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HONOLOULOU:

A DOCUMENT ADDRESSING AFRICAN INFLUENCE IN POULENC'S *RAPSODIE NÈGRE* AND RAVEL'S *CHANSONS MADÉCASSES*

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HONOLOULOU: A DOCUMENT ADDRESSING AFRICAN INFLUENCE IN POULENC'S *RAPSODIE NÈGRE* AND RAVEL'S *CHANSONS MADÉCASSES*

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Dedication

This document is dedicated to John L. Bostic because this journey began when I walked into your office so many years ago.

Acknowledgements

In completing this document, I would like to thank everyone who has been so helpful to me over this long process. Firstly, to the teachers who have inspired me to continue my journey in music, both in scholarship and performance. This wonderful list includes Professor Kim Josephson who has continually reminded me to "believe," Professor Reed Woodhouse of The Juilliard School and Professor Manny Perez of Miami. I would like to acknowledge the wonderfully supportive faculty at The University of Oklahoma, including the brilliant members of my doctoral committee, the doctors Joel Burcham, Sanna Pederson, Jonathan Shames and Meta Carstarphen. I offer thanks to the countless staff members who have helped my work at libraries across the globe, including The Grant Fine Arts Library, St. Charles Parish Libraries, The Burton Barr Central Library, The Pablo Neruda District Central Library in Berlin, and The New York Library for the Performing Arts. I would especially like to thank The Opera Foundation at The University of Oklahoma for their financial support and continued commitment to fostering students' development in the field of operatic arts.

As always, I am thankful for my dear friends and family. The work on this document has continued through a global pandemic and a time of political and social unrest, I have been blessed to have my mother, father, and those I hold closest to my heart, to shed tears with, laugh, and be my most genuine self.

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Foreword

What, if anything, does western classical music have to say about race? This is a question that is often posed today amid the growing discussion around diversity and representation in the arts. On the new American operatic scene this discussion has fostered the creation and recognition of several new and relevant works, including Jeanine Tesori's *Blue* and Anthony Davis' *The Central Park Five*.[1] In the annals of opera history, however, what composers and librettists have had to say about black characters has often presented a host of complications. In *Die Zauberflöte*, for example, the character Monostatos is hated and feared for the color of his skin; he is presented as vile and is gifted with beatings from Sarastro. Verdi's Ethiopian princess Aïda is presented as a slave who would readily betray her native home for the love of Radames, an Egyptian who is often played by a Caucasian leading man. Then of course, there's *Porgy & Bess*.[2] Opera has been a prime musical genre for presenting engaging societal and political content that challenges the viewer once they have moved beyond the glorious music. This document, however, will primarily consider vocal chamber music, a genre that is typically not meant for large public consumption and instead reserved for the musical elite.

[1] *The Central Park Five* premiered on June 15, 2019, at The Long Beach Opera, conducted by Leslie Dunner and directed by Andreas Mitisek. *Blue* premiered on July 14, 2019, at The Glimmerglass Festival, conducted by John DeMain and directed by Tazewell Thompson.

[2] There are a number of sources written on the subjects and histories of these operas. For translations, see Nico Castel *The Libretti of Mozart's Completed Operas, vol. 2* and *The Complete Verdi Libretti, vol. 1*. More on Die Zauberflöte: Alyssa Howards, *Teaching Race and Gender in Mozart's Zauberflöte* (2014); Malcolm S. Cole, *Monostatos and his "sister": Racial stereotype in Die Zauberflöte and its sequel* (2005). More on Aïda: Edward Said, *The Imperial Spectacle* (1987); Paul Robinson, *Is Aida an orientalist opera?* (1993); Christopher R. Gauthier and Jennifer McFarlane Harris, *Nationalism, Racial Difference, and 'Egyptian' Meaning in Verdi's Aida* (2012). More on *Porgy & Bess*: Ellen Noonan, *The Strange Career of Porgy & Bess* (2012).

Abstract

With music coming out of Paris at the turn of the twentieth century as its primary focus, specifically Poulenc's *Rapsodie Nègre* and Ravel's *Chansons Madécasses*, this document discusses moments, whether explicit or implicit, in which musico-dramatic means used to express blackness cause a lingering effect. Sweeping change came to Paris in the years following the first World War but significant cultural colliding occurred at the century's turn when Claude Debussy began publishing music influenced by cakewalk dances and American Minstrelsy. Erik Satie would then go on to cause a scandal with *Parade*, a work that drew influence from American silent film, cubist art, and ragtime. At that same time, Francis Poulenc writes *Rapsodie Nègre*, a work that paints an image of Africa using exhaustive ostinato and sung lines of nonsense by a made-up poet named Makoko Kangourou, while Maurice Ravel masterfully added elements of jazz and blues in works like his *Sonata for Violin and Piano* and pushed the limits of exoticism in the *Chansons Madécasses*.

This document means to peer into the larger Africanist influence. It wants to know how Africa, the land, and its people, sparked a fascination that was manifested in works not written by them; works reflective of them, but not by them. These are complex works of art that must, whether intended or not, say something about the people represented within their musical frames. I hope bringing works like these into our current discussion will not only help to deepen their interpretations but also remind us of their relevance.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Purpose of the Study

This document means to explore the wave of interest in black culture and music, found in the works of Parisian composers during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Focusing attention towards the *Rapsodie Nègre* (1917) of Francis Poulenc and *Chansons Madécasses* (1925- 26) of Maurice Ravel, the study will provide a broad analysis and historical background to the compositions, while acknowledging and examining the Africanist influence that underscore these works.

Need for the Study

Interest in diversity and representation in the arts has grown exponentially over the past few years, with the bulk of that interest focused on opera companies and orchestras, the works they perform and the people they employ.[3] This document will focus on a smaller scale, the genre of vocal chamber music. It is important that we, as scholars and performers of western classical music, recognize those works which display certain racialized representations that may have been historically overlooked.

[3] This is evidenced by the growing trend in the performing arts, of institutions adopting commitments and implementing departments of diversity, equity, and inclusion. San Francisco Opera, " San Francisco Opera Establishes Department of Diversity, Equity and Community," accessed May 7, 2021, https://sfopera.com/about-us/press-room/press-releases/Dpt-of-DEC. New York Times, "The Metropolitan Opera Hires Its First Chief Diversity Officer," accessed May 7, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/25/arts/music/met-opera-chief-diversity-officer.html. Cincinnati Business Courier, "Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra Names First Chief Diversity Officer," accessed May 9, 2021, https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2021/03/12/cso-names-first-ever-chief-diversity-officer.html. New York Philharmonic, "NY Phil: A Commitment to Change," accessed May 9, 2021, https://nyphil.org/about-us/general-information/commitment-to-change.

Background of the Method and Structure of the Study

Within this study a variety of literatures will be surveyed that provide scholarly insight to the history of the twentieth century, the history of jazz, the growth of modernism and primitivism in music, art history and cultural exchange. Writings focused on Ravel and Poulenc, their lives, works, and social circles will be examined. The document will provide a purpose-specific analysis of the selected works and seek to find connections between them and the people they represent. As both works draw inspiration from and/or paint an image of people of African descent, the people are called "black" collectively.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the surveyed literature while highlighting important historical events, social thought, and music history. The opening discussion examines the reaction to blackness, as represented in the cakewalk, ragtime, and the minstrel show. These provide some of the first and nearest exposures of black people to the French and help to further establish a general perception of the Africanist presence. Chapter three will provide relevant biographical information on Poulenc and take a closer look at the ways in which *l'art negre* inspired Parisian artists and composers. Seeking to align the composition with the time of its creation, 1917, important emerging movements and moments will be discussed. The chapter will end with an analysis of the complete *Rapsodie Nègre*. Chapter four analyzes Ravel's *Chansons Madécasses* by first providing a background to the work and interpreting the poetry. Because the poems spring from the colonial era, a small section will briefly look at the nature of France and Africa's relationship between the 17th and 19th century.

Deepening the discussion around the composition's texts, its author Évariste de Parny is studied to understand the inspiration behind the poems. Finally, Ravel's attraction to the text and the cycles central movement, *Aoua!*, is examined. The final chapter will provide a closing thought for the document.

Chapter 2: Introduction and Literature Review

"It was the time of African wood carvings, Picasso's African period. It was only natural that a young composer should be swayed by the ambiance of the day."[4] This is what the composer Francis Poulenc stated in reference to his work *Rapsodie Nègre*, which was the very first work of his to be performed in public, at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in 1917. Its scandalous premier, facilitated by Jane Bathori, was at once heralded a success and received many repeat performances, but was also described in terms like "stupid" and "ridiculous." Poulenc continued on to compose another African inspired work titled *Poèmes Sénégalais* for voice and string quartet, and while there are no surviving traces of this composition, insight is gained from a critical review that compares the composer's early work to the compositions of the French masters that came before him, who strove "to endow European music with the resources of sonority and color peculiar to the black races."[5] Likewise, Maurice Ravel's *Chansons Madécasses* exhibited something "new, dramatic, and even erotic," with the composer

[4] *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews*, ed. Nicholas Southon, trans. Roger Nichols (England: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 98.
[5] Leonard Peyton, "Musical Notes from Abroad," *The Musical Times* 59, No. 903 (May 1, 1918): 228, accessed November 11, 2018, https://www.jstor.org/stable/910295.

utilizing a variety of compositional techniques to conjure a foreign atmosphere filled with expressive, narrative possibilities.

The "ambiance of the day" which took hold of Paris early in the twentieth century spread far beyond the walls of the concert halls. A taste for African art was seen in the famous works of Pablo Picasso, whose African period spanned from around 1906 – 1909. Highly influential works of his, like *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and *Tête de femme*, have remained a wellspring for scholarly research. The public's interest in Africa and its people, was fueled by ever increasing media coverage in mass distributed newspapers like *Le Petit Journal* and *Le Petit Parisiene*. Anthropological studies concerning the physical and mental make-up of "primitive peoples," who were primarily designated as non-white and non-European, emerge at the turn of the twentieth century. This tumultuous time also facilitated an influx of African American culture to the Parisian scene. From John Philip Sousa's band playing ragtime at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, to Josephine Baker dancing the *Dance Sauvage* in *Le Revue Nègre*, the citizens of Paris were allowed ample opportunities to witness, approbate, and even satirize this new "fetish" that captured the imaginations of artists, musicians, and composers.

While consolidating and summarizing previous research in this area, this introduction and literary review will serve to give historical and social context to the selected chamber works that will be analyzed in the coming chapters. These vocal chamber pieces were chosen for study because so much attention has already gone to instrumental works, like Darius Milhaud's *La Création du monde* and Igor Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*. These select vocal chamber pieces make it possible to

explore a deeper level of analysis because they utilize narrative text. Even if the narrative text does not tell an intelligible story, as in the case of Poulenc, it nonetheless says something.

Recent film documentaries like Joanne Burke's *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light*, which documents the migration of African Americans to France and discusses the impact each culture had on each other, and scholarly output like Mary McAuliffe's *When Paris Sizzled* and Roger Nichols' *The Harlequin Years: Music in Paris 1917 – 1929*, provide a broad range and scope of information concerning the culture and atmosphere of the city and events that may have been influential to its inhabitants. The work of Nichols presents an especially wonderful example of musicology. His fifth chapter studies the wave of popular culture, citing an abundance of historical tidbits, from Erik Satie's performances of ragtime pieces by Jelly Roll Morton to the acceptance of Josephine Baker by the mainstream. He gives insight to a history of Paris that includes dance halls, café-concerts, and The Moulin Rouge, areas often overlooked when discussing the compositions of classical composers. This underground provided a space for cultural diversity and exchange, where Claude Debussy would meet the famous Afro-Cuban clown Chocolat and hear the American Minstrel music that would inspire a number of his piano pieces, for example.[6]

Since the relationship between France and Africa reaches back to the seventeenth century a large slice of history was surveyed for this document. It was important to acquire an idea of the way black people were perceived in France, and a good source of information was found in *An Empire for the Masses: The French*

[6] Geoffrey Jennings Haydon, "A Study of the Exchange of Influences Between the Music of Early Twentieth-Century Parisian Composers and Ragtime, Blues, and Early Jazz" (DMA dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1992), 14.

Popular Image of Africa from 1870 - 1900 by William Schneider. The research examines widely held perceptions about Africa and interactions with its people by surveying the mass media that proceeded the turn of the twentieth century. This study is special for focusing its attention on the French masses, defined as literate workers, the lower middle-class, and peasants.[7] In analyzing the growing amount of coverage on Africa and the nature of it, Schneider reveals that pro-colonial editorial policy was responsible for the ways in which Africa was reported.[8] From the iconography and data presented in this research, we are able to understand the social history surrounding African - European relationships in Paris. We are able to witness how the exaggerated, spectacle driven, and often inaccurate coverage of events in Africa, informed Parisian attitudes towards African people, both positively and negatively.

Similar social knowledge is gained from Richard Brender's article "Reinventing Africa in their Own Image," which investigates the premier productions of *La Création du Monde* and *Ballet Nègre* by The Ballets Suédois. Quoting the historian William B. Cohen, the article highlights the way certain stereotypical views toward black people were perpetuated.

> [despite] the differences African people might reveal, the characteristics that seemed to put them apart from the Europeans, their color, their lack of Christian faith and their social customs, lead to the formation of the concept of *a single black people.*[9]

While the words of Cohen were made in reference to the nineteenth century, a time in which "scientific racism was at its peak," Brender argues convincingly that certain

[7] William H. Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa 1870 – 1900* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), xx.
[8] Ibid.
[9] William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: Responses to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). See Brender, "Reinventing Africa in Their Own Image: The Ballet Suédois' 'Ballet Nègre,' 'La Création du monde'," *Dance Chronicle* 9, no. 1 (1986): 121, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1567597.

stereotypes lingered well into the 20th century, referencing for example, the anthropological studies of Levy-Bruhl, whose "*La Mentalite primitive* (1922) and *L'Ame primitive* (1927) stressed how the African tended to think in childlike concrete sensory terms, how he could not postpone immediate pleasure for future reward, how he was a slave to his instincts, and how he was beholden to his belief in magic jujus.[10] Referencing Leon Fanoudh-Siefer, the article observes three major stereotypical motives from colonial era literature, the *gris-gris*, the *palaver*, and the *bamboula*.

The *gris-gris* was used as proof of black childishness and was misunderstood and despised by enlightened colonialists.[11] With West African roots, gris-gris was usually identified as either a sculpted fetish or charm used to "Conjure," and among the slaves in French Louisiana, a colony until the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, it formed a vital part of Voodoo that was sacred to them.[12] Its existence helped colonial Europeans to paint Africans as superstitious. The *palaver* motive grew from a myth that Africans worked very little, slept a lot, and spent the rest of their time idly chatting, or "palavering.[13] For the French, according to Fanoudh-Siefer, the *bamboula* evoked images of "a powerful magic rhythm and hysterical dancing," that gave license for completely "unfettered animal sensuality and eroticism without shame." [14] The utilization of these leitmotivs perpetuated the idea that Africans were lazy and

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[10] Leon Fanoudh-Siefer, *Le Mythe du Nègre et de l'Afrique noire dans la littérature française* (de 1800 à la 2e Guerre Mondiale) (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1968). See Brender, 122.
[11] Brender, 123
[12] John T. Krumplemann, "Du Pratz's History of Louisiana (1763), a Source of Americanisms," *American Speech* 20, No. 1 (1945): 48. https://www.jstor.org/stable/487140. See also: Emily Suzanne Clark, "Noble Drew Ali's 'Clean and Pure Nation': The Moorish Science Temple, Identity, and Healing." Blake Touchstone, "Voodoo in New Orleans."
[13] Brender, 123. *18th century, from the Portuguese "palavra," and used by Portuguese traders with the specific meaning "discussions with natives." Borrowed by English sailors on trading trips along the West African coast. See Merriam-Webster https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/palaver.*
[14] Ibid.

unintelligent, but glorified African rhythm, dance, movement, and sensuality. One could argue that these depictions of sensual freedom, the licensing of it, propagated by both fictional and scholarly writings, helped to make black people one of the prime candidates for the European composer's exploration of the unknown; the exotic, erotic, and new.

