui gives her protagonist: Nina, Yasmina, Ahmed and Brio. As opposed to the male-bodied, cis-gendered[131] Abdo-Julien, Nina is unable to find a space in which her non-binary gender identity can exist and, therefore, is compelled to navigate between ruptured expressions of gender in the form of different personae. While this continues to be a problem for her in France where she notes that her grandmother doesn't like "fausses filles," questions of gender are particularly acute for the child while she is in Algeria, where her female body invites expressions of gendered violence. Yasmina and Ahmed represent, respectively, Nina's polarized feminine and masculine elements. Ahmed is a masculine persona that Nina created to feel safe and to have a sense of agency in "la forêt des hommes" that she describes Algerian society to be. Yasmina, Nina's given name, represents an Algerian femininity and is almost completely absent from the novel. Brio, whose joyful presence in the novel is ephemeral,[132] represents the possibility for a socially tolerated, somewhat fluid gender identity. Significantly, Nina's movement among these personae is not the sign of agency it may appear to be at first glance; rather, it is a sort of auto-destructive violence: "Je passe de Yasmina à Nina. De Nina à Ahmed. D'Ahmed à Brio. C'est un assassinat. C'est un infanticide. C'est un suicide" (60). The internal movement seen here is akin to the type of compulsive or forced (im)mobility experienced by those trapped within fracture zones—a constant, futile and ultimately destructive movement. Nina's compulsion to take on each of these identities is devouring or destroying her from within:

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[131] I justify taking the leap of assuming that Abdo-Julien is cis-gendered, because his gender identity was never an issue, and just as the masculine is treated as neutral in patriarchal society, so is being cis-gendered.
[132] I will discuss Ahmed and Brio—as well as Yasmina's absence—more in-depth in section two where I focus on Nina's Algerian experiences.

it is killing her and, to go further, it is Nina killing herself, as suggested by her use of the word "suicide."

In addition to these personae, Nina has an alter-ego, Amine, who is also a child of a French mother and an Algerian father. Nina refers to Amine as her "deuxième prénom" and her "deuxième visage" (165). Significantly, Nina and Amine are not the only two children of a Franco-Algerian marriage in the novel; there is also Nina's older sister, Jami (Djamila). Nina and Jami are close, but, Nina identifies more with Amine, claiming: "Seul Amine sait mes jeux, mon imitation. Seul Amine sait mes envies secrètes, des monstres dans l'enfance" (15). Jami plays with other little girls and, unlike for Nina who plays with a boy, there is no indication in the text that Jami struggles with the binary gender she is assigned.[133] Amine, on the other hand displays a gender fluidity similar to Nina's. In fact, Nina and Amine, when alone together, move fluidly between genders, suggesting, perhaps, the potential of an existence beyond fragmenting binaries. At times, Amine takes on a decidedly feminine role in the text. Nina describes him as beautiful with long curly black hair, and soft, very white skin: "la peau d'une fille" (63). She also describes him as one who cries at the drop of a hat; a boy who has earned the nickname, "la fontaine" (63). Nina says that she loves him like a man, as if he were a girl, and Amine loves her as a boy. Indeed, there are times in the text when Nina takes a decidedly masculine part with respect to Amine:

> C'est moi qui danse autour de toi. C'est moi qui allume ton corps. *Ava Inouva.* C'est moi que tu imiteras en France. C'est de moi que tu tiendras ça. Cette ronde

[133] When their mother is sick, the girls are sent to stay with other families, and Nina explains that she and her sister are split up. Jami stays with a girlfriend while Nina stays with Amine, "Les filles avec les filles. Les garçons avec les garçons" (68).

> sexuelle. Cette façon d'aller vers l'autre. De provoquer. De demander. De chercher. Toi tu ne viens jamais vers moi. Tu attends mon signe. Tu me subis. Je te traverse. Et je danse comme un homme. Je t'apprends à marcher comme Steve McQueen. Je t'apprends à jouer. Je t'apprends à nager le crawl sans t'étouffer (62).

Here we see Nina firmly occupying a male role is-à-vis Amine. In traditional Algerian dance, the man would dance around the woman, as Nina does Amine. They dance to a Berber song, *Ava Inouva,* which translates to "little father." Whereas it is the man's role to approach the well-mannered, chaste woman, it is always Nina who approaches Amine. Moreover, as women have traditionally been forced to endure male advances, it is Amine who endures (*subit*) Nina. Nina initiates Amine, teaching him the hyper-masculine gestures (à la bad boy/tough guy actor Steve McQueen) that assure his (masculine) agency, an agency from which he benefits in her absence.

If at times it appears that Nina plays the male to Amine's female, there is, in reality, a constant, fluid, give and take of gender roles between Nina and Amine. At times, he protects her, allowing her to enter spaces like the seaside where, normally, only male Algerian children play: "Contre les autres garçons qui sautent. Qui me bousculent. Qui prennent mon tour. Amine m'impose. Amine me protège. Je sais plonger" (35). When someone else mistakes her for a boy, Amine intervenes ("Amine me protège. C'est Nina. C'est une fille [36]). Amine is also the only one who calls her Yasmina, her given name and one that marks her Algerian femininity, but only in this one scene in the novel:

> Toi, Amine, tu m'appelles Yasmina. Mais pas devant les autres. C'est ton secret. C'est ta façon d'être un homme. Tu dis Yesmina, à l'algérienne. En appuyant sur le 'Y'. Ça donne la puissance. De l'autorité. De l'homme sur la femme. De toi sur

> moi. Et du désir. Dans ta bouche. Yasmina me féminise. C'est fugitif. C'est un jeu. C'est un rôle. Qu'on efface très vite en plongeant des falaises du Rocher plat. Comme deux anges (175).

There is considerable fluidity in this passage in spite of the seemingly rigid gender roles evoked. By invoking Yasmina, Amine connects Nina to her Algerian heritage at the same time affirming his masculine dominance over Nina. Yet he can only do this in private, which suggests that his power over her is as fleeting as is her sense of belonging to an Algerian identity. Moreover, Amine and Nina erase Yasmina when they dive off the cliff (a masculine activity which would not be performed by the Algerian feminine Yasmina), and into the Mediterranean Sea, the rupture *par excellence* between France and Algeria in which the Algerian Yasmina cannot exist.

In addition to sharing gender fluidity, Nina and Amine also share the pain of embodying both sides of the contentious Franco-Algerian war. However, unlike the gender divide which the children were able to at least temporally suspend—as prepubescent children sometimes do—Nina and Amine are never able to assume French or Algerian identities, nor are they able to bridge the Franco-Algerian fracture that engulfed them. Vassallo explains that the children can occupy neither "the 'privileged' place of the Metropolitan colonizer," nor "the 'subaltern' position of the African colonized, and yet for each culture, they will always represent the other." (5). There are numerous scenes in the novel where the children attempt but fall short of assuming either an Algerian or a French identity. Early in the novel, Nina describes a scene in which she and Amine are playing together. Amine's father would bring home gifts for the children (both of their fathers travelled for work and were away from home most of the time).

This time he brought them traditional Algerian wear. The children tried them on and quickly found that:

> Les burnous sont trop longs. Ils prennent le corps entier. Ils le noient. On devient fragiles et perdus dans le costume traditionnel qui révèle l'impuissance à être vraiment une partie de soi. On hésitera toujours. On ne sera jamais de vrais Algériens (10).

While they "would never be true Algerians" in Algeria, they also could not be included among other children of French ancestry whose parents cooperated with the French during the war. Nina describes their paradoxical situation at school: "Certains professeurs nous placent à droite de leur classe. Opposés aux vrais Français. Aux enfants de coopérants. Le professeur d'arabe nous place à gauche de sa classe. Opposés aux vrais Algériens" (34).

Rejected on both sides, Nina and Amine are drawn to the Mediterranean Sea that separates the continents. It is along its shores that they play, running along the beach and diving off the cliffs. Bouraoui beautifully describes the ambiguity and even violence of Nina and Amine's status: "Deux bâtards sur la plage. Deux métis. Amine et moi, moi et Amine. Attirés l'un par l'autre. Assis côte à côte. Serrés dans l'eau, à jamais" (29-30). And the emphasis on their bastardisation underscores the violence of their situation. The image of Nina and Amine being "serrés dans l'eau" very much reflects the paradoxical space of fracture, for water, which should be fluid and therefore something that can be moved through, has tightened itself around Nina and Amine, squeezing them into an eternal immobility (*à jamais*). Moreover, there is nothing safe or welcoming about the sea. At most, its ambiguous embrace could be a temporary respite from the lands on

either side that reject the children, a characterization Vassallo reinforces in her analysis of Nina's relationship to the Mediterranean Sea:

> The sea that separated the two is simultaneously dangerous (Nina almost drowns on more than one occasion in the narrative) and comforting to the child, who concentrates on developing her physical strength so that she can lose herself in the ocean. However, she always has to come back to one side or the other, land on one shore or another, indicating the impossibility of a 'hybrid' identity. She can never be comfortably 'entre deux' (continents or identities), as a landing place or an alliance will always be sought. (32).

Not landing on one shore or the other signals the risk of drowning between the continents, between the opposing identities. Bouraoui indeed cements the notion that the sea is dangerous and is something that can't be mastered, describing it as "une violence" "sans cesse," (14) "sans fond," and "impractible" (26). Swimming in the water or keeping afloat entails constant movement. Thus, this eternal immobility implicated by the children being "[s]errés dans l'eau, à jamais" is in fact an (im)mobility, a fruitless movement leading to a sort of frenetic self-destruction that wears the children down. Thus Nina reflects: "Je suis agitée. Je dors mal. Je mange peu. Amine double ma folie. Nous courons ensemble, toujours plus vite. Nous fuyons. Nous nous dévorons" (9). In inhabiting and internalizing this agitated space, Nina and Amine are devouring themselves, consuming their own life forces from within.

This first section has examined the fractured space that Nina occupies, the space that is all the more inescapable because she is also made to embody it. And because Nina embodies fracture which has penetrated and fragmented her psyche at the deepest levels, the possibility of her filling a role of Bhabhaian hybridity, even in her imagination, is

precluded. Unlike Abdo-Julien, she never had the sensation of being whole as she moved between the separate personae within her. Amine, while providing her company, ultimately signals her solitude and her fragmentation. He is Nina's alter-ego from whom she will ultimately be permanently split, leaving an internal rupture that she will carry throughout her life (this question will be revisited in the conclusion to this chapter). Yet, I also contend that her very being, fractured as it is, still points to the existence of something outside of the binaries that tear her apart, a beyond, as evidenced by the children's gender fluidity.

