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Actualité coloniale: French Colonial Literature and the Press, 1877-1898

DeNino, Maureen

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ACTUALITÉ COLONIALE: FRENCH COLONIAL LITERATURE AND THE PRESS, 1877-1898

Maureen DeNino

A DISSERTATION

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OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Adviser: Göran Blix

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Abstract

This dissertation examines writing on colonialism in late nineteenth-century French literature and the press as part of a distinct *littérature d'actualité coloniale* that emerged at the nexus of French colonial empire, global information networks, and the mass press. Four chapters situate this literature in the context of the *actualité* that informed and inspired it, tracing how writers commented on and transformed the colonial current events, debates, scandals and *affaires* that filled newspaper pages in the 1880s and 1890s. At the height of this "civilisation du journal," journalism and literature were inextricably linked. Newspapers not only mediated information about colonial expeditions and politics for a broad metropolitan readership, they were also a formative site of literary production, as *chroniques*, *contes*, and *romans-feuilletons* turned colonial current events into a privileged subject for critiquing the media and its power to deceive.

Chapter one reconstructs the international furor occasioned by Pierre Loti's front-page account of a massacre at the Battle of Thuan An in 1883, which sparked a debate that helped to define the boundaries of colonial writing in the press. Chapter two tells the story of the Port-Breton colony, a fraudulent colonial venture propped up—and ultimately brought down—by a sophisticated media operation, and shows how its victims served as a cautionary tale in an age of expanding mass media. Chapter three examines how this story made its way into fiction, analyzing Alphonse Daudet's 1890 novel *Port-Tarascon* against and alongside its sources in the press. Chapter four looks at the journalistic writing of prominent *chroniqueur* Octave Mirbeau, and explores the connection between criticism of colonial current events and criticism of journalism and media practices more broadly. A conclusion looks ahead to the end of *littérature*

d'actualité coloniale, situating it in the context of new developments in global reporting and new literary debates codifying the genre of *littérature coloniale*.

In memory of my father, James DeNino, and my grandfather, James Cotter

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of my many mentors, colleagues, and friends. It is the product of my education and training at New York University, the University of Colorado–Boulder, and Princeton University, and the product of research at the Archives of the City of Paris, the Archives of the Paris Prefecture of Police (Le Pré Saint-Gervais), the Armand Salacrou Library (Le Havre), the Berlin State Library, the Defense Historical Service (Vincennes), the French National Archives (Pierrefitte-sur-Seine), the Ghent University Library, the Historical Library of the City of Paris, Leipzig University Library, the Library of the French Overseas Archives (Aix-en-Provence), the Library of the Marseille Municipal Archives, the Maison de Pierre Loti (Rochefort), the National Library of France (Paris), the Paris City Hall Library, Princeton University Library, and the Rochefort Library. I am grateful to the archivists, librarians, and *magasiniers* at these institutions, especially the *magasiniers* at the Arsenal site of the National Library of France, who accommodated my many requests; the archivists at the French Overseas Archives, who were able to locate missing copies of the newspaper *La Nouvelle France* in the absence of the main librarian; and Julie Mellby, at Princeton University Library, who helped me to understand the process of copying and reproducing nineteenth-century wood engravings.

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Fellowship for France (Georges Lurcy Foundation) and a Harold W. Dodds Honorific Fellowship (Princeton University). Princeton University's exchange with the École Normale Supérieure allowed me to spend two years in Paris as a *pensionnaire étrangère*. While in Paris, the TIGRE seminar at ENS and the Médias19-Transfopress seminar played a formative role in developing the theoretical framework for this dissertation and its grounding in press and literature studies.

This dissertation includes work presented at several conferences. Material from chapter one was presented at the Society for French Studies Conference at Durham University and at the Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium at the University of Virginia, both in 2017. Material from chapter two was presented at the Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium at Scripps College and the University of California, Riverside, in 2018. Material from chapter three was presented at the meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society at the University of Ottawa in 2016 and at the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes Conference at Newcastle University in 2018. Material from chapter four was presented at the Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium at Florida State University and the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art in 2019 and at the Nineteenth-Century French Studies Colloquium at Georgetown University and George Washington University in 2021. Other material from the dissertation was presented at the Médias19-Transfopress seminar at the University of Paris 7 in 2017.

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Moudileno, Alina Van Nelson, and Masano Yamashita. I am particularly thankful to Andrew Cowell for the opportunity to co-write an article on scent in the novel *Hutu Pāinu*, an invaluable introduction to the profession that helped develop my interests in the history and literature of the Francophone Pacific. I was fortunate to have many extraordinary teachers and mentors at Princeton: David Bellos, David Bell, André Benhaïm, Göran Blix, Katie Chenoweth, Linda Colley, Nick Nesbitt, Philip Nord, Murielle Perrier, Raphaël Piguet, Christine Sagnier, Volker Schröder, Effie Rentzou, and Christy Wampole.

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I have passed these years of research and writing, blissfully, with a fellow scholar, Paul Babinski. It is hardly enough, and yet it is all I can say: his love has made all things possible.

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INTRODUCTION

"Il est bien difficile, vraiment, de se fier aux renseignements que nous fournit la presse française." [1] With these words, from a *chronique* in *Le Gaulois* in the spring of 1881, Guy de Maupassant neatly summarized the savvy reader's suspicion of colonial reporting. Maupassant was then on the cusp of literary stardom, as Émile Zola noted, "au premier rang, parmi les jeunes écrivains d'avenir."[2] The success of his 1880 novella "Boule de suif," published in the anthology *Les Soirées de Médan*, had made his career as a writer. When he was offered a monthly salary of five hundred francs by Arthur Meyer, editor-in-chief of *Le Gaulois*, Maupassant quit his job in the Ministry of Public Instruction and become a regular contributor to the daily newspaper, where over the next year he published *chroniques* on literature, theater, travel, and the Parisian boulevard, among other subjects.

In the spring of 1881, Maupassant's *chroniques* turned toward what was then called "la politique coloniale."[3] The newly republican-led Third Republic was undertaking a series of colonial expeditions and wars of conquest, and, in April 1881, the French government, led by Jules Ferry, deployed troops to colonial Algeria, purportedly to end "incidents" on the border

[1] Guy de Maupassant, "Vive Mustapha!", *Le Gaulois*, 30 June 1881, 1.

[2] Émile Zola, "Alexis et Maupassant," *Le Figaro*, 11 July 1881, 1.

[3] Maupassant's biographer Marlo Johnston sees in this shift toward the political evidence of the newspaper's "nouvelle tendance 'ironique et frondeuse'." Marlo Johnston, *Guy de Maupassant* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 371.

with Tunisia caused by the Kroumir (or Khmir) tribe.[4] As some noted in the opposition press, the expedition was a pretense for colonial expansion, and, a month later, troops were still in Tunisia and the bey of Tunis was forced to sign the Treaty of Bardo (or Ksar Said), effectively establishing a French protectorate over Tunisia.[5]

Maupassant was struck by the media frenzy around the colonial troops. From the metropole, the French public avidly followed these events as they were reported daily in newspapers. This was nothing new. Since the early days of the rise of a mass daily press, colonial current events had regularly figured on the front page, aided by an expanding network of telegraphs that made overseas expansion a current event. Already in 1830, when Restoration France under Charles X launched an invasion of Ottoman Algiers, military bulletins quickly furnished the French public with an official account of the expedition, traveling first by steamship from the Algerian coast to Toulon and then by optical telegraph to Paris.[6] Word of the dey of Algiers's capitulation to French expeditionary forces on 5 July 1830 reached Paris in four days. The official telegraph dispatch was quickly posted in the Paris stock exchange and printed on newspaper front pages, and a special *Te Deum* mass was celebrated in Catholic churches

---

[4] "La Journée – Incidents de Tunisie," *Le Moniteur universel*, 6 April 1881, 1. The Bardo treaty was proclaimed on 12 May 1881. On the circumstances leading up to the declaration of a French protectorate in Tunisia, see Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 2014), particularly "Tunisia in the Imperial Mediterranean," 14-27.

[5] *L'Intransigeant*, Henri Rochefort's radical left daily newspaper, founded in 1880 after his return from exile a decade after the Paris Commune, was critical of the expedition all through the spring. See, for instance, an article by Rochefort, "Menteur comme un bulletin," casting doubt on the reporting coming from the conflict, as it had to be approved by the military (*L'Intransigeant*, 22 April 1881, 1), or Maurice Talmeyr's "La Paix à coups de canon," which cut through official rhetoric concerning 'peace-keeping expeditions' to declare that "en fait, nous sommes en pleine guerre" (*L'Intransigeant*, 2 May 1881, 1).

[6] The optical telegraph, or semaphore, was a long-distance telecommunications system invented by Claude and Ignace Chappe during the French Revolutionary wars and widely used in France until the 1850s, when it was replaced by the electrical telegraph. For a recent discussion of telecommunications and imperialism in the Mediterranean, see Arthur Asseraf, "La mer immédiate: nouvelles, télégraphe et impérialisme en Méditerranée, 1798-1882," *Monde(s)* 16, no. 2 (2019): 47-66.

across the country.[7] Artists visualized the events with dramatic scenes of naval bombardments and assaults on the walls of Algiers, and popular woodcut prints showing the "prise d'Alger" soon circulated.[8]

By the time of the "expédition de Tunis" in the spring of 1881, there was more news, and it arrived faster. An underseas cable connected the Algerian coast to Marseille. From there dispatches could reach Paris via overland wire in time for the evening papers. Major daily newspapers sent correspondents to Algeria to accompany the armies to the Tunisian border, and, on their front pages, telegraph dispatches of the latest news jostled for space with longer reports from special correspondents, narrating events from the previous days and weeks in literary detail (figure 1). Illustrated weekly news magazines like *L'Illustration* and *Le Monde illustré* printed wood-engraved illustrations of troop movements, encampments, and battles, as well as portraits of the Bey of Tunis and his ministers, Tunisian views and figures, and detailed maps of the country and the "pays des Kroumirs."[9] Many daily newspapers published editorials and articles enthusiastically supporting the campaign – including *Le Gaulois*, which on 8 May featured the headline "Il nous faut la Tunisie."[10]

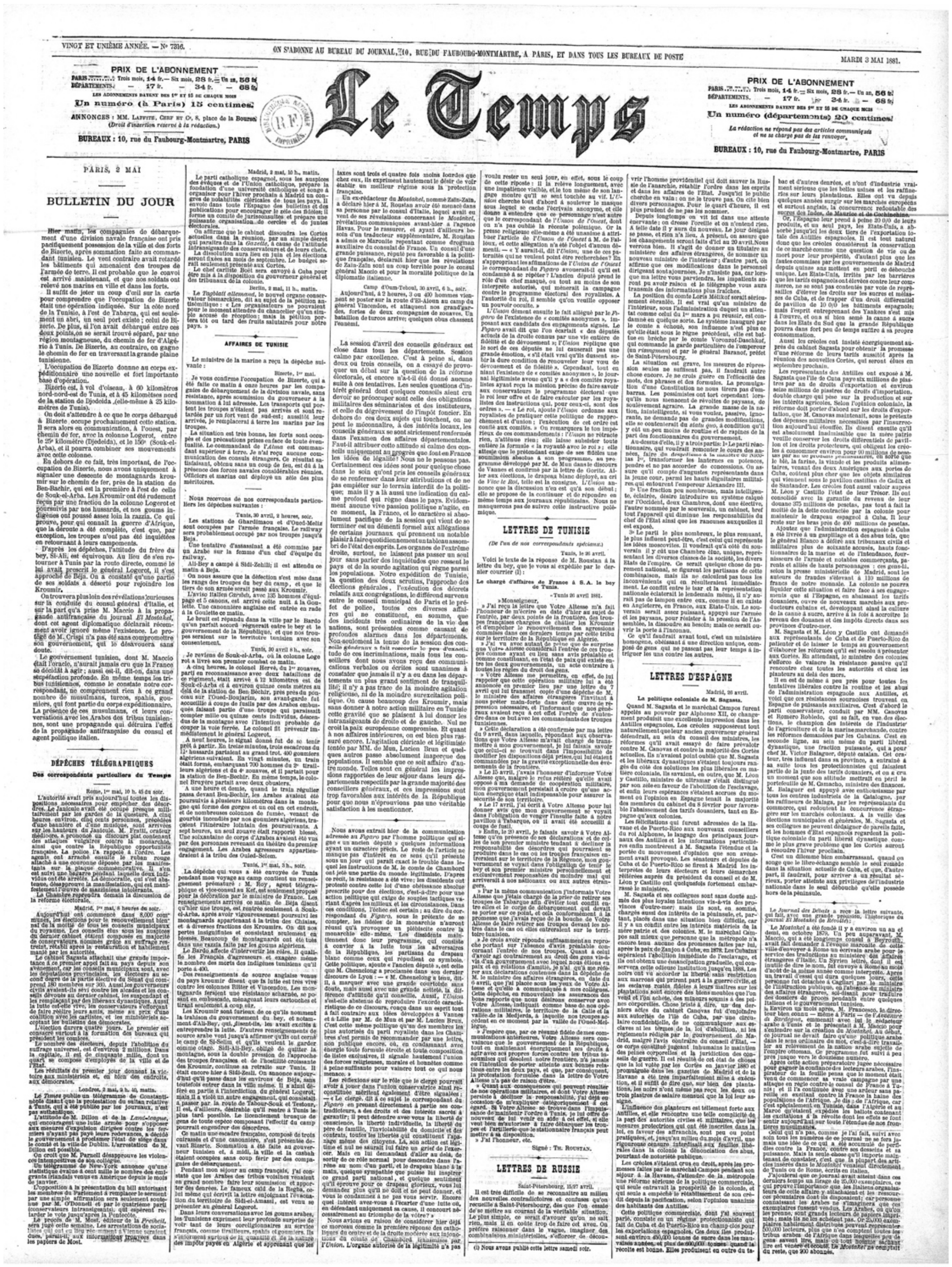
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[7] On the French expedition in Algiers and the political context of 1830, see Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), especially "A Tale of Two Despots: The Invasion of Algeria and the Revolution of 1830," 19-66.

[8] See Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, especially figures 2, 10, and 11. Other examples can be found by searching online databases, such as the photo agency of the Réunion des Musées nationaux or the collections of the Musées de Paris.

[9] Wood-engraved illustrations appeared in issues of *Le Monde illustré* in April and May 1881. In order to produce a news image of the Tunisian campaign, drawings were sent by mail overseas and overland, and then had to be engraved – a time-consuming process. In the spring of 1881, the illustrations in *Le Monde illustré* depicted events with a two- to four-week delay. Media scholars have recently theorized the category of the "news picture": see Jason Hill and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

[10] X... "Il nous faut la Tunisie," *Le Gaulois*, 8 May 1881, 2. This article built on the argument of economist and procolonial theorist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu in favor of the conquest of Tunisia, published in his weekly newspaper *L'Économiste français* the previous day. There, Leroy-Beaulieu argued in favor of "la politique coloniale," writing that France's "grande faute historique" was to have "préféré la politique


VINGT ET UNIÈME ANNÉE. — N° 7316.

ON S'ABONNE AU BUREAU DU JOURNAL, 10, RUE DU FAUBOURG-MONTMARTRE, A PARIS, ET DANS TOUS LES BUREAUX DE POSTE

MARDI 3 MAI 1881.

PRIX DE L'ABONNEMENT

Un numéro (à Paris) 15 centimes

BUREAUX : 10, rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, PARIS

Le Temps

PRIX DE L'ABONNEMENT

Un numéro (départements) 20 centimes

BUREAUX : 10, rue du Faubourg-Montmartre, PARIS

PARIS, 2 MAI

BULLETIN DU JOUR

AFFAIRES DE TUNISIE

DÉPÊCHES TÉLÉGRAPHIQUES

LETTRES DE TUNISIE

LETTRES D'ESPAGNE

LETTRES DE RUSSIE

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1. News of Tunisia: the latest telegraph dispatches, in the first and second column, jostle up against longer "Lettres de Tunisie" sent by surface mail, in the fourth. *Le Temps*, 3 May 1881. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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continentale à la politique coloniale." Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, "La Politique continentale et la politique coloniale: à propos de la nécessité de l'annexion totale de la Tunisie," *L'Économiste français*, 7 May 1881, 566.

Maupassant saw in the press frenzy around the "expédition de Tunis" the "balançoires"—the abrupt 'swings' of public opinion and spikes in enthusiasm—of a terminally media-saturated France.[11] These "tourbillon[s] de sottises" were directed by newspapers, at once the motor and the mirror of public opinion.[12] He compared the press to the uncontrolled and impressionable crowd, writing that it had "des crises comme la foule," and succumbed "tête baissée dans toutes les extases injustifiables du moment."[13] That spring, front pages were filled with "dépêches héroïques," and it seemed that even reporters themselves "étaient mis en campagne, la plume d'une main, le revolver de l'autre." Newspapers immersed readers in the experience of war through minute details—sometimes invented—about the campaign, advertising "des cartes du pays kroumir que personne ne connaît" so that readers could follow "la marche des troupes, les dangers à courir, l'état sanitaire, la situation de l'ennemi, le dénombrement de ses forces," and so on.[14]

Maupassant opined on the questionable "renseignements" of the French press a month later, in a *chronique* titled "Vive Mustapha!" commenting on the much-heralded visit of a Tunisian vizier, Mustapha Ben Ismaïl, to Paris.[15] Here, the juxtaposition of the spring's "Kroumir" frenzy with a new conciliatory tone drew into focus the emptiness of these swings in press attitude and public opinion. The same press which, in April, had riled up the French public was now flattering the visiting dignitary. For Maupassant, this about-face was typical.

---

[11] Guy de Maupassant, "Balançoires," *Le Gaulois*, 12 May 1881, 1. On the Franco-British debates and colonial rivalry sparked by French actions in Tunisia, see also Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, "Tunisia, 1881–Egypt, 1882," *Arguing about Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19-48.

[12] Maupassant, "Balançoires," *Le Gaulois*.

[13] Guy de Maupassant, "Enthousiasme et cabotinage," *Le Gaulois*, 19 May 1881, 1.

[14] Maupassant, "Balançoires," *Le Gaulois*.

[15] Maupassant, "Vive Mustapha!", *Le Gaulois*.

Belligerence quickly drummed up was just as quickly forgotten, as impermanent as yesterday's newspaper: "On accuse vite en France. On tourne vite aussi."[16]

Already earlier that spring, as support was growing for a French invasion of Tunisia, Maupassant had sketched a scene illustrating the feedback loop between press, public, and politics in the matter of colonial war, conquest, and expansion:

> Or, quelques bandits tuent quelques hommes à notre frontière; et voilà tout le peuple en rumeur. Un frisson court d'un bout à l'autre de ce pays de gobe-mouches. On murmure:
>
> — La guerre! la guerre! Tunis, Roustan, Maccio, Roustan!
>
> Et tous les bourgeois exaltés brandissent leur journal au coin du feu, en criant à leur femme et à leurs mioches, devant leur servante stupéfaite:
>
> — A Tunis! à Tunis!
>
> Aussitôt, les hommes du pouvoir se disent:
>
> — Il faut tenir compte de l'opinion publique.
>
> Et on arme, on déplace les régiments, on réquisitionne les transatlantiques, on fait un bruit du diable, avec cette pensée secrète:
>
> — Il sera toujours temps de voir ce qui peut arriver.[17]

Several years later, in his 1885 novel *Bel-Ami*, Maupassant elaborated on this dynamic, depicting how Georges Duroy, an unscrupulous journalist, became involved in a scheme to manipulate public opinion about a colonial expedition for the financial gain of a corrupt minister and a newspaper owner.[18] For Maupassant, criticism of *la politique coloniale* was inextricable from criticism of the media, as colonial politics fed—and was fed by—the "balançoires" of the press. Diagnosing an ill, Maupassant also offered an antidote: a form of writing that dramatized unmasking the fiction of the press.

The interplay between colonial culture and press culture, between colonial criticism and media criticism, is the subject of this dissertation. It argues that a distinct genre of colonial

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[16] Maupassant, "Vive Mustapha!", *Le Gaulois*.

[17] Guy de Maupassant, "La Guerre," *Le Gaulois*, 10 April 1881, 1.

[18] For a thorough exploration of Maupassant's rewriting of the Tunisian affair in *Bel-Ami*, see Edmund Birch, "Sleight of Hand: Maupassant and *Actualité*," in *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 163-205, especially 166-172.

writing emerged in the 1880s and 1890s at the juncture of the fiction of the novel and the fiction of the press, one defined by writers like Maupassant who used their mobility between periodical writing and the literary marketplace to probe the press's capacity to misrepresent and deceive. This genre drew from two interrelated and contemporaneous phenomena: the rise of a mass press and a wave of colonial expansion. The Tunisian campaign coincided with a seismic shift in the media landscape. In the summer of 1881, the Chamber of Deputies passed a new law on press freedom (*loi sur la liberté de la presse*, 29 July 1881), setting the stage for two decades of explosive growth in both the number of daily newspapers printed in France and the number of newspaper subscribers and readers. Between 1870 and 1910, the print runs of Parisian newspapers increased fivefold. There were 257 daily newspapers in France in 1892, up from 179 in in 1892, with a peak of ninety in Paris alone in 1882.[19]

The rapid transformation of the press impacted all aspects of literary production. Recent scholarship has shown the extent to which literature in this period was inextricable from the press.[20] As Marie-Ève Thérenty put it in an influential study, "le journal au XIXe siècle est

[19] Claude Bellanger et al., eds., *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. III: De 1871 à 1940 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972), 137, 138.

[20] "Press and literature studies," as Marie-Ève Thérenty has dubbed it ("Petit manifeste pour les 'Press and Literature Studies'," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 1-6), is a vibrant field, especially in Francophone scholarship, but with a growing contingent of Anglophone scholars as well. See especially Dominique Kalifa, Philippe Régnier, Marie-Ève Thérenty, and Alain Vaillant, eds., *La Civilisation du Journal: Histoire culturelle et littéraire de la presse française au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2011); Marie-Ève Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien: Poétiques journalistiques au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2007); Guillaume Pinson, *L'Imaginaire médiatique* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012); Dean de la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Birch, *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century France*; Edmund Birch, ed., "Literature and the Press," special issue of *Dix-Neuf* 21, no. 4 (2017); Marie-Ève Thérenty and Alain Vaillant, *L'An I de l'ère médiatique: Analyse littéraire et historique du journal la Presse d'Émile de Girardin* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2001); Michael B. Palmer, *Des petits journaux aux grandes agences: Naissance du journalisme moderne, 1863-1914* (Paris: Aubier, 1983); and Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Le Roman du quotidien: Lecteurs et lectures populaires à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Le Chemin vert, 1984).

essentiellement composé de 'littérature'."[21] That novels were serialized in newspapers is only one aspect of the imbrication of literature and journalism. Many writers moved between newspaper and novel—penning, like Maupassant, *chroniques* on a wide variety of subjects, as well as short stories or *contes*, and literary, art, or theater criticism. These writers treated the quotidian subjects of their newspaper coverage with literary flair, and, in turn, they took inspiration from the stories elsewhere in the newspaper to write fiction. Journalism borrowed literary style and narrative. Novels depicted—often satirically or critically—the world of the newspaper. In this "civilisation du journal," the shared discourse of a reading nation found a common source: the *actualité* of the newspaper page.[22]

In those same decades, beginning with the invasion of Tunisia, the French Third Republic undertook a series of protracted and bloody colonial campaigns, from Congo and Dahomey (Benin) to Madagascar and Tonkin (Vietnam). For the vast majority of the French public, the colonies were a textual reality, encountered through newspapers and other print media ranging from press commentary on parliamentary debates, news of expeditions and war, and travel narratives, to polemical *chroniques* and caricatures, short stories and novels. This reality, in turn, like so much that passed under the Parisian presses, was bitterly contested, particularly in the early 1880s.[23] While the press could be coopted as an organ of the state, it was also a platform

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[21] Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien*, 11. Edmund Birch similarly describes "the continual crossover, overlap and exchange which bind literature and journalism in this period." Birch, *Fictions of the Press*, 5.

[22] Kalifa et al., eds., *La Civilisation du Journal*. See also Marc Angenot, *1889: Un état du discours social* (Montréal: Balzac, 1989).

[23] See in particular Jean-Noël Jeanneney, "Preface," in *La politique coloniale: Clemenceau contre Ferry* (Paris: Magellan, 2012), 7-16, on the well-known parliamentary clash on the subject of colonial politics between deputy (and critic of colonialism) Georges Clemenceau and former prime minister (and proponent of a *mission civilisatrice*) Jules Ferry in 1885. On the history of French criticisms of colonialism more broadly, see also: Charles-Robert Ageron, *L'anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914* (Paris: Presses universitaires françaises, 1973); Jean-Pierre Biondi, *Les Anticolonialistes: 1881-1962* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1992); Claude Liauzu, *Histoire de l'anticolonialisme en France* (Paris: Armand

for public critique and a stage for increasingly acrimonious parliamentary politics. Deputies and commentators excoriated *la politique d'aventures* and *la politique de conquête* in the halls of the National Assembly and in the columns of the daily papers. Colonial controversies, scandals, and *affaires* of all kinds competed for the attention of readers.

Waves of colonial enchantment and disenchantment—and the distance of French colonies from the everyday experiences of readers—made the colonial a privileged subject for thinking about (and satirizing) the press and its readers. As Jennifer Yee has recently shown in her study of realist fiction, in nineteenth-century France the colonies were both ever present and ever "offstage."[24] Around the time that Maupassant was writing in *Le Gaulois*, a literature emerged around *actualité coloniale* that doubled as a critique of the press and a reflection on the mediation of modern experience through print, constituting a transitory genre that appeared and disappeared before the rise of both colonial and postcolonial literature. The characteristics of this genre were rooted in the conventions and styles of the press: it was ironic and skeptical, deploying referentiality, generic playfulness and parody in order to critique and question the newly forming conventions of colonial writing.[25]

While some of the works studied here have drawn the attention of scholars for their criticism of colonialism, they were not necessarily anticolonial.[26] Rather, the failures of colonialism were a convenient tool for contrasting representation with reality in the daily press. In recent years, press and literature scholars have underlined the centrality of the question of

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Colin, 2007).

[24] Jennifer Yee, *The Colonial Comedy: Imperialism in the French Realist Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[25] On irony and parody in journalistic style, see Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien*, 153-173.

[26] See for instance the works studied in Martine Astier Loutfi, *Littérature et colonialisme: l'expansion coloniale vue dans la littérature romanesque française 1871-1914* (Paris: Mouton, 1971).

representation—and misrepresentation—in French anxieties about newspapers in the "siècle de la presse."[27] This anxiety about misrepresentation was particularly strong when it came to reporting on France's colonial undertakings. This was true both for supporters of colonialism, who feared that frank discussion of colonial failures or colonial violence jeopardized France's standing in the world.[28] It was also true for critics, who asked, as Maupassant did in the face of the media frenzy around Tunisia in the spring of 1881, "Que croire?"[29] As others have observed, Maupassant was not alone in his concern that, as Edmund Birch put it, "the world is somehow other than newspapers would have their readers believe," as distance, coupled with the limits of technology—a feeling that the world was growing ever more connected and yet remained just out of reach—made writing on colonial events ripe for doubt, suspicion, and disillusionment.[30]

This form of writing, marked by its dual critique of colonialism and the press, and which I am calling *littérature d'actualité coloniale*, emerged in the decades before the theorization and codification of *littérature coloniale* at the turn of the twentieth century and into the interwar period. At that time, writers like Pierre Mille or Georges Athénas and Aimé Merlo (who wrote under the joint pen name Marius-Ary Leblond) defined colonial literature against what they characterized as the *exotisme* or *littérature d'escale* of earlier generations.[31] They argued that to be truly authentic, colonial literature should be written in the colonies, by European colonists. This definition was hardly disinterested, as it characterized the work and status of the very

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[27] Christophe Charle, *Le Siècle de la presse: 1830-1939* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

[28] See for instance, Thomas and Toye, *Arguing about Empire*; Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 2011).

[29] Maupassant, "Vive Mustapha!", *Le Gaulois*.

[30] Birch, *Fictions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, 7.

[31] Robert Randau, "La littérature coloniale: hier et aujourd'hui," *Revue Des Deux Mondes* 52, no. 2 (1929): 419; Pierre Mille, "Littérature coloniale*," Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 2 January 1932, 1; Marius-Ary Leblond, *Après l'exotisme de Loti, le roman colonial* (Paris: Rasmussen, 1926).

writers who were promoting it. It was also a definition that tended toward instrumentalization, attributing to colonial literature the duty of educating an allegedly ignorant metropolitan public, often said to understand little about France's colonial possessions.[32]

Squaring this narrow vision of colonial literature with the relationship between French literature and colonialism in the nineteenth century has remained a challenge in the study of nineteenth-century literature. Often, scholars have reinforced a restrictive definition of colonial literature based in these early twentieth-century distinctions. An edition of the *Cahiers* of the Société internationale d'étude des littératures de l'ère coloniale (SIELEC) on "Littératures et Colonies" defined its corpus in these terms, as did a special issue of *Cahiers naturalistes* on the "roman colonial," while a recent edited collection on the novelist and naval officer Pierre Loti argued against characterizing his work as colonial. [33] Others continue to define colonial literature only as "une littérature produite par des Français sédentarisés et faisant souche dans des territoires conquis et gouvernés officiellement par leur nation."[34]

Recently, Jennifer Yee has challenged such definitions, arguing in *The Colonial Comedy* for a broader understanding of the role of the colonial in nineteenth-century literature, and particularly in the realist tradition. Drawing from literary and postcolonial theorists such as

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[32] Caroline Ferraris-Besso, "*Littérature Coloniale* and The Failure of the Novel," *MLN* 133, no. 4 (2018): 979.

[33] Jean-François Durand and Jean Sévry, eds., *Les Cahiers de la SIELEC* no. 1: "Littératures et Colonies" (Paris: Kailash, 2005); *Les Cahiers naturalistes* no. 88: "Le roman colonial" (2014); Yvan Daniel and Charles Brion, "Présentation," in *Pierre Loti, l'œuvre-monde?* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2015), 7-28. In these studies, if authors like Émile Zola are also included, it is as a counter-example, as the title of Jean-Marie Seillan's contribution to the *Cahiers naturalistes* indicates: "Zola et le fait colonial: les raisons d'un rendez-vous manqué." Jennifer Yee's *The Colonial Comedy* has convincingly shown, to the contrary, how the colonial in fact permeated many of Zola's novels, whose plots were thoroughly imbricated in the global (colonial) financial system.

[34] Jean-Marie Seillan, "La (para)littérature (pré)coloniale à la fin du XIXe siècle," *Romantisme* 1, no. 139 (2008): 34.

Fredric Jameson, Gayatri Spivak, and Ann Stoler, Yee shows that far from being absent from the nineteenth-century French realist novel—as its relative absence in scholarship might suggest—colonialism in fact appears throughout the realist tradition: often indirectly, in offstage spaces, through metaphor and metonymy, or as objects and people from colonial spaces.[35] At the same time, Yee argues against a tendency, since Said's *Orientalism*, to emphasize literature's "complicity" in colonial ideology, instead drawing out the ways in which the nineteenth-century French novel was a site of "colonial doubt" as much as colonial enthusiasm.[36]

In a recent special issue of the journal *French Studies*, Yee, along with Charles Forsdick, called for "new work at the intersection of nineteenth-century French studies and postcolonial studies."[37] While they acknowledge that this is by no means "a missed cross-disciplinary rendezvous," Forsdick and Yee convincingly identify three field-specific reasons—historiographic, terminological, and disciplinary—behind the relative paucity of work at this intersection (as compared with, say, postcolonial studies and eighteenth-century French studies).[38] Of these, the historiographic reasons are of particular interest for my own project. Forsdick and Yee diagnose misapprehensions toward nineteenth-century French colonial culture as arising in part from a common reading of French colonial history in which the mid-century is understood as a "lull" between two periods of colonial expansion: the 'First French Empire' of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century, whose colonies were largely lost in the Seven Years' War or during and immediately following the Revolution, and the 'Second,' beginning with the

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[35] Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 8.

[36] Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 21, 22.

[37] Charles Forsdick and Jennifer Yee, "Towards a Postcolonial Nineteenth Century: Introduction," *French Studies* 72, no. 2 (April 2018): 167.

[38] See especially Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, eds., *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

burst of expansion under the Third Republic.[39]

In this view, "a truly popular 'colonial culture'" does not exist before the end of the nineteenth century.[40] This was a commonly held opinion at the time, recited both in newspapers and in works of official colonial propaganda. As the daily newspaper *Le Temps* put it in 1928, that "C'est une opinion générale en France que le Français n'est pas colonisateur."[41] Countering this allegedly common belief was a goal shared by the twentieth-century theorists of colonial literature like Pierre Mille and Marius-Ary Leblond, and procolonial political figures like minister of the Colonies Paul Reynaud, who wrote in 1931 that a main aim of that year's Colonial Exposition was to publicize the "vérité obscurcie" of France's "vocation coloniale" to a metropolitan public still doubtful of colonialism's benefits.[42]

This idea, oft-echoed, that "les colonies françaises sont presque inconnues en France!", has shaped the historiography of colonial ideology.[43] It was long accepted that a truly broad-based *idée coloniale* or *culture coloniale* did not exist until the 1890s, and did not reach its height until the interwar period.[44] A 1967 account of "l'idée coloniale" around 1871 cited a number of procolonial theorists attesting to the "indifférence" of the general public, and

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[39] Forsdick and Yee, "Towards a Postcolonial Nineteenth Century," 168.

[40] Forsdick and Yee, "Towards a Postcolonial Nineteenth Century," 169.

[41] "La France colonisatrice," *Le Temps*, 11 November 1928, 1.

[42] Paul Reynaud, "Introduction," *Le Livre d'or de l'Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris* (Paris: Fédération française des anciens coloniaux, 1931), 9.

[43] Jean Pierre Rambosson, *Les Colonies françaises: géographie, histoire, productions* (Paris: Delagrave, 1868), VII.

[44] Henri Brunschwig, *Mythes et réalités de l'impérialisme colonial français, 1871-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1960); Raoul Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1972); Charles-Robert Ageron, *France coloniale ou parti colonial* (Paris: Presses universitaires, 1978). See also the work of Anglophone scholars on the French 'parti colonial': C.M. Andrew, "The French Colonialist Movement during the Third Republic: The Unofficial Mind of Imperialism," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (1971): 143-166; C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, "The French 'Colonial Party': Its Composition, Aims and Influence, 1885-1914," *The Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (March 1971): 99-128.

generally took these claims at face value, albeit while granting the caveat that "l'indifférence fut sans doute moins générale qu'on ne l'affirme."[45] Still, the idea that the general public was indifferent to and ignorant of the colonies and colonialism persisted. In his influential 1972 work, *L'Idée coloniale en France*, historian Raoul Girardet wrote of early Third Republic colonial ideology that there was an "absence, dans la masse de l'opinion, de ce qu'on appellera plus tard une 'conscience coloniale'." Girardet further declared that, even when it came to colonial ideology in government, "l'idée serait, en d'autres termes, parfaitement illusoire d'un grand dessein colonial reconnu et accepté pour tel et auquel, sous des formes diverses, les gouvernements successifs de la France n'auraient cessé d'être fidèles."[46] According to Forsdick and Yee, the framework Girardet and other scholars work with "reflects a single model for colonial culture, based on the idea of a monolithically pro-colonial, expansionist attitude," and widespread familiarity with the colonies and their characteristics.[47] When nineteenth-century procolonial theorists claimed that the colonies were unknown in France, they cited as proof anecdotes concerning ignorance of colonies' names and locations or even commercial interest or output.[48] It is only later, usually in the interwar period, that this kind of widespread colonial culture is thought to have reached its "apothéose."[49] When this model is applied retrospectively

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[45] Jacques Vallette, "Note sur l'idée coloniale vers 1871," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 14, no. 2 (April-June 1967): 158, 159. Vallette cites the Rambosson quote above ("Les colonies françaises sont presque inconnues en France!"), but misattributes it to another procolonial theorist, the abbé Raboisson, whose *Étude sur les colonies et la colonisation au regard de la France* (Paris: Challamel aîné & Le Monde, 1877) is briefly discussed in relation to the Port-Breton colony in my second chapter.

[46] Raoul Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1972).

[47] Forsdick and Yee, "Towards a Postcolonial Nineteenth Century," 168.

[48] Rambosson, *Les Colonies françaises*, VII,

[49] The 1931 "Exposition coloniale" is often cited as such a moment of apotheosis. See Charles-Robert Ageron, "L'Exposition coloniale de 1931: mythe républicain ou mythe Impérial?", in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 561-91, and Steve Ungar, "La France impériale exposée en 1931: une apothéose," in *Culture coloniale 1871-1931*, ed. Sandrine Lemaire (Paris: Autrement, 2003), 201-211.

to the nineteenth century, it can only be seen as a not-yet-fully-realized version of what would come later.

New scholarship has begun to complicate that understanding. Forsdick and Yee point out that "French colonial culture in the nineteenth century presents an altogether messier picture."[50] Historians including David Todd and Christina Carroll have reexamined the supposed 'lull' between France's first and second colonial empires, uncovering a period in which France's "influence on a global scale" appeared in different, though not necessarily diminished, forms.[51] Similarly, the concept of the "culture coloniale," developed in recent years by a group French scholars of colonialism, has underlined the centrality of *le fait colonial* in the political and cultural imaginary of the nineteenth century.[52]

In charting the rise and fall of a distinct *littérature d'actualité coloniale*, this dissertation presents a chapter of the history of colonial representations in literature before *littérature coloniale*. It complicates the story of an evolution from (pro)colonial literature to anti- and postcolonial literature, situating the question of colonial literature within the conditions of

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[50] Forsdick and Yee, "Towards a Postcolonial Nineteenth Century," 168. As another historian put it, colonialism in the nineteenth-century imagination was "a shifting target, its meaning open to alternative understandings." Dane Kennedy, Rev. of *Enlightenment Against Empire*, by Sankar Muthu. *The International History Review 27.1* (Mar. 2005): 144-146. In fact, as Alain Ruscio has shown in a recent online article collecting nineteenth- and twentieth-century laments about French ignorance of the country's colonial empire, this messiness continued well into the twentieth century, overshadowing any so-called "apothéose." Alain Ruscio, "Deux siècles de confusions et de méconnaissance: l'incroyable ignorance des colonies de la part de l'opinion française," https://histoirecoloniale.net/L-incroyable-ignorance-des-colonies-de-la-part-de-l-opinion-francaise-par-Alain.html#nh4, 14 October 2018 (modified 12 October 2019).

[51] David Todd, "A French Imperial Meridian, 1814-1870," *Past and Present* no. 210 (Feb. 2011): 155-186; Christina B. Carroll, "Defining the French Empire: Memory, Politics, and National Identity, 1860-1900" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015).

[52] Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire, eds, *Culture coloniale en France: de la Révolution Française à nos jours* (Paris: CNRS, 2008).

writing in the media culture of the metropole. These conditions were marked by the possibilities of long-distance communication through the telegraph—which quickly brought information to Paris, but also routed that information through sources that presented new problems of mediation—and by the circumstances of professional writing in the age of the "civilisation du journal."

A crucial aspect of this *littérature d'actualité coloniale* was the proximity of fiction writing to the newspaper genre of the *chronique*. Criticizing the press from within its pages, as Maupassant did in the spring of 1881, was a venerable tradition among French *chroniqueurs*, and the *chronique* had long been the site for reflection on and criticism of press style and practices, as recent work by press and literature scholars has shown. Perhaps the quintessential form of the nineteenth-century French newspaper, the *chronique* developed under and persisted through different censorship regimes and into the age of press freedom and the rise of mass-market daily newspapers.[53] Marie-Ève Thérenty has analyzed the form extensively,[54] as have other scholars,[55] many focusing in particular on the work of a single author.[56] Still, the *chronique* remains

[53] If I use the French term *chronique* rather than translating, it is because it has no precise equivalent in the English-language terminology of journalism; 'chronicle' is not widely used, and 'newspaper column' is vague. Since it is a particularly French genre, I will continue to use *chronique*, italicized, throughout this dissertation.

[54] Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien*, 235-268; Marie-Ève Thérenty, "La chronique," in *La Civilisation du journal*, eds. Kalifa et al., 953-968.

[55] See, for example, Sandrine Carvalhosa, "Chronique journalistique et causerie: rapports, formes, enjeux," *Carnets* 2, no. 2 (2014); Mélodie Simard-Houde, "Être reporter sans le titre? La chronique journalistique: Les reconfigurations poétiques de la chronique à l'heure de l'invention de l'enquête (1870-1890)," *Sur le journalisme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo* 6, no. 1 (2017); and the essays collected in Bruno Curatolo and Alain Schaffner, eds., *La chronique journalistique des écrivains (1880-2000)* (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2010).

[56] To cite only a few examples: Gérard Delaisement, ed., *Maupassant journaliste et chroniqueur*. Paris, Albin Michel, 1956; Noëlle Benhamou, "De l'influence du fait divers: les Chroniques et Contes de Maupassant," *Romantisme* 27, no. 97 (1997): 47-58; Guillaume Pinson, "Jules Claretie et la chronique. Littérature du présent, archive du futur," in *La chronique journalistique des écrivains*, 13-21.

difficult to define, much less identify – for one, because the word *chronique* itself was not necessarily used as a title, and texts now understood as *chroniques* appeared under a variety of headings and rubrics. A recent study of the *chronique journalistique* suggests that it is in fact defined by its reception: "il n'y a de chronique que si celle-ci est *reçu comme telle* par le lecteur."[57]

The word *chronique*, with its connections to both the passing of time and the recording of history, hints at the role of the genre in accounting for the events of the day. For Guillaume Pinson, "la chronique décrit et raconte le monde, elle tente de percer sa complexité et son opacité tout en suivant un flux temporel inexorable qu'elle contribue également à scander."[58] The *chronique* responded to *actualité*, in the broadest sense of the term – as Gabriel Tarde defined it, "tout ce qui inspire actuellement un intérêt général."[59] The *chroniqueur* both commented on and helped to create this *actualité*. According to one early study of genres of press writing, "le chroniqueur touche à tout sans rien approfondir. Son art consiste à effleurer les questions, à improviser une causerie aussi ingénieuse et intéressante que possible sur n'importe quel sujet."[60] Subjects that could provide material for a *chronique* were vast, but what many had in common—especially in the last two decades of the century, as the number of press outlets grew exponentially—was their source in the press itself.[61] *Chroniques* were very often the fruit of reading, the topics spurring the *chroniqueur*'s commentary originating in the pages of the

[57] Bruno Curatolo and Alain Schaffner, "La chronique journalistique, un (mauvais) genre littéraire?," in *La chronique journalistique des écrivains*, 5-9.

[58] Pinson, "Jules Claretie et la chronique," 15.

[59] Gabriel Tarde, *L'Opinion et la foule* (Paris: Alcan, 1910), 5.

[60] Auguste de Chambure, *À travers la presse* (Paris: Th. Fert, About, 1914), 438. Cited in Thérenty, "La chronique," 953.

[61] Guillaume Pinson suggests that towards the end of the century, *chroniqueurs* turned with increasing frequency to the press itself to source the subjects of their *chroniques*.

newspapers (and occasionally books) she or he read. In this way, the *chronique* was a site of complicity between writer and reader. By referencing and riffing on subjects or events recognizable to the *lecteur averti*, the *chroniqueur* created a bond of familiarity. The *chronique* was also a stage in the creation of literary works. Writers sometimes repurposed material from their own *chroniques* in new literary contexts, and, in mining the daily press for material, they developed ideas forged in the columns of other *chroniqueurs.*

The *chronique* was a reflection of contemporary culture.[62] As such, some *chroniqueurs*, like Jules Claretie, who published yearly collections of his *chroniques* from *Le Temps*, suggested that their work might be of interest to future historians:

> […] j'ose croire que, plus tard, ces *Mémoires des Années Parisiennes* formeront un ouvrage de chercheurs, de fureteurs, un livre de coin de bibliothèque, qu'on sera très aise de trouver, — comme on est enchanté de rencontrer, sur les quais, une gravure de Debucourt, — lorsqu'on voudra savoir un peu comment vivaient les Français de ce temps, qui est bien, soit dit entre nous, le plus bizarre et le plus affolé qui ait jamais marqué sur un baromètre moral.[63]

Claretie's remarks were partly a justification for the republication of his *chroniques* in book form, but they also reflected an anxiety that much contemporary writing, printed in the ephemeral daily newspaper, would be discarded or disappear – like "une fumée qui se dissipe, un parfum qui s'évapore, un bruit qui rentre aussitôt dans le grand silence des choses mortes," as Octave Mirbeau phrased it in 1886.[64] The hope for *chroniqueurs*, then, was that "les chroniques des journaux, en vieillissant, deviennent mémoires," and that "celles d'aujourd'hui paraîtront prodigieusement intéressantes dans cent ans." However, this possibility, expressed by Jules

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[62] For Sandrine Carvalhosa, it was at once reflection and commentary: "La chronique est un genre où se réfléchit le contemporain: il est tout à la fois le miroir de l'actualité et son commentaire spirituel." "Chronique journalistique et causerie," 3.

[63] Jules Claretie, *La Vie à Paris: 1880* (Paris: Victor Havard, 1881), IX.

[64] Octave Mirbeau, "Bâtons rompus," *Le Gaulois*, 24 May 1886, 1.

Lemaître, another *chroniqueur*, was threatened by the simple fact that "il y en aura trop."[65] The sheer quantity of *chroniques* was not the only problem; paradoxically, it is often the *chronique*'s very embeddedness in the *actualité* it reflects and furthers that renders it inaccessible to readers and scholars today. Without the common set of readings and references shared by the *chroniqueur* and the public, the modern reader is adrift.

Over four chapters, this dissertation reconstructs the *actualité* that informed and inspired the *littérature d'actualité coloniale* of the late nineteenth century. **Chapter one**, "'Le Monde entier, penché sur son épaule': Pierre Loti and the War in Tonkin in the Press," explores how debate in the press probed and enforced the limits of the genre of colonial writing, reconstructing the international media debate that emerged in 1883 when the naval officer and writer Pierre Loti published a gruesomely violent account of colonial war on the front page of *Le Figaro*. **Chapter two**, "Reading the Paper Colony: The 'Affaire de Port-Breton'," tells the story of the colony of Port-Breton, a failed and fraudulent colonial venture whose victims, understood as dupes, served as cautionary tales for journalists' warnings about the dangers of naïve readings in a media-saturated and disillusioned world. **Chapter three**, "'Des Petits Papiers découpés dans les journaux': Alphonse Daudet's *Port-Tarascon*" analyzes Daudet's 1890 novel, *Port-Tarascon*, as a story of disenchantment in conversation with its source material in the "affaire de Port-Breton," and as a commentary on the power of print to deceive. **Chapter four**, "Octave Mirbeau's 'Plaisanteries macabres': Colonial Criticism as Media Criticism," situates the colonial criticism of the prolific *chroniqueur*, Octave Mirbeau, in the context of his broader critique of the French press.

[65] Jules Lemaître, "Chroniqueurs parisiens – MM. Albert Wolff et Émile Blavet," in *Les Contemporains* (Paris: H. Lecène et H. Oudin, 1887), 268.

CHAPTER ONE

"LE MONDE ENTIER, PENCHÉ SUR SON ÉPAULE":

PIERRE LOTI AND THE WAR IN TONKIN IN THE PRESS

On 2 December 1883, Julien Viaud, stationed aboard the battleship *Atalante* in the bay of Da Nang, received a letter announcing his recall.[1] He was to return to Paris where he faced possible sanction. The Ministry of the Navy and Colonies had recalled Viaud because of an eyewitness account of the battle of Thuan An which had appeared in *Le Figaro* in September and October under Viaud's pen name, Pierre Loti.[2] The third installment of the account included a graphic depiction of a French massacre of Vietnamese soldiers, which sparked outrage abroad. Outrage abroad made for controversy at home, and after intense debate in the press, the government officially disavowed Loti's version of events and dispatched Viaud's recall notice. The letter took more than a month to wend its way over land and sea to Da Nang, and by the time Viaud opened his mail in December, the "incident Loti" had long passed.[3]

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[1] Da Nang was called "Tourane" by the French in 1883. Tourane was in the region of Annam (central Vietnam), and the French colonial war was being fought for control of Annam and Tonkin (northern Vietnam). On this war and French colonial rule in the region, see Christopher Goscha, *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam* (London: Penguin Random House, 2016), 57-92.

[2] X… [Pierre Loti], "La Prise du Tonkin – Vue de l'Escadre," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883, 1; X [Pierre Loti], "Au Tonkin – La Prise de Hué II," *Le Figaro*, 13 October 1883, 1; Pierre Loti, "Au Tonkin – La Prise de Hué II," *Le Figaro*, 17 October 1883, 1.

[3] Several newspapers referred to the scandal as the "incident Loti"; see "L'incident 'Pierre Loti'," *Paris*, 24 October 1883, 1; Marius Vachon, "L'incident Loti," *La France*, 25 October 1883, 1; "La Politique – L'incident Pierre Loti," *La Petite Presse*, 27 October 1883, 2. Loti recorded the arrival of this letter in his

While he packed his bags and said his goodbyes, the lieutenant Julien Viaud tried to figure out what had happened to the writer Pierre Loti. In late August he had sent a letter with his account of the battle at Thuan An to his publisher, Calmann Lévy. Loti pieced together what happened next from the stack of month-old newspapers that arrived with the recall notice: the account he had written had been picked up by foreign news outlets, where it was read as a denunciation of French troops' brutality, and many French newspapers were outraged and calling for his dismissal.[4] The minister of the Navy and Colonies, Loti's superior, apparently agreed, for here was an official letter, summoning him back to France. Even then, the parcel of newspapers offered only a peek into the furor Loti's account had occasioned. The "cas de Pierre Loti," as one newspaper called it, was short-lived, but intense: nearly one hundred articles, between forty and fifty on the front page, within a period of about two weeks.[5]

Loti quickly made up for lost time. He wrote to influential friends like the novelist Alphonse Daudet and Juliette Adam, the editor of *La Nouvelle Revue*, expressing his bafflement

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journal on 2 December 1883. *Journal: 1879-1886,* vol. II, eds Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vercier, (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2008), 498 (hereafter: *Journal II*).

[4] Based on Loti's descriptions, quotations, and references to specific writers in his journal and correspondence, the newspapers he received were: *Le Figaro*, 25 October 1883; *L'Intransigeant*, 25 October 1883; *La France*, 25 October 1883; *Gil Blas*, 25 October 1883; and *Le Temps*, 27 October 1883. These issues included significant contributions to the media debate by Albert Delpit at *Le Figaro*, Marius Vachon at *La France*, and Jules Claretie at *Le Temps*. The edition of *L'Intransigeant* he read was representative of the opinion of the radical left— namely, that Loti intended to denounce the actions he described—and *Gil Blas*, with its brief mention of Loti in an "entrefilet," was representative of the *boulevardier* Parisian press. It is unclear whether these newspapers were specifically chosen to give him an overview of the discussion of his case, or who might have selected and sent them, but the selected papers did provide a fairly accurate overview of the affair.

[5] Montjoyeux, "Chroniques parisiennes," *Le Gaulois*, 26 October 1883, 1. On the "affaire" and its height in the late nineteenth century, see Dominique Kalifa, "Qu'est-ce qu'une affaire au XIXe siècle?" in *Affaires, scandales et grandes causes*, eds Luc Boltanski, Élisabeth Claverie, Nicolas Offenstadt, and Stéphane Van Damme (Paris: Stock, 2007), 197-211. As Kalifa points out, while the new media landscape in the last third of the century created fertile ground for these kinds of media events, they tended to become "une sorte de criée publique ou permanente" (197), their very proliferation diluting the impact of any particular affair. And indeed, the "incident Loti" was quickly eclipsed by other scandals – including the "Affaire de Port-Breton," the subject of chapter two of this dissertation.

and begging them to intervene on his behalf.[6] To *Le Figaro* he sent a detailed rebuttal of his critics.[7] He was painfully aware that time and distance rendered these interventions futile, noting in his letter to *Le Figaro* that "[c]'est le lendemain qu'il aurait fallu dire ma surprise et mon indignation, pour avoir chance d'être entendu _ On ne sait plus de quoi je parle."[8] He was right. *Le Figaro* would never publish his response to months-old criticisms. The very thing that made Loti a famous author—his world travels with the French Navy—had removed him from the rhythms of the Parisian press. He had no choice but to wait. He marked the day's journal entry with a cross (a sign that denoted, according to his later personal secretary, "une chose néfaste"; figure 2) and spent the long sea voyage back to France in suspense.[9]

As Loti received his recall notice in the bay of Da Nang, the account he had written was completing a world tour. In late November, newspapers in Australia reprinted an English translation of an excerpt from the third installment of Loti's account.[10] In mid-December, just as Loti was setting sail for France aboard the *Corrèze*, word reached the British colonial press in Shanghai.[11] The global media circuit of Loti's account began in late October, when foreign

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[6] Letter to Alphonse Daudet, 9 December 1883, *Journal II*, 503-505; letter to Juliette Adam, 505-506.

[7] *Journal II*, 499-503. The original of Loti's private journal (a collection of loose booklets and sheets of paper) is held in the Médiathèque de Rochefort.

[8] *Journal II*, 499. Response addressed to *Le Figaro*. Loti's punctuation in his journal was idiosyncratic and expressive; I use here the same punctuation marks chosen by Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vercier, the editors of Loti's multivolume journal.

[9] Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vercier, "Introduction," in Pierre Loti, *Journal: 1868-1878*, vol. I, eds Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vercier (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2006), 10-11 (hereafter: *Journal I*).

[10] Australian newspapers reprinting this translation (taken from the London *Standard*; see note 11 below) included *The Age* in Melbourne (27 November 1883, 5), the Sydney *Australian Town and Country Journal* (1 December 1883, 39), and the Clare *Northern Argus* (11 December 1883, 3). The affair was also discussed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (28 November 1883, 5).

[11] Loti departed aboard the *Corrèze*, a *transport*, on 15 December. He would arrive in Toulon, France on 3 February 1884, and in Paris a few days later. *Journal II*, 507-509, 521-23. The Anglophone newspaper in Shanghai was the *North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette*: "The French-Mail Papers," 12 December 1883, 665-66.

correspondents in Paris wired London with the news that a major daily newspaper had published a front-page article by a well-known novelist and naval officer describing a French massacre of fleeing and wounded enemy soldiers near the Vietnamese imperial capital of Hue. The first translations into English of this part of Loti's account appeared almost immediately, as early as the day after the original had been published in *Le Figaro*. One translation in particular, from the London *Standard*, was reprinted throughout Great Britain, the United States, and eventually in Anglophone newspapers in colonial India and Australia.[12] The *Standard*'s translated excerpt and its brief commentary also served as the basis for translations into German and Spanish.[13] The affair was widely discussed across Europe, particularly in Germany, as well as in Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy.[14]

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[12] "The Fall of Hue: Barbarity of French Soldiers," *Standard* (London), 18 October 1883, 5. Another London newspaper, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, also published a slightly abridged version of the same translation on 18 October: "Massacre of Annamites by French Sailors," 8. This version of the excerpt also traveled widely. See note 10 above for the Australian newspapers reprinting the *Standard* or the *Pall Mall*. In British colonial India: "Barbarity of French Sailors," *Times of India* (Bombay), 9 November 1883, 6.

[13] The translation into German was "Frankreich," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 20 October 1883, morning ed., 1. Into Spanish: "Las Matanzas de Hué," *El Correo Militar* (Madrid), 22 October 1883, 3. This was reprinted in other Spanish newspapers as well ("Prensa extranjera – Francia," *La Época*, 25 October 1883, 3). It is possible to identify re-translations of the *Standard*'s excerpt both by the beginning and end of the passage (in the original, it runs from "Les matelots devenaient difficiles à retenir" to "sous peine de succomber soi-même"), and the inclusion of the French phrase, "c'était un plaisir," in parentheses in the translation. The *Standard* translated this idiomatically as "it was quite a treat," and included the French for clarity (and, surely, for effect). This parenthetical French sometimes got muddled as the *Standard*'s account traveled: the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, for instance, in their reprint of the *Standard*'s article and translation, wrote it as "cetait un plaisure." "The Fall of Hue – A Graphic Description of the Horrible Massacre as Given by an Eye Witness," 20 October 1883, 1.

[14] The German press reaction will be examined further on in this chapter; newspapers in major cities across the country reacted to Loti's account. In Belgium: Jacques Mardoche, "Le Mouvement parisien," *L'Indépendance Belge* (Brussels), 28 October 1883, 1; or "Tonkin – Un récit de la prise de Hué," *Le Bien Public* (Ghent), 28 October 1883, 2. The Netherlands: "Buitenland," *Arnhemsche Courant*, 24 October 1883, 2; Henry Havard, "Het Leven te Parijs," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (Amsterdam), 28 October 1883, 6; "Frankrijk," *Rotterdamsch nieuwsblad*, 29 October 1883, 2. Switzerland: "Bulletin politique," *Gazette de Lausanne*, 22 October 1883, 1; "France," *Gazette de Lausanne*, 25 October 1883, 1; "Étranger," *Journal de Genève*, 25 & 27 October 1883, 2. Italy: "Come i Francesi fanno la guerra," *Gazetta Piemontese* (Turin), 25 October 1883, 2.

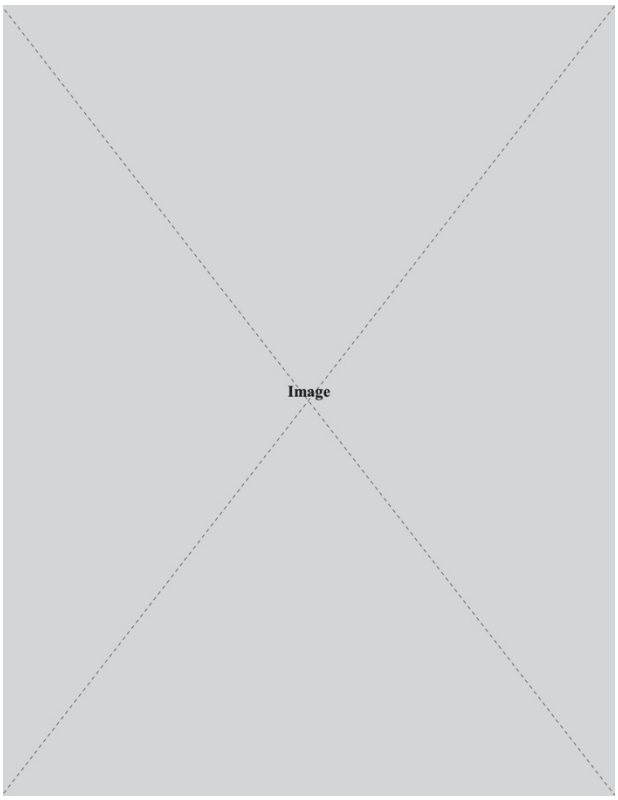


Figure 2. An entry from Loti's journal marked with a cross, 2 December 1883: “Le courrier de france, arrivé le soir à Tourane, m’apporte la nouvelle que je suis renvoyé en France à la disposition du ministre, pour le compte-rendu de la prise de Thuan an que j’ai publié dans le Figaro _ _”. Source: Médiathèque de Rochefort.

Around the world, Loti’s account was deemed newsworthy as the story of a “horrible massacre,” evidence of French troops’ “barbarity,” though some details became garbled in translation and foreign readers missed crucial context.[15] The day after one American newspaper ran its story on the “Horrible Massacre” at Hue, a curious reader wrote in: “I see an account of the fall of Hue and the massacre of the Annamites by the French. Where is Hue situated, under

[15] Many Anglophone newspapers printed a variation on the *Standard*’s subtitle, “Barbarity of French Soldiers,” including *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh, 19 October), *The Times of India* (Bombay, 9 November), and *The Age* (Melbourne, 27 November). On the difficulties in estimating the global circulation of media events—and the danger of overstating their impact abroad—see Quentin Deluermoz, “La guerre franco-prussienne et la Commune de Paris, 1870-71, événements médiatiques dites ‘globaux’ du XIXe siècle,” *Monde(s)* no. 16 (Nov. 2019): 159-181.

what government, and who are the Annamites, and why so called."[16] In this international game of telephone—or telegraph, as it were—new errors crept into the account. In the American press, parts of English newspapers' commentary were folded into the excerpt from Loti and presented as part of his account.[17] More than one English newspaper, beginning with the *Standard*, misspelled Loti's pseudonym as "Loté." Various regional American newspapers called him "Pierre Lote" or even "Pierre Late," and mentioned only his naval career, not his literary pursuits.[18] This fuzziness was not limited to the Anglophone press: in one Spanish newspaper, his pseudonym was given as "Pierre Loticurio."[19]

The specter of this global readership and its attendant misunderstandings were at the center of the debate that played out in the pages of French newspapers from late October to mid-November. At the height of the affair, *chroniqueur* Jules Claretie conjured an evocative image of an unsympathetic world reading over France's shoulder: "Le monde entier, penché sur son épaule, lit curieusement et ironiquement ce qu'elle laisse tomber sur le papier, et le monde le commente avec assez peu de sympathie."[20] Other journalists and commentators also admonished *Le Figaro* and Loti for having played into the hands of a global, and particularly European, media, "toujours attentive à trouver la France en faute."[21] In an age of "arguing about empire," to

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[16] "Two Questions," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 21 October 1883, 10.

[17] The following newspapers included *The Pall Mall Gazette*'s commentary as part of their quote from Loti: "The Fall of Hue," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 20 October 1883, 1; "The Annamite Butchery," *Daily American* (Nashville), 23 October 1883, 6; "Foreign – Inhuman Conduct of French Sailors Engaged in the Attack on Hue," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 October 1883, 5.

[18] "The Fall of Hue," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 20 October 1883, 1. *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, 20 October 1883.

[19] "Las Tropas Francesas en Hué," *La Época*, 27 October 1883, 3.

[20] Jules Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," *Le Temps*, 27 October 1883, 3.

[21] *La Liberté*, 23 October 1883, 1. See also *Le Parlement*, 22 October 1883, 2: "Quoi d'étonnant si à Londres, à Berlin, la lettre publiée par le Figaro est reproduite, traduite, entourée de commentaires que nos lecteurs devinent sans peine?"

borrow the title of a recent study by Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, it was particularly fraught to put French colonial violence on the front page: as one observer put it, "on nous guette."[22]

At the same time, domestic press dynamics also shaped the French reaction to Loti's account. "La Prise de Hué" was published several weeks after the first brief reports of a victorious battle at Thuan An reached Paris only a few days after the battle, thanks to recently-laid underseas cables connecting French colonial Saïgon (today Ho Chi Minh City) to Paris via Singapore and London.[23] Most Parisian newspapers published the brief official *dépêche* announcing a major French victory near the Vietnamese imperial capital, and popular *un sou* dailies hailed the news of the "succès que nos braves marins […] viennent de remporter sur la rivière de Hué," and proclaimed that "cette très heureuse nouvelle nous fait […] tressaillir de joie patriotique."[24] Published after those telegraph dispatches, Loti's "La Prise de Hué" was understood as a corrective, even a rebuke, of their triumphant account of the battle. In fact, the cabled reports and Loti's longer account had been written and dispatched to France at the same

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[22] Camille Pelletan, "L'Aventure tonkinoise," *La Justice*, 29 August 1883, 1. Thomas and Toye, *Arguing about Empire*. For a study of a highly mediatized intra-European colonial conflict which preceded and, in some ways, laid the groundwork for the Loti affair, see the chapter "Tunisia, 1881-Egypt, 1882," 19-48.

[23] The cable to Saïgon was laid in 1871 by a British company, John Pender's China Submarine Telegraph Company. Much of the global telegraph network was laid by British companies, and was therefore centered in London. See Daniel Headrick, "Telegraphy and Imperialism in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *The Invisible Weapon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 50-72. For a general history of the global telegraph network, see Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), as well as Headrick, *The Invisible Weapon*. For another history which emphasizes international cooperation rather than rivalry and imperial conflict, see Simone M. Müller, *Wiring the World: The Social and Cultural Creation of Global Telegraph Networks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); see also Müller's recent review essay, which gives an account of recent trends in the history of telegraphy: "From Cabling the Atlantic to Wiring the World: A Review Essay on the 150th Anniversary of the Atlantic Telegraph Cable of 1866," *Technology and Culture* 57, no. 3 (July 2016): 507-526.

[24] "L'Expédition de Tonkin," *La Petite Presse*, 30 August 1883, 1; "Les Français à Hué," *Le Petit Journal*, 27 August 1883, 1.

time. The long delay between the arrival of early cabled reports and longer accounts sent by surface mail did not go unnoticed as the war in Tonkin escalated in 1883.[25] Over the summer, Pierre Giffard, who had reported on Tunisia as a correspondent for *Le Figaro*, commented on this anxious wait for news: "Ce Tonkin est si éloigné de l'Europe, les communications […] si rudimentaires, qu'il s'écoule des mois entiers entre les événements et le moment où un récit complet de ces événements peut être fait en France."[26] After first word of the victory at Thuan An arrived in late August, Camille Pelletan gave voice to a view common among critics of the war when he argued in *La Justice* that such partial information made for poor reasoning and poorer decision-making: "Il est impossible de raisonner sur des événements que nous connaissons mal."[27]

Timing was also a factor in the backlash to Loti's account. Appearing in *Le Figaro*, it was broken into several installments and published at irregular intervals – the first on 28 September, the second two weeks later, the third four days after that. In serializing the story, *Le Figaro* obscured Loti's ambitious structuring of the account, which turns around a perspectival shift. The first part (corresponding to the first installment) contains a comprehensive description of the entire battle through Loti's eyes as he watched from aboard one of the battleships in the bay. Here, Loti emphasizes his distance from the action, describing how he looked through a spyglass to observe the troop movements. In the rest of the account, he describes the battle once more, but this time through the eyes of the soldiers in the landing party, and Loti's visceral

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[25] Surface mail from Southeast Asia generally took about six weeks to arrive in France via the *paquebots* of the Marseille-based *Compagnies des messageries maritimes*. In 1881, during the Tunisian campaign, *L'Écho Rochelais* already complained of the delay in getting news via cable connections in Algeria: "Le vent, la pluie et la mer ont permis enfin, qu'on expédiât d'Algérie deux dépêches sur les affaires de Tunisie, qui tiennent en suspens tout un pays, c'est peu!" (30 April 1881, 1).

[26] Pierre Giffard, "Affaires du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 24 June 1883, 1.

[27] Pelletan, "L'Aventure tonkinoise," *La Justice*, 29 August 1883.

descriptions of their experiences were meant to contrast with the sanitized character of the spectacle Loti had witnessed from the ship. When the account was divided and spread out across weeks, this complicated organization gave rise to confusion. Some took it for one continuous story, and assumed that the brutal massacres Loti described in the second portion of the account, which took place during and immediately after the battle, happened instead in the following days.[28] The delayed publication of the second and third installments also contributed to the sense that Loti's account was meant as a rebuttal of other published accounts, since, by the time the description of the massacre appeared in *Le Figaro* on 17 October, other surface mail accounts which hewed more closely to the triumphant story of the cabled dispatches had already been published in full, and the narrative of Thuan An as a triumph was well established.

Disconnected as he was from the rhythms of the daily Parisian news cycle, Loti could hardly parse the broader media context of the scandal from the letters and newspapers he read in Da Nang. In particular, he could not grasp the interwoven foreign and domestic reactions to his account. In his letter to *Le Figaro*, Loti wrote that while he was not surprised that English and German newspapers would twist his words and interpret him in bad faith, he was surprised that French newspapers could have so thoroughly misunderstood his writing: "mais les journaux français, l'interpréter si mal, cela me confond!"[29]

In the rest of this chapter, I will reconstruct this broader context, the interrelated foreign and French reactions to and interpretations that turned Loti's account into a debate not only about

[28] Responses to Loti which made this error included: Jacques Hervé de Kerohant, "Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Soleil*, 23 October 1883, 1; *La République française*, 25 October 1883, 1; Le Sphinx, "Échos de Paris," *L'Événement*, 25 October 1883, 2; Paul Fresnay [Guillaume Livet], "Pierre Loti," *Le Voltaire*, 26 October 1883, 1.

[29] Loti, *Journal II*, 499.

colonialism, but also about the forms and conventions of colonial writing.[30] This is a task not unlike Loti's own, as he puzzled over what happened from the bits and pieces sent to him in the early December mailbag. Writing to Alphonse Daudet, he expressed his frustration that there were likely further reactions and criticisms "dans des journaux que je n'ai pu lire."[31] His difficulty in sounding out the limits of the scandal he had caused finds echoes in the scholar's challenge in locating the imprecise boundaries of a media affair like the Loti case – an example of what Rachel Mesch called the "transitory moments of the media past," taking place almost entirely within the pages of periodicals, as newspapers and magazines quoted from, commented on, and criticized one another's articles in a rapid-fire print exchange.[32]

For Mesch, media events can provide scholars "a prism onto a multivalent society" or a "snapshot of a culture trying to understand itself."[33] In the debate sparked by Loti's account of

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[30] My study extends work done by other scholars who have approached the Loti affair from various angles, most notably: Paul Mus, *Le Destin de l'Union française: De l'Indo-Chine à l'Afrique* (Paris: Seuil, 1954), 158-218; Sylvain Venayre, *Une Guerre au loin: Annam, 1883* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016); Alec Hargreaves, "Loti and Indochina: A Myth in the Making," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 14, no. 1/2 (1985-86): 138-152; Marie-Ève Thérenty, "Les reporters embrigadés: entre aventure et propagande coloniale" in *Journalisme et mondialisation. Les Ailleurs de l'Europe dans la presse et le reportage littéraires (XIXe-XXIe siècles)*, edited by Marie-Astrid Charlier and Yvan Daniel (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017), 171-184; Mélodie Simard-Houde, 'French Reporters, Real and Fictional Transmitters of the Colonial Ideology (1890-1900)," *Literary Journalism Studies* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 76-88; Véronique Juneau, "Les reportages de guerre au Tonkin de 1883 à 1885: Figurer un territoire 'sans mémoire'," in *Journalisme et mondialisation*,185-197.

[31] Loti, letter to Alphonse Daudet, *Journal II*, 502.

[32] Rachel Mesch, "Understanding the Tinayre Affair: New Media, New Methods for the Belle Epoque," in *French Cultural Studies for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Masha Belenky, Kathryn Kleppinger, and Anne O'Neil-Henry (Newark, DE: Delaware University Press, 2017), 195-211 [196]. See also Rachel Mesch, "A Belle Époque Media Storm: Gender, Celebrity, and the Marcelle Tinayre Affair," *French Historical Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2012): 93-121.

[33] Mesch, "Understanding the Tinayre Affair," 197. In 1908, the name of the writer Marcelle Tinayre was floated as a possible candidate for the Légion d'Honneur. After her name leaked to the press, Tinayre gave several interviews in which she expressed surprise and amusement at the idea that she could be a knight, and insisted that she had not solicited the honor. The response to these interviews was "a veritable media frenzy," nearly one hundred articles, mostly opposing Tinayre's nomination on the grounds that she had mocked tradition and displayed false modesty. In the end, she was not nominated. For Mesch, the affair provides an opportunity to analyze the signifying styles and codes of different subsections of the press, namely women's magazines like *Femina* and *La Vie Heureuse* on the one hand, and mainstream

colonial warfare, we find questions at the intersection of journalism, literary style, and politics. But the Loti incident provides more than a prism. As a moment of collective reading and criticism, it was formative, both for Loti's career and for colonial literature more broadly, setting the terms for how *actualité coloniale* would be represented in the press in an age of increasingly global media circulations. The newspaper commentators, as well the naval officers who would conduct the internal investigation ordered by Navy hierarchy, were concerned as much with *how* the battle of Thuan-An was recounted and presented in *Le Figaro*—the form the narration took, its literary style, its publication in a high-circulation daily newspaper, its placement on the front page—as with the question of what actually happened. Newspapers published articles written by political commentators, as well as literary critics, who read Loti's account with a critical eye toward its global reception. This collective response, in turn, would help demarcate and solidify the limits of colonial writing.

CE MAUDIT TONKIN

In June 1883, Pierre Loti was called up to join reinforcements departing for Vietnam to bolster the colonial war in Tonkin, in an area north of French colonial territory in Cochinchine and Annam. In May, French troops led by commander Henri Rivière had suffered an unexpected defeat when they were ambushed by Vietnamese and Black Flag troops outside of Hanoi.[34] Rivière was killed, and when news reached Paris via cable a few days later, prime minister Jules

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newspapers on the other.

[34] The Black Flags (*Pavillons noirs*) were irregular Chinese troops "of diverse ethnic origins" called in by the Vietnamese imperial government and military commanders for support against invading French troops, beginning in the 1870s with the campaigns of Francis Garnier. See Goscha, 62, 62-68.

Ferry's government scrambled to respond, quickly decreeing further funding of the war and the rapid dispatch of reinforcements. A well-known figure, Rivière was, like Loti, a published author as well as a naval officer, and he was mourned across the press. His death was also a moment of debate. The government sought to turn Rivière's death into a moment of patriotic consolidation behind the war in Tonkin. For others, he died a martyr to French colonial ambition, and opposition newspapers attacked the "politique sanglante" which had sealed his fate. Such was the title of a leading article in *Le Petit Parisien*, which praised Rivière for having "glorieusement écrit son nom dans l'Histoire," while also proclaiming the right to "demander compte au Ministère d'une politique extérieure criminelle, qui vient aujourd'hui de glisser dans le sang."[35] Rivière's death was also memorialized in popular culture. A vivid wax tableau depicting the scene could be seen at the Musée Grévin over the summer (figure 3),[36] and back page advertisements appeared for a print illustration "représentant la mort du Commandant Rivière […] tiré à douze couleurs sur très beau papier […] Prix: 65 centimes (valeur réelle: 5 francs)," as newspapers and their readers waited for news of the troop reinforcements' arrival in northern Vietnam.[37]

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[35] "La Politique sanglante," *Le Petit Parisien*, 27 May 1883, 1. *Le Petit Parisien* was a popular *un sou* daily which tended toward the radical anticlerical left in this period, and opposed the "opportuniste" republican government of Jules Ferry.

[36] An advertisement for the museum's new display describes its tableau of Rivière thus: "Le musée Grévin inaugure un nouveau groupe d'une actualité saisissante: 'La Mort du commandant Rivière.' Le commandant est frappé à la tête de ses vaillants marins et les Pavillons Noirs accourent pour enlever son cadavre. L'effet est des plus dramatiques" (*La Caricature*, 14 juillet 1883, 6). On the Musée Grévin as a reflection of public opinion, see Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1998), particularly 110-115. The museum's tableaux were changed frequently, and closely tracked the latest topics of interest in the popular press. As Schwartz puts it, the Musée Grévin was a kind of "journalistically inspired pantheon of the present" (115). The claim that the museum represented popular tastes was also, of course, a marketing strategy, and the oft-changed tableaux a way of turning one-time visitors into repeat customers (115).

[37] The advertisement for the color print of Rivière's death appeared in *La Petite République française*, beginning on 24 July and through to the end of the year. This color lithograph is likely the one that can be seen, unfortunately in a poor-quality image, on a website collecting biographical information on French

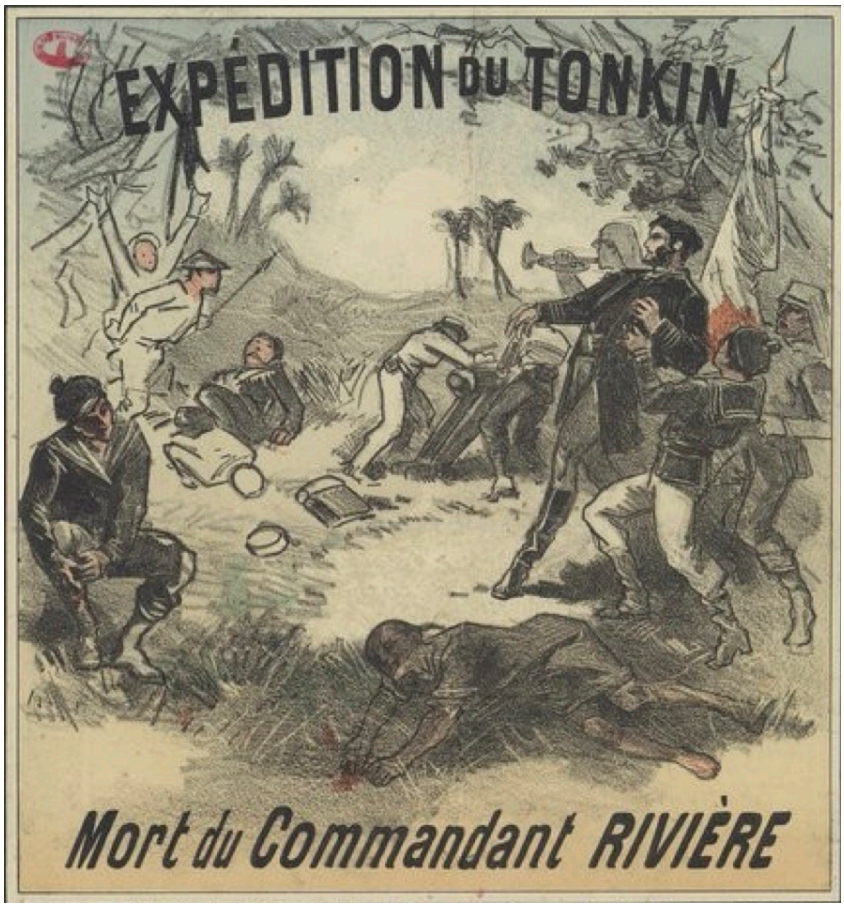


Figure 3. "Expédition du Tonkin. Mort du Commandant Rivière." Advertisement for the Musée Grévin, 1883. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

By 1883, Loti was famous enough that his departure for Tonkin was announced by several newspapers, including *Le Figaro*, which suggested that Loti, as a new *écrivain-marin* in the Far East, took the mantle from the deceased Rivière.[38] *Le Figaro* also predicted that Loti's

naval men: http://ecole.nav.traditions.free.fr/celebres/riviere_hanoi_tableau.JPG. It depicts Rivière in a heroic posture, striking down enemies, but soon to be overwhelmed (though this is not shown).

[38] *Le Figaro* reported Loti's departure, calling him "le jeune émule du regretté Rivière," on 31 May ("À Travers Paris," 1). Other papers reporting Loti's departure included *Le Temps*, 31 May 1883; "Informations," *Le Gaulois*, 1 June 1883, 2; and *La Justice*, 2 June 1883, 2. A few months later, a review of Loti's most recent novel (*Mon Frère Yves*, published serially over the summer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*) also underlined that Loti's connections to Rivière: Loti was "un marin, comme le commandant Rivière." Also like Rivière, "son aîné dans la marine et dans les lettres," Loti had now been "envoyé dans l'extrême Orient" (Auguste Marcade, "À Travers les Revues," *Le Figaro, Supplément littéraire du dimanche*, 4 August 1883, 123). Comparisons between Loti and Rivière would be common at the height of the media debate. Jacques Hervé de Kerohant described Loti as following in Rivière's footsteps ("Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Soleil*, 23 October 1883, 1), and one chroniqueur went so far as to suggest that,

deployment to Vietnam would result in "un bon livre de plus," just as his earlier deployments to Turkey, Tahiti, and Senegal had resulted in the novels *Aziyadé* (1879), *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880) and *Le Roman d'un spahi* (1881), respectively.[39] Even later, at the height of the "incident Loti," another newspaper would claim that the publication of "les impressions de bivac et de combat du brillant officier" was widely expected "dans quelque journal."[40]

Loti arrived in Annam in August, and the battle at Thuan An took place not long thereafter, between 18 and 20 August. Loti's diary entries and the correspondence from his deployment to Tonkin aboard the *Atalante* indicate that he had promised his publisher, Calmann Lévy, to write about his experience of colonial war, and that it was Calmann Lévy who arranged for the pre-publication of his writing in a daily newspaper, *Le Figaro*.[41] Publishing in a high-circulation daily newspaper was a new development in Loti's career. His earlier works had been pre-published in Juliette Adam's *Nouvelle Revue* or in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* – but, for Lévy, the intersection of Loti's naval career with a major world event was a significant opportunity worthy of a major outlet.[42] Indeed, the publication of Loti's correspondence from Tonkin would be timed to coincide with the appearance of his latest novel, *Mon Frère Yves*, after

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like Rivière, Loti's career would end up a casualty of "ce maudit Tonkin." Colombine [Henry Fouquier], "Chronique," *Gil Blas*, 5 November 1883, 1.

[39] "À Travers Paris," *Le Figaro*, 31 May 1883, 1.

[40] *La République Française*, 25 October 1883, 1.

[41] Letter to Oirda (Blanche Lee Childe), 11 October 1883, *Journal II*, 483.

[42] Juliette Adam's correspondence with Lévy suggest that the move to *Le Figaro* was a question of both money and potential readers. During the Loti affair, she wrote to Lévy to express her regret that he and Loti had "quitté la revue pour une question d'argent." Juliette Adam to Calmann Lévy, unpublished letter, quoted in Jean-Yves Mollier, *Michel et Calmann Lévy ou la naissance de l'édition moderne, 1836-1891* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), 453. As Sylvain Venayre suggests, it is likely that Lévy and Loti did intend, as *Le Figaro* predicted, for a book to result from his experiences in the Tonkin campaign (*Une guerre au loin*, 98). In 1887, Calmann Lévy published Loti's *Propos d'exil*, an edited volume containing stories drawn largely from 1883-1884 – but "La Prise de Hué" was not among them. It was not republished until 1896, and even then in a heavily edited form (discussed later on in this chapter).

pre-publication in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* earlier in the year. As Lévy and Francis Magnard, the editor-in-chief of *Le Figaro*, must have seen it, this was sure to be one of the major literary events of the fall season.

THE ACCOUNT

The first installment of Loti's account of the battle for the forts of Thuan An—at the mouth of the Hue river, near the Vietnamese imperial court at Hue—appeared on the front page of *Le Figaro* on 28 September, the second on 13 October and the third on 17 October. Loti would later say that he wrote his account with the collaboration of a fellow *lieutenant de vaisseau*, Poidloüe, and his men, who had been among the landing parties which fought and won the forts.[43] As noted above, Loti was never with the landing party, but watched from the battleship *Atalante* in the bay, where he directed cannon fire toward enemy troops on shore (see figure 4).[44] The first part of the account, subtitled "Vue de l'escadre," described the battle from this perspective, at a distance, while the next section—corresponding to *Le Figaro*'s second and third installments—retold the same story, now from the close-up perspective of the landing parties.

[43] Loti mentions the contributions of Poidloüe and his men in three letters: to *Le Figaro*, 6 December 1883, *Journal II*, 501; to Alphonse Daudet, 9 December, *Journal II*, 504; to Juliette Adam, 9 December, *Journal II*, 505.

[44] In a letter to Oirda (Blanche Lee Childe) dated 11 October 1883, Loti wrote of his participation in the battle: "Si vous aviez pu voir avec quel calme ennuyé je faisais pointer mes pièces sur ces ennemis pour rire_" (*Journal II*, 483).

