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**STÉRÉOTYPES CULTURELS ET TRANSMISSION DE LA  
CONNAISSANCE DES ÎLES DE L'ATLANTIQUE : LES  
ARCHIPELS DE MADÈRE ET DES CANARIES DANS  
*L'INSULAIRE DE BENEDETTO BORDONE***

BY

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**Abstract.** Benedetto Bordone's *Isolario*, written in 1534, is an ambitious work aiming to provide a comprehensive description of all existing islands. Although relatively understudied, it stands as a significant resource, not only for its contributions to cartography but also for the invaluable insights it offers into the cultural specifics of these territories in the sixteenth century. This contribution aims to highlight, on one hand, the cultural and identity specifics of two archipelagos that seem to exert a particular fascination on Bordone, perhaps due to their proximity to Europe: Madeira and the Canary Islands. Methodologically, our analysis will seek to address the following questions: What is the evolution that the *Isolario* represents, from a cultural perspective, in comparison to the medieval portolan? How is the description of the fundamentally wild nature of the Atlantic Islands approached? And finally, is it possible to domesticate these lands?

**Keywords:** Book of Islands; maritime trade; portolan; Atlantic archipelagos; cultural specificities.

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## 1. Introduction

A me sembra di far cosa assai giovevole, se de tutte le isole & penisule del mondo con lor nomi antichi & moderni, & con ogni altra cosa che a quelle s'appertengono io faro intendere, si che delle istorie che de quelle scritte sono, come anchora delle lor favole, & in quale parte del mare giacciono, & de varii costumi che tutto di navigando vi si veggono, & sotto qual parallelo, & in qual climi siano poste [...] (Bordone, 1534, p. XV).

(Il me semble accomplir une entreprise fort utile en fournissant des informations sur toutes les îles et les péninsules du monde, avec leurs noms anciens et modernes, ainsi que tout ce qui se rapporte à elles. Je souhaite rendre publics les récits qui les concernent, leurs légendes, ainsi que leur emplacement géographique, les diverses coutumes que l'on peut observer en naviguant entre elles, et dans quel parallèle et quel climat elles se trouvent.) [Les traductions françaises de l'ensemble des citations italiennes issues des volumes indiqués dans la liste des références sont personnelles].

C'est par ces propos que le cartographe et enlumineur Benedetto Bordone présente à son neveu, Bartolomeo Bordone, médecin réputé de la Marine vénitienne, les critères sur lesquels repose son ambitieux projet de description de « toutes les îles qui existent et dont nous connaissons l'existence » intitulé *Isolario* dès 1543. Bien qu'animé par la volonté de proposer à ses lecteurs un arsenal exhaustif sur l'ensemble des îles « connues » à son époque, Benedetto éprouve un intérêt bien particulier pour celles de la Méditerranée et de l'Atlantique. Aussi, loin d'être un simple recueil d'îles, l'œuvre de Bordone contient-elle – comme le veut la tradition du *Livre des Îles* initiée par le Florentin Cristoforo Buondelmonti en 1420 – de précieuses informations sur les spécificités culturelles et l'identité des îles dont il décrit la localisation géographique.

La présente contribution se propose de dégager les spécificités identitaires et culturelles de deux archipels qui semblent exercer une fascination particulière sur Bordone, sans doute en raison de leur proximité avec l'Europe, ceux de Madère et des Canaries. D'un point de vue méthodologique, à partir des chapitres consacrés à ces deux archipels atlantiques – dont nous proposons la traduction française en regard du texte italien – notre analyse tentera de répondre aux interrogations suivantes : quelle est l'évolution que l'*Isolario* représente, d'un point de vue culturel, par rapport au portulan médiéval ? Comment est abordée la description du caractère foncièrement sauvage de l'île atlantique ? Et enfin, est-il possible d'apprivoiser ces terres ?

## 2. Du portulan à l'insulaire

Posons le décor. D'une manière générale, les *Livres des Îles* ou *Insulaires* se fondent sur le système cartographique hérité des portulans, conçus, quant à eux, pour un public spécialisé, essentiellement composé de marins. Le premier *Livre des îles* est composé en 1420 par le Florentin Cristoforo Buondelmonti, qui ajoute aux cartes des légendes et des commentaires :

Terreau fertile des mythes et des légendes de l'Antiquité, la mer Egée et ses îles sont aussi le lieu des récits de voyage d'Homère [...] Ces récits se retrouvent à travers tout l'ouvrage de Buondelmonti, démontrant sa compréhension de l'importance de l'Archipel aux niveaux symbolique et culturel [...] (Perreault, 2019, p. 6).

Tout en véhiculant une série de récits symboliques, les *Isolari* fournissent aux navigateurs un arsenal de renseignements pratiques destinés à favoriser les échanges commerciaux et maritimes. Umberto Eco définit quant à lui l'*Insulaire* de Bordone comme un ouvrage cataloguant toutes les îles du monde, aussi bien celles qui étaient bien connues au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle que celles qui ne faisaient l'objet que de vagues légendes. Les *Insulaires* en général représentent – dit Eco – une géographie de l'inconnu ou du peu connu, ce qui explique leur succès :

Ainsi s'expliquent le succès et la séduction d'un genre d'ouvrages très populaire aux X<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles : les *Isolari*, qui cataloguaient toutes les îles du monde – les connues, mais aussi celles qui n'étaient mentionnées que par de vagues légendes. A leur manière, les *Isolari* cherchent à être aussi géographiquement précis que possible (à la différence des histoires des pays légendaires écrites aux siècles précédents) et ils évoluaient toujours à la frontière entre la tradition orale et le compte rendu de voyage. Parfois ils se trompaient [...], mais qu'importe ? Ils représentaient une géographie de l'inconnu, ou, à tout le moins, du peu connu (Eco, 2000, p. VII).

À cet égard, F. Lestringant observe que le genre de l'*Isolario* connaît une expansion de sa structure d'origine avec l'ajout d'archipels nouveaux, y compris atlantiques :

On appelle Insulaire un atlas exclusivement composé de cartes d'îles. Plus simplement encore, l'Insulaire c'est le Livre des îles, *Liber insularum* [...]. A l'origine cantonné dans la mer Egée, l'*Isolario* déborde bientôt de son cadre originel. Le *Livre des îles de l'Archipel*, dans son projet même, était extensible à volonté, et c'est cette virtualité qu'exploitent d'abord les copistes et suiveurs

de Buondelmonti, sans renoncer pour autant au canon classique qui avait présidé à la naissance du genre. Les voici donc qui agrègent au noyau égéen, objet privilégié de l'humanisme géographique, des archipels nouveaux, qui reduplicent l'archipel premier (Lestringant, 2021, p. 19).

Le genre de l'*Insulaire* connaît une évolution rapide au XVe siècle. Ce processus n'est pas étonnant si l'on songe à la précision géographique que ces textes revendiquent et qui en font de puissants outils de militarisation. À des fins d'expansion maritime, leurs cartes permettent en effet d'appréhender la forme des îles, de leurs côtes, l'emplacement des ports – quand ils existent – et les spécificités des populations locales.

De ce point de vue, l'*Isolario* de Bordone est particulièrement représentatif de cette évolution car il se situe précisément à la croisée des chemins entre ce glissement de l'aspect plus technique des portulans et du mouvement représenté par l'ajout des archipels atlantiques. Bien que Bordone soit principalement étudié pour son utilisation novatrice de la projection polaire dans l'élaboration de ses cartes remplaçant ainsi l'ancienne projection de Ptolémée, l'attention portée à son œuvre en tant que source d'inspiration pour ceux qui envisagent l'exil ou la migration vers des terres inconnues est étonnamment négligée. Cet aspect revêt une importance encore plus grande lorsque l'on considère l'*Isolario* et son exploration approfondie des archipels atlantiques. Nous nous proposons par conséquent de porter un regard nouveau sur l'héritage de Bordone, soulignant la richesse de son œuvre tant sur le plan historique que sur le plan des possibilités qu'elle offre à ceux qui aspirent à se rendre sur ces îles parfois féériques.

Il convient de nous arrêter brièvement sur l'objectif que Bordone affiche lorsqu'il rédige l'*Isolario*, et plus particulièrement dans son Introduction : il souhaite corriger les erreurs des anciens en matière de connaissance des îles, ce qui le conduit à appliquer un schéma fixe à l'ensemble d'îles qui composent son œuvre : en premier lieu une nomenclature renouvelée (les îles sont en effet présentées avec leurs noms antiques, modernes et leur étymologie). À cela s'ajoutent des connaissances nouvelles, grâce à l'exposition des légendes liées à chaque île mais aussi des singularités que l'on peut y trouver. Ces stéréotypes culturels se fondent sur les témoignages oraux des marins qui les ont visitées. On voit bien ici que le souci de l'apport culturel précède et domine l'élément plus technique qui aurait en revanche été essentiel dans un portulan.

Sur ces bases, peut-on dégager, au sein de l'œuvre de Bordone, des spécificités propres aux archipels atlantiques ?

### **3. La mémoire et le lieu. L'île sauvage**

Le côté foncièrement obscur que les archipels atlantiques représentent pour Bordone se traduit avant tout, dans l'*Isolario*, par l'évocation de l'île dans son état sauvage. F. Lestringant observe à cet égard que, de manière générale, dans les Insulaires l'île est le produit de l'affrontement de l'eau et de la terre, d'un conflit perpétuel entre éléments rivaux (Lestringant, 2021, p. 19).

Dans le cas de l'œuvre de Bordone, cet antagonisme est particulièrement marqué. Ainsi, l'île de Madère jaillit même d'une confrontation violente entre l'eau, la terre et le feu. Ce sont précisément ces éléments qui, ajoutés à la nature hostile de l'environnement, scandent les étapes de la colonisation de l'île de Madère par les Portugais. L'étymologie proposée par Bordone pour expliquer le nom de l'île, qu'il fait dériver de « bois », fournit un premier indice sur l'aspect primitif de l'île, lorsqu'elle était encore à l'état sauvage.

Couverte de bois impénétrables qui en font une sorte de forteresse, Madère est totalement inaccessible à toute tentative de pénétration humaine mais aussi d'éléments naturels, comme les rayons du soleil. C'est pourquoi la colonisation de cette île par l'homme se fera forcément au moyen d'un affrontement brutal :

Medera, per lo tempo andato era diserta, ma è dintorno anni sessanta che Portogagliesi ad habitarla incominciorono, & il nome di Medera le diedero, che nella nostra lingua legname si dice, la quale, di cosi fatta natura era, che non gli huomini, ma appena Phebo co suoi raggi penetrar potuto l'harrebbe, tanto di arbori era folta, in modo che volendo quivi habitare, costretti furnono di porvi dentro il fuoco, accio che detti arbori da quello consumati fosseno, ne per altro modo o vero ingegno non lor dava il core de poterli consumare, il qual dentro postovi, non molto tempo passo chel fuoco divenne in tal modo grande, ardendo, che chi sopra l'isola dimorava, fu da l'incendio costretto nel mar a fuggire, & infino al mento in quello tuffarsi, & due di & due notti senza mangiare o bere cosi starsi, & li duo di passati, il fuoco al suo furor dette fine. (Bordone, 1534, p. XVI).

(L'île de Madère était autrefois déserte, mais depuis environ soixante ans les Portugais ont commencé à y habiter. Ils lui donnèrent le nom de Madera qui signifie ‘bois’ dans notre langue. Sa configuration était telle que non seulement les hommes, mais aussi Phébus avec ses rayons n’aurait pu y pénétrer. En voulant la rendre habitable, les Portugais furent contraints d’y mettre le feu pour que les flammes consomment tous ces arbres, car ils ne pensaient pas pouvoir y parvenir par un autre moyen. Une fois le feu allumé, il devint très grand, si bien que ceux qui vivaient sur l'île furent obligés de fuir en se jetant dans la mer et d'y plonger jusqu'au menton. Ils restèrent ainsi deux jours et

deux nuits, sans manger ni boire, et au bout de ces deux jours la fureur des flammes s'apaisa.)

Les incendies volontaires allumés pour débroussailler cette terre hostile se retournent contre l'homme ; l'île, personnifiée, semble se révolter et résister à la colonisation par le violent incendie qui chasse les hommes et les constraint à plonger dans la mer pour être épargnés de la propagation des flammes.

La nature hostile est également l'un des éléments sur lesquels repose la description des Canaries, vis-à-vis desquelles Bordone montre peu d'indulgence. Il en fait au contraire un portrait épouvantable : pour lui, ces îles sont majoritairement sauvages, voire même inhabitées, et celle de Ténérife est à proprement parler inquiétante. Les ânes sauvages prolifèrent sur l'une d'entre elles, et les autres sont un repaire d'Infidèles :

Fra [le isole Canarie] ne sono sette habitate & tre altre diserte, la prima è Lanzaroto, Forteventura, Gran Canaria, Teneriffe, Ginera, Palma & l'ultima il Ferro è nominata, l'altra che tre sono, da gente idolatre. E il viver de christiani è pane di orzo, carne & latte, & quasi tutto di capra. Non hanno vino, ne grano, & pochi frutti colgono, copia di Aseni selvatici hanno, & sopra a tutte l'Isola del Ferro [...]. Nel loro favellare molto dissimili sono (Bordone, 1534, p. XVII).

(Sept des îles Canaries sont habitées alors que trois autres sont désertes : Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, Grande Canarie, Tenerife, La Gomera, La Palma et la dernière s'appelle El Hierro. Les trois autres sont habitées par des Infidèles. Les habitants ne se nourrissent que de pain d'orge, de viande et de lait, presque toujours de chèvre. Ils n'ont ni vin ni blé et peu de fruits. Sur ces îles on trouve quantité d'ânes sauvages, surtout à El Hierro. Leurs parlers sont très différents les uns des autres.)

Cet aspect sombre semble déteindre sur ses habitants : ces terres n'ont aucune ressource naturelle digne de ce nom (ni vin, ni maïs, très peu de fruits), ce qui les force à se nourrir exclusivement de pain, d'orge et de lait de chèvre, une alimentation plus que rudimentaire. Mais aux yeux de Bordone, leur organisation sociale est encore plus incroyable. Les habitants de cet archipel vivent dans des grottes et sont dominés par neuf seigneurs aux mœurs tyranniques et, en quelque sorte, préhistoriques car ils se font la guerre à coup de pierres et de bâtons. Leur aspect n'est guère plus rassurant : couverts de peaux de chèvre, ils n'ont aucune religion – certains voient un culte au soleil, d'autres à la lune, et d'autres encore adorent ce qu'il leur plaît d'adorer.

Leur caractère sauvage les pousse même à être polygames : horrifié, Bordone précise qu'ils mettent un point d'honneur à céder leurs épouses à leurs seigneurs pour la nuit de noces et qu'ils pratiquent le suicide rituel.