Part two: A Fractured Algeria Devours Nina and its Future

Nina was most able to be herself, or more accurately, to exist, even if that existence was deeply troubled, in the wild spaces of her Algerian childhood. However, Algerian society remained deeply fractured by its contact with France, making for unstable and potentially dangerous public spaces. In such spaces, for example the street, Nina is confronted with both gendered and racialized victimization and exclusion. This section will begin with an examination of Algeria's colonial fracturing at the hands of France before moving on to an investigation of Algeria's resulting societal disfunction after independence, as represented in Bouraoui's novel, and its disfiguring effects on the young Nina. Finally, I will contend that in Bouraoui's Algeria, the country's metaphorical wounds have remained largely un(ad)dressed and have become infected and threaten to taint its future.

Algeria's Fractured State

Algeria suffered from a particularly intense form of erasure and alienation that became deeply internalized. In her article, “Language and Politics: A New Revisionism” (2006), Habiba Deming explains the unique severity of Algeria’s destruction at the hands of France. Citing the extreme brutality of France’s battles to conquer Algeria and the extended Algerian war for independence as well as the destruction of Algerian society during the 130 year long colonial period, Deming contends that colonization in Algeria “resulted in greater social upheavals than in the rest of the Maghreb” (181). She refers to the consequences of these upheavals in terms of a multi-faceted and difficult to measure destructuring of Algerian society.

In his book, *Identity in Algerian Politics: The Legacy of Colonial Rule* (2009), J.N.C. Hill describe how, almost immediately after its 1830 invasion of Algeria, France embarked on a mission to break up tribes and disorganize Algerian social systems. This, Hill reports, was done in two phases: in the first phase tribes were evicted from the land that economically and physically sustained them (33). Phase two involved destroying tribal identities by assigning family members to different, far away *douars-communes*—new settlements inhabited by people originating from a multitude of tribes (33). This disorganization would prevent the tribes from “ever threatening the security of Algérie française in the future” (Hill, 33). After conquering Algeria as “a social, political, and economic entity,” France turned its attention to ensuring its dominance over the Algerian people by erasing evidence of an Algerian nation on a cultural level. Drawing on Mustefa Lacheraf’s article “L’avenir de la culture algérienne” (1963), Deming explains that the French military conquest and the subsequent mass land appropriation “had devastating

effects on Algeria's cultural resources" (182). France deliberately severed Algeria's cultural connections to a larger Arabic civilization. This was done in large part by "closing thousands of traditional schools leading to a precipitous and catastrophic fall in literacy rates" (Deming 182). By dismantling the traditional Arabic educational system in Algeria, France not only rendered the population mostly illiterate but "caused deep cultural and psychological damage by distancing written Arabic from spoken Arabic" (Deming,182). With the relationship between written classical Arabic and spoken vernacular Arabic ruptured, Algerian culture became detached from its Arab-Islamic moorings and Algerians began to see themselves as a people with a dialect, not a real language (Deming, 187). Deming reports that the French effort to strip Algerians of their "ownership over written Arabic as a language of knowledge, abstraction, and universality and left them with an impoverished dialect, which could only serve as a vehicle for practical concerns and provincial values" (187). This rupture caused by colonial discourse, Deming affirms, orphaned Algerians "from the millenarian civilization they had participated in building, and Algerians internalized this linguistic and civilizational inferiority" (187). Such a rupture produced the type of existential destabilization necessary to preclude access to a historical and cultural context which may otherwise have formed a base on which Algerians could have articulated a discourse of resistance (Deming 183).

Furthermore, it was never a question of Algeria's annexation by France translating to French identity and citizenship being offered to Algerians. For example, while the French essentially eliminated Arabic as a language of education, they did not teach French in its

place on a large scale (Deming 184), thus denying Algerians one of the most fundamental requisites for participating in French society. Indeed, the very nature of French colonialism demanded that the French remain in a separate and superior position vis-à-vis Algerians—in other words, there cannot be a breech in the strict Manicheism that defines Western Subjectivity. France, indeed, strove to maintain this sharp division between the European settlers and the "*indigènes*" in Algeria. Peter Dunwoodie explains in this article, "Assimilation, Cultural Identity, and Permissible Deviance in Francophone Algerian Writing of the Inter-war Years" (2006), that Algerians were never citizens like the French. Instead they became "subjects"[134] at the time of annexation, and in 1865 they were promoted to what he calls "French national noncitizens," a category that would become permanent at the time of Algeria's absorption into the metropolitan French administrative system in 1881 (68). By keeping the populations separate[135]—not allowing Algerians to share citizenship with the French—Dunwoodie explains, "The necessarily dialogic processual nature of assimilation could thus be denied" (70). The binary opposition of settler/*indigène* could be maintained and a sort of Bhabhaian cultural innovation could be prevented. Algeria, thus, did not become France, but was prohibited from being Algeria; it was relegated to a liminal space, a fracture zone, wherein binary

[134] To avoid any confusion, I use the word "subject" here to refer to people ruled by an authoritarian ruler (like a king or a Tsar) rather than the more Lacanian definition of the Subject I have been using to describe the Subject position in the Subject/Other dichotomy.

[135] Dunwoodie succinctly summarizes the unique situation in which the French placed the Algerians: "The French of the colony dismissed the possibility of assimilation for the majority and demanded of the few the internalization of French models to the exclusion of Arab or Islamic alternatives: intellectual (through schooling in the values of the republic and Western rationalism); sociocultural (through Western practices such as monogamy); and politial (parties, elected representatives, etc.). The rigid Manicheanism that motivated settler cultural hegemony satisfied both the European population, firmly convinced that the difference was the product of morphotypes, not mentalities, and the majority of the indigenous population, for whom Western mores were totally alien" (69). Moreover, representation for the Algerian departments on a national level was divided into two unequal houses, one for the French and one for the indigenious people.

oppositions were strictly maintained in spite of the pronouncement that the two countries were in fact one.

After the war, Algeria suffered from a crushing state of post-independence (im)mobility on socio-economic levels. This is due, in large part, to the fact that the newly independent Algeria remained deeply entangled with France both culturally and, especially, economically. In his book *The Making of Contemporary Algeria* (1988), Mahfoud Bennoune states that at the time of its independence, Algeria's economy was completely dependent on France and was "characterized by intersectoral disintegration, inter-branch disarticulation and a striking 'extraversion'" (Bennoune, 92).[136] In Algeria, like in other dominated countries, industrial development could not take place under colonial conditions. As Bennoune explains,

> [T]he beginning of the colonial period and the subsequent integration of the Algerian economy and society into the French capitalist market ushered in a process of pauperization. The deterioration of the living conditions of the rural population brought about a massive rural-to-urban exodus which began around the turn of the century (120).

This rural-to-urban migration only accelerated after the war for independence further adding to the process of pauperization in Algeria (Bennoune 120). In 1966 the unemployment rate in Algeria was 45%, leaving a sizeable population of able-bodied men to languish for want of opportunity. Unemployed men clustered in "the mushrooming shanty towns and slums that were expanding within and around the urban centers, or crossed the Mediterranean in search of wage labour in French industrial

[136] "Extraversion" is used in reference to Africa's economy's dependence on the global economy coupled with a lack of possibility to influence this economy on Africa's part.

conurbations" (Bennoune 120). Trapped in a lagging economy devoid of local industry, the potential workforce of Algeria was alienated.[137]

Well aware of this history, Bouraoui depicts the population of Algerian men as a stagnant yet agitated mass, at the core of a social body from which the vitality has been syphoned out, struggling to exist in time that is itself stagnant, "immobile":

> Ici le temps est infini. Il est entêtant. C'est une prison. Il est contre les hommes. Il est à leur insu. […] Dès 1970 la violence algérienne est dans la rue. Elle vient du temps immobile. Elle est dans ces corps qui cherchent. Qui marchent en cercles. Qui se multiplient. Chacun est le miroir de l'autre. Chacun est le défait de l'autre. Chaque tristesse son relais. Chaque corps est la contamination d'un autre corps. Chaque forme strate de l'autre. C'est un corps unique à force. C'est un seul mouvement. C'est une attraction. Le temps algérien est une maladie. Il appauvrit. Il égare. Il est à l'intérieur des corps. Il gaine. Il enserre. Il est la désillusion même" (39-40).

There are three actors in this passage: time, violence and the bodies of the men. Beginning and ending the passage with time in the subject position, Bouraoui paints a picture of extreme hopelessness with (im)mobile time at its core. This debilitatingly immobile time is portrayed as a violence that has invaded Algerian streets ("***la violence*** *algérienne est dans la rue.* ***Elle*** *vient du temps immobile*"). Moreover, the victims of this violence are alienated to the point where they are unaware of time's nefarious effects (*Il est à leur insu*). Internalized and unidentifiable to the men, Algerian time is therefore an invasive enemy that cannot be fought. This alienation transforms time in Algeria into

[137] There are clear parallels to the kind of alienation I discussed in the first chapter where those global Southerners who attempted to immigrate to Europe did so because, as Bauman argues in *Globalization: The Human consequences* (1998), they are "spiritually uprooted from a place that holds no promise" and "pushed from behind" toward Western centers of prosperity" (92).

what Bouraoui calls sick Algerian time—which is not intrinsically Algerian but rather is an effect of France's fracturing contact with Algeria. Infinite Algerian time encases (*gaine*) the men, progressively constricting them (*enserrer*) like a snake around its prey. Time forces a futile kind of mobility on the men who are compelled to move in endless circles. It has seeped within their bodies and takes the form of an impoverishing sickness that settles, inextricably, *à l'intérieur des corps*. This time causes men to stray (*égare*) from any course of possibly productive action in which they may have otherwise engaged. In other words, this insidious, internalized time prevents the men from even the possibility of making meaningful progress toward a desired goal. Nina describes these men as (im)mobile and essentially captive as are cogs in the system: "Devenir un homme en Algérie. Entrer dans le manège. Suivre les cercles concentriques. Etre prise au rayon. Prise au ventre de la ville" (40). Bouraoui further highlights the futility of the men's situation by describing them as stuck in the stomach of the city as if having been devoured.

The men form an undifferentiated mass, each the mirror image of the other, and Bouraoui describes the sickness of "Algerian" time as having so deeply penetrated the Algerian social body that each individual within it serves as a vector to contaminate the others rather than as a potential for hope and change. Moreover, like a virus, these bodies are multiplying, therefore making a return to health increasingly impossible. This diseased, multiplying mass of bodies very much fits the image of the abject France projects on its Southern (neo)colonies, which, of course, would only serve as a

justification to keep Algeria in a crippled, (im)mobile state so that this disease can remain outside of France.