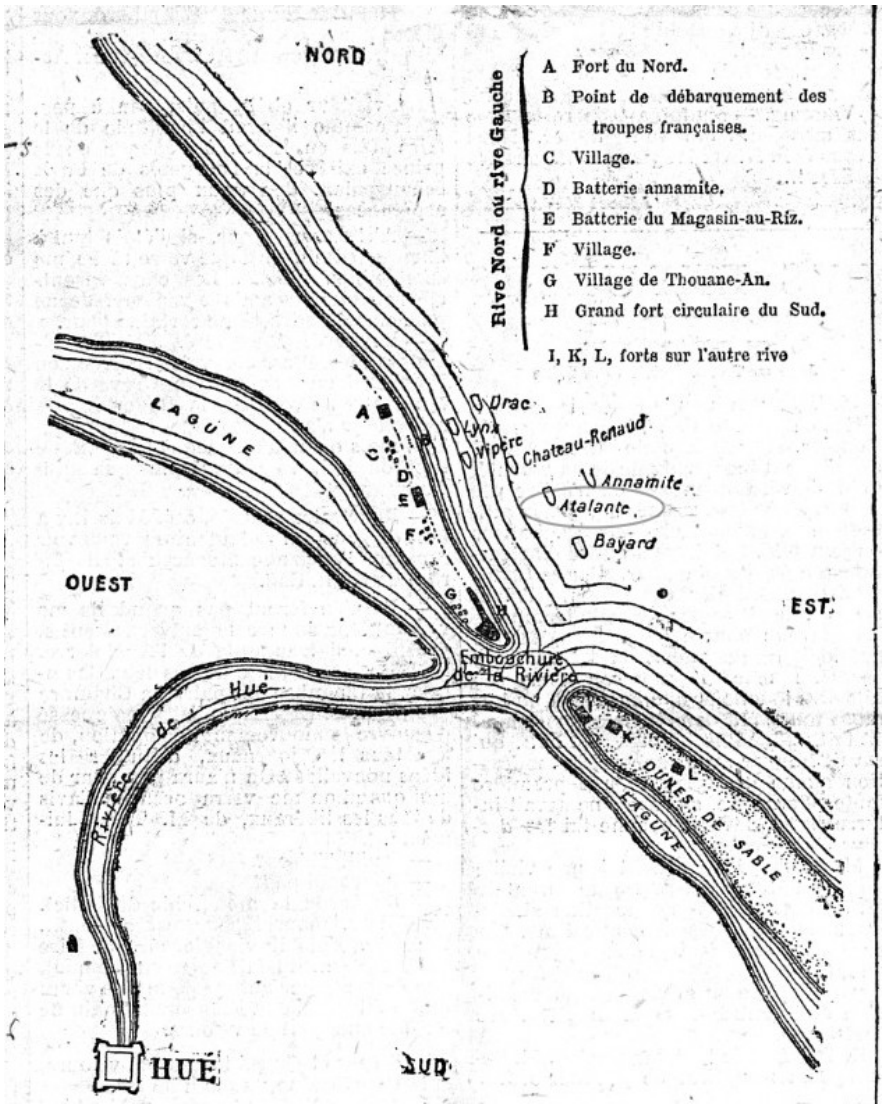


Figure 4. "La Prise de Hué – Vue de l'escadre," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883, 1. Wood-engraved map showing French military positions during the battle of Thuan An, with Loti's position aboard the Atalante circled. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Loti's description of colonial massacre—the passages which sparked the "incident Loti"—appeared in the third installment, which was also the first to reveal the previously anonymous correspondent's identity. The first two installments had been signed "X" and identified by the newspaper as the work of "un officier de marine, à qui sa situation ne permet pas de signer" and as "un spectateur qui a été aussi un acteur de cette héroïque aventure."[45] On

[45] "La Prise du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883; "La Prise de Hué II," *Le Figaro*, 13 October

17 October, *Le Figaro*, with some fanfare, announced that the mysterious "X" was none other than Pierre Loti, naval officer and novelist whose latest book, *Mon Frère Yves*, had just been published:[46]

> Tous les lettrés ont certainement reconnu l'auteur des admirables *Impressions* que le *Figaro* a publiées sur la guerre du Tonkin et la prise des forts de Hué; aussi n'y a-t-il plus d'inconvénient à dire aujourd'hui que ces pages magistrales sont l'œuvre de Pierre Loti, l'auteur du *Mariage de Loti*, du *Roman du Spahi* [*sic*], et de ce récit qui, après avoir charmé les lecteurs de la *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, va être le succès de l'hiver pour l'éditeur Calmann Lévy: *Mon Frère Yves*.[47]

The alert reader of *Le Figaro* had likely already identified Loti as "X" – there were not, after all, so many *écrivains-marins* stationed in Tonkin who might merit such front-page treatment and credibly be called "un penseur et un écrivain." But privately knowing an author's identity was one thing, and publicly printing it another. Now, attached to this war correspondence, Loti's name would make all the difference.

The passages that followed *Le Figaro*'s revelation of Loti's identity and announcement of his latest novel jarred discordantly with its promotional tone. Picking up where the last installment had left off, it finds the French naval soldiers waiting for surviving enemy troops to emerge from a burning village where they had taken refuge. They set their repeating rifles, watch the fires, and proceed to mow down the soldiers as they flee. They then descend upon the remaining wounded, murdering them with bayonets and blows from rifle butts. The following passages, which were quickly picked up in the foreign press and in France, can only be quoted at length, and capture the horror of these actions:

> Les matelots devenaient difficiles à retenir; ils voulaient descendre dans ce village, fouiller sous les arbres, en finir avec les gens de Tu-Duc. Un danger inutile, car

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1883.

[46] Pierre Loti, *Mon Frère Yves* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1883).

[47] Loti, "La Prise de Hué II," *Le Figaro*, 17 October 1883.

évidemment les pauvres fuyards allaient être obligés d'en sortir, et alors la route d'en bas, qui passait au pied même du fort, deviendrait leur seule issue.

On avait réglé les hausses pour la distance, chargé les *magasins* des fusils; on avait tranquillement tout préparé pour les tuer au passage. Et, en les attendant, on regardait là bas le mouvement combiné des autres troupes françaises, qui s'accélérait vers le Sud, les ennemis qui fuyaient, les pavillons d'Annam qui s'amenaient. La grande batterie du *Magasin-au-riz* était prise, les villages de derrière brûlaient avec des flammes rouges et des fumées noires….. Et on se réjouissait de voir tous ces incendies, de voir comme tout allait vite et bien, comme tout ce pays flambait. On n'avait plus conscience de rien, et tous les sentiments s'absorbaient dans cette étonnante joie de détruire.

———

En effet, ils avaient passé sous le feu des marins de l'*Atalante*, ces fuyards attendus. On les avait vus paraître, se masser, à moitié roussis, à la sortie de leur village; hésitant encore, se retroussant très haut pour mieux courir, se couvrant la tête, en prévision des balles, avec des bouts de planches, des nattes, des boucliers d'osier. – précautions enfantines, comme on en prendrait contre une ondée. Et puis ils avaient essayé de passer, en courant à toutes jambes.

Alors la grande tuerie avait commencé. On avait fait des "*feux de salves*," deux — et c'était plaisir de voir ces gerbes de balles, si facilement dirigeables, s'abattre sur eux deux fois par minute au commandement, d'une manière méthodique et sûre. C'était un espèce d'arrosage, qui les couchaient tous, par groupes, dans un éclaboussement de sable et de gravier.

On en voyait d'absolument fous, qui se relevaient, pris d'un vertige de courir, comme des bêtes blessées; ils faisaient en zigzags, et tout de travers, cette course de la mort, se retroussant jusqu'aux reins d'une manière comique; leurs chignons dénoués, leurs grands cheveux leur donnant des airs de femme.

D'autres se jetaient à la nage dans la lagune, se couvrant la tête, toujours, avec des abris d'osier et de paille, cherchant à gagner les jonques. On les tuait dans l'eau.

Il y avait de très bons plongeurs qui restaient longtemps au fond; — on réussissait tout de même à les attraper, quand ils mettaient la tête dehors pour prendre une gorgée d'air, comme des phoques.

Et puis on s'amusait à compter les morts.... cinquante à gauche, quatre-vingts à droite; dans le village on les voyait par petits tas; quelques-uns, tout roussis, n'avaient pas fini de remuer: un bras, une jambe se raidissait tout droit, dans une crispation; ou bien on entendait un grand cri horrible.

Avec ceux qui avaient dû tomber dans les forts du Sud, cela pouvait bien faire huit cents ou mille. Les matelots discutaient là-dessus, établissaient même des paris sur la quantité.

At this point, all seems to be over; it is only nine in the morning, and the conquest of the fort is complete. But the soldiers, excited by the short bursts of fighting, the heat, and the smell of the burning villages, are not ready for the action to end. They set out from the fort, searching for more enemy soldiers to kill:

> Déjà une chaleur accablante, une réverbération mortelle sur ces sables; les grandes fumées des villages incendiés montaient toujours, très droites, puis s'épanouissaient tout en haut de l'air en gigantesques parasols noirs.
>
> Plus personne à tuer. Alors les matelots, la tête perdue de soleil, de bruit, sortaient du fort et descendaient se jeter sur les blessés avec une espèce de tremblement nerveux. Ceux qui haletaient de peur, tapis dans des trous; qui *faisaient les morts*, cachés sous des nattes; qui râlaient en tendant les mains pour demander grâce; qui criaient "Han!... Han!..." d'une voix déchirante, — ils les achevaient, en les crevant à coups de baïonnette, en leur cassant la tête à coups de crosse.
>
> Des petits "boys" de Saïgon, efféminés et féroces — domestiques annamites venus à la suite de l'infanterie — s'étaient répandus parmi les matelots, les appelaient quand ils avaient déniché quelque malheureux caché dans un coin, les tiraient par le bras, disant: "Monsieur, encore un par ici, encore par là!... Viens vite, monsieur, lui faire pan, pan, pan!"
>
> On ne les reconnaissait plus les matelots; ils étaient fous. — On voulait les retenir. — On leur disait: "Mais c'est sale et lâche mes pauvres amis, ce que vous faites là!"
>
> Eux répondaient:
>
> — Des sauvages, cap'taine! — Ils ont bien promené la tête du commandant Rivière au bout d'un bâton, dans leur ville!…
>
> — Ça des vrais hommes, cap'taine? — Si c'était nous les battus, ils nous auraient coupés en morceaux — vous savez bien — ou sciés entre deux planches!
>
> Rien à répondre à cela; c'était vrai — et on les laissait à leur sombre travail…
>
> ———
>
> Après tout, en extrême Orient, ce sont les lois de la guerre. Et puis, quand on arrive avec une petite poignée d'hommes pour imposer sa loi à tout un pays immense, l'entreprise est si aventureuse, qu'il faut faire beaucoup de morts, jeter beaucoup de terreur, sous peine de succomber soi-même.[48]

It is no surprise that Loti's detailed description of these gruesome scenes soon traversed the globe, following the circuitous routes of trans-European and global cable and mail networks, and that they provoked outrage at French methods of colonial warfare.

Loti's Thuan An account also contrasted sharply with other accounts of the battle. Other long, detailed accounts of the battle were published in late September and early October in the Parisian press. Arriving to Paris via surface mail around the same time as Loti's were a full-length official naval report, authored by Counter Admiral Amédée Courbet, the commander of the naval forces in Tonkin, and an eyewitness account originally published on 25 August in the

[48] Loti, "La Prise de Hué II," *Le Figaro*, 17 October 1883.

French colonial newspaper *L'Indépendant de Saïgon*.[49] These accounts were received without controversy, as they confirmed and bolstered the story told by the late August telegraph dispatches. In fact, no other source echoed the brutal scenes narrated in Loti's account. If Loti's words stood out because of their prominence—appearing on the front page for *Le Figaro*'s broad, international circulation, with fanfare surrounding the revelation of Loti's identity—they were also noteworthy for their marked contrast with the 'official' consensus. Loti's account described, in elaborate detail, something at which others would not dare to hint. As Paul Mus put it, Loti's account entered into a "brèche" in the official narrative, breaking into a history which was being written like an *image d'Épinal*, "en quatre coloriages, rouge, bleu, vert et jaune, avec clairons et drapeaux," to sketch an image which was much grislier, and much less glorious.[50]

Discrepancies between Loti's and other accounts of Thuan An were already apparent with the first installment from 28 September, describing the battle as seen from the bay. Courbet and the *Indépendant de Saïgon*'s correspondent describe in only a few paragraphs events what,

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[49] *L'Indépendant de Saïgon*, 25 August 1883, supplement, 95-96. This batch of mail from Asia came aboard a ship called the *Yang-Tsé.* This and other *paquebots* of the Marseille-based *Compagnies des messageries maritimes* transported mail around the world, connecting colonies and military outposts to Europe. There were also other reports from Vietnam in this mail shipment; however, *Le Figaro*'s and *L'Indépendant de Saïgon*'s were the only eyewitness accounts of the battle for Thuan An in the batch. *Paris* and *L'Avenir de la marine et des colonies* both printed a letter from the same correspondent in Saïgon, recycling details about Thuan An taken from the *Indépendant de Saïgon*'s late August account ("Lettre de Cochinchine," *Paris*, 29 September 1883; "Lettre de Cochinchine," *L'Avenir des colonies et de la marine*, 30 September 1883, 1060-1061), and a major Marseille daily, *Le Petit Marseillais*, published a letter from a correspondent in Tonkin which addressed the situation there more generally ("La Situation au Tonkin — D'après un témoin oculaire," *Le Petit Marseillais*, 29 September 1883, 1).

[50] Mus, *Le Destin de l'Union Française*, 159. Mus's extraordinary analysis of Loti's account of Thuan An was first published across three chapters of his 1957 work: "Le 'cas Loti' et la déshumanisation colonialiste," 158-177; "L'arrière-plan historique d'un témoignage," 178-193; "Aux sources du malentendu franco-vietnamien," 194-218. Portions of it were republished in the *Cahiers Pierre Loti*, the journal of the Société des amis de Pierre Loti, in 1957-58. *Cahiers Pierre Loti* no. 19 (March 1957): 9-13; no. 20 (June 1957), 16-20; no. 21 (September 1957), 21-24; no. 22 (March 1958), 24-28; no. 23 (June 1958): 22-27. On Mus himself, see Christopher Goscha, "'Qu'as-tu appris à la guerre?' Paul Mus en quête de l'humain…," in *L'Espace d'un regard: L'Asie de Paul Mus (1902-1969)*, eds. David Chandler and Christopher E. Goscha (Paris, Les Indes Savantes, 2006), 269-90.

in Loti's account, stretches over several newspaper columns. Loti filled his story with vivid detail, as, for instance, when he sets the scene on the morning of the twentieth by evoking landscape and atmosphere:

> 5 heures 50. — Toute la flottille des canots se met en marche. Temps très pur, absolument calme. Le soleil se lève dans de petits nuages couleur d'or. Le jour est venu tout d'un coup, comme il est de règle dans les pays des tropiques. Tous les détails des montagnes s'accentuent en rose et en bleu. On voit au-dessus des dunes des cocotiers verts, batteries, villages, pagode, maisons aux toits ornés de découpures. Dans tout cela rien ne bouge, et nos obus semblent tomber sur un pays abandonné.[51]

In contrast, Courbet's report, covering the same morning, moves briskly, enumerating military action but giving little description or sentiment:

> Le 20 août, au matin, le feu fut ouvert de nouveau à cinq heures et demie, et à cinq heures quarante-cinq les troupes de débarquement partent des navires, au son de la Marseillaise, commandées par M. le capitaine de vaisseau Parrayon. Elles se composent de deux sections et des compagnies de débarquement de l'escadre. A six heures dix, sous la protection du Lynx et de la Vipère, qui balayent la plage de leurs obus, soldats et marins se lancent dans les brisants de la plage. Les Annamites sortent de leurs retranchements pour les repousser avec beaucoup de bravoure, mais, malgré leurs efforts, les dunes sont rapidement couronnées.[52]

The account of the *Indépendant de Saïgon* correspondent is similarly concise, covering the entire battle in only three short paragraphs, with the bulk of the action described in just a few sentences:

> L'attaque fut magnifique. *Les Annamites se sont défendus jusqu'au bout*. Personne n'avait quitté le village ni les forts, et ils se sont battus tant qu'ils ont pu; mais, bien qu'approvisionnés et armés complètement, ils ne nous ont fait aucun mal.
>
> À sept heures du matin, le drapeau français flottait sur les forts du Nord, pendant que la musique de l'amiral entonnait une *Marseillaise* triomphale.[53]

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[51] Loti, "La Prise du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883.

[52] "Affaires coloniales – Prise de Hué," *Le Temps*, 29 September 1883, 1.

[53] *L'Indépendant de Saïgon*, 25 August 1883, quoted in "La France au Tonkin," *La Presse*, 29 September 1883, 1. Italics appear in *La Presse*. *Le Temps* on the same day did not quote the sections of the *Indépendant de Saïgon* account covering the action of 20 August—relying on Courbet's report instead—but rather the section describing the events following the victory.

In these two accounts, descriptive language serves a vision of French heroism, with troops fighting honorably against equally matched opponents. Already in his first description of the battle from aboard the *Atalante*, Loti's challenged this idea. While Loti was no stranger to triumphant language—"En somme, une matinée heureuse et glorieuse, admirablement conduite"—the tone carries a hint of irony alongside passages describing the enemy dead that undermine the notion of a battle of equals. Loti describes the corpses with visceral detail that captures the brutal reality of the lopsided casuality numbers: "Du côté des Annamites, environ six cent morts jonchent les chemins et les villages, la tête criblée de balles ou la poitrine crevée à coups de baïonnette. De notre côté, une dizaine de blessés à peine, pas un mort, pas même une blessure desespérée." Loti includes smaller, anecdotal incidents, moments of individual interaction revealing larger truths about colonial conquest. Near the end of the first installment, a French *gabier* is seen, from a distance, discovering a wounded "Annamite" playing dead on the beach. The Vietnamese soldier makes a gesture of submission, and the French sailor, "qui a bon cœur," lets him live – but orders him to shoulder the heavy barrel he himself was carrying, "et s'en fait accompagner comme d'un groom."[54]

Loti's first installment finishes with another evocative description, of the suffocating midday heat that follows the morning of fighting, before returning to its victims:

> Plus un souffle dans l'air. L'accablement de midi commence à gagner partout. La mer immobile brille et chauffe par en-dessous comme un miroir. La ligne des dunes est sous le soleil d'une blancheur fatigante; deux ou trois cadavres annamites se dessinent sur le sable; des moutons et des porcs, chassés par le feu, leur passent dessus; un pauvre chien qui, sans doute, n'a plus de maître, galope de droite et de gauche, ayant l'air d'avoir aussi perdu la tête. Derrière les sables, les montagnes d'Annam pâlissent sous une espèce de buée chaude, et le bleu du ciel est comme terni de chaleur. On n'entend plus rien. Seulement, les villages brûlent toujours avec de longues flammes très rouges; leurs

[54] Loti, "La Prise du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883.

> fumées montent tout droit, à d'étonnantes hauteurs, tant l'air est calme; au milieu de tout cet éblouissement de bleu, elles ressemblent à de gigantesques colonnes noires.[55]

The description of flames and smoke marks the transition to the next section of the account (published in *Le Figaro* in two installments two weeks later) which moved to another, smaller fire – the campfire around which the soldiers sit on the evening following the battle. Around the fire, the chatting and celebrating of the men subsides, as the violence they faced and perpetrated begins to sink in:

> Impossible de causer gaiement. On ne sait pourquoi, le silence revient. On pense à toute cette région déjà noire, qui entoure les murs bas du fort, et où sont éparpillés des morts à grands cheveux…Vraiment, ces longues chevelures rudes donnent à ces cadavres de soldats des physionomies très particulières.[56]
>
> Dans ce silence et ce repos, mille choses vous reviennent en tête; on a la conception très nette de tout, on est obsédé maintenant par l'horrible de ce qu'il a fallu faire.
>
> La journée a été rude. On repasse lentement, heure par heure, cette succession de souvenirs.[57]

This passage introduces a shift in perspective and temporality: the narrative returns again to the morning of 20 August in order to narrate the battle once more, now from the point of view of these men—the heroic *compagnies d'embarquement* praised by Courbet and the

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[55] Loti, "La Prise du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883.

[56] References to the long hair of the Vietnamese soldiers are frequent in Loti's account of Thuan An, and in his correspondence and journal entries from the period he spent in Tonkin. His collection of items gathered (sometimes pillaged) from around the world includes a gruesome reminder of this fascination: a lock of hair, still held in the Maison de Pierre Loti collections today, inside a worn piece of paper labeled in Loti's hand: "Cheveux – queue de chinois (de la prise de Thuan-an août 83)" (MPL TRB 103.1). In a letter written shortly following the battle, likely to his friend and frequent correspondent Oirda, Loti described the items he had collected in the pillage following the battle, including hair: "Le lendemain de la prise de Thouane-an, je vous écris dans ma chambre encombrée de bibelots de pillage, _ des lances, des monstres, du vieux chine, des débris bizarres, jusqu'à des chevelures…" (*Journal II*, 475). This lock of hair also underscores that soldiers' post-battle acts of pillage and looting could include the collection not only of objects but also of human remains, kept as souvenirs and trophies. Kim Wagner's recent microhistory explores one such example of the taking of human remains as a war trophy in a British colonial context: Kim A. Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bheg: The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[57] Pierre Loti [as X], "Au Tonkin: La Prise de Hué II." *Le Figaro*, 13 October 1883, 1.

Indépendant—as they recall and relive the battle, in excruciating detail. As Paul Mus put it, "on revit ainsi [l'événement] une seconde fois, mais à un autre rythme."[58] The rhythm is marked by the soldier's distorted perception of time, first in the rush of combat and, afterwards, as events are relived as if in slow motion. The action that occupied fewer than two columns in the first installment was now elaborated on at length. Across two installments, Loti's narration returns again and again to distortions of experience and memory. In the second installment, after describing a surprise encounter with enemy soldiers in the dunes, he notes that "[t]out cela, qui est très long à dire, n'avait pas duré deux minutes," and makes a similar remark following the description of an especially gruesome killing: "Et tout cela qui s'était passé très vite, très vite, en quelques secondes, défilait maintenant en souvenir, avec une lenteur et une netteté de détails qui étaient atroces…"[59]

This part of Loti's battle account in particular broke through a breach in the official and triumphant narratives. Courbet's account lauded the bravery of the Vietnamese soldiers, overcome by French soldiers' superior "élan" (rather than firepower), and kept the action at a safe distance:

> En vain, les Annamites se défendent avec beaucoup de bravoure, ni le feu de leurs pièces, ni les bombettes qu'ils lancent sur nos hommes, ni l'incendie dont ils cherchent à se faire un rempart, n'arrêtent l'élan de nos troupes.
>
> À neuf heures, le capitaine de vaisseau Parrayon, qui commande toutes les troupes, MM. Gourdon et Olivieri, officiers du *Bayard*, M. de la Bastide, pénètrent les premiers dans le fort, et à neuf heures cinq le pavillon français flotte sur les ouvrages. Il est salué par les acclamations de tous.

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[58] Mus, *Le Destin de l'Union française*, 187.

[59] Loti, "Au Tonkin: La Prise de Hué II." *Le Figaro*, October 13 1883. "Un [Annamite], qui avait dans la bouche la baïonnette d'un matelot, mordait cette pointe, la serrait de toutes ses forces, avec ses dents saignantes qui crissaient contre le fer, — pour l'empêcher d'entrer, de lui crever la gorge. Mais le matelot était fort, et ses dents s'étaient cassées; la pointe, sortie par la nuque, l'avait cloué dans le sable. On tuait presque gaiement, déjà grisé par les cris, par la course, par la couleur du sang."

> Ce fait d'armes, brillamment et sagement conduit, nous a coûté peu de blessés, parmi lesquels M. de Curzon, lieutenant d'infanterie de marine. L'ennemi a six cents hommes tués.
>
> Dans l'après-midi, la *Vipère* et le *Lynx* ont franchi la barre de la rivière.[60]

The *Indépendant de Saïgon*'s account does hint at the massacre that took place, but at a safe distance: "On a fait une véritable boucherie d'Annamites, puis on a incendié tout ce qu'il y avait de paillottes dans le village; quoiqu'en plein jour c'était un spectacle grandiose et terrible que cet immense incendie."[61] Even then, this passage barely registered with readers, and was much less widely reproduced than the triumphant report of Courbet.

In contrast, Loti painted in rich, human detail the "véritable boucherie d'Annamites," which is represented only by a gap in Courbet's account (between the conquest of the fort, at 9:05 AM, and the ships sailing up the river in the afternoon). Recounting the battle a second time, through the soldiers' memory, Loti lingers on the psychological experience of combat, on the men's fear and bloodlust. Read continuously, in its form in the manuscript Loti sent to Paris, the shift of perspective to the soldiers' experience prompts a reflection on the sanitizing distance of the usual accounts. However, this literary maneuver was ill-suited to serialization in the daily press. In the three-week gap between the publication of the first part of Loti's account—in itself a 'complete' narrative of the battle—and the rest, Loti's perspectival shift and the double narration lost force and coherence. To serialize Loti's account was then, in Paul Mus's terms, to "dénature[r] son récit."[62] The mismatch between the cohesive shifts of the original and the disjointed divisions of newspaper serialization was only exacerbated as the account made its global tour from newspaper to newspaper, edited, abridged, translated, and cut into ever-smaller

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[60] "Affaires coloniales – Prise de Hué," *Le Temps*, 29 September 1883, 1.

[61] *L'Indépendant de Saïgon*, 25 August 1883, quoted in "La France au Tonkin," *La Presse*, 29 September 1883.

[62] Mus, *Le Destin de l'Union française*, 192.

pieces, interpreted not on the scale of the literary work but that of the news item.

THE "BARBARITY OF FRENCH SOLDIERS"

Loti's description of French soldiers' massacre of the fleeing and wounded at Thuan An in the 17 October *Le Figaro* immediately caught the eye of foreign correspondents in Paris. Several days before they caught the eye of the French press, the passages made the rounds in London and Berlin. Already on 18 October, translated excerpts, wired from Paris to the London press bureaus, were published in a dozen daily London newspapers, accompanied by outraged commentary.[63] The *St. James Gazette* described Loti's third *Figaro* installment as "a truly horrible account" of a massacre, while for the *Standard* it inspired "almost equal astonishment and disgust."[64] The *Pall Mall Gazette* called it "sickening and revolting" and "a disgrace to the French flag and a stain on the humanity of the nation which will not soon be effaced"; the *Globe*, too, characterized the details of Loti's account as "sickening."[65] In the following days, the news continued to spread, and many regional papers reprinted the summary translation and commentary from the 18 October issues of either the London *Standard* or *Pall Mall Gazette*, with titles like "Massacre of Annamites by French Sailors: A Horrible Story" or "Barbarity of

[63] The most widespread English translation—the one that, as mentioned above, was the basis for translations into further languages including German—was from the London *Standard*, and it covered the entire passage quoted in French above, from "It became difficult to hold the sailors back" to "the undertaking is so adventurous that you must inspire terror by killing many, under pain of being destroyed yourself." The version of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which had the same translation as the *Standard* but with the beginning and end, as well as some sentences in the middle, lopped off, also traveled widely.

[64] "The Fall of Hue: Barbarity of French Soldiers," *The Standard* (London), 18 Oct. 1883, 5; "Massacre of the Annamites by the French," *St. James Gazette* (London), 18 Oct. 1883, 10.

[65] "Occasional Notes," *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 18 October 1883, 3; "By the Way," *The Globe* (London), 18 October 1883, 4.

French Sailors at Hue."[66]

London, in turn, set the tone for the press in Germany, where the story was quickly picked up and discussed in similar terms. On 20 October, the *Kölnische Zeitung* ran a translation of the *Standard*'s 18 October article, and the Berlin *Vossische Zeitung* published an overview of the British press reaction, quoting the *Globe*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *St. James Gazette*.[67] Major newspapers across Germany seized the opportunity to criticize French conduct overseas, characterizing the events Loti narrated as "butcheries," "scenes of cruelty," "atrocities," "barbaric doings," and "dreadful events."[68] The *Kölnische Zeitung* went so far as to coin a term, working its anti-French message into the language itself: the paper declared that Loti's article should serve as a warning to any peoples who might fall into French hands, lest they too be "anamitisirt" – that is, "Annamitized."[69]

Across Europe, newspapers commented with outrage on what they described as "acts full of barbarism," "horrible scenes of barbarity," "atrocities," or "barbarities," recounted with "utterly indifferent cold-bloodedness" and "in a chilling manner."[70] The English press reaction

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[66] "Massacre of Annamites by French Sailors: A Horrible Story," *Leeds Times*, 20 October 1883, 5; "Barbarity of French Sailors at Hue," *Glasgow Herald*, 19 October 1883, 4. Other regional newspapers, many copying from the *Standard* or the *Pall Mall*, ran translations and commentary as well. The following is a non-exhaustive sampling of some of these regional outlets across Great Britain and Ireland: *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, *Hampshire Advertiser*, *Northern Echo* (Darlington), *Birmingham Daily Post*, *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, *The Bury and Norwich Post*, *Suffolk Herald*, *Edinburgh Evening News*, *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin), etc.

[67] "Frankreich," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 20 October 1883, first ed., 1; "Berlin, 20. Oktober," *Vossische Zeitung*, 20 October 1883, evening ed., 1.

[68] "Metzeleien": "Frankreich," *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Munich), 24 October 1883, 4348; "Gräuelszenen": "Französische Gräuelthaten," *Berliner Tageblatt*, 21 October 1883, morning ed., 3; "Gräuelthaten": "Frankreich," *Neue Preußische Zeitung* [*Kreuz-Zeitung*] (Berlin), 25 October 1883, 2; "Grausamkeiten": *Berliner Tageblatt*, 24 October 1883, 2; "barbarische Auftreten" and "Scheußlichkeiten": "Frankreich," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 22 October 1883, second ed., 1.

[69] "Die Vorgänge vor Hüé sollten aber jedenfalls eine Warnung für Deutschland und überhaupt für die Völker sein, welche den Franzosen der Neuzeit in die Hände fallen, sie würden 'anamitisirt' werden." "Frankreich," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 22 October 1883, second ed., 1.

[70] The above quotes come from newspapers in Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands: "atti inondati di

set the tone for much of the media response in Europe and around the world, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Short telegraph dispatches from London appeared immediately in the Australian press, once again with occasional errors cropping up in transmission, such as when several newspapers identified the outlet where Loti's "statement" had been published as "the London *Figaro*" – a British weekly unrelated to the French daily newspaper.[71] American correspondents in Paris also wired news of Loti's account to papers including the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Daily Times*, which both printed a dispatch reporting that *Le Figaro* had published "a narrative of a French officer […] at Hué" relating "that after the natives had ceased to resist they were driven from the burning village unarmed, and were then shot down in piles, the Frenchmen afterward murdering those who had been wounded."[72] Other newspapers across the United States got the news from London, reprinting either the *Standard*'s or the *Pall Mall*'s translated excerpt, under sensational headlines and subheadlines like "A Graphic Description of the Horrible Massacre as Given by an Eye Witness," "The Annamite Butchery," or "Savage Conduct of the French Conquerors – Slaying the Defenseless."[73]

For English and German papers in particular, the scandal was an invitation to deploy

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barbarie": "Come i Francesi fanno la guerra," *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 25 October 1883; "las horribles escenas de barbárie": "Las Matanzas de Hué," *El Correo Militar*, 22 October; "gruwelen": "Overzicht der Belangrijkste Gebeurtnissen," *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser courant* (Assen & Drenthe, Neth.), 23 October, 1; "Met de meeste onverschillige koelbloedigheid schildert hij de barbaarschheden […]": "Buitenland," *De Grondwet* (Roosendaal, Neth.), 25 October, 1; "op huiveringwekkende manier": "Frankrijk," *Rotterdamsch nieuwsblad*, 29 October.

[71] "Alleged French Barbarities at Hue," *The Argus* (Melbourne), 19 October 1883, 5; "Massacre at Hue," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October 1883, 7; "The French in Anam," *Launceston Examiner*, 19 October 1883, 2; "French Excesses," *The Maryborough Chronicle*, 22 October 1883, 2.

[72] "A Massacre by French Troops," *New York Times*, 18 October 1883, 1; "Crimes and Casualites – A Story of a Horrible Massacre by French Sailors at Hue," *Los Angeles Daily Times*, 19 October 1883, 1.

[73] "The Fall of Hue," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 20 October 1883, 1; "The Annamite Butchery," *Daily American* (Nashville), 23 October 1883, 6; "Foreign – Inhuman Conduct of French Sailors Engaged in the Attack on Hue," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 October 1883, 5. All of these newspapers mistakenly absorbed some of the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s commentary into their 'quotes' from Loti's account.

well-practiced disdain for French claims to 'civilization.' In an era of colonial competition, newspapers served increasingly as a battleground for metrics of "civilization," and reports of colonial violence were often crudely tallied like deductions in an intra-European competition.[74] The *Globe* warned readers wishing "to regard the French as a civilised people" to refrain from reading the *Figaro* article, and the *Vossische Zeitung* declared that if Loti's account should prove true, the French would have to be "denounced before all of Europe as cannibals, who had placed themselves outside of civilization and international law."[75] Sarcasm was de rigueur; the London *Saturday Review* invoked the "blessings of civilisation" being brought to Annam and Tonkin, while the *Berliner Tageblatt* remarked that the violence had been committed "in the name of 'civilization'."[76] For the Berlin *Kreuz-Zeitung*, a semi-official paper close to the government, "such occurrences" made France's boastful pretentions to "marching at the peak of civilization look like mere travesty."[77] In Italy, the *Gazzetta Piemontese* echoed these points, writing that it was particularly odious to commit such violent acts "when one is French and always praising one's own humanitarianism."[78]

At the same time, journalists at Parisian opposition newspapers like *L'Intransigeant*, *La Justice* and *La Lanterne* were also responding to Loti's account with indignation. Already critical

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[74] On this dynamic, see Thomas and Toye, *Arguing about Empire*.

[75] "[…] so müßte man sie vor Europa als Kannibalen denunciren, die sich außerhalb der Civilisation und des Völkerrechts gestellt haben." "Frankreich," *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin), 20 October 1883, morning ed., 3.

[76] "France," *The Saturday Review*, 20 October 1883, 488-89; "Französische Gräuelthäten," *Berliner Tageblatt*, morning ed., 21 October 1883, 3: "Und dies Alles im Namen der 'Civilisation'."

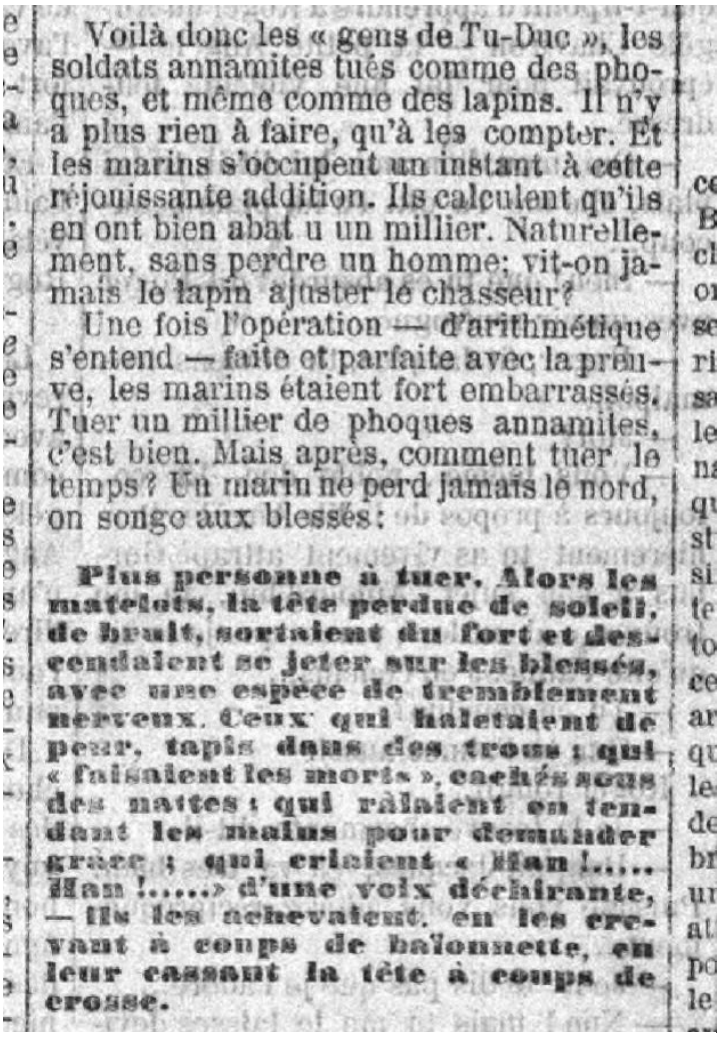
[77] "Frankreich und Tonking," *Neue Preußische Zeitung* [*Kreuz-Zeitung*], supplement, 23 October 1883, 1: "Die prahlerische Ueberhebung Frankreichs aber, an der Spitze der Civilisation zu marschiren, stellt sich solchen Vorkommnissen gegenüber nur als Fratze hin!" Other German newspapers commenting on Loti's account between 20 and 25 October included the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Munich) and, in Berlin, the *Staatsbürger-Zeitung*, the *Berliner-Zeitung*, the *Volks-Zeitung*, the *Berliner Fremdenblatt*, and the *National-Zeitung*.

[78] "Come i Francesi fanno la guerra," *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 25 October 1883.

of the colonial politics of Jules Ferry's government, these papers saw in Loti's account a confirmation of the brutality of colonial war, and a reason to condemn it. Henri Rochefort's *L'Intransigeant* invoked the memory of the violent repression of the Paris Commune, and suggested that colonial violence would eventually be brought home to the metropole – as it had been before, when officers and troops well-practiced in colonial warfare had brutally put down street protests and revolutionary uprisings in France.[79] A 22 October leading article in *La Lanterne* with the sardonic title "Notre Héroïsme" was widely cited in the German press, after a translated excerpt appeared in the *National-Zeitung*. The article concurred with *L'Intransigeant*, and framed excerpts from Loti's account with outraged commentary on the injustice and barbarity of wars of conquest, and the hypocrisy of invoking national honor and 'civilization' while perpetrating atrocities.[80] On the same day, an article in *La Justice* by Charles Longuet titled "Les Inhumains," included long citations from "La Prise de Hué," and printed a particularly shocking paragraph, beginning with "Plus personne à tuer," in bold (figure 5).

[79] "La Prise de Hué," *L'Intransigeant*, 19 October 1883, 2. This article, which included a long excerpt from Loti's account, was largely borrowed from the previous day's issue of *Le Télégraphe*, a more moderate newspaper. However, the closing section drawing a comparison to the repression of the Commune was *L'Intransigeant*'s addition. On the links between colonial violence and violent repression in the metropole, see especially Jennifer Sessions, "'Unfortunate Necessities': Violence and Civilization in the Conquest of Algeria," in *France and Its Spaces of War: Experience, Memory, Image*, eds Patricia M.E. Lorcin and Daniel Brewer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 29-44. Sessions discusses the "widespread conviction that colonial warfare's greatest danger lay in its potential to barbarize French soldiers and even France itself" (30) – a conviction that shaped much of the response to Loti's account, particularly in opposition newspapers.

[80] "Notre Héroisme," *La Lanterne*, 22 October 1883, 1. Translated excerpt in *National-Zeitung*, 23 October 1883, evening ed., 1. Reproduced, with some variations, by the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Berliner Zeitung*, *Staatsbürger-Zeitung*, and *Volks-Zeitung*, all on 24 October 1883.



Voilà donc les « gens de Tu-Duc », les soldats annamites tués comme des phoques, et même comme des lapins. Il n'y a plus rien à faire, qu'à les compter. Et les marins s'occupent un instant à cette réjouissante addition. Ils calculent qu'ils en ont bien abat u un millier. Naturellement, sans perdre un homme; vit-on jamais le lapin ajuster le chasseur?

Une fois l'opération — d'arithmétique s'entend — faite et parfaite avec la preuve, les marins étaient fort embarrassés. Tuer un millier de phoques annamites, c'est bien. Mais après, comment tuer le temps? Un marin ne perd jamais le nord, on songe aux blessés:

Plus personne à tuer. Alors les matelots, la tête perdue de soleil, de bruit, sortaient du fort et descendaient se jeter sur les blessés, avec une espèce de tremblement nerveux. Ceux qui haletaient de peur, tapis dans des trous ; qui « faisaient les morts », cachés sous des nattes ; qui râlaient en tendant les mains pour demander grâce ; qui criaient « Han !..... Han !.....» d'une voix déchirante, — ils les achevaient, en les crevant à coups de baïonnette, en leur cassant la tête à coups de crosse.

Figure 5. Charles Longuet, "Les Inhumains," *La Justice*, 22 October 1883, 1. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Longuet declared the massacre a stain on the French flag, and, echoing *L'Intransigeant* and *La Lanterne*, predicted that inflicting such horrors abroad would only redound back onto France.[81] The next day, relaying the commentary of German newspapers, *La Lanterne* concurred with them that such massacres made French claims to civilization difficult to sustain: "Il ne faut pas parler de civilisation, si on agit comme les derniers des barbares."[82]

Ultimately, it was the British and German media furor, paralleled and echoed by opposition critics at home, that made Loti's Thuan An account a scandal in France. A typical response came from *La Liberté*, which testily observed on 23 October that "la presse étrangère, toujours attentive à trouver la France en faute," had taken hold of Loti's story "avec la plus extrême malveillance." In this understanding, it was the naïveté and lack of generosity of *Le Figaro*'s foreign readers which made Parisians debate the "cas de Pierre Loti." The problem, in short, was one of

[81] Charles Longuet, "Les Inhumains," *La Justice*, 22 October 1883, 1.

[82] "Les commentaires," *La Lanterne*, 23 October 1883, 2.

misreading: foreign readers could not parse the mix of literature and journalism in French newspaper style. For *La Liberté* and other moderate and opportunist republican newspapers, it was a mistake to read Loti's account as journalism rather than fiction, because "les faits y étaient présentés sous un aspect romanesque […] et ils s'écartent généralement de la vérité."[83] *Le Temps* similarly suggested a misunderstanding on the part of the outraged German newspapers, observing tersely that "aucun de ces journaux ne se demande même si le récit susmentionné n'est pas exagéré."[84]

ON EN PARLE PARTOUT

Loti's account quickly became a matter of state. "Peut-être notre reproduction décidera-t-elle les ministériels si nous devons considérer M. Pierre Loti comme l'historiographe militaire officiel du cabinet Ferry": this challenge, posed by Charles Longuet in *La Justice* on 22 October, was answered within a day. At the first *conseil des ministres* of the new legislative session, Admiral Peyron, minister of the Navy and Colonies, announced that naval lieutenant Julien Viaud would be summoned back to France to face questioning, and stated that Loti's account was a "récit erroné […] de nature à déconsidérer l'armée et la marine françaises."[85] Peyron's words were reproduced across the press between 23 and 25 October. Many interpreted the statement (erroneously, as it turned out) to mean that Loti would not just be recalled but would be "mis en disponibilité par retrait d'emploi," losing his post in the Navy.[86]

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[83] *La Liberté*, 23 October 1883, 1.

[84] "Dépêches télégraphiques," *Le Temps*, 22 October 1883, 1.

[85] "Journal des Journaux," *Le Moniteur universel*, 24 October 1883, 3. The recall announcement was published in most newspapers on either 24 or 25 October.

[86] See, for instance, the evening papers dated 24 October 1883, including *La Liberté*, *Paris*, and *La*

If the minister hoped to quell the growing furor, he was disappointed. On 26 October, three days after the recall announcement, a *chroniqueur* at *Le Gaulois* observed—with a clever turn of phrase reversing Loti's real and assumed identities—that the Loti affair was now the talk of the town: "Le cas de Pierre Loti, homme de lettres connu, qui faisait, en même temps que des livres, de la lieutenance de vaisseau sous le pseudonyme de Viaud, est en train d'accomplir son tour de Paris. On en parle partout, et avec quelles divergences d'opinion, vous l'imaginez."[87] Another newspaper described a veritable "déluge d'articles."[88] Already on 3 November, the chroniqueur at *L'Illustration* prefaced his opinion with the caveat that "il est trop tard pour parler de ce qu'on a appelé 'le cas de Pierre Loti'"; by 9 November, the literary critic at *Le Français* was acknowledging that the Loti conversation was "épuisée."[89] More than half of the hundred articles comprising the affair were published after the recall announcement – the conversation was at its peak as the *Gaulois*'s chroniqueur was writing that "on en parle partout." After news of Peyron's order broke, newspapers of every stripe began commenting on Loti's case, and the number of publications discussing the incident expanded from approximately a dozen to more than thirty. The conversation spread beyond the political columnists who had dominated the early press reaction at papers like *Paris*, *Le Temps*, and *La Justice*,[90] and moved into the domain of the *chronique* – an elastic genre (discussed in the introduction and in chapter 4), but one

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France.

[87] Montjoyeux [Jules Poignand], "Chroniques parisiennes – L'Assommoir en mer," review of *Mon Frère Yves*, by Pierre Loti, *Le Gaulois*, 26 October 1883, 1.

[88] *Le Soir*, 26 October 1883, 1.

[89] Perdican [pseudonym], "Courrier de Paris," *L'Illustration*, 3 November 1883, 275; AΦ, "Causerie littéraire – Mon Frère Yves," review of *Mon Frère Yves*, by Pierre Loti, *Le Français*, 9 November 1883, 1.

[90] Notable signed contributions to the first phase of the French media debate were by Joël le Savoureux at the opportunist republican *Paris*, and Charles Longuet (former Communard and son-in-law of Karl Marx) at Georges Clemenceau's *La Justice*. Most articles published before 24 or 25 October were unsigned and appeared in general or political news rubrics.

generally devoted to discussions of *actualité*. Many *chroniqueurs*, like Jules Claretie (*Le Temps*), Francisque Sarcey (*Le XIXe Siècle*), or Gustave Geffroy (*La Justice*), were also literary or theater critics, and their interventions in the Loti affair made the conversation one that mixed colonial politics with distinctly literary concerns.

The terms of the literary debate were already set by the terse early responses in moderate and opportunist republican newspapers like *Le Temps* and *La Liberté*, which insisted in brief news items that foreign media were misunderstanding Loti's account as intended to be factual—that is, as journalism—when in was in fact literature. This response echoes a persistent media debate in the early Third Republic, a period when the markedly literary tradition of French journalism found itself confronted with the "impératif du tout-information" associated with the dominate British and American newspaper style.[91] Critics and journalists observed the advent of a new, more laconic style prompted by both the rapid precision of communication by telegraph and a creeping American influence. Already in 1877 Émile Zola lamented "le jour où les faits devinrent les maîtres du journal," and when, he claimed, newspaper editors became wary of literary writing.[92] A few years later the prominent *chroniqueur* Jules Claretie complained of the telegram's negative effects on journalistic style and on the French language more broadly.[93] At the same time, as Marie-Ève Thérenty has shown, literary style, broadly defined, continued to

[91] Dominique Kalifa, Philippe Régnier, Marie-Ève Thérenty, and Alain Vaillant, "Les scansions internes à l'histoire de la presse," in *La Civilisation du Journal*, 263.

[92] Émile Zola, "La Presse parisienne," trans. Alexandre Trifounovitch, *Études de presse* 8, nos. 15-16 (1956): 262-63. This article was originally published in August 1877 in *Le Messager de l'Europe*, a Russian review where Zola published a number of articles in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Some of these were also published in *Le Voltaire* or, later, collected in either *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris: Charpentier, 1880) or *Les Romanciers naturalistes* (Paris: Charpentier, 1881). This article never appeared in French, and the manuscript has not been found; it was retranslated from Russian for the journal *Études de presse* in 1956.

[93] Jules Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," *Le Temps*, 6 April 1880, 3.

reign over French newspaper pages, and outlets from *Le Figaro* to *Gil Blas* actively recruited literary talents (like Loti) in order to win prestige—and readers—for their papers.[94]

This tension, between the 'factual style' of Anglophone journalism and its more literary French counterpart emerged again and again in the press in the early 1880s. A June 1883 article in *Le Gaulois* is characteristic of this tendency. It compared journalistic styles along ethnic lines, characterizing the press of the "groupe latin" as "légère [et] littéraire" and that of the "groupe germanique" (which comprised the English, Germans, Americans, and Austrians) as, in contrast, "touts remplis de relations de faits graves."[95] Newspaper articles in the "groupe germanique" were generally unsigned, while French newspapers cultivated *chroniqueurs* and political commentators with literary style and identifiable points of view.

When the editor of *Le Figaro*, Francis Magnard, obtained from Calmann Lévy the promise of Loti's war correspondence from Tonkin, he was no doubt counting on the attraction of an increasingly famous literary signature to draw readers to his paper over competitors, and expecting Loti to produce something not only of news interest but also of literary value.[96] Accordingly, in the debate about Loti's account of colonial war, the old distinction between Anglophone and French traditions resurfaced throughout the ensuing debates, straining the tension between "factual" and "literary" journalism to the breaking point, and prompting a debate over the status of literature on the front page.

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[94] Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien*, especially 11-26, and, on the tensions in the 1880s and 1890s in particular, the section "Le grand reportage," 292-330. On newspaper editors' interest in *littérateurs*, see also Venayre, "La querelle naturaliste," *Une guerre au loin*, 136-142.

[95] Mermeix, "À props d'une dépêche de 10,000 mots," *Le Gaulois*, 17 June 1883, 2.

[96] Venayre, *Une guerre au loin*, 136.

LITERATURE AND JOURNALISM

Whether or not they disputed Loti's account, French newspapers across the political spectrum universally recognized its literary character. Even those critics inclined to believe the account did not diminish its literary style; rather, they saw style as essentially linked to its truthfulness. For Paul Alexis, writing under the pseudonym "Trublot" in the newly relaunched leftist newspaper *Le Cri du Peuple*, Loti's "La Prise de Hué" had recounted the battle "en bon style et sous un jour vrai."[97] The popular *La Lanterne* declared that Loti was able to "rendre toute la vérité dans son effet pittoresque," citing Flaubert and Daudet as his literary influences.[98] Albert Rogat in *Le Pays* referred to Loti as an "observateur exact, ayant le talent de traduire sa pensée sans déviation,"[99] while Charles Vincent praised him for having narrated combat "avec les couleurs vraies de la lutte."[100] Octave Mirbeau's weekly pamphlet *Les Grimaces* praised Loti's style, and remarked of the account that "c'était évidemment un tableau d'une réalité poignante."[101]

That Loti's account was both literature and journalism at the same time was the claim made for it by *Le Figaro*'s introductory *chapeaux* to the first and second installments. On 28 September, *Le Figaro* described the then-anonymous account of Thuan An as a "relation détaillée et prise sur le vif," and underlined its duality: "Ce n'est pas seulement un document historique important, c'est aussi, comme on va en juger, un fort joli morceau de littérature."[102]

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[97] Trublot, "À Minuit – Petites nouvelles du théâtre et de la littérature," *Le Cri du Peuple*, 28 October 1883, 2. *Le Cri du Peuple* was Jules Vallès's ephemeral Paris Commune newspaper, relaunched in October 1883, after Vallès's return from political exile. This was the first issue of the relaunched paper, which would continue after Vallès's death in 1885, headed by Séverine, the well-known woman journalist.

[98] "Notre Héroïsme," *La Lanterne*, 25 October 1883.

[99] Albert Rogat, *Le Pays*, 25 October 1883, 1.

[100] Charles Vincent, "Pierre Loti," *Gazette de France*, 16 November 1883, 2.

[101] Mac'iavel, "La Politique," *Les Grimaces*, 27 October 1883, 697.

[102] Loti, "La Prise du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883.

On 13 October, introducing the second installment, the newspaper emphasized more strongly its literary qualities, calling the account "[les] remarquables *impressions*" which "nous ont particulièrement frappés par l'intensité et le *rendu* des sensations," while still claiming it as the work of an eyewitness and participant: "ces notes ont la saveur spéciale des choses vues et vécues."

Following Sylvain Venayre, we might say that the Loti affair turned on the "éternelle question de savoir ce que représenter veut dire."[103] The chroniqueurs who accepted Loti's account as true understood literary style as ancillary rather than antithetical to reported accuracy. Any representation necessarily involved a kind of transformation; as Gustave Geffroy put it in *La Justice*, using the language of sculpture, what a writer did was to "mouler la réalité sous une phrase."[104] However, many more newspapers refused to accord to Loti's account the double status claimed for it by *Le Figaro*, claiming that literary style distorted rather than translated reality. They declared that the marks of literary style in Loti's account were marks against its truthfulness, and dismissively likened Loti's account to a novel: it was a "narration littéraire"; "une œuvre purement littéraire"; "un récit absolument romanesque"; a "roman militaire"; "le roman de l'*Atalante*"; "le roman-feuilleton du *Figaro*"; "un récit fantaisiste."[105] Columns were

[103] Venayre, *Une Guerre au loin*, 142.

[104] Gustave Geffroy, "Chronique – Le cas de M. Pierre Loti," *La Justice*, 28 October 1883, 1-2. Geffroy would later include this powerful chronique in an edited collection in a section titled "Pour la vérité." Gustave Geffroy, "Le cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Notes d'un journaliste* (Paris: Charpentier, 1887), 22-25. Sylvain Venayre quoted this phrase of Geffroy's, but with an error ("montrer la réalité d'une phrase") which significantly changed Geffroy's meaning (*Une Guerre au loin*, 135).

[105] *Le Parlement*, 22 October; Jacques Hervé de Kerohant, "Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Soleil*, 23 October 1883, 1; Le Diable boiteux [Baron Devaux], "Nouvelles et Échos," *Gil Blas*, 25 October 1883; Marius Vachon, "L'Incident Loti," *La France*, 25 October 1883, 1; Charles Laurent, "Le roman de l'Atalante," *Paris*, 25 October 1883, 1; *La République française*, 25 October 1883, 1; Hippolyte Gautier, "Les Lettres et l'armée," *Le National*, 26 October 1883, 2.

devoted to detailing Loti's "procédés," deploying the vocabulary of the visual arts.[106] Loti was "un peintre qui aime les grands effets; il force volontiers les ombres et adoucit les lumières."[107] He used a "pinceau" to create "des peintures où la part de l'imagination est beaucoup plus grande que celle de la réalité," and invented "des détails qui complètent le tableau, qui lui donnent à son goût, plus de force et d'énergie."[108] His descriptions were like "broderies sanglantes," and he had tried to "orner son récit de toutes les parures de l'épouvante."[109] The language of ornament served to undermine the truth value of Loti's account, drawing a line neatly cordoning literature off from journalism, in a way that unsettled the usual characterization of French journalism as essentially literary. But in the "incident Loti," troubled by Loti's use of style to give a heightened sense of reality to an inconvenient truth about colonial war, many French newspapers quickly disavowed literary style, in the interests of colonial politics and intra-European rivalry.

If Loti's words distorted reality, as these newspapers had it, the question of responsibility necessarily followed. Should naval lieutenant Julien Viaud be punished for the excesses of Pierre Loti? As *Le Gaulois* had put it, there were many "divergences d'opinion" on this point. Quite a few newspapers, among them *Le Temps*, *La République française*, *Le Gaulois*, and *Le Siècle*, judged that the minister had acted rightly. Others tried to absolve Loti by claming he had only been carried away by "le feu de la description."[110] Francisque Sarcey conjured up the scene of Loti's literary creation, imagining him giving in to "une habitude de métier" and beginning to

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[106] Venayre discusses the derogatory use of the term "procédés" to describe Loti's literary style in the aforementioned chapter "La querelle naturaliste," *Une Guerre au loin*, 135-142.

[107] "Affaires coloniales – Chine et Indo-Chine," *Le Temps*, 24 October 1883, 2.

[108] Hervé de Kerohant, "Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti"; Francisque Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe Siècle*, 26 October 1883, 1.

[109] Fresnay, "Pierre Loti," *Le Voltaire*, 26 October 1883.

[110] Y…, "À travers champs," review of *Mon Frère Yves*, by Pierre Loti, *La Liberté*, 28 October 1883, 2.

"accomode[r] tout le récit pour obtenir l'effet voulu":

> Je ne serais pas étonné que M. Viaud, du haut de son observatoire, voyant un soldat français s'élancer, les yeux hors de la tête, la baïonnette en avant, sur les ennemis dispersés, ne se soit dit: "Ah! bien sûr il va l'enfoncer dans le ventre du premier pauvre diable qu'il rencontrera… blessé, mourant peut-être!..."
>
> De là à croire qu'il l'enfonce, à le voir l'enfoncer, il n'y a qu'un pas; et le romancier se représente la scène; tous les traits lui en sont présents, et à mesure qu'il y songe ces traits deviennent plus nombreux et se revêtent de couleurs plus atroces […]
>
> Il s'échauffe tout en écrivant; les phrases s'ajoutent aux phrases; les épithètes accourent pressées, pittoresques, farouches.
>
> Si à ce moment quelqu'un, lisant par-dessus son épaule et le tirant par la manche, lui disait:
>
> — Prenez garde, que diable! C'est de vos compagnons d'armes que vous parlez ainsi!
>
> Il ouvrirait de grands yeux surpris. Des compagnons d'armes! des soldats français? Allons donc! ce sont des héros de roman! Il est grisé lui-même de sa narration, il a perdu le sens de la réalité.[111]

This defense was unconvincing, and hardly flattering to Loti – or indeed any writer. Sarcey, in his portrayal of a wide-eyed Loti losing touch with reality, went farther than most, but the gist of his argument echoed other *chroniques* in the days following the recall announcement. Loti had been "emporté par son imagination […] Il a été imprudent, maladroit, il s'est *emballé*";[112] "ému par le spectacle qui se déroulait sous ses yeux […] le peintre [a] laissé à son imagination le soin de guider sa plume."[113] It was due to "les nerfs," which "jouent un si grand rôle dans la vie de l'homme qui tient une plume," that Loti had abandoned himself to "la griserie de description";[114] he had sinned only "par entraînement d'écrivain."[115] Critics had forgotten that "un poète voyait des choses sous une optique particulière, que la fougue du récit pouvait l'entraîner à une

[111] Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe siècle*, 26 October 1883.

[112] Marius Vachon, "L'Incident Loti," *La France*, 25 October 1883.

[113] "Chine et Indo-Chine," *Le Temps*, 24 October 1883.

[114] Léon Chapron, "Chronique de Paris – Le Lieutenant Viaud," *L'Événement*, 29 October 1883, 1.

[115] Fresnay, "Pierre Loti," *Le Voltaire*, 26 October 1883.

exagération inévitable";[116] that he saw things "à travers le prisme d'une imagination échauffée par le sentiment de la couleur."[117] Summing up, Paul Fresnay remarked, "Voilà où l'amour trop vif de la description peut entraîner, sans qu'il s'en doute, un officier de marine…"[118]

"Description," invoked again and again as a "genre perfide!", addicting, and intoxicating, was rarely defined.[119] It also had an obvious connotation, made clear by Léon Chapron's reference in *L'Événement* to "la manie de description réaliste dont nous sommes atteints."[120] The Loti affair, was, as Sylvain Venayre points out, a skirmish in a larger literary battle known as "la querelle naturaliste."[121] While Pierre Loti is not usually classed among the naturalists, in 1883, his "La Prise de Hué" temporarily placed him in Émile Zola's camp, at least for the convenience of commentators at the height of the debate. Many of the established *chroniqueurs*, including Jules Claretie and Francisque Sarcey, were longstanding critics of naturalism, and Claretie in particular used the Loti case to further develop his critiques of the new literary school.

Like Émile Zola, wrote Claretie, "Pierre Loti a peint d'après nature et vu les choses au

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[116] Albert Delpit, "Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Figaro*, 25 October 1883, 1.

[117] Edmond Texier, À Travers la semaine," *Le Siècle*, 29 October 1883, 3.

[118] Fresnay, "Pierre Loti," *Le Voltaire*, 26 October 1883. These were defenses of literature that distorted the conditions of literary creation, making the writer a naïf at the mercy of his own imagination. Loti's brief discussions of writing "La Prise de Hué," in letters to friends both before and after the scandal, paint a much more prosaic picture, both of his feelings during the battle and of the process of literary creation. He wrote in early October to a friend that he had written "tout cela pour Calmann-Lévy, par procédé, avec dégoût, pour de l'argent," and sought to downplay the outsize image his correspondent, Oirda, had developed of the battle: "Comme tous ces événements se sont agrandis en venant jusqu'à vous… De grandes émotions, de grandes luttes, vous dites?... Ah! mon Dieu non _ […] En moi, rien n'a vibré _" (Letter to Oirda [Blanche Lee Childe], 11 October 1883, *Journal II*, 483). Later, in letters to Alphonse Daudet and Juliette Adam, he described a scene of collective and collaborative writing: "je l'avais écrit avec eux, au milieu d'eux," with a fellow officer and a handful of soldiers (*gabiers* and *cannoniers*) "m'apportant chacun sa petite histoire," which Loti then read back and edited with them (Letter to Adam, 9 December, *Journal II*, 505; Letter to Daudet, 9 December, *Journal II*, 504).

[119] Y…, "À travers champs," *La Liberté*, 28 October 1883.

[120] Chapron, "Le Lieutenant Viaud," *L'Événement*, 29 October 1883.

[121] Venayre, *Une Guerre au loin*, 136.

microscope." But Loti had tried to "faire trop vrai" and had gone too far, describing details which would disgust the ordinary reader. In Claretie's analogy, "si l'on savait ce qu'il y a dans la goutte d'eau, on ne boirait pas. À plus forte raison éprouve-t-on une nausée à regarder ce qu'il y a dans une goutte de sang!" Unlike Sarcey and Fresnay, who imagined Loti naïvely carried away by writerly enthusiasm in order to better excuse his fault, Claretie suggested that Loti had attempted a stylistic maneuver which had backfired. He compared Loti's "admirables descriptions" to Courbet's official naval account of the battle, published in the press around the same time as the first installment of Loti's in *Le Figaro*. To write, as Claretie did, that Courbet's report "m'avait fait passer sur la peau un frisson généreux que les admirables descriptions de Pierre Loti ne m'avaient point donné," was to imply that the style best suited to war writing was the spare, distanced style of the official report.[122] As his account seemed likely to end his naval career, Loti became, in Claretie's memorable turn of phrase, a "victime du naturalisme."

Doubly a victim, because his stylistic choice made him particularly vulnerable to the kind of misreading and misinterpretation Zola and other naturalists suffered abroad, according to Claretie. Foreign readers, Claretie and others suggested, made a kind of elementary error when they read Zola, and now Loti: they mistook their stylized grimy descriptions for unadorned truth, and took them as faithful representations of contemporary society and current events.[123] Léon

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[122] Ironically, Claretie misquotes Courbet's report, attributing to him a more poetic turn of phrase, "les frères des soldats de Bazeilles"; Courbet's report was rather clunkier: "L'armée ne s'est pas en vain couverte de gloire à Bazeilles, et dans toute circonstance où elle se trouva elle se tient à la hauteur des hauts faits de ses aînés." Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," *Le Temps*, 27 October 1883.

[123] As proof of this, Claretie cited a recent article in the *Scottish Review*, on Zola's *Pot-Bouille*, where the author characterized Zola's portrayal of the Parisian middle classes as "coarse almost beyond expression." Zola's Parisian Middle Classes," *The Scottish Review*, no. 2 (September 1883): 301-334. This article consists mostly of a long passage from *Pot-Bouille*, surrounded with a little commentary. Contra Claretie, however, there is little suggestion that the Scottish critic took Zola's depiction as in any way representative. Claretie also misunderstood the article's heading, "Art. VI.," which indicated it was the sixth article in that particular issue, to mean that it was the sixth in a series of studies of Zola: "Six articles et ce n'est pas le dernier!" Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," *Le Temps*, 27 October 1883.

Chapron concurred, and warned that "notre littérature est un peu plus prise au mot qu'il ne conviendrait, on l'ignore trop."[124] One could not convince a Berliner who had read Zola's *Pot-Bouille* that

> les jeunes bourgeois parisiens ne passent pas leur vie à lever les jupons crottés des servantes […] et que les femmes de classe moyenne n'ont pas, chez nous, l'habitude de faire l'amour avec le premier venu, […] sur une table de cuisine, entre une bouteille à demi-pleine et une assiette ébréchée.

And now, Chapron continued: "Ainsi de ce malheureux article."[125] Just as they had judged French society "d'après les romans de M. Zola," foreigners now judged the French navy, and French colonialism, according to what Marius Vachon at *La France* called "le roman militaire de Pierre Loti."[126]

LE MONDE ENTIER

Commentators saw a basic problem behind foreign misreadings of Loti's account. How could readers, especially non-French readers, distinguish between the literary and the journalistic on the front page? As *chroniqueur* Francisque Sarcey asked: "Comment leur faire comprendre que nous sommes avant tout […] une nation littéraire, qui inventons le fait pour avoir le plaisir de le bien conter?"[127] Discerning French readers of *Le Figaro* could enjoy the "plaisir de lire une description animée, d'une couleur superbe et d'un style excellent,"[128] understanding that what

[124] Chapron, "Le Lieutenant Viaud," *L'Événement*, 29 October 1883.
[125] Chapron, "Le Lieutenant Viaud," *L'Événement*, 29 October 1883.
[126] Vachon, "L'incident Loti," *La France*, 25 October 1883.
[127] Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe siècle*, 26 October 1883.
[128] Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe siècle*, 26 October 1883.

they were reading was not one of the "relations de faits graves"[129] found in English and German newspapers, but rather "un joli roman écrit à l'usage des lettrés, des délicats."[130] But *Le Figaro*'s audience was not limited to critics and Parisian *lecteurs avertis*. Another chroniqueur, Jacques Hervé de Kerohant—whose detailed comparison of Loti's "La Prise de Hué" to Flaubert's *Salammbô* in *Le Soleil* on 23 October did much to prompt the literary turn in the debate—warned of the dangerous possibility that "à l'étranger on prendrait au pied de la lettre" what was meant to be read for style.[131]

The *chroniqueurs*' concern for the particularities of journalistic style also dovetailed with a call for self-censorship. In a world of global news circulation, Jules Claretie wrote, "la France devrait veiller sur ce qu'elle écrit." Claretie's imagined unsympathetic foreign reader— "le monde entier, penché sur son épaule"—already little disposed to interpret French writing charitably, encountered Loti's account only through translated and truncated excerpts, divorced from context, which further muddled matters.[132] For many French commentators, it was impossible to interpret "La Prise de Hué" in this fragmented way. Sarcey, in a striking image that combined concern over non-French publics with the interpretive challenges posed by Loti's account, envisioned English newspapers and readers stripping sentences of style, leaving only naked facts, ugly and exposed: "Les Anglais n'ont vu et voulu voir que les faits. Ils les ont dépouillés de leur parure, ils les ont montrés tout nus au monde civilisé, qui les a trouvés hideux."[133]

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[129] Mermeix, "À props d'une dépêche de 10,000 mots," *Le Gaulois*, 17 June 1883.

[130] Jacques Hervé de Kerohant, "Le cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Soleil*, 23 October 1883, 1.

[131] Kerohant, "Le cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Soleil*, 23 October 1883.

[132] Claretie, "La Vie à Paris," *Le Temps*, 27 October 1883.

[133] Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe siècle*, 26 October 1883.

Stripped bare, these hideous facts could, and did, crisscross the globe. These were the dangers of global textual circulation: an article published one day in a Parisian daily newspaper was excerpted in the British press the following morning, and reached the American and even Australian press in short cable dispatches nearly as quickly. The same cable networks that allowed newspapers to be kept abreast of what French troop movement across the world also beamed out French news to be carved and digested into translated tidbits divorced from their original context, served up for unsympathetic foreign readers. It was Sarcey, again, who imagined how French news might travel through Europe and beyond, finding unanticipated and dangerous extra-European publics:

> Les feuilles de Londres et de Berlin se sont tout aussitôt emparées de cette relation; elles l'ont traduite, en soulignant les passages les plus vifs; elles les ont commentés à leur façon; toute l'Europe a dévoré ce récit, que l'on a affecté de tenir pour vrai dans tous ses détails […] Journaux allemands et journaux anglais vont être répandus à profusion dans l'Extrême-Orient, traduits dans la langue des Asiatiques, qui vont être persuadés, en les lisant, que nos matelots et nos soldats sont des bêtes brutes qui aiment à se baigner dans le sang de leurs ennemis, qui achèvent les blessés à coups de crosse et de baïonnette.[134]

Sarcey's move from the past to the near future tense made such dangerous circulations seem inevitable, as if the process, once started, could not be stopped. Other newspapers had also presented dangerous East Asian circulations as a fait accompli, rendering Loti responsible for imagined violent acts of vengeance against French soldiers:

> Quoi d'étonnant si à Londres, à Berlin, la lettre publiée par le Figaro est reproduite, traduite, entourée de commentaires que nos lecteurs devinent sans peine? Quoi d'étonnant si le gouvernement chinois, très au courant, comme l'on sait, de ce qui s'imprime en Europe, s'empare à son tour de cette lettre, la propage dans l'extrême Orient, et si, quelque jour, elle sert de prétexte à quelque épouvantable acte de représailles?[135]

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[134] Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe siècle*, 26 October 1883.

[135] *Le Parlement*, 22 October 1883, 2. This article, published in the opportunist Republican *Le Parlement* early in the media debate, was quoted across the German press as an example of the cynicism of the French reaction to Loti's account: "Therefore Ribot's outlet [*Le Parlement*, whose editor-in-chief was Alexandre Ribot, a moderate Republican deputy] is not at all outraged by the atrocities themselves, but

Here the process was, as for Sarcey, inevitable but not necessarily intentional. Other papers did not hesitate to suggest the English and German press meant for such propagation "dans l'extrême Orient" to occur: "Les journaux anglais et allemands sont enchantés de pouvoir se servir de ces relations, toutes pleines de détails atroces, pour exciter contre la France l'animosité des populations de l'extrême Orient."[136] Even the staid *Le Temps* suggested that Loti's account of Thuan An might turn out to be a "une arme contre ses concitoyens," unknowingly given over to France's enemies.[137]

According to many *chroniqueurs* and journalists, the party most responsible for the global spread of Loti's account was not the author—who had been, we recall, simply "emporté par son imagination"—but *Le Figaro*, and especially its editor, Francis Magnard. Magnard, "qui était de sang-froid," as Francisque Sarcey put it, "aurait mieux fait de couper les passages dont je parle."[138] Just two years after the passage of the landmark 1881 press freedom law, the idea that a newspaper had a responsibility to the public to practice a kind of preemptive censorship when necessary—when dealing with possibly inflammatory topics, and particularly military matters—was still prevalent.[139] "Ce que je m'explique moins," wrote Léon Chapron in *L'Événement*, in a

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only by the fact that the news is being shouted from the rooftops (So Ribots Organ, das keineswegs über die Greuelthaten selbst empört ist, sondern nür darüber, daß man sie an die große Glocke gehängt hat)." "Frankreich," *Kölnische Zeitung*, 23 October 1883, second ed., 1. The *Kölnische Zeitung* also cited a 23 Oct. article in *Paris* as another, "still more cynical" [noch cynischer], example of the reaction in moderate republican newspapers to Loti's account. The political chroniquer Joël le Savoureux had lumped together English, German, and French opposition newspapers like *La Justice*, accusing the latter of being on the side of "l'étranger contre la France et les Français." Joël le Savoureux, *Paris*, 23 October 1883, 1.

[136] Le Sphinx, "Échos de Paris," *L'Événement*, 25 October 1883.

[137] "Affaires coloniales – Chine et Indo-Chine," *Le Temps*, 24 October 1883, 2. In *Le Soleil*, Jacques Hervé de Kerohant also wrote that Loti's account would be "une arme contre la France" ("Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti").

[138] Sarcey, "L'Amour de la phrase," *Le XIXe siècle*, 26 October 1883.

[139] In his chapter in *La Civilisation du Journal* on press laws and censorship, Vincent Robert discusses the two "tabous implicites" concerning subjects which could still lead to legal difficulty for newspapers, even after the 1881 law: "ce qui tenait à la propriété et ce qui tenait à l'armée." These remaining taboos

passage later quoted in *Gil Blas*,

> c'est la légèreté du *Figaro*. Par le fait même de sa publicité immense, ce journal est tenu à une foule de ménagements et à une prudence extrême. Il est fort délicat, voire dangereux, d'y écrire. Sur cette feuille de papier qui circule par le monde entier, les épithètes ont une importance qu'elles n'ont point ailleurs.[140]

Juliette Adam, too, in a letter written to Loti's publisher Calmann Lévy just after the scandal, implied that it was the editor's duty to be extremely prudent, as Chapron suggested. Implicitly critiquing Lévy's decision to publish Loti in *Le Figaro* rather than in her *Nouvelle Revue*, she wrote of Loti's account that "Il est malheureux que vous ne me l'ayez pas adressée ou apportée. J'aurais biffé les cruautés et conjuré les foudres gouvernementales pour le pauvre petit."[141]

Whether or not Juliette Adam could have "biffé les cruautés," it is likely that if Loti's account had been published in the *Nouvelle Revue* rather than on the front page of *Le Figaro*, it would not have led to a scandal. As Chapron declared, "Tout le monde a lu, puisque le *Figaro* est le plus répandu des journaux français." In the Loti affair, context mattered. It mattered that the widely read *Le Figaro* published Loti's account, and that it was published on the front page in the leading article position. It mattered that the account was a colonial war correspondence, in a war that was controversial and criticized at home and abroad. It mattered that the author of the account was novelist Pierre Loti, that Pierre Loti was also *lieutenant de vaisseau* Julien Viaud – and that the author's identity had been revealed alongside the most shocking passages of the account. "Quoi d'étonnant," we might say, echoing *Le Parlement*, that such a confluence of

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prefigured the anti-anarchist "lois scélérates" to come in the early 1890s, which criminalized apology of crime, direct or indirect involvement in "propagande par le fait," and the publication of anarchist propaganda, including certain kinds of antimilitarism. Vincent Robert, "Lois, censure et liberté," *La Civilisation du Journal*, 93-94.

[140] Chapron, "Le Lieutenant Viaud," *L'Événement*, 29 October 1883.

[141] Juliette Adam to Calmann Lévy, unpublished letter, quoted in Jean-Yves Mollier, *Michel et Calmann Lévy ou la naissance de l'édition moderne, 1836-1891* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), 453.

factors produced a media affair?

LE SOLDAT ET L'ÉCRIVAIN

In a long reflection on the Loti case in *La Justice*, literary critic Gustave Geffroy observed that "c'est de la dualité entre le soldat et le littérateur qui constitue le cas de M. Pierre Loti."[142] What had made Loti famous—his dual status as an *écrivain-marin*, like Rivière, and his ability to draw on his world travel with the Navy for literary material—was now cause for trouble. Geffroy was not alone in making this point. Marius Vachon concluded that Loti "ne s'est point assez souvenu qu'il écrivait, son sabre de lieutenant de vaisseau au côté, et que, dans ces conditions, l'écrivain doit céder le pas à l'officier français."[143] For Paul Fresnay, "l'écrivain, chez lui, a fait tort au soldat."[144] Others framed the duality in terms of opposite movement in Loti's two careers, his literary star rising as his naval career lay in ruins. "Le lieutenant Julien Viaud a été frappé, alors que le narrateur Pierre Loti devenait célèbre," according to Charles Vincent; or, in Albert Delpit's words, "on brise son épée, puisqu'il n'a pas voulu briser sa plume."[145] *L'Illustration*'s chroniqueur summed up the situation with a pithy phrase: "Le lieutenant Viaud a payé un peu cher quelques adjectifs de Pierre Loti."[146]

Though they may not have known it, these *chroniqueurs* were echoing the Navy's internal ambivalence toward Loti's status as *soldat* and *littérateur*. A glance through his yearly

[142] Geffroy, "Le cas de M. Pierre Loti," *La Justice*, 28 October 1883.
[143] Vachon, "L'Incident Loti," *La France*, 25 October 1883.
[144] Fresnay, "Pierre Loti," *Le Voltaire*, 26 October 1883.
[145] Vincent, "Pierre Loti," *Gazette de France*; Delpit, "Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Figaro*.
[146] Perdican, "Le Courrier de Paris," *L'Illustration*, 3 November 1883, 275.

naval evaluations (*bulletin individuel de notes*) finds Loti's naval superiors vacillating between positive and negative opinions of his literary interests. His commanding officers in 1879 underlined his rare ability to speak and write Turkish, picked up in Istanbul, and recommended him for promotion.[147] His 1881 evaluation—written after *Le Mariage de Loti* was published and just before *Le Roman d'un spahi* would be—marked him "très bonne" in all categories and noted appreciatively that he was "déjà connu comme auteur pour le récit de ses voyages."[148] Not all of his evaluations were so positive, however. Stationed in Istanbul in 1877, Loti's captain remarked that he spent all of his time in the city, characterized him as an "artiste et dessinateur remarquable, correspondant de plusieurs journaux illustrés," and finally suggested that he appeared to be better suited "pour la carrière artistique que pour la mer."[149] Later that same year, the *préfet maritime* at Rochefort concurred, observing that Loti had a "nature d'artiste plus que de marin," and that his "timidité excessive" made him ill-suited to command.[150] Again in 1880, we find a remark concerning Loti's "nature d'artiste," proof that he was "dépourvu des principales qualités nécessaires pour faire un bon officier de marine."[151]

This tension between literature and military duty was, as Geffroy and others realized, at the heart of the "incident Loti." Albert Delpit, in his defense of Loti in *Le Figaro* on 25 October,

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[147] Bulletin individuel de notes, Cherbourg, 3 September 1879. Service historique de la Défense (hereafter: SHD), CC7 4e moderne 297/7. He was promoted to *lieutenant de vaisseau* on 24 February 1881.

[148] Bulletin individuel de notes, Rochefort, 6 September 1881. SHD, CC7 4e moderne 297/7.

[149] Bulletin individuel de notes, aboard the *Gladiateur*, Istanbul, 5 March 1877. The details of Loti's naval deployments can be found in a special issue of the *Revue maritime* devoted to Loti, as well as in the annexes of his *Journal* edited by Quella-Villéger and Vercier: "Relevé des Services, Embarquements et Voyages de Louis-Marie-Julien Viaud," *Revue maritime: Pierre Loti 1850-1923*, (1950): 169-176; Quella-Villéger and Vercier, "Embarquements de Julien Viaud (1879-1886)," *Journal II*, 774-777.

[150] Bulletin individuel de notes, Majorité générale, Rochefort, 24 October 1877. SHD, CC7 4e moderne 297/7.

[151] Bulletin individuel de notes, aboard the *Friedland*, 15 September 1880. SHD, CC7 4e moderne 297/7.

wrote that he suspected the writer's naval superiors of "un certain dédain non pour M. le lieutenant de vaisseau Viaud, mais pour Pierre Loti."[152] Delpit's suspicions were not unmerited, as can be seen in the internal naval response. At the same time as they announced his recall in October 1883, Pierre Loti's naval superiors had commissioned a review of his conduct. Courbet, the naval commander in Tonkin who had authored the official report of the battle of Thuan An printed in the press at the end of September, was in charge, and sought out another naval officer who had fought at Thuan An in order to obtain, as he put it, "une relation plus exacte des faits dénaturés par l'imagination trop vive d'un écrivain" – a soldier's account to counter the writer's.[153] In his report to Courbet, Commander Parrayon supported this interpretation of Loti's account: it was marked by excessive description and did not hew closely enough to the bare facts of the battle.

However, as Alain Quella-Villéger has pointed out in his reading of Parrayon's and Courbet's letters, Loti's superiors did not in actuality dispute the facts of his account. In fact, Parrayon did more to confirm than disprove it. Parrayon, who had commanded the landing parties on 20 August at Thuan An, admitted that there were "fuyards" fleeing the forts and surrounding villages, and that soldiers from the *Atalante* fired on them. There had also been, Parrayon acknowledged, "soldats Annamites à la nage, plongeant de temps à autre pour éviter des balles," shot at by French troops. He admitted, too, that French troops "n'ont pas usé de clémence envers des vaincus pris les armes à la main."[154] Parrayon's and Courbet's reports grant,

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[152] Albert Delpit, "Le Cas de M. Pierre Loti," *Le Figaro*, 25 October 1883, 1.

[153] Letter from Admiral Courbet to Vice-Admiral Peyron, minister of the Navy and Colonies, 20 January 1884. SHD, CC7 4e moderne 297/7.

[154] Letter from Commander Parrayon to Counter admiral Courbet, undated. SHD, CC7 4e moderne, 297/7. Parrayon's report, as well as Courbet's letter relaying it to the ministry, are also reprinted in full in Alain Quella-Villéger's 1998 biography of Loti: *Pierre Loti, pèlerin de la planète* (Bordeaux, Aubéron, 1998), 81-82.

with a dose of military realism, that such "actes de sauvagerie" are the stuff of war – "quel est le combat qui en soit exempt?" Parrayon asked, rhetorically.[155]

Indeed, it was Loti's style that made his account inadmissible as military fact. Parrayon claimed that Loti's duty as a naval officer compelled him to "ménager la couleur de son récit." Echoing the commentary of many journalists and literary critics in October, Parrayon pointedly referred to Loti's account as "ses impressions," and underlined several instances where Loti's turns of phrase seemed, to him, inaccurate or exaggerated. Though the French shot at "fuyards," they were not "fuyards attendus," and while they had admittedly not spared "des vaincus pris les armes à la main," these killings were not followed by sudden changes of feeling and small gestures of mercy, as Loti had described. Here Parrayon objected to what one newspaper had dubbed Loti's "goût de l'antithèse" and another his "effet d'opposition," and scoffed that whatever may have happened, "je n'ai jamais ouï dire, comme l'affirme M. Viaud, qu'ils se soient conduits tour à tour en bêtes féroces et en sœurs de charité."[156] Parrayon here did not dispute what Loti said happened – merely the way he said it.

Read alongside Parrayon's report, Gustave Geffroy's interpretation of the "cas de Pierre Loti" takes on new significance. Many critics had attempted to draw a line dividing Loti's "développements littéraires" from "relations exactes" or "correspondances vécues,"[157] dividing his style, which they insisted was characterized by "du procédé et du jargon," from a "langage

[155] Letter from Parrayon to Courbet, SHD, CC7 4e moderne, 297/7.

[156] *La République française*, 25 October 1883, 1; "Chine et Indo-Chine," *Le Temps*, 24 October 1883, 1; SHD, CC7 4e moderne, 297/7. The reference to French soldiers conducting themselves like "sœurs de charité" comes from *La République française*: "[on] voit les marins français, le soir de la bataille [*sic*], achever les blessés à coups de baïonnette, quitte à prodiguer une heure après, aux derniers survivants, des soins de sœur de charité. Autre tableau de genre."

[157] Le Sphinx, "Échos de Paris," *L'Événement*, 25 October 1883.

simple et vivant."[158] For Geffroy, a literary critic known for championing naturalism, this distinction was not neutral, and there was no such thing as a simple, unmarked 'nonstyle' with which one might convey the reality of the violence of war. Unknowingly foreshadowing the conclusions of the naval internal inquiry, he remarked that "ce que l'on veut, c'est le bulletin officiel, avec les phrases toutes faites, les boniments convenus qui ont servi à Napoléon Ier et qui ont dû servir à Attila." Despite what other commentators claimed, Geffroy recognized that the *bulletin officiel*, too, had a style: it was not a simple statement of objective fact but a genre with its own conventions. As Théodore Banville put it in a *chronique* obliquely addressing the Loti affair through a discussion of the style of *Mon Frère Yves*, it was not possible to "diviser les écrivains en deux catégories: ceux qui apportent des faits et ceux qui font des phrases," nor to believe that "l'une de ces qualités exclut l'autre" – anyone who wrote, Loti included, was "un simple magicien du style, comme les autres."[159]

In the bitterest passages of the unpublished response he wrote to *Le Figaro* as he waited to be transported back to France, Loti castigated the French press and public for their horror at learning of the details of the colonial war they promoted and supported. He wrote:

> Des gens crient à l'horreur parce que c'est la première fois ~~sans doute~~ qu'on met sous leurs yeux les <u>réalités</u> d'une guerre, et d'une guerre exotique _ Là est tout le mal; c'est vrai, j'aurais dû y songer et ménager leurs nerfs – Ils sont de ceux qui, du coin de leur feu, assis sur des fauteuils à ronds de cuir, suivent une expédition lointaine et ~~supposent~~ admettent que tout doit se passer là-bas avec la plus extrême facilité, et d'après les règles de la bonne philanthropie _

Neither the public nor the press had any idea, according to Loti, what the wars they advocated

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[158] Y…, "À travers champs," *La Liberté*, 28 October 1883.