Hor queste tre isole cioè la Gran Canaria, Teneriffe, & la Palma, hanno per numero nove signori, li quali per forza si fanno, & per queste cotali tirannie, grandissime guerre tra loro si commettono, non già con armi, perche sono di quelle del tutto privati, ma con pietre e mazze di legno, alle loro guerre impongono il fine, & percio che tutti nudi sono, nell'uccidersi fanno mirabile operatione, ben che alchuni di pelle di capra siano coperti, & similmente alchun altri, per ripararsi non tanto dalla guerra, quanto dal freddo, (benche puoco o niente ve ne sia) [...] e con succo d'herba fanno una lor compositione, con la quale si ungono, per far loro la pelle grossa. Habitano nelle grotti di montagne e il viver loro è pane di orzo, carne & latte di capra [...]. Il lor segar di biade è di marzo e d'Aprile. Vivono senza alchuna religione, ch'il sole, & chi la luna, & chi altra cosa come più à loro è dipiacere, adorano. E tra loro le femine non sono comune, ma ciaschuno tante ne prende quante à lui ne piace. Ne sarebbe alchuno (per vil che sia) ch'alchuna di queste sue moglie à casa conducesse, se col signor suo non fosse in prima giacciuta, percio che [...] appo loro questo dormire che fa la moglie col signore grandissimo honore si tiene. Et oltre a questa usanza, un'altra ve n'è di cosi fatta maniera, che creato il signore [...] alchuno de suoi sudditi, a sua signoria si rappresenta, & à quella per honorar la festa si offerisce, de si medesimo uccidere, e per cotal cosa vedere, cioè l'effetto di l'offerta fatta, tutto il popolo si raduna in una certa valle profundissima, & quello, che di morire per lo signore medesimo offerse, ad una altissima rupe asceso, & dopo alchune ceremonie fatte, & alchune parole in laude del suo signore dette, subito da questa rupe altissima gittatosi, di ruinare per quella non resta in fino a tanto che in fondo di quella valle in pezzi è divenuto, dove poi dal popolo è ritrovato, e il signore per cotale effetto, a suoi parenti di cio molto obligato rimane (Bordone, 1534, p. XVII).

(Ces îles donc – à savoir la Grande Canarie, Tenerife et La Palma – sont gouvernées par neuf seigneurs qu'on élit par la force. A cause de ces assujettissements violents, des guerres d'un grande brutalité éclatent entre eux, non pas avec des armes, car ils n'en possèdent pas, mais à coups de pierres et de bâtons. Lorsqu'ils s'entretuent, ils font quelque chose d'étonnant parce qu'ils sont entièrement nus même si certains se couvrent avec des peaux de chèvre. Ils agissent ainsi plus pour se protéger du froid – ici quasiment inexistant – que de la guerre. Ils préparent une mixture à base de jus d'herbes dont ils s'enduisent pour rendre leur peau plus résistante. Ils vivent dans des grottes, sur les montagnes, et ne se nourrissent que de pain d'orge, de viande et de lait de chèvre. [...] Leurs moissons ont lieu aux mois de mars et d'avril. Ils vivent en dehors de toute religion ; certains adorent le soleil, d'autres la lune, et d'autres encore ce qu'ils préfèrent. Ils ne mettent pas leurs femmes en commun, mais chacun peut en prendre autant qu'il veut. Bien que ce soit abject, aucun des habitants ne laisserait entrer chez lui une femme qui n'aurait pas d'abord couché avec son seigneur. Ici, le contraire serait considéré honteux parce que le fait qu'une femme couche d'abord avec le seigneur est un grand honneur. Une autre coutume locale veut que lorsqu'un seigneur prend le

pouvoir [...], l'un de ses sujets se présente à lui et pour lui faire honneur se propose de se tuer lui-même. Pour assister au spectacle et voir l'effet de cette proposition, tous les habitants de l'île convergent vers une vallée très profonde ; celui qui s'offre en sacrifice monte au sommet d'un pic très haut, et après quelques cérémonies et quelques mots de louange adressés son seigneur, il se jette dans le vide et dévale la pente jusqu'à en être réduit en pièces. Une fois son corps retrouvé au fond de la vallée, le seigneur fait preuve d'une grande reconnaissance envers ses proches à cause de ce geste.)

Les descriptions présentées ci-dessus pourraient suggérer une lecture plutôt négative de toute tentative de discipliner la nature foncièrement sauvage de ces espaces insulaires. Brutale et dangereuse dans le cas de Madère, cette entreprise semble tout simplement vouée à l'échec dans le cas des Canaries, dont la nature inhospitalière, conjuguée aux mœurs quasiment bestiales des habitants, rend impossible toute forme de réorganisation territoriale et sociale. Ce jugement est d'autant plus digne d'autorité pour les lecteurs de l'*Isolario* qu'il repose, selon les dires de Bordone, sur des témoignages directs des marins ayant effectué un voyage vers ces terres. Peut-on pour autant considérer qu'aucun de ces deux espaces insulaires ne trouve grâce aux yeux de l'enlumineur italien ? Une question à cette réponse nous est fournie par l'analyse des cartes qui accompagnent les textes étudiés dans les pages précédentes.

#### **4. L'île apprivoisée**

Les textes descriptifs des archipels de Madère et des Canaries ne doivent pas occulter l'élément autour duquel l'ensemble de l'*Isolario* s'est construit, à savoir la carte de géographie. C'est grâce à cet élément que le processus de domestication de l'île de Madère devient tangible et mesurable pour le lecteur.

Deux cartes sont consacrées à l'archipel portugais, l'une pour l'île de Madère, l'autre pour celle, plus petite, de Porto Santo. Les villes indiquées sur la carte sont représentées par un dessin assez détaillé, plus élaboré pour celle de Madère, qui laisse entrevoir des bâtiments ainsi que des villes douées d'une identité précise et reconnaissable, plus sobre pour la deuxième, consacrée à Porto Santo. Les cours d'eaux y apparaissent maîtrisés et réguliers et les espaces urbains clairement délimités et structurés (voir Fig. 1). La petite île de Porto Santo est représentée selon un procédé analogue, bien qu'avec moins de détails – les noms des principaux villages sont omis, très probablement parce que Bordone n'avait pas suffisamment de renseignements pour les indiquer avec

plus de précision. Les lieux habités sont toutefois restitués avec soin, tout comme le relief (voir Fig. 2).



Fig. 1 – L'île de Madère dans l'*Isolario*.

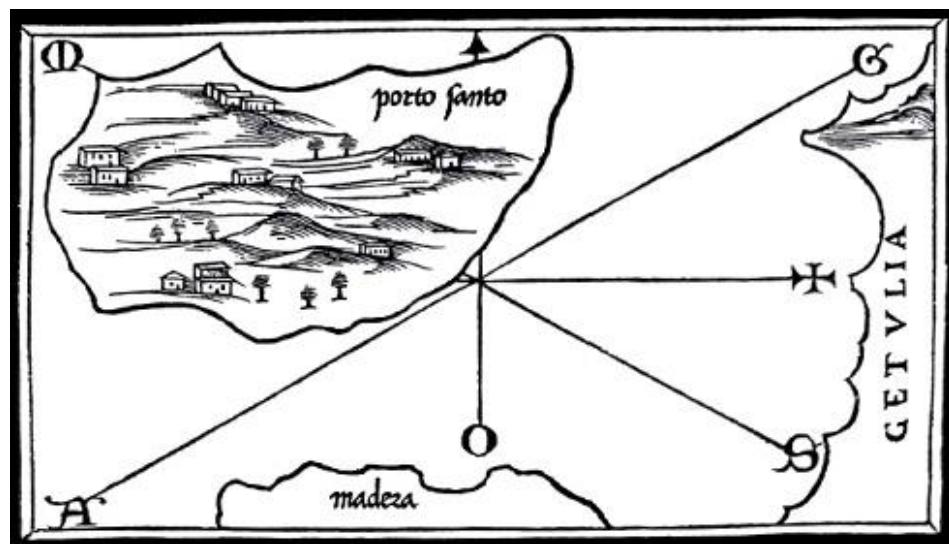


Fig. 2 – L'île de Porto Santo dans l'*Isolario*.

Dans le texte qui accompagne la carte, Bordone nous informe – rappelons-le – que la colonisation portugaise a permis de transformer cet espace

hostile et impénétrable en une île totalement habitée (*Medera, per lo tempo andato era diserta, ma è dintorno anni sessanta che Portogagliesi ad habitarla incominciorono*). L'Auteur évoque une population d'environ deux mille habitants dont trois cents cavaliers, structurée par un découpage territorial rationnel articulé autour de quatre villes principales : *Funzal* (Funchal), *Camera de lioni* (Camara de Lobos), *Santa Croce* (Santa Cruz) et *Monezico* (Machico). Lorsque l'enlumineur passe à la description des ressources naturelles de l'île, elles semblent à proprement parler féeriques. Couverte de quantité d'étangs et regorgeant de toute sorte de fruits, elle possède des ressources de maïs et d'eau douce. Ses petites rivières bien dessinées prouvent que la violence de l'eau a fini par être canalisée par l'homme. Ce petit archipel a également une utilité sur une échelle plus vaste, car ses ressources en bois de cèdre permettent même de fournir tout le Portugal. Sans oublier le miel, la cire, le raisin, les paons blancs, les cailles et les cochons. La comparaison avec la carte réservée aux Canaries est saisissante.

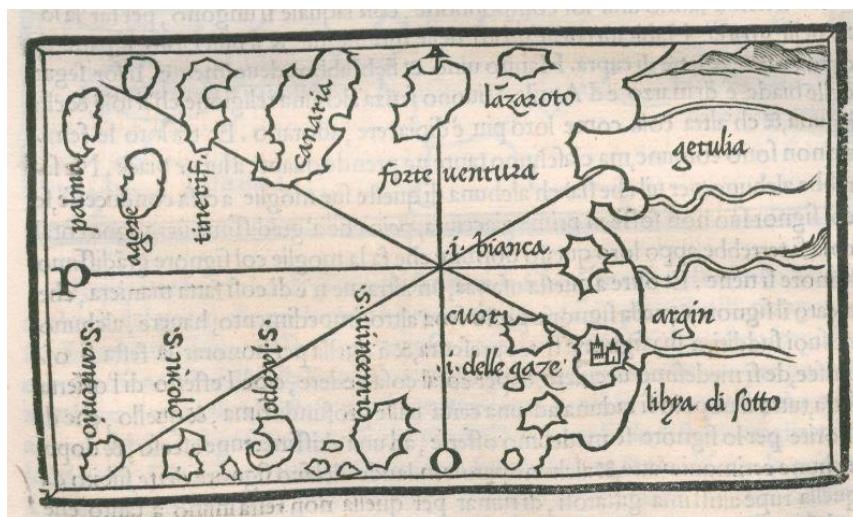


Fig. 3 – Les Îles Canaries dans l'*Isolario*.

Ces îles, déjà dépeintes comme sauvages et inhospitalières tant au point de vue de ses ressources que de celui des mœurs bestiales de ses habitants, sont présentées comme un ensemble unique et indifférencié, sans plus de détails. Le dessin des côtes est lui aussi peu travaillé. Aucune ville n'est ébauchée, puisque l'Auteur considère – sur la base des témoignages qui lui ont été rapportés – qu'il n'y en n'a pas, puisqu'il est persuadé que les habitants vivent dans des grottes et ne disposent donc d'aucun habitat plus évolué. De même, en dépit de

l'impressionnante description des pratiques de suicide rituelles pratiquées dans cet archipel, la seule carte exécutée par l'enlumineur pour les Canaries ne comporte aucune image des profondes vallées choisies pour ces cérémonies. Il convient enfin d'observer qu'aucun détail n'est donné pour le relief, pourtant important, de ces îles volcaniques. Ce contraste entre les représentations des deux archipels traduit une perception ambiguë de l'entreprise de colonisation de ces espaces lointains : dans certains cas – Madère et son archipel – l'île est pliée à la volonté humaine, ses espaces organisés et la force des cours d'eau maîtrisée. En revanche, toute action colonisatrice semble impossible pour les Canaries, dont la nature physique mais aussi humaine (celle de ses habitants) semblent incompatibles avec toute tentative d'organisation civile.

### 5. Conclusions

Pour conclure, les archipels atlantiques de Bordone sont fortement marqués par deux stéréotypes majeurs et opposés, celui du mythe de l'île sauvage et celui de l'île apprivoisée. Dans le cas de Madère, île apprivoisée au moyen du feu et pliée à la volonté humaine, l'espace est caractérisé non pas par son exotisme – l'île n'est plus un pays lointain – mais par sa dépendance du Portugal, dont elle a fini par devenir un espace colonisé et civilisé. L'île ainsi apprivoisée devient un réservoir précieux de toute ressource naturelle pour l'homme (bois, fruits, vin, blé, cire...), y compris pour les habitants du « continent ». En revanche, le mythe de l'île sauvage façonne en profondeur la description des Canaries, où la nature marque au fer rouge les mœurs sociales et spirituelles des habitants. Dans ce cas, il s'agit d'un espace sauvage que les maigres ressources naturelles et l'instabilité politique provoquée par les guerres incessantes entre seigneurs locaux rendent imperméable à toute action colonisatrice. Ainsi, si la description cartographique proposée par l'*Isolario* a pour ambition de contribuer à la description d'une île apprivoisée, cela peut s'appliquer à Madère, mais échoue, au contraire, pour les Canaries, qui demeurent un espace fermé.

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STEREOTIPURI CULTURALE ȘI TRANSMITEREA CUNOȘTINȚELOR DESPRE  
INSULELE ATLANTICE: ARHİPELAGUL MADEIRA ȘI INSULELE CANARE ÎN  
*ISOLARIO DE BENEDETTO BORDONE*

(Rezumat)

*Isolario* de Benedetto Bordone, scrisă în 1534, este o lucrare ambițioasă care urmărește să ofere o descriere cuprinzătoare a tuturor insulelor existente. Deși relativ substudiată, ea reprezintă o resursă semnificativă, nu numai pentru contribuțiile aduse cartografiei, ci și pentru cunoștințele neprețuite pe care le oferă asupra specificului cultural al acestor teritorii în secolul al XVI-lea. Această contribuție își propune să evidențieze, pe de o parte, specificul cultural și identitar a două arhipelaguri care par să exerceze o fascinație deosebită asupra lui Bordone, poate datorită apropiierii lor de Europa: Madeira și Insulele Canare. Metodologic, analiza noastră va căuta să abordeze următoarele întrebări: care este evoluția pe care o reprezintă *Isolario*, din perspectivă culturală, în comparație cu portulanul medieval? Cum este abordată descrierea naturii fundamental sălbaticice a insulelor Atlanticului? Și în sfârșit, este posibil să domesticim aceste pământuri?

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**THE NEXUS BETWEEN ORATURE AND POETIC LANGUAGE  
IN THE CRAFTING OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S *BEWARE SOUL  
BROTHER* (1972)**

BY

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**Abstract.** The objective of this paper is to analyze the way Chinua Achebe as a poet and an artist has availed himself of his indigenous oral literature and cultural community as features with which he has sharpened his poetry craft. Imaginaries such as the python, children chanting, themes like war, death, love, culture, and symbolisms, namely the vulture, the tortoise, the drum, lizards, etc. are mostly drawn from the huge and inspiring repertoire of orature ranging from funeral dirges, myths, folk anecdotes to proverbial utterances. These have been used as literary raw materials, fertilizing silt in establishing *Beware Soul Brother* (1972), and in capturing the flavor of African life, past and present, and its human conditions. The literary hybridity (which is also the poet's hallmark) that prevails in this collection of poems, devoid of private mysticism and orphic messages, has undoubtedly enabled hearers/readers to be locally and universally receptive.

**Keywords:** poetry; Chinua Achebe; orature; dirges; myths; anecdotes; proverbs; culture.

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## 1. Introduction

Chinua Achebe is reputed to draw whole-handedly from the huge, rich, and varied palimpsest of the Igbo folklore. His collection of poems *Beware Soul Brother* was published in 1972 in Heinemann Education Book. But it was first issued in 1971 by Nwankwo Ifejika, a new publishing company in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria, and written during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) or the Biafra War, a socio-political turmoil that has unquestionably provided text-specific content for close reading, commitment, and the development of thought-provoking assignments. Most of the poems revolve around the issue of death and life and the necessity of the poet's community to recognize those who value their lives and those who only value their land resources and cultures. Nearly all the poems printed in this collection are inscribed in free verses. In 1973, the American editor Doubleday republished and retitled the poems under the name of *Christmas in Biafra and other poems*. Whatever collection it may be included in, it is quite obvious that this eclectic grouping of poems of which many have been crafted at the gloomiest period of the poet's country's history has also been steeped into the Igbo oral culture and indigenous knowledge.