This (im)mobility risks, ultimately, becoming fatal. The sickened Algerian social body is also constantly being drawn toward the gaping mouth that is the Mediterranean Sea waiting to devour anyone foolhardy enough to enter it. Bouraoui describes the Mediterranean Sea essentially as the *illusion* of the Algerian men wishing for a better life in Europe: "Ils tendent la main vers l'horizon. Je [Nina] retiens un seul mot, *el bahr, el bahr, el bahr,*[138] une magie répétée" (7-8). She depicts the men's attraction to the sea by evoking the mythical Sirens who were known in Greek mythology to lure sailors to their death with their beautiful, entrancing voices: "La sirène des cargos appelle les hommes de Zeralda. Ils viennent. La sirène rassemble. Tous ces corps qui s'ennuient" (16). In his book *Ex-Centric Migrations: Europe and the Maghreb in Mediterranean Cinema, Literature, and Music* (2016), Hakim Abderrezak coined the term *leavism* to describe this strong and often fatal attraction to the Mediterranean Sea on the part of disenfranchised Maghrebis. Leavism, Abderrezak writes, is "the insatiable desire to cross the sea, which precedes the actual instance of clandestine migration" (9). Abderrezak's leavism—a compulsion toward an impossible dream of social and economic mobility—is a core element of (im)mobility that I have maintained is a defining element of confinement in a fracture zone and is an apt characterization of men's attitudes in *Garçon manqué*: "Ils inventent un départ. Ils inventent une arrivée. Ils feront mieux que les autres. Ils sauront. Ils rêvent français" (38). Caught between a crippling disillusion which is the realization that there is nothing for them in an existentially fractured Algeria and the dangerous

[138] "The sea, the sea, the sea"

illusion that their salvation lies in crossing the sea, Bouraoui presents images of the men as eternally waiting along the walls of the city, dreaming of the sea. In no uncertain terms, Bouraoui reveals that it is precisely this dream of mobility that proves fatal in the young Nina's description of such a man who drowned in the Mediterranean: "Ses yeux sont mi-clos, comme s'il rêvait. Son ventre est immobile. C'est une pierre sombre et perlée d'eau. Ses cheveux sont plaqués en arrière. Seul un filet humide sur ses lèvres. Cet homme est mort" (14). His half-closed, unseeing eyes are still under the spell of the dream that killed him (*comme s'il rêvait*). Dead, he is now completely immobile, a stone, a heavy inanimate object that certainly could not move across a sea.

Algeria Genders and Devours Nina

Bouraoui genders this sickened and even moribund Algerian social body as unquestionably masculine and as the author of intense gender violence. In her book on women in post-bellum Algeria, *Féminisme et Politique au Maghreb: Sept décennies de lutte* (1995), Zakya Daoud notes that independence did not improve the lot of women: "Après la nuit coloniale, les femmes entrent dans la nuit FLN" (Daoud 149). The violence of the war, on top of the cultural eradication of the colonial period, completely destructured Algerian society and women paid a particularly steep price. As Daoud explains, "L'angoisse de la société est extrême, suscite des réactions misogynes et très agressives, et développe des fantasmes régressifs violents" (Daoud, 155). Beginning in the 1960s attacks on women in Algerian streets increased (Daoud 148). The rural exodus that I mentioned earlier with regard to the situation of countless, jobless Algerian men

listlessly wandering the streets of Algiers, also had extremely negative effects on Algerian women whose mobility became even more extremely restricted:

> L'exode rural est lourd à porter pour les femmes, il rétrécit leur espace et accroît leur dépendance. Pour Fatiha Hakiki, la ruralisation et la politique du logement transforment la séparation traditionnelle des sexes en enfermement des femmes dans les villes, avec de petits appartements dans les HLM en étage. Face à ce qui est un processus d'individualisation urbain, les femmes ne parviennent pas à construire une nouvelle sociabilité (159).

Not only were women confined to small apartments, they were increasingly barred from social spaces. Beginning in 1970, it even became legal to deny women the right to vote, allowing men to vote in the place of the sequestered women in their lives (Daoud, 162). In addition to being denied the basic privileges of an Algerian citizen and essentially being held captive in their homes, women were, in Daoud's words "chosifiée[s], à la fois désirée [s] et méprisée[s]"; they were followed in the streets and insulted if seen to be too liberated (150). "Les hommes se comportent en véritable obsédés sexuels" (150).

While in Algeria, the young narrator frequently expresses her longing to be a man because, she explains, "L'Algérie est un homme. L'Algérie est une forêt des hommes" (37). The child knows that by virtue of her gender, she is always already fractured from the Algerian social body even while remaining physically within it. Marked as female, Nina finds that she "exists too much"; she cannot assimilate into the larger social body and become a "cog in the machine" (40). Even her Algerian last name attests to the rigidity of the Algerian social body's mandatory masculinity. Nina explains that "[l]es noms arabes sont des prisons familiales. On est toujours le fils de avec Ben ou le père de avec Bou. Des prisons familiales et masculines" (124). Without any nominal existence

outside the patronymic, Nina is necessarily defined from the outside by her female form which marks her as an object for consumption. I will demonstrate that the masculine Algerian social body works to siphon out Nina's vital force, essentially devouring the girl and leaving Nina with the remains of a fragmented masculine persona.

Early in the novel, Nina introduces her most gender-fluid persona, Brio. A creation of Nina's father's, Brio is "un garçon, inventé, avec la grâce de sa fille, qui existe." (50). Brio enjoys a degree of social acceptance. The men of Zeralda know she is Rachid's daughter, not his son, but accept her as a masculine girl:

> Le fils ou la fille de Rachid ? Ses yeux. Sa peau. Ses épaules. Trop étroites. Sa fille. Leurs doigts qui pincent mes joues. Leur odeur sur mon visage. Ici je suis protégée. Par leurs mots. Par leurs gestes lents. Par leur attitude. Par leurs visages. Par l'imitation que j'en ferai. Ici je sais. Ici j'apprends. Ici je suis dans le secret des hommes d'Alger (24).

Brio is the persona that allows Nina to feel the most free and alive and allowed her access to (protective) male society. Significantly, Brio is not a proper name recognized in either Algeria or France; in fact, the young Nina admits not knowing why her father calls her Brio, only that she likes this name. Nina asserts that "Brio trace mes lignes et mes traits. Brio tend mes muscles. Brio est la lumière sur mon visage. Brio est ma volonté d'être en vie" (24). Significantly, *Brio* is an Italian word meaning "vitality".[139] However, this accepting space and the persona which dwelled within it would turn out to be ephemeral,

[139] It is not insignificant that Bouraoui uses an Italian word here to describe the ephemeral identity in which Nina finds comfort. As it is revealed at the end of the novel, Italy is a space outside of the destructive Algeria-France binary. I will discuss Italy with relation to Nina more in the concluding section of this chapter. For now, I will say in passing that Italy is not, ultimately, a viable third space, in the Bhabhaian sense, in which Nina can resolve her internally fractured identity.

only able to exist in this particular time and place: the time of Nina's childhood and the place inhabited by the closed circle of her father's friends.

Bouraoui depicts a progressive escalation in gender-related violence throughout the section of her novel dedicated to Nina's life in Alger. First, Nina sees herself transformed in the eyes of the men and boys who occupy the streets into an object to be deconstructed part by part and consumed: "Ici je suis terrifiée. Leurs yeux. Leurs mains. Leurs corps contre les grilles du lycée. Jamais je ne regarde. Je les sens. Ils attendent. Mes yeux. Mon corps. Ma voix. Des objets à prendre" (38). This scene is a powerful indication of the gender violence to come. While Nina does not yet physically experience the threat, she can sense it. Moreover, the fact that it is coming from other children, older boys suggests that more active gender violence is a reality that awaits her in the near future as these boys become her peers. Indeed, this masculine violence certainly does not remain a feeling sensed or imagined but is quickly revealed to be a real, physical threat to her person. Bouraoui paints an animalistic and almost vampiric image of the way that the men act, seeming to be ravenously attracted to her female body. This is potently expressed through Nina's unwilling interactions with Amine's family dog. Commenting on Amine's (male) dog who mauls her every time he sees her, Nina reflects: "Souvent je compare les hommes à ton chien. Sa violence. C'est un aimant sur ma peau. Une sangsue qui me renverse. L'enfer de ton chien. C'est mon odeur. C'est mon corps qui l'attire" (53). The comparison reveals Nina's perception that male violence is/will become physical, knocking her over and threatening to consume her vitality, like a giant leach siphoning out her blood.

Nina's experiences with Amine's dog foreshadow the central traumatic event of Nina's time in Algeria: her attempted kidnapping by a man in the park, narrowly foiled by Nina's sister Jami who frees her by running out of house yelling and waving a knife. Like an animal, the man is drawn to her body. He calls her "belle." He caresses her face and compares it to velvet and her hair to silk. He tells her to come with him. Unlike the animal, the man's violence penetrates much deeper than the physical aggression of Amine's dog. While the dog knocks her over and clings to her like a giant leach after her blood, the man deconstructs Nina part by part and even entrances her, thereby inhibiting her power both to physically and/or mentally resist his advances. Nina reflects: "Ses mains sur mon visage. Ses mots sur mes yeux. Sa voix contre mes lèvres fermées. Son attention. Son désir. Sa douceur, une immense brutalité" (45). The man first puts his hands on her face, physically claiming her. Later, he holds the back of her neck, a spot from which he could control not only her movements but her perception of the world (which way she turns her head), thus offering him the potential to distort her worldview in accordance to his desires. This deforming of her ability to perceive is also evident in the image of his words covering her eyes—his message blinding her or at the very least obscuring her vision. If she is blinded, she is also silenced: his voice is against her closed lips further prohibiting her speech and even threatening to enter her mouth and claim her voice for his own should she part her lips to speak.