[159] Théodore Banville, "Lettres Chimériques – Les Magiciens – À Philippe Gille," *Gil Blas*, 2 November 1883, 1. Banville was responding to Gille's review of *Mon Frère Yves* in *Le Figaro* ("Revue bibliographique," 24 October 1883, 6), which had described Loti's style as: "Pas de phrases; des faits, rien que de la vérité."

for required of the young men sent to fight them. This passage of the manuscript letter conserved in Loti's archives in Rochefort is covered in strikethroughs and other edits (figure 6). Adopting the voice of those he imagined to be outraged by what he had described, we read through the minute edits Loti writing, "Mais ~~surtout~~ surtout, prenez bien garde de ne faire de mal à personne _ ou au moins, s'il vous faut accomplir quelque lugubre besogne, ne nous le racontez pas _ oh! non, de grâce; voyez vous, nous risquerions de suffoquer en apprenant ces petits détails – Cela fait sourire – –."[160] Though he did not know it, he was echoing here arguments made by Geffroy and others during the media debate in some of those newspapers, he wrote in his letter to Daudet, "que je n'ai pu lire," including some newspapers with which Loti had very little in common politically, such as Jean Grave's anarchist newspaper *Le Révolté*, printed in Geneva. On 27 October, like Loti, *Le Révolté* gave sarcastic voice to the point of view of Loti's mainstream critics: "Un grand criminel a trouvé sa peine méritée […] un témoin oculaire qui ne dénature pas les faits, qui ne cache pas la vérité, si dure soit-elle; c'est honteux, vraiment!"[161]

[160] Médiathèque de Rochefort, 2016-431. Transcribed (without Loti's revisions and edits) in *Journal II*, 500.

[161] "Mouvement social – France," *Le Révolté* (Geneva), 27 October 1883, 2.

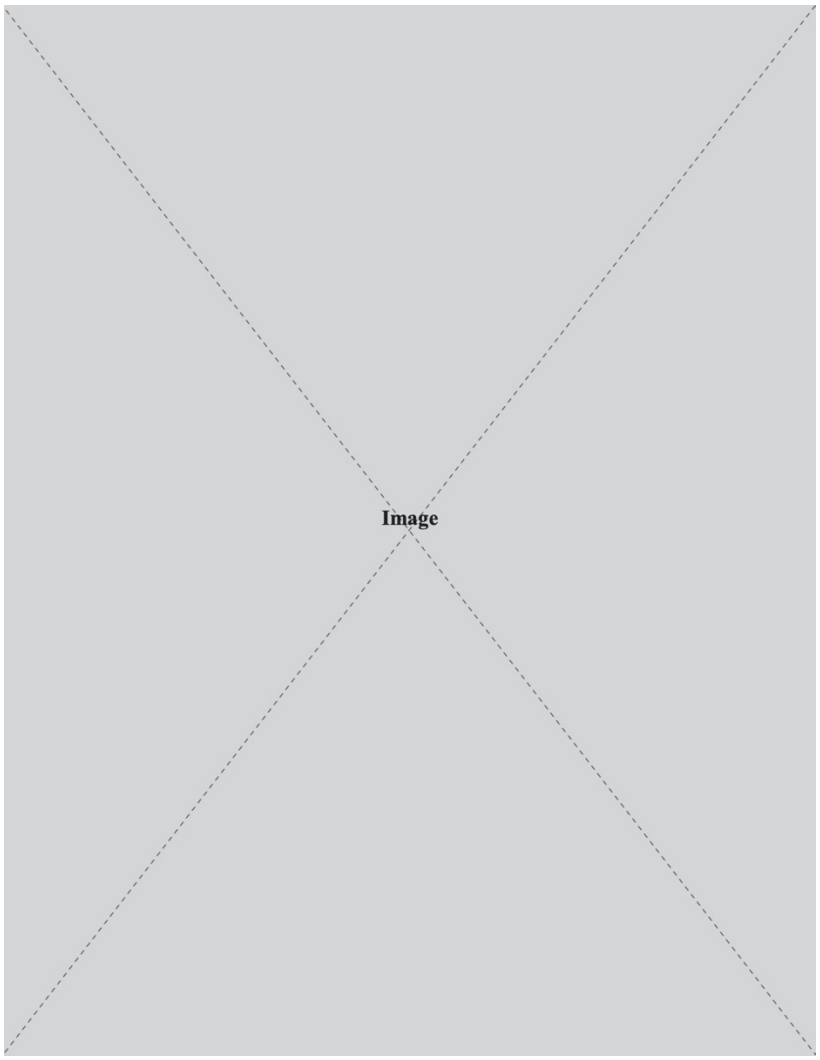


Figure 6. Loti's letter to *Le Figaro*, written in Tourane (Vietnam) in December 1883. Source: Médiathèque de Rochefort.

A leading Bonapartist newspaper, *Le Pays*, also pointed out the inconsistencies in the government's position, in a short, rather cynical item:

> Les narrations du lieutenant de vaisseau ne nous ont rien révélé que le ministère de la marine ne nous ait révélé lui-même.
>
> Quand M. Peyron met en circulation des dépêches où il raconte que nous avons livré des combats dans lesquels nous avons tué des centaines d'Annamites sans perdre un seul homme, sans avoir même un blessé, il nous semble que ces massacres sont précisément semblables au spécimen que nous a donné M. Viaud.
>
> Maintenant, est-ce à coups de fusil, de crosse et de baïonnette, que ces pauvres diables ont été envoyés de vie à trépas, comme le raconte M. Viaud, ou par tout autre procédé exterminatoire? Le fait a peu d'importance. Mais si le gouvernement français juge à propos de massacrer des Annamites pour complaire à deux ou trois trafiquants

> véreux, il ne peut pas avoir la prétention, quand il avoue ces massacres en bloc, d'empêcher qu'on les décrive en détail.[162]

This was reprinted two days later in *Le Figaro*, which praised *Le Pays*'s blunt exposé of the facts "dans leur pure et simple vérité."[163] A small regional newspaper in Troyes made a similar point, suggesting that savvy news consumers were able to read between the lines of the "dépêches officieuses" announcing military victories with partial information:

> Ces victoires étaient la prise de deux ou trois villages, et il se trouvait que les ennemis avaient perdu un nombre considérable d'hommes, tandis que les troupes françaises, très peu nombreuses, n'avaient que trois blessés. […] Ceux qui sont habitués aux dépêches officieuses se demandaient ce que signifiaient ces nouvelles. On vient d'en avoir l'explication.[164]

Another Bonapartist paper, *Le Petit Caporal*, anticipated Loti's response almost exactly, introducing its commentary with the "vieux dicton" that "Toute vérité n'est pas bonne à dire." The chroniqueur, signing Flammeche, continued, "Nos marins seraient incapables d'accomplir les cruautés qu'on leur attribue. En est-on bien sûr? Il est extrêmement facile de discuter de ces choses-là dans un fauteuil, les pieds sur les chenêts."[165]

Bonapartists, an anarchist newspaper in exile, a small regional daily – these comments were undoubtedly marginal relative to the responses of well-known *chroniqueurs* like Claretie or Sarcey. But alongside Gustave Geffroy's analysis in the more widely read *La Justice*, they translate a sense that critical readings of the Loti affair were possible. Similarly on the margins, the Fourierist bimonthly *Revue du mouvement social* made a prescient decision when, in their 31 October issue, they reprinted passages from the third installment of Loti's "La Prise de Hué" for posterity, sensing that it would quickly disappear from the record:

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[162] Albert Rogat, *Le Pays*, 25 October 1883, 1.

[163] Adolphe Racot, "Paris au jour le jour," *Le Figaro*, 26 October 1883, 2.

[164] "Dilemme," *Le Petit Troyen*, 28 October 1883, 2.

[165] Flammeche, "Courrier parisien," *Le Petit Caporal*, 26 October 1883, 1.

> Un journal français, parisien, le Figaro a publié un récit de la récente prise de Hué par les soldats français; il s'y trouve des passages qu'il est bon de ne pas laisser perdre dans le journal qui ne vit qu'un jour; mais, au contraire, de conserver pour que plus tard un peu de honte puisse monter à nos fronts ou à celui de nos enfants.[166]

The instincts of the *Revue du mouvement social* were correct – these passages would not reappear in print until the mid-twentieth century.[167]

CONCLUSION: "LES ŒUVRES PUREMENT LITTÉRAIRES"

By the time Loti returned to Paris, the scandal had blown over and the minister was sympathetic, and he was not removed from his post in the Navy. While his friends, and particularly the powerfully connected Adam, did intervene, it is also true that the passage of time had done its work. As Quella-Villéger points out, the naval report, which the minister likely received before Loti's arrival, had neither identified malice nor recommended dismissal. And, without further

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[166] "La Guerre," *La Revue du mouvement social*, 31 October 1883.

[167] Interestingly, the controversial text was almost immediately published in English in a New Orleans newspaper, the *Times-Democrat* on 4 November 1883 on page 8. The translation was by Lafcadio Hearn, who had a recurring column in the paper called "The Foreign Press: Our weekly translations of the Paris journals." Hearn translated articles from a variety of Parisian newspapers and magazines, and Loti was a particular favorite of his. Hearn's translations of Loti, including the 1883 *Figaro* articles, were collected together and printed by an Anglophone press in Japan—where Hearn had also lived—in 1933 (Lafcadio Hearn, trans., *Stories from Pierre Loti*, introduction by Albert Mordell (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1933)). The unedited, 1883 version of Loti's account of the battle of Thuan-An would not be republished in full until 2006, in the second volume of the complete edition of Loti's *Journal* edited by Alain Quella-Villéger and Bruno Vercier (*Journal II*, 747-69). It was also republished as a standalone volume in 2014: *Trois journées de guerre en Annam* (Paris: Éditions du Sonneur). This same press had, for unexplained reasons, also republished the censored version of Loti's account in 2006. Though the inclusion of the 1883 text in Quella-Villéger and Vercier's edition of Loti's journal is, to my knowledge, the first full republication of Loti's Thuan An account since 1883, excerpts had appeared in print numerous times, notably in several biographies, by Nicolas Serban, *Pierre Loti: sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris: Les Presses Françaises, 1924), 84-86, and Alain Quella-Villéger, *Pierre Loti, le pèlerin de la planète* (Bordeaux: Aubéron, 1998), 96-97, as well as in an important article by Alec Hargreaves: "Loti and Indochina: A Myth in the Making," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 14, no. 1/2 (1985-85): 138-52. Excerpts also appeared in Kateb Yacine's play, *L'Homme aux sandales de caoutchouc* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 27-29. Loti appears briefly in the play and recites the most disturbing passages from his account aloud.

developments to feed the daily press cycle, the outrage had simply died down. Loti was granted a post in his hometown, Rochefort, where he would spend a year before returning to the Tonkin campaign in 1885. In 1891, he was elected to the Académie Française, beating out Émile Zola. In many ways, then, the "incident Pierre Loti" of 1883 appears to have been a mere blip in a long and successful career. But in other, less visible ways, it shaped how and where he wrote and helped demarcate the limits of acceptable colonial writing for the French public.

The affair marked the beginning of new limits on Loti's writing by the Navy. In the years following 1883 Pierre Loti was forbidden to publish in any daily newspapers; all of his manuscripts had to be submitted to the Ministry for pre-approval; and he was forbidden from addressing issues relating to politics or naval affairs. His writing would appear exclusively in literary magazines like *La Nouvelle Revue* and *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. Post-1883, Loti's naval personnel file is filled with requests for manuscript approval; while the dossier, curiously, does not contain any evidence of refusals, Loti's correspondence indicates that he was indeed denied permission to publish several times – including as early as 1884, when he ill-advisedly tried to republish his Tonkin writings.[168] When, in 1890, he published his autobiographical *Roman d'un enfant* in *La Nouvelle Revue*, without first seeking ministerial approval, he received a "blâme sévère" in his yearly evaluation.[169] When *Roman d'un enfant* was republished in book form by Calmann Lévy, he again heard grumbling from his superiors, prompting him to explain in a letter to his commander that "je me fiais à une tolérance […] et une autorisation verbale que m'avait donné un précédent ministre 'pour toutes les œuvres purement littéraires, ne touchant ni

[168] Correspondence with Juliette Adam, 16-19 May 1884. Médiathèque de Rochefort, Fonds Hervé. DH 441 (1), ff. 65-67.

[169] Bulletin de notes, 1889-1890. SHD, CC7 4e moderne, 297/7.

à la marine ni à la politique.'"[170] After he was elected to the Académie Française in the spring of 1891, he received precisely this authorization, in writing this time, with the note "par mesure exceptionnelle."[171]

In 1897, he again requested permission to publish his account of the Tonkin campaign. This time, permission was granted: his submitted manuscript had been thoroughly scrubbed of all offending passages. A memo to the ministry of the Navy and Colonies' personnel department referred to the articles as having been "autrefois très critiqués" and "de nature à laisser dans les esprits une impression fâcheuse pour la Marine." But, this memo noted, "dans l'ouvrage actuel, les faits sont présentés sous une forme plus adoucie," and could therefore be printed without danger.[172] Although, as the personnel memo underlined, time had certainly done its work to reduce the possibility of scandal, Loti still made substantial changes to the three previously published 1883 articles before submitting them for approval. Loti, mindful of the literary criticism of the naval bureaucracy, had learned his lesson.

In his letter authorizing the republication, the minister of the Navy and Colonies, Sallandrouze de Lamornaix, requested a final change. Describing the fires burning in the Annamite villages, set by French cannon fire, Loti had written in 1883: "Et on se réjouissait de voir tous ces incendies, de voir comme tout allait vite et bien, comme tout ce pays flambait."[173] Sallandrouze objected that "[l]e fait des incendies, qu'excusent seules les nécessités de la guerre, est assez affligeant sans qu'il paraisse nécessaire d'insister sur le sentiment qu'ils peuvent

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[170] Undated letter, likely to Commandant Roustan of the *Formidable.* Can safely be dated to the first half of 1891. SHD, CC7 4e moderne, 297/7.

[171] Letter from the Chef d'État Major Général, to the Direction du Personnel, 24 June 1891. Loti was elected to the Académie on 21 May 1891.

[172] SHD, CC7, 4e moderne, 297/7.

[173] "La Prise du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 28 September 1883.

provoquer de la part des belligérants."[174] In the 1897 reprint, the verb *se réjouir* was replaced by *s'étonner*, transforming the unsettling joy of the sailors into a more neutral surprise. Loti himself had already made an edit in the next sentence that reflected his understanding of the need to underplay the emotional element: the "étonnante joie de détruire" felt by the sailors watching the blaze became the "étonnante *fièvre* de détruire" (emphasis mine), again deemphasizing the joy in favor of a mitigated fever. Such changes reflect the general tenor of Loti's 1897 edits: moving away from depictions of the soldiers' interior lives and the psychological toll of violence, Loti now presented what his naval superiors recognized as a "forme plus adoucie" of the facts of the battle.

Loti's edits also served to clarify his position as an observer, rather than a participant, of the battle. The shifting perspectives of the 1883 articles, moving from a point of view aboard one of the ships to a point of view among the soldiers as they sought out wounded enemies to kill, had drawn severe criticism from naval superiors. Admiral Courbet's January 1884 report had castigated Loti as "un officier de marine qui n'a même pas été témoin de ce qu'il raconte."[175] Captain Parrayon, charged with giving a detailed counter-narrative to Loti's, had similarly written that "Mr Viaud a eu des torts beaucoup plus graves. Il n'a point assisté aux opérations à terre; il ne les connaissant que par ouï-dire, et ses impressions ne sont que de seconde main."[176]

Loti accepted these constraints in order to keep his position in the Navy, and never again explored the style and subject matter he had tested in his brief stint as a colonial war correspondent. And by his election to the Académie Française, the episode was mostly forgotten. When, in that year, the *L'Univers illustré* published an article retracing Loti's literary career, the

[174] SHD, CC7, 4e moderne, 297/7.
[175] SHD, CC7, 4e moderne, 297/7. On the memo, this sentence has been underlined by a second hand.
[176] SHD, CC7, 4e moderne, 297/7.

idea that he could have written a 'realistic' account of the Tonkin campaign had come to seem utterly strange: "Au Tonkin! car il a été, hélas! au Tonkin. Qui dira jamais le vide énervant, les dégoûts, les ennuis de cette longue et fastidieuse expédition? Qui les dira? Ce n'est certes pas notre lieutenant de vaisseau, fidèle quand même à la consigne."[177]

[177] Wila Zyndram Koscialkowska, "Le roman russe et français (Aperçus d'une étrangère)," *L'Univers illustré*, 30 May 1891, 265, 268.

CHAPTER TWO

READING THE PAPER COLONY:

THE "AFFAIRE DE PORT-BRETON"

In early December 1877, the daily *chronique* of the satirical newspaper *Le Charivari* included a short item poking fun at a curious back-page advertisement which had recently appeared in the *Journal officiel* (figure 7):

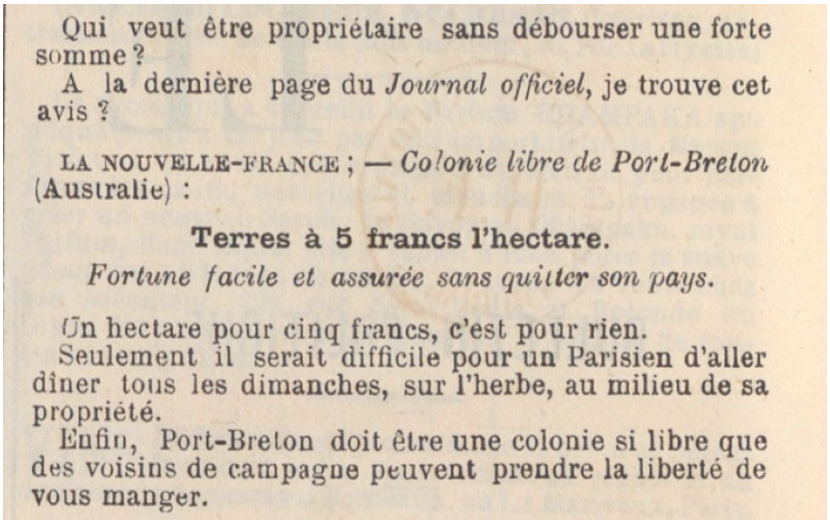
> Qui veut être propriétaire sans débourser une forte somme?
>
> A la dernière page du Journal officiel, je trouve cet avis:
>
> LA NOUVELLE-FRANCE; — Colonie libre de Port-Breton (Australie):
>
> Terres à 5 francs l'hectare.
>
> Fortune facile et assurée sans quitter son pays.
>
> Un hectare pour cinq francs, c'est pour rien.
>
> Seulement il serait difficile pour un Parisien d'aller dîner tous les dimanches, sur l'herbe, au milieu de sa propriété.
>
> Enfin, Port-Breton doit être une colonie si libre que des voisins de campagne peuvent prendre la liberté de vous manger.[1]

The targets of the *chroniqueur*'s mockery were advertisements published across both Parisian and regional daily newspaper back pages in 1877 and 1878. The ads trumpeted LA NOUVELLE-FRANCE or LA COLONIE LIBRE DE PORT-BRETON in capital letters and advertised a hectare (about two and a half acres) of land for sale for less than the price of a newspaper subscription, payable one franc per month.[2] They promised a "fortune faite," or a "fortune rapide et assurée sans

[1] André Lafoche, "Chronique du jour," *Le Charivari*, 2 December 1877, 2. *Le Charivari*'s joke was also reprinted by a daily newspaper, *L'Événement*, on 4 December.

[2] For comparison, a three-month subscription to *Le Figaro* in 1877 cost sixteen francs in Paris, while a

quitter son pays."[3] In some ads, the location of the colony was not specified; in others, it indicated Australia.[4] One version, published in *Le Petit Journal* on 31 December, suggested an investment in the colony would make an excellent gift for the New Year: "Une fortune pour étrennes" (figure 8).[5] Not surprisingly, how the purchase of a hectare of land in an indeterminate locale might lead to an easy fortune was left unspecified.



Qui veut être propriétaire sans débourser une forte somme ?

A la dernière page du *Journal officiel*, je trouve cet avis ?

LA NOUVELLE-FRANCE ; — *Colonie libre de Port-Breton* (Australie) :

Terres à 5 francs l'hectare.

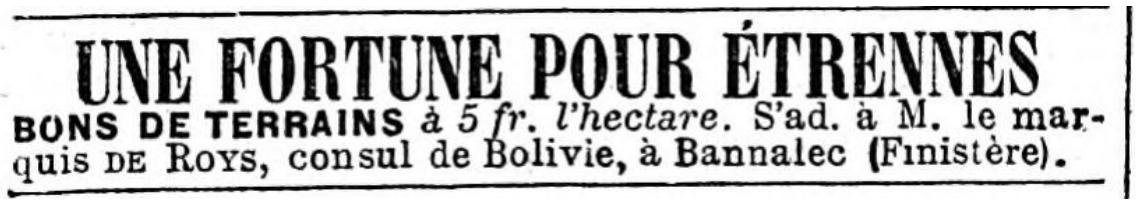
Fortune facile et assurée sans quitter son pays.

Un hectare pour cinq francs, c'est pour rien.

Seulement il serait difficile pour un Parisien d'aller dîner tous les dimanches, sur l'herbe, au milieu de sa propriété.

Enfin, Port-Breton doit être une colonie si libre que des voisins de campagne peuvent prendre la liberté de vous manger.

Figure 7. "Qui veut être propriétaire sans débourser une forte somme?" *Le Charivari*, 2 December 1877, 2. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.



UNE FORTUNE POUR ÉTRENNES

BONS DE TERRAINS *à 5 fr. l'hectare.* S'ad. à M. le marquis DE ROYS, consul de Bolivie, à Bannalec (Finistère).

Figure 8. "Une fortune pour étrennes." *Le Petit Journal*, 31 December 1877. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

yearlong subscription to the popular *Petit Journal* cost 24 francs.

[3] *Le Conservateur*, 11 November 1877, 4; for one example of the second phrasing, see *Le Petit Journal*, 26 July 1877, 4.

[4] Unspecified location: *Le Petit Journal*, 4 August 1877, 4; *L'Univers*, 22 September 1877, 4; *L'Avenir républicain* (Troyes), 5 December 1877, 4. Australia: *L'Univers*, 8 October 1877, 4; *Le Journal des Débats*, 24 November 1877; *Le Temps*, 27 November 1877, 4.

[5] *Le Petit Journal*, 31 December 1877, 4. This version of the ad also appeared in *L'Avenir républicain*, 25 & 28 December 1877.

Six years after this advertisement drew the attention of *Le Charivari*, the man behind it was sitting in the dock in a crowded Paris courtroom, on trial for "escroquerie." Newspaper accounts of his trial printed the prosecution's long, detailed "exposé des faits" – which opened with yet another version of that very same 1877 ad:

> Dans le courant du mois de juillet 1877, on pouvait lire à la quatrième page du *Petit Journal*, une annonce ainsi conçue:
>
> > COLONIE LIBRE DE PORT-BRETON
> > Terres à 5 francs l'hectare payables à 1 franc par mois. Fortune rapide et assurée sans quitter son pays. Pour tous les renseignements, s'adresser à M. le marquis Du Breil de Rays, consul de Bolivie, au château de Quimeren [*sic*], en Bannalec (Finistère).
>
> C'était le début, bien timide encore, d'une entreprise singulière qui ne devait pas tarder à se signaler, soit par le nombre des dupes et des victimes qu'elle allait faire, soit par la nouveauté et la hardiesse des moyens qu'on allait mettre en œuvre pour tromper le public.[6]

Behind this "entreprise singulière" which had so brazenly duped its victims was a Breton aristocrat named Charles Marie Bonaventure du Breil, marquis de Rays. The 1877 back page advertisements were de Rays's first attempt at garnering publicity for his private colonial venture, called "la colonie libre de Port-Breton," or "La Nouvelle France." Circulars and pamphlets were next, followed by the June 1879 founding of a monthly newspaper printed in Marseille, called *La Nouvelle France*. De Rays also relied on word of mouth, particularly in Catholic and anti-republican networks, capitalizing on current political divisions to draw support for his enterprise. His planned colony promised to become a refuge from the secularizing Third Republic, a vast private Catholic empire in the Western Pacific – as well as a lucrative investment opportunity. By the spring of 1881, four ships had set sail for the island of New Ireland, just west of New Guinea, bearing hundreds of emigrants who had either purchased land

[6] "Justice criminelle – Tribunal correctionnel de Paris (8e ch.) – Présidence de M. Bagneris – Audience du 27 novembre – Affaire du Port-Breton," *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 28 November 1883, 1-2.

in the colony or signed up as indentured laborers in exchange for a promise of future land ownership. All the while, the newspaper *La Nouvelle France* printed illustrated accounts of the colony's development and continued to raise funds from individual investors to ensure its success. The only problem was, in the words of one would-be colonist, "Port-Breton n'existait que sur le papier!"[7] It was not a legitimate attempt to found a colony, but rather an attempt to raise funds by projecting the image of a serious colonial venture.[8]

In order to sustain this elaborate illusion, de Rays—who had never traveled to New Ireland—was obliged to recruit emigrants for a series of what proved to be desultory and under-prepared colonization attempts. The progress of the Port-Breton colonists, who departed aboard four different ships from ports in the Netherlands and Spain after emigration to Port-Breton from French ports was forbidden by government order in July 1879, was extensively covered in *La Nouvelle France* – but it was their stories which would soon prove to be the venture's undoing.[9] When the survivors of the first ill-fated voyage of emigration to Port-Breton aboard the ship

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[7] Alexandre Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton et la colonie libre dite Nouvelle-France* (Paris: Dreyfous, 1883), 108.

[8] As Anne-Gabrielle Thompson, the author of one of the few academic studies of the Port-Breton colony, succintly put it: "Il ne s'agissait pas de fonder une Nouvelle-France mais de faire croire à un tel projet." (21). Thompson, "Une Escroquerie à la colonisation: l'entreprise du marquis de Rays à Port-Breton," *Revue française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* LXV, no. 238 (1978): 21-39 [21].

[9] This order, dubbed "la circulaire Tirard" by *La Nouvelle France* after the government official who promulgated it, appeared to the Port-Breton organizers and devoted supporters as proof that the republican government was conspiring against their enterprise. The order couched its ban on emigration to Port-Breton in terms of a lack of knowledge about the venture, de Rays's rights to the land, and the safety of the area they intended to settle: "le service de l'émigration ne possède aucune donnée sérieuse sur la situation exacte des terrains promis aux émigrants, non plus que sur le droit de l'entrepreneur à en disposer. En outre, le département des affaires étrangères […] a fait connaître qu'il était également dépourvu de toute information sur la partie de l'Océanie où seraient dirigés les émigrants, de telle sorte que nos nationaux se trouveraient ainsi, le cas échéant, dépourvus de tout recours à la protection d'aucun agent français." Pierre Tirard, "Circulaire agricultural et commercial, 21 juillet 1879," *Journal des commissaires de police* (1879): 278. The Port-Breton organizers immediately circulated pamphlets about the order, which they claimed had been proclaimed "contre notre entreprise, en haine de nos principes." Charles du Breil de Rays, *Colonie libre de Port-Breton: au sujet de la circulaire ministérielle* (Paris: Morris, 1879).

Chandernagor began returning to France in early 1881, haggard and destitute, with tales of being stranded on an island with few supplies, the Port-Breton colony became the Port-Breton Affair. Newspapers competed to publish survivors' accounts, and denounced de Rays as a swindler who had led hundreds to their death on a "rocher sec" in the Pacific.[10] The whole enterprise ended in failure and scandal in 1882, when de Rays and nine co-conspirators were arrested and charged with fraud, having embezzled millions of francs from thousands of investors. After a long investigation and several procedural delays, the trial finally opened in November 1883. Along with six others, de Rays was convicted in January 1884.[11]

The "Affaire de Port-Breton," as it was called, captured the attention of Parisian journalists and newspaper readers. For Pierre Giffard, a leading reporter at *Le Figaro* whose February 1881 article broke the news of the disaster that befell the first Port-Breton colonists, their story was both outlandish and amusing, "un drame tragique autant que burlesque."[12] Joseph Acquisto underlines in his study of the nineteenth-century afterlives of *Robinson Crusoe* that "the tale's reception and its many retellings often indicate more about the writers and readers than about the story itself."[13] In the Port-Breton Affair, the Defoe novel provided a frame with

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[10] Pierre Giffard, "L'équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*, 23 February 1881, 2. Giffard's flippant description of New Ireland would quickly become a thorn in the side of Port-Breton supporters – and it was not soon forgotten, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

[11] There have been a handful of books and articles written about the Port-Breton Affair, many focusing primarily on the fate of the would-be colonists who emigrated to New Ireland. Anne-Gabrielle Thompson's 1978 article, ""Une escroquerie à la colonisation," drawn from her dissertation, is among the most thorough and well-documented. More recently, an article by Bill Metcalf analyzes the Port-Breton enterprise in the context of utopian ventures: "Utopian Fraud: The Marquis de Rays and La Nouvelle France," *Utopian Studies* 22, no. 1 (2011): 104-124. Popular histories have also treated the subject; see especially Daniel Raphalen, *L'Odyssée de Port-Breton ou le rêve océanien du Marquis de Rays* (Rennes: Portes du large, 1986), and Daniel Floch, *Port-Breton: La Colonie tragique* (Rennes: Ouest France, 1987).

[12] Giffard, "L'équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*.

[13] Joseph Acquisto, *Crusoes and Other Castaways in Modern French Literature: Solitary Adventures* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2012).

which to interpret the colonists' island misadventures, while also relegating them to the realm of anachronism. Surely, in the modern era of a largely mapped world, fast travel, and even faster communication, Giffard and other journalists suggested, it should be impossible to believe in promises of easy exotic fortune, or to find oneself stranded on a desert island. As Giffard remarked, "n'est-ce pas d'une autre âge?" Later on, Alexandre Baudouin, a doctor who sailed on the fourth expedition to Port-Breton and who published an account of his experiences in 1883, would echo him, asking "comment d'aussi étranges aventures [ont-elles] été possibles à une époque comme celle-ci?"[14]

Like other mediatized affairs of the Third Republic, from the crash of the Union Générale bank to the Dreyfus Affair, the Port-Breton scandal provided commentators like Giffard with a lens through which to examine and interpret contemporary society. If the Port-Breton victims had believed de Rays's promises—the "fortune pour étrennes" trumpeted in the back page ads—this credulity marked them as naïve dupes, innocents who still believed in the old myth of fertile island paradise. More broadly, for many journalists, the affair underlined the unforeseen risks of the age of mass media and information. Even as the modern nineteenth-century French press expanded its reach, there still existed naïve modes of reading – which could, in certain circumstances, prove dangerous. The journalists typified instead an ironic, even suspicious, mode of reading and interpretation, which Marie-Ève Thérenty identifies as one of the main characteristics of the nineteenth-century Parisian press. For the newspapers imbued with "l'esprit-Paris," as Thérenty calls it, de Rays's promotional material was, as in *Le Charivari*, a source of amusement.[15]

[14] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 3.

[15] Thérenty, *La littérature au quotidien*, in particular "L'ironie," 153-174.

The Port-Breton victims had not read in this way, and their face-value reading had sealed their fate as the butt of another round of jokes for journalists and their readers. News stories focused on the most sensationalistic aspects of the affair. In his bombshell article, Giffard revealed that the stranded colonists had resorted to eating lizards and parrots to survive:

> La nourriture consiste en ignames et en lézards. On tue les gros lézards, on leur coupe la tête, on retourne la peau… et, me disait hier l'un des revenants de cette expédition lugubre, c'est encore passable. Bientôt on prend les balles des fusils pour […] tirer sur les perroquets. On mange les perroquets.[16]

This vivid image would provide the material for the front-page illustration of a summer 1881 issue of the *Journal des Voyages*, which quoted from Giffard's article (figure 9).[17] Other sensational anecdotes circulated widely, including the story of an Italian emigrant named Boero (sometimes spelled Boëro or Boerio), a version of which appeared in the *Gazette des Tribunaux* in September 1882.[18] In an echo of *Le Charivari*'s joke about Port-Breton being "une colonie si libre que des voisins de campagne peuvent prendre la liberté de vous manger," Boero was said to have been captured by a local tribe of "anthropophages" from whom he eventually escaped. As Boero's story spread, it acquired new details: Boero had only survived by becoming a cannibal himself;[19] or because he was old and "trop coriace" to eat;[20] or, most fantastically, because he

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[16] Giffard, "L'équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*.

[17] Jules Gros, "Les chercheurs d'aventures – Les émigrants du *Chandernagor*," *Journal des voyages*, no. 208, 3 July 1881, 402-404. Interestingly, Gros himself would soon be mixed up in an ephemeral overseas colony: the République de Counani in Guyana, from 1886 to 1888. Gros, too, became an object of mockery in the Parisian press. See, for instance, "La Presse au jour le jour," *Le XIXe siècle*, 18 August 1887, 2. For a longer account of Gros's involvement with the République de Counani, see Marc de Villiers Du Terrage, *Rois sans couronne* (Paris: Perrin, 1906), 411-428.

[18] "Chronique," *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 7 September 1882, 863. This brief mention of Boero did not include any cannibalism, a detail that first appeared in Albert Bataille's column in *Le Figaro* the following year. Bataille wrote of Boero that "pendant sa captivité, il avait dû devenir anthropophage!" ("Gazette des Tribunaux – Procès du marquis de Rays," *Le Figaro*, 12 June 1883, 2).

[19] Bataille, "Gazette des Tribunaux," *Le Figaro*.

[20] "L'Affaire de Port-Breton," *Le Petit Journal*, 13 June 1883, 2.

burst into tears as his captors came to kill him, which was "un spectacle si nouveau" that the captive became a court jester: "Boero fut chargé d'amuser le roi en pleurant."[21]

These stories, alongside characterizations of the victims as dupes and naïfs, consigned the Port-Breton story to the realm of the *roman d'aventures*. In November 1883, the *Gazette des Tribunaux* remarked that the Port-Breton affair would endure as a "monument curieux dans l'histoire des impostures."[22] The newspaper was not wrong: Port-Breton has indeed lived on as a kind of curiosity, and the press emphasis on the sensational has continued to determine the affair's place in history. The story of the marquis de Rays and his failed colony appears in works or collections with titles like "Rois d'opérette," "Histoires extraordinaires," *Phantom Paradise*, *Rois sans couronne*, *Saga of the South Seas* or *Rascals in Paradise.*[23] In these works, de Rays figures alongside other eccentric adventurers or would-be rulers of ephemeral colonies and kingdoms, like Antoine de Tounens, king of Araucania (Chile), to whom Giffard had already compared de Rays in *Le Figaro*; David de Mayréna, king of the Sedang (Vietnam); William "Bully" Hayes, an American-born South Seas swindler and blackbirder; or Jacques Lebaudy, self-declared "empereur du Sahara" (near the border of Morocco and Mauritania).[24] More

[21] "Tribunaux – L'affaire de Port-Breton," *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 30 November 1883, 3.

[22] *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 28 November 1883, 1.

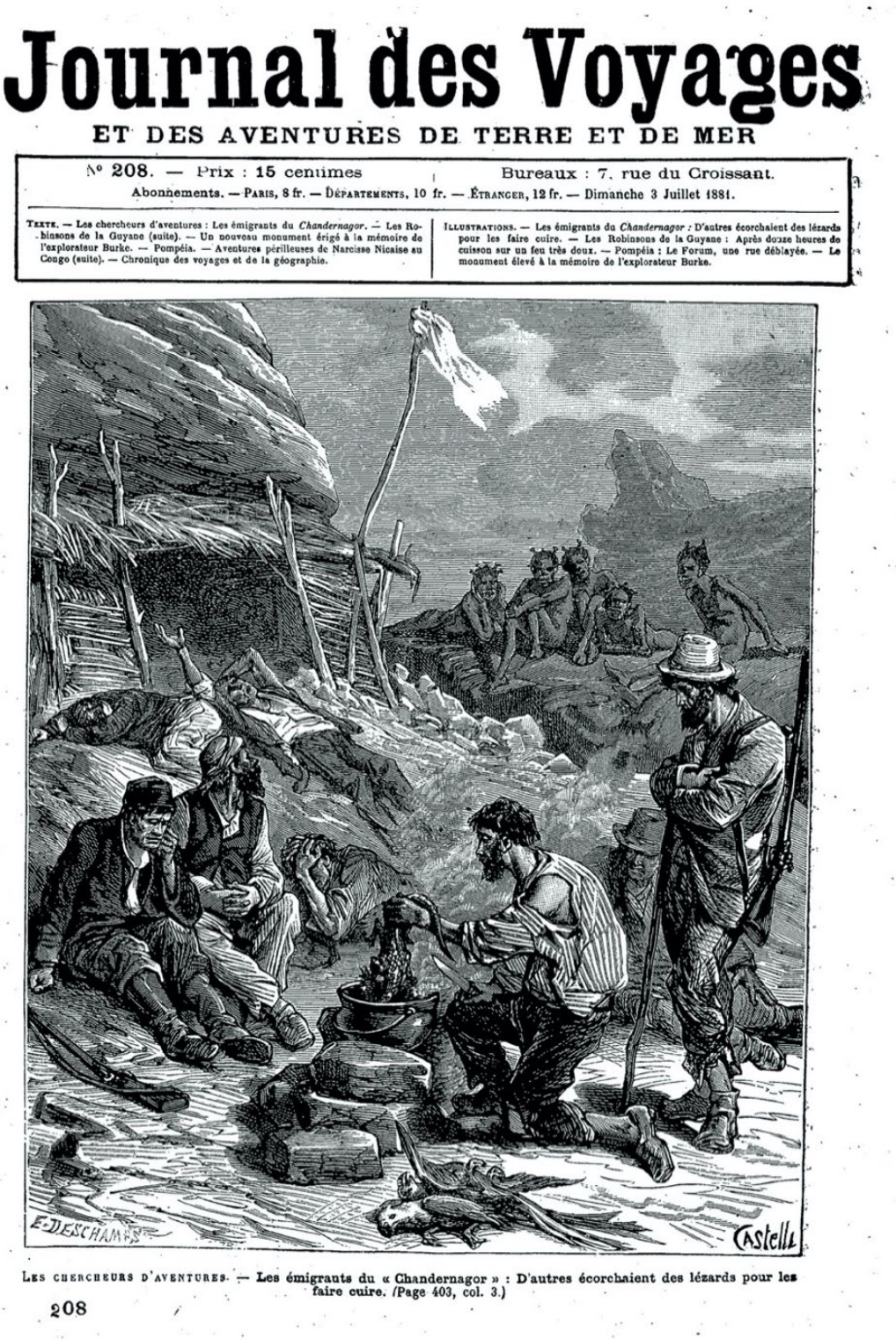
[23] Paul Cazaubon, "Rois d'opérette," *Gil Blas*, 14 January 1907, 1-2; "Les Histoires extraordinaires" is the title of the Gallimard series which included a book on Port-Breton by Jean Lucas-Dubreton, *L'Éden du Pacifique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1929); Josephine Niau, *The Phantom Paradise* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1936); Marc de Villiers du Terrage, "Le Marquis de Rays, fondateur de Port-Breton," in *Rois sans couronne: Du roi des Canaries à l'empereur du Sahara* (Paris: Perrin, 1906), 373-395; J.J. Stewart, "The Phantom Paradise," in *Saga of the South Seas* (Tip-Top Publications, 1945), 94-96; James A. Michener, "Charles I, Emperor of Oceania," in *Rascals in Paradise* (New York: Random House, 1957), 44-72.

[24] All three Frenchmen mentioned above figure in Marc de Villiers du Terrage's *Rois sans couronne*. Bully Hayes features in Michener's *Rascals in Paradise* and in Stewart's compilation, "Saga of the South Seas." Blackbirding was the term for the mid- to late-nineteenth-century practice of capturing and trading in enslaved islanders in the Pacific.

recently, de Rays has figured in a history of financial scams and affairs titled *Les plus belles histoires de l'escroquerie*.[25] The fantastical tale of the failed island empire has also inspired numerous works of fiction—beginning with Alphonse Daudet's 1890 novel, *Port-Tarascon*, the subject of the following chapter—retelling the sensational story of those unfortunate emigrants who attempted to colonize New Ireland.[26] Alphonse Daudet's fictionalization, in particular, durably associated the failed colony with the realm of farce and burlesque by inscribing the story into the world of the beloved character Tartarin de Tarascon, who leads his fellow Tarasconnais on an ill-fated but ultimately sympathetic attempt at Pacific island colonization.

[25] Christian Chavagneux, *Les plus belles histoires de l'escroquerie: du collier de la reine à l'affaire Madoff* (Paris: Seuil, 2020).

[26] Three recent novels, in three different languages, have taken their inspiration from the Port-Breton story: Stanislao Nievo, *Le Isole del paradiso* (Milan: Mondadori, 1987), Jean-Michel Barrault, *Port-Éden* (Paris: Arthaud, 2013), and Andreas J. Obrecht, *Der König von Ozeanien* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2006). The Port-Breton affair also figures prominently in a novel retelling the story of another colorful character of Western Pacific lore, Emma Coe, known as Queen Emma, a Samoan-American woman who was involved in shipping and trading in the islands around New Ireland: Geoffrey Dutton, *Queen Emma of the South Seas: A Novel* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1976).



Journal des Voyages

ET DES AVENTURES DE TERRE ET DE MER

N° 208. — Prix : 15 centimes — Bureaux : 7, rue du Croissant.

Abonnements. — Paris, 8 fr. — Départements, 10 fr. — Étranger, 12 fr. — Dimanche 3 Juillet 1881.

Texte. — Les chercheurs d'aventures : Les émigrants du *Chandernagor*. — Les Robinsons de la Guyane (suite). — Un nouveau monument érigé à la mémoire de l'explorateur Burke. — Pompéia. — Aventures périlleuses de Narcisse Nicaise au Congo (suite). — Chronique des voyages et de la géographie.

Illustrations. — Les émigrants du *Chandernagor* : D'autres écorchaient des lézards pour les faire cuire. — Les Robinsons de la Guyane : Après douze heures de cuisson sur un feu très doux. — Pompéia : Le Forum, une rue déblayée. — Le monument élevé à la mémoire de l'explorateur Burke.

E. DESCHAMPS

Castelli

Les chercheurs d'aventures. — Les émigrants du « Chandernagor » : D'autres écorchaient des lézards pour les faire cuire. (Page 403, col. 3.)

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Figure 9. "Les Chercheurs d'aventures – Les émigrants du 'Chandernagor': D'autres écorchaient des lézards pour les faire cuire." *Le Journal des Voyages*, no. 208, 3 July 1881. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

The emphasis, in both scholarship and fiction, on the Pacific side of the Port-Breton Affair has obscured the affair's metropolitan dynamics. It is this context that this chapter will reconstruct and analyze, examining the Port-Breton affair as a media affair, both elaborated in and commented on in the pages of French newspapers. The vast majority of de Rays's victims did not, and never intended to, leave their homes. They were investors, from all corners of France, who saw in the Port-Breton colony a lucrative financial opportunity, and who believed de Rays's promises – not simply of island utopia, but of high return on their investments. They were duped by something much more modern than Giffard's literary and historical comparisons would suggest: a vision of a serious colonial venture, led by an informed and motivated founder, and grounded in both scientific expertise and colonial methodology. In order to sustain this vision, de Rays and his collaborators made use of the power of the press, relying on the authority implied by the words "Journal officiel" as well as on the authority of print illustrations and respected sources of geographical and ethnographic knowledge. The Port-Breton investors believed that the illustrations and maps printed in the monthly newspaper *La Nouvelle France* were accurate representations of reality, and that the telegrams and letters the newspaper reprinted were faithful and informative reports on events in the newly-founded colony. They fell for a cunningly constructed fraud: a paper colony, whose progress they could follow in the pages of *La Nouvelle France*. According to the doctor Baudouin, even "l'homme qui connaît le mieux les affaires du journalisme, n'y saurait rien trouver qui éveille sa défiance."[27]

De Rays's venture played into already powerful narratives: as he increasingly positioned himself and his colony in opposition to the republican regime, and eventually as victims of the government's anti-Catholic persecution, financially supporting de Rays's venture could be

[27] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 28.

construed as an act of resistance. For many Port-Breton investors, becoming a 'landowner' in the colony was a way of affirming support for French colonial expansion generally, and more particularly for a colonial expansion that followed an alternate model to the republican "mission civilisatrice" then taking hold in geographical and procolonial societies as well as in official circles. This vision was one in which Catholicism and civilization went hand in hand, in the style of the monumental fifteen-painting cycle by Antoine-Dominique Magaud which decorated the walls of the Galerie Historique of the Marseille Cercle Religieux, where the Port-Breton colony was launched in April 1879. Next to the room in which de Rays gave a lecture to the assembled Catholic notables of Marseille could be found a large painting of a Jesuit missionary preaching to the indigenous peoples of Paraguay, and across the gallery was another image showing Catholicism's global reach, of Christopher Columbus kneeling and raising his eyes to heaven as he disembarked in the "Nouveau Monde," the culmination of an expedition which was, according to the authors of the gallery's catalogue, "avant tout, un acte de foi catholique."[28] Later, *La Nouvelle France* would serialize extracts from a lecture given at the Salon des Œuvres about Columbus, and reproduce toasts and letters from supporters calling de Rays a "Christophe Colomb français" or "un homme vraiement (*sic*) providentiel, un Christophe Colomb."[29] After his venture's uncertain beginnings among the *annonces* on the back pages of French newspapers, de Rays would come to position the Port-Breton colony as an ambitious private colonial venture explicitly modeled on the Marseille images of the missionaries and of Columbus, promising to conquer vast swaths of the Western Pacific and open it to French commerce and Catholic

[28] "Christophe Colomb, 1492," *Album de la Galerie historique du Cercle religieux de Marseille* (Paris: Claye, 1868).

[29] "Christophe Colomb," nos. 32, 33, 35, 36-, February-March, May-June 1882; "La Fête de Lyon," *La Nouvelle France* no. 27, 15 September 1881, 62; "Justice et consolation," *La Nouvelle France* no. 37, 15 July 1882, 204.

missionary activity.

THE PAPER COLONY

After his arrest, Lucien de Puydt, a friend of de Rays's and the director of the Port-Breton bureau in Paris, told his interrogators about a conversation he had with de Rays in 1877. Sitting on a Paris café terrace, de Rays showed de Puydt an item in the *annonces* section of a newspaper, and told him, "Voici un homme qui, parait-il, a trouvé des graines de pensées donnant naissance à des fleurs larges comme le fond d'une soucoupe. Savez-vous bien que, par ce moyen, cet homme gagne beaucoup d'argent?" By selling a packet of magical pansy flower seeds for only two francs, this man, claimed de Rays, had made a fortune. He declared admiringly, "Voilà un homme qui a une idée!" De Puydt told his questioners that it was not long after this conversation that he saw the first back page advertisement for Port-Breton, offering a hectare of land and a surefire fortune for the low price of five francs. De Rays, according to de Puydt, had found his pansy seeds.[30]

The Paris investigators set the transcript of this interrogation apart, labeling its folder with the note "Ces déclarations sont des plus importantes." For the investigators, it was proof that de Rays's motivation for founding Port-Breton was primarily financial. De Rays's interest in the pansy seeds also showed his keen eye for the dynamics of media attention and narrative, and, more broadly, his recognition of the importance of print propaganda to a financial venture like the one he was devising. Indeed, the 1877 back page advertisements were only the start of a

[30] Interrogation of Lucien de Puydt, 22 November 1882. Archives de Paris (hereafter: AP), D4U9 31, f. 381a.

sophisticated media operation, which would continue to evolve as de Rays adapted the presentation of his project to different targeted publics, before finally hitting on a successful angle.

This media operation was a focus of the French government's eight-month long investigation of de Rays's colonial venture. The heavily annotated papers and files held in the Paris municipal archives indicate the prosecution's two main lines of inquiry: first, into the colony's finances and second, into its media operations and manipulations. The files contain multiple copies of a letter sent out to identified victims asking each to explain "comment vous avez été amené à faire cette souscription, et par qui."[31] A subsequent letter sent by the examining magistrate (*juge d'instruction*) in Paris to jurisdictions around France instructed the magistrates tasked with interviewing the Port-Breton victims to ask each "comment et dans quelles circonstances il a été amené à faire l'acquisition de ces terrains et à l'aide de quels moyens (Prospectus, journaux, circulaires, imprimés, etc…) sa confiance dans l'entreprise de la colonisation de Port-Breton a été captée." The letter further instructed the local magistrates to collect from each victim "ses titres de propriété des hectares de terrain ainsi que les imprimés qu'il a reçus et les numéros du journal '*La nouvelle France*' qui lui auraient été adressés."[32] As a result of these inquiries, the dossiers held in the Paris Archives are bursting with copies of *La Nouvelle France*, newspaper clippings, flyers, pamphlets, factsheets, maps, and land titles. Interspersed with these documents are the letters the victims sent to Paris, as well as copies of the

[31] Letter from Octave Brimont, 14 September 1882. AP, D4U9 29. This letter was received by many investors who were still loyal to de Rays and his venture, and caused much outrage among them, both because of the seeming insinuation that they had been 'led' to invest by some third party, and because of what they understood as an attempt to gather further names and addresses of people with anti-republican interests.

[32] "Commission rogatoire," signed by judge Bouniceau-Gesmon, 23 September 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2674.

depositions they made to local magistrates.

In their letters and depositions, the Port-Breton victims explained in detail how and why they came to invest in the scheme. The investors included men and women, young and old, from all corners of France. There were *gendarmes* from small towns in Saône-et-Loire or Finistère; shop employees in Paris and Marseille; teachers from the departments of Gers, Marne, and Vendée; a retired army officer in the Gard; a priest from a village in Lot-et-Garonne; a domestic worker in German Alsace; blacksmiths in Nancy and in rural Lot; a seamstress in Paris; a countess with a *château* just outside of Nantes. Some wrote that they had invested simply because they believed it would be lucrative, while others explained that they had done so because they were a "partisan de la colonisation,"[33] or because they wished to support Catholic missionary activities.[34] Some hoped it would turn a profit, but felt that whether or not it did, they were at least supporting "une bonne œuvre."[35] There were those who had only invested small sums, and others who had sunk thousands or more in the scheme. A few wrote in with desperate tales of savings lost, creditors calling, and families to feed. The teacher in the Vendée, who had seven children, wrote that he was devastated by the loss of three hundred francs,[36] while the countess from outside the nearby city of Nantes wrote a pleading letter explaining that she had

[33] Letter from M. Henry, Marseille, 25 August 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2968a.

[34] Support for Catholic missionary activities is more often cited among the letters of those investors still supporting de Rays, rather than those pressing charges – suggesting that for many of de Rays's devout Catholic investors, the fraudulent nature of his venture was harder to accept. For instance, François Chaillon from Marseille explained, in his letter protesting against the "indignes traitements" of de Rays, that he had invested for a "double motif […] l'évangélisation des peuplades des îles Solomon et un intérêt pécuniaire probable, mais non assumé." A woman, a landowner near Tours, also declared having invested "pour la civilisation des sauvages, pour y établir des missionnaires, car sans religion pas de civilisation." AP, D4U9 31. Catholic support was cannily exploited by *La Nouvelle France*. After the "circulaire Tirard," the newspaper increasingly attributed official opposition to republican anti-Catholic sentiments.

[35] Deposition of Jean-Pierre Baria, priest, Hautefage-la-Tour (Lot-et-Garonne). AP, D4U9 29, f. 2400a.

[36] Letter from M. Chaliron, Châteauneuf (Vendée), 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2673.

had invested 18,400 francs which she was hoping to get back, as she owed 64,000 francs, and creditors were calling.[37]

What many had in common were the ways in which they found out about the Port-Breton colony. In general, word of mouth and the spread of print propaganda worked in concert. A few had been sufficiently intrigued by the back page advertisements—above all encountered in the popular daily *Le Petit Journal*— that they purchased *bons de terrains* outright, or requested more information, which they received in the form of flyers and brochures.[38] Many more described being convinced to purchase titles by trusted friends, neighbors, and colleagues, as well as local doctors, postal workers, priests, and *notables*, who either spoke to them about Port-Breton or passed them documents to peruse. The parish priest from Lot-et-Garonne heard about it from a fellow clergyman.[39] A feed merchant in the Var was hounded by an acquaintance—"toutes les fois qu'il me rencontrait il me reparlait de cette facheuse affaire"—until he gave in.[40] A postmaster (*receveur des postes*) in Livernon distributed prospectuses and convinced at least two

[37] This letter, from the comtesse de la Tocnaye, in the Loire Inférieure, was written to the Port-Breton administration rather than to the prosecutors. A widow (her husband, Henri de la Tocnaye, a naval officer, had died in 1873), she had suffered financial setbacks, and creditors were knocking. She wrote in desperation to the Port-Breton administration, asking if it was possible to sell her land titles back to the colony. Even in the face of financial catastrophe, she remained a devoted supporter. She closed her letter by deploring the persecution of the recently arrested marquis: "L'ardeur, le courage, et la confiance, du Marquis de Rays, sont admirables, et dignes des plus grands éloges – Je voudrais pouvoir sauver sa belle œuvre – Helas! je ne suis rien, et ne peut rien" (Letter from Clotilde de la Tocnaye, Haute-Goulaine (Loire-Atlantique), 1882. AP, D4U9 30, f. 647a). The Tocnaye family boasted an illustrious Catholic and counterrevolutionary history, and included an uncle of Henri de la Tocnaye, Jacques-Louis de la Tocnaye, who had met Chateaubriand in exile in England. Somewhat less illustrious was a twentieth-century descendant, Alain de la Tocnaye, a far-right militant involved in the 1962 plot to assassinate President Charles de Gaulle.

[38] Victims who mention having seen advertisements in *Le Petit Journal* include Antoine Nicolas Bourdon, *fabricant de chaînes*, Paris (Letter to Octave Brimont, 21 August 1882, ms D4U9 29); Victor Henry, shop employee, Marseille (Deposition, 25 September 1882, ms D4U9 29 f. 2[5]70a; Jean Baptiste Lhomme, domestic worker in German Alsace (Letter to Brimont, 30 September 1882, ms D4U9 29 f. 2480a).

[39] Deposition of Jean-Pierre Baria, priest, Hautefage-la-Tour (Lot-et-Garonne). AP, D4U9 29, f. 2400a.

[40] Letter from Marius Marcel, Solliès (Var), 21 September 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2685.

locals, an *employé des Tabacs* and a blacksmith, to invest (though he also apparently counseled prudence).[41] In Nancy, a local merchant was responsible for numerous investments.[42] Those who spread word of Port-Breton, and convinced others to invest, could themselves benefit from their networking. One priest from a parish just outside of Poitiers sent the Port-Breton organizers a list of eight hundred names and addresses of potential investors. Though he underlined that he was providing these names "plus pour l'œuvre, que pour mes propres intérêts," thanks to de Rays's scheme for encouraging word of mouth, for every five land purchases resulting from this list, the priest would have received a "prime" in the form of a free hectare of land.[43]

The wide array of print materials investors received worked to convince by conjuring the illusion of prosperity and security. One man, who worked in a Paris clothing shop (*maison de confection*) where de Rays and his associates had placed custom orders for Port-Breton military uniforms, recounted how he and his coworkers had been "assaillis de leurs prospectus et de leur journal *La Nouvelle France*," such that several of the shop employees were convinced to invest, and one even emigrated.[44] A chain manufacturer in Paris wrote that his confidence in the

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[41] Deposition of Pierre Briat, Souillac (Lot), 5 October 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2551.

[42] The merchant (though some victims refer to him as a doctor), Auguste Pitoy-Ramonet, was cited by Joseph Aubel, in Jarville-la-Malgrange (Meurthe-et-Moselle); Joseph Messin, in Nancy (Meurthe-et-Moselle); and Dodin, in Saulxures-sur-Moselotte (Vosges) (AP, D4U9 29). Pitoy-Ramonet himself, having acquired quite a few hectares, emigrated to Port-Breton, and, according to the police in Nancy, likely died there ("Enquête de recherche concernant le Sieur Pitoy-Ramonet," Commissaire de Police, Nancy (Meurthe-et-Moselle), 17 August 1882. AP, D4U9 29). Baudouin, in the version of his memoir serialized in *Le National*, opened his account with the story of "le père Pitoy," who had sold all of his merchandise in order to invest his entire fortune in land in Nouvelle France, and who emigrated with his family intending to grow tropical crops. He and his wife died, and his orphaned children were left in Australia (*Les Martyrs de Port-Breton*, *Le National*, 14 June 1883, 1).

[43] Letter from J.P. Boyer, priest at St. Benoît de Quinçay (Vienne), 12 June 1882. AP, D4U9 29. This element of Port-Breton's strategy resembles in some ways today's multilevel marketing schemes, where participants are often rewarded for recruiting others to the scheme, and might be 'paid' in the form of more merchandise or in-house benefits. In this case, the "prime" received by those investors who devoted themselves to encouraging others to purchase land titles turned out in the end to have no value.

[44] According to one of the employees, it was the return of this colleague—a man named René Laville, who narrowly escaped Port-Breton with his life—which precipitated the disillusionment of this group of

venture, prompted first by an ad in *Le Petit Journal*, "n'a fait que grandir par la lecture d'une grande quantitié de prospectus, de circulaires et autres imprimés qui m'étaient adressés et qui disaient monts et merveilles de la colonie, de sa prospérité et de son développement."[45] Many investors described being dazzled by de Rays's promises, reiterated again and again across these different media venues. A peasant farmer (*cultivatrice*) in Maine-et-Loire, in a letter written with many mispellings, conveyed her impression that "les promes de Mr le Marquis étaient si belle," and found it no wonder that she and another friend had been duped: "qui aurait pu se douter de cela d'apprès toute les belle choses qu'il nous ecrivais dans leurs circulaires."[46] A number of investors made clear that they understood these 'belles choses' in primarily financial terms. A Parisian seamstress directly described the financial logic that led her to invest: "J'ai été amenée à faire cette acquisition à la suite des magnifiques promesses que les prospectus et circulaires du Marquis de Rays faisaient luire sur l'avenir de ces terrains qu'on me disait devoir rapporter jusqu'à plusieurs milliers de francs par hectare."[47] In another letter, from a village in Lot-et-Garonne where the whole population had been swept up in a "fièvre" of enthusiasm for Port-Breton, an investor memorably described the authenticating power of de Rays's rhetorical style in his small community:

> On faisait bien un peu le sacrifice de la somme qu'on aventurait ainsi, mais en songeant au résultat qui devait être si brillant […] M. le Marquis de Rays nous fit tout de suite l'effet d'un caractère chevaleresque, tant nous étions pénétrés de cette idée en lisant ses

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investors. Laville's story was published in *La Petite République française* under the title "L'Affaire de Port-Breton racontée par une des victimes" on 19 and 20 August 1882, and *Le Pilote*, a small Dieppe weekly, published a letter from Laville on 6 June 1883, but was unable to publish his as de Rays had successfully sued them to stop the publication of another survivor's account. Deposition of Emmanuel Arthur, Paris, 26 May 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2772a; Deposition of René Laville, Paris, 8 March 1881. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2760a.

[45] Deposition of Antoine Nicolas Bourdon, chain manufacturer, Paris, 1882. AP, D4U9 29.

[46] Letter from Victoire Bureau, Cholet (Maine-et-Loire), September 1882. AP, D4U9 29.

[47] Deposition of Madeleine Léoni, Paris, 23 August 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2780a.

appels aux souscripteurs, que le style c'était l'homme![48]

These and other letters underscore the way in which for many investors, the rhetorical flourishes of the Port-Breton print material were inextricably linked to the promise of financial gain – from magnificent style would necessarily flow magnificent riches.

Many of these investors, both steadfast supporters and those now pressing charges, understood their investment in Port-Breton not as a "souscription" but as a straightforward purchase of land. For the prosecutors, this was proof of de Rays's fraud, as he had purported to sell something he did not possess. Blue and red pencils in hand, they pored over the letters and documents sent in by victims and collected in the Port-Breton bureaus, underlining words like "titres de propriété" and "prix de l'hectare," or passages like "afin que je le fasse cultiver [le terrain] de suite," which indicated a particular investor's clear understanding that he owned a patch of land which could be developed.[49] Their close reading of the Port-Breton documents and letters resulted in a curious semantic debate between de Rays and the prosecutors. Interrogating de Rays, the investigating magistrate Bouniceau-Gesmon pushed him to admit that he had misrepresented his venture as "une vente réelle de terrains" rather than a financial contribution toward a future colonial venture which might or might not succeed, as de Rays now maintained (3-4).[50] To this, Bouniceau-Gesmon countered that such a venture should be discussed not in the present but in the *future* tense, and de Rays had used this tense only infrequently. The future tense was effectively overwhelmed by the present: "pour une fois que vous parlerez au futur, il en est dix où vous parlez au présent, surtout dans le journal, si bien que le futur […] est

[48] Letter from Joseph Bentéjac, Montignac-de-Lauzun (Lot-et-Garonne), 2 September 1882. AP, D4U9 29.

[49] Letter from A. Bourigault to [?] Auxcousteaux, St Martin du Fouilloux (Maine et Loire), 7 December 1880. AP, D4U9 30, f. 645.

[50] Interrogation of de Rays by Bouniceau-Gesmon, 18 January 1883. AP, D4U9 30, ff. 644.3-4.

véritablement, on peut le dire, submergé, noyé, étouffé et effacé sous les affirmations fermes de la propriété présente."[51]

The collapse of de Rays's colonial enterprise and the wave of arrests in 1882 split the Port-Breton investors into opposing groups: those who continued to support de Rays and his venture, and those who became disillusioned, and, upon being contacted by the prosecution, agreed to press charges. In their letters and depositions, many in this latter group, angered by being duped, offered their own interpretations of the affair and its political implications. A feed dealer from the Var called the Port-Breton organizers "beaux diseurs qui n'en voulaient qu'à ma bourse," and wrote that he had become convinced they had anti-republican political motives in addition to financial ones: "aujourd'hui je crois qu'ils en voulaient aussi à nos institutions."[52] Others suspected a clerical conspiracy behind the Port-Breton venture, writing that "l'affaire est aussi cléricale et Jésuitique que financière." Some came to rue their participation for that particular reason, as one investor, an *employé des Tabacs* from the Lot, wrote, "ce qui me froisse le plus c'est que mon argent soit passé dans les mains des cléricaux sans m'en douter je peux dire entre les mains de mes plus grands ennemis." He concluded, "Voila Monsieur ce que je regretterais toute ma vie."[53]

FROM "LA POLITIQUE COLONIALE" TO "LA QUESTION RELIGIEUSE"

The theories of the Port-Breton victims point to the political and confessional context informing

[51] Interrogation of de Rays by Bouniceau-Gesmon, 18 January 1883. AP, D4U9 30, f. 644.4.

[52] This merchant, named Marius Marcel, closed his letter emphatically and in colorful language, writing that he would be "satisfait si je pouvais faire rendre gorge à des coupe bourses d'un nouveau genre." Letter from Marius Marcel, Solliès (Var), 21 September 1883. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2689.

[53] Letter from Pierre Briat, Souillac (Lot), 26 September 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2849.

the affair, and particularly to the ways in which de Rays tried to exploit the fault lines of the early Third Republic through a canny media strategy. De Rays modified his approach to publicity and promotion as these fault lines shifted in the late 1870s following the arrival of republicans in power and the specter of legislation affecting the role of Catholicism in French society. Between 1877, when the first ads appeared, and 1879, when *La Nouvelle France* began publication and the first ship set sail for New Ireland, the image of Port-Breton evolved from one of a lucrative colonial investment opportunity into one of a haven for Catholic interests in a newly secularizing republic. One investor, a teacher from the Gers named Navarre, who had purchased land titles relatively early on after reading a prospectus, shrewdly observed the way in which appeals to religious sentiment had come only gradually to dominate the colony's promotional material: "Au début, on n'a fait briller aux yeux des souscripteurs que l'appât du gain: peu à peu la question religieuse a pris le dessus."[54]

A close look at the evolution of Port-Breton's print propaganda bears out this observation. The early back page advertisements had mentioned only the price of land and the promise of fortune, and other examples of undated print ephemera found among the investors' letters in the Paris Archives also present the venture in purely financial terms. One small flyer (figure 10) explained the financial advantages and likely outcomes of an investment in Port-Breton, compared it with metropolitan investment opportunities, and presented it as a safe investment accessible to the average "père de famille" or "ouvrier laborieux," who would find in it "le bien-être de leurs vieux jours, la dot de leurs enfants, l'avenir assuré de leur famille, sans soucis, et sans avoir à s'imposer aucune privation, ni à sortir de chez eux."[55] Another small

[54] Letter from Jean-François Navarre, Sabaillon (Gers), 1882. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2643.

[55] Print ephemera, likely sent to investigators by a Port-Breton victim named Chaliran. "Nouvelle France – Colonie libre de Port-Breton (Océanie)," undated. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2650.

document, possibly clipped from a newspaper (figure 11), defined the colony's objective simply as the procurement of "de terres excellentes à bon marché […] en dehors de tous troubles et risques politiques." [56] Aside from this last vague reference to political instability, the venture in its early days had no definite political orientation, and there was no mention of "la question religieuse."

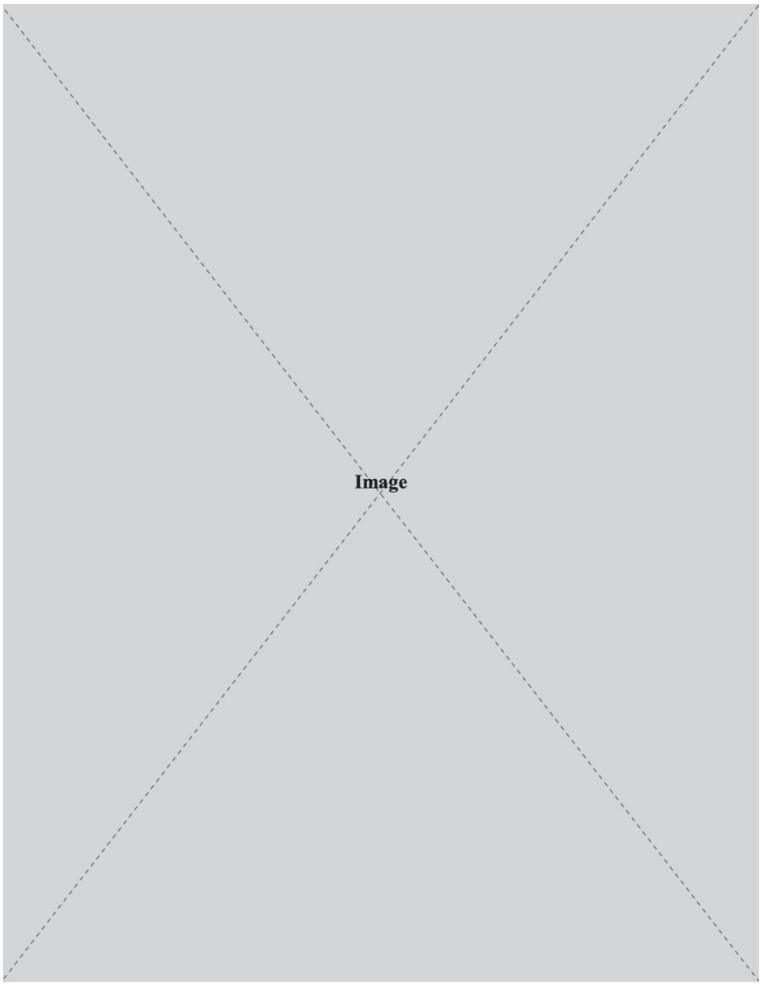


Figure 10. Clipping of an advertisement for Port-Breton, sent to Paris prosecutors by a victim of the scheme: "Nouvelle France – Colonie libre de Port-Breton (Océanie)." Undated. Source: Archives de Paris, D4U9 29, f. 2650.

[56] Print ephemera, likely sent to investigators by a Port-Breton victim named Chaliran. "La Nouvelle France – Colonie Libre de Port-Breton," undated. AP, D4U9 29, f. 2680, 2682.

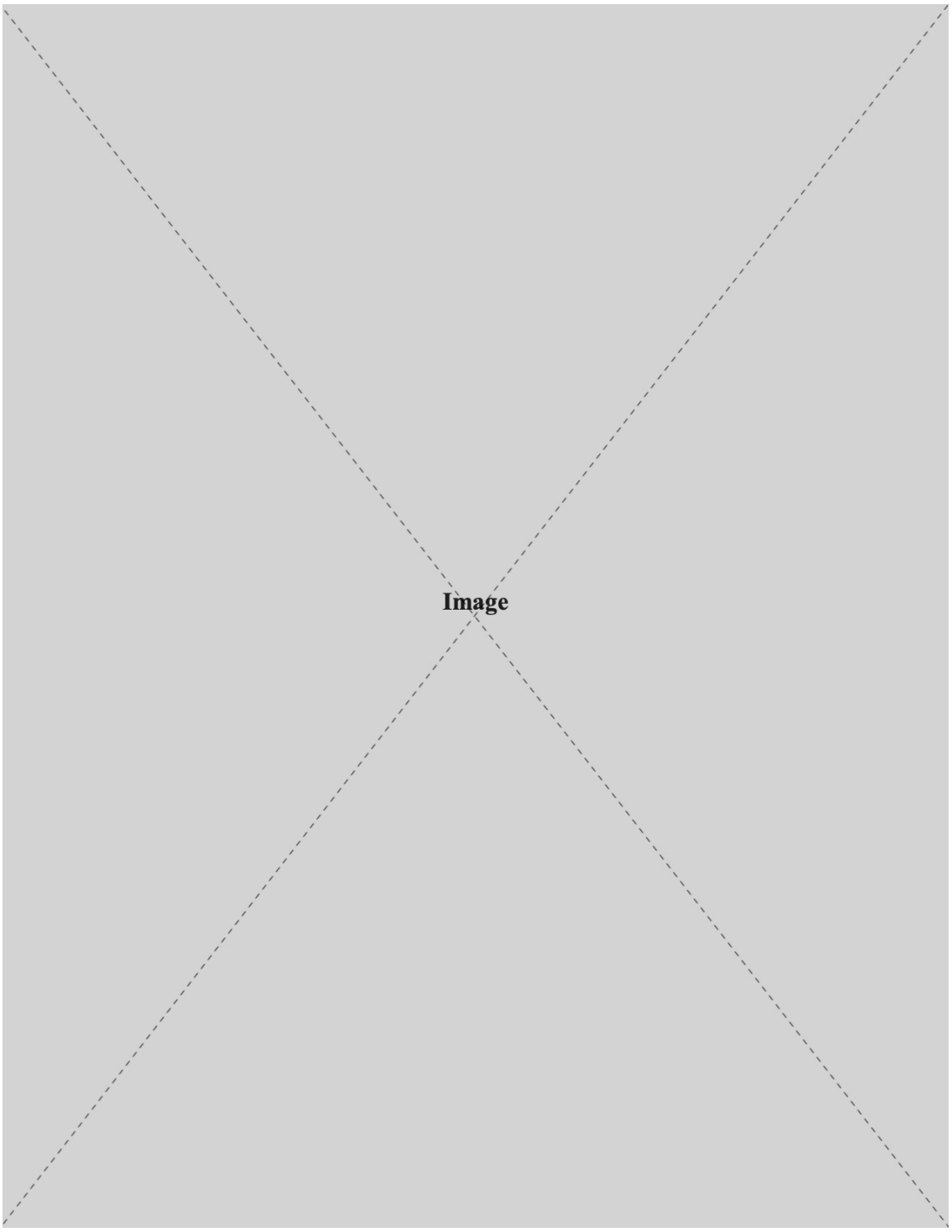


Figure 11. Clipping of an advertisement for Port-Breton, sent to Paris prosecutors by a victim of the scheme: “La Nouvelle France – Colonie Libre de Port-Breton.” Undated. Source: Archives de Paris, D4U9 29, f. 2652.

De Rays's early attempts at garnering institutional support for his venture followed a similar trajectory. In July 1878, de Rays was inducted as a member of the Société des Études coloniales et maritimes, one of the first French scholarly societies to be founded with the explicit aim of advocating for the development of French colonies and for further colonial expansion.[57] The Société des Études coloniales et maritimes was dominated by men associated with the Navy, overseas commerce, and the study of geography. Some held government positions, frequently in the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, as was the case for Henri Chessé, who sponsored de Rays's membership. When, in January 1879, Lucien de Puydt presented the Port-Breton colonial enterprise to the assembled members of the group, he read aloud a text written by de Rays, which proclaimed that his project was aimed at resolving "les pressants besoins du commerce maritime et de la marine marchande," and went into great detail about how the new private, independent colony would provide merchant marine ships with new cargo and ports of call operating outside of strict French law.[58]

This presentation was clearly tailored to the interests of this procolonial society, which devoted much attention in the late 1870s and 1880s to the question of the merchant marine and to encouraging individual initiatives in geography, commerce, and colonial expansion.[59]

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[57] The Société was founded in 1876. De Rays's membership was sponsored by Lucien de Puydt—he of the café terrace and the "graines de pensées"—and Henri Isidore Chessé, a founding member of the society and an official at the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. On the rise of colonial societies and the influence of their members in the parti colonial after 1890, see Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, "The French 'Colonial Party',"; and L. Abrams and D.J. Miller,"Who Were the French Colonialists? A Reassessment of the *Parti Colonial*, 1890-1914," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 3 (1976): 685-725.

[58] *Bulletin de la Société des Études coloniales et maritimes*, January 1879, 3. In the text read by de Puydt, de Rays stressed repeatedly that this model, "l'application de la liberté particulière et de l'initiative individuelle aux entreprises de colonisation," had been successful in Southeast Asia and Oceania for all of the other major colonial powers. De Rays made a further, more unusual promise: his free colony would only supply French ships. Paradoxically, then, de Rays seemed to suggest that Port-Breton, though private, would do more for France than actual French colonies, where "tous les navires étrangers peuvent charger aujourd'hui," to the detriment of French commercial and merchant marine vessels.

[59] The inaugural *Bulletin* of this society explained its mission in these terms : "Malgré tous ces avantages

Nonetheless, the minutes of the meeting during which de Puydt presented de Rays's text show that the leading members of the group were not convinced by the project. When de Puydt asked them to "témoigner sa sympathie pour le but à atteindre," in response, one member articulated several objections concerning emigration and security. When de Puydt was unable to answer them, another member underlined that "toute approbation venant de la Société est un engagement moral pris par elle; elle ne peut recommander l'œuvre qu'en connaissance de cause." This latter member, the baron de Cambourg, also pointedly asked whether or not the marquis had governmental approval for his venture.[60] De Puydt was unprepared for this resistance, and promised he would speak with the marquis and obtain fuller details – however, the minutes of meetings in subsequent years show that he never provided them, and indeed de Puydt and de Rays appear to have abandoned the Société des Études coloniales et maritimes altogether.

Only four months after this unsuccessful bid for support, we find de Rays himself presenting the Port-Breton colonial project to a different audience, at the Salon des Œuvres in Marseille. The Salon des Œuvres was a Catholic association, founded in Marseille in 1876, and hosted by the city's Cercle Religieux. Weekly conversations and lectures were held in "une des belles salles […] devant un bon feu, dans de commodes fauteuils." In the next room over was the Cercle's grand "Galerie Historique," where Magaud's cycle devoted to the "génie civilisateur du

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naturels cependant, nos Colonies s'étiolent et languissent, et avec elles, notre Commerce maritime, dont le sort est intimement lié à celui de nos possessions d'outre-mer, quand à côté de nous, des nations voisines voient leur navigation prospérer et leur empire colonial s'étendre sans cesse. […] Une association seule pouvait entreprendre avec fruit de rechercher, pour les faire cesser, les causes de notre infériorité coloniale et maritime, et, c'est dans le but de réunir en un faisceau tous les efforts isolés jusqu'alors, c'est pour faire appel à l'expérience et au bon vouloir éclairé de tous ceux qui s'intéressent à la prospérité de la France, que des amis tous dévoués de ses Colonies et de sa Marine marchande, pensèrent à créer un centre d'action pour prendre en mains la défense d'intérêts trop souvent méconnus." "Origine de la Société," *Bulletin de la Société des études coloniales et maritimes* 1 (May 1876), 3.

[60] "Extrait des Procès-Verbaux des Séances en Assemblée. Séance du 13 janvier 1879," *Bulletin de la Société des Études coloniales et maritimes* (1879): 13.

Catholicisme" was displayed, and where tea was sometimes served. Speakers at the Salon des Œuvres included bishops and priests as well as lay clergy, doctors, judges, and writers. Among other topics, there were many lectures on global missionary work in the French colonies and around the world. The inaugural issue of the Salon's *Annales* enumerates the group's interests as "les œuvres de bien; les efforts tentés au point de vue religieux vers un but social, scientifique, charitable; les récits de voyage et de missions lointaines; la connaissance intime, en un mot, de tout ce qui intéresse le Catholicisme dans son action multiple et sous toutes ses formes."[61]

De Rays's presentation at the Catholic Salon des Œuvres was decidedly different than the report read at the Société des Études coloniales et maritimes. For this group, he now emphasized his faith as the "source commune de nos aspirations mutuelles" and proclaimed that "la pensée de notre colonie libre est née du sentiment religieux et patriotique." Lamenting the decline of a country newly governed by Republicans—"Hélas, pauvre patrie, qu'est devenue ta gloire?"—de Rays now connected the inspiration for his colonial venture to contemporary Catholic anxieties about *laïcité* and the diminishing prospects for a restoration of the monarchy. He evoked past glories, connecting colonial expansion under the Ancien Régime to France's former status as "fille aînée de l'Église," explicitly stating that it was this concert between church and state that

[61] Emile Sumien, "Avant-propos," *Annales du Salon des Œuvres de Marseille* (Marseille: Marius Olive, 1876), 4. The Cercle Religieux was a major gathering place for Marseillais Catholics. According to Régis Bertrand, its headquarters, in central Marseille, included a reading room for periodicals, a library, and "une salle de musique et de jeux et rafraîchissements." Magaud's painting cycle for the Galerie Historique was a major work of nineteenth-century Catholic art. It was an ensemble of large-format historical paintings known together as the "Génie civilisateur du catholicisme," commissioned by and for the Cercle Religieux and painted between 1856 and 1862. On the Cercle Religieux, and in particular on Magaud's paintings, see Régis Bertrand, "'Le génie civilisateur du catholicisme', quinze 'tableaux historiques' d'A.-D. Magaud pour le Cercle religieux de Marseille (1856-1864)," in *Images militantes, images de propagande*, ed. Christian Amalvi (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2007), 219-234; see also Marie-Paule Vial, "Antoine-Dominique Magaud," in *Marseille au XIXe: rêves et triomphes*, ed. Marie-Paule Vial (Marseille, Paris: Musées de Marseille – Réunion des musées nationaux, 1991), 256-267.

had led to France's former grandeur – and implying that its absence was at the source of France's diminished colonial power.

Here, de Rays presented himself as a kind of apostle of a renewed Catholic faith, which, in tandem with strong national pride, would be the foundation of a new type of colony, a hybrid model drawing from the examples of independent British and Dutch colonial ventures:

> Aux époques de trouble et de désordre moral comme celle où s'agitent aujourd'hui les peuples européens, les œuvres de colonisation sont toujours appelées aux plus heureux résultats. […]
>
> Suivons donc cet exemple de tous les peuples libres et, libres nous-mêmes dans notre champ d'action, élévons à la France un monument nouveau de grandeur nationale!
>
> Nous serons suivis, soyez-en certains, dans une semblable voie, et notre pays retrouvera de grands jours. Nous renouerons, sur des nouveaux rivages, au moyen de nos colonies libres, la chaîne interrompue de nos traditions coloniales, nous serons grands encore, et sans charges nouvelles pour le pays lui-même, nous ressusciterons, au grand profit de tous, notre pauvre marine marchande, souvenir d'un grand passé, source de gloire nouvelle![62]

In this speech, the mention of the merchant marine was in service not of a vision of global free trade but of a glorious tradition neglected in an age of republican decline but ready to be reawakened by a great man. De Rays concluded his speech with a call to action: "À l'œuvre donc, messieurs, et veuille Dieu nous aider!"[63]

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[62] Émile Sumien, "Salon des Œuvres XIX. Nouvelle France en Océanie," *La Gazette du Midi*, 9 April 1879, 2-3.

[63] At the 1883 trial, the indictment read by the prosecutor, Falcimaigne, suggested that de Rays was also met with skepticism and pointed questions at the Salon des Œuvres, although these would never make it into the printed records of the event, as they had in the *Bulletin de la Société des études coloniales et maritimes*. According to Falcimaigne, during a question-and-answer session at the end of his lecture, a Marseille lawyer had asked de Rays several detailed questions not unlike those asked by the wary members of the colonial society. De Rays apparently answered the questions with confidence (lying brazenly as he did so) – but several members of the audience were unconvinced, and, according to Falcimaigne, concluded amongst themselves that "Nous avons affaire à des escroqueurs" (*Le Droit*, 5 December 1883, 3). While negative audience reaction was alluded to in the trial issue of *La Nouvelle France*, it was in terms which dismissed the questioners, characterizing them as disruptive and disrespectful, while de Rays was described as having responded "avec âme, solidité, énergie à toutes les attaques" (Émile Sumien, "Causerie et indiscrétions," *La Nouvelle France*, numéro spécimen, 15 June 1879, 6). Still, however skeptical some of the audience members at the Salon des Œuvres may have been, de Rays had the support of the organization's leadership, and his enterprise proceeded apace. This anecdotal evidence of skepticism among the Catholic public at the Salon des Œuvres is nonetheless

De Rays's message was quickly relayed around the South of France, thanks to the work of Émile Sumien, one of the organizers of the Salon des Œuvres, the author of its yearly bulletins, and the editor-in-chief of a conservative Catholic Marseille daily newspaper, the *Gazette du Midi,* where he published numerous articles about the venture in the spring of 1879.[64] In fact, Sumien would soon become the editor-in-chief of the Port-Breton propaganda newspaper *La Nouvelle France*, founded in the summer of 1879; but even before *La Nouvelle France*, he played a crucial role in spreading the word about Port-Breton through his own widely read paper. On 9 April 1879, in its feuilleton rubric, the *Gazette du Midi* printed Sumien's account of de Rays's 4 April lecture at the Salon des Œuvres.[65] The bulk of the column was given over to the text of the speech, framed by Sumien's own commentary, where he set the scene by evoking current fears about France's status: "Il n'est pas de jour où quelque plainte ne s'élève sur la destinée de la France," he wrote, citing strife between political factions, weakened international standing, and an uncertain and dangerous future. Faced with such an unsettling image of the present and future, Sumien claimed that the French were turning to the past and making comparisons which cast the present in an unfavorable light, particularly when it came to colonial expansion: "Combien nous avons dégénéré, dit-on; autrefois nous colonisions […] Aujourd'hui,

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significant, and echoes of Catholic wariness can be found scattered throughout various archives of correspondence related to Port-Breton. Although de Rays wore the cloak of Catholic support, gaining the trust of several institutions beginning with the Salon des Œuvres, there were also those who asked shrewd questions, and, when they did not receive satisfactory answers, refused to lend their voices or funds to the Port-Breton colony.

[64] Sumien authored the yearly *Annales* of the Salon des Œuvres. These reports were generally pre-published in the feuilleton rubric of the *Gazette du Midi*, which also regularly advertised the Salon's upcoming lectures.

[65] Émile Sumien, "Salon des Œuvres XIX. Nouvelle France en Océanie," *Gazette du Midi*, 9 April 1879, 2-3. This was also reprinted in the next volume of the *Annales*: "Nouvelle France en Océanie," *Annales du Salon des Œuvres de Marseille* (Marseille: Marius Olive, 1880), 447-471.

c'est le contraire."[66] Sumien's article, echoing de Rays's speech, ended with a patriotic call to destiny: "Chère patrie! Que le ciel favorable lui verse ses rayons créateurs et que les mers dociles portent fidèlement le vaisseau rajeuni de ses destinées!" Paid mentions were also placed in regional and Catholic newspapers around the country, advertising the *Gazette du Midi*'s issue containing the compte-rendu of de Rays's speech, claiming that "Cette conférence a produit un effet considérable" and that "le compte rendu tiré à 5,000 exemplaires, déjà épuisés, a achevé de conquérir tous les suffrages à cette œuvre si française et chrétienne."[67]

NOUVELLE(S) FRANCE(S)

The rhetoric of civilizational decadence in de Rays's speech and Sumien's commentary situate the newly Catholic Port-Breton at the intersection of Catholic anxieties about the decline of postrevolutionary France and procolonial anxieties about decline in the wake of France's military defeat. Recent years have seen a resurgence of scholarly interest in the role of Catholicism in Third Republic colonialism. As historians like Elizabeth Foster and J.P. Daughton have shown, despite Léon Gambetta's famous declamation ("Le cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi!"), Catholicism and colonialism were often linked.[68] But de Rays's vision of Catholic overseas expansion was

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[66] Émile Sumien, "Salon des Œuvres," *Gazette du Midi*.