The orature is artistically combined with the Victorian poetic tradition and even with biblical parables through which Achebe conveys and decries the social and political troubles of the time. If the war and its physical and psychological drawbacks have been looked upon as the primary inspirational raw material when interweaving this volume of poetry confined to thirty poems and gathered under a series of headings, other leitmotifs such as colonialism and post-colonialism have deeply weighed on Achebe's poems. The recourse to Igbo oral tradition in his both prose and poetic writings can be explained by the fact that he was born at the juncture between the Igbo traditional life – *Odinala* belief and Western Christian belief. The poet's father had been a teacher and a Christian religious man by the time his family members kept pouring libation for and on behalf of the gods and ancestors, which implies they honored their traditions. Both cultures comprehend the feeling of ambivalence incorporated in the novels, namely *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*. Achebe's short stories like *The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories* (1962) and *Girls at Wars and Other Stories* (1972) were not spared from the hybrid culture, let alone *Beware Soul Brother*. Specific features of Achebe's collection disclose that some poems are dated and others not, but such a remark is not really central as the important aspect to be considered here is to what extent he sprinkles his poems with elements of content and technique taken from the oral literary tradition.

## 2. Dirges Symbolism in Poetry Crafting

The basis of the exploitation of oral literary tradition by modern African writers like Chinua Achebe lies in the understanding that times have changed and that the oral heritage they own is bound to be slavishly mirrored or metaphorically and symbolically used. Bearing in mind the war context in which the poems are set, Achebe has heavily resorted to the theme and the imagery of the Igbo dirges to display his concerns. The poem “Beware Soul Brother” encompasses an unclear stance as far as the identification of the audience is concerned even though it is geared towards warning the audience to be aware, to be heedful. The language and the culture the poem pinpoints are specific to the Igbo people. The poem works as a celebration of culture and at the same time as an advocacy to preserve tradition, to use it as a shield against cultural assimilation whose negative impact is identity loss and crisis. Those forewarned Igbo people are referred to as “men of soul/ men of songs” (lines 1, 2) “in paces of the dance” (line 5). Such a plea that springs up by the means of the metaphor is mindful of the traditional dance and songs. It is not just about any kind of dance and song but those performed in the course of funeral dirges and within which sprawls and pivots the epitome of the Igbo culture.

A dead end nor total loss  
If we should go to it striding  
The dirge of the soulful *abia drum* (Achebe, 1972, p. 29)

The mention of the musical instrument *abia drum* is very significant in so far as it is used during title man’s funeral dirges among the Igbo community. Dirge (*iru uju* in Igbo) is a kind of oral poetry that naturally, as any oral genre, resorts to the use of language to communicate experience.

Funeral dirges, however different in the way they are rendered, share something together: the expression of the emotion of loss. Dirges in its broadest meaning, a dirge is simply the lament for the dead. The ultimate function of the funeral dirge turns around commiseration, and condolence with the bereaved family as the performance of the funeral rituals so that the soul of the dead may be pleased and appeased allowing the soul to rest peacefully in the ancestors’ world. The cultural use and spiritual use of the elegiac *abia drum* reveals a “lament in which the musical and ballistic elements are as important as words” (Finnegan, 2012, p. 146). Still, according to Finnegan, the occasion of elegiac poetry varied from one community to another. More often than not, funeral dirges are performed around the corpse or in the vicinity of the abode where the corpse lies while it is being prepared for burial. In some communities like the Akan for instance, the occasion goes along with a long period of public mourning, during which period the body lies in state while the dirges are sung. Sometimes, deaths are celebrated by late memorial ceremonies and are usually

performed with songs. These songs may both include funeral songs as well as a panegyric of the dead “to lend a certain grandeur or fullness to the occasion” (Okpewho, 1992, p. 156). Women are often the ones who perform dirges. Among the Igbo, women lament at funeral dirges (Uzochukwu, 1978, p. 299). It is the same phenomenon that happens among the Yoruba (Ellis, 1894, p. 157). Akan dirges are chanted by women mourners (Nketia, 1955, p. 8). The fact that these mourning songs involve sobbing, wailing, and weeping makes them specifically female prerogatives and perquisites. But in this context, the poet is alluding to is exclusively chanted for deceased men of titles by their fellows. Achebe clarifies in the collection of poems notes:

*Abia* drums beaten at the funeral of the Igbo-titled men. The dance itself is also called *abia* and is danced his danced by the dead man’s peers while he lies in state and finally by two men bearing his coffin before it is taken for burial; so he goes to his ancestors by a final *rite de passage* in solemn paces of dance. (Achebe, 1972, p. 65)

In this above-mentioned quotation, the allusion to the *abia drum* which is beaten only when a personage among the community passes away makes reference to the grandeur of the magnificence and significance of the culture to be preserved from falling into abeyance, into disuse not only for posterity but also for dignity and identity as humans. Generally, within this emotional, spiritual, ritual space where verbal and nonverbal art in all their forms blossom, all the community members, regardless of age group, strongly chip into the liveliness and the dynamism of the culture whose survival is dependent on the warning put forwards by the poet.

But beware soul brother  
 Of the lures of Ascension Day  
 The day of soporific levitation  
 Of high winds of sky songs; beware  
 Lying in wait leaden-footed, tone-deaf  
 Passionate only for the deep entrails  
 Of our soil; beware of the day  
 We head truly skyward leaving  
 That spoil to the long ravenous tooth  
 And talon of their hunger (Achebe, 1972, p.29, lines 11-22)

The stanza “our ancestors, soul brother, were wiser/ than it is often made out. Remember” is very telling since it sounds like a reaction against white imperialists whose unique and biased purpose is to trample the indigenous culture and civilization and coerce the colonized. So the return to African oral literature or folk literature stems from this heavy-duty poetic injunction: “pray protect this patrimony to which you must return...” This is significant for the

poet because it is a primary means of conveying culture. It is also a mode of transmitting feelings and attitudes. The poet highlights it through these stanzas: “men of songs we measure out/ our joys and agonies” (lines 2, 3). The use of the first plural personal narration “we” and the possessive adjective “our” unveil the idea that Achebe is connecting his struggle to the whole history of his people, making his longing for freedom stronger than just himself. The poet’s ancestors bestowed the land and culture to Achebe and his soul brothers. Due to this, the descendants not only have at their disposal the legacy of their forebears to impede the cultural invader’s scheme, but they also take advantage of the power of their culture’s wisdom and bond to the land. These persistent caveats definitely make the reader believe that the poet is conscious of the ongoing changing world which he refers to as “the lures of Ascension Day/ the day of soporific levitation”, a culture-crushing world where the only survivors are those who are deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. The terms “lures” and “soporific” are very insightful insofar as the former touches upon a mirage – a seductive and deceptive appearance the new Western culture enfolds, and the latter hints at its propensity to induce drowsiness or sleep in order to better enthrall and baffle minds. Such a clash of civilizations shows up as a genuine juxtaposition of the Cross (line 7) with the *abia drum* blending the language of the colonizer with the traditional language. In this poem which immerses into the Igbo cultural referent, numerous clues, specifically the anaphora “beware soul brother”, phrases like “remember” (lines 27, 41), “take care then” (lines 33-34), and “pray protect” (lines 37-38) indicate Achebe has heavily resorted to the conative or interpretive language function (Jakobson, 1995). This language function acts on the addressees (the Igbo people, men of the soul), to persuade and provoke an effect on them, hence the rife use of the imperative mode to provide orders, counsel, and summons by means of songs and dance—folk literature with which the Igbo affirm and reaffirm their humanity, gain and regain their pride. The words songs or chants along with their pedagogical and didactic constituents are what the preliterate Igbo mind is akin to. It is what can explain the absence of the word poetry in the Igbo language. Chukwuma has correctly observed that: “[...] there is also (in Igbo) no word corresponding to ‘poetry’. Yet there are songs and chants.” (1977, p. 5). That is why the reading of nearly all the poems sounds like a storytelling performance. The poet’s high proclivity towards storytellers as he has brilliantly shown it off in *Anthills of the Savannah* is foregrounded on the belief they are entrusted with the mission to create the memory that survivors will lately make use of. Achebe ascribes distinct potency to poetry and sees the role of a creative artist as that of a healer of the self, the people, and the wounded soul of society in the harsh, bad times. He even appeals for commitment in the poem entitled “Non-commitment”, where he points the finger at those writers who pretend it is far better to play the card of neutrality, nonsensical and counterproductive prudence in a time of

absolute chaos, injustice, and oppression. Beside the panegyric style and register borrowed, the poet has also been inspired by his traditional cosmology.

### **3. Myths Incursion in Poetry Crafting**

Myth in Africa sets forth the basic imaginative resource from which extensive and substantial cultural values stem. The Igbo metaphysics is the epicenter of their philosophy which is basically grounded on the belief that the Supreme Being is the cause of everything that exists and has been used in this collection of poetry as narrative tropes. But because of the distance that separates him from his creatures, he creates secondary Deities to superintend different parts of the universe. These gods populate and inhabit the poetic framework of *Beware, Soul Brother*.

Chinua Achebe as a poet has been deeply inspired by indigenous myths in the structuring of his creative work. Still in the poem “Beware Soul Brother” the resistance against cultural domination is also voiced through the goddess *Ala* as it appears in these stanzas highlighting her cultural significance: “remember/ they gave Ala, great goddess/ of the earth, sovereignty too over/ their arts for they understood” (lines 24-25). In these poetic lines, the interrelatedness between the earth goddess and the arts is noteworthy because it refers to *omenala* – the Igbo cultural system which etymologically means “as it is in the land”, alluding to the tradition and the customs. Following the key idea of the poem, it can be asserted that the poet urges his people to stand firm using fittingly what defines and identifies them as humans imbued with pride, dignity, and cultural and humanistic values. For this reason, *Ala* is also regarded as the divinity of creation and creativity, whose shrine is *mbari*, the cradle of artistic invention. Herbert M. Cole in his paper “Mbari Is Life” sums up the different perceptions around *mbari*:

*Mbari* is our god  
*Mbari* is a dance for our god  
*Mbari* is a piece of artwork for our god  
*Mbari* is a thing of pride  
*Mbari* is the crown of our god  
*Mbari* is life (1969, p.17)

*Ala* , also called *Ani* in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is an *alusi*, a deity in *Odinani*, the Igbo religious system. Her name etymologically purports “ground” in the Igbo language. She is considered the highest and the most ever-present deity in the Igbo pantheon. This is understandable considering the religious system. *Ala* is the goddess of the earth, fertility, morality, and creativity. She is looked upon as the mother of all things, that is why she is present at both the beginning and the end of the life circle: *Ala* the *Telluric*

*Mother* is present when babies are born into the world, just as she is present in the fertile earth. She welcomes the spirits of the dead into her womb at the end of life. Andrew Lang underpins in his work *The Homeric Hymns* (1899) a similar viewpoint: “firm earth, oldest of gods, that nourishes all things in the world...Thine it is to give or to take life from mortal men” (p. 70). Ala rules over human morality and is in charge of the Igbo laws, known as *Omenala*. If someone commits a crime or a moral injustice, they are said to have offended Ala herself, known as *nso ala*. Mircea Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959) admits that the primordial image of *Mother Earth* is universally known even though there are numerous and varied versions. In *Things Fall Apart*, it is on the name and authority of Ani that Ikemefuna ought to kill to appease and please the ire of the Earth goddess whose “child” has been murdered. It is the same prescription that urges Okonkwo to undertake a seven-year exile for inadvertently killing a clansman. Similar expiatory rites levied by Ani also emerge from *Arrow of God* where nearly all the moral codes and behavioral patterns revolve around her.

In Igbo mythology, vultures are scavengers and are hence perceived as unclean birds by the Igbo society as they feed on carrion. They are also considered messengers of spirits and evil. Vultures, like owls and bats, all have a similarly bad reputation associated with both nightmares and danger. However, their role in Igbo mythology is not restricted to such a negative description and attributes. In the poem “Mango Seedling” through the version of the primordial Squabble of Earth and Sky, the bird of prey has been used as an emissary to solve the dispute between Amadiora the god of Sky, and Ani the goddess of Earth. The myth recounts that it was about a power struggle to determine who was sovereign. To show its might, Sky decided to withhold its rain for seven long years making the ground harder than iron so that the dead could not be buried. When Earth sued for peace, she decided to send a vulture as a go-between. This ambivalent role of the vulture’s opposite but interconnected role representing evil and good at the same is ingrained with the Igbo cosmogony and socio-religious philosophy. It implies that the universe creates itself out of the primary chaos before organizing and forming into objects and lives. In the Igbo metaphysical philosophy, such a dualism appears in the Nri and Aro which represent two opposing but complementary principles. The Nri is considered to be the feminine part of everything. It symbolizes the moon, the dark, the negative, coolness, unconsciousness...While the Aro is often associated with the male part of everything. It is represented by the sun, the light, the warmth, and awareness. The same phenomenon is noticeable in the Taoist philosophy of the Yin and Yang principle. The poem “Vultures”, more precisely in these verses: “a dump of gross/ feathers inclined affectionately/ to hers. Yesterday they picked/ the eyes of a swollen/ corpse in a water-logged/ trench [...]” are indicators of human nature. These mythic and profane raptorial birds snuggling each other after feeding themselves with a decaying corpse

works here as a metaphor to address the fact that human beings are equally capable of love and evil, that they are the perfect embodiment of angel and demon. The two birds' cuddling strikes a macabre contrast with their behavior and their surroundings is portrayed thanks to another metaphor of the "Commandment at Belsen/ Camp..." (lines 31-32) (a notorious Nazi death camp) whose grim and gloomy works consisted in committing atrocities, abuses, mass crime and a crime against humanity after "the day with fumes of human roast clinging... got used to stopping at a candy store to buy sweeties for his kids, who would be waiting innocently for "Daddy's/ return" (lines 33-41). Such a forbidding image posits that evil and love, are outward opposites but matter-of-factly coexist.

References to Igbo mythology also emerge from the poem "Mango Seedling". With the vegetable imagery of the mango seedling which strives to survive in an unfavorable and perishable environment that lacks everything necessary, Achebe develops his poetic themes which revolve around struggle, courage, and identity. People around have constructed stereotypical images of Africans and Achebe, by way of this poem attempts to show how different the perspectives are. The leitmotif of identity rises through one's culture but amidst all hardships, there is a glimmer of hope left. Such hope flows from the following mythological stanzas: "Or else it hoped for Old Tortoise miraculous feast". The piece of myth Achebe has poetically handled to introduce a beacon of hope in a country and a continent that is struggling hard to see daylight at the end of the tunnel is about a tortoise who went to work for an old woman. At the end of the toiling, the woman handed over to Tortoise a calabash containing a lone cocoyam sited on a mound of cooked green leaves. At first sight, Tortoise protested vehemently and refused to touch such a meager meal. In the end, however, he made up his mind to eat the food. Then he found out to his amazement that another cocoyam always appeared as soon as he ended up eating the last one. To sum up, it is the same delightful surprise that the Mango seedling is supposed to get unexpectedly notwithstanding the whirlwind of difficulties, the season of anomie, and the sociopolitical upheavals represented by the mythological stanza: "Poised courageous impartiality/ Between the primordial quarrel of Earth/ And Sky striving bravely to sink roots" (lines 23-25, p. 5).