Nina qualifies the man's penetration into her childhood as a rape: "C'est le viol de mon visage, de mes yeux, de ma peau. C'est le viol de ma confiance. C'est une immense trahison" (44). Rape is the most violent form of gendered violence and assertion of the

male subject's power over the female object. This encounter with the man, for Nina, was not only the violation of her physical features but also that of her organs of perception and expression which are intimately connected to her sense of identity. Moreover, in attempting to kidnap Nina, the man took her for his child: "Cet homme me prend pour son enfant" (46) and essentially ended the innocence of her childhood. Nina reflects: "Sa voix répète encore. Cet homme est dans ma vie. Il décide. Il finit l'enfance. Cet homme est ma défaite." (45). She also makes clear the most damaging part of the encounter, is the loss of "the girl," by adding, "Et plus encore. Il garde la fille" (46). Beyond the obvious escalation signified by the words "et plus encore," the verbs used here express increasing gravity of the situation. Whereas in attempting to kidnap her he *(mis)took her for* his child (a mental act that does not necessarily touch the child), he actually *kept the girl,* definitively fracturing the child from the possibility of expressing her Algerian femininity, Yasmina. Silently mourning this loss, Nina laments: "Où es-tu, Yasmina? Noyée, écartée, en dessous. Une femme étouffe" (63). In keeping the girl, the man in the park, robbed her of essential elements of her childhood development, creating a rupture where there should be a transition from child to woman. When she laments that loss of Yasmina as a woman struggling to breathe, it evokes an image of womanhood that is as if dead on arrival.

Brio is unable to survive other than in the closed circle of her father's friends, and Yasmina's existence made increasingly unpalatable to Nina due to the limitations of Algerian femininity before being metaphorically stolen before her time by the man in the park. Nina is left with Ahmed who represents a polarized masculinity, one cut off from

Nina's feminine elements. While not directly stated in the text, it gradually becomes clear that Ahmed is a persona that Nina invented to protect herself from masculine violence, and that he is not a free-flowing expression for her gender fluidity as was Brio. The young Nina describes a sort of physical and existential mutilation involved in becoming Ahmed. Nina claims that she must deform her female body: "Je me déguise souvent. Je dénature mon corps féminin" to become Ahmed (49). This way she can bury the violence that the man in the park visited upon her: "Ainsi j'oublie la voix de l'homme. Ainsi j'efface ses mains douces sur mon visage" (49). The internal violence of Nina's protective self-destruction is all the more evident a few pages later: "J'apprends à étouffer. À me cacher. À ne plus manger. Mes yeux dévorent mon visage" (53). Nina learns to cover-up and even suffocate her femininity. The man in the park injected his violence into her—now Nina is devouring herself by literally starving her female body.

Algeria's Wounds Infected

Just as was the case with Miano's civil-war torn Mboasu in chapter three, Algeria's strife also comes in part from the ways in which Algerians, particularly those in power, have responded to destructive French influences. I contend that, in Algeria as in Mboasu, these responses have allowed the fracture to mutate and have created the conditions for infection. In particular, I will argue that Algeria's response has been one of shrouding its internal strife during and after the war—fearing that it could result in post-bellum division—under what Stora refers to as a *voile simplificateur* (Transfert 115).[140]

[140] Included among Stora's examples of these internal conflicts covered over by post-1962 official memory are: "les affrontements tragiques entre le FLN et les messalistes, le rôle décisif de la Fédération de France du FLN, la mise à l'écart des 'berbéristes' et des communistes dans les maquis, l'engagement des femmes dans la lutte nationaliste, etc." (*Mémoires* 160).

The next few pages will reveal the signs of societal infection developing and erupting in Nina's narration in the form of violence—first against those perceived to be foreigners and then a generalized violence against fellow Algerians.

The war for independence united a deeply divided and diverse population[141] under a common goal, that of expelling the colonial order and gaining the right to self-determine (Hill 85). After the war, Algeria was left profoundly fractured. Independence had been achieved, but deep existential wounds remained both from the violent cultural, economic and political eradication by the French and as a result of the internecine fighting[142] during the war. Thus, in Algeria there was an acute need to reconstruct a unifying national identity. As Hill explains, "With the achievement of independence, the primary task of nationalism ceased to be that of orchestrating colonialism's demise and, instead, became one of trying to reintegrate the state with society" (16). Algeria's first three presidents, Ahmed Ben Bella (1963-1965), Houari Boumedienne (1965-1978) and Chadli Benjedid (1979-1992)[143] each worked to mold the image of Algerian nationalism—in such a way as to ensure unwavering support of the sole political party, the FLN, and to stamp out any possible challenge to the presidency that a multiplicity of voices might offer.[144]

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[141] The Algerian population at this time was diverse including significant populations of French Algerians, Arabophones, Berbers and Jews. Among the major cultural divisions were those of language, religion and level of assimilation to French culture.

[142] The FLN terrorized and eliminated anyone who in any resisted or rejected them. This included those in other groups fighting for Algerian liberation and even Muslim-Algerian citizens. See Hill's *Identity in Algerian Politics: The Legacy of Colonial Rule* for detailed information (pages 59-60).

[143] Nina's family left Algeria several years into Benjedid's presidency which would be punctuated by a brutal civil war (December 26 1991-February 8 2002).

[144] Ultimately Benjedid would give into one such challenge, which would ultimately lead to the end of his presidency. During his presidency, many of the youth were chafing under adverse economic conditions with little hope for jobs—leading to riots throughout the 1980's (Hill 129). Benjedid finally approved the

Much as the French had done with their concept of the *mission civilisatrice*[145], the Algerian leaders strove to define the Algerian citizen as a unified "us" against a "them." All three of these early presidents achieved this through strict control of political and social spaces, and by identifying common enemies against whom to rally the people. In this case the "them" would be made up of external and threatening enemies such as France, United States, Spain, Morocco and Mauretania,[146] all of whom to some degree were seen to represent the feared neocolonialism (Hill 97). Furthermore, with the privileged and culturally distinct pied noirs[147] mostly gone from Algeria, the government enflamed the population to rally against a new group of internal enemies as well: the harkis and the bourgeoisie[148] (Hill 85). This very much echoes what Hakim Abderrezak referred to as a sort of "autoimmune disorder" of the social body (16). When he coined this term, Abderrezak was referring to Europe's protectionist discourse and its paranoid targeting of extra-European immigrants. However, I see some parallels to be drawn with Algeria's targeting of specified subgroups of its population as well. As Abderrezak aptly

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multi-party system for which the youth had been militating. However, the multiparty system provided openings for "various Islamist, Berber and other secular groups" to challenge the regime (Hill 114). This led to elections in 1991 that gave visibility and power to Islamist parties and ultimately led to the Algerian civil war, which pitted the secular government modeled after French republicanism against radical Islamist groups.

[145] I will discuss the significance of the *mission civilisatrice* to the formation of French Republican subjectivity in section three of this chapter. However, for now I would like it to be kept in mind that one of the core notions that the *mission civilisatrice* advanced what that "we" (the French) are a group distinct from and superior to "them" (the peoples the French colonized).

[146] Hill explains that in Boumedienne's eyes "Morocco's and Mauretania's occupations of the Western Sahara against the wishes of its inhabitants were taken as clear examples of colonial aggression. Algeria, therefore, had a duty to stand up to these countries on behalf of the underdog, be they Algerian citizens or Sahrawi" (97).

[147] The pied noirs, descendents of French settlers in Algeria, left in large numbers in the weeks after the end of the Algerian war for independence in spring of 1962.

[148] The harkis, Algerians who aided the French during the war, "were condemned and persecuted for collaborating with the French. Not only were thousands of them killed in the years immediately following independence, but legislation was brought to seize property, goods and money from anyone convicted of collaboration. And the bourgeoisie was condemned for […] advancing 'neo-colonialism'" (Hill 85).

notes, autoimmune disorders involve an overproduction of antibodies in response to what the body's immune system perceives as dangerous foreign bodies:

> Advocates of this war against 'foreign' bodies seem to forget the physiological consequence when they focus on eradicating or containing a spreading disease: 'It is the same nebulous psychosis of the fear of being 'overrun,' 'invaded,' 'contaminated,' and ultimately 'destroyed' that leads to…a pathology'" (16-17).[149]

In the case of autoimmune disorders, the physiological consequence of over-active and over-abundant antibodies is the destruction of benign tissue, tissue that may even be vital to the health of the organism. This focus on external and internal enemies functions as a sort of screen preventing any real examination of Algeria's gaping existential wounds from having suffered cultural and economic eradication at the hands of its French occupiers. Unexamined and under the cover of this *voile simplificatrice* these wounds provide ideal conditions for the development and growth of infection. Moreover, it should be noted that a body cannot effectively fight an actual infection if its immune system is deployed in full force against its own tissue and the infection.

In *Garçon manqué,* Bouraoui illustrates effects of Algeria's worsening auto-immune disorder on Nina and her family by evoking the silences in which the eventual eruption in the novel of anti-"them" violence (a result of the overproduction of metaphorical anti-bodies) would grow: "…tout se préparait lentement, par petits signes, par petits silences" (89). The silence ripens into verbal violence before exploding in physical violence : "Le téléphone sonne la nuit. Aucune voix. Juste la profondeur du silence. Puis une respiration lente et forte. Un mouchoir sur le combiné. Une voix

[149] Chambers, Ian *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*.

déformée. Des insultes" (80). Algerian attempts to identify the foreign element so that it may be expelled are evident in Nina's narration. Labled "*pieds-noirs de la deuxième génération,*" the bi-racial protagonist and her family are denounced as "*des colons*" and "*encore des Français*" (72). The divided country seems united in its rejection of Nina's family. Nina describes how Algerian eyes follow her united in "la peur de l'autre, cet étranger" (20). In one scene toward the end of her time in Algeria, Nina describes an incident where she is reduced to a physically abject state just outside of her home: "Je reçois un seau d'eau en sortant de l'immeuble. Il vient d'un balcon. Un seau d'eau sale. Une odeur d'urine sur mes vêtements. Une punition pour la fille de la Française" (81).

While the Algerian social body is focused on destroying a part of itself perceived as the enemy (the Franco-Algerian child and her family), it is ignoring the growing infection of its untreated pre-independence wounds. Evidence that the future of the country is being deformed by the festering wounds of the past is stark in Bouraoui's powerful depiction of Algerian children rejecting Nina, her sister and their French mother. Nina's mother is driving when suddenly the car is surrounded by Algerian children whipping it with braided vines, raining rocks and spit down on the car, and hitting it with their fists. Nina remarks that, at this moment, it is "Comme si toute la haine de la guerre revenait" (78). Even though the methods the children used to attack the car are not likely to do much damage, the threat of violence against the family in the car is clearly conveyed. More telling of the sickened state of the Algerian social body is the fact that these children, who represent the future of Algeria, are also the illness that is killing it: "L'enfance est le sang de la terre. Ces enfants-là sont la maladie de cette terre" (78).