Turning to visual art, Jody Blake's expansive study in two volumes offers another perspective of this time period. *Le tumulte noir: Modernist Art and Popular Entertainment in Jazz-age Paris, 1900 – 1930*, provides an in-depth study of the intersection between jazz-age entertainment and modernist art. Beginning with the cakewalk craze at the turn of the twentieth century, she investigates the art and music history of select works from Debussy's *Golliwogg's Cakewalk* and Matisse's *The Blue Nude* to George Antheil's *A Jazz Symphony*. Davinia Caddy, who draws inspiration from Blake's cakewalk study, pinpoints her primary concern, aligning "Parisian interest in African American music and dance with the concurrent enthusiasm of modern artists for 'Negro' art and sculpture."[15] The scope of Blake's study is monumental, and it highlights an important dialogue surrounding the utilization of black art subjects within the wave of primitivism. In articles from Patricia Leighten's "The White Peril and L'Art nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism" in the *Art Bulletin*, to collector Paul Guillaume's 1919 article "Une Esthétique nouvelle: L'Art nègre" in *Les Arts à Paris*, the surveying of articles surrounding this debate show that art scholars have examined this complex relationship since its beginnings.

[15] Davinia Caddy, "Parisian Cake Walks," *19th-Century Music* 30, no. 3 (2007): 291, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncm.2007.30.3.288.

Research into the connection between jazz and primitivism includes addition to Blake, the writings of Ted Gioia, Bernard Gendron, and Frank Salamone.[16] A wonderful description of this relationship comes from Salamone, who explains primitivism as:

> ... an aesthetic theory, strongest in France, that holds that what is most authentic in jazz is what is most African. Thus, the more Dionysian a performance, the more African and thus authentic it is. The more the music stresses "pure" emotion and direct expression of that emotion, the more authentic the music.[17]

Much of the musicology specific to this time and place has centered around the influence of jazz which often makes it a convenient talking point. A primary focus on the influence of jazz, however, would be inappropriate for the vocal chamber works surveyed in this document. One would not say that *Rapsodie Nègre* is traditionally jazz influenced, nor has any known scholarship linked *Chansons Madécasses* to the cultural influence of African Americans. Salamone's study goes as far to include Poulenc in the group of European intellectuals who were actually opposed to jazz.[18] In any case, giving high credit to their modernity, these works do not fit simply into any one-sided interpretation. With this in mind, it was helpful to view writings that expanded my understanding of exoticism and ethnic influence, either work or non-work specific.

Research that included Derek B. Scott's *Orientalism and Musical Style*, Ralph P. Locke's *A Broader View of Musical Exoticism*, and writings from *Blackness in Opera*, helped to provide a broader base for the questioning and understanding of some of the

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[16] See: Bernard Gendron, "Jamming at Le Boeuf: Jazz and the Paris Avant-Garde," *Discourse* 12, no. 1 (Fall -Winter 1989-90): 3 – 27, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41389137.; Ted Gioia, "Jazz and the Primitivist Myth," *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1989): 130- 143, https://www.jstor.org/stable/741862.; Frank Salamone, "Jazz and Its Impact on European Classical Music," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38, no. 4 (2005): 732 – 743.
[17] Salamone, 733.
[18] Salamone, 735.

meanings behind the use of musical exoticism. For Scott, "Oriental music is not a poor imitation of another cultural practice; its purpose is not to imitate but to represent," and this is the primary view held in regard to our selected works.[19] He makes note of several musical devices that are often indiscriminately applied as signifiers of cultural difference, including the use of modal scales, augmented fourths and seconds, trills, dissonant grace notes, and use of ostinato. He explains that there is not a singular "exotic" style, but "a chain of signifiers may be assembled to represent a more defined Other." Scott makes us aware of both the positive and negative sides of musical exoticism, which may serve as a social critique that embraces cultural difference on one hand but may also encourage negative notions of ethnic and racial difference on the other.[20]

Richard James's article makes a strong argument for authentic Malagasy influence, referencing specific musical cues to support his claim that Ravel was absolutely aware of Malagasy music.[21] The strongest points in his argument lie in the comparison of certain Malagasy instruments to experimental instrumental techniques employed by Ravel. For James, the most "enchanting aspect" found in Malagasy music for the Western listener would have been the sounds of the *valiha* and the *lokanga*, two plucked string instruments that make the raised fourth scale degree obligatory.[22] The raised fourth scale degree, along with repetition of small motivic units, occasional bitonality, and use of ostinato, are claimed as evidence of Ravel's awareness of

[19] Derek B. Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," *The Music Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 326, https://www.jstor.org/stable/742411.
[20] Scott, 328.
[21] Richard S. James, "Chansons Madécasses: Ethnic Fantasy or Ethnic Borrowing?" *The Musical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (1990): 360- 384, https://www.jstor.org/stable/741937.
[22] James, 365.

Malagasy music; but these indicators are also said to be clichés of musical exoticism. The most distinctive elements of Malagasy music, according to James, which include the use of tertiary intervals, parallel thirds, and falling melodic contour, are scarcely found in the *Chansons Madécasses*. He explains right away that no recordings of Malagasy music existed until after Ravel's death, but somehow, the composer would have likely been "able to remember" the native sounds from his first hearings at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, over twenty years before the composition of *Chansons Madécasses*. The plausibility of this argument becomes questionable when we consider other more immediate and highly influential works. As far as authenticity, and in agreement with the thoughts of Diana Lea Ellis, "it is important that performers understand the true nature of what Ravel was basing his composition upon — not just what was authentically native."[23]

This document recognizes a limited number of work specific studies like Ellis' *Performer's Analysis of Maurice Ravel's Chansons Madécasses*, but also pulls from the plenteous information provided by prominent Ravel scholars like Roger Nichols, Deborah Mawer and Arbie Orenstein. Scholarly attention given to Poulenc's *Rapsodie Nègre* is markedly less, but two sources, *Entrancing Muse: A Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc* by Carl B. Schmidt, *and Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* by Daniel W. Keith provide a good insight to the composer and his works. Two new biographies of Poulenc have recently emerged, *Poulenc: A Biography* (2020) by Nichols and Graham Johnson's *Poulenc: The Life in the Songs* (2020), these works were not consulted in the writing of this document. Poulenc's own words were of

[23] Diana Lea Ellis, "A Performers Analysis of Maurice Ravel's Chansons Madécasses," (DMA dissertation, University of North Texas, 2004), 17.

most value, found in *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews*, edited by Nicholas Southon and translated by Nichols.

The aim of this document is to provide a broader contextual view of these pieces. Musically, it attempts to analyze works that generally defy analysis. Because they are misfits, they are not only impressive, but provide a certain "je ne sais qua" in which to examine the times that generated them.

***Prelude*: Minstrels, Rags, and Ravel's Teapot**

Sometime before Picasso's famed "illumination" at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, which eventually inspired *Les Demoiselle d'Avignon* of 1907, the African American brother sister duo of "Les Petits Walkers" danced *le danse de gateau* in a production of *Les Joyeux Négres* at Paris' Nouveau Cirque during their 1902-03 season.[24] The cakewalk, known for its straight upright posturing and high knee strutting, took Paris by storm and ignited a craze that lasted well into the jazz age of the 1920s. The dance developed on the plantations of the American south amongst slaves and was originally meant to parody the manners of slave owners and high white society.[25] For the slaves, the act of dancing the cakewalk signified an artistic form of protest against those who were oppressing them, yet within the frame of theater, the dance took on another meaning all together. Under the shadow of nineteenth-century American minstrelsy, where white performers would play satires in blackface, the cakewalk

[24] Jody Blake, "Le tumulte noir: Modernist art and popular entertainment in jazz-age Paris, 1900 – 1930," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delaware, 1992), 32.
[25] Lindy Smith, "Out of Africa: The Cakewalk in Twentieth-Century French Concert Music," *Nota Bene: Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Musicology* 1, no. 1, Article 6 (2008): 67. Also Blake, 33.

gained popularity.[26] A relatively short time after the birth of these blackface satires, credited to T.D. Rice who first decided to imitate a crippled black man on stage in 1820, American Minstrel troupes arrived in Europe in the 1850s. The immense popularity of American minstrel shows, hailed by some scholars as America's first mass cultural export, offered a hope of financial security and prominence that was not restricted to white performers. Black performers too played in blackface, and by 1870 they had even found their way to Europe.[27] Recognizing this history which includes the early performances of Les Petits Walkers, we should acknowledge that it was not only the cakewalk that preceded France's appetite for African sculpture, but also the satirized and constructed spectacle of blackness itself as was found in the minstrel show.[28]

The popularity of minstrelsy was so substantial that its influence would have been virtually unavoidable. It is highly likely that Debussy would have attended at least one minstrel show and then incorporated the images and music he experienced there into his *Minstrels* (1910). Giving the impression of a theatrical event, the opening figures are imitative of a strummed instrument, a banjo perhaps, followed by a number or syncopations and percussive effects. The final product is a humorous piece that relies more on rhythmic and atmospheric effects than melody.

[26] Blake, 69. See also: Baldwin, "The Cakewalk: a Study in Stereotype and Reality," Kramer, "Powers of Blackness: Africanist Discourse in Modern Concert Music," and McKinley, "Debussy and American Minstrelsy."
[27] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Hicks, (Charles) Barney," by Dominique-René de Lerma, accessed April 4, 2021, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2284623.
[28] Blake, 32

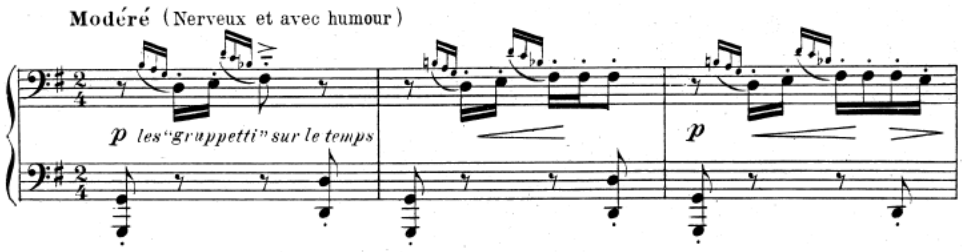

Figure 1: *Minstrels* (mm. 1 – 3)

Another example of the composer's awareness of blackface minstrelsy is found in *Golliwogg's Cakewalk*, a work inspired by his daughter's doll.[29] Syncopated rhythms are much more apparent in this example, the opening sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth rhythmic figures are a hallmark of ragtime music and were also featured prominently in *Le petit nègre*.[30] The traditional march-like bass line is also present but what is most fascinating is Debussy's use of the form to parody Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

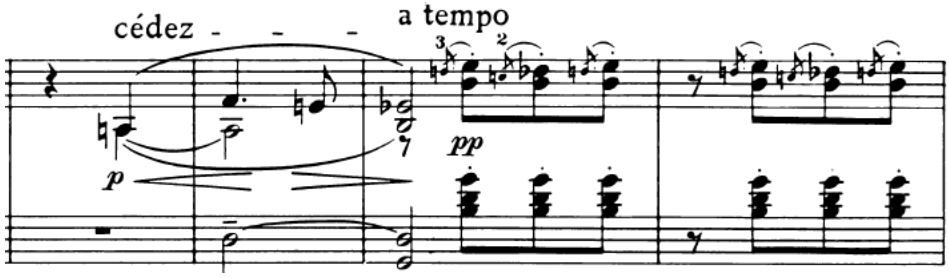

Figure 2: *Golliwogg's Cakewalk*; Tristan parody

Satire was part and parcel of the American minstrel show and performances regularly included jokes at the expense of "high art" forms like operatic scenes or Shakespearean plays, T.D. Rice produced and stared in his own minstrel version of *Otello* (1844) for

[29] Ann McKinley, "Debussy and American Minstrelsy," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14, No. 3 (1986): 249, Accessed January 23, 2021. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1215065.
[30] Debussy's actual titled the piece *The Little Nigar*. See McKinley, 250.

example.[31] Both pieces, *Golliwogg's Cakewalk* and *Minstrels*, are built on themes of humor and parody. Works like these clearly represent a dismissal of German romanticism but, at the same time, replaces it with an Americanism that was representative of happiness and fun. The minstrel experience, clearly aligned with blackness in the mind of the composer, was completely linked to comedy and people having fun, but when one considers the experience of those who were regularly made the laughingstock, the satirizing elements become unsettling.

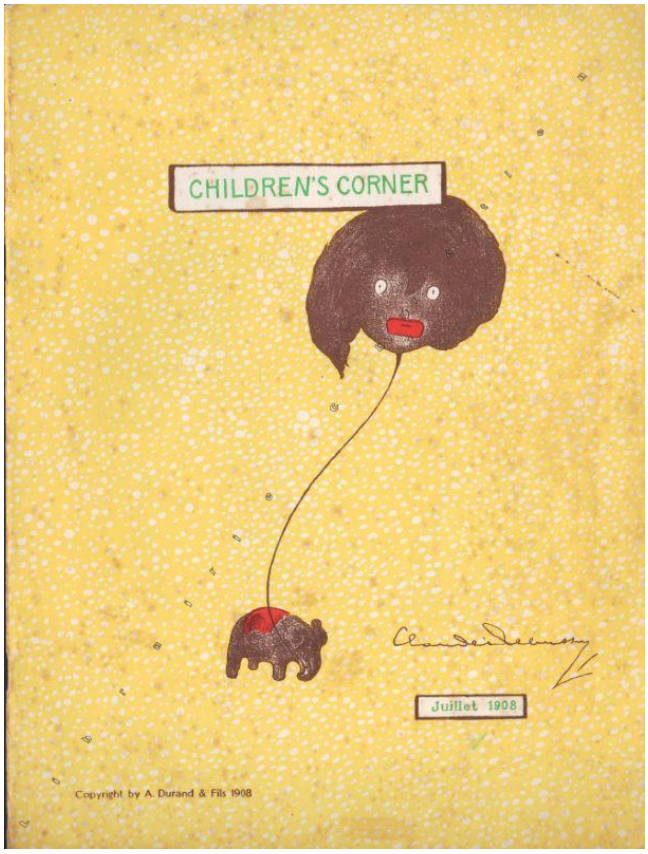

Figure 3: Cover art: *Children's Corner*, published by Durand (1908)[32]

[31] W. T. Lhamon, Jr., *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 343.
[32] Original cover art depicting the black head of the Golliwogg being carried along by a circus elephant, sketched by Debussy himself. See: Kiyoshi Tamagawa, "Chopsticks, Golliwogs And Wigwams: The Need for Cultural Awareness in Piano Teaching Materials and Repertoire." *American Music Teacher* 67, no. 2 (Oct/Nov 2017): 19 – 23. Also: Sherry Lin-Yu Chen, "Debussy's *Children's Corner*: A Pedagogical Approach," (DMA dissertation, Rice University, 2001): 30.