Another mythological reference springs from "The Lament of the Sacred Python" and concerns the goddess Idemili. She inhabits the River Idemili and is also the goddess of pregnant women, mothers, and infants. She takes any offense against her people seriously and is known for her violent outlashes against offenders. Mircea Eliade states with accuracy: "The symbolism of waters implied death and rebirth [...] they are the reservoir of all the possibility of existence" (1959, p. 130). Idemili is also known to be the goddess of the python. With this poem, Achebe tries to demonstrate how devoted the people are toward their culture, values, and creed and how these humanizing aspects

are trampled and desacralized by colonialism by means of its armed wing of Christianism which goes along with Western missionary schools. They are represented in these subsequent verses: “I was there when lizards/ Were ones and twos, child/ Of sacred father”. A similar situation is depicted in Achebe’s village novels *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* where the newly and highly zealous converted younger lads sometimes express their *bonafide* killing, and kidnapping of the python in the cupboard. This mythic water snake called by the poet “of sacred father Idemili” (line 3, p. 49) has even become the laughingstock of children, who, whenever they see one crawling around mockingly sing these poetic verses: “Look out, python! Look out, python!/ Christian relish python flesh”. These acts of desecration and sacrilege made Idemili weep: “Painful/ Tear-drops of Sky’s first weeping” (lines 3, 4). The poet shows in these verses the conceited attitude the new religion has toward local belief. With this clash of cultures springs up a complete misunderstanding. The snake is for the indigenous the emissary of the goddess, so it ought to be honored and awed; whereas for the Christians it reminds nothing but the biblical snake, the roaming evil to be chastened, crestfallen, and killed. In the *Rig Veda*, the snake symbolizes chaos too.

#### 4. Folk Anecdotes and Proverbial Utterances in Poetry Crafting

Egudu’s contribution on “Nature and functions of Igbo anecdotes” (1977) has been part of the research work that has enabled us to realize that anecdotes exist as a separate and independent (though not isolated) genre in Igbo oral literature. In Achebe’s poetic universe, the type of anecdotes he resorted to do not really fit Johnson’s definition, who famously defined it as “a biographical incident; a minute passage of private life” (Johnson, 1773). Nonetheless, Edmund Fuller’s definition goes beyond the personal character of anecdotes. He considers them as stories with points that take in a more global vision and are generally shared by the collective memory (Fuller, 1948). Thus, it is these cultural, communal, and normally short narratives encompassing no more than a single incident, generally factual, authentic in content, and whose plot is basically uncomplicated (Sutherland, 1977) have been intertwined by the poet in his poetic framework. Egudu provides a very comprehensive definition of anecdotes, equating them with other oral genres such as folktales and proverbs, with which they share the same didactic and aesthetic functions:

A brief story which often embodies witticism or a ludicrous situation and which is used to embellish speech, reinforce or illustrate an argument, or convey moral lessons. It resembles the folktale in having the narrative form and animal characters, but differs from it by being more limited in scope and structure and in not having any embedded folksong such as some folktales do have. The anecdote also resembles the proverb, particularly in being a tool for

linguistic expression and composition for purposes of rhetorical adornment and persuasion, and being witty, humorous, and generally imagistic, but also differs from the proverb by not possessing the epigrammatic symmetry and pithiness, balanced structure and poetic rhythm which are characteristic of most of Igbo proverbs (Egudu, 1977, p. 78).

It can be recognized that features of the oral traditional techniques in African poetry have been gleaned from Achebe's collection of poems. These include the embeddedness of anecdotes. In the poem "Lazarus", where an anecdote has been used in the poetic framework, the everlasting conflict and entanglement between Evil and Good is once more handled as an obsessional leitmotiv. Here is the integral folk anecdote:

Many years ago a strange and terrible thing happened in the small village of Ogbaku. A lawyer driving through the highway that passed by the village ran over a man. The villagers thinking the man was killed, set upon the lawyer and clubbed him to death. Then to their horror, the man began to stir. So, the story went, they set upon him too and finished him off, saying, 'You can't come back having made us do that' (Achebe, 1972, p. 66, notes).

The similarity between this poetic folk anecdote and a folktale is blatant since they have in common the same opening formula and the same social, moral, and philosophical code of a community. Here we witness a dialectic opposition in play, a dualism between resurrection and murder, a resurrection that results in an act of revenge but is quickly transformed into an act of murder. This story may drive us to come up with the idea that resurrection in Igboland does not bode well because of beliefs about devils, witchcraft, and ghosts. These are negatively charged creeds that always disturb tranquility, social peace, and harmony. Reincarnation is what is culturally and religiously understood and putative but not resurrection which is apprehended as a devilish manifestation. It is in this way that John Mbiti has claimed: "African Traditional Religion is silent about the resurrection of the dead. It should only be implied in reincarnation conveyed through names and divination" (Mbiti, 1975, p. 67). The poet himself overtly confesses this Igbo behavioral pattern: "[...] for/ him resurrection is an awful embarrassment" (lines 9-11). The anachronical behavior of glorious justice/odious murder is encapsulated in this saying "Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair". This approach that Achebe has borrowed from his community's philosophy and assumed in his poems has been approved and sustained by G.D. Killam. When commenting on the poem "Lazarus", he asserts that: "the poem displays a habit of mind among Igbo; a way of seeing and judging which contrasts with a European view of action appropriate to the occasion" (Killam, 1977, p. 114) and eschatological philosophy. Here is the poetized Igbo folk anecdote operating in the poem as a narrative proverb:

[...] The luckless/ people of Ogbaku knew its/ terrors that day the twin-headed/evil strode their highway. It/ could not have been easy/ picking up again in the blood-spattered/ clubs they had cast away, or to/ turn from the battered body/ of the barrister lying beside his/ battered limousine to finish off/ their own man, stirring now suddenly/ in wide eyed-resurrection.../ how well/ they understood these grime-faced/ villagers wielding their crimson/ weapons once more that at the hour/ of his rising their kinsman/ avenged in murder would turn/ away from them in obedience/ to other fraternities, would turn indeed/ their own accuser and in one/ breath obliterate their plea/ and justification! So they killed/ him a second time that day on the/ threshold of a promising resurrection (Achebe, 1972, p. 37, lines 11-34).

As in many folk anecdote structures, the presence of the comical and the hilarious aspect stands side by side with the pedagogical. Egudu pinpoints: “They are analogical, imagistic and comic” (1977, p. 76). But the humor that arises from this anecdote is basically connected to black humor. Additionally, Achebe has not only employed folk anecdotes in his poetic universe but also typically private and personal anecdotes like the one in the poem “Bull and Egret”. The use of the first-person narration: “I come up a mighty bull/ in form and carriage...” (lines 4-5) proves the reader can easily feel the mono episodic plotline, and most of all the biological occurrence.

It is not uncommon to find proverbs in Achebe’s fiction (novels, short stories) using them as one of his narrative techniques. For that reason, he is lauded as a champion of proverbs and narratives as the reservoir or the dictionary of Igbo proverbial expressions (Aguoru, 2012). But the fact of using and weaving his Igbo proverbial literature in his poems is somewhat unusual and highly original. Such a literary choice and motivation strengthen his deep connectedness with his oral culture. In the poem “Misunderstanding” the poet has once again availed himself of the dichotomy as the principle of human life hinting at the idea that nothing can stand alone. The poetic storyline is even introduced as usual by the introductory proverbial clause: “My old man had a little saying” (line 1). Such a way of starting a poem truly sounds like a narration, an anecdote about family education and the issue of misunderstanding which can adversely affect stubborn and injudicious individuals like the child poet: “heedless at first/ I waved it aside” (lines 6-7), who clumsily and conceitedly pretends to know and fathom everything about life on hearing the poetic proverbial utterance which has been repeated twice in what can be observed as the poem-anecdote. Firstly when his father addresses the piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm; secondly when the poem restated the same pithy words of wit when talking to his wife in reminiscent of the sagacious man: “whenever something/ stands, he’d say, there also something/ Else will stand” (lines 4-6) underlining the Igbo social and religious philosophy which instructs that the world or reality consists of two basic,

opposed, but complementary and irreducible principles that account for everything that exists.

### 5. Conclusions

Regarding African literature, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and other African writers seem to agree that successful engagement of the issues like identity, and colonialism it raises requires both a sustained engagement of African oral traditions to discover its own theories of aesthetics, criticism, and performance as well as the formulation of relevant theories for exploring contemporary African literature. It is what Achebe has artfully done by using the Igbo traditional archive to redeploy and redirect African thought. In their critical work *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (1983), Chinweizu and his fellow scholars have been able to identify three major tendencies in African modern poetry. The first one comprises those poets labeled as euro modernists namely Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, and Christopher Okigbo at his *début*. The second tendency concerns the traditionalists, meaning the poets who have sought to blend the English-language poetic tradition with elements from traditional African poetry. These include Mazisi Kunene, Kofi Awoonor, Okot p'Bitek, and Christopher Okigbo with his early poetry output. The third and last group is the crossbreed, the middle-ground poets who unlike the Euro modernists and the traditionalists fluctuate between the above-mentioned trends, encompassing poets such as Dennis Brutus, Lenrie Peters, and Gabriel Okara. Subsequently, the genuine query that should be raised is, in which trend should Chinua Achebe be placed? Taking into account the stylistic features of his writing, which is characterized by a rife and substantial use of Igbo orature, Achebe's place must be located among the traditionalists insofar as we can easily find out in his poems, without having much to ponder over, the techniques and the narrative devices borrowed from indigenous oral tradition and poetry.

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LEGĂTURA DINTRE LITERATURA ORALĂ ȘI LIMBAJUL  
POETIC ÎN SCRIEREA VOLUMULUI *BEWARE SOUL BROTHER* (1972)  
DE CHINUA ACHEBE

(Rezumat)

Obiectivul acestei lucrări este să analizeze modul în care Chinua Achebe ca poet și artist a folosit literatura orală indigenă și comunitatea culturală ca trăsături cu care și-a sporit meșteșugul poeziei. Imagini precum pitonul, scandările copiilor, teme precum războiul, moartea, dragostea, cultura și simbolurile, anume vulturul, broasca testoasă, tamburul, șopârlele etc. sunt extrase în mare parte din repertoriul imens și de mare inspirație al literaturii orale, de la cântece funerare, mituri, anecdotă populare până la enunțuri proverbiale. Acestea au fost folosite ca materii prime literare, adevărat teren fertil în crearea volumului de poezii *Beware Soul Brother* (1972) și pentru a surprinde atmosfera vieții africane, trecute și prezente, și condiția sa umană. Hibriditatea literară (care este de altfel semnul distinctiv al poetului) ce predomină în această colecție de poezii, lipsită de misticism privat și mesaje orifice, a permis, fără îndoială, ascultătorilor/cititorilor să fie receptivi la nivel local și universal.



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## THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSCLE TONE IN THE HARMONIOUS EVOLUTION OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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**Abstract.** Muscle tone and spinal mobility are crucial to our health and well-being. Correct muscle tone helps maintain correct posture and supports joints, preventing deformities and pain. The mobility of the spine allows for fluid and flexible movements, maintaining the proper functioning of nerves and blood circulation. These aspects are essential to prevent musculoskeletal problems and to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

**Keywords:** muscle tone; mobility; muscle contraction.

### 1. Introduction

Continuous correction and prevention, in terms of body posture and muscle toning, can be essential in preventing various ailments, both of the spine and of the various organs that can be affected by its pathology.

Adequate muscle tone plays a crucial role in maintaining correct body posture. Strong and flexible muscles around the spine help support the back, helping to keep the vertebrae in proper alignment. This not only improves the

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aesthetic appearance, but also prevents back pain, reduces pressure on the intervertebral discs and supports the overall health of the spine and musculoskeletal system.

## **2. Objective Assessment of Muscle Tone**

Objective assessment of muscle tone involves assessing the resistance to passive movement of a muscle or group of muscles. This can be done by palpating and applying a gentle movement to see how the muscle responds. Normal muscle tone should be even and resilient, without excessive tension or weakness. If the tone is abnormal, such as hypertonia (excessive tone) or hypotonia (muscle weakness), it can indicate various conditions or neurological problems. For a complete and accurate evaluation, consultation with a qualified medical professional such as a physician or physical therapist is recommended (Sbenghe, 2005).

## **3. Static Muscle Contraction**

Static muscle contraction refers to a muscle contraction where the length of the muscle remains unchanged, meaning no movement or change in joint position occurs. During a static muscle contraction, the muscles are tensed and held in the same position for a period of time without any movement of the body parts (Papilian, 2008).

A common example of a static muscle contraction is when we hold a plank or wall position for a period of time. In this case, the muscles are contracted to maintain the position, but no actual movement of the body occurs.

Static muscle contractions can be used in resistance training to develop muscle strength and endurance in certain positions. It is important to perform it correctly and safely, taking into account the limits of your own body and avoiding muscle overload.

## **4. Muscle Contraction in Motion**

Muscle contraction in movement refers to the process by which muscles contract and generate force to produce movement of a joint or body segment. This is a common form of muscle contraction that occurs during physical activities and everyday movements.

There are two main types of muscle contractions in motion, namely:

- *Concentric contractions*, in this type of contraction, the muscle shortens while generating force, and the joint moves in a specific direction. For example, when you do a knee lift, the thigh muscle contracts concentrically to lift the knee.

- *Eccentric contractions*, in this type of contraction, the muscle elongates while under tension. This happens when you meet gravitational

resistance or an opposing force greater than the muscle is generating. An example would be the controlled lowering from a push-up position, where the chest muscle lengthens eccentrically to control the downward movement.

These types of moving muscle contractions are essential for daily activities, sports and physical training, helping to develop muscle strength, endurance and coordination.

### 5. Normal, Low or Increased Muscle Tone

There are several types of muscle tone. More specifically, normal muscle tone, low muscle tone and increased muscle tone can be distinguished.

**Normal muscle tone** represents the optimal condition of the muscles, in which they present a moderate resistance to passive movement. When the muscle is gently stretched or compressed, it exhibits a balanced response and the movement is fluid and effortless. Normal muscle tone contributes to maintaining proper posture and joint functionality.

**Low muscle tone (hypotonia)** means that the muscles have less resistance than usual to passive movement. This can cause the muscles to feel soft or weak. People with low muscle tone may have difficulty maintaining posture, coordination or making movements. Sometimes this can be associated with neurological conditions or periods of prolonged immobilization.

**Increased muscle tone (hypertonia)** refers to an increase in muscle resistance to passive movement. This can lead to stiffness and excessive tension in the muscles. Hypertonia can be caused by conditions such as spasticity, which usually occurs with damage to the central nervous system. Muscles in hypertonia may appear tight and limit joint range of motion.

It is important to note that all of these conditions can have various causes and can be seen in the context of different medical conditions or circumstances. A proper diagnosis and evaluation should be performed by medical professionals to determine the causes and provide the appropriate treatment (Sbenghe, 2008; Tache, 2001).

### 6. Muscle Tone in Children

In children, muscle tone refers to the degree of resistance and tension of their muscles during passive movement or at rest. Muscle tone in children can vary depending on age and development.

In general, in the first weeks or months of life, babies may have lower muscle tone (hypotonia), which allows them to move easily and be handled by their parents. As babies grow and develop, muscle tone tends to increase and become firmer. At this stage, the child's muscles can become more resistant to passive movement and muscle tone approaches the normal level (Tache, 2001).

It is important to monitor the development of muscle tone in children and see if there are significant changes compared to other children of the same age. Excessively low or high muscle tone can be a sign of developmental problems or underlying medical conditions. If parents or caregivers notice concerns about the child's muscle tone or development, consultation with a physician or child development specialist is recommended for appropriate evaluation and counseling.

## 7. Muscle Tone in Healthy and Ill persons

Muscle tone can vary significantly between healthy and ill people, reflecting overall health and possible medical conditions. As a comparison between the muscle tone in healthy and sick people, we can say that healthy people generally have a balanced and normal muscle tone. Their muscles show adequate resistance to passive movement and are able to maintain correct posture. Normal muscle tone allows movements to be carried out without difficulty and contributes to the proper coordination of daily activities. Healthy people can maintain optimal muscle tone through regular exercise, healthy eating and general health care.

Conversely, muscle tone in sick people, especially in people with neurological or musculoskeletal conditions, can show significant variations in muscle tone. We can list the following situations, namely *hypertonia* (increased muscle tone) that can be encountered in the case of conditions such as spasticity, Parkinson's disease or spinal cord injuries. This can cause stiffness and difficulty moving.