[67] The advertisement appeared in: *Le Progrès de la Somme*, *Le Sémaphore de Marseille*, *Le Courrier de la Rochelle*, *Le Courrier de Saône-et-Loire*, *Le Journal du Cher*, *Le Midi*, *La Semaine Religieuse du diocèse de Nantes*, and *Le Pays*. This list is surely incomplete as it contains only results in text-searchable digitized newspapers. De Rays and Sumien appear to have targeted regional papers—of the above, only the Bonapartist *Le Pays* was printed in Paris—but digitization of regional French newspapers remains limited compared with the Parisian press.

[68] Elizabeth A. Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); J.P. Daughton *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). See also Sarah Curtis, *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of French Empire*

above all a shrewd move to rebrand himself within the metropolitan media context. After failing to garner support from the Société des études coloniales et maritimes, de Rays sought to harness anti-republican Catholic discontent in the wake of the arrival of republicans in power in early 1879, and the prospect of new laws secularizing education and diminishing Catholics' role in public and political life.[69]

When the first trial issue of the official newspaper of the new colonial venture appeared in June 1879—with Sumien on board as editor-in-chief—its new Catholic orientation was apparent. The header image at the top of the page, under the arc of the title, showed a bustling seaport, surrounded by abundant tropical flora (figure 12). In the foreground, figures are seen working the land and loading barrels onto barges, behind several allegorical symbols, including a beehive, denoting industriousness and labor. The seaport is flanked on the left by a scene of two priests, crosses in hand, speaking to groups of indigenous figures, and on the right by a scene showing nuns ministering to children. The motto of the colonial enterprise, given at the close of the issue's first article, was "Espoir et Foi. — Dieu, Patrie et Liberté."[70] In the issue's pages, the double character of the venture, articulated in the Marseille lecture, is repeatedly emphasized: it is an "œuvre chrétienne-catholique; œuvre française-libre," and, later, "une œuvre chrétienne et civilisatrice […] même catholique et toute française."[71]

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[69] "Loi du 9 août 1879 relative à l'établissement des écoles normales primaires." These matters were hotly discussed in Catholic newspapers like *L'Univers* in the months leading up to the passage of the law; see, for example, a letter addressed to Jules Ferry (minister of Public Education) in *L'Univers*, 28 March 1879, 1.

[70] *La Nouvelle France*, numéro spécimen, 15 June 1879. Archives nationales d'outre-mer, BIB AOM RES31172.

[71] *La Nouvelle France*, 15 June 1879, 2, 6.

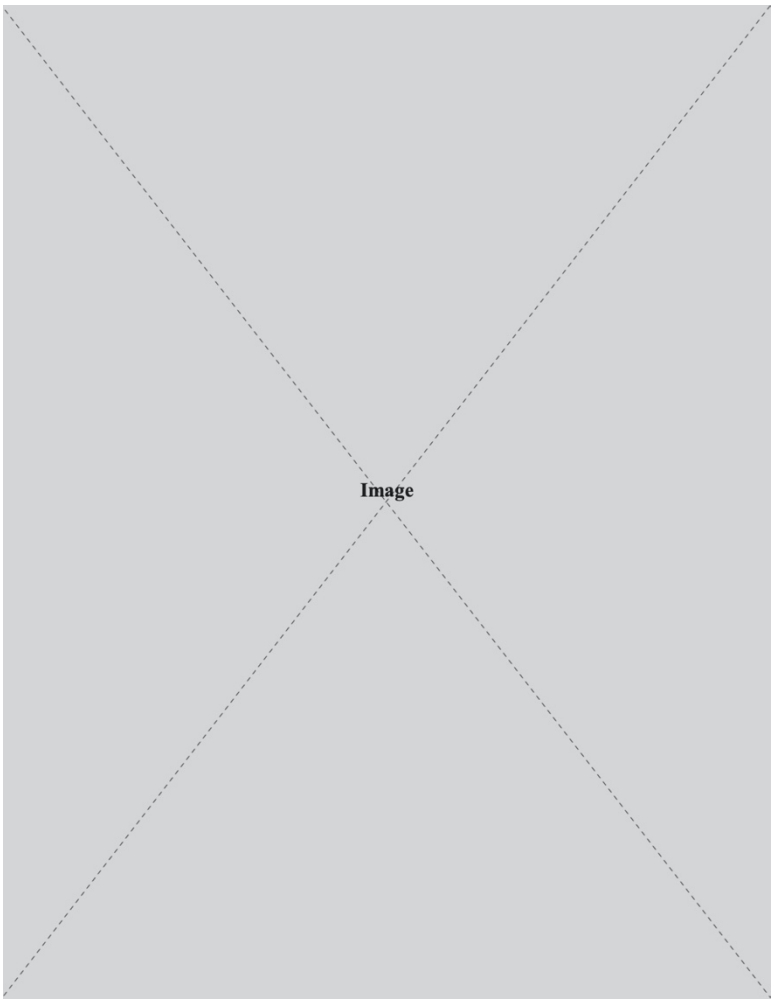


Figure 12. *La Nouvelle France*, numéro spécimen, 15 June 1879. Source: Bibliothèque des Archives nationales d'outre-mer.

Nostalgia for an earlier era of colonial grandeur was, of course, already encoded in the colony's very name: "La Nouvelle France," an homage to France's lost colony of Canada. Another lost colony was evoked by the name de Rays gave to the first ship, whose purchase and imminent departure was announced in the June trial issue of *La Nouvelle France*: the *Chandernagor*, named for the French colonial *comptoir* in India (today Chandannagar, in West Bengal, India), which was but a small remnant of what could have been a great *Inde française*, according to many Third Republic procolonial theorists.[72] Recent scholarship has illuminated

[72] For Charles Canivet, author of a historical study of France's "colonies perdues," "Dupleix est un

how memories of and nostalgia for France's "colonies perdues"—to borrow the title of an 1884 history by Charles Canivet—informed nineteenth-century understandings of France's place in the world, and how invocations of that loss could be instrumentalized to promote colonial ideology and new colonial expansion.[73] For the men behind the Port-Breton colony, Canada harked back to the prerevolutionary era of French global expansion, reinforcing a link between monarchy, Catholicism, and colonialism, while also implicitly criticizing the current state of colonial politics under a republican regime. Later issues of *La Nouvelle France* would further expand on the links between the lost colonies of Ancien Régime France and de Rays's enterprise, giving a brief history of the French colonization of Canada – and even promising to recruit colonists from among "nos anciens compatriotes Franco-Canadiens," a promised initiative which does not appear to have truly existed.[74]

The evocation of Canada and the earlier era of colonial grandeur also served another purpose. It worked to counter an idea that procolonial theorists like the abbé Pierre Raboisson claimed was widespread: namely, that "Le Français […] n'est pas colonisateur," and that "la France, donc, ne peut être une puissance coloniale." [75] This mostly served the interests

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homme antique, dans toute la force du mot," whose greatest and most powerful enemy was "la coupable indifférence de la métropole." Charles Canivet, "Inde," *Les Colonies perdues* (Paris: Jouvet, 1884), 123-251.

[73] Canivet, *Les Colonies perdues*. See *France's Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia, and la fracture coloniale,* eds. Kate Marsh and Nicola Frith (Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2010); in particular Kate Marsh's chapter, "Territorial Loss and the Construction of French Colonial Identities, 1763-1962," 10-19.

[74] *La Nouvelle France* no. 4, 15 October 1879, 27. The following issue (no. 5, 15 November 1879, 36-37), also contained articles on the history of French Canada, in order to familiarize Port-Breton investors with their once and future "compatriotes." Another article was promised for December, but it never appeared. Later, the claim that Canadians were being recruited to colonize Nouvelle France was repeated by Georges Piart, who wrote a series of laudatory articles on the colony in *Le Petit Caporal* in 1880-81 (4 August, 25 September, 14 October, 30 October, 30 November 1880, 28 January 1881).

[75] Abbé Pierre Raboisson, *Étude sur les colonies et la colonisation au regard de la France* (Paris: Challamel aîné & Le Monde, 1877), 43. Raboisson was a Catholic procolonial theorist and a member of the Société des Études coloniales et maritimes whose work of procolonial theory was a major reference

procolonial theorists and advocates, who frequently invoked the idea in order to better disprove it – a practice which continued well into the twentieth century.[76] The commonplace was addressed in *La Nouvelle France*'s June 1879 trial issue in the opening of the lead editorial article:

> Parler en France d'une œuvre de colonisation lointaine, c'est tout d'abord s'exposer à provoquer au moins un sourire. La France est si belle, on y vit habituellement si bien! Qui pourrait donc songer à la quitter pour aller courir les aventures, s'établir volontairement dans des climats moins heureux, compromettre jusqu'à son existence, dans de longues et périlleuses navigations?[77]

For de Rays, Sumien, and other collaborators at *La Nouvelle France*, the success of the Port-Breton venture would refute this commonplace and renew France's colonial vocation. This would be achieved through the efforts of one man, the marquis de Rays – just as, according to *La Nouvelle France*, the individual efforts of men like Dupleix and La Bourdonnais in the lost Indian colony of Chandernagor had been at the origin of its flourishing, and the source of its unfulfilled potential.[78] As Sumien put it, "Voilà ce qu'en si peu de temps avait pu faire l'influence d'un homme; voilà le présage que nous envoie, avec son nom, le premier navire de la colonie libre de Port-Breton, le *Chandernagor*!"[79] Unlike Dupleix and La Bourdonnais, de

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point for the men behind Port-Breton. On Raboisson and his influential theories, see especially Christina B. Carroll, "Defining the French Empire: Memory, Politics, and National Identity, 1860-1900" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015), 250-256.

[76] See introduction. In 1928, in response to Albert Londres's critical portrayal of French colonial Congo, *Le Temps* prefaced an article arguing that France's achievements in colonial administration were undervalued with a familiar refrain: "C'est une opinion générale en France que le Français n'est pas colonisateur" ("La France colonisatrice," *Le Temps*, 11 November 1928, 1). Even more strikingly, the official rationale for the 1931 Exposition Coloniale was, according to minister of the Colonies Paul Reynaud, to demonstrate France's "vocation coloniale," previously a "vérité obscurcie," to a metropolitan public still doubtful of colonialism's benefits (Paul Reynaud, "Introduction," *Le Livre d'or de l'Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris* (Paris: Fédération française des anciens coloniaux, 1931), 9).

[77] V.M. [possibly Vincent Méglia], *La Nouvelle France*, no. spécimen, 15 June 1879, 2.

[78] This link was drawn in several articles in early issues of *La Nouvelle France*: Émile Sumien, "Le Chandernagor," *La Nouvelle France* no. spécimen*,* 15 June 1879, 3-4; V.M., *La Nouvelle France*, no. 2, 15 August 1879, 10 (La Bourdonnais here is spelled Labourdonnaye).

[79] Sumien, "Le Chandernagor," *La Nouvelle France* no. spécimen*,* 15 June 1879, 4.

Rays's work would be brought to fruition through the contributions of small investors, which *La Nouvelle France* compared to the "obole hebdomadaire" paid by subscribers to the Catholic missionary journal *Les Missions catholiques* to support overseas missions.[80]

The colonial past signified for de Rays's investors and supporters at once the possible heights of the national colonial spirit, and a more individualistic imaginary of the great male adventurers who had crisscrossed the globe in previous centuries. A promotional song composed by L. Alfred de Roux de Ruffi, "Le Cri de la Nouvelle France"—the sheet music for which was frequently advertised for sale on *La Nouvelle France*'s back page, beginning in the fall of 1880—developed the parallel at length, tracing a slow decline from a sixteenth-century height of colonial confidence through the disastrous losses of the Seven Years' War, and finally to the contemporary decadence and the rejuvenation promised by Port-Breton (figure 13):

> Cent ans après, tandis que tout s'écroule,
> Dieu ne veut pas voir s'éteindre son nom;
> Il a choisi dans la fange qui roule
> Le cœur parfait d'un valeureux Breton.
> Bientôt étincelant dans la Nouvelle France
> Le flambeau de la Foi, fécondante semence,
> Rajeunira la France à Port Breton.[81]

An article in the leading Catholic daily newspaper *L'Univers* in early 1881—just a month before Pierre Giffard's story in *Le Figaro* changed the media narrative around Port-Breton—provides an example of the effectiveness of de Rays's and Sumien's shift toward Catholic colonial nostalgia. *L'Univers* situated the origins of de Rays's colonial venture in 1879, "au moment même où la persécution s'annonçait contre l'Église," eliding the venture's uncertain early years.

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[80] *La Nouvelle France*, no. spécimen, 15 June 1879, 1. "N'est-ce pas ainsi, d'ailleurs, que chaque adhérent à l'œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi, par son obole hebdomadaire, mérite, en quelque façon, de participer au titre de Missionnaire catholique?"

[81] L. Alfred Roux de Ruffi, "Le Cri de la Nouvelle France." BnF Département de Musique VM7-98416.

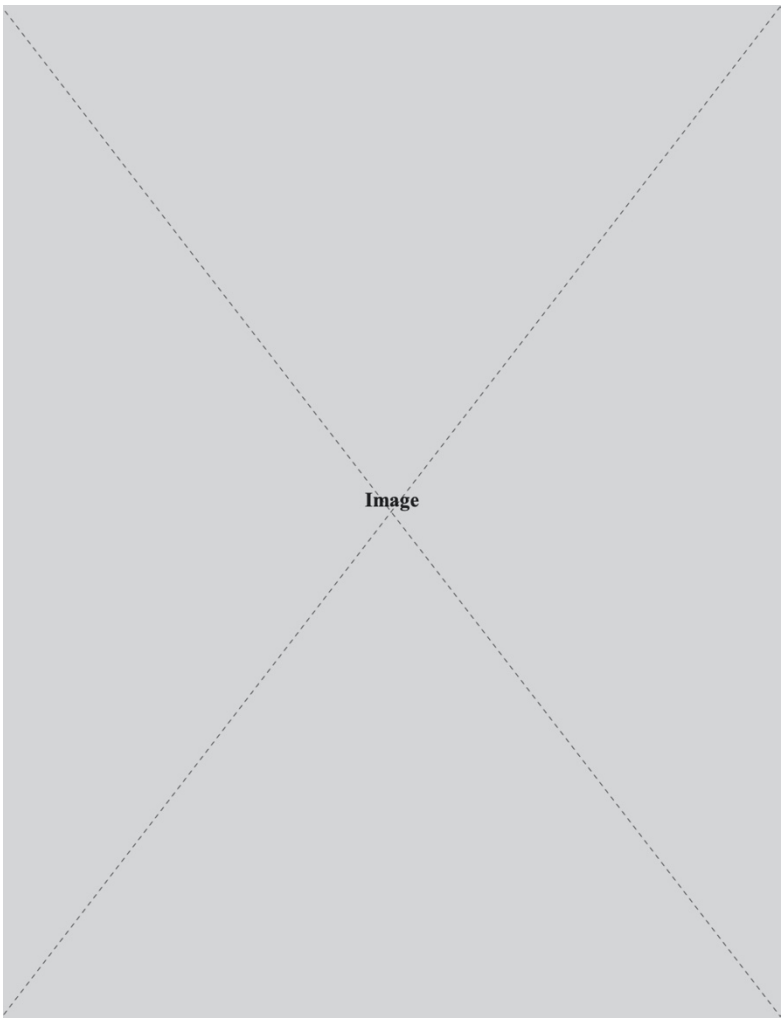


Figure 13. Sheet music for L. Alfred de Roux de Ruffi's "Chant national: Le Cri de la Nouvelle France à Port-Breton." Source: BnF Département de Musique, VM7-98416.

According to *L'Univers*, de Rays declared his inspiration: "Je veux coloniser pour Dieu et pour la France," and, following in the footsteps of "Christophe Colomb il planta le drapeau et la croix, pour offrir à Dieu cette conquête nouvelle." The article concluded with a promise to continue to follow the news of "une colonisation si hardiment entreprise, dans un siècle qui affecte de ne plus croire à rien, par un homme pour qui gardent toute leur signification ces deux mots: Dieu et patrie."[82] Always on the lookout for positive press, the next issue of *La Nouvelle France*, dated 15 February, reprinted the *L'Univers* article nearly in its entirety.[83]

[82] "La Nouvelle-France," *L'Univers*, 21 January 1881, 3.

[83] "La Nouvelle-France," *La Nouvelle France* no. 20, 15 February 1881, 115-116.

MISE EN SCÈNE À OUTRANCE

La Nouvelle France, was, even according to those who were duped by it, an impressive document to look at.[84] It was extensively illustrated, printed on quality paper, and inexpensive – a yearly subscription of twelve monthly issues cost a mere five francs. Many victims underscored the centrality of this newspaper to the success of de Rays's scheme. In his account of Port-Breton, Alexandre Baudouin described its "mise en scène à outrance," which included "Gravures, descriptions, pièces de vers et, par-dessus tout, affirmations intrépides et sans réplique."[85] A close examination of this "mise en scène" reveals that *La Nouvelle France* was as much a fraud as the venture itself, cobbled together from the vast eighteenth- and nineteenth-century print archive of the Pacific.

In order to bolster the credibility of their venture, the men behind *La Nouvelle France* drew on travel narratives, periodicals, and missionary accounts for both the texts and images that would fill the newspaper's pages. By the late 1870s, much material and many models were available to them. *La Nouvelle France* was, in its derivative and combinatory way, as much a part of the Third Republic boom in "presse de voyage" as *Le Journal des voyages et des aventures de terre et de mer* and *L'Exploration*.[86] Like these magazines, *La Nouvelle France*

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[84] The Bibliothèque nationale de France holds an extensive, though incomplete, collection of issues of *La Nouvelle France*, digitized and available on Gallica. I have located further issues, including those missing from the BnF's holdings, in archives and libraries in the cities and regions in which the colony had its recruitment offices: the Bibliothèque Armand Salacrou in Le Havre has a bound volume of issues nos. 2 to 26 (missing no. 25), and the Archives municipales de Marseille hold nos. 24, 26, and 28. The Archives d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Provence hold a rare item not found in any other collection: the *numéro spécimen*, the trial issue of the newspaper published in June 1879. They also hold issues 21 and 24.

[85] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 25.

[86] See Sylvain Venayre, "La presse de voyage," in *La Civilisation du journal*, 465-480. Earlier models for the illustrated "presse de voyage" include the *Magasin pittoresque* and *Le Musée des familles*—which both had broader mandates but included many travel narratives and illustrations of far-flung places and peoples—and the more pedagogically-minded *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation* founded by Pierre-Jules Hetzel and Jean Macé in 1864. There was a new vogue in the 1870s: the Société de Géographie's *L'Exploration* began printing in December 1876, with the subtitle "journal des conquêtes de la civilisation

printed articles on the history of exploration and colonization, and promoted further overseas expansion and colonial development. In a recurring column called "De la Colonisation," written by editor-in-chief Émile Sumien, the newspaper synthesized (and simplified) scholarship and theory on European colonial history and methodology, with the stated aim of examining colonial practices of the past in order to ensure future success.[87] As Sumien asked rhetorically in the first column of the series, "Connaître comment d'autres ont su réussir ou ont dû échouer, n'est-ce point avoir les premiers moyens de s'assurer un succès durable?"[88] This was a vulgarization of the trend in colonial history and theory exemplified by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu (*De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, 1874), as well as Lucien Prévost-Paradol (*La France nouvelle*, 1868) and the abbé Raboisson, who argued in his 1877 *Étude sur les colonies* that a renewal of French Catholic faith would also bring about a renewal of French colonial expansion and growth.[89]

La Nouvelle France was also similar in form and content to Catholic missionary magazines, in particular the well known and long-established *Les Missions catholiques*, a weekly published by the Lyon-based missionary organization, the Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi. A

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sur tous les points du globe," while the popular *Journal des voyages* was, like the marquis' colonial project, established in July 1877. The editor's note to the first issue of the *Journal des voyages* claimed to be responding to "le goût de plus en plus marqué en France pour les récits de voyages et d'aventures."

[87] During a 5 January 1883 interrogation, Sumien was asked by the Paris investigators if he was the author of "les articles intitulés 'De la Colonisation' et signés de l'initiale E." He replied, "Je reconnais que ces articles sont de moi." To the great frustration of his questioner, this was the only time he admitted to an active role in the production of *La Nouvelle France* (in an earlier interrogation on 3 November 1882 he had insisted that he was only a "compilateur" or an "arrangeur": AP, D4U9 28, f. 983e), and further on in the conversation the *juge d'instruction*, Bouniceau-Gesmon, was driven by exasperation to ask, "Pourquoi à une question si simple, si nette et si précise: êtes vous l'auteur de tel ou tel article et spécialement de l'article dont nous venons de vous parler? ne répondez-vous d'une façon simple, nette et précise ni oui ni non?" AP, D4U9 28, f. 984a.

[88] "De la Colonisation," *La Nouvelle France* no. 1, 15 July 1879, 5.

[89] Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1874); Lucien-Anatole Prévost-Paradol, *La France nouvelle* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868); abbé Raboisson, *Étude sur les colonies et la colonisation au regard de la France* (Paris: Challamel aîné & Le Monde, 1877).

comparison of typical front pages for issues of *La Nouvelle France* and *Les Missions catholiques* underscores the similarities, and suggests that de Rays and Sumien were likely using the missionary periodical as a model. *Les Missions catholiques*, like *La Nouvelle France*, had a relatively low annual subscription price, of 10 francs. In 1876, Émile Sumien described the periodical's role as raising funds for the organization which published it;[90] similarly, the role of *La Nouvelle France* would be to attract potential investors and to solicit further financial contributions to the cause through the purchase of land titles in the colony.

In December 1879, following a suggestion by a supporter identified as Mademoiselle D. Ger… in Montpellier, *La Nouvelle France* also began soliciting cash and in-kind donations from supporters, just as *Les Missions catholiques* did.[91] Lists of "petits cadeaux" began appearing in the very next issue. Subscribers sent money as well as useful items, like "15 costumes pour les sauvages" or small devotional objects, like "24 douzaines de médailles de N.–D. de Lourdes, bénites et indulgenciées dans la grotte" (figures 14 and 15).[92] These lists would later be a great source of amusement to newspaper commentators, and would also figure prominently in Alphonse Daudet's *Port-Tarascon* (discussed in the following chapter).

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[90] Sumien described *Les Missions catholiques* in terms that foreshadowed the newspaper he would soon have a hand in creating: "ce journal est illustré; chaque semaine, en seize grandes pages de texte à deux colonnes, il raconte les merveilles de l'apostolat catholique sous tous les méridiens; bien modique est son prix, 10 fr. par an; […] il parvient encore à produire quelques bénéfices matériels qui sont versés dans les caisses de la Propagation de la Foi […]." *Annales du Salon des Œuvres de Marseille*, (Marseille: Marius Olive, 1877), 105.

[91] This young woman wrote asking "Pourquoi ne feriez-vous pas pour notre Mission, car enfin celle-ci est bien la nôtre, ce que l'on fait souvent pour d'autres, à la grande satisfaction des Missionnaires?" She suggested soliciting the kinds of small devotional objects cluttering French homes, because they might help missionaries to "attir[er] à eux des indigènes." Issues of *Les Missions catholiques* included a list of "Causerie et informations," *La Nouvelle France* no. 6, 15 December 1879, 47-48.

[92] "Liste des personnes qui ont envoyé des dons pour les missionnaires de la Nouvelle France," *La Nouvelle France* no. 7, 15 January 1880, 36; "Les Petits Cadeaux," *La Nouvelle France*, no. 28, 15 October 1881, 79; "Les Petits Cadeaux," *La Nouvelle France*, no. 15, 15 September 1880, 43.

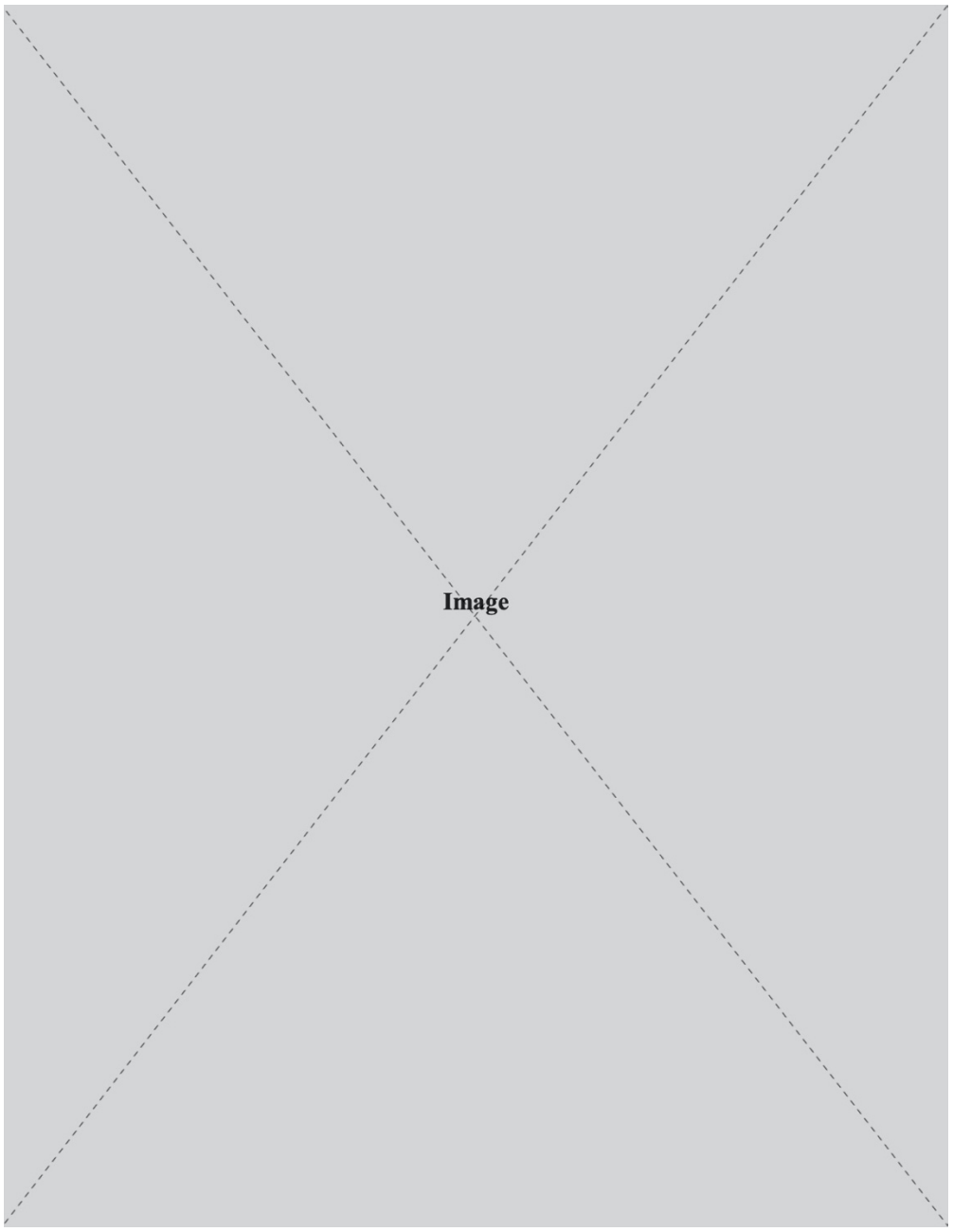


Figure 14. "Les Petits Cadeaux," *La Nouvelle France*, no. 28, 15 October 1881, 79. Source: Archives municipales de Marseille.

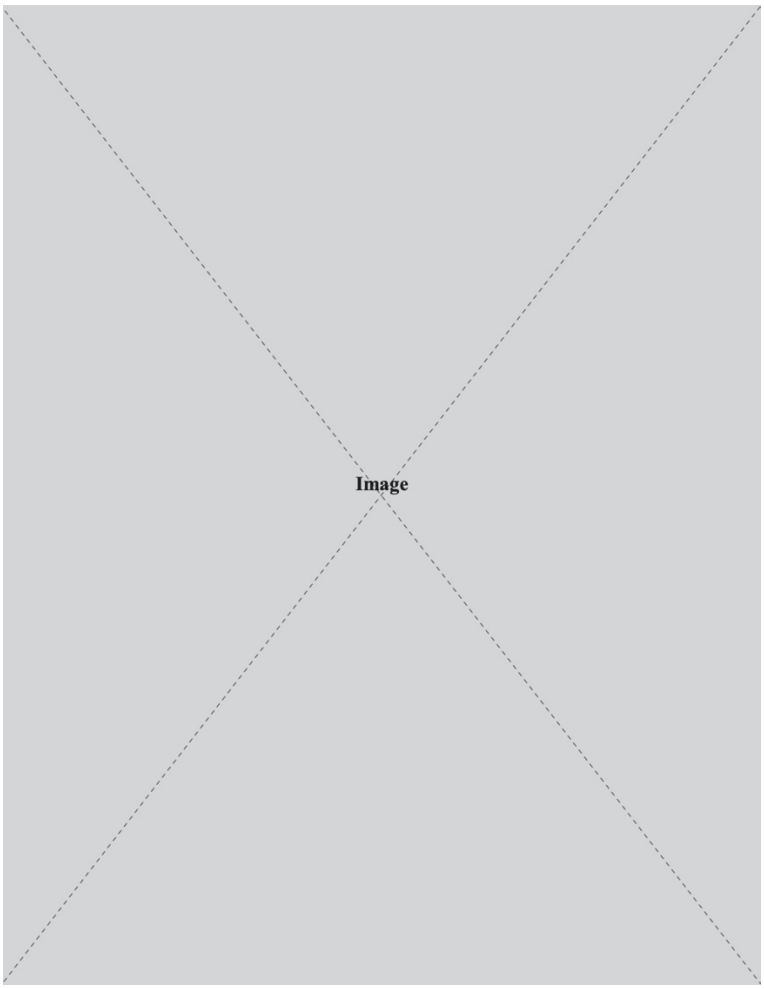


Figure 15. "Les Petits Cadeaux," *La Nouvelle France*, no. 15, 15 September 1880, 43. Source: Bibliothèque Armand Salacrou, Le Havre.

The contents of *La Nouvelle France*—particularly in its early issues before the colony was officially 'founded'—also resembled those of *Les Missions catholiques*. *La Nouvelle France* frequently excerpted travel accounts and histories of missionaries to Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The very first issue included an article on the history of Anglican missionaries in New Caledonia, taken from a work by Charles Lemire of the Société de géographie commerciale, and an August 1880 issue excerpted from an unidentified work on the earliest Catholic missions to the islands that were to make up the future Nouvelle France.[93] Beginning in July 1881 *La*

[93] "Missions religieuses," 15 July 1879, an extract concerning the history of Anglican missions in New

Nouvelle France began serial publication of chapters from a history of Catholic missions in Melanesia, taken from an 1854 work by a Port-Breton collaborator and frequent contributor to *La Nouvelle France*, a canon from Carcassonne named Léopold Verguet.[94]

Finally, perhaps most importantly, the men behind *La Nouvelle France* drew from the century-old archive of Pacific island imagery to create enticing new engraved illustrations – now cast, thanks to helpful captions, as depictions of locations and landscapes in the future colony. In his memoir, Alexandre Baudouin emphasized the central role played by illustrations, both in *La Nouvelle France* and in other ephemeral print objects, in the appeal of the venture. He described flabbergasted migrants aboard the fourth and last ship to reach the would-be Port-Breton pulling their lavishly illustrated land titles from their pockets (figure 16), and comparing its illustration of a bustling colonial port with the undeveloped landscape before them: "Il y en avait qui tiraient de leurs poches leurs titres au porteur, où l'on voyait la fameuse ville, avec ses quais, son phare, ses maisons, ses églises, ses docks, ses usines, ses marchandises que l'on débarquait et ses exploitations agricoles. 'Eh quoi! c'était donc vrai! Port-Breton n'existait que sur le papier!'"[95]

Caledonia, excerpted from Charles Lemire, *La Colonisation française en Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances* (Paris: Challamel, 1877); "Premières Missions aux îles Salomon, à la Nouvelle-Irlande, aux îles Woodlark et Rook et à la Nouvelle-Guinée," *La Nouvelle France*, 15 August 1880, 16-18.

[94] *La Nouvelle France* no. 25, 15 July 1881, 13-17. After de Rays and Sumien were arrested in the summer of 1882, Verguet would take over the production of *La Nouvelle France*.

[95] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 108.

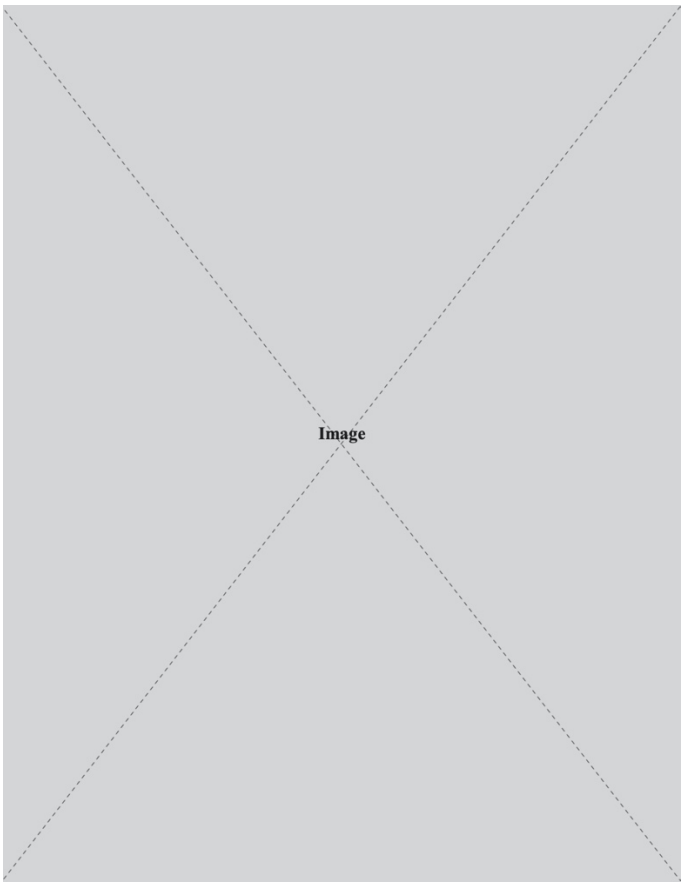


Figure 16. Land title for ten hectares in "La Nouvelle France, colonie libre de Port-Breton (Océanie)." Dated 31 August 1879. The border illustrations show scenes of missionary work, exotic flora and fauna, and, as Baudouin described it, "la fameuse ville, avec ses quais, son phare, ses maisons, ses églises, ses docks, ses usines, ses marchandises que l'on débarquait et ses exploitations agricoles." Source: Archives de Paris, D4U9 28.

In the first three years of its run, *La Nouvelle France* printed numerous illustrations representing the location of the future Port-Breton as a lushly fertile paradise. Baudouin noted that for the well-informed reader, these images ought to have seemed familiar:

> Malheureusement, pour quiconque connaît le matériel de gravures déjà existant, toutes ces belles images ont un faux air de vieilles connaissances, et en fouillant dans la collection de l'*Univers Pittoresque*, publié il y a tantôt quarante ans, on retrouve, en grande partie, le matériel dont il a suffi d'acheter les clichés pour illustrer le journal la Nouvelle-France.[96]

L'Univers pittoresque, the umbrella title for an extensive series of travel narratives and

[96] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 28.

ethnographies, included three volumes on the Pacific published in 1836 and 1837. *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde* was written and compiled by the explorer Domény de Rienzi. It was from these three volumes that *La Nouvelle France* drew the majority of its early illustrations: between June 1879 and June 1880, twelve of fourteen illustrations (excluding portraits and one image depicting the ship *Chandernagor*) were copied directly from *Océanie*. The *Univers pittoresque* volumes were extensively illustrated, with steel engravings printed on separate pages which could be bound either at the end of each volume or interleaved according to indications given by the publishers. To illustrate *La Nouvelle France*, the engravers hired by the Port-Breton organizers copied the original prints from *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, reversing the image as they engraved it into new woodblocks in order to preserve its original orientation.[97]

When depicting the distant islands of the Pacific for travel narratives and illustrated periodicals, nineteenth-century engravers copied and re-adapted from a small pool of compositions, creating a visual language of the Pacific that would, by 1880, have been familiar to many readers. *La Nouvelle France* exploited this familiarity, pushing beyond the usual practice of borrowing into the realm of outright fraud. The third volume of *Océanie* had included only three illustrations specifically depicting the island of New Ireland, where Port-Breton was to be established. *La Nouvelle France* reused these three (*Océanie* plates 242-44), but once they had exhausted illustrations of that island, de Rays and Sumien did not hesitate to borrow images

[97] Copying the image as seen on the printed page onto new woodblocks would produce a result with the left-right orientation reversed; a mirror image of the original. Such a copy could easily be produced by engravers, who could even take a shortcut by placing an image to be copied onto the woodblocks and cutting through it to engrave. This is not what the *Nouvelle France* wood engravers did, however; the new wood engravings they produced had the same orientation as the originals, indicating that they reversed the orientation while engraving freehand. This was a common practice and not difficult for practiced engravers. The use of this technique also explains the small differences in vegetation and layout that can be observed in the images, as well as the more significant changes such as alteration of the figures. I thank Julie Mellby, Graphic Arts Librarian at Princeton University Library, for her help in understanding the techniques used for the *Nouvelle France* illustrations.

of other sites across Oceania – relabeling them to remove geographic specificity and thereby suggest that they too showed the future Port-Breton or Nouvelle France. The new captions they appended to their copies of old images played at once on readers' expected familiarity with the visual language of the Pacific and on their expected *un*familiarity with its actual geography and cultural differences. De Rays and Sumien relabeled as "Port-Breton," "Nouvelle France," or simply "Océanie," illustrations from *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde* showing sites as far-flung as the Admiralty islands (approximately 450 miles from Port-Breton), Vanikoro (1,000 miles), West Papua (1,500 miles), the Bonin Islands (2,300 miles) and even Tahiti (nearly 4,000 miles). These captions took visual specificity and made it general: one "forêt vierge" in Oceania was, for *La Nouvelle France*'s intents and purposes, like any other.

A specific example, one that did draw the attention of the criminal investigation, demonstrates the way in which this approximate geography could work to deceive. The June 1880 issue of *La Nouvelle France* included an illustration depicting, according to the caption, an encounter between the baron Titeu de la Croix (the first 'governor' of Port-Breton who sailed on the *Chandernagor*) and a local sovereign, king Toméo, with whom de la Croix claimed to have concluded a treaty (figure 17). In the regular rubric "Nos Gravures," the paper narrated the scene in detail:

> Au fond, en rade, on aperçoit le *Chandernagor* qui a amené le personnel de la Colonie nouvelle.
>
> Une barque portant les présents destinés aux indigènes est amarrée au rivage.
>
> Vers la gauche, on remarque une grande cabane qui est le palais du chef de la tribu indigène. Quelques sauvages, serviteurs du monarque, gardent l'entrée de l'habitation.
>
> Au premier plan, le roi Toméo, suivi de ses gardes du corps armés de sagaies, s'avance au devant de M. le baron de La Croix qui lui tend une main amie. C'est l'échange de ces bonnes relations dont il a été parlé et la consécration du traité d'alliance conclu entre le chef indigène et le représentant de Monsieur le marquis de Rays qui, comme on le sait, a été reconnu par les naturels comme le souverain des îles Laughlan. M. de La Croix est entouré de divers officiers et de plusieurs matelots armés, prêts à faire

respecter sa personne en cas de besoin.[98]

In reality, this engraving was an adaptation of an illustration from the third volume of *Océanie* of a bay in West Papua – some 1,300 miles from Port-Breton (figure 18). The fertile vegetation and thatched building (identified in *La Nouvelle France* as the "palais du chef de la tribu indigène") were kept for the background, with slight modifications, while the figures in the left foreground of the original image (two figures in European garb on the left, surveying the view) were replaced by the figures of Toméo and Titeu de la Croix and their entourages. In the adapted illustration, there is now a ship anchored in the bay in the background. Though the description does not claim that the engraving is a direct representation of the events as they happened, it insists repeatedly on its verisimilitude, claming that it is "bien conforme" to a previous relation of the events and is a "représentation vivante" whose "aspect de vérité" will strike the reader, and finally that it will serve as one of "les véritables illustrations" of Port-Breton's history.[99] However, interrogated about this particular illustration, Sumien, the editor-in-chief of *La Nouvelle France*, admitted that it was based partly on a "croquis […] assez informe" sent by Titeu de la Croix, and was otherwise drawn from the "descriptions des voyageurs."[100]

[98] "Nos gravures – Entrevue du baron de La Croix et du roi Toméo," *La Nouvelle France* no. 12, 15 June 1880, 108-109.

[99] "Entrevue du baron de La Croix et du roi Toméo," *La Nouvelle France* no. 12, 109.

[100] Interrogation of Émile Sumien by Bouniceau-Gesmon, 2 February 1883. AP, D4U9 28 f. 990a.

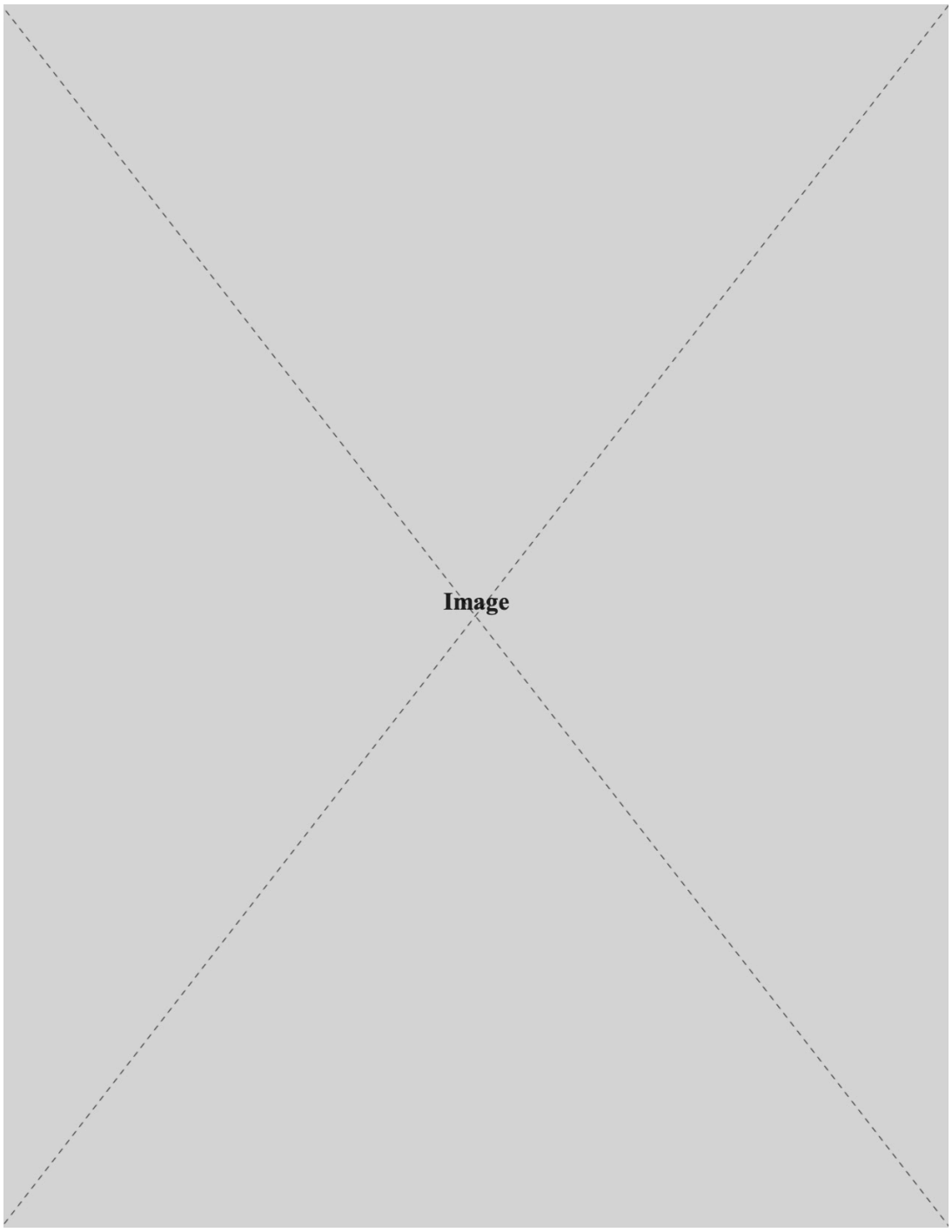


Figure 17. "Entrevue du baron de La Croix et du roi Toméo." *La Nouvelle France* no. 12, 15 June 1880, 108. Source: Bibliothèque Armand Salacrou, Le Havre.

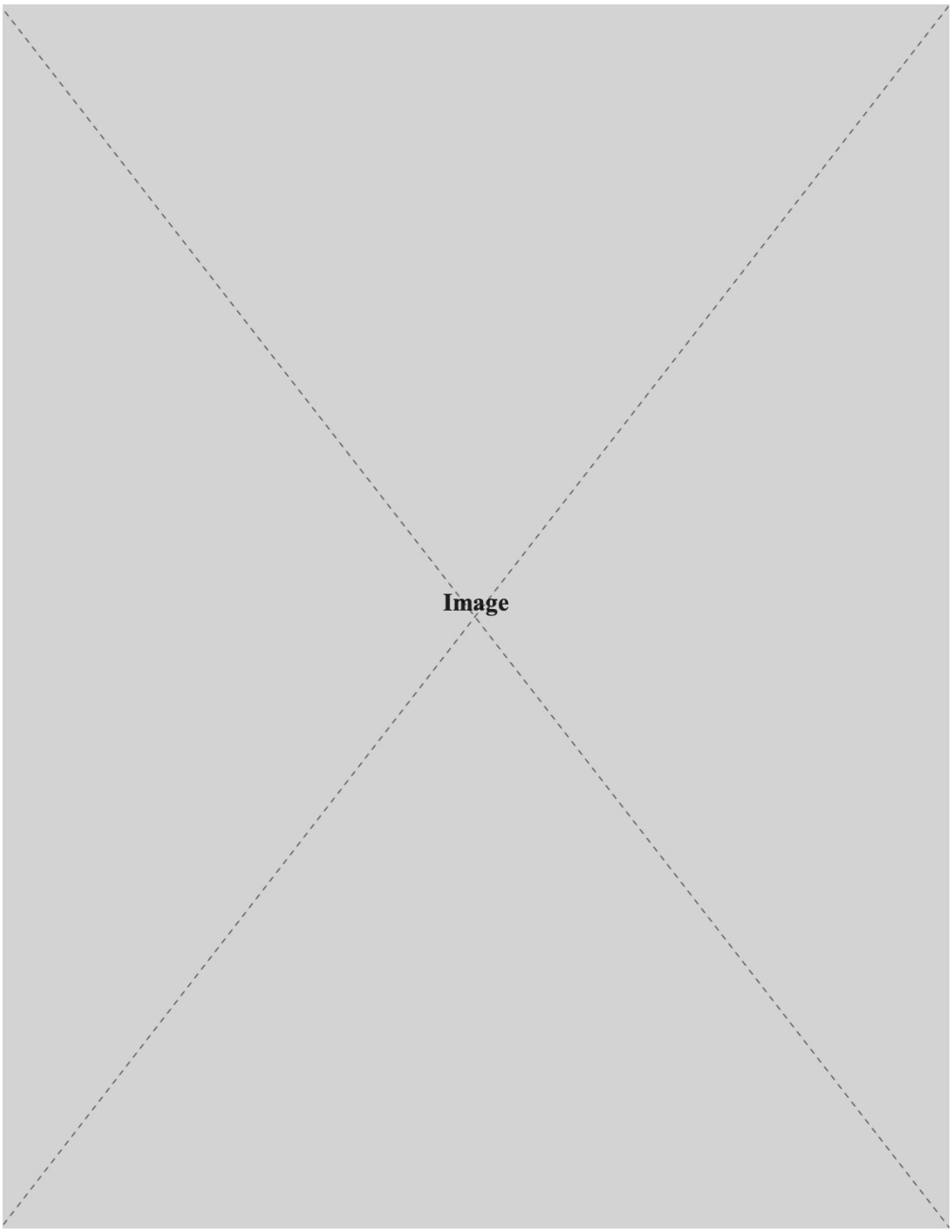


Figure 18. "Papouasie – Vue de Manavaï." *Océanie, cinquième partie du monde*, vol. III, plate 227. Source: Leipzig Universitätsbibliothek.

Geographic vagueness also suited the marquis de Rays' increasingly outlandish claims concerning the possible expansion of Nouvelle France beyond the site chosen on New Ireland for Port-Breton. Already in his April 1879 speech in Marseille he promised that "aussitôt établis, nous rayonnerons autour de notre centre," and suggested a kind of trade and agricultural network established by treaties with the "chefs" of nearby "tribus maritimes." He described an unusual system of colonialism-by-association, which he called "notre système spécial de colonisation": "Nous relierons ainsi, dans un faisceau commun d'intérêts sérieusement étudiés, sous la sauvegarde et la sanction de leurs chefs naturels, toutes ces petites peuplades dont nous serons la tête, pour en former une sorte de confédération franco océanienne […]."[101] De Rays's promise of expansion was made visible in several maps printed of the future colonial territory between 1879 and 1881. Maps of New Ireland and the surrounding area were printed separately and distributed to investors and *Nouvelle France* subscribers.[102] One 1879 map, titled "Carte de la Nouvelle France: Colonie libre de Port-Breton" and captioned as being "dressé à Marseille sur des documents particuliers fournis par Mr. le Marquis de RAYS," shows the northernmost part of Australia, the island of New Guinea and the island archipelagoes to the east, from the Admiralty Islands to the Solomon Islands (figure 19). The words NOUVELLE FRANCE stretch across the map diagonally from northwest to southeast; this label in addition to the color-shading suggest that the entire eastern part of New Guinea, as well as all of the islands shown to its east, are part of de Rays's colonial domain.

[101] Sumien, "Nouvelle France en Océanie," *La Gazette du Midi*.

[102] Many of these maps were submitted by Port-Breton investors to the prosecution and are conserved among the investigation's files; others are part of small collections of Port-Breton print materials like that of the Archives nationales d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Provence.

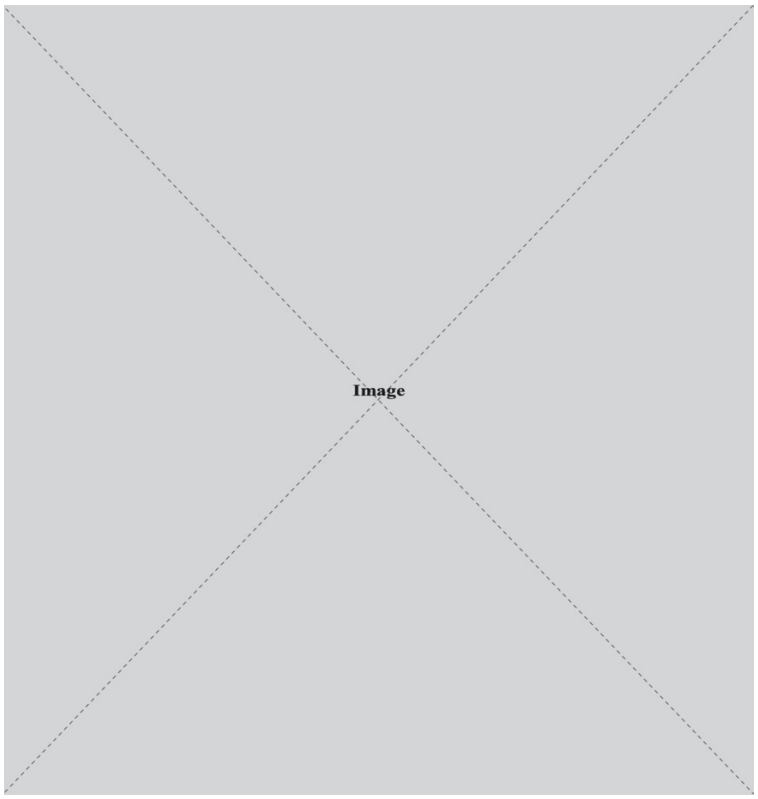


Figure 19. "Carte de la Nouvelle France – Colonie libre de Port-Breton – 1879." Source: Bibliothèque des Archives nationales d'outre-mer.

This was an astounding work of what we might call map fiction: brazenly labeling and thereby symbolically claiming an area that, in 1879, had not been reached by any of the colony's representatives or potential settlers, and that certainly had not been ceded by any treaties or agreements. A foldout version of this same map was later included in an 1880 book published by Paul de Groote, a Belgian doctor who headed the Brussels bureau and assiduously promoted Port-Breton in Belgian Catholic milieux.[103] This map, printed after the *Chandernagor*'s arrival at Port-Breton, concretized the founding of Nouvelle France by adding small French flags at the two sites where emigrants had landed, Port Praslin (the previous name, chosen by Bougainville, for what was now Port-Breton) and at one other site (figure 20).

[103] Paul de Groote, *Nouvelle-France: Colonie libre de Port-Breton, Océanie* (Brussels: Librairie catholique, 1880).

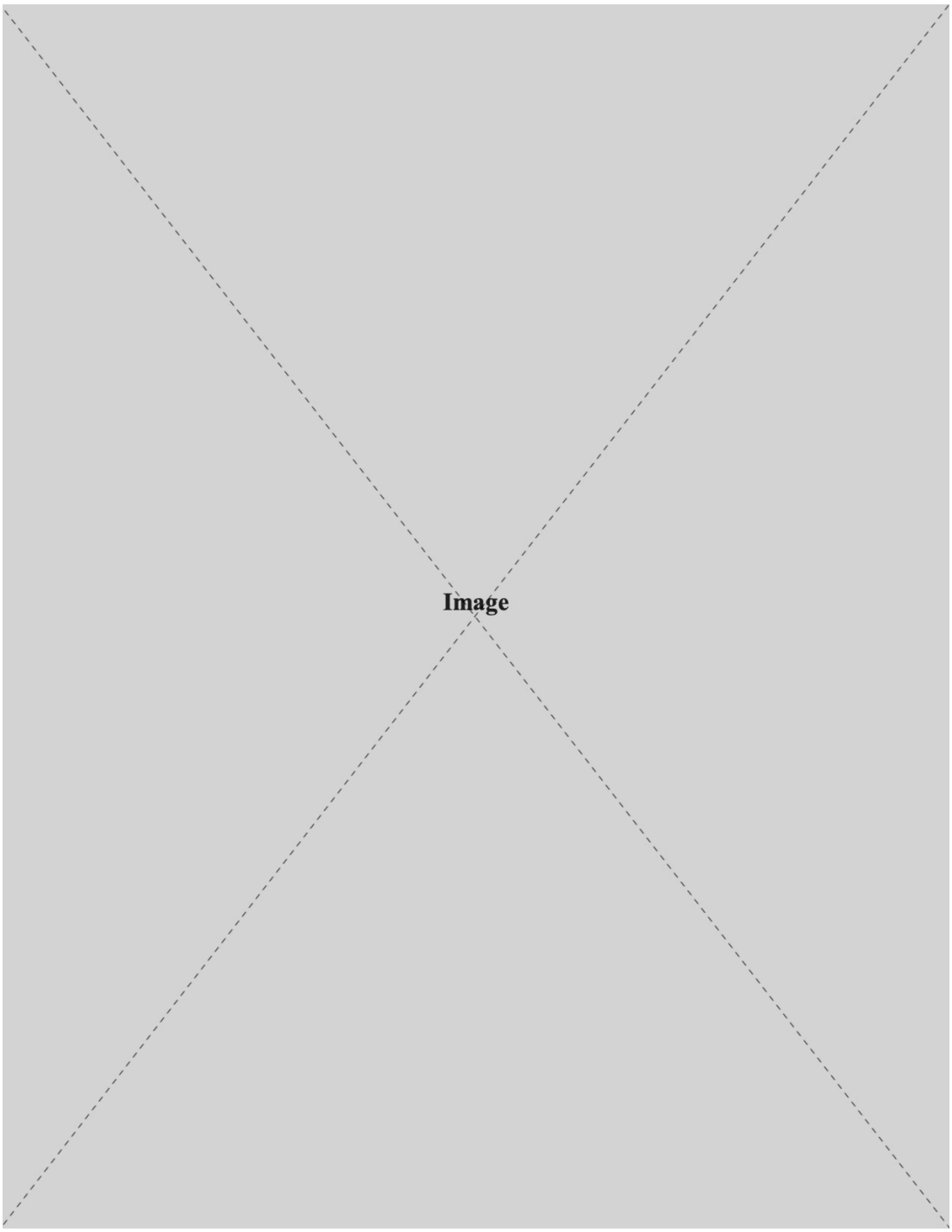


Figure 20. Map of Nouvelle France (above left, detail), from *La Colonie libre de Port-Breton: Nouvelle France en Océanie* (Marseille: M. Olive, 1879). Source: Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Map of Nouvelle France (above right, detail), showing French flags (circled) at Port Praslin and on the Îles Laughlan, from Paul de Groote, *Nouvelle-France: Colonie libre de Port-Breton, Océanie* (Brussels: Librairie catholique, 1880). Source: National Library of Australia.

Not only were *La Nouvelle France*'s illustrations borrowed, but much of its text was, as well, particularly in its first year. Textual borrowings—like the images, only occasionally attributed to their original sources—played a similar authenticating role, lending the venture an air of studied seriousness. Copying and repurposing the existing European accounts of Pacific exploration was, again, hardly uncommon. After the publication of explorers' official accounts, often in expensive government-funded editions out of reach for many readers, abridged and compiled versions would often be reissued in cheaper, popular editions – like the *Univers pittoresque* series. Indeed, *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde* was itself a compilation, stitching together the accounts of Bougainville, Dumont d'Urville, and others into a comprehensive and reasonably-priced *summa* of descriptions and images of the parts of the Pacific visited by Europeans. Similar volumes with titles like *Voyage autour du monde* or *Histoire générale des voyages* continued to be published throughout the midcentury.

La Nouvelle France's reliance on earlier sources gave the impression of extensive knowledge about the area to be colonized, while also cementing a link between de Rays and the tradition of Pacific exploration represented by figures like Bougainville, Dumont d'Urville, and Duperry – frequently cited by de Rays (who had not traveled to the Pacific himself – and who never would) as authorities whose brief visits to New Ireland justified his choice of the island as a site for a future colony.[104] In his lecture at the Marseille Salon des Œuvres, he explained that the basis for a productive colony in the Pacific was "un bon port de mer," and proclaimed that the port he had found was "bien choisi" since it had been "visité par Dumont d'Urville, relevé par Duperré [*sic*];" therefore, "les Français ont assurément, plus que tout autre peuple, le droit de

[104] Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (*Le voyage autour du monde,* 1771), Louis Isidore Duperrey (*Voyage autour du monde…* 1826-30), and Jules Dumont d'Urville (*Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe*…, 1830-35; *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde*, 1834-35).

s'y établir." It was the authority of these explorers that gave his choice of island and port credibility, and their Frenchness only bolstered his claim further – though he was still careful to note that his enterprise was a private one and therefore did not engage "en aucune façon la responsabilité de notre gouvernement."[105]

The trial issue (*numéro spécimen*) of *La Nouvelle France*, printed in June 1879, demonstrates the role played by these French explorers, with both text and illustrations taken from the published accounts of their travels. An article titled "L'Océanie" quotes a long passage from the same multivolume series, *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, that was the source for most of the newspaper's engravings during its first year. The passage, attributed to the explorer Domény de Rienzi, is presented as a general description of Oceania, and the image it gives of "les nombreux archipels de l'Océanie" is appealing:

> Les nombreux archipels de l'Océanie placés entre les tropiques se ressemblent […] Quoique sous la zône torride, ces jolies îles caressées jour et nuit par les brises rafraîchissantes de la mer, partagent la température de l'Océan sur lequel elles sont assises avec tant de grâce; elles jouissent d'un printemps perpétuel rarement troublé par les ouragans, les volcans et les tremblements de terre; partout elles présentent les scènes les plus ravissantes.

In the quote, Domény de Rienzi goes on to paint a familiar picture of Pacific paradise, where "de jeunes garçons […] semblables aux tritons de la Fable," dive from trees into the surf, near emerald-colored coral reefs; lushly green islands, "arrosés par des eaux fraîches et limpides," with fertile land "qui produit dans chaque saison et n'exige aucun soin pour produire."[106]

However, a look at *La Nouvelle France*'s source for this passage, the first volume of *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, reveals that the newspaper had engaged in deceptive editing. Domény de Rienzi was in fact describing only the islands of Polynesia, and not Oceania

[105] Sumien, "Nouvelle France en Océanie," *Gazette du Midi*, 3.

[106] "L'Océanie," *La Nouvelle France*, numéro spécimen, 15 June 1879, 4.

as a whole. By replacing a few words and removing others, *La Nouvelle France* transformed a passage about a subregion of Oceania which did not even include the future Port-Breton (located on the island of New Ireland, in the subregion of Melanesia) into a general description whose tantalizing references would now be read by potential investors and colonists as applying to the island the marquis de Rays had wisely selected for his colony.[107]

The next page of the trial issue of *La Nouvelle France* contains the newspaper's first wood-engraved illustration, an image of a waterfall shaded by trees and observed by two small figures, one European and one indigenous, gesturing toward it (figure 21). The caption read "LA CASCADE DE BOUGAINVILLE / Colonie libre de Port-Breton (Océanie) / (NOUVELLE FRANCE)." This image was taken from *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, and in this case, it did represent an actual site on New Ireland, near the port named "Port Praslin" by the explorer Bougainville (figure 22). The only change made to the version published in *La Nouvelle France* was to replace the original figure of a single indigenous male standing with a pole, or possibly a fishing spear, in the background, with a pair of figures in the foreground pointing at the waterfall – and, of course, to make a substantial modification to the illustration's caption, which now read "La Cascade de Bougainville – Colonie libre de Port-Breton (Océanie) (Nouvelle France)," as if the site had already been claimed and settled by Port-Breton's colonists, perhaps in a moment of amity with the native inhabitants like the one now shown in the modified engraving.

[107] As defined by Domény de Rienzi, Polynesia stretched "depuis les îles Mariannes jusqu'à l'île Vaïhou, éloignées de 2,000 lieues, et de Houaï à la Nouvelle Zeeland, également éloignées de 2,000 lieues." *Océanie, cinquième partie du monde*, vol. 1, 337.

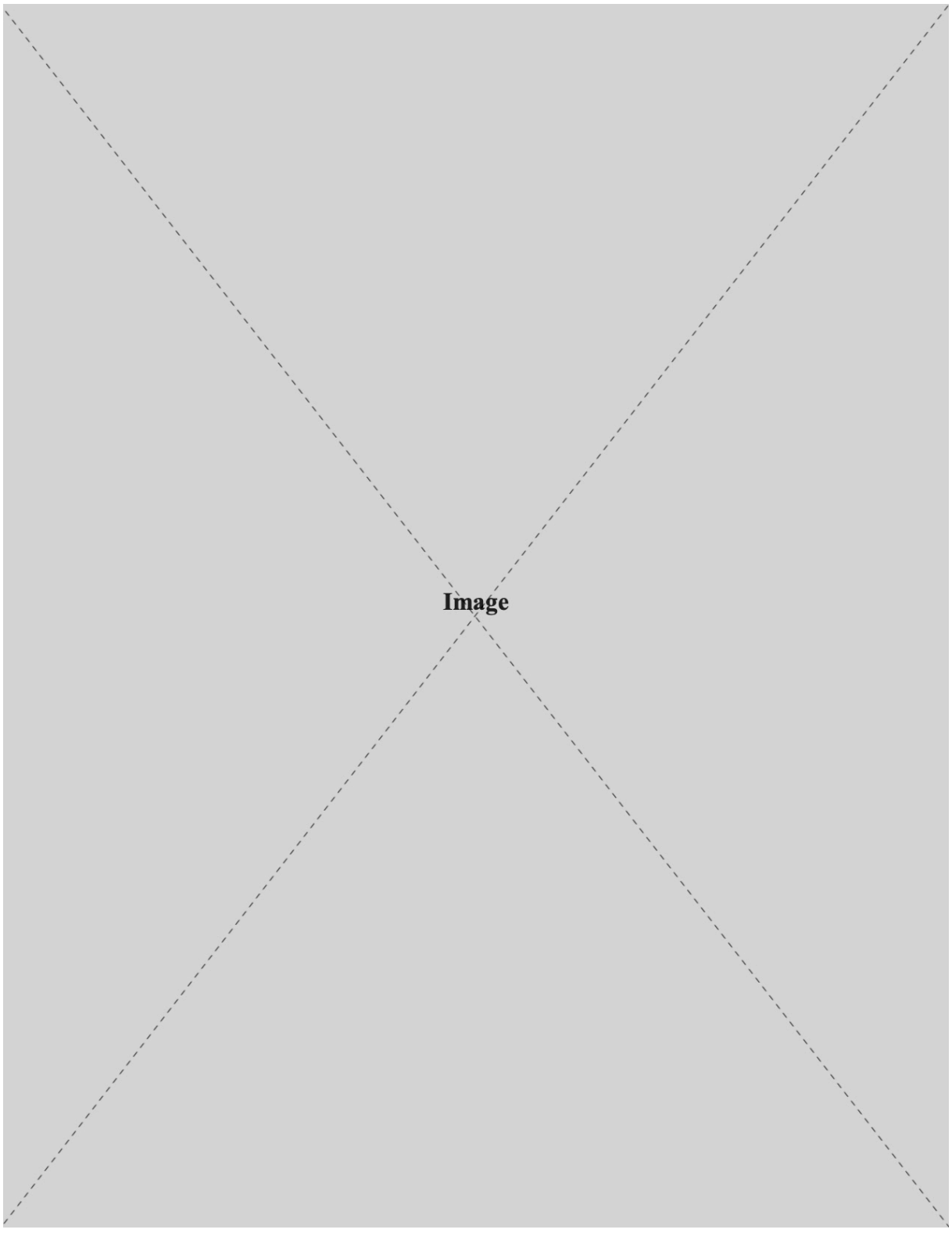


Figure 21. "La Cascade de Bougainville – Colonie libre de Port-Breton (Océanie) (Nouvelle France)," *La Nouvelle France*, no. spécimen, 15 June 1879. Source: Bibliothèque des Archives nationales d'outre-mer.

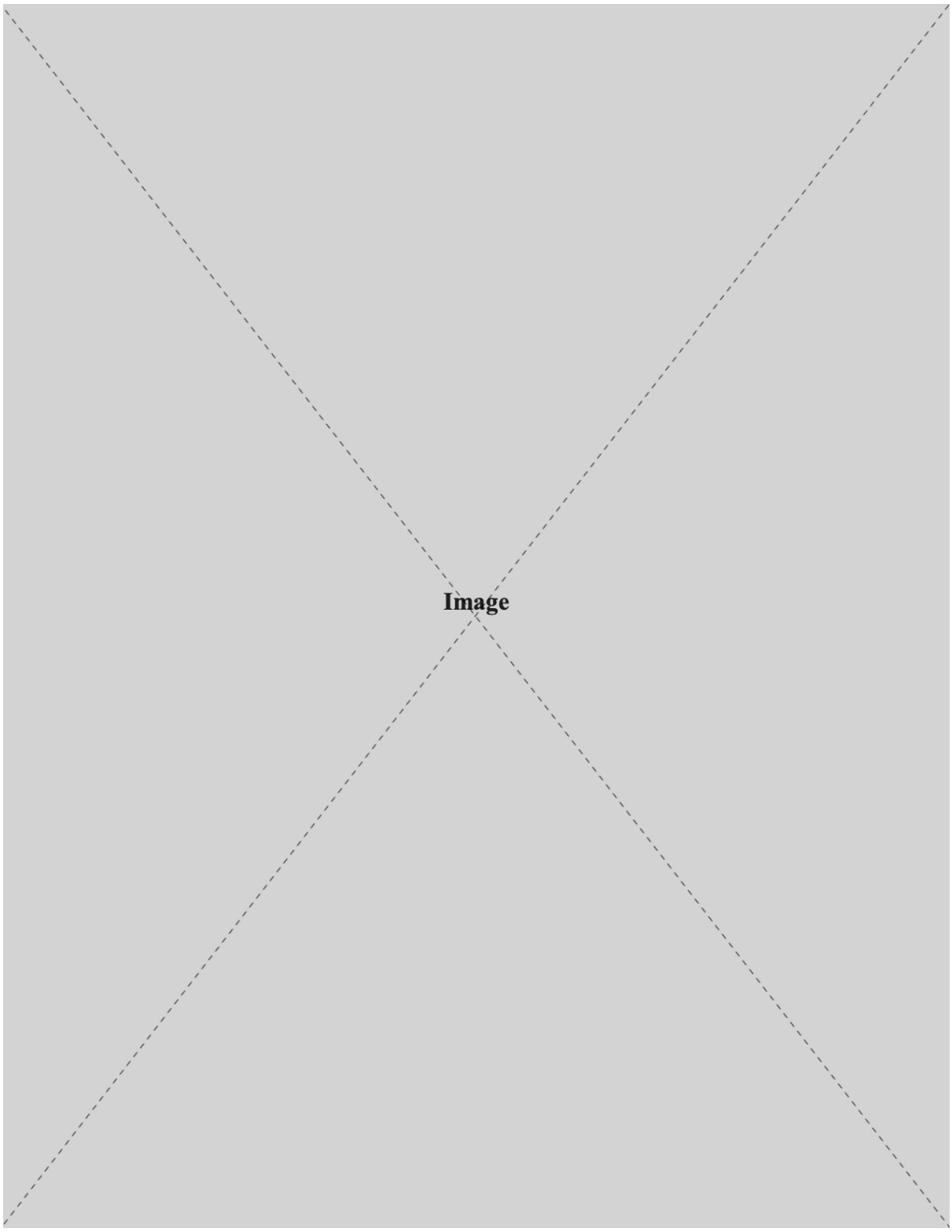


Figure 22. "Nouvelle Irlande – Cascade du port Praslin," *Océanie, cinquième partie du monde*, vol. III, plate 243. Source: Leipzig Universitätsbibliothek.

The choice to present the so-called "Cascade de Bougainville" as the first illustration of Port-Breton was doubly meaningful: the site suggested both natural beauty and natural resources.[108] The text that accompanied the image reflected this, moving from a discussion of "ce luxuriant rivage" with "ses merveilles les plus apparentes, au premier rang desquelles les navigateurs placent la belle fontaine dont nous donnons ici le dessin," to the importance of fresh water to development: "*Urbes aquæ condunt*, dit un vieil adage; ce sont les eaux qui font naître les villes […] Port-Breton aura naturellement et sans l'intervention de l'art, cette belle et hygiénique richesse. A ses pieds la mer qui enrichit, — au flanc de ses montagnes l'eau douce qui fait vivre."[109] The rest of the accompanying text, signed "E." (denoting editor-in-chief Émile Sumien) was a compilation of quotes from the travel accounts of explorers who had seen and described the waterfall. The first quote, which is attributed to Duperrey but is actually from Bougainville, sings the praises of the waterfall, describing it as "digne d'être reproduite par le pinceau du plus grand peintre."[110] But the following quotes—from the explorer Dumont d'Urville and the naturalist René Lesson, a naturalist who accompanied Duperrey and Dumont d'Urville on their 1822-25 circumnavigational voyage—are selectively edited, eliminating words and sentences that either minimize the importance of the waterfall, or suggest that the area near it might in fact not be suitable for settlement. *La Nouvelle France*'s quote from Dumont d'Urville

[108] The text that accompanied the image reflected this, moving from a discussion of "ce luxuriant rivage" with "ses merveilles les plus apparentes, au premier rang desquelles les navigateurs placent la belle fontaine dont nous donnons ici le dessin," to the importance of fresh water to development: "Port-Breton aura naturellement et sans l'intervention de l'art, cette belle et hygiénique richesse. A ses pieds la mer qui enrichit, — au flanc de ses montagnes l'eau douce qui fait vivre." *La Nouvelle France*, no. spécimen, 15 June 1879. ANOM, BIB AOM RES31172.

[109] *La Nouvelle France*, no. spécimen, 15 June 1879. ANOM, BIB AOM RES31172.

[110] This error in attribution in fact confirms that Sumien's specific source for this quote was *Océanie*, since Domény de Rienzi's particular wording makes the author of the passage in question difficult to identify.

is edited so as to remove any suggestion that he was disagreeing with Bougainville's praise of the waterfall, cutting out the sentence "Bougainville a exagéré l'importance de cette cascade" and eliminating the "tout simplement" which had qualified the judgment that "C'est un torrent assez large":

> *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde*:
> Cette chute d'eau étant située à cinq minutes du rivage, nous y arrivâmes bientôt. Bougainville a exagéré l'importance de cette cascade. C'est tout simplement un torrent assez large qui se précipite le long d'un rocher madréporique d'une hauteur de quarante à cinquante pieds.[111]
>
> *La Nouvelle France*:
> Cette chute d'eau étant située à cinq minutes du rivage, nous y arrivâmes bientôt à ses pieds… C'est un torrent assez large qui se précipite le long d'un rocher madréporique, d'une hauteur de quarante à cinquante pieds.[112]

A quote from Lesson, likely sourced from Domény de Rienzi, is similarly truncated.[113] In the original, Lesson's description of the waterfall begins with this less-than-enthusiastic observation: "Pendant la durée de notre relâche, la source ne fournissait que peu d'eau, car nous étions à la fin de l'été dans cette partie du monde, et au moment où la saison des pluies allaient commencer," and the sentence that closes the quote in *La Nouvelle France*, "Comme site romantique, cette cascade mérite de fixer l'attention," is not the final sentence in the original passage, which in fact goes on to compare the waterfall unfavorably to others the expedition had observed in the Pacific. Another sentence takes note of the unpleasant local insect life: "De grosses fourmis, dont la morsure est douloureuse, sont très communes en ce lieu."[114] There was,

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[111] Dumont d'Urville is not quoted in *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, in the section on the waterfall, but his account was widely available and often republished. *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde*, vol. 2 (Paris: Tenré, 1835), 169. I cite this passage from volume two of the reedited 1853 edition: Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage autour du monde*, vol. 2 (Paris: Furne, 1853), 237.

[112] *La Nouvelle France*, no. spécimen, 15 June 1879, 5.

[113] Quoted in *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, vol. 3, 353.

[114] Quoted in *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, vol. 3, 353.

unsurprisingly, no mention made of large biting ants in the description presented in *La Nouvelle France*.

LE FIGARO AND "L'ÉQUIPÉE DU CHANDERNAGOR"

The creative reuse of the archive of Pacific print and image underscores the extent of Port-Breton's print deception, and goes a long way toward answering Baudouin's question of "comment d'aussi étranges aventures ont été possibles à une époque comme celle-ci." This was a question that had preoccupied commentators on the Port-Breton affair since its first appearances on newspaper pages in 1880 and 1881.[115] The stories that began trickling back to France in mid-1880 and continued through to the end of 1883, first via cabled newspaper reports from Australia and eventually from the mouths of survivors themselves, were almost too far-fetched to be believed. The first news arrived in the summer of 1880, when many newspapers relayed—usually in the *faits divers* rubric—a story from the *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting that the first attempt at colonization of Port-Breton, by the emigrants aboard the *Chandernagor*, had "met with a serious disaster at the outset": the settlement attempt had failed, and a number of colonists had died of hunger or disease.[116]

[115] There was some coverage of the departure of the first ship for Port-Breton, the *Chandernagor*, in 1879, but it was relatively minor and confined to short notices in the back pages. The *Chandernagor* was meant to depart from Le Havre, but the "circulaire Tirard" forbade the embarkment of emigrants for Port-Breton. The ship then tried to depart from Antwerp, Belgium, again being blocked, and eventually was able to embark emigrants and depart from Vlissingen in the Netherlands.

[116] "The New Colony at New Ireland," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 June 1880, 5. Details from this and other *Herald* articles from early June were reported in the French press in early August; see for instance a small item in the "Nouvelles diverses" column in *Le Journal des Débats*, 2 August 1880, 3.

The newspaper coverage that followed would correspond to the arrival in Paris of groups of survivors of the four different expeditions (which had set sail between 1879 and 1881), particularly the first and last. In late 1880, the first survivors returned to French soil, a group of men who disembarked in Dieppe after completing the long overseas voyage from Australia. They made their way to Paris, where they immediately engaged the services of a lawyer, who in turn mobilized connections in the Parisian press. Stories began to appear, at first in radical republican newspapers like *La Lanterne* and *L'Intransigeant*. *La Lanterne* reported in mid-December that "les malheureux colons, abandonnés à eux-mêmes, viennent de rentrer en France," and, a few weeks later, *L'Intransigeant* published a larger exposé on what it called "Un État catholique."[117] However, these attacks from the anticlerical left had little impact – that came only when the story broke in the pages *Le Figaro*, one of the most widely read Parisian dailies. Early in 1881, the survivors of the *Chandernagor* were interviewed by Pierre Giffard, *Le Figaro*'s lead reporter, and on 23 February, a sensational article telling their story appeared across three columns of page two of the newspaper under the title "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*."

Giffard's article brought the Port-Breton story out of the *faits divers* and closer to the front page, precipitating a rush of dramatic narratives. Soon thereafter, a letter from a survivor of the *Chandernagor* appeared in *L'Intransigeant*; another survivor's story was published in 1882 by *La Petite République française*.[118] In early 1883, the story of an anonymous survivor of the

[117] "Une Tentative de colonisation cléricale," *La Lanterne*, 14 December 1880, 2; "Un État catholique," *L'Intransigeant*, 26 December 1880, 3.

[118] "L'affaire du *Chandernagor*," *L'Intransigeant*, 4 & 8 March 1881, 2; "L'Affaire de Port-Breton racontée par une des victimes," *La Petite République française*, 19 & 20 August 1882, 2-3. The latter was the account of René Laville, the Parisian clothing store employee mentioned above.

India voyage was published in a small Dieppe newspaper called *Le Pilote*;[119] in mid-1883, it was the arrival of the survivors of the last ship, the *Nouvelle-Bretagne*, which prompted a new wave of stories, in particular Baudouin's *Les Martyrs de Port-Breton*, which was first serialized in the *feuilleton* rubric in *Le National* and would later be expanded and published as an extensively illustrated book under the new title *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*.[120]

In Giffard's influential telling, the *Chandernagor* expedition had been nothing short of a disaster; the island was unsuitable for settlement, the colonists were unprepared and under-supplied, many fell sick and died, and the survivors had needed to be rescued by a passing English ship. Giffard's article was a bombshell, and news of the *Chandernagor* disaster quickly spread across the Parisian press. What caught journalists' attention was not only the gripping story of the *Chandernagor* survivors, but also Giffard's powers of invention. *L'Intransigeant* in mid-December had already described the gap between emigrants' expectations and reality, writing straightforwardly that "La Nouvelle-France qui avait été présentée à ces malheureux comme un paradis océanien n'est qu'une terre vierge où tout est à faire."[121] In contrast, Giffard transformed their recollections into a dramatic page-turner, using imagined dialogue and narrativization to enliven journalistic detail:

> — La voilà donc, cette île fortunée, s'écrient les 84 colons qui croient que le Pactole y coule à larges bords. Nous voilà donc riches! Vive le marquis de Rays! Vivent les terres qu'on nous a promises et les champs à 10 francs l'hectare!
>
> — Pourtant, hasarde l'un des émigrants posté sur la dunette, l'île me paraît bien petite.

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[119] "Un Martyr de Port-Breton," *Le Pilote* (Dieppe), 14 April 1883, 3-4. This series in *Le Pilote*, and de Rays's response, will be discussed further on.

[120] Baudouin's account—also discussed in chapter three—was titled *Les Martyrs de Port-Breton* and appeared in *Le National* between 14 June and 28 July 1883. Another survivor's account would appear in *L'Intransigeant* later that year, timed to coincide with the reopening of the trial. "Affaire de Port-Breton – Souvenirs d'un passager du *Chandernagor*," *L'Intransigeant*, 28 November 1883, 2-3. This account was among the "Autour de *Port-Tarascon*" supplements included in the 1930 edition of *Port-Tarascon*.

[121] "Un État catholique," *L'Intransigeant*.

— Bah! répond un autre, c'est que tu la vois dans sa largeur. Elle n'est pas large, soit, mais elle a l'air d'être joliment longue.

On débarque. Désenchantement subit. Il n'y a pour toute île qu'un rocher sec, volcanique, étroit, capable au plus de porter çà et là autre chose que des ignames et des cocos. Une grève déserte est là. Jamais navire européen n'y a abordé depuis Bougainville, qui l'a reconnue en passant. L'île est montagneuse, impropre à la culture et peuplée de lézards énormes, de serpents dangereux, de perroquets qui hurlent par milliers.

Giffard went on to recount how the emigrants of the *Chandernagor* found themselves abandoned at the site of their would-be colony, with nothing to drink but "eau saumâtre" and nothing to eat but lizards and parrots, and were threatened by the indigenous people, who were "anthropophages quand on n'est pas bien armé."[122]

The details of Giffard's captivating narrative spread throughout the press in the following days and weeks. Newspapers which reprinted or repurposed Giffard's story included serious Parisian dailies like *Le Temps*, *Le Journal des Débats*, *La Justice*, *La Presse*, and *La République française*, as well as regional newspapers in Nantes and Marseille.[123] The next day, *Le Temps* published a piece echoing Giffard's tone, which declared "Quelle audace aveugle donne le goût des aventures!" and concluded with an ironic warning: "Les naïfs qui croiraient encore aux délices de Port-Breton sont prévenus."[124] *Le Journal des Débats* similarly played up the moment when the emigrants caught sight of their new home: "Grande fut la déception! la Nouvelle-France est un rocher sec," and so on.[125] For Maurice Talmeyr in *L'Intransigeant*, in a *chronique* titled "Le roi des fumistes," the island was "un horrible coin de terre inculte […] Pas un arbre,

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[122] Giffard, "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*.

[123] "La fin du *Chandernagor*," *Le Temps*, 24 February 1881, 2; *Le Journal des débats*, 25 February 1881, 2; *La Justice*, 27 February 1881, 3; *La Presse*, 27 February 1881; *La République française*, 25 February 1881; *L'Union bretonne* (Nantes), 27 February 1881, 1; *Le Phare de la Loire* (Nantes), 27 February 1881, 2; H., "La Colonie libre de Port-Breton," *Le Petit Marseillais*, 24 February 1881, 3.

[124] "L'Affaire du 'Chandernagor'," 3 & 8 March 1881; "Tombara," Le Petit Parisien, 5 March 1881.

[125] "Nouvelles diverses," *Le Journal des débats*, 25 February 1881, 2. This article was based on *Le Figaro*'s and was reprinted in many other newspapers, including *Le Petit Journal*, *La Justice*, and *Le Phare de la Loire*, all on 27 February.

pas une fleur, pas une source, pas un gibier. Ce port breton était un écueil sauvage."[126] In the letter from a *Chandernagor* survivor published shortly thereafter in the same paper, the site chosen for the new Port-Breton was characterized, colorfully, as "un pays où une chèvre crèverait de faim, à moins qu'elle ne mourut de soif," while in the same week the popular *Le Petit Parisien* described the island as "un ilot aride peuplé d'anthropophages."[127] News items clearly based on Giffard's story also appeared in the English press. The London *Times* reported that the *Chandernagor* emigrants had "found the expected paradise a rocky and barren tract inhabited by cannibals," where only "parrots and a large kind of lizard served as food."[128] As Giffard's account of the island's topography, flora, and fauna circulated, they quickly became accepted as conventional wisdom. By March, one newspaper could state with authority that "on sait que l'île de Tabara [*sic*] est surtout fertile en gros lézards et en perroquets."[129]

LE ROCHER SEC DU *FIGARO*

Pierre Giffard's narrative reveal of the island's disappointing reality was a devastating blow to *La Nouvelle France*'s carefully constructed propaganda image, and de Rays and his associates immediately jumped into action to counter the story. The first issue of *La Nouvelle France* to

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[126] Maurice Talmeyr, "Le roi des fumistes," *L'Intransigeant*, 26 February 1881, 1.