These children, like a misdirected and self-destructive autoimmune response attempting to eject “foreign bodies,” are themselves, the illness of the land. Algeria’s blood, which should be a source of nourishment and renewal, is tainted.

The instability and violence that is sickening the Algerian social body reaches a fever pitch before Nina and her family leave the country. Even nature seems to have turned against the country. Bouraoui paints a picture of extreme chaos with the earthquake that shook Algeria in 1980, during which the ground literally opened up and swallowed living human bodies in El Asnam (a city 120 kilometers southeast of Nina’s native Algiers). Moreover, she follows up by these images with a gruesome scene of extreme social disorder: “En centre-ville, un homme poursuit des enfants avec une hâche. Il frappe dans le désordre des courses. À l'aveugle. Il blesse, sans savoir. […] C'est donc cela 'perdre la raison'” (84). At this time in the novel, the young Nina suffers a series of unexplained fevers suggesting that the external strife has infected her. Furthermore, she is haunted by a recurring dream that no one wants to hear, one that seems to prophesize the upcoming civil war in the 1990s[150]:

> L'Algérie, ce pays seul au monde. Cet abandon. Cette grande solitude. La vengeance de la France. Dans mon rêve, les hommes se dévorent entre eux. Chacun pour soi. L'un contre l'autre. Ce ne sera plus entre chat et rat. Ce sera bien plus grave. Il n'y aura plus d'excuse. Plus d'indulgence. Plus de femmes, plus d'enfants, plus de vieillards. La guerre pour tous. La guerre contre tous. Juste des corps à brûler, à piller, de la vie à défaire (86).

[150] The FLN dominated as the single-party in power in postwar Algeria and worked hard to maintain this status. Patricia Lorcin explains that the FLN’s "short-circuiting of the electoral victory of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in 1992 engendered a civil war, in all but name, that matched the War of Independence in its savagery" (xxiii).

Algeria's current state is related to France's influence: France's legacy of violence. It is not simply a question here of a French-created fracture zone devouring Algerian life, for Algerians are now doing it to themselves. The fracture has been internalized to the point that its violence has mutated and now comes from the victims themselves: it is no longer the cat that eats the rat, but another rat that eats its brother. It is a war against everyone and one that promises no gain: just bodies to burn and life to undo.

Part three: Nina Reveals France's "Hidden" Necrosis

Crisis of Republican Subjectivity

Although Algeria unarguably suffered, and continues to suffer, most intensely from the Franco-Algerian fracture, France did not remain untouched by the violence it generated in Algeria. The following pages will argue that the Algerian war for independence exposed and aggravated inconsistencies inherent in the formation of Republican Subjectivity—inconsistencies that, once revealed, would lead to a deeply wounded body politic at risk of coming apart at the seams.

France's loss in the Algerian war, more than any other event, marked the failure of the *mission civilisatrice*, a doctrine that played a vital role in the establishment and maintenance of French Republican identity.[151] Like America's Manifest Destiny,[152]

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[151] French imperialism and the *mission civilisatrice* played a critical role in defining and maintaining French identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this turbulent time, new revolutionary movements in France and throughout the West were gaining a growing international presence, causing a sort of denationalization; citizens began identifying themselves as workers, feminists, socialists etc. (Bancel and Blanchard 42). Moreover, with increasing urbanization and declining birthrates in the late nineteenth century came the fear that French men were losing their masculine vitality (Conklin et al. 94). In their book, *France and its Empire since 1870* (2014), Alice L. Conklin, Sarah Fishman, Robert Zaretsky explain that "[m]any observers, hoping to counter the signs of degeneracy and lack of masculine vigor, advocated 'manly' empire building as essential for reinvigorating the nation" (94). Imperialism, therefore, justified itself as it was believed to be "a cure for social division, worker unrest, and national decadence" (Conklin et al. 73). The Empire promised to be a source of unification for the French people, by

France's *mission civilisatrice*[153] came from an idea of an inherent superiority of the invading people (the French) over those they colonized, thereby drawing a sharp and indelible dividing line between colonizer ("us") and colonized ("them"). Bancel and Blanchard refer to the objective of the *mission civilisatrice* to be "une sorte de creuset absolu de la francité, un moule à 'fabriquer du républicain', une matrice idéale pour donner vie aux nouveaux héros de la République" (42). Moreover, the logic of the *mission civilisatrice* was that it was rational to occupy a territory in the interest of transforming the "sauvages" who inhabited the land into "civilisés"; the French were to use their "superiority" to aid others (Transfert, 34). While it might seem paradoxical for the land of *liberté, égalité et fraternité*, to participate in colonialism (a system of subjugation, inequality and dehumanization), the *mission civilisatrice* was thought to be perfectly compatible with French Republicanism, "parce que le projet colonial est associé aux valeurs essentielles des républicains : le progrès—le positivisme comtien est la philosophie le mieux partagée dans le camp républicain--, l'égalité, la grandeur de la

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calling all these groups to participate in a universal *mission civilisatrice* to spread Republican values and *les droits d'homme* and to civilize as many *sauvages* as possible. In short, the *mission civilisatrice*, in grouping the French together against (or in the French imaginary, "to help") outsiders in need of education, took advantage of the unifying effects of creating an us/them binary. Blanchard and Bancel explain that the concept of the *mission civilisatrice* was forged "dans la représentation d'une unicité de la France et dans la croyance en un lien particulier entre la France et le monde, matérialisé par sa mission universelle d'éducation'[…]" (38).

[152] Manifest Destiny denotes the American Belief in the nineteenth century that westward expansion of the nation was not only inevitable, bu ordined by God so that Americans can spread democracy across North America. Information taken from https://www.history.com/topics/manifest-destiny on 6/19/2028) at 3:45 PM.

[153] In line with the American concept of Manifest Destiny, the French believed it was their right to appropriate land in Algeria on the basis that it was, according to the French, not sufficiently utilized by the people who lived there. Along these lines some even imagined that France would transform Algeria into a sort of Eldorado: "D'abord territoire des éblouissements, domaine des rencontres qui épargnent le voyage vers la lointaine Amérique, l'Algérie se transforme, sous l'impulsion du colonisateur, en univers de richesses […] Les écrits militaires du XIXe siècle, récits de voyage, d'exploration, journaux de route, serviront grandement à la mythologie de ce Sud vu comme un Eldorado, une nouvelle terre promise" (Stora, Transfert, 23).

nation" (Bancel and Blanchard 36). In fact, it was precisely the French belief that the fact that they promoted equality, in their minds, justified their desire to be an imperial power (Blanchard and Bancel 35). I contend that it was necessary for France to deform its perception of reality with some carefully executed mental gymnastics to maintain an illusion of superiority in spite of continuing to commit the quotidian acts of violence necessary for direct domination over other peoples. It was precisely by exporting its imperial violence to its colonies—far away from the *Métropole* itself—that France was able to participate in colonial oppression, committing the same types of atrocities it deemed un-republican while openly condemning foreign regimes that participated in similar practices within their national borders (Bancel and Blanchard 40).

New divisions were born from the failure of the unifying *mission civilisatrice.* In France, during and after the Algerian war, new, horizontal divisions were added to existing ones that in colonialism were once largely vertical (for example those between the colonizer and the colonized). These schisms, for example, took the form of fear and hatred between proponents and adversaries of a French Algeria, desires of revenge against the faraway Metropolis on the part of the *pieds-noirs* who believed that France abandoned them when it left Algeria, and French soldiers who were dragged into a cruel engagement by the government and who felt betrayed by the French authorities they served (Stora 64). Some contested even the very possibility of offering secession to departments that were constitutionally part of the Republic. France's loss of Algeria not only opened fissures in France's body politic[154] and caused a deep sense of loss, even

[154] As Stora explains, "[…] les Anciens combattants 'contestent qu'on puisse offrir la succession à des départements faisant constitutionnellement partie de la République' ;et le mouvement populaire de 13 mai

amputation of part of the self,[155] it also resulted in a loss of access to an important outlet through which the Republican Subject expelled its abject. The abject, in this case, is the ensemble of oppressive attitudes and behaviors that the French deemed foreign to its self-definition—such as the violence it traditionally exported to its colonies to uphold the illusion of being the land of *libérté, égalité et fraternité*. However, with the influx of former colonists and *pied-noirs* following the war, the divisive imaginary that fueled the creation of the French Empire and its resulting violence appeared undeniably within the borders of the *Hexagone*. Stora describes this violence as "un imaginaire sudiste analogue à celui porté par les 'petits blancs' des États-Unis" that became durably embedded within French society (Transfert, 21).

A ***French Autoimmune Disorder***

One of the principle ways in which this *sudisme*[156] manifested (and continues to manifest) is a national turn toward "une idéologie de la revanche dirigée contre les 'ennemis de l'intérieur', les immigrés" (Stora, *Gangrène*, 318). France turned to blame its internal problems on what was thought of as "l'étranger qui vampirise et gangrène la

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(une des organisations de l'OAS) 's'élève avec honte et indignation contre la proposition de *sécession*, véritable insulte à nos morts. De guerre franco-algérienne, la guerre d'Algérie se transforme en guerre civile franco-française, dans les poitrines et les cœurs, dans les désirs avoués de revanche contre la métropole, ce Nord lointain ; dans le remords inavoué d'abandon de l'Algérie par la France ; dans la peur et la haine qui s'entrechoquent, entre Algériens et pieds-noirs, entre adversaires et partisans de l'Algérie française" (*Transfert*, 27).

[155] As Stora explains in his dialogue with Alexis Jenni in *Les Mémoires dangeureuses*, France defined its national identity on the basis of an ever-expanding territory, as a country forever in conquest of new lands (47). The loss of its Algerian departments awakened the fear that France could once again be small (Stora, Mémoires, 47). In the French imaginary, Algeria represents "une rupture extraordinaire, une rupture narcissique très forte, difficile à accepter. On ne peut pas penser l'amputation de soi [...]" (47).

[156] Sudisme, Stora clarifies, was not a regional phenomenon relegated to the South of France—although there is no denying that because more *pieds-noirs* relocated to this region it was more visible there—rather, he specified that *sudisme* was pervasive throughout France: "Paroles du nord de la France, identiques à celles entendues dans le Midi" (Stora, Gangrène, 318).