*Hypotonia* (low muscle tone) can occur in conditions such as muscular dystrophy or other muscle disorders. Muscles may seem less strong and it may be difficult to maintain posture (Sbenghe, 2008).

Acute or chronic conditions can influence muscle tone, for example a person with severe flu may have temporarily lower muscle tone due to general weakness. Treatment and management of muscle tone in sick individuals may involve physical therapy, medications, or other medical interventions specific to the condition in question.

It is important to understand that changes in muscle tone can be signs of medical conditions and should be evaluated and treated by qualified medical professionals to ensure proper health and symptom management.

## 8. Muscle Tone in Women and Muscle Tone in Men

Muscle tone in women and men can vary depending on several factors, but there are no fundamental differences between the two sexes in how muscle tone normally works. However, there are biological and hormonal differences

between women and men that can influence the development and maintenance of muscle tone.

Muscle tone in women can be related to the fact that women have the same types of muscles and physiological processes as men. Thus, muscle tone in women is largely determined by the same set of factors, including physical activity, nutrition and general health. Some women may have a natural tendency to have less or more muscle tone, depending on heredity and other genetic factors. Hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle or periods such as pregnancy and menopause can temporarily affect muscle tone and the feeling of weakness or fatigue.

When it comes to muscle tone in men, they generally tend to have more muscle mass than women, largely due to hormonal differences, such as testosterone, which is present in greater amounts in men's bodies. However, this difference in muscle mass does not necessarily translate into higher or lower muscle tone. Muscle tone in men still depends on the level of physical activity, diet and general health.

Ultimately, both women and men can develop and maintain healthy muscle tone by adopting an active, nutritionally balanced lifestyle and paying proper attention to overall health. Individual differences and genetic influences may play a role in the variability of muscle tone regardless of sex.

## 9. Variations in Muscle Tone

Variations in muscle tone refer to changes in the level of muscle resistance and tension under different conditions or circumstances. These variations can be observed both within a person, depending on different times and situations, and between different people.

Physiological variations refer to the fact that muscle tone can vary during the day or depending on the level of activity. After a period of prolonged rest, muscle tone may initially be lower until the person resumes activities. After exercise or strenuous activity, muscle tone may temporarily increase (Nelson and Kokkonen, 2020).

*Variations related to stress or emotions* result from the fact that stress, anxiety or other emotions can affect muscle tone. Some people may develop muscle tension during stress or exhibit excessive muscle relaxation in states of deep relaxation.

*Variations depending on age* can result from the fact that muscle tone in children can vary depending on the stages of development. Babies may have lower muscle tone in the first months of life, which increases as they develop. In old age, muscles may become less resilient and muscle tone may decrease.

*Variations in the case of medical conditions* can occur in various conditions, such as neurological or muscle disorders, can lead to significant variations in muscle tone. For example, spasticity can cause increased muscle tone, while muscular dystrophy can cause decreased muscle tone.

*Individual variations* may occur in each person who has a unique predisposition to muscle tone. Certain people may naturally have higher muscle tone, while others may be more flexible or have lower muscle tone.

It is important to note that muscle tone can vary significantly and that these variations may be normal under certain circumstances. However, if you notice significant changes in muscle tone or have concerns about this, it is recommended that you consult a medical professional for proper evaluation and advice (Nelson and Kokkonen, 2020).

## 10. Functional Hypotonia and Functional Hypertonia

Functional hypotonia and functional hypertonia are terms that describe temporary or reversible states of muscle tone that are caused by factors such as fatigue, stress, or emotional strain. These states may occur in a functional context and may vary according to circumstances.

*Functional hypotonia* refers to a condition in which muscle tone is lower than normal for temporary and functional reasons. This can be caused by fatigue, stress, exhaustion or emotional strain. During functional hypotonia, the muscles may appear less resilient and may feel excessively soft or relaxed. For example, a person who feels exhausted after a long day's work may experience functional hypotonia during periods of relaxation.

*Functional hypertonia* refers to a condition in which muscle tone is higher than normal for temporary and functional reasons. This can be caused by stress, anxiety or heightened emotional tension. Functional hypertonia can cause muscles to become tense and tight, making movements more difficult or uncomfortable. For example, a person who feels very stressed before a public presentation may have functional hypertonia in the neck and shoulder area.

It is important to understand that both functional hypotonia and functional hypertonia are temporary and reversible conditions that may be related to psychological and emotional factors. While these conditions are not associated with serious medical conditions, they can affect daily comfort and functionality. If these conditions persist or become debilitating, it is recommended that you speak with a medical professional or mental health specialist for appropriate evaluation and counseling.

If functional muscle hypertonia becomes persistent or significantly affects comfort and functionality, it is recommended that you seek the advice of a medical professional or mental health specialist. They can provide stress management strategies and techniques to reduce muscle tension and associated discomfort.

### Pathological muscular hypertonia

*Pathological muscle hypertonia* refers to an abnormal and persistent state of the muscles, in which they exhibit increased muscle tone and are

excessively tense, even in the absence of functional stimuli. This type of hypertension is associated with underlying medical conditions or neurological problems and can negatively affect mobility, functionality and quality of life.

*Spasticity* is a form of muscle hypertonia that occurs as a result of brain or spinal cord injuries. Muscles become excessively contracted, which can lead to stiffness and difficulty moving.

*Parkinson's disease* in which people with Parkinson's disease can develop muscle hypertonia, which contributes to the muscle stiffness characteristic of this condition.

*Dystonia* is a group of neurological conditions in which muscles contract involuntarily and can cause abnormal positions or movements.

*Multiple sclerosis*: people with multiple sclerosis may experience muscle hypertonia, which can vary depending on the location of the lesions.

*Spinal cord or central nervous system injuries* occur following trauma or injuries affecting the central nervous system can lead to changes in muscle tone in the affected areas.

Treatment for pathological muscle tone may involve physical therapy, medications, surgery, or other forms of medical management. The goal of treatment is to relieve symptoms, maintain or improve mobility and function, and improve the affected person's quality of life.

It is important to see a doctor or specialist for proper evaluation and diagnosis of any condition that may be causing pathological muscle hypertonia so that you can receive the appropriate treatment and care.

#### Pathological muscle hypotonia

*Pathological muscle hypotonia* refers to an abnormal and persistent condition of the muscles in which they exhibit low muscle tone or excessive weakness. This type of hypotonia can be caused by various medical conditions or underlying neurological problems and can affect the ability to maintain correct posture, coordination and mobility.

Conditions that can cause pathological muscle hypotonia include *muscular dystrophy*, a group of genetic conditions that cause progressive muscle weakness and muscle loss over time. Hypotonia is a common symptom in many forms of muscular dystrophy (Sbenghe, 2008).

*Down syndrome*: people with Down syndrome may experience muscle hypotonia frequently, which can affect muscle tone and physical development.

*Spinal muscular atrophy* is a serious genetic condition that leads to motor neuron damage and muscle weakness. Hypotonia is a characteristic symptom of this condition.

*Neuromuscular disorders* represented by various disorders of the nervous system or muscles can cause muscle hypotonia, such as myasthenia gravis or cerebral palsy.

*Neurological conditions* materialized in injuries or conditions affecting the central or peripheral nervous system can contribute to muscle hypotonia.

Treatment for pathological muscle hypotonia depends on the underlying cause and may involve physical therapy, muscle-strengthening exercises, medications, surgery, or other forms of medical intervention. The goal of treatment is to improve muscle tone, mobility and functionality, as well as to ensure the best possible quality of life for the affected person.

It is important to seek the advice of a doctor or specialist if you notice symptoms of pathological muscle hypotonia or have concerns about your or someone else's development or health.

## 11. General Muscle Hypotonia and Segmental Muscle Hypotonia

Muscle hypotonia can be divided into two main categories: general muscle hypotonia and segmental muscle hypotonia. These terms describe how weakness or reduced muscle tone affects the whole body or just certain parts of it.

*General muscle hypotonia* refers to muscle weakness or reduced muscle tone that affects the entire body. In this situation, all or most muscles may show reduced resistance to passive movement and may appear less firm or more relaxed. General hypotonia can be seen in conditions such as Down syndrome, spinal muscular atrophy type 1, and other genetic or neuromuscular disorders.

*Segmental muscle hypotonia* refers to muscle weakness or reduced muscle tone affecting only certain segments or parts of the body. In this case, only certain muscle groups may show reduced resistance to passive movement, while other muscles may have normal or increased tone. Segmental hypotonia can be caused by various conditions, such as peripheral nerve damage or other localized problems.

It is important to understand that muscle hypotonia can be caused by a wide range of conditions and can vary in severity. The correct diagnosis and management of hypotonia depends on the underlying cause and may involve consultation with specialist doctors and appropriate medical assessments. If you notice symptoms of muscle hypotonia or have developmental concerns, it is recommended that you seek medical advice for appropriate assessment and care (Tache, 2001).

Combating physiological muscle hypotonia can be achieved through exercise, an active and regular lifestyle can help maintain muscle tone and improve strength and coordination. Activities such as swimming, walking, yoga or Pilates can help strengthen muscles and maintain overall health.

Balanced nutrition, a diet rich in protein, essential vitamins and minerals can support muscle health and proper development.

Hydration, i.e. adequate water consumption, is important for the optimal functioning of the muscles and the whole body.

Adequate rest and sleep help muscle recovery and regeneration.

Combating pathological muscle hypotonia can be achieved through specialist medical consultation to obtain an accurate diagnosis and establish the appropriate treatment for the underlying condition.

Physical therapy can be essential for developing and strengthening muscles, improving coordination and mobility, and reducing symptoms of pathological hypotonia.

Medications: In severe cases or medical conditions that cause muscle hypotonia, medications may be prescribed to help manage symptoms and the underlying condition.

Surgery: In some cases, surgery may be necessary to correct structural problems or to treat conditions that cause hypotonia.

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy, these therapies can help develop motor skills and improve functionality (Sbeghe, 2008).

Examples of muscle tone exercises that can be included in a full body tone routine will be presented below. Before starting a new exercise program, it is necessary to talk to a medical professional, especially if the person has pre-existing medical conditions.

#### *Exercises for strengthening the core muscles*

Plank: Stand in a plank position on your forearms and toes. Hold the position for 30 seconds to 1 minute or as long as you can. Repeat 2-3 times.

Crunches: Lie on your back, bend your knees and bring them close to your chest. Lift your head and shoulders off the ground and return to the starting position. Do 2-3 sets of 12-15 repetitions.

Leg raises: Lie on your back, place your hands under your hips for support, and raise your legs to a 90-degree angle. Lower them in a controlled manner without touching the ground. Do 2-3 sets of 10-12 repetitions.

#### *Exercises for strengthening the upper limbs*

Push-ups: Stand in a plank position with your palms under your shoulders and bend your elbows to lower yourself to the floor. Push yourself back to the starting position. Do as many reps as you can in 2-3 sets.

Triceps dips: Use a bench or chair to support your back. Bend your elbows to lower your body and then return to the starting position. Do 2-3 sets of 12-15 repetitions.

#### *Exercises for strengthening the lower limbs*

Squats: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees and lower yourself down, then return to the starting position. Do 2-3 sets of 15-20 repetitions.

Lunges (step forward): Step forward with one leg, bend both knees to lower into a squat, and then return to the starting position. Alternate legs and do 2-3 sets of 10-12 repetitions for each leg.

### *Back-strengthening exercises*

Superman: Lie on your stomach, stretch your arms in front of you and lift your arms and legs off the ground at the same time. Hold the position for a few seconds and then lower yourself down. Do 2-3 sets of 10-12 repetitions.

Lat pull-downs: Use an exercise machine or resistance band to perform pull-ups by pulling your hands toward your chest and then straightening them. Do 2-3 sets of 12-15 repetitions.

This is just one example of an exercise routine for strengthening muscle tone. These exercises can be adapted to the individual's fitness level and personal preference. It is important to work with a trainer or fitness professional to make sure the individual is performing the exercises correctly and staying safe while working out.

## **12. Conclusions**

Muscle tone is of fundamental importance in maintaining proper body position and maintaining proper posture. Muscles are responsible for maintaining the stability and balance of the body during daily activities, and optimal muscle tone helps to avoid problems related to posture and imbalance.

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## **IMPORTANTĂ TONUSULUI MUSCULAR ÎN EVOLUȚIA ARMONIOASĂ A DEZVOLTĂRII FIZICE**

(Rezumat)

Tonusul muscular și mobilitatea coloanei vertebrale sunt cruciale pentru sănătatea și bunăstarea noastră. Tonusul muscular corect ajută la menținerea posturii corecte și susține articulațiile, prevenind deformările și durerile. Mobilitatea coloanei vertebrale permite mișcări fluide și flexibile, menținând funcționarea corectă a nervilor și circulației sângei. Aceste aspecte sunt esențiale pentru a preveni problemele musculoscheletice și pentru a menține un stil de viață activ și sănătos.

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## FIRST AID DURING THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION LESSON

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**Abstract.** During a physical education lesson, first aid may be necessary in case of accidents or minor injuries. It is important to know basic first aid steps, such as caring for minor injuries, applying a bandage or ice to reduce inflammation. In more serious cases, such as injuries or fractures, it is recommended to seek qualified medical help immediately.

**Keywords:** first aid; bone fractures; injuries; sprains.

### 1. Introduction

The causes of injuries in sports can be diverse and include aspects such as overloading and excessive effort on the body, an incorrect technique or defective exercise form that can disrupt the normal functionality of a joint, the lack or insufficiency of warming up before physical activity.

Furthermore, the use of unsuitable or damaged equipment, the use of non-compliant footwear, with a sole that does not correspond to the sport which is being practiced, can be injury-causing factors that can influence the performance of an athlete even in the long term.

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Other factors leading to injuries can also be the athlete's poor physical condition or inadequate training, multiple deficiencies in the biomechanical structure of the body, external factors such as weather conditions or playing surfaces.

Additionally, the lack of compliance with the rules and safety measures during competitions, the lack of adequate rest and recovery between training sessions, a poor diet with a major nutrient deficit can be causes that lead to the occurrence of injuries.

It is important for athletes or students to be aware of these risks and take preventive measures to reduce the chances of injury.

In any situation, safety and good cooperation with the physical education instructor or teacher are essential to ensure an appropriate and rapid intervention.

The following sections detail some of the frequent traumas that can occur during a physical education lesson or in a training session, as well as how to approach them.

## 2. Sprains

A sprain is a traumatic injury to the ligaments that stabilize a joint. Ligaments are strong fibrous tissues that connect bones together and keep the joint in the correct position. A sprain occurs when a ligament is overstretched, strained or torn, resulting in an impairment of the function of that joint. It represents direct trauma through a strong blow or impact to the joint that can cause ligaments to stretch or tear (Duma, 2009).

The causes that lead to the occurrence of a sprain are very sudden or forced movements, efforts or uncontrolled movements of the joint can lead to sprains, especially when the ligaments are stressed beyond their normal limit of elasticity (Potach and Meira, 2022).

Another cause would be overloading the joint, participating in intense physical activities, sports or exercises without proper warm-up and without proper preparation can increase the risk of sprains.

In addition, chronic ligament instability can also be a cause; specifically, if the ligaments of a joint are already weakened due to a previous injury or medical condition, the risk of recurrent sprains increases.

The most common joints affected by sprains are the ankle, knee and wrist. Symptoms of sprains can include pain, swelling, bruising, difficulty moving and instability in the joint.

Treatment for sprains can range from rest and icing to temporary immobilization of the joint and physical therapy in order to recover and restore normal joint function. In more severe cases, surgery may be required to reconstruct torn ligaments (Potach and Meira, 2022).