[127] "L'Affaire du *Chandernagor*," *L'Intransigeant*, 4 March 1881, 2; "Tombara," *Le Petit Parisien*, 5 March 1881, 2. The letter published in *L'Intransigeant* was dated to Sydney, 19 December 1880.

[128] "France," *Times* (London), 24 February 1881, 5. The London *Pall Mall Gazette* also published an item on the *Chandernagor* survivors likely based on *Le Figaro* ("Occasional notes," 28 February 1881, 4) and regional newspapers around the United Kingdom relayed the news, with several newspapers calling it "An Unfortunate Enterprise" (*Manchester Courier*, 26 February 1881, 3; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 26 February 1881, 3; *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin), 5 March 1881, 6) and one Welsh paper calling the expedition "A Ship of Fools" (*North Wales Chronicle* (Bangor), 5 March 1881, 3).

[129] Mallat, "Chronique," *Le Courrier du Soir*, 7 March 1881, 1.

appear after 23 February was nearly double the usual length, in order to accommodate supplementary material printed in rebuttal to *Le Figaro*, and the print run was quadrupled from 25,000 to 100,000, "pour que la défense égale l'attaque des journaux mauvais ou trompés qui, à la suite du *Figaro*, ont déversé sur nous l'injure et la calomnie."[130] Correspondence from members of the colonial administration, priests, missionaries, and emigrants jostled for space with outraged commentary from editor-in-chief Émile Sumien and de Rays, excerpts from favorable press outlets, and letters from indignant supporters.

In the 15 March issue, ten pages of letters from leaders and members of the expeditions already departed for New Ireland attested to the progress made in the colony and provided descriptions of the island which countered *Le Figaro*'s disparaging image. Sumien and de Rays appealed once more to the authority of the explorers: "Eh, braves gens que vous êtes! ce ne sont pas nos navires qui ont découvert ces régions. Mais lisez donc les géographies et les relations des voyageurs, et vous verrez que l'article du *Figaro* est un conte triste et ignare."[131] The issue also contained two open letters addressed to *Le Figaro*, one by de Rays, and another by a Carcassonne canon and leading Port-Breton supporter named Léopold Verguet. Verguet called Giffard's story "un récit fantaisiste" and Giffard himself "un journaliste désœuvré," while de Rays blamed any setbacks the colony had faced on "*les persécutions, les calomnies constantes et les entraves de toute sorte dont nous avons toujours été l'objet*."[132] De Rays also commented on Giffard's ironic tone, claiming to find "[le] style et la tournure des phrases […] si différents du style ordinaire" of *Le Figaro* (this was a misapprehension, at best). Another article, likely written

[130] *La Nouvelle France* no. 21, 15 March 1881, 121 fn1.

[131] "Lettres de Nouvelle-France," *La Nouvelle France* no. 21, 131.

[132] Léopold Verguet, "Une Réponse"; Charles du Breil de Rays, "Lettre de M. le Marquis au *Figaro*," *La Nouvelle France* no. 21, 15 March 1881. Emphasis original.

by Sumien, "À propos du *Figaro*," accused the newspaper of ulterior motives, and noted with particular disapproval the circulation of Giffard's "rocher sec" description among journalists practicing a form of copy and paste: "chose plus triste encore, après le *Figaro*, tous les journaux copistes ont répété que l'île où est Port-Breton est 'un rocher sec, volcanique, étroit, capable au plus de porter çà et là autre chose que des ignames et des cocos. Une grève déserte est là…..'."[133]

The March issue also contained a remarkable double-page illustration which served as another rebuttal to Giffard's claims: a detailed map of the settlement at Port-Breton "indiquant les travaux déjà exécutés" (figure 23). The map showed a small town, with several roads, a group of houses, a *blockhaus*, a dock, a planted field, and a church. Baudouin discussed this audacious map, as he called it, in *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*: "Le journal parlait de Port-Breton comme d'une ville faite et prononçait sans hésiter les mots de *rues*, de *magasin*, de *débarcadère* et de *routes carrossables*."[134] Another one of *La Nouvelle France*'s map fictions, this engraving would later draw the attention of the investigating magistrates, and would be revealed in interrogations as almost entirely false.[135]

[133] "À propos du *Figaro*," *La Nouvelle France* no. 21, 134.

[134] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 43.

[135] In his deposition, Le Prévost stated that the "croquis" he had sent of the possible layout of a *future* town had been "embelli" when printed by *La Nouvelle France* (Deposition of Le Prévost, 1882, AP, D4U9 28, f. 1495a). Le Prévost repeated this explanation during his interrogation at the trial ("Justice criminelle – Tribunal correctionnel de Paris, 8e ch – Audience du 27 novembre," *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 28 November 1883, 2).

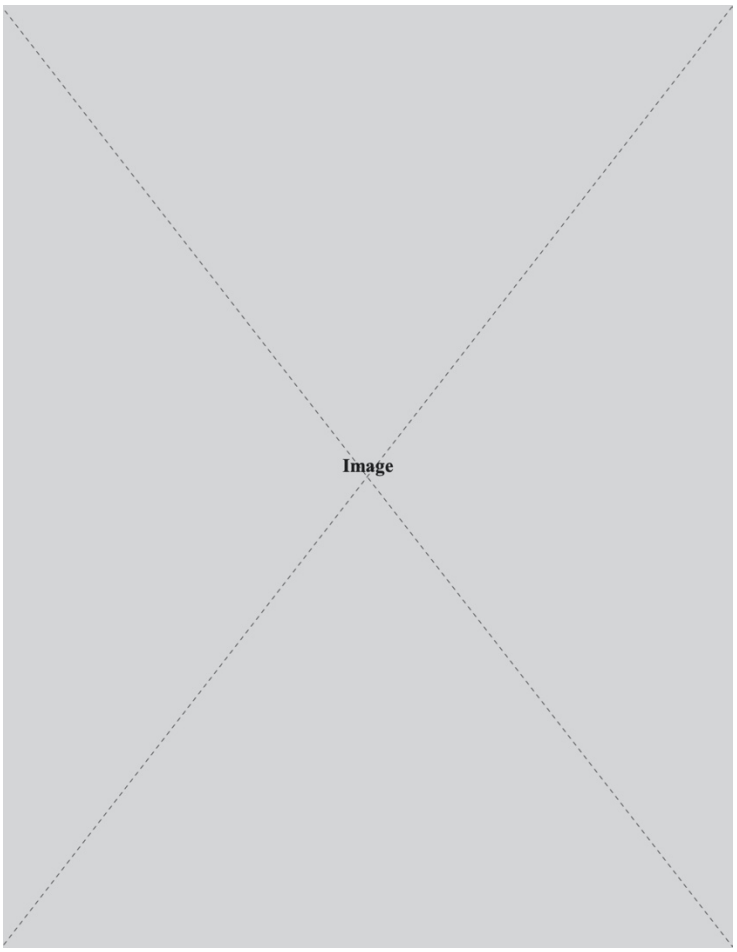


Figure 23. "Levé à vue hydrographique et topographique dressé par M. le Colonel Le Prévost indiquant les travaux déjà exécutés à Port Breton (Nouvelle France)," *La Nouvelle France* no. 21, 15 March 1881. Source: Bibliothèque des Archives nationales d'outre-mer.

Two months later, the May 1881 issue of *La Nouvelle France* included a full-page illustration which depicted, according to its caption, morning activities in the village of Oné, located somewhere in Nouvelle France (figure 24).[136] It was a crowded scene showing indigenous men and women busy with a variety of tasks – fishing with nets, loading canoes, playing at a group game, or sleeping in a hammock, among others. At the top of the page was another title for the image: "Le rocher sec du Figaro." Nearly three months after its publication, it seemed, Giffard's description was still a thorn in the side of the Port-Breton organizers.

[136] I have not yet been able to identify a prior printed source for this illustration.

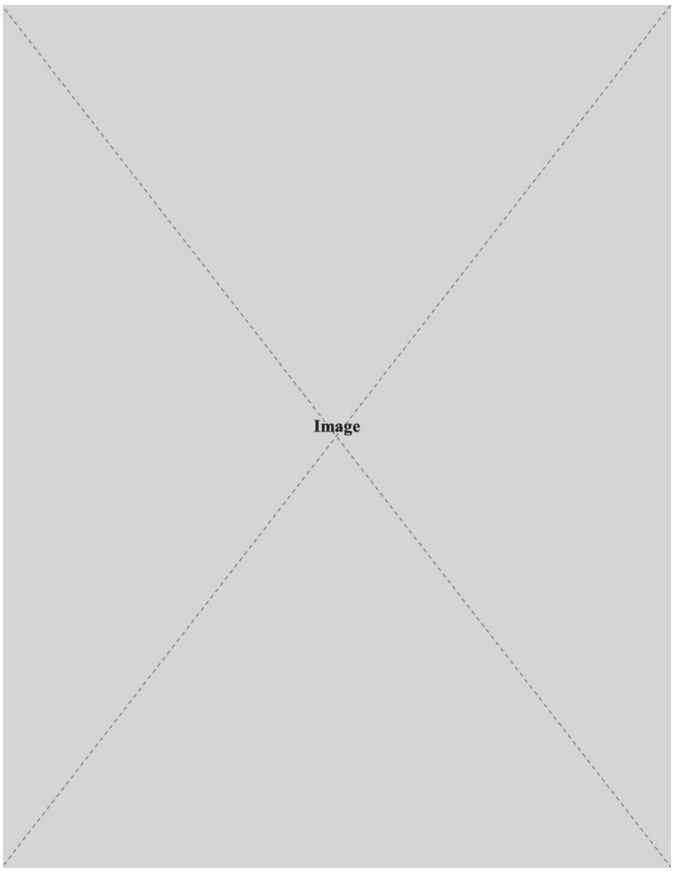


Figure 24. "Le rocher sec du *Figaro* – Occupations matinales au village d'Oné (Nouvelle France)," *La Nouvelle France* no. 23, 15 May 1881. Source: Bibliothèque Armand Salacrou.

"Le rocher sec du *Figaro*" lived on in the memory of some Port-Breton supporters. One of de Rays's collaborators, a ship-owner from Nantes named Poulain who had founded a company linked to the Port-Breton colony and heavily promoted in the pages of *La Nouvelle France* called the Société des Fermiers-Généreaux—and who avoided justice by fleeing with the company funds—wrote a memoir justifying his participation in the Port-Breton enterprise, and titled it *Le Rocher de Port-Breton*. The title was sarcastic, a wink for those in the know. Poulain directly addressed Giffard's description of the island in the preface:

> Parce que le *Figaro*, par la plume de M. G. …, a dit, pour complaire à quelques gâteux mécontents de n'avoir pas trouvé là-bas des alouettes toutes rôties, que Port-Breton n'était qu'une terre aride, le croirez-vous sans examen? Serons-nous condamné pour avoir vu des arbres et des rivières où cet écrivain, sans quitter son cabinet, n'a vu qu'un

> rocher stérile habité par des perruches, et pour avoir eu la singulière idée de créer un établissement français près des Allemands et des Anglais?[137]

Poulain's *Le Rocher de Port-Breton* attempted to prove two things at once: that he was innocent in the matter of the stolen funds and fraud, and that the island chosen by de Rays was indeed suitable for European colonization, despite Giffard's claims.

Many years later, when a prominent Belgian Port-Breton supporter was putting together his archive of documents and ephemera related to the failed colony to donate to the library of the University of Ghent, he included a box of curious specimens, including small items like a beaded necklace and shells labeled "Souvenirs de la plage de Port-Breton" – and the wing of a parrot (figure 25). Inside the box is a note:

> Aile de perroquet rapportée de Port-Breton [à] M. Amand Casier par son ami M. Hodister qui fut dans la suite tué et dévoré au Congo par les Ribas-Ribas. M. Hodister rapporta de la Nouvelle-France cette pièce à conviction en réponse aux détracteurs de l'entreprise qui prétendraient que Port-Breton était un rocher aride où pas même un oiseau ne venait se poser.

"Le rocher sec du *Figaro*" still provoked, long after the colony's failure and de Rays's imprisonment and his death in 1893, five years after his release. There was perhaps some irony in the fact that the object chosen here to refute Giffard, a parrot's wing, was another one of the memorable elements of his story that circulated widely, and thus once again brought to mind the unappetizing meals choked down by the *Chandernagor* emigrants depicted on the cover of the *Journal des voyages* in 1881.

[137] J. Poulain, *Le Rocher de Port-Breton: Journal d'un voyage en Océanie* (Nantes: Plédran, 1883), III.

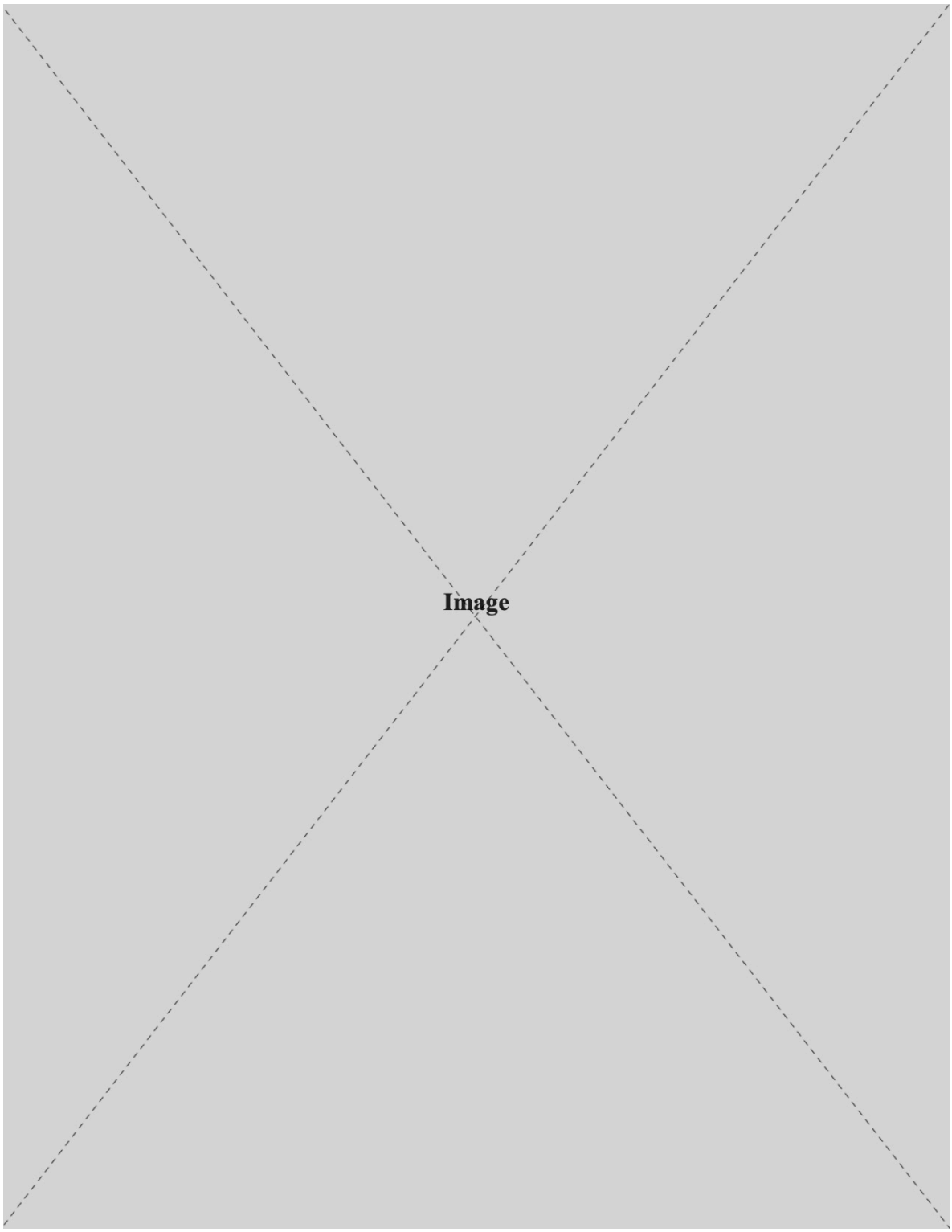


Figure 25. Shells, carved objects, a bead necklace, and a parrot's wing, brought back from New Ireland and donated by a prominent Port-Breton supporter to the Ghent Library. "Souvenirs de la plage de Port-Breton (Nlle France) rapportés par M. Hodister." Source: Universiteitsbibliotheek Gent.

LA PRESSE ENNEMIE

During one of several interrogations of de Rays, the judge Bouniceau-Gesmon had pushed him to explain how, if there had been nothing underhand or deceptive about his enterprise, it could be possible that forty or so of his investors were now pressing charges against him for fraud. De Rays's response spoke to his vision of the Port-Breton trial as a *media* affair: after such a widespread campaign of "diffamations" in the press, he asked, was it not surprising that only forty were willing to press charges? And what was Bouniceau-Gesmon's forty, he continued, against "des milliers de protestations" signed by his supporters and sent in by mail?[138] Of course, as Bouniceau-Gesmon pointed out, these "protestations" were hardly spontaneous – they were form petitions, printed in Marseille at the behest of *La Nouvelle France* and distributed to the Port-Breton investors. The text of the petition was also reprinted in the October 1882 issue of *La Nouvelle France*, which presented it as an independent initiative by de Rays's supporters.[139]

This pointed exchanged between de Rays and Bouniceau-Gesmon was yet more proof that for de Rays, the Port-Breton venture had always been a metropolitan affair, and the real measure of its success or failure was to be found in in the battleground of the press. De Rays had admitted as much in the pages of *La Nouvelle France*, in an 1881 response to an investor who had written to ask why he could not go to Port-Breton himself: "La bataille est ici, en Europe; elle n'est point là-bas." He further declared, in an emphatic style riddled with italicized and capitalized letters, that

> Si j'avais été là-bas, au lieu d'être ici, *les événements provoqués par des tiers ennemis auraient eu lieu quand même*; *mais ils eussent été irréparables* et notre œuvre SERAIT

[138] Interrogation of de Rays by Bouniceau-Gesmon, 18 January 1883. AP, D4U9 30, f. 644.12. A great number of these petitions are now among the Archives de Paris files, mainly in the D4U9 31 box.

[139] *La Nouvelle France* no. 40, 15 October 1882, 47.

> MORTE *depuis longtemps déjà*.
>
> Nos ennemis peuvent le désirer; mais nos amis doivent s'unir à moi pour l'empêcher et comprendre qu'il m'est impossible, *sans lâcheté ou sans trahison*, d'abandonner notre œuvre commune *à la discrétion de nos puissants ennemis d'Europe* […][140]

This narrative of persecution was powerful; even to question de Rays's decisions, as this investor had, was to align oneself with the venture's enemies and to contribute to its possible failure.

Like Giffard, de Rays understood the power of a good story, and the years 1877 to 1879 had been devoted to developing and refining the narrative of Port-Breton. It is no coincidence that the man who ultimately helped shape this narrative, Émile Sumien, was a seasoned journalist; nor was it surprising that *La Nouvelle France* typically devoted several columns of each issue to discussion of broader press coverage of the colonial venture. These press clippings, both positive and negative, became a crucial part of Port-Breton's print propaganda. Positive coverage was reproduced at length, while negative coverage was fact-checked, countered, and mocked. Already in the third issue of *La Nouvelle France*, from September 1879, there were flattering quotes from one Parisian, one Belgian, and four regional newspapers, as well as a detailed commentary and rebuttal of a critical article in another regional paper.[141] In December 1879, *La Nouvelle France* requested that any newspapers writing about their colonial venture to send along their clippings:

> Bien des articles publiés par des journaux de Paris ou de province, ne nous sont certainement pas parvenus. Serait-ce trop demander à nos bienveillants confrères que de les prier de nous adresser le moindre mot publié par eux à notre sujet, ne serait-ce que pour nous offrir l'occasion de les en remercier.[142]

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[140] "Préoccupations imprudentes," *La Nouvelle France* no. 27, 15 September 1881, 53.

[141] *Le Courrier du Soir* (Paris), *La Gazette de Bruxelles*, *Le Journal du Havre*, *Le Petit Marseillais*, *Le Propagateur de l'Est* (Nancy), and *L'Union de l'Aude*. The critical article was from *La Jeune République* (Marseille).

[142] *La Nouvelle France* no. 6, 15 December 1879.

Nearly every issue of *La Nouvelle France* would contain a column called "Les Journaux" or "Revue des Journaux," thanking newspapers which wrote positive notices and attacking those that had criticized or mocked the venture. Behind the scenes, de Rays and his associates carefully monitored press coverage, solicited support from newspapers they perceived as friendly, and wrote angry letters to newspapers critical of the venture.[143]

Indeed, negative press coverage was only folded into the emerging narrative of the persecution of the colony of Port-Breton by an anti-Catholic republican government, and transformed into a motivation to persevere:

> Les journaux s'occupent beaucoup de nous […] Parmi ces journaux, un grand nombre est hostile. Est-ce que la majorité des journaux n'est pas hostile aujourd'hui à tout ce qui est chrétien, catholique…. nous allions dire: à tout ce qui est français?
>
> N'importe! La violence et la perfidie de leurs attaques sont une des meilleures preuves de notre vitalité. S'occuperaient-ils tant de nous si nous n'existions pas? Redoubleraient-ils de rage s'ils ne voyaient pas notre succès?[144]

In this same August 1880 issue—which devoted five pages to press commentary—*La Nouvelle France* printed excerpts from two articles in *Le Temps* and annotated them, appending footnotes with sarcastic corrections and ironic commentary (an example, in footnote 9: "Il y a un peu de roman dans tout cela. Mais, enfin, après la pluie le beau *Temps*"). The newspaper also thanked its subscribers and supporters for their aid in monitoring and responding to "la presse ennemie."[145]

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[143] In September 1881, a prominent Port-Breton backer in Ghent, Amand Casier, wrote to the editor-in-chief of a major Catholic newspaper published in Ghent, *Le Bien public*, asking for his official support and backing. Casier's father-in-law had founded the newspaper. But the editor-in-chief refused, writing that "Le *Bien public* est fermement résolu à ne pas patronner cette affaire […] Le Journal ne patronne jamais d'affaires financières." The editor also sharply criticized the Port-Breton backers for proclaiming that giving money to the venture would be a way to support a permanent Catholic mission in the region: "vous vous trompez si l'on vous fait croire qu'un moyen sûr d'assurer d'une manière permanente la dotation de la Mission de Micronesie […] c'est d'inscrire un capital au Grand Livre sur la tête d'un Néo-français quelconque." Letter to Amand Casier from Jules Lammens, 24 September 1881. UB Gent, BIB.G.018761, f. 36.

[144] "Les Journaux," *La Nouvelle France* no. 14, 15 August 1880, 18.

[145] "Les Journaux," *La Nouvelle France* no. 14, 15 August 1880, 22.

De Rays also repeatedly went after "la presse ennemie" in court. In 1880, he successfully sued a journalist at a newspaper in Le Havre for having "traité [de Rays] de flibustier" and his enterprise "de flibusterie."[146] In 1881, after Giffard's article, he unsuccessfully sued *Le Figaro*. In 1883—from pre-trial detention no less—he sued a small republican weekly in Dieppe, *Le Pilote*.[147] *Le Pilote* had begun publishing the account of a survivor of the *India* voyage under the title "Un Martyr de Port-Breton."[148] The publication of this account was linked to the trial, whose beginning was believed to be imminent, and *Le Pilote* presented it as a kind of legal document: "Le récit dont nous commençons la publication ci-dessous a donc tout l'intérêt d'une déposition faite devant nos lecteurs par un témoin et une victime de cette odieuse affaire."[149] If the Dieppois readers of *Le Pilote* could not themselves attend the Paris trial, the paper would provide them with the exclusive testimony of a local victim. De Rays, through his lawyers, claimed that *Le Pilote*'s publication—which he wrongly, though perhaps deliberately, called a *roman-feuilleton*—would cause him "un grave préjudice" by influencing public opinion against him and polluting the jury pool. His lawyer published a statement to the same effect in another Normandy newspaper, *Le Journal de Rouen*, declaring that the suit was meant to "empêcher que la publication fantaisiste et peut-être intéressée d'un roman-feuilleton qui n'est même pas signé précède les débats et influence les témoins."[150]

Le Pilote eventually lost in court, and was forced to interrupt publication of its account. The small newspaper took its loss in stride, however, and, determined to keep antagonizing de

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[146] "Coup d'œil rétrospectif," *La Nouvelle France* no. 8, 15 February 1880, 64.

[147] "Notre Procès," *Le Pilote* (Dieppe), 29 April 1883, 1: "Qui le croirait, le marquis de Rays nous fait un procès?"

[148] "Un Martyr de Port-Breton," *Le Pilote*, 14 April 1883, 3-4.

[149] "La Colonie de Port-Breton," *Le Pilote*, 14 April 1883, 3.

[150] "Dieppe et l'arrondissement. L'avocat du marquis de Rays," *Le Pilote*, 5 May 1883, p. 2.

Rays within the limits of the law, devised a new and more devious line of attack. They turned de Rays's propaganda against him:

> Le *Pilote*, toujours généreux, va faire une réclame gratuite au Marquis en prenant, dans la collection de son journal la *Nouvelle France*, tout ce qui pourra intéresser nos lecteurs sur le passé, le présent et l'avenir de cette merveilleuse colonie. C'est pourquoi désormais le titre de *Un Martyr de Port-Breton* va faire place à celui de: *Le Héros de Port-Breton*.[151]

Under this title, for the next few weeks, *Le Pilote* published excerpts from *La Nouvelle France* alongside brief, sarcastic commentaries. To introduce their excerpt of de Rays's now infamous 1879 speech at the Salon des Œuvres, *Le Pilote* wrote: "Pour commencer, nous donnons à nos lecteurs, dans toute sa beauté native, cette conférence que fit à Marseille, dans le Salon des Œuvres, l'illustre colonisateur qui passe aujourd'hui d'une cellule de Mazas au banc de la police correctionnelle. Lisez, et soyez édifiés!"[152]

Le Pilote's response to the interdiction of "Un Martyr de Port-Breton" demonstrates neatly the kind of ironic readings and humor possible in the press through practices of excerpting: lifted from its original context and reprinted in a radical republican newspaper, the text of de Rays's Marseille lecture, even when presented without comment, read as an ironic skewering of the Port-Breton founder's outsize pretentions, and surely provoked some hilarity among *Le Pilote*'s readers. The same text, cited in another newspaper—say, the legitimist *Gazette du Midi* in Marseille, which published it in 1879—was understood entirely differently. *Le Pilote* continued to quote from materials about Port-Breton which had already been published elsewhere (in *La Nouvelle France*, in Baudouin's account in *Le National*, in articles in other newspapers like *La France*) thereby shielding themselves from legal consequences.

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[151] "Notre procès," *Le Pilote*, 9 June 1883, 1.

[152] "Le Héros de Port-Breton," *Le Pilote*, 16 June 1883, 3-4. The rest of de Rays's Marseille speech was printed on 23 June.

CONCLUSION: EXTRAITS DE JOURNAUX

A large black notebook is found among the files of the Port-Breton investigation, with a label reading “Affaire de Port-Breton. Extraits de journaux” (figure 26). In it are pasted-in clippings of articles, from dozens of different newspapers, discussing the Port-Breton colony and trial. Many are major Parisian daily newspapers, but there are also a number of provincial dailies and a few from the other European countries—Belgium and Spain—where the colony also had recruitment offices. The clippings are not organized by date, but rather according to their attitude toward the Port-Breton colony: “Journaux divers qui ont parlé de l’affaire”; “Journaux prônant l’Entreprise”; “Journaux attestant l’esprit de Parti qui préside à l’affaire”; “Journaux flétrissant l’Entreprise.” In addition to these there are some uncategorized clippings, as well as a number of clippings from *La Nouvelle France*, and a section of clippings labeled “Journaux envoyés

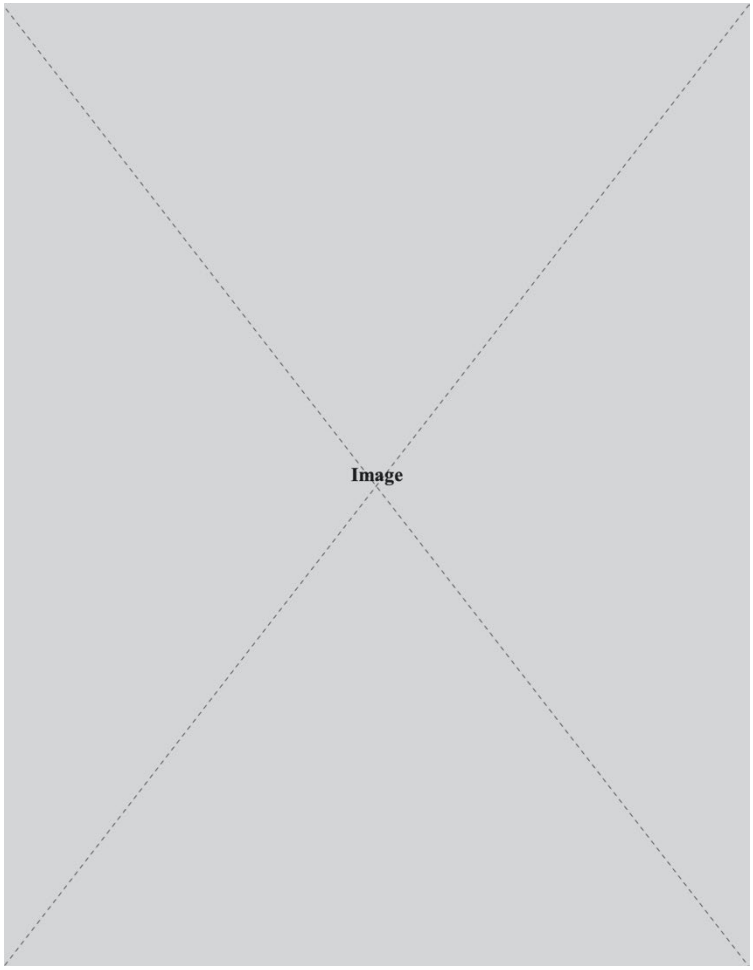


Figure 26. “Affaire de Port-Breton – Extraits de Journaux.” Source: Archives de Paris.

par l'administration de la Colonie de Port-Breton."[153]

The "Extraits de Journaux" scrapbook reconstructs the media narratives that competed to shape understanding of the colony and the Affair, and it is a useful reminder of the centrality of the press to the genesis, development, and downfall of the affair, despite the absence of this metropolitan press context in scholarship on de Rays's colonial venture. For the prosecution, these press clippings were at the heart of the story. First, and most generally, press coverage helped provide a basic sketch of events, and gave an idea of what was known in France, and when, about the venture's fundraising, recruitment, and development, and later, what was known about the events in New Ireland. Second, the press clippings helped investigators understand the role of what they called "l'esprit de Parti" in the affair – that is, the partisan ideologies and interests that had either championed or criticized Port-Breton. Among the "journaux prônant l'Entreprise" and those "attestant l'esprit de Parti" were newspapers opposed to the current opportunist republican government, including monarchist *Le Triboulet* and *Le Soleil*, Catholic *L'Univers*, and Bonapartist *Le Petit Caporal*. Those "flétrissant l'Entreprise" represented a wider array of opinion: *Le Figaro* was there, of course, and there were also moderate republican papers like *Le Temps*, popular dailies like *Le Petit Parisien*, radical republican outlets like *L'Intransigeant*, and *mondain* Parisian papers like *Gil Blas*. Finally, the extensive dossier of exculpatory clippings submitted by the Port-Breton administration, which included extracts from their own *La Nouvelle France*, as well as smaller regional newspapers like *L'Ordre* and *La Gironde* and procolonial outlets like *La France Coloniale*, provided a third point of interest for investigators: it was another compelling piece of evidence that these men both understood the power of press coverage and that they had put into place, from the beginning, a media strategy.

[153] AP, D4U9 28.

The competing versions of the story of the rise and fall of Port-Breton, collected in the "Extraits de Journaux" dossier, underline the problem of misrepresentation in the press at its most extreme, and reveal the Port-Breton affair as a question of competing media narratives, all drawing on previous print traditions and deploying style in the service of a story – or a scam.

CHAPTER THREE

"DES PETITS PAPIERS DÉCOUPÉS DANS DES JOURNAUX": ALPHONSE DAUDET'S *PORT-TARASCON*

"Le goût du merveilleux, du romanesque, et de ce qu'on pourrait appeler la vie à fond perdu, est si peu mort, quoi qu'on en dise": so explained Maurice Talmeyr, a *chroniqueur* at *L'Intransigeant*, the misadventures of the would-be colonists duped by the "colonie libre de Port-Breton" or "Nouvelle France."[1] Those colonists had found themselves stranded on a remote island with meager supplies. Many died, but the survivors who began to arrive back in France in late 1880 told their story to a rapt Parisian readership. A flurry of articles recounted their travails, and attention turned to the Port-Breton founder, Charles du Breil, marquis de Rays, whom Talmeyr dubbed "le roi des fumistes." The reporters and *chroniqueurs* who descended on the Port-Breton survivors forged narratives that endured throughout the years-long media spectacle that followed. A detailed narrative in *Le Figaro*, written by lead reporter Pierre Giffard, set the tone. It portrayed the Port-Breton emigrants as naïve dupes who fell for an all-too-familiar image of island paradise.[2] Giffard's account was suffused with irony and literary references, and

[1] Maurice Talmeyr, "Le roi des fumistes," *L'Intransigeant*, 26 February 1882, 1. For the story of Port-Breton, see chapter 2.

[2] Pierre Giffard, "L'équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*, 23 February 1881, 2. See previous chapter for an in-depth discussion of this article and its effect on the Port-Breton venture.

painted the colonists as victims of their own romantic imagination – in short, they had confused print for reality.

As he followed the newspaper accounts of the Port-Breton scandal in the early 1880s, the novelist Alphonse Daudet was also struck by the affair's "romanesque" qualities. In his notebook, he jotted down the germ of a plot for a future novel: "Ce marquis de Rays avec son Port-Breton serait une bonne physionomie de livre. Acheté son île à un roi canaque. Peut-être un homme d'imagination?"[3] Years later, this work came to fruition: *Port-Tarascon: les dernières aventures de l'illustre Tartarin de Tarascon*, the last novel in a series of three featuring Tartarin de Tarascon, Daudet's comic archetype of the *méridional*. This chapter follows how Port-Breton became *Port-Tarascon*. It is in part an account of Alphonse Daudet's creative process and his relationship to his sources, but it is also broadly relevant to the question of the colonial novel at the height of "la civilisation du journal." In an age when most readers experienced colonialism largely through the mediation of reporting and commentary in periodicals, the subject became a proxy for representing a problem of misrepresentation: the capacity of print to deceive readers into immersing themselves in invented worlds. This specter of naïve reading, of failing to parse fact and fiction on the newspaper page, was a central concern of the time, one which writers like Daudet could approach through the subject of colonialism precisely because the problem of colonial reality had been so contested in the press, where *chroniqueurs* and reporters had already developed narrative concepts that lent themselves to literary treatment.

Daudet's scribbled remark about the marquis de Rays immediately linked him to the Tartarin character: Tartarin, too, was an "homme d'imagination." In the first Tartarin novel, *Aventures prodigieuses de Tartarin de Tarascon*, published in 1872, he was described as "le

[3] "Autour de Port-Tarascon," *Port-Tarascon* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1930), 173.

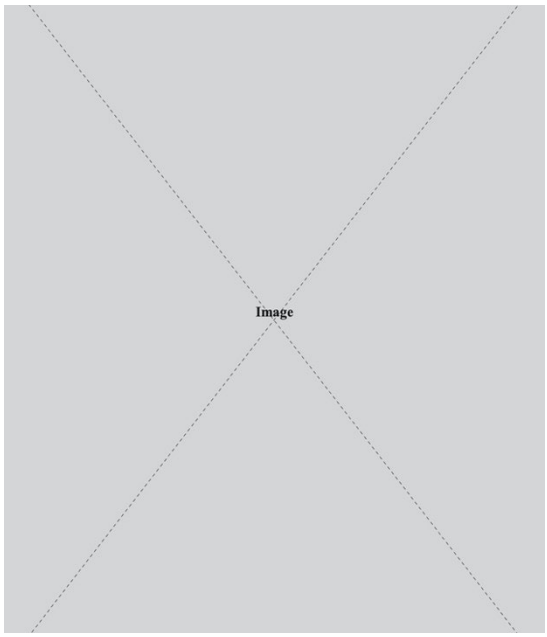


Figure 27. In Tartarin's head we find Captain Cook's travels, adventure novels by James Fenimore Cooper and Gustave Aimard, and the story of Schinderhannes, a notorious German criminal. Illustration by George Grosz, in Alphonse Daudet, *Die Abenteurn des Herrn Tartarin aus Tarascon*, trans. Klabund (Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1921). Source: Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig.

romanesque Tartarin," a modern Don Quixote, possessed of the same "folie du romanesque et du grandiose," who sets off to fulfill his exotic dreams of hunting lions in French Algeria.[4] When the novel was serialized in the press in 1870, it carried the title *Le Don Quichotte provençal*, and like Don Quixote, Tartarin's attempts to make the world conform to the visions conjured by his readings meet only with disappointment.[5] In a particularly evocative illustration by George Grosz, in a twentieth-century German translation, Tartarin is depicted with his head literally stuffed with adventure novels, travel narratives, and crime stories (figure 27).[6]

A small detail in *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, the second novel in the series published in 1885, suggests that Daudet was already considering how the Port-Breton story might fit into the fictional world of Tartarin, not long after the close of the criminal trial of de Rays and his co-conspirators in late 1883. In *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, Tartarin disappears while on an ill-considered mission to scale the Jungfrau mountain in the Alps, and the

[4] Daudet, *Aventures prodigieuses de Tartarin de Tarascon*, in *Œuvres*, ed. Roger Ripoll, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

[5] Alphonse Daudet, *Le Don Quichotte provençal, ou les Aventures prodigieuses de l'illustre Barbarin de Tarascon en France et en Algérie*, in *Le Figaro*, 7 February-19 March 1870.

[6] Alphonse Daudet, *Die Abenteurn des Herrn Tartarin aus Tarascon*, trans. Klabund (Berlin: Erich Reiss, 1921).

Tarasconnais speculate wildly as to his whereabouts. Sandwiched by other outlandish explanations for Tartarin's disappearance is a mention of a project of island colonization, a clear calque of Port-Breton: "Selon les uns, il venait d'entrer à la Trappe, il avait enlevé la Dugazon; pour les autres, il était allé dans les îles fonder une colonie qui s'appelait Port-Tarascon, ou bien, parcourait l'Afrique centrale à la recherche de Livingstone." These implausible propositions are all drawn from the Tarasconnais' confused memories of conversations with Tartarin, "ce dormeur éveillé," who is always dreaming up new schemes.[7] The affair had evidently drawn enough media attention to catch Daudet's eye and spark his novelistic imagination.[8]

In turning a media "affaire" like the "Affaire de Port-Breton" into a novel, Daudet was following a well-trodden path. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, nineteenth-century literature was inextricably linked to the periodical press, not least by the common writerly practice of scouring newspaper pages for material to turn into fiction. This cross-pollination between literature and the press cut both ways: fiction writers used the newspapers as a source of inspiration, while journalists borrowed narrative frames and styles from fiction and employed them in newspaper genres from the *chronique* to *reportage* and *fait divers*. Newspaper articles by journalists like Pierre Giffard and Albert Bataille, *Le Figaro*'s judicial chroniqueur, employed stylistic devices from types and tropes to irony, dialogue, and interiorization. Literary style could thus be found on the newspaper page both above and below the *feuilleton* line – and when novelists like Daudet used newspaper stories as material for fiction, they were thus repurposing texts which were already literary on multiple levels.[9]

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[7] Alphonse Daudet, *Tartarin sur les Alpes* (Paris: Marpon & Flammarion, 1885), 168.

[8] See Roger Ripoll, "Port-Tarascon: Notice," in Alphonse Daudet, *Œuvres*, ed. Roger Ripoll, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 1327.

[9] See Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien*; Birch, *Fictions of the Press*; Pinson, *L'Imaginaire médiatique*.

The literariness of newspaper stories, particularly crime stories, made them well-suited to adaptation into the kinds of novels which had influenced their style in the first place. In one particularly striking example, in early 1883, a *chroniqueur* in *L'Illustration* recommended the latest criminal affair to make headlines as an ideal source for future fictions – precisely because it already had all of the qualities of a prototypical serialized adventure novel:

> Les romanciers en quête de sujets intéressants vont évidemment se précipiter sur cette affaire Monasterio pour la découper en feuilletons. Tout y est entassé à souhait pour le plaisir des lecteurs de Montépin: arrestation arbitraire, séquestration, violences, enlèvement, – un vrai roman d'aventures en plein Paris moderne.[10]

In a similar vein, in 1889, in a preface to the latest volume of *chroniqueur judiciaire* Albert Bataille's *Causes criminelles et mondaines* (annual published collections of Bataille's columns from *Le Figaro*), the novelist Paul Bourget expressed his debt of gratitude to Bataille for his finely-rendered trial accounts, which delved deep into the drama and psychology of crime and thus provided a crucial source for authors of *romans psychologiques*.[11] In this way, newspaper stories, already shaped by literary forms drawn from fiction, doubled back and became themselves sources for new fictions.

Another form of cross-pollination between literature and journalism was what Marie-Ève Thérenty calls "l'intertextualité romanesque," the common practice of invoking "l'envers fictionnel de tout événement" reported in the press.[12] Similarly, Marc Angenot has argued that nineteenth-century discourses were shaped by "le romanesque général," a shared mode of

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[10] Perdican, "Courrier de Paris," *L'Illustration*, 31 March 1883, 195.

[11] Paul Bourget, preface to Albert Bataille, *Causes criminelles et mondaines* (Paris: Dentu, 1889), VII-VIII: "Je lus votre étude et je ne cherchai pas plus loin; j'avais rencontré justement ce qu'il me fallait: une mise à nu de l'envers du drame, une dissection fine et précise des motifs et des caractères, un établissement bien net des milieux et des antécédents. Enfin, si comme l'a dit mon cher maître M. Taine et, comme je le crois, la littérature romanesque est surtout de la psychologie vivante, quelle suite de notes plus précieuses que celles-là, prise sur nature et *de visu*, par un esprit sagace et libre entre tous."

[12] Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien*, 122.

thinking and interpreting events by inserting them into familiar narrative sequences.[13] During the Port-Breton affair, familiar frames drawn from popular fiction and history made the story intelligible to readers. Pierre Giffard had compared the travails of the *Chandernagor* emigrants, who found themselves stranded on New Ireland with meager supplies, to an eighteenth-century novel, a real-life *fait divers*, and popular melodramas: "[cela] rappelle à la fois les innocentes prouesses de Robinson Crusoé, le naufrage poignant de la Méduse et maint drame aventurier de la Porte-Saint-Martin."[14] In *Le Voltaire* Henry Fouquier suggested that the whole affair might easily fit into a play featuring the fictional conman of popular theater and print, Robert Macaire.[15] In *Le Petit Marseillais*, the saga of the "pauvres diables" who emigrated to Port-Breton was described as "un voyage bien plus extraordinaire que tous ceux inventés par Jules Verne," while their ordeals were "bien autrement terribles que celles de tous les Robinsons qui ont fait rêver notre enfance."[16]

Journalists also reached for such *romanesque* references when describing de Rays's print propaganda. Giffard described de Rays's prospectuses as claiming that Nouvelle-France was "un petit Chanaan," the biblical promised land, and leading the emigrants were to believe that "le Pactole," the river where Midas washed away his golden touch, "y coule à large bords."[17] According to *Le Petit Parisien*, de Rays told the colonists he would bring them to "un nouvel Eden, où les mœurs étaient pures, la terre fertile, le ciel bleu."[18] Jules Gros wrote in the *Journal*

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[13] Marc Angenot, "Une gnoséologie romantique," in *1889* (electronic version, http://www.medias19.org/index.php?id=11003), §4.

[14] Pierre Giffard, "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*, 23 February 1881, 2.

[15] Henry Fouquier, "Chronique," *Le Voltaire*, 17 May 1883, 2.

[16] ADV, "Les colons de Port-Breton," *Le Petit Marseillais*, 21 June 1883, 1.

[17] Giffard, "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*.

[18] "Tombara," *Le Petit Parisien*, 5 March 1881, 2.

des voyages that the advertisements and newspapers painted Nouvelle-France as "un véritable Eldorado, rempli de fruits exquis, de gibier délicieux, de blé, de riz, d'oranges, de dattes, d'ananas poussant sans culture et n'attendant que le bon vouloir des émigrants pour être cueillis."[19] Other newspapers described the Port-Breton print material as falsely depicting the island as "un véritable paradis terrestre," "une sorte de terre promise," or "une île enchantée où tout poussait, germait et fleurissait à souhait."[20] For some, such promised riches went beyond even the fictional imagination; Henry Fouquier wrote that de Rays's descriptions "faisaient pâlir le conte de Voltaire sur l'Eldorado."[21]

Daudet's *Port-Tarascon* was born out of this media context, casting the history of Rays's fraudulent as a tragicomic story of exotic illusion followed by disenchantment. However, studies of *Port-Tarascon* have tended to neglect what we might call (adapting Thérenty's term) the "intertextualité journalistique" of the novel, debating instead its status as either parody or pastiche of a "roman colonial," anticolonial satire, or rewriting of a true story. Leading Daudet scholar Anne-Simone Dufief has argued against classifying *Port-Tarascon* as a parody or pastiche of a colonial novel, instead calling it a "transposition d'un récit véridique" in the burlesque vein. Jennifer Yee recently countered that *Port-Tarascon* should indeed be seen as a parody of the colonial novel, citing the example of *Le Mariage de Loti*, referenced in *Port-Tarascon*'s brief comical love plot between "the fat, aging Tartarin and a barely nubile Polynesian princess."[22]

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[19] Jules Gros, "Les chercheurs d'aventures. Les émigrants du *Chandernagor*," *Journal des voyages* no. 208, 3 July 1881.

[20] Gros, "Les émigrants du *Chandernagor*," *Journal des voyages*; "La fin du *Chandernagor*," *Le Temps*; Talmeyr, "Le roi des fumistes," *L'Intransigeant*.

[21] Henry Fouquier, "Chronique," *Le Voltaire*, 2 May 1883, 2.

[22] Anne-Simone Dufief, *Alphonse Daudet romancier* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 475; Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 120, 122.

The media context of *Port-Tarascon* bears directly on this question of genre. *Port-Tarascon* is neither a simple transposition of a true story nor a parody of colonial literature; its relationship to the true events of the Port-Breton affair is more complex, and if it is a parody of a colonial novel as Yee claims, it is unclear which contemporary novel it would be parodying (other than the small detail of Tartarin's marriage to the young princess Likiriki, *Port-Tarascon* has very little in common with Loti's colonial idyll). Instead, *Port-Tarascon* is what we might call a *roman d'actualité coloniale*, whose source material is the media event of the Port-Breton affair. Informed by contemporary news coverage in both content and tone, *Port-Tarascon* transforms *actualité coloniale* into a fictional form. At the same time, it exposes the highly constructed, often fictional character of *actualité*, cleverly narrativizing print's power to deceive.

At its heart, this question of the novel's genre concerns the referent of colonial literature before the codification of the genre as written in the colonies by *colons*. Indeed, what is true for Daudet's final Tartarin novel is true for much of the colonial literature of the 1880s and 1890s: it was written by an author with little to no colonial experience for a public for whom the colonies were a textual reality, understood through newspapers and other print media. A *roman d'actualité*, according to Marie-Ève Thérenty, takes as its subject not an actual event, but "sa textualisation dans le périodique."[23] A close reading of *Port-Tarascon* alongside the Port-Breton media narratives of 1881-1883 reveals Daudet's debt to journalists like Giffard, Talmeyr, and others, who had already depicted Port-Breton's would-be colonists as Tartarin-esque figures: overenthusiastic, easily duped, and guilty of taking what they read in a newspaper at face value.

The origin of Daudet's *Port-Tarascon* lies not so much in de Rays's colonial fraud as in

[23] Marie-Ève Thérenty, "Le réel," in *La Civilisation du journal*, 1535. See also 1534: "l'actualité de la fiction ne se définit pas comme référentialité; il s'agit plutôt d'une actualité médiate, d'une intertextualité avec la matière du journal."

the stories told about it in the press, where it had been understood not as a financial swindle, but as a cautionary tale of the power of print. As newspapers had it, the Port-Breton colonists were seduced by de Rays's dangerously effective print propaganda, overwhelming in both scale and form. *Le Temps* described tantalizing posters covering the walls of Paris: "Des affiches apposées sur les murs de Paris avaient, dans les formes les plus séduisantes, invité les hommes entreprenants qui n'étaient point satisfaits du vieux monde à aller coloniser Port-Breton."[24] In the *Journal des Voyages*, Jules Gros conjured up a veritable avalanche of print propaganda against which the gullible were unable to defend themselves: "La 4e page des journaux était pleine d'annonces séduisantes. […] accumulant les promesses, les tableaux séduisants, et faisant entrevoir à tous les futurs colons une existence tissée d'or et de soie […] tous les pauvres gens s'arrachaient le journal illustré créé tout exprès pour les séduire."[25]

Newspapers conjured a caricatured vision of the naïve reader as a warning against the dangers of enchanted readings in a disenchanted world: better to be a *lecteur averti*, in the mode of the savvy journalist, than a "naïf" or a "jobard."[26] Pierre Giffard's wry opening to his *Le Figaro* article set the tone for the coverage to come, voicing the amused astonishment of the skeptical and jaded Parisian observer at the *Chandernagor* story: "O Paris! Paris! Paris! Le temps des aventures extraordinaires semble être passé il y a beaux jours, et pourtant voici que dans ce Paris moderne et sceptique va se dénouer, ces jours-ci, un drame tragique autant que burlesque […] N'est-ce pas d'un autre âge?"[27] That the drama of Port-Breton seemed somehow out of place, or even out of time—recalling *robinsonnades*, faits divers, or theatrical

[24] "Au jour le jour. La fin du 'Chandernagor'," *Le Temps*, 24 February 1881.

[25] Jules Gros, "Les chercheurs d'aventures. Les émigrants du 'Chandernagor'," *Journal des voyages*, no. 208, 3 July 1881.

[26] Pierre Fresnay [Guillaume Livet], "M. le Marquis," *Le Voltaire*, 30 November 1883, 1-2.

[27] Giffard, "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*.

melodramas—in the disabused society of the modern day would come to be a common refrain across many newspaper commentaries. To be unable to distinguish between a serious colonial venture and something out of the pages of a novel was to be one of the "gobe-mouches," hopelessly naïve and hopelessly out of step with modern, skeptical Paris.[28] Writing the day after Giffard's article, *Le Temps* made the warning explicit: "les naïfs qui croiraient encore aux délices de Port-Breton sont prévenus."[29]

In 1890, when *Port-Tarascon* was published, the "intertextualité journalistique" of Daudet's novel was obvious to critics. One particularly unimpressed reviewer went so far as to remark that Daudet had simply inserted Tartarin's story into "la fameuse et lamentable aventure de Port-Breton," characterizing the novelist's method as the replacement of imagination with "des petits papiers découpés dans les journaux."[30] Favorable reviews, too, conjured the memory of the Port-Breton affair in just a few words. In an early preview of the "année littéraire" in *Le Figaro* in January 1890, André Maurel gave a brief summary of the novel's plot and assumed the reader's familiarity with its source material: "On aura sans doute, à ce court récit, reconnu la source de Port-Tarascon."[31] Later reviews of the novel would similarly assume familiarity. René Doumic observed that "On se souvient de la navrante affaire de Port-Breton."[32] Maurice Guillemot noted in *La Patrie* that "le fond du roman est connu de tous, on le peut relire dans la *Gazette des Tribunaux*," and suggested it might be interesting to compare "le modèle avec la

[28] *Le Petit Parisien*, 5 March 1881.

[29] "Au jour le jour – La fin du *Chandernagor*," *Le Temps*, 24 February 1881, 2.

[30] Charles Matta, "Le Mois," *La Revue universelle illustrée*, November 1890, 507-8.

[31] André Maurel, "L'Année littéraire," *Le Figaro, supplément littéraire*, 25 January 1890, 1.

[32] René Doumic, "Causerie littéraire," review of Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, *Moniteur universel*, November 14, 1890, 3.

copie."[33] Victor Fournel in *La Gazette de France* characterized the novel as simply a "traduction fantaisiste du fameux *Port-Breton* qui fit tant de bruit, il y a une douzaine d'années."[34] In situating the colonial subject of *Port-Tarascon*, then, it is necessary to understand both the Tartarin tradition and its roots in the *petite presse* and *boulevardier* humor, as well as the details of the media reaction to the Port-Breton affair.

L'IRONIE IMPRIMÉE: TARTARIN BETWEEN THE POPULAR PRESS AND THE BOULEVARD

In December 1869, *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, a popular one *sou* daily, began serial publication of a new novel by Alphonse Daudet called *Barbarin de Tarascon raconté par le témoin de sa vie: Aventures prodigieuses du plus fameux des tueurs de lions.*[35] Advertisements for *Barbarin de Tarascon* began appearing a week in advance—in between articles about the Troppmann affair, a sensational murder case then gripping the Parisian press—aiming to whet readers' appetites for the upcoming story. The first was mysterious, showing only the title of the story surrounded by question marks (figure 28). Several more detailed advertisements were published over the course of the following week. On 8 December, *Le Petit Moniteur* announced that

[33] Maurice Guillemot, "Fait du jour – L'Humour," *La Patrie*, 9 November 1890, 1.

[34] Victor Fournel, "Quinzaines littéraires – Fleurs de Noel," *La Gazette de France*, 23 December 1890, 1.

[35] Alphonse Daudet, *Barbarin de Tarascon raconté par le témoin de sa vie: Aventures prodigieuses du plus fameux des tueurs de lions*, *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 9-19 December 1869. *Barbarin* appeared in the 'variétés' rubric, where shorter, often comic, serial publications were generally published. Daudet's autobiographical novel, *Le Petit Chose*, had been serialized in the feuilleton section of an earlier iteration of the same popular evening newspaper, then called *Le Moniteur universel du soir*, in 1866.

Barbarin de Tarascon would exceptionally be accompanied by illustrations by "l'un des dessinateurs les plus spirituels de Paris," Émile Benassit.[36]

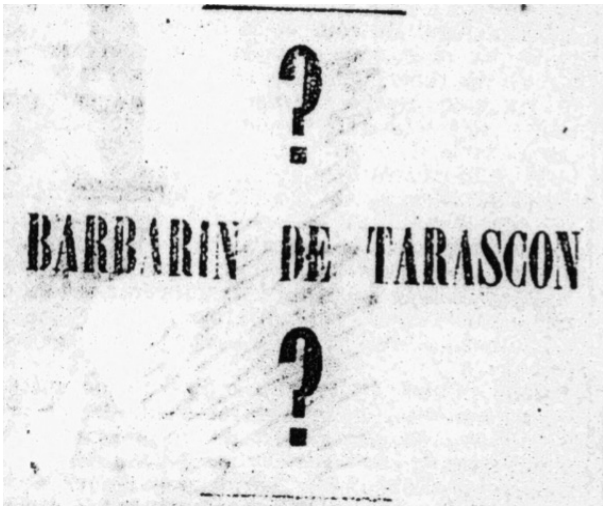


Figure 28. Advertisement for *Barbarin de Tarascon*. *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 4 December 1869, 2. Source: Microfilm reproduction / BnF.

When the first installment appeared on December 9, it was visually striking, taking up half the page, with a large title and subtitle, and a foreword by an anonymous author signing as "Le Témoin." Bénassit's large wood-engraved illustration of a statue of Barbarin was placed at the center of the page, between two blocks of text (figure 29). The next four installments were also lavishly illustrated. One large engraving (figure 30) depicted Barbarin, yawning and dressed in undergarments in his "cabinet," which is decorated with his collection of exotic arms and armor. Another had a procession of figures curving under the text (figure 31), a dynamic use of space atypical for a daily newspaper. There were no further illustrations after the fifth installment, and although the first section of the novel came to a close on 19 December with the promise of a second section to come—"L'Algérie comique, ou Barbarin chez les Turcs"—this promise was never fulfilled, as publication of *Barbarin de Tarascon* in *Le Petit Moniteur* abruptly ceased.

[36] *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 8 December 1869, 2. Most of *Le Petit Moniteur*'s illustrations in 1869 were accompanying front-page news stories; many were related to the Affaire Troppmann (views of the forest where one body was found, maps of the scene of the crime, reproductions of Troppmann's handwriting, and the like) or to other sensational stories (for instance, on 21 November 1869, an image of "le cadavre de l'homme qui a dormi 7 mois").



1368 LE PETIT MONITEUR UNIVERSEL DU SOIR. — 9 DÉCEMBRE 1869.

BARBARIN DE TARASCON

RACONTÉ PAR LE TÉMOIN DE SA VIE

AVENTURES PRODIGIEUSES DU PLUS FAMEUX DES TUEURS DE LIONS

AVANT-PROPOS

Je dirai la vérité,
Toute la vérité,
Rien que la vérité.
Je sais que je vais blesser l'orgueil de tout un peuple, que je touche à une gloire nationale, que je me flanque tout Tarascon sur le dos.
Je sais qu'en lisant cette attaque contre le Grand Barbarin de Tarascon, tous les Barbarins du Midi, ses frères en saint Hubert, vont se lever en masse et monter vers Paris.
Je sais tout cela;
Mais ça ne fait rien.
Je dirai ce que j'ai à dire.
Tant pis si les Tarasconais se fâchent! Il m'a plu de raconter leur grand homme à ma manière et d'attacher des casseroles à la queue de ses lions.
Seulement...!
Ah! seulement je n'ai pas voulu me faire d'affaire, et voilà pourquoi je ne signe pas.

Digo-li qué vengué, moun bon! *Si Tarascon vient me chercher, il ne trouvera personne.*

LE TÉMOIN.

PREMIÈRE PARTIE

BARBARIN CHEZ LUI

I

OU LE TÉMOIN EST ADMIS A L'HONNEUR DE CONTEMPLER LE BAOBAB

Ma première visite à Barbarin de Tarascon est restée dans ma vie comme une date inoubliable; il y a douze ou quinze ans de cela; mais je m'en souviens mieux que d'hier. L'intrépide Barbarin habitait alors, à l'entrée de la ville, la troisième maison à main gauche sur le chemin d'Avignon. Jolie petite villa tarasconaise avec jardin devant, balcon derrière, des murs très-blancs, des persiennes vertes, et sur le pas de la porte une nichée de petits savoyards jouant à la marelle ou dormant au bon soleil, la tête sur leurs hottes à cirage.

Du dehors, la maison n'avait l'air de rien. Jamais on ne se serait cru devant la demeure d'un héros! mais quand on entrait, coquin de sort!...

De la cave au grenier, tout le bâtiment avait l'air héroïque, même le jardin!!...

Oh! le jardin de Barbarin, il n'y en avait pas deux comme celui-là en Europe! Pas un arbre du pays, pas une fleur de France; rien que des plantes exotiques; des gommiers, des calebassiers, des cotonniers, des cocotiers, des manguiers, des bananiers, des palmiers, un baobab, des nopals, des cactus, des figuiers de Barbarie, à se croire en pleine Afrique centrale, à dix mille lieues de Tarascon. Tout cela, bien entendu, n'était pas de grandeur naturelle; ainsi les cocotiers n'étaient guère plus gros que des betteraves, et le baobab (*arbre géant, arbos gigantea*) tenait à l'aise dans un pot de réséda; mais c'est égal! pour Tarascon, c'était déjà bien joli, et les personnes de la ville admises le dimanche à l'honneur de contempler le baobab de Barbarin s'en retournaient pleines d'admiration.

Penser quelle émotion je dus éprouver ce jour-là en traversant ce jardin mirifique... Ce fut bien autre chose quand on m'introduisit dans le cabinet du héros.

Le Témoin.

(*La suite à demain.*)

Figure 29. Illustration by Émile Benassit, *Barbarin de Tarascon*, by Alphonse Daudet. *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 9 December 1869, 4. Source: Microfilm reproduction / BnF.

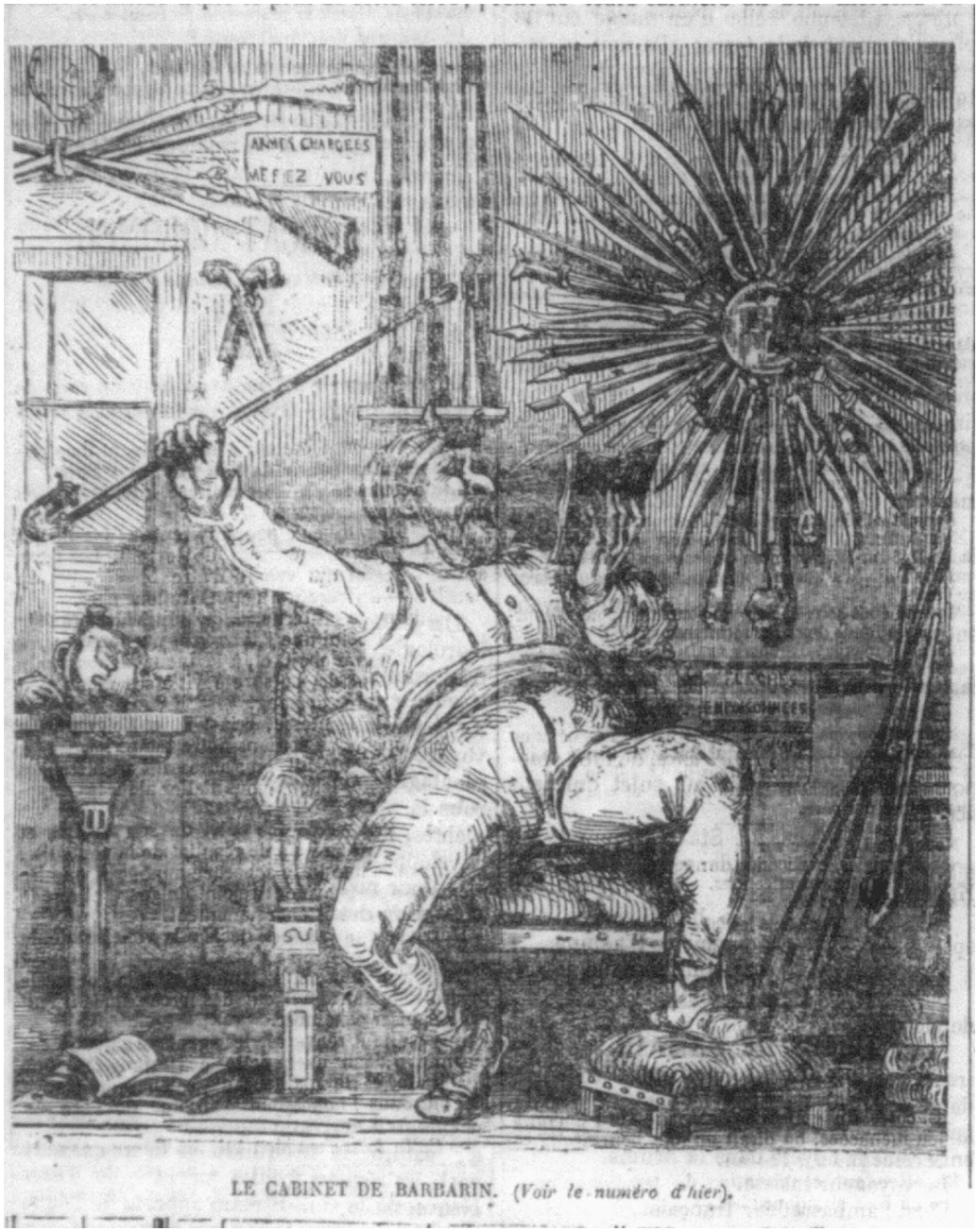
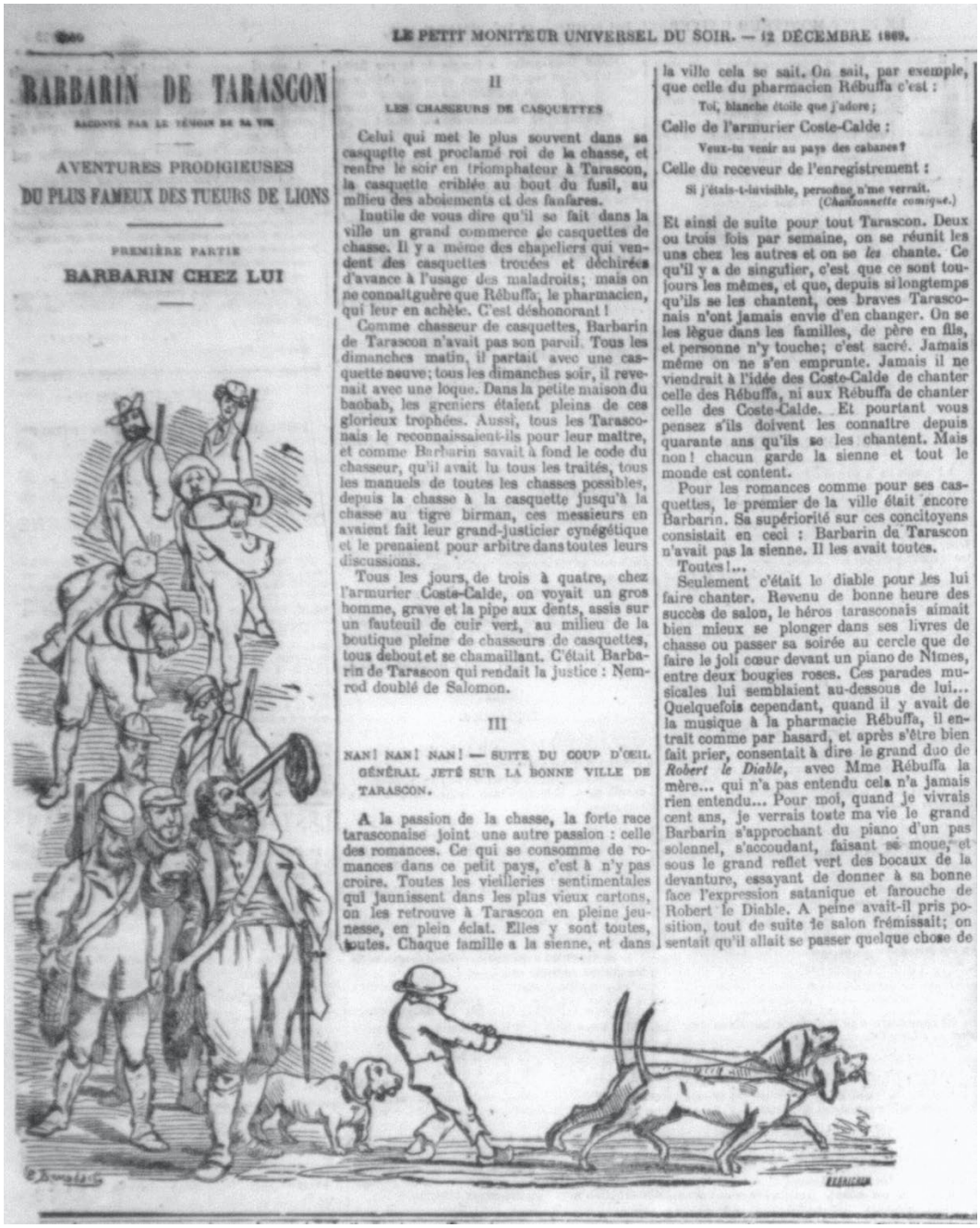


Figure 30. "Le cabinet de Barbarin," illustration by Émile Benassit, *Barbarin de Tarascon*, by Alphonse Daudet. *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 11 December 1869, 4. Source: Microfilm reproduction / BnF.



LE PETIT MONITEUR UNIVERSEL DU SOIR. — 12 DÉCEMBRE 1869.

BARBARIN DE TARASCON

RACONTÉ PAR LE TÉMOIN DE SA VIE

AVENTURES PRODIGIEUSES
DU PLUS FAMEUX DES TUEURS DE LIONS

PREMIÈRE PARTIE

BARBARIN CHEZ LUI

II

LES CHASSEURS DE CASQUETTES

Celui qui met le plus souvent dans sa casquette est proclamé roi de la chasse, et rentre le soir en triomphateur à Tarascon, la casquette criblée au bout du fusil, au milieu des aboiements et des fanfares.

Inutile de vous dire qu'il se fait dans la ville un grand commerce de casquettes de chasse. Il y a même des chapeliers qui vendent des casquettes trouées et déchirées d'avance à l'usage des maladroits; mais on ne connaît guère que Rébuffa, le pharmacien, qui leur en achète. C'est déshonorant!

Comme chasseur de casquettes, Barbarin de Tarascon n'avait pas son pareil. Tous les dimanches matin, il partait avec une casquette neuve; tous les dimanches soir, il revenait avec une loque. Dans la petite maison du baobab, les greniers étaient pleins de ces glorieux trophées. Aussi, tous les Tarasconais le reconnaissaient-ils pour leur maître, et comme Barbarin savait à fond le code du chasseur, qu'il avait lu tous les traités, tous les manuels de toutes les chasses possibles, depuis la chasse à la casquette jusqu'à la chasse au tigre birman, ces messieurs en avaient fait leur grand-justicier cynégétique et le prenaient pour arbitre dans toutes leurs discussions.

Tous les jours, de trois à quatre, chez l'armurier Coste-Calde, on voyait un gros homme, grave et la pipe aux dents, assis sur un fauteuil de cuir vert, au milieu de la boutique pleine de chasseurs de casquettes, tous debout et se chamaillant. C'était Barbarin de Tarascon qui rendait la justice : Nemrod doublé de Salomon.

III

NAN! NAN! NAN! — SUITE DU COUP D'OEIL GÉNÉRAL JETÉ SUR LA BONNE VILLE DE TARASCON.

A la passion de la chasse, la forte race tarasconaise joint une autre passion : celle des romances. Ce qui se consomme de romances dans ce petit pays, c'est à n'y pas croire. Toutes les vieilleries sentimentales qui jaunissent dans les plus vieux cartons, on les retrouve à Tarascon en pleine jeunesse, en plein éclat. Elles y sont toutes, toutes. Chaque famille a la sienne, et dans la ville cela se sait. On sait, par exemple, que celle du pharmacien Rébuffa c'est :

Toi, blanche étoile que j'adore;

Celle de l'armurier Coste-Calde :

Veux-tu venir au pays des cabanes?

Celle du receveur de l'enregistrement :

Si j'étais-t-invisible, personne n'me verrait.
(*Chansonnette comique.*)

Et ainsi de suite pour tout Tarascon. Deux ou trois fois par semaine, on se réunit les uns chez les autres et on se *les* chante. Ce qu'il y a de singulier, c'est que ce sont toujours les mêmes, et que, depuis si longtemps qu'ils se les chantent, ces braves Tarasconais n'ont jamais envie d'en changer. On se les lègue dans les familles, de père en fils, et personne n'y touche; c'est sacré. Jamais même on ne s'en emprunte. Jamais il ne viendrait à l'idée des Coste-Calde de chanter celle des Rébuffa, ni aux Rébuffa de chanter celle des Coste-Calde. Et pourtant vous pensez s'ils doivent les connaître depuis quarante ans qu'ils se les chantent. Mais non! chacun garde la sienne et tout le monde est content.

Pour les romances comme pour ses casquettes, le premier de la ville était encore Barbarin. Sa supériorité sur ces concitoyens consistait en ceci : Barbarin de Tarascon n'avait pas la sienne. Il les avait toutes.

Toutes!...

Seulement c'était le diable pour les lui faire chanter. Revenu de bonne heure des succès de salon, le héros tarasconais aimait bien mieux se plonger dans ses livres de chasse ou passer sa soirée au cercle que de faire le joli cœur devant un piano de Nîmes, entre deux bougies roses. Ces parades musicales lui semblaient au-dessous de lui... Quelquefois cependant, quand il y avait de la musique à la pharmacie Rébuffa, il entrait comme par hasard, et après s'être bien fait prier, consentait à dire le grand duo de *Robert le Diable*, avec Mme Rébuffa la mère... qui n'a pas entendu cela n'a jamais rien entendu... Pour moi, quand je vivrais cent ans, je verrais toute ma vie le grand Barbarin s'approchant du piano d'un pas solennel, s'accoudant, faisant sa moue, et sous le grand reflet vert des bocaux de la devanture, essayant de donner à sa bonne face l'expression satanique et farouche de Robert le Diable. A peine avait-il pris position, tout de suite le salon frémissait; on sentait qu'il allait se passer quelque chose de

Figure 31. Illustration by Émile Benassit, *Barbarin de Tarascon*, by Alphonse Daudet. *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 12 December 1869, 4. Source: Microfilm reproduction / BnF.

Over a decade later, in a series of retrospective essays on the "histoire de mes livres"—first published in the literary monthly *La Nouvelle Revue* in 1882 and 1883, and then included as prefaces in a new edition of his *Œuvres complètes*)—Daudet reflected on the turbulent early publishing history of *Barbarin de Tarascon*.[37] The adventures of Barbarin de Tarascon, whose name was later changed to Tartarin (supposedly because of the complaints of a Provençal family of that name), would eventually become one of Daudet's most successful and beloved novels. When *Barbarin* first appeared in *Le Petit Moniteur* in 1869, however, in Daudet's words, "l'insuccès fut absolu." Explaining the sudden interruption of the story, he claimed that the popular *Petit Moniteur* had been forced to abandon publication after receiving a deluge of negative feedback from readers, who wrote both the newspaper's editor, Paul Dalloz, and Daudet himself to express their displeasure in forceful, if enigmatic, terms: "On m'écrivait: 'Eh! bien, oui… et puis après? Qu'est-ce que ça prouve? Imbécile!' et l'on signait violemment." In Daudet's retrospective analysis, this vehement reaction was prompted by a mismatch between text and audience: "*Le Petit Moniteur* était un journal populaire, et le peuple n'entend rien à l'ironie imprimée qui le déroute, lui fait croire qu'on veut se moquer de lui."

Despite *Le Petit Moniteur*'s advertising campaign and unusual program of illustrations (Daudet wrote of editor Paul Dalloz that "il payait cher une expérience"), it would seem—at least in Daudet's telling—that there was no space in the popular press for a comic tale of exotic

[37] Alphonse Daudet, "Histoire de mes livres – Tartarin de Tarascon," *La Nouvelle Revue* vol. 23, 1 July 1883, 13-21. It was then reprinted as the preface of *Aventures prodigieuses de Tartarin de Tarascon*, vol. V of Daudet's *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Dentu & Charpentier, 1884), I-XIII. These new editions of Daudet's complete works were reviewed favorably, with some reviewers taking particular note of the retrospective prefaces. For a critic in *Le Livre*, while the title "Histoire de mes livres" might seem pretentious, the new prefaces were "de la qualité la plus précieuse et la plus rare," and this was particularly due to Daudet's personality: "ce travail rétrospectif emprunte à la personnalité de l'écrivain un attrait qu'il n'aurait pas avec un autre" ("Critiques littéraires du mois," *Le Livre* no. 52, 10 April 1884, 220). This text was also later included in a collection of short texts by Daudet: *Trente ans de Paris* (Paris: C. Marpon & E. Flammarion, 1888), 139-157. I cite this 1888 edition.

misreading and disenchantment.[38] Daudet's retrospective self-mythologizing should be taken with a grain of salt. Still, newspapers' house styles could and did shape readers' expectations and reactions. *Le Petit Moniteur* often published popular *romans-feuilletons* by Ponson du Terrail, the prolific author of novels featuring the adventurer Rocambole, or by Fortuné du Boisgobey, two of whose mystery novels would bracket Daudet's: *Le Forçat Colonel* was wrapping up as publication of *Barbarin* began, and *Disparu* started appearing shortly after *Barbarin* was discontinued. To such readers, Daudet's subtitle, *Aventures prodigieuses du plus fameux des tueurs de lions*, may have suggested something more in the vein of those popular fictions, and readers might easily have missed the multiple clues, both in the advertising and in Daudet's title and introduction, that *Barbarin* was to be read with a wink.

After the question mark advertisement—which may well have been more puzzling than intriguing—text ads previewed *Barbarin*'s content and style, promising "l'histoire d'un héros inconnu qui, grâce au *Petit Moniteur*, remplira le monde de sa renommée," as well as "une fantaisie spirituelle et joyeuse […] gaillardement écrite par un lettré en bonne humeur." The latter advertisement further suggested the novel was a possible contender for the title of "le roman comique de la France méridionale."[39] As for the title, it was doubly referential, winking at both the biography of Victor Hugo written by his wife Adèle Hugo, *Victor Hugo, raconté par un témoin de sa vie*, and to the memoir of the famous lion-hunter Jules Gérard, titled *Le Tueur de lions*.[40] The tone of the fictionalized author's preface was firmly tongue-in-cheek, with the

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[38] Daudet, "Histoire de mes livres – Tartarin de Tarascon," *Trente ans de Paris*.

[39] *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 7 December 1869, 2; *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 8 December 1869, 2.

[40] Adèle Hugo, *Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie* (Paris: Librairie internationale, 1863). Gérard's memoir was first published in 1855 with Hachette, and appeared regularly in new editions. In 1862 it was reissued in a lavish edition with illustrations by Hadamard: Jules Gérard, *Le Tueur de lions* (Paris: J. Vermot, 1862). On the origins of *Tartarin* in parody and pastiche, see Anne-Simone Dufief, *Alphonse Daudet romancier*, especially pages 456-461 of the chapter "Le ton burlesque et la parodie." On

author promising to tell "la vérité, toute la vérité, rien que la vérité," while finally explaining away his anonymity as a result of his desire to avoid trouble: "Seulement… Ah! seulement je n'ai pas voulu me faire d'affaire, et voilà pourquoi je ne signe pas."[41]

After its abbreviated run in the popular *Petit Moniteur*, *Barbarin de Tarascon* would next land at *Le Figaro*, where it was published in full beginning in February 1870, now with the title *Le Don Quichotte provençal, ou les Aventures prodigieuses de l'illustre Barbarin de Tarascon en France et en Algérie* (it would not be until 1872, after the war and tumult of 1870-71, that the novel was finally published with Dentu, with final changes to the title and main character's name: *Aventures prodigeuses de Tartarin de Tarascon*). Daudet wrote in 1883 that at *Le Figaro*, his story "fut mieux compris des lecteurs."[42] This was not surprising: several years prior to the publication of *Barbarin* in *Le Petit Moniteur*, an embryonic version, a short story called "Chapatin le Tueur de Lions," appeared in *Le Figaro* in 1863.[43] The connection between Chapatin–Barbarin–Tartarin and *Le Figaro* would endure. Both *Tartarin sur les Alpes* and *Port-Tarascon* were published with the Éditions du Figaro, a joint venture between the newspaper and major Parisian publishers that produced lavishly illustrated volumes suitable for *étrennes* gift-giving at the end of the year.[44] This association meant that *Le Figaro* was invested in Tartarin,

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Tartarin's connections to literature on hunting and famous hunters, see Dufief, "Tartarin, les avatars d'un disciple de Saint-Hubert," *Romantisme* 3, no. 129 (2005): 61-78.

[41] Alphonse Daudet, *Barbarin de Tarascon*, *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 9 December 1869.

[42] Daudet, "Histoire de mes livres – Tartarin de Tarascon," *Trente ans de Paris*, 153.

[43] Alphonse Daudet, "Chapatin le Tueur de Lions," *Le Figaro*, 18 June 1863, 1-3. This short story was a more direct parody of Gérard's *Le Tueur de lions*. Here, Chapatin is pushed to go on a lion-hunting trip to Algeria after the members of the Tarascon hunting club gush over the exploits of the more famous Gérard.

[44] *Tartarin sur les Alpes* was the inaugural volume of the Éditions du Figaro. The story behind the publication of the second Tartarin novel—nearly fifteen years after the first—and the genesis of the newspaper's foray into publishing was recounted in *Le Figaro* in December 1885, as part of a promotional push: René Martin, "Histoire d'un livre – Tartarin sur les Alpes," *Le Figaro*, 16 December 1885, 1.

and launched extensive publicity campaigns for both novels, publishing previews, behind-the-scenes glimpses at each novel's creation, and *chroniques* and reviews that had the whiff of the *réclame*, or paid in-text advertisement (as at least one critic noted around the publication of *Port-Tarascon*).[45]

Le Figaro was the emblematic Parisian newspaper of the mid-century, part of what was known as the *petite presse*, "an occasionally satirical, literary and supposedly non-political alternative to the so-called *grande presse*, the major political newspapers of the day."[46] Under the Second Empire's press laws, these non-political newspapers (which did not pay the extra tax required to cover official government affairs) often used literary style, irony, and humor to obliquely address *actualité* while skirting fines and threatened interdiction.[47] As Jules Lermina wrote in 1885—by which time *Le Figaro* had become part of the *grande presse* while still retaining something of its *petite presse* style—"il faut quand même lire chaque matin son *Figaro*, sans quoi on ne serait pas Parisien, et on tient à l'être."[48]

Like *Barbarin*, *Le Figaro* was ironic, irreverent, peppered with insider humor, destined for the select few *lecteurs avertis* well enough apprised of current events and contemporary literary movements to understand the allusive references common to the *boulevardier* style.[49]

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[45] See in particular Félicien Champsaur, "Chronique parisienne," *L'Événement*, 26 November 1890, 1.

[46] Birch, *Fictions of the Press*, 116.

[47] See *La Civilisation du journal*, 236-238. On this history of *Le Figaro* (which was first founded in 1826 and then revived by press baron Hippolyte de Villemessant in 1854), see Claire Blandin, *Le Figaro: deux siècles d'histoire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2007).

[48] Jules Lermina, *Dictionnaire universel illustré, biographique et bibliographique, de la France contemporaine* (Paris: Boulanger, 1885), 609. This kind of characterization about the dominance of *Le Figaro* was a commonplace by the 1880s. Octave Mirbeau made similar, if much more sardonic, remarks in his weekly pamphlet *Les Grimaces* in July 1883, in an article attacking *Le Figaro* as a pernicious influence: "Ce n'est un secret pour personne – tout le monde lit le *Figaro* et tout le monde […] le trouve parfaitement ennuyeux; d'aucuns même le prétendent assommant. […] Comme la fièvre typhoïde et la petite vérole, il s'est acclimaté parmi nous." "Le Figaro," *Les Grimaces*, no. 2, 28 July 1883, 53.

[49] Daudet claimed in his "Histoire de mes livres" that the story encountered resistance at *Le Figaro* as

Daudet began his literary career at *Le Figaro* in the 1860s, contributing several comic poems, parodies, and pastiches, and cultivating a "boulevardier" or "burlesque" style, favoring parody, pastiche, and "la 'blague'," an irreverent, even combative, sense of humor.[50] "Chapatin le Tueur de Lions" was one of these early pastiches, and it was, like many articles in *Le Figaro*, a humorous response to *actualité*: a minor press debate had recently pitted two famous big game hunters, Jules Gérard and Charles Bombonnel, against each other on the subject of lion and panther hunts.[51] In Algeria on an ill-planned hunting trip, Chapatin manages to kill neither kind of wild animal – though he does, as in *Tartarin de Tarascon*, mistakenly kill a tame lion from a traveling menagerie.[52]

Aventures prodigeuses de Tartarin de Tarascon was a novel of what Jennifer Yee has called "exotic Bovarysm," which denotes "the discrepancy between dreams or textually derived expectations on the one hand and reality on the other."[53] As such, it was a genre more suited to the well-read savvy reader who could decipher the textual references and enjoy the irony than to the 'popular' reader seeking an adventure story, as Daudet's experience at the *Petit Moniteur universel* proved. Tartarin himself is the Bovary figure, his exotic fantasies nourished by his reading. In his "cabinet" in Tarascon, surrounded by his collection of "toutes les armes de tous les pays du monde" (see above, figure 30) or in his garden, which boasts a locally famous exotic

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well, in the form of the newspaper's editorial secretary, a former civil servant in Algeria who did not appreciate "la façon légère dont je parlais de sa chère Algérie," and who arranged things so that the relatively short novel was parceled out in brief and intermittent bursts, "si bien que ce tout petit roman s'éternisa dans le journal presque autant que le *Juif-Errant* ou les *Trois Mousquetaires*." This appears to have been something of an exaggeration: *Barbarin de Tarascon* was published in *Le Figaro* with few interruptions between 7 February and 19 March, hardly rivaling a novel by Sue or Dumas ("Tartarin de Tarascon," *Trente ans de Paris*, 154).