France éternelle," in this case the figure of "l'Arabe" (Stora, *Transfert,* 89). The French imaginary transformed the formerly colonized immigrant from what Stora described as "un dominé tranquille" into an internal demonic force attempting to colonize and even drain the life out of the Metropole itself (*Mémoires* 130). The war was not left behind in Algeria but invaded the French social body itself. This is particularly evident in Bouraoui's novel when Nina poignantly describes Algerians within France as "bombes humaines," "gens de la guerre," "terroristes par leur seul visage, leur seul prénom," and as "bêtes à chasser du territoire français" in the eyes of the French (101-102). There are many indications in Bouraoui's novel that Nina, the young child who should symbolize the future, is suspected to be a dangerous foreign body that poses a threat to France's health—even if this paranoia is at times more and at times less obscured by a cloudy veil of familial love.

The most obvious manifestation of this French obsession with its perceived threat of foreign invasion, though, is the medical exam that must happen every year after Nina and her sister Jami arrive in France. Nina describes their doctor visit as an opportunity to put under surveillance the little girls, "deux étrangères," that is, two potentially threatening bodies "[à] vérifier. Intérieur. Extérieur" (117). In this way, the young narrator adds, the French doctor checks, searches, penetrates and appropriates their bodies with the help of blood analyses, x-rays and stethoscopes "[pour] voir que tout va bien. Après ce pays, cette terre, cette Afrique du Nord" (111). This scene, focusing on the innocent body of a child, confirms the pathology of the French obsession with finding a feared disease in *any* body coming from post-war Algeria, a land the French perceived as

abject, teaming with violence and chaos. That the tests always come up negative incites Nina to exclaim: “on m’examine. Mais moi je vais très bien” (111). But, just as the man who attempted to kidnap her took her childhood in Algeria, the medical exams destroy her childhood in France, shrouding it in France’s pathological fear of invasion. During her medical exam Nina asks: “Où passe soudain l’enfance? C’est la mort déjà qui est là. La mort à trouver sur ces peaux brunes et encore brûlantes” (117). France attempts to find death on and within these brown bodies that are not only warm with life but burning with it.

If the annual search for disease on the bodies of the healthy Franco-Algerian children—who are, after all, French citizens—gives the reader a sense of the French national paranoia with regulating what it perceives as foreign bodies, Nina’s relationship with her French grandparents themselves also allows for a glimpse into the destructive ambiguity of the autoimmune disorder undermining the health of the French social body. Although in multiple places in the novel Nina comments on the warmth with which she has been received and the love she feels from her French family, she also makes clear that there is an unaddressed violence lurking beneath it, going so far as to qualify this love as “étrange” and “un peu brutal” (125). Strikingly, an underlying violence can be seen bubbling underneath the surface of quotidian scenes of familial love. Nina hears echoes of racism in the comments of her undeniably loving grandmother while she is giving her a bath: “De l’amour dans les mains de ma grand-mère qui me lave. De l’amour sur tout mon corps. De l’amour dans sa petite voix qui dit : C’est marrant tu es toute noire avec les plantes de pied blanches” (125). Her grandmother’s love is all over her body,

until, in a small voice, the old lady makes a comment that clearly others Nina and that exposes a damaging and racialized ignorance on the part of Nina's French family. Moreover, her grandmother's phrase, pronounced while scrubbing the biracial child, suggests an attempt to wash away "blackness" which both suggests dirt because Nina's skin tone would generally not be qualified as "black," and a connection to Sub-Saharan Africans, seen as even more foreign than Algerians. Later in the same scene, Nina questions the love of her grandfather as he reads with her after her bath: "De l'amour ou une dévoration?" (125). This is a powerful and ambiguous phrase that only further emphasizes the insidious nature of France's autoimmune disorder that destroys itself in attempting to save itself. Does her grandfather act out of love for his granddaughter or do his nurturing actions hide a desire to destroy her or more precisely to rid her of her Algerianness? Is his reading with her an iteration of the *mission civilisatrice*, an attempt to erase her Algerian cultural influences to implant his superior French ones? There are indeed indications in the novel that the young Nina believes that her grandfather does indeed wish to somehow erase Algeria—this threatening body—from his grandchildren. For instance, when their grandfather picks them up at the train station the narrator takes his point of view and reflects that "[l]eurs yeux, leurs cheveux, leur peau. Tout se passe avec le temps peut-être. Tout s'efface" (101). Perhaps, in her grandfather's view, their time with him in France could cure them of their *algérienité* not only on a cultural level, but on a level of bodily transformation.

Willed Amnesia and the Spread of Necrosis

The true threat, the true infection is in indeed within France, but it does not stem from the perceived actions of nefarious foreign bodies but, rather, it is a direct effect of France's mutilation of its own memory, a denial of the violence France committed under the banner of the *mission civilisatrice* and of its own unmeasured brutality during Algerian war. Bancel and Blanchard coin the term *fracture coloniale* to describe France's fragmented and fragmenting memory of the violence of its colonial period and the on-going effects of this mutilated memory on the increasingly fractured French social body of the current era.[157] Moreover, the amnesty laws that France enacted after the war were "designed to prevent or stop legal action, erase sentences, and stop the pursuit of

[157]In his article, *Aux origins: L'indépendence d'Haïti et son occultation,* Michel Dorigny explains that the *fracture coloniale* that characterizes French memory since the end of the process of independence in the 1960s began with the *Métropole*'s reaction to its loss of Haiti in 1804 at the height of France's colonial power and glory (55):

> […] la perte de Saint-Domingue par un défait une défaite ? face à une insurrection d'esclaves transformée en guerre de libération était inacceptable, car elle transgressait un dogme jusqu'alors unanimement admis, celui de la supériorité des Blancs sur les autres peuples. […] Le mécanisme de l'oubli entra aussitôt en œuvre et fit très rapidement sortir la naissance d'Haïti de l'histoire coloniale française" (47).

Haiti's loss was such an unthinkable wound to the beliefs at the core of the Republican Subject that the very memory of this former colony was excised from the French imaginary. This willful amnesia, Dorigny argues, paved the way for *la fracture coloniale* that would destabilize France following the Algerian War of Independence and continuing to the present day.

Blanchard et al. explain that in the past few decades it has become difficult to ignore the realities of "postcoloniality" in France:

> […] tant elle porte des tensions extraordinairement fortes : l'extension, dans les quartiers, de la comparaison entre les situations de relégation (sociale, économique, culturelle, éducative, religieuse) et la situation coloniale ; la législation sur la bonne manière de construire et de transmettre le 'bilan globalement positif' de la colonisation ; les revendications mémorielles des 'enfants de la colonisation' dans un contexte de 'reprise en main' de l'histoire coloniale ; la montée du 'sentiment d'insécurité' face aux immigrations postcoloniales et l'incompréhension des élites républicaines devant les identités 'hors des normes' qualifiées de 'communautaristes' ; les dénonciations médiatiques d'un 'racisme anti-blanc au moment même où nous assistons à une crispation du modèle d'intégration à la française'; les phobies anti-islam exprimées lors du débat du voile ; le rejet de la France en Afrique francophone et les politiques de la francophonie…Autant de signes qui font de la *fracture coloniale* une réalité multiforme et impossible à ignorer (Bancel et al. 11).

knowledge around a particular incident after a war has ended,"[158] only deepening the reach of France's institutionalized amnesia (Khanna 11). As Stora puts it, the memory of the war, cut off from the rest of France's collective memory, "va s'enkyster, comme à l'intérieur d'une forteresse invisible. Non pour être 'protégée', mais pour être dissimulée, telle la figure de la Gorgone" (Gangrène, 215). Just as the Medusa turns those who look at her into stone, the memory of the war is obscured from view because contact with it would have potentially fatal consequences for the Republican subject's positive self-image.

In addition to acts of amnesty for war criminals, France's collective amnesia is promoted as memories of the war are shrouded in silence. This silence makes up the fortress Stora evoked in the previous paragraph. As Stora is quick to clarify, this fortress does not protect the memories from the outside world, as would be the traditional function of a fortress, rather its function is reversed so that it protects the outside world from the memories contained within. The painful memories and the criminal acts enveloped by this invisible fortress are not erased by it ; rather, they remain a festering presence that, Stora warns, will resurface: "Ce 'compromis' permet en tout cas de refouler encore, de rendre inconscients les conflits antérieurs […] car ce qui est refoulé n'est pas éliminé, et trouve toujours à exprimer par des voies détournées" (*Transfert,* 85). Stora contends that these acts of amnesty for those who committed atrocities during the war made it impossible "de vider l'abcès" (*Mémoires* 128). Even more so than Stora's image of the Medusa, the abscess is a very apt metaphor for the necrotizing, yet hidden (indeed,

[158] Included among such instances were war crimes such as torture and mass killings of civilians committed by French hands. One such example of such silenced mass killing was massacre of Algerians in Paris on the 17th of October 1961, which only began coming to light in the 1980's.

as if within an invisible fortress[159]), infection from which, I argue, France suffers. On a very basic level, an abscess is a ball of necrotizing infection that progressively dissolves surrounding tissue adding to its purulent ooze. I will demonstrate that in the following analysis of Bouraoui's novel, this pus takes the form violent, racist attitudes that fester in the silence of homes. Moreover, I contend that this poisonous ooze expanding behind the invisible walls of silence allows the infection to spread.

In Bouraoui's novel, silence is much like the tissue surrounding the untreated, expanding abcess,

> "[…] le silence prendra tout. Silence sur les massacres en Algérie. Sur la douleur. Sur notre nouvelle vie. Un silence qui court. Qui se transmet par contagion. Une vraie maladie. Une peste. Une épidémie. Silence sur toutes les lèvres" (115).

The image of silence "taking" everything indeed evokes images of a massive covering over of unpleasantness, but it also goes further than that: it suggests a sort of devouring action. In French the verb "prendre" (to take) is frequently used when talking about eating food. Silence here is certainly not an inert substance, it is not simply a shroud. It is a contagion, spreading and infecting, just as the tissue surrounding the abscess expands to accommodate the growing necrosis within it—all the while giving the infection the cover it needs to continue to grow exponentially. Indeed, Bouraoui makes clear that this is not a small problem, or an isolated wound by referring to silence as a plague and an epidemic.

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[159] As a normally healthy body attempts to fight the infection growing within it, it cuts the abscess off from healthy tissue. In an abscess, the sphere of purulent liquid is surrounded by layers of necrotic and healthy-appearing immune cells and a layer of fibrin tissue (tissue formed by a non-soluble protein that forms a barrier between wounded tissue and healthy tissue) that protects it from the rest of the body's immune system. Ironically, this layer of fibrin tissue is the body's, ultimately ineffective, response to the infection growing within it.