In the case of sprains during the physical education lesson, the first aid consists of the following steps:

- Stopping the activity: any physical activity is to be stopped immediately to prevent aggravation of the injury.
  - Rest and immobilization are recommended by advising the injured person to sit or lie in a comfortable position and protect the affected limb. If necessary, immobilize the affected area using an elastic band or bandage.
  - Application of ice: apply ice wrapped in a towel or plastic bag to the sprained area for 15-20 minutes. This will reduce inflammation and relieve pain.
  - Compression by wrapping the affected area very loosely with an elastic band to control swelling. The compression must not be too tight so as not to affect circulation.
  - Elevation of the limb: if possible, elevate the affected limb to help reduce swelling.
  - Seeking medical assistance: in the case of severe sprains, when the pain is very intense, there is a deformity or the impossibility of supporting the weight on the leg, it is important to seek medical help immediately (Cunningham, 2010).
- It is to be noted that it is always important to follow the directions and advice of a health professional or physical education instructor when giving first aid to avoid further complications.

### 3. Bone Fractures

Bone fractures refer to breaks in the bone and can vary in severity from minor cracks to a complete shattering of the bone. Fractures can be classified into several types, such as open fractures (the broken bone protrudes through the skin) or closed fractures (the broken bone does not penetrate the skin) (Duma, 2009).

Fractures can be caused by various situations, such as direct blows, strong blows or falls, by repetitive forces or constant overloading of a bone or joint.

Sports accidents or intense physical activities can be causes of fractures, as well as osteoporosis, a condition that weakens the bones.

Diagnosing bone fractures usually involves physical examination, radiographs, and sometimes other imaging tests, such as computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

The treatment of bone fractures depends on their type and severity and the options may include rest, immobilization with casts or splints, surgery to align and fix the bones, physical therapy and rehabilitation for the purpose of recovery. It is essential to seek appropriate medical attention to treat fractures and avoid long-term complications.

In the case of bone fractures in the physical education lesson, first aid must be given very carefully, as it pertains to the category of more serious injuries that require immediate medical intervention.

The important steps to follow in the case of a bone fracture would be to secure the injured person, to stop physical activity immediately and to ensure that the area around the injured person is safe so as to prevent further injuries.

It is also important not to move the fractured limb. Moving or trying to reposition the affected limb should be avoided as this can aggravate the injury and cause more pain.

A call to the emergency service is mandatory. An emergency number (such as 112) must be called immediately, or other emergency medical help must be requested to ensure prompt and appropriate intervention.

It is recommended to try to calm the injured person by encouraging them to sit or sit in a comfortable position until medical help arrives.

Optionally, ice may be applied. If there is access to ice and the fractured limb is not moved, ice wrapped in a towel or plastic bag can be applied to the sprained area to help reduce inflammation and pain.

It should be emphasized that improper handling of a fracture can lead to complications and worsen the injury, therefore it is essential to wait for the intervention of health professionals to provide adequate assistance.

#### **4. Joint Dislocations**

Joint dislocations are the abnormal and permanent movement of joints, where the bony surfaces that make up the joint separate completely from each other. This leads to the loss of normal contact between the bones, resulting in the impossibility of normal movement in the joint (Duma, 2009).

Dislocations can be caused by the following situations:

- Strong trauma: blows or strong forces on a joint can cause dislocations.
- Sudden movements: quick and sudden movements of the joints can cause dislocations.
- Joint overuse: intense physical or sports activities can lead to dislocations.

- Weak ligaments: if the ligaments that hold the joint in place are weak or stretched, dislocation can occur more easily and recur.

Dislocations can affect different joints, such as the shoulder, elbow, wrist, fingers, hip, knee or ankle. Symptoms of dislocations include severe pain, swelling, visible deformity and inability to move the affected joint.

Treatment of dislocations generally involves repositioning the joint in the correct position, known as reduction. This procedure must be performed by a medical professional. After reduction, the joint may be immobilized to allow healing. In more severe cases, surgery may be necessary to repair the affected structures and restore normal joint function.

In the case of sprains in the physical education lesson, it is important to give first aid with caution, because it is a serious injury that requires immediate medical attention.

The important steps to follow in case of a joint dislocation have the following order:

- Immediately stopping the physical activity to prevent the injury from worsening and to avoid other participants interacting with the athlete with problems.

- It is recommended that the injured person sit or lie in a comfortable position and support the dislocated area to avoid movements that could aggravate the injury.

- Under no circumstances should reduction be attempted: avoid trying to reposition the dislocated joint back to its normal position as this can cause more harm. This intervention is to be left to healthcare professionals.

- Application of ice (optional): if there is access to ice and the affected area is not moved, ice wrapped in a towel or plastic bag can be applied to the sprained area to help reduce inflammation and pain.

- Calling the emergency services: call an emergency number (such as 112) immediately or seek emergency medical help to ensure prompt and appropriate intervention.

It is important to avoid improper handling of a dislocation as it can aggravate the injury and cause complications. Until the arrival of medical help, the person should be kept in a comfortable position and calmed down. Healthcare professionals will further manage the patient's treatment and care.

## 5. Loss of Consciousness

If someone loses consciousness during a physical education lesson, it is important to act quickly and effectively by checking the safety of the athlete and ensuring that the area is safe for the affected person and those around them and that there is no risk of being struck by objects or affected by other hazards.

The following steps are to be taken:

- Check breathing and pulse: sit next to the affected person and check if they are breathing normally and if they have a pulse. If he is not breathing or has no pulse, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is needed.

- Place the person in the lateral safety position: if the person is breathing and has a pulse, place them in the lateral safety position to prevent choking on vomit and to ensure good air circulation.

- Make sure the airway is open: check and make sure the person's airway is open. Keep the head and neck in a straight line and make sure there are no obstructions in the airway.

- Call the emergency service: immediately call an emergency number (such as 112) or ask another person in your vicinity to call for qualified medical help.

- Monitor the person's condition: while waiting for medical help, monitor the affected person's condition. Observe their breathing and pulse and be prepared to act if their condition deteriorates.

It is essential to get medical help as soon as possible in case of loss of consciousness, as it can be a sign of a serious condition. Stay with the affected person until medical help arrives and provide support and comfort until they are taken over by health professionals (Potach and Meira, 2022).

## 6. Lipothymia

Lipothymia, also known as fainting or syncope, is a temporary loss of consciousness and muscle tone that usually lasts only a few seconds or minutes. This condition can be caused by a temporary decrease in blood flow to the brain, leading to a temporary reduction in brain activity (Flegel, 2013).

Lipothymia can have various causes. One possible factor is dehydration, as lack of water in the body can lead to decreased blood volume and reduced blood flow to the brain.

Orthostatism is another possible cause, as in the case of a sudden change of position from lying down or sitting upright, the blood flow to the brain can be temporarily affected, causing fainting.

Physical overload can also cause lipothymia. Intense physical exertion can lead to the dilation of blood vessels, which causes a drop in blood pressure and possible fainting.

Emotional stress is another possible cause, since intense stressful situations can cause a “fight or flight” reaction, which can lead to a temporary decrease in blood flow to the brain.

Anemia can also lead to lipothymia, as low levels of hemoglobin and red blood cells can affect oxygenation of the brain, causing fainting.

Cardiological factors can also be a cause of lipothymia, since some heart problems can affect the blood flow to the brain and can be associated with lipothymias.

Neurological factors should also be mentioned – neurological conditions, such as epilepsy or migraines, can cause syncope in some cases.

It is important to see a doctor to evaluate the specific causes of lipothymia, especially if it happens frequently or in unusual situations. Treatment will depend on the diagnosis and the underlying cause of the fainting.

In the case of fainting (syncope) during physical education lessons, it is important to act carefully to ensure the quick and safe recovery of the person affected. A lipothymia is a temporary loss of consciousness, often caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure or poor blood flow to the brain. First aid consists in ensuring the safety of the affected person by stopping physical activity, making sure that the surrounding area is safe to prevent further injuries. It is

recommended that the affected person sit or lie down with their head between the knees to ensure good blood circulation to the brain.

If the person is uncomfortable sitting down, you can raise their legs higher than their heart to improve blood flow.

Tight clothing should be loosened to allow adequate blood circulation and water or fluids should be offered if the person is conscious and able to swallow to help their hydration levels.

The person's condition needs to be monitored. It is necessary to stay with the affected person so that they remain under supervision until they fully regain consciousness. Make sure that the person is feeling well and that there are no other alarming symptoms.

Optionally, call the emergency number. If the person does not regain consciousness quickly or has other worrying symptoms, an emergency number (such as 112) can be called to get medical help.

Although lipothymias can be harmless, it is important to offer support and attention to the affected person. If lipothymias become frequent or are accompanied by other symptoms, it is recommended to seek medical attention to identify the cause and receive appropriate treatment.

## 7. Wounds

A wound is an open injury or tear in the body's tissues, which may involve the skin, muscles, internal organs, or other structures. Wounds can be caused by various situations and can range in severity from minor cuts to more serious injuries (Poenaru *et al.*, 1985).

Causes of wounds can include the following: trauma and accidents, blows, cuts or other types of trauma, all of which can cause open wounds. Additionally, using sharp objects such as knives, scissors or cutting tools can also cause cuts and wounds.

Puncture wounds are injuries caused by punctures, such as fingers pricked with a needle or other sharp objects and can result in open wounds. Thermal or chemical burns can cause the skin to break and form wounds as well.

Open bone fractures can be another cause, as broken bones that protrude through the skin can create serious wounds.

Wounds from animals or insects can also be counted as a cause, as bites or stings from various animals or insects may lead to open wounds.

Some conditions, such as diabetic ulcers or abscesses, can cause open tissue damage, therefore diseases or infections should also be included in the possible causes of wounds.

It is important to provide proper wound care to prevent further complications and infections. The treatment usually involves cleaning and

disinfecting the wound and applying appropriate dressings, while in more severe cases medical assistance may be required to close or suture the wound.

## **8. The Necessity of a First-Aid Kit in the Physical Education Lesson**

The existence of a first aid kit in the physical education lesson is extremely important and beneficial for several reasons.

Rapid response to emergencies is one of the main reasons, as accidents can occur at any time during physical activities, including physical education lessons. A well-stocked first aid kit allows for quick intervention and immediate care in case of minor injuries or injuries.

Preventing injuries from becoming worse is another reason for using a first aid kit, as it contains essential supplies to treat minor injuries such as cuts, scrapes or bruises. The use of dressings, antiseptic solutions and bandages can prevent the aggravation of injuries.

The convenience of a first aid kit and the safety it provides the students with is a third reason. Having a first aid kit nearby can help students feel safe and confident that they can receive help if needed.

Another use for the first aid kit is learning first aid. By having a first aid kit and using it correctly in case of emergency, pupils or students can learn and acquire basic knowledge of first aid, thus preparing them for similar situations outside of school.

## **9. Conclusions**

In more serious or complex cases, the first aid kit can provide initial support until the arrival of qualified medical personnel. This can help stabilize the patient and reduce risks until the ambulance arrives.

In conclusion, the existence of the first aid kit in physical education lessons is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of students and to allow a prompt and effective response in the event of an emergency. School staff should be trained in the use of the first aid kit and be aware of its importance in the context of physical education and student safety.

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## PRIMUL AJUTOR ÎN CADRUL LECȚIEI DE EDUCAȚIE FIZICĂ

(Rezumat)

În cadrul unei lecții de educație fizică, primul ajutor poate fi necesar în cazul unor accidente sau răniri minore. Este important să cunoaștem pașii de bază ai primului ajutor, cum ar fi acordarea îngrijirii pentru răni minore, aplicarea unui pansament sau a gheții pentru a reduce inflamațiile. În cazurile mai grave, cum ar fi leziuni sau fracturi, se recomandă să se solicite imediat ajutor medical calificat.



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## LA DÉRIVE NOSTALGIQUE DANS LA NOUVELLE « LES NAUFRAGÉS » DE JEAN-CHRISTOPHE RUFIN

BY

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**Abstract.** In his short-story entitled “Les naufragés” or “The Shipwrecked” (*Sept histoires qui reviennent de loin*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011), Jean-Christophe Rufin analyses the social and cultural fissures in Mauritius through his text which goes beyond the class conflicts in order to take into consideration a historical dimension which gives to the text its own characteristic. The nostalgic drift that we shall address in this paper, and which adds to the idea of a wreck results in a sad ending for the narrator (a white woman) while in a happy one for the “silent” protagonists of the text (the Hindus of the inlet where the narrator and her husband live). However, this short-story remains relevant because it offers a new look on the end of white hegemony on the island of Mauritius which has experienced the horrors of colonisation.

In the first of the three parts of this paper, we shall look into the nostalgia for a glorious past, where the character-narrator remains deeply nostalgic of such a past. The second part of our analysis will focus on highlighting temporal differences; the white narrator, will demonstrate how time – an important factor to analyse in the process of decolonisation – can create a nostalgic drift. The last part of the analysis of this short story will be marked by the nostalgic quest for the past in contrast to the inevitable present. This fatality is then sadly linked to the suicide of the character who can no longer accept the profound changes taking place within Mauritian society.

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**Keywords:** island; ethnicity; wreck; fate; nostalgia.

## 1. Introduction

Il n'est pas toujours possible de comprendre les nuances d'une culture autre que la sienne lorsqu'on ne s'est pas assez longtemps imprégné de cette même culture ; le regard que l'on porte alors sur elle, reste, par manque de références tangibles, inspiré par ce que l'on peut glaner dans les magazines, livres, documentaires, voire les émissions télévisées ou par notre propre interprétation qui peut s'avérer erronée car nourrie de préjugés. Or, l'académicien Jean-Christophe Rufin démontre, dans les maints détails et un style convaincant, les fissures d'une société et d'une culture qui évoluent ; celles de l'île Maurice. En effet, « Les naufragés », nouvelle extraite de *Sept histoires qui reviennent de loin*, pourrait se résumer à la définition de Vincent Stoffel comme étant : « un remake moderne d'une histoire de *Paul et Virginie* sur fond d'île de France où une certaine communauté indienne affirme ses racines religieuses en empiétant de manière intrusive sur l'espace de liberté de [...] deux amoureux » (Stoffel, 2012). On pourrait même prêter foi à l'analyse de Christophe Ono-dit-Biot, qui, dans Le Point, renchérit avec : « La dernière scène montre la femme avec une flingue sous l'oreiller. Après la lutte des classes, le clash des luttes » (Ono-dit-Biot, 2011). Certes, la nouvelle, telle que l'a voulu présenter Rufin, dépasse cette simple « lutte des classes » car elle prend en considération et met en valeur une dimension historique qui lui confère un cachet particulier. La dérive nostalgique que nous aborderons au cours de notre analyse, et qui renchérit le naufrage – au risque de frôler le pléonasme –, a pour conséquence une triste fin pour la narratrice et un dénouement heureux pour les protagonistes silencieux du texte (les hindous de la crique où habitent la narratrice et son mari). Cependant, cette nouvelle reste d'actualité car elle propose de porter un regard nouveau sur la fin de l'hégémonie blanche dans cette île qui a connu les affres de la colonisation.

L'analyse de cette nouvelle se fera en trois parties. Dans une première partie, nous analyserons la nostalgie d'un passé glorieux, en portant une attention particulière à l'histoire de l'île Maurice, connue sous le nom de l'Isle de France, plus précisément à l'époque de la colonisation française. L'analyse de cette période de l'Histoire permettra de faire une introspection dans le monde des colons, à l'époque de l'esclavage sur l'île. Nous verrons comment le personnage-narrateur reste profondément nostalgique de ce passé et analyserons la raison pour laquelle ce personnage l'est tant. La deuxième partie de notre analyse portera sur une mise en valeur des écarts temporels ; nous verrons, toujours à travers le regard de la narratrice blanche, comment le temps – facteur important à analyser dans le processus de la décolonisation – peut créer une dérive nostalgique. Le temps creuse des gouffres tout en générant un conflit

constant entre passé et présent pour mieux mettre en relief l'un et l'autre. La dernière partie de l'analyse de cette nouvelle sera marquée par la quête nostalgique du passé confrontée à la fatalité du présent. Cette fatalité est alors tristement liée au suicide du personnage qui n'arrive plus à accepter les changements profonds qui opèrent au sein de la société mauricienne.