Minstrelsy was a dominating form of entertainment that reduced an entire race of people to stereotypes, and it survived in a variety of forms for more than 100 years.[33] The scope of its influence was capsulized in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortileges* when he wrote to the librettist Colette, "what would you think of the cup and teapot, in old Wedgewood – black – singing a ragtime? [The] idea of having a ragtime sung by two Negroes ...fills me with great joy."[34] The extreme darkness of Wedgewood black, as dictated in the score, with its disturbing likeness to blackface make-up, makes it quite clear that the composer intended to place a small minstrel show inside his *fantasie lyrique*. Children were also blackened to perform as "little Negroes" in the first production of *Ma Mère l'Oye*.[35]

Figure 4: *Ma Mère l'Oye* at the Téâtre des Arts (1912)[36]

[33] "Blackface: A cultural history of a racist art form," YouTube video, 7:56, CBS Sunday Morning News, reported by Maurice DuBois, posted by "CBS Sunday Morning," October 28, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqlD-eZm1ck
[34] Arbie Orenstein, ed., *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, 188.
[35] Orenstein, *Ravel Reader*, 128 – 129 and Plate 8. See also, p. 198, n. 2.
[36] Ibid. *Photograph in the Music Division of the Bibliothèque Nationale.*

This may have nothing to do with racism in the American sense of the word. It is true that things were different in Paris, particularly when compared to American forms of racism and discrimination.[37] It cannot be said, however, that the country was completely devoid of racialized imagery or prejudgments. It is plausible that both racialist attitudes and general ignorance existed in France as it did in America. A general ignorance that can be heard written into Poulenc's "Cloth-cap Concerto," a work composed for the Boston Symphony which features Stephen F. Foster's *Old Folks at Home*, a minstrel song Poulenc believed to be an old Negro spiritual.[38]

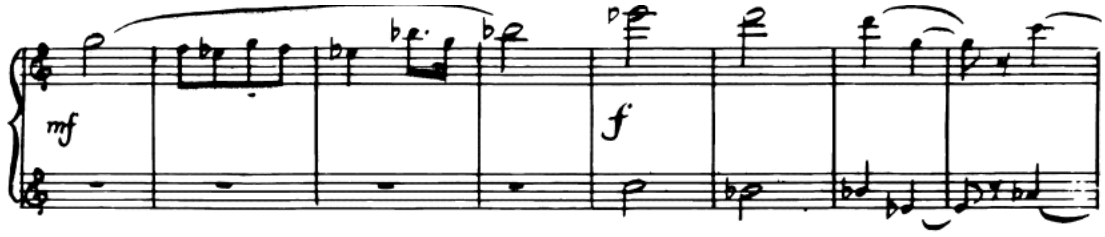

Figure 5: *Concerto pour Piano*, mvmt. 3, 1st & 2nd clarinet (Poulenc)

It is not the point of this document to say who or what is or is not racist. Its purpose is to ask how black people are represented in this music. It cannot be denied that *Aoua!* makes a statement about race, no matter if the statement is about racism or the problems of Imperialism. And while the *Rapsodie Nègre* remains an immature work, especially when comparison to *Chansons Madécasses*, it wields a similar power. The portrait of blackness crafted by the titles and the music of these composers, like a

[37] For more on this, see; T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Bricktop's Paris : African American Women in Paris between the Two World Wars* (2015), and Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (1996).
[38] Nicholas Southon, ed., *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews*, 247. The "Cloth-cap Concerto" refers to Poulenc's *Concerto pour Piano* published in 1950 by Salbert. The work was not well received at either its Boston or Aix-en-Provence debut. Poulenc: "It never occurred to me that the idea would be badly received, which is why, in the 'rondeau a la francaise,' I combined the rhythm of the maxixe with a negro spiritual..."

wildcard, was played in the manner of their choosing. It should be acknowledged that the images, sculptures, forms, musical rhythms, and timbres, appropriated and molded by so many early twentieth century artists, were not received without tainted bias. They came accompanied with the ideas the dominant, white European, culture held about the lesser, Africanist, culture that crafted them, good and the bad.

Chapter 3: Inside the Rapsodie Nègre

Poulenc & The Time of African Wood Carvings: 1917

Francis Poulenc was born in Paris on January 7, 1899, to a family of "more than comfortable means and artistic inclination."[39] The family business in chemical manufacturing provided enough income for the Poulencs to engage passionately in the arts, and subsequently allowed Francis the freedom to compose and perform as he chose. Poulenc began learning piano from his mother at the age of four, an accomplished amateur pianist who sparked in her son a love for Mozart, Schubert, and Chopin, along with some popular pieces of the day. He progressed quickly and was soon sent to study seriously by the age of eight. He discovered the contemporary music of Claude Debussy during his early years of study and it made an impression that was lasting, causing him to state later in life that after Mozart, Debussy always remained the musician he preferred.[40] An even more significant experience with contemporary music took place when Poulenc attended a performance of *Le Sacre du Printemps* at the *Casino de Paris* in 1914, an event which left him in such a state of shock that he felt the need to discuss it with his parents.[41] Stravinsky would soon become significantly influential to both his music and career but at the moment, his father lovingly disapproved of the young Poulenc going to the performance after he recalled the scandalous debut of *Le Sacre*.[42] Francis also became aware of the music of Arnold

[39] Carl B. Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse: A Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc*, (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001), 3.
[40] Schmidt, 10.
[41] Southon, *Francis Poulenc: Articles and Interviews*, 190.
[42] Poulenc first meet Stravinsky in 1918 through the introduction of Sergei Diaghilev. Stravinsky would go on to recommend Poulenc to Chester who became his first publisher, with works including *Rapsodie*

Schonberg during this time by studying the scores of *Pierrot lunaire* and the *Six Little Piano Pieces,* op. 19, the chromaticism of which "stupefied" him.[43]

In 1914 he was placed at the heart of the contemporary music scene when he began piano studies with Ricardo Viñes, a virtuoso who had acquired a reputation as the leading interpreter of contemporary piano works, premiering technically demanding pieces that included Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* and *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Manuel de Falla's *Pièces espagnoles,* and many works of Erik Satie and Federico Mompou. He was greatly admired by his student Poulenc who dedicated his *Suite in C* (1920) to him.[44] With the help of Viñes, Poulenc was connected to a strong circle of influential people, including Jane Bathori, Erik Satie, and Charles Koechlin, who would eventually become Poulenc's composition teacher. Satie's influence on Poulenc's music was "profound and immediate" and his impact on the whole of French music cannot be understated, this is especially true of the highly influential *Parade* (1917) which Poulenc proclaimed, "a landmark in the history of art."[45] Poulenc showed his deep admiration for Satie by making him the dedicatee of *Rapsodie Nègre*.

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The "cult of *art nègre*," Glenn Watkins explains, was observable in Paris before Poulenc wrote *Rapsodie Nègre,* and referencing artforms commonly known to be originated by African Americans, like the cakewalk and ragtime, Watkins links this

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Nègre (1917), *Toréador* (1918), *Sonata for 2 Clarinets* (1919), *Sonata for Piano 4 hands* (1918), and *Mouvements perpétuels* (1918). See Schmidt, 98 and Southon, 190.

[43] Schmidt, 17.

[44] Schmidt, 19 – 21. For more on Viñes, see Grove, https://doi org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29430.

[45] Schmidt, 35 – 39.
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history with the composer's first opus and acknowledges the fact that many other artists were also inspired by these forms.

Since 1906 Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso collected African art and artifacts, and their works that drew inspiration from these foreign objects helped to spark such a Parisian passion for *les choses nègre*, that the writer Guillaume Apollinaire was seeking to rationalize the novelty of collecting "negro idols" in his essay *Mélanophilie ou Mélanomanie* by 1917.[46] African art and sculpture was found at the center of exhibitions and high society soirées, like the *Société Lyre et Palette* at the Salle Huyghens which combined art and music.[47] The music of Parisian composers, like art, came under strong Africanist influence, as evidenced by the publication of *Golliwogg's Cakewalk* in 1908, but new musical energy came to Europe when America entered the First World War in 1917. In the winter of the same year Satie made use of ragtime in his "petite fille Americaine," the all-black 369th Infantry Regiment of New York landed at the Port of Brest and immediately started playing jazz.[48] They, led by James Reese Europe, would go on to enjoy great successes throughout Europe, along with Will Marion Cook's American Syncopated Orchestra and others. The meteoric rise of the fascination with black art and black music was reflected in such a number of classical works that by 1928 Ravel gives the call to *Take Jazz Seriously*, a call that echoes one put out by Jean Cocteau a decade earlier.

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[46] J B Donne, "Guillaume Apollinaire's African Collection," *Newsletter (Museum Ethnographers Group)* no. 14, (1983), p. 5, accessed December 20, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40838688.
[47] Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 103. See also, Carl B. Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse: A Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc* (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2001), 55.
[48] Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light*, (New York: Houghton Millfin Company, 1996), 21.

The group *Les Six* emerged under the wings of Satie and Jean Cocteau, and in his *Le coq et l'arlequin* (1918) which became a manifesto for the group, Cocteau declared: "new music was to take its subject matter and its stimulus from everyday life; it was not to turn its back on machines, whether as instruments or as a source for the imagination; it was also to learn from the music hall, the circus and the jazz band; and its principal qualities were to be dryness, brevity and straightforwardness."[49] Expressly breaking free from foreign influence, especially German, Cocteau and his followers sought to make art out of everyday life. The early jazz Cocteau called for, however, was not the widely revered musical genre that we have come to know and for many of the French, it may be argued, it was hardly recognizable as music. The prominent French music critic Emile Vuillermoz (1878 – 1960), a lifelong friend of Ravel, gave his description in *La Musique de guerre: Rag-time et jazz-band* in 1918:

> "You are familiar with this orchestra of the damned in which tireless banjos grate your nerves to the quick and in which an epileptic in the middle of a fit leaps like a squirrel in a cage and hurls himself incessantly at various sonorous objects that constitute the bars of his prison...a big drum thunders without stop, cymbals collide with a lashing noise, a transparent drum crackles like a hailstorm on a window. The fool exasperates himself in his vibratory cell: automobiles horns and sirens bellow, rotary whistles bore into your ear drums... It is a certain death by suffocation, or it is hypnotic ecstasy."[50]

This early critique, vivid and somewhat terrifying, says very little about music but zeroes in on what Vuillermoz must have heard simply as noise. One can hardly imagine an instance where a classical musician might be compared to a caged squirrel hurling himself incessantly at various objects. While regularly favored for its qualities of

[49] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Les Six" by Paul Griffiths, accessed April 4, 2020, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.25911.
[50] Quoted in Blake, 177.

entertainment it was not consistently regarded as music and often represented a "music" that was disliked and misunderstood, vehemently so by the likes of Poulenc who found it "frankly odious in the concert hall."[51]

This noisy music found a partner in Dadaism, a disruptive movement in art which came into focus following the advent of and in reaction to the events of World War I. First named in a 1916 manifesto by Hugo Ball, Dada was best described as anti-art movement that embraced the irrational, prized nonsense, and was intended to offend.[52] According to Ball, the nonsense of its name was a movement in itself.

> "I shall be reading poems that are meant to dispense with conventional language, no less, and to have done with it. Dada Johann Fuchsgang Goethe. Dada Stendhal. Dada Dalai Lama, Buddha, Bible, and Nietzsche. Dada m'dada. Dada mhm dada da."[53]

Fellow dadaist Tristian Tzara went further to maintain that Dada meant nothing. While not meant to be taken seriously, it was deliberately provocative and meant to portray the opposite of social norms. It rejected traditionalism, aestheticism, capitalism, colonialism, and bucked bourgeois society. Watkins draws a connection between Poulenc's *Honoloulou,* and the mock-African poetry used in Tzara's 1916 play.[54] Whether or not Poulenc was aware of Tzara's work, however, or the Dadaists adoption of a nonsense primitivist textual model, which ran parallel to their infatuation with *art nègre*, is not as important as the fact that a nonsense textual model had already come to signify blackness at least six years before with the publication of *Les Poésies de*

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[51] Southon, 99. Even Ravel would speak of the "deafening noise of jazz." Orenstein, A Ravel Reader, 466. Ravel: "Jazz might serve many of us as entertainment, but it has nothing in common with art. Humanity was seeking, also in music, loud or deafening media, and it accepted the first, best means Europe could import form the New World."
[52] Naomi Joy Barker, "Parody and Provocation: 'Parade' and the Dada Psyche," *RIdIM/RCMI Newsletter* 21, No. 1 (Spring 1996): 29.
[53] Hugo Ball, "Manifeste DaDa," *Wikisource*, last modified January 1, 2020, accessed June 20, 2021.
[54] Watkins, 104.

Makoko Kangourou. The Dadaists sought to dispose of conventional language by "chanting 'authentic' Negro poems and singsong with clappers, wooden mallets, and primitive instruments "; its parallel is found in the 20th century composer seeking to break free from conventional music by deliberately incorporating sounds into their works that may or may not have been popular but were the absolute opposite of the classical aesthetic they had come to know.[55]

Poulenc's *Rapsodie Nègre* emerges from this ambience of anti-aestheticism, and also Satie's *Parade* to which it can be compared, at least musically. Satie's use of ragtime, along with what were arguably *other* additional noise effects, the typewriter, sirens, and revolver, represent an idea of displacement. The idea that an audience member would attend a ballet, a high-art hybrid of dance and music, and then be confronted with jazz and typewriters, clearly displays the type of bizarre contrast. This has resonance in Poulenc's *Honoloulou* with its "pseudo-Malagasy" nonsense accompanied by the percussive noise of the piano, presenting itself as a high-brow European chamber work. A strange juxtaposition even exists within the nonsense text, as Honolulu is nowhere near Africa.