In Bouraoui's novel, the purulent ooze that grows within the surrounding shell of silence takes the form of racism. Nina describes racism as "[u]ne maladie honteuse. Qui se développe parfois dans le silence des maisons" (149). However, she also goes further, referring to racism as "[u]ne lèpre" and "une nécrose" (149). Nina notes that this necrotic infection is spreading throughout Paris. She presents a scene at a bus stop. Nina is with her father when a woman, staring at Nina's father, remarks: "Il y a trop d'Arabes en France. Beaucoup trop" (130). Just as we saw a progression of silence, to words and, finally, to violence in Nina's Algerian experience, Nina remarks that scenes like this are becoming increasing frequent, gaining ground like hungry forest fires: "Puis ça deviendra une habitude d'entendre ça. Ces mots prendront comme des petits feux de forêt. Ça sera dans toute la ville de Paris" (130). Bouraoui provides the reader numerous scenes in which Nina is faced with very blatant slurs thrown her way in violent verbal attacks. Nina encounters these everywhere and considers them "Comme des pièges à déjouer. Comme des mines à enjamber. Dans la rue. Au restaurant. Dans le métro" (131). She connects these incidents with the type of violence that she and her family experienced in Algeria, "Ces fragments de la grande mosaïque. Ces petites flèches. Ces petits venins. Comme tous ces petits crachats des enfants algériens dans la chevelure blonde de ma mère, au volant de sa GS bleue" (150). But, the most powerful indications that the French social body is deeply sickened and unable to heal itself of its true illness come out in the scenes where equally blatant racism is not recognized as such because it has become so deeply embedded in the culture. Nina describes her more "friendly" interactions with French people:

> [L]es familles françaises que je rencontrerai par hasard. Leurs mots. Leurs grandes discussions. Leurs familles politiques. Ces gens. Qui disent. Sans penser. Sans le faire exprès, soi-disant. Raton, youpin, négro, pédé, melon. Ça part tout seul. C'est une mécanique de mots. Intégrée au langage (122).

Sometimes after lacing their language with such racial slurs in conversations with Nina, these French citizens would add "Tu n'es pas comme les autres. Ou: Tu fais pas. Tu pourrais même faire italienne" (131). This but-you-you're-a-good-one-ism which in no way softens the racist language is in direct contradiction of their claim that these words "are just part of the language." Furthermore, it is confirmation of the depth to which a poisonous racist mentality has penetrated their minds. Moreover, telling her that because she does not look too Algerian and that she could be Italian further erases Nina, replacing her with a culturally acceptable Nina, a sanitized version washed clean of everything Algerian. Nina recounts scenes where friends take comfort in calling her "Nina." "On préfère t'appeler Nina plutôt que Yasmina. Nina ça arrange. Ça fait espagnol ou italien. Comme ça on n'a pas à expliquer nos fréquentations " (123). Still not considered French, now Nina has been assigned an acceptable immigrant identity: Spanish or Italian.

Nina, too, has contracted the contagion of silence that plagues the French social body. After encounters with French racism Nina finds she cannot speak: "blessée jusqu'au silence" (130), she is in her silence "terrassé[e] par la douleur" (130). Nina also describes the effects of the racist remarks she hears as that of many little vipers coiled around her neck— creatures that seem to be waiting there to lodge their poisonous fangs into her neck and kill her. However, as with Stora's use of the word "fortress" to describe the silence around France's Algerian memories, Bouraoui's depiction of silence with

respect to Nina is dynamic. Stora's "fortress" is a word that can never not incite the reader to think of the word's traditional connotation, that of a structure for the "protection of" that which is inside its walls, all-the-while retaining Stora's definition of fortress as a structure that provides "protection from" that which is inside its walls. Nina has become encased in a silence—much like the French social body encased its purulent racism in silence. Toward the end of the novel she remarks that "Mon silence est un corps. Mon silence est une maison. Mon silence est une habitude. Mon silence est une forteresse" (172). Nina as the embodiment of everything France wishes to forget, as an embodiment of the Franco-Algerian war must herself be shrouded in a silence that protects others from the reality she represents. Vassallo remarks tht for Nina there is no possibility of external influence; rather, Nina is imprisoned in a transmitted, internalized silence" all because society wants to believe itself to be healthy and Nina threatens to shatter its self-delusion and expose its necrotizing infections (45).

Moreover, the language of the quote above reveals an ambiguity in the valence of this silence which paints it as all the more insidious in Nina's life. First, she gives it form in the shape of a body (un corps), giving it corporeal power. Then, Nina gives her silence the form of a house (une maison). Nina's silence becomes almost protective and perhaps it is somewhat protective: her silence allows her to become Italian or Spanish in the eyes of those who would reject her for being Algerian. From there, silence becomes a habit (une habitude), a pattern of thought or action from which it is difficult to break free. Finally, it becomes "une forteresse" in which I read quite clearly Stora's concept of a

fortress that is dissimulating, keeping something in, essentially keeping Nina in and cutting her off from a France that does not want to acknowledge her.

Wherever Nina goes, she feels as if she is always different or out of context ("hors de contexte,"). (121). She describes herself as not belonging to "l'unité du monde" (121). This feeling of not belonging was evident in Algeria where Nina found she could never be part of the Algerian social body, first because she is female and thus marked as an object and, second, because she has French heritage and is thus marked as a threatening foreign body. Similarly, while in France, Nina is constantly either being metaphorically "scrubbed clean" of her Algerian heritage, shrouded in silence, or redefined completely (as Spanish or Italian, for example). This constant feeling of exclusion, of being cut off from those around her is, for Nina, akin to death:

> L'idée de la mort s'insinue avec la sensation du rejet. […] L'idée de la mort vient avec l'idée d'être toujours différente. De ne pas être à sa place. De ne pas marcher droit. D'être à côté. Hors contexte. Dans son seul sujet. Sur soi. De ne pas appartenir, enfin, à l'unité du monde. Mon visage. Mon corps à vérifier. Mon accent. […] Mon coupe de cheveux trop court. […] (121).

Death, as Nina defines it, is the loss of connection between people, "la perte du lien. Sa coupure. Puis son oubli" (121). Returning to our abscess metaphor, death is precisely what the walls of the abscess, the invisible fortress, cultivate as they encase the purulent ooze developing and reproducing inside it—in this case the pus is formed from France's denied violence and racism against Algerians and others from its former African colonies. Nina, the Franco-Algerian child shrouded in silence is the present covered up by a disavowed past. The death that threatens Nina represents a future that is cut off, disconnected from vital connections with life, and not allowed to develop.

Conclusion

The conclusion of Bouraoui's novel is divided into two sections, "Tivoli" and "Amine." These brief final sections (spanning only seven pages combined) represent a rupture from the form of the rest of the novel in which childhood memories and feelings ebbed and flowed fluidily with a rather loose chronology. Conversely, "Tivoli" and "Amine" recount two specific experiences and occur in Nina's early adulthood, each of which demonstrates the ways in which her internal fractures (France/Algeria and masculine/feminine) may be muted in her departure from the landscape of her childhood, but are not resolved.

In "Tivoli," a city in Italy near Rome, Nina finds that she is no-longer being pulled in opposite directions, that she no longer has to navigate two opposed identities: "Je n'étais plus française. Je n'étais plus algérienne. […]. J'étais moi. Avec mon corps" (184). Nina felt able to reclaim and redefine the body that had always been confiscated and defined by others:

> Mon corps portait autre chose. Une évidence. Une nouvelle personnalité. Un don, peut-être. Je venais de moi et de moi seule. Je me retrouvais. Je venais de mes yeux, ma voix, de mes envies. Je sortais de moi. Et je me possédais. Mon corps se détachait de tout. Il n'avait plus rien de la France. Il n'avait plus rien de l'Algérie. Il avait cette joie simple d'être en vie (185).

The first line in this quotation speaks to the quotation from this novel that I used in my opening epigraph: "Je porte la souffrance de ma famille algérienne. Je porte le refus de ma famille française. Je porte ces transmissions-là" (32). Nina no longer feels she carries the violence that was transmitted to her by her French and Algerian families while in

Italy. This passage also draws us back to when Nina was almost kidnapped by the Algerian man in the park by her home. He claimed her body and her organs of perception, but here she reclaims them as her own. She escapes that which trapped her in a body defined from the outside ("Je sortais de moi") and she possesses her body for herself.

This is undoubtedly a positive and healing experience for Nina, however, there remain some troubling elements in her Italian happiness. For one, while she feels welcome and content within a group of boys that is she is photographing in the street, Nina cannot actually communicate with them and does not know what they are actually saying. As she notes, "Ils me parlaient. Et, sans connaître la langue, je savais que toute ma force était là." (186). Perhaps they are labeling her, perhaps they are objectifying her, or perhaps it simply does not matter because if she cannot understand them, she cannot internalize the images they may be projecting onto her. Perhaps her strength lies precisely in their inability to reach her. If this is the case, it is clearly an ephemeral state because she cannot feasibly remain there forever, surrounded by people but in a state of noncommunication with others. Another potentially ambiguous element of this experience is that it occurs in Italy. Italy is a benificial place for Nina to be because it is outside the relentless fracturing of the France/Algeria binary that threatened to devour her.

But escaping the fracture does not heal it; it merely gives Nina reprieve and perhaps only acts as yet another mask behind which the wounds of fracture might continue to fester. References to Italy first appeared in the novel with Nina's most

ephemeral persona Brio, an Italian term meaning "vitality," who existed in the safe, closed space of the community of Nina father's friends, and gave the young child temporary reprieve from gendering and gender violence in Algeria. The second time Italy came in the picture was when Nina's French friends associated an Italian or Spanish identity to Nina's name to hide her socially unacceptable Algerian one. In this case Italy was a protective mask from the French so that they would not have to come to grips with France's troubled past and present relationship with Algeria. Both these previous references to Italy lend meaning to the Tivoli section of the novel, tainting the utopian bent of her Italian adventure and reminding the reader that escape and healing are not one in the same.

The final section, "Amine," reads like a letter, addressed to Amine, written in the second person and depicts Nina's definitive fracturing from her alter-ego. Returning from her trip to Italy, Nina goes to visit Amine. He finds her much changed. Decidedly feminine and adult in appearance, Nina no-longer shares with Amine that gender fluidity they enjoyed as children. Amine seems bothered and even betrayed by her changed person, Nina writes: "Tu m'en as voulu. Peut-être. Tu t'es senti trahi. Moi j'étais là, devant toi, avec toi. Et toi tu allais déjà vers le silence. Vers cette séparation" (187-188). Amine, Nina wrote, was fading out of her life, moving toward the silence and separation, the indelible fracture between them. The loss of Amine left a rupture in Nina, a permenant fracture that she would not be able to escape by simply changing scenary and leaving the environment in which the fracture occurred as she could when she went to

Italy. However, this rupture, as painful as it was, provided Nina window to break through the silence that had imprisoned her all of her life:

> Sans le savoir, tu m'as donné la force d'écrire. Par ton souvenir, si plein, si constant. Par ce vide à combler. À raconter. Par cette place immense que tu as, malgré toi, creusée en moi. Par ce manque dans mon histoire que je porte. […] Il restera toujours une trace de toi, Amine. Sur ma peau. Un petit tatouage bleu, comme le ciel d'Alger (188).