## 2. La nostalgie d'un passé glorieux

Nous pourrions admettre que la nouvelle *Les naufragés* de Jean-Christophe Rufin dénonce l'attitude des colons de l'île Maurice, qui, « anciens esclavagistes » (Rufin, p. 53), ne peuvent accepter que l'esclavage fasse partie d'un passé révolu. Il y a l'aveu de cette quête constante d'un passé glorieux dans lequel les colons ont été bercés, dès leur plus tendre enfance, comme lorsque l'admet la narratrice : « Notre famille y est si anciennement établie, si illustre, que depuis l'enfance, je suis accoutumée à être reconnue partout » (Rufin, p. 57). En effet, le regard porté par les descendants français à l'île est teintée d'affectivité. Nous retrouvons cette même atmosphère marquée d'un certain repli temporel ou d'une stagnation d'un temps passé dans le roman d'une auteure mauricienne, Marcelle Lagesse, intitulé *La Diligence s'éloigne à l'aube* (1958 [1<sup>ère</sup> édition]) où l'esclavage est même abordé sous un regard qui mérite l'attention puisque l'auteure semble se remémorer la période esclavagiste de manière nostalgique. Si Lagesse semble faire l'éloge de la période coloniale et se positionne donc dans un espace-temps idéal, voire utopique, la différence chez Rufin se situe dans une conjoncture d'événements qui entraînent une fin ou donnent lieu à un point de non-retour.

Les Français prennent possession de l'île après le départ des Hollandais qui la quittent « pour de bon et [concentrent] leurs efforts sur Le Cap, bien mieux situé [...] Leur insuccès a été attribué à la voracité des rats qui [dévorent] les récoltes » (Toussaint, 1974, p. 27). L'île prospère. Mahé de Labourdonnais arrive dans l'île le 4 juin 1735 et fait de Port-Louis le meilleur port de l'océan Indien. Il ouvrira, par ailleurs, une première sucrerie à Pamplemousses, village du nord de l'île. Cependant, ce sera Labourdonnais lui-même qui organisera la traite négrière avec le Mozambique portugais, la côte d'Afrique (Nagapen, 1996, p. 23), ainsi qu'avec Madagascar (Moutou, 1998, p. 69). Ce seront des grands noms comme Barthélémy David, Lozier-Bouvet, René Magon, Desforges-Boucher ou encore Daniel-Jean Dumas qui seront d'autres grandes figures françaises qui auront successivement aidé au développement de l'île (Toussaint, 1973, pp. 24-32). La capitulation des forces françaises, le 3 décembre 1810, durant la Bataille du Vieux Grand-Port, a eu lieu essentiellement à cause de « l'infériorité des forces françaises » (Moutou, 1998, p. 37) déjà affaiblies par la situation financière particulièrement difficile de l'État français.

En 1810, à la suite d'une sanglante bataille – la bataille du Vieux Grand-Port (Toussaint, 1974, p. 60) – les Anglais prennent possession de l'île. Certains descendants de colons, dont les ancêtres sont venus s'établir dans l'île, veulent regagner la France ou l'île Bourbon (La Réunion) quand, le traité de Paris de 1814 stipulera que « les propriétés des habitants, quelles qu'elles soient, seront respectées, et (article VIII) que les habitants conserveront leur religion, leurs lois et leurs coutumes » (Moutou, 1998, p. 54). Cette décision, bien en faveur des colons français, masquerait-elle la véritable raison qui pousse les Français à ne pas regagner la terre de leurs ancêtres ? Car la Révolution ayant eu lieu, et l'Égalité ayant pris le dessus sur l'esclavage, vivraient-ils dorénavant dans une société démocratique, en déphasage avec celle qu'ils auraient connue ?

Dans la nouvelle analysée, ce passé glorieux est d'entrée en matière mis en exergue avec l'adjectif indéfini « chaque » qui a valeur itérative. Par exemple : « Chaque matin, depuis plus de quarante ans, je sors de chez moi pour me baigner dans l'océan » (Rufin, 2011, p. 37). L'itératif, qui « raconte une fois ce qui s'est passé plusieurs fois » (Kodia, 2008) sert, dans ce cadre précis et dès le départ, à mettre l'accent sur un événement qui se concrétise souvent ainsi que sur l'effet produit. Les vestiges du passé sont multiples et se présentent à travers une multitude de références à la beauté du lieu, signe que l'environnement particulier de la narratrice est en marge de l'autre société, composée lui de Noirs et d'Indiens. Par exemple, « Cricpirate » (Rufin, 2011, p. 37), le lieu où habite la famille de la narratrice, est si retiré que la narratrice peut se permettre de mettre son intimité à nu :

Les palmiers et toute la végétation alentour se dressent lentement vers le ciel tandis que les nuages, quand il y en a, fatigués d'avoir couru toute la nuit après la lune, s'allongent sur l'horizon et rôtissent au petit feu du soleil. Je lâche mon paréo, le laisse tomber sur le sable et marche nue jusqu'à l'eau. C'est à ce moment précis que je l'ai remarquée (Rufin, 2011, p. 37).

Dans cet exemple, il y a une esthétisation du réel qui se manifeste par une fusion entre les éléments contraires : le bois des palmiers côtoie l'eau voire le feu du soleil. Le rythme lent qui soutient cet élan poétique pour une dimension verticale – « végétation » suivi de « nuages » (Rufin, 2011, p. 37) –, ne peut nullement atténuer l'effet de chute qui s'ensuit. En effet, si l'extrait « la végétation alentour se dresse lentement vers le ciel » (Rufin, 2011, p. 37) est plus loin soutenu par « les nuages (...) fatigués d'avoir couru » (Rufin, 2011, p. 37), cela préfigure la chute ultime de l'homme. L'élévation sous-tend, en contrario, un mouvement opposé vertical suivi d'un autre horizontal. D'abord avec la chute (mouvement vertical) : « s'allongent sur l'horizon et rôtissent au petit feu du soleil » (Rufin, 2011, p. 37) et puis avec : « marche nue jusqu'à l'eau » (mouvement horizontal) (Rufin, 2011, p. 37), comme s'il s'agissait

d'annoncer la fin de l'envol du Franco-mauricien, pris depuis les débuts de la colonisation. Il pourrait s'agir aussi, pour Rufin, de l'annonce d'une fin quelque peu rare pour un Franco-mauricien, mais également, l'annonce que le mythe de l'île paradisiaque, en référence à *Paul et Virginie* (Bernardin de Saint-Pierre), n'en est plus un.

Le descendant français a un sentiment nostalgique en se remémorant le passé. En effet, Rufin nous démontre cela car la gloire du passé est liée au fait même que le Blanc vivait dans un espace remarquablement étanche avec les autres, permettant la construction d'une unité avec son espace restreint par ce pouvoir forcé de mise en connexion interne. À travers la description de la villa familiale située dans le Sud de l'île, au bord de la mer, la narratrice se remémore le passé :

C'[était] une simple villa de plain-pied dont les baies sont toujours grandes ouvertes. Le vent traverse les pièces et apporte un peu de fraîcheur même pendant les jours les plus chauds. Selon son orientation, il est parfumé par les embruns où gorgé de pollens de l'intérieur. Alentour de cette maison, tout est violent : la mer qui bat les brisants, le soleil nous écrase toute l'année, la chaleur humide. Pourtant, dans ce lieu géométrique où s'annulent toutes ces forces contraires, la paix atteint une densité inégalée. Je devrais dire atteignait car désormais, *elle* était là.

En temps normal, je vais dans la cuisine qui est ouverte de tous côtés sur le salon et la terrasse (Rufin, 2011, p. 39).

Notons, dans cet extrait, l'importance de la mer pour la narratrice comme pour rappeler l'éternel liquide amniotique qui protège l'enfant dans le ventre de sa mère. Un sentiment d'ouverture se fait sentir avec des fenêtres « grandes ouvertes » que la narratrice renchérit davantage de « baies... ouvertes de tous côtés sur le salon et la terrasse ». Ce discours recèle une multitude d'éléments qui permettent de confirmer la mise en relation de plusieurs espaces. Si « cuisine », « salon » et « terrasse » permettent de réinvestir le rôle premier de ces espaces, en leur donnant dans ce cas une nouvelle perspective de modélisation, nous ressentons, tout de même, cette homogénéité de la narratrice dans la description de ces lieux chargés d'histoires. Point de parcellisation mais un tout indissociable, comme si cela confirmait que, dans son monde de l'enfance où elle évoluait, l'espace ne donnait pas lieu à des conflits ou ne pouvait faire ressortir des clivages. Comme s'il ne s'agissait que de cet espace textuel de Xavier Garnier, qui doit se laisser « féconder par la vie » (Garnier et Zoberman, 2006, p. 24) pour constituer un espace littéraire puisque, pour Garnier, afin que se concrétise un espace littéraire, il faut qu'il y ait un événement. C'est à travers l'espace inondé de soleil et synonyme d'ouverture que la narratrice démontre un sentiment d'attachement à ce glorieux passé. La gloire étant pour elle le fait indéniable d'appartenir à un espace paradoxalement peu homogène car, n'oublions pas qu'à l'époque coloniale les gens de la

communauté blanche habitaient une région spécifique de l'île alors que les Créoles habitaient les « mornes du dedans, improches à culture, [étant] laissés à l'abandon, avec leurs forêts primitives [où] [j]adis, les esclaves marrons y trouvaient refuge » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54).

Nous parvenons, dans le même temps, à faire le rapprochement entre l'espace littéraire et une approche sociologique de la nouvelle de Rufin. Rufin nous démontre comment une enfant qui a grandi en marge des réalités sociales se trouve, soudain, en vieillissant, face à la réalité. Jean-Christophe Rufin dépeint de manière fort révélatrice, les limites d'un microcosme organisé, qui, en niant un espace extérieur pour un espace élaboré en vase clos, ne peut qu'être voué à l'échec. Notons, à cet effet, cette allusion à un mode de vie – qui favorise le repli sur soi – que vit la narratrice dès l'enfance. Cette famille constituée du père, de la sœur, du frère de la narratrice et de la narratrice elle-même semble fermée. La notion de circularité qui se dégage dans le texte, comme lorsque la narratrice raconte ayant « [serpenté] entre les champs de canne (...) [où] nous vivions dans un lieu clos, cerné par les eaux » (Rufin, 2011, p. 40), est un élément clé pour expliquer l'explosion sociale qui s'ensuit. Ce sera un peu plus que ce qui relève d'un simple contentement de soi, à travers ce qui pourrait être le déni de l'Autre, que la narratrice, dans une sorte de monologue intérieur, précise :

[...] À partir de ce jour, nous n'avons cessé de regarder la mer et notre île avec des alternances violentes d'amour et de haine.

Tantôt nous étouffons dans cette prison d'eau ; nous haïssons la mer qui nous sépare du monde. C'est le moment où nous voulons voyager, quitter l'île, rejoindre le reste de l'humanité [...] Tantôt nous voyons la mer comme une protection qui nous garde des malheurs du dehors (Rufin, 2011, p. 40).

Tout est alors plus clair. L'ambiguïté est bien le maître-mot pour décrire les sentiments qui envahissent la narratrice ; les verbes « étouffons » et « haïssons » qui cohabitent avec « quitter » et « rejoindre », expliquent d'une manière juste la perception de l'île qui est perçue tantôt comme une « prison d'eau », tantôt comme une « protection qui (...) garde des malheurs du dehors ». La narratrice semble happée par une sorte d'indétermination et d'imprécision, nourries par une sorte d'ambiance oppressive. Le souhait des Blancs est d'abandonner l'île afin de rejoindre ce « reste de l'humanité » (Rufin, 2011, p. 40) mais, en même temps, ils sont comme retenus par une force résistante. Est-ce le cordon ombilical avec l'île qui n'est pas totalement coupé ? Cette île, mère nourricière, ayant apporté plein de richesses à la communauté, appellerait-elle ses progénitures vers elle presque inconsciemment ? L'île, en tant que mère, a la « fonctionnalité d'un symbole qui a été depuis toujours associé métaphoriquement au continent (chez les poètes de la Négritude notamment) [...] » (Diaz Narbona, 2022, p. 42).

La claustrophobie grandissante du décor étouffe progressivement la narratrice, nourrit presque automatiquement cette nostalgie d'un passé glorieux, poussant même la narratrice à émettre une opinion radicale, celle qui vénère le colonialisme, car elle semble avouer alors avoir « une affreuse [nostalgie] du temps colonial » (Rufin, 2011, p. 44). Ne doit-on pas penser qu'il s'agit là d'un dérapage à travers une forme de dérive nostalgique ?

### **3. Une mise en valeur des écarts temporels**

Jean-Christophe Rufin porte une analyse réaliste de la société mauricienne, bien en contraste avec ce qu'elle a jusque-là projeté comme image, surtout dans les pamphlets publicitaires. Par la voix de la narratrice, il y a une nostalgie du passé teintée d'un aspect obscur. La narratrice n'hésite pas à démontrer comment lorsqu'elle :

[...] était petite, il y avait seulement là une petite église fréquentée par les travailleurs agricoles, un bar qui vendait de l'alcool de canne et un vulcanisateur de pneus (Rufin, 2011, p. 50).

La dérive nostalgique se situe justement à travers les écarts temporels. La narratrice Franco-mauricienne ne cesse de comparer la fulgurance du passé au présent quelque peu tiède car ayant perdu de sa brillance :

Aujourd'hui, c'est une ville indienne [...]. La route se glisse entre deux rangées continues de façades à un ou deux étages. Ce sont des constructions pauvres, en parpaings, terriblement désordonnées. Certains murs sont peints de couleurs criardes, d'autres couverts de carreaux de salle de bains, d'autres encore laissés nus. Toutes les maisons sont couronnées par des fers à béton dressés à la verticale, comme des cheveux hérisrés. Ils sont là en prévision d'extensions futures quand arriveront de nouveaux enfants (Rufin, 2011, p. 50).

La description qui y est faite n'est pas entièrement fausse car beaucoup d'Indo-mauriciens construisent des maisons dans l'espoir – et comme le veut la coutume – de voir leur fils, une fois marié, s'installer en haut de la maison familiale. Il s'agit pour les parents d'une sorte de sécurité assurée de vieillir en la présence des progénitures. Il s'agit aussi d'une forme de perpétuation d'une tradition asiatique d'habiter avec son fils marié.

La nouvelle de Rufin est un miroir grossissant d'une situation sociale qui paraît se gangrénier pour finir en dérive. Le paroxysme est atteint lorsque la narratrice se rend compte de la statuette de Shiva déposée dans sa crique, espace presque exclusivement réservé à elle et son mari et à sa famille depuis son enfance :

Elle m'est apparue de dos, car elle regardait la mer. Un peu plus petite que moi, elle avait des épaules larges et elle écartait les bras (Rufin, 2011, p. 38).

La statue quasiment personnifiée a le caractère intense d'une personne, voire d'une intruse dans le couple. Comme s'il pouvait s'agir d'une maîtresse du mari. La jalousie, l'envie et « l'angoisse surnaturelle » (Rufin, 2011, p. 38) de la narratrice se cristallisent pour donner lieu à « une horreur plus humaine, plus raisonnée, qui n'a cessé depuis de s'approfondir » (Rufin, 2011, p. 38). L'« horrible» découverte, qui ne déclenche même pas un peu de piété chez la narratrice, est bien la raison qui explique la dérive dans ses actions : le rapt de la statue. Car cet acte réprobateur insinue sans doute un non-respect de la religion des autres et des Hindous qui ont le plein pouvoir sur l'administration alors que le bonheur de ces ‘adversaires’ se trouve dans leur recours en Shiva. La mise en valeur d'un écart temporal se situe dans ce cadre précis à travers le passage du pouvoir central aux Hindous. Et ce conflit interne de la narratrice est dans ce cadre précis un conflit existentiel qui incarnerait même un conflit relevant d'une conscience collective.