The composition was offensive to some but represented a great early success for the budding composer. Poulenc encountered the composer and conductor Paul Vidal when his teacher sent him for composition lessons. Upon showing him the manuscript of *Rapsodie Nègre*, as recalled by Poulenc himself, Vidal shouted "Your work stinks, it is ridiculous, it is merely a load of balls."[56] Even the baritone engaged to sing the works

[55] Watkins, 106 – 107. Quoting Richard Huelsenbeck on Dadaists and Africanism.
[56] Schmidt, 40.

debut performance flat out refused because it was "too stupid."[57] However, after its debut at the Vieux-Colombier it was regularly reprised throughout Paris over the next several years, including a performance at the Beaumonts' which featured jazz on August 30, 1918.[58] It is also speculated that Poulenc contributed *Rapsodie Nègre* as the music for *Sculpture nègre*, the first solo recital danced by Jean Börlin at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées.[59]

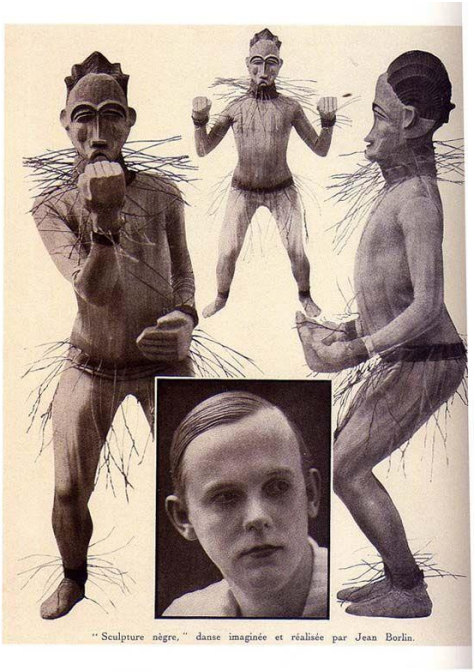

Figure 6: Images from Börlin's *Sculpture Nègre*[60]

Poulenc's score was reviewed in London in 1920 after it was published by Chester. Like Vidal, the critic reviewed it as, "an essay in what may be called the elaborately infantile type of humor... mere spoof from beginning to end...The whole

[57] Schmidt, 44.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Jean Börlin (1893 – 1930) Swedish dancer and choreographer. Trained at the Royal Swedish Ballet. Danced and choreographed works for the Ballets Suédois including *Sculpture Nègre* (1920), *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1920) *La Boîte à joujoux* (1921) and *La Création du monde* (1923).
[60] Reproduced at https://www.pinterest.com/mlisewashere/homage/

work is so ugly and childish that one grudges the excellent engraving and paper spent on it."[61] If the composers aim was deliberate provocation, then he had surely succeeded.

Rapsodie Nègre: an Analysis

The *Rapsodie Nègre* is indeed a product of its time and offers many complex and sophisticated compositional choices, despite its perceived satire. From the inclusion of ragtime syncopation to the unconventional harmonic effects, this first opus of Poulenc deserves much greater attention than has been offered to it. The work is unique in Poulenc's output, but previous scholarship has not always considered how the "ambience of the day" is reflected in the composition. Some examinations have lost footing in the finding of musical Orientalism in place of an Africanist influence, and others have written the whole work off as a spoof.[62]

The work comprises of five movements that are largely instrumental, with the provocative *Intermède Vocal* and *Final* being the only movements that utilize the voice. Poulenc employs what has come to be known as the Pierrot ensemble, which is comprised of flute, clarinet, strings, and piano. The movements are largely built on simple two or three-part forms that exhibit very little to no musical development, which is uncomfortably true in the case of the third movement. While sounding sometimes as a collage of elements, the work does provide a sense of unity through the reutterance of small melodic motives that are most clearly heard in movements two, three, and five. The recapitulatory nature of the final movement further binds the opus.

[61] William Child, "New Music," *The Musical Times* 61, No. 927 (1920), 336.
[62] Ibid.

The *Prelude* can be viewed as a binary form, with its division delineated by a change in orchestration and the contrasting of quintal versus tertiary intervals at measure 21. The opening fourteen bars are constructed of planing open fifths. Its long, serpentine melody is reminiscent of those found in earlier exotic works like Rimsky-Korsakov's *Shéhérazade*; this is especially true for the flute solo beginning in measure ten.

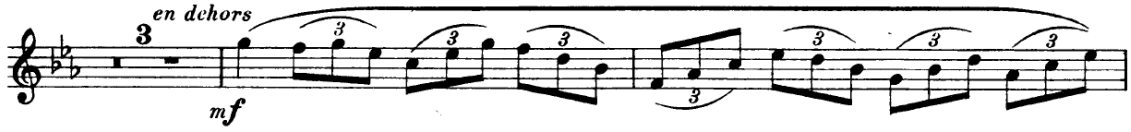

Figure 7: *Rapsodie Nègre,* Prelude, solo flute (mm. 10 - 11)

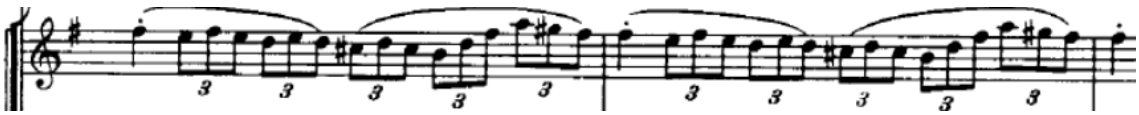

Figure 8: Rimsky-Korsakov *Shéhérazade,* Mvmt. 1, solo violin (mm. 94 - 95)

The link to Debussy is also clear. If one considers the opening of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, it may be found that Poulenc not only mimics the chordal planning but also the contrasting duple-triple rhythmic figures. The use of ostinato, likely representing a percussive element, may be the largest contributor to the work's Africanism. The steady rhythmic pulses provide a contrast to the snake-like melody heard above, but it even conforms to western musical traditions in a small way. The bass revolves around V-I harmonic movement subtly providing a juxtaposition of exotic melodic construction with western harmonic movement. It is as if the *Prelude* could act symbolically, pitting East against West.

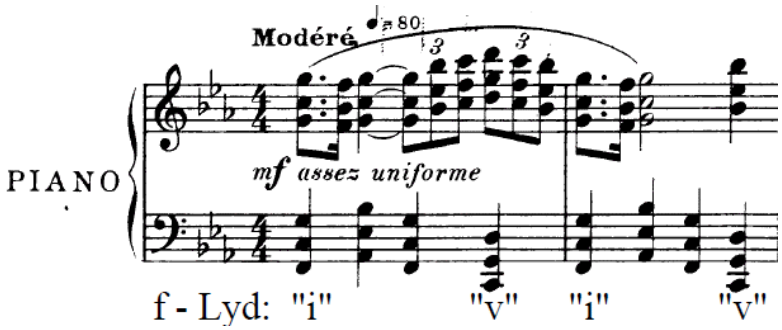

Figure 9: Prelude (mm. 1 – 2)

Another argument can be made in the comparison of East versus West, referencing the piano solo in mm. 21 – 28, where we are confronted with a number of hallmarks that seem to reference jazz harmony. The piano solo opens with an F-major chord at m. 21, which up until now has been situated in the key of F lydian-minor. Intervals of a third are heard for the first time in this piece, which has been dominated by open fourth and fifth intervals, and in mm. 23-24, the introduction of the pitch D-flat helps confirm the key of F-minor. Western musical tradition is therefore embodied in these four measures, with tertiary intervals, the abandonment of the lydian mode, and classic major-minor mode mixture. The composer continues to stack thirds as the solo advances. In measures 25 – 28 we are confronted with dominant ninth chords, augmented triads, and an overall moment of heightened dissonance that does not function or conform to the rules of traditional harmony; this is both evocative of jazz, and certain piano works of Satie.[63] The extended tertiary environment is washed away by clusters of minor seconds, as the planing parallel fifths return in the upper voices to end the movement.

[63] Haydon, 3 – 5.

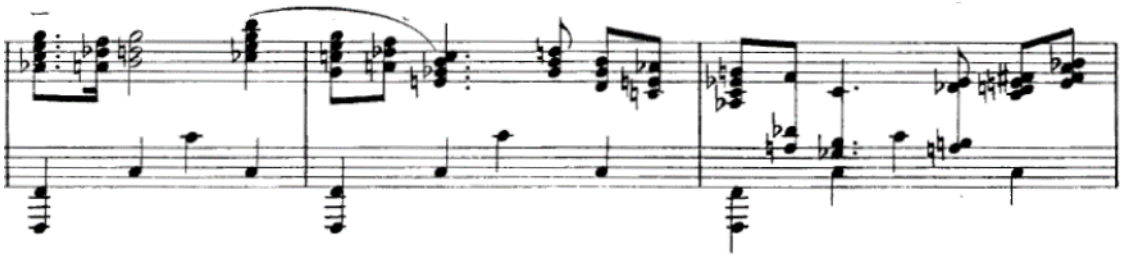

Figure 10: Prelude, solo piano (mm. 26 - 28)

Jazz-like influences are also recognizable in the *Ronde* movement, which successfully blends pentatonic melodies with bitonality and ragtime syncopation. This small rondo follows a three-part form that concludes with a presto coda. The ostinato in the piano is unceasing and provides a whirling frenzy of movement and sound, reminiscent of Fanoudh-Siefer's description of the bamboula. The opening two bars are saturated with chromatic alterations like blue notes and conflicting rhythms, the shifting from metric four to three adds to the rhythmic delirium as the opening 5-bars conclude.

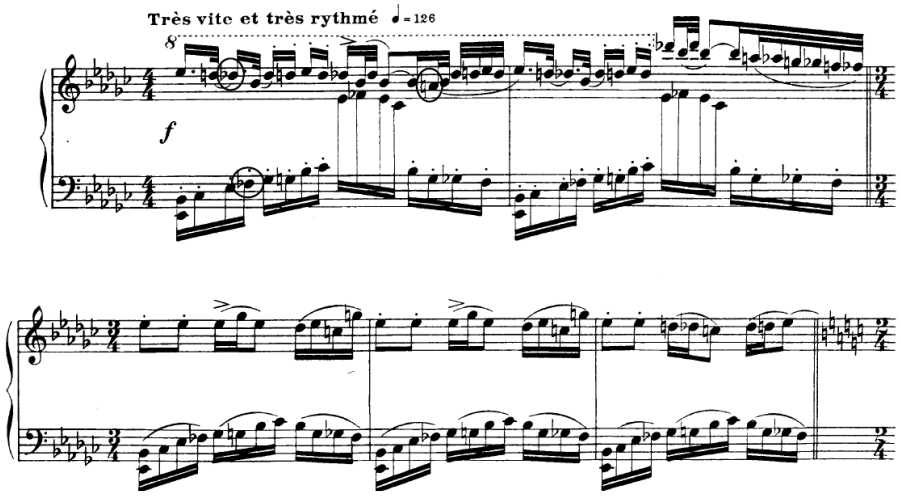

Figure 11: Rondo, solo piano (mm. 1 - 5). Circles indicated altered scale degrees. Notice dotted syncopations.

Measures 6 – 42 constitute the main B-section, where the ostinato of the piano and the backbeat pizzicato of the cello provide a steady rhythm for the melodic action above. The "wrong-note" type of dissonance described by Daniel may be better defined

as bitonality.[64] The strings and winds are tonally centered around the pitch A, while the piano continues to play the established E-flat centered ostinato. The clarinet figure appearing in m. 7 also contributes to the "wrong-note" feeling and once again echoes an eastern, "Arabian Nights," sort of exoticism. This figure, which bears a striking similarity and was possibly inspired by melodic material in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, helps to establish a pattern of call and response, further delineating the B-section. From measures 6 – 22 the call from the strings grows from a single note to a 4-note undulating melody while the clarinet figure responds unchanged. Measures 23 – 38 are constructed of the simplest repetition, the 4-bar modal melody introduced by the clarinet is played four times exactly with the flute joining the call for the final two restatements.

Never has a piece said so much with so little as this third movement of *Rapsodie Nègre*. Writing to Viñes, Poulenc recounted the reaction of Vidal who nearly threw the composer out after viewing the score. "What the hell is this *Honoloulou?*" he said.[65] At the work's premiere the baritone engaged to sing "threw in the towel," saying it was "too stupid and that he didn't want to be taken for a fool," leaving the composer to sing the song himself, hidden behind a music stand.[66] Poulenc commented on the "unusual effect" of him singing songs in "pseudo-Malagasy" while dressed in his army uniform, but the unusualness of this piece has lingered long after its first performance.

[64] Keith W. Daniel, *Francis Poulenc: His Artistic Development and Musical Style* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 103.
[65] Schmidt, 44.
[66] Ibid

Figure 12: *Honoloulou* of "Makoko Kangourou"

Honoloulou, poti lama!	Wata Kovsi mo ta ma sou,	Pata ta bo, banana lou,
Honoloulou, Honoloulou,	Etcha pango, Etche panga,	mandes Goals Glebes ikrous
Kati moku, mosi bolou,	tota nou nou, nou nou ranga	Banana lou ito kous kous
Ratakou sira, polama!	lo lo, lu lu ma ta ma sou	pota la ma Honoloulou.

Following Scott, we are reminded of how nineteenth-century composers used the wordless vocalese as a device to symbolize the "emotional Easterner." Its lack of verbal content highlighted the contrast with the "rational Westerner."[67] Poulenc's *Rapsodie Nègre* uses words, however, nonsense words which in my opinion make a parody of black people. The text comes from *Les Poésies de Makoko Kangourou* (1910), a collection of poetry which Poulenc claims to have found in a bookstall along the banks of the Seine river. It was alleged to be a collection of Liberian poetry edited by two Frenchmen, but recent scholarship has proven it to be the work of the Parisian poet Marcel Ormoy.[68]

This poem is accompanied by piano alone. Marked "Lent et monotone" with the voice marked "sans nuances," the uniformed accompaniment oscillates between E-major and D-major chords which cycles around a reiterated C-natural pedal point. Previous analyses of this work have recognized the repeating 4-note descending pattern in the voice part [B-A-G#-F#] but have stopped short of the culminating pitch at the end of each verse [E]. This leads one to believe that Poulenc may once again be attempting to establish a sense of bitonality, now between E and D major, making the C natural pedal the "wrong note." Previous analyses have also ignored the motivic figure which

[67] Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," 310.
[68] Schmidt, 43.

punctuates each verse. It bears striking similarities to motivic figures found in movements two and five, thereby, providing cyclic features to the entire opus.

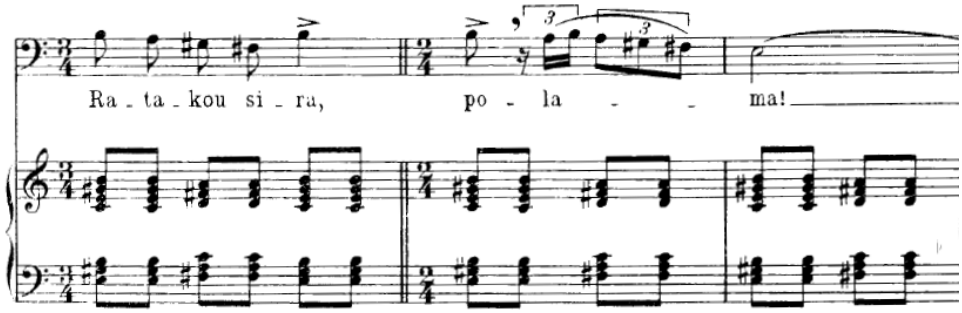

Figure 13: Honoloulou (mm. 10 - 12)

The *Pastorale* movement complements the *Prelude* in its unashamed and overly abundant usage of parallel open fifths. Though the unceasing stepwise oscillating movement in the lower voices, coupled with incessant tremolo in the violins, Poulenc muddles our sense of time. The effect is heighted when the primary melodic theme enters as a pentatonic melody emphasizing a 4-pulse phrase. The duple based melody combined with triple meter puts us in a state of metric dissonance, leaving us not only unsure of place but also time.