Nina's wounds are not healed, and she carries (porte) a hole (manque) within her where Amine, her alter-ego her other self should be. Her loss of Amine is the loss of that unstable space of freedom that they shared as children: running on the wild Algerian beaches next to the Mediterranean Sea, sharing the tumultuous experience of being both Algerian and French and yet also neither of these, and alternately taking on masculine and feminine gender roles. Nina remarks that Amine "est le rêve du lien perdu. De l'innocence. Du bonheur" (166). However, it is this rupture from him that allows her to write, to tell her story.

To conclude, let us return now to the Benjamin Stora quote with which I opened this chapter : "Le passé ne sert plus d'explication du présent pour élargir le champ des possibles, mais recouvre le présent pour faire disparaître le futur" (Transfert 161). If Nina has a future beyond the social death she experienced in France and in Algeria, it is one that is not yet recognizable. This lack of resolution is evident in the abrupt ending Bouraoui gave to her novel. I contend that Bouraoui's novel is not meant to heal the gaping and infected wounds produced by the troubled Franco-Algerian relationship. Nina never solves the problem of her fractured identity. However, much as Miano's protagonist, Ayané, did in chapter three, Nina's story is an invitation to break down the

fortresses of silence that cover a sinister past that continues to deform the present; that is, it enabes her to unbury the past so that it stops strangling out the future. And, perhaps more than anything else, Nina's story exposes the very deep interconnections between France and Algeria that cannot be broken without causing harm to each society or in the case of children like Nina without fatally fragmenting the identities that draw on them. In spite of the seemingly hopeless magnitude of the Franco-Algerian wounds that Bouroui exposes along with the deep fracture that remains within Nina herself, the last lines in Bouraoui's novel offer a small, yet beautiful, nugget of hope. Bouraoui ends her novel with a sign of a joyful interconnectedness between France and Algeria in Nina's memory of her time with Amine: "Il restera toujours quelque chose de nous, Amine. Dans nos rêves. Dans notre force. Dans cette joie à retrouver. Dans cette odeur algérienne qui revient comme par miracle à chaque printemps français" (188-9).

(In)conclusion
Death in Fracture or Hope Beyond the Abject?

Throughout the course of this dissertation I have taken significant steps in my exploratory journey into my concept of fracture zones as I see them represented in a range of works of Francophone African literature. My study confirmed that, in their essence, fracture zones are the abject spaces. They form constitutive borders of the Subject and serve as spaces into which the Subject expels its own refuse. Fracture zones, unlike fluid interstitial spaces of contact and negotiation, not only do not allow for the creation of new life but mutilate life within them. These unnatural spaces are what the Subject, in this case the global North and specifically France, designed them to be: unlivable realms in which identities are confiscated, lives are lost, and futures are deformed and even altogether erased.

The novels discussed in each chapter provided a window into the proteiform nature of fracture zones and the multifaceted consequences of dividing and polarizing human reality. My investigation began in the mass graveyard of African bodies that the Mediterranean has become at the behest of fortress Europe, and in the geopolitical and administrative border zone that is the Roissy airport. The purpose of these spaces is literally to create and enforce divisions between peoples. These fracture zones manifest as spaces of authoritarian control, interrupted transit and a dizzying state of (im)mobility in the form of endless repatriations. The abject nature of these spaces was reflected in the dehumanizing treatment of the would-be migrants—who, were themselves made to be

seen as abject, less-than-human, vectors of animal-like violence rather than people in search of a more promising future.

From there my study of fracture zones advanced through newly independent and often war-torn African countries suffering the ill effects of colonial destabilization of cultural moorings and through the continued, noxious neo-colonial interventions newly independent nations continue to suffer. My study of Waberi's civil-war torn Djibouti revealed that fracture zones do not necessarily have to be located at France's physical or administrative borders but can also be found within the African continent. France's continued malign presence in the country keeps Djibouti in a state of violent chaos, making it all the easier to label the country and its inhabitants as abject.

I also demonstrated that fracture zones are not necessarily physical spaces, nor are they recent phenomena as might be suggested by my initial investigations of the deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, the captivity in Roissy airport, and the instability often seen in newly independent African nations. My analyses of Kane's and Bugul's novels demonstrated that through the machinations first of colonization and then of neocolonization, France fractured the very psyches of individuals in order to detach them from traditional identities, to confiscate notions of subjectivity that would challenge the universality of the Subject, and of course, to justify inhuman treatment of the colonized. This internalization first created psychic schisms between world views that were made to be polar opposites with no room for growth or compromise between them, as we saw with Kane's Samba and *le fou*. Both of these men found themselves torn between incompatible world views, resulting in insanity for one and death for the other. Later, as

we saw with Bugul's Ken, the initial colonial fracture did not heal but mutated into a more insidious established neocolonial alienation—one that was further complicated for this female protagonist by the fracture between genders and the erasure of the feminine subjectivity, characteristic of patriarchal societies. Moreover, internalized fracturing made way for internalized abjectification as evidenced be Ken's dissolution into the abject identity of the exotic prostitute in Europe, for want of any other possibilities for an intelligible identity.

Returning to a larger societal point of view, my study revealed that within the African continent, societal wounds left behind in collective psyches from fracturing contact with France remain unhealed and can become infected, resulting in self-destructive social disorder. Where France was actively fueling and benefitting from the chaos in Waberi's Djibouti, Miano made little to no mention of France's on-going involvement in her imaginary newly independent Central African country, Mboasu. Miano, conversely, offers an image of the inhuman violence produced in a fracture zone no longer being under the control of its author. African individuals and societies within are indeed not inert clay to be molded to the Subject's specification and the consequences of fracturing and abjectifying a people are complex and terrible.

Finally, turning my gaze toward the authors of fracture zones, I found a France suffering the effects of the violence it imposed on others, a France sickened by the return of the poisonous attitudes it cultivated through the violence it visited on its former colonies. My study of Miano's Mboasu planted the seeds for this idea that the inhuman violence of fracture zone could extend beyond its original purpose of defining and

protecting the Subject and its interests. This chapter more than any other confirmed that the abject does indeed belong to the subject and so will eventually return to its author. Bouaroui depicts a France showing signs of a deadly infection resulting from its own poisonous, racist attitudes, in addition to the perhaps more anticipated image of an Algeria suffering the consequences of having been culturally and economically erased and the social disorder resulting from the festering wounds of its fracture.

Ultimately, however, I cannot offer a satisfying conclusion to this study. As my dissertation has revealed, fracture zones and the resulting abjectification present a complex, deeply-rooted and on-going problem that only seems to be growing in our current globalized era. It is not surprising that none of the authors I studied offered satisfying conclusions to their novels—that is if a satisfying conclusion is resolution. However, these writers each helped to accomplish the first step toward resolution: identifying the problem. Each novel helps, in some way, to lift the veil of alienation that allows fracturing and abjectification to continue unexamined. Waberi's and Kane's novels both ended in death and stagnation of protagonists within fractured spaces, or in Samba's case, a protagonist who has internalized fracture. The deaths of Abdo-Julien, the failed idealistic Bhabhaian hybrid figure, and of Samba, the intellectual desperately trying to find common ground between two opposed world views that he has internalized, served to illustrate that power-infused binaries do not dissipate in interstitial spaces and that considerations of Bhabhaian-type hybridity risk being more of an intellectual exercise than descriptive of reality. Bugul ended her novel with Ken, who had metaphorically died in Belgium and had been reborn, returning to Senegal to silently

contemplate the hollowed out remains of her village's baobab—a symbol of traditional Senegalese society—that had gone crazy and died. Bugul's protagonist solved one problem. She was able to pierce the blinding veil of neocolonial alienation that had led her to become a prostitute to European men. With the veil lifted, Ken is able to mourn the empty remains of Senegalese identity but is unable to imagine a future for herself or for her country. Miano's novel, which delved deeper into the neocolonial mutations of fracturing, ended with a similar sort of recognition on the part of a protagonist who had been blinded by her alienation. However, where Ken was silently contemplating the dead tree, Ayané joined the *folle-sage* Epupa in a scream, which functions as a sort of breaking of the silence that allowed Mbaosu's metaphorical societal wounds to fester into the chaos of mercenary wars. Yet, the scream, an inarticulate sound, seems unlikely to bring about any change. Bouraoui's novel ended with Nina unable to resolve the Franco-Algerian fracture that she embodies and permanently fractured from part of herself, her alter-ego Amine. However, Nina claims that this last painful fracture is the one that allowed her to write, to tell her story, and potentially to break the silence around the Franco-Algerian fracture in an articulate way.

The question that remains to be investigated is: how might fractured individuals and societies reclaim livable identities not marred by the abjection inscribed in them by the West? France's colonialization on the African continent deformed traditional identities and societies, and as the works discussed in this dissertation revealed, there can be no return to precolonial African identities. The current study has led me to (in)conclude that resistance and rebirth have to come from outside of the identitary and

societal structures that have been destabilized and injected with the Subject's poison. This outside, also called the abject, in the Millerian sense of the abject as all that is outside of the Subject's domain, is yet unimaginable. Miano's otherworldly and abjectified Epupa offers a window into what I call the beyond—beyond the domain of the Western (and the masculine) Subject. However, as an embodiment of a Haitian goddess, Epupa essentially remains in the realm of the mythical and in that her her message comes from a crazy, naked, woman, well outside of the bounds of the socially acceptable, it promises to remain unintelligible. But what if her message were heeded? What if the African body politic were to find a way, not only to lucidly examine its wounds, but to delve into the abject—truly beyond the realm of the Subject? What would a journey into the abject, not taken from a stand-point of fear and disgust look like? What valuable insights might one achieve and what relics might one be able to retrieve from the metaphorical muck? If the abject could be reclaimed, cleaned up of the fear and disgust that the Western Subject assigned it, could a livable identity, a Subject, emerge? And could that Subect exist completely outside of the West's purview?

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