[50] Dufief, *Alphonse Daudet romancier*, 448-449, 506-507.

[51] Dufief, "Tartarin, les avatars d'un disciple de Saint Hubert," 65.

[52] Alphonse Daudet, "Chapatin le Tueur de Lions," *Le Figaro*, 3.

[53] Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 116.

baobab tree (in the form of a small potted plant), Tartarin rereads his collection of "les *Voyages* de Capitaine Cook, les romans de Cooper, de Gustave Aymard, des récits de chasse, chasse à l'ours, chasse au faucon, chasse à l'éléphant, etc."[54] He is torn between the two sides of his nature: "Don Quichotte et Sancho Pança dans le même homme," with "Tartarin-Quichotte," urging "couvre-toi de gloire," and "Tartarin-Sancho" countering with "couvre-toi de flanelle."[55] Once he disembarks in Algiers—where the locals gape in disbelief at his improbable orientalizing costume—his capacity for self-deception leads him on a wild adventure through in search of exotic experiences, from "Teurs" (Turks) and lion hunts to beautiful "Mauresques" and rich Montenegrin princes. In the end, he encounters only deception and disappointment.[56] Throughout *Tartarin de Tarascon*, the narrator's commentary cultivates both an ironic distance, mocking Tartarin's bluster and ridiculous actions, and a feeling of sympathy; the mockery is gentle, and Tartarin is revealed as essentially bumbling, even harmless.

This ironizing sympathy corresponds to Tartarin's own vacillations between disillusionment and reenchantment. In an 1890 column previewing the upcoming *Port-Tarascon* in *Le Figaro*, the *chroniqueur* Albert Wolff called Tartarin "l'homme de toutes les illusions, qui ne ment pas seulement aux autres, mais encore à soi-même."[57] Already in the first Tartarin novel, Daudet uses the trope of colonial disillusionment to heighten the sense that Tartarin's bluster is a strategy of productive self-deception. In a scene late in *Tartarin de Tarascon*, the narrator suggests that Tartarin's exotic illusions are so strong as to blind him to the colonial reality before his eyes:

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[54] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:474-475.

[55] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:485.

[56] On Daudet's humor in *Tartarin de Tarascon*, see Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 120-121, and Dufief, *Alphonse Daudet romancier*, 505-523.

[57] Albert Wolff, "Courrier de Paris," 3 November 1890, 1.

> Pendant un mois, cherchant des lions introuvables, le terrible Tartarin erra de douar en douar dans l'immense plaine du Chéliff, à travers cette formidable et cocasse Algérie française, où les parfums du vieil Orient se compliquent d'une forte odeur d'absinthe et de caserne […] Curieux spectacle pour des yeux qui auraient su voir…[58]

The reality is that of colonial corruption, abuses of authority, arbitrary justice, hunger, poverty, and suffering: "Voilà ce que Tartarin aurait pu voir, s'il s'en était donné la peine; mais, tout entier à sa passion léonine, l'homme de Tarascon allait droit devant lui, sans regarder ni à droite ni à gauche, l'œil obstinément fixé sur ces monstres imaginaires, qui ne paraissaient jamais."[59] His blinkered vision protects him from noticing the discrepancies between dream and reality, and thus from disappointment.

Until it does not. Near the end of the novel, Tartarin is finally disillusioned, coming to recognize what the narrator and readers have long known.[60] Colonial Algeria is not the land of exotic dreams, but rather of frauds and fakes; the lion is part of a traveling menagerie, the "Mauresque" speaks French and even Marseillais, and the "prince monténégrin" is a known swindler. Confronted with the truth, he shouts incredulously: "Mais, c'est donc tous des gredins dans ce pays?" An acquaintance, a Marseillais ship captain named Barbassou, responds with a "geste de philosophe" and a warning against the colonies: "Mon cher, vous savez, les pays neufs… C'est égal! si vous m'en croyez, vous retournerez bien vite à Tarascon."[61] As Tartarin's illusions crumble, he seeks his revenge – the revenge of the duped. In an explosion of anger and frustration, he commandeers the tower of the local muezzin to rain down curses and insults on the deceptive and disappointing Orient:

> La mer luisait au loin. Les toits blancs étincelaient au clair de lune. On entendait dans la brise marine quelques guitares attardées… Le muezzin de Tarascon se recueillit un

[58] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:542.

[59] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:543.

[60] On Daudet's use of "double focalization" in the Tartarin trilogy, see Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 121.

[61] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:550.

moment, puis, levant les bras, il commença à psalmodier d'une voix suraiguë:

—*La Allah il Allah*… Mahomet est un vieux farceur… L'Orient, le Coran, les bachagas, les lions, les Mauresques, tout ça ne vaut pas un viédaze!… Il n'y a pas de *Teurs*… il n'y a que des carotteurs… Vive Tarascon![62]

Here Tartarin expresses the resentment linked to what Chris Bongie has called "belatedness," the feeling of having arrived in an exotic locale which has already been spoiled by colonial modernity.[63] In a letter to Daudet after the publication of the novel in 1872, Gustave Flaubert called this vision of Tartarin "engueulant l'Orient […] sublime."[64]

However, Tartarin's disenchantment is only temporary. In the end, as Jennifer Yee puts it, the novel "asserts the value of the dream over reality, the lie over the truth."[65] Returning to Tarascon in the final chapter, trailed by a camel which has followed him across the Mediterranean and influenced by the "soleil tarasconnais […] qui fait mentir ingénument," he begins to tell tall tales, spinning an enchanted version of his travels in Algeria:

C'est une noble bête!... Elle m'a vu tuer tous mes lions.

Là-dessus, il prit familièrement le bras du commandant, rouge de bonheur; et, suivi de son chameau, entouré des chasseurs de casquettes, acclamé par tout le peuple, il se dirigea paisiblement vers la maison du baobab, et tout en marchant, il commença le récit de ses grandes chasses:

—Figurez-vous, disait-il, qu'un certain soir, en plein Sahara…[66]

With this final sentence, Tartarin re-enchants through storytelling – something that featured frequently in the popular reprisals of the Tartarin character that circulated in the form of short newspaper pieces or *images d'Épinal*. A print from 1890 titled "Tartarin joué," which sees

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[62] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:551.

[63] Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1991). On colonial travel literature and belatedness, see also Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

[64] Gustave Flaubert, letter to Alphonse Daudet, 12 March 1872. *Correspondance*, vol. IV, ed. Jean Bruneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 1267.

[65] Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 123.

[66] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:554.

Tartarin tricked by "Arabes" who dress in a lion skin in order to scare him off and steal his lunch, concludes similarly: "Et Tartarin? / — Il a regagné Tarascon / où, dit-on / Il raconte le fait de tout autre façon."[67]

"VOIR CLAIR": DISILLUSIONMENT IN *PORT-TARASCON*

Daudet returned to the theme of colonial disillusionment in *Port-Tarascon*, which used the Port-Breton affair as both a setting for exoticizing adventure and a template for reflection on the shifting boundaries between fact and fiction. Daudet's memorable description of Tartarin in *Tartarin de Tarascon* as both Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in one man is echoed in a final moment of melancholy self-realization at the end of *Port-Tarascon*, when Tartarin himself recognizes the aptness of this description. He tells his faithful friend Pascalon, the local assistant pharmacist and the narrator of portions of the novel, that "ce gueusard de Daudet a écrit de moi que j'étais un Don Quichotte dans la peau de Sancho… Il a dit vrai."[68] The failure of the Port-Tarascon colonial venture has undermined Tartarin's image as an adventurer and as a "grand homme." As the Tarasconnais lose faith in him, and he also loses faith in himself.[69] If, in *Tartarin de Tarascon*, Tartarin did not have "des yeux qui auraient su voir," by the end of *Port-Tarascon* his vision has cleared. Before leaving Tarascon for good, Tartarin explains to Pascalon feeling as if he had just had his cataracts removed, so to speak: "J'y vois clair maintenant [...]

[67] Louis Bombled, "Tartarin joué," engraving, Imagerie Pellerin, 1890.

[68] Alphonse Daudet, *Port-Tarascon: Dernières aventures de l'illustre Tartarin*, in Alphonse Daudet, *Œuvres*, ed. Roger Ripoll, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 980.

[69] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:866.

c'est comme si on m'avait opéré de la cataracte."[70] Tartarin's newfound lucidity marks the end of the series: a disillusioned Tartarin is impossible to imagine, and so the character is destined to die at the novel's close.

Although Daudet had wondered if the marquis de Rays were "un homme d'imagination" like Tartarin, in *Port-Tarascon*, Daudet separates the "homme d'imagination" from the con artist (after all, a con artist can have no illusions). Instead, the marquis de Rays becomes the duc de Mons, a Belgian 'aristocrat,' and Tartarin is one of his victims. At the beginning of the novel, Tartarin's reputation as a local celebrity brings the duc de Mons to Tarascon. The duke convinces Tartarin to join him in his plan to found an independent colony on a far-off Pacific island, and Tartarin becomes the figurehead and most prominent booster of the future Port-Tarascon. With the help of Tartarin's enthusiastic propaganda efforts and an avalanche of print advertisements and newspapers, the entire town of Tarascon is persuaded to support this ill-conceived venture and to emigrate overseas. However, the duke's colonial enterprise turns out to be a scheme to fleece the Tarasconnais of their funds, and the expedition led by Tartarin is a disaster. Expecting to find a paradise of abundance and fertility, upon their arrival they are shocked to discover infertile terrain, an inhospitable climate, and unfriendly locals. While it's clear they've been swindled by the villainous so-called duke—whom they take to calling the "sale Belge," and who quickly disappears—Tartarin, along with a group of loyal followers, nonetheless decides to stay and to try to found a colony. The adventures that follow include brushes with cannibalism and a marriage with a local princess, and, eventually, Tartarin's arrest by British naval officers, his trial for fraud in Tarascon, and his exile and death in Beaucaire across the river.

[70] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:977.

Not only did Daudet rip his story from the headlines, he also filled it with details that would have been recognizable to contemporary readers who had followed the Port-Breton affair in the press. Tartarin's trial at the end of *Port-Tarascon* echoes the 1883 trial of the marquis de Rays and his collaborators, during which the prosecuting attorney Falcimaigne deconstructed de Rays's image as "le fondateur" of Nouvelle France brick by brick. In his opening statement, Falcimaigne presented the task of the investigation as determining whether de Rays was "un apôtre méconnu, calomnié, persécuté," as his defenders argued, or rather "un imposteur audacieux qui a reculé au delà des limites connues l'art de pratiquer l'escroquerie?"[71] The indictment (*réquisitoire*) would show that he was the latter, that "l'entreprise de Port-Breton était une entreprise chimérique," and that de Rays had raised money for this enterprise by means of "une longue suite d'escroqueries."[72] Over the next two days, presenting the indictment, Falcimaigne contrasted print promises with disappointing and even deadly realities, convincingly demonstrating that everything de Rays had done was designed to "entretenir l'illusion" of a serious colonial venture, born of and sustained by his advertisements, prospectuses, lectures, and newspaper issues.[73]

The end of *Port-Tarascon* also features a trial: as the duc de Mons has fled, it is Tartarin who is on trial for "escroquerie," for the role he played in deceiving the Tarasconnais. Here, the legend of the "grand homme" of Tarascon is thoroughly disenchanted. Connecting Tartarin's tall tales of lion hunts in Algeria and peaks ascended in the Alps to his colonial fraud, the prosecuting attorney Bompard du Mazet, in a blistering speech, tears apart his storied life one

[71] Falcimaigne's opening statement was widely published across the press. For the most complete reproduction, see the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 6 December 1883, 1-2.

[72] "Gazette judiciaire," *Le Soir*, 5 December 1883, 3.

[73] "Jugement du 2 janvier 1884," AP, D4 U9 28.

myth at a time:

> Comme il le secouait le pauvre Tartarin, assis avec son secrétaire entre deux gendarmes! Quelle loque, sous ses crocs baveux, devenait tout ce passé de gloire!
>
> [...] Bompard du Mazet, de plus en plus insultant, le représentait comme un vulgaire escroc abusant d'une renommée illusoire, de lions peut-être jamais tués, d'ascensions peut-être jamais faites, s'associant à un aventurier, à un inconnu, à ce duc de Mons que la justice ne retrouvait même pas devant elle. Et il faisait Tartarin plus scélérat encore que ce duc de Mons [...].[74]

In another wink to the reader, Bompard du Mazet's attacks reveal Tartarin's heroism as the stuff of fiction – doubly so, both within and without the world of the Tartarin novels. Though the narrative irony and double focalization lend the scene humor, this and other scenes of the final chapters are marked by pathos (as many reviewers would remark). At the trial, Tartarin listens calmly, and, clear-eyed, accepts his inevitable downfall: "Tartarin, lui, très calme, écoutait, le front droit, les yeux clairs, sentant sa journée finie, l'heure venue du grand déclin, sachant qu'il y a des lois naturelles de grandeur comme de pesanteur, et résigné à les subir toutes [...]."[75]

Though Tartarin is acquitted—unlike the marquis de Rays—the damage has been done. He is forced to auction off his belongings and eventually his home to pay debts incurred in several civil trials. In the first novel, Tartarin's garden of exotic flora and formidable collection of "toutes les armes de tous les pays du monde" were the pride of Tarascon and an attraction for visitors. Now that his legend has been disenchanted, his collection becomes an object of ridicule, and his formerly renowned exotic belongings are sold off for next to nothing:

> On a vendu hier chez Tartarin. [...] Il paraît que c'était navrant. La vente n'a rien fait. On vendait devant la porte, selon l'habitude de chez nous. Rien, pas un sou, et pourtant il était venu beaucoup de monde. Ces armes de tous les pays, flèches empoisonnées, sagaies, yatagans, revolvers, winchester à trente-deux coups, rien de rien... Rien, les magnifiques peaux de lions de l'Atlas, rien l'alpenstock, son glorieux bâton de la Jungfrau, toutes ces richesses, ces curiosités, vrai musée de notre ville, vendues à des prix

[74] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:962.

[75] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:962.

dérisoires... La foi perdue![76]

When his famous baobab tree comes up for auction, the auctioneer's comically outsized description of the potted plant as "*arbos gigantea*, des villages entiers peuvent tenir sous son ombrage," provokes a "fou rire" among attendees, which Tartarin can hear from inside the house. He remarks, without anger, that they, too, can now *voir clair*: "Opérés de la cataracte eux aussi, mes bons Tarasconnais. Ils y voient, maintenant; mais ils sont cruels."[77] He theorizes to Pascalon that he had been afflicted with "le mal des gens de chez nous. Je me suis trop nourri de regardelle," which Pascalon explains signified "tout ce qui tente les yeux, dont nous avons envie et que la main n'atteint pas [...] la nourriture des rêveurs, des gens d'imagination."[78] It was "regardelle" that led Tartarin to his previous adventures, and "regardelle" that caused him to fall victim to the dream of Port-Tarascon. Pascalon, the faithful friend, accompanies Tartarin to the bridge leading out of town, catching only snippets of his remarks in the high winds, but understanding that "il disait n'en vouloir à personne et parlait de son existence avec une douce philosophie."[79]

As Roger Ripoll notes, Daudet's outline for *Port-Tarascon* had Tartarin generalizing more broadly in this scene, relating his experience to the national character and the spirit of the times: "Inférieur à mon rêve. Écrasé par lui. Incapable d'action comme beaucoup de Français de mon temps."[80] Indeed, since the first novel, which had as its epigraph "En France, tout le monde est un peu de Tarascon"—a sentiment echoed near the end of *Port-Tarascon*, when a British

[76] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:978.
[77] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:978.
[78] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:979.
[79] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:980.
[80] Ripoll, in Daudet, *Œuvres*, 3:1364.

naval officer observes that "en somme, le type tarasconnais, c'est le Français grossi, exagéré, vu dans une boule de jardin"[81]—Tartarin had been understood to distill something of the French national character. In an age of colonial expansion, the utter failure of Tartarin's colony served to ironically deflate French pretensions to colonial grandeur. *Port-Tarascon* follows a narrative of disillusionment, where an embellished print legend meets the reality of fraud and deception. In this the novel is emblematic of what we might call, borrowing the title of a recent journal issue, "le désenchantement colonial."[82]

PRIS DU VRAI

Prefiguring Tartarin's metatextual remarks at the end of the novel, *Port-Tarascon* is framed by a fictionalizing prologue set in a world where both Tartarin and Alphonse Daudet, an author who writes novels about him, exist. In the prologue, Daudet is traveling through the Midi with the Provençal poet Frédéric Mistral, and as they approach Tarascon, Daudet is apprehensive: "C'est que nous avions un terrible compte à régler, les Tarasconnais et moi. Je les savais très montés, me gardant une rancune noire de mes plaisanteries sur leur ville et sur son grand homme, l'illustre, le délicieux Tartarin."[83] The playfulness of this preface rewards readers of the previous two novels as well as of the press, where Tartarin as a type had come to take on a life of his own – with the help of Daudet's mythologizing, in essays like the one on Tartarin in the "Histoire de

[81] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:951.

[82] Jean-François Durand, Jean-Marie Seillan, and Jean Sévry, eds., *Les Cahiers de la SIELEC* no. 6: "Le Désenchantement colonial" (Paris: Kailash, 2010). *Port-Tarascon* arguably could have been a centerpiece of this volume, imbued as it is with feelings of colonial loss and nostalgia—a phenomenon widespread not only in literary circles but also found in Third Republic works of colonial theory, history, and practice, from Raboisson's *Etude sur les colonies* to Canivet's *Les colonies perdues*.

[83] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:854.

mes livres" series, published in 1883, where he described his pride in having created a character who figured among those "qui circulent désormais par le monde avec le nom, le geste, la grimace qu'il leur a donnés et qui font parler d'eux – qu'on les déteste ou qu'on les aime, – en dehors de leur créateur et sans que son nom soit prononcé."[84] The preface to *Port-Tarascon* winkingly extended this extradiegetic life, suggesting that Tartarin's colonial exploits were real and could be read about in the newspapers.

Upon their arrival in Tarascon, Daudet and Mistral find the town deserted. They inquire after the whereabouts of the Tarasconnais at the train station, where a lone employee responds with surprise: "Comment!... Vous ne savez pas?... D'où sortez-vous donc?... Vous ne lisez donc rien?... Ils lui ont pourtant fait assez de réclame, à leur île de Port-Tarascon… Eh! oui, mon bon… Partis, les Tarasconnais… Partis coloniser, l'illustre Tartarin en tête… Et tout emporté avec eux, déménagé jusqu'à la tarasque![85] In the railroad employee's response, we see that the earlier speculations of the Tarasconnais in *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, when they wondered if

[84] Daudet, "Tartarin de Tarascon," *Trente ans de Paris*, 156. Elsewhere in the new preface to *Tartarin de Tarascon* Daudet humorously describes the town of Tarascon's lasting grudge against him, claiming that in 1878 a heavily mustachioed Tarasconnais visited a friend of Daudet's in Paris and wanted this friend to take him to Daudet's home to have it out with the author over his depiction of the town. The enduring rancor of Tarascon was a running joke for Daudet, and he repeatedly claimed that he was careful to avoid the town in his travels through the Midi – part of the comic setup for the *Port-Tarascon* preface. Daudet's short reflection on Tartarin was also republished in *La Justice* (18 February 1884, 3, introduced by Gustave Geffroy), and in *Les Annales politiques et littéraires* (13 February 1887, 3-4). It was common in the press in the 1880s to characterize figures in the news as "des Tartarins" of one sort of another, and at least one chroniqueur took Tartarin as a pen name. Tartarin could also occasionally be spotted "à Paris" in comic articles or "échos," such as when Aurélien Scholl published a *chronique* titled "Documents humains – Tartarin de Paris" in *L'Événement* on 21 November 1881. In 1891, following the publication of *Port-Tarascon*, *La Gazette de France* declared that "Nous sommes heureux de pouvoir annoncer à ses nombreux admirateurs que Tartarin n'est pas mort" – and that he was in Paris, attending the wedding of Alphonse Daudet's son, Léon ("Tartarin à Paris," *La Gazette de France*, 13 February 1891, 1). One 1895 "écho" published in several newspapers found Tartarin once again in Paris, recounting his latest exploits in Central Africa at a café table: Le Flaneur, "Échos et nouvelles," *Le XIXe siècle*, 12 May 1895, 2; Le Passant, "Les On-dit," *Le Rappel*, 12 May 1895, 2.

[85] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:856.

Tartarin "était allé dans les îles fonder une colonie qui s'appelait Port-Tarascon," have turned out to be predictions.

At the end of the preface, in a playful wink to the reader, Daudet declares that the story is "pris du vrai," adapted from "des lettres d'émigrants, le 'mémorial' du jeune secrétaire de Tartarin, des dépositions empruntées à la *Gazette des Tribunaux*," and swears that if the reader encounters "quelque tarasconnade par trop extravagante, que le crique me croque si elle est de mon invention!"[86] As André Maurel suggested in *Le Figaro* in his preview of the novel, it was likely that the *lecteur averti* would quickly decipher the 'intertextualité journalistique' of the *Port-Tarascon* preface.[87] If, however, readers did not cotton on to the joke—after all, the *actualité* in this *roman d'actualité* was several years out of date—a footnote pointed them to the real sources of Daudet's fiction: "Lire dans les journaux d'il y a douze ans le procès de la 'Nouvelle-France' et de la colonie de Port-Breton, ainsi que le curieux volume publié chez Dreyfous, par le docteur Baudouin, médecin de l'expédition."[88]

Of these, it was the "curieux volume" published by a Port-Breton doctor that provided Daudet with the most raw material. This was of course the 1883 memoir by the doctor Alexandre Baudouin, discussed briefly in the previous chapter. Baudouin, who sailed with the fourth expedition to Port-Breton in 1881, returned to France in the summer of 1883, after the complete collapse of the Port-Breton colony on New Ireland. Almost immediately after his arrival, his account of Port-Breton began appearing serially in *Le National* under the title *Les Martyrs de Port-Breton*, timed to coincide with the opening of the Port-Breton trial (before it was postponed

[86] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:857.

[87] Maurel, "L'Année littéraire," *Le Figaro, supplément littéraire*, 25 January 1890.

[88] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:857.

to November).[89] It was then published as a book with the title *L'Aventure de Port-Breton et la colonie libre dite Nouvelle-France*, just in time for the reopening of the trial later that year.[90]

In *Le National*, Baudouin framed the publication of his account as an act of justice, part of his duty as a survivor and a witness to those who were killed by de Rays's cavalier actions:

> Là-bas, à Port-Breton, j'ai promis aux agonisants d'écrire le récit de leur long martyre.
>
> Je suis arrivé d'Australie hier.
>
> Je tiens aujourd'hui ma promesse.
>
> Mon récit est une œuvre de justice.
>
> Pour édifier sa fortune, M. le marquis de Rays a été sans pitié. Trois cents morts crient contre lui et tous ceux que j'ai vus mourir m'ont dit: "N'est-ce pas, docteur, que vous raconterez ce que vous avez vu et que nos frères d'Europe sauront ce qu'on a fait de nous?"[91]

These opening lines positioned Baudouin's Port-Breton account as an extension of the courtroom, much as *Le National* did in its front-page *chapeau* describing *Les Martyrs de Port-Breton* as "l'une des dépositions les plus étranges et les plus concluantes de ce procès sans précédent dans les annales judiciaires."[92] In addition to the columns devoted to the unfolding of the trial, eyewitness accounts could provide even more detail for readers avidly following the latest sensational affair. *Le Pilote*, a small Dieppe newspaper discussed in the previous chapter, similarly presented the survivor's account it published in the spring of 1883 as giving its provincial readers a glimpse of the Paris courtroom: "le récit […] a donc tout l'intérêt d'une déposition faite devant nos lecteurs par un témoin et une victime de cette odieuse affaire."[93]

Like the accounts of other victims published in the press, Baudouin's was a story of a group of would-be emigrants who depart for a promised Pacific paradise, convinced by fabulous

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[89] Alexandre Baudouin, *Les Martyrs de Port-Breton*, *Le National*, 14 June-28 July 1883.

[90] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*.

[91] Baudouin, *Les Martyrs de Port-Breton*, *Le National*, 14 June 1883, 2.

[92] *Le National*, 14 June 1883, 1.

[93] "La Colonie de Port-Breton," *Le Pilote*, April 14, 1883, 3.

print propaganda, only to find they have been deceived. However, for Baudouin, emphasizing the seductive power of de Rays's print propaganda was not simply a question of 'intertextualité romanesque.' It was also a way to explain—and even exonerate—his own actions and the actions of the other victims who chose to participate in this attempt to found a "Nouvelle France." Consequently, Baudouin did not depict the Port-Breton colonists as naïve dupes who thought they were sailing for a "véritable Eldorado, rempli de fruits exquis, de gibier délicieux," as Jules Gros had written in *Le Journal des voyages*, but as victims of a skilled scam artist who convincingly instrumentalized colonial knowledge and expertise, political instability, and the ever-tempting promise of great financial gain:

> Pourquoi? Parce que d'abord cette terre inconnue leur fut présentée comme connue, parce qu'une propagande sans scrupule et sans foi leur affirma que Charles-Bonaventure du Breil, marquis de Rays, l'avait visitée et connaissait tout particulièrement et dans tous leurs détails les îles de l'Océanie qu'il avait choisies pour la création de la Nouvelle France.
>
> Pourquoi? Parce que le soi-disant visiteur de ces îles fortunées déclara lui-même *ex cathedrâ* (Conférence de Marseille, 4 avril 1879), qu'ils pourraient y vivre heureux, *à l'abri des troubles politiques, des révolutions et des bouleversements sociaux*.
>
> Parce qu'enfin, à tous ces attraits, on joignit habilement celui qui n'a pas cessé d'être, depuis l'origine du monde, le grand mobile de nos actions, celui qui rend les peureux intrépides, ranime les mourants et donne du génie aux imbéciles, l'appât de la fortune.[94]

In order to show precisely how de Rays created and sustained this convincing image of a promising colonial venture, Baudouin quoted extensively from the Port-Breton propaganda material, including advertisements, prospectuses, pamphlets, and *La Nouvelle France*. The book version of his memoir, subtitled *Souvenirs personnels et documents*, contained an unusual number of engravings reproducing relevant primary sources. These included portraits of de Rays and a few of his co-conspirators, the masthead of *La Nouvelle France*, a Nouvelle France land

[94] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 11-12.

title, and the audacious maps published in the colony's newspaper, discussed in the previous chapter. Such was the interest in the Port-Breton print propaganda as the trial approached in 1883 that the weekly news magazine *L'Illustration* reproduced the "documents" included in *L'Aventure de Port-Breton* in a double-page spread in an issue timed to coincide with the re-opening of the trial late in the year.[95]

While Daudet mined Baudouin's account for the "documents" he included—most of the direct quotations of Port-Breton print in *Port-Tarascon* come from *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*—he did not borrow Baudouin's framing of the scam. Instead, *Port-Tarascon* draws on the other sources mentioned in the footnote to the preface, "les journaux d'il y a douze ans," and especially the newspapers covering the 1883 trial. Most, if not all, daily newspapers anticipated the opening and then re-opening of the trial in June and December 1883 by publishing narrative overviews of the affair, reminding their readers of the shocking details which had been gradually revealed between the *Chandernagor* stories in 1881 and de Rays's arrest in 1882.[96] In *Le Figaro*, the *chroniqueur judiciaire* Albert Bataille began covering the trial in mid-June, with three long articles summarizing the facts of the case (and reminding readers that it was *Le Figaro*'s own reporter, Giffard, who had first broken the story).[97] The *Gazette des Tribunaux*, the daily legal newspaper, also published long summaries of the Port-Breton saga in June. More articles would

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[95] "Le procès du marquis de Rays – Gravures extraites de *l'Aventure de Port-Breton et la colonie libre dite Nouvelle France*, par M. Baudoin [*sic*], médecin de l'expédition," *L'Illustration*, 8 December 1883, 360-361.

[96] Besides those cited below, see also: F. Ducuing, "La colonie de Port-Breton," *Le XIXe siècle*, 12 June 1883, 3; "L'affaire de Port-Breton," *Le Temps*, 12 June 1883, 3; Georges Meusy, "Une Cause célèbre – La colonie catholique de Port-Breton," *L'Intransigeant*, 12 June 1883, 1-2; "Affaire de Port-Breton," *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 13 June 1883, 3.

[97] Bataille's *chroniques judiciaires* of the year's most notable crimes and court cases were also collected and published yearly in volumes titled *Causes criminelles et mondaines*. The 1883 edition, published in July 1884, included a particularly long chapter (fifty-seven as opposed to an average of about twenty) on the Port-Breton trial.

come in November. These 1883 accounts of Port-Breton, again, followed in Giffard's and Bataille's footsteps in *Le Figaro*, emphasizing the sensational aspects of the affair. The story of Boero, the Italian victim discussed in the previous chapter who was said to have been captured by "anthropophages," circulated widely at this time. Daudet, too, followed in *Le Figaro*'s footsteps, making the story one of exotic dream and disenchantment. The Tarasconnais are convinced to emigrate not for political or financial reasons, but because they become enamored with an image of island paradise promoted in print propaganda which had been "créé tout exprès pour les séduire."[98]

Daudet sets the scene for Tartarin's failed colonial mission by recalling the political conflicts of the early 1880s, particularly those provoked by the new regime of republican *laïcité*. A grumbled complaint, uttered by Tartarin, opens the novel: "Branquebalme, mon bon…, je ne suis pas content de la France!... Nos gouvernants nous font de tout."[99] Behind this complaint is a pressing local concern: a new decree banning unauthorized religious orders will mean the imminent closure of the nearby Pampérigouste monastery, home to the religious order of the Pères Blancs.[100] In a burlesque echo of the true story of the siege of the Frigolet abbey in Tarascon in 1880 following the law banning unauthorized religious orders, dissatisfaction and discontent with this "état des choses" lead the Tarasconnais, with Tartarin at their head, to occupy the abbey and defend it against government troops.[101] However, the siege is a disaster:

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[98] Gros, "Les émigrants du 'Chandernagor'," *Journal des voyages*.

[99] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:879.

[100] In March 1880, the republican government issued two decrees, which dissolved the Jesuit religious order (the *Compagnie de Jésus*) and banned other unauthorized religious orders. See Patrick Cabanel, "La République contre les catholiques?", in *Serviteurs de l'État: Une histoire politique de l'administration française (1875-1945)*, eds. Marc Olivier Baruch and Vincent Duclert (Paris: La Découverte, 2000), 167-180.

[101] Daudet's preparatory notebooks include a mention of the "siège du couvent de Frigolet," with the note "à utiliser dans Tartarin": Daudet, "Autour de Port-Tarascon," *Port-Tarascon* (ed. 1930), 175. On the

the stocks of the Pères Blancs are quickly depleted by the hungry Tarasconnais, and the occupiers as well as the Pères are forced to abandon the abbey.

The Tarasconnais' disgruntled complaints about a vaguely outlined but deeply resented "état des choses" are a comic echo of the evocations of decline and decadence in republican France which bolstered de Rays's colonial philosophy, and Tartarin's buffoonish attempt to occupy the Pampérigouste abbey recalls de Rays's image of Port-Breton as a refuge for Catholics. The failed occupation also prefigures the fate of the Port-Tarascon colony: in both cases, prompted by dissatisfaction and dreams of glory, Tartarin and the Tarasconnais occupy new territory, until—unprepared, disorganized, and finally disillusioned—the campaigns end in failure. Temporarily, however, the siege—a noble if failed attempt to save the Pères Blancs—only increases Tartarin's fame, already burnished by the stories circulating about his adventures in Algeria and the Alps. Travelers come to Tarascon just to see him: "Les Tarasconnais étaient habitués à voir souvent Tartarin en compagnie d'étrangers, car on ne passe pas dans leur ville sans visiter comme attraction le fameux tueur de lions, l'alpiniste illustre, le Vauban moderne à qui le siège de Pampérigouste faisait une renommée nouvelle." Biographies and portraits are on display in local bookstore windows: "on vendait chez les libraires de biographies du grand homme; on ne voyait aux vitrines que ses portraits en 'Teur,' en ascensionniste, en costume de croisé, sous toutes les formes, et dans toutes les attitudes de son existence héroïque."[102]

It is this renown as an exotic adventurer and as a defender of the faith that attracts the duc de Mons to Tarascon and to Tartarin. The duke from "le Nord" comes to town in order to recruit

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Frigolet siege and the reaction of the local press, see Vincent Flauraud, "La construction d'un symbole? Le blocus de l'abbaye de Frigolet vu par la presse marseillaise (1880)," *Provence historique* no. 227 (2007): 37-49.

[102] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:866.

Tartarin for his Catholic colonial project.[103] In the back room of the local pharmacy, Tartarin confers with the duke and with two other Tarasconnais, the pharmacist, Bézuquet, and Père Bataillet, a popular and somewhat bellicose priest from the now-defunct abbey (during the siege, he had advocated against surrender, proposing that they blow up the building—and its inhabitants—instead). The apprentice pharmacist Pascalon catches intriguing bits of their muffled conversation through the door: "'Polynésie…Paradis terrestre…, canne à sucre, distilleries…, colonie libre.' Puis un éclat du Père Bataillet: 'Bravo! j'en suis.'" When these "conspirateurs" reemerge, it is with a flourish – but their grand posturing is undermined by their meeting in a pharmacy storeroom, and Tartarin's final heroic gesture on the threshold is undercut by the backdrop of bunches of drying poppy seed pods, and the fact that the suddenly opened door sends Pascalon rolling across the floor:

> Tout à coup, la porte s'ouvrit avec fracas, poussée *manu militari* par la poigne énergique du père, et l'élève alla rouler à l'autre bout de la pharmacie. Mais, dans l'agitation générale, personne n'y fit attention.
>
> Tartarin, debout sur le seuil, le doigt levé vers les paquets de têtes de pavots qui séchaient au plafond de la boutique, avec une mimique d'archange brandissant le glaive, s'écria: "Dieu le veut, monsieur le Duc! Notre œuvre sera grande!"[104]

This final proclamation is a direct quote of the closing line of de Rays's 1879 lecture at the Catholic Salon des Œuvres in Marseille, and the bits of conversation Pascalon overhears distill the essential of the Port-Breton print described across the press and in victims' accounts.[105]

The next paragraph, paraphrasing newspaper descriptions of the future island colony,

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[103] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:866.

[104] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:867.

[105] Daudet's likely source was, again, Baudouin, who quotes extensively from the Marseille lecture: *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 17. More firmly associating his fictional colony with literary exoticism and utopias, Daudet places Port-Tarascon in Polynesia rather than in Melanesia – providing an echo, perhaps unintentional, of de Rays's deceptive use of illustrations, taking images of Polynesia and re-labeling them as "Nouvelle France."

again adapts, with only slight changes, a passage from the lecture de Rays gave at the Salon des Œuvres in Marseille. Baudouin quoted the following portion of that April 1879 lecture in *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*:

> La température, température océanienne, y est très modérée, malgré sa proximité de l'équateur, et ne varie généralement que de deux à trois degrés, entre 25 et 28. Le pays est très boisé, très fertile, admirablement arrosé; il s'élève rapidement à partir de la mer, ce qui permet à chacun de choisir la hauteur et, par conséquent, la température qui convient le mieux à son propre tempérament. L'abondance des sources et des cours d'eau y permet la création économique de toutes les industries exigeant une force motrice quelconque, et l'arrosage naturel du pays y facilite, dans des conditions de fertilité exceptionnelle, toutes les productions coloniales dont le placement s'effectue en Australie beaucoup plus avantageusement qu'en Europe. Les vivres y abondent ainsi que le poisson.[106]

Daudet's notes for *Port-Tarascon* contain a few quotes jotted down from this speech.[107] When he repurposed de Rays's description of Port-Breton in the novel, it was with modifications to further exaggerate the image of an island utopia:

> Un climat *paradisiaque*, une température océanienne, très modérée malgré sa proximité de l'équateur, ne variant que de deux à trois degrés, entre 25 et 28; pays très fertile, boisé à miracle et merveilleusement arrosé, s'élevant rapidement à partir de la mer, ce qui permettait à chacun de choisir la hauteur convenant le mieux à son tempérament. Enfin les vivres abondaient, fruits délicieux à tous les arbres, gibiers variés dans les bois et les plaines, innombrables poissons dans les eaux. Au point de vue commerce et navigation, une rade splendide pouvant contenir toute une flotte, un port de sûreté fermé par des jetées, avec arrière-port, bassin de radoub, quais, débarcadères, phare, sémaphore, grues à vapeur, rien ne manquerait.[108]

Even more than the original, this resembles what Giffard had called "le prospectus alléchant de la Terre-Promise."[109] Here, the climate is "*paradisiaque*" and the land is "merveilleusement" rather than simply "admirablement" watered; "les vivres" are abundant in both versions, but

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[106] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 18-19. Baudouin is quoting from a lecture the marquis de Rays gave at the Salon des Œuvres de Marseille – an important event in the founding of the colonial venture. The lecture was reproduced many times over, in *La Nouvelle France* and in standalone booklets.

[107] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1930), 177.

[108] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:868.

[109] Giffard, "L'Équipée du 'Chandernagor'," *Le Figaro*, 23 February 1881.

Daudet further adds “fruits délicieux” hanging from every tree and not just abundant but “innombrable” fish waiting to be caught in the surrounding waters. The facilities planned are abundant as well, from a splendid harbor to a dry dock and a lighthouse, and even grander possibilities are suggested by the final claim that “rien ne manquerait.”

The promises for the future Port-Tarascon, echoing and exaggerating what de Rays had pledged to his supporters, continue in the next paragraph:

> Les travaux étaient déjà commencés par des ouvriers chinois et canaques, sous la direction et sur les plans des plus habiles ingénieurs, des architectes les plus distingués. Les colons trouveraient en arrivant des installations confortables, et même, par d’ingénieuses combinaisons, avec 50 francs de plus, les maisons seraient aménagées selon les besoins de chacun.[110]

The idea that “par d’ingénieuses combinaisons”—which involve paying an additional fifty francs—emigrants could obtain a comfortable colonial residence adapted to individual needs is Daudet’s simplified adaptation of the variety of ostensibly independent accessory companies that sprung up around the Port-Breton venture. With an additional payment of five francs per hectare to the Société des Fermiers-Généraux de la Nouvelle-France, for instance, investors who did not wish to emigrate could ensure that their land was cultivated for them.[111] Investors and emigrants alike could pay an extra 100 francs to purchase a share in the Société anonyme de la Sucrerie-Distillerie et Exploitation Agricole de la Nouvelle-France, and support the future sugar cane

[110] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:868.

[111] See *L’Aventure de Port-Breton*, 43-44, 77-82. Flyers and “bons” associated with these accessory companies are among the many documents collected in the Archives de Paris, in the files related to the Port-Breton trial. These ephemera were sent in to the Paris prosecutor’s office by victims of the Port-Breton colony, in response to a request by investigators.

industry on the island.[112] Other companies sold shares in mines and in maritime commerce.[113] These accessory societies were all more or less fantastical, considering no one involved in them had visited the island to judge its suitability for these enterprises – but they furthered the image de Rays promoted of Port-Breton, as a secure investment and a promising colony well on its way to successful development.

The details and descriptions first printed in the local Tarascon newspapers are then excerpted and reprinted in newspapers across the south of France:

> […] les articles du *Forum* et du *Galoubet* étaient reproduits dans tous les journaux du Midi, les villes, les campagnes inondées de prospectus à vignettes encadrés de palmiers, de cocotiers, bananiers, lataniers, toute la faune exotique; une propagande effrénée s'étendait sur la Provence entière.[114]

Here Daudet depicts the common newspaper practice, particularly outside of Paris, of clipping and reusing material from other outlets, and shows how it could serve in effect as free publicity. These cut-and-paste newspaper articles spreading across the region worked to bolster and confirm the information provided by beautifully illustrated pamphlets put out by the colonial venture itself. The spread of propaganda via prospectuses and friendly newspaper coverage also directly mirrors de Rays's print strategy, as does the next step taken by Tartarin. Soon after this first successful wave of publicity in local newspapers, he decides to found his own news outlet, "pour continuer la propagande si bien commencée": a newspaper called the *Gazette de Port-*

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[112] The organizer of the Fermiers Généraux was Jean Poulain; Émile-Victor Pasquier was behind the sugar refineries and distilleries. Both were arrested and tried alongside de Rays, and both were convicted of "complicité d'escroquerie." Poulain, who was on the run outside of France during the trial, was additionally convicted of "complicité par recel," and sentenced to five years of prison and a fine of 3,000 francs. Pasquier was sentenced to eight months in prison and also to a fine of 3,000 francs. While on the run in 1883, Poulain published an exculpatory memoir titled *Le Rocher de Port-Breton* in 1883.

[113] The Société franco-océanienne des Mines and the Société franco-océanienne de Commerce et de Navigation, respectively.

[114] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:868-869.

Tarascon.[115]

Tartarin's *Gazette* contains a cross-section of several types of colonial and exotic writing, from news briefs, market prices of colonial products, and advertisements for stock options and shares to surveys of natural resources and geography, and even an exotic *roman-feuilleton* – all of which, together, work to enchant the Tarasconnais:

> La *Gazette* donnait chaque jour au public de la métropole les nouvelles de la colonie. Elle contenait des articles sur ses ressources, ses beautés, son magnifique avenir; on y trouvait aussi des faits divers, des variétés, des récits pour tous les goûts.
>
> Récits de voyages à la découverte des îles, conquêtes, combats contre les sauvages, pour les esprits aventureux. Aux gentilshommes campagnards des histoires de chasse à travers les forêts, d'étonnants parties de pêche sur des rivières extraordinairement poissonneuses, avec description des méthodes et des engins de pêche des naturels du pays.[116]

De Rays's newspaper, *La Nouvelle France*, had been a patchwork affair, reprinting excerpts from travel narratives, missionaries' accounts, and ethnographies – but it never ventured into the common newspaper genres, like *faits divers*, *variétés*, and *romans-feuilletons*, that Daudet included in *La Gazette*. The serialized novel, *La Belle Tarasconnaise*, the story of "une fille de colon enlevée par le fils d'un roi papoua," is a particular demonstration of Daudet's interest in the seduction of exotic narratives. The "péripéties" of this romantic novel "ouvraient aux jeunes personnes des horizons sans fin," just as the newspaper's lush descriptions of Pacific island utopias again set readers imaginations working in overdrive:

> Les gens plus paisibles, boutiquiers, braves bourgeois sédentaires, se délectaient à la lecture de quelque frais déjeuner sur l'herbe au bord d'un ruisseau à cascade, sous l'ombre de grands arbres exotiques; ils y croyaient être, et sentaient gicler sous leurs dents le jus de fruits savoureux, mangues, ananas et bananes.
>
> "Et pas de mouches!" disait le journal, les mouches étant, comme on sait, le trouble-fête de toutes les parties de campagne en terre de Tarascon.[117]

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[115] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:874.

[116] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:874.

[117] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:874.

Though Daudet cannot have known that *La Nouvelle France* excised from its reprinted travelers' accounts any mention of the biting ants that plagued the area around the bay which was to become Port-Breton, his humorous interpolation of "pas de mouches!" suggests that he nonetheless grasped, like de Rays, that the French idea of paradise had no place for bugs.[118]

The promise of houses "aménagées selon les besoins de chacun" also suggested a bourgeois idea of comfort, now transferable to the tropics. The Tarasconnais immediately begin dreaming up their "fantaisies d'installations idéales," complete with wooden blinds, weather vanes, and even verandas:

> Vous pensez si les imaginations tarasconnaises se mirent à travailler à la lecture de ces merveilles. Dans toutes les familles on faisait des plans. L'un rêvait des persiennes vertes, l'autre un joli perron; celui-ci voulait de la brique, celui-là du moellon.
>
> On dessinait, on coloriait, on ajoutait un détail à un autre; un pigeonnier serait gracieux, une girouette ne ferait pas mal.
>
> "Oh! papa, une véranda!
>
> — Va pour la véranda, mes enfants!"
>
> Pour ce qu'il en coûtait!…[119]

For Daudet, then, it was not the promise of financial gain that was most interesting for fiction, but rather the exotic prospect of an comfortable villa in paradise and picnics in the grass shaded by tropical trees, from which ripe fruits drop, ready to savor.

In another instance of borrowing "documents" from Baudouin's account, Tartarin's *Gazette* also contained lists of "petits cadeaux" donated by the Tarasconnais to the colony. Baudouin had quoted several examples of "petits cadeaux" lists in *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, and Daudet's notes for *Port-Tarascon* show that he was particularly struck by the absurd juxtapositions these lists contained.[120] He jotted down a few remarks: "Collectes en France.

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[118] *Océanie, ou cinquième partie du monde*, vol. 3, 353.

[119] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:868.

[120] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 49-53.

Curieux de voir les dons, une oriflamme, cahiers de musique militaire pour les volontaires de Port-Breton, abonnements au *Pèlerin*."[121] In the *Gazette de Port-Tarascon*, this became:

> *Anonyme*: Une boîte de petite perles blanches.
> — Un lot de numéros du *Forum*.
> *M. Bécoulet*: Quarante-cinq résilles en chenilles et perles pour les femmes indiennes.
> *Mme Douladoure*: Six mouchoirs et six couteaux pour le presbytère.
> *Anonyme*: Une bannière brodée pour l'Orphéon.
> *Anduze, de Maguelonne*: Un flamant empaillé.
> *Famille Margue*: Six douzaines de colliers de chiens.
> *Anonyme*: Une veste soutachée.
> *Une dame pieuse de Marseille*: Une chasuble, un orfroi de thuriféraire et un pavillon de ciboire.
> *La même*: Une collection de coléoptères sous verre.
> Et, régulièrement, dans chaque liste, était mentionné un envoi de Mlle Tournatoire: *Costume complet pour habiller un sauvage.* C'était sa préoccupation constante, à cette bonne vieille dame.[122]

Much here was borrowed from Baudouin: the pearls, newspapers, handkerchiefs and knives, ornamental hairnets, and the liturgical garments and décor. The dog collars and the beetles under glass, however, were Daudet's own additions, as was the "préoccupation constante" of the elderly and prudish Mlle Tournatoire with clothing the indigenous inhabitants of Port-Tarascon – though, s Roger Ripoll notes, this, too, was most likely inspired by one item in the list of "petits cadeaux" in Baudouin's account – from "les jeunes filles de Villeneuve-lès-Maguelonne" came a donation of "onze costumes pour les sauvages."[123]

Later in the novel, during the trial, it is revealed that *La Gazette de Port-Tarascon* was primarily the work of Tartarin's fevered imagination, assisted by Pascalon, serving as his secretary:

> — Je donnais à ce malheureux enfant, continua Tartarin, l'idée de l'article à faire en lui disant: "Brodez là-dessus." Et il brodait.

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[121] "Autour de Port-Tarascon," *Port-Tarascon* (ed. 1930), 173. This was in the same jotted note as Daudet's observation that the marquis de Rays might by an "homme d'imagination."

[122] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:870.

[123] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 49.

— C'est vrai que je n'ai jamais fait que bro… broder…, bégaya timidement Pascalon.[124]

Tartarin's exotic dreams and colonialist fantasies were the stuff of *La Gazette de Port-Tarascon*'s propaganda, and, woven together and 'embroidered' into a convincing print product, the means by which the entire population of Tarascon was seduced into partaking in a mad venture that ended in disaster. In his borrowings from Port-Breton's print production, Daudet thus worked out in *Port-Tarascon* his own version of a response to Baudouin's series of questions about what made the scam possible, finding answers in the work of print on the imagination.

As promised in the preface, nearly all of *Port-Tarascon*'s most outrageous plot points are drawn directly from Daudet's sources, and particularly from his sources in the press. In one striking example, as Tartarin and Tarasconnais, aboard the *Tutu-Panpan*, approach the island where they expect to find Port-Tarascon already established by a first expedition which departed a few months earlier, they are surprised to see nothing of the sort. In a scene directly echoing both Giffard and Baudouin, who dramatically narrated the colonists' arrival at Port-Breton and their realization that it "n'existait que sur le papier," the Tarasconnais compare reality with the image they had seen in print: "un grand silence enveloppa de nouveau ces îles d'aspect sinistre. Toujours personne: et le plus inexplicable encore, c'est qu'on ne voyait ni port, ni fort, ni ville, ne jetées, ni bassins de radoub…, rien!" Tartarin asks Pascalon to fetch him the map of the colony, which represents in great detail "caps, golfes, rivières, montagnes, et jusqu'à l'emplacement des principaux monuments de la ville." Tartarin and Pascalon look back and forth from map to island, puzzled: "Mais alors, quoi? La ville, le port, les habitants, qu'est-ce que tout

[124] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:963-964.

ça était devenu?"[125]

When they come ashore, they quickly encounter a contingent of hostile locals, one of whom bears down on them with an (incongruous) tomahawk, killing Bravida, the Tarasconnais military man who approached them convinced they were part of some sort of farce. Later, in a comic reversal, another figure emerges out of the trees – this time, the Tarasconnais take him for a "Canaque" and nearly shoot him, only to realize he is one of them, a survivor of the first expedition, now strangely transformed: "un être bizarre, hideux, couvert de tatouages vermillon et noir qui lui faisaient comme un maillot de clown de la tête aux pieds. C'était Bézuquet."[126] Bézuquet, the town pharmacist, has a "lugubre" tale to tell – a tale that largely follows Giffard's and Bataille's accounts in *Le Figaro* of the first *Chandernagor* expedition to Port-Breton. Bézuquet tells Tartarin and the Tarasconnais that the first attempt at colonization was plagued with difficulties from the start: they were ill-prepared for the climate and environment, and some quickly fell ill. For nourishment, they survived on canned goods, "ainsi que de lézards, de serpents apportés par les Papouas." But the Papouas soon attack, the Tarasconnais are taken prisoner, and then, "rôtis sur des pierres brûlantes […] et dévorés par ces sauvages cannibales." Bézuquet is spared, and managed eventually to escape.

As the savvy reader might notice, Bézuquet is a version of Boero, the Italian Port-Breton colonist whose story of surviving captivity with cannibals circulated widely in the press, acquiring new details at every turn. In the most sensational versions, Boero was able to survive because his freely flowing tears amused his captors, and he became their (crying) court jester. In Daudet's version of the tale, it is Bézuquet's work in the pharmacy that saves him: "Le

[125] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:893.
[126] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:897.

pharmacien pensait qu'à vivre dans les bocaux, à mariner dans les produits pharmaceutiques, menthe, arsenic, arnica, ipécacuana, sa chair avait à la longue avait pris un goût d'herbages qui ne leur allait sans doute pas" – though he allows it is also possible they were saving him for last, "pour la bonne bouche," "justement à cause de son odeur de pharmacie."[127] Though he survived, his garish full-body tattoos will forever remind him of his near-death experience, and will eventually cause him to turn against Tartarin toward the end of the novel—like the other Tarasconnais—becoming disillusioned with the "grand homme" and his tall tales that caused his misfortune.

LE GRAND TARTARIN DE TARASCON N'EST PLUS

In the fall of 1890, *Le Figaro* announced "une triste nouvelle": the death of a beloved fictional character. In his "Courrier de Paris" for the first week of November, the *chroniqueur* Albert Wolff shared the news that "L'illustre Tartarin de Tarascon est mort à Beaucaire." This was, of course, a tongue-in-cheek advertisement for Daudet's latest novel, newly published as part of the Éditions du Figaro. Now, as Wolff announced, "Alphonse Daudet a tué ce vieux compagnon de sa gloire […] à la fin d'un volume intitulé: *Port-Tarascon*, qui paraît aujourd'hui."[128] In *La République française*, chroniqueur Henry Fouquier opened his discussion of the new novel with a lament for the loss of a fictional hero: "Le grand Tartarin de Tarascon n'est plus! M. Alphonse Daudet vient d'enterrer son héros favori"—while in the *Revue politique et littéraire*, Augustin Filon mourned an old friend: "J'ai perdu un vieil ami avec lequel j'ai passé des heures

[127] Daudet, *Port-Tarascon*, 3:900-901.

[128] Albert Wolff, "Courrier de Paris, *Le Figaro*, 3 November 1890, 1.

excellentes, j'ai appris la mort de Tartarin."[129] Anatole France wrote similarly in his own review in *Le Temps* that the death of Tartarin was a blow: "J'avoue que pour moi, c'est un deuil. Car je l'aimais."[130]

Not all reviewers praised Daudet's novel or mourned the loss of Tartarin, however. René Doumic of the *Moniteur universel* wondered "par quelle étrange erreur de goût un artiste a pu choisir" the subject of the Port-Breton affair; the result was that "la gaieté qui se dégage de ce livre, c'est justement ce qu'on appelle une gaieté d'enterrement."[131] Charles Matta at the *Revue universelle illustrée* wrote bluntly that "On doit la vérité aux grands," and described the third Tartarin as "navrant" and "lugubre," criticizing Daudet's strange choice to insert him into "la fameuse et lamentable aventure de Port-Breton qui a eu, il y a quelques années, son dénoûment en cour d'assises. On voit d'ici l'effet qu'y produit ce fantoche. *Port-Tarascon*, c'est un drame noir de l'Ambigu joué par la troupe du Palais-Royal."[132] In his review for *L'Événement*, Félicien Champsaur was more openly scathing: "Certes, il est mauvais, — mauvais, — mauvais, — exécrable le livre, heureusement très court, qu'il vient de publier."[133]

The suspicion of commercial interests and behind-the-scenes machinations also hung over *Port-Tarascon*, in large part due to its publication with the Éditions du Figaro, *Le Figaro*'s in-house publishing venture. The same had been true of *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, also published with *Le Figaro*'s publishing house. In 1885, rumors circulated in the press that Daudet had been

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[129] Henry Fouquier, "Chronique," *La République française*, 13 November 1890, 1; Augustin Filon, "Courrier littéraire," *La Revue politique et littéraire*, 22 November 1890, 665.

[130] Anatole France, "La vie littéraire," *Le Temps*, 9 November 1890, 2.

[131] René Doumic, "Causerie littéraire," review of *Port-Tarascon* by Alphonse Daudet, *Moniteur universel*, November 14, 1890, 3.

[132] Charles Matta, review of *Port-Tarascon*, by Alphonse Daudet, *Revue universelle illustrée*, December 1890, 508.

[133] Champsaur, "Chronique parisienne," *L'Événement*.

paid an extravagant sum for his manuscript – by a "barnum Américain," a "société internationale," or simply a deep-pocketed French publisher.[134] When the book was eventually published as part of the new "Éditions du Figaro," the newspaper promoted it extensively, in front-page articles which smelled strongly of *puffisme*.[135] Léon Bloy, in his 1886 novel *Le Désespéré*, targeted Daudet and *Tartarin sur les Alpes* with a character named Gaston Chaudesaigues, a writer whose desire for "un argent infini" leads him to commercial literary pursuits: "On n'avait peut-être jamais vu, avant lui, une littérature aussi âprement boutiquière. Son récent livre, *Sancho Pança sur les Pyrénées*, conçu commercialement, en forme de guide cocasse, d'un débit universel, avec des réclames pour des auberges et des fictions d'étrangers sympathiques, est, au point de vue de l'art, une honte indicible."[136] When *Port-Tarascon* was published, and was again heavily promoted in *Le Figaro*, it garnered similar reactions in some quarters. One critic complained in *Le Petit Marseillais* that "ce livre sent vraiment trop la spéculation de librairie, et M. Daudet vaut infiniment mieux que cela."[137] Félicien Champsaur informed the "lecteurs naïfs" of *L'Événement* of the financial calculations he saw hidden behind Daudet's second and third Tartarin novels, and advised them to take *Le Figaro*'s relentless promotion of the novel with a grain of salt:

> Ah! lecteurs naïfs! Braves gens! — *Tartarin sur les Alpes* (comme encore aujourd'hui,

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[134] The rumor of the "barnum américain" circulated in early 1885; see L. Serizier, "Romans d'exportation," *Le Voltaire*, 22 February 1885, 1. Edmond de Goncourt recounted, disapprovingly, Daudet's plans for another Tartarin novel in his journal entry dated 20 October 1884: "Il fait, sans l'avouer à personne, il fait pour une société internationale, une sorte de *Tartarin en Suisse*, une machine qu'on lui paye *deux cent soixante mille francs*!" Léon Daudet attributed to Guillaume, the publisher charged with the illustrations for the Éditions du Figaro, the offer of 100,000 francs for the manuscript, in *Quand vivait mon père* (Paris: Grasset, 1940), 259. For the real story behind *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, see Roger Ripoll, "Notice," *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, 3:1239-1244.

[135] On the intersections of literary criticism and paid publicity, see Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin, "La critique littéraire," in *La Civilisation du journal*, especially 945-947.

[136] Léon Bloy, *Le Désespéré* (Paris: Soirat, 1886), 310.

[137] Paul Bosq, "Trop de Tartarins," *Le Petit Marseillais*, 9 November 1890, 1.

> *Port Tarascon*) c'était une entreprise, une spéculation du journal même associé à un éditeur pour la circonstance. Et c'est ce qui explique cette formidable réclame, tous les jours, en première page du journal.[138]

For Charles Matta, these front-page in-text advertisements were something like the "tarasconnades" of the character whose book they puffed up.[139]

The most in-depth reflection on the novel came from the literary critic Gustave Geffroy, at *La Justice*, who wrote a first brief review of *Port-Tarascon* in *La Justice* in December; an expanded version of this review was then printed in the literary magazine *La Lecture* the following month, accompanying the literary magazine's reprinting of all three Tartarin novels between December 1890 and June 1891.[140] Geffroy considered the Tartarin trilogy as a whole, tracing Tartarin's arc from "L'Algérie des lions" to "les Alpes aux périlleuses ascensions" to his final, extravagant, colonial adventure: "Il veut aller plus loin, au large, en plein Océan, fonder une civilisation […] il tente avec eux [les Tarasconnais] la grande et désastreuse entreprise coloniale."[141]

Despite its being "de la littérature debout, parlée, gesticulée, avec les allures débordantes de mon héros," as Daudet had put it in his "Histoire de mes livres," Geffroy recognized in the Tartarin trilogy something that allowed it to transcend its comic trappings and take its place in a lasting literary pantheon, something having to do with Daudet's powers of observation. For Geffroy, "Daudet sait, à n'en pas douter, entendre. Il sait aussi voir."[142] Daudet's ability to, we might say, *voir clair*, allowed him to create a character who appeared as a specific type (the

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[138] Champsaur, "Chronique parisienne," *L'Événement*.

[139] Matta, *Revue universelle illustrée.*

[140] Gustave Geffroy, "Chronique littéraire – Port-Tarascon," *La Justice*, 23 December 1890, 1; "Alphonse Daudet – À propos des trois Tartarin," *La Lecture*, no. 85 (10 January 1891): 17-24.

[141] Geffroy, "À propos des trois Tartarin," *La Lecture*, 21.

[142] Geffroy, "À propos des trois Tartarin," *La Lecture*, 19.

bouffon of the Midi) but who in reality "dépasse le Midi et arrive à la personnification d'un état général." Tartarin as a type is "ce menteur sincère, cet imposteur dupé, ce glorieux terre-à-terre," and as such he is "l'homme de partout."[143] Geffroy's longer review in *La Lecture* closes with a slight modification of Daudet's original epigraph: "On pourrait mettre avec plus de raison sur l'édition définitive: 'L'homme est un peu de Tarascon.'"[144]

Tartarin thus ultimately remained sympathetic, a victim of his naive illusions rather than a villain. If Tartarin could be sympathetic, the marquis de Rays would seem, by comparison, to be an unalloyed villain. And yet, the downfall of de Rays and the failure of his Port-Breton colony had also been shot through with disillusionment, disenchantment, and melancholy. Alongside the ironic mockery of Pierre Giffard, Albert Bataille, and others, there were also more ambiguous reactions, which pointed the way forward to the disenchanted and melancholy tone of the conclusion of *Port-Tarascon*.

In a December 1883 issue of Octave Mirbeau's *Les Grimaces*, an article signed "Sceptique" portrayed the marquis de Rays not as a duplicitous con man, but as a figure out of step with his time and with the modern world – a naive dreamer, not unlike Tartarin. "Sceptique" (a pseudonym not definitively associated with one particular writer at *Les Grimaces*) mused over the incongruous character of this would-be colonizer, referring to him as "cet égaré, cet halluciné, ce revenant de cent ans." Though the author's pseudonym echoed Giffard's

[143] Geffroy, "À propos des trois Tartarin," *La Lecture*, 23.

[144] Geffroy, "À propos des trois Tartarin," *La Lecture*, 24. Henry Fouquier made a similar claim for Tartarin's resonance beyond the Midi, writing that "Tartarin n'est pas seulement un type d'original de province […] Comme dans toutes les créations des poètes (et Daudet en est un), il y a en lui un symbole" (Fouquier, "Chronique," *La République française*). For Anatole France, Tartarin was universal: "Je suis peiné d'apprendre qu'il a quitté ce monde d'apparences et de vanités, où il ne s'attacha jamais qu'aux apparences des apparences et aux vanités des vanités, en quoi il fut un homme comme les autres" (France, "La vie littéraire," *Le Temps*).

characterization of modern Paris as "sceptique," *Les Grimaces*' skeptical columnist treated de Rays with melancholy rather than ironic detachment, marveling at his doomed attempt to swim against the tides of his own era. True to the polemical spirit of *Les Grimaces*, "Sceptique" also used de Rays's failed colonial venture as a tool with which to attack modern society, calling him the "judicieux inventeur d'une 'Nouvelle France'—la France actuelle laissant fort à désirer." De Rays's attempt at colonization stuck out like a sore thumb in the disabused fin de siècle: "Mais, infortuné marquis de Rays, entreprendre des expéditions lointaines, rêver de restauration d'un empire colonial pour la France, faire lever des légions de souscripteurs, susciter une croisade de capitaux autour de cette œuvre d'un autre âge […] On ne se trompe pas à ce point sur son temps […] cette ignorance de son époque est si fabuleusement étrange."

Here lay the difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – in the eighteenth century, and earlier, Sceptique suggests, "aventurier" connoted "coureurs de mers et chercheurs de mondes," while in 1883 it meant gambling tables or high finance. Sceptique concluded, with not a little sarcasm, that "cette ignorance de son époque est si fabuleusement étrange, qu'il est humain et salutaire de souhaiter un jugement inflexible, pour décourager les imitateurs du marquis de Rays" and to leave the field open instead for the more suitable kind of swindler, "qui travaillent sans sortir de Paris et de sa banlieue."[145]

[145] Sceptique, "Un Procès," *Les Grimaces* no. 24, 29 December 1883, 1081-84. In fact, as Stephen Press' recent book, *Rogue Empires*, has shown, the late nineteenth century saw quite a few European adventurers claiming land around the world, and many other newspaper articles would note the similarities between Port-Breton and other recent 'aventuriers', both those who garnered official support (Brazza) and those who didn't (the king of Araucania). Stephen Press, *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe's Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017).

CONCLUSION: LA POLITIQUE COLONIALE

Near the end of his favorable review of *Port-Tarascon* in *La Revue politique et littéraire*, Augustin Filon quoted a letter from a reader who felt some apprehension over the novel's possible success, and in particular, over the possibility that its success might damage public support for colonial expansion, by dredging up memories of one of the previous decade's more notorious colonial scandals: "Ne craignez-vous pas […] que l'histoire de *Port-Tarascon* ne porte un coup à la popularité renaissante de la politique coloniale, de cette politique que nous soutenons tous... excepté ceux qui n'en veulent pas, de cette politique, en un mot, que nous acclamons quand elle donne des succès et que nous exécrons en cas d'échec?"[146]

The anonymous reader's concern harkened back to the contentious colonial debates of the early 1880s. Then, too, advocates of colonial expansion had worried that the Port-Breton affair would discourage future colonization efforts, either official or private. In its bulletin, the Société des Études coloniales et maritimes (to which de Rays had belonged, though the group declined to support his venture) bemoaned the likelihood that the "folle aventure" of the Port-Breton colonists who had departed for "la fantasmagorique Nouvelle-France" would make possible emigrants "méfiants."[147] In *L'Exploration*, an illustrated magazine published by another procolonial society, the Société de Géographie commerciale, Henri de Bizemont similarly feared that Port-Breton would broadly "discrédite pour longtemps les entreprises de ce genre," depressing French overseas emigration and expansion, which these kinds of societies were laboring to promote.[148]

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[146] Filon, "Courrier littéraire," *La Revue politique et littéraire*, 667.

[147] "Mouvement de l'expansion," *Bulletin de la Société des Études coloniales et maritimes* 8, nos. 1-2 (Jan.-Feb. 1884): 43.

[148] Henri de Bizemont, "La Colonie de Port-Breton," *L'Exploration* (1882): 225-28.

Nearly a decade later, however, things had changed. Testimony to this changed political context can be found in the introductory preface to the fourth edition of the Third Republic's most influential work of colonial theory, economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu's *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*.[149] The fourth edition was published in May 1891, only a few months after *Port-Tarascon*, and in its preface, Leroy-Beaulieu observed with a note of incredulity that public opinion on colonial politics and colonial expansion had reversed almost entirely from 1886, the year in which the book's third edition had appeared. He marveled that "aujourd'hui l'utilité de la colonisation n'est plus guère discutée. On a pour elle presque autant d'engouement qu'autrefois on lui témoignait d'éloignement!"[150] Filon's response to his worried correspondent seemed to echo this view. For Filon, in 1890, the dredging up of the Port-Breton Affair in a comic novel posed no threat to the newfound popularity of colonial politics. He downplayed his reader's concerns with humor, adopting Tartarin's persona (and accent):

> Enfant! (prononcez ainfain). Laissez rire les hommes d'esprit. On ne se moque que de ce qui vit. En France, toute lumière a son ombre, toute médaille son revers, tout capitole sa roche tarpéienne, toute histoire sa légende et tout chef-d'œuvre sa parodie. Auprès de chaque grande vérité nait et fleurit une grosse blague qui s'en nourrit, s'enroule fraternellement autour d'elle comme le lierre autour de l'ormeau. Et c'est bien ainsi. Tant qu'il y aura un grand Tarascon appelé Paris, avec son Tour-de-ville qu'on nomme le boulevard, l'ironie et l'enthousiasme feront route de compagnie, comme deux chevaux attelés ensemble. Ils se taquinent, ils se mordent! tout de même la voiture marche.[151]

Filon's tone of amused detachment underlines his own affinity with the ironic *boulevardier* style that he identifies as the characteristic of the "grand Tarascon appelé Paris, avec son Tour-de-ville

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[149] Leroy-Beaulieu's *De la colonisation* was first published in 1874, adapted from a prize-winning essay, written for the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques essay competition in 1870. It was subsequently reprinted, in ever-expanding editions, another five times between 1882 and 1908. Each edition came with a new preface, but also reprinted previous prefaces, creating a kind of palimpsest of the evolution of French colonial politics over three decades.

[150] Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes*, 4th edition (Paris: Guillaumin, 1891), II.

[151] Filon, "Courrier littéraire," *La Revue politique et littéraire*, 667.

qu'on nomme le boulevard." In this view, it was success which drew ironic mockery. Humor—the "ironie imprimée" Daudet had earlier described—did not subvert but rather accompanied colonial politics, the two hitched together like horses to a cart.

CHAPTER FOUR

OCTAVE MIRBEAU'S "PLAISANTERIES MACABRES": COLONIAL CRITICISM AS MEDIA CRITICISM

In a biographical sketch in his collection of essays on the contemporary literary and artistic "élite," Belgian writer Georges Rodenbach declared that Octave Mirbeau was no journalist: "'Du journalisme' disent les sots. Mais M. Octave Mirbeau ne fait pas des articles; il n'a jamais écrit un seul article de sa vie…"[1] Rodenbach's provocative attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff and rescue Mirbeau—one of the most prolific writers in the late nineteenth-century press, contributing some 1500 articles over four decades—from "du journalisme" speaks to the generic tensions between journalism and literature still operative at the high point of the 'civilisation du journal.'[2]

These tensions traversed Mirbeau's career. As Jean-François Nivet puts it, Mirbeau was "pétri de paradoxes."[3] At the height of his productivity and popularity, he regularly used his platform in major daily newspapers to fulminate against the genre of the *chronique*, against

[1] Georges Rodenbach, "Octave Mirbeau," in *L'Élite: écrivains, orateurs sacrés, peintres, sculpteurs* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1899), 147.

[2] Jean-François Nivet, "Mirbeau journaliste," in *Octave Mirbeau: Actes du colloque international d'Angers du 19 au 22 septembre 1991*, edited by Pierre Michel and Georges Cesbron (Angers: Presses de l'université d'Angers, 1992), 25. Éléonore Reverzy puts the number around 1300: "Octave Mirbeau," *La Civilisation du Journal*, 1257.

[3] Nivet, "Mirbeau journaliste," 25.

Parisian journalism, and against the press as an institution. In letters to friends, he both solicited ideas for articles and complained bitterly about the demanding drudgery of the life of a journalist.[4] His periodical writings were his primary source of income and a constant burden, and Mirbeau often complained of the stress caused by his weekly or biweekly *chroniques*.[5] In a letter written to Stéphane Mallarmé in 1890, he described his dread as he procrastinated before an approaching deadline:

> Je suis dans un dégoût insurmontable du journalisme. Et c'est avec terreur que je vois approcher l'instant de l'article. Durant huit jours je m'efforce de n'y pas penser, et quand vient le moment, je n'ai rien de préparé. Il faut alors, en deux heures, bâcler quelque chose. Et je bâcle n'importe quoi.[6]

As Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin has pointed out, such laments over the punishing demands of journalism were part of the regular "*topoi* du chroniqueur."[7] Mirbeau deployed these *topoi* not only in private correspondence, but also in articles, even turning writer's block into a prompt in one 1886 *chronique*, which opened with Mirbeau remarking that he had nothing to say: "Il me faut écrire une *chronique* et me voici devant mon papier blanc. Que dire? En vérité, je ne sais pas."[8] In this article, titled "Bâtons rompus," Mirbeau deplored the impermanence of the *chronique*, whose demands forced *chroniqueurs* to expend their energy on work that would, in the end, be quickly forgotten. Perhaps appropriately, Mirbeau later reused this same material for another *chronique*, "Rêverie," published in *Le Journal* in 1894.[9]

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[4] Nivet, "Mirbeau journaliste," 25.

[5] On the demands of regular newspaper writing, see Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin, "De 'l'homme de lettres' à 'l'intellectuel'? Octave Mirbeau, journaliste, romancier et 'prophète'," in *L'Écrivain-journaliste au XIXe siècle: un mutant des Lettres* (Saint-Etienne: Éditions des Cahiers intempestifs, 2003), 254-256.

[6] Letter to Stéphane Mallarmé, 1 October 1890. Cited in Melmoux-Montaubin, "Octave Mirbeau," 255.

[7] Melmoux-Montaubin, "Octave Mirbeau," 255.

[8] Octave Mirbeau, "Bâtons rompus," *Le Gaulois*, 24 May 1886, 1.

[9] Octave Mirbeau, "Rêverie," *Le Journal*, 11 March 1894, 1.

For Georges Rodenbach, however, Mirbeau was not defined by the journalistic grind. He was instead "le don Juan de l'Idéal," a "grand incontenté" who was always dissatisfied not just with love but with society at large: "M. Mirbeau veut l'absolu dans la beauté, dans l'art, dans la justice, comme don Juan voulait l'absolu dans l'amour. C'est pourquoi il accable de sa puissante raillerie, de ses invectives aux vols d'aigles et d'ouragans, de sa haine loyale, les mauvais écrivains, les mauvais riches […]."[10] It was this search for "l'Idéal" which linked all of Mirbeau's writings and made of them one great work – not "fleurs d'un jour" as Mirbeau pessimistically described his and others' *chroniques* in "Bâtons rompus," but rather a continuous correspondence from the writer's heart, a record of his "extases changeantes" and "ses amours et ses haines."[11]

This vision of Mirbeau's corpus as an interconnected whole finds an echo in more recent scholarly explorations of the links between Mirbeau's newspaper articles, short stories, and novels. For many *écrivains-journalistes*, the short life cycle of the *chronique* lamented by Mirbeau in "Bâtons rompus" could be prolonged through the practice of "la double édition." A number of prominent *chroniqueurs* of the 1880s and 1890s published yearly collections of their *chroniques*, thus assuring their writing a life beyond the disposable newspaper page.[12] Usually,

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[10] Rodenbach, *L'Élite*, 143, 145, 147. Rodenbach's sobriquet for Mirbeau, "le don Juan de l'Idéal," has become a favorite of Mirbeau scholars. See, for instance, Pierre Michel and Jean-François Nivet, "Conclusion: Le Don Juan de l'Idéal," *Octave Mirbeau, l'imprécateur au cœur fidèle* (Paris: Séguier, 1990), 929-936; Pierre Michel, "Octave Mirbeau, Don Juan de l'Idéal," in *L'Orne littéraire: Octave Mirbeau* (Alençon: L'Association départementale pour l'Orne en français, 1992), 9-30. See also Robert Ziegler, "The Landscape of Death in Octave Mirbeau," *L'Esprit Créateur* 35, no. 4 (1995): 80.

[11] Rodenbach, *L'Élite*, 147.

[12] For instance: Jules Claretie (*Le Temps*) published yearly collections under the title *La Vie à Paris*, and Émile Blavet (*Le Figaro*, under the pseudonym 'Parisis') published his chroniques as *La Vie parisienne*. Mélodie Simard-Houde's recent article on these chronique includes a study of Blavet's columns. Simard-Houde, "Être reporter sans le titre? Les reconfigurations poétiques de la chronique à l'heure de l'invention de l'enquête (1870-1890)," *Sur le journalisme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo* 6, no. 1 (June 2017).

writers repackaging their *chroniques* did not make significant changes to the articles, beyond stripping them of the most obvious marks of journalism.[13] For Mirbeau, periodical writing and book publication were similarly linked – however, Mirbeau's version of "la double édition" was peculiarly his own.[14] In his lifetime, he published only two volumes of *contes* which had previously appeared in the press: *Lettres de ma chaumière* in 1885 and *Contes de la chaumière* in 1894. In an article examining Mirbeau's "expérimentation générique" with the form of the *recueil*, or collection, Marie-Ève Thérenty shows how Mirbeau had recourse to "une série de procédés éditoriaux ou stylistiques plus ou moins originaux et plus ou moins efficaces" in order to "éviter à ce[s] recueil[s] de se réduire à une compilation," and suggests "une vision extensive" of the Mirbellian collection, one which would also include one of Mirbeau's novels, *Les vingt-et-un Jours d'un neurasthénique* (1901). Thérenty convincingly shows that *Les vingt-et-en Jours* should be considered less as a "roman discontinu" than as a "recueil corseté," made up of previously published contes and *chroniques*, bound together into the structure of a novel.[15]

Recycling and reuse extended far beyond Mirbeau's two story collections and *Les vingt-et-un Jours*. As Marie-Françoise Melmoux-Montaubin has discussed, many of his other novels, too, were "guère que des collages d'articles," serving as "relais et prolongement[s] du journal."[16] But even before they made his way into his novels—as dialogue, conversation, and embedded stories—many of Mirbeau's *contes* and *chroniques* had already been reused and reworked,

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[13] Marie-Ève Thérenty writes that "généralement, les conteurs publient leurs fictions dans la presse parfois sous forme de séries déjà attestées par un titre commun, puis les reprennent ensuite dans des recueils plus ou moins travaillés – plutôt moins généralement que plus, la simple compilation de circonstance étant la règle majoritaire." Thérenty, "Le dernier mot de l'arlequin: de l'effet-journal à l'objet-recueil," *Littératures* 64 (2011): 111.

[14] On this, see Thérenty, "Le dernier mot de l'arlequin," and Melmoux-Montaubin, "Octave Mirbeau."

[15] Thérenty, "Le dernier mot de l'arlequin," 112.

[16] Melmoux-Montaubin, "Octave Mirbeau," 245, 269. On Mirbeau's novels as "une continuation de l'article," see in particular 272-282.

sometimes several times over, in the press. Indeed, his self-borrowings went more often from newspaper article to newspaper article—as in the case of "Bâtons rompus" and "Rêverie"—than from newspaper article to book.[17] As the examples in this chapter will show, for Mirbeau, his periodical writings were a kind of "generative matrix," a renewable source of material that could be adapted and reused again and again.[18] Considering Mirbeau's reuse in the context of this generative matrix, in turn, is crucial for understanding the place of colonial criticism in his œuvre. Mirbeau never formulated a coherent critique of colonialism; rather, colonial criticism was exemplary for him in specific respects, echoing basic concerns about the media and the political situation.

The example of "Bâtons rompus" and "Rêverie" is illustrative. The two *chroniques* have several identical passages, but each is framed around a particular aspect of the *actualité*, or current events, of the moment. In "Bâtons rompus," the *chroniqueur* stares at his blank paper and laments his lack of ideas; roving around the room, his gaze provides the through line to a wandering *chronique*, as it falls on a pair of recently-published books, the Salon *livret* and a collection of Henri Rochefort's articles from his infamous Second Empire pamphlet *La Lanterne*, which then spark reflection. "Rêverie" responds more directly to a recent debate in the press about the work of critic Ferdinand Brunetière, newly elected to the Académie Française. Despite their different contexts, both *chroniques* are framed around discussions of the fleeting nature of journalism and its impact. The conclusion of "Bâtons rompus" mirrors its opening,

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[17] A number of *contes* were also reprinted wholesale in different periodicals, a common practice across the press for works of fiction. To cite just one example, the conte "Gavinard," published first in *Le Gaulois*, was reprinted several years later in *La Revue illustrée*, with illustrations by Jeanniot: vol. 1, no. 7 (15 March 1886): 231-236.

[18] Robert Ziegler, *The Nothing Machine: The Fiction of Octave Mirbeau* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2007), 12. Ziegler's concept of the "generative matrix" applies to ideas of life, death, and undifferentiated form in Mirbeau's novels.

lamenting the impermanence of the *chronique* as a genre (what does it matter, then, if the *chroniqueur* has nothing to say?). "Rêverie" finds Mirbeau regretting that he had previously attacked Brunetière without reading him, a practice he suggests is common in his profession. Both *chroniques* use Rochefort's *La Lanterne* as an archetype of the modern press: making plenty of noise upon arrival, but passing just as quickly into "le grand silence des choses mortes."[19]

In returning to the "generative matrix" of his own work, Mirbeau rearranged and repurposed ideas, rhetorical moves, and narrative frames to respond to the shifting ground of *actualité*, while developing and refining a broader argument. With their linked reflections on and critiques of contemporary journalism, "Bâtons rompus" and "Rêverie" can also be connected to other *chroniques* treating the subject in similar ways: "Le Journalisme" and "Le Journalisme français," in 1884 and 1885, two broadsides against contemporary Parisian journalism, and "La Chronique," from 1886, another critique of the *chronique* as a genre "qui aurait pu être le magnifique flambeau de l'opinion et qui a toujours préféré s'en faire l'éteignoir."[20] Mirbeau was not the only prolific *chroniqueur* to mine his own previously published work; his contemporary Guy de Maupassant, too, adapted his journalistic material to new contexts and different newspapers, most notably in the case of two *chroniques* titled "La Guerre" and published during two different colonial wars in the early 1880s.[21] However, Mirbeau's self-borrowings were both

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[19] The expression is used in both "Bâtons rompus" and "Rêverie."

[20] Octave Mirbeau, "Le Journalisme," *Le Gaulois*, 8 September 1884, 1; "Le Journalisme français," *La France*, 14 May 1885, 1 (discussed briefly further on); "La Chronique," *Le Matin*, 12 February 1886, 1. The regrets expressed in "Rêverie," about unjustifiably harsh opinions written under pressure, can also be found in an earlier chronique, "Impressions littéraires," *Le Figaro*, 29 June 1888, 1, and in a later one, written during the Dreyfus Affair to explain his evolution from antisemitism to Dreyfusism, "Palinodies," *L'Aurore*, 15 November 1898, 1.

[21] Both versions of this *chronique* came in response to colonial current events: the first, published in *Le Gaulois* on 10 April 1881, was a response to colonial conflict in Tunisia; the second was published under Maupassant's regular pseudonym, "Maufrigneuse," in *Gil Blas* on 11 December 1883, in the context of

more extensive and more experimental. As Thérenty puts it, for Mirbeau, the newspaper page was a "laboratoire."[22] From the mid-1880s on, he pushed at the bounds of the *chronique*, inventing his own particular genre, "une forme hybride entre le *conte* et la *chronique*," which we might call a *conte-chronique* or a *conte d'actualité*.[23] The *chronique*, traditionally a space for freeform commentary on *actualité*, was a particularly literary genre of journalism. It was also, as Guillaume Pinson has underlined, the site of much "méta-médiatique" commentary, particularly in the final decades of the century, as the press grew in influence and journalism professionalized, when *chroniqueurs* like Mirbeau, Jules Claretie, or Guy de Maupassant interrogated and criticized the press—its style, its purpose, its ideologies, its failures—from within its pages.[24]

Mirbeau's hybrid *chroniques* belong to this tradition, while also representing a formal innovation. Appropriating the conventions of actual news items, mimicking the trappings of *actualité*, these hybrid *chroniques* were, in effect, fake news as literary form. Mirbeau combined ironic commentary on current events with fiction, parodying or pastiching familiar journalistic genres and forms in order to criticize them. Often appearing on the front page, above the

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the escalating war in Tonkin. The two *chroniques* shared many passages, but each was framed to fit its particular context, not just with reference to the particular war being discussed but also by modifying other, less consequential, remarks (for instance, an 1881 reference to "naturalisme," evoking current literary debates, became "matérialisme" in 1883, which perhaps suggested that the debate was no longer relevant, or was in any case old news).

[22] Thérenty, "Le dernier mot de l'arlequin," 123.

[23] Thérenty, "Le dernier mot de l'arlequin," 119. On *fictions d'actualité*, see Marie-Ève Thérenty, "L'invention de la fiction d'actualité," in *Presse et plumes: Journalisme et littérature au XIXe siècle*, eds. Marie-Ève Thérenty and Alain Vaillant (Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2004), 415-427.

[24] Pinson, "Jules Claretie et la chronique," 15-16. Adeline Wrona has usefully summarized the main trends of this "discours intertextuel," attacking the newspaper from its very pages, which was characteristic of the press throughout the nineteenth century, in "La Presse en son miroir: Dénonciations," in *La Civilisation du journal*, 1587-1599. Wrona's chapter is paired with its own mirror: Benoît Lenoble, "La Presse en son miroir: Célébrations," in *La Civilisation du journal*, 1601-1608.

feuilleton line traditionally thought to demarcate fiction from nonfiction (though scholars have recently complicated this picture), Mirbeau's *contes-chroniques* fictionalized the *actualité* they jostled against in nearby columns (figure 32), using literary style to provide a meta-commentary on journalistic writing and revealing it to be not objective fact but rather already stylized, even already fiction: determined by generic constraints and political views, and riddled with tropes, commonplaces, and figures of style.[25] Like periodical images, which J. Michelle Coghlan suggests could go beyond simple illustration to provide commentary on current events in the way in which they chose to portray them, Mirbeau's stories were inextricable from the *actualité* they referred to and rewrote.[26] Today, however, they are too often read shorn of this crucial context. This chapter will analyze a series of Mirbellian *chroniques* and *contes-chroniques*, reconstructing the *actualité* that informed them. Mirbeau's hybrid *chroniques* on colonial current events will be considered alongside his *chroniques* on the press and contemporary culture, thus situating his colonial criticism within a broader strain of fin de siècle disenchanted criticism, not only of colonial politics, but of French journalism more broadly.