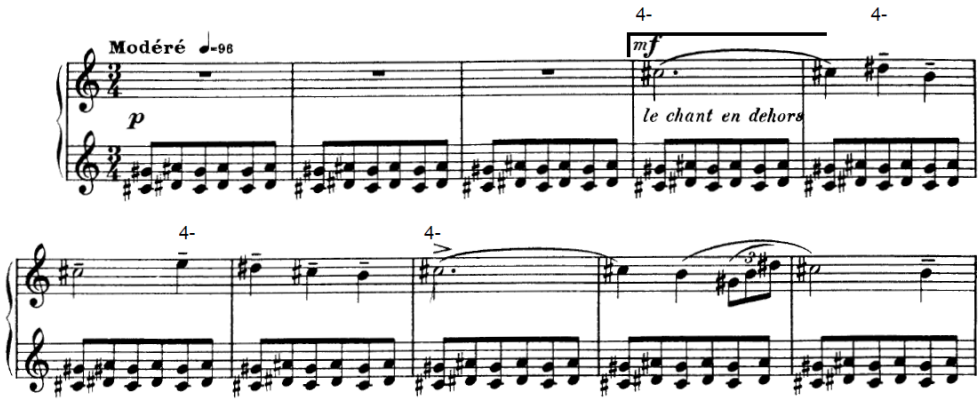

Figure 14: Pastorale (mm. 1 - 10) Showing a metric pulse of four within bars of three.

The movement mimics a small sonata form yet follows an overarching theme of the opus; overly complex development is not to be found. The little B-section, which proves to be the most metrically stable area of the piece, comprises two stepwise pentatonic melodies in simple counterpoint. Poulenc briefly establishes a sense of triple meter and momentarily abandons the oscillating lower voice.

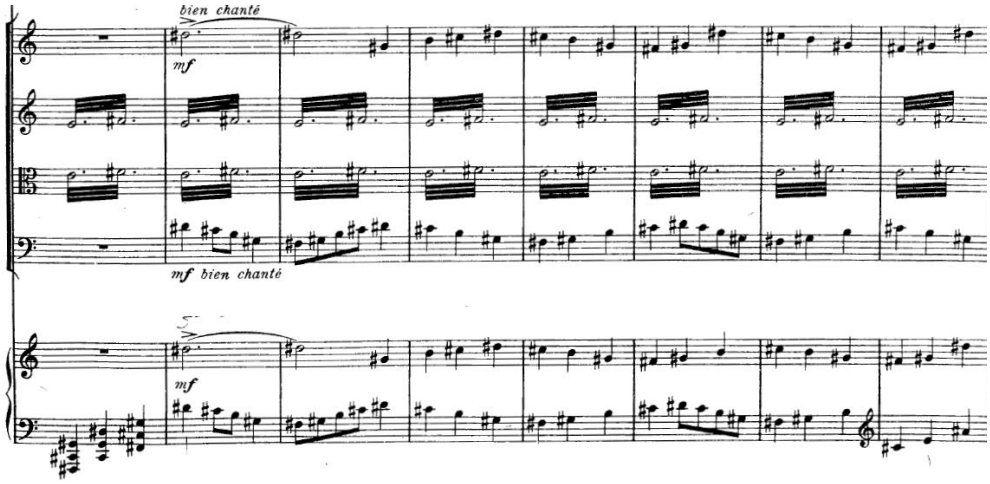

Figure 15: Pastorale (mm. 19 - 25)

This movement has been especially recognized for imparting "an Oriental rather than an African color," which may be due in part to both musical and non-musical factors.[69] Firstly, the use of pentatonic scales and the compositional treatment of them, and secondly, the implications of "gentle" and "melodic". Up until now the composer has given us: blue note scales, jagged syncopations, harsh uniformed dissonance, and a monotone voice, by contrast, nothing seems particularly "African" or "Nègre" about this 4th movement. It is pleasant and plaintive, with its musical indications of *bien chanté* and *très doux*. It is uncomplicated and unoffensive, with its fluid stepwise motion.

[69] Daniel, 104.

The final movement summarizes the entire work within a simple ABA form. Far removed from the sweet pastoral image of the previous movement, the composer indicates an expression marking of *violent*. The upper strings sustain a Wagnerian amount of tremolo, *strident et dur*, on an unchanging dissonant chord. The four-by-four call and response from the second movement returns in measure 13 with an expression marking of *rude*, calling for rough sounds from the winds.

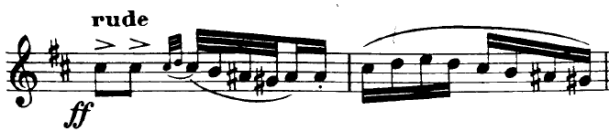

Figure 16: Final, solo clarinet (mm. 13 - 14)

The return of the Honoloulou theme is striking, with the voice accompanied by sustained half-step trills from the flute and clarinet. An alien atmosphere is conjured, and outside of the piano's reprise of themes from the second movement, the parts are monotonous and unchanging for twenty-seven bars.

On the whole, this piece presents an interesting and complex combining of elements. We have seen how blue-note scales and jazzy chords rub up against bitonality and pentatonicism, and how the composer creates a sense of unity throughout the work by restating motivic gestures, even within the monotonous central movement. But still contained within this complex musical collage is the voice, *le chant sans nuance*, representing the rhapsodic, Black voice, whose limited range produced "an extraordinary color and Negro atmosphere."[70] Perhaps, one will only ever draw complicated meanings from this fascinating work since the voice, given meaningless language, will continually represent a paradox.

[70] Watkins, 106. Words of Jane Bathori.

Despite the adverse reactions of a few, *Rapsodie Nègre* was an immediate success and reprised regularly during its early years.[71] Today it is rarely heard but modern recordings have featured successful singers that include Nicolas Rivenq, Thomas Olieman, and Anne Sophie von Otter. Neither the subject of race nor its implications have been considered in performing this work, yet the title clearly means to portray an image of black people, being called *Rapsodie Nègre,* not Rapsodie Afrique. This work is as complicated as it is attractive. Its complication should not terminate its success, but its complication should not be ignored.

[71] Schmidt, 44.

Intermède:

France and Africa's Emerging Relationship

By the start of WWII, the growing French empire extended well over 4.5 million square miles and boasted a population of nearly 65 million, with French domain being especially prevalent in West Africa.[72] From Algeria to The Congo or Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to the island of Madagascar, the historian WM. Louis states that the aim of all these territories, since the time of the French Revolution, had remained the same; "France's republican heritage and civilization would be offered to its subjects, allowing them to become assimilated as French citizens.[73] However, the spirit behind this *mission civilisatrice* was problematic as the colonial "subjects," largely people of color, were not always treated humanely. Laws such as the Code Noir of 1685, the declaration of 1738, and the *declaration pour la policie des noirs* of 1777, expressly ostracized and oppressed both the slave population in the colonies and free black people living on French soil.[74] Ethnographic exhibitions, known informally as people zoos, were very popular throughout the 19th century, with many of the most famous found in France. Sarah Baartman, a South African Khoikhoi woman, was sold to an animal trainer and exhibited at the Palais Royal in 1814, and by 1877 the Jardin d'Acclimatation was regularly hosting exhibits of Nubians, Madagascans, the Kali'na of French Guiana, and many others.[75] These human exhibitions, which proliferated to justify colonial

[72] WM. Roger Louis, "The European Colonial Empires," in *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 98.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Samuel L. Chatman, "There are no Slaves in France: A Re-Examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France," *The Journal of Negro History 85*, no. 3 (2000): 146- 149, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2649071.
[75] DW Documentary, "Colonial Crimes." *YouTube* video, October 20, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WFTSM8JppE. See also, Schneider.

domination, lasted well into the 20th century and helped fuel the acceptance of racism.[76] Regular contact between France and Africa was established during the 1600's with the first private French trading company being formed in 1626 out of Rouen, whose purpose was to capture and trade in gum-arabic which came down the Senegal River. Outside of tradesmen, visits to Africa were made by missionaries who began promoting Catholicism on the Guinea coast in 1633.[77] This relationship with the African continent, its goods, and its people, helped to establish France as an imperial power.

Évariste de Parny: Politics and the Exotic

Évariste de Parny was born on Réunion island which was called the Isle of Bourbon during colonial times. It is situated approximately 340 miles east of Madagascar and his aristocratic family settled there in the late 1600's. Parny was schooled in France and planned to enter the clergy but opted for a military career instead, where he quickly climbed the ranks and was made a captain in the Queen's Regiment of Dragoons. When he authored the *Chansons Madécasses traduites en françois, suivies de poésies*, Évariste de Parny was serving as aide-de-camp to the governor-general of French colonies in India. While the work's complete title alludes to the idea that these were French translations of native Madagascan songs, the common knowledge is that he had never even been to the island of Madagascar.[78]

The prominent Ravel scholar Gerald Larner makes note of the poems "appealing exoticism ... and an interesting anti-colonial political sentiment," and in doing so, alerts

[76] Ibid.
[77] Chatman, 146. See also, Schneider.
[78] Orenstein, *Ravel: man and musician*, 196.

us to the coexistence of the exotic and political thought.[79] Turning back to the scholarship of Schneider, we can see that the combining of these two seemingly disparate elements were somewhat stereotypical, particularly in the writings of enlightenment era philosophers. In referencing writings that include Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1711) and Denis Diderot's satire *Les bijoux Indiscrets* (1748), a story that pokes fun at Louis XV by portraying him as a sexually powered sultan from the Congo, Schneider makes us aware of this emerging pattern in eighteenth century literature.[80] Literature of this nature evoking the exotic developed alongside growing political ideological thought, prompted by philosophers which included Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For many of the philosophes of the Enlightenment era, slavery was generally seen as unnatural and antagonistic to the state of humanity, but when it came to African slavery, certain customs and attitudes made it easier to accept. In his study of slave laws in eighteenth-century France, Chatman makes us acutely aware of the contradictory and satirical treatment of the institution of slavery by philosophers. For Rousseau, of whom Parny was a noted disciple, once a person had grown accustomed to being mastered, they could function no other way; once a slave, always a slave.[81] Montesquieu goes further by justifying the economics of slavery, maintaining that the economic benefits afforded by the cultivation of cash crops like sugar, outweighed humanitarian concerns. He also believed that the work involved benefited those in the tropics, where the climate caused them to be slothful and unwilling to do heavy work.[82] This complicated view of the institution of slavery is

[79] Gerald Larner, *Maurice Ravel* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 189.
[80] Schneider, 18.
[81] Chatman, 150 – 151.
[82] Ibid.

shared by Évariste de Parny whose grandfather helped in the administration and organization of the slave trade in Madagascar.[83] The Parny family benefited from the economics of the slave trade, yet Évariste writes the poem *Méfiez-vous des blancs* in clear opposition to it, smartly written from the perspective of a colonial subject.

Moving deeper into the work's exotic nature, the scholar Jean-Michel Racault makes a connection between Parny's *Chansons Madécasses* and the *Histoire de la grande isle Madagascar* (1661) of Étienne de Flacourt. This earlier work paints an image of paradise, a "New Eden," that is held in contrast to the author's descriptions of darkness and a population portrayed as treacherous and crude. The book includes the Latin inscription: *O advena, lege monita nostra tibi, tuis, vitaeque tuae profitura: Cave ab Incolis! Vale*; (Traveler, for yourself, for yours and for your life, beware of our warnings. Beware of the inhabitants! Be well). Évariste de Parny reverses this warning with his "méfiez-vous des blancs, habitans du rivage"; (*Fear the whites, inhabitants of the riverbank*).[84] Unlike Flacourt, who spent time on the island serving as the governor of Madagascar, there is the problem of spatial distance for Parny. Yet, he somehow manages to write a compelling and provocative narrative that at times seem to be written from the viewpoint of the Madagascans. Like Flacourt, Parny plays both ends of the exotic, firstly by painting an image of the idyllic and stereotypic, with fantastic landscapes and happy natives undisturbed by the outside world, and secondly, by including scenes of massacres, revenge, and sacrifice to violent deities. The savage primitivism, highlighting cruelty and superstition in this exoticized society, along with

[83] Jean-Michel Racault, "L'ailleurs et l'exotisme dans l'oeuvre de Parny: contours, empreintes et traces," Séminaire *Poésies érotiques d'Evariste Parny*, Ecole Doctorale Européenne des Universités de Bologne et Clermont-Ferrand, Dec 2010, Pont-du-Chateau, France. pp.7-43. hal-01174568, 3.
[84] Ibid.

fantastical images of paradise, aligns these poems with other exotic writings of the time. Therefore, there was no express need nor demand for Parny to physically visit the island or speak to any of the natives. This issue of distance is regularly commented upon in the research surrounding this work, however it may be regarded as a standard practice; quoting Racault, exoticism assumes spatial distance and cultural duality.[85] Further, it may in fact be possible that Parny had some awareness of Madagascan song or poetry, considering the fact that black inhabitants outnumbered the whites four-to-one in 1716, and of the 45,800 people living on the Isle of Bourbon in 1788, 37,000 of them were slaves, generally from Madagascar.[86]

[85] Racault, 2.
[86] Ibid.

Chapter 4: Inside The Chansons Madécasses

Background

Ravel's composition of *Chansons Madécasses* came as the result of a song cycle commission in 1925 from the American pianist and philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. At her request, the song cycle was to include voice, piano, flute, and cello. According to the musicologist Roland-Manuel, the composer was reading the poetry of Évariste de Parny when he received the commission.[87] Parny's poetry, published in 1787, emerged at time when African themes started to appear as motivic material in literature. Writers of the colonial-era often looked to Africa and were inspired to paint an image of an idealized, alien realm, but their writings could also be used to broadcast the tumultuous relationship that existed between Europe and its colonies, as is the case of Parny's *Méfiez-vous des blancs*. Parny's language evokes the distant and exotic and, at the same time, documents the history of violent conquest that was a part of imperialist rule. Indeed, native peoples and their lands were treated as possessions by the French, and this poem in particular highlights their resistance to the foreign European invaders.

Contrasting the composer's choice of colonial era poetry, Ravel's music moves to push beyond the clichés of exoticism that are abundantly present in many 19th century compositions. [88] From the highly influential *Le Déserts* of Félicien David to Camille Saint-Saëns' *Africa*, and even in Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*, exoticist musical effects-- ostinato, modality, and use of unpitched percussion-- can be heard in plentitude. With the *Chansons Madécasses*, Ravel looks forward and makes use of symbols found in the

[87] Ellis, 15.
[88] James, 367.

text to align with his modernist aesthetic. A number of Ravel's compositional choices show the influence of Arnold Schoenberg and while he claimed this work was "in no way Schoenbergian," the similarities between it and *Pierrot Lunaire* are such that they seem to be cut from a matching cloth.[89] Ravel's controlled use of atonality, instrumental combinations, and sparse linear textures, follow the path set by *Pierrot,* and the thematic similarities between the two are noteworthy, particularly references to the moon and the contrasting of colors. Schoenberg's multicolored moon becomes Ravel's investigation of black versus white. The complex nature of the composition is then crowned by an element of visual art. Each of the songs published 1926 by Durand are accompanied by wood block prints created by Luc-Albert Moreau, whose "messy, murky post Gauguin images" add greatly to the primitivist theme.[90] The first image shows a bare-chested figure in a loincloth, waiting by a large tree while another figure rows a long boat on the river in the background. The second shows three figures in the foreground, a warrior, an unarmed person, and a child, seemingly wailing by the seashore as the large ship approaches. The third shows a man lounging under large palm trees while bare-breasted women approach, carrying large vases on their heads. Like in the works of Gaugin, the nude characters seem to embody the primitivist aesthetic.

Text

The *Chansons Madécasses* is comprised of three illustrative movements that express a great deal of exotic color. *Nahandove* tells the story of two lovers meeting. The speaker anxiously awaits the beautiful Nahandove outside under the cover of night. The full moon shines on his head. He has prepared a bed of leaves for her arrival and

[89] Orenstein, ed., *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, 47.
[90] Ellis, 18.

has sprinkled it with flowers and fragrant herbs. It is time (*voici l'heure*), he remarks. From a distance, Nahandove is heard approaching. He recognizes her heavy breathing and the rustling of the garment she is wearing. Ravel highlights this moment with an increased tempo and a highly syncopated, driving rhythm from the piano. Nahandove is breathless upon her arrival and rests herself upon her lover's lap. He observes the movement of her breast and remarks upon the deliciousness of that movement, feeling it with his hand *(Que le mouvement de ton sein est vif et délicieux sous la main qui le presse*). She smiles.

Moving deeper into the poem, the story grows increasingly sensual. The narrator speaks of Nahandove's kisses penetrating deep into his soul and how her caresses set all of his senses ablaze. Yield, he says, or he will die. Without doubt, we are experiencing the narrator telling of his side of the sexual encounter. He asks, can one die of so much voluptuousness (*Meurt-on de volupté*)? As the moment of pleasure passes, her breath grows calmer, her moistened eyes close, and her euphoric movements yield to stillness (*tes transport s'éteignent dans la langueur*). Ravel marks this moment with *calando* in all parts.

Nahandove leaves (*tu pars*), and the narrator is left once again waiting. He waits languishingly, conflicted with feelings of regret and desire, until both she and the evening come again. He sings the refrain that is heard time and time again (*Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove*).

Here in the first poem, we see a breaking away from romantic tradition, evidenced by the position of the female character. In all respects she is in the dominant position. It is she who comes and goes, and it is her gestures that burn and penetrate.

The male character, on the other hand, waits, and is at her service. It is he who prepares the bed, a good housekeeping role most often reserved for female figure. Here, Ravel chooses to set the story of an African woman who embodies sexual freedom and independence. This is a radical choice that stands in contrast with the idealized position of romantic-era European female figures.

In the third song, *Il est doux*, we find the narrator lying down under a shady tree waiting for the evening breeze to cool him from the mid-day heat. Women approach. He asks them to sing for him, requesting they tell him the story of the young girl (*la jeune fille*) who braids hair with her fingers and then chases away the hungry birds that hover around her rice. Ravel uses the cello to illustrate this moment, gradually accelerating its two note figures. Pleased by the women's song, the lazing speaker then asks them to dance. As the flute plays an elongated amorous motive, he asks the women to move slowly and imitate the "manners of pleasure" with the "abandon of voluptuousness" (*les attitudes du plaisir et l'abandon de la volupté*). The increasing sense of sensuality follows the pattern set in *Nahandove*, and Ravel makes connection between these two movements by utilizing the motive heard prominently during the moment Nahandove's pleasure. The "abandon of voluptuousness" proves to be a major theme in both songs. The evening breeze finally comes, the moon rises, and as if awakening from a state of intoxication the speaker brusquely exclaims, "Go and prepare the meal" (*Allez, et préparez le repas*).

The centerpiece of the work, *Aoua!*, seems to stand apart. It tells the story of a battle in times past while voicing a warning for the future. The poem presents a very strong anti-colonialist sentiment, with the narrator making constant reference to "des

blancs." The contrasting of black and white is explicit in this song, with Ravel going so far as to contrast black and white keys at the piano, and the work's political undertone sets it apart from the surrounding songs.

Maurice Ravel & The Chansons Madécasses

By 1925, the majority of Ravel's song output had already been written, including the cosmopolitan *Chants Populaires* (1910), *Histoires Naturelles* (1906), and the exotic masterpiece *Shéhérazade* (1903). He was already well established as a composer invested in musical experimentation and exotic subjects. His taste for Spanish subjects, for example, is found quite early in works like *Suites Auriculaires* (1895) and *Rapsodie Espagnole* (1907). Famous later compositions like *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* (1933) and *Bolero* (1928) would come to be known as pinnacle examples of Spanish exoticism. Because the composer showed interest in a large variety of ethnic music, compositions including *Mélodies hébraïques* (1914), *Mélodies populaires grecques* (1906) and even *Gaspard de la Nuit* (1908) with its noted orientalism, the *Chansons Madécasses* would have been a natural choice for Coolidge's commission.

The poems themselves provide a number of elements that would have been attractive for Ravel. The prosaic nature of the text, firstly, delivers a rhythmic complexity that the composer would have immediately been drawn to. Ravel outlines his preference for setting free verse and prose in an opinion presented by Fernand Divoire, saying, "for truly poignant and emotional situations, free verse is preferable to regular verse."[91] He believed that free verse allowed the composer to break free of the

[91] Fernand Divoire, "What should be set to Music? Good Poetry or Bad, Free Verse or Prose?" in *A Ravel reader: correspondence, articles, interviews*, ed. Arbie Orenstein (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004) 338 - 339.

poet's cadence, and made it possible for a "stylized naïveté" and "simple affection" to be portrayed in a work like Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.[92] Along with the *Chansons Madécasses,* both *Shéhérazade* and *Histoires Naturelles* are considered to be complete settings of free verse.

Of the twelve poems written by Parny, in addition to the provocative *Méfiez-vous des blancs,* Ravel chose to set *Nahandove* and *Il est doux* which express erotic subjects, a second component that attracted the composer. A desire to compose eroticism into music can be witnessed in *Shéhérazade,* where in the final song *L'Indifférent,* the narrator comments on the graceful and seductive feminine charms of a young stranger passing by. In this song, filled with erotic ambiguity, we do not know if the narrator is male or female since the handsome young stranger (*jeune étranger*) is described in both masculine and feminine terms. In his essay on the subject of "Erotic Ambiguity in Ravel's Music," Lloyd Whitesell makes an argument that the composer's self-presentation and the enigmatic nature of his sexuality drew him to texts that expressed sensuality in complicated ways.[93] While sexual desire is thwarted in the case of *L'Indifférent*, in *Chansons Madécasses* we find a much more explicit expressions of sexual desire.

In *Nahandove* the male figure awaits his lover and prepares the bed for her. She comes and they enjoy a vividly intimate encounter. She leaves and he waits again. Then in *Il est doux*, the speaker is entertained by the erotic movement of dancers imitating sexual acts (*les attitudes du plaisir*), which are halted by the setting of the sun and the speaker's sudden desire for food (*Allez, et préparez le repas*). In both songs we are

[92] Ibid.
[93] Lloyd Whitesell, "Erotic Ambiguity in Ravel's Music," in *Ravel Studies,* ed. Deborah Mawer (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 75.

confronted with the idealized "noble savage," sometimes seen in a positive light, but his/her thoughts are dominated by carnal pleasures, like sex, food, and laziness. Unlike *Shéhérazade,* there is no filling in of the blanks required of Ravel. The texts of *Chansons Madécasses* clearly mean to express, without ambiguity, images of sensual pleasure and abandon.

Under the shadow of an Africanist backdrop and removed from his well-known Asian and Spanish exoticisms, the composer is free to explore completely new areas, musically, formally, and politically. In his work *Musical Exoticism,* Ralph Locke posits a metaphorical use of African objects, which functions less as an image of African life and more as a shocking way to re-envision the West and challenge the techniques and aesthetics of academic Realism.[94] Acknowledging the twentieth century artists' rejection of realistic representations, the poems selected by Ravel clearly fit the mold. Themes of voluptuousness, sensual abandon, and weary men lounging while women work are generally contrary to Western views and thereby, offer an alternative to Western life. Parny's texts, coupled with the instrumentation requested by Coolidge, must have indeed inspired the composer to a new and total freedom.

Ravel only said a few words about the composition, but what stand out for most scholars is his claim that the work possessed "a new element, dramatic, [and] indeed erotic, resulting from the subject matter of Parny's poems." Ravel acknowledges both the sensual and stirring components of the work with this statement, while also assuring the listener that he has attempted to move beyond the old-fashioned exoticism that is expected, but what "new element" could the composer be alluding to and is there something that gave him license to compose such different music? As mentioned

[94] Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 217.

earlier, the composer is found working with arguably his most erotic subject and we witness his process of conjuring of an extremely violent and utterly "non-Ravelian" landscape in *Aoua!* below, these components often discussed. Moreover, the composer had already demonstrated an exemplary command of typical musical exoticisms for some time; the drone dominated and chromatic *L'énigme éternelle*, for example, or the serpentine melodies of *Asie*. While countless standard exoticists cues are noticeable in *Nahandove* and *Il est doux,* certain distinctive features aid Ravel's creation of a wholly alien realm, that at least represents a different *type* of exoticism.

Rhythm & Timbre

In his synopsis, James mentions how little attention was paid to the rhythmic elements of Malagasy music by early 20th century music historians, possibly due its "unremarkable" individual parts.[95] Also mentioned is prevalence of harmonic thirds, a common sonority in western classical music that is made obligatory by the tuning of the valiha. Historical recordings, admittedly made after Ravel's composition and likely never heard by him, show a strong preference for choral singing following the form of call and response, often associated with African musical culture, comprised of fairly steady meters that are usually grouped in three or four. The New Grove Dictionary attributes the basic rhythms of Madagascan music to its proximity to the African continent and further designates vocal and dance music based upon meter, simple meter for dance and complex for singing. These "standard" tools of harmony and rhythm employed by native and traditional Madagascan musicians would not have sounded

[95] James, 364.

very exotic to westerners who were now familiar with the intense chromaticism and harsh dissonance of musical orientalism.[96]

A most impressive area of Ravel's invention is found in his treatment of rhythm which is largely credited to the extremely linear writing and the individuality of parts. Ravel suspends our sense of time in the opening measures of *Nahandove* (mm. 1 – 8) by presenting a multitude of misaligned beats with no clear regulating meter, the written time signatures and their alterations serve to emphasize the poetic text. Following changes of articulation, tessitura, and contour, the cello plays constantly shifting hypermetrics and joins to accompany a vocal line that is equally irregular. Time is either meant to stand still or to linger a bit too long as the lover awaits the arrival of Nahandove.

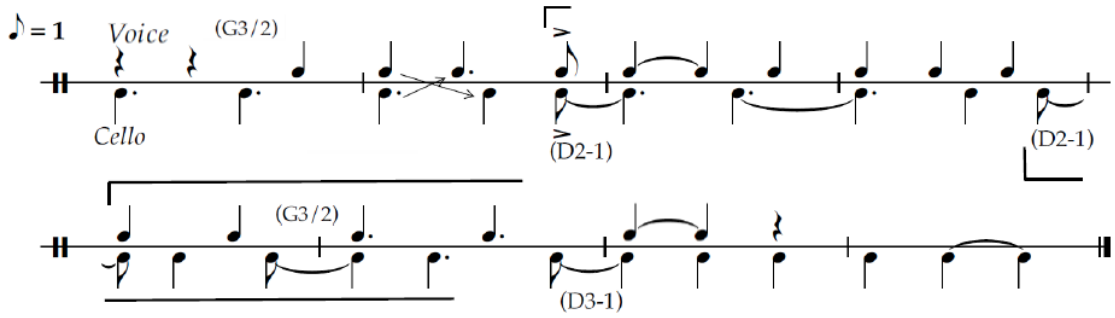

Figure 17: *Nahandove* (mm. 1 – 8)

The reduction above exhibits the metrically dissonant environment that undelays the works opening bars. The cello begins by establishing a pulse of three that is disrupted by the voice entering at a pulse of two, right away establishing a state of hemiola (G3/2).[97] The displaced or "syncopated" entrance of the voice further rubs

[96] See Locke on orientalism, *Musical Exoticism*, 34 – 38.
[97] The discussion on rhythmic and metric effects will make use of symbols as found in Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann* (Oxford University Press, 1999). "G"

against the establishment of a steady beat. Cross-rhythms are noticeable in the second measure followed by a brief, syncopated alignment at the level of (D2-1). Measures 5 – 6 are especially abundant with seemingly constant syncopations and shifting between pulses of two and three at the individual level, producing both direct and indirect hemiolas (G3/2). The plaintive mood established in this opening duet is actually filled with rhythmic complexity that moves beyond the standard usage of "local color." This constant shifting may have a claim to this works Africanism that is more sophisticated than the frequently noted layering of disjunct ostinati. The polyrhythmic flurry that emerges as Nahandove enters the scene (mm. 19 – 27) for example, is made up of the piano providing a metric pulse of three in the left hand while simultaneously playing repeated rhythmic figures in the right hand that outline a metric pulse of five. If one were to attune to the low bass voice's early arrival (m. 19) as initiating the pulse of three, then they would be mistakenly emphasizing the syncopated beat. This repeated emphasis on the secondary beat and polyrhythm are fundamental features of sub-Saharan African music.[98] Nahandove's nervous energy and the excitement of her lover are illustrated by this surge of hyper-rhythmic activity.

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symbolizes a grouping dissonance. Groups of 3 shifting to or heard concurrently with groups of 2 for example, would represent the classic *hemiola*. "D" symbolizes a metric or rhythmic displacement, *syncopation* for example.

[98] For a starting place, see A. M. Jones, "African Rhythm," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* (1954), and Simha Arom, *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm: Musical Structure and Methodology* (1991).

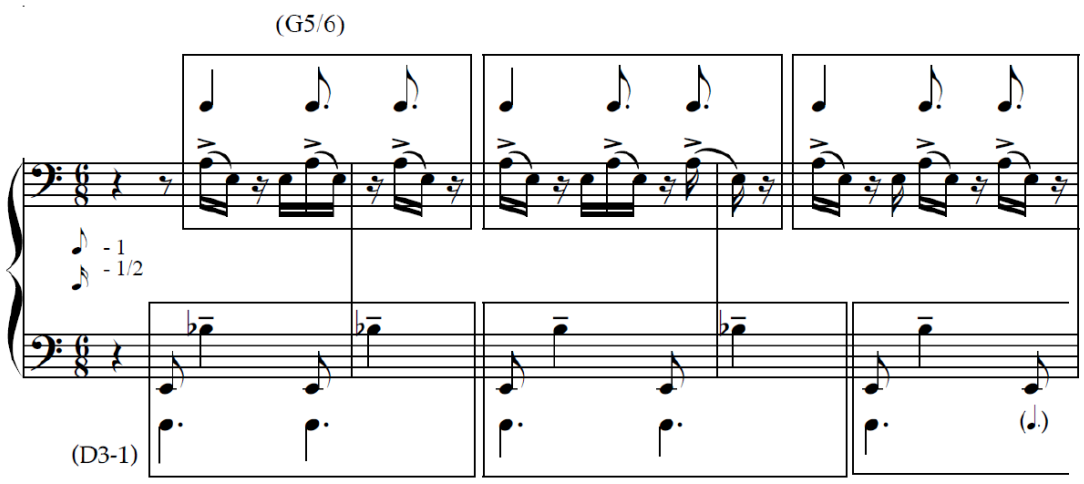

Figure 18: *Nahandove* (mm. 19 – 21)

Timbre is also used as a structural and narrative device, particularly in *Il est doux* where the theorist Jennifer P. Beavers links certain timbral shifts with "representations of eroticism," and rightly so. The song is totally atmospheric and is abundant in contrasting motives, hot versus cool, day versus evening, shade versus moon, and so forth; Beavers goes as far to include male versus female. The bitonality established in *Aoua!* seeps into *Il est doux*, with the flute scored in D-flat and the cello in C. Bitonality, which has been recognized as the major source of dissonance in traditional Malagasy music, is especially noticeable in this song due to its extremely thin texture.[99] Unlike the songs before that ruminated on active themes of sex and war, the speaker is found here in a decidedly passive position. A sense of laziness is evoked as character speaks of lying down under a tree, awaiting the cool breeze of evening and the approaching women who will dance and sing for him, and bring him food. The

[99] James, 364.

music often mirrors this inactivity with major 7th pedal tones, leaving only color to illustrate the scene.

A sense of timelessness is once again evoked as the opening solo flute playing figures of varying duration. The cello enters quite high in harmonics to meet the flute tessitura, unnaturally blending with its timbre. The flute continues upward as the cello moves down to its natural register, wedging the melodies outward until the cello settles on the pedal point of C-natural. A moment of repose occurs in mm. 10 – 13 as the voice and flute, both in their lower registers, duet in the same key of D-flat. These opening bars present a mixing and mingling of timbre, register, and tonal areas, while contrasting high and low, C against Db, accentuating the speakers idling position similar to the way metric ambiguity illustrates the anticipation of Nahandove's lover. Both of these men long for nothing more than the absolute abandon of voluptuousness, which is found realized in *Ils est doux* as drums and dancing. Once again, the cello takes an unnatural position, now as a percussive instrument with its pizzicato imitating a tom-tom or bongos. At the same time, the piccolo plays an imitation of the motive heard prominently in Nahandove during the lover's encounter, imitating the manners of pleasure.[100]

In addition to providing structure to the work and illustrating the texts in purely musical terms, the timbral effects made as a result of Ravel's instrumental experimentation may rightly express the composer's knowledge of Malagasy instruments. Noting the abundance of muting, harmonics, and pizzicato, James suggests Ravel may had been attempting to downplay the characteristic qualities of the cello in

[100] Appendix B, *N5*

order to produce a less Western sound.[101] Likewise, the piano writing throughout is far less "pianistic" than one would expect from the composer of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. The flourishes, sensibility, and technical prowess of the French baroque are to be found nowhere in *Chanson Madécasses*, what is found instead is a percussive and rhythmic treatment of the piano that dissolves any trace of French pianism.

Aoua! an Analysis

The complete work offers a number of challenges for deep analytic review, which is not uncommon for compositions of this era that employ such masterful use of experimentation. Using very limited resources and primitivist themes, Ravel is able build a strong symbolic narrative through the melding of enlightenment era poetry with modernist era compositional techniques. This analysis will look specifically into the musical narrative built around the center piece *Aoua!*, which as Roger Nichols remarks, deserves special treatment.[102] It will also peer into the close relationship between the text and music, a relationship that is already well known to be extremely important in the vocal works of Ravel.

mm. 1 – 5; The opening 5-bar introduction gives the impression of a call to arms. By adding the expression "Aoua," which is not found in the original poem, Ravel is able to construct an introductory framework that greatly deepens the meaning and emotional depth of Parny's text. The voice enters at an extremely high register, with the high G4 likely being at the very top of the baritone range.[103] The intense, bellowing

[101] James, 374.
[102] Roger Nichols, *Ravel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 278.
[103] Arbie Orenstein, ed., *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, 507. Martial Singher writes to Orenstein saying he was the first male singer to perform *Chansons madécasses* in 1939. He

tessitura assists in the development of a tremendously anxious atmosphere, where one may witness the colliding of two dissimilar cultures through music.

These opening bars are a study in chromatic saturation, but what is most important to this narrative is not what is used, but what is left out. The introduction utilizes every pitch of the chromatic scale with the exception of C-natural.[104] Being the whitest of scales, presenting neither sharps nor flats, the exclusion of this pitch may symbolize the absence of "des blancs." Ravel further signals the black/white dichotomy through the two conflicting key signatures of B and C. Additionally, two motives emerge that may further illustrate the tension between "the Blacks" and "the Whites."

The musical motive tied to the exclamation of "Aoua" is a small rhythmic figure that will have many manifestations, ranging from the full-out assertive opening sonorities, down to the simple outlining of an open fifth. This motive is held in contrast with the 2-bar flute motive that emerges in the sixth measure. It is insistent, constant, and unyielding. This analysis will show how the narrator, the singing voice, yields to the hovering flute motive and symbolizes a narrative of submission in this racially driven musical representation of conflict, not peace.

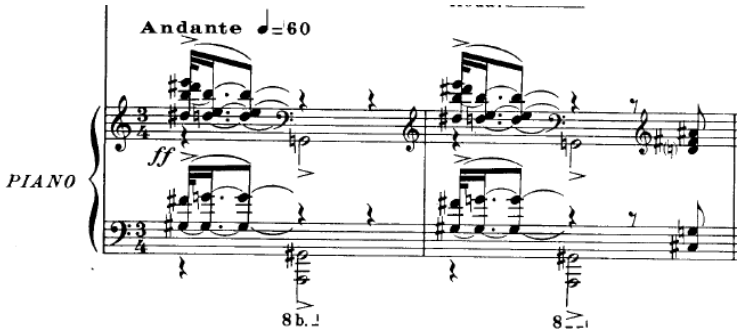

Figure 19: "Aoua" motive (mm. 1 - 2)

confirms Maurice Ravel "had in mind a male voice when writing them, but only women singers, with strong musical backgrounds [were] interested by them."

[104] This event is mentioned in the scholarship of Nichols, 279.

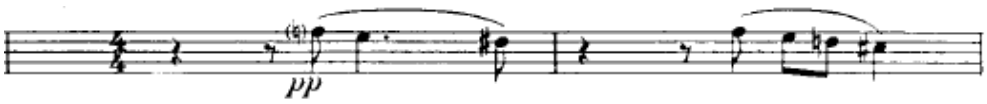

Figure 20: Descending flute motive (mm. 6 - 7)

Squares 1 – 4 constitute a large A-section that can be divided in two based upon motivic interplay. A1 (mm. 6 – 18) provides a sense of stability fostered by the use of ostinato. There are no changes for the piano and cello parts in these 13-bars. The vocal writing centers primarily around D#-aeolian, but implying mode becomes difficult when phrases are built with only four to five notes. The motive that appears in the flute part also offers a feeling of security due to its regularity, two bars repeated exactly for five cycles, but this is a manipulation. Following the narrative text, one may begin to discover ways in which this motive and its behavior is grown organically from the poet's words. Here, the singer speaks of a time in the past when white people descended (*descendirent*) upon the island, where they were welcomed and offered land, if they would be good, act justly, and be brotherly. In this reading, the whites agree to these requirements supported by the composer's placement of "*les blancs promirent*," which proceeds the formal delineation of A2 at measure 19. The descending motive penned by Ravel reflects the image of the whites coming down upon the island. It repeatedly snakes downward, moving chromatically from F- C# but disappears at bar-18. Considering the open perfect 4^{ths} and 5^{ths} found abundantly in the cello and the right hand of the piano, one might assume a melodic resolution of the flute's motive from diminished to perfect 4^{th}, yet the insinuated C-natural does not come. The pitch C-natural is therefore not only absent from the introduction, but it is purposely withheld

and repeatedly suggested for 18 bars. Its long-awaited arrival finally occurs in the left hand of the piano at m.19 [fig. 21], altering the musical landscape and marking the A2 section that spans measures 19 – 37.

Up until now, Ravel has utilized of the open major 7th interval for this piece's pedal points which are heard prominently in A1 between the notes G – F#, but now at m. 19 octaves are heard in the bass. This may seem like a minor detail, but this octave spread is a rarity in the whole of *Chansons Madécasses*, only occurring here in mm. 19 – 36, and toward the end of the final song, *Il est doux*. We now experience a true moment of bitonality, with all naturals in the piano LH and cello, and all sharps in the piano RH and voice. There is no sense of stability here however, even with everything seemingly in its place. This section is marked by strong harmonic and metric shifting, in line with its disconcerting text.

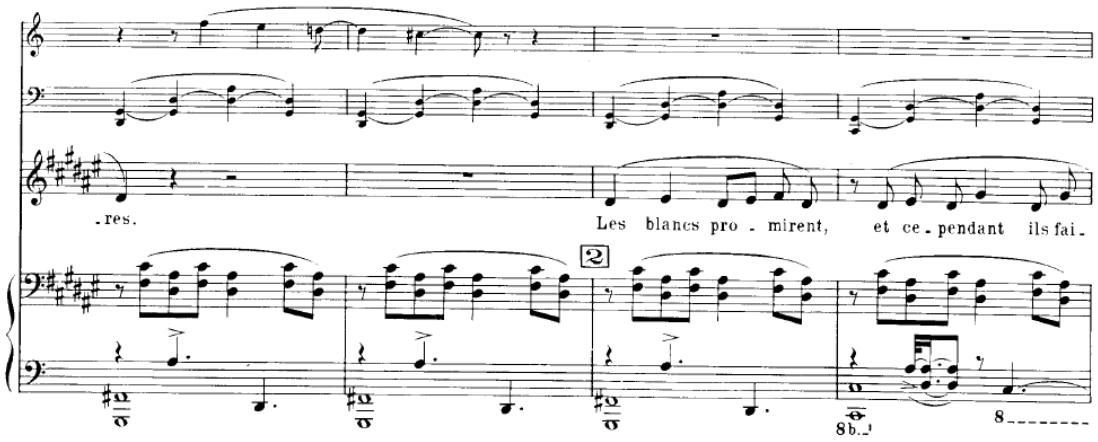

Figure 21: C-Natural directly followed by "Aoua" motive in the bass at m. 19 (mm. 16 - 19)

In a clear reference to colonialism, the singer speaks of the whites breaking promises and making retrenchments. The words remark on the building of a large,

menacing, weaponized fort, and goes on to speak of religious conversion, obedience, and slavery. The speaker claims death as a better fate. Ravel underlines the horror of this story with bass movement in the piano LH moving downward by minor 3rd, outlining a diminished triad in mm. 19 – 25, while modulation upward by half-step can be heard the piano RH (mm. 19 – 29). This wedging outward is accompanied by rising vocal tessitura, the melodic contour of which turns distinctly upward at the mention of slavery (*esclavage*). "Slavery" is highlighted by tritone movement in the bass from G# to D-natural in m. 30. Ravel also truncates the meter from pulses of four, to three, to two, from mm. 30 – 34, adding further to the anxiety of this moment.

One may also become increasingly aware of the Aoua motive, which is heard unceasingly in mm. 30 – 36 in the flute and piano LH (treble). This motive reemerged at m. 19, hidden within the dense low-voiced texture created in the absence of the dominating flute descant. The likelihood of the Aoua motive being heard at its reemergence is extremely slim, considering the very low and powerful placement of the C-natural, which may easily command the listeners auditory attention.

Square 4 (mm. 38 – 67) constitutes the large B section in which the narrator tells the story of a battle in the past when their opposition was even stronger, but nature fought for them in the form of storms and poisoned winds, vanquished the foe and allowed them to continue their lives freely. Ravel indicates a tempo marking of *allegro feroce* to forward this story and again utilizes open major 7th intervals in the piano while the flute plays *quasi tromba* battle calls.[105] Ravel clearly meant for the flute to emulate a trumpet or bugle call and the registral shift to illustrate the "poisoned air" is striking at

[105] Appendix B, *N4*

measure 57. What has gone unnoticed at this moment of climax, however, is the Aoua motive, which gives a loud sforzando cry in the piano RH.

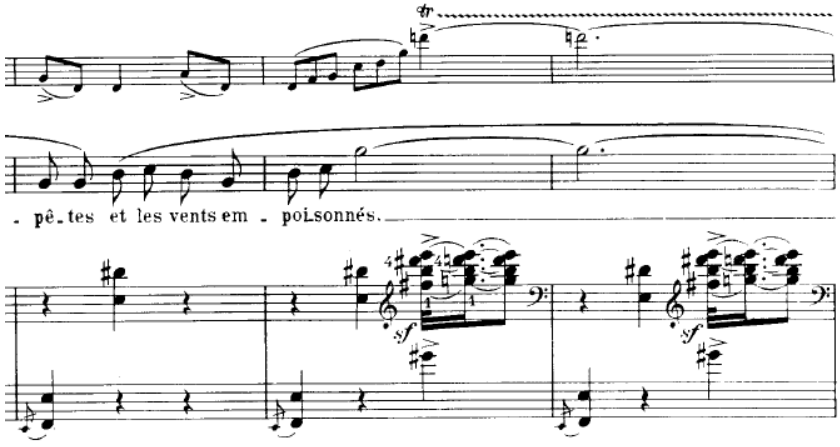

Figure 22: "Aoua" motive in RH (mm. 56 - 58)

The abrupt deceleration of tempo that follows this climax, the downward turn of melodic contour, and reduced dynamic force, all serve to undermine the narrator's declaration of freedom (*Ils ne sont plus, et nous vivons libres*). Ravel has not written a song of victory for the Madagascans. In disagreement with the analysis offered by Ellis, this reading does not find "the natives relaxed" in the absence of a "real threat;" on the contrary, this motive driven analysis recognizes the altering effect this conflict has had on the native people.[106] The story told by Ravel in mm. 63 – 67 is unambiguous. The singer gives two final cries of "Aoua" and for the first time, in this sparse texture, the descending minor 3rd is unaccompanied. This is followed immediately by the warning, *"Méfiez-vous des blancs, habitans du rivage,"* sung to the tune of the descending flute motive, last heard in section A1. The narrator's initial cries have been transformed to

[106] Ellis, 31.

conform to the chromatic, snake-like, descending figure that is in complete contrast with the modal vocal writing that came before it.

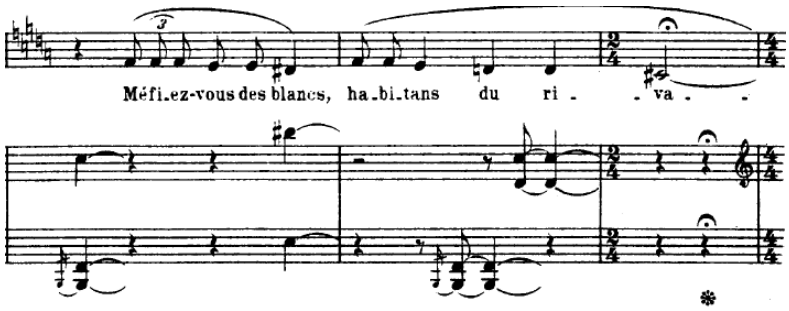

Figure 23: *Aoua* (mm. 55- 57) Descending motive

As the postlude plays out, the cello plays the narrator's primary melody in duet with the flute's descending motive. They both live together now in musical democracy. The primitivist Aoua motive has evaporated and the native, driving ostinato slackens to a halt.

Final: A Closing Statement

I discovered while writing this document that I was not the first to make a connection between *Rapsodie Nègre* and the *Chansons Madécasses*, Poulenc himself performed both works in a recital with the soprano Madeline Grey in 1928.[107] The works complement each other in many ways. Both are vocal chamber works meant for the concert hall that share in a primitivist aesthetic that speaks to the then current French taste for Africanism that was reflected in art, music, and literature. This is done without any overt references to black music which would have been recognized as ragtime or jazz, being in such close proximity to the popular jazz-age of the 1920s. Other inspirations instead, like Schoenberg's *Pierrot* and the mock African texts of Parny and Ormoy, supplied both composers with tools to produce a work that answered the Parisian "call to blackness."[108] I chose to examine these works for these reasons. They play in an unexpected place and present an imagined blackness. There is not enough being said of the Africanist influence in classical music. Speaking from my own past experience as a young black student, one is taught that black people have contributed very little to classical music outside of jazz or the spiritual, but I wanted to write a document that showed a different type of influence, outside of the realm of the popular. As Toni Morrison stated so beautifully in *Playing in the Dark*, "I was interested, as I [have] been for a long time, in the way black people ignite critical

[107] Schmidt, 163.
[108] Watkins, 184.

moments of discovery or change or emphasis in literature [music] not written by them."[109]

This document does not mean to claim that anything is necessarily wrong with these works. The *Chansons Madécasses* is a regularly performed and highly regarded work of art-music. However, to not ask questions of *Aoua!* or ponder Ravel's attraction to the characters illustrated in the surrounding songs or avoid questioning the nature of the conflict between the dark inhabitants of the island and the white people who invaded them, would be denying a significant portion of the work's interpretation. An issue arises when a work that is evocative of a people, particularly those of an underrepresented racial group, is taken too lightly. Works like *Rapsodie Nègre*, with its jarring harmony and meaninglessness texts, are provocative by nature, I therefore believe that vulgarity should be avoided at all costs. Dramatized performances played for laughs, or exaggerated vocalisms that actually run contrary to the composer's indications, may be offensive to audience members of that group. I believe a fine line emerges when we take a moment to investigate our response to provocation, which are present in both pieces. In these cases, are we reacting solely to the sounds conjured by the composition, or is the reaction to what or who the sound is meant to represent? Would I, as a black person for example, react at all to these works if they were titled differently? The frame enhances the image.

Locke observes that offensiveness is in the eye of the beholder, and I agree. There are indeed many exotic works that are not tied to "systematic hatred [or] events

[109] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), viii.

of great beastliness."[110] Yet there are compositions wielding such evocative power as these that are arguably charged with a level of crassness that would be unthinkable for either Poulenc or Ravel. Another *Rhapsodie Nègre* was composed in 1918 by the American pianist and composer John Powell, a noted white supremacist who gave up performing to further the cause of "racial integrity," and *The Sonata Sauvage* was written for piano by George Antheil in 1922, with the colorfully titled movements *Niggers*, *Snakes*, and *Ivory*; works such as these, clearly encapsulating the blatant history of American racism decked abundantly with harsh dissonance, help to prove the unfortunate truth that racialism, negative ideas about race, can be expressed through music.[111] This is no different than the pounding drums and eerie trills of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, which marked the Madagascan Hindus as primitive and uncivilized.[112]

I do not believe it was the intent of either Poulenc or Ravel to project beastliness. It was inevitable that the young Poulenc would compose an African(ish) work, considering the way the artists and composers that inspired him pulled inspiration from an idealized view of blackness itself. Tzara spoke of extracting light from blackness, which symbolized the infinite, naivety, and transformation.[113] Whiteness on the other hand, clearly a metaphor for European tradition, was dark and grinding. Given Poulenc's devotion to European musical tradition and his French republican identity, it would seem unlikely that he shared Tzara's point of view. Yet "atmosphere," which Poulenc always responded to and depended upon, called for a push against

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[110] Locke, 40 – 41.
[111] See: Rolf Charlston, *A Rhapsodic Heart of Darkness: John Powell's Rhapsodie Nègre*; Stephanie Delane Doktor, *How a White Supremacist Became Famous for His Black Music: John Powell and Rhapsodie Nègre (1918)*. Watkins, 171.
[112] Locke, 198.
[113] Tristan Tzara, "note on negro art," in *Seven Dada manifestos and lampisteries*, trans. Barbara Wright (London: John Calder, 1977), 75 – 78.

"impressionist snow" and his momentary commitment to the African mask afforded him immediate validation and recognition as a composer.[114]

Whiteness is the apparent enemy in *Aoua*, where it has a human form. We can really only ever speculate the reasons why Ravel choose to set the poetry of Parny upon receiving Coolidge's commission, or the level of influence Malagasy music had upon the work. He personally said nothing of Malagasy influence, music, or history. The story that he haphazardly choose Parny's African(ish) text seems incomplete.[115] There was no reason for Ravel, a noted lover of Edgar Allan Poe, to not set an American text for an American commission. *The Raven* also exploits the contrasting of black and white with its beguiling ebony bird sitting still on the pallid bust, and there is also a strong similarity between Poe's refrains of nevermore, and Parny's *Nahandove*. The works *human* elements, informed by Parny's exoticizing colonialist poetry, may simply be a secondary consequence of Ravel's desire to emulate the technique Poe, whom he called his greatest teacher of composition.[116] Therefore, to quote Locke, "the work is largely irrelevant to the exotic locale being evoked," and vice-versa.[117] We are left with a Poe(*esque*)-Schoenbergian hybrid that benefits from the Africanist mask; light under the cover of blackness. A number of stereotypes found in Parny's text are undermined by Ravel's stellar compositional technique however, and unlike Poulenc's immature work, cheap shots are hard to play. There is also a heightened feeling of authenticity, whether or not Ravel utilized or referenced any actual Madagascan music. Locke recognizes this phenomenon as transcultural composing, a practice which usually

[114] Southon, 101. Schmidt, 70.
[115] Ellis, 15. Citing liner notes from the recording *Madeline Grey: Great Recordings of the Century* (England, Columbia Gramophone Company, ltd., 1932).
[116] Orenstein, 454.
[117] Locke, 327.

creates a work for Western contexts, such as a chamber music concert or a piano recital, that incorporates stylistic and/or formal conventions of a distant culture's music, blending it with elements the composer or audience would recognize as their own.[118] The caveat is that composers could not (and perhaps would not) expect audience members to know much about the unfamiliar music or style being borrowed.

Finally, we must ask what this all means for performances today. Is there anything to do about these works? Should they be cancelled or only performed by a select few? Concert works such as these have not received the level of scrutiny as a *Madama Butterfly* or *Porgy and Bess*, where race and culture take centerstage and intensify the story, for better or worse. Instead, the Europeanist guard of concert style frequently dissolves all traces of blackness and presents a soundscape clothed in Western formal attire. The concert audience expects music, not story, but there is one being told, nonetheless. While it is not my position to dictate who should or should not perform these works (I believe everyone who is capable should), I do wonder if they become more effective when performed by a person of color? If it does in fact offend, does *Honoloulou* become more or less provocative when performed by a black person? Does the *Chansons Madécasses* receive an added layer of authenticity when performed by an ensemble of black and brown? There is more than pure music here.

Recently, Wigmore Hall presented *Nuits d'Afrique* (2015) alongside *Chansons Madécasses*. The work, which was composed as a companion to Ravel's, features the texts of three contemporary African women and the event of its debut provides an excellent example of how a work like *Chansons Madécasses* can be used to act as a

[118] Locke, 228.

catalyst for equity, diversity, and inclusion.[119] As mentioned earlier, Poulenc's first opus was performed alongside an all-black jazz band in 1918.[120] While I imagine the dual performance did little lessen the blows of incessant tremolo and meaningless chant, it would have given the listening audience an opportunity to recognize what Poulenc's music absolutely was not. I do not believe it is necessary to remove the sung movements of the work. While many staged works would, and often do, benefit from the excising of blatantly racist and historically degrading material, I believe the artistic merit of this concert work would be lost without the voice.

More than anything, performances of such works should not take place without at least mentioning the Africanist influence, which goes beyond the music that may or may not be appropriated. The presence of blackness itself, represented in the black bodies that were conquered by colonization, that played jazz at the Port of Breast, or that was signified in Golliwogg dolls and Negro idols, gave composers (Poulenc and Ravel are only examples) license to delve into their dark unknown, extract light, and present works that are considered significant – works that would not exist without the African mask.

[119] *Nuits d'Afrique* (2015) composed by Judith Weir, pub. Chester Music, Ltd., debuted at Wigmore Hall, London, July 14th, 2017. The work features the poetry of Fatou Ndiaye Sow, Véronique Tadjo and Marie-Léontine Tsibinda. See: https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/56293/Nuits-dAfrique--Judith-Weir/.
[120] Watkins, 109.

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Appendix A: Chansons Madécasses translations including Jean-Luc Moreau's woodcut engravings found in the published score.

Nahandove

[121]

Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!	Nahandove, oh beautiful Nahandove!
L'oiseau nocturne a commencé ses cris,	The bird of night has begun its cries,
la pleine lune brille sur ma tête,	the full moon shines on my head,
et la rosée naissante humecte mes cheveux.	and the newly born dew moistens my hair.
Voici l'heure; qui peut t'arrèter,	This is the hour; who can be keeping you away,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!	Nahandove, oh beautiful Nahandove!
Le lit de feuilles est prépare;	The bed of leaves is prepared;
je l'ai parsemé de fleurs	I have scattered it with flowers
et d'herbes odoriférantes;	and aromatic herbs;
il est digne de tes charmes,	it is worthy of your charms,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!	Nahandove, oh beautiful Nahandove!
Elle vient.	She comes.
J'ai reconnu la respiration précipitée	I recognized the precipitous breathing
que donne une marche rapide;	that comes from a hurried pace;
j'entends le froissement de la pagne	I hear the rustling of the cloth
qui l'enveloppe; c'est elle,	that covers her; it is her,
c'est Nahandove, la belle Nahandove.	it is Nahandove, the beautiful Nahandove.
Ô reprends haleine, ma jeune amie;	Oh, recover your breath, my young love,

[121] Images by Jean-Luc Moreau reproduced from the published score of *Chansons Madécasses* (Paris: Editions Durand, 1926).

repose-toi sur mes genoux.
Que ton regard est enchanteur!
Que le mouvement de ton sein est vif
et délicieux sous la main qui le presse!
Tu souris, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Tes baisers pénètrent jusqu'à l'âme;
tes caresses brûlent tous mes sens;
arrête, ou je vais mourir.
Meurt-on de volupté,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Le plaisir passe comme un éclair.
Ta douce haleine s'affaiblit,
tes yeux humides se referment,
ta tête se penche mollement,
et tes transport s'éteignent dans la langueur.

Jamais tu ne fus si belle,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Tu pars, et je vais languir
dans les regrets et les desirs.
Je languirai jusq'au soir.
Tu reviendras ce soir,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

rest yourself on my knees.
How enchanting you look!
How the movement of your breast is alive
and delicious, under the hand that presses it!
You smile, Nahandove, beautiful Nahandove!

Your kisses penetrate down to the soul;
your caresses burn all my senses!
Stop, or I will die.
Can one die of voluptuousness,
Nahandove, o beautiful Nahandove?

The pleasure passes like a flash of lightning.
Your sweet breath grows gentler,
your wet eyes close again and again,
your head loosely bends,
and your rapturous transports yield to stillness;

Never were you so beautiful,
Nahandove, o beautiful Nahandove!

You leave, and I will languish
filled with regret and desire.
I will languish until evening.
You will come back this evening,
Nahandove, o beautiful Nahandove!

Aoua!

Aoua! Aoua!
Méfiez-vous des blancs,

Aoua! Aoua!
Beware of the whites,

habitans du rivage.

Du temps de nos pères,
des blancs descendirent dans cette île.
On leur dit: Voilà des terres,
que vos femmes les cultivent;
soyez justes, soyez bons,
et devenez nos frères.

Les blancs promirent, et cependant
ils faisaient des retranchements.
Un fort menaçant s'éleva;
le tonnerre fut renfermé
dans des bouches d'airain;
leurs prêtres voulurent nous donner un Dieu
que nous ne connaissons pas;
ils parlèrent enfin d'obéissance
et d'esclavage. Plutôt la mort!

Le carnage fut long et terrible;
mais malgré la foudre qu'ils vomissaient
et qui écrasait des armées entières,
ils furent tous exterminès.
Aoua! Aoua!
Méfiez-vous des blancs!

Nous avons vu de nouveaux tyrans,
plus forts et plus nombreux,
planter leur pavillon sur le rivage.
Le ciel a combattu pour nous.
Il a fait tomber sur eux les pluies,
les tempêtes et les vents empoisonnés.
Ils ne sont plus, et nous vivons,
et nous vivons libres.

inhabitants of the riverbank.

In the time of our fathers,
the whites descended upon this island.
To them we said: Here is land,
let your women cultivate it;
be just, be good,
and become our brothers.

The white men made promises, and meanwhile
they were making retrenchments.
A menacing fort arose;
thunder was shut
into bronze mouths.
Their priests wanted to give us a God
we knew nothing of;
they then spoke of obedience
and slavery. This was, rather death!

The carnage was long and terrible,
but despite their hurling lightning bolts,
which wiped out entire armies,
they were all exterminated.
Aoua! Aoua!
Beware of the whites!

We had seen new tyrants,
stronger, and more numerous,
plant their banners on the shore.
The skies fought for us.
It made the rains fall on them,
storms and poisoned winds.
They are no more, and we live on,
and we live free.

Il est doux

Il est doux de se coucher, durant la chaleur,
sous un arbre touffu, et d'attendre
que le vent du soir amène la fraîcheur.
Femmes, approchez.

Tandis que je me repose ici sous un arbre touffu,
occupez mon oreille par vos accents prolongés;
répétez la chanson de la jeune fille,
lorsque ses doigts tressent la natte,
ou lorsq'assise auprès du riz, elle chasse les
oiseaux avides.

Le chant plaît à mon âme.
La danse est pour moi presque aussi douce qu'un
baiser.

Que vos pas soient lents;
qu'ils imitent les attitudes du plaisir
et l'abandon de la volupté.

Le vent du soir se léve;
le lune commence à briller au travers des arbres
de la montagne.

Allez, et préparez le repas.

It is sweet to lie down during the heat,
under a shady tree, and wait
for the evening wind to bring its coolness.
Women, approach.

While I rest here under a shady tree,
occupy my ear with your drawled words.
Sing again the song of the young girl,
when her fingers weave the mat,
or when sitting by the rice, she chases
away the eager birds.

The singing pleases my soul.
Dancing, for me is almost as sweet as a
kiss.

Let your steps be slow;
let them imitate the attitudes of pleasure
and the abandon of voluptuousness.

The evening wind rises;
the moon begins to shine through the trees
on the mountain.

Go, and prepare the meal.

Translated by Thomas Cannon

Appendix B: Nahandove Motive and Transformations