À travers une description en analepse – ce que Valette décrit comme servant « à désigner un retour en arrière » (1992, p. 96) –, l'histoire nous est contée de manière progressive. L'écart du temps est mis en avant lorsque la narratrice nous parle de « la fin de la fin » (Rufin, 2011, p. 42), comme si cela annonçait une fin définitive pour les personnes de cette communauté. On peut penser à l'effet de mise en abyme quand, après avoir fait une première comparaison entre le passé et le présent, la narratrice nous convie à une seconde mise en valeur des écarts temporels ; à travers la notion du vide et du tout. Effectivement, cela peut paraître ambigu quand ce personnage indique que le « vide pour [eux], c'est la nature, la richesse et la vie. Le plein, c'est l'épuisement de tout, l'appauvrissement et la mort » (Rufin, 2011, p. 42). Dans le *Traité du vide*, Blaise Pascal, critique les Anciens (et Aristote) en justifiant que :

C'est ainsi que, sur le sujet du vide, ils avaient droit de dire que la nature n'en souffrirait point, parce que toutes leurs expériences leur avaient toujours fait remarquer qu'elle l'abhorrait et ne le pouvait souffrir (Pascal, 1963, p. 232).

De cette idée imparfaite du vide que Pascal fait des Anciens, nous savons qu'aujourd'hui la nature reconnaît l'existence du vide. Pour les Blancs de l'île, ce serait ce rapprochement entre le vide et la nature et non avec les hommes. La contradiction réside justement dans le fait qu'il n'existe pas de rapport de proximité entre les autres hommes et les Blancs, car le plein mène les Blancs à l'impossibilité d'un rapport dialogique. Cela peut donner lieu à une sorte de réaction épidermique dès que le Blanc est mis en contact avec un Noir/Indien.

Si la complexité des relations entre Blancs et Noirs n'est pas absente des « Naufragés », il est encore moins surprenant d'entendre dire de la narratrice :

Je suis née aux derniers temps de cette époque de fêtes. Nous allions en carriole d'un domaine à l'autre ; nous étions jeunes, insouciants, riches, beaux et blancs. Nous étions des maîtres, et dans le monde ordonné sur lequel nous régnions, chacun était à son poste. Les castes ne se mélangeaient pas. Mais de la nôtre, rien n'existe pour nous. Les Indiens étaient dans les champs ou dans les villages, mais nul n'y prêtait attention (Rufin, 2011, p. 52).

Cet extrait nous permet de voir à quel point « la peau noire est une représentation symbolique des forces du mal » (Caute, 1970, p. 13). La différence raciale nourrit chez le Noir un sentiment d'infériorité et, inversement, chez le Blanc un complexe de supériorité alors que, paradoxalement, il « ne s'est jamais soucié de créer une idéologie fondée sur la blancheur de son épiderme » (Pascal, 1963, p. 232). Pourtant, chez Rufin, les petits Blancs sont comme d'heureux paons : « nous étions jeunes, insouciants, riches, beaux et blancs » (Rufin, 2011, p. 52). D'ailleurs, Wole Soyinka, poète nigérien, ne disait-il pas, que « le tigre n'a pas besoin de proclamer sa tigritude, mais il tue sa proie et la mange » (Frioux-Salgas, 2009, p. 160). Et comme le dit Philippe Coulangeon :

La stratification sociale désigne le découpage des sociétés humaines en catégories hiérarchisées, présentant en leur sein une certaine homogénéité, et qui résulte de l'ensemble des différences sociales associées aux inégalités de richesses, de pouvoir, de prestige ou de connaissance. Effectivement, dans le monde ordonné des petits maîtres du passé « [l]es castes ne se mélangeaient pas » (Coulangeon, 2010, pp. 101-102).

Cette représentation unidimensionnelle des faits confirme la non-congruence entre Blancs et Noirs. La narratrice termine sa présentation des faits en mettant l'accent sur le fait que : « Les Indiens étaient dans les champs ou dans les villages, mais nul n'y prêtait attention » (Rufin, 2011, p. 52) comme s'il s'agissait pour la communauté blanche de l'existence d'êtres insignifiants.

Plus loin, nous ressentons non cet art d'ignorer et de dénigrer l'Autre mais l'acrimonie certaine nourrie contre lui. L'île, avait effectivement connu des changements avec les activistes locaux, initiés à la révolte par Manilall Doctor, lui-même envoyé par Gandhi, pour la demande de l'indépendance de la colonisation britannique. Alors, lorsque la narratrice précise : « Je déteste le rouge » (Rufin, 2011, p. 47), c'est moins la couleur du soleil couchant qu'elle dit ne pas aimer que ce rouge – le rouge est la couleur de la première bande horizontale du drapeau mauricien et signifie le sang qui a coulé pour l'obtention de l'indépendance ; les bandes du dessous sont successivement, bleue (pour la

mer), jaune (pour le soleil) et verte (pour la canne à sucre) –, couleur du sang des Indiens, qui se sont tués à la culture de la canne et qui ont mené au front un combat sans relâche pour exiger l'indépendance de l'île. Cela corrobore le résultat d'une dérive de la nostalgie qui s'installe car en voulant maintenir les prérogatives d'autan, la narratrice s'enfouit dans un espace fait de stratifications et de dénégation de l'Autre, démontrant à quel point les écarts du temps ne semblent pas être acceptés par la communauté blanche de l'île.

#### **4. De la nostalgie du passé à la fatalité du présent**

Quand la nostalgie d'un passé glorieux pousse à une forme de dérive, l'enjeu qui en découle est plus sûrement teinté de fatalité. Comme nous l'avons vu dès l'incipit de la nouvelle, la narratrice met l'accent sur « [leur] enclos de terre » (Rufin, 2011, p. 40) et la notion « [d'enfermement] dans [leurs] propriétés » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54) pour marquer le rétrécissement du décor chez les Franco-mauriciens. Cette sensation délibérée d'étouffement et de « resserrement » vient faciliter la perception d'une volonté aveugle du destin. L'île étant déjà le symbole d'une vie en vase clos, plusieurs éléments concourent à mettre davantage en évidence cette tragédie qui s'abat sur la blanche. Une fois le rapt de la statue de Shiva commis, la narratrice et son mari, Éric, s'engouffrent dans leur 4x4 tout en se déplaçant vers les hauts plateaux. Si la poésie propose l'idée de verticalité pour expliquer le principe que l'homme, ce faisant, quitte le monde matériel pour se diriger vers une introspection de soi, voire vers Dieu, nous pouvons penser que cette observation est adaptée au contexte local. L'extrait : « Éric nous menait vers des régions boisées et montagneuses du centre que je connais mal » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54), nous donne des indications concernant ce mouvement vertical vers les hauts. Cela reste tout de même très utile car il nous informe de l'emprise des Blancs sur le monde noir à l'époque coloniale qui, elle, se soldait par une forme d'opposition entre le monde des Blancs et celui des Noirs. En sélectionnant les meilleures terres de l'île, les « morceaux de choix » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54), et en ne laissant que les parties les moins arables à la majorité de la population – « Les mornes du dedans, improches à la culture, étaient laissés à l'abandon, avec leurs forêts primitives » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54) –, où le recours aux « divinités les plus sauvages » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54) a lieu, les Indiens se sentent obligés de trouver refuge dans ces forces divines « plus puissantes que celles qui végétent dans les temps en ciment, offerts aux yeux de tous, sur les bords de route » (Rufin, 2011, p. 54). Le rythme accéléré provoqué par la peur d'être découverts, mêlé à l'obscurité effrayante dans cette partie de l'île, ne peut que mener les protagonistes vers des « repaires sacrés » (Rufin, 2011, p. 55), où « les troncs serrés » des arbres, « [tiennent] lieu de colonnes, formaient [...] une voûte » (Rufin, 2011, p. 55). Dans ce décor claustrophobique, règne un désordre indescriptible avec « les statues de divinités hindoues » qui « [sont] réparties ça

et là dans l'espace » (Rufin, 2011, p. 55). La narratrice doit faire face à une triste réalité à laquelle Rufin donne un sens de la perspective historique d'une grande justesse. Cette fatalité du présent est brillamment mise en exergue au travers d'un niveau stylistique qui permet de voir comment l'idée y est exprimée en profondeur. Nous pouvons même voir, à travers « les souffrances ressenties, une manière de thérapie, conception qui confère à l'acte d'écrire une valeur cathartique » (Cozic, 2006).

Avec la focalisation de la narration sur un passé révolu qui, lui, serait égal au temps présent, « la chronologie s'absente, la linéarité s'échappe » (Morel, 2011). Le présent semble doublement traumatisant pour la narratrice. En même temps que la nouvelle met en scène la fin d'une époque, entraînant avec elle l'avènement d'une nouvelle ère, il y a également comme une sorte de deuxième forme de violence : l'incompréhension de son mari Éric. L'esthétique de cette nouvelle pourrait bien reposer sur une forme absurde car à quoi bon essayer à tout prix de vivre dans les images survivantes du passé lorsque les siens ne cautionnent pas ce désir avec conviction ? L'acte d'écrire semble se substituer à une dignité perdue, qui, pour elle, s'apparente à une « fin du monde » (Rufin, 2011, p. 42). Cela s'apparente alors à ce que précise Kant :

Dans le règne des fins tout a un PRIX ou une DIGNITÉ. Ce qui a un prix peut être aussi bien remplacé par quelque chose d'autre, à titre d'équivalent : au contraire, ce qui est supérieur à tout prix, ce qui par suite n'admet pas d'équivalent, c'est ce qui a une dignité (Kant, 1967, p. 160).

Et le moins que l'on puisse dire est que lorsque cette dignité est perdue, tout est véritablement perdu. La violence psychologique s'installe subséquemment chez la narratrice, en réaction à la fatalité de la situation, comme si « le présent n'est en réalité qu'un entre-deux spectral et sépulcral, dont la seule perspective est sa propre mort » (Rufin, 2011, p. 43).

Cette association fatalité-mort est davantage mise en avant à travers un rappel du texte fondateur de la littérature mauricienne, *Paul et Virginie*. Si « [L]es Blancs d'ici sont tous les enfants d'un naufrage » (Rufin, 2011, p. 43), la violence est alors profondément ancrée chez les Blancs. Pour les victimes qu'ils sont, cela peut expliquer la raison pour laquelle la dérive nostalgique s'installe chez eux. Peut-on alors faire un lien entre le naufrage et la mort de Virginie comme symbole d'un deuil qui se répèterait dans l'Histoire ? Ce constant rappel du passé, et paradoxalement marque indélébile de prestige et de grandeur, pourrait-il agir comme un principe de prémonition à la mort (n'oublions pas que la narratrice se suicide à la fin de la nouvelle) ? Il semble impossible à la narratrice de faire le deuil du passé et de ne pouvoir le (re)vivre car il s'agira d'un retour impossible ; les Hindous étant à présent au pouvoir, il y a une nouvelle identité qui s'est construite dans l'île contemporaine.

Ces images d'une impossible survivance du passé sont doublées par un autre fait marquant : « l'océan [les] a arrêtés » (Rufin, 2011, p. 45). En effet, même si la narratrice aurait souhaité rompre avec ce destin rempli de tragédie, la fatalité lui est indissociable. Elle est prisonnière de l'espace déjà restreint de l'île. Même des Français de souche qui viennent au pays comme touristes représentent une spirale qui la happe davantage car ils n'hésitent pas à voir, à travers les descendants de colons, l'image d'esclavagistes :

Ah oui, ce 0,2% de la population qui s'accroche à ses priviléges. C'est tout juste s'ils ne vous demandent pas si vous avez encore des esclaves. Nous sommes à leurs yeux les représentants d'un système qu'ils condamnent sans autre forme de procès (Rufin, 2011, p. 46).

Il n'y a aucune échappatoire si ce n'est la mort, à travers le suicide du personnage, pour exécuter la malédiction de Dieu. Pour celle qui ne voulait, au fond, que converser et faire perdurer « [c]ette bulle » (Rufin, 2011, p. 62) protectrice autour d'elle, elle n'a pas estimé le pouvoir de l'autre communauté. Cette communauté sévit à travers des actions encore plus manifestes avec « ... un temple complet [qui] avait été dressé » (Rufin, 2011, p. 63), renchéries par une « foule indienne arrivant de partout, calme, résolue, victorieuse [...] » (Rufin, 2011, p. 63).

## 5. Conclusion

Le travail qui marque bien la « sourde hostilité [des] communautés » (Rufin, 2011, p. 56) revêt un caractère particulier pour le lecteur qui ne comprendra pas les sous-entendus. Jean-Christophe Rufin démontre comment une descendante des anciens propriétaires d'esclaves, ayant des origines française, anglaise, hollandaise et baltes (Rufin, 2011, p. 41), doit se réveiller face à la réalité du jour : l'omniprésence rampante et triomphante des Hindous dans un pays encore pas longtemps sous l'emprise exclusive des esclavagistes. Ce que Rufin met en évidence dans cette nouvelle est bien le trop grand attachement au passé – si glorieux soit-il pour celui qui l'entend de cette manière. En effet, ce que dénonce Rufin est la posture adoptée par la narratrice. Face au déni de la réalité, mettre en avant un passé onirique créé, ce faisant, une mise en valeur des écarts temporels, plongeant le récit dans une réflexion où douleur rime avec fatalité. Cette « histoire » précise les relations entre la littérature et la réalité, effaçant, à bien y voir, la ligne frontalière entre la fiction et la réalité. Lorsque le présent reste teinté du passé, comme dans une sorte de fixation et d'obsession, nul ne peut survivre et c'est à travers le suicide de la narratrice que se décline l'esthétique de la nouvelle « Les naufragés » de Jean-Christophe Rufin.

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**DERIVA NOSTALGICĂ ÎN POVESTIREA „LES NAUFRAGÉS”  
DE JEAN-CHRISTOPHE RUFIN**

(Rezumat)

În povestirea sa intitulată „Les naufragés” sau „Naufragiații” (din volumul *Sept histoires qui reviennent de loin*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011), Jean-Christophe Rufin analizează fisurile sociale și culturale din Mauritius prin textul său care trece dincolo de conflictele de clasă pentru a lua în considerare o dimensiune istorică care îi conferă textului o caracteristică proprie. Deriva nostalnică pe care o vom aborda în această lucrare și care se adaugă ideii de epavă are ca rezultat un final trist pentru naratoare (o femeie albă), dar unul fericit pentru protagoniștii „tăcuți” ai textului (hindușii din micul golf unde locuiesc naratoarea și soțul ei). Cu toate acestea, această povestire rămâne relevantă, deoarece oferă o nouă privire asupra sfârșitului hegemoniei albe pe insula Mauritius, care a trecut prin ororile colonizării.

În prima dintre cele trei părți ale acestei lucrări, vom analiza nostalgia unui trecut glorios, în care personajul-povestitor păstrează o profundă nostalgia unui astfel de trecut. A doua parte a analizei noastre se va concentra pe evidențierea diferențelor temporale; naratoarea albă va demonstra cum timpul – un factor important de analizat în procesul de decolonizare – poate crea o derivă nostalnică. Ultima parte a analizei acestei povestiri va fi marcată de căutarea nostalnică a trecutului în contrast cu prezentul inevitabil. Această fatalitate este apoi, din păcate, legată de sinuciderea personajului care nu mai poate accepta schimbările profunde care au loc în societatea mauritiană.