[25] Scholars have more recently underscored the "porosité" of that line, cataloguing instances of line-crossing, particularly of serial fiction borrowing from *faits divers*. Marie-Ève Thérenty has also shown that this "porosité" operated in the other direction as well, as narrative techniques and literary style migrated upward from the *feuilleton* into other newspaper rubrics. Thérenty, *La littérature au quotidien*, 125-130.

[26] J. Michelle Coghlan, *Sensational Internationalism: The Paris Commune and the Remapping of American Memory in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 28. Coghlan draws on the work of Joshua Brown on the "news image": *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded-Age America* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 2003).



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VENDUS À L'ENNEMI

Grand roman patriotique et populaire

PAR

THÉODORE CAHU

MAROQUINERIE

Plus on frappera coupables ou innocents, plus on aura bâtie.
Général Archinard.
(*Gazette européenne.*)

Le sabre et la mitrailleuse valent mieux que tous les traités du monde.
Idem. (*Ibidem.*)

... En tuant sans pitié un grand nombre.
Idem. (*Ibidem.*)

Ayant lu les déclarations que M. le général Archinard voulut bien, tout récemment, confier à la *Gazette européenne*, sur le meilleur mode de colonisation, et les ayant trouvées curieuses en soi, je me rendis chez ce brave soldat, dans le but patriotique de l'interviewer. Ce n'est point chose facile de pénétrer jusqu'à cet illustre conquérant, et je dus patiemment longtemps. Mais, par bonheur, je m'étais « en haut lieu » prémuni de lettres et de références devant lesquelles il n'y avait, même pour un héros de sa trempe, qu'à s'incliner. Le général n'opposa donc, que pour la forme, une résistance d'ailleurs assez molle, et il finit par me recevoir. Dieu sait si le cœur me battait fort, lorsque je fus introduit près de lui.

Je dois dire qu'il m'accueillit avec cette bonne grâce, charmante que, chez messieurs les militaires, on peut appeler de la cordialité. Cordialité joviale et ronde et plaisant à l'esprit d'un Français qui a la Gruges d'Épaules. Vite d'un bureau rouge, il était assis sur une peau de tigre et fumait, à la mode arabe, dans un énorme narghileh. Sur son invitation, brève comme un commandement, que j'entendis : une! deuxme!... une! deuxme!... à m'asseoir, moi aussi, sur une peau de simple mouton; en face de lui, je ne pus me défendre, en obtempérant à ses ordres, de ressentir une vive émotion, et, à part moi, je tirai de la différence hiérarchique de ces fourrures, des philosophies grandioses, non moins que de peu consolantes analogies.

— Pékin ?... Militaire ?... Quoi ?... Qu'est-ce que vous dites ?... telles furent les interrogations rapides et successives dont m'assaillit le général.

— Territorial ! répondis-je, conciliateur.

Un geste peut-être un peu dédaigneux sortit de ses lèvres, dans un gargouillement de mépris, et j'aurais, certes, du seul fait de mon vivre contre-garde et amphibiologique, passé un mauvais quart d'heure comme on dit, si une espèce de petit négrillon, bizarrement costumé, n'était entré, à ce moment, portant un plateau, sur lequel il y avait de nombreux bouteilles et des verres.

C'était l'heure tranquille où les héros vont boire.

Je me réjouis fort d'arriver à cette heure providen tielle de l'absinthe.

— Gomme !... Curaçao !... Quoi ?... me demanda abréviativement le glorieux soldat.

— Pure, général !... Je ne la prends jamais autrement.

Et je vis, au sourire approbateur par quoi fut accueillie cette martiale déclaration, que je venais de me conquérir la bienveillance, et peut-être l'estime, du grand Civilisateur soudanais.

Tandis que le général préparait, selon des rites méticuleux, les boissons apéritives, j'examinai la pièce, autour de moi. Elle était fort sombre. Des étoffes orientales ornaient les fenêtres et les portes d'une décoration un peu sunnisme, un peu trop rue du Caire, à mon goût du moins. Aux murs, des armes, en panoplie, des armes terribles et compliquées sûrement. Sur la cheminée, entre deux vases où s'engraient, en guise de fleurs, des cheveux ensevelis, la tête d'un jeune guerrier mordait de ses crocs féroces une boule en verre au centre de laquelle le cadran d'une toute petite montre faisait les heures captives, transparentes et grossissantes. Mais ce qui attirait le plus mon attention, c'étaient les murs eux-mêmes. Sur toute leur surface, ils étaient tendus de cuir, d'un cuir particulier, de grain très fin, de matière très lisse et dont le noir verdâtre et si mordoré m'impressionna, je ne sais pourquoi, et me causa un inexprimable malaise. De ce cuir, une étrange odeur s'exhalait, violente et fade à la fois, et que je ne parvenais pas à définir. Une odeur *un peu forte*, comme disent les chimistes.

— Ah ! ah ! vous regardez mon cuir !... fit le général Archinard dont la physionomie s'épanouit, soudain, tandis que ses narines dilatées humaient, avec une visible jouissance, le double parfum qui s'évaporait de ce cuir, et de cette absinthe, sans se mélanger.

— Oui, général !...

— Vous épate, ce cuir, hein ?

— Il est vrai, général !

— Eh bien, c'est de la peau de nègre, mon garçon.

— De la...

— ...peau de nègre... Parfaitement... Riche idée, hein ?

Je sentis que je pâlissais. Mon estomac, ouvrit par un brusque dégoût, se révolta presque jusqu'à la nausée. Mais je dissimulai de mon mieux cette faiblesse passagère. D'ailleurs, une gorgée d'absinthe rétablit vite l'équilibre de mes organes.

— Riche idée, en effet !... approuvai-je.

— Employés de cette façon, les nègres ne seront plus de la matière inerte, et nos colonies serviront du moins à quelque chose... Je me tue à le dire !... Regardez ça, jeune homme, tâtez-moi ça... Ça fait de la magnifique et premier choix... Bon !... ils peuvent se fouiller, maintenant, à Londres, avec leur *cuir !...*

Nous quittâmes nos fourrures et nous fîmes le tour de la pièce, en examinant minutieusement les bandes de cuir exactement jointes dont les murs étaient recouverts. A chaque minute, le général répétait :

— Riche idée, hein ?... Tâtez-moi ça !... Joli... solide... inusable... imperméable... Une vraie mine pour le budget, quoi !

Et moi, affectant de vouloir m'instruire sur les avantages de cette corroierie nouvelle, je lui posai des questions techniques :

— Combien faut-il de peaux de nègres, général, pour tendre une pièce comme celle-là ?

— Cent neuf, à peu près, l'une dans l'autre... la population d'un petit hameau. Mais tout n'est pas utilisé, pensez bien... Il y a, dans ces peaux, principalement dans les poches de femme, des parties plus fines, plus souples, avec quoi l'on peut fabriquer de la maroquinerie d'art... des bibelots de luxe... des porte-monnaie, par exemple... des valises et des nécessaires de voyage... et même des gants... des gants pour deux !... Ha ! ha ! ha !

Je croyais devoir rire, moi aussi, bien que mon corps servît protestât contre ce genre de gaieté anthropophagique et colonial.

Après une inspection détaillée, nous reprîmes position sur nos fourrures respectives, et le général, ramolli par mon « à des déclarations plus précises, parla ainsi :

— Quoique je n'aime guère les journalistes, je ne suis pas fâché que vous soyez venu... parce que vous allez donner à mon système de colonisation un retentissement considérable... Voici, en deux mots, la chose... Moi, vous savez, je ne fais pas de phrases, ni de circonlocutions... Je vais tout droit au but... Attention !... Je ne connais qu'un moyen de civiliser les gens, c'est de les tuer... Que de temps perdu avec la conversion, mettre les peuples conquis... protection, annexion, etc., etc... on a toujours des cousin, ces bougres-là ne voulant jamais entendre raison... On les mas sacre, on bloc, je supprime les difficultés ultérieures... Ils sont morts... Seulement, voilà... tant de cadavres... c'est encombrant et malsain... Ça peut donner des épidémies... Ils font mal... Ils tanne... j'en fais du cuir... Et vous voyez par vous-même que cuir on obtient avec les nègres. C'est superbe !... Je me résume... Pas de milieu, supprimer les nègres... de l'autre côté, création d'un commerce épatant !... Tel est mon système... Tout bénéfices... qu'en dites-vous, hein ?

— Je pense, objectai-je, je suis d'accord avec vous, pour la peau... mais la viande, général !... que faites-vous de la viande ?... Est-ce que vous la mangez ?

Le général réfléchit pendant quelques minutes, et il répliqua :

— La viande ?... Malheureusement, le nègre n'est pas comestible. Il y en a même qui sont vénéneux... Heureusement, traité de cette façon, on pourrait, je crois, fabriquer avec cette viande des conserves excellentes... pour la troupe... C'est à voir !... Je vais soumettre au gouvernement une proposition dans ce sens... Mais il est bien sentimental, le gouvernement...

Et, ici, le général se fit plus confiant :

— Ce qui nous perd, comprenez bien, jeune homme... c'est le sentiment... Nous sommes un peuple de poules mouillées... de vieilles femmes bêtes... Nous ne savons plus prendre des résolutions énergiques... Pour les nègres, nous disons : pauvre encore !... Ça ne fait pas trop crier qu'on les massacre... parce que, dans l'esprit de public, les nègres ne sont pas des hommes, et sont presque des bêtes... Mais si nous avions la malheur d'égratigner seulement un blanc !... Oh ! là ! là !... Nous en aurions de mes histoires !... Il faut se demander, là, en conscience :... Les prisonniers, les torpille, par exemple, qu'est-ce que nous en ferions ?... Ils nous coûtent les yeux de la tête, et ils nous apportent, ma foi, quoi ?... Voulez-vous me le dire ?... Vous voyez que vous ne pouvez pas répondre... Les missions centrales, tous les établissements pénitentiaires ne fourniront pas de merveilleuses et confortables cuirs... Et quel cuir avec la peau de leurs anciens pensionnaires !... De cuir de criminel, nous tous les anthropologues vous diront qu'il n'y a que Soudanais !... Ah ! oui-dire !... elles donne toucher à un blanc...

— Général, interrompis-je, j'ai une idée... Elle est spécieuse, mais générale...

— Alors-y !...

— On pourrait peut-être teindre en nègres les blancs, afin de ménager le sentimentalisme national...

— Oui... Et puis...

— Et puis, on les tuerait... et puis, on les fourrerait !...

Le général devint grave et soucieux.

— Non ! fit-il, pas de superchérie !... Ce cuir ne serait pas loyal... Maintenant, rompez... j'ai à travailler...

Je vidai mon verre, au fond duquel restaient encore quelques gouttes d'absinthe, et je partis.

OCTAVE MIRBEAU.

NOS ÉCHOS

CHASSOR. (TOUS-VENTS)

LA TEMPÉRATURE

Paris. — Hier : Beau temps.
Thermomètre :
A 3 h. 55 soir : 17° au-dessus.
A 4 h. 15 soir : 3 5/9 au-dessus.
Baromètre. — 9 h. soir : 0m,07.
Temps probable : Nouggat. — Temps rieure élevé.

Aujourd'hui, à deux heures, courses plates à Maisons-Laffitte (gare Saint-Lazare).

Prix des Tuileries. — Prix de Paris. — Prix d'Ispahan. — Prix d'Orléans. — Prix d'Ivry. — Prix d'Ivry. — Prix Friedland II.
Prix d'Argenteuil. — Prix de Pomard. — Prix de Deauville. — Prix de Beauvais. — Prix de Bercy. — Prix de Vincennes. — Prix de Saint-Cloud. — Prix de Longchamp. — Prix de Meudon. — Prix de Versailles. — Prix de Fontainebleau. — Prix de Compiègne. — Prix de Chantilly. — Prix de Deauville. — Prix de Trouville. — Prix de Dieppe. — Prix de Boulogne. — Prix de Calais. — Prix de Dunkerque. — Prix de Lille. — Prix de Roubaix. — Prix de Tourcoing. — Prix de Roubaix. — Prix de Lille. — Prix de Dunkerque. — Prix de Calais. — Prix de Boulogne. — Prix de Dieppe. — Prix de Trouville. — Prix de Deauville. — Prix de Chantilly. — Prix de Compiègne. — Prix de Fontainebleau. — Prix de Versailles. — Prix de Meudon. — Prix de Longchamp. — Prix de Saint-Cloud. — Prix de Vincennes. — Prix de Bercy. — Prix de Pomard. — Prix de Deauville. — Prix de Beauvais. — Prix de Bercy. — Prix de Vincennes. — Prix de Saint-Cloud. — Prix de Longchamp. — Prix de Meudon. — Prix de Versailles. — Prix de Fontainebleau. — Prix de Compiègne. — Prix de Chantilly. — Prix de Deauville. — Prix de Trouville. — Prix de Dieppe. — Prix de Boulogne. — Prix de Calais. — Prix de Dunkerque. — Prix de Lille. — Prix de Roubaix. — Prix de Tourcoing.

Ça et là

Dans sa séance d'hier, l'Académie des Beaux-arts a entendu la lecture des diverses de candidatures de MM. Georges Berger, Ch. Yriarte, Henry Jouin, Georges Ph. Gille, Ravaisson et Jules Comte, pour la place vacante d'académicien libre par suite de la mort de M. Barbet de Jouy.

L'Académie a procédé ensuite à la désignation d'un membre, pour remplacer le directeur de la Villa Médicis, arrivé à l'expiration de son mandat.

M. Guillaume a été maintenu dans ses fonctions de directeur de l'Académie de France à Rome, pour une nouvelle période de six années.

Le Gil Blas commence la publication d'un roman très curieux, qui est en même temps une étude de mœurs contemporaines extrêmement violente.

Ce roman, qui porte ce titre suggestif *les Vendeurs d'amour*, a pour auteur M. Hitzy Davenel.

La plus touchante des idylles, croyant, dans le cadre exquis de la nature bretonne, un drame passionnel profondément émouvant, tel est le sujet du *Crucifix de Kerzalic*, le beau roman que vient de publier Charles Le Goffic et que l'Académie française a couronné.

Sur la côte d'azur :

Les réjouissances estivales de Monaco se succèdent sans se ressembler. Les diverses Sociétés de la Principauté rivalisent à tour de rôle, pour offrir, chacune à leur tour, des fêtes variées aux étrangers et aux excursionnistes nombreux qui fréquentent le littoral en cette saison d'été, délicieuse ici grâce aux brises de mer, alors qu'ailleurs pèsent les chaleurs sans air. Voici donc une nouvelle fête que donne la Société chorale, l'Avenir de Monaco.

Au programme :

Fête de jour : grande Kermesse, avec le concours des Sociétés locales et de la Société des flèches de Mer, qui s'associe à toutes les fêtes. — Concert, fête foraine, concours de tir, bal d'enfants, etc.

Le soir : grand concert vocal, grand bal populaire, tombola, feux d'artifice.

Cette nouvelle fête, préparée avec tout le zèle que l'on sait déployer à Monaco, sera sûrement très réussie.

NOUVELLE A LA MAIN

Bébé et sa mère :

— Quand je serai grand, alors tu me donneras tout ce que je voudrai ?

— Oui, mais elle ne sera pas en or.

— Oh ! si, petite mère, une vieille montre qui ne serait presque plus en or !

LE DOMINO ROSE.

PSYCHOLOGIE FAMILIÈRE

DES SUPERSTITIONS COMMUNES

Je ne connais rien de fâcheux comme la superstition des autres.

C'est ainsi que ma chère Lola a le préjugé des « poissons ». Vous lisez bien des poissons, de ces innocents habitants des mers, que l'on mange à table, et que le collège sans la forme des morues du vendredi, que l'on estime plus lard comme un régal de chat, quand la modernité nous a rendus et la lassitude de l'homme vous sont apparu que d'un bouquet de Parme acheté dans une charcuterie, ou d'une tendresse ou d'un assaut d'éperlans frais sortis du filet, ce sont les écailles d'argent qui flottent le plus élevé, comme la volubilité, près de la vérité, l'expérience des rois délicats.

La superstition de ma chère Lola ne s'attache pas aux poissons d'eau douce ni aux salés. Elle porte sur les poissons de songe.

Mais voici à cette très charmante minute du matin, où, après la vie inconsciente que chacun de nous mène pendant les heures noires, on se retrouve en face de l'autre dans les positions régulières du sentiment et de la loi.

Jamais je n'oublie de demander à ce qu'elle a...

— Eh bien ! ma chère Lola, avez-vous fait bon voyage ?

Il arrive souvent que l'on me répond avec une gravité inquiète :

— J'ai rêvé de poissons... La journée en finira pas sans querelle...

Eh ! parbleu ! on y arrive toujours à la querelle, quand on croit qu'elle est superflue. Les occasions ne manquent pas à une maîtresse de maison, depuis le cynisme du boucher de campagne, qui compte la livre de « réjouissance » au prix du « filet », jusqu'à l'ironie avec laquelle un compagnon acrylique nous demande le soir, tout en fumant son cigare, à la fenêtre :

— Et ces poissons ?...

— Vous m'ennuyez...

— Non, répondez sérieusement... Vous n'avez pas eu une seule contrariété de la journée ?

— Qu'en savez-vous ?

— Je l'aurais vu à votre air.

— Je ne suis pas contrariée, vous, je cache ma mauvaise humeur...

Et cetera.

Poussons du matin ou araignées du soir, les superstitions des autres me déplaisent autant que les mienne me sont chères.

Parce qu'elles sont à moi ?

Non.

Mais parce que ce sont des superstitions raisonnables, fondées sur l'observation, sur la loi des causes, sur le raisonnement des gens vraiment sensés, sur la suspicion de l'Église, sur les défenses des Talmudistes, et non des billevesées de sol répandu, de couleurs en croix, de vendredi, de tintement d'oreilles, de treize à table, de vol d'hirondelles, de taches de vin, d'appels de couvous, de rencontres noires, de touchage de fer, de sous troués, de trépas de malheur, de songe de poissons, que sais-je ? toutes marques insignes de faiblesse d'esprit, cela je l'affirme, au risque d'amuser contre moi toutes les colères, au risque de provoquer le sourire des esprits forts, ceux, par exemple, que n'inquiète point un vol de corbeaux.

On peut discuter du présage des pies : mais l'augure du corbeau ? Ah ! mes amis, rien n'est plus véritable, et nos pères eurent bien ce qu'ils firent quand, désorientant la tête à droite, ils aperçurent cette apparition de « sinistre ». *Je compte qu'un homme de ville*, qui lit son journal entre quatre lambris, parle légèrement du péril de ces rencontres. Mais un amoureux d'horizon qui, comme moi, bat la campagne, doit compter avec elles. Le moyen de ne point trembler, quand, tumultueusement, derrière quelque haie, l'ennemi caché s'enlève, fouette l'air de son aile robuste, pour se suspendre, une seconde, et vous fixant de son œil rond qui jette le mauvais sort... En ce cas, si je suis de loisir, je n'insiste point, je tourne bride : s'il faut aller de l'avant, je me recommande à Dieu.

Pour mériter son indulgence, j'ai toujours pratiqué la raisonnable discipline qui se définit : « faire des concessions ». Vous pouvez fouiller dans mes poussets, vous n'y trouverez pas cette petite glace qui est si commode pour se tirer les moucherons des yeux, vérifier l'écourtement de la moustache et les progrès de la cicatrice qui vous déshonore le menton. C'est grande glace qui, née c'est périt de mort; je l'ai vérifié deux fois en une année, où je tombai successivement avec un cheval au sauf d'un obstacle, puis dans un bois de hanneton sous les coups d'une bande de grandins.

Quand la judicieuse idée que le ciel prodigue aux personnes clairvoyantes vers les accommodements qu'il faut pour agir. Je recommande aux personnes qui voyagent en chemin de fer d'apporter, en mémoire la multiplication que des chiffres aussi voyants pourrait me plaire. J'étais assis à la dernière place d'un compartiment de dames, seul en face de quatre d'entre elles, et, comme je me trouvais assez sa rougie, qu'elle appelle cieusement Mme Pinet, et qui ne pouvait rougir chrysolde et désespoir qu'elle désigne sous le nom de Mme Bourgogne de Tata (une suivante, sans doute).

Au moment où elle se préparait à offrir, sous forme de boche, un petit rafraîchi semen à Mme Pinet, la dernière place, la dernière, à coup enlevée du plancher si plus ni moins qu'une balance, se trouva, tandis que les vrai blonds rougissent en descendre, ses petites chaussées, drapées de bas jaunes d'orange — pour réveiller la jaunisse — sans que nous ayons pu savoir si, au milieu d'une nuit de moucher irrespectueuses.

— Mais papa disait, grave, froid, risqué et brun, qui, en effet, n'a parlé jamais, à cette heure, que d'intérieur épicurisme !

— Quel cas, ces ?

— Ce que la petite Yvonne...

— A qui c'est, la petite Yvonne ?

— A son père...

— A son père seulement ? Bien ; alors je l'emporte.

— Dont l'a les autres sans !

— A quels autres ?

— Maman, tante Lalie, grand'mère.

— Alors, elle est à nous quatre, la petite Yvonne !

— Non !

— Et ce cas, je vais la couper en quatre ; comme ce sont nous sœurs chacun aurez morceau ; ta tour !

— Moi ?

— Alors-y !

— Voui, deux soulevons !

— Soulevons donc !

— Faudra doyner la tête à grand'mère !

— Pourquoi ?

— Parce que quand on mange du lapin — ta soi, bien — on doit donner la tête à son grand mère !

GEORGE AUNOU.

Parisiens de Juillet

PAR JEAN LORRAIN

La Rue

Dans la rue chaude encore des brûleries de la journée, pendant qu'aux balcons des villas, qu'aux fenêtres basses des petits employés, en caleçons clairs, se penchent, et que les premières rêveries s'alanguissent, dans l'atmosphère rude et dorée du soir, toute la marmaille du quartier, en chemisettes et petites filles plus graves, déjà femmes, poussent pompeusement leurs rondes vers les grandes glaces du pâtissier.

Aux portes, les commérages installés à même le trottoir font salon avec les bonnes des locataires parties, soit à la mer, soit à la montagne; tous les paquets de l'année défilent et repassent successivement de Dieu sait quelles épaisseurs histoires pour l'a réputation des absents ! et tandis que Juliette, la fille du charbonnier marchand de vins, regarde d'un bout de la rue à l'autre d'où viennent parties de volant, prélasse à sa grande aise de rires, à de petits cris et à des envois-sonts de jupes qui font re-

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 32. A *conte d'actualité*, Mirbeau's "Maroquinerie," in the leading article position in *Le Journal*, jostling up against news and *reportage*. Octave Mirbeau, "Maroquinerie," *Le Journal*, 12 July 1896, 1. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

CETTE VERVE DIABOLIQUE

In 1886, Arthur Meyer, the powerful press baron and then director of *Le Gaulois*, where Mirbeau was a chroniqueur, told Mirbeau that his journalistic future lay in *chroniques*, rather than in *contes* or in novels:

> Vous, vous avez le talent de la chronique, je vous l'ai dit bien des fois, et vous devez vous faire une place très haute dans la chronique… Vous réussissez beaucoup moins bien dans le conte. Ceux que vous avez donnés au *Gil Blas*, permettez-moi de vous le dire, n'étaient pas excellents, ce n'étaient pas des contes… La chronique, croyez-moi! […] Ah! si j'avais votre plume, je me ferais une place à part dans la chronique![27]

In a way, Meyer was right– whatever his abilities or inclinations, Mirbeau first won fame for his *chroniques*. According to Jean-François Nivet, by the 1890s, Mirbeau's byline reliably caused daily sales to jump by ten percent.[28]

Above all, Mirbeau's chroniques helped craft his public persona. In 1889, Edmond de Goncourt described Mirbeau as "un causeur verveux, spirituel, doublé d'un potinier amusant."[29] The image of Mirbeau as impassioned and "verveux," which was later echoed by Rodenbach, had been part of his public persona in its earliest incarnation. An 1883 profile written by his friend Paul Hervieu described him as a fiery interlocutor:

> Pour mille sujets il se passionne avec des brusqueries séduisantes. […] Bon gré mal gré, chacun subit le charme de cette verve diabolique, de cette éloquence ironique où l'auteur du *Comédien* reparaît tout entier […] Les lecteurs parisiens […] suivent avec intérêt les manifestations curieuses de ce tempérament supérieur et impressionnable, ses indignations originales, ses prises de parti imprévues et téméraires sur toutes les questions qui émeuvent pour vingt-quatre heures les salons et la ville.[30]

For Hervieu, Mirbeau's appeal to readers was both his critical perspective and his polemical

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[27] Letter from Mirbeau to Paul Hervieu, c. 20 August 1886, *Correspondance générale I*, 575.

[28] Nivet, "Mirbeau journaliste," 32n8.

[29] Edmond de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, vol. 8, *1889-1891* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1895), 59.

[30] Éliacin [Paul Hervieu], "Les Jeunes – Octave Mirbeau," *Le Jour*, 28 April 1883, identified by and republished in Pierre Michel, "Octave Mirbeau vu par Paul Hervieu," *Cahiers Octave Mirbeau* 9 (2002).

style – a kind of motor of *actualité* in miniature, moving quickly from one subject to another. Mirbeau's style was exemplified by "Le Comédien," mentioned by Hervieu here, an article published in *Le Figaro* in October 1882. "Le Comédien" caused an immediate uproar and cemented Mirbeau's image, for better or worse, as a "grand engueuleur."[31] In the front-page *chronique*, Mirbeau directed his "verve diabolique" at actors and their dominance in contemporary culture: "cet être [le comédien], autrefois rejeté hors de la vie sociale, pourrissant, sordide et galeux, dans son ghetto, s'est emparé de toute la vie sociale." The article took potshots at the theater critics who wrote weekly feuilletons praising the talentless hacks whose popularity, according to Mirbeau, represented an outward sign of decline and decadence.[32] As Pierre Michel and Jean-François Nivet have underlined, Mirbeau's attack on actors and critics was, more broadly, a "mise en cause radicale de toute la société," in which the unjustly praised actor served as a symbol "d'une société où les vraies valeurs sont bafouées et les vrais talents méconnus."[33]

The response to "Le Comédien" was immediate. An emergency meeting of the Société des artistes dramatiques was called, where five prominent actors were chosen as delegates and sent to speak with *Le Figaro*'s editor-in-chief, Francis Magnard, judged responsible for Mirbeau's offensive article. These five men headed to *Le Figaro*'s offices in the rue Drouot and demanded satisfaction from Magnard by way of a published retraction or reparation. Such official steps were meant to discourage disgruntled actors from challenging Mirbeau to duels –

[31] Jean-François Nivet, "Mirbeau et l'affaire du 'Comédien'," *Les Cahiers* no. 35: "Les Acteurs, haine, amour…" (May 2000): 33.

[32] Octave Mirbeau, "Le Comédien," *Le Figaro*, 26 October 1882, 1. On this scandal, see the relevant letters collected in Octave Mirbeau, *Correspondance générale I*, eds Pierre Michel and Jean-François Nivet (Lausanne: Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 2002), 285-295; Michel and Nivet, *Octave Mirbeau*, 145-148; Nivet, "Mirbeau et l'affaire du 'Comédien'."

[33] Michel and Nivet, *Octave Mirbeau*, 145.

something Jacques Damala, husband of Sarah Bernhardt, had already done.[34] *Le Figaro* did print a brief apology, in an *entrefilet* written by theater critic Auguste Vitu, but the outrage hardly died down.[35] The scandal was discussed across the press for the next week: the famous actor Constant Coquelin published a lengthy response to the offending article in *Le Temps*;[36] another actors' meeting was held and a declaration was issued expressing the actors' "dédain" and "mépris" for Mirbeau;[37] Francis Magnard was challenged to several duels, by Mirbeau, who felt unjustly abandoned by his newspaper, as well as several offended actors (Magnard declined).[38] The furor apparently also drew the attention of the police – in their dossier of news clippings by and about Mirbeau, some of the earliest articles concern the "Comédien" affair.[39]

Mirbeau's broadside against actors and critics established him as a journalistic rabble-rouser, and the memory of his "article-pétard" would linger.[40] For Nivet, "Le Comédien"

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[34] Tout-Paris, "Bloc-Notes Parisien – La Question Mirbeau," *Le Gaulois*, 28 October 1882, 1-2.

[35] August Vitu, "'Le Comédien'," *Le Figaro*, 28 October 1882, 1.

[36] Constant Coquelin, "Au directeur du *Temps*," *Le Temps*, 1 November 1882, 3. This text was soon republished in a curious pamphlet, printed to be readable in two directions. Held one way, one could read Mirbeau's original article, Vitu's *entrefilet*, Mirbeau's letter to Magnard, and the declaration of the Société des artistes dramatiques; held the other way, Coquelin's response to Mirbeau. Mirbeau, *Le Comédien* (Paris: Brunox, 1883); Constant Coquelin, *Les Comédiens par un comédien* (Paris: Brunox, 1883).

[37] The artists' statement was reprinted across the press. See, for instance, L'A.D.S., "Bulletin théâtral," *Moniteur universel*, 30 October 1882, 3.

[38] "Affaire Mirbeau-Magnard," *Gil Blas*, 1 November 1882, 1; "M. Magnard et M. Mirbeau," *Le Gaulois*, 1 November 1882, 1.

[39] Archives de la préfecture de Police, E A 52 Mirbeau. It is difficult to say for certain when police surveillance of Mirbeau may have begun. The surveillance file (Archives de la préfecture de police, B A 1190 Mirbeau) contains documents (ff. 1-7) recording a background check in the summer of 1883, when Mirbeau filed paperwork to declare his intention to print a weekly pamphlet, *Les Grimaces* (discussed further on). The earliest dated article in the news clippings dossier is a short story "à la manière d'Edgard [*sic*] Poë": "La Chanson de Carmen," *Le Figaro*, 21 August 1882. The news clippings related to "Le Comédien" are: Baron de Vaux, "L'Affaire Mirbeau," *L'Intransigeant*, 1 November 1882; "M. Magnard et M. Mirbeau," *Le Gaulois*, 1 November 1882; Octave Mirbeau, "Une Bombe," *Le Gaulois*, 30 October 1882, 1.

[40] Chose et machin, "Dialogues du boulevard – Sur les comédiens," *Gil Blas*, 30 October 1882, 1. Even decades later, biographical sketches by Mirbeau's contemporaries in the press tended to situate the true origin of his career as a *pamphlétaire* around this moment; see, for instance, Étienne Grosclaude,

contains the germ of Mirbeau's future "combats," as well as of his conception of the role of the journalist as "un être de défi, à rebours de l'opinion consacrée."[41] Just as Hervieu used Mirbeau's polemical gesture in "Le Comédien" to frame a career trajectory, the article and the scandal it engendered were often referenced by critics situating his subsequent moves and ventures in a crowded press field. In the spring of 1883, a chroniqueur in the left-wing *Le Réveil*, Henry Bauer, announced that "l'auteur du célèbre paradoxe sur 'le comédien'" was launching "un pamphlet hebdomadaire" with the title *Les Grimaces*. Bauer suggested that the new pamphlet would give Mirbeau the opportunity to revive his polemical attacks—"enfoncer les parois des aquariums où s'ébaudissent dans l'eau les petits poissons directoriaux"—unfettered by the whims of editors and directors of the major dailies where he had previously written.[42] Ahead of the publication of the inaugural issue on 21 July, a brightly-colored poster (figure 33) apostrophized passerby in terms that recalled the polemics of "Le Comédien" and served as a call to action:

> Public! Dupé, bafoué, perverti, ramolli par l'esprit Parisien et la blague salissante du boulevard, voilà ton rôle dans la comédie contemporaine […] À travers ces pages, tu verras grimacer tout ce faux monde de faiseurs, effrontés, de politiciens traîtres, d'agioteurs, d'aventuriers, de caborins et de filles […] L'heure est sombre. Il faut lutter — ou tomber. Les GRIMACES paraissent pour donner le signal du branle-bas.[43]

An assemblage of grimacing, orientalizing masks, which would also feature on the pamphlet's flame-orange cover (figure 34), conjured the world of fakery Mirbeau had already targeted in

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Mémoires d'outre-bombe: Souvenirs d'un apprenti centenaire (Paris: Nouvelle Société d'Édition, 1930), 82: "C'était alors le plus brillant des Parisiens de tous les mondes […] Quelle fougue! Quelle flagellance! Quelle puissance d'invective prédicatoire! Son Épitre aux Comédiens avait soulevé contre lui le monde des théâtres, qui mit rapière au vent."

[41] Nivet, "Mirbeau et l'affaire du 'Comédien'," 33.

[42] Henry Bauer, "Courrier de la Semaine," *Le Réveil*, 25 May 1883, 1.

[43] Gustave Fraipont, *Les Grimaces*, 1883, color lithographed print, 120 x 80 cm., Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9009410v. A few newspapers also ran the text of this ad: *L'Événement*, 22 July 1883, 1; *Le Conservateur*, 29 July 1883, 4.

"Le Comédien," the world of those who conquered society "en un seul soir de grimaces."[44] Here, the theatrical metaphor was extended to all of contemporary society, to which *Les Grimaces* would provide the key. Reading the pamphlet would be a way to "arracher tous les masques."[45]



Figure 33. Poster advertising *Les Grimaces*. Illustration by Gustave Fraipont. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

[44] Mirbeau, "Le Comédien," *Le Figaro*.

[45] Michel and Nivet, *Octave Mirbeau*, 158.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 34. The color of this cover so clearly invoked Henri Rochefort's famous pamphlet, *La Lanterne*, that comparisons were inevitable, and not always in Mirbeau's favor; one chroniqueur reported that Mirbeau's pamphlet had been derisively dubbed "la *Lanterne* de *Rochefaible*!"[46] Cover of *Les Grimaces*, no. 16, 3 November 1883. Illustration by Gustave Fraipont. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

[46] Perdican, "Courrier de Paris," *L'Illustration*, 6 October 1883, 211.

The political orientation of *Les Grimaces* was, broadly, 'anti' – anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, and, as Mirbeau wrote in a letter to a friend in early summer 1883 "très anti-républicaines et très anti-juives." In that same letter, he promised that "cela va ronfler" and that "nous rirons un peu."[47] Though Mirbeau scholars have evinced various attitudes toward the politics of *Les Grimaces*, they have mostly agreed that the short-lived pamphlet (its twenty-sixth and final issue was published on 12 January 1884) contained the germs of many of the positions Mirbeau would develop over the next two decades. The impulse to reveal the truth behind the "grimaces" and to "faire tomber les masques" would remain at the center of Mirbeau's criticisms of contemporary society in his journalism as well as in his novels. At the same time, however, many scholars have sought to absolve Mirbeau of his overt antisemitism in *Les Grimaces*, either as an aberration or as something beyond Mirbeau's individual responsibility: an "antisémitisme de commande," demanded by the financial backers of the pamphlet,[48] or an "antisémitisme ambiant,"[49] attributable to "le climat social"[50] or "l'inconscient collectif"[51] rather than an actual conviction.[52]

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[47] Letter possibly addressed to Louis-Antoine Léouzon Le Duc, June or early July 1883, *Correspondance générale I*, 304. Mirbeau's collaborators at *Les Grimaces* included Hervieu, Étienne Grosclaude, and Alfred Capus. On Mirbeau's early antisemitism—as is well known, by the late 1890s he was among the most prominent dreyfusards—see Jean-François Nivet, "L'Antisémitisme d'Octave Mirbeau," *L'Orne littéraire: Octave Mirbeau* (Alençon: L'Association départementale pour l'Orne en français, 1992), 47-59; Pierre Michel, "Octave Mirbeau: de l'antisémitisme au dreyfusisme," *Mil neuf cent* no. 11 (1993): 118-124.

[48] Michel and Nivet, *Octave Mirbeau*, 166.

[49] Alain (Georges) Leduc, *Octave Mirbeau: le gentleman-vitrioleur* (Saint-Georges d'Oléron: Éditions Libertaires, 2017), 45.

[50] Sylvie Thiéblemont-Dollet, *Octave Mirbeau: un journaliste faiseur d'opinion* (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2001), 15.

[51] Michel, "Octave Mirbeau: de l'antisémitisme au dreyfusisme," 120.

[52] At a 1992 conference, Jean-Yves Mollier notably disagreed, instead declaring that "l'antisémitisme d'Octave Mirbeau [en 1883] est conscient" and that it represented an early version of the "antisémitisme génétique" which would later be popularized by Édouard Drumont – an interpretation which prompted strong pushback from Pierre Michel and others, in an exchange recorded in the published conference

However, Mirbeau himself would later provide an explanation of his beliefs during this period, one that acknowledged his own antisemitism in *Les Grimaces*. By 1898, Mirbeau was a prominent Dreyfusard, and when an anti-Dreyfusard newspaper exhumed his antisemitic writings from *Les Grimaces* in an effort to discredit him, he responded in a *chronique* titled "Palinodies," admitting that "j'ai détesté les juifs, et cette haine je l'ai exprimée dans *les Grimaces*," and firmly asserting the right to change one's opinion:

> [On] me reproche, amèrement, d'avoir changé d'opinion sur les juifs, les patriotes, les militaires, les je ne sais quoi, les je ne sais quoi… La chose est parfaitement exacte… j'ai fait cela et je m'en vante! […] Ce que je suis aujourd'hui, je ne l'étais pas il y a dix ans; ce que je fus, il y a dix ans, je ne l'étais pas, il y a vingt ans; et, dans vingt ans—à supposer que je sois encore—je veux espérer, oui je pousse le cynisme jusqu'à espérer que je ne serai pas celui que je suis aujourd'hui... […] C'est mon droit, je pense, et c'est mon honneur.[53]

In this play of verb tenses Mirbeau argued for inconsistency as the mark of integrity. Unlike Rochefort—Mirbeau's fellow *pamphlétaire* who followed a path inverse to his, and whose political positions Mirbeau suggested were contingent and cynical—Mirbeau's evolution was marked by "la sincérité de son inconstance."[54] While other aspects of Mirbeau's worldview in *Les Grimaces* did remain central to his later work, antisemitism did not, as Mirbeau plainly acknowledged in 1898.

Many years later, Alfred Capus, Mirbeau's colleague at *Les Grimaces*, claimed to have forgotten the specific targets of the pamphlet's "opposition," remembering only that "elle était énergique et virulente" and that "nous aimions à flétrir les hommes politiques et, en général,

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proceedings: Jean-Yves Mollier, "Octave Mirbeau et la vie politique de son temps," in *Octave Mirbeau: Actes du colloque international d'Angers*, eds Pierre Michel and Georges Cesbron (Angers: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1992), 79-80, 88-90.

[53] Octave Mirbeau, "Palinodies!", *L'Aurore*, 15 November 1898, 1.

[54] Bertrand Marquer, "Mirbeau pamphlétaire: de la grimace au sarcasme," *Studi Francesi* 185, no. LXII | II (2018): 219. On Rochefort, see Cédric Passard, *L'âge d'or du pamphlet* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2015), 33-54 and 64-65, 152-157.

l'ensemble de la société."[55] According to Marc Angenot, such a generalized oppositional attitude defined the genre of the pamphlet, particularly in the decades following Henri Rochefort's influential *La Lanterne* (1868-1869):

> Le propre du pamphlet est de se refuser à la nuance: le groupe adverse est maximalisé. On n'affronte pas une poignée d'imposteurs, mais une vaste conspiration, une cabale aux limites floues qui s'appuie sur la lâcheté et la duperie générales. Le pamphlétaire, solitaire, affronte une hydre, un monstre protéiforme; son refus devient englobant, sa malédiction entraîne la société entière dans le déluge […]."[56]

If Mirbeau was not a "solitaire" in the mode of Rochefort—also writing for *Les Grimaces* were Capus, along with Paul Hervieu and Étienne Grosclaude—the pamphlet nonetheless represented a comprehensive attack on 'l'ensemble de la société.' The first issue opened with a deliberately shocking article by Mirbeau titled "Ode au choléra," calling for the cholera epidemic currently ravaging Egypt to come and 'cleanse' France: "Viens donc, mais hâte-toi. […] car c'est ici qu'est le grand amoncellement des pourritures et des crimes qu'il te faut déblayer."[57] In the six months the pamphlet lasted, Mirbeau, Hervieu, Grosclaude, and Capus attacked the press (and particularly *Le Figaro*, in a demonstration of lingering rancor after the "Comédien" affair), contemporary literature and drama, and political corruption and manipulation (calling the contemporary republican government the "Pot-de-vinat" regime).[58]

Though Angenot underlines the "exotopie" of the *pamphlétaire*, marginal to the world he criticizes, Mirbeau's insider knowledge was crucial to *Les Grimaces*.[59] Mirbeau positioned himself as the outsider's insider: privy to the secrets of the world of the press, he could reveal

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[55] Alfred Capus, *Boulevard et coulisses* (Paris: A. Messein, 1914), 33.

[56] Marc Angenot, *La Parole pamphlétaire: Contribution à la typologie des discours modernes* (Paris: Payot, 1982), 92. On Mirbeau as a "pamphlétaire," see in particular Marquer, "Mirbeau pamphlétaire," and Passard, *L'âge d'or du pamphlet*, especially 73.

[57] Octave Mirbeau, "Ode au Choléra," *Les Grimaces* no. 1, 21 July 1883, 3.

[58] Octave Mirbeau, "Pots-de-vin," *Les Grimaces* no. 3, 4 August 1883, 97.

[59] Angenot, *La Parole pamphlétaire*, 40-41.

them to the reader. *Les Grimaces* would not be a newspaper reader's first subscription or sole purchase at the kiosque – it was a work of media commentary, legible only to those who had already read the past week's news elsewhere. Reading *Les Grimaces*, which appeared on Fridays, at the end of the week was intended as an exercise in disillusionment. Mirbeau provided a glimpse backstage at the 'coulisses' – where the hidden tricks and mechanisms were made visible and where the players of the press learned their lines, so to speak.

CURIOSITÉS EXOTIQUES

In its focus on the world of the Parisian daily press at a moment of intense media interest in colonial politics—the summer and fall of 1883 saw colonial war in Tonkin, the opening of the Port-Breton trial, and the Pierre Loti affair—*Les Grimaces* often turned a scornful eye on newspapers' treatment of colonial and exotic subjects. Several years later, Mirbeau would return once again to colonial topics, in a series of interrelated *chroniques* published in *Le Gaulois* in 1884 and 1885.

"Ni reine, ni sauvage: Parisiens, nous sommes volés!" This was the complaint of the *Petit Parisien* in 1884 upon the arrival in Paris of the queen consort of Tahiti, Marau (or Marahu). The visit had been eagerly anticipated by the Parisian press, but the queen did not conform to expectations: "Marahu n'est pas une fille des bois et de la mer. C'est une civilisée."[60] Such feigned astonishment was in fact a commonplace of French reporting in the age of colonial conquest, allowing journalists to report the mundane details about the visiting queen of Madagascar or ambassador of Timbuktu through the lens of staged disenchantment. During her

[60] *Le Petit Parisien*, 3 March 1884.

visit, readers of the *Petit Parisien* and other newspapers learned of Marau's lifestyle, from her modern European dress and facility with both French and English to her penchant for cigarettes.

Reporting on visiting exotic dignitaries was a frequent target of Mirbeau's satire, first in *Les Grimaces* in 1883 and later in a pair of linked *chroniques* published in 1884 and 1885. In one item, Mirbeau's collaborator Étienne Grosclaude comically inverted two foreign royals currently featuring on newspaper front pages.[61] Deploring newspapers' usual habit of printing "une foule de détails inexacts," Grosclaude pointed to a *Figaro* article which supposedly described the appearance of king Alphonse XII of Spain, beginning with his "ongles démesurés […] considérés par les habitants comme la preuve de la souveraineté absolue." Grosclaude concluded this short item in the "Nouvelles" rubric of *Les Grimaces* by pompously declaring that "Nous sommes à même d'affirmer que ce récit est empreint d'une grande exagération." The punchline came in a footnote: "Vérification faite, à la dernière heure, nous constatons qu'il ne s'agit pas du roi d'Espagne, mais bien de son collègue Chulalong, roi de Siam. Cette confusion est évidemment regrettable, mais bien naturelle."[62]

Grosclaude's item was a humorous conflation of two forms of newspaper ethnography: one of the rich and famous, the other of the unfamiliar and exotic, allowing the reader to imagine a Spanish king with thirty-centimeter-long fingernails. It was also a parody of a journalistic genre: the *échos* column, where disconnected news items appeared in brief one after another. Indeed, in the 25 September issue of *Le Figaro*, Alphonse XII and Chulalongkorn had brushed

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[61] Like Mirbeau, Grosclaude had written for *Le Gaulois*, signing joint *chroniques* with Alfred Capus as "Dupuis et Cotonet" (Michel and Nivet, *Octave Mirbeau*, 159). After working closely with him on *Les Grimaces*, Mirbeau would later praise Grosclaude for his "esprit," and for having "une vision originale des choses, des dons précieux de critique, une imagination très ardente et très personnelle": "La Chronique," *Le Matin*, 12 February 1886, 1. Grosclaude and Mirbeau would find themselves on opposite sides during the Dreyfus Affair, when Grosclaude aligned himself with the *antidreyfusards*.

[62] Étienne Grosclaude, "Les Nouvelles," *Les Grimaces* no. 11, 29 September 1883, 503-504.

shoulders, so to speak, under this rubric, appearing just a few paragraphs apart (figure 35). Such proximity allowed for Grosclaude's feigned confusion.[63] Finally, Grosclaude's joke also poked fun at the usual codes of newspaper writing on the frequent visits of dignitaries like Chulalongkorn, which often focused on the details of exotic costume – or, as in the case of queen consort Marau, on the mundane and disappointing reality of modern appearance which failed to live up to exotic reality.[64]

[63] The Thai king was not in fact in Paris at the time; he was mentioned in *Le Figaro* because a group of ambassadors was expected to arrive soon. *Le Figaro*'s description was based on "un photographe que possède un voyageur de nos amis": "Échos de Paris," *Le Figaro*, 25 September 1883, 1.

[64] On the reception of exotic figures in the French press, see, for instance, Heidi Brevik-Zender's rich recent study of the image of Siamese (Thai) queens: "Crypto-colonialism, French couture, and Thailand's queens: fashioning the body politic, 1860–1960," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 42, no. 1 (2020): 87-112. The pendant to the image conjured of Alphonse in the costume of the king of Siam was, of course, one of Chulalongkorn in the modern European costume of the king of Spain. When Chulalongkorn did eventually visit Paris, in 1897, the many images of him published in the press showed him dressed in military regalia not unlike Alphonse's in 1883. Compare, for instance, the cover illustration of Chulalongkorn in *Le Petit Journal, supplément illustré*, 19 September 1897, and of Alphonse in *Le Monde illustré*, 29 September 1883. On king Chulalongkorn's visits to Paris, see Robert Aldrich, "France and the King of Siam: An Asian King's Visits to the Republican Capital," *French History and Civilization: Papers from the 19th George Rudé Seminar*, vol. 6, ed. Julie Kalman (2015): 225-239.



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SOYONS PRATIQUES!

Il y a chez nous une école, assez restreinte heureusement, que l'on pourrait appeler « l'école du miracle », parce qu'elle attend tout du ciel et voudrait être sauvée par une intervention supérieure en se croisant les bras.

Les fidèles de cette petite Eglise jouent de la Providence comme ils joueraient du violon, en s'imaginant qu'elle produira le son qu'ils désirent, à l'heure qu'ils assignent! C'est aussi chimérique que ridicule! Rien n'appartient moins à la toute-puissance de Dieu, et rien ne convient moins au respect que lui doit l'homme.

Les leçons là-dessus abondent depuis un siècle, et il faut être aveugle pour ne pas les voir...

Avons-nous le droit de nous flatter que nous valons mieux que l'honnête Louis XVI, mieux que l'héroïque Vendée, et que nous avons de meilleures intentions que Charles X? Et, pourtant, Dieu leur a-t-il donné le succès, ou bien a-t-il laissé leurs fautes humaines porter leurs fruits humains?

A ne jeter sur le monde qu'un regard superficiel, il semblerait parfois que la Providence abandonne les justes causes, mais n'est-ce pas trop souvent parce que ces causes ont commencé par s'abandonner elles-mêmes?

Ah! le miracle! On l'espère trop de nos jours, pour se dispenser d'agir soi-même; tandis qu'il faudrait se rendre digne de l'obtenir, sans y compter!

C'est le conseil éminemment pratique que donnait déjà saint Ignace dans son temps : « Invoquez d'abord la Providence, disait-il, puis faites comme si elle n'existait pas! »

***

C'est aussi la sage maxime que traduisait en son langage populaire un vieux paysan chargé de famille qu'un riche voisin cherchait à rassurer sur le sort de ses huit enfants. « — Ne vous tourmentez pas, disait-il au bonhomme, la Providence y pourvoira! » — « Ah! monsieur, répliqua le paysan avec une simplicité profonde, c'est vrai que la Providence est bonne, mais *elle ne boulange point*... »

Il résumait là, ce rural, sans s'en douter, toute l'économie chrétienne.

Dieu fait germer le grain de blé; il le fait grandir, il le fait mûrir; mais, arrivé là, sa tâche est accomplie. La nôtre est ensuite de faire la farine et de faire le pain. — Le moindre morceau de ce pain se compose de deux parts : celle de Dieu et celle de l'homme; celle de la charité et celle de la liberté humaine.

Quand Dieu a rempli son devoir et que l'homme manque au sien, tout reste en suspens ou en péril. Il n'y a de complet que ce qui réunit au degré voulu la création d'en haut et la main-d'œuvre d'en bas.

Il faut donc agir, au lieu de déclamer stérilement ou de lever les bras au ciel.

***

D'ailleurs, pouvons-nous nous plaindre que la puissance mystérieuse qui plane sur le monde ait été trop avare, depuis quelque temps, de ces coups de main qui sont des coups de foudre? Qui aurait osé, par exemple, faire intervenir la Providence plus directement qu'elle ne l'a fait dans la mort prématurée du Prince Impérial, dans la mort inattendue de Gambetta, peut-être dans la mort saisissante du comte de Chambord?

On demande des miracles! Occupons-nous plutôt de tirer parti de ce que la Providence nous donne, sans lui adresser constamment de vaines sommations. — Qui peut se croire le droit d'assigner son rôle et son heure à un miracle? Et combien de fois ne voyons-nous pas dans l'histoire l'abus ou la méconnaissance de ce mot?

Au lendemain de la mort de Louis XIV, Massillon, donnant déjà à un prince au berceau le nom d'enfant du miracle que l'on s'imagine avoir été inventé de nos jours, croyait pouvoir l'appliquer à l'enfant qui allait être Louis XV!

« N'oubliez jamais, lui disait-il, ces derniers moments où le grand roi, comme Siméon, vous tenant entre ses bras, vous baignant de ses larmes paternelles, et offrant au Dieu de ses pères ce reste précieux de sa race royale, quitta la vie avec joie, puisque ses yeux voyaient l'*enfant miraculeux* que Dieu réservait encore pour être le salut de la nation et la gloire d'Israël. »

Je le répète, cet « enfant miraculeux » devait s'appeler Louis XV, et son règne si long, si désastreux à tous les points de vue, ne devait être que celui de Voltaire, de Mme de Pompadour et de la Du Barry!

N'y a-t-il pas là de quoi nous rendre un peu plus circonspects?

***

Qui peut prétendre aussi que la Révolution n'a été qu'un sanglant et fatal avortement? Assurément, il faut mettre en lumière et stigmatiser les crimes, mais, en même temps, il faut éviter de dire, comme quelques-uns de nos publicistes, de nos orateurs et de nos historiens, que toute la Révolution se résume dans Robespierre et dans Marat. — Que fait-on des principes supérieurs qui s'en dégagent : la liberté civile, l'égalité devant la loi, et, dans une grande mesure, la liberté politique? Que fait-on du Code civil?

On ne peut pas plus personnifier la Révolution dans ses forfaits que le catholicisme dans le crime de quelques fanatiques. La Révolution ne se résume pas plus dans Marat que le catholicisme dans la Saint-Barthélemy ou dans les excès de la Ligue.

Le catholicisme n'est pas plus dans Catherine de Médicis et ses Italiens, ou dans le duc de Mayenne et ses Espagnols, que les principes de 1787, devenus à peu près littéralement les principes de 1789, ne sont dans les échafauds de la place dite de la Concorde, dans les égorgements de la Bastille ou dans les massacres de septembre.

La Révolution n'est pas plus dans les noyades que le catholicisme dans les dragonnades!

Des deux côtés, il faut séparer la cause des violences et des crimes qui l'ont défigurée et compromise.

Ceux qui veulent sincèrement rester ou devenir chrétiens doivent chercher le christianisme là où il est. Ceux qui veulent vraiment connaître, gouverner et régulariser la Révolution doivent l'étudier dans Turgot, dans Malesherbes, dans Monnier, souvent dans Mirabeau lui-même; non dans ceux qui l'ont souillée en l'ensanglantant et nous ont laissé en héritage les terribles problèmes contre lesquels nous nous débattons encore!

***

Soyons donc pratiques et restons dans la vérité comme dans la mesure, en nous appliquant à tirer le meilleur parti de ce que Dieu nous donne. Il a fait plus de miracles que nous ne le croyons en notre faveur. Prenons garde, à notre tour, d'en faire un qui surpasserait les siens : celui de perdre l'admirable partie qu'il nous offre, avec tous les atouts dans la main!

Ph. de Grandlieu.

Échos de Paris

LA POLITIQUE

Ce qu'il y a de plus caractéristique dans l'élection de M. Forest, c'est de voir un arrondissement où domine l'élément républicain bourgeois donner la majorité à un candidat tout à fait avancé que ne signalent d'ailleurs ni l'éclat du talent ni l'importance des services rendus.

Il nous paraît difficile d'admettre que les riches commerçants des quartiers du Palais-Royal et des Halles tiennent tant que cela à la mairie centrale et au reste du programme ultra-radical de M. Forest; mais évidemment, en repoussant M. Hiélard, candidat quasi gouvernemental, agréable aux gens qui détiennent le pouvoir, ces riches bourgeois ont voulu exprimer au ministère Ferry le mécontentement que leur inspire sa politique et l'inquiétude que les complications survenues au Tonkin ont répandue dans le monde des affaires. C'est la vieille coutume parisienne, ce que l'on appelait dans le temps « donner » une leçon au pouvoir ».

La leçon, me direz-vous, serait bien plus complète si l'on avait voté pour M. Despatys. Oui, à coup sûr, mais le charme n'est pas rompu, et la majorité croit encore à la République. La désagrégation d'une opinion, d'un parti pris, est fort lente quand elle n'est opérée qu'à l'aide de menus incidents : il faut des coups de tonnerre, des Reichshoffen et des Sedan pour faire sombrer un régime auquel un pays abandonne ses destinées depuis longues années.

L'élection de M. Forest est donc un symptôme important de désaffection, et à ce titre nous devons la noter au passage, comme une toute petite date historique. — F. M.

A TRAVERS PARIS

La Température. — Les basses pressions signalées hier au large de l'Irlande se sont rapidement approchées de l'ouest de l'Europe et ont déterminé un changement subit dans la situation atmosphérique. Une forte baisse du baromètre s'est produite et les pluies ont recommencé. En France, le temps reste à la pluie.

La température a généralement remonté, surtout dans l'Ouest. Cependant à Paris, où il a plu pendant toute la journée d'hier, le thermomètre ne s'est pas élevé au-dessus de 17°.

Pougues. — Beau temps; nuages; therm. min : 17°; max.: 22°.

Royat. — Beau temps; ciel couvert.; therm. max.: 21°.

On nous affirme que Mme la comtesse de Chambord se rendra prochainement au couvent des Carmélites de Graetz, où elle aurait l'intention formelle de se retirer jusqu'à la fin de ses jours.

Le roi d'Espagne est toujours attendu à Paris pour le 29 septembre. Il n'y aura pas de revue passée en son honneur; les seules démonstrations militaires se borneront à des manœuvres d'artillerie, qui auront lieu au polygone de Vincennes, et auxquelles assistera don Alphonse XII.

Une des trois journées qu'il passera à Paris sera employée à une visite qu'il fera à Epinay, chez le roi don François d'Assise, son père.

Une dépêche de Montpellier nous apporte la nouvelle de la mort de M. Arrazat, député de Lodève.

M. Arrazat est mort subitement hier, d'une attaque d'apoplexie.

Nous apprenons le prochain mariage du comte Alphonse Rochaïd-Dahdah, fils du grand propriétaire de Dinard, avec Mlle de Fournès, nièce du marquis de Fournès et de la marquise née de Caraman. Le frère puîné du comte Rochaïd-Dahdah avait épousé, l'année dernière, la seconde fille de la baronne de Laborde.

Le comte Dahdah a aussi une sœur qui fait partie de l'Ordre des Carmélites.

M. Waddington est toujours à la Ferté-Milon ou plutôt au château de Bourneville qui, bien que très voisin de la Ferté-Milon, se trouve dans le département de l'Oise. Il passe une partie de ses journées à chasser et l'autre à se promener à cheval, accompagnant Mme Waddington, qui est une écuyère accomplie.

Sa Majesté le roi de Siam, dont nous attendons aujourd'hui les ambassadeurs, est un fort étrange petit roi.

Chulalong-Korn Ier, d'après une photographie que possède un voyageur de nos amis, paraît avoir une vingtaine d'années. Ce qui frappe surtout les regards dans la reproduction de sa personne, ce sont ses ongles démesurés. Ils n'ont pas, en effet, moins de trente centimètres.

Les ongles sont considérés par les habitants du royaume de Siam comme la preuve de la souveraineté absolue. Ils attestent que Sa Majesté ne se livre à aucune occupation manuelle. Mais ce luxe a un inconvénient. Il condamne le roi à une inaction absolue, et l'oblige, pour les besoins de la vie, même les plus intimes, à recourir aux bons soins d'un officier d'ordonnance.

N'insistons pas.

Un de nos abonnés nous écrit que, titulaire d'une rente viagère sur le Trésor (rente dont il a touché les arrérages de juillet dernier en province), il s'est présenté à Paris, au guichet du payeur, le 10 du mois courant, pour toucher les arrérages échus le 1er. Mais, bien qu'il eût, comme d'habitude, fait queue pendant plusieurs heures, on lui a objecté que, n'ayant pas donné avis de son retour un mois à l'avance, il devait attendre *quinze jours* pour être payé. Encore lui a-t-il fallu se présenter successivement au bureau du visa des quittances, à celui du portefeuille, puis faire légaliser la signature de son notaire certificateur à la préfecture de la Seine. Les courses qu'il a dû faire à cette occasion lui ont pris un temps considérable. « Et cependant, ajoute-t-il, je suis créancier de l'Etat (de mes deniers propres) et je doute fort qu'une maison de banque, pour l'accomplissement d'une formalité si simple que celle relative à un changement de résidence, osât demander un délai de quinze jours. »

Il y a là évidemment un abus contre lequel on ne saurait trop protester.

Il paraît que le parc Monceau est envahi par les rats, qui ont pour ainsi dire pris possession de la pièce d'eau, dans laquelle les pigeons et les canards n'osent plus prendre leurs ébats.

De la pièce d'eau ils s'aventurent naturellement dans les allées, où leur présence effraye les enfants.

Il doit être possible, cependant, de débarrasser le parc de ces hôtes incommodes, et nous sommes surpris qu'on ne l'ait pas encore fait.

Dans les sphères politiques de Londres, on s'est vivement ému de la prochaine publication des mémoires du duc Ernest de Cobourg-Gotha, qui, dit-on, contiendront des révélations curieuses sur la politique anglaise après la guerre de Crimée.

Aujourd'hui, nous apprenons de Londres que, comme pendant à l'ouvrage susmentionné, il se prépare actuellement un autre livre portant pour titre : *la Vie de la reine Victoria.* On assure que c'est la reine elle-même qui a chargé une dame écossaise, miss Keddie, d'écrire ce dernier ouvrage, et qu'elle lui a fourni à cet effet un grand nombre de lettres et de documents inédits qui se conservaient dans les archives de la cour de Saint-James.

Nous trouvons, dans les Mémoires du célèbre violoniste et compositeur allemand Spohr, l'amusante anecdote que voici :

Pendant les répétitions de mon *Oratorio*, j'y conduisais chaque fois ma petite fille, qui avait alors huit ans. L'enfant se tenait tranquille jusqu'au morceau final qui était une fugue; alors ses yeux s'animaient et elle écoutait avec une attention soutenue. J'en conclus qu'elle devait avoir de grandes dispositions pour la musique d'un style sévère et je le lui demandai :

— Oh! non, papa, me répondit la petite, mais je sais que quand la fugue est terminée, nous rentrons chez nous pour dîner.

NOUVELLES A LA MAIN

Un jeune collégien joue à l'écarté, dans le café d'un casino.

— Comment, lui dit un ami de sa famille, tu joues déjà à l'écarté?

— Oh! des loques, répond le potache... Je m'entraîne pour l'an prochain!

Un monsieur orné d'un bolivar, d'une moustache fortement pointue, d'un gourdin, se présente au contrôle de l'Odéon, et, d'une voix tonnante, demande une place.

Le contrôleur va pour la lui donner; mais le monsieur à la moustache pointue se ravisant :

— Pardon, qu'est-ce qu'on joue?

— *Eugénie.*

Le monsieur renfonce son bolivar, son argent, et s'écrie d'une voix encore plus tonnante :

— Je ne viens pas à l'Odéon pour voir jouer *Eugénie*... Mes opinions politiques s'y opposent!

Et il sort furieux, en faisant des moulinets avec son gourdin.

Avant son départ pour les eaux, la belle Mme de Z... a rompu avec le comte Georges, qui a tâché de se consoler de son mieux de cette rupture.

Mme de Z..., le rencontrant dernièrement en Suisse :

— Qu'est-ce que j'apprends? lui dit-elle, avec un dépit mal déguisé. Comment! Trois conquêtes nouvelles, depuis un mois?

— Que voulez-vous? répondit le comte, en soupirant... désespérant de trouver votre équivalent, j'ai tâché de trouver votre monnaie!

Le Masque de fer.

LES MIETTES DE LA POLITIQUE

Le général Thibaudin

Décidément, c'est un gaillard!

C'est si bien un gaillard que je me reproche de ne pas encore lui avoir consacré un petit croquis.

On croyait, après sa première aventure, celle des princes, qu'il se tiendrait inodore et incolore dans son coin. Ce qui pouvait lui arriver de mieux, disait-on, c'était de se retirer dans ce portefeuille, payé si cher, comme dans un fromage de Hollande; de s'y faire oublier et d'y moisir. Ceux mêmes qui lui voulaient quelque bien étaient convaincus que, moins on prononcerait son nom, plus il aurait sujet de se féliciter. Ils souhaitaient que le silence se fît autour de lui, et qu'il y travaillât de son mieux.

Eh bien, non! Il ne veut pas moisir, Thibaudin! Il n'a pas songé un instant à rester tranquille. Il n'implore ni le silence ni l'oubli. Il se remue, il brave, il provoque, et le voilà presque un personnage.

En ce moment, il bat en brèche le redouté Ferry et peut-être le réduira-t-il en poudre. Ne s'est-il pas avisé d'aller, lui aussi, à Mont-sous-Vaudrey?

Ce sera curieux : le loup et le renard plaidant par-devant le président de la République! Je parie pour Thibaudin!

***

Comment cela s'est-il fait? Comment le Thibaudin que nous avons connu a-t-il pu acquérir tant de prestige? Comment cette vieille lune a-t-elle réussi à se déguiser en soleil levant?

Possède-t-il en propre un de ces charmes irrésistibles qui triomphent des plus légitimes griefs? A-t-il un de ces talismans qui font qu'un homme est aimé pour lui-même; une figure sympathique, un caractère attrayant, une parole magnétique, un moyen quelconque de se recommander à l'attention de ses semblables? Le général Le Bœuf, qui nous a perdus, était superbe!

Le général Thibaudin a une tête de reître et des allures de crocodile. On ne lui trouve aucun talent de tribune, et, si ses capacités politiques commencent à briller, il nous a soigneusement caché jusqu'à présent ses capacités militaires. Chacun sait que ses tournées dans l'Est n'ont été qu'une diplomatie pour ne pas assister au conseil.

Est-il aimé pour le mal qu'il a fait? Oui, un peu! Il suffit chez nous de se compromettre pour avoir un parti. Il a eu tous les intransigeants, tous les radicaux, et même de simples boulevardiers. On a vu des journalistes plaider sa cause; que ne voit-on pas? On en a vu qui l'ont posé en martyr du patriotisme.

Mais tout cela n'eût pas suffi. Ce qui a fait de lui un monsieur, c'est l'aversion qu'il inspire à Ferry.

***

Personne n'ignore que Ferry ne peut sentir Thibaudin; qu'il ne l'a pris que pour faire le coup et s'en débarrasser ensuite; mais que Thibaudin résiste et a résisté jusqu'ici victorieusement.

Après tout, il n'a pas tort. Vous figurez-vous un pauvre diable à qui on offre pour sa peine une part de galette, et qu'on renvoie avant qu'il ait eu le temps de la manger? Naturellement, il réclame : Ma galette! ma galette! Ce qui exaspère Ferry.

Ferry exaspéré pourrait devenir dangereux, et il y a beaux jours que M. Thibaudin eût sauté le pas s'il n'avait pris ses précautions. Mais il les a prises : non seulement il s'est mis bien avec un certain nombre de radicaux et de journalistes, non seulement il a pour lui M. Laisant et M. Sarcey, mais il s'est assuré, outre ces voltigeurs, une forteresse inexpugnable : l'Elysée.

L'Elysée a toujours aimé et soutenu M. Thibaudin. C'est tout simple : l'exécuteur des princes, le bourreau de la concurrence.

Il l'a surtout aimé et soutenu parce qu'il était détesté par Ferry. Les ennemis de nos ennemis sont nos amis.

***

Autrefois l'Elysée adorait Ferry; mais la chute du ministère Freycinet (juillet 1882) les a brouillés. L'Elysée accusa Ferry de trahison, et un peu plus tard, forcé de le subir, jura de l'expédier au plus vite. Il n'y a pas de niches qu'il ne lui fasse, et la meilleure de toutes a été de lui jeter dans les jambes le général Thibaudin.

Qui a imaginé cela? M. Grévy? Non, M. Wilson.

Et Ferry trébuche dans le grand sabre du général, et soyez assurés qu'il finira par s'y casser le cou un jour ou l'autre.

Comme cette mauvaise affaire du Tonkin est bien choisie pour opposer ces deux fiers-à-bras! Encore un peu, on nous présenterait Thibaudin comme le restaurateur des libertés publiques, un La Fayette ou un Washington!

Aujourd'hui, il touche au but, il fait sa grande manœuvre à Mont-sous-Vaudrey.

On entrevoit le dénouement. Un de ces matins, Ferry furieux mettra le marché à la main à M. Grévy, et lui dira de sa voix la plus arrogante : « Il faut qu'un de nous deux s'en aille, lui ou moi! »

Et, derrière M. Grévy, une petite voix, celle de M. Wilson, répondra doucement : « Vous! »

Sérizy.

Le Budget d'un Sous-Lieutenant

Et l'on ne dira pas que je fais des folies,
Car j'achète un château sur mes économies.

Ainsi parle le sous-lieutenant de la *Dame blanche*. L'air et les paroles en reviennent naturellement à la mémoire en lisant dans le *Journal officiel* la longue liste des sous-lieutenants sortant de Saint-Cyr qui vont entrer au régiment avec toutes leurs illusions.

Je ne veux pas les détruire, ces chères illusions, mais je crois bien faire en donnant à eux et à leurs familles le bilan de la fortune des futurs généraux en chef.

Un homme d'esprit, le lieutenant-colonel Ducoin, tué à Solferino à la tête du 37e, avait coutume de dire — notez qu'il avait de la fortune, ce qui était rare alors dans l'infanterie — que les sous-lieutenants et lieutenants devaient s'interdire absolument de passer par la rue où se trouve le café militaire. Les capitaines pouvaient s'y hasarder, mais marcher vite, et les chefs de bataillon seuls avaient le droit de s'y arrêter pour regarder consommer le lieutenant-colonel et le colonel.

Depuis trente ans, les choses n'ont pas changé beaucoup. Si la solde a été légèrement augmentée, les conditions de la vie sont devenues plus coûteuses, et voici le budget d'un sous-lieutenant, en province, budget rédigé par un officier supérieur qui s'assure à la fin de chaque mois que MM. les sous-lieutenants de son régiment ont fait honneur à leurs affaires :

Recettes	Fr.	189
Dépenses		...
Pension obligatoire		75
Une chambre		25
Ordonnance		8
Au maître tailleur (Abonnement)		20
Au maître bottier (id.)		5
Bois, blanchissage, lumière		20
Entretien, linge, cols, gants, etc.		20
Bibliothèque, cercle, réceptions		5
		178

Après avoir tout payé, il lui reste donc, à ce sous-lieutenant, 11 francs par mois *pour ses vices*, ajoute mon correspondant. « J'avais donc bien raison de dire dernièrement que le vœu de chasteté, dont les républicains affirment l'immoralité lorsqu'il s'agit de religieux ou de prêtres, le règlement militaire l'impose pendant une moyenne de quinze années à nos officiers. Avec 11 francs de disponible par mois, un sous-lieutenant ne peut espérer qu'une héritière le demande en légitime mariage; il lui est également difficile d'entretenir une danseuse pour la même somme. Donc, s'il est un peu difficile, il s'abstient.

L'augmentation de solde lorsqu'il passe lieutenant est dérisoire, et l'on n'obtient l'épaulette de capitaine qu'après une moyenne de quinze ans de service. Le voilà donc condamné à la mélancolie pendant un long bail.

***

Si encore, dans notre armée, la sous-lieutenance n'était qu'un surnumérariat, qu'une épreuve, on comprendrait cette gêne imposée aux débutants, car elle pourrait être amoindrie par des sacrifices momentanés de la part des familles.

Mais une famille, après s'être saignée à blanc pour bien élever un garçon, et l'entretenir deux ans à Saint-Cyr, est souvent au bout de son rouleau. Elle ne peut le pensionner jusqu'à trente-cinq ans. Un pupille de cet âge est d'ordinaire, dans la vie civile, chef d'établissement et chef de famille.

Il faut avoir pénétré un peu dans les mystères et dans les douleurs de la vie d'officier pour en parler savamment. Si je vous disais qu'il y a dans l'armée des officiers qui subissent des retenues pour acquitter le prix de leur pension à Saint-Cyr, pension que leurs parents n'avaient pu payer à temps, vous ne le croiriez pas. Eh bien, cela est. L'administration de l'Ecole, bienveillante, ne rend jamais un élève à sa famille pour manque de payement, mais le Trésor impitoyable retrouve toujours ses droits; et c'est quelquefois la solde du lieutenant ou du capitaine qui libère l'éducation de l'apprenti officier.

C'est donc une bêtise de ridiculiser l'armée et de se moquer des braves gens qui se vouent à la défense de la patrie et encourent tous les désagréments de la pauvreté par amour de la gloire. Je voudrais que l'armée fût placée bien loin des atteintes des caricaturistes, des vaudevillistes et des diseurs de calembredaines. A mon avis, on ne devrait s'occuper de l'armée que sérieusement; mais c'est énorme de demander, je le sais, qu'on respecte les sous-lieutenants dans un siècle où l'on blague le bon Dieu et ses saints avec la garantie des institutions.

***

Cependant, il faut des sous-lieutenants.

Augmenter leurs appointements est une mesure fort coûteuse, car, après avoir relevé leur traitement, il conviendrait de relever celui des lieutenants et celui des capitaines. Et si le militaire n'est pas riche, la France commence à s'appauvrir.

Je recevais tout récemment une lettre d'un ex-sous-lieutenant, démissionnaire pour cause de dettes et aujourd'hui commis dans la nouveauté. Il ne se louait pas précisément de son sort; cependant il convenait qu'il y en avait de plus malheureux que lui; et il me signalait la situation d'un de ses camarades de Saint-Cyr, dettier, démissionnaire comme lui, devenu garçon de café.

Ainsi donc l'armée, au lieu d'être un agent d'élévation — comme autrefois — est une école de déclassement. On y est si pauvre, qu'il faut une vertu triple pour n'y point commettre de faute; on y est si sévère, que toute faute entraîne la démission. Or, la dette est une faute irréparable. Tout en réduisant un officier à la portion congrue, en lui faisant tirer ses vivres de la cantine des sous-officiers — ce qui le déshonore aux yeux de ses inférieurs, — on arrive à lui faire payer, sur ses 180 fr. d'appointements, tout au plus de 40 à 50 fr. à ses créanciers.

Quinze cents francs de dettes — qui dans la vie civile se payent en quelques mois et qui dans la vie militaire ne peuvent se payer qu'en trente ou quarante mois, — jettent donc un homme à la côte, brisent une carrière et font un déclassé terrible, car son âme n'est plus hantée que par le regret et l'idée de vengeance.

Quelles compensations d'honneur ne devons-nous pas aux martyrs du devoir, à ceux qui ne défaillent pas un instant!

Jadis, le prince et sa liste civile étaient là pour soulager les plus intéressants de ceux qui allaient à la dérive; aujourd'hui M. Grévy, dans ses émoluments à peine suffisants pour satisfaire ses goûts d'économie, ne peut trouver de quoi venir en aide aux sous-lieutenants qui ont fait la fête.

***

Donc, il faut qu'ils se résignent à leur malheureux sort.

Mais, ce que l'on ne conçoit pas, c'est qu'en réorganisant l'armée, en instituant les régions militaires d'où les régiments ne sortent plus et qui devront être complétées par le recrutement régional, nos législateurs n'aient pas eu l'idée de rechercher les moyens de soulager un peu la vie de l'officier.

J'ai parlé de la pension de 75 fr. On ne se doute pas de ce que, pour ce prix, les gargotiers militaires font avaler aux estomacs complaisants de nos officiers. Il me semble que l'on aurait pu utiliser, surtout dans les grands centres de garnison, l'obligation de la vie en commun pour améliorer la qualité et diminuer le prix des vivres. Si on parvenait à bien nourrir les officiers pour 60 fr. par mois comme autrefois; si les abonnements aux maîtres ouvriers pouvaient être allégés; s'il y avait des fournisseurs et des blanchisseurs militaires tarifés, rien qu'en portant à 199 fr. la solde des sous-lieutenants, on arriverait peut-être à leur laisser 50 fr. par mois de disponibles. Ce ne serait pas la richesse, mais ce ne serait plus la misère!

Et si je prends ce chiffre de 50 francs, c'est qu'il est justement celui de la pension supplémentaire *minimum* que les familles bourgeoises aisées allouent à leurs enfants. Avec cent francs par mois, un sous-lieutenant d'infanterie est riche; avec deux cents, il écrase par son luxe ses égaux et ses supérieurs.

On le voit, il y a quelque chose à faire — et il faut qu'on le fasse — car, avec la rude concurrence que la vie civile fait à l'état militaire, on n'aurait bientôt plus assez de sous-lieutenants pour l'armée active.

Jules Richard.

LES EXPULSÉS

M. GUILLE-DESBUTTES
Conseiller à la Cour d'appel d'Orléans

Révoqué en 1870 à la suite de la plus méprisable dénonciation, M. Guille-Desbuttes fut nommé conseiller à la Cour en 1872. Doué d'un esprit fin et très observateur, d'un caractère droit et très ferme, cet honorable magistrat, que sa nature même éloignait de l'agitation des partis, ne devait pas conserver la moindre illusion sur le sort qui lui était réservé à l'heure des exécutions.

Juge éclairé, président d'assises remarquable, il joignait aux qualités de l'esprit une de ces choses que les républicains ne pardonnent pas volontiers : l'éducation parfaite de l'homme du monde. Si les inspirateurs du ministre que par habitude on dénomme encore le ministre de la justice ont voulu renverser un galant homme doublé d'un magistrat de valeur, ils lui ont fourni l'occasion d'échapper à une véritable humiliation, et en cela ils ont manqué leur coup.

M. DUBEZIN
Conseiller à la Cour d'appel d'Orléans

Un magistrat de talent, voyant juste, touchant juste, osant dire ce qu'il pense, un caractère en un mot. Un de ces hommes comme il n'en faut plus à nos Martin-Feuillée, en ce temps de décadence morale et de honteux servilisme.

M. Dubezin, qui a laissé de précieux souvenirs et de vives amitiés dans le ressort de la Cour de Bordeaux, était un de ces observateurs de la loi qui veulent que l'autorité soit partout respectée et respectée par tous, mais qui se sentent peu disposés à saluer jusqu'à terre la majesté des favoris du suffrage universel. De pareilles audaces se paient cher aujourd'hui!

Les regrets du barreau tout entier suivront M. Dubezin dans sa retraite. On n'oubliera pas avec quelle autorité et quelle bienveillante fermeté il dirigeait les débats comme président de la Cour d'assises. Le gouvernement, en maintenant l'excellent magistrat dans ses fonctions, aurait fait preuve de tact et d'habileté; en le mettant à la retraite, il a fait certainement acte de prévoyance, car les sentiments bien connus de M. Dubezin lui eussent fait repousser avec indignation l'offre de demeurer plus longtemps dans une maison d'où l'on chassait brutalement ses collègues les plus respectés et ses plus anciens amis.

M. PAULMIER
Conseiller à la Cour d'appel d'Orléans

Avec sa nature en dehors, son esprit pratique, son caractère résolu et sa parole abondante, M. le conseiller Paulmier n'avait aucune chance de devenir l'idole des citoyens républicains qui, après avoir grouillé dans les bas-fonds, sont parvenus à la surface. Homme d'ordre avant tout, ennemi déclaré des bassesses et des lâches complaisances, le très estimable magistrat avait débuté dans la carrière judiciaire par un coup d'éclat : à vingt-trois ans il était décoré pour son énergie en face d'une insurrection triomphante. Substitut à Lure, puis à Forcalquier, procureur à Gien, Chinon et Blois, M. Paulmier avait été appelé à la cour d'Orléans en 1862, il y apportait sa grande expérience des affaires. Depuis vingt années, l'honorable magistrat présidait avec talent les Cours d'assises du ressort et il eût pu occuper un long temps encore son siège de conseiller, mais sa condamnation était prononcée! N'avait-il pas eu l'audace de croire qu'un régime autre que celui qui nous comble de prospérités pouvait assurer le salut de la France!

M. NORMAND
Conseiller à la cour d'appel d'Orléans

Ancien magistrat du ressort de la Cour de Paris, M. Normand appartenait, depuis 1864, au ressort d'Orléans, dans lequel il avait occupé les fonctions de procureur impérial à Tours, et de président du tribunal civil de Vendôme.

Magistrat de valeur, laborieux, d'un jugement sûr et d'une grande bienveillance, M. le conseiller Normand était un excellent président d'assises. Demeuré étranger aux choses de la politique, il partageait sa vie entre l'étude du droit,

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 35. Alphonse XII and Chulalongkorn in the "Échos" column, highlighted in gray. *Le Figaro*, 25 September 1883. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Grosclaude's inversion of Alphonse and Chulalongkorn played on these conventions, and such meta-journalistic humor aimed at the *lecteur averti* familiar with the week's news was typical of the style of *Les Grimaces*. Alongside press treatment of exotic dignitaries, press coverage of other exotic visitors was also a target. The first issue of the pamphlet commented on the recent visit of a large delegation of Hungarians (a group of writers, journalists, artists, and professors) to Paris by assimilating them with other groups of foreigners present in the city – "des Esquimaux, des Fuégiens, des Galibis et des Cinghalais" at the human zoo exhibits of the Jardin d'Acclimatation. Applying the ethnographic mode of description to the Hungarian cultural delegation, Grosclaude detailed the "mœurs" and costumes of their "tribu," and described their visits to museums, monuments, theaters, the opera, and the headquarters of *Le Figaro*.[65] In a late October "Nouvelles" column, Grosclaude similarly juxtaposed the French deputies arriving in Paris for a new legislative session and a group of Iroquois or Mohawks on display at the Jardin d'Acclimatation, again applying the dehumanizing ethnographic mode to the deputies rather than the Iroquois:

> Ces Peaux-Rouges se disent originaires de la Prairie américaine; quant aux députés, ils arrivent de tous les points du territoire français, où des barnums expérimentés les ont choisis parmis les types les plus curieux de l'espèce humaine: il y en a même qui proviennent du fin fond de l'Auvergne.
>
> Leurs mœurs sont relativement douces; ils ne mangent de chair humaine qu'à la dernière extrémité et se nourrissent habituellement de portefeuilles, que les plus gourmands arrosent parfois d'un ou deux pots-de-vin.

[65] Étienne Grosclaude, "Les Nouvelles," *Les Grimaces* no. 1, 21 July 1883, 17-21. On the human zoo exhibitions common in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Bancel, Nicolas et al., eds., *Zoos humains: Au temps des exhibitions humaines* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), and in particular, William H. Schneider, "Les expositions ethnographiques du Jardin zoologique d'acclimatation," 72-80. Human zoos were also the focus of a recent *conte* by Paul Hervieu, who signed "Liris" in *Les Grimaces*: "L'Esquimau," in *Diogène le chien* (Paris: Charavay, 1882), 93-133. Jean-Marie Seillan discusses this Hervieu story, alongside "La Sagesse de Koukourounou," in his study of literary anticolonialism: "Fiction et anticolonialisme," in *Aux sources du roman colonial, 1863-1914: l'Afrique à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Karthala, 2006), 189-211.

> Ils sont vêtus à l'Europénne, mais sans aucun luxe, et fort peu d'entre eux ont des anneaux dans le nez; — en revanche, plusieurs y mettent du tabac à priser, pendant les discours, ce qui les fait éternuer de temps à autre en signe d'assentiment.
>
> L'usage du chapeau paraît leur être inconnu; ce qui est d'autant plus regrettable qu'ils sont généralement privés de cheveux. On remarque tout particulièrement un petit vieillard, désigné sous le nom de Bisch, dont le crâne poli sert de miroir aux spectatrices des tribunes; une légende bien connue rapporte que ce vieux chef a été glorieusement scalpé dans une rencontre avec les Mohicans. Aussi jouit-il d'une grande considération parmi les Peaux-Rouges du Palais-Bourbon.[66]

The reader familiar with the week's news would have read both reports of the deputies' return to Paris, and descriptions of the new exhibit at the human zoo, perhaps again juxtaposed in the *échos*. Grosclaude's joke amuses the *lecteur averti* on two levels. First, it offers a parodic send-up of both self-serious political coverage and dehumanizing popular ethnography.[67] Second, in chaotically crossing signals across the printed page, it prompts the disillusioned reader to reflect on the invisible rules of newspaper coverage.

In the years following *Les Grimaces*, Octave Mirbeau returned to the subject of the visiting exotic dignitary. In a pair of articles that also offer a prime example of how Mirbeau recycled material, "Conte polynésien" and "Tombouctou," published in *Le Gaulois* in 1884 and 1885 (the first under a pseudonym, Henry Lys, imposed on him by director Arthur Meyer during a post-*Grimaces* probationary period), Mirbeau poked fun at credulous newspaper stories about exotic visitors, deploying offensive ethnic stereotypes and nativist rhetoric as part of a parodic attack on the press's habitual depictions of such visitors as either uncivilized innocents or all-too-civilized disappointments. Like Grosclaude's *échos*, "Conte polynésien" and "Tombouctou"

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[66] Étienne Grosclaude, "Les Nouvelles," *Les Grimaces* no. 15, 27 October 1883, 682-83.

[67] See, for instance, Éric Besnard, "Les Peaux-Rouges au Jardin d'Acclimatation," *Le Soir*, 20 October 1883, 2: "Leurs costumes sont originaux. Avec des peaux de cerf tannées, ils font de larges pantalons et des espèces de babouches qu'ils brodent de perles de toutes couleurs […] Le visage de l'homme rouge porte l'expression d'une gravité sombre et indifférente. Sous l'influence des excitations ordinaires, les traits s'animent à peine d'une manière perceptible; le regard est timide et inquiet, la physionomie humble."

mock the conventions that characterized the press' performance of disillusionment with the exoticism of visiting dignitaries ("Ni reine, ni sauvage: Parisiens, nous sommes volés!"). However, Mirbeau upends these conventions by turning them into a stratagem, imagining foreign dignitaries who feign innocence to trick their hosts into footing the bill for a lavish, and distinctly Parisian, lifestyle.

"Conte polynésien," published in 1884, described the arrival in Paris of a fictional "colonel Thaoorawa," an emissary of the king of Hawai'i. Hoping to garner publicity—and funds—for their foundering organization, the members of a "Cercle franco-hispano-américain" plan a banquet in the eminent colonel's honor, to be promoted across the press, in paid announcements full of fantastic details which will entice the imagination of readers and, they hope, wealthy donors:

> Nous lui offrirons un banquet, et, ce banquet, nous le ferons annoncer par tous les journaux; en même temps nous raconterons sur ce militaire des choses stupéfiantes, des aventures de jeu prodigieuses, nous lui prêterons une fortune extraordinaire… C'est très loin, Hawaï. Bref, vous comprenez, ces récits mettront l'eau à la bouche de nos banquiers et de nos pontes, qui se dépêcheront de nous revenir, les poches pleines d'or, et la partie reverra peut-être ses jours de prospérité.

At first, the public relations maneuver goes according to plan. The colonel arrives, accepts the invitation, and newspaper items paid for by the *Cercle* spread "les légendes les plus incroyables […] autour de ce personnage exotique." Soon he is followed around the boulevards by "une armée de reporters." At the banquet, the literary members of the society tell stories in the exotic Polynesian mode and toast to the colonel and to the "l'union si précieuse" of France and Polynesia. In the end, however, the colonel gets the last laugh. At the gambling table after dinner, the Hawaiian emissary gradually empties the society's newly-replenished bank. Carefully

counting his cash, the colonel bids the astonished group adieu and disappears.[68] At the end of this *conte*, Mirbeau's imagined exotic dignitary is revealed as a kind of *lecteur averti* himself – familiar with the codes, he conformed to his expected role and left with his winnings, having played both his hosts and the press for fools.

"Conte polynésien" was not tied to any particular news event, but at least one reader of *Le Gaulois* felt targeted. A few days after it ran on the front page, the newspaper printed a letter from a certain comte de Gourcy-Pagny, the consul to the kingdom of Hawai'i in Paris. Despite the story's title marking it as fiction, the consul could not let Mirbeau's characterizations pass unchallenged:

> Je prends seulement aujourd'hui connaissance d'un article paru récemment dans le *Gaulois*, sous la rubrique de *Conte polynésien*.
>
> Si, par cette dénomination de *conte*, le signataire a voulu prouver que son récit n'était en entier que le produit de son imagination, il y a parfaitement réussi!...
>
> Mais je ne puis laisser passer, sans protester énergiquement, l'allégation qu'un coloniel, aide de camp de Sa Majesté le roi d'Hawaï […] soit parti sans payer la note de son hôtel, ou en emportant d'un cercle une liasse de billets de banque.[69]

Though the consul himself did not admit to misunderstanding the genre of Mirbeau's article, the possibility that others might demanded intervention. That the consul's response to "Conte polynésien" reads as a *pro forma* performance of his duty only further underlines the provocative power of Mirbeau's hybrid of *conte* and *chronique*.

Less than a year later, another conjunction of *actualité* led Mirbeau back to the figure of the exotic visitor who manages to outwit the press and politicians. In early January 1885, an ambassador from Timbuktu arrived in Paris. According to a journalist in *Le Figaro*, "un grand nombre de nos confrères ont tenu à *interviewer*" this visiting dignitary, in an echo of the phalanx

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[68] Henry Lys [Octave Mirbeau], "Conte polynésien," *Le Gaulois*, 31 August 1884, 1.

[69] "Boîte aux lettres," *Le Gaulois*, 5 September 1884, 3.

of reporters who trailed the Hawaiian colonel in Mirbeau's 1884 *conte*. Mentions of Timbuktu, details about the ambassador, Sidi El Hadj Abdelkader Ould Baker—Fernand Xau informed readers of *Gil Blas* that the ambassador's evening meal consisted of a half-dozen fried eggs and that he ate without utensils, "à la façon orientale"—and reports on French colonial prospects in the region filled newspaper pages in the first weeks of the month.[70]

Later that same month, Mirbeau published a front-page *chronique* in *Le Gaulois* titled "Tombouctou," this time under his own signature.[71] "Tombouctou" revolves around a provocative premise: "Tombouctou n'existe pas." Mirbeau cast doubt on the bonafides of the ambassador who had just spent two weeks in Paris, meeting with Jules Ferry and with president Jules Grévy, attending lectures at the Société de géographie and performances at the Opéra: "Qu'a-t-il fait ici, sinon de courir les théâtres et les petites dames? Nous l'avons logé, nous l'avons nourri, nous l'avons amusé, nous l'avons bourré de cadeaux. Qu'avons nous en échange? Rien, rien, rien." If Timbuktu did exist, he wrote, it was merely a rundown desert outpost, and not the "Tombouctou fantaisiste, ou plutôt fantastique" which existed in the same sense as "le pays de Cocagne, l'Eldorado, la mer Bétée, les confins du monde, le duché de Gerolstein et le royaume de Prestre Jean" – that is, in the world of poetry, not geography.

"Tombouctou" borrowed its framing directly from "Conte polynésien," opening with the same ironic description of the typical visit of an exotic dignitary: elaborate costumes, a stay in a luxury hotel, exotic gifts offered to ministers, visits to the Opéra, the Folies-Bergère, and the Bastille panorama, and finally a departure "sans payer sa note d'hôtel." While he did not directly accuse Sidi El Hadj Abdelkader Ould Baker of having skipped out on his hotel bill, Mirbeau

[70] Paul Louis, "Tombouctou," *Le Figaro*, 4 January 1885, 1-2; Fernand Xau, *Gil Blas*, 1 January 1885, 2.
[71] Octave Mirbeau, "Tombouctou," *Le Gaulois*, 27 January 1885, 1.

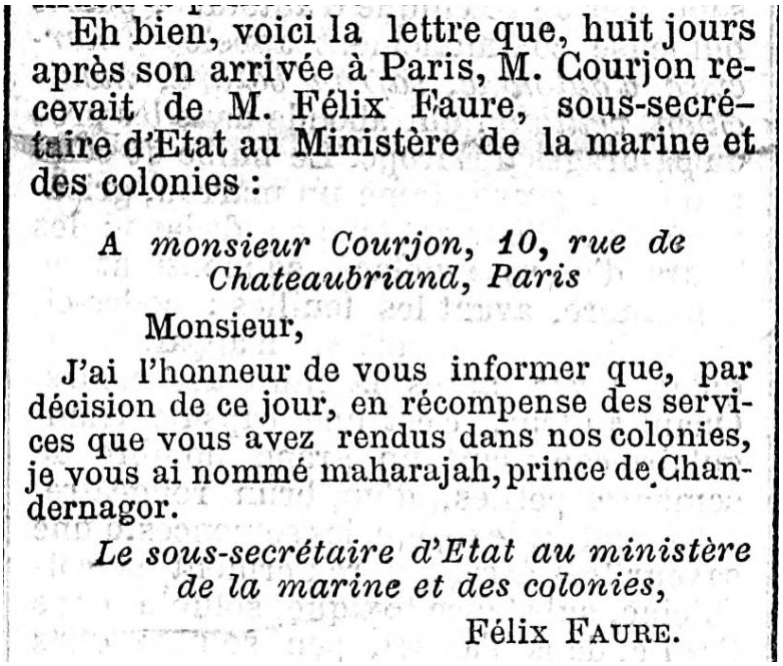
nonetheless characterized the Timbuktu embassy as another example of the kind of farcical visit he had so recently fictionalized in the previous summer's *conte*. "Tombouctou" presented the two weeks of press coverage of the ambassador's trip as typical of colonial print culture: fantastical, unverifiable, unmoored from reality, proceeding along predictable lines which could easily be anticipated by the *lecteur averti* who would by now be accustomed to these kinds of stories, "après les envoyés du Fouta-Djallon, après la reine de Taïti, après le maharajah de Chandernagor," as Mirbeau put it, listing a number of recent exotic visits.

The last of these would have been particularly fresh in the mind of Mirbeau's regular readers. On 12 January, toward the end of the visit of the Timbuktu embassy, Mirbeau published an article on the front page of *Le Gaulois* recounting the curious tale of an 'exotic' figure currently making the rounds in Paris. Titled "S.A. le Maharajah Courjon, prince de Chandernagor," it spun a fantastical tale of a mysterious M. Courjon, a fabulously rich resident of Chandernagor, a French colonial *comptoir* on the western coast of India. According to Mirbeau, Courjon invited a French colonial official to visit his palace, which was luxuriously decorated with all of the riches of India, and to share his opulent lifestyle of enormous feasts, a lush garden and an exotic menagerie, and even a harem. But Courjon's fortunes were dwindling, and he decided to leave Chandernagor to travel with the official to Paris. There, in recompense for the rich hospitality he had been offered, the official made sure that Courjon's wishes was granted. Félix Faure, the under-secretary of the Naval and Colonial Ministry, named him maharajah of Chandernagor: "Ainsi, pour payer deux mois d'hospitalité donnée à un fonctionnaire, M. Félix Faure, par une simple décision, nommait un M. Courjon Altesse Royale! O Courjon! ô maharajah Courjon!" The incongruity of the juxtaposition of the name "Courjon" and the exotic title of "maharajah" is patently ridiculous, and it is heightened by Mirbeau's final

image, of the newly-named maharajah Courjon parading his title, asking to be called "Altesse Royale" by his servants, and walking the streets of Paris "coiffé d'un turban jaune et brun, piqué d'épingles d'or, qui est l'insigne des maharajahs, vêtu d'une sorte de stambouli soutaché de soie noire, et portant sous son bras l'ombrelle blanche."[72]

As with "Conte polynésien," the generic status of "S.A. le Maharajah Courjon" was difficult to decipher. Was this a work of journalism? Or was it, like "Conte polynésien," only "le produit de son imagination," as the disgruntled consul to Hawai'i had put it in his letter to *Le Gaulois*? The article was published on the first page, as the first major headline after a column of breaking news items. At the same time, Mirbeau was known as a *chroniqueur*, not a reporter, and elements of the article are clearly tongue-in-cheek. It began with a dedication to Jules Ferry: "À monsieur Jules Ferry. Cet humble récit est dédié, et je le supplie de considérer qu'il n'est ni une fantaisie, ni une invention." The scenes of dialogue and the extravagant descriptions of Courjon's palace and lifestyle appeared to be fictionalized. But the article also contained a reproduction of what purported to be an authentic document, the letter sent to Courjon by Félix Faure, notifying him of his new royal status (figure 36).

[72] Octave Mirbeau, "S.A. le Maharajah Courjon, prince de Chandernagor," *Le Gaulois*, 12 January 1885, 1.



Eh bien, voici la lettre que, huit jours après son arrivée à Paris, M. Courjon recevait de M. Félix Faure, sous-secrétaire d'Etat au Ministère de la marine et des colonies :

A monsieur Courjon, 10, rue de Chateaubriand, Paris

Monsieur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que, par décision de ce jour, en récompense des services que vous avez rendus dans nos colonies, je vous ai nommé maharajah, prince de Chandernagor.

Le sous-secrétaire d'Etat au ministère de la marine et des colonies,

Félix FAURE.

Figure 36. An authentic letter from Félix Faure to the Maharajah Courjon – or was it? Octave Mirbeau, "S.A. le Maharajah Courjon, prince de Chandernagor," *Le Gaulois*, 12 January 1885, 1. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

The reaction in the press to Mirbeau's "S.A. le Maharajah Courjon" illustrates that its ambiguous place within the paper's rubrics caused confusion even among fellow journalists. This reaction split roughly along political lines, with newspapers critical of prime minister Jules Ferry's government taking it as true, and those in support reading it as a farce. The letter to Courjon from Faure was reproduced a few days later by the radical republican *L'Intransigeant*, accompanied by sardonic commentary on the current state of republican politics, ridiculing the government's colonial pretentions: "Quelle comédie! Quel ridicule! Nous croyions que l'Empire seul avait de ces faiblesses, ou de ces habilités. Ferry et ses acolytes singent les Napoléons. A quand le baron de Madagascar et le chevalier du Cambodge?"[73] This in turn prompted an amused reaction from several pro-government newspapers, who took Mirbeau's "Maharajah Courjon" as an obvious joke. "Une bien bonne histoire vient d'arriver à un journal intransigeant

[73] "L'Altesse Courjon," *L'Intransigeant*, 15 January 1885, 1.

du matin," remarked *Paris*, calling Mirbeau "un écrivain fantaisiste," while *Le Français* noted that the opposition paper had fallen for what was obviously "une pitoyable plaisanterie."[74]

Mirbeau responded, first with a short note, and then with a longer article. He reiterated his claim that a M. Courjon really had been named a maharajah, and invited disbelievers to visit the Naval and Colonial Ministry to inquire about him. Fernand Xau, the reporter at *Gil Blas* (who would later go on to found the major daily *Le Journal* where Mirbeau would be a regular *chroniqueur*), obliged, by visiting not the Ministry but Courjon himself. There, Xau found that Mirbeau's story was true – in spirit, if not in detail: "M. Félix Faure n'a pas écrit la lettre publiée […] mais la nomination de M. Courjon au titre de maharajah n'en est pas moins authentique." Xau's descriptions revealed truth at least as strange as fiction. The newly-nominated maharajah was as absurd as Mirbeau had imagined, wearing adopted exotic garb and addressing the journalist with false modesty: "Monsieur, daigna-t-il laisser tomber de ses augustes lèvres, en jetant un regard inquiet, et en affectant cependant une allure bon enfant de commis-voyageur, vous pouvez voir que je ne parle pas trop mal le français pour un Indien… (*remettant son turban qui tombait*)."[75] Xau's sarcastic asides and transitions—"Je fais grâce du reste"—definitively classed Courjon as a figure of ridicule.

In "Tombouctou," Mirbeau juxtaposed the ridiculous maharajah, the doubtful ambassador from Timbuktu, and the satire of the visiting exotic dignitary in order to reveal the exotic and the colonial as the domain of the inauthentic and the ridiculous:

> Décidément, c'est au Ministère des colonies qu'il faut aller chercher les grandes gaîtés de ce temps, et les auteurs comiques y devraient puiser à plains cartons les désopilantes aventures et les inoubliables "fumisteries". Après les envoyés du Fouta-Djallou, après la reine de Taïti, après le maharajah de Chandernagor, voici venir l'ambassadeur de

[74] "Échos du Jour," *Paris*, 15 January 1885, 2; "Un 'prince de Chandernagor'," *Le Français*, 15 January 1885, 3.

[75] Fernand Xau, "Le Prince de Chandernagor," *Gil Blas*, 17 January 1885, 2.

> Tombouctou. M. Félix Faure devrait se composer une sorte de ménagerie, de musée vivant, de toutes les curiosités exotiques qu'il a révélées au monde, et, lorsqu'il aura quitté le ministère, courir les foires dans une belle baraque, où il exhibera, au bruit des cymbales et des grosses caisses, ses rois nègres, ses ambassadeurs, ses maharajahs. Et, quand il aura joint à sa collection le Makoko et Sa Majesté d'Araucanie, il pourra se vanter de posséder une exhibition sans rivale [...].

The vision of Félix Faure opening a traveling exhibition of his "curiosités exotiques" recalls Grosclaude's *échos* in *Les Grimaces*, and similarly exposes the predetermined codes for reporting on exotic ambassadors and French colonial dignitaries alike.

In theme and in tone, Mirbeau's early articles on press coverage of visiting dignitaries owe much to the exotic disillusionment of Alphonse Daudet's *Tartarin de Tarascon*, with journalists and the public as Tartarin figures unable to distinguish fiction from reality. We can hear in "Conte polynésien" and in "Tombouctou" an echo of the warning issued to Daudet's affable main character in Algiers by a more experienced French marine captain, who suspects Tartarin has been duped by a couple of con artists: "Seulement, voyez-vous, monsieur Tartarin, vous ferez tout de même bien de vous méfier des Mauresques algériennes et des princes du Monténégro!…"[76] Mirbeau's "menagerie" of "curiosités exotiques" also prefigured the kinds of histories of colonial where the marquis de Rays, "roi d'Océanie," would later appear, alongside the king of Araucania and other would-be rulers of colonial kingdoms.

[76] Daudet, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, 1:550. Guy de Maupassant's Algerian *chroniques* also owed something to *Tartarin de Tarascon* – in "Alger à vol d'oiseau," Maupassant cited Tartarin's characterization of the "Teur" (Turk), and echoed Daudet's portrayal of the colony as a kind of unsettling hybrid, describing Algiers as "l'exutoire de l'Afrique en fait de races indigènes et l'exutoire de l'Europe en fait de races dites civilisées. Le désert y envoie sa vermine, la France y rejette tout ce qui est vieux, le monde y crache ses aventuriers" (*Le Gaulois*, 17 July 1881, 1).

LÀ-BAS

In the spring of 1885, simmering public anger over the colonial war in Tonkin, ongoing since 1882, came to a boil. In late March, Parisian newspapers learned of an official telegram from General Brière de l'Isle, then commander of the French troops in Tonkin, announcing that French troops had been routed near the Chinese border at Lang-Son. The retreat was front page news, a disastrous military defeat and a sign that the unpopular war was, as many newspapers had been writing for years, an expensive boondoggle and a waste of French lives – "la plus folle et la plus criminelle des entreprises," in the words of one right-wing deputy.[77] Newspapers exploded with outrage, much of it directed at prime minister Jules Ferry, who had repeatedly pushed for expansion and intensification of the conflict since the early days of his ministry in 1883.[78] On 30 March, Ferry was forced to step down, faced with an outcry in the chamber of deputies—during which the left-wing deputy Georges Clemenceau shouted at Ferry and his fellow ministers, "Nous ne vous connaissons plus, nous ne voulons plus vous connaître. […] Ce n'est plus un ministre, ce ne sont plus des ministres […] Ce sont des accusés de haute trahison." He fled the chamber, avoiding a gathering crowd shouting taunts of "Ferry le Tonkinois!" Even after the fall of Ferry's ministry, controversy continued to surround the Tonkin campaign, and the future of French colonial prospects in East and Southeast Asia generated heated debate across

[77] Jules Delafosse, Chamber of Deputies, 26 March 1885. His comment was reported in most daily newspapers on either 27 or 28 March; see, for instance, "Chambre des Députés," *Le Petit Moniteur universel*, 28 March 1885, 2.

[78] See chapter 1 for a discussion of the "incident Pierre Loti," sparked by an account of a French massacre of Vietnamese troops. On the French conquest of Vietnam, see Goscha, *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam*, particularly 60-68. For a discussion of the conflict in the context of Third Republic colonial politics, see Jean-Marie Mayeur, *Les débuts de la IIIe République, 1871-1898* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), especially 124-133; for a more general overview of colonial politics in the period—though one that is in many respects out of date—see Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962*, particularly chapters two and three.

Parisian newspapers.[79]

It was in this context that, in May 1885, Mirbeau published a *chronique* titled "Le Journalisme français" in the moderate republican daily *La France*. Mirbeau lamented the decline of the French press in dramatic terms: "Il en est du journalisme comme des gouvernements: le public n'a jamais que les journaux qu'il mérite et les journaux d'aujourd'hui sont en une décadence aussi profonde que l'est le public lui-même." Mirbeau rehashed the litany of complaints about modern journalism—it was shallow, vulgar, gossipy, and corrupt—common to many critics of the press and familiar from his own earlier *chroniques* in *Les Grimaces* and elsewhere. To these Mirbeau now added a new criticism, one born of the Tonkin affair. In an age of global conflicts, he wrote, French newspapers seemed unable to look past the end of the boulevard to the wider world:

> Aujourd'hui la politique se déplace et suit le mouvement géographique qui secoue le monde. Elle remplit, comme d'un mystère, des pays lointains, vers lesquels l'imagination aime à s'envoler. C'est là-bas, maintenant, que se jouent les destinées de nos civilisations européennes, menacées par le branle des barbares et la fermentation bouillonnante de l'Extrême-Orient. […] Ouvrez un de ces journaux. À peine s'il est question de cela.[80]

Later that same year, Mirbeau prefaced a profile of a colonial deputy from Réunion with another call for French journalism to go global, in nearly identical terms:

> De jour en jour, l'intérêt politique se déplace, les questions coloniales se multiplient et grossissent, et sans exagération on peut dire maintenant que les destinées des pays occidentaux se jouent en Orient, dans ce mystérieux et impassible Orient qui se dresse

[79] For a relatively straightforward report on the tumultuous parliamentary session resulting in Ferry's dismissal, see for example "À la Chambre," *La France*, 1 April 1885, 2. An example of the kind of commentary that surrounded the fall of Ferry's ministry can be found in the popular daily *Le Petit Parisien* on the same date: "M. Jules Ferry est enfin chassé du pouvoir: son pied a glissé dans le sang français qui coule par sa faute! Il tombe sous le poids de la malédiction publique et de l'indignation nationale!" "La Chute dans le Sang," *Le Petit Parisien*, 1 April 1885, 1.

[80] Octave Mirbeau, "Le Journalisme français," *La France*, 14 May 1885, 2.

> devant nous comme un terrible point d'interrogation. Tout ce qui se fait de grand, d'imprévu et de redoutable, s'accomplit là-bas.[81]

Mirbeau's sudden interest in South and East Asia in 1885 can be partly attributed to his association with François Deloncle, an *opportuniste* republican politician and procolonial advocate. Mirbeau was Deloncle's ghostwriter for a work called *Lettres de l'Inde*, prepublished in *Le Gaulois* and *Le Journal des débats* in 1885, and he may also have been promoting Deloncle's interests here.[82]

The procolonial attitudes of these *chroniques* would soon fall away in Mirbeau's writing, but the concern with Parisian journalism's blind spots and propensity for misrepresentation would not. In "Le Journalisme français," he suggested that the public, too, was fed up:

> Il me semble pourtant que le public […] demande autre chose que ce que le journal lui donne. Je crois, malgré tout, qu'il est avide de connaître des choses qu'il ignore, et dont on s'obstine à ne pas lui parler, sous prétexte qu'elles ne sont pas assez parisiennes.[83]

Mirbeau gave voice to a growing ambient concern about France's place in the world in the age of global media circulations, colonial expansion, and intra-European colonial conflict, and echoed complaints about the Tonkin conflict by journalists like Pierre Giffard and Camille Pelletan, which spoke to the problems of distance, communications technology, and limited information flows.[84] While the ties between France and far-flung corners of the world were growing

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[81] Octave Mirbeau, "M. Pierre Alype," *La France*, 4 July 1885, 1.

[82] For Michel and Nivet, Mirbeau in his early years was sacrificing authenticity in order to make a living, and it was only circa 1885 that his writing and his own beliefs began to coincide. They call this year "un tournant décisif dans la vie de Mirbeau," during which he "réussit – enfin! – à faire coïncider ses idées et ses écrits." *Octave Mirbeau,* 201.

[83] Octave Mirbeau, "Le Journalisme français," *La France*, 14 May 1885, 2.

[84] See chapter 1. For Giffard, "Ce Tonkin est si éloigné de l'Europe, les communications […] si rudimentaires, qu'il s'écoule des mois entiers entre les événements et le moment où un récit complet de ces événements peut être fait en France" (Giffard, "Affaires du Tonkin," *Le Figaro*, 24 June 1883). Pelletan similarly complained that "Il est impossible de raisonner sur des événements que nous connaissons mal" (Pelletan, "L'Aventure tonkinoise," *La Justice*, 29 August 1883).

tighter—particularly thanks to expanding networks of underseas cables and overland wires—some doubted that French journalism was keeping pace with this new global reality. Distance led to doubt and mistrust; with little possibility for verification. How could readers trust in what newspapers wrote about events in Tonkin or in other far-flung places "là-bas"? Discrepancies between reported news and reality, particularly in colonial spaces, were a common target for satire in the early 1880s – most pointedly, in a number of Guy de Maupassant's 1881 *chroniques* written from Algeria for *Le Gaulois*, which revealed the ways in which colonial news was constructed—even falsified—in circuits between journalists, metropolitan officials, the military, and local authorities and informants.[85] An 1886 short story by Mirbeau's friend and collaborator Paul Hervieu, "La Sagesse de Koukourounou," similarly ridiculed the press's inability to represent colonial reality, as the contents of the metropolitan newspapers in Hervieu's story bear no resemblance to events on the ground in the fictional Côte d'Ivoire kingdom of Sotokoto.[86]

Part of a broader tradition of literary media criticism explored by scholars including Edmund Birch and Guillaume Pinson, these and other texts approached press discourses on colonial events with suspicion, showing how newspapers' storytelling proceeded along pre-determined lines familiar to the *lecteur averti*.[87] Similarly, Mirbeau's 1885 *chroniques* exposed French journalism's blinkered perspective, and represent an early stage in a critical reflection linking media criticism to colonial criticism, one which would last the length of his journalistic

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[85] Maupassant's Algerian *chroniques* dealing most explicitly with media manipulations in colonial conflicts are "Le Prisonnier," *Le Gaulois*, 28 July 1881, 1; other chroniques in the same paper written that spring, during the French campaign in Tunisia, treated similar themes: "La Guerre," 10 April; "Balançoires," 12 May; "Enthousiasme et cabotinage," 19 May; "Vive Mustapha!", 30 June; "Zut!", 5 July. On Maupassant's North African journalism, see Birch, *Fictions of the Press*, especially 172-179.

[86] Paul Hervieu, "La Sagesse de Koukourounou," *Revue illustrée* 1, no. 5 (15 February 1886): 169-177; *Revue illustrée* 1, no. 6 (1 March 1886): 205-212. On this story, see Jean-Marie Seillan, "Fiction et anticolonialisme," in *Aux sources du roman colonial*, 189-211.

[87] Birch, *Fictions of the Press*, 176. See also Pinson, *L'Imaginaire médiatique*, especially 93-103.

career. As Mirbeau saw it, colonial culture was a press culture; like most of the French reading public, Mirbeau encountered the colonies through print, as a textual reality mediated by newspapers and magazines. In Mirbeau's media criticism, the developing genres of journalistic writing around colonial and exotic subjects were privileged – precisely because they drew attention to the mediation, and therefore to the manipulation or fabrication, of information.

MAROQUINERIES

In 1910, a pastiche of Octave Mirbeau's literary style featured in the latest volume of Paul Reboux and Charles Müller's series, called *À la Manière de…*.[88] In the short story, called "Pour les pauvres," Reboux and Müller deployed an array of recognizably Mirbellian tropes. The story is narrated in the first person by an unidentified "je," who goes to interview an unnamed associate of a well-known public figure – in this case, Georges Leygues, a moderate republican who had retired from ministerial duties in 1909 after inheriting a vast fortune. In Müller and Reboux's pastiche, Leygues has employed his fortune to become a "grand industriel," opening a new factory for an ambiguous industry that will, according to the associate, result in "l'extinction du paupérisme, quoi!"

The reality of this industry is slowly revealed as the interviewer is taken on a tour of Leygues's new factory. The raw material of the factory turns out to be human beings: the poor, the excess population, their bodies processed for a variety of purposes and products. Their blood, drained, becomes iron pills; their teeth, piano keys; their unborn fetuses, soft, supple leather;

[88] Paul Reboux and Charles Müller, "Pour les pauvres," in *À la Manière de…* (Paris: Grasset, 1914), 7-18. The 1914 edition brought together the first (1908) and second (1910) series of pastiches in one volume.

their intestines, window decorations. Eyeballs become knobs on hairpins or canes; ears and noses, canned provisions for soldiers; bones, toothpicks and pipe-cleaners; hair, high-quality paintbrushes; tendons become tennis rackets; nails are transformed into salt spoons; the skin of men's torsos into suitcase leather; stomachs into drawstring pouches; skulls into decorative knobs on staircases; children's fingers into hair curlers. In a horrible crescendo, the agitated interviewer asks about sex organs, and learns that women's breasts become sponge cases, pin cushions, or tea cozies, while their genitals serve as sex toys for long-haul merchant sailors. The interviewer finally shouts, "Et les trous du cul, en fais-tu quelque chose?" and learns that even these have their use, as cigar-cutters.[89]

While the excess of this pastiche overwhelms, it also underscores the extent to which Mirbeau was associated with gruesome details. Reused body parts, along with cannibalism, figure in a number of Mirbeau's stories published in the press in the 1880s and 1890s. In particular, the pastiche recalls two contes-*chroniques* with the title "Maroquinerie": the first published in *Gil Blas* in 1887, and the second in *Le Journal* in 1896. The 1896 "Maroquinerie" was later incorporated into the novel *Les vingt-et-un jours d'un neurasthénique* (1901), while the general schema of the 1887 "Maroquinerie" was repurposed in *La 628-E8* (1907). References to the two "Maroquineries" often uncomplicatedly suggest that the 1896 version is a simple reprisal of the 1887 story or connect the passages in the novels directly to both newspaper stories.[90] In

[89] The close of the story reveals that even the bodily waste of the poor can be used, purchased by "un seul [client], et qui prend tout…" Confidentially, Leygues reveals this client as "M. Bonnat," in a reference which is, I admit, obscure to me. Perhaps the painter Léon Bonnat is meant; Bonnat, in 1913 (when this story was first published) was in the news for having donated his collection of Old Masters paintings to found a museum, the Musée Bonnat, in his hometown of Bayonne.

[90] The "Anticolonialisme" entry in the *Dictionnaire des naturalismes*, for instance, conflates the 1887 "Maroquinerie" with its later reuse in *La 628-E8* in a chapter called "Le caoutchouc rouge," which more overtly addresses colonialism (the violence of the rubber industry in Belgian Congo), and classes the 1887 *conte-chronique* as anticolonial. *Dictionnaire des naturalismes*, vol. A-H, eds Colette Becker and Pierre-Jean Dufief (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017), 68.

fact, the genealogy of these 'skin stories' is more complex, and the links between them speak to Mirbeau's practices of self-borrowing more generally. The two "Maroquineries" are part of a constellation of *conte-chroniques* dealing with the reuse and misuse of human bodies, interconnected variations on a theme within Mirbeau's generative matrix. In writing their pastiche, Reboux and Müller had in effect drawn from the same well from which Mirbeau had repeatedly drawn, according to the demands of current events.

The first *chronique* that Mirbeau published with the title "Maroquinerie" appeared on 28 September 1887, and, like most of his *contes-chroniques*, it was a response to current events.[91] A shocking murder had gripped the Parisian press in the spring of 1887: the brutal stabbing of Marie Regnault, an elite courtesan, along with her servant and her servant's young daughter.[92] "Le crime de la rue Montaigne," as the press called it, became the "affaire Pranzini" after a suspect named Enrico Pranzini was arrested in April. A sensational trial occupied newspaper front pages through the summer. Pranzini was convicted, sentenced to death, and executed on 31 August 1887. While part of a long tradition of postmortem examination of criminals' bodies, what followed next caused an enormous and unprecedented scandal, one which upended the careers of several government officials. In September, word got out in the press that high-ranking officials had taken pieces of Pranzini's body as souvenirs.[93] *Le Figaro*'s faits divers rubric printed an item alleging that a certain *monsieur* with military bearing had come to a leather goods (*maroquinerie*) boutique with "un morceau de peau," asking to have it made into two

[91] Octave Mirbeau, "Maroquinerie," *Gil Blas*, 28 September 1887, 1-2.

[92] For my discussion of this crime I am indebted to Aaron Freundschuh's *The Courtesan and the Gigolo: The Murders in the Rue Montaigne and the Dark Side of Empire in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2017).

[93] For a more detailed account of the "affaire de la peau de Pranzini," see Freundschuh, *The Courtesan and the Gigolo*, particularly the chapter "The Skin Affair," 173-196.

card-holders. Questioned, the man admitted, not without pride, that it was "de la peau de Pranzini."[94] The scandal was immense, quickly moving from the faits divers to the front page. Paris police chief Ernest Taylor, revealed to be a recipient of one of the card-holders made of Pranzini's skin, was forced to resign.

The cadavers of executed criminals had long been subject to autopsy, analysis, preservation, and even display, and such postmortem treatment did not generally raise eyebrows. Journalists from several newspapers had been present at the autopsy and had recounted in great detail the dissection of Pranzini's corpse as well as the preservation of his organs, including his penis, in alcohol-filled jars for later study.[95] His skeleton, the newspapers reported, would be conserved by the Société d'anthropologie. *Le Figaro*, having broken the scandal with its *faits divers* item, belatedly (and ineffectively) tried to stem outrage by situating the fate of Pranzini's skin in a longer tradition of cadaver "souvenirs" and public display:

> Plusieurs personnes connues, des fonctionnaires, même, possèdent des objets provenant de suppliciés; le squelette de l'un des derniers condamnés est exposé dans un musée presque public; des crânes de guillotinés ont pris place dans des collections de particuliers. Et quant à la pauvre dépouille humaine, ne sait-on pas le cas qu'en font dans les amphithéâtres, ou à domicile, les ouvriers de la science pour lesquels elle est un objet d'études?[96]

What, then, about the story of the "peau de Pranzini" made it such a "scandale!" as one newspaper, *La Lanterne*, trumpeted from the front page? While the preservation of specimens for

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[94] "Nouvelles diverses," *Le Figaro*, 14 September 1887, 5-6.

[95] See, for instance, "Pranzini," *La Lanterne*, 2 September 1887, 1-2.

[96] Jean de Paris, "Nouvelles Diverses," *Le Figaro*, 23 September 1887, 2. *Le Figaro* was not alone in downplaying the scandal; a *chronique* in *L'Événement* called Taylor's decision to accept the Pranzini card-holder "une faute contre le bon goût" (Carnac, "Chronique parisienne," 24 September 1887, 1), and *Le Gaulois* remarked that many young students who assisted in autopsies would bring to *maroquineries* "des morceaux de cadavre de criminels ou de suicidés," and later ran an interview with the former police chief Gustave Macé calling the brouhaha "beaucoup de bruit pour rien" (E. Bois-Glavy, "En Peau humaine – Histoire de deux portefeuilles," 22 & 23 September 1887, 1-2).

study or even public display was scientific, the transformation of body parts into macabre souvenirs for private use verged on uncivilized fetishism. Albert Wolff, the well-known chroniqueur at *Le Figaro*, made the association with supposedly primitive colonial subjects explicit, when in a tongue-in-cheek *chronique* he expressed the hope that the transnational European newspaper-reading public would take the affair "du côté burlesque," judging it as "une simple fumisterie parisienne" rather than considering the French as "les derniers des sauvages, qui fabriquent des bibelots avec la peau des suppliciés, comme les Peaux-Rouges se font une ceinture avec les chevelures des petits blancs scalpés."[97] Wolff's comments point to the layers of signification and interpretation that help to explain the outrage and interest generated by the "peau de Pranzini" affair. The confluence of the tackily commercial and the 'savage' made the whole affair doubly distasteful to an aesthete like Wolff, and hinted at the dangerous specter of a fetishistic violence that blurred the lines between a dangerous criminal like Pranzini and the public servants who would bring him to justice.

Mirbeau's first "Maroquinerie," in 1887, arose out of this context. In the *conte-chronique*, an unnamed narrator approaches a boutique window displaying *articles de Paris*, the small fashionable leather items sold in many a Parisian shop. But these objects are "particulièrement bizarre," the narrator explains, in the sense that despite their unremarkable appearance they inspired "la sensation très intense, d'une indéfinissable horreur." Fascinated, he presses his nose to the glass to study the objects more closely – until, horrified, unsure if he is hallucinating or not, he notices that they seem to be moving:

> Il me parut que ces objets remuaient, vivaient, grouillaient comme des larves; non, pas comme des larves, comme les tronçons d'un corps, morcelé à coups de hache, qui cherchent à se rapprocher, à se rejoindre, à se recoller l'un à l'autre; et dans cet effort volontaire à se reconstituer, dans cette aspiration consciente à se réunir en un seul corps,

[97] Albert Wolff, "Solution," *Le Figaro*, 24 September 1887, 1.

> je vis ces multiples objets dessiner, en leurs spasmes, de vagues ébauches de figures humaines.

The owner of the boutique appears, and the narrator is surprised to recognize "M. Taylor […] l'ancien chef de la sûreté." Taylor chats amiably with the narrator—while running his hands over a display of leather card-holders—and explains that he has opened the shop to make a living after losing his position as chief of police.

Skin is not the only part of the cadaver repurposed in his shop; in a passage later echoed in Reboux and Müller's pastiche, he details the myriad uses to which body parts can be put: "des os, des cartilages, du sang, des cheveux, de la gélatine des pieds, des ongles… C'est étonnant comme avec les moindres déchets d'un homme on peut fabriquer de charmants bibelots…" He describes a new design for an umbrella, made from a carved tibia bone and decorated with a dehydrated and polished eyeball. Taylor openly wishes for more frequent criminal executions, in order to provide the raw material he needs for his shop, as he is currently forced to source "à l'étranger," dealing with "les bourreaux de tous les pays, avec quelques souverains absolus," most notably the king of Dahomey in West Africa. Other wares in his shop include a violin made from the skull and intestines of two well-known executed murderers, Abadie and Marchandon, and even a leather matchbook case made from skin from the thigh of Pranzini's victim, Marie Regnault (calling to mind the lurid and prurient press coverage of her murder). The *conte-chronique* ends on an ambiguous note, as the narrator awakes from his swoon. Taylor's shop of horrors was, it seems, only a nightmare, though the reality of the Pranzini card-holders remains.[98]

Undermining attempts by *Le Figaro* and other newspapers to downplay the possibility of

[98] Mirbeau, "Maroquinerie," *Gil Blas*.

misuse of Pranzini's body parts, Mirbeau's "Maroquinerie" imagines instead its crass commercialization, and underlines the way in which transformed objects like the leather card-holders made from human skin bear traces of their origins. As Wolff's *chronique* and Mirbeau's reference to the king of Dahomey suggests, these unsettling "bibelots" also inevitably bring to mind the violence of colonial conquest. In his work on colonial violence in British India, Kim Wagner has discussed how human remains collected and displayed as specimens or as trophies were indissociable from and indecipherable without the stories attached to them. Trophies of conquest and war in particular "become meaningful by highlighting the circumstances of [their] taking."[99] In the case of Pranzini's skin, the line separating objects like colonial war trophies and scientific specimens was blurred. Like the belt of hair imagined by Wolff, the card-holders made from Pranzini's skin were trophies, legible through the story of police chief Taylor's victory over the dangerous criminal.[100]

When Mirbeau wrote his second "Maroquinerie" in 1896, he developed further this connection between colonial violence and the metropole fetishism. The *conte-chronique*, which appeared on the front page of *Le Journal* in July of that year, opened with three quotes on military strategy attributed to General Archinard, a colonial military officer well known for his victories in Mali against Ahmadou Tall and Samory Touré and his tenure as *commandant supérieur* of the territory then called "Soudan français," in the *Gazette européenne*. The first

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[99] Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bheg*, 2.

[100] Aaron Freundschuh convincingly situates Enrico Pranzini, who was an Egyptian of Italian descent, at the nexus of coloniality and criminality, showing how his body was particularly charged with meaning. Pranzini was often called a "rastaquouère" in the press, a derogatory term often applied to foreigners, especially South Americans and those of Mediterranean origin, and signaling suspect origins and doubtful character – "aventurier d'allure suspect," as the Trésor de la langue française has it. On the racialization of Pranzini, see Freundschuh, *The Courtesan and the Gigolo*, "Introduction," 1-14, and "Criminal Detection as Colonial War by Other Means: Investigative Claims on the Latin American Rastaquouère," 117-144.

quote declares that "Plus on frappera coupables ou *innocents*, plus on se fera aimer." The second, that "Le sabre et la matraque valent mieux que tous les traités du monde." The third quote is a fragment reading "En tuant sans pitié un grand nombre." The narrator of the *conte-chronique*, a journalist intrigued by Archinard's recent statements to the press, sets out for his home "dans le but patriotique de l'interviewer."

The 1896 "Maroquinerie" was Mirbeau's response to the press treatment of the recent death of the marquis de Morès, a colonial adventurer and antisemitic agitator formerly associated with Édouard Drumont, in Tunisia.[101] In May of that year, Morès had set off on an ill-planned expedition to the upper Nile region, aiming to challenge British control of the area. He was dead within a month, killed by his Tuareg escorts in the southern Tunisian desert.[102] The *Gazette européenne* sought out Archinard for his opinion on how best to "venger Morès." Archinard replied that for the Tuaregs who had killed Morès, "le mot 'crainte' est presque synonyme du mot 'affection'; donc, plus on frappera, coupables ou innocents, plus on se fera aimer." Archinard's declared strategy was part of a long tradition of using supposedly 'native' forms of violence in a colonial context, justifying extreme forms of violence as the only kinds comprehensible to 'uncivilized' enemies like the Tuaregs.[103]

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[101] Drumont was the author of the bestselling antisemitic tome, *La France juive* (1886), and the editor-in-chief of the right-wing antisemitic newspaper founded in 1892, *La Libre Parole*. Jean-Marie Seillan elucidated the media context behind "Maroquinerie" in "Anticolonialisme et écriture littéraire chez Octave Mirbeau," *Littératures* 64 (2011): 185-202. On Morès, see Dorian Bell, "Men on Horseback (I): The Marquis de Morès, Nationalism, and Imperial Space-Time," in *Globalizing Race: Antisemitism and Empire in French and European Culture* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 132-178. The brief account of Morès here is drawn from Bell's work.

[102] Bell, "Men on Horseback (I)," 142-143.

[103] "Comment venger Morès? Interview du général Archinard," *Gazette européenne*, 3 July 1896, 1. On the purposeful deployment of extreme violence in colonial warfare, see Jennifer Sessions's study of the "enfumades" in Algeria in the 1840s, and the debate that resulted from their revelation in the press: "'Unfortunate Necessities': Violence and Civilization in the Conquest of Algeria," in *France and Its Spaces of War: Experience, Memory, Image*, eds. Patricia M.E. Lorcin and Daniel Brewer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 29-44.

In Mirbeau's *conte-chronique*, published a little over a week after the real interview in the *Gazette européenne*, the scene at the home of the "grand Civilisateur soudanais" soon takes a macabre turn. Observing his surroundings—descriptions of the prominent figure's home décor being a commonplace of the interview genre—the journalist's attention is drawn to the leather covering the walls.[104] "Un cuir particulier, de grain très fin, de matière très lisse," it seems to give off "une étrange odeur […] violente et fade à la fois," which begins to make him feel ill. The general notices him looking at the leather and, pleased and not a little proud, explains its source:

> — Ah! ah! vous regardez mon cuir?... […]
> — Oui, général!
> — Vous épate ce cuir, hein?
> — Il est vrai général!
> — Eh, bien, c'est de la peau de nègre, mon garçon.
> — De la…
> — …peau de nègre… Parfaitement… Riche idée, hein?

The interviewer—a proxy for the reader—pales, and suppresses a sudden urge to vomit. Archinard, undaunted, explains that this gruesome product is the result of the "système de colonisation" he would like to promote in the press:

> Voici, en deux mots, la chose… Moi, vous savez, je ne fais pas de phrases, ni de circonlucutions… Je vais tout droit au but… Attention!… Je ne connais qu'un moyen de civiliser les gens, c'est de les tuer… Quel que soit le régime auquel on soumette les peuples conquis… protection, annexion, etc., etc… on en a toujours des ennuis, ces bougres-là ne voulant jamais rester tranquilles… En les massacrant, en bloc, je supprime les difficultés ultérieures… Est-ce clair? Seulement, voilà… tant de cadavres… c'est encombrant et malsain… Ça peut donner des épidémies… Eh bien! moi, je les tanne… j'en fais du cuir… […] Je me résume… D'un côté, suppression des révoltes… de l'autre côté, création d'un commerce épatant!… Tel est mon système… Tout bénéfices…[105]

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[104] On the interview and the description of interiors and home decor, especially of famous writers, see Elizabeth Emery, *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum (1881-1914): Privacy, Publicity, and Personality* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012).

[105] Octave Mirbeau, "Maroquinerie," *Le Journal*, 12 July 1896, 1.

Like the 1887 version, this "Maroquinerie" uses a fictional account to heighten the tensions and contradictions of real, reported events. What this 'Archinard' declares about colonial conquest is not entirely implausible: in the real interview in the *Gazette européenne*, the real Archinard proposed blocking the Tuaregs' access to water, and suggested it was necessary to "impitoyablement faire parler la poudre toutes les fois qu'un Touareg sera en vue."[106] The false Archinard's remarks would also have called to mind scandalous colonial massacres of the recent and not-so-recent past, from Tonkin to Algeria. As Jean-Marie Seillan points out, Mirbeau erases the particulars of the recent media context around the death of the marquis de Morès to apply Archinard's remarks to the violent practices of colonial expansion more generally, and thus connects Archinard's recent interventions to the reasons for his fame.[107] It was his violent conquest of Western Africa which provided him the pedigree as an authority on how France might seek vengeance against the Tuaregs for the killing of Morès. Mirbeau's fictional interview turns Archinard into a spokesperson for colonial methodology more broadly, and, by having him voice a system at once shockingly extreme and distressingly plausible, polemically undermines the entire edifice – while also calling into question the common journalistic practice of the interview.

At the heart of Mirbeau's gruesome *conte-chronique* is a comment on the role the press plays in making known—even promoting—colonial 'systems' like the one outlined here by the ventriloquized Archinard. He claims to dislike newspapers and journalists, but admits to Mirbeau's interviewer that he is not displeased to speak with him, "parce que vous allez donner à mon système de colonisation un retentissement considérable." Both in the crescendo from

[106] "Interview du général Archinard," *Gazette européenne*, 3 July 1896.

[107] Seillan, "Anticolonialisme et écriture littéraire chez Octave Mirbeau," 192-193.

normalized colonial violence to the macabre horror of walls made of human skin and in this blunt remark about publicity, the fictional Archinard makes explicit what is normally left unsaid in the newspaper, to disenchanting and unsettling effect.

Mirbeau's byline would likely clue in the savvy reader that this was not a real interview with Archinard, but as in the case of "Conte polynésien" or "S.A. le Maharajah Courjon," others may have found the story's hybridity difficult to understand, and even dangerous. A little over a week after the publication of "Maroquinerie," *Le Journal* published a response from a reader identified simply as "un lecteur assidu du *Journal*," taking offense at Mirbeau's "plaisanteries macabres et dangereuses pour certains," not because he himself was deceived by them, but because another, imagined reader—one less sophisticated and savvy—might be. This reader provided a counter-narrative to Mirbeau's bloody vision. In 1893, he wrote, he met Archinard in Bordeaux, where he had just arrived from West Africa. Archinard brought back with him two trophies: "un lion d'Afrique dont il a fait don aux Jardin des Plantes et… un baby nègre." Archinard had allegedly found this three-year-old girl while marching through devastated territory whose inhabitants had been massacred – presumably by French troops, though the violent action is discreetly described without an actor. For the letter-writer, this story was a good-natured anecdote that illustrated the general's moral character, and thus served as an antidote to Mirbeau's horrible fantasy: "Il est bon de faire connaître l'histoire de Fanta, la petite négresse du régiment du brave et courageux Archimard [*sic*], et d'opposer la vérité à cette horrible fantaisie de peaux de nègres."[108] The newspaper provided no comment on the reader's supposedly exculpatory story.

The two "Maroquinerie" *contes-chroniques* uncover the violence hidden just below the

[108] "Boîte aux lettres," *Le Journal*, 20 July 1896, 2.

surface of everyday life – a theme Mirbeau explored in other *chroniques*, most notably "La loi du meurtre," published in *L'Écho de Paris* in 1892 and later adapted and reused in the novel *Le Jardin des supplices* (1899), which explores "l'instinctif plaisir de tuer" common to men, women, and children, and exposes the channels through which it is routed by modern civilization. The "Maroquineries" suggest that both colonialism and criminal justice have become 'acceptable' conduits for what Mirbeau ironically described as "l'émotion délicate et civilisatrice de l'assassinat."[109]

INTERVIEWS IMAGINAIRES

Mirbeau's "Maroquineries" were connected to other hybrid *contes-chroniques* published in the 1890s, featuring explorations of colonial violence, particularly colonial cannibalism. In June 1892, a story by Mirbeau was published on the front page of *L'Écho de Paris*. Part of a series of "Dialogues tristes" subtitled "Profil d'Explorateur," the *chronique* staged a conversation between an unnamed explorer and an interlocutor, identified simply as "Moi." The explorer, who has recently returned from Africa, coolly details the violent practices of Europeans in Africa. When asked why he and his fellow European explorers kill innocent African villagers, he responds with incredulity: "Mais pour les civiliser donc!" Later, after a silence, his conversation partner asks his opinion of the well-known Welsh-American journalist and explorer, Henry Morton Stanley – and the French explorer responds disdainfully, "Oh! lui... il va tout de même un peu loin!"[110]

By 1892, this reference to Stanley would have conjured up a decade's worth of colonial

[109] Octave Mirbeau, "La loi du meurtre," *L'Écho de Paris*, 24 May 1892, 1.

[110] Octave Mirbeau, "Dialogues tristes – Profil d'Explorateur," *L'Écho de Paris*, 21 June 1892, 1.

rivalry in Africa. Henry Morton Stanley rose to fame in the 1870s, as a journalist-explorer who chronicled his own exploits, and drew admiring media coverage in both England and France.[111] A highly mediatized rivalry with Italian-born French explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza in the early 1880s both increased Stanley's fame and durably associated him with what the French media disdainfully called "colonisation à coups de fusil." As French newspapers had it, Stanley's colonial brutality stood in opposition to Brazza's "conquête pacifique." In a representative treatment of their rivalry in the press, *Le Petit Parisien* on 1 October 1882 contrasted the methods of the two explorers: "Tandis que M. Stanley [...] descendait les fleuves d'Afrique dans des bateaux armés de canons; tandis qu'avec la petite armée qu'il traînait à sa suite, il livrait plus de quarante combats, brûlait plus de vingt villages et répandait la terreur [...] M. de Brazza, lui, [...] se présentait partout en homme de paix."[112]

By the early 1890s, Stanley was even more durably associated with both colonial violence and with Britishness, having lead the "Emin Pasha Relief Expedition" – an unsuccessful attempt to rescue Eduard Schnitzler, a Prussian serving as governor of British Equatoria (parts of present-day South Sudan and Uganda), from the threat of Mahdist troops.[113] Unsuccessful though it was, it cemented Stanley's reputation in Britain as the very model of "manly greatness" – he was a vigorous and resourceful hero, perfectly suited to the era of "competition for civilizing and commercial influence," in the words of one London newspaper.[114] At the same

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[111] On Stanley as a British "hero of empire," see Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, especially ch. 1, "Henry Morton Stanley and the New Journalism," 22-48, and ch. 4, "The 'Stanley Craze'," 122-165.

[112] *Le Petit Parisien*, 1 October 1882.

[113] In an interesting comment on Stanley's shifting allegiances and dual nationalities, it was in 1892 that several French press outlets finally 'confirmed' Stanley's Britishness: "Enfin, nous sommes fixés sur la nationalité de Stanley: il est anglais", proclaimed *Le Figaro* (Le Masque de Fer, "Échos," 4 January 1892, 1). Confirmation had come indirectly in the form of Stanley's decision to run for a seat in Parliament.

[114] *Mercury*, quoted by Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 143. Edward Berenson, in his account of the 1890s "Stanley Craze," shows how British newspapers came to see in Stanley, as another paper put it, "the best

time, French newspapers were denouncing Stanley's expedition for the trail of murder and mayhem it left behind.[115] For Henry Fouquier in *Le Figaro*, not since Pizarro had such a "trouée sanglante" resulted from the passage of a European explorer.[116]

In 1892, when *L'Écho de Paris* published Mirbeau's "Profil d'Explorateur," Stanley was back in the news, having announced in early May that he would run for a seat in British Parliament. This prompted one newspaper to declare that he had forgotten to announce what should be his slogan: "Civiliser en massacrant."[117] At the same time, a French explorer, Antoine Mizon—who had been part of Brazza's earlier expeditions—was returning to Paris in triumph, and several newspapers took the coincidental timing as an opportunity to, once again, invoke Stanley's legendary violence as a counterpoint to French civilizing methods. An article in the same issue of the *Gazette de France* proposing Stanley's bloodthirsty slogan lauded Mizon as one of the "courageux pionniers de la civilisation" and proclaimed that "c'est une gloire réservée à nos explorateurs que la *conquête pacifique* de vastes territoires."[118] The final remark of the explorer in Mirbeau's fictionalized interview would have conjured up precisely these kinds of colonial comparisons, serving as a darkly humorous reminder of the nationalist pride which blinds the explorer and those like him to their own faults, as the impulse to compare, and especially to contrast, obscures similarities between rival colonial powers.

Like Archinard in the 1896 "Maroquinerie," Mirbeau's explorer casually admits to

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embodiment of qualities which […] are, as we hope and as we believe, more distinctive of the Anglo-Saxon strain than of any other" (*Morning Post*, quoted by Berenson, 141).

[115] While British newspapers, as Berenson points out, had also denounced Stanley's violent methods, the critical reactions ultimately died down, and upon his return he was greeted as a hero. Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 141.

[116] Henry Fouquier, "Les Explorateurs," *Le Figaro*, 3 March 1890, 1.

[117] "Nouvelles du jour," *La Gazette de France*, 24 June 1892, 1.

[118] Emphasis added. Louis de Meurville, "Lettres Parisiennes – Explorateurs," *La Gazette de France*, 24 June 1892, 1-2.

extreme colonial violence and instrumentalization of human cadavers in a way that places this store in the same matrix as that 1896 story, its 1887 predecessor, and Reboux and Müller's later pastiche. "Profil d'Explorateur" opens in medias res, as if the reader were just overhearing a conversation already underway. "Moi" asks, as if responding to something the explorer has just said, "Alors, vraiment? Ce n'est pas une plaisanterie? Vous en avez mangé, de la viande humaine?" A conversation about cannibalism ensues, revealing that European explorers in Africa resort to it only when necessary, and that they prefer to eat other Europeans—Germans being the best option—rather than Africans, whom they find inedible. The explorer then sighs, and comments "Ah! quelle sale vie!" His interlocutor is surprised to learn that he refers not to the hard life of an explorer in Africa, but instead to "cette sale vie d'Europe […] au milieu de toutes les entraves abètissantes que les sociétés civilisées mettent aux libres instincts de l'homme, à son besoin d'activité, son désir de conquêtes."[119] It is in Africa where he is free to exercise his instincts, such as killing others when they bother him—he explains in an angry aside that he has just had to pay a fine for having killed a French peasant who had gotten in his way.

In Africa, by contrast, the explorer's innate brutality is rewarded, and indeed it serves a higher purpose. In terms that recall both Jules Ferry's infamous 1885 procolonial speech in the Assemblée and procolonial discourse in the press more broadly, he continues, "Ne sommes-nous pas, comme disent les journaux et les députés, ne sommes-nous pas les pionniers intrepides de la civilisation? Ne portons-nous pas chez les peuples en enfance la lumière occidentale?" His interlocutor attempts to offer him a rationalization for this attitude, suggesting that Africans are no doubt violent cannibals themselves – but the explorer interrupts, and corrects him, saying they are in fact "doux et gais." The logic of the civilizing mission, as the explorer understands it, is

[119] Mirbeau, "Profil d'Explorateur," *L'Écho de Paris*.

circular, and defined by violence: "Si les gouvernements et les missions de commerce qui nous confient des missions civilisatrices apprenaient que nous n'avons tué personne… que diraient-ils?"[120]

Six years later, in a front-page *chronique* in *Le Journal*, Mirbeau again staged a revealing fictional conversation with a figure of colonial prestige. "La fée Dum-Dum" appeared in the midst of an international debate about whether or not a British expanding bullet, called the Dum-Dum bullet, designed for use in colonial war, was a violation of the laws of war.[121] Mirbeau's *chronique* purports to be an interview with the British officer who had invented the Dum-Dum bullet. At the theater, the two men gaily discuss this marvelous new technology, whose astonishing effectiveness makes it 'féerique,' and imagine developing its technology further, pushing exterminationist logic to its extreme: a bullet which would incinerate enemies entirely, eliminating even the need to deal with the mess of dealing with dead bodies.

The British officer then reflects on the reception of his invention in the French press. "Par exemple," he says, "je ne comprends pas pourquoi votre Presse nous éreinte, nous autres Anglais qui avons trouvé ce splendide engin, et pourquoi elle nous traite de sauvages et d'hypocrites." Furthermore, it is "les plus farouches de vos patriotes" who write of Britain in this way, the same papers "qui crient très haut qu'on ne dépense jamais assez de milliards pour la guerre, qui ne parlent que de tuer et de bombarder." If the logic of war is to kill, how can it be wrong to kill more efficiently? The British officer goes further: "Comment! On admet que les obus soient explosibles… et l'on voudrait que les balles ne le fussent pas? […] Nous vivons sous la loi universelle de la guerre. Or, en quoi consiste la guerre? Elle consiste à massacrer le plus

[120] Mirbeau, "Profil d'Explorateur," *L'Écho de Paris*.

[121] Octave Mirbeau, "La fée Dum-Dum," *Le Journal*, 20 March 1898, 1.

d'hommes que l'on peut, en le moins de temps possible! […] C'est une question d'humanité! Et c'est le progrès moderne!" He is brutally honest about what the European conception of global power entails:

> Et puisque c'est par la guerre, c'est-à-dire par le vol, le pillage et le massacre, que nous entendons gouverner, commercer, régler nos différends, venger notre honneur! eh bien! nous n'avons qu'à supporter les inconvénients de cet état de brutalité où nous voulons nous maintenir quand même! […] Pas d'hypocrisie! Nous sommes des brutes, agissons en brutes.[122]

In the perverted logic of violence, the British officer is admirable, because unlike the French government and press, he does not hide behind a mirage of a "conquête pacifique." As in "Profil d'explorateur," dark humor and cynicism underline colonial commonalities rather than differences.

CONCLUSION: FROM THE *CONTE D'ACTUALITÉ* TO THE NOVEL

Mirbeau's casually brutal colonial figures, the unnamed explorer and the British officer, arose out of particular junctures of *actualité coloniale*. Read on the newspaper page, the *lecteur averti* could find resonances and read the criticism behind the shocking excesses of the *contes-chroniques*. In his 1899 novel *Le Jardin des supplices* Mirbeau would return to these figures, drawing them out of their *actualité* – and into conversation with one another. A long overseas voyage to China provides the stage for a series of discussions between the ship's passengers, including the narrator, a young Englishwoman who fascinates him named Clara, a gentleman hunter from Normandy obsessed with game hunting in French colonial Tonkin, a French explorer, and a British captain. These shipboard discussions are, in fact, a series of Mirbeau's

[122] Mirbeau, "La fée Dum-Dum," *Le Journal*.

previously published *contes-chroniques*, now stitched together to form a novel.

One evening, Clara asks the French explorer if he has really eaten human flesh, and the conversation proceeds along similar lines as in "Profil d'Explorateur," with Clara playing the part of "Moi." As the French explorer expounds on his theories of civilization and violence, the British captain interjects with his own exploits in developing the new exploding Dum-Dum bullets, competing for Clara's attention in a twisted bit of one-upmanship: "—Moi! dit-il… j'ai fait beaucoup mieux que tout cela… Et vos petits massacres ne sont rien auprès de ceux que l'on me devra…"[123] This cross-*chronique* conversation in *Le Jardin des Supplices* is a final stage in the evolution of Mirbeau's hybrid *contes-chroniques*.

[123] Octave Mirbeau, *Le Jardin des supplices* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 114-123.

CONCLUSION

FROM *ACTUALITÉ COLONIALE* TO *LITTÉRATURE COLONIALE*

This dissertation has traced the outline of what I have called *littérature d'actualité coloniale*, a tradition of "colonial" writing that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century between literature and the daily press. In treating colonial subjects, this genre centered the experience of the savvy metropolitan reader, for whom the colonies were both fraught with the contentious *politique coloniale* of parliamentary debate and embedded in the hyper-referential discourse of the daily press. The preceding chapters examined aspects of this form, exploring how debates in the press helped forge conventions of colonial writing and representation (chapter 1), how *actualité* could be instrumentalized for fraud and how that fraud could resonate with readers' and writers' anxieties about print's capacity to deceive (chapter 2), how that story in turn became a work of literature, folded into a series of novels whose subject was the collapse of print illusions and exotic dreams (chapter 3), and finally, how *actualité coloniale* came to be a privileged subject for criticism of the press more broadly (chapter 4).

This writing was distinct from both the naively exoticizing and the explicitly ideological forms that we often associate with colonial literature. Indeed, it was critical in ways that might strike today's reader as modern and even anti-colonial, marked by an eagerness to unmask the crimes, deceits, and frauds of colonial undertakings. However, this criticism did not serve a particular vision of colonial politics (not to speak of any postcolonial vision). Rather, colonial

disenchantment—uncovering the colonial image constructed through newspaper articles, books and posters, popular images and theater, zoos and exhibitions—was understood as paradigmatic for an experience of disillusionment in an era of media saturation.

As the preceding chapters have shown, staging this disenchantment often meant telling stories about two distinct kinds of readers, the *lecteur naïf* and the *lecteur averti*. Reflecting on the difference between the two was a regular preoccupation within the press, where constant feedback from circulation, letters to the editor, and intra-newspaper debate prompted a professional interest in the ethnography of reading. This was particularly true in moments of conflict and controversy. When Pierre Loti wrote a response to *Le Figaro* after receiving word of his recall to France because of the scandal caused by his account of colonial war in Tonkin, he conjured an image of the kind of reader who might have been offended by what he had written. This imagined reader was a comfortable *bourgeois*, sitting in a leather chair by the fireplace with his daily newspaper, expecting to encounter only the usual sanitized accounts of colonial war: "Ils sont de ceux qui, du coin de leur feu, assis sur des fauteuils à ronds de cuir, suivent une expédition lointaine et admettent que tout doit se passer là-bas avec la plus extrême facilité, et d'après les règles de la bonne philanthropie." He wrote bitterly that "j'aurais dû y songer et ménager leurs nerfs."[1] At the outset of the French expedition to Tunisia in 1881, Guy de Maupassant criticized the sudden swings in public opinion prompted by the press by imagining a similar reader – a *bourgeois* with his newspaper next to the fireplace, who startles his family by shouting for war after reading the latest news from the colonies:

> Or, quelques bandits tuent quelques hommes à notre frontière; et voilà tout le peuple en rumeur. Un frisson court d'un bout à l'autre de ce pays de gobe-mouches. On murmure:
>
> — La guerre! la guerre! Tunis, Roustan, Maccio, Roustan!
>
> Et tous les bourgeois exaltés brandissent leur journal au coin du feu, en criant à

[1] Médiathèque de Rochefort, 2016-431. Transcribed in *Journal II*, 500.

leur femme et à leurs mioches, devant leur servante stupéfaite:
— A Tunis! à Tunis![2]

Both Loti and Maupassant imagined newspaper readers as *lecteurs naïfs*, whose vision of the colonies and colonial politics was filtered through the press, and whose credulity meant they were liable to swallow any information presented. They were easily duped into cheering for colonial war while also being totally unaware of its realities.

A similarly imagined scene figured in many stories about the failed colonial expeditions to Port-Breton, due especially to the influence of Pierre Giffard's account, whose success hinged on his masterful description of the moment colonists arrived at the island of New Ireland, an elaborate scene that directly staged the confrontation between paper promises and hard reality. As they approached, the emigrants refer back to the marquis de Rays's advertisements and newspapers: "La voilà donc, cette île fortunée, s'écrient les 84 colons qui croient que le Pactole y coule à larges bords. Nous voilà donc riches! Vive le marquis de Rays! Vivent les terres qu'on nous a promises et les champs à 10 francs l'hectare!" But once disembarked onto a "rocher sec, volcanique, étroit," they experience only a "désenchantement subit." Rather than an island paradise, they find themselves faced with unforgiving terrain, "peuplée de lézards énormes, de serpents dangereux, de perroquets qui hurlent par milliers."[3]

Alexandre Baudouin recounted a similar scene during the fourth expedition to Port-Breton. According to Baudouin, his fellow emigrants pulled their lavishly decorated land titles from their pockets in order to compare print and reality, only to find a total disconnect between the two: "'Eh quoi! c'était donc vrai! Port-Breton n'existait que sur le papier!'"[4] For the

[2] Guy de Maupassant, "La Guerre," *Le Gaulois*, 10 April 1881, 1.
[3] Giffard, "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*, 23 February 1881.
[4] Baudouin, *L'Aventure de Port-Breton*, 108.

chroniqueur Paul Fresnay, that modern French citizens like Baudouin had fallen for such a fraud was proof that the naïve reader, those Fresnay called "la race des naïfs et des gobe-mouches," was anything but a dying breed: "Quel est le farceur qui a taxé notre siècle de scepticisme? Ma parole, il n'y a jamais eu plus de jobards qu'en cette époque de doute et de science expérimentale."[5]

Readers of literature, too, could fall victim to the traps of naïve reading. A few years after Pierre Loti's 1883 colonial media scandal, Guy de Maupassant reviewed his latest novel in the pages of *Gil Blas*. Recalling the overwhelmingly positive reception of *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880), which was set in Tahiti, Maupassant described the reader's enchantment with Loti's exotic love story:

> À travers les brumes d'un océan inconnu de nos yeux, il nous a montré d'abord une île d'amour adorable, et il a refait avec Loti et Rarahu ce poème de Paul et Virginie. Nous ne nous sommes point demandé si la fable était vraie, qu'il nous disait si charmante. Il revenait de ce pays; et nous avons pensé naïvement qu'on aimait comme ça là-bas!"[6]

But now, reading *Pêcheur d'Islande*, which depicts nearby Brittany with similar charm and beauty, the spell of enchantment is broken. Loti's representation does not match what the reader knows from experience and proximity:

> Puis il nous dit la Bretagne de "mon frère Yves."
>
> Alors, pour tout homme qui regarde avec des yeux clairs et perspicaces, des doutes se sont éveillés. La Bretagne est trop près de nous pour que nous ne la connaissions point […][7]

This disconnect prompts a reevaluation of previous readings as well, and the *lecteur naïf*, once fooled, now becomes a *lecteur averti*, able to recognize the literary codes that shaped Loti's

[5] Fresnay, "M. le Marquis," *Le Voltaire*, 30 November 1883; Giffard, "L'Équipée du *Chandernagor*," *Le Figaro*, 23 February 1881.

[6] Guy de Maupassant, "L'Amour dans les livres et dans la vie," *Gil Blas*, 6 July 1886, 1.

[7] Maupassant, "L'Amour dans les livres et dans la vie," *Gil Blas*.

fictions.[8]

While the press's preoccupation with readers continued, their proximity to colonial literature lessened in the first decades of the twentieth century. In particular, two factors contributed to the gradual dissipation of the literary fascination with colonial *actualité*. The first of these concerns was the changing landscape of professionalization within the press. The years following Loti's account of the battle at Thuan An saw the emergence of a new kind of writer: the foreign correspondent.[9] Linked to the concurrent development of the figure of the reporter, emblematized by Pierre Giffard (whose 1881 collection of *reportages* titled *Le Sieur de Va-Partout* is considered the foundational text of late nineteenth-century reporting), the foreign correspondent was sent abroad, taking *reportage* global.[10]

The establishment of the foreign correspondent helped to settle anxieties about the authority of foreign reporting. At the same time, correspondents came to reflect procolonial interests. In late December 1883, the journalist Paul Bourde departed for Tonkin. Bourde was traveling as an official foreign correspondent for *Le Temps*, one of the first (along with Georges Fillion of Agence Havas and Paul Bonnetain for *Le Figaro*) to be sent on a newspaper's payroll

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[8] In this minor literary skirmish, it was Octave Mirbeau who would come to Loti's defense against Maupassant, praising his style – and also reminding readers that Loti had once before tried his hand at a less idyllic genre, when he described a battle in Tonkin in the pages of the *Figaro*, and had been severely reprimanded for it: "ceux qui l'accusent de ne pas assez sortir des conventions littéraires ne sont-ils point les mêmes qui lui reprochèrent un jour d'en être trop violemment sorti, en poussant contre les atrocités de la guerre un cri superbe de colère et de pitié?" Octave Mirbeau, "Pierre Loti," *Gil Blas*, 13 July 1886, 1.

[9] While newspaper foreign correspondents (as opposed to contributors, like Loti, who was not on *Le Figaro*'s payroll) were not entirely new in 1883, they had not previously ranged as far as Asia, being posted mainly in Europe, the Near East, or North Africa. See also Palmer, *Des petits journaux aux grandes agences*, especially 65-75.

[10] Pierre Giffard, *Le Sieur de Va-Partout: souvenirs d'un reporter* (Paris: 1880). On Giffard as the emblematic reporter, see Palmer, *Des petits journaux aux grandes agences*, 68-70.

to as distant a destination as Vietnam. Bourde's first article, written en route, appeared on the front page of *Le Temps* on 22 January 1884.[11] In it, Bourde relayed a conversation he had overheard between a group of French colonists and businessmen traveling to the Far East. These men spoke casually of the far-flung locales that made up the French colonial world, from the Antilles to Cochinchina and Tahiti. Bourde contrasted their familiarity with the "mappemonde" with the blinkered perspective of the average Parisian, whose horizons, he claimed, extended no farther than the city walls.

Referring to the oft-cited commonplace that "nous [les Français] ne savons pas coloniser," Bourde countered that if one looked to Brittany rather than to Paris, France was hardly lacking in men of adventurous spirit. As evidence for this, he cited the colonial affair that had been filling newspaper columns in the weeks before he left the metropole: the trial of the marquis de Rays and his collaborators for their fraudulent colonial venture, Nouvelle France or "la colonie libre de Port-Breton." For Bourde, that French men and women had been willing to sail for unknown shores in order to develop an independent colony was proof not of their gullibility or naïveté, but of the French colonial spirit. As he wrote, "jamais les hommes disposés à courir les mers n'ont manqué à un pays où a pu se produire l'étonnante aventure du marquis de Rays." Rather, what was missing from French colonial culture was the support of that nebulous thing, Parisian public opinion: "Ce qui a manqué constamment à la France pour réussir dans ses entreprises coloniales, c'est une capitale où il y eut une opinion pour les soutenir." Extending a rather nineteenth-century conception of public opinion back into the age of Louis XV, Bourde linked Parisian provinciality with France's colonial failures past and present, citing Voltaire's

[11] [Paul Bourde], "De Paris au Tonkin," *Le Temps*, 22 January 1884, 1-2. Articles in *Le Temps* were very often unsigned (following the common practice in British journalism), as was the case here. The article was attributed to "notre correspondant spécial."

infamous dismissal of Canada as "quelques arpents de neige" not worth fighting for as the real reason Ancien Régime colonies like Canada and French India were lost, despite the efforts of men like Montcalm and Dupleix: "Ces héros n'auraient pas été abandonnés si l'opinion les avait pris sous sa garde."[12]

For Bourde, ever-increasing global connection, via steamship lines and underseas cables, defined the nineteenth century, but had so far gone unheeded by Parisian public opinion. He had reason to be hopeful, however. His own position as a 'correspondant spécial' in Tonkin could be seen as a sign that French public opinion was broadening its horizons:

> Pour conserver sa royauté intellectuelle, Paris élargira-t-il son horizon? Un des plus grands événements du dix-neuvième siècle est l'effort qu'ont fait toutes les parties du monde pour prendre une part directe à la vie commune de l'humanité civilisée, y restera-t-il insensible? Des lignes de paquebots ont établi des services rapides entre les pays les plus lointains; les câbles sous-marins ont mis les antipodes à deux heures de nous, continuera-t-il à vivre comme s'il n'y avait plus rien au delà des fossés de ses fortifications? Tandis que la mer me secoue sur ma couchette, je rêve que mon confrère de l'agence Havas et moi, qui nous rendons ensemble au Tonkin, nous sommes des signes d'une transformation qui s'opère. C'est, si je ne me trompe, la première fois que des correspondants français spéciaux paraîtront aussi loin. Qu'il se soit trouvé un journal pour penser qu'il intéresserait ses lecteurs en envoyant un de ses rédacteurs dans l'extrême Orient, n'est-ce pas là un symptôme significatif?[13]

Bourde, who was himself in favor of French colonial expansion and who would later serve as a colonial administrator in Tunisia, understood public opinion for or against colonialism in terms of information flows – with increased information about colonial current events would come increased awareness and, it was implied, increased favorability.

A second, even more fundamental change involved new efforts to contest and theorize colonial writing as writing specifically by colonists from the colonies, centering colonial identity

[12] Bourde, "De Paris au Tonkin," *Le Temps*, 22 January 1884.

[13] Bourde, "De Paris au Tonkin," *Le Temps*, 22 January 1884.

and ideology in contrast to the interests (or, more often, the disinterest) of metropolitan readers and writers. This new colonial literature would also be a kind of *reportage*, documenting and describing colonial spaces. The experience of colonists, the new theorists claimed, had so far gone unrepresented. Attempts to define and codify the genre of *littérature coloniale* began in earnest at the turn of the century, in the circle of writers formed around the short-lived procolonial journal *La Grande France* (1900-1903) and especially around Georges Athénas and Aimé Merlo, a pair of cousins from La Réunion who wrote under a joint pen name, Marius-Ary Leblond.[14] *La Plus Grande France* was dedicated to a common conviction, in the words of one collaborator, "qu'il naissait un esprit nouveau, qu'une âme française nouvelle s'exhalait du grand mouvement d'expansion coloniale qui avait marqué le dernier quart du XIXe siècle."[15]

In August 1909, the newspaper *La Dépêche coloniale* launched a survey on the subject of colonial literature. Comprising four questions, the survey, titled "La littérature coloniale de la France comparée à celle d'Angleterre," asked respondents to compare French colonial literature since 1870, and particularly since 1900, to English colonial literature from the same period (surely on the minds of the survey makers and respondents was the fact that Rudyard Kipling had

[14] It was not immediately taken for granted that writers and texts from and about territories as distant and diverse as French Algeria, French Indochina, Martinique or Réunion should all be considered under one and the same generic heading. In fact, early attempts to define colonial literature met with resistance from certain circles of writers, like those associated with the "Français d'Asie" group, which promoted instead a regional understanding of colonial literary movements. See Vladimir Kapor, "Provocation Versus Performativity: Launching *la littérature coloniale française* in 1909," *Modern & Contemporary France* 23, no. 1 (2015): 58-59.

[15] Robert Randau, "La littérature de France comparée à celle d'Angleterre. XII Robert Randau," *La Dépêche coloniale*, 29 September 1909, 1-2. For my account of the origins of *littérature coloniale*, I draw mainly on a series of studies by Vladimir Kapor: "The *La Grande France* circle (1900–1903): *Littérature coloniale*, transcolonial synergies and the Belle Époque avant-gardes," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 16, no. 4 (2013): 385-403; Kapor, "Provocation Versus Performativity," *Modern & Contemporary France*, 47-64; Kapor, "Constructing, promoting and controlling the littérature coloniale of interwar France: an anatomy of the Grand prix de littérature coloniale (1921–1938)," *Modern & Contemporary France* 26, no. 4 (2018): 337-352.

been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907).[16] One writer, Pierre Mille, wrote a *chronique* on the subject of the survey in the daily newspaper *Le Temps*, undermining it before results were even published (they would appear in *La Dépêche coloniale* in September and October 1909). Mille gave a provocative response to the questions, which he had received: "Or je professe une opinion scandaleuse. C'est qu'il est impossible de répondre parce que la littérature coloniale française *n'existe pas*." Instead, he offered his own definition of colonial literature – one which, as he had it, French literary production had yet to meet: "Une œuvre de littérature coloniale, selon moi, serait celle qui eût été produite dans un pays où les Européens sont transplantés depuis un certain temps, par un de ces Européens qui y serait né, ou tout au moins y aurait vécu les seules années où l'on possède une sensibilité, où on pénètre dans leur essence la nature et les hommes […]."[17]

Another writer, Rémy de Gourmont, responded in the *Mercure de France*, and agreed with Mille: "M. Pierre Mille se demande, dans Le Temps, si nous avons une littérature coloniale, et tout d'abord ce doute paraît singulier. Pourtant, si l'on prend soin de ne pas confondre colonial avec exotique, on se rangera volontiers à l'opinion de M. Pierre Mille, laquelle est qu'en vérité, et malgré les apparences, nous n'avons pas de littérature coloniale."[18] Gourmont hinted here at a crucial programmatic distinction: that between the exotic and the colonial.

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[16] The questions were: "1. Que pensez-vous de la littérature coloniale française qui s'est développée depuis 1870 et, en particulier, de la nouvelle littérature coloniale éclose depuis 1900? Quels sont les écrivains que vous y avez le plus distingués? 2. Quelles vous ont semblé être leurs tendances? Quel idéal doit se proposer, selon vous, la littérature coloniale française en face de la littérature coloniale anglaise? 3. Soit par un ensemble, soit par quelques individualités, notre littérature coloniale vous semble-t-elle valoir celle des Anglais? 4. Voyez-vous dans cette nouvelle littérature un élément d'enrichissement ou une cause de déviation pour la littérature française?" *La Dépêche coloniale*, 3 September 1909, cited in Kapor, "Provocation versus Performativity," 50.

[17] Pierre Mille, "En passant – Littérature coloniale," *Le Temps*, 19 August 1909, 2.

[18] Bury [Rémy de Gourmont], "Les Journaux," *Mercure de France*, 1 September 1909, 162.

In the interwar period, this distinction would become the foundation of a renewed conceptualization of *littérature coloniale*, neatly summed up by the title of a 1926 work by Marius-Ary Leblond: *Après l'exotisme de Loti, le roman colonial*.[19] If exotic literature was a necessary precursor to colonial literature, as the Leblonds' title suggested, it was also inferior to it. Leblond and others derided "littérature de tourisme colonial" or "littérature d'escale," written by authors who only passed through colonial spaces as travelers or in military service – or, worse, by authors with only secondhand, textual knowledge, who had never spent time in the colonies at all. The Leblond definition tended toward instrumentalization.[20] Authentic colonial literature could serve a propaganda purpose, increasing knowledge, understanding, and even appreciation of the colonies in the metropole, where (Leblond and other procolonial theorists claimed) they were little known and even actively disdained. Cementing the link between France and its colonies was also a matter of the future of the nation. As they wrote, "on sent que la France ne peut plus tenir son rang en Europe, ni peut-être même vivre, qu'en s'appuyant sur son empire d'outre-mer, qu'il lui faut s'attacher étroitement et durablement cet empire. D'où approfondissement de l'Exotisme […] en Littérature Coloniale."[21]

According to the new theorists of colonial literature, the exoticism that preceded it relied

[19] The exotic-colonial distinction, however, was often fuzzy, and its bright line not always respected, as certain authors were 'recuperated' from the exotic period and nonetheless valorized. These included Eugène Fromentin as well as Pierre Loti. Despite the Leblonds' title, Loti was a complicated case, and other theorists like Roland Lebel lauded him for his exemplary style, and hailed both Fromentin and Loti as predecessors to and stylistic models for the true colonial literature.

[20] Ferraris-Besso, "*Littérature Coloniale* and The Failure of the Novel," 979. Kapor also explores at length the links between this conceptualization and the Third Republic procolonial political lobby: "the literary propaganda of French colonisation conceals as its flipside the promotion of an emerging social group of the Third Republic: the settlers and other 'colonials', seeking to express their distinct cultural identity and to increase their visibility in the métropole through colonial literature." "Provocation versus Performativity," 51.

[21] Marius-Ary Leblond, "Après l'exotisme de Loti, le roman colonial," in *Écrits sur la Littérature coloniale*, ed. Vladimir Kapor (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 5-44.

on recognizable clichés and tropes – in French Algerian novelist Robert Randau's memorable formulation, their works resembled 'oriental terrines' composed out of a set of familiar ingredients, easily modified to fit different exotic settings:

> Coiffez d'un turban le héros, drapez-le dans un burnous, plantez ici un palmier, là un minaret, plus loin un mirage; saupoudrez de sable le coucher du soleil; tenez des propos consternants sur l'ogive arabe et le palais mauresque; mettez à rissoler des tirades amoureuses, un harem, des eunuques, un chibouck et des mouquères; croquez un croissant d'un sou, et vous servirez la plus délicieuse des terrines orientales. Remplacez le palmier par un manquier, le minaret par un bungalow, le mirage par un récif de corail, la dune par la savane, le djebel par le morne, l'eunuque par le créole, le chibouck par une canne à sucre, la mouquère par une quarteronne; ne changez pas au reste le fond de l'histoire.[22]

Randau's comic description of an exotic literary casserole characterized all too well most of French literature set in the colonies, according to the new theorists. It was inauthentic, analogous to the false exoticism found at the *Expositions universelles*. To avoid these pitfalls, the new colonial literature would be grounded in observation and experience. As Randau advised, "la littérature coloniale exige de l'écrivain qu'il observe, qu'il analyse, qu'il approfondisse." In contrast, exoticism "à l'ancienne mode," written by "les auteurs d'escale," was nothing but a decor.[23]

In 1932, Pierre Mille again opined on the subject of colonial literature – in order to reverse his previous declaration. In *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, he proclaimed, "Voilà maintenant que ça existe!" For Mille, French literature now possessed writing that was "vraiment coloniale, non pas seulement exotique, ou de tourisme, ou d'aventures."[24] From Pierre Mille and Rémy de Gourmont through Marius-Ary Leblond and Robert Randau and finally back to Mille, we can

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[22] Roland Lebel, *Histoire de la Littérature Coloniale en France* (Paris: Larose, 1931), 80-81.

[23] Robert Randau [Robert Arnaud], "La Littérature coloniale: Hier et Aujourd'hui," *Revue des deux mondes* 52, no. 2 (15 July 1929): 416-434.

[24] Pierre Mille, "Littérature coloniale*," Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 2 January 1932, 1.

trace an arc in the early twentieth-century attempt to identify and define French *littérature coloniale*. In 1909, colonial literature did not exist, according to Mille and Gourmont; in the 1920s it was called into being through a manifesto and a flurry of studies opposing the colonial with the exotic; and finally, in 1932, its existence was acknowledged by Mille, the original skeptical observer.

Over this period, colonial writing was gradually loosed from the complex media debates that imbricated it in *actualité*, as foreign news was cordoned off as a distinct area of expertise and literature explicitly instrumentalized within the colonial project. In the end, the rise of *littérature coloniale* was brief as well, petering out even before the Second World War and independence movements in the colonies. In Paris in 1943, during the Nazi Occupation, an exhibition was held on colonial literature called "150 ans de littérature coloniale." The exhibition, organized by the Société des auteurs coloniaux et maritimes, was meant to commemorate French colonial history and literature, and, in a dark period, inspire hope for future colonial renewal. However, for one collaborationist *chroniqueur*, the exhibition mainly brought about a feeling of melancholy and nostalgia:

> Le 20 mai a été inaugurée l'Exposition que la Société des auteurs coloniaux et maritimes a consacré à '150 ans de littérature coloniale.' Les journaux ont dit quelles hautes personnalités avaient pris part à cette cérémonie. Je me suis rendu à cette exposition deux jours plus tard, à trois heures de l'après-midi: j'y étais seul. Sur la fin de ma visite, j'ai croisé un vieux monsieur fort décoré, l'air infiniment respectable, et qui promenait dans les salles désertes quelque chose qui était peut-être de la nostalgie. Ainsi, en 1943, un samedi après-midi, il ne s'est trouvé qu'un journaliste et un vieux colonial pour se déranger et venir faire acte de présence à une exposition qui aurait dû être une sorte d'acte de confiance dans l'avenir colonial de la France et de reconnaissance pour le passé. C'est un petit fait, mais un petit fait vrai, et dont il faudra se souvenir.[25]

In the postwar period, it would be a new *littérature postcoloniale* that would take up the baton –

[25] Jean Pontouvre [Jacques Lemarchand], "Cent cinquante ans de littérature coloniale," *La Gerbe*, 3 June 1943, 6.

like *littérature coloniale*, with the goal of representing a colonial and increasingly postcolonial reality, but to differing political ends